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KEVIN CALE
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

MOATED SITE

DALTON - ON - TEES

RICHMONDSHIRE

NORTH YORKSHIRE

N.G.R. 42962 50778

COUNTY / PARISH NO.1097

FOR

NORTHERN UTILITY SERVICES LTD

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

DECEMBER 1998

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**MOATED SITE
DALTON - ON - TEES
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
NOVEMBER 1998**

INTRODUCTION

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken to monitor and record ground disturbance associated with the machine excavation of two placements for new electricity poles in a green field site near the village of Dalton-on-Tees. The nature of the ground disturbance relates renewing of the existing overhead electricity line (dated 1978). The works were commissioned by Northern Utility Services Ltd, Northern Electric.

LOCATION AND STATUS

Dalton-on-Tees is a rural village situated within the parish of the same name in the northern extent of the District of Richmondshire at N.G.R.42970 50800. This nucleated settlement is situated on the southern side of the River Tees and slightly elevated above it's flood plain at 52 metres AOD. The village is serviced by a small number of minor roads that run to a number of outlying farmsteads and the village of North Cowton. The A167 Northallerton / Darlington road by passes the village to the south west and defines the limit of development in this direction.

PLANNING HISTORY

Prior to the commencement of groundwork's Northern Electric were informed by The Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council that due to the immediate proximity of a Medieval Moated Site and potential for disturbing archaeological deposits it would be necessary for the groundwork's within the field (O.S.No.154) to the immediate south of the village, at N.G.R. 42962 50778, to be subject to an Archaeological Watching Brief.

DALTON - ON - TEES

WEST MOATED SITE

N.G.R. NZ 296 078

A167

SCORTON ROAD

RIDGE & FURROW

R & F OVERLYING PERIMETER BANK

VILLAGE SITE

EXISTING POLE

SUNKEN AREA

Pole A

BANK B

FEEDER TANK
/ FISH POND

BANK A

PRINCIPAL DITCH

PRINCIPAL
PLATFORM

PERIMETER BANK

Pole B

AREA UNDER ARABLE CULTIVATION



HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The moated site is one of two such structures that survive as well defined earthworks within the immediate vicinity of Dalton-on-Tees.

The moated site is a medieval phenomenon that consists of an elevated earthen platform surrounded by a waterfilled ditch. The enclosed platform would have supported a timber or half timber dwelling and possible ancillary buildings, access to which would have been afforded by a timber bridge. The surrounding fresh water was often utilised for rearing fish and as such it is not uncommon to have adjoining fishponds. The form of these features varies from site to site due to land suitability, availability, finance and design characteristics. However, moated sites are usually situated on heavy, poorly, drained soils and near a reliable water source. These structures provided a well drained and defended occupation site, for the medieval aristocracy who were capable of organising the labour and funding such developments. The enclosed platform was often the chosen site upon which the Manor House was constructed. The moated site was a conspicuous feature within the medieval countryside, it's role as a status symbol can not be underestimated.

The site was investigated in 1971 when partial excavation was undertaken of the moated platform, by Pallister and Still. These works revealed that the surface of the central mound was partly roughly surfaced, but no structural evidence was found. Sherds of pottery recovered from the excavations suggested that the central mound had been constructed during the Early 14th century and may have been abandoned during the Late Medieval period. It was confirmed that access on to the central mound was from the west via a narrow causeway, this feature was revetted on it's outer face. North of the main platform three rectangular shaped depressions were noted these were connected to the perimeter ditch of the main mound by small channels, one of these contained standing water. It was concluded that due to the absence of structural remains and the non-defensive nature of the ditchworks the site had the appearance of a small complex of fishponds.

During this same programme of investigation the earthworks associated with the layout of the Medieval Village of Dalton-on-Tees was recorded to the north and north east of the study area. Unfortunately the greater majority of these remains had been truncated during the construction of A 167.

The site was re-inspected in 1978 by the Moated Sites Research Group, after which the site was classified as a Rectangular Enclosure, with two adjoining, possible fishponds. It was noted that the 25" Ordnance Survey plan omitted the large external perimeter banks that enclose the complex on three sides.

