

FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS Ltd

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Plot 3, Middleover, St Helen's Lane,
Reighton, North Yorkshire

Prepared by:

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Client:

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INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief was carried out at Plot 3 'Middleover', St Helen's Lane, Reighton (NGR TA 1275/7542) for Miss C Rumley and Mr C Snow on 4th March 1996. The works were carried out as a condition of the planning consent, granted by Scarborough Borough Council on the 5th October 1995 (Planning Decision No. 4/1/106A/FL) for the construction of a dwelling house with adjoining garage.

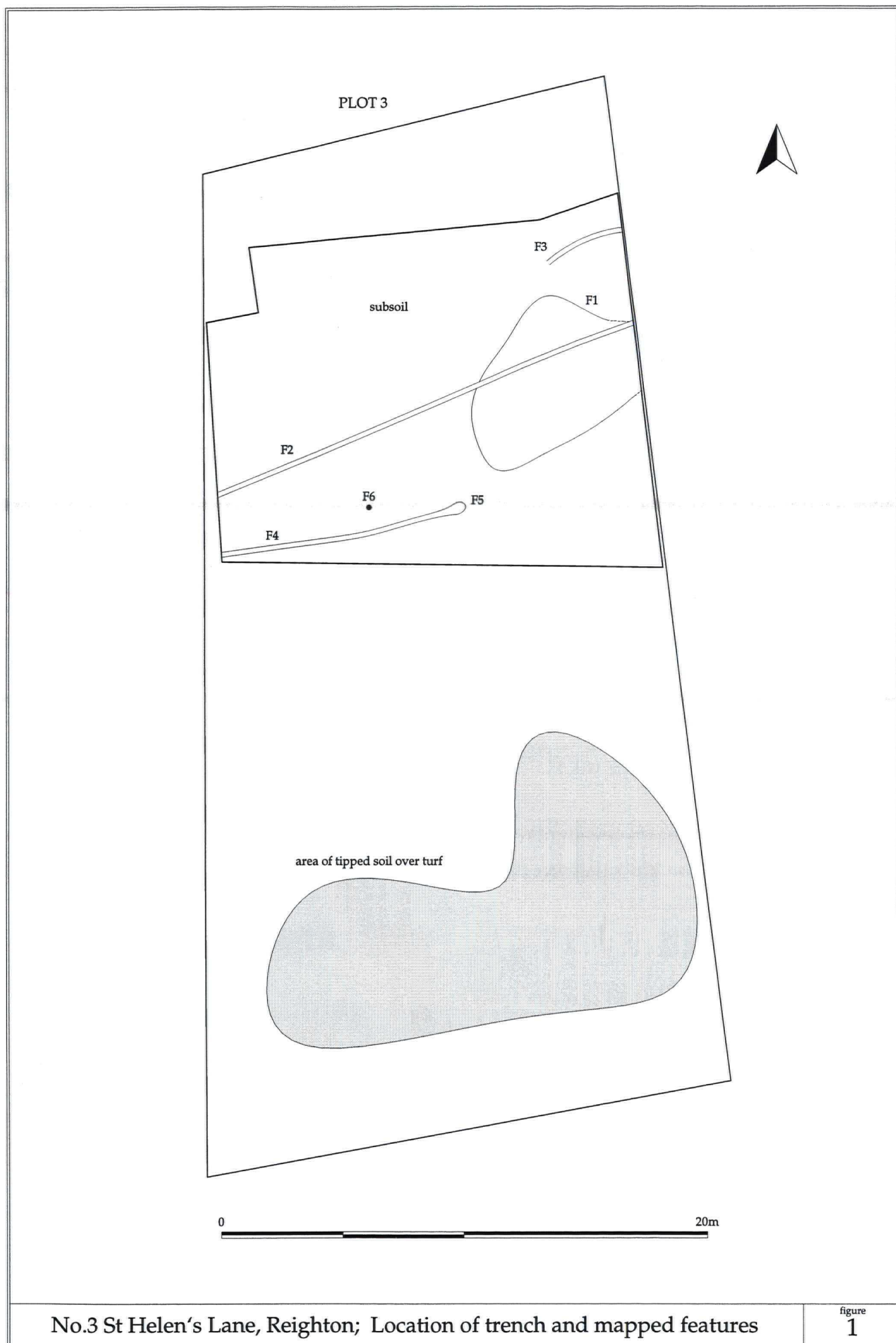
Plot 3 covers a rectangular area approximately 22m x 41m. Within the plot the ground surface generally slopes down towards the north end which fronts onto St Helen's Lane, a total drop of over 4.10m. The ground surface at the north end is relatively level but rises steeply at approximately 16m in from the edge suggesting that this fronting has been terraced in the past. At the back of the plot a low bank runs eastward just inside the southern boundary.

