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**Main Street  
Welburn  
North Yorkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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January 1998  
MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

**Main Street  
Welburn  
North Yorkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**Main Street  
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**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Introduction**

This report sets out the results of an Archaeological Watching Brief on ground works carried out during the construction of a house on land to the east of Sunny Cottage, Main Street, Welburn, within the parish of Welburn, North Yorkshire (SE 7190 6810 : Fig. 1).

Attention had been drawn to the possible archaeological potential of the site through planning control by the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council. Possible archaeological significance arises from Roman and medieval activity recorded in the area (Kelly 1937, 57). MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd undertook the work in November 1997.

The site lay in an open space formerly occupied by an allotment and bounded by the garden wall of Sunny Cottage to the west and a wall to the north, the garage boundary to the east and Main Street to the south (Fig. 1).

The site stands on soils of the Rivington 1 Soil Association with a solid geology of Carboniferous and Jurassic sandstone (Mackney et al.) at an height of approximately 54.20m AOD.

All work was funded by Harvest Homes, Yorkshire.

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**Methods**

The footings (Trenches 1-6 : Fig. 2) were excavated in spits by a JCB excavator using a toothless bucket under archaeological supervision. A written record and photographic archive was compiled (Appendices 1 & 3), sections and plans were drawn where necessary (Appendix 4).

**Results**

Before archaeologists arrived, topsoil had been removed from the whole site. This revealed a compact sand (context 1010) which was absent on the southern part of the site where context 1005 (a culvert wall) was located.

The six excavated trenches all showed signs of archaeological activity, although only two, Trenches 3 and 6, showed signs of activity other than the process of deliberate deposition.

***Trenches 1 and 3***

Trench 1 was situated along the western side of the site and measured approximately 5.10m in length, and approximately 1m wide. It was excavated to a depth of 2.6m below the level of the excavated topsoil.

This trench illustrated five distinct archaeological deposits (Fig. 3 e-f - contexts 1014-1010). The lowest deposit was a compact sandy silt, which contained no finds (context 1014). Above this were context 1013, a 0.27m deep deposit of compact sand with coal and limestone inclusions, context 1012, a coarse sand with brick and burnt stone fragments of approximately 0.03m - 0.10m deep, context 1011 a gravel sand deposit of approximately 1m by 0.05m and context 1010 which consisted of a compact sand.

It is likely that the deposits revealed in this trench represent successive attempts to raise the ground to a level similar to properties on either side.

Trench 3 ran parallel to Trench 1. The removal of topsoil from this area of the site revealed a brick built well which had been capped with concrete (context 1001 : Fig. 3 c-d).

#### *The Well*

The well was of brick construction roughly bonded with a cream-white mortar and measured 0.65m in diameter with a depth of c. 2m, and had been capped with concrete slabs measuring on average 0.60 x 0.50m.

The interior of the well displayed a hole channelled into the southern side measuring c. 0.06m x 0.04m. Removal of the capping stones revealed a further recess in the eastern side. A gap had been left in the last course of bricks and an additional brick lain on end behind the gap suggested that they were probably for a stand pipe or pump (Pl. 1).

The excavation of the well by the JCB excavator revealed the base, which was a large slate slab the size of which was estimated as in excess of the diameter of the well. A salt glazed pipe running into the well from the culvert in Trench 6 was also exposed.

The excavation of the footings in the remainder of Trench 3 revealed a section of overlying deposits common to Trench 1, and a further two archaeological features (contexts 1015 and 1007 : Fig. 2).

Context 1015 was a deposit approximately 2.2m long of an ashy clay containing fragments of pottery and leather (Pl. 2).

#### *Sandstone Drain (context 1007)*

Context 1007 was constructed of large sandstone slabs forming a channel three courses deep (including the slabs for the base). This channel was capped by larger sandstone slabs, c. 0.40m x 0.60m. The gaps between the capping slabs were filled by smaller fragments of sandstone held together with a silty clay which overlay the sandstone slabs, acting as a sealant (Pl. 3).

Removal of the capping slabs exposed the drain which showed no signs of silting despite the apparent collapse of the drain at the north end (Pl. 4). This section of drain still functioned with water flowing through it. The course of the drain appeared to extend into Trench 2 although only a few sandstone fragments were observed. This suggests that the drain had been previously disturbed.

#### *Trench 6*

Trench 6 ran along the southern boundary of the site parallel to the Main Street, measuring c. 10m east to west and c. 0.70m north to south and c. 1.86m deep.

### *The Culvert*

The earliest visible features within Trench 6 after the removal of topsoil and prior to the excavation of the trench were contexts 1002, 1005, 1004 and 1006. All these contexts relate to the same feature, the culvert.

