Scalford and Wycomb Rising Mains, Leicestershire: Archaeological earthwork survey and watching brief (SK 782 247 – SK 792 255)

Vicki Priest

Checked by Project Manager

Signed: .....Date:

Name: .....

University Of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd, Leicester LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614

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Contents

Illustrations

Plates

Scalford and Wycomb Rising Mains, Leicestershire: Archaeological earthwork survey and watching brief (SK782247 – SK792255)

1. Summary

This document provides a report on a topographical earthwork survey and watching brief conducted by University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS), during the construction of the Scalford and Wycomb Rising Mains between Scalford and Chadwell. The desk top identified a number of areas of ridge and furrow and other village earthworks requiring topographical survey and recording prior to commencement of the construction. A watching brief was also carried out during the excavation of ten access holes for direct drilling. No further archaeological finds or features were noted during the course of the work. The archive will be held by Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under the accession number X.A188.2003.

2. Introduction

The Scalford and Wycomb rising mains renewal was carried out between Scalford and Waltham on the Wolds (SK 782 247 – SK 792 255; Fig. 1). Nottingham University Consultants Ltd. (NUCL) as archaeological consultants for Severn Trent Water Ltd. produced a *Brief for Archaeological Desktop Assessment and Walkover Survey of the Scalford and Wycomb and Kings Norton Rising Mains, Leicestershire, for Severn Trent Water Ltd.* The desk-based assessment (Browning 2003) concluded that there were significant archaeological remains in the wider landscape including surviving medieval village earthworks close to Chadwell. After discussion with the Senior Planning Archaeologist for Leicestershire County Council, a programme of archaeological intervention was devised by NUCL defined in the *Brief for pre-construction topographical and geophysical survey and watching brief during construction, Scalford and Wycomb Rising Mains, Leicestershire.*

3. Geology and topology

The site lies north of Melton Mowbray on glacial Boulder Clays (Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 142 (Melton Mowbray)).

4. Background and summary of previous archaeological work

The desk-based assessment and walkover survey (Browning 2002), demonstrated that the development site lies within an area of considerable archaeological interest with remains recorded from prehistoric to post-medieval times. Wycomb was a significant settlement in the Roman period – probably a *vicus* of Goadby Marwood, while Waltham-on-the-Wolds was an important area during the Saxon period.. The assessment also identified numerous instances of earthworks along the route of the pipeline. These included good examples of ridge and furrow within several pasture fields and medieval village earthworks in Chadwell. Chadwell is a shrunken village dating back to medieval times and contains a Saxo-Norman church.

A Geophysical Survey was carried out by Stratascan (Sabin 2003), on land close to Manor Farm in Chadwell, in an area where earthworks had been observed. The results showed a number of potential archaeological features. Linear features, probably representing a bank and several ditches were located close to the pumping station near Manor Farm. Ridge and furrow, the remains of medieval strip field systems was also detected in this area.

As part of this project a watching brief was also carried out by ULAS between Chadwell and Waltham-on-the-Wolds (Browning 2003). No further archaeological finds or features were recorded during this work.

5. Aims and objectives

The aim of the earthwork survey was to fully identify, delineate and adequately record any visible earthworks in the areas outlined by the Brief.

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to observe the earthworks and to record, as appropriate, any archaeological deposits of features encountered.

6. Earthwork Survey

Three areas were identified as having visible earthwork features requiring topographical survey. These were later narrowed down to two main areas (Fig 2):

Site 1: Ridge and furrow east of Salford

Site 2: Ridge and furrow south of Wycomb

6.1 Methodology

The survey areas comprised the route of the proposed pipeline and sufficient of its surroundings to provide a context to enable the understanding and interpretation of the earthworks affected by construction.

An electronic distance measurer (EDM) was used to carry out the survey. A single line was recorded across the tops of ridges and banks and the bases of furrows. Banks, tracks, ditches and boundaries were also recorded. Arbitrary spot heights were recorded across blank spaces between the earthworks and at least one detailed profile was recorded across each site. All data was converted to OS National Grid using the Cad drawings provided by NUCL, and to approximate OS datum heights using the Cad drawing and bench marks where available.

EDM plots were converted using N4ce and all drawings were created using Autocad and ArcGIS.

A photographic survey of each site was also undertaken.

6.2 Results

The study area formed part of the open fields surrounding Donington called West Meadow during the medieval period (Browning 2003). These were enclosed in 1779. Both sites contained evidence for ridge and furrow. This is generally considered representative of medieval ploughing within the midlands and northern counties (Hall 1982) and is the most common surviving feature of the medieval landscape (Astill 1988). Fields were divided into strips within an open landscape and ploughed for arable crops causing large ridges. This creation of ridges is thought to assist natural drainage; ridges are usually therefore aligned down the steepest gradient (Hall 1982). This method caused the soil to move in the direction of ploughing creating heads at the end of ridges where the plough was lifted for turning and headlands where two strips lay at right angles to each other.

Site 1 (Figs 3 and 4)

A small amount of ridge and furrow was visible in the south-east corner of the field running in a north-west – south-east direction. Where they existed the earthworks were well defined with ridges approximately 0.5-0.6m high running westwards down-slope

towards a drainage channel marking the edge of the field. Although roughly parallel with the field boundaries the southern edge is slightly off alignment with the hedge suggesting that this boundary may have been changed at some time. The ridge and furrow became less pronounced towards the west as the slope steepened and faded before reaching the field edge. To the north the earthworks also became less distinct and shorter.

In the north-east corner was a slight ridge sloping down to the west and a pathway running across and round the slope.

Site 2 (Figs 5 and 6)

The earthworks at Site 2 were much more extensive. The land sloped northwards and the fields south of the site also sloped steeply to the north. The southern area of the site was relatively flat apart from a few hollows and ridges; this area was once traversed by the now dismantled goods railway line (Browning 2003), and is much disturbed. The remnants of a bridge lies in the north-east corner of the field.

All of the ridge and furrow runs north-south (down-slope) and is aligned with the existing field boundaries. The earthworks are well-defined with ridges approximately 0.5 – 0.8m high (Plate 1