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Archaeological Watching Brief

Crossgates Farm, Seamer

February, 1991

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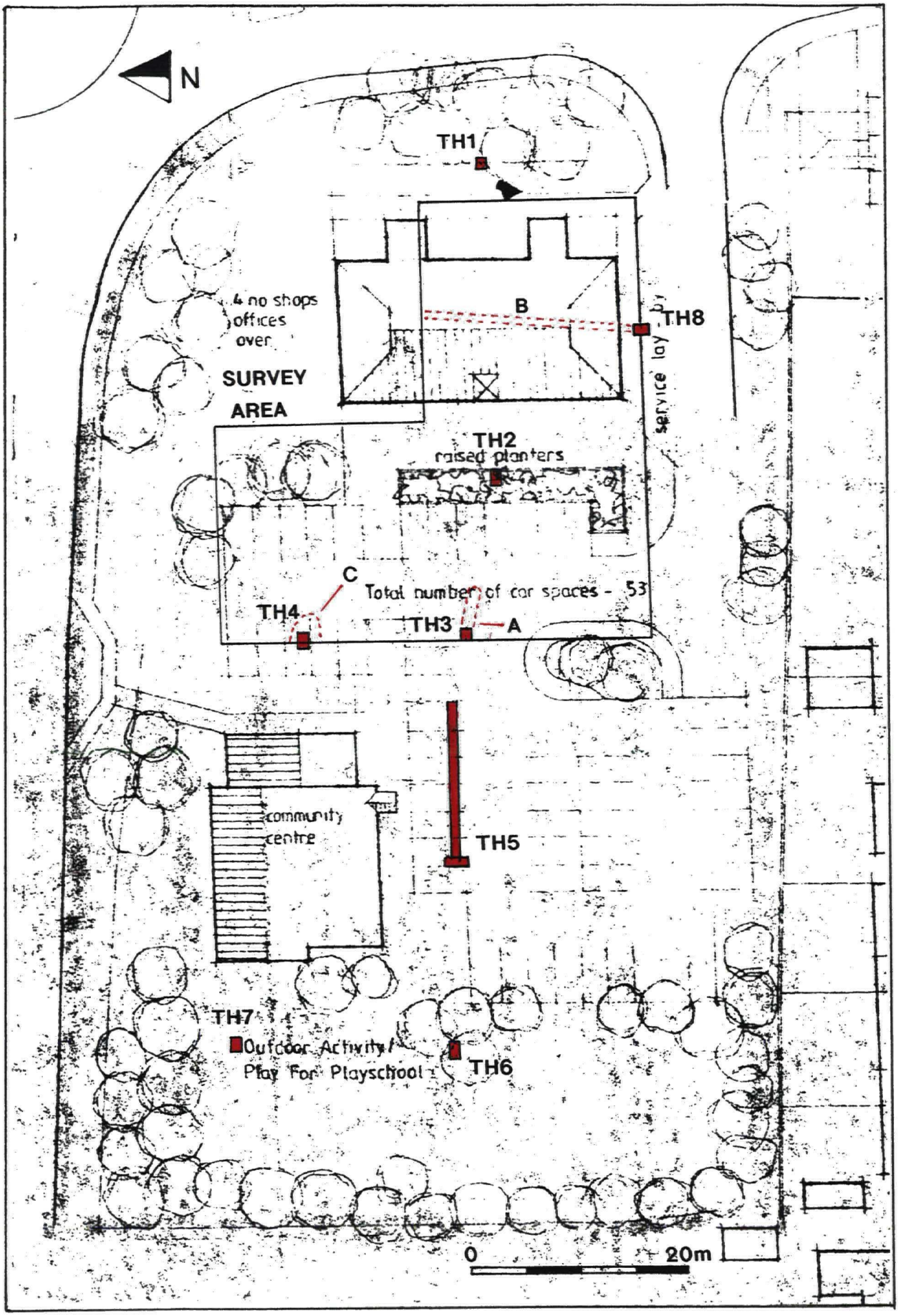

