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**Staxton Farm  
Main Road  
Staxton  
North Yorkshire**

**TA 0164 7905**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**MAP**  
September 2002

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Main Road  
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**Archaeological Evaluation**

**1. Introduction**

This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out at Staxton Farm, Staxton, Willerby parish, North Yorkshire (TA 01641 79059 centre).

The site comprises of Staxton Farm and an area of c. 0.4ha consisting of areas covered by farm buildings, hardstanding, gardens and paddocks, situated within the centre of the modern village, between Main Street to the north and the A64 road to the south (Fig. 1). The eastern and northern boundaries of the site are formed by the Eighteenth century farmhouse and associated farm buildings. The foldyard wall and attached building at the rear of the farmhouse is Grade II. listed.

The elevation of the site is c. 41m AOD, and the land drops away to the north and north-west. The underlying geology is glaciofluvial drift of sands and gravels, which form an east to west zone between the elevated chalk Wolds to the south, and marshy carr lands (now largely drained) following the course of the River Derwent to the north. The glaciofluvial drift provides deep, well-drained and coarse loamy soils of the Newport 1 Association (SSEW).

A planning application (02/00156/FUL & 02/00163/DEMLB) has been submitted to Ryedale District Council for the demolition of the more recently constructed farm buildings in the central and north-western areas of the site and the conversion to residential use for the remaining farm buildings of Eighteenth century date located in the eastern and northern areas of the site. In addition the main access for the development will follow the existing access and new build will be located along the southern boundary of the site in an area currently used as a garden and a paddock (Fig. 00).

The evaluation was carried out over 6 days in August 2002, by the writer (M R Stephens) with the assistance of R Blackburn, N Finch and G Moody in the field. Deposits of Prehistoric, Roman and medieval date were identified.

All work was commissioned through D Lindley., for Boulton & Cooper, who were the funding agent.

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## Archaeological and Historical Background

The sandy soils of the Newport 1 Association on which the site is situated, attracted large-scale settlement in the prehistoric period. The earliest known activity in the vicinity of Staxton Farm is represented by a number of Beaker burials from an area c. 500m east of the site, excavated in 1957 (Stead 1960). Beaker sherds were also found at Newham's Pit sand quarry (c. 500m east of the site) by Brewster (Brewster 1957). More recently, a complete beaker, possibly associated with an inhumation, was found during the construction of houses at the former Methodist church c. 300m east-north-east of the site (pers. comm. J Halliday, beaker in Doncaster museum).

Considerable excavation has been carried out on the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements between Sherburn and West Heslerton (Powlesland 1986), but the extent to which that 'ladder settlement' extended to Staxton is unclear. Brewster excavated a considerable Roman enclosure at Newham's Pit, and also found evidence of Anglian settlement there. A large Anglian cemetery is also known to have existed in the vicinity of the Shell Garage immediately west of Newham's pit, crouched inhumation being found in 1994 (MAP 1994) and further Watching Briefs have been undertaken in the intervening years but no further archaeological features observed (MAP 2002).

Staxton itself existed as a settlement before the Norman conquest. The name, first recorded in 1086, means '*Stakk's* farmstead' and shows Anglo-Scandinavian influence (Smith ed. 1937). Two estates were in the king's ownership at the time of the Domesday survey; at the time of King Edward 5 carucates were held by Carle and Torfin, with 1 carucate being the soke of Morcar's manor of Bridlington.

The extent and form of the medieval settlement is not certain. The village pattern seems to indicate a 'Street Village', with north to south aligned plots bisected by an east to west road (now Main Street). The present site would appear to lie within the southern row of this Street Village plan, and probably originally formed part of a number of the north to south properties to the south of the axis road.

