

ELDMIRE INGS, TOPCLIFFE

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Planning Application number 12/00112/FUL



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

M Wilkinson Esq.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the topsoil strip for a new free range egg facility at Eldmire Ings near Topcliffe, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 42473 74372); Planning Application number 12/00112/FUL. The watching brief recorded the remains of up to five heavily denuded lynchets surviving at the north-western end of the site. Originally these were probably c.3m wide and up to c.1m high.

The only other archaeological material recovered was a small number of fragments of 19th century pottery and glass, along with three small fragments of un-diagnostic medieval pottery, all of which were consistent with manuring.

The results of the watching brief show that the area has been used for agriculture since at least the medieval period.

ELDMIRE INGS, TOPCLIFFE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological watching brief on the ground works for a new free range egg production unit at Eldmire Ings, near Topcliffe, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 42473 74372) (Figures 1 & 2); Planning Application number 12/00112/FUL. The watching brief was undertaken by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) on the 25th June 2012 on behalf of Mr M Wilkinson.

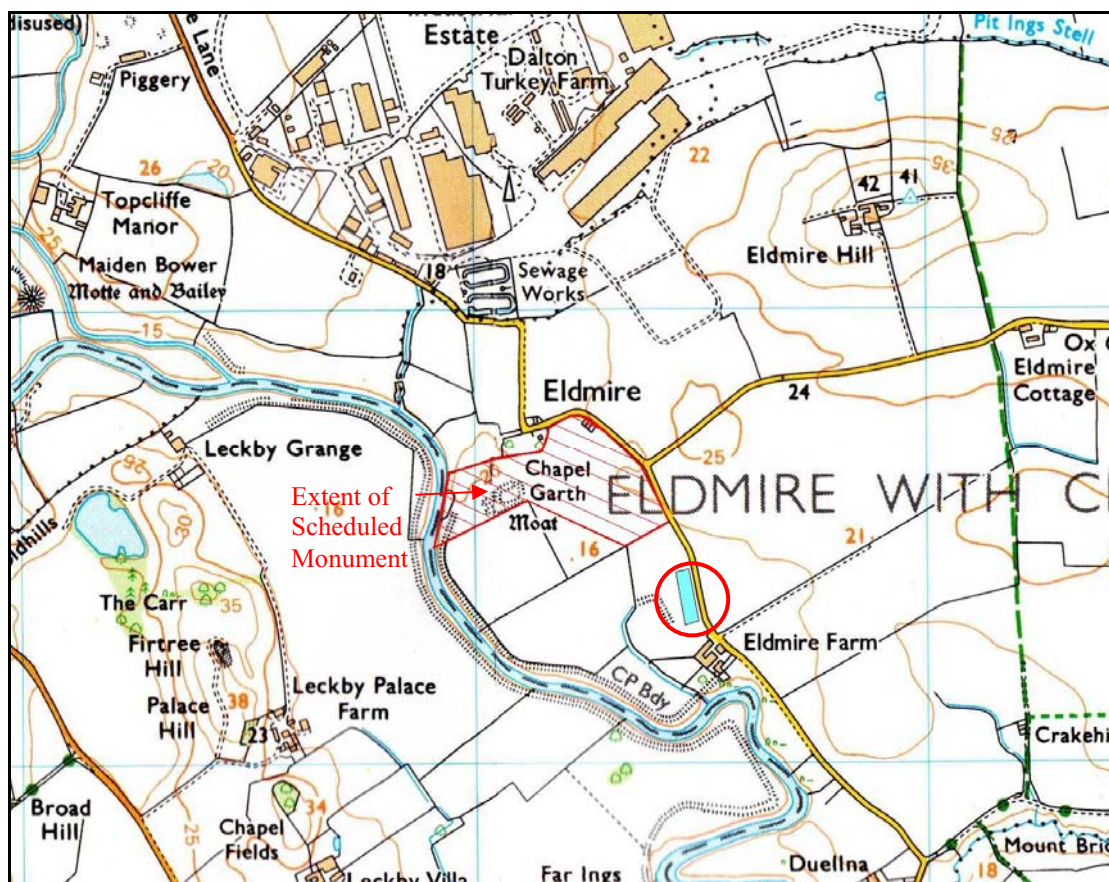


Figure 1. Site Location

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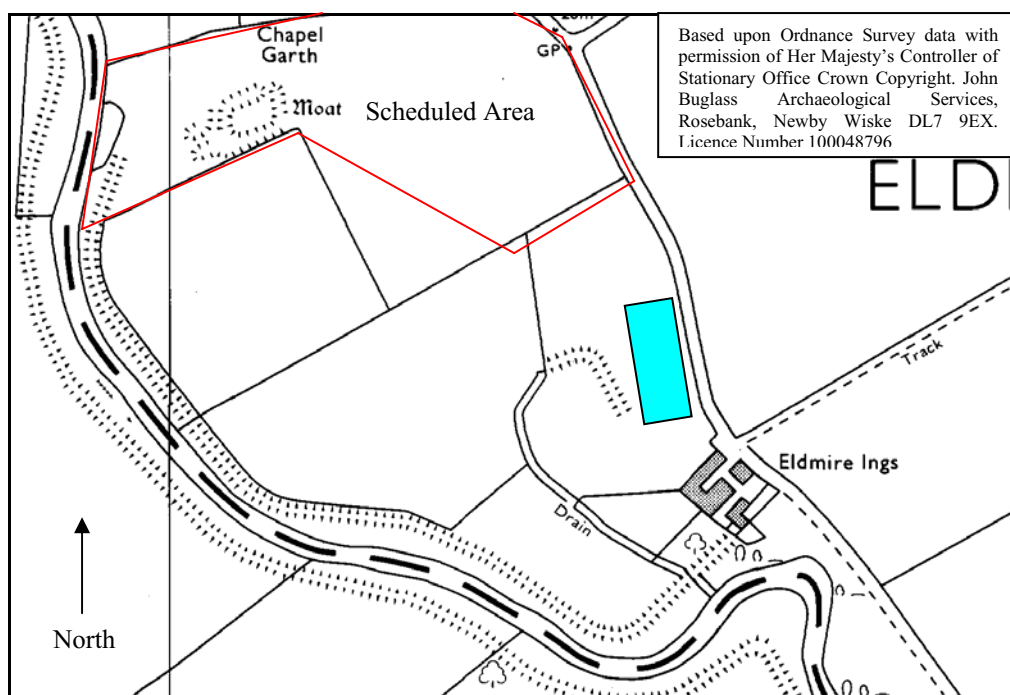


Figure 2. Location of new free range egg unit

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic and Archaeological Background

- 2.1 The name Eldmire derives from the Old English word *mere* for a lake or pool and *eld* meaning swan(s) whilst the *ings* portion refers to the field systems around the farm so the name means 'pond with swans surrounded by fields' (Gelling, 2000, 26). The development site lies to the south of a Scheduled Monument number 1015419 (formerly 28290). This is a complex of medieval features which includes a moated feature along with fishponds and an associated field system and windmill base. Evidence in the form of medieval agricultural earthworks can be seen in several parts of the landscape, particularly along the course of the River Swale. This meant that there was a moderate potential for further buried archaeological remains associated with the Scheduled Monument to be present within the development area.

Geology and Soils

