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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
WEST LODGE 2, MALTON.

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MAP Ltd., Malton.
8.7.92

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Introduction

This report concerns the results of a Watching Brief conducted on the area to be intercepted by new roads and sewers on the southern part of the development site known as West Lodge 2, Malton.

The West Lodge 2 site is situated on land between Castle Howard and York Roads, on the western fringes of Malton, North Yorkshire, SE 7800 7135 (Figs 1 and 2). The site lies on a south-east-facing spur of the Howardian Hills. The underlying geology consists of Coralline (Oolitic) limestone (OS 1960). The level of the land drops from c50m to the north-west to c35m at the south-east of the site, along York Road.

A Watching Brief was carried out on the area because of the proximity of known archaeological remains situated c300m to the north (Stephens 1992). The possibility therefore existed that further remains could occur on the area of the new roads and sewers. The need for the Watching Brief was expressed as article 4 of the scheme of Archaeological Works attached to the Planning Decision (3/83/5550A).

The Watching Brief was conducted in April of 1992, by the writer with the assistance of M S Johnson.

All work was funded by Persimmon Homes (Yorkshire) Ltd, and was carried out with their full co-operation.

Excavation Methods

The area to be intercepted by the road-beds was laid out by surveyors from the developer. The modern ploughsoil was removed from the area by the rear-actor of a JCB excavator using a toothless blade. The site was then quickly shovel-scraped by hand and any areas where archaeological features were observed were further defined by coarse trowelling.

Plans and sections were drawn at 1:100 and 1:10 respectively, and a photographic record was taken. Context records were compiled under the Continuous Recording system.

Excavation Results

The plan of the excavated area was a curvilinear strip on a north-west to south-east alignment, c8m wide and c110m long; a 6m wide west to east element branched off to the west for a distance of 70m. Five areas of archaeological activity were revealed, consisting of two rows of Postholes, a more random scatter of Postholes, a Hedge ditch and bank, and a Trackway. All of the features were of post-medieval/recent date, and the topmost fills lay directly beneath the modern ploughsoil (context 100).

Context 100 was a very dark yellowish brown, silty clay loam. Contained within this context were several flint flakes, and sherds ranging in date from Romano-British to recent (Appendix 1).

The northernmost row of Postholes (Figs 4 and 5) consisted of five Postholes (cuts 101, 104, 108, 112 and 114). The row had a east to west alignment. All of the Postholes cut the natural limestone bed-rock.

The most easterly Posthole of this row was **cut 101** (Figs 4 and 5). The plan was a rounded square, 0.55m in diameter, with a vertically-sided, flat-based profile. The depth was 0.34m.

The fill of the postpipe was composed of a dark brown, silty, clayey loam (context 102), bounded by packing consisting of angular limestone fragments (context 103 – not removed). Context 102 contained cinder, brick and glass fragments (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 104 (Figs 4 and 5) occurred c1m to the west of cut 101. The cut was rounded-rectangular in plan. The dimensions were 0.4 x 0.5m. The profile was a broad, flat-based U, with a depth of 0.29m.

The remains of a squared timber post (context 105) were packed with angular limestone fragments (context 107), with a dark greyish-brown, silty, clayey loam fill (context 106) occurring above 107 on the north side of the post.

Posthole cut 108 (Figs 4 and 5) was located c1.2m west of cut 104. The plan was a rounded square, 0.45 x 0.42m in size. The profile was a flat-based U giving a depth of 0.38m.

The decayed remains of a squared timber post (context 109) were encircled at the top of the Posthole by angular limestone packing (context 110). The packing overlay a dark greyish-brown, silty, clayey loam (context 111) which occupied the remainder of the cut. Context 111 contained fragments of coal, brick and tile, plus two modern pottery sherds (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 112 (Figs 4 and 5) was situated 1.2m west of cut 108. The sub-circular plan had a diameter of 0.45m. The vertically-sided, flat-based profile showed a depth of 0.35m.

The fill, context 113, was a loosely compacted dark greyish-brown clayey loam, the looseness being accountable by the (recent) removal of a post.

