YORK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

MILLFIELDS RECREATION AREA, EASINGWOLD, NORTH YORKSHIRE

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES COMMISSION · REGISTERED MUSEUM

REGISTERED · IFA · ORGANISATION

1998 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 38

MILLFIELDS RECREATION AREA,

EASINGWOLD,

NORTH YORKSHIRE

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL

WATCHING BRIEF

CONTENTS

List of Figures

Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York YO1 7FG
Tel. (01904) 663000 Fax. (01904) 640029

1. INTRODUCTION

Between the 10th and the 14th and again on the 18th August 1998 York Archaeological Tnist undertook an archaeological watching brief during the construction of a new car park, access road and cycle path at the Millfields Recreation Area, Easihgwold, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 5290 7015) (Figure 1). The work was commissioned by Hambleton District Council in compliance with an archaeological condition imposed by North Yorkshire County Council.

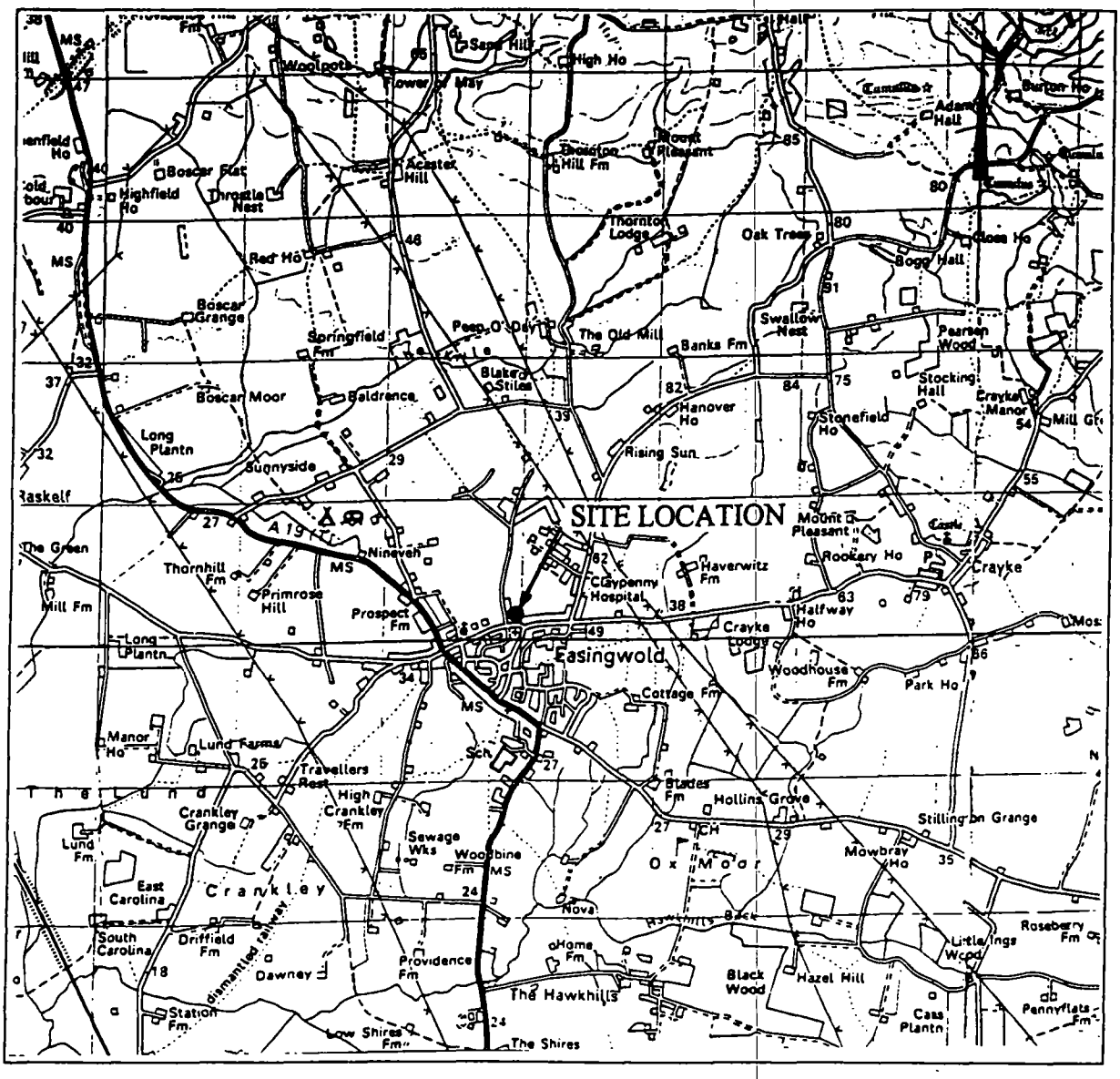

Figure 1 Site Location (scale 1:50,000)
© Crown Copyright

2. METHODOLOGY

The ground-works carried out involved the machine removal of topsoil prior to the construction of a car park, and associated access road, situated to the north east of the junction between Millfield Rise and Millfield Lane in Easingwold (Figure 2). This also included a vegetation strip of the route intended for a new cycle path from Millfield Lane to a housing development some 450m to the north - east. (Only the westem end of the cycle-path was observed as this was the area in which damage to archaeological deposits was thought to be most likely).