I understand that English Heritage are drawing close to having the site protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

THE NATURE OF THE WORKS

The excavation of two placements was monitored during the watching brief. Each placement measured 1.66m length x 0.86m wide x 1.86m deep. Each was excavated by hand until natural sub soil was encountered at which point a machine (JCB 3CX) was engaged to reduce down to the required depth.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is situated within the south east quadrant of field (O.S.No.154), this field is presently managed as unimproved pasture which is conducive to the preservation of the earthworks. The field is contained on all four sides by a mature hedgeline, with intermittent post and rail fencing, vehicular access into the field was from the north off the A167. The surface of the field was relatively flat with the exception of the complex of earthworks which were intensive and well defined.

The prevailing weather and ground conditions were favourable to inspection and recording.

The earthworks fall into three main categories, namely:-

- I. Civil - Those associated with the moated site.
- ii. Civil - Those associated with the layout of the Medieval village.
- ii. Agricultural - Those associated with later cultivation processes i.e. ridge and furrow.

There follows a brief description of each.

The Moated Site:

The main complex is sub-rectangular and is aligned north north east, with the adjacent field boundaries respecting the planform of these earthworks.

The Perimeter Bank:

The complex is contained to the south, east and west by a rectilinear bank. This broad structure, measuring up to 9.5m wide has a rounded profile, the internal aspect of which is more acute than the external. The overall length of the bank is difficult to calculate as it appears to project further to the north north east than the main complex where it's relationship with a headland bank is unclear. The form and extent of the perimeter bank has been distorted by later activity including:-

- The formation of existing field boundaries which has amalgamated sections of the east and southern bank.
- The formation of ridge and furrow, this clearly overlies and post dates the western perimeter bank.
- The formation of a shallow and narrow drainage channel which cuts across the south west corner of the feature on a west north west alignment.

The Principal Platform:

The perimeter bank contains the principal platform and ditch, which are situated at the southern extent of the complex. The surface of the pre-excavated platform measures 15m x 16m, the elevation of which slightly exceeds that of the surrounding perimeter bank. Access to the perimeter bank across the ditch is via a poorly defined causeway on it's western side, the surface of the causeway is considerably lower than either that of the platform or external bank. Each of the four aspects of the platform have a similar, moderately steep, gradient.

The Principal Ditch:

The ditch that contains the principal platform is uniform on three sides having a rounded "v" shaped profile, 1.70m in depth (below the surface of the platform), the base width measured approximately 3m and was waterlogged at the time of inspection. To the north the ditch is contained by a partition bank the dimensions of which are considerably reduced to that of the perimeter bank.

Partition Bank A:

The partition bank measures 20m in width and 18m in length with a rectilinear planform. This feature has a shallow profile with a relatively flat upper surface, the sides of which are short and acute on it's northern aspect and long and gentle on it's south. The bank forms a partition between the main ditch and the feeder pond / fishpond to the immediate north north east.

The bank has been intentionally breached, to the east of centre, allowing access or the transfer of water from the feeder pond to the principal ditch. At its western extent this same bank doglegs north north east and runs parallel to the main perimeter bank containing the western side of the feeder pond. A linear ditch / goit like feature separates the principal bank from the partition bank, this feature has a shallow rounded "v" shaped profile, the base of which falls to the south south west into the principal ditch.

Feeder Tank / Fish Pond:

A square depression that is situated to the north north east of the principal platform and ditch, measuring 14m x 14m.

The base of the feature is level, waterlogged and is slightly elevated above that of the principal ditch. The feature is contained to the west and south by the almost vertical short sides of the partition bank, to the east by the gently sloping sides of the perimeter bank and to the north by partition bank B. It is suspected that this feature functioned as either a feeder tank or fishpond.

Partition Bank B:

This spur projects from the eastern perimeter bank on a west north west alignment the bank has a shallow profile with a flat top and measures 28m in length by 7m wide. The feature separates the feeder / fish pond to the south from the lozenge shaped depression to the north. These two sunken and waterlogged areas are connected by a narrow channel that cuts through the western extent of the bank. Its relationship with Partition Bank A at its western extent are unclear, the two appear to be separated by yet another narrow channel connecting the goit like feature with the northern most sunken area.

