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*A1 Dishforth to Barton Improvement
Section 2, Summary Archaeology Report*

November 2010



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MWY36107



*A1 Dishforth to Barton Improvement
Section 2, Summary Archaeology Report*

Status	Date	Author	Approved for issue (Aecom)	Approved for issue (Grontmij)	Approved for issue (RPS)
	11 November 2010	Cath Ambrey			
		Stuart Ross			
		David Fell			

November 2010

Status:

Reference D2B-0-W-30-002-RE11-A

Prepared by: Ambrey, Fell & Ross

Date: 11 November 2010

Checked by: Richard Fraser

Date: 11 November 2010

Highways Agency
Lateral
8 City Walk
Leeds
LS11 9AT

Carillion/Morgan Sindall
A1 Dishforth to Barton Site Offices
Leases Farm Quarry
Leases Bridge
Leeming Bar
Northallerton
DL8 1DL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1 1 Minor archaeological remains were identified within Fields 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 44, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55. The fields were located in Section 2 of the A1 Dishforth to Barton road improvement scheme, between the Melmerby and Baldersby St James access road and Ramshaw Farm (Figure 1). Further archaeological features were encountered in Fields 23-25 and in Field 47 and these results are set out in separate reports (D2B-0-W-002-RE01 and D2B-0-W-002-RE02).

1 2 The identified features consisted mainly of field ditches and isolated pits, although a small complex of enclosures was recorded in Field 53. Whilst some of the ditches could be demonstrated to be Roman in date the majority were medieval or post-medieval. The majority of the pits were undated, although one in Field 33 was certainly prehistoric and another in Field 35 was medieval. An unstratified prehistoric stone axe was recovered from Field 42.

2.0 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2 1 The fields were located between the Melmerby and Baldersby St James access road to the south (SE 435170 477137) and Ramshaw Farm (SE 433095 481996) to the north. The land within this section of the scheme varied in height between 33 and 28m AOD. The fields were numbered individually from south to north.

2 2 The solid geology throughout this area comprises Permian and Triassic sandstones overlain by sands and gravels. The soils are mapped as being of the Wick 1 Association, comprising deep, well drained, coarse loamy, typical brown earths.

3.0 RESULTS

3 1 Significant archaeological remains were encountered over a distance of 5.35 km within Section 2, from the southern extent of features within Field 28 to the northern extent of features within Field 55.

3 2 A preliminary plan of archaeological features is presented in Figures 2 to 17. In addition, the relevant context numbers have been allocated to features referred to specifically in the text.

Field 28 (Figure 2)

17350182
3 3 Field 28 contained the remains of a kiln or oven and an 'L'-shaped ditch within the southern area of the corridor. This field was located to the north of a concentration of archaeological remains identified throughout Fields 23 and 25 and it is possible that the features identified here represent a continuation of that activity.

3 4 The remains of an isolated small kiln or oven (1844) were identified towards the southern end of the field. The kiln comprised a sub-circular pit with a linear flue or stoke-hole to the north-east. The pit had a primary clay fill which was overlain by a silty layer that contained significant quantities of fired clay and lenses of charcoal. This layer extended into the flue where it was sealed by a small flagged area (1847).

3 5 An 'L'-shaped ditch (1798) was recorded c 80m to the north of kiln (1844) which appeared to form the north-west corner of an enclosure. The northern arm had a clear terminal at its eastern end while the western arm faded out to the south and could not be traced thereafter. A small finds assemblage was recovered from the ditch fill comprising some Roman pottery (including Greyware and Colour Coated Ware), several iron objects and a fragment of flint.

Fields 30 – 32 (not illustrated)

3 6 A number of linear features were identified in Fields 30 – 32, which upon investigation appeared to be geological. A series of medieval plough furrows aligned east – west were noted in Field 32 and the course of the former Melmerby and Thirsk Branch Railway formed the boundary between Fields 31 and 32.

Field 33 balancing pond (Figure 3)

17350182
3 7 Two shallow, sub-circular pits of prehistoric date were identified within the area of a balancing pond in Field 33, immediately north of Hergill Lane. Pit (4019) measured 1.75m by 1.50m and had a maximum depth of 0.10m. The pit contained a high quantity of charcoal and burnt bone fragments and sherds of prehistoric pottery were recovered from the fill. The clay forming the base of the pit was heat-affected indicating *in situ* burning. Pit (4022) measured 0.60m by 0.50m and had a maximum depth of 0.13m. The fill comprised burnt clay, charcoal and pebbles but produced no artefactual material.

