

**HAUXLEY FARM, GREAT STANTON,
COUNTY DURHAM**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Planning reference 17/01187/FULE

OASIS ID - johnbug11-319786



JB Archaeology Ltd

On behalf of

D Hewitson Esq.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken between the 23rd and 30th May 2018 on the topsoil strip for four poultry sheds and an associated biomass boiler at Hauxley Farm, Great Stainton, planning reference 17/01187/FULE (NGR NZ 3268 2185).

The watching brief recorded a simple stratigraphic sequence of a deep uniform plough soil with only isolated patches of natural subsoil. The plough soil directly overlay the drift geology which had been scored by the deep ploughing in numerous places. All of the potential archaeological geophysical anomalies turned out to either be modern disturbance or variations in the natural geology.

A very small assemblage of medieval and 19th century pottery was noted in the plough soil. This consisted of two sherds of 19th century Black Coarse Ware pottery and two sherds of c.12-13th century medieval pottery. This material would seem to represent manuring with midden material over a prolonged period of time.

No other archaeological find or features were encountered.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on the topsoil strip for four poultry sheds and an associated biomass boiler at Hauxley Farm, Great Stainton, planning reference 17/01187/FULE (NGR NZ 3268 2185) (Figure 1). The site is in Great Stainton civil parish, which is part of Darlington Borough Council District, County Durham.
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken by JB Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of D Hewitson Esq. between the 23rd and 30th May 2018.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic Background

- 2.1 There is no evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity in the vicinity of the site – though a Roman road is suggested to run some distance to the east. The place name for Great Stainton is first recorded in 1091 as *Staninctona* with the name deriving from the Old Scandinavian *staning* meaning ‘Farmstead at a stony place’ (Mills, 2011, 431). This shows that there has been a settlement here for around 1,000 years and there was probably some form of settlement here before 1091, as Old Scandinavian was in use between the 8-12th centuries. Stainton was also known as *Stainton le Street*, presumably referring to the nearby Roman road. Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows the farm and its associated buildings with no features marked within the site (see also Allen Archaeology 2017).

Geology and Soils

- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site is Ford Formation Dolostone. Overlying this, the quaternary geology is predominantly glacial sands and gravels with some boulder clay (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The soils, which have developed from these deposits, are classified as the Clifton association which is a slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, reddish fine and coarse loamy soil (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Topography and Land-use

- 2.3 The site lies in an area of lower ground in a gently undulating landscape at c.105mOD to the east of the farm and is surrounded by farmland.

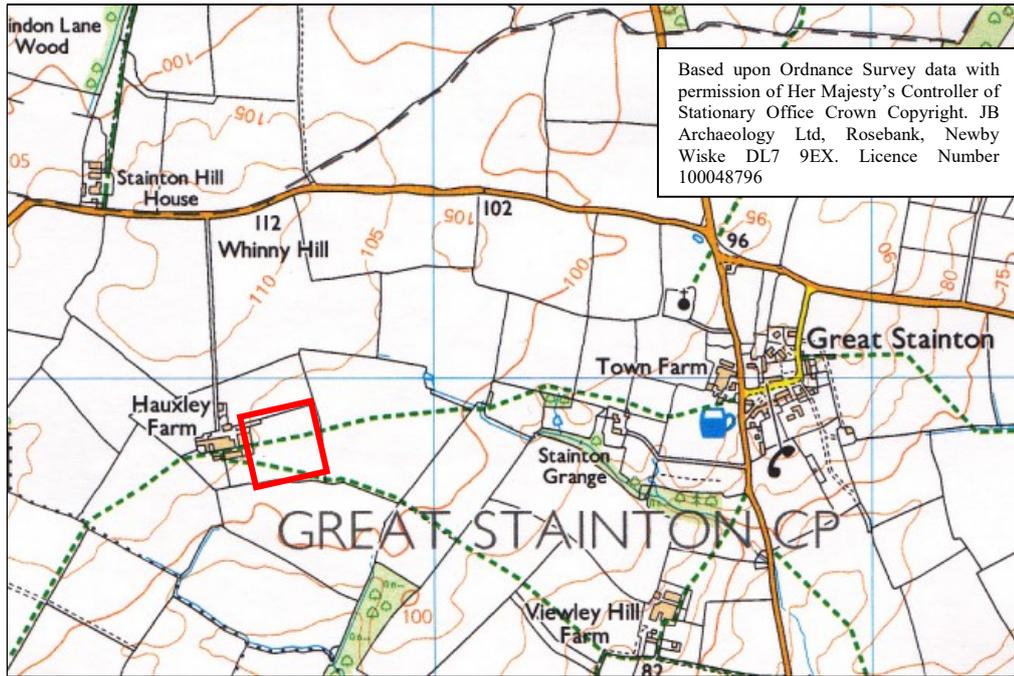


Figure 1. General Site Location.



