



FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS

WATCHING BRIEF

LAND ADJACENT TO STONEYDALE

CEMETERY ROAD

THIRSK

NORTH YORKSHIRE

NYCC HER	
SNY	9489
ENY	1254
CNY	2791
Parish	2152
Rec'd	31/05/2005

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the results of a watching brief undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd on behalf of Mr Neil Collinson of C. Dale of Thirsk during the site clearance and excavation of foundation trenches for a house under construction on land adjacent to Stoneydale, Cemetery Road, Thirsk. The watching brief was carried out on 17th and 30th April 2003.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The development area was located to the west of the town centre (NGR SE 4255 8245), west of St Mary's Church and immediately to the east of a late 19th century cemetery, on a site which had been used as a mason's yard since the creation of the cemetery. The road along the western edge of the site was approximately 1m higher than the site itself which had been levelled out but sloped down slightly towards the north. Beyond the site to the north were houses forming part of the Norby estate which was thought to have been constructed in the 1950s and which was at a lower level than the development area.

Until the start of the present development, there had been a group of small modern timber buildings on the western part of the site. The largest of these was set on concrete slabs and fronted onto the road along the southern edge of the plot. To the north of the proposed building was a bungalow constructed in the 1980s with a double garage and landscaped garden and the eastern part of the site had been maintained with hardcore and gravel as an access route serving the mason's yard and the bungalow (Figure 1).

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the watching brief was to record and ascertain the nature of any archaeological deposits or features contacted during the groundworks which would be disturbed or destroyed by the development. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the North Yorkshire County Council Standard Written Scheme of Investigation for Limited Archaeological Recording.

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

The site clearance was undertaken under archaeological supervision using a wheeled mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, except when it was necessary to break up concrete slabs when a toothed bucket was employed. The foundation trenches were 0.80m wide except for some of the internal walls where they were 0.50m wide. The bases and corners of the trenches were finished by hand.