The majority of the ground was covered in a rough sward of grass but superficial clearance of brush and undergrowth at the north end had revealed a few modern structures. In the northwest corner two concrete hardstandings (c. 2.5m x 10m) abutted each other and were separated from the foundations of a small building (3m sq) by a narrow driveway. The entrance to the driveway from St Helen's Lane was flanked by two large concrete posts. More recently the plot has been to keep chickens.

STRATEGY

The purpose of the watching brief was to observe trench excavations and record features and finds of archaeological interest. Work was carried out following North Yorkshire County Council guidelines (Appendix A). The excavations included the removal of the modern structures and the stripping of the overburden on top of the subsoil surface. The trench was located at the north end of the plot and the overburden was removed with a back-acting excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. An area of 252m² (c.18m x 14m) was stripped by machine down onto the surface of the subsoil and carefully cleaned with the lip of the bucket. A few miscellaneous features were discovered on the subsoil surface. None were considered to be of archaeological significance and were therefore left unexcavated (Fig.1).

The majority of the topsoil from the excavations was taken to a dump at the south end of the plot, where it will be used to level-up the ground. The spread of topsoil lies in front of the bank (see Fig.1).



INVENTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS (see Appendix B)

- Context 1000 A rough turf sward, 0.05m thick.
- Context 1001 A layer of dark brown sandy loam topsoil (Munsell colour 7.5YR 3/2), varying in depth from 0.10m beneath the driveway to over 0.40m at the back of the trench. This context contained a small assemblage of ceramic finds.
- Context 1008 An orange-brown boulder clay deposit representing the subsoil surface, this material was of heterogeneous character and contained extensive areas of mineral staining (manganese), particularly at the north end of the trench.
- Feature 1 A large, irregularly shaped pit measuring 7.5m X 6.0m and lying against the eastern edge of the trench. The loose fill of the pit (1002) contained a dense concentration of charcoal and lumps of modern brick, tile and tin, suggesting its recent origin.
- Feature 2 A narrow field drain, 0.20m wide and approximately 0.20m deep which ran in a north-easterly direction across the trench. The feature only contained a spread of loose rounded pebbles (1003).
- Feature 3 The short arc of a field drain mapped in the north east corner of the trench and constructed from lengths of inverted ceramic piping (1004).
- Feature 4 A field drain, 0.20m wide and 9.00m long running in a north-easterly direction from the south west corner of the trench. This drain was silted-up and contained a 'smooth' grey-brown fill (1005), (7.5YR 4/2). The drain terminated in a sub-circular feature, F5, possibly a sump.
- Feature 5 A sub-circular feature 0.60m in diameter situated at the eastern end of the drain, F4, this feature is possibly a drainage sump. It was filled with a loose deposit of broken brick and concrete (1006).
- Feature 6 A small circular posthole, 0.19m dia, containing a dark brown fill (1007), (5YR 2.5/2). This feature, located at the southern end of the trench, was not investigated since it was an isolated anomaly.

THE FINDS ASSEMBLAGE

Finds were only recovered from the topsoil during machine stripping, Context 1001 (Appendix C). Within this small and unstratified assemblage two types of pottery were recognised.

Staxton ware: A group of six sherds including rim, base and body sherd forms (Δ 1, 6, 11, 12, 15 and 17), dating from the 12th - 14th Centuries.

Scarborough ware: A total of nine body sherds (Δ 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 13, 18 and 19) and a single base sherd (Δ 8). Three of the body sherds are additionally covered with a thin green glaze. This style of pottery dates from the 13th - mid 14th Centuries.

The remaining three sherds are unidentified, all are wheel turned and are probably medieval or later, (Δ 5, 14 and 16).

DISPOSAL POLICY

All of the finds derive from a disturbed secondary context, since the assemblage has no further analytical destiny they will not be kept.