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Triassic mudstones (British Geological Survey, 2001). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is alluvium (British Geological Survey, 1977). The soils, which have developed from these deposits, are classified as the Milford 2 association which is a fine well drained loamy soil (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Topography and Land-use

- 2.3 The site is located to the north-west of the farm in an area of eroded lynchets/terraces which slope down towards the River Swale to the west. The site lies at a height above sea level of *c.*20mOD and is surrounded by agricultural land.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the ground works associated with the new free range egg unit. The specific aims are to:
- archaeologically record (written, graphic and photographic records) any archaeological features revealed by the ground works
 - recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works
- 3.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists (now Institute *for* Archaeology) Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Watching Brief (1999).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The ground works were undertaken on 25th June 2012 by a 16 tonne tracked mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket under direct archaeological supervision.

5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 The overall results of the watching brief were generally negative. The only features recorded were the probable remains of a series of greatly denuded lynchets or agricultural terraces (Figure 3 and Plates 1 – 2). The lynchets were most visible towards the north-western end of the site where they formed a series of four, possibly five terraces and continued to the north-west. Towards the south-eastern end of the site they appear to have been completely ploughed down.
- 5.2 Initially one of the terraces appeared to be a small hollow-way or track-way. However, on further investigation it was seen that this feature was much more likely to have been caused by the movement of livestock between fields which had eroded one of the terraces into a hollow-way type feature over a long period of time.
- 5.3 Due to the denuded condition of the lynchets, it was not possible to determine their full extent but it would appear that originally they were *c.*2-3m wide and *c.*0.75-1m high.
- 5.4 During the topsoil strip, a small amount of 19th century pottery and glass was recovered along with three small sherds of un-diagnostic medieval pottery, all of which are the result of manuring with midden material.



