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**Former Methodist Chapel
Leppington
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

January 1998
MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

**Former Site of Methodist Chapel
Leppington
North Yorkshire
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Introduction

The following report contains the results of archaeological observation and recording that was carried out on the excavation of a building platform for a dwelling in Leppington, a village in the parish of Scrayingham (Figure 1). The site occupies a rectangular plot of land approximately 41m in length East to West and 10m North to South off the main street running through Leppington (S E 7635 6125). An archaeological Watching Brief was placed on the site by North Yorkshire County Council because of the areas potential archaeological significance. The plot was formerly occupied by a small Methodist chapel which was erected in 1867 (Bulmer, 1893). This building was the subject of an associated recording brief before it was demolished for the current development.

The underlying natural geology of the site consists of slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged clayey soils with similar fine loamy over clayey soils (SSEW, 1983).

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Archaeological potential

To the south east of the chapel plot, near the parish church of St. Helens, there is an earthwork which is reputed to be the site of a 'castellated mansion' which belonged to the Carey family who held a baronial title in the seventeenth century. The names of Manor Farm and House Farm which are adjacent to the plot suggest that the village of Leppington developed within the geographical boundaries of the demesne lands of the manor of Leppington. Bulmer's directory records that the whole village was still in the ownership of Lady Mary Vyner, 'lady of the manor' in the late nineteenth century. This evidence would suggest that the site had a close relationship with the territorial and proprietorial management of the manor since the medieval period. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the development of the site in the modern period is the purchase and erection by the Wesleyan congregation in 1867 of a Methodist chapel (Bulmer, 1893). In a landscape redolent of the authority of medieval society with its estate farms, manor house and parish church, the chapel plot represents the spatial expression of this tendency toward individuality which characterises the Post Medieval world. The chapel stood on the public highway, only a few metres away from the footpath past the ruined manor to the parish church. It is possible that evidence exists that would allow us to trace the changes in the boundaries in the estate. (Briggs, 1987; Thompson, 1988).

Methodology

The excavations for the dwelling consisted of the mechanical levelling of the eastern end of the site to create a building platform and associated level area around the property. The new dwelling will occupy the footprint of the demolished chapel. The excavation was carried out by a JCB mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket. At the eastern end of the site the footings for the chapel were still visible and the surface level of the soil fell at a shallow gradient from a level of approximately 74.8m A.O.D. west toward the road, reaching a level of 74.3m where the Chapel entrance had been situated. The soil was removed in spits by the machine lowering the soil surface to

the level of the western face of the chapel building. The excavation of the rear of the site removed the majority of the remaining wall footing trenches.

The top soil in this area was shallow, being only 0.2 - 0.3m thick. On the majority of the levelled area this soil overlay a clean and undisturbed natural sand and clay containing occasional nodes of natural flint. It is likely therefore that the chapel footings had been cut into a natural slope running toward the road. At the south eastern corner of the excavation three pits which had been cut into the sand were observed, recorded and pottery sherds collected for dating evidence. A further excavation for a driveway approximately 30m long, with an associated area of hard standing to the west of the front of the building plot was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.25m thick to accommodate crushed brick hard-core. The driveway was cut into garden soil along its length and no features or natural sand deposits were observed in the excavated area.

Archaeological deposits

The house platform area was assigned a context number 001 for the purpose of identifying finds collected during machining and not associated with a feature. The material collected consisted of a sample of the flints which were present on the natural sand surface which was within the chapel walls and had probably been under the floor. These flints were identified as natural and were discarded. The pits observed in the excavation of the house platform were assigned context numbers 002, 003, and 004.

Pit 002 was filled by a firm clay mixed with areas of darker silty clay. This deposit appeared to be a backfill consisting of dirty material originally excavated from the hole. This feature measured approximately 1.5m east - west and 1m where visible north - south where it extended into the section. In section the pit was seen to be stratigraphically immediately below the topsoil level and if it was circular would extend under the boundary between the chapel property and the plot immediately to the south. Feature 002 was outside the footprint of the chapel and was not excavated to its full depth because it would not be disturbed by the building work. Two sherds of Medieval pot of thirteenth century date and a small piece of clay tobacco pipe stem were collected from the surface of the fill. The extension of the pit under the boundary would seem to indicate that the pit predated the laying out of the land plot for the chapel (before 1867?), this would be consistent with the clay pipe being a contemporary artefact and the Medieval pottery residual material. However the possibility of contamination of the deposit from modern material in the topsoil deposited by the machine could indicate a medieval origin for the pit.

A second pit 003 lay 1.5m to the north of 002, this measured 0.60m by 0.80m and was roughly rectangular. This feature was filled by a mid to dark grey clay deposit containing occasional ash inclusions. A single sherd of Post - Medieval Red Coarse ware was found in the surface of the fill deposits, the remainder of the pit was left in situ.

A third pit 004 lay underneath the south east corner of the footprint of the chapel footings, this feature was truncated by the excavation of the house platform. The feature measured 1.1m by 0.9m and was filled with a compact, silty clay containing occasional small 0.02m - 0.03m natural flint inclusions. One sherd of York Glazed Ware, a sherd of Koln/Freschen stoneware and two sherds of post medieval Red Coarse ware were found on the surface of the deposit. In addition a fragment of animal bone was also recovered.

