



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
WYAS

**Land at High Street
Gargrave
North Yorkshire**

*Archaeological Trial Trenching
Interim Statement*

July 2003

Report No. 1146

CLIENT
Procter Homes Ltd

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Summary

Archaeological trial trenching at High Street, Gargrave revealed the remains of two intercutting graves. This report details the preliminary results from the excavation as post-excavation analysis is still ongoing.

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Archaeological Services WYAS

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Archaeological Services WYAS was commissioned by Mr Gary Procter of Procter Homes Ltd to undertake a scheme of archaeological trial trenching on land at High Street Gargrave, North Yorkshire (Fig. 1). The site covers an area of 0.17ha and is located to the south of High Street (centred at SD 93255425). The northern side of the site fronts onto High Street and it is bound to the east by the grounds of a church and to the west and south by residential buildings. The work was undertaken in advance of a proposed residential development (planning ref. 30/2003/2992) comprising the construction of eight dwellings.
- 1.2 The area under investigation is located on relatively flat land which slopes very gradually from 107.9mOD in the north to 108.9mOD at the southern limits of the site. It is currently occupied by a derelict commercial garage workshop and three garage blocks and the ground cover was primarily tarmac and hardcore.
- 1.3 The underlying solid geology has been mapped as Lower Carboniferous limestone (Geological Survey of England and Wales 1979) and the soils as fine silts and clays which have been affected by groundwater (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).
- 1.4 This interim statement represents the preliminary observations of the archaeology encountered and includes inventories of the primary archive (Appendix I), context record (Appendix II), the artefact assemblage (Appendix III) and environmental samples (Appendix IV).
- 1.5 The trial trenches were excavated between the 2nd and 4th of July 2003 with two archaeologist being present on site. A site monitoring visit was made by Gail Falkingham, of North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit, on 2nd July 2003.

2. Archaeological Background

- 2.1 Gargrave is recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 as comprising two manors divided by the River Aire. The development site is situated in the northern manor of Gargrave, which is associated with the Fee of Clifford and Skipton Castle. Little is known about the extent and survival of the medieval settlement, although a recent excavation at the former Pennine Motors Services Grouse Garage, again on the High Street, uncovered the remains of a medieval post-hole suggesting structural remains may survive in this location.
- 2.2 The remains of a medieval moated site, associated with the Old Hall and situated off West Street were excavated in both the 1970s and in 1997. (Falkingham 2003).

3. Method

- 3.1 The trial trenching was undertaken in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Gail Falkingham of the North Yorkshire County Council, Heritage Unit. This document is presented in Appendix V.
- 3.2 The objectives of the archaeological trial trenching were:

- to determine the nature, depth, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological remains
 - to prepare a report summarising the results of the work and assess the archaeological implications of the proposed development
 - to prepare and submit a suitable archive to the appropriate museum.
- 3.3 Three trenches, each measuring 5m by 3m, were located in areas determined by the client in consultation with Gail Falkingham of the North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit (Fig. 2). The trenches were stripped using a mini-excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching bucket. A toothed bucket was used for the removal of a hardcore/tarmac surface, 0.10m in depth in Trench C. Following removal of this surface the toothless bucket was utilised for the excavation of the remainder of the trench.
- 3.4 Each trench was stripped under direct archaeological supervision in level spits until the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural was reached. The exposed surfaces and sections were cleaned by hand and then inspected for archaeological remains.
- 3.5 One long section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:20. Plans of the trenches were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and archaeological features at a scale of 1:10. The written records were completed for the trenches in accordance with ASWYAS standard method (2003). Colour transparency and monochrome negative photographs were taken of each trench and of the archaeological remains uncovered.
- 3.6 Excavation ceased in Trench B after the identification of human bones and the remains left *in situ*, covered and protected. A Home Office Licence for the removal of the remains was applied for, in compliance with the Burial Act 1857, and a licence granted on the 2nd July 2003 (Licence Number A4661).
- 3.7 Archaeological Services WYAS currently holds the written, drawn and photographic record (Appendix I). It is anticipated that the archive will be deposited with The Craven Museum, Skipton, North Yorkshire.
- 3.8 The trench limits were surveyed and tied into two stations that were fixed in relation to nearby permanent structures using a 600 series Geotronics Total Station Theodolite. Ordnance Survey Datum was calculated for the two stations established at the site from the Ordnance Survey Bench Mark located on the church immediately to the east of the site.

