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HALL GARTH FARM

BIRKIN

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

**REPORT
MAY 2004**

EXCAVATION AND EVALUATION SECTION



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**HALL GARTH FARM
BIRKIN
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**SITE CODE: BHG04
NGR: SE 5310 2655**

**REPORT
May 2004**



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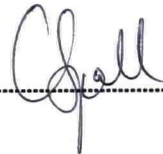
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LIST OF CONTENTS

	Contents	Page
	Summary	iii
	Acknowledgements	iii
1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	LOCATION AND LAND USE	1
1.2	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	1
1.3	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	1
2.0	FIELDWORK PROCEDURE	5
3.0	FIELDWORK RESULTS	7
3.1	INTERVENTION 1	7
3.2	INTERVENTION 2	12
3.3	INTERVENTION 3	15
3.4	INTERVENTION 4	15
3.5	INTERVENTION 5	19
3.6	INTERVENTION 6	21
4.0	DISCUSSION	21
4.1	PHASE 1	21
4.2	PHASE 2	24
4.3	PHASE 3	24
4.4	PHASE 4	24
5.0	ASSESSMENT	24
6.0	MITIGATION	26
7.0	ARCHIVE	26
 <i>References</i>		
 Figures		
1	Location of area of investigation	2
2	Location of interventions	6
3	Northeast facing section, Intervention 1	8
4	Southeast facing section, Intervention 1	9

5	F1 to F4 pre-excavation plan, Intervention 1	10
6	F5 to F9 pre-excavation plan, Intervention 1	10
7	Northeast facing section, Intervention 2	13
8	F12 to F17, Intervention 2	14
9	Northeast facing section, Intervention 3	16
10	Southeast facing section, Intervention 4	17
11	F18 to F20, Intervention 4	18
12	F21, Intervention 4	18
13	F22 to F24, Intervention 5	20
14	NE-SW profile, Intervention 6	22
15	Results of scheme of investigation by phase	23

Plates

1	Roman sarcophagus outside St Mary's church	3
2	St Mary's church looking north	3
3	Excerpt from 1907 Ordnance Survey map	4
4	Late 17th century gateposts	5
5	F1 to F4, Intervention 1 looking northeast	7
6	F5 to F9, Intervention 1 looking northeast	11
7	Architectural stone incorporated into F2	11
8	F12 to F17, Intervention 2 looking northeast	12
9	Stone wall footing F25, Intervention 2 looking southwest	12
10	Brick drain F18, looking northwest	15
11	Stone wall footing F19, looking northwest	19
12	F22 to F24, Intervention 5, looking northeast	19

Tables

1	Summary of phasing	21
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Appendices

A	Written scheme of investigation
B	Index to field file
C	Summary of context and feature records
D	Ceramic assessment
E	Building material assessment
F	Zooarchaeological assessment

Summary

A scheme of archaeological evaluation, consisting of five evaluation trenches (Intervention 1 to 5) and a small auger survey (Intervention 6), was carried out at Hall Garth Farm, Birkin, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 5310 2655) in advance of a proposed development. The fieldwork was undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd in association with Mike Griffiths and Associates, on behalf of Mr Martin Nunns. The evaluation took place between the 19th and 27th of February 2004.

The earliest activity encountered during evaluation was a phase of structural activity encountered in Interventions 1, 2, 4 and 5 dated by pottery to the 16th century. These remains included a stone building, possibly an oven, with an associated cobbled surface and posthole in Intervention 5. Intervention 1, 2 and 4 encountered a stone roof tile-filled pit, a stone wall footing and a boundary ditch respectively. Later post-medieval activity is represented by structural remains and a ditch in Intervention 4. A cottage complex, known from cartographic evidence to have existed on the site from the late 18th century and demolished in the 1960s, was contacted in Intervention 1 and 2. 19th and 20th century made-ground was encountered in Intervention 3 and 4 and may relate to the recent reclamation of land from the flood plain.

Acknowledgements

Field Archaeology Specialists are grateful to Mr Nunns for his assistance and cooperation during fieldwork and to Gail Falkingham of Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council for her advice and support.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd at Hall Garth Farm, Birkin, North Yorkshire, in association with Mike Griffiths and Associates, on behalf of Mr Martin Nunns. The fieldwork was carried out between the 19th and 27th of February 2004.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The site (NGR SE 5310 2655) is situated on the southern periphery of the village of Birkin, against the northern banks of the Old Eye river. To the north the site is bounded by housing and farm buildings; and to the west and east, by the boundary wall of the churchyard of St Mary's and the low pasture field of Hall Garth, respectively (Figure 1). The area of investigation is positioned on an area of raised ground, and is markedly higher than the surrounding land to the south. The eastern edge of this high ground falls away sharply into the enclosed pasture field of Hall Garth. The site comprises a small area of pasture adjacent to St Mary's Church and a complex of agricultural buildings, currently used for storage of fodder and housing livestock, lies in the southern area of investigation.

