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**Starr Carr Farm  
Seamer  
North Yorkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd  
March 1998**

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Seamer  
North Yorkshire**

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**Starr Carr Farm  
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Archaeological Watching Brief**

**1.1 Introduction**

During the month of November 1997, an archaeological watching brief was carried out on land to the south of Starr Carr Farm, Seamer (TA 020 811 : Fig. 1) by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. An area covering approximately 0.75 hectares of the farm yard was to be redeveloped as a potato store for J Stockdale and Son Ltd who have funded all work.

The specification prepared in advance of the work was designed to establish the nature of archaeological deposits which may be effected by the proposed development. The work program involved the excavation of a series of test pits located to establish on site stratigraphy

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**1.2 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Starr Carr Farm lies within 1 km of Star Carr which is arguably one of the most prestigious Mesolithic sites in Europe, and probably, the world. The site was excavated over a four year period by J. Clark (1954) and yielded over "13000 pieces of worked flint, over 100 bone points and, among other artefacts, remarkable stag antler frontlets." (Schadla-Hall 1987).

The most commonly held view of Star Carr is that it was a seasonal hunting camp, used by a single family or small group of individuals, probably numbering less than 25 in total. The excavated site had been made by piling brushwood into a platform and than weighting this down with stones and other local debris. The family then occupied this platform whilst hunting and processing red deer. The date of the Mesolithic activity ranges from 7607+/- 210bc to 7538+/- 350bc (Megaw and Simpson 1979).

The nearby site of Seamer Carr of Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic date has also been the subject of archaeological investigations.

Later prehistoric, Roman and Anglian activity has also been established within the parish of Seamer. Between 1947 and 1956, Rutter and Duke excavated a square ditched enclosure at least 60m wide at Seamer Carr. The ditches were up to 4m wide and 2m deep, and appeared to have

been deliberately backfilled. Rutter and Duke believed that there had originally been a rampart within the enclosure and that this had been levelled into the ditch. They interpreted the enclosure as a fortlet which was occupied only briefly during the first century as an outpost of a temporary military frontier centred on the Vale of Pickering. This military interpretation is based on the recovery from the ditch of a sword, blacksmith's tongs and two ballista balls (Rutter and Duke, 1958). Rutter and Duke's work was supplemented by that of Leach in 1989, though the latter added little to the original work other than to place less emphasis on the military aspects.

Most recently, M.A.P. Archaeological Consultancy investigated the Greenacres site to the north of Back Lane at Seamer. Features of Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglian date were excavated. Geophysical survey located further evidence for Iron Age and Romano-British features.

It was due to the proximity of Starr Carr farm, to the Mesolithic sites of Star Carr and Seamer Carr as well as the nearby Anglian and Roman activity that the archaeological work was recommended.

### **1.3 Methodology**

A total of nine test pits (Fig. 2) were dug in order to establish at what depth solid ground occurred. This information was required to enable the construction of the potato store.

The majority of the work was carried out in conjunction with the development contractors on site. This involved the use of a mechanical excavator to remove bulk quantities of overburden, thereafter all archaeological deposits were removed manually.

All archaeological contexts were cleaned and recorded on *pro forma* context sheets (Appendix 2.1).

All sections were drawn at 1:10 and all plans at 1:100 (Appendix 2.2). A photographic record was maintained (Appendix 2.3), using 35 mm, colour print, colour slide and monochrome plates.

### **1.4 Results**

All 9 test pits consisted of similar deposits ranging from glacial/alluvial sands through to the modern yard surface (Figs. 3-11).

#### **Natural Deposits**

Two different types were encountered during excavation. A grey/green lacustrine clay was found in Trenches 7 and 8 only, and therefore confined to the south-east of the site (Figs. 9 & 10 : 7003 and 8005 respectively). In Trenches 1, 2, 4, 6 and 9 the natural was a yellow/grey sand (Figs.



3,4,6,8&11 : 1005, 2005, 4005, 6003, 9003 respectively : Pls. 1 & 2). It is difficult to establish the exact origin of the sands since there are both water lain and wind blown sands in the immediate area. It has been suggested that the sands both were deposited as part of the formation process of Lake Pickering ( Clark 1954 and Sheppard 1956). More recently it has argued that the sands were water lain originally, but were subsequently wind blown, perhaps as a result of anthropogenic vegetation clearance (Edwards 1978).

#### Peat

Excavation in all trenches except Trench 9 located a layer of black or very dark brown peat (Figs. 3-10 :1004, 2004, 3004, 4004, 5004, 6002, 7002, 8004 respectively). The peat was dry and humic and mainly made up of twigs and leaf matter, indicating a woodland or fen environment. The highest point at which the peat occurred was in Trench 3 with a datum of 25.54m AOD. The peat then sloped away to the north, south and east. The lowest datum recorded was in Trench 7 at 24.28m AOD. It is generally accepted that the 25m AOD mark around Lake Pickering formed the basic habitation zone during the Mesolithic (pers comm. R. Simpson 1996). Therefore the site of the potato store seems to be a level usually identified as the lake margins, and evidence of prehistoric activity could be expected.

