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SNY	585
E.Y	172
CNY	1686
Parish	6047
Rec'd	26/07/2000

**PRIMARY SCHOOL,
KIRBY HILL,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**



**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**



**2000 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 37**

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KIRBY HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHURCH LANE, KIRBY HILL,
NORTH YORKSHIRE

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF

CONTENTS

	ABSTRACT
1.	INTRODUCTION
2.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
3	METHODOLOGY
4	WATCHING BRIEF
5.	CONCLUSIONS
6	LIST OF SOURCES
7	LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

List of Figures

Figure 1	Site location
Figure 2.	Test pit locations
Figure 3.	Ridge and Furrow

ABSTRACT

In July 2000 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief on five geotechnical test pits excavated in grassed recreational fields adjacent to the primary school at Kirby Hill, North Yorkshire. A number of above ground earthworks are visible in the fields. These include two ridge and furrow field systems, their attendant boundaries and a lynchet/terrace. Most or all of these relate to the past agricultural use of the area. The test pits revealed only the topsoil (formerly a plough sod) and underlying deposits believed to be of "natural" origin. No finds or features were observed within the confines of the small test pits that could confirm or deny the presence of a pre Norman conquest monastic settlement which may be located at or near the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 11th July 2000 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief on grassed recreational fields adjacent to Kirby Hill (Church of England) Primary School, Kirby Hill, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 3920 6840), (Figure 1, Site location map). The monitoring works concerned the recording of five geotechnical test pits mechanically excavated on behalf of White, Young and Green, Consulting Engineers. These works were prompted by proposals to rebuild the primary school on parts of the recreational fields adjacent to the school.

The aims of the archaeological work were to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains within the area of the test pits and to determine the location, date, extent, character and quality of any such deposits that may be found. The watching brief was carried out at the instruction of White, Young and Green and conducted in accordance with the "standard written scheme of investigation (WSI) for limited archaeological recording (Watching Brief)" issued by the Heritage Department of North Yorkshire County Council.

A very gentle ground slope is apparent at the site, this being predominantly in a south-west down to north-east direction. The soils of the Kirby Hill area are essentially sandy loams whilst the solid geology is of Bunter and Keuper sandstones (Geol Surv, 1971).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area of proposed development lies at the north-eastern extremity of the village of Kirby Hill. The major Roman road of Dere Street, which follows a north-west – south-east route is located some 250m to the east (Margary 1973). At a point roughly equidistant between Dere Street and the site lies the parish church of All Saints. Parts of the fabric of this Church are believed to have a pre-Norman conquest origin (Taylor &

