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B1248

**Land East of B1428  
Wharram-Le-Street  
North Yorkshire  
NGR SE 8647 6595**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**MAP  
February 2004**

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NGR SE 8647 6595**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

**Non Technical Summary**

*During February 2003 <sup>4?</sup> four trenches were excavated to assess the presence or absence of archaeological activity at land East of the B1428, Wharram-Le-Street. Two undated shallow ditches were located in Trench 1. A number of modern features were exposed in Trench 2, no archaeological features were exposed in Trench 3 and a number of medieval features in Trench 4.*

**1. Introduction**

This report has been commissioned by Birdsall Estate Company Ltd, in advance of the proposed residential development on land east of the B1248 road, Wharram-Le-Street, North Yorkshire (SE 8647 6595 : Fig. 1). The site lies in the parish of Wharram, on the edge of the village of Wharram-Le-Street on land east of the B1248 road and north of Salents Lane.

This document sets out the details and results of Archaeological Evaluation Trenches as specified in the agreed Written Scheme of Works.

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This report has been funded by Birdsall Estate Company Ltd.

**2. Site Description**

The site was under rough grassland at the time of the Evaluation Trenches 1, 2 and 3 were situated on land that was sloping from the south to the north. Trench 4 was situated on roughly a flat land surface.

### **3. Geology**

The soils on the site are of the Andover 1 Association, shallow well drained calcareous coarse loamy and sandy soils, over chalk on slopes and crests. (Mackney 1983).

### **4. Historical and Archaeological Background**

Lying close to the heart of the presumed area of former medieval settlement, and to the immediate west of the Roman 'villa' site and associated settlement, the site of proposed development is of potential archaeological significance. There has been limited archaeological work within the area of the village. However, an archaeological Watching Brief in 1999 during the construction of a new dwelling in land adjacent to Red House Farm revealed evidence of the occupation of the site from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century and agricultural use thereafter (YAT, 1999).

As part of the wider Wharram Percy Research Project, two Roman 'villas' at Wharram-Le-Street and Wharram Grange were investigated by the project between 1978 and 1980 to assess the impact of the continued ploughing of the site. The site investigated at Wharram-Le-Street lies to the east of the proposed development area and contains the source of the Gypsey Race. Through a combination of aerial photography, fieldwalking, geophysical survey and excavation, this area has been shown to contain complex, dense, well-stratified and multi-period remains, the limits of which are currently unknown. The earliest evidence for activity in the area comprised a number of Mesolithic flints. The earliest structural activity comprised a deep ditch, of pre-Roman date and is interpreted as Bronze Age. The principal features on the site, however, were of the Roman period and comprised a stone building complex of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Whilst this is described in the report as a 'villa', the excavators do not rule out the possibility of this being a religious or temple site, given the proximity to the source of the Gypsey Race (Rahtz 1986). Whilst the excavation of this site targeted limited and small areas, the prior geophysical survey detected a complex of features over an area a six hectares.

The alignment of some of the linear features suggests that they may continue into the area of proposed development.

Development of this site to the north of Salents Lane for residential housing, therefore, could disturb and destroy any surviving evidence of features and finds relating to former settlement, industry and burial within the former prehistoric, Romano-British, medieval and later settlements at Wharram-Le-Street.

## 5. Methodology

A total of four trenches were excavated on the site (Fig. 2). Trench 1 was located at the eastern end of the site, aligned north - south, parallel to the hedgeline that forms the eastern boundary. Trenches 2 and 3 were positioned in the centre of the site, both aligned east - west. Trench 2 was located parallel to the hedgeline that forms the northern boundary and trench three parallel to the hedgeline that forms the southern boundary. Trench 4 was located within the garden area to the west of the easternmost pair of semi-detached dwellings.

Topsoil and overburden were removed by a JCB excavator using a toothless bucket to the top of archaeological or natural deposits which ever appeared soonest, under direct archaeological supervision.

The areas were then hand cleaned to record in plan archaeological features. All ditches and gullies were hand excavated in segments with a minimum length of 1m; isolated features such as pits were excavated in half section.

A drawn, written and photographic record was made of all features and deposits. Plans and sections were drawn at scales of 1:20 and 1:10 respectively. The written record was compiled on standard forms using a continuous context recording system and all finds recovered were recorded by context.

## 6. Results

A total of four trenches were excavated as part of the archaeological evaluation of the site (Fig. 2).

### *Trench 1 (Pls. 1 & 2 & Fig. 3)*

Trench 1 measured 25m x 2m and was located c.3m from the eastern end of the site, aligned north – south, parallel to the hedgeline that forms the eastern boundary.

The natural was a strong brown sand with natural chalk and flint inclusions.

Two shallow linears were located above this natural and modern plough scratches (1005), the latter were located in the southern end of the trench running east - west.

Linear (1007) was located in the southern end of the trench. The exposed area of this linear measured 2m in length, 0.70m in width and 0.10m in depth. This linear had steadily sloping sides with a flat base. The fill (1003) was dark yellowish brown, silty clay with natural chalk and flint inclusions containing bone fragments.