The westernmost posthole of the northern row, **Posthole cut 114** (Figs 4 and 5) occurred adjacent to the western baulk of the excavation, at a point c1.4m west of cut 112. The plan was a rounded square 0.4m across. The sides of the cut were vertical, the base flat. The depth was 0.30m.

The remains of a squared timber post (context 115) were surrounded by angular limestone packing (context 116). A greyish-brown silty loam fill, with few inclusions (context 116), occupied the northern part of the cut.

The southern row of Postholes was on a slightly curving north-west to south-east alignment, c10m south of the row described above (Fig 4). The southern row of Postholes consisted of cuts 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129 and 131. All of these postholes were cut into natural limestone bed-rock.

Posthole cut 119 (Figs 4 and 6) occurred at the north-west end of the row, (as excavated). The plan was sub-circular with a diameter of 0.30m. The profile was irregular with uneven sides and base; the maximum depth was 0.17m.

The fill was an homogeneous dark brown clayey, silty loam (context 118).

Posthole cut 121 (Figs 4 and 6) occurred c2m south-east of cut 119. The plan was ovate, with dimensions of 0.31 x 0.26m. The base was stepped and the sides uneven, with a depth of 0.11m.

The fill was an homogeneous dark brown, clayey silt loam (context 120).

Posthole cut 123 (Figs 4 and 6) was situated 2.4m to the south-east of cut 121. The plan was a rounded square c0.35m in width. The edges were steep and the base flat, with a depth of 0.17m.

A dark brown, clayey, silty loam (context 122) comprised the fill, which contained a few charcoal fragments, plus an Fe nail (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 125 (Figs 4 and 6) was situated c2.6m to the south-east of cut 123. The plan was a rounded square c0.35m in width. The edges were steep and the base uneven, giving a depth of 0.16m.

The fill consisted of context 124, an homogeneous dark brown, clayey silt loam containing animal bone, brick and clay tobacco pipe fragments, along with a modern pottery sherd (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 127 (Figs 4 and 6) was located c2.7m to the south-east of cut 125. The subrectangular plan was 0.32 x 0.25m in size. The profile had vertical sides and a slightly concave base, with a depth of 0.23m.

The fill, context 126, was an homogeneous dark brown clayey, silty loam, which contained two cinder fragments (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 129 (Figs 4 and 6) was situated c1.7m south-east of cut 127. The subcircular plan of this cut had a diameter of 0.35m. The edges were steep, with a flattish base. The depth was 0.26m.

The fill consisted of a dark brown, sandy, silty loam (context 128), and included cinder fragments (Appendix 1).

The most south-easterly Posthole in the row was **Posthole cut 131** (Figs 4 and 6), which was situated 1.7m south-east of cut 129. The plan was subcircular, with a diameter of 0.28m. The sides were moderately steep, the base flattish and the depth 0.12m.

The fill, context 130, existed as a dark yellowish-brown, clayey, silty loam.

A number of further Postholes, cuts 133, 135, 141 and 143 were scattered, apparently randomly, towards the southern limit of the site.

Posthole cut 133 (Figs 7 and 8) was subrectangular in shape, with dimensions of 0.40 x 0.32m. The profile showed steep sides and a flat base, giving a depth of 0.18m.

The fill consisted of a dark brown, clayey, silty loam (context 132). Context 132 contained cinder fragments (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 135 (Figs 7 and 8) was situated c1.5m south of 133. The plan was subrectangular, with dimensions of 0.41 x 0.28m. The sides of the cut were steep to vertical, with a flat base. The depth was 0.22m.

The fill, context 134, existed as a dark brown, sandy, silty loam. Finds included a clay tobacco pipe stem fragment (Appendix 1).

Posthole cut 141 (Figs 7 and 8) occurred c9m to the south-west of cut 135. The cut was rounded rectangular in plan, with dimensions of 0.50 x 0.47m. The steep sides fell to a flat base. The depth was 0.23m.

The remains of a timber post (context 138) was enclosed by limestone packing (context 140) in a dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam matrix.