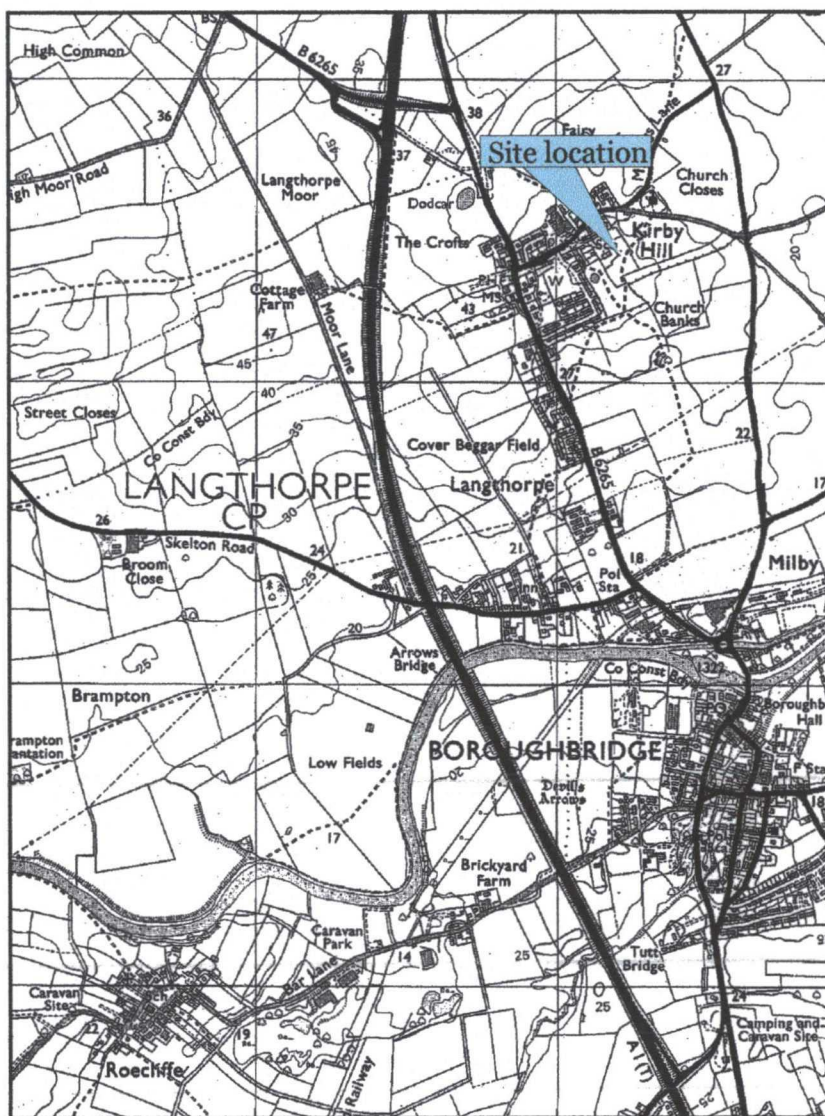
Taylor, 1965) Much of the stonework of the church is clearly re-used Roman material, though whether from the Roman town of Aldborough (Isurum Brigantium) or closer to hand, is uncertain. Several pieces of Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture from the church are again of a pre-conquest origin (Bailey, 1980). The presence of this sculpture together with the “Kirby” place-name has been used to suggest that the ecclesiastical origins of the church may have been monastic (Morris, 1990). Recent opinions have tended towards the view that any ecclesiastical settlement at Kirby Hill may have been satellite to the important early minster church at Ripon (R. Hall, pers. comm.). Evidence in the form of irregularity of alignment, has been used to suggest that the “village” of Kirby Hill is an addition to a pre-existing (ecclesiastical) focus.

3. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief consisted of the observation and recording of deposits (in accordance with NYCC WSI guidelines) revealed during the excavation of the five geotechnical pits. Each pit was mechanically excavated by a JCB 3CX machine equipped with a small toothed bucket under the supervision of an environmental engineer. All test pits were nominally 2.0m x 0.40m in plan area and were cut to depths of between 1.65m – 3.10m. For health and safety reasons, detailed section examination could only be carried out in the uppermost parts of the pits, examination of soils at depth was accomplished by inspection of the contents of the machine bucket. All records were made in a site notebook, this includes measured section drawings and soil descriptions/notes. A number of 35mm colour print photographs were also taken of both the pits and the site. All depths in the text are given as below ground level (BGL) i.e. from the ground surface at the top of each pit.

Although not strictly part of the watching brief, notes and sketch detail on a map together with photographs, were made of a number of earthworks located at and immediately adjacent to the proposed development site.

All site records are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the YAT accession code YORAT 2000 11.



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Figure 1 Site location

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METRES



Figure 2, Test pit location plan



Figure 3, Plan showing sketched locations of earthworks

4. WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 Test pits

Test pit 1

Test pit 1 was excavated to a depth of 2.60m BGL. At, and above this level to a depth of 1.40m BGL, context 13, was present. This material was brownish red, soft, fine sand in which quantities of weak, laminated, red sandstone fragments were noted. This was sealed by context 12, mid reddish brown slightly clayey sand which contained occasional cobbles and had an upper limit at 0.45m BGL. The uppermost deposit recorded in the pit was the topsoil, context 11, mid brown, friable, sandy loam whose lowermost parts extended to around 0.45m BGL. The interface between contexts 11 and 12 was not sharp, but one that tended to merge. No finds were recovered from pit 1.

Test pit 2

At a depth of some 2.50m BGL the uppermost parts of context 23 were reached. This material was seen to extend beyond the basal limits of pit 2 at 3.10m BGL. Context 23 was brownish red (frequently with a pinkish tinge), soft, fine sand in which quantities of weak, laminated, red sandstone were present. Context 22 sealed 23. This material, which had an upper limit at 0.30m BGL, was brownish red, fairly soft, fine sand that contained a small amount of clay. The uppermost material in pit 2, context 21, was the mid brown, friable, sandy loam topsoil. No finds or other artifactual materials were observed in pit 2.