4. Results

Trench A

- 4.1 This trench was oriented north-north-east to south-south-west and was located to the south-west of the site. Removal of a compacted hardcore surface 0.20m in depth and the topsoil, a dark brown black silty sandy loam 0.20m in depth, revealed natural sand and gravel deposits. A darker deposits which contained larger water worn pebbles was observed to the western side of this trench. A sondage 0.50m in width by 0.20m in depth confirmed this to be a slight change in the natural. No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

Trench B

- 4.2 Trench B was positioned to the rear of the site on a north to south alignment. Removal of hardcore (0.20m deep) and topsoil (0.38m deep) revealed a thin band of light yellow brown silty clay subsoil. This deposit, which measured 0.16m in depth was only observed at the very southern end of the trench and overlay natural deposits, again comprising sands and gravels.
- 4.3 Following cleaning of this trench an irregular cut filled with a mid/dark brown deposit was uncovered. At the western side of this cut the skull of a human skeleton was exposed (SK1, Plate 1). Excavation revealed that the body had been buried on a north-south alignment, with the head at the southern end. It appeared, from the position of the remains, that the body may have been bound when buried, with the knees of the individual being placed tightly towards the head.
- 4.4 The cut for these remains had been excavated through part of the backfill of an earlier burial (SK2, Plate 2), possibly in a circular pit. The earlier burial had been placed in an north-east to south-west aligned sub-rectangular grave, that had been cut through natural deposits. This skeleton was found to be in a flexed position, on its right side and with the head towards the north-west. No grave goods were recovered during the excavation of either skeleton and a small piece of pot, obtained during the excavation of the area around SK1 feet could easily be intrusive.

Trench C

- 4.5 This trench was orientated north-west to south-east and was located parallel with the eastern boundary of the site. Hardcore and topsoil deposits, were removed to reveal a similar sand and gravel natural to that observed in Trenches A and B. No archaeological features were identified in this trench.

5. *Artefact Record*

- 5.1 Very few finds were recovered from the trial trenching, with only five sherds of medieval/post-medieval pottery being collected. Of these, only one small sherd was from a stratified context, associated with SK1. It is proposed that Dr Chris Cumberpatch will assess this assemblage. A single fragment of clay pipe stem was also collected from topsoil deposits. A full list of the artefact assemblage is presented in Appendix III.

6. *Environmental Record*

- 6.1 The two human skeletons form the most significant discovery on the site. These remains have been washed and are to be analysed and reported on by Malin Holst of Field Archaeology Specialists. Environmental samples were taken from each of the grave fills and an extensive sampling procedure was undertaken around the skeleton for the recovery of any small bones that were difficult to identify during excavation. It is anticipated that 10 litres from each grave deposit context will be floated for the recovery of environmental remains with the remaining samples being dry sieved.
- 6.2 A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from the topsoil in Trench B and will be assessed by Dr Jane Richardson of ASWYAS.

7. Discussion

- 7.1 This interim statement has outlined the results from the scheme of trial trenching undertaken at High Street Gargrave. Only one trench was found to contain archaeological remains, comprising two intercutting graves, containing human skeletons. At present the sex and date of these individuals is unknown, although both appear to be adult. The post-excavation analysis, currently being undertaken, will provide relevant demographic data.
- 7.2 Preliminary interpretation of the archaeological suggests that the skeletons are of a Saxon date, due to their burial position, although it is also possible that they are prehistoric in date. The location of SK1 above SK2 suggest that this grave was visible from the surface, possibly with a marker, or that the burials were interred within a short period of time of each other. It is not known if these features represent an isolated grave plot or form part of a larger area of archaeological activity.

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Acknowledgements

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