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NORTON TOWN CEMETERY

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Archaeological Watching Brief

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd

COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT		
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NORTON TOWN CEMETERY

Abstract

This report concentrates on the results and conclusions subsequently derived from the excavation of an electricity cable trench in the grounds of Norton Town Cemetery from the north-west boundary of the Chase II development to the electricity substation to the east of St Peter's Church Hall, Norton.

Figure List

1. Site Location Plan

NORTON TOWN CEMETERY

Archaeological Investigations

1. Introduction

A watching brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd on behalf of Northern Electric at Norton Town Cemetery in June, 1991. The line of the new cable trench (Fig. 1) cut through an area of possibly highly sensitive archaeological deposits (see section 2).

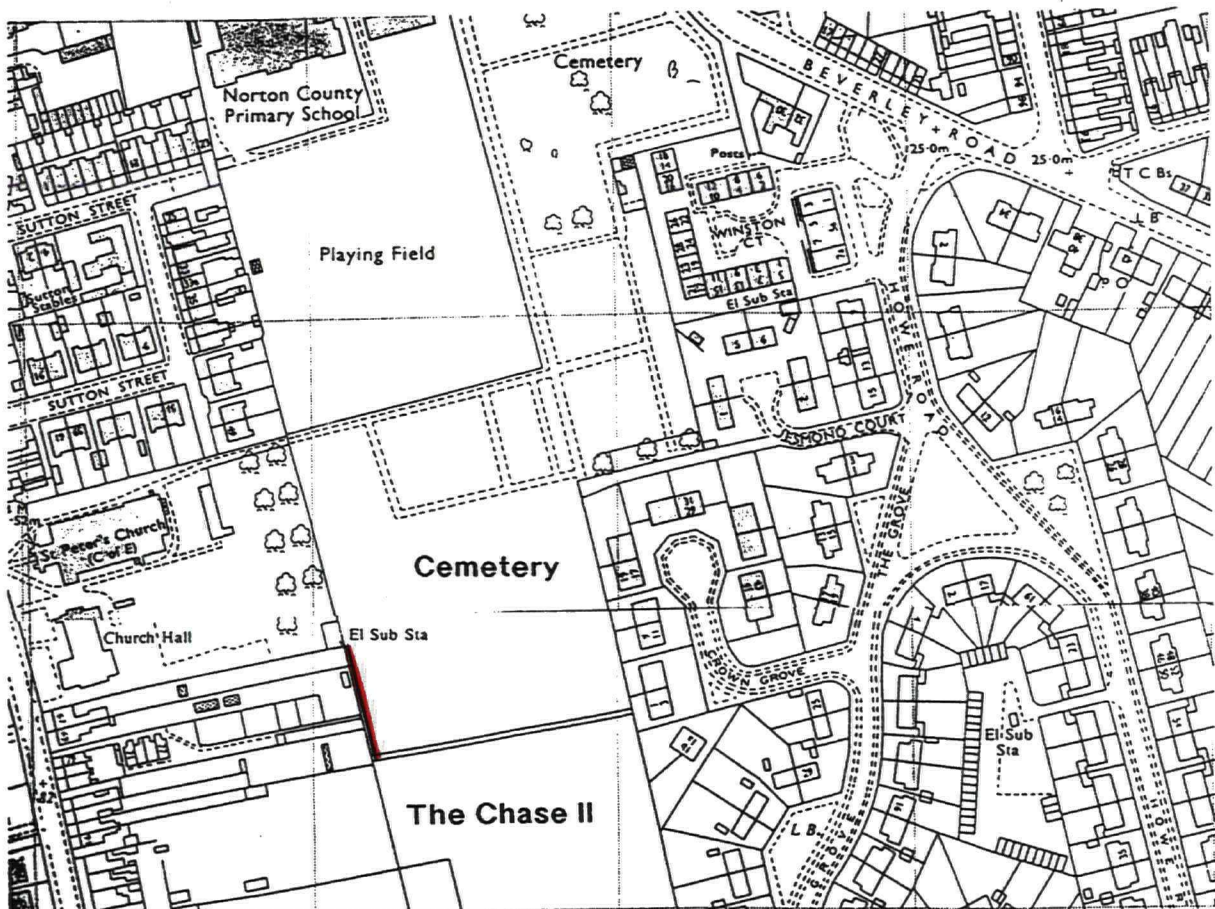


Fig. 1. Site Location Plan - scale 1:10560. 12500

The red line illustrates the line of the excavated cable trench.