Sunken Area:

A lozenge shaped area of low lying, waterlogged, ground that is situated at the northern extent of the complex. The area has a very shallow profile and is aligned west north west, contained to the south by partition bank B and to the west and east by the perimeter bank, the northern extent of this feature is less clearly defined. It is suspected that this low lying area may have originally functioned as a settling pond and via the narrow sluice like apertures to the south regulated the supply of water to the feeder / fish pond and principal ditch to the south.

The Village Site:

The shallow rectilinear banks demarcating the village closes were situated within the northern corner of the field.

These had clearly continued to the north and north north east where they have been truncated by the A167 and the Scorton Road.

The Ridge and Furrow:

The ridge and furrow was situated within the western half of the field and was aligned on a north north east axis i.e conforming to the alignment of the existing field boundary configuration. The earthworks were well defined with prominent rounded profiles and spaced at 8m centres. This pattern of cultivation continued beneath the southern field boundary into the field beyond, suggesting that the ridge and furrow pre dates the formation of the existing field configuration. To the north the cultivation terminated short of a headland bank that effectively contained the ridge and furrow and separated from the village closes.

Within the southern extent of the field the ridge and furrow has been cut by what appears to be a linear drainage channel, aligned west north west. This feature also cuts the perimeter bank of the moated site.

It was noted that the earthworks in the adjoining field to the east which in 1971 were extant and consisted of ridge / furrow and village closes have since been ploughed and destroyed, this same field is presently under root crop.

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

It was anticipated that the proposed installation of two electricity poles would have a direct impact on the perimeter bank of the Moated Site. The placements were located at N.G.R.429830 507813 and 429830 507742. It is not suspected that this area of the site has been previously disturbed and as such would provide an opportunity to inspect the make up and stratigraphy of the perimeter bank.

The aims of the archaeological investigation were as follows:

- a. to record any finds, features or structures of archaeological interest and obtain information on the presence, extent, character, date and depth of these remains;
- b. to assess the importance of any remains found and interpret them in terms of their historical context.

Plate 1



Placement A - Location shot, facing south south west

Plate 2



Placement A - On completion of hand excavation

Plate 3



Placement A - On completion of machine excavation

Plate 4



Placement B - Location shot, facing south



Plate 5 Placement B - On completion of hand excavation

Plate 6



Placement B - On completion of machine excavation

CONCLUSION

The Archaeological Watching Brief commenced on 23rd July 1998 and after a hiatus of a number of months, the site works were concluded on Friday 23rd October 1998.

The watching brief provided a useful opportunity to investigate the stratigraphy and make up of the perimeter bank surrounding the moated complex. As anticipated, given the close proximity of the ridge and furrow field system to Placement A overburden associated with repeated night soiling and manuring had accumulated on the earthwork, this deposit of sandy clayey loam contained a small assemblage of 19th century pottery and clay tobacco pipe stems. The profile of the rectilinear earthwork was identified at 0.31m below the existing ground levels in Placement A and at 0.16m in Placement B. It was confirmed that the matrix of the bank was a sandy loamy clay, with a low to moderate quantity of inclusions, which had the appearance of re-deposited sub-soil mixed with top soil, this would indicate that the material was excavated locally, probably from the adjacent ditch, and feeder fish pond. This made up ground measured upto 0.64 m in depth, however as neither Placement was situated on the apex of the earthwork it is possible that the overall depth may have slightly exceeded this.

It was confirmed that the surface of this deposit respected the gradient and aspect of the existing ground levels, suggesting that the profile of the feature is little changed since the site was abandoned during the late medieval period.

As for establishing a date for the construction of the perimeter bank a single sherd of Tees Valley Ware was recovered from within Placement B at 0.52 m below the existing ground level. The sherd measured 0.016m x 0.013m x 0.004m and has a pink orange, soft, fabric with a small quantity of inclusions, the external surface is applied with a yellow green coloured glaze. The sherd is early 14th century in date. However, too much reliance can not be placed on a single sherd of this size as it may have been discarded at some time during a protracted phase of building works alternatively it may have been deposited during repairs or maintenance to the earthwork.

No evidence of buried topsoil associated with the ground levels within the field prior to the construction of the earthworks.

The excavations established the nature of the undisturbed sub soil as a sandy silty clay the surface of which was identified at 0.80 m below the existing ground level.

