

Rec 24/09/03

3096 parish

NYE 868

NYC 1110

NYS 8562

**Whitewall Quarry
Norton
North Yorkshire
SE 7918 6940**

NYCC HER	
SNY	8562
ENY	868
CNY	1110
Parish	3096
Rec'd	24/9/03

Archaeological Watching Brief

**MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.
November 2002
03-04-02**

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North Yorkshire
SE 7918 6940**

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Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Plate List	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Geology	3
3. Historical and Archaeological Background	3
4. Methodology	4
5. Results	4
6. Discussion	6
7. Bibliography	7
Appendices	
1. Context Listing	16
2. Finds Catalogue	16
3. Drawing Catalogue	17
4. Photographic Catalogue	17

Figure List

	Page
1. Site Location. Scale 1:50000.	8
2. Site Location. Scale 1:10000.	9
3. Plan of Excavated Ditch Segments. Scale 1:50.	10
4. Ditch Section Drawings. Scale 1:20	11

Plate List

1. General View of Quarry. Facing North.	12
2. General View of Topsoil Strip. Facing Northeast.	12
3. Section Ditch Cuts 1007, 1009. Facing North.	13
4. Section Ditch Cuts 1011, 1013. Facing North.	13
5. Feature 1 to North of Excavated Segments. Facing North.	14
6. Ditch Cut 1003. Facing South.	14
7. Ditch Cut 1005. Facing South.	15
8. Ditch Cut 1005 Showing Northern Terminal. Facing North.	15

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Archaeological Watching Brief

1. Introduction

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd at Whitewall Quarry, Norton, North Yorkshire, during April 2002. The Watching Brief involved the monitoring of topsoil and overburden stripping in the southern extension area of the quarry in advance of deep quarrying operations.

The site lies immediately to the east of Welham Road, approximately 1km south of the town of Norton, North Yorkshire (Fig. 1, Pl.1 : SE 7918 6940).

Prior to the quarry extension, the site was under arable cultivation, and at the time of the Watching Brief under a cover of ploughed-in stubble. The site was bounded to the east and south by agricultural land, to the west by the minor road from Norton to Westow Grange and to the north by the present quarry.

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2. Geology

The site lies on Ellerbeck Association soils, characterized by stony, coarse loamy soils over a solid geology of oolitic limestone (Mackney et al 1984, 179).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

A Roman fort was established to the north of the River Derwent at Malton in circa AD 79 and an extensive civilian settlement or *Vicus*, serving the garrison, grew up to the south-east of the fort, spreading southwards across the river to cover large areas of what is now

the modern town of Norton (Robinson JF, 1978, 6-7). The fort was part of a system of forts and roads established by Agricola in order to control northern England (*ibid.*, 6).

Of particular significance in terms of the quarry extension at Whitewall is the Roman road which ran south from the fort at Malton through the Vicus at Norton and on to Brough-on-Humber, the Roman port of *Petuaria* (Wenham, 1974, 43). To the south of Whitewall quarry, the road is visible as a cropmark to the west of the modern road, running in a northerly direction towards the southern quarry boundary (Robinson, 1978 no 237, RCHME AP plot, Sheet SE 76 NE, Fig. 2). North of the quarry, a second section of the road is visible as a cropmark to the north of Sutton Grange (*ibid.*).

A previous Watching Brief at Whitewall Quarry led to the excavation of a linear boundary and a double-ditched feature interpreted as the Roman road (MAP 1995). It was hoped that the present phase of quarry extension might provide another opportunity to investigate the nature and alignment of the Roman road at this location.

4. Methodology

Topsoil was stripped over an area measuring approximately 150m x 60m situated immediately to the south of the existing quarry boundary (Pl. 2). The work was undertaken using a mechanical excavator operating under full archaeological supervision.

5. Results

The Watching Brief identified a number of finds and features of archaeological significance. Chance finds from the ploughsoil ranged in date from Prehistoric struck flints to modern pottery, plastic bottles and scrap metal. These finds are consistent with a modern ploughing regime destroying and scattering earlier archaeological material.

Two parallel linear features were identified, the later re-cut of the western feature (Feature 1) producing sherds of Romano-British pottery. Both features appeared to have been heavily damaged by modern ploughing.

A full description of the features and finds is given below.