Pit 004 must predate the foundation of the Methodist chapel and it is likely that both pits 003 and 004 are of post medieval, sixteenth or seventeenth century origin.

Discussion

There were relatively few archaeological deposits within the area of excavation. The three pits which were observed showed evidence of human activity in the area from the thirteenth century until the modern era. It is difficult to firmly date pit 002, however it is possible that it is of thirteenth century origin. The other features 003 and 004 appear to be of sixteenth or seventeenth century date and may relate to the post medieval occupation of the manor by the Carey family in a period when there was renewed activity on rural estates. The features in themselves do not contribute a great deal to our understanding of the individual events which shaped the area but it was during this period that the control and ownership of medieval estates became increasingly a commercial rather than a seigneurial matter. It was in this context that manorial estates were divided, leased or sold as new ideas of religion and ownership developed. The new social and spatial circumstances are represented by the chapel plot which begins its own independent history at this time.

Bibliography

- Briggs, A. 1987. *A Social History of England*. Pelican.
Bulmer, 1893. *A Directory of the East Riding of Yorkshire*.
SSEW, 1983. *Soils of England and Wales Sheet 1 Northern England*.
Thompson, E. P. 1988. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Penguin

Appendix 1

Context Listing

Context No	Description
001	Assigned to finds from machining not associated with features.
002	Sub circular Pit extending under southern section; 1.5m x 1m; filled by a firm mid-grey clay mixed with areas of darker silty clay.
003	Sub rectangular Pit; 0.60m by 0.80m; filled by a mid to dark grey clay deposit containing occasional ash inclusions.
004	Sub circular Pit; 1.1m by 0.9m; filled with a medium grey, compact, silty clay containing occasional small 0.02m - 0.03m natural flint inclusions.

Appendix 2

Finds Catalogue

Context No	Description
001	?Natural Flint fragments, discarded.
002	Pottery- 2 sherds 1 Scarborough ware 1 ?Beverley ware 13th Century
003	Pottery- 1 sherd 1 Post- medieval Red Coarseware 17th century
004	Pottery- 4 sherds 1 York Glazed Ware 1 Koln/Freschen Stoneware 2 Post-Medieval Red Coarseware 16th -Early 17th Century