The amoumt of ground disturbance necessary for the development was negligible as the areas encroached upon by the car park and cycle path were to be built up with quarry stone and elevated above ground level. This meant that only a minimal amount of topsoil removal was necessary in both of these areas, barely penetrating below the depth of the topsoil in the car park and only requiring a vegetation strip along the route of the cycle path. The exception to this was the new road leading from the surgery access road to the car park, which was excavated to a greater depth to give an adequate formation level.

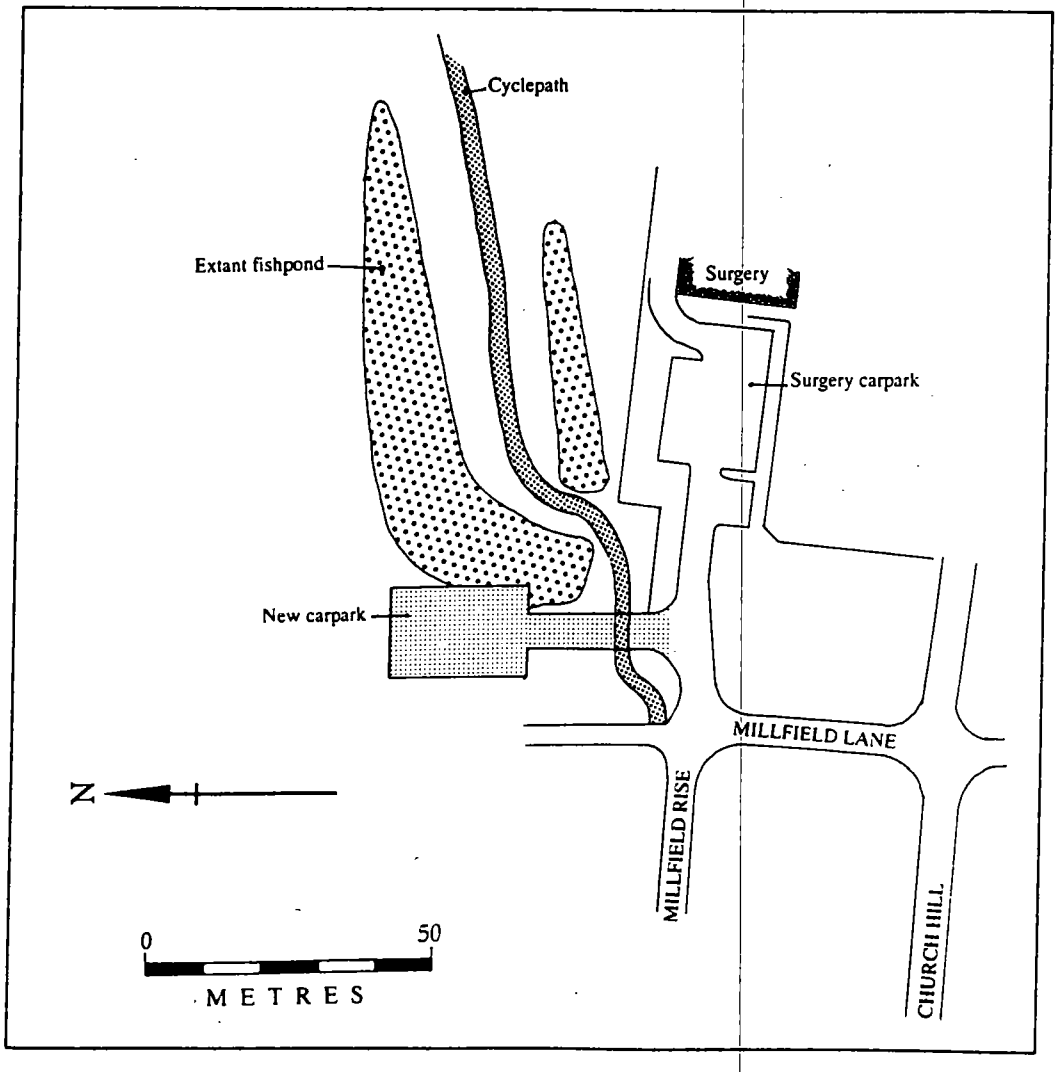

Figure 2 Location of car park, access road and cycle path

The deposits in these areas were recorded in the form of drawn plans and sections (Figure 3), at a scale of 1:20 and described using pro-forma context recording sheets with a series of 35mm colour print photographs being taken.

