

# The Landscape Research Centre

## **The Landscape Research Centre**

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## **Staxton Carr :Fields 3841 and 1813**

## **Report on an archaeological Watching Brief covering Bird Scrapes excavated on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012**

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### **Introduction**

A series of ground works were undertaken on land belonging to Tom Burton (6 Carr View Staxton, Scarborough YO12 4SD). The aim was to create a series of “scrapes” – shallow depressions in which standing water would accumulate seasonally to provide nesting habitats for various species of wader birds. These were excavated by mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.60m toothless ditching bucket. Due to the archaeological significance of the Vale of Pickering and the degree of organic preservation afforded by the local peat deposits, Scarborough Borough Council ruled that all scrapes should be archaeologically monitored in the form of a watching brief. This report presents the findings of that watching brief undertaken on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012 by L.Signorelli on behalf of the Landscape Research Centre Ltd.

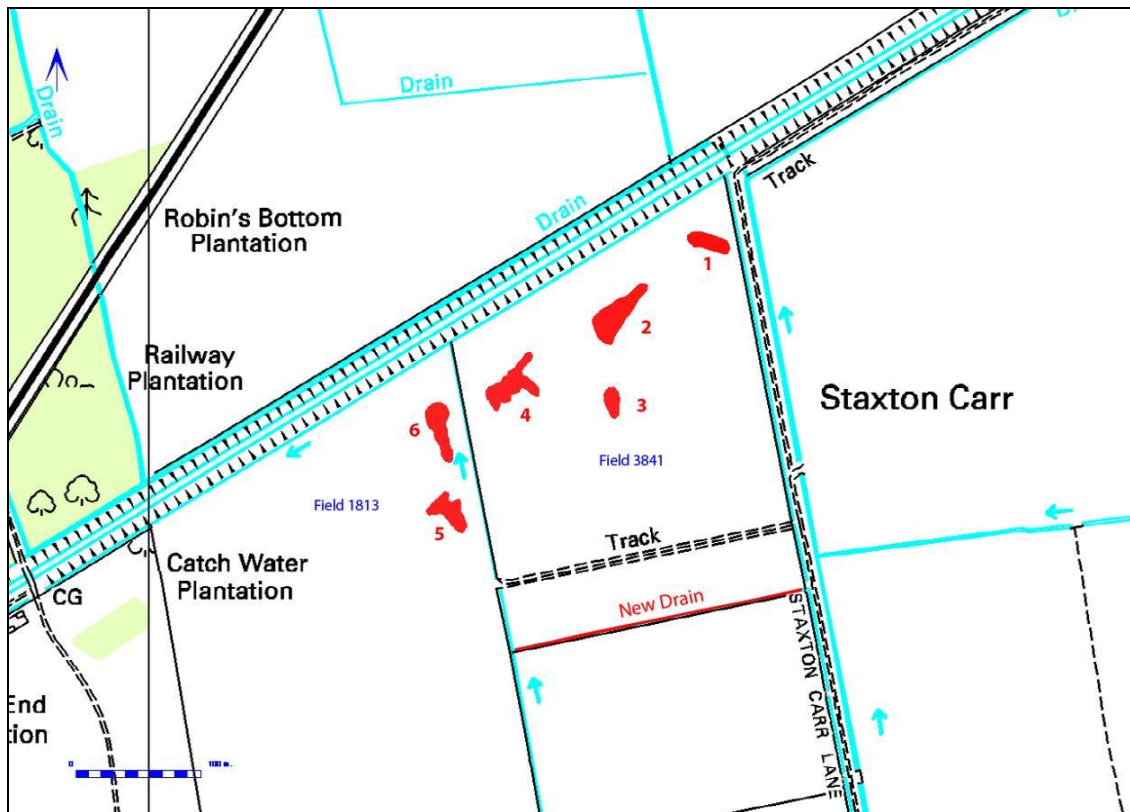


Figure 1: Plan of sites 3841 and 1813

## Field 3841

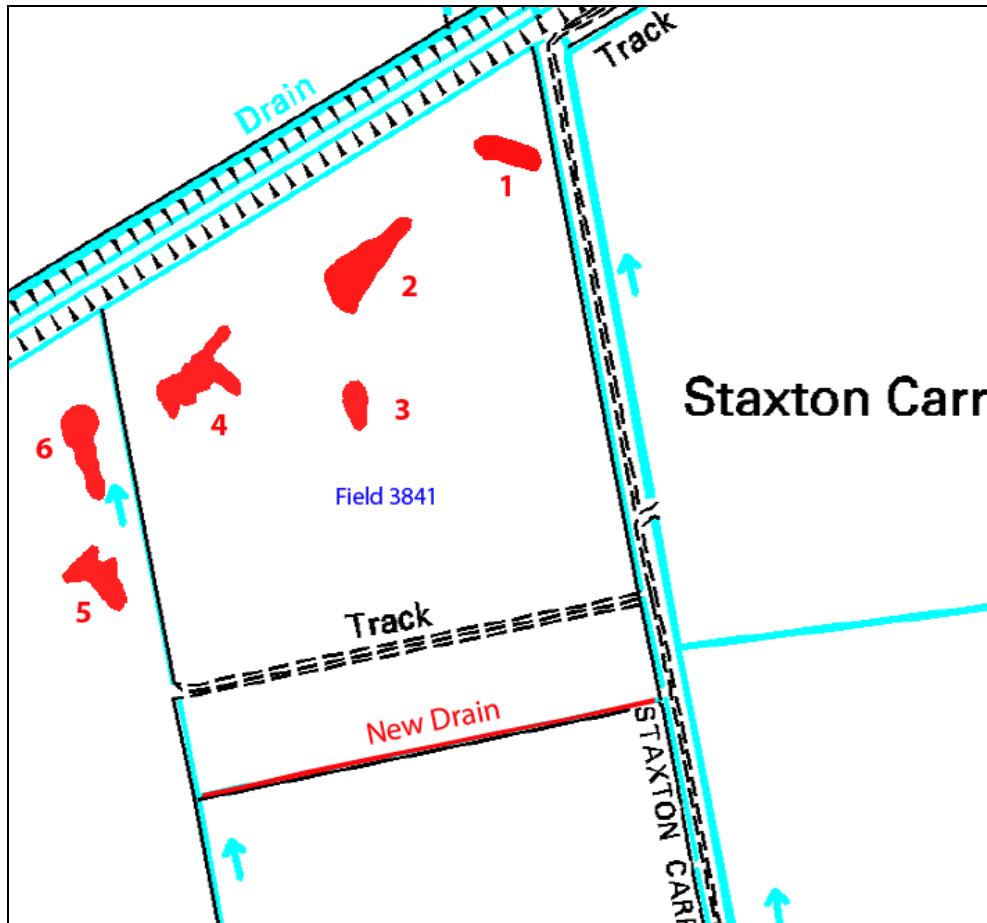


Figure 2: Plan of Field 3841

### Scrape 1

At the north east end of the site, Scrape 1, 374m<sup>2</sup> and aligned NW-SE, was opened with a 1.6m toothless bucket to a maximum depth of 0.50m. The dark brown silty-clay topsoil, 0.20m in depth, overlay a peat deposit approximately 0.15m deep, beneath which was grey sandy silt mixed with small gravel inclusions and interpreted as natural.