The medieval village was one of three settlements in Willerby parish (the others being Willerby and Binnington), and seems to have been of moderate size. 71 tax-payers were recorded at Staxton by the 1377 Poll Tax, compared to 81 at Willerby and 36 at Binnington. Staxton, along with Potter Brompton has been long believed to be the source of Staxton / Potter Brompton ware (Brewster 1958). Brewster excavated a medieval building at the Hare and Hounds, but the exact location of his trenches is

unknown (of which more later). Brewster also recorded a large medieval pit in the plot immediately west of the site (Dean's Kiln ), and recovered a group of medieval sherds from the Boythorpe Engineering Works, which lies west of the site. In addition, medieval sherds and chalk rubble were observed when the area immediately north-west of the site was cut back to improve the visibility of traffic exiting Main Street. The supposition is that peasant potters were producing coarse pottery for the East Yorkshire market, possibly from the late 12th to the early 15th century, but there is no clear proof that any of the sites that Brewster recorded at Staxton (or Potter Brompton) were ever concerned with pottery manufacture (Brewster & Hayfield 1992). It is obvious that any evidence of pottery manufacture present on the Staxton Farm development site would be of probable National Significance, and evaluation trenches excavated in 1995 at the Hare and Hounds (MAP 1995) located evidence for buildings and property boundaries associated with a large assemblage of Staxton Ware pottery. Further work on this site produced evidence of pits and quantities of iron slag.

In the post-medieval period, the other two settlements in Willerby parish began to decline; the 1670 Hearth Tax returns list 25 house-holds in Staxton, with 21 in Willerby and 19 in Binnington. Staxton benefited from the coaching trade; the Hare and Hounds (known from the early 19th century) and the Stirrup Inn (formerly The Board) bears a date-stone of 1649.

Twentieth century changes and improvements to the Malton to Scarborough road have included the diversion of the route from Main Street to a new course south of the village (immediately south of the Staxton Farm site). The site itself has been a working farm for over 200 years and part of the farm complex is listed Grade II.



## Evaluation Methods

The modern topsoil and colluvium over the trenches was removed under close archaeological supervision by a JCB excavator using a broad toothless bucket. In Trenches 1, 2 and 3 the surface of the natural gravelly sand revealed by the machining was cleaned by hand and inspected for features. Trench 4 was different in that mechanical excavation revealed that this area of the site had been terraced in the past and that the modern hard standing stood directly upon natural sands and gravels.

Plans and sections were drawn at suitable scales, and are reproduced in this report. A photographic record was taken in colour and monochrome, and a written record was maintained under the continuous context recording system.

## Evaluation Results

Four trenches were excavated. Trench 1 measured <sup>?20m</sup> 40m x 2m, Trench 2, 5m x 2m, Trench 3 5m x 2m and Trench 4 10m x 2m.

### Trench 1

Excavation of this trench measuring 20m x 2m located in the southern half of the site (Figs. 2 & 3) exposed a hearth (contexts 1009 - 1012), two ditches (1019 & 1025 : Pl. 1), a gully (1029), two postholes (1022 - Pl. 1 & 1027) and four pits (1015, 1031, 1033 & 1035).

The earliest features appeared to two contexts Ditches 1019 and 1025.

Ditch 1025 was aligned north-east to south-west and appeared to respect and follow the alignment of Ditch 1019 to the south. This pairing was almost identical to Ditches 3004 and 3006 in Trench 3 (compare Figs. 3 and 6). Ditch 1025 measured 0.34m in width and was 0.26m in depth with a shallow 'V' shaped profile (Fig. 3 : Pl. 1). The single fill, context 1024, was a greyish brown sandy silt which contained three sherds of pottery of Prehistoric date, plus a possible intrusive medieval sherd.

Ditch 1019 was situated immediately to the east of Ditch 1025 on a south-west north-east alignment. Measuring 0.75m in width and 0.37m in depth with a flat based 'V' shaped profile, this feature was different to other ditches excavated during the evaluation in that it possessed two fills (contexts 1017 & 1018 : Fig. 3). Context 1018 a yellowish brown silty sand represented the primary fill of the ditch. Fill 1017 was a



brown silty sand. Fill 1017 contained four sherds of Prehistoric pottery and one fragment of flint (Appendix 2).

Situated to the south of Ditches 1019 and 1025 were two sub circular features interpreted as pits (contexts 1031 & 1033) due to their form and associated fills.