Test pit 3

Context 33, which was observed at the base of the pit at 1.65m BGL, was composed predominantly of shattered, weak, laminated, red sandstone together with lesser quantities of pinkish red sand. Above this, and extending to 0.30m BGL was context 32, a very slightly clayey red sand in which small quantities of sandstone and lesser amounts of cobbles were present. The uppermost material, context 31, was the mid brown, friable sandy loam topsoil. No finds were recovered from pit 3.

Test pit 4

Occurring at a depth of 2.0m BGL and extending beyond the basal limits of the pit at 2.20m BGL, was context 44. This was composed in roughly equal proportions of brownish red sand and weak, laminated, red sandstone. Sealing this and with an upper limit at 0.80m BGL was context 43, brownish red, soft, fine sand containing occasional fragments of red sandstone. Context 42 occurred between 0.80m and 0.22m BGL and was essentially reddish brown, slightly clayey sand that contained very occasional cobbles. The mid brown, friable sandy loam topsoil, context 41, sealed 42. A total absence of finds was noted for pit 4.

Test pit 5

Context 53 was noted at a depth of 1.40m BGL and was seen to extend beyond the base of the pit at 2.90m BGL. This material was composed of brownish red, soft, fine sand that contained quantities of weak, laminated, red sandstone. Above 53 and with an upper limit at 1.40m BGL was context 52, mid brown (with a slight reddish hue) slightly clayey sand. This was in turn sealed by context 51, the mid brown, friable, sandy loam topsoil. It was noted that the interface between contexts 52 and 51 was one that tended to gradually merge.

Test pit summary

Each of the test pits produced broadly similar results. In each case the only deposit likely to have been the subject of human activity was the topsoil, though no artifactual material was recovered from this. The grounds for suggesting human intervention are the traces of ridge and furrow ploughing indicative of past arable agriculture (see below). All materials below the topsoil appear to be of a "natural" origin in which human intervention has played no part.

4.2 Earthworks

A number of earthworks are present at the site. The larger, north-eastern part of the recreational grounds contains narrowly spaced ridge and furrow (spacing approximately 5.0m centre to centre of furrow) aligned north-west – south-east, of an arable field system. The south-eastern limits of this are demarcated by a low south-west – north-east aligned bank just within the limits of the grounds. This narrow spaced ridge and furrow survives only shallowly. The field system can be seen to continue into the adjacent pasture field to the north-east. A south-western limit to the system is marked by what appears to be the low remnants of a north-west – south-east aligned bank and ditch. South-west of this boundary traces of a further ridge and furrow system can be observed, again aligned north-west – south-east but this time more widely spaced (approximately 10.0m centre to centre of furrow). Earthworks, parts at least of which may relate to this broadly spaced system, can be seen to be immediately south-east of the grounds in meadow land. Towards the northern end of a tongue of land that abuts Church Lane a lynchet or terrace, standing up to 1.50m high and aligned approximately east – west was noted. Beyond the site boundaries, the pasture field immediately south-east of the narrowly spaced ridge and furrow can also be seen to contain earthworks. Although inspection of this was not possible it is thought that that most or all of this may relate to south-west – north-east aligned ridge and furrow.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

No finds or features were noted in any of the test pits. Only the topsoil, formerly a plough soil, could be seen to relate to past human activity. All observed deposits below the topsoil are believed to have "natural" origins. Above ground, a plethora of earthworks was visible. The bulk of these were ridge and furrow, and their attendant boundaries, and relate to past agricultural use of the area. The origin and function of the lynchet/terrace at the extreme north of the site is uncertain. The presence of the ridge and furrow suggests that from medieval times the site has been devoted to arable or pasture fields, not settlement. No evidence was found to confirm earlier medieval or pre-medieval settlement at the site. This may be because such has never existed here. Alternatively it may be that only the deepest parts of such would survive medieval and later ploughing and that none of these coincided within the area of a test pit. Academic research has suggested the possible presence of a pre-conquest monastic institution in the vicinity of the church (and that it is known that these can encompass considerable areas) so the possibility of features relating to any such establishment occurring within the development area cannot be ruled out. The extant earthworks described above merit a full survey and description should they be affected by the proposed development.

6. LIST OF SOURCES

Bailey, R 1980	Viking Age Sculpture
Geol Surv 1971	Geological Survey of Great Britain "Ten Mile Map"
Margary, I 1973	Roman Roads in Britain
Morris, R 1990	Churches in the Landscape
Taylor, H & Taylor, J 1965	Anglo-Saxon Architecture, Vol I

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