Figure 3: Scrape 1, looking south-east

## Scrape 2

Scrape 2, 849m<sup>2</sup> and aligned NE-SW, was excavated to a depth of 0.60m. 0.20m of topsoil overlay 0.30m of peat, beneath which was natural yellow sand.



Figure 4 : Scrape 2, looking east

## Scrape 3

Scrape 3, 232m<sup>2</sup>, ovate in shape and aligned N-S, was excavated to a depth of 0.50m. Beneath the topsoil a dark brown desiccated peat deposit was revealed, similar in nature to that in Scrape 2.



Figure 5: Scrape 3, looking north

## Scrape 4

Located towards the north-west corner of the site Scrape 4, 763m<sup>2</sup> and aligned NE-SW, was dug to a maximum depth of 0.60m. Removal of the topsoil once again revealed a thick desiccated peat deposit, excavated to a depth of 0.30m



Figure 6: Scrape 4, looking north-east

## Field Drain

An old drainage ditch, running east - west and providing the southern boundary of field 3841 (Figure 2), was restored. Measuring 290m by 2.70m, it was excavated to a depth of 0.90m. The topsoil was a dark brown silty sand deposit, beneath which was a yellow brown, clay silty sand deposit.



Figure 7: Restored field drain looking west

## Summary

Work in Field 3841 consisted of the excavation of 4 'scrapes' and the restoration of a field drain. In all four scrapes removal of the topsoil exposed a desiccated peat deposit which, in turn, overlay a clay silty sand deposit. The excavation of the field drain revealed a layer of yellow silty sand material beneath the topsoil.



