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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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WYAS

**Colton Lane Junction
Bilbrough Top
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

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Report No 1079

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Atkins Heritage

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WB on geotech. pits

Colton Lane Junction (A64)

Bilbrough Top

North Yorkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

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Summary

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out at Colton Lane Junction in advance of the construction of a new road corridor. The projected route of a Roman road crosses the site and is to be impacted on by the development. No archaeological remains were observed in any of the six trial trenches or simultaneous watching brief.

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Archaeological Services WYAS

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1 Introduction

- 1 1 Archaeological Services WYAS was commissioned by Atkms Heritage to undertake an archaeological evaluation and watching brief in advance of a new bridge and junction complex between Colton and Bilbrough on the A64. The site is situated between Tadcaster and York centred on SE 537458 (Fig 1)
- 1 2 The area for evaluation lies within the proposed road corridor to the north and south of the A64, spanning three fields currently used for arable farming. The project has been designed with minimum impact in mind
- 1 3 The solid geology of the site was mapped as Permian and Triassic sandstones (British Geological Survey 1979). The soils are slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, fine loamy and fine loamy over clayey soils, associated with similar clayey soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983)
- 1 4 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence of archaeological features/deposits within the proposed junction improvement scheme, to establish their date, nature, significance and state of preservation

2 Archaeological Background

- 2 1 Archaeological interest in the site primarily relates to the course of the former Roman road that ran between Tadcaster and York. Its projected course runs through the site and is marked by a present field boundary that forms the southern boundary of the existing commercial complex
- 2 2 The main component of a Roman road is the agger, a raised embankment, whose width and height vary from c 3.5m by 0.15m to c 25m by 1.75m (from known locations) although more typically the height is c 0.75m and widths vary from 8m to 13m (English Heritage 1989). The closest section of Roman road to have been recorded is at Street Houses, c 1km west of the proposed scheme. It was c 7m wide with a slight camber and had a well-preserved surface made of gravel with a few cobbles (Sutton 2002)
- 2 3 Other features relating to Roman roads include road side drainage ditches that run parallel to the road, with known examples being c 0.5m deep and 2m wide. In addition to this, secondary or boundary ditches are common. These features that are usually set well back from the road on either side and are typically, c 1m wide and shallow. Their function is unclear. As local materials were invariably used it is also common to find quarry pits (English Heritage 1989)
- 2 4 The section of Roman road between York and Tadcaster is known to have been a major route during the period. As a result there is potential for Roman roadside settlement surviving along its length
- 2 5 There is also potential for the survival of prehistoric sites within the development area. The position of a prehistoric burial mound is recorded on the 1st Edition 6 inch O.S. mapping of the area (1849), situated 0.5km to the north of the site. Field-name evidence, from this map, also records *Barrow Fields* and *Hill fields* to the north-east of Bilbrough. These names suggest the location of further burial mounds in the vicinity

3 Method

- 3 1 The work has been carried out in accordance with the method statement presented in Appendix III (Roberts 2002)
- 3 2 The evaluation comprised six trenches, each measuring 15m by 1.75m. The trenches and test pits were located and surveyed by Geotechnics, the principal sub-contractors, and influenced by the proposed locations of test pits for geotechnical investigations (Sutton 2002). Following excavation and backfilling the locations of the trenches were surveyed by ASWYAS using a 600 series robotic Geodimeter theodolite. Two archaeological trenches were positioned to the north of the A64 and four to the south (Fig 2)
- 3 3 Trenches 1-3 and 6 were located to investigate areas of unknown potential. They were positioned to assess the potential of any surviving Roman roadside settlement or archaeological sites of other periods. The remaining trenches (4 and 5) were positioned to investigate the degree of survival of the Roman road, as well as investigating the possibility of flanking ditches or borrow pits on either side of its supposed course. Wherever possible trench locations and orientations are designed to fall within the area to be impacted upon by the proposed groundworks (Roberts 2002). The location of Trench 6 was changed, with the agreement of Rob Sutton of Atkins Heritage as the landowner denied access, prior to commencement of fieldwork. The location of Trench 5 was also modified due to the proximity of a gas main. As a result, the raised field boundary was not investigated.
- 3 4 The trenches were excavated using a 180°-backhoe loader 'JCB' with a 1.6m-wide toothless ditching bucket. This was carried out under direct archaeological supervision down to the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural.
- 3 5 Each trench was surveyed with a CAT scan prior to excavation and the spoil was metal detected. A photographic record was taken of each trench. All trench plans were recorded and a section along one of the trench lengths was recorded, both to scale, prior to backfilling. The recording followed the Archaeological Services WYAS standard method (Boucher 1995).
- 3 6 A watching brief also formed part of the archaeological works, with the monitoring of all 11 engineering trial pits on the southern side of the A64 (Fig 2). These trial pits were also excavated under archaeological supervision using a 180°-backhoe loader 'JCB', this time equipped with a 0.3m wide toothed bucket. The geotechnical contractor determined the depths of these test pits.
- 3 7 Rob Sutton of Atkins Heritage made a site visit on the 28th November 2002, during which he observed the excavation of Trenches 5 and 6.
- 3 8 An inventory of the primary archive is presented in Appendix I. It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with The Yorkshire Museum, York, although it is currently held by Archaeological Services WYAS.