Plate 1. Location of lynchets and possible hollow way, looking north-west



Plate 2. Location of lynchets and possible hollow way, looking north-west

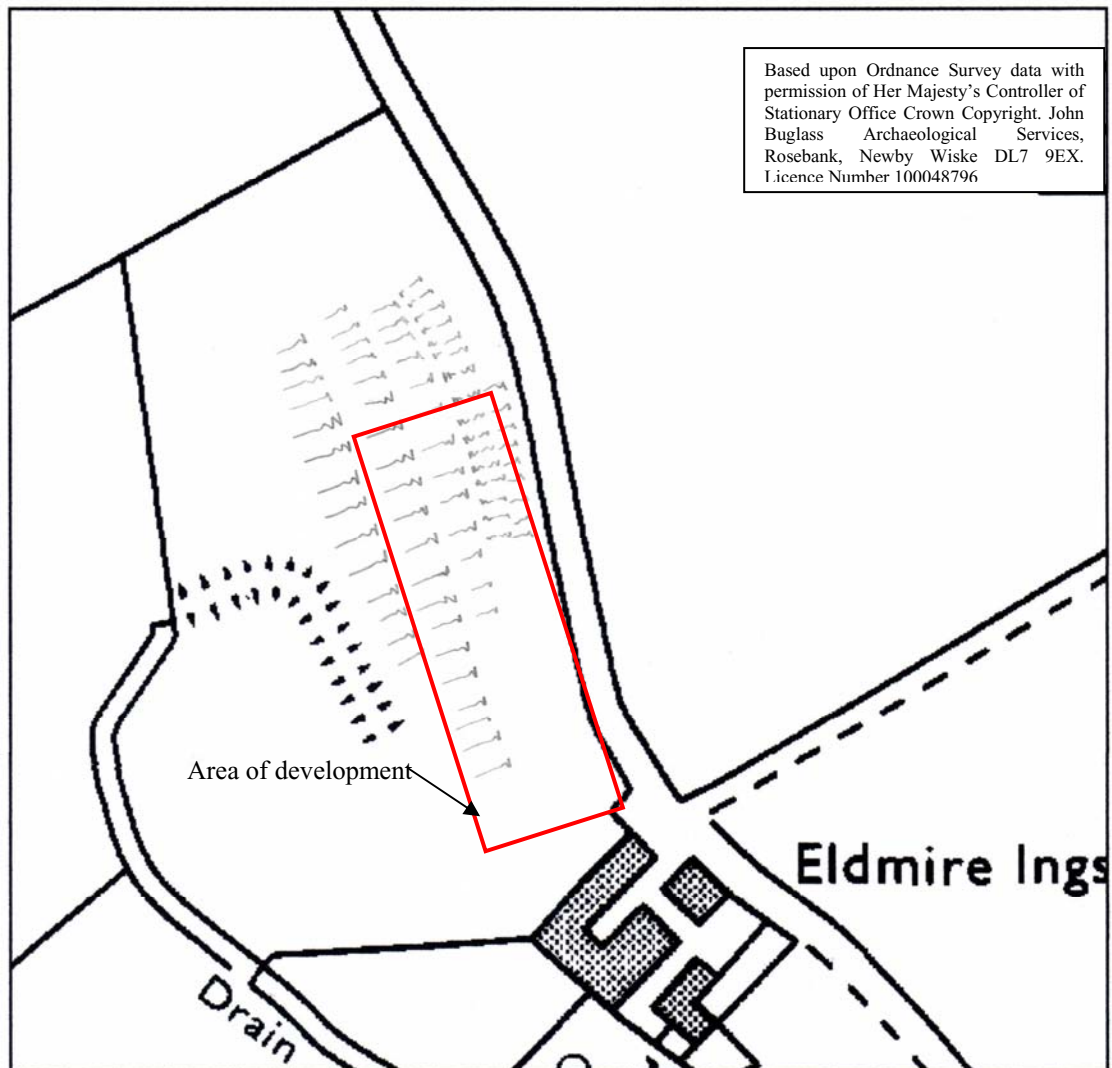


Figure 3. Hachure sketch of lynchets, not to scale

- 5.5 No other archaeological finds or features were encountered during the ground works.

6.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 From the results described above it appears that the area of the development has been agricultural land since at least the medieval period. The agricultural earthworks described are probably associated with the Scheduled monument to the north-west.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank both Mick Wilkinson for asking me to undertake this project and Jim, the machine driver, for their co-operation in doing the site work.

References

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