SUMMARY

Finds recovered from the terraced fronting suggest activity in the area, at least during the medieval period, which was domestic in character. Unfortunately none of the archaeological remains mapped could be associated with this activity or period. Instead the impression is that the drainage gullies were dug relatively recently to improve the drainage at the foot of the terraced slope, in response to a change in the use of the land, perhaps as an agricultural plot. It is likely that only more extensive investigations in the area will discover the nucleus of the medieval occupation. In this regard the extensive earthworks visible in the field above the plot, toward Humber Howe, suggest a long period of occupation which could date from the earlier, medieval period.

APPENDIX A

NYCC STANDARD WATCHING BRIEF

1. The aim of the archaeological watching brief is to enable recording and recovery of archaeological remains which are a) affected by proposed development only to a very limited and clearly defined extent, b) inaccessible by standard area excavation techniques, or c) of limited importance or potential. The watching brief should not require construction work within the development site to be held up while archaeological investigation takes place, although some developers may give such a facility.
2. Contractors removing overburden (that is vegetation, turf, loose stones, rubble, modern sterile fill materials, Tarmac, concrete, hardcore, building debris and topsoil) shall be supervised by the Archaeological contractor undertaking the brief.
3. Overburden should be removed by machine, using a back-acting excavator fitted with a toothless, ditching or grading bucket only. Where overburden is exceptionally difficult to lift, a toothed bucket may be used temporarily. Subsoils and other soil materials below the overburden may be removed by machine but only in areas specified by the Archaeologist on site, and only with constant archaeological supervision.
4. Metal detecting within the development area, including the scanning of topsoil and spoilheaps, should only be permitted subject to archaeological supervision and recording such that metal finds are properly located, identified and conserved.
5. The contractors shall inform the Archaeologist of the correct timing and schedule of overburden removal.
6. Where structures, soil features and finds of archaeological interest are exposed or disturbed by construction works, the Archaeologist shall be provided with the opportunity to observe, clean, assess, and where appropriate hand excavate, sample and record these features and finds. 'Heavy' plant or excavators shall not be operated in the near vicinity of archaeological remains until the remains have been recorded and the Archaeologist on site has allowed operations to recommence at that location. Where archaeological remains are observed by contractors or plant operators, they shall immediately notify the Archaeologist.
7. Upon completion of fieldwork, samples shall be processed and all finds shall be cleaned, identified, assessed, spot dated, and properly stored. A field archive shall be compiled consisting of all primary written documents, plans, sections and photographs. Arrangements should be made for the transfer of the archive to a museum or records office.
8. A summary report shall be produced following NYCC guidelines on reporting. The report shall contain planning details about the site, a summary of the works carried out, a description and interpretation of the findings, an assessment of the importance of the archaeology including its historical context, and a catalogue of finds, features and primary records. All excavated areas should be accurately mapped with respect to nearby buildings and roads. All significant features should be illustrated with conventionally scaled plans, sections or photographs. Where few or no finds are made, it may be acceptable to provide the report in the form of a letter with plans attached.

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF ARCHIVE RECORDS

ARCHIVE CODE	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
Y2	Context records	8
Y3	Feature records	6
Y5.1	Co-ordinate records	59
Y5.3	Plans (A1)	1
Y6	Photographs - prints	6
Y7	Finds	19

APPENDIX C

THE FINDS INDEX

FIND No.	MATERIAL	IDENTITY	TYPE	Wt (g)
1	Ceramic	pot(rim)	Staxton	67.0
2	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	16.0
3	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	4.0
4	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	30.0
5	Ceramic	pot(body)	Unid.	28.0
6	Ceramic	pot(base)	Staxton	12.0
7	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	48.0
8	Ceramic	pot(base)	Scarb.	182.0
9	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	2.0
10	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	56.0
11	Ceramic	pot(base)	Staxton	32.0
12	Ceramic	pot(body)	Staxton	24.0
13	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	18.0
14	Ceramic	pot(body)	Unid.	12.0
15	Ceramic	pot(body)	Staxton	6.0
16	Ceramic	pot(base)	Unid.	26.0
17	Ceramic	pot(base)	Staxton	20.0
18	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	2.0
19	Ceramic	pot(body)	Scarb.	10.0