4. Results (Fig 2)

Trenches 1 and 2

- 4 1 Trench 1 measured 15m in length by 1.75m in width. It was orientated north-east to south-west on slightly undulating grass covered farmland. The topsoil, 0.25m in depth, consisted of loose dark brown, sandy silt and was seen to overlie natural deposits. The natural was mostly yellowish orange sandy clay with gravel inclusions, but changed to dark grey clay with gravel inclusions to the north. Broken land drains were evident within the trench. No archaeological remains were discovered.
- 4 2 Trench 2 measured 15m in length by 1.75m in width and was orientated west to east. Topsoil 0.45m in depth, of the same type as that seen in Trench one (Section 4.1, above), was removed to reveal natural deposits. The natural was mid-brown sandy clay with sandstone frags and clay patches. Shallow plough scars were noted cutting into the natural. No archaeological features were exposed in this trench.

Trenches 3 to 6

- 4 3 Trench 3 measured 15m in length and 1.7m in width and was orientated north-west to south-east. The topsoil was 0.4m deep and directly overlies natural deposits. Land drains were seen cutting into the natural, a yellow/grey mottled sandy clay with silt grey patches. A higher percentage of clay was evident to the north-west. Two intersecting land drains were noted. No archaeological remains were observed.
- 4 4 Trench 4 measured 15m in length and 1.75m in width. It was orientated north-north-west to south-south-east and located perpendicular to the field boundary that is believed to reflect the course of the Roman road. The land falls gently to the south with the hedge on a slight rise. Within the trench the stratigraphy was seen to comprise topsoil (0.4m in depth) directly overlying natural. The natural was reddish brown silty sand at the southern end changing gradually to the north to a darker brown with 20% pebble inclusions. No evidence of the Roman road or any other archaeological remains was found.
- 4 5 Trench 5 measured 15m in length and 1.75m in width. It was orientated north-north-west to south-south-east and was located 7m to the south of the gas main that runs parallel to the hedge. The stratigraphy consisted of a 0.35m depth of topsoil directly above variable natural. Two sondages were excavated to a depth of 0.75m to determine the nature of the natural deposits in this trench. A modern iron bolt was recovered from the removed topsoil by metal detection. This artefact was not retained.
- 4 6 Trench 6 measured 15m in length and 1.75m in width and it was orientated north to south. The natural deposits were directly overlain by 0.4m of topsoil. The natural was light brown silty clay with occasional sandstone fragments and large 0.1m by 0.15m rounded stones. A few fragments of broken land drain were noted in the interface between the topsoil and natural. No archaeological features were present in the trench.

Watching Brief

- 4 7 The watching brief undertaken on the trial pits did not uncover any archaeological remains or deposits. Topsoil between 0.25m and 0.4m in depth was noted overlying natural deposits similar to those observed in the evaluation trenches.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

- 5 1 The archaeological evaluation and watching brief undertaken at Colton Lane Junction uncovered no evidence for surviving archaeological features or deposits.
- 5 2 There may be greater potential for archaeological survival in the south-western field, currently being used for grazing, as the survival of ridge and furrow indicates minimal ploughing and therefore preservation of archaeological features. Earthworks are visible in this field and the original location of Trench 6 would have presented an opportunity to assess the nature of these features prior to development. Unfortunately the potential of the area was not realised as the current landowner denied access.
- 5 3 In addition, it was not possible to test the area across the field boundary between Trenches 4 and 5 due to the position of the gas main. If this does represent the line of the Roman road, it is probable that the groundworks involved with the construction of the gas main may have disturbed and/or destroyed any surviving vestiges of it in this area. Modern ploughing may also have impacted on the preservation of any *Agger* associated with a Roman road. It is also, however, possible that extant earthworks, associated with a Roman road may not have survived at all. Excavations undertaken in the near vicinity to the west of Street Houses uncovered the remains of only a slight camber (Sutton 2002). If similar construction techniques were adopted in the current development area, these may have contributed to a failure to identify any remains of the Roman road.

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