

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON NORTHERN ELECTRIC WORKS AT CHAPEL FARM, SOUTH KILVINGTON, THIRSK

INTRODUCTION

In the course of improvements at Chapel Farm, South Kilvington, near Thirsk, new underground electricity supply services were brought from a substation at the farm to an outbuilding and to the farmhouse. The overhead supply to the pole-mounted substation was also moved by Northern Electric, involving the resiting of two poles. These works involved ground disturbance on and adjacent to the site of the deserted medieval village of North Kilvington which lies to the south of Chapel Farm.

It was therefore necessary to undertake an archaeological watching brief during ground disturbance work to observe and record any material of archaeological interest. This was done between 30 May and 5 June 1995.

WATCHING BRIEF

TRENCHES

A trench for underground cable was excavated by machine from the site of the new substation to an outbuilding at the farmstead, and from there to the farmhouse (see plan). The last 13 metres of the trench, through the garden, was hand dug.

The machine trench from the substation to the outbuilding was approximately 90 cm. wide, and varied between 80 cm. and 105 cm. deep. It ran across concrete in some parts, and a very mixed dirty loam in others. Modern deposits, including bricks, tarmac and other modern debris, extended to an average depth of 50 cm. throughout the trench. Below this were the natural glacial orange-brown clays with silt, very wet in places. Several clay land drains were encountered in the course of the trench. Towards the southern end of the trench the silts and clays appeared to be disturbed, being grey-brown in colour and containing occasional black patches. The ground above this area contained a concentration of brick rubble (debris from a former building on the site), and it seems likely that the disturbed ground below related to this. At the southern end of the trench, away from the farm buildings, the ground became less disturbed, consisting of drier, lighter brown clay and sand below a surface spread of rubbly loam.

The trench from the outbuilding to the farmhouse garden was 40 to 60 cm. wide and between 70 cm. and 100 cm. deep. It crossed an area of concrete including the drive into the farm, which with a hardcore base extended to 45 cm. below the surface. Beneath this was orange-brown silt and clay, or in some places a dirty grey-brown silt with stones and clay patches. A 10 cm. thick layer of dark grey silt with mortar flecks dipped from below the concrete to near the base of the trench at one point, but appeared to be modern.

To the north of the drive the trench crossed a grassed area where 50 to 60 cm. of brown loam overlay orange clay. Some modern pottery and other modern material was observed in the topsoil.

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Within the garden of the farmhouse the trench was hand dug to a depth of 65 cm. and a width of 55 cm. Below 35 cm. of topsoil was a mid-brown loam which reached to the bottom of the trench. In the southern part of this trench, this became lighter and more clayey towards the base of the trench. Approximately 10 metres south of the house a line of bricks crossed the trench, forming the remains of a wall. The bricks were small (4 cm. thick) and handmade. To the north of this wall numerous small floor tiles were observed in the fill. These were 7 to 8 cm. square and 3.5 to 4 cm. thick, many showing some green glaze on some surfaces but none completely covered on any one surface. They were not in situ but were scattered throughout the fill.

HOLES

The new substation pole was erected to the south of the farm buildings at the end of the previously dug trench (see plan) and at the edge of a field of barley. The machine excavated hole was 70 cm. from north to south and 200 cm from east to west. It contained topsoil and loam to a depth of 70 cm., below which were mixed clays and loam to a depth of 135 cm. The rest, to the base of the hole at 180 cm., was orange silts and clays with stones.

Five metres to the east of the hole another hole was excavated to contain the stays for the pole. This was 70 cm. from east to west, 370 cm. from north to south and 180 cm. deep. Below topsoil and loam to a depth of 50 cm. was disturbed yellow-orange silt and stony clay which reached to a depth of 100 cm., and below that were the orange clay and silts encountered elsewhere on the site.

A second new pole hole was excavated to the south-west of the farm in the barley field(see plan). This was 70 cm. from north to south and 200 cm. from east to west. Below 40 cm. of brown loam was a mid brown fine loam which became clayey in places towards the bottom at 145 cm. below the surface. Below this was reddish brown sand which reached to the bottom of the hole at 155 cm. Apart from some small fragments of brick or tile, and one fragment of pottery, the topsoil and loam were almost free of inclusions. No features were visible.

CONCLUSIONS

The excavations in the farmyard revealed no archaeological features beyond the effects of modern disturbances, which appear to have been widespread. Current maps show that ranges of outbuildings existed in the areas which were excavated, and these probably account for all the disturbed ground which was recorded.