The site records are currently stored with York Archaeological Tmst under the Trust Accession Code YORAT: 1998.8

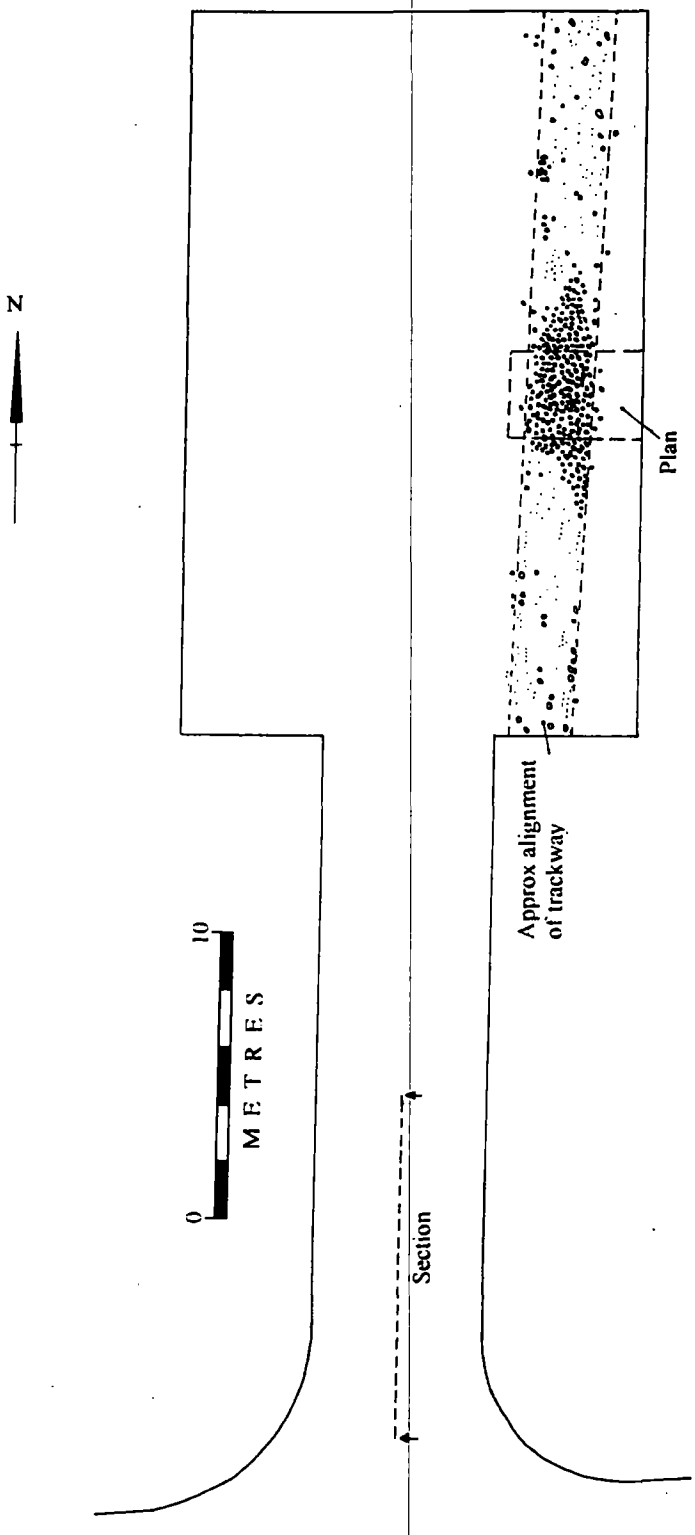

Figure 3. Location of plan and section

3. RESULTS

3.1 Car Park

The earliest deposits seen were at a depth of approx. 0.20m B.G.L (metres Below Ground Level). These were located in a small area within the proposed car park (Figure 3), and were only exposed during cleaning and were not excavated.

Both were thought to be dumps of material used to infill the westem end of the fish pond that had previously occupied the area. These deposits (Figure 4), consisted of a moist light grey brown silty sand with inclusions of occasional charcoal flecks, small pebbles, brick or tile fragments and small patches of yellow brown sand (1002) and a loose yellow brown silty sand with occasional small brick fragments, small pebbles and charcoal fiecks (1003).

The relationship between contexts 1003 and 1002 was not certain as both deposits lay beneath a linear north-south aligned metalled surface (Figure 3), which was interpreted as a track way. This only survived to its full width in the area illustrated and became patchy and badly eroded to both the north and south, where it was only recognisable as a scatter of brick fragments or patches of small cobbles.

