# LAND TO THE SOUTH OF THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE

# LEPPINGTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs Everett

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# LAND TO THE REAR OF THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE LEPPINGTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRIP AND RECORD

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION


### *Summary*

*An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on land to the south of the Old School House at Leppington. The archaeological evaluation was in order to determine if there was any potential for archaeological remains on the site that would be impacted upon by the proposed development of the site. The Old School House lies on the eastern side of the village of Leppington which itself is 10km south-south-west of Malton, on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds (NGR SE 7645 6120). The archaeological works were undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) for Mr & Mrs Everett between 26th and 28th January 2010.*

*Two 2x3m trenches were opened within the proposed footprint of the new building. Due to difficulties with extensive dumped modern refuse and the close proximity of standing buildings and stockpiled materials, it was only possible to excavate an area approximately half the size of the original trench to the underlying natural geology. However, this was sufficient to demonstrate that the area covers part of the remains of a small pond which probably originated in the 16th/17th century. The pond continued in use into the early 20th century when it started to be used as refuse dump - probably coinciding with the use of the School House to the north.*

*The presence of the 16th/17th century pond shows that the area has probably been pasture since its origins. The pond has only recently been filled in and levelled with the modern refuse. This in turn strongly suggests that any remains of the medieval settlement lie further to the east in the area of scheduled earthworks.*

*There is no evidence to suggest that the remains of the pond are sufficiently significant to hinder any proposed development. A suitable archaeological mitigation would be to cover any ground works for the footprint of the proposed building with an Archaeological Watching Brief.*

*No other archaeological finds or features were recorded during the ground works.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation at the Old School House at Leppington. The evaluation took the form of two trenches on land to the south of the school house. The Old School House lies on the eastern side of the village of Leppington which itself is 10km south-south-west of Malton, on the edge of the Yorkshire Wolds (NGR SE 7645 6120) (Figure 1).

1.2 The archaeological works were undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) for Mr & Mrs Everett between 26th and 28th January 2010.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### Geology and Soils

2.1 The underlying solid geology of the site is of Cretaceous and Jurassic chalk and clays (British Geological Survey, 2001) with an overlying quaternary geology which is currently unclassified by the British Geological Survey (British Geological Survey 1977). The soils that have weathered from this are the Denchworth association which are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

### Topography and Land-use

2.2 The site lies in an area of level ground within the village with an area of possible minor earthworks to the east beyond the site boundary. The village itself is sited on the top of a high point within the surrounding landscape. The land to the east is in agricultural use whilst to the west lies the village.

### Historical

2.3 Leppington is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1082 as *Lepinton* which comes from the Old English personal name Leppa and *-ing* and *-ton* and means 'estate associated with a man called Leppa' (Mills, 1998, 219). Approximately 250m to the south-east of the site are the remains of a Scheduled Monument (No. 20542) which are described as being of a motte and bailey castle but may be the remains of a moat and platform for a manorial site (site number MNY2034 in North Yorkshire HER). The minor earthworks to the east of the site may be associated with the scheduled site. Archaeological investigations to the south in the field adjacent to the Old School House at Manor Farm in 2007 only recorded a few fragments of medieval pottery. However, investigations further to the south in 2006 revealed a series of substantial ditches with 12th to 14th century pottery (NGR SE). Additional evidence for medieval activity was also recorded during a watching brief on land at Havelock House (NGR SE7633 6107) in the form of ditches and 12th to 13th century pottery (On-Site Archaeology, 2007, 6).

2.4 In the wider landscape around Leppington there is evidence for prehistoric activity in the form of crop marks for a barrow and possible field systems (ibid).

## 3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objective of the evaluation was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed during the excavation of two 3x2m evaluation trenches on land proposed for the site of a new dwelling to the south of the Old School House. The specific aims were to:

- archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed by the evaluation
- recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works
- propose a strategy that would allow for suitable mitigation for any archaeological remains should the proposed development go ahead

## 4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The area of the two evaluation trenches was covered in concrete hard-standing. This was broken up using a mechanical breaker and removed by the contractors using mechanical mini-excavator with a toothed bucket under direct archaeological supervision. Once the concrete had been removed a layer of agricultural, building and general rubbish was exposed. Due to its compact and difficult nature this too had to be removed with the toothed bucket along with the use of the breaker and mechanical saw. Once sufficient rubbish had been removed, it was possible to use the toothless bucket to remove the remaining dumped material in order to expose the archaeologically significant layer.

4.2 Once the dumped overburden had been removed, the remaining accessible area of the trenches was cleaned by hand and recorded. The significant archaeological features were then drawn and photographed. Drawings were at a scale of 1:20, whilst the photographic record was on 35mm colour slide and black and white print film and digitally at 5m pixel resolution. 1m and 2m bi-coloured poles were used as scales and a north pointer for orientation. The ground works which did not produce any archaeological features were only recorded digitally.

4.3 Once the archaeological layer had been recorded hand excavation continued down to the naturally occurring deposits.

## 5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Due to the presence of standing buildings and large amounts of stockpiled timber and building materials, the location of the two trail trenches had to be altered slightly (Figure 2). As already described above, large amounts of recent dumped rubbish were encountered in both of the evaluation trenches. This meant that the final area available for investigation was curtailed due to potentially unstable trench sides and the close proximity of stockpiled materials (Plate 2).

5.2 Trench 1 was located at the eastern edge of the evaluation area and at ground level measured 2x2.9m. Trench 2 was located towards the central western part of the evaluation area and measured 1.8x3m (Figure 2). As already mentioned above, problems with the proximity of stockpiled materials and standing buildings meant that the actual area of trench that it was possible to excavate to natural deposits was 2.5x1m for Trench 1 and 1.8x3m for Trench 2. Both trenches encountered the same single archaeological feature at their base. In the text below the context numbers for each archaeological deposit or feature are given in [] brackets.

*Trench 1(Figure 3, Plates 2 & 3)*

5.3 The area of Trench 1 was covered in a layer of modern concrete [01] of between 0.1 and 0.15m thickness. Directly below this was a *c.*0.15-0.2m thick (*c.*74.59mOD) layer of dumped refuse containing corrugated iron sheets, building debris etc [02]. The base of [02] 'blurred' into a *c.*0.2m thick layer of mixed topsoil and refuse [03] below. The blurring of the interface between the two layers would seem to show that the dumping of upper layer of refuse [02] and infilling with [03] was all probably part of the same process.

5.4 Directly below the topsoil/refuse layer [03] was a 0.1m thick (74.49mOD) layer of coarse light brown silty-clay with some small patches of fine sand [04]. Within this layer a modest amount of late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century pottery was encountered of which a small sample was recovered.

5.5 Below [04], and slightly mixed with it along its boundary, was [05] which was a *c.*0.12m thick (74.37mOD) layer of a finer light brown clayey-silt but without any of the patches of sand. Small amounts of late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century pottery had been pressed into the upper part of this layer. This layer also produced a very small number of fragments of late 18$^{th}$ century slipware and three fragments of 16$^{th}$ to 18$^{th}$ century Ryedale Ware (see below for details).

5.6 The clayey-silt of [05] gradually became more clayey until it could satisfactorily be described as the underlying natural geology [06] at *c.*74.29mOD.

*Trench 2(Figure 4, Plates 4 - 6)*

5.7 The second trench contained a very similar stratigraphy as Trench 1 along with a small, modern, cut feature in the south-eastern corner. The concrete layer [01] in Trench 2 was of a much more varied thickness and was up to 0.3m thick in some places. Directly below this was a layer of compacted ceramic building debris which probably formed the base for laying the concrete. The refuse layer [02] in this trench was considerably thicker than that seen in Trench 1 and in places was up to 0.3m thick. This layer proved very difficult to remove within the confines of the site and thus restricted the area of the trench that could be fully excavated.

5.8 Again, as with Trench 1, the bottom of the refuse layer was mixed with dumped topsoil and refuse [03] to a thickness of up to *c.*0.3m (74.47mOD). Below, and also slightly mixed with it, was a 0.1m thick (74.37mOD) layer of

coarse light brown silty-clay with some small patches of fine sand [04]. Within this layer a small amount of late 19th and early 20th century pottery was encountered of which a small sample was recovered. The amount of late 19th and early 20th century pottery from Trench 2 was notably less than in Trench 1 although it came from the same deposit.

5.9 Below [04], and slightly mixed with it along its boundary, was [05] which was a *c.*0.12m thick layer of a finer light brown clayey-silt but without any of the patches of sand. Unlike Trench 1 no pottery or other finds were encountered within this layer. The clayey-silt of [05] gradually became more clayey until it could satisfactorily be described as the underlying natural geology [06] at *c.*74.14mOD.

5.10 In the south-eastern corner of Trench 2 a roughly 0.45m (74.00mOD) circular cut feature [07] was recorded. On excavation this feature was found to be filled with a very loose fill [08] derived from the dumped backfill [03] lying above it and it contained fragments of refuse the same as that seen in [03]. In the section to the east of this feature a pair of parallel lines could be seen running up from it end just below the concrete. This would seem to represent the removal of a later post of some form.

## 6.0 FINDS

6.1 Significant archaeological finds were only recovered from two contexts – [04] and [05]. The material from the upper part of [04] was all late 19th and early 20th century pottery and contained a typical range of fragments e.g. stonewares, creamwares, blue and white transfer printed china etc. all of which were very typical of a domestic refuse assemblage. The lower, mixed part of [04] and [05] contained some earlier pottery forms that were submitted for specialist study (Plate 7).

6.2 The material from contexts [04] and [05] were assessed by Peter Didsbury MPhil FSA.

Pottery was distributed as follows:

| *Context* | *Type* | *No. of sherds* | *Wt of sherds (grams)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 04/05 | Ryedale | 1 | 22 |
| 04/05 | Staffordshire Slipware | 4 | 43 |
| 04/05 | White-Dipped Ware | 1 | 18 |
| 05 | Ryedale | 2 | 57 |
| 05 | Unclassified (medieval?) | 1 | 6 |
| *TOTALS* | | *9* | *146* |

The lower of the two layers (05) contained a closed form rim and handle of Ryedale Ware, and a small rim fragment of an unidentified, but high medieval, North Yorkshire Whiteware. Ryedale is conventionally held to have an overall

date-range from the late sixteenth to very early eighteenth century. It is usually regarded as a regional seventeenth-century 'type fossil'.

The upper layer (04/05) contained a further sherd of Ryedale; sherds from two eighteenth-century Staffordshire Slipware vessels, including a press-moulded platter; and a dished rim open form in White-Dipped Ware with iron staining. The latter could be contemporary with the Staffordshire products, or be slightly later, going into the nineteenth century.

## 7.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

7.1 As can be seen from the results and descriptions above, the majority of the ground was formed by a large refuse dump of modern material. From discussions with the next-door farmer it is now known that the material was dumped there within the last 20 or so years in order to fill a hole in the ground.

7.2 Prior to the filling of the hole it seems to have been used for the disposal of at least small amounts of domestic refuse. At the earliest this seems to be from the 16th/17th century with an increase in the late 19th and early 20th century, probably coinciding with the use of the School House to the north.

7.3 Immediately to the south of the evaluation area there is a D shaped pond (Figure 1, Plate 8) which appears to have originally extended north into the evaluation area. It seems most likely that it is this which has been filled in in recent years.

7.4 Overall it would appear that the feature recorded in the evaluation was the northern part of a pond which had existed in some form from the 16th/17th century onwards. The presence of small amounts of domestic type refuse from the earlier period of its use probably relate to accidental losses of items rather than a deliberate use of the feature as a dump. The increase of material in the late 19th and early 20th century would seem to indicate that the pond had gone out of use as a pond and was now in the process of being filled in. The process of infilling was completed with the large scale dumping of modern refuse and levelling with concrete.

7.5 The presence of the pond with its 16th/17th century origins strongly suggests that the area around the evaluation was one of pasture with the pond supplying the water for the livestock. This interpretation would seem to be borne out by the lack of archaeological material found during the On-Site Archaeology (2007) investigation in the field immediately to the south of this site.

7.6 There is no evidence to suggest that the remains of the pond are sufficiently significant to hinder any proposed development. A suitable archaeological mitigation would be to cover any ground works for the footprint of the proposed building with an archaeological Watching Brief.

## References

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Simon Everett for asking me to undertake the project and Paul Hewitt for the plans and discussion about the site. I would also like to thank Les Ward and his workforce of Rob and Paul who all made the project so much easier to undertake.

## APPENDIX I

### Context Catalogue

| Context Number | Description |
|---|---|
| 1 | Concrete |
| 2 | Brick rubble and modern refuse layer |
| 3 | Re-deposited topsoil and refuse |
| 4 | Coarse light brown silty-clay with some small patches of fine sand |
| 5 | Fine light brown clayey-silt but without any of the patches of sand |
| 6 | Natural clay geology |
| 7 | Cut for modern post |
| 8 | Fill of modern post hole |