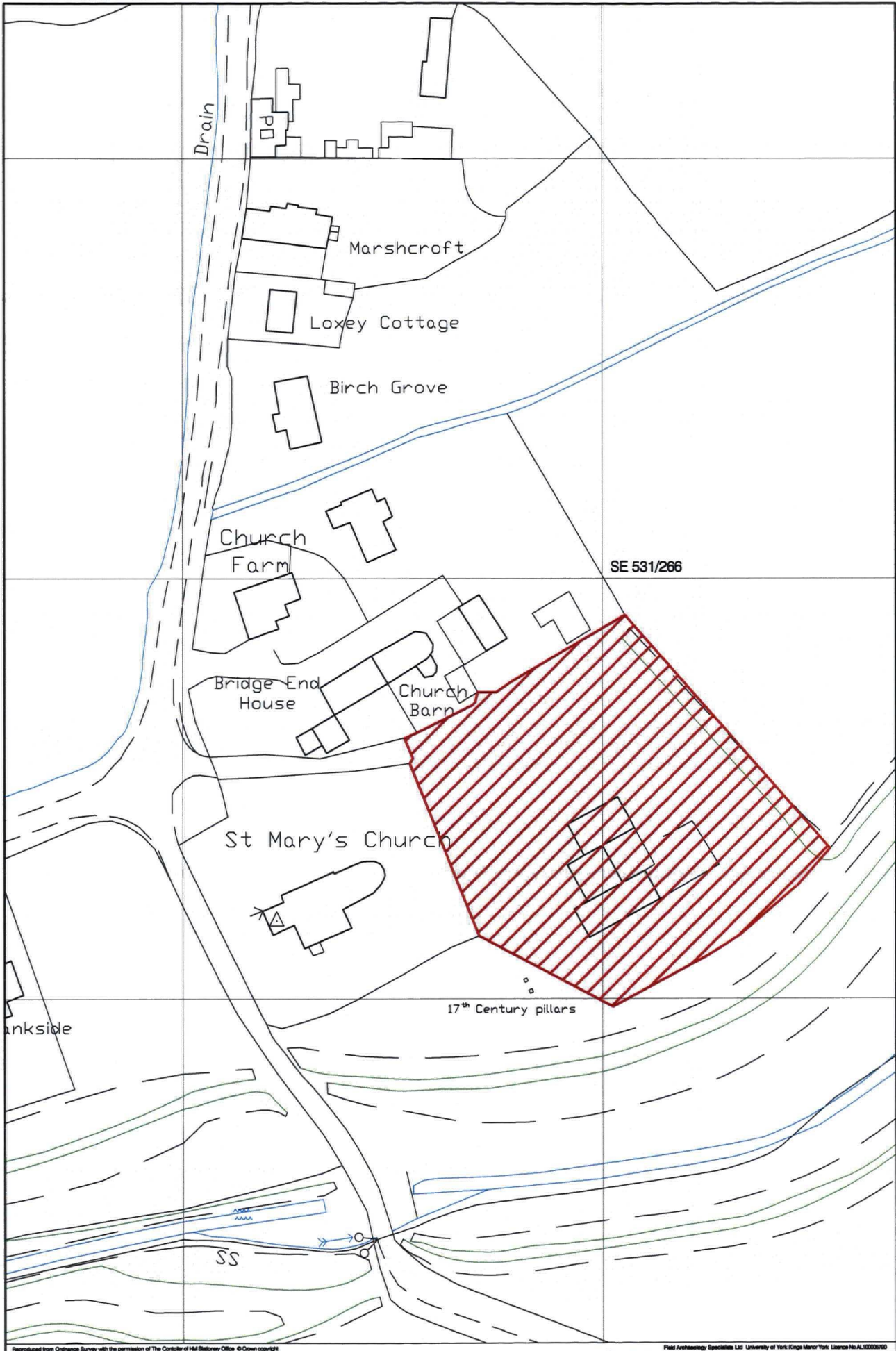
1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The evaluation aimed to characterise, date and assess any archaeological remains within the proposed development area. The scheme consisted of five trenches positioned across the site to investigate areas which would be affected by the proposed development (application ref: 8/51/14H/PA). In addition, an auger survey (Intervention 6) was undertaken with the aim of achieving a profile through underlying deposits from northeastern edge of Intervention 4, through the slope and into Hall Garth Field. This aimed to test for the presence of a possible ditch associated with the moated manor suggested to have been sited to the immediate east. Other key objectives were to test for the potential survival of a putative late/post-medieval hall, which cartographic evidence suggests was present at the site. The same map indicates that the site of the putative hall was overlain by two late 18th century cottages demolished during the 1960s. A pair of listed late 17th century ornate gateposts lie close to the area of investigation and also suggest the presence of a building of some status nearby. More generally, the proximity of the area of investigation to the Norman church of St Mary's and the possible site of a moated manor house increased the archaeological potential of the site. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by the Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council (Appendix A).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hall Garth lies on the northern bank of the Old Eye, shortly before it joins the River Aire to the southeast. Little is known of the early history of the immediate area, though the discovery of a stone sarcophagus, of Roman date in a nearby field, may indicate Roman activity in the area (YAJ 1901; find spot in a field centred at SE 5445 2690: NYSMR card index). The millstone grit sarcophagus is now located at the northwest corner of the St Mary's Church (Plate 1).