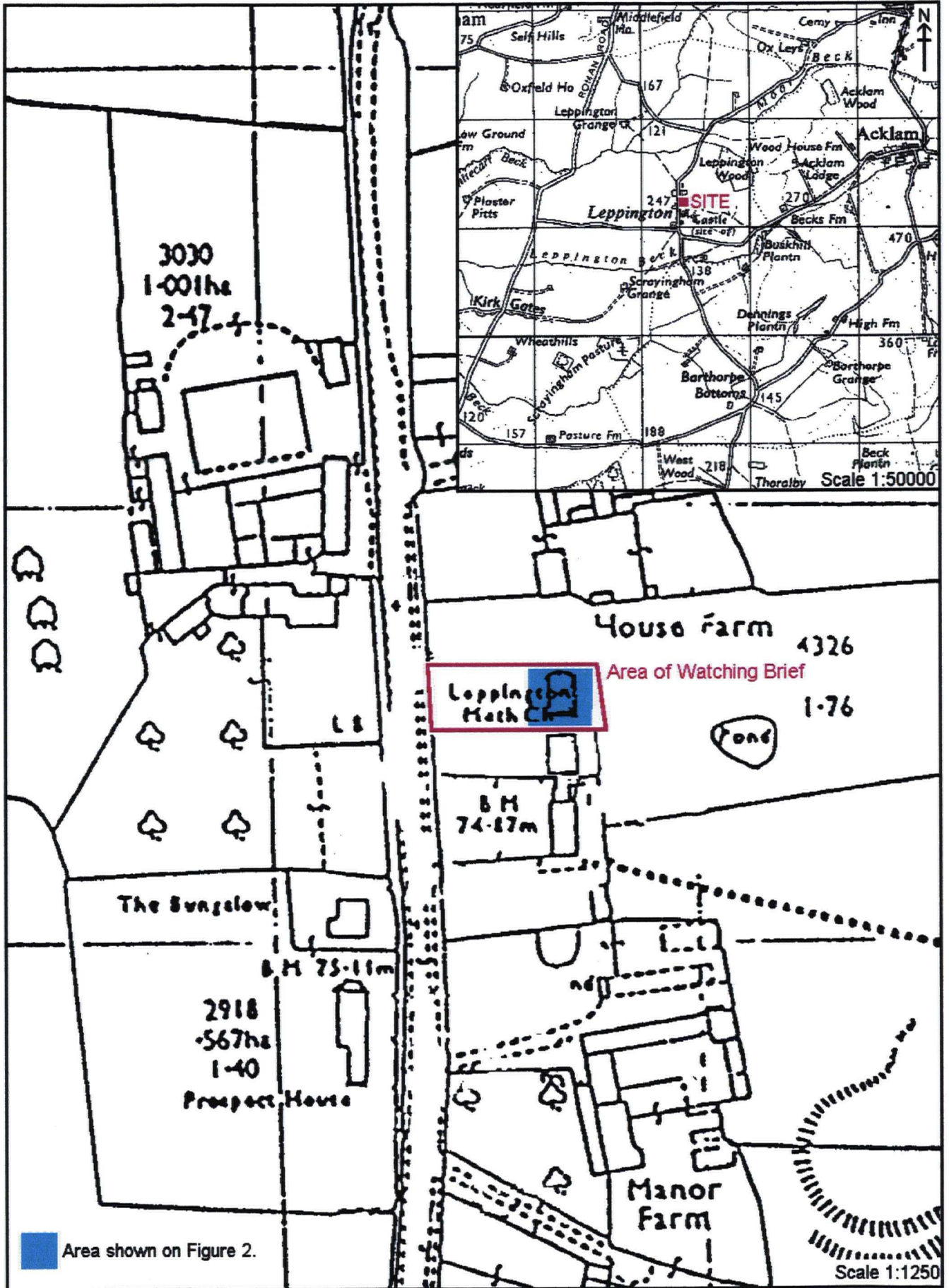


Figure 1. Site Location.

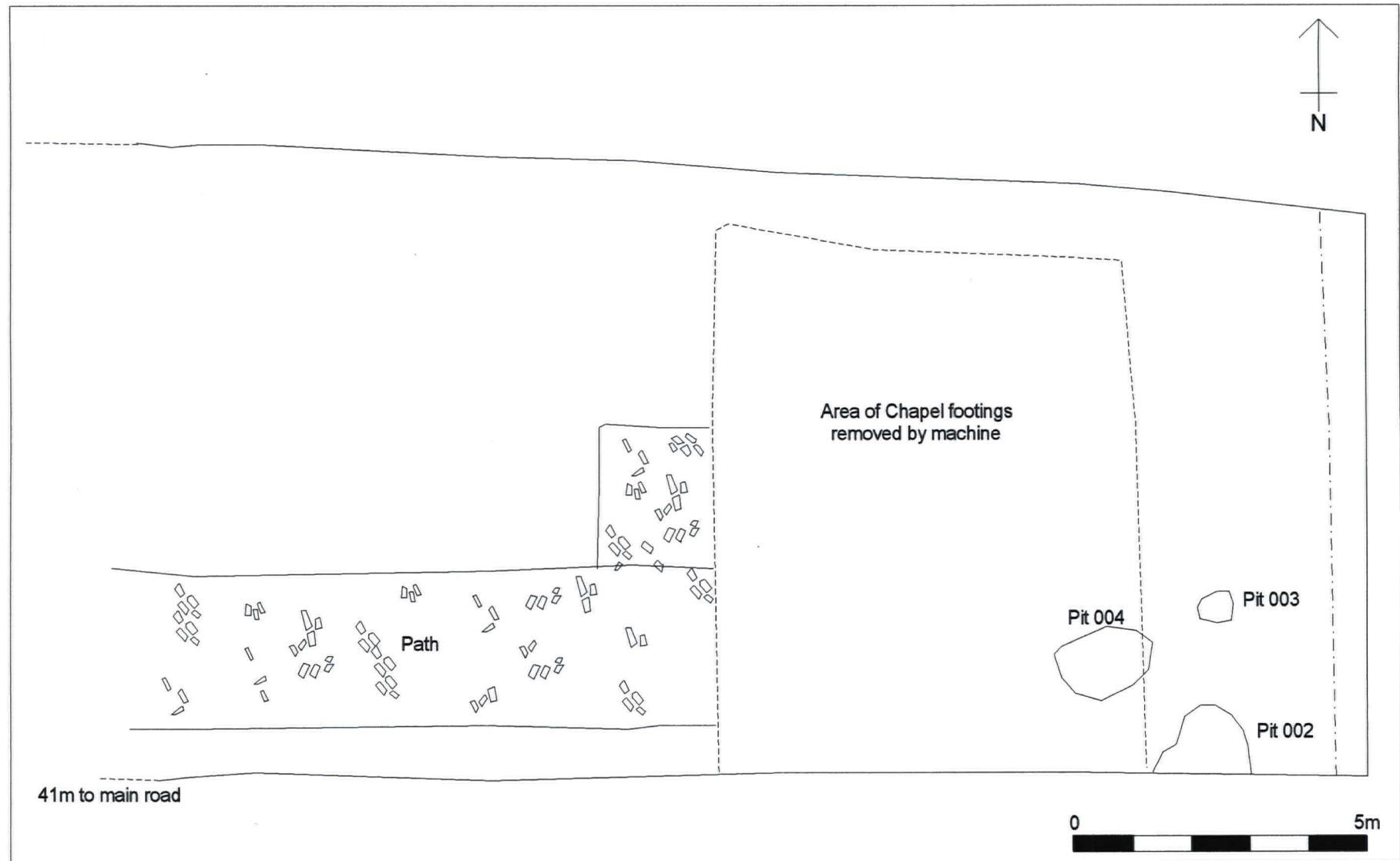


Figure 2. Location of Archaeological Features.