2. Historical Background

In January 1986 two Huntcliffe ware jars were found during the excavation of a grave at the Norton Town Cemetery. The pots were found at a depth of approximately 0.60m. The location of these finds tended to confirm Roman archaeological deposits in this area of Norton.

Previously chance finds and limited excavations (Hayes 1988) had located a number of skeletons, cinerary urns, pottery and coins to the west of the proposed cable trench at SE 7941 7098.

To the east excavations in the area of the housing development known as The Grove (Hayes *ibid*) had located a paved area and occupation debris (SE 7963 7093), a 'floor' and pottery (SE 7967 7095), an area of rough paving (SE 7963 7091) and an isolated find of human bone, i.e. a skull (SE 7966 7095).

To the south excavations in the 1940's (Hayes & Whitley 1950 & Hayes *ibid*) plus aerial reconnaissance had suggested the following archaeological features: – an area of paving (SE 7954 7089), a pottery kiln (SE 7963 7091), a 4th century paved floor and 'T' shaped flue (SE 7951 7090), a road (SE 7954 7093 – 7958 7093), and two pottery kilns (SE 7955 7091 & SE 7957 7088). The actual presence of some of these features were substantiated and elaborated on by excavations at the site of the housing development at the Grove Cottage Stables (The Chase II) during 1989–1990 (Finney 1989 & Stephens 1990).

To the north finds of pottery, coins, iron objects and animal bone were found (SE 7960 7107) and also pottery and coins (SE 7960 7103). During the excavation of plot 932 (SE 7956 7103) in the Norton town cemetery a ?flue had been located .

The occasional finds are more extensively documented in Robinson (Robinson 1978).

Based on the available evidence it was suggested that a watching brief should be undertaken during the excavation of the cable trench as there was a distinct possibility that the excavation would disturb *in situ* archaeological deposits. The known archaeological data from the site environs was of a varied nature and it was impossible prior to excavation to ascertain the type of finds and features which may be located during excavation.

3. Excavation Methods

The cable trench was excavated using a JCB with a 0.60m wide untoothed bucket. The trench was cut to a depth of approximately 0.85m from the present land surface level.

The excavation of the trench was observed and recorded by an archaeologist.

A continuous context system of recording was employed.

4. Excavation Results

The total length of the trench excavated extended for approximately 40m on a north-south alignment from SE 7952 7095 to SE 7951 7099. The trench was in fact situated within 1m of the western boundary of the cemetery and the eastern boundary of the allotments. The depth of the trench was pre-determined by the type of electricity cable which was to be laid in the trench. The depth of the trench measured no less than 0.85m and no greater than 0.95m from the present land surface level.

It was apparent prior to excavation that the area where the trench was to be excavated consisted of a sector of made up ground measuring up to 0.30m in depth. This overburden was due to rubbish, soil and artefacts being redeposited in the cemetery from the allotments. This deposit a very dark brown silty loam (10 YR 2/2 - layer 1) contained deposits of modern pottery in the main with only the occasional sherd of Roman wares, animal bone mainly of domestic cattle and sheep, iron objects such as broken spade blades and forks and broken glass bottles.

This layer had accumulated over the previous ground level which was represented by a layer of grassed topsoil (10YR 2/2 - layer 2: a dark brown clay loam). Inclusions within this layer consisted mainly of the occasional sherd of modern pottery. This layer extended to a depth on average of 0.30m.

Sealed beneath layer 2 was a substantial deposit of dark yellowish brown silty sand (10YR 3/6 - layer 3) measuring 0.35m in depth. The full depth was not recorded due to the pre-determined depth of the trench. This layer contained deposits of post medieval and Roman pottery and the occasional animal bone fragment (Appendices 2 & 3).

Layer 4 represents the mixture of layers 1 and 2 which were excavated as one layer as it was impossible to separate finds out into their original contexts during excavation.

At no point during the excavation were the subsoil levels encountered.