Context 1002 and 1005 are the same feature, the mortared sandstone wall 1002 refers to the mouth of the culvert, and 1005 to the wall itself. Context 1002 was faced with dressed sandstone blocks bonded to the earlier wall, context 1006 (Fig. 4). It is very likely that this phase of the culvert was capped with large sandstone blocks in a similar way to the construction in Trench 3 (Fig. 4).

Sandstone retaining wall, context 1005 ran the length of the property, east-west extending into the properties either side and formed the southern boundary. Its length was in excess of 10m and it was 0.70m wide. Above ground level the wall would have stood approximately 1.20 to 1.50m high as attested by the surviving wall either side of the property. Below ground level it extended for approximately 2m.

Context 1005 was constructed of large sandstone blocks bonded with mortar, in which the gap in construction formed the culvert 1002 (Fig. 4). Context 1004, the brick wall abutted context 1002. The bricks were bonded together with mortar and formed a retaining wall. Within the area created by contexts 1002 and 1005; context 1003; four sandstone slabs appear to form the beginning of context 1007 and continue into Trench 3. A salt glazed pipe lay above the grey blue clay deposit 1008 which overlays the sandstone slabs. The pipe runs through the brick wall, context 1004 into the adjacent well.

The excavation of the sandstone wall, context 1005, revealed the extent of context 1006, the dry stone limestone constructed culvert and wall (Fig. 4 : Pls. 5 & 6). This context formed a continuous wall within the culvert and along the boundary of the property. The wall measured 1.8m in depth and overlay clay deposit 1008 which also underlay 1002/1005. At the mouth of the culvert formed by 1006, two limestone slabs were laid on edge at right angles to the culvert mouth. Context 1006 had been recently disturbed by a water pipe running through both sides of the inner culvert.

Context 1008 overlay context 1009, a clay deposit.

Removal of contexts 1004, a modern brick wall which sealed off the culvert, produced a uniform section of sandy silts (context 1016 : Fig. 4 g-h).

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The archaeological evidence exposed at Welburn revealed three types of feature, the culvert and extension, the well, and the archaeological deposits.

Excavation results suggested that water played an important part in the role of the site. A local villager mentioned that the local farm hands told him the site had been used as the village watering hole where they brought their horses, and that south of the site there had once been a corn mill.

The 1911 Ordnance Survey County Series map of Welburn shows no evidence of either a corn mill or a village watering hole (Fig. 5), although the boundary wall is shown. If the site had been used as a watering hole or as part of the corn mill, this activity would predate the 1911 map. There is a reference to a corn mill in the Victoria County History (Victoria County History 1928, 107) ' *on the cram beck to the north of the school is a disused corn*

*mill, on the site of a mill which belonged to the Bulmers in 1537 and was itself the successor of a mill valued at 2s in 1086.'*

This reference could place the mill in the same area as mentioned by the villager. It is possible that the culvert was part of a tail race for the mill running down stream to the site. The use of dry stone walling emphasises that this was a substantial construction to strengthen the culvert. The use of dry stone walling is common to the Yorkshire area and context 1008 (the clay deposit) would appear to be used to reduce seepage from such a tailrace (Crossley 1990, 140). The sandstone wall respects the mouth of the culvert which implies that the tail race was still in use when the boundary wall was built.

Alternatively, it is possible that there was a watering hole on the site with the tail race leading water to it. Presumably as the mill became increasingly run down a lack of maintenance to the mill races would reduce the flow of water enabling the site to be filled in. Perhaps enough water was still present to necessitate a drain.

The later use of the site may have been connected to the leather industry, as one of the earliest deposits on the site contained small fragments of leather (Appendix 2) . There is a reference to a leather dressing yard in Welburn belonging to Messers. John Stead & Co. in 1859 (Whellan 1859, 591) and it seems possible that this site may be where the refuse was dumped from this industry.

The well and the blocking wall for the culvert, are the latest archaeological features on the site. These may be contemporary with the use of the site as an allotment. The well was fed from the mouth of the culvert via a salt glazed pipe. Later when the well became disused it was capped and covered over.

A suggested time scale can be established on consideration of the documentary sources. If the culvert, context 1006 , was connected to the disused corn mill referred to in V. C. H., the date of disuse was prior to 1928 (V.C.H. 1928). A further reference to a corn miller, Mary Todd places construction earlier than 1823 (Barnes 1823). The reference to the leather dressing yard dates to 1859. No further mention is made of the corn mill until 1928. The only visible remaining evidence on the site is the boundary wall located on the 1911 Ordnance survey map.