The single sherd of pottery recovered from these excavation is presently being held by Mr.K.J.Cale until it has been established whether the sherd merits future curation, if this is recommended then it is likely that it will be deposited at Richmondshire Museum.

Kevin John Cale

December 1998

APPENDIX A

Placement Excavations

Placement A

Type: Pole Placement: hand and machine excavated
N.G.R: 429830 507813

Length: 1.66 m
Width: 0.86 m
Depth: 1.865 m

Planform: Rectangular
Aligned: North

Context No's: 1000 - 1004
Plate No's: 1, 2, 3
Fig. No: 1

The placement was excavated into the central area of the field and was situated in the north west corner of the Moated Site complex, on the mid slope of the south east facing aspect of the perimeter bank. The existing ground levels slope gently downwards to the south east.

The turf (context 1000) was bedded on a layer of topsoil (context 1001), this dark grey brown (10YR3/3) loam was dry and friable with a low quantity of inclusions, dominated by root with occasional coal and cinder fragments, it is suspected that these may have originated from repeated night-soiling activities.

At 0.16m below the existing ground level a cultivated soil (context 1002) was identified, this medium brown (10YR4/3) sandy clayey loam was well compacted and dry with a friable texture. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions, these were dominated by sandstone blotching, charcoal flecking, sand blotching and sandstone fragments. It was initially suspected that this layer was the principal make up of the perimeter bank, however, upon excavation it was revealed to be only 0.16m in depth and contained a small assemblage of 19th century pottery. It is likely that this soil was formed during farming activities that have been continuous across the site since the late medieval period.

The buried profile of the perimeter bank was identified at 0.32m below the existing ground level, the aspect and gradient of which appeared to mirror that of the existing earthwork. The bank was made up of a medium brown (10YR4/3) loamy clay (context 1003). This layer was moist and well compacted and contained a low quantity of inclusions, namely sand blotches, Iron Stone fragments, limestone fragments and magnesian limestone fragments, these were evenly mixed throughout the matrix of the soil. The layer measured upto 0.58m in depth.

At 0.85 below the existing ground level the surface of the sub soil (context 1004) was identified. This yellow brown (10YR5/6) sandy silty clay was found to be moist and well compacted, the upper levels of which had a crumbly texture becoming increasingly plastic towards the base of excavation. The layer contained a low to moderate quantity of inclusions these were predominantly limestone fragments, sandstone fragments and sand blotching.

Placement B

Type: Pole Placement: hand and machine excavated
N.G.R: 429830 507742

Length: 1.60 m
Width: 0.70 m
Depth: 1.60 m

Planform: Rectangular
Aligned: North

Context No's: 2000 - 2003
Plate No's: 4, 5, 6
Fig. No: 1

The placement was excavated into the southern corner of the field and was situated in the south east corner of the Moated Site complex, on the lower slope of the south east facing aspect of the perimeter bank. The existing ground levels slope gently downwards to the south east.

The turf (context 2000) was bedded on a layer of topsoil (context 2001), this dark brown (10YR3/2) loam was extremely dry and friable, these arid conditions were enhanced by the close proximity of a mature hedge with Ash trees. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions, dominated by root with occasional coal fragments, it is suspected that these may have originated from repeated night-soiling activities.

The buried profile of the perimeter bank was identified at 0.16m below the existing ground level, the aspect and gradient of which appeared to mirror that of the existing earthwork. The bank was made up of a medium orange brown (10YR4/3) sandy clayey loam (context 2002). This layer was moist and well compacted and contained a low quantity of inclusions, namely sand blotches, shale, limestone fragments and charcoal flecking, these were evenly mixed throughout the matrix of the soil. The layer measured upto 0.64m in depth. A single sherd of Tees Valley Ware was recovered from this layer, this tentatively dates the construction, or repair, of this section of bank to the early 14th century.

At 0.80m below the existing ground level the surface of the sub soil (context 2003) was identified. This orange brown grey (10YR5/6) sandy clay was found to be moist and well compacted, the upper levels of which had a crumbly texture becoming increasingly plastic towards the base of excavation. The layer contained a moderate quantity of inclusions these were predominantly limestone, sandstone fragments, Iron Pan mottling and sand blotching.