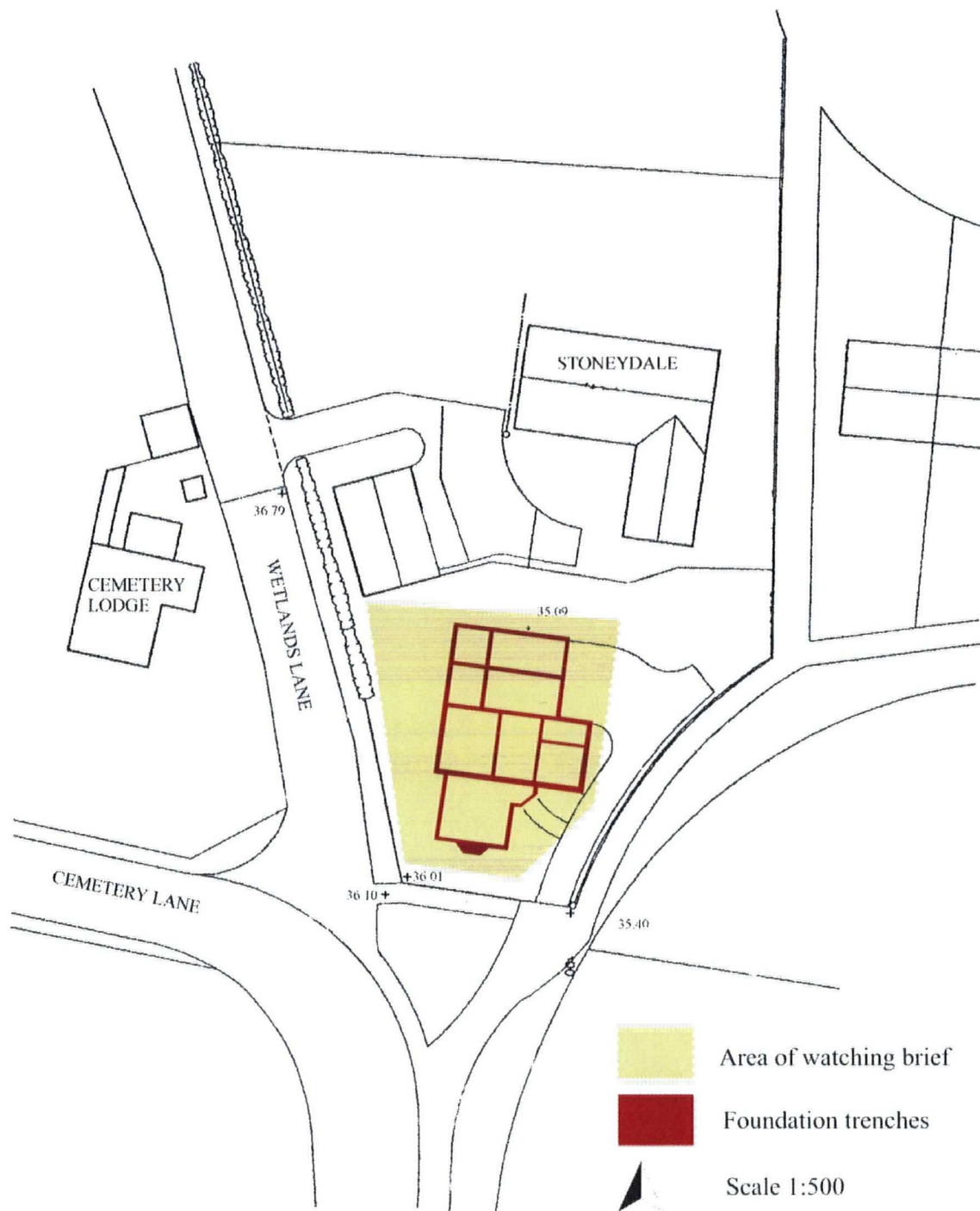


Figure 1 Location of the watching brief

3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The site clearance involved the removal of concrete slabs and timber beams (C1000) associated with the timber buildings of the mason's yard, as well as a layer of loose rubble and soil (C1001) trapped beneath these and some of the gravel make-up of the driveway. An area of approximately 20m x 15m was cleared to a maximum depth of 0.30m from the present ground surface. Surface finds included debris from stone working and from the demolished buildings. One fragment of green glazed medieval pottery was noted.

The foundation trenches suggested that the ground had originally sloped down more gently from the high point on the road at the southwestern corner of the site towards the area of the present Norby housing estate to the north. The northern and northeastern parts of the development area had been levelled out with dumps of ash, loose building rubble including brick and tile and fragments of glass and slag (C1002). This material appeared to be of 19th century date or later, and since the Ordnance Survey maps show no buildings on the site prior to the creation of the mason's yard in the late 19th century, it is suggested that this material was brought in at this time. The presence of slag and ash in the rubble dump may indicate that it came from the nearby foundry site to the east shown on the Ordnance Survey 1856 map.

Stratigraphically beneath this, but seen only in the area of the larger of the mason's buildings, was a deposit of clean brown sandy clay, C1003, thought to have been brought in as levelling for the building. This had a maximum depth of 0.30m and seemed to fill a natural shallow depression.

The earliest deposit recorded was C1004, a homogenous brown silty sand which was up to 0.60m thick, although the base of it was not seen. It rose up in the southwestern corner of the site and the surface of it sloped down towards the north, where only the top 0.10m of it were seen beneath C1002. This layer was very clean with only occasional inclusions of small pebbles. One fragment of medieval green glazed pottery was observed towards the base of the foundation trench at the southwestern corner of the proposed building. This layer is thought to represent a ploughsoil.

Table 1 Summary of contexts

Context	Description	Munsell Colour
1000	Concrete slabs and timber beams	-
1001	Very dark brown humic gritty soil mixed with a high percentage of modern rubble, marble fragments and chippings, nails and fragments of timber. Varied in thickness from 0.10m - 0.20m	10YR 2/2
1002	Deposit of mixed rubble including cobbles, brick and tile, as well as occasional mortar fragments, slag and ash. Also contained occasional nails and fragments of porcelain and glass, including screw-topped bottles.	-
1003	Clean brown sandy clay with occasional small pebble inclusions. Up to 0.30m deep in southwestern corner of the site but petering out to north. Probably represents redeposited subsoil levelling out a depression	7.5YR 4/4
1004	Homogenous brown silty sand with very few inclusions, but with occasional pockets of rubble and mortar on the surface. Depth not seen.	7.5YR 3/3

4.0 DISCUSSION

The layers contacted during the watching brief are all thought to be related to the construction of the mason's yard in the late 19th century or with levelling of the site at a later date, with the exception of C1004 which may relate to ploughing prior to this. The ploughsoil sloped down towards the north suggesting that the ground originally sloped more gently from the level of the road to the south of the site to the area of the Norby estate to the north.

5.0 ARCHIVE

Two sherds of residual medieval green glazed pottery were noted but not retained. A copy of this report is held by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd and the North Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

Acknowledgements

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