Posthole cut 143 (Figs 7 and 8) was situated c10m south-east of cut 141. The subcircular plan had a diameter of 0.40m. The concave profile had a depth of 0.15m.

The fill (context 142) comprised a fairly loose dark brown, sandy, silty loam with appreciable amounts of charcoal. Finds were represented by fragments of brick and tile, coal, clay tobacco pipe stem fragments and a recent pottery sherd (Appendix 1).

The examined area contained two lengths of a bank and ditch associated with an extant hedge bank (Figs 7 and 8). A 1.5m wide segment was excavated through both the ditch cut (context 137) and the hedge bank (context 146). There was no surface indication of the ditch, and at the same point the bank existed only as a 0.02m high swelling.

Ditch cut 137 (Figs 7 and 8) was situated directly to the east of the bank, context 146. The alignment was approximately north-west to south-east. The ditch had a dished profile cut into the natural limestone bed-rock. The ditch had a width of 1m and a depth of 0.21m.

The fill consisted of a dark yellowish brown, clayey silt (context 136). Context 136 contained glass, clay tobacco pipe and brick fragments, and a post medieval Staffordshire-type sherd (Appendix 1).

The bank material, **context 146** (Fig 8), existed as a deposit of brown, sandy, silty loam with a convex profile. The bank material was 1.5m wide and 0.28m high.

Trackway cut 145 (Fig 9) consisted of a broad, shallow feature cut into the natural silty clay subsoil towards the west of the site. The alignment was approximately north to south. The width was c2.15m and the maximum depth 0.15m.

The sides of the trackway fell at an angle of c45 degrees into two narrow (c0.35m wide) slots at the base of each edge. The slots were separated by a c0.04m higher area in the centre of the feature.

The fill of the Trackway (context 144) extended into the slots, and existed as a dark yellowish-brown, clayey silt. There were larger amounts of inclusions, including brick fragments, within the central area. Finds included 18–19th century pottery and clay tobacco pipe fragments, in addition to the brick fragments (Appendix 1). The fill directly underlay the modern ploughsoil (context 100).

Discussion

It is clear that the Postholes located on site are of post medieval/recent date. The finds from the Postholes, plus the survival of decayed timber posts within the northern row, and Posthole cut 141, amply demonstrate the period to which they belong.

It is probable that the two Posthole rows, 101/104/108/112/114 and 119/121/123/125/127/129/131 are of different dates, for the Postholes in the northern row contained physical traces of posts, and were larger and deeper than the southern row. The southern row, particularly, would appear to be truncated by cultivation, accounting for the shallowness of the features.

The two Posthole rows almost certainly represent former fence lines. The occurrence of fences in what was formerly an arable field indicates either the suspension of cultivation or subdivision of the field in fairly recent times.

The remainder of the Postholes located, cuts 133, 135, 141 and 143, did not show any readily interpretable plan; this factor, coupled with the small number of features involved, therefore, makes any structural interpretation impossible.

The field in which the site stands formed part of High Field, one of the Open Fields of Old Malton (Robinson 18). Accordingly, it was anticipated that the excavation of the hedge ditch and bank might possibly recover evidence for pre-Enclosure land division occupying the same course. However, the ditch and bank revealed no activity earlier than that of Enclosure date.

The Trackway, cut 145, also falls within the post medieval/recent date of the other features on site. The two depressions at the base of the edges are interpreted as wheel ruts. The relatively large quantities of limestone and brick fragments found in the fill (essentially building rubble) were apparent attempts to provide a firm passage across the natural silty clay occurring at this point, which must have been liable to deep rutting in wet conditions.

It can be seen, therefore, that the archaeological features examined during the Watching Brief do no more than provide detail concerning the post medieval/recent utilisation of the field.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The recent date and truncated form of the archaeological remains revealed during the Watching Brief are not in themselves of sufficient significance to warrant further archaeological examinations of the immediate area. Therefore it is proposed that the construction of houses on plots adjacent the area of road-bed examined should be able to proceed with no further archaeological coverage.

Bibliography

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