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THE BAILEY
SKIPTON
NORTH YORKSHIRE
SE 39943 45213

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP STUDY

for

SKIPTON BUILDING SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 1998

Kevin John Cale

September 1998

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Introduction

In May 1998 the Bowman Riley Partnership acting on behalf of the Skipton Building Society instructed Kevin John Cate, Archaeological Consultant to carry out an archaeological desk top study in advance of the commencement of groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the headquarters building at the Bailey, Skipton, North Yorkshire.

An Archaeological Desk Top Study was commissioned in advance of ground disturbance associated with the construction of a large office extension to Skipton Building Society Headquarters at The Bailey, Skipton. The study was undertaken in order to locate and assess any archaeology that may be situated within the study area and thereafter establish the likely impact of the proposed works on these remains. The study was commissioned by Skipton Premises Ltd, Skipton Building Society.

The findings within this report are based upon a detailed inspection of the available documentary, photographic and map based information and these were complimented by a rapid site inspection.

Location and Status

The Town of Skipton:

Skipton is situated within the suburban township of Skipton, on the confluence of a number of shallow valleys on the hinterland of the Pennine uplands.

The town is situated on the interface between the millstone grit geology of the uplands and the late glacial lake deposits of the low lying plain to the south east.

The market town is bisected by Eller Beck a minor tributary of the River Aire. The old town centre is situated on a prominent rise, approximately 114 metres above sea level, benefiting from a commanding aspect overlooking the flood plain of the River Aire. This area of rising ground is contained to the north and west by a steep sided wooded ravine, that channels Eller Beck.

The Study Area:

The Skipton Building Society Headquarters are located within the north eastern extent of the market town of Skipton, immediately adjacent to the A6131 road leading to Knaresborough. The general area is referred to as The Bailey due to the close proximity of Skipton Castle. The study area is situated to the immediate south of the existing and recently constructed office buildings at National Grid Reference SD 39943 45214 at 137 m AOD.

The site measures approximately 160m x 100m and falls gradually from the north to the south. The ground levels within the central and northern extent of the study area have been recently landscaped to produce a relatively level lawn and gardens, the remainder of the site is occupied by car parking.

Summary

The desk top study indicated that the area proposed for development had a low potential to contain archaeological remains.

The County Sites and Monuments Record and The Craven Museum contain no references to archaeological remains on the site of the proposed development.

The following statement draws on information derived from a wide variety of sources that include publications, maps, museums and photographic evidence, these were supplemented with a site inspection. Details concerning the recent development of the site were provided by Mr.W.Barron, Facilities Manager, Skipton Premises Ltd.

The consultation of this wide variety of sources would suggest that there is a very slight possibility that archaeological features and deposits survive across the site, these are likely to be agricultural structures associated with the boundaries of the late 18th century field configuration together with a possible agricultural trackway. Furthermore with the sites close proximity to the defences of Skipton Castle the possibilities of identifying features and deposits associated with militant activities across the site can not be ruled out. However as a result of the high levels of disturbance across the site in the last 60 years the probability of the survival of archaeological evidence, in situ, is unlikely.

Site Development

Early 19th Century

The earliest cartographic source of the area is a Plan of Skipton made for the Earl of Thanet in 1830. The site is depicted on the south eastern edge of this map as consisting of three enclosed fields (A, B & C).

Field A - No. 362

The largest of the three fields situated in the centre and north of the site. The field is contained to the north and west by the Skipton to Knaresborough road, to the south by the eastern aligned boundary with Field B, the nature of the eastern boundary can not be determined as it projects beyond the area surveyed. The point of access into the field is not depicted. A small number of mature trees are shown as being spaced intermittently

Need figure

along the northern boundary. The field shows no indication of having been developed or as supporting any associated features. It would appear that the configuration of the field has been determined by the line of the Skipton to Knaresborough road, it is suspected to be the product of the late 18th century enclosure.

Field B - No.363

This narrow strip field is sandwiched between fields A and C and is situated within the centre south of the site. The field is aligned, predominantly east with a slight east north east return towards the east. The north eastern area of the field is obscured by an illustration. The field is enclosed on all sides, to the west by the Skipton Knaresborough road. A single mature tree is situated mid length on its northern boundary. The point of access into the field is not depicted. The field shows no indication of having been developed or as supporting any associated features. It would appear that the configuration of the field has been determined by the line of the Skipton to Knaresborough road to the west and possible trackway to the south. It is possible that the planform and characteristics of the field have their origins in the (selion) strip land allocation of the pre 18th century common fields.