5.1. Topsoil Strip

Excavations revealed a deposit of modern ploughsoil (context 1001) extending over the entire extension area and varying in depth from 0.30m to 0.40m. Removal of this deposit revealed natural fractured limestone bedrock, with occasional deposits of natural stony

subsoil (context 1002) occupying shallow depressions and undulations in the surface of the bedrock. Along with modern material, finds recovered from context 1001 during the topsoil strip included a struck flint flake, a sherd of Romano-British Calcite-gritted ware and three sherds of heavily abraded Romano-British Greyware. No archaeological features were associated with these finds.

Two archaeological features were uncovered during the Watching Brief. These were a probable ditch (Feature 1), entering the extension area from the south at a point approximately 93m east of the western quarry boundary and running northwards for approximately 60m towards the existing quarry face. A second ditch (Feature 2) was also identified entering the site from the south at a point 3.60m east of Feature 1 and running parallel to it. Feature 2 was observed to run in a northerly direction for approximately 10m before becoming too indistinct to identify. Sample excavations on both features were undertaken at the southern end of the site where the features were most clearly defined and apparently better preserved.

5.2. Feature 1

Two segments were excavated across Feature 1 (Fig. 3). The southern segment (Fig. 4, A-B, Pl. 3) showed Feature 1 to consist of a shallow ditch cut 1.50m wide and 0.25m deep, with a moderately sloping profile and flat base (context 1009). This had been cut into the natural limestone bedrock and was filled by a deposit of sandy silt (context 1010). Context 1010 produced no finds and was cut by a later ditch 1.25m wide and 0.30m deep, with a steeply sloping profile and flat base (Context 1007), situated to the west of Ditch 1009 and running along the same north-south alignment. It was filled by a sandy silt deposit (Context 1008), from which one sherd of Romano-British Greyware and three rim sherds of Romano-British Orange fabric Coarseware, dating to the second century, were recovered.

The northern segment (Fig. 4, C-D, Pl. 4) revealed a similar sequence, with a 1.10m wide, 0.35m deep ditch cut of moderately sloping v-shaped profile (context 1013) filled by a silty deposit (context 1014). Context 1014 was cut to the west by a later ditch (context 1011) 1.35m wide and 0.35m deep, with a moderately sloping concave profile. This ditch was filled by a silty deposit (context 1012). No finds were recovered from contexts 1014 and 1012.

On completion of archaeological excavations, the remainder of Feature 1 was removed by a mechanical excavator operating under archaeological supervision, confirming that it

continued in a northerly direction to the existing quarry face (Pl. 5). It became increasingly shallow and narrow, surviving as a U-shaped gully 0.50m wide x 0.10m deep at its northernmost extent. No evidence of a re-cut was seen at this point and this plus the shallow depth of the feature suggested severe truncation due to modern ploughing. No further finds were recovered from Feature 1.

5.2. Feature 2

Two segments were excavated across Feature 2 (Fig. 3). The southern segment (Fig 4, E-F, Pl. 6) showed the feature to consist of a 0.90m wide, 0.15m deep ditch cut of shallow concave profile (context 1003), cut through a thin deposit of subsoil (context 1002) and the underlying natural bedrock. Ditch cut 1003 was filled by silty deposit 1004.

The northern segment (Fig. 4, G-H, Pl. 7) revealed a 0.75m wide, 0.14m deep ditch cut of shallow concave profile (context 1005), cut through subsoil deposit 1002 and filled by silty deposit 1006. No finds were recovered from deposits 1004 and 1006.

Following the recording of the sections, the northern segment across Feature 2 was extended north. This showed Ditch cut 1003/1005 to run northwards for 12.40m before ending in a rounded terminal (Fig. 3, Pl. 8). However, given the shallow depth of the feature, it is possible that this apparent terminal represents the truncation of Cut 1005 to the north by modern ploughing.

6. Discussion

The two parallel linear features uncovered during the Watching Brief relate directly to the cropmarks which are known to enter the site from the south and which have been interpreted as the remains of the Roman road. This being the case, it is probable that the two features represent kerbside ditches delineating the line of the road. Evidence for a re-cut of the western ditch (contexts 1007, 1011 Feature 1) perhaps indicates a phase of maintenance and repair.

No evidence of metalling or road surfaces of any kind were noted between the two ditches and it is probable that any deposits of this kind have been destroyed by ploughing. Similarly, the shallow depth of the ditches and the abrupt termination of ditch cut 1005 suggest severe truncation by later agricultural activity.

7. **Bibliography**

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