#### Wind Blown Sands

In Trenches 1-5 the peat was sealed by a yellow wind blown sand which also formed the deposit in Trench 9 (1003, 2003, 3003, 4003, 5003, 9002). Below the wind blown sands in Trench 8 was a thin lens of chalk fragments (8003 : Fig 10). The exact nature of this deposit is unclear.

#### Former Plough Soil

Excavation showed that the wind blown sands were sealed by a silty sand deposit (1007, 2002, 3002, 4002, 5002, 6001, 7001, 8002, 9001) which most probably represents the remains of a former plough soil.

#### Modern Deposits

The trenches in the north-west of the site (1-5 & 8) were sealed finally by a deposit of limestone chippings which were associated with the modern farm buildings (1001, 2001, 3001, 4001, 5001, 8001).

### **1.5 Conclusions**

The test pits show a uniform profile throughout the site. Lacustrine activity is sealed by a thick layer of peat, which is in turn sealed by wind blown sands.

The lack of any archaeological dating evidence suggests an absence of activity on the site; however the height and depth of the peat is in keeping with the expected location for a

Mesolithic site (Table 1). It should be stressed that flint scatters are by their very nature, small scale and extremely localised. It is therefore entirely possible that any areas of activity may not be located other than through total stripping of the site.

### **1.6 Bibliography**

Clark J.G.D. ed. (1954) Excavations at Starr Carr.

Edwards C. A. (1978) The Quaternary History and Stratigraphy of North East Yorkshire.

Ellis S. ed. (1987) East Yorkshire Field Guide. Quaternary Research Association.

Megaw J. & Simpson D. (1979) Introduction to British Prehistory.

Schadla-Hall R. T. (1987) Recent investigations of the early Mesolithic landscape and settlement in the Vale of Pickering North Yorkshire. In recent studies in the Mesolithic of north-west Europe.

Sheppard J.A. (1956) The Draining of the Marshlands of Yorkshire.

## Appendices

### 2.1 Context Register

No.	Context Register
1001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
1002	Sand. Loose. 5 YR 5/2.
1003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 7/6.
1004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
1005	Clay. Firm. 10 YR 7/1.
1006	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/3.
1007	Silty sand. Loose 10 YR 5/1.
2001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
2002	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 5/1
2003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/6.
2004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
2005	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/6.
3001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
3002	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 4/2.
3003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/6.
3004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
4001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
4002	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 5/2.
4003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/6.
4004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
4005	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 5/2.
5001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
5002	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 4/3.
5003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/8.
5004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
6001	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 4/3.
6002	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
6003	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 6/2.
7001	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 4/3.
7002	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
7003	Clay. Plastic. 10 YR 6/1.
8001	Limestone chippings. Firm to friable. 5 YR 8/2.
8002	Sandy silt. Loose. 10 YR 6/1.
8003	Chalk. Firm. 5 YR 8/2.
8004	Peat. Firm. 10 YR 2/2.
8005	Clay. Plastic. 5 YR 4/2.
9001	Silty sand. Loose. 10 YR 2/2.
9002	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 8/8.
9003	Gravel. Firm. 10 YR 6/6.
9004	Sand. Loose. 10 YR 6/5.



## 2.2 Drawing Register

No.	Type	Scale	Facing
1	Section T1	1:20	East
2	Section T2	1:20	East
3	Section T3	1:20	East
4	Section T4	1:20	East
5	Section T5	1:20	East
6	Section T6	1:20	East
7	Section T7	1:20	East
8	Section T8	1:20	East
9	Section T9	1:20	East
10	Location Plan	1:100	

## 2.3 Photographic Register

Film No. 1	Black and White		
Frame	Scale	Facing	Comments
7	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
8	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
9	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
10	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
11	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
12	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
13	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
14	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
15	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
16	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
17	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.
18	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.
19	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
20	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
21	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
22	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
23	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
24	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.
25	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.

Film No. 2	Colour Print		
Frame	Scale	Facing	Comments
1	ID Shot		
2	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
3	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
4	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
5	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
6	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
7	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
8	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
9	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
10	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
11	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
12	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.

13	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.
14	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
15	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
16	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
17	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
18	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.
19	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.

Film No. 3		Colour Slide	
Frame	Scale	Facing	Comments
12	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
13	2x1m	West	Trench 1. East facing section.
14	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
15	2x1m	West	Trench 2. East facing section.
16	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
17	2m	West	Trench 4. East facing section.
18	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
19	2m	West	Trench 3. East facing section.
20	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
21	2x1m	West	Trench 5. East facing section.
22	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.
23	2m	West	Trench 6. East facing section.
24	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
25	2x1m	West	Trench 7. East facing section.
26	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
27	2x1m	West	Trench 8. East facing section.
28	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.
29	2x1m	West	Trench 9. East facing section.