Linear (1006) was located in the northern end of the trench (Plate.2). The exposed area of this linear measured 2m in length, 0.95m in width and 0.17m in depth. This linear had steadily sloping sides with a flat base. The fill (1004) was a dark yellowish brown, silty clay with natural chalk and flint inclusions containing no finds.

Above the linears and plough scratches was the subsoil consisting of a yellowish brown clay silt and was approximately 0.2m deep and topsoil consisting of a dark brown, silty loam containing natural chalk and flint fragments and was approximately 0.3m deep.

*Trench 2 (Pl. 3 & Fig. 4)*

Trench 2 measured 10m x 2m and was located in the middle of the site, aligned east – west and roughly 5m from the hedgeline that forms the northern boundary.

The natural was a strong brown sand with natural chalk and flint inclusions.

Four features were exposed in this trench above the natural. Three of these features (2004, 2008 and 2010) were interpreted as postholes, all three having steadily sloping edges with flat bases, and approximate depths of 0.10m. Their fills (2003, 2007 and 2009 respectively) were all dark greyish brown clay. Fills 2003 and 2009 contained bone fragments and rotten wood with 2007 containing two fragments of CBM. These features were all interpreted as modern postholes due to the fills and residual wood fragments.

The fourth feature (2006) was interpreted as a pit. This feature had steadily sloping sides with a flat base and an approximate depth of 0.10m. The fill (2005) was a dark greyish brown clay containing one fragment of 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

The subsoil consisted of yellowish brown, clayey silt containing natural chalk and flint fragments approximately 0.20m deep. The topsoil consisted of brown, friable silty sand containing natural chalk and flint fragments approximately 0.3m deep.

*Trench 3 (Pl. 4)*

Trench 3 measured 10m x 2m and was located in the middle of the site, aligned east – west and roughly 5m from the hedgeline that forms the southern boundary.

The natural was a yellowish orange sand with natural chalk and flint inclusions. The subsoil consisted of yellowish brown, clayey silt containing natural chalk and flint fragments approximately 0.45m deep. The topsoil



(3001) consisted of brown, friable silty sand containing natural chalk and flint fragments approximately 0.40m deep. No archaeological features were present in this trench.

*Trench 4 (Pls. 5-8 & Fig. 5)*

Trench 4 measured 5m x 2m and was located within the garden area to the west of the easternmost pair of semi-detached dwellings.

The natural was a yellowish orange sand with natural chalk and flint inclusions.

The primary phase of activity found in trench 4 consisted of two ditches (4009 and 4011). Ditch 4009 (Pl. 7) was situated roughly in the centre of the trench running northeast to southwest with a width of 1.3m and a depth of 0.30m. This ditch had a steep sided profile with a flat base and two fills, 4007 and 4008. The primary fill of this ditch (4007) was a dark grey clay with occasional natural chalk and flint fragments, and also contained bone fragments. Above 4007 was fill 4008, dark greyish brown clay with occasional natural chalk and flint fragments, containing bone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks.

Ditch 4011 (Pl. 8) was situated in the northern end of the trench running northeast to southwest, however, the total extent of this ditch was not seen as it ran beyond the examined area. The excavated extent was 0.35m in width and 0.22m in depth. This ditch had steadily sloping sides and a single fill was (4010). Consisting of very dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional natural chalk and flint fragments, and containing bone fragments and pottery dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. There were also nine large fragments of flint and sandstone contained in this fill, possibly discarded building material.

Above the two ditches was a spread of medieval plough soil (4004) roughly 0.40m in depth that spread across the entirety of the trench. This material was

a dark greyish brown loamy clay with occasional natural chalk and flint fragments containing pottery dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, CBM and bone.

Directly above this was an area of chalk fragments that was given two numbers (4002 and 4003). Context 4003 spread over most of the trench, and was clearly demolition material (Pl. 5) that had originated from the demolition of feature 4002. It contained CBM and pottery dating to the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century. Feature 4002 (Pl. 6) was made from more substantial blocks of chalk, between 20–30cm in width and 8-10cm in depth and a single course thick and contained CBM. This was situated on the western side of the trench and went beyond the excavation area. It is unclear what this feature was, however, a possible surface seems most likely.

One modern feature (4013) was also recorded directly above Feature 4002 and 4003. This feature was a modern flower bed which was recorded in section.

The topsoil (4001) consisted of brown, friable silty sand containing natural chalk and flint fragments approximately 0.2m deep.

## 7. **Conclusions**

The absence of any significant archaeology in Trenches 1 – 3 was initially surprising, however, it seems likely that this area lies directly between the Roman activity to the east and medieval activity to the west. The features located in Trench 4 are likely to be due to activities which took place to the rear of medieval houses that were located closer to the current B1248 road. The recovery of 10<sup>th</sup> century pottery from Ditch 4011 could be of significance, as this may help in the understanding of the early stages of Wharram-le-Street's history. More research needs to take place on this ditch, however, to gain further datable evidence.

8. **References**

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