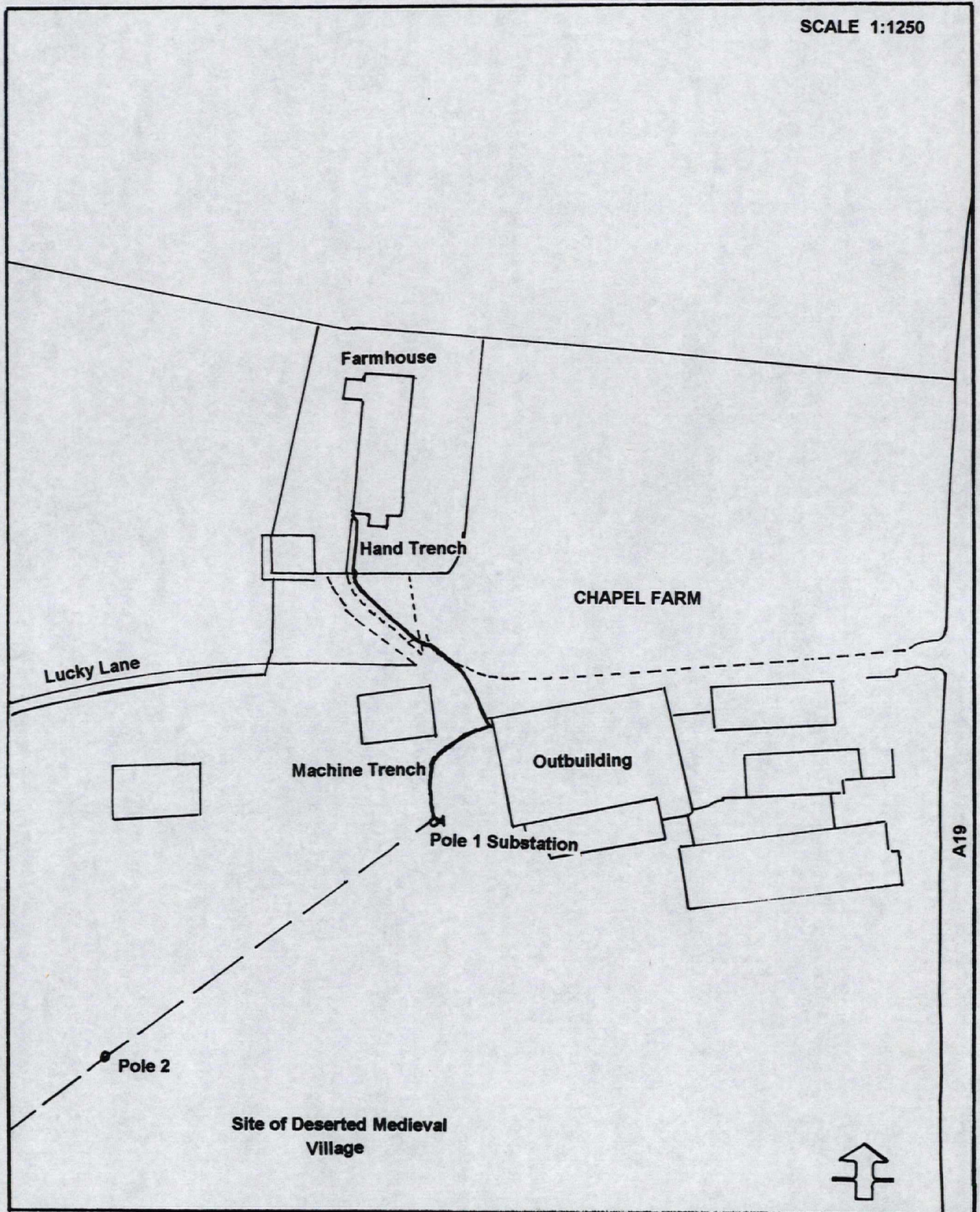
The hole excavated in the barley field might have been expected to have the highest potential as it was nearest to the site of the deserted medieval village, but no archaeological features were revealed. The paucity of finds might be a result of the de-stoning which the farmer carried out in the field some years ago.

The most interesting part of the watching brief was in the garden of the house. The brick wall and floor tiles are most likely to be associated with the Catholic chapel which was established at Chapel Farm in the seventeenth century when worship was not allowed in Thirsk.

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CHAPEL FARM, NORTH KILVINGTON: NORTHERN ELECTRIC WORKS