## Field 1813

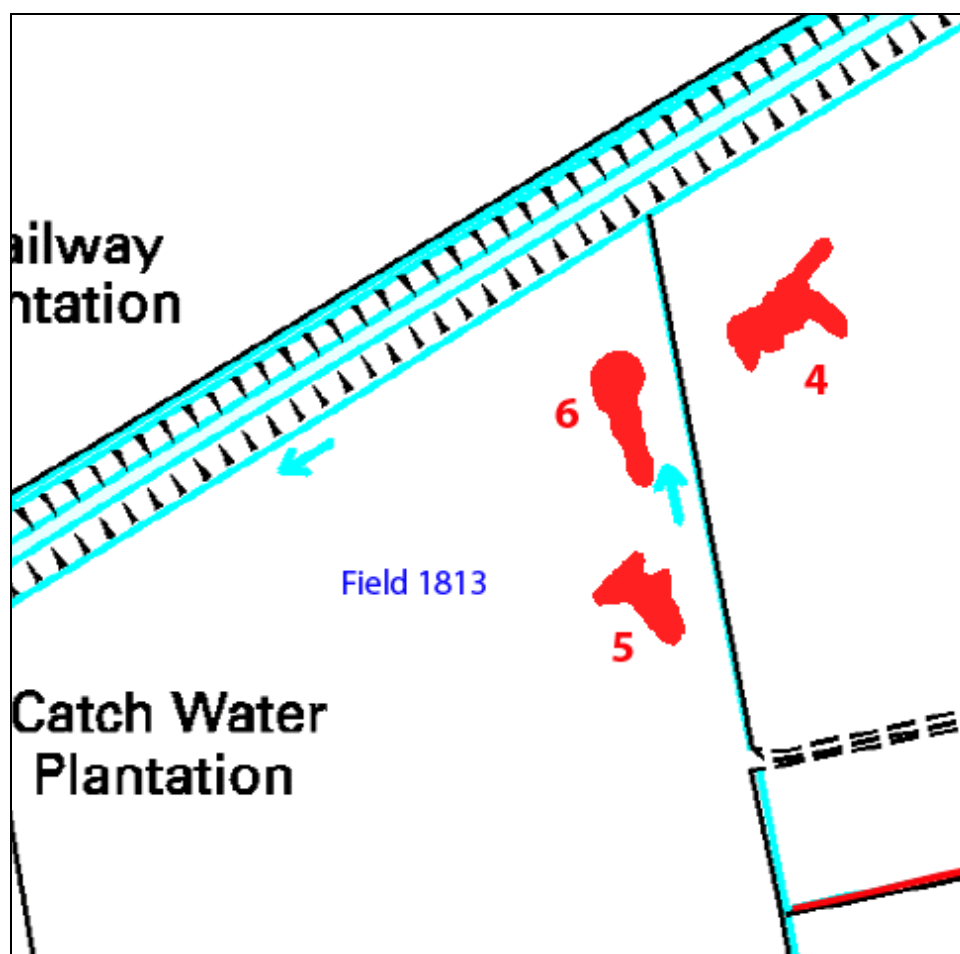


Figure 8: Plan of Field 1813

### Scrape 5:

Scrape 5, 495m<sup>2</sup>, is in the south east corner of the site. Amorphous in plan, it was excavated for most of its length to a depth of 0.50m. Around 0.30m of topsoil overlay a grey silty-clay deposit. No peat deposit was encountered.



Figure 9: Scrape 5 looking east

### Scrape 6:

Scrape 6, 577m<sup>2</sup> and aligned N-S in the north-eastern corner of the field, was excavated to an average depth of 0.70m. Around 0.30m of topsoil overlay 0.30m of dark brown peat, beneath which was a grey silty clay sand deposit.



Figure 10: Scrape 6 looking south.

### Summary:

Two scrapes were excavated in Field 1813, revealing similar stratigraphy to that encountered in Field 3841.

### Conclusion:

No evidence of archaeological activity was encountered during this monitoring exercise. The total area excavated for the bird scrapes was 3290m<sup>2</sup>.

That no obvious archaeological features were identified in the process of excavating these bird scrapes cannot be taken as a reflection that the area has no archaeological potential; a much more intensive archaeological investigation with hand excavation of the peat deposits may have revealed evidence of past activity which cannot be recovered through a simple programme of machine watching. The peat itself is worthy of investigation and dating, as this is part of a rapidly diminishing resource which contains detailed environmental and climatic evidence; unfortunately with the very limited resources available any research on the peats and their dates was not possible.