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**PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
STATIC CARAVAN FACILITIES AT SE77608080
FLAMINGO LAND, KIRBY MISPERTON**

COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT	
17 FEB 1992	
PASS TO	INITIALS
HML	
HRC	

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INTRODUCTION

This brief report details the results of an assessment of the archaeological potential of a field (NGR SE 77608080, Parish of Kirby Misperton, North Yorkshire) that is the subject of proposed development, situated on the west bank of the Costa Beck and immediately to the north of the Flamingoland entertainment complex.

The site which lays on the 22 metre contour is virtually flat, is rectangular in shape , measures approximately 300 metres east to west by 160 metres north to south and is presently down to pasture. On the west side the site is demarcated by a small tree plantation, on the north and south sides by hedges, whilst the east side runs up to the edge of Costa Beck, Fig. 1.

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (map sheet 1. Northern England) shows the site to lay on glaciolacustrine clay whilst some 250 metres to the north a small area of Fen peat is located, (SSEW, Map.1. & legend). After the last glaciation the Vale of Pickering was the site of an ancient lake. Through processes of natural and more recently, human engineered drainage, the Vale has gradually been reclaimed.

The assessment research employed all available sources of data pertaining to the archaeology of the site. This included the Sites and Monuments Records office of NYCC, published works, unpublished archive information and a site inspection.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND Fig. 2.

The first recorded archaeological notes regarding the vicinity of the site were the results of excavations conducted in 1893 by Major M.J. Mitchelson at NGR SE 77828065 some 200 metres to the south east of the proposed development site, (Spink. 1895).

Clark, in her summary of Mitchelson's excavations, notes that wooden piles with a spacing of 1.2 – 1.5 metres were found at a depth approximating with that of the bed of Costa beck, (Clark. 1930). Also recovered in 1893 were nearly sixty different patterns of "jars or urns" believed to be of Romano-British date, an assemblage of animal bones and the bones of four human individuals. It was considered that Mitchelson's excavations demonstrated the existence of a lake type settlement, presumably of a similar pattern to those at Glastonbury and the Swiss lake edges also excavated in the latter part of the 19th century, (Bulleid. & Gray. 1911 & 1917).

Between 1925 – 1929 intermittent excavation was carried out a short distance to the south of Mitchelson's 1893 works by Lt Col E. Kitson Clark, Dr Kirk and Professor Omerod. The basic series of strata recovered in the 1920's trenches was summarised thus : 0.75 – 1.2 metres of heavy clay, beneath this was peat containing birchwood and wooden piles together with other evidence of human occupation. Below this were recorded aquatic plants resting on sand with Kimmeridge clay beneath the sand. The depth of the 1920's trenches varied between 1.8 – 2.1 metres and it should be noted that the peat layer was not present in all of the excavated areas. A quantity of bone chiefly of domestic animals, pot boilers and a number of pot sherds said to be of Iron Age date were recovered. Although no clear plan of structures could be elucidated the excavators concluded the site to be the remnants of a series of pile dwellings located in what was then a marshy area in the former Lake Pickering.

Elgee, in his considerations of the excavated evidence from Costa Beck, was in broad agreement with the conclusions of the 1920's excavators, though on the basis of elements of the ceramic assemblage thought the site to continue in use into the Romano-British period, (Elgee. 1930).

T.C.M. Brewster found a fragment of an Iron Age blue glass bead in the vicinity of the proposed development site in 1949 and ventured the opinion that the piles excavated earlier could be part of a bridge, (MAP archive, Malton).

Hayes details his visits to the Costa beck area between 1975 – 79, (Hayes. 1988). Between these dates he and his colleagues inspected an approximately 2 km stretch of both sides of the Costa Beck between NGR SE 76808170 and SE 77858050 by means of a rubber dinghy. At a number of points along the beck quantities of animal bone, calcite gritted pottery, wooden stakes or piles, iron slag, burnt stone, part of a ?quem and a small piece of thin bronze strap were retrieved from the banks, (Fig. 2.). Hayes also noted that bone had previously been found in the "12 ft cut" a short distance to the east that drains into the beck from Pickering and Westgate Carr, and that antlers had been found by a river warden at NGR SE 76858175, who had also seen bones over an area that extended downstream for some distance. From Hayes' fieldwork it is apparent that archaeological material is spread over a considerable area both along the present course of the Costa beck, to the east of the beck and quite probably to the west of the beck also.

SITE INSPECTION (of 10.2.92)

At the time of inspection the beck water level was in the region of 1.8 – 2.2 metres below the top level of the bank sides. By wading along the shallower parts of the western side of the beck it was possible to examine the strata down to water level. The basic sequence can be listed thus:

- c. 1.5 m stiff, greyish yellow clay
- c. 0.05 m damp, grey silty sand
- c. 0.20 m damp, complex bands of silts and sands with lenses of peat containing wood and animal bone
- unknown depth of grey medium sand

It should be noted that all finds were located in the layer containing peat lenses and the thin bands of sand and silt immediately above and below the peat lens layer. The peat was nowhere seen to be continuous for more than a few metres and seldom tended to be more than 5 cm thick. Although finds (all animal bone and wood) could be seen at several places along the beck bank only a small sample was collected at NGR SE77798072. These finds were:

several frags wood with no obvious signs of working, < 10 x 20 x 10 cm.

1 x scapula, bovine.

1 x lower jawbone, probably small bovine.

1 x longbone, bovine.

1 x small, rib frag, probably small bovine.

1 x unidentified frag of longbone showing clear signs of animal gnawing.

All finds had been blackened by deposition in waterlogged peaty conditions.