The full extent of Pit 1033 could not be recorded as its western edge had been removed by Pit 1031 and the eastern edge by Ditch 1025. What did survive measured 0.72m in width and 0.40m in depth with well defined sloping sides. The fill, 1032, was a greyish brown sandy silt with no associated finds.

Pit 1031 was sub circular in shape and measured in excess of 1.1m in diameter with a depth of 0.18m and a gentle 'U' shaped profile. The fill, 1030, was a dark brown sandy silt with no associated finds.

Excavation to the south of this group of features would have provided valuable stratigraphic information, but unfortunately extension of Trench 1 was outside the remit of the evaluation programme.

All of the above features were cut in to the natural sand and chalk gravels. This was also true of Features 1022, 1027 and 1029.

Feature 1022 was a sub circular posthole measuring 0.28m in diameter and 0.24m deep with a 'U' shaped profile and a concave base (Pl. 1). The fills, contexts 1020 and 1021, were brown silty sands. Only fill 1020 contained finds which consisted of one sherd of pottery and a single fragment of animal bone (Appendix 2).

Posthole 1027 was a sub circular cut measuring 0.25m in diameter and 0.23m deep with a 'U' shaped profile and a single fill of greyish brown sandy silt (context 1026). No finds were recovered from this feature.

Feature 1029 a north south aligned gully which measured 0.25m in width and 0.08m deep. The fill, context 1028, was a yellowish brown sand which contained no finds.

Feature 1016 represented a deposit of three large fragments of limestone associated with a single piece of animal bone. This deposit was laying directly on top of the natural chalk gravels but it unclear as to its nature.

Sealing Feature 1016 was a deposit of yellowish brown sand, context 1013, which contained flint, pottery and animal bone. This deposit would appear to be a sub division of the more extensive wind blown deposit context 1023.

Cut into Deposit 1023 were a number of features including two pits (1015 & 1035) and a hearth.

The full extent of Pit 1015 could not be determined due to the northern edge of Trench 1 and the baulk left in situ to preserve Wall 1005. Measuring in excess of 2m in diameter and 0.4m deep with a 'U' shaped profile, the pit contained a single fill of dark brown sandy silt (context 1014). No finds were recovered from this feature.

Pit 1035 measured in excess of 0.85m in diameter with a depth of 0.25m, the full extent of the feature was masked by the northern edge of Trench 1 and the in situ baulk associated with Wall 1005 to the west. The sides of the pit ranged from steep/vertical in the north to a 45° angle in the west. The base was flat and the fill, context 1034 a fine silty sand contained animal bone, pottery and flint (Appendix 2). Pit 1035 cut into the earlier Pit 1030.

To the west of Pit 1035 excavation located the remains of a burnt feature which due to its form and nature has been interpreted as a hearth (Pl. 2). Deposits 1009, a dark yellowish brown sandy soil and 1012, a blackened mass of clay all sat within context 1010 a pinky brown clay deposit which formed the lining of the hearth. The only finds from the feature was a single fragment of animal bone. Archaeoemagnetic dating has been undertaken (Geoquest forthcoming).

Deposit 1007, a dark brownish grey sandy loam sealed Features 1010, 1014, 1019, 1022, 1027, 1035. Deposit 1007 has been interpreted as an agricultural/garden soil formed by natural accumulation. No finds were recovered from this context.

Cut into stand still horizon 1007 was a shallow 'U' shaped cut (1008) which contained irregular shaped limestone blocks of varying sizes randomly laid within a hollow, cut 1008. It seems likely that Deposit 1005 (Pl. 3) represents the base for a wall, perhaps for a garden wall.

Associated with this phase of activity was a linear feature, 1004, a shallow scoop filled with a brownish yellow sand which overlay Hearth 1010.



Completing the archaeological sequence in Trench 1 was a deposit of topsoil/garden soil, contexts 1001 and 1006. 1002 & 1007?

## **Trench 2**

Trench 2, measuring 5m x 2m, was positioned in the western half of the site (Figs. 2 & 4 : Pl. 4). Excavation located two ditches (2004 & 2010), a curvi-linear gully (2006) and a posthole (2008 : Fig. 4).