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Location of area of investigation

Scale 1:1250



Figure 1





Plate 1 Roman sarcophagus outside St Mary's church

At the time of the Domesday Book, Birkin is recorded as *Berchinge*:

'where Aluric had one carucate of land to be taxed, and there may be one plough there. Gamel has it now under Ilbert. In the demesne one plough, and four villanes, and two bordars with two ploughs, and one mill of three shillings. Two acres of meadow, wood pasture one mile long and half broad. The whole manor two miles long and one mile and a half broad value in King Edward's time ten shillings, the same now. This land is said to belong to *Esneid*' (Forrest 1871, 79)

Historical studies of Birkin are somewhat dominated by St Mary's church, considered by Pevsner to be 'one of the most impressive Norman churches in Yorkshire', and retaining much of its Norman plan and structure (Pevsner 1959, 104) (Plate 2). The church is a Grade I listed building, and was previously held under the patronage of the families of Byrkin and Everingham (Forrest 1871, 88).



Plate 2 St Mary's church looking north

To the east of the church, on land now known as Hall Garth, is the presumed site of the moated manor house of the Birkin family. Evidence for this moated site is, however, scarce. Historical references and cartographic evidence have, as yet, provided little information on the location or development of this manorial hall, generally thought to have been constructed c.1180, though a date of 1230 is also given (Anon 196?; NYM 9912).

At this time (1140 to 1230) the manor of Birkin was held by a family of the same name, descended from one Asolf or Essulf (Holmes 1893, 140). Asolf had died by 1165, and his land was divided between his sons; land at Birkin came into the possession of Peter fitz Asolf (also styled Peter of Flockton, Peter of Gipton, Peter of



Mary's Church, and have been compared to similar examples at Kellington dated to *c.*1698 (Pevsner 1959, 105). They are described as plain piers with a pulvinated frieze and stepped cornice with ball finials (NYM 9913) (Plate 4).



Plate 4 Late 17th century gateposts

The date at which the hall was demolished is not known. The existence of late 17th century pillars has led to the assumption that the hall would have remained in existence into the 18th century. Church Hill Cottages, which survived on the site into the 1960s, are thought to have been constructed on the earlier location of the hall, and are marked as such on the Ordnance Survey map of 1907 (see Plate 3). Prior to their demolition at some point in the 1960s, a 'coursed plinth of an earlier building' was observed, incorporated in the north and south fronts of the brick-built cottages (NYSMR card index). Other than these cottages, and buildings to the north of the churchyard, no structures are shown on the earliest maps consulted: the 1845 tithe map and the 1850s Ordnance Survey edition.

It is notable that the tithe map of 1845 records the field known currently as 'Hall Garth' as 'Horse Close Barn and Cottages' (no 241), and refers to a field immediately to the west, over the road, as 'Hall Garth' (no. 123). This would suggest either that the tithe commissioner, Joseph Townsend, was mistaken, or that the title of Hall Garth has shifted over time, a conclusion which would have significance for interpretation of remains beneath Church Hill Cottages as the main hall of the manor of Birkin.

To the south of the site, a series of earthworks represent modern flood defences or river management. This would represent a considerable level of modern disturbance and topographical change in the area, also suggested by a watching brief undertaken during excavation for an agricultural building in 2002. The watching brief monitored twelve 1m x 1m foundation trenches, in the southern part of Hall Garth, and modern deposits were observed to a depth of 1m over the whole area (OSA 2003).

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

Prior to excavation, the site was scanned using a cable avoidance tool and all services were marked out on the ground. The evaluation involved the excavation of five trenches (Intervention 1 to 5)(Figure 2) which were marked out on the ground and all modern overburden excavated using a wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.20m wide toothless ditching bucket, under strict archaeological supervision. Intervention 1 was excavated by machine in two stages, the initial stage contacted a quarry tile floor at a depth of approximately 0.30m below present ground level which was cleaned and recorded prior to its removal after which further machining was undertaken to a depth of no greater than 1.20m. Intervention 2 to 5 were excavated mechanically until the first archaeological horizon was visible, below which all excavation was carried out by hand, or to a depth no greater than 1.20m below present ground level, whichever came sooner. Intervention 6 was a series of six hand-augered cores, removed in 1.00m column intervals, each to a maximum depth of 2.50m. The soil