The sequence of strata at the site is of some archaeological interest in so far as extensive deposits of human derived material are almost certainly present at a level in and close to the layers containing peat. Furthermore, the presence of anaerobic conditions due to waterlogging have served to preserve organic material at this horizon, these being protected by an overlaying clay deposit of some considerable depth. It would appear that the listed strata are the result of water borne sediment formation processes in the remnants of what was formerly Lake Pickering. The peat deposits (Fen or Fen carr peat) have developed in damp lowland depressions, (SSEW, 1984).

The uppermost clay deposits are thought to be of an origin that post dates the Iron Age though whether or not they contain any archaeological remains is unknown. No earthworks are visible at the site nor are there any cropmark aerial photographs of the vicinity and so it cannot be certain as to what the post Roman land use of the area has been. Given the location of the site adjacent to a watercourse however, the use of the surrounding land for pasture is quite probable during the medieval and post medieval periods.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

The elements of the development proposals that will cause ground disturbance can be listed as:

(measurements refer to disturbance depth)

- a) shower block 0.75 – 1. m
- b) toilet block 0.75 – 1. m
- c) electricity link-ups to static caravans 0.5 m
- d) drains < 1. m

It is understood that plans to install a new sewerage treatment plant adjacent to the shower block have been abandoned. In their place drains are to be laid from both the shower and toilet blocks to an existing sewerage treatment plant to the south.

On the basis of present information it would appear that none of the ground disturbing works are likely to encounter and disturb the deposits containing finds that were examined at the beck banks. Any destructive impact would appear to be limited to the present topsoil and its underlying clay layer only. The archaeological significance of this material is not known, though as it appears to be post Roman in date, of water borne origin, has no earthworks, is some distance away from the medieval village of Kirby Misperton and may always have been of a marginal nature, it may well be minimal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Geophysical survey is not considered to be a particularly useful option at the site on the grounds that the areas to be disturbed are of minimal size and the only known archaeological deposits lay at a depth beyond which geophysical surveying instruments could successfully penetrate for readings. Likewise augering survey is considered to be of minimal value as it is already known from the riverbank sections that the peat deposits are discontinuous and that they are at a depth that is unlikely to be reached by ground disturbance in development.

In consideration of all the above it is suggested that the next phase of archaeological works should consist of a 2 x 2 metre test-hole excavated to a depth of 1.5 metres (ie: beneath the level of any anticipated ground disturbance) in the area of the shower block. The test-hole will indicate whether the important peat layer would be affected by the development and the excavation of the test-hole should cease at the point at which archaeological deposits occur, if higher than 1.5 metres. The results of this test-hole should then be used as the basis for assessing whether or not any further archaeological work is required. Should the test-hole be devoid of archaeological deposits then the only further works recommended are that a watching brief be maintained during the cutting of building foundation trenches and sewer trenches.

It is further noted that the use of a gravity fall for the effluent from the shower block to the existing sewerage plant would ensure that the anticipated drainage pipes be installed at as high a level as possible minimising any disturbance to archaeological deposits.

In the event of a new sewerage treatment plant being installed, it is recommended that any archaeological deposits here be fully excavated.



Fig. 1. Location Plan

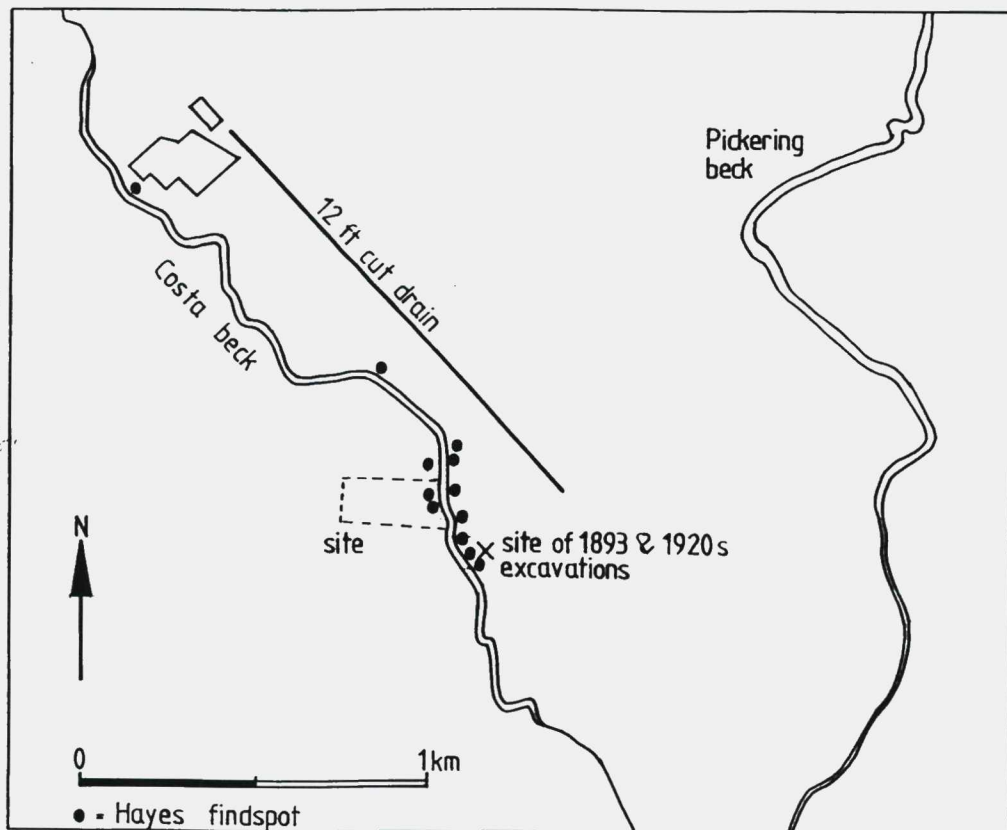


Fig. 2. Plan showing location of site, earlier excavations and Hayes' findspots

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