Stratigraphically the earliest feature, the curvi-linear gully (2006) was observed in the northern half of the trench where it measured 0.30m in width and 3.2m in extent and 0.21m in depth with a variable profile ranging from a basic 'U' shape to a more vertically edged profile in the north. The northern extent appeared to continue outside of the limits of the trench and in the south the feature had been cut away by Ditch 2004. The fill of Gully 2006 was a fine sandy silt (2005) which contained no associated finds.

Interpretation of Gully 2006 is slightly problematic. The full extent was not revealed therefore if it had a funerary function the grave is likely to be outside of the evaluation trench. A domestic context is equally unsure due to the lack of postholes. Perhaps a more likely interpretation is that Gully 2006 represents a stack base.

Immediately to the north-west of Gully 2006 was a circular cut (2008) which was interpreted as a posthole due to its size and form. Measuring 0.30m in diameter and surviving to a depth of 0.12m with a 'U' shaped profile the feature possessed a fill of dark greyish brown sandy silt (2007) with no associated finds. Like Gully 2006 Posthole 2008 was cut directly in to the natural sands and gravels.

Ditch 2004 was located in the south of Trench 2, aligned south-west to north-east and measuring 1.65m in width and up to 0.22m in depth with a broad 'U' shaped profile. The ditch was filled with a dark greyish brown sandy silt with well mixed chalk and flint gravel (2003). Only a single sherd of pottery was recovered from the excavated segment. Even so the ditch is clearly stratigraphically later than Gully 2006 to the north (Figs. 4 & 5). The single sherd of pottery from Ditch 2004 is ? in date.

In the extreme south of Trench 2 excavation partially revealed an east-west aligned feature cut into the natural sands and chalk gravel. This linear (context 2010) had a width in excess of 0.25m and survived to a depth of 0.40m. Only the northern edge was visible but the fall of c. 70° to a slightly rounded base suggested a rounded 'V'

profile. The fill, 2009, a dark brown gravelly sandy silt contained pottery of medieval date.

A 0.34m deep layer of dark greyish brown silty sand (context 2002) overlay the gravelly sand natural and also sealed all the above features.

The excavation sequence in this trench was completed by 0.12m of modern hardcore surface.

### **Trench 3**

Trench 3 situated in the eastern half of the site and measured 5m by 2m. Excavation recorded three linear features (cuts 3004, 3006 & 3008 : Pls 5 & 6).

The earliest non archaeological feature encountered in this trench was a deposit of silty sand (context 3009) which filled a solution hollow. A further two similar features were observed immediately to the east (Fig. 6) The northern edge of Deposit 3009 had been cut away by a linear feature (3006 : Fig. 5). This feature cut diagonally through the trench on a north-east south-west alignment. Measuring 0.5m in width with a 'U' shaped profile and 0.30m deep, the single fill, 3005, a yellowish brown silty sand contained no finds. The nature and form of linear 3006 suggested that it represented a small drainage ditch/gully.

Immediately to the north of Ditch 3006 was a larger linear feature (3008) which both respected and appeared to follow the same alignment as Ditch 3006.

Ditch 3008 measured in excess of 1m in width (the northern limit of this feature continued outside of the limits of Trench 3) and was 0.40m deep with a wide shallow 'U' shaped profile. The fill, 3007, was brownish yellow silty sand. Finds from this context consisted of a single fragment of sheep's tooth and fifteen sherds of pottery of Prehistoric date.

To the south of Ditches 3006 and 3008 a similarly aligned ditch (cut 3004) was recorded. This feature measured 1.50m in width and 0.48m in depth with steep 60° sides and an uneven base. The fill, 3003, a yellowish brown silty sand contained no finds.

The exact function of Ditches 3006 and 3008 are unclear but they may both represent either field or settlement boundaries. Ditch 3004 is on the same alignment as Ditch



1019 and is of a similar form perhaps suggesting that Ditch 3004 is a continuation of Ditch 1019. Of course without further excavation this hypothesis can not be tested.

All of the above features had been cut into the natural sands and chalk gravels (context 3002) and were sealed by a thick deposit measuring 0.50m of brown silty sand (3001) which represented wind blown material.