The track way (Figure 4; 1001) was constructed, initially, from small to medium pebbles compacted into the underlying deposits to form a uneven surface with a slight camber to both the east and west. A deposit of crushed brick (Figure 4), restricted to the southem area of the surviving track way, may have been part of the original construction or, more likely, a repair to the metalled surface which was damaged by several north-south aligned wheel mts. (The depth, up to 0.05m, and width (between 0.20 to 0.40m), of the wheel ruts suggested that they were formed by a narrow wheeled vehicle, such as a horse drawn cart, rather than a modem vehicle such as a tractor)

After the track way had fallen out of use, probably because of its poor state of repair, the area was abandoned and a thin layer of loose mid grey brown silty sand 0.10m thick (1000), either built up naturally or was dumped over the track way and the surroumding area, extending beyond the limits of the new car park.

3.2 Access Road

The area of the new access road was reduced to a maximum of 0.96m B.G. L. at its southem end, rising gradually to 0.20m at the entrance to the car park area in the north.

The earliest deposit reached (Figure 5) was at 0.78m B.G.L and was excavated to a depth of 0.12m and was found to continue beyond the base of the excavation. This was interpreted as a levelling deposit and consisted of loose brick and mortar rubble with occasional charcoal flecking (1008).

This was sealed by a dump of stiff pale grey clay (1009), up to 0.28m thick, which contained occasional mortar flecks, charcoal flecks, small concrete fragments and small glazed sewer pipe fragments. (Context 1009 also sealed the lid of a modern service inspection chamber (1010) which was still in use at the time the watching brief was taking place)

Directly above 1009 was a dump of friable mid brown slightly clay silt sand (1007), which contained inclusions of occasional flecks and small fragments of mortar, small brick fragments and charcoal flecks.

This was sealed by a deposit consisting of mixed dumps of sand, mortar, clay and brick rubble (1006) with occasional thin lenses and small patches of pale to mid orange yellow sand.

Overlying this was a deposit of brick rubble and mortar in a matrix of mid to dark grey brown silty sand (1005), 0.18m thick, which contained inclusions of occasional patches of limestone hard-core, charcoal flecks and small clinker fragments.

This was sealed by a layer of loose pale brown silty sand topsoil (1004), 0.26m deep, which contained occasional small clinker, brick, tile and stone fragments, dumped to form part of the flower garden to the adjacent surgery (south of the fence line, Figure 5).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Natural deposits were not encountered during the topsoil strip. The earliest deposits seen (1003 and 1002) were both thought to represent dumps of material used to back fill and level the medieval fish pond that previously occupied the area and originally extended further to the west. As these contexts remained un-excavated it is not known whether they represented the original infilling of the pond or were part of a later attempt at land reclamation on what would have been a low lying marshy area prone to seasonal flooding. The fact that they were both directly below the metalled surface 1001 suggested the latter.

1001 probably represents a track way leading from Millfield Lane to farm land or buildings such as barns, stock pens or cart sheds which have since been demolished. Although no dating evidence was recovered, the type of brick used in its construction suggested that it was laid during the 19th century and had been visible until fairly recently as very little top soil (1000), had formed above it.

The area of the access road was excavated to 0.96m B.G.L. and all deposits here proved to be modern in date. This was highlighted by the presence of a modern man hole cover, to a sewer that is still in use, at the base of the observations (Figure 5). This also demonstrated that there was a marked fall in the ground level which fell 0.86m from the southern edge of the car park, where track way 1001 lay at 0.10m B.G.L., to the man hole cover (0.96m B.G.L.), located some 20m to the south. This fall may be attributable to a reduction in the ground surface to reach formation level for the access road to the modern surgery or the removal of a "soft spot" encountered during their construction.

The presence of a "soft spot" may indicate the position of a further fish pond, lying to the south of the one in the adjacent field or it may indicate that the known fish pond was originally considerably larger than has been suspected. (As none of the deposits beneath modem levels in the access road were excavated any theory as to the reason for the fall in ground level is speculative)

After the inspection chamber was installed the ground level was raised by 0.64m with dumps of clays and brick mbble before a 0.30m thick deposit of topsoil was laid to form the fiower bed to the surgery. This also raised the level of the flower bed to the same height as the recreation area immediately to the north.

5. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Watching Brief, report and illustrations	**Bryan Antoni**
Editor	David **Brinklow**

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

York Archaeological Trust undertakes a wide range of urban and rural archaeological consultancies, surveys, evaluations, assessments and excavations for commercial, academic and charitable clients. It can manage projects, provide professional advice, and monitor archaeological works to ensure high quality, cost-effective archaeology. Its staff have a considerable depth and variety of professional experience, and an international reputation for research, development and maximising the public, educational and commercial benefits of archaeology. Based in York its services are available throughout Britain and beyond.

York Archaeological Trust
Cromwell House
13 Ogleforth
York YO1 7FG

Telephone: 01904 663000
Fax: 01904 640029

York Archaeological Trust is a
Registered Charity
No. 509060