There was no evidence from the section cut through this area of the cemetery to suggest previous archaeological activity. The stratigraphic sequence showed a gradual accumulation of deposits which had remained undisturbed prior to the excavation of the cable trench. The associated finds suggest that layer 3 had continued to accumulate over a considerable period of time from the late Roman period through to the late medieval. Whereas layer 1 provides a distorted picture for dating due to the redeposited material from the cultivation of the allotments situated to the east.

Due to the fact that the stratigraphic sequence portrayed gradual accumulation, no photographic record nor diagrammatic record was undertaken.

The artefacts located are listed by context and briefly described in Appendices 2 and 3.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the watching brief it is clear that this area of the cemetery was not extensively used in the Roman and medieval periods. As illustrated by excavations to the south during the development of the Chase II (Stephens 1990, Finney 1991) it would appear that portions of this area of Roman Norton was dedicated to horticulture and therefore not developed. The finds located therefore represent occasional deposits.

Excavations to the immediate south-east of the cable trench (Finney 1989) had located the traces of a road and information based on previous find locations (Robinson 1978) and the occurrence of chance finds (pottery sherds, fragments of animal bone and worked stone) found during the excavation of grave plots in the north of the cemetery at a depth of 0.60m – 1.40m, but a general scarcity of similar finds within excavated plots along the western sector of the cemetery, i.e. to the east of the cable trench (M. Piercy pers comm) suggests that the road in the south and some form of boundary to the north demarcate the area where horticulture was practised in Roman and medieval times.

If the southern area of the cemetery was used primarily for horticultural purposes then this interpretation would explain the general paucity of Roman and medieval finds within the immediate vicinity of the cable trench.

6. Bibliography

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- Hayes, R.H. & Whitley, E. (1950): 'The Roman Pottery at Norton'
- Robinson, J.F. (1978): 'The Archaeology of Malton and Norton'.
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APPENDIX 1

Context Listing

1. 10 YR 2/2. Very dark brown silty loam. Soil forming rubbish dump above original topsoil.
2. 10 YR 2/2. Very dark brown clay loam. Original topsoil levels.
3. 10YR 3/6. Dark yellowish brown. Gradual accumulation layer.
4. Context representing mixture of contexts of 1 and 2.

APPENDIX 2

Finds Catalogue

Contexts

3. Animal Bone: weight – 0.6kg

Sheep: – 5 long bone fragments
1 upper mandible fragment
2 pelvis fragments (1 with butchery marks)

Cattle: – 1 long bone fragment

Pottery: weight – 0.18kg

1 Roman body sherd
1 post-medieval rim sherd
1 post-medieval base sherd

4. Animal Bone: weight – 0.03kg

Sheep: – 2 rib fragments

Cattle: – 1 vertebrae (modern butchery marks)

Pottery: weight – 0.88kg

3 Roman body sherds
14 modern rim sherds
7 modern base sherds
1 modern handle sherd
13 modern body sherds

Misc:

1 complete glass ?glue/varnish bottle – 20th century AD

APPENDIX 3

Pottery Catalogue

Context 3

- 1 Calcitite gritted Norton type ware body sherd – 2–4th century AD
- 1 Ryedale ware storage jar rim sherd with lug handle – 17th–18th century AD
- 1 manganese glazed base sherd jug/beaker base sherd – 18th century AD

Context 4

- 1 Knapton ware coarsely gritted body sherd – 2nd–3rd century AD
- 1 Norton type body sherd – 3rd century AD
- 1 Grey ware base sherd – 2nd–4th century AD

- 13 Transfer ware rim sherds – early 19th–20th century AD
 - 5 Transfer ware base sherds – early 19th–20th century AD
 - 6 Transfer ware body sherds – early 19th–20th century AD
- 1 Salt glazed porter bottle rim sherd – mid 19th century AD
- 1 Salt glazed porter bottle base sherd – mid 19th century AD
- 2 Salt glazed porter bottle body sherds – mid 19th century AD
- 3 Salt glazed storage jar body sherds – 19th century AD
- 1 Staffordshire stone ware storage jar handle – 19th century AD
- 1 Staffordshire stone ware storage jar body sherd – 19th century AD
- 2 Flower pot body sherds – 19th–20th century AD