Figure 2. Site Location. (Imaged supplied by D Hewitson from Allen Archaeology)

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify, map, record and potentially sample excavate any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the topsoil strip and ground reduction for the development. The specific aims of the watching brief were to:
- archaeologically record (written, graphic, and photographic records) any archaeological features revealed by the ground-works and as the result of any sample excavation
 - recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground-works
- 3.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (1999) and a previously submitted Written Scheme of Investigation (Buglass, 2018).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The topsoil strip was carried out by the contractors using mechanical excavators with toothless buckets working under direct archaeological supervision. The topsoil strip varied from c.300 to 400mm across the site.

5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 The watching brief recorded deep plough soil of c.3-400mm across the site which contained varying quantities of modern debris and building material – particularly around the former gateways to fields. The plough soil directly overlay the natural drift geology with only isolated patches of subsoil. This was due to deep ploughing, which had not only disturbed the subsoil but also numerous left plough marks in the natural geology. In addition to the deep ploughing, the site had been extensively drained using clay land drains (Plate 2).
- 5.2 Apart from the in-filled pond, none of the geophysical anomalies identified in the earlier survey proved to be archaeological features. The majority of the ‘pond-like’ hollows were undulations in the underlying geology that retained a natural sub-soil which had not been disturbed by ploughing. The other anomalies appeared to be a combination of the remains of former field boundaries seen on historic OS mapping, as well as bonfires and dumped modern building debris in gateways.



Plate 1. General view of site, looking south-east



Plate 2. Example of the remains of land drains

5.3 During the monitoring, apart from the modern debris, the only archaeologically significant finds were:

- a very small amount of blue and white transfer printed pottery sherds
- two body sherds of later Black Coarse Ware (19th century)
- two sherds of medieval pottery (see below for details)

The blue and white transfer printed pottery and Black Coarse Ware were all noted at the western end of the site closest to the farmhouse. This material had probably derived from the farm as midden material for manuring the fields.

Medieval pottery

C.G. Cumberpatch BA PhD

Introduction

5.4 Two sherds of pottery from a watching brief at Hauxley Farm, Great Stainton, County Durham were examined by the author on 13th June 2018. Both were heavily abraded and had suffered considerable damage, including the loss of much of the patchy external glaze. Both were recovered from the topsoil and so were unstratified.

Catalogue

- Base; a coarse buff sandy fabric with a grey core (58 grams); poorly preserved pale green splashed glaze on the underside of the base and the external surface; probably late 12th to late 13th century in date
- Body sherd: a coarse dull orange sandy fabric with a grey core (23 grams) with traces of patchy green glaze in the inner surface; probably 13th century in date

Discussion

5.5 While neither of the sherds can be identified to a specific local or regional type, their general appearance is consistent with the wider picture of medieval pottery from northern and specifically north-east England. Buff-coloured wares were common from the mid 11th century until the late 13th to early 14th century, after which they were replaced by finer reduced wares. Orange-coloured wares, made from clays with a higher iron content than the buff wares, were current during the 13th century before they too were superseded by the Reduced Greenware tradition. Both sherds are somewhat sandier and softer than many of the local wares but this is likely to be more a reflection on the poor state of our knowledge of local pottery industries than on any other factor.

5.6 The site is entered on the OASIS system as OASIS ID - johnbug11-319786.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 As can be seen from the results described above, the monitoring recorded no significant archaeological evidence for activity on the site apart from manuring with midden material, starting from at least the c.12th century onwards. This is probably due to a combination of the remoteness of the location away from any historic settlements and its location in a low lying part of the landscape which has seen it prone to water logging in the past.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David Hewitson for inviting me to undertake the project and Spike on the machine for his faultless co-operation on site.

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