FIGURE 1 LOCATION PLAN

Introduction

This report covers the results of archaeological supervision carried out during the digging of engineering test holes over the area to be developed for Shop Units and a Community Centre by Persimmon Homes Ltd. as part of the Greenacres development. The site is adjacent to the former Crossgates Farm, in the parish of Seamer, North Yorkshire, NGR, TA: 027 839.
A geophysical survey over part of the area had shown three anomalies, labelled A, B and C on Figure 1 (Hunter and Powlesland, 1991). Three of the test holes (3,4 and 8) were positioned in order to elucidate the nature of these anomalies.
A total of eight test holes were machine-dug under close archaeological supervision. The sections of the test holes, along with the surface of the natural where appropriate, were cleaned and examined for archaeological activity.
All work was funded by Persimmon Homes (Yorkshire Ltd.).

Background

The area to the south east had been the subject of a number of archaeological watching briefs and excavations by MAP and ERARC (Finney and Stephens, 1989; Finney, 1989a; Finney, 1989b; Stephens, 1990). The previous fieldwork had revealed the existence of Iron Age buildings and enclosures, along with Medieval field boundaries. In addition, Anglian remains had been discovered in 1857 in the quarry of Seamer Lime Works c.150m to the north of the present site.

Results

Test Hole 1: A layer of brownish-yellow, pebbly, loamy sand, with a depth of 0.40m, covered a layer of reddish-brown silty sand, c.0.60m deep, which in turn covered the natural black silty clay with cobbles. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 2: A 0.50m deep layer of reddish-brown silty sand overlay the sandy , cobbly gravel natural. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 3: A context consisting of reddish-brown, gravelly, silty sand existed above the sandy, cobbly gravel natural. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 4: A 0.50m deep layer of reddish-brown silty sand occurred above the natural which consisted of a black silty clay with occasional inclusions of cobbles. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 5: This test hole contained a 0.30m deep layer of dark-greyish brown sandy, silty loam topsoil, overlying a 0.40m deep layer of reddish-brown, silty sand which occurred on top of the natural limestone bedrock. The test hole was extended eastwards for a distance of 15m in order to establish the point at which the natural gravels began to mantle the limestone bedrock. No archaeological features were present in the test hole or extending trench.

Test Hole 6: The contexts in this test hole consisted of a 0.30m deep layer of dark greyish-brown, sandy, silty loam topsoil, occurring above a 0.50m deep layer of reddish-brown silty gravelly sand. The natural consisted of limestone bedrock. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 7: Test hole 7 contained a layer of of dark yellowish-brown topsoil, 0.40m deep, which overlay a 0.20m deep layer of reddish-brown silty, gravelly sand. The natural consisted of limestone bedrock. No archaeological features were present.

Test Hole 8: This test hole revealed a layer of reddish-brown, silty, gravelly sand, 0.45m deep, which had been cut by a modern service trench on a north-south alignment, complete with a 0.16m diameter utilities pipe. Excavation ceased at that point.

Discussion

The three test holes (3, 4 and 8) that were dug to assess the geophysical anomalies demonstrated the nature of those anomalies with varying degrees of success.
The north–south anomaly B was conclusively shown to result from the cast–iron pipe observed in test hole 8.
Conversely, no definite indications of the east–west anomaly A were located by the excavation of test hole 3. However, a large piece of lead pipe was present close to the surface, possibly creating the anomaly.
The results of test hole 4, which was dug to examine anomaly C, suggest that the anomaly was created by the presence of an area of dark greyish–brown silty clay filling a natural hollow in the sandy gravel subsoils. Such areas of silty clay had been demonstrated in previous excavations (Finney 1989b) to be of natural, periglacial origin.
All the test holes had revealed the presence of a reddish–brown, silty, gravelly sand overlying the natural subsoil. This material apparently represents a "hillwash" deposit relating to post–prehistoric agriculture coupled with wind–blown deposition.

Conclusion

No archaeological features occurred within the test holes, which were fairly evenly distributed over the development area. Available evidence suggests that no widespread, densely packed archaeological activity is present over the site. However, it is possible that more randomly or thinly distributed features exist; such features would be difficult to locate by the relatively small test holes covered in this report.

Bibliography

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