Field C - No.364

This irregular shaped field broadens to the west and east with a central sinuous section. The field is situated to the immediate south of field B, with only the northern extent of the field lying within the study area. The field is contained to the west by the Skipton to Knaresborough road, to the north by the field B to the south by a rectilinear boundary, to the south east the field is open affording direct access into a narrow strip field that is aligned north north west. This unusual configuration of the field would suggest that prior to the late 18th century enclosure this area functioned as a trackway affording access to and from the Skipton / Knaresborough road into the open common fields.

On a Plan of Skipton made for the Earl of Thanet by John Wood dated 1832 the site is depicted within the north eastern corner of the map. Upon which the site is occupied by two fields, the configuration of which slightly differ from that described above, namely by the amalgamation of field B into field A.

Field A is named New Close ——— (the third component of the name is illegible) the field supports ridge and furrow cultivation which is aligned east. It is of note that the cultivation continues on a similar alignment into that the triangular shaped field to the west of the Skipton / Knaresborough road suggesting that a single, large cultivated field had been bisected by the construction of the thoroughfare.

Field C is similar in form and character to that depicted in 1830, with the exception that it does not open out into the field to the south east. The field is not shown as supporting ridge and furrow, but the field to the south does indicate that an area of ridge and furrow aligned north may have originally continued into field C.

Mid 18th Century

The two available map sources for this period were surveyed by the Ordnance Survey at 6" to the mile and date to 1863 and 1854. The study area is depicted as being contained within the curtilage of a single large field, this field is the amalgamation of field A and B

as depicted on the 1830 map. This field is devoid of development, but is traversed by a trackway that would appear to afford access from the Knaresborough road to an isolated un-named property the immediate east of the study area. This trackway is aligned east and forks at its eastern extent, with at least one mature tree along its length. The location and alignment of the track appears to match the line of the northern boundary of field B, 1830.

It is of note that field C that, has previously, contained the study area to the south has changed in form and use. The northern boundary of this field has shifted south onto the boundary of the study area, furthermore the eastern extent of the field has been developed with an isolated dwelling, named as Overdale surrounded by woodland.

Early 20th Century

On the Ordnance Survey 25" to the mile map of 1938 the study area is contained within the boundaries of a single field, the size and form of which respect that as depicted on the 1854 map. A narrow, curvilinear strip of land, running parallel with the western boundary is marked and shaded. The trackway affording access to the isolated property to the east of the site is marked as before as is the configuration of the southern boundary of the study area. Further development of the Overdale site, together with development of the "green fields" to the south east of the study area.

Mid 20th Century

During the post war years the site was taken over and run by the local Agricultural College, this resulted in the construction of temporary classrooms and implement storage units within the southern extent of the study area. The remainder of the study area, it is understood, was utilised for ploughing practice. From the OS 1:25,000 map it would appear that the college buildings were situated to the south of that trackway as depicted on the 1938 map, the track being utilised for site access. During the post war years housing development had encroached to the east of the site with the construction of the Spring Gardens / Regent Road Estate, together with further infill of the Overdale site. Running adjacent to the southern boundary of the site a public right of way was established forming pedestrian access between the Knaresborough Road (A6131) and Regent Road.

Recent Years

During recent years the study area has been acquired by the Skipton Building Society who during the late 1980's and early 1990's developed the central and northern extent of the site. These works resulted in the construction of the Main Office Building, The Bailey, and associated ancillary buildings, service roads and car parking facilities. The southern half the study area was cleared of the temporary classrooms, their hardstandings were utilised as overspill car parking. Elsewhere the rough wasteground that had been used for ploughing practice was deturfed, topsoiled and then backfilled and graded for the existing lawn area.

This programme of construction works and landscaping revealed that limestone bedrock was within 0.20 m of the former ground levels within the centre north of the site.

Observations

The result of the desk top study would indicate that there is a low potential for the survival of archaeology across the site. It is anticipated that this will be due to a number of factors, namely:-

- . post war cultivation.
- . agricultural college development including the installation of services and drainage
- . recent landscaping across the site.

The available evidence would suggest that should any archaeology have survived the above it is likely that this will be associated with the medieval and post medieval cultivation practices. Furthermore given the truncation and removal of topsoil deposits these features will only survive where they have cut into the underlying sub soil deposits, assuming the same is not bedrock.

Sources:

1830 Earl of Thanet Plan of Skipton in the West Riding of Yorkshire

1832 Earl of Thanet Plan of Skipton surveyed by John Wood

1853 OS 1st Edition 6" to the Mile

1854 OS 1st Edition 6" to the Mile

1938 OS 25" inch to the Mile

1984 OS 1:25,000

NYCC SMR Consultation - August 1998

Craven Museum Consultation - September 1998

Skipton Building Society Archive Consultation - September 1998

D.Williams, 1981, Medieval Skipton

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