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Kelly (1937) Kelly Directory of North and East Ridings of Yorkshire.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Context Listing

Context No.	Trench	Description
1001	3	Structure; mortar, 10YR 8/1 and red brick
1002	6	Structure; 2.5YR N6 plastic clay and sandstone slabs
1004	6	Structure; mortar, 10YR 8/1 and red brick
1005	6	Structure; mortar, 7.5YR and sandstone slabs
1006	6	Structure; limestone slabs
1007	3	Structure; sandstone drain and sealant, 10YR 5/2 silty clay
1008	6	Deposit; 2.5YR 6/N6 plastic clay
1009	6	Deposit; 10 YR 3/1 Ashy clay.
1010	1 & 3	Deposit; 2.5YR 4/6 compact sand
1011	1 & 3	Deposit; 10YR 6/3 gravelly sand
1012	1 & 3	Deposit; 10YR 6/4 coarse sand
1013	1 & 3	Deposit; 10YR 3/3 compact sand
1014	1 & 3	Deposit; 10YR 2/2 compact sandy silt
1015	3	Deposit; 10YR 2/1 black ashy clay
1016	6	Deposit; 10YR4/3 compact sandy silt

## APPENDIX 2

### Finds Catalogue

Context No	Description	Date
1001 (Cleaning)	Total Pottery- 7 sherds 1 Brandsby type ware  1 Staffordshire type slipware 3 Red Coarse ware 1 Blue and white transferware  Glass 1 modern glass bottle/jar neck	14th to 20th Century
1007	Total Pottery- 11 sherds 1 ?medieval shard 3 Red coarse ware  2 19th century Stoneware 2 Blue and white earthenware  Glass 2 18th century green glass sherds (1 bottle base, 1 phial base)  Clay Pipe. 1 19th century stem  Animal Bone, 1 fragment Ovis/Capra metapodial. Distal fragment.	?Medieval to 19th Century
1015	Total Pottery- 5 sherds	

4 Red coarse ware  
1 Pearlware

17th/18th & Early 19th Century

Animal Bone, 1 fragment  
Ovis/Capra rib fragment

Leather- 2 small fragments (discarded)

Fe Object- 1 fragment (discarded)

Cu Alloy Object  
1 damaged and corroded button (discarded)

## APPENDIX 3

### Photographic Listing

#### Colour Print

1. Base of Trench 3, context 1015. Facing east.
2. Base of Trench 3, context 1015. Facing east.
3. Base of Trench 3, context 1015. Facing east.
4. Base of Trench 3, context 1015. Facing east.
5. Trench 3, east facing section. Facing west.
6. Trench 3, east facing section. Facing west.
7. Trench 3, culvert prior to removal of capping stones. Facing north.
8. Trench 3, culvert prior to removal of capping stones. Facing north.
9. Trench 3, culvert after removal of capping stones. Facing north.
10. Trench 3, culvert after removal of capping stones. Facing north.
11. Trench 3, base of trench after removal of capping stones. Facing north.
12. Trench 3, base of trench. Facing north.
13. Modern well with capping removed, context 1001. Facing south.
14. Modern well with capping removed, context 1001. Facing south.
15. Top of wall, context 1006. Facing south..
16. Top of wall, context 1006. Facing south.
17. Culvert, context 1005. Facing south.
18. Wall, context 1006. Facing south.
19. Wall, context 1006. Facing south.
20. Wall, context 1006. Facing south.
21. Culvert partially obscured by rubble. Facing south.
22. Culvert partially obscured by rubble. Facing south.
23. Wall, context 1006. Facing south.
24. Wall, context 1006. Facing south.
25. Trench 3, east facing section. Facing west.
26. Trench 3, east facing section. Facing west.
27. Base of Trench 6.
28. Trench 6, context 1006 partially exposed. Facing south-west.
29. Trench 6, context 1005 in section. Facing west.
30. Trench 6, context 1005 in section. Facing east.
31. Well with capping stones, context 1001. Facing south
32. Culvert base with pipe, context 1003. Facing north.
33. Culvert base with pipe, context 1003. Facing north.
34. Culvert base with pipe, context 1003. Facing south.
36. Internal view of culvert, context 1006. Facing south.
37. Internal view of culvert, context 1006. Facing south.

## APPENDIX 4

### Archive Listing

#### Plans and Sections

1. Plan of contexts 1001,1002 and 1004. Scale 1:20.
2. West facing section of trench 1. Contexts 1010- 1014. Scale 1:10.
3. West facing section of trench 3. Contexts 1010- 1014. Scale 1:20.
4. Plan of trench 3. Contexts 1007 and 1015. Scale 1:20.
5. Section overlay to drawing 3 of context 1007. Scale 1:20.
6. Plan of trench 3, context 1007 with capping stones removed. Scale 1:20.
7. Plan overlay to drawing 1. Scale 1:20.
8. South facing section of trench 6. Context 1002, 1003, 1006 and 1007. Scale 1:20.
9. Plan of context 1003. Scale 1:20.
10. Overlay for drawing no 8. Section of 1006,1008. Scale 1:20.