The archaeological sequence in this trench was completed by a 0.30m deposit of limestone fragments and modern building material (context 3000) associated with an area of hardstanding.

#### **Trench 4**

Trench 4 was situated in the north-eastern area of the site. The evaluation trench measuring 10m by 2m recorded only deposits of modern build up over natural sands and chalk gravels. It would have appeared that this area of the site had been extensively terraced in the past thus removing any earlier activity.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Five phases of activity were identified during the course of the evaluation of Staxton Farm, Staxton. These phases are summarised as follows :

Phase 1 : ?Bronze Age - ditches, gullies, pits and postholes in Trenches 1, 2 and 3

Phase 2 : ?Iron Age/Romano-British - Hearth 1010 (Interim interpretation until results of archaeomagnetic dating known).

Phase 3 : Medieval - Ditch 2010

Phase 4 : Post-medieval - Wall 1005 and Gully 1004

Phase 5 : Modern - surfaces associated with current farm buildings

The evaluation objective was successful in identifying the presence of archaeological deposits within the application area, examining their character and date. The significance of the archaeological remains is discussed below.

Three of the excavated trenches (Trenches 1-3) produced evidence of early activity on the site. The presence of features associated with Prehistoric pottery and a small flint assemblage is not by any means surprising considering the background of known Prehistoric sites in the proposed development site's immediate environs. But what is unusual is that this period of activity appears to dominate the record as opposed to medieval activity, namely the production of Staxton pottery which has characterised previous evaluations and excavations in the village of Staxton. The only firmly dated medieval feature was a ditch possibly representing a boundary/property division. The very small assemblage of medieval finds would tend to suggest that the site is away from the centre of the medieval village and the centre of pottery production.

What is interesting, although still awaiting confirmation is the possibility that the hearth is of Roman date. If this is so then questions need to be answered as how such a feature fits into the wider picture of known Roman occupation/activity in and around Staxton.

Further organised excavation of specific areas of the site is likely to provide additional information on the full extent and character of Prehistoric and Roman settlement/land use in these periods.

The proposed development plan shows new build in the immediate vicinity of Trench 1. Any archaeological deposits/features in this area of the site are likely to be disturbed/destroyed by the new development. Equally a high percentage of features recorded during the<sup>e</sup>valuation are linear in character and continue beyond the confines of the evaluation trenches. New building development and associated roads and service installation are potential threats to the archaeological resource.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Context Listing

Context	Description
<b>Trench 1</b>	
1001	Topsoil
1002	Subsoil
1003	Deposit. Brownish yellow sand. Fill of 1004
1004	Cut. Scoop
1005	Structure. Linear wall base
1006	Deposit. Very dark brownish grey sandy loam, topsoil/garden soil
1007	Deposit. Very dark brownish grey sandy loam, agricultural/garden soil
1008	Cut
1009	Deposit. Fill. Dark yellowish brown sand, fill of burnt pit/hearth
1010	Deposit. Fill. Light pinky brown clay, clay lining
1011	Deposit. Fill. Pinky brown clay.
1012	Deposit. Black, hearth material
1013	Deposit. Yellow sand/brown yellow soil
1014	Deposit. Mid-dark brown silty sand. Fill of 1019
1015	Cut. Well defined steep sided pit
1016	Deposit of stone
1017	Deposit. Brown silty sand. Fill of 1019
1018	Deposit. Pale yellowish brown silty sand. Fill of 1019
1019	Cut (linear). Ditch
1020	Deposit. Brown silty sand. Fill of 1022
1021	Deposit. Brown silty sand. Fill of 1022
1022	Cut. Posthole
1023	Deposit. Yellowish brown sand. Hill wash
1024	Deposit. Mid greyish brown silty sand. Fill of 1025
1025	Cut. 'V' shaped linear ditch cut
1026	Deposit. Mid to dark greyish brown sandy silt. Fill of 1027
1027	Cut. Small sub circular posthole
1028	Deposit. Dark yellowish brown. Fill of 1029
1029	Cut. Small gully
1030	Deposit. Very dark brown sandy silt. Fill of 1031
1031	Cut. Shallow sub-circular pit
1032	Deposit. Mid greyish brown sandy silt. Fill of 1033
1033	Cut. Well defined sub circular pit
1034	Deposit. Brown fine silty sand. Fill of 1035
1035	Cut. Pit
<b>Trench 2</b>	
2001	Deposit. Modern hardcore surface
2002	Deposit. Sandy silt. Old cultivation soil/topsoil
2003	Deposit (linear fill). Snady silt. Fill of 2004
2004	Cut (linear). Ditch
2005	Deposit. Fine sandy silty. Fill of 2006
2006	Cut. curvilinear gully
2007	Deposit. Dark greyish brown sandy silt. Fill of 2008
2008	Cut. Posthole