Fields 33 – 40 (Figures 4 – 11)

- 3 8 No prehistoric or Roman settlement remains were identified in Fields 33 to 40. Evidence of elements of field boundaries of certain and probable Roman date were identified in Fields 33 to 36. These comprised a series of slightly sinuous ditches, broadly aligned on the A1 and which produced either Roman finds or were cut by demonstrably later field boundaries. A small number of curvilinear ditches/gullies did not conform to this alignment and may potentially have been earlier. MNY36106
- 3 9 A series of 21 ditches was identified along the course of Fields 33 to 40 all of which were aligned from northeast to southwest and appeared to be medieval or post-medieval field boundaries (these are shown on plans 4-11, but are not labelled). Two cobbled trackways were encountered which were potentially contemporary with the post-medieval field system. One of the tracks was a former section of Mark's Lane, which ran from Middleton Quemhow to Skipton-on-Swale. A large quantity of post-medieval pottery was retrieved from the make-up of this track. A single pit of medieval date was encountered in Field 35 and a further 11 small pits were encountered in Field 36, although none yielded any artefacts. MNY36105
- 3 10 The potentially Roman period features included ditch 1163 in Field 33 (Fig 4), ditches 1175, 1180, 1191, 1204, 1249, 3079 and 3169 in Field 35 (Figs 5-6), and ditch 1242 identified in Field 36 (Fig 7). Ditch 1175 was orientated roughly from east to west and extended for approximately 40m across the stripped corridor. Ditch 1175 was V-shaped in profile and yielded no finds. Ditch 1175 was cut by ditch 1180, which was also V-shaped in profile, was oriented from north to south, and extended for a length of approximately 52m within the road corridor. The ditch contained four distinct fills and Roman pottery was recovered from the uppermost fill. Two small sections of ditch, (1163 and 1191), were identified in Fields 33 and 35 respectively. They followed the same alignment as ditch 1175 and may have been part of the same phase of activity. A single posthole (1188) was identified to the northwest of ditch 1191 on the line of the orientation of the ditch and may have been associated with it (Fig 5). Ditch 3169 in Field 35 and ditch 1242 in Field 36 (Figs 5 & 7), also followed the same alignment as ditch 1180, which may suggest that they are of the same phase.
- 3 11 Ditch 1204 was an extensive linear feature in Field 35, which crossed the site from east to west and turned north to run along the western limit of the excavation (Fig 6). Ditch 1204 was traced north for some 192m before it was lost beyond the western limit of excavation. The only artefact recovered from this ditch was a copper alloy coin, which appeared to be Roman period in date. A further section of ditch (3079) appeared to head south from ditch 1204 and was

truncated by it. A shallow gully (1249) was identified in Field 35 which was also truncated by ditch 1204 suggesting that it may also have been Roman period in date. It was oriented from east to west and a small gully (3001) branched off it to the south. The fills of the two gullies were indistinguishable from each other and produced no artefacts.

- 3 12 A number of small pits were identified in Fields 34 to 36, which were generally sub-oval in shape and measured on average 1.1m by 0.8m, depths around 0.3m. Pit 1161 was encountered less than 5m to the north of the northwestern terminus of ditch (1163) in Field 34. No dateable finds were recovered from the fill of this feature, which contained a quantity of charcoal flecks and rounded pebbles. A further pit (1186) was identified to the immediate east of ditch 1180 against the eastern baulk of site in Field 35. A number of sherds of medieval pottery were retrieved from the surface of the fill. The remaining 12 pits were located along the length of Field 36 (Figs 7 and 8). The fills of pits 3036, 3045 and 3067 yielded a large quantity of animal bone which might suggest that they had been used as refuse pits or had some ritual function. The fill of pit (3085) appeared very dark and organic in nature and may have been a storage or a cess pit. Pits 3059, 3073, 3075 and 3089 were located in close proximity to one another. No finds were recovered from the fills of these pits, or from the fills of pits 3062 and 3060, which helped clarify either their date or function.

Field 42 (Figures 12 and 13)

- 3 13 Minor archaeological remains were identified in Field 42 in the road corridor, which followed the field's eastern edge, and in an area stripped for an access track at the western edge of the field. The remains comprised two ditches and five pits. A prehistoric polished stone axe from Langdale in Cumbria was also recovered during soil stripping indicating that there was early prehistoric activity in the vicinity.
- 3 14 Within the area of the access track two ditches (3198 and 3210) were identified, which were thought to be post-medieval in date (Figure 12). In the road corridor five pits were distributed over a distance of 436m (Figure 13). At the southern end a small isolated pit (4046) was found to contain burnt clay within its backfill. Some 80m to the north, a group of three pits was identified, one of which (4040) contained evidence of burning. A further small pit (6553) was identified at the northern end of the corridor which had been deliberately filled with rounded stones. None of these pits yielded any diagnostic finds and their date and functions are unknown.

Field 44 (Figure 14)

MAY 30 '08

3 15 A small number of archaeological features were identified within Field 44 within a narrow zone stripped for an access road located adjacent to the eastern field boundary. The features comprised two ditches and six pits but the date of the remains could not be determined. Field 44 was located c 100m to the south of a concentration of archaeological remains comprising gullies and pits/post-holes that appeared to date the Iron Age or Bronze Age which were identified within Field 47 (see report D2B-0-W-30-002-RE1-A)

3 16 Ditch 1352 measured c 45m in length on a south-east to north-west alignment. It survived to a maximum depth of 0.18m and contained a single fill. The alignment of this ditch was similar to the existing field boundaries of which it may have represented an earlier phase. Ditch 1359 was located at the western edge of the corridor c 14m to the north of the northern end of ditch 1352. It was only partially exposed by soil stripping but did not appear to form a continuation of ditch 1352 due to the differing alignments. This ditch was cut on the east side by three undated sub-oval pits (1365, 1363 and 1361). A fourth pit (1367) was located close to pit 1363. None of these features contained any evidence of burning or produced any artefacts.

Field 51- 52 (Figure 15)

3 17 A small number of dispersed pits were recorded within Fields 51 and 52. Within the northern part of Field 51 a group of five sub-circular pits or postholes (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008) were recorded. To the north of this in Field 52, a two further pits (2048 and 2052) were also identified. In the majority of cases the backfill of the pits contained evidence for localised burning indicating that some of the pits were used for burnt refuse or as fire pits. None of the archaeological features identified contained any artefacts.

MAY 30 '08

3 18 Towards the centre of Field 52 a former field boundary (2010) was recorded on a southwest to northeast alignment from which sherds of post-medieval pottery

Field 53 (Figure 16)

MAY 30 '08

3 19 A small complex of enclosures was encountered within Field 53 concentrated within the central third of the road corridor. The enclosures were attached to the southern side of a field boundary but were aligned at a divergent angle to this feature.

- 3 20 The earliest feature comprised an east to west oriented ditch (2024) which extended beyond the road corridor on both sides of the easement and formed a major field boundary. A series of narrow gullies (2028, 2014, 2031, 2041 and 2043) were subsequently set out in a rectangular arrangement to the south of this ditch.
- 3 21 During the use of the enclosures the main field boundary ditch was re-cut (2012). However, the re-cut post-dated a curving gully (2020/2023) which appeared to be related to gullies 2017 and 2045. The final phase of activity comprised three gullies (2037, 2022 and 2047).
- 3 22 Although there was an absence of artefacts from the investigation of the gullies and ditches, it appears from both the sequence of activity and the regular pattern that most, if not all of the linear features, were in use at broadly the same time and were subject to episodes of cleaning out, re-definition and slight adjustments in position.

Fields 54 and 55 (Figure 17)

- 3 23 Traces of four ditches were identified within Fields 54 and 55 within an access corridor and a balancing pond area. Ditches 1519 and 6503 were aligned perpendicularly to the A1 and were both crossed by ditches on a north – south alignment (1517 and 6501 respectively). In the balancing pond area ditch 6503 was cut by ditch 6501 and the latter was traced for a distance of 72m and continued beyond the edges of the area. No artefactual material was recovered from any of the ditches.

4.0 DISCUSSION

- 4 1 The archaeological features and deposits identified within Fields 28 to 55 pertain to various phases of land enclosure, which in many cases, appear to relate directly to the alignment of Roman Dere Street and the later Great North Road. The boundaries may have been extended and re-cut with locations and alignments changed over time, but the large-scale pattern of enclosure appears to have originated in the Roman period.
- 4 2 Little evidence for any sustained domestic activity was exposed during archaeological investigations, nor were any settlements identified within the stripped areas. However, a limited number of refuse pits and 'fire pits' hint occupation in the immediate vicinity both before and after the construction of Dere Street. The kiln or oven feature identified in Field 28

was almost certainly associated with the roadside settlement identified in Fields 23 and 25 to the south