2009 Deposit. Dark brown sandy silt. Fill of 2010  
2010 Cut (linear). Med. ditch cut

**Trench 3**

3000 Deposit. Overburden/ modern made surface  
3001 Deposit. Brown silty sand. Subsoil  
3002 Deposit. Natural chalk/ gravel  
3003 Deposit. Fine silty sand. Fill of 3004  
3004 Cut. Field boundary/ settlement boundary  
3005 Deposit. Brown fine silty sand. Fill of 3006  
3006 Cut. Small drainage ditch/ gully  
3007 Deposit. Brown fine silty sand. Fill of 3008  
3008 Cut. Ditch  
3009 Deposit. Dry silty sand  
3010 Naturally occurring deposit in solution hollow

## APPENDIX 2

### Finds Catalogue

#### Context

1003	Animal bone (3 sheep vertebra)
1005	1 sherd pottery (redware) 1 fragment tile 2 fragments glass 1 fe object
1009	Animal bone (1 sheep rib bone)
1013	Animal bone (5 sheep rib fragments) 17 sherds calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B 18 sherds calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B 7 fragments flint ( 1 blade, 1 flake, 4 spalls, 1 chunk)
1015	Animal bone ( 1 fragment sheep bone) 4 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B
1016	Animal bone (1 fragment pig leg)
1017	4 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B 1 flint flake percussion bulb
1020	Animal bone (1 sheep scapular fragment) 1 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B
1023	Animal bone (4 fragments) 6 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B 1 unidentified sherd pottery 2 flint fragmentsn (1 spall, 1 chunk)
1024	2 stab prehistoric decorated/Late Neolithic Early Bronze 1 staxton ware
1034	2 animal bone 4 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B 2 flint (1 chunk, 1 flake )
2003	1 base sherd Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age
2009	4 sherds staxton ware body sherds medieval
3001	1 fragment flint snapped scraper
3007	1 fragment animal bone 15 sherds Calcite gritted ware Iron Age R.B

### APPENDIX 3

<b>Drawing No.</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	1: 20	Plan of deposit 1008
2	1: 20	Plan of cut 1004
3	1: 10	intersection 2004 and 2001
4	1: 10	Section gully 2006
5	1: 10	Section E.Baulk Trench 2 2004 and 2010
6	1: 10	Section posthole 2008
7	1: 20	Plan of trench 3 (post excavation)
8	1: 10	Section of ditches trench 3
9	1: 20	Plan of Trench 2
10	1: 20	Plan of 1009
11	1: 20	Plan of 1011
12	1: 20	Plan of 1010 and 1012
13	1: 10	Section of 1011
14	1: 20	Plan of wall 1005
15	1: 20	Plan of foundation cut 1008
16	1: 20	Plan of pit 1015
17	1: 20	Plan of stoney deposit 1016
18	1: 20	Plan of 1029
19	1: 10	Section of 1029
20	1: 10	Section of ditch 1019
21	1: 10	Section of posthole 1022
22	1: 10	Section of posthole 1027
23	1: 10	Section of gully 1025
24	1: 10	Section of gully 1025
25	1: 10	Section of 1031
26	1: 10	Section of 1035
27	1: 20	Plan of western end of trench 1 part 1
28	1: 20	Plan of western end of trench 1 part 2
29	1: 10	North facing Section of cut 1015
30	1: 10	East facing Section of cut 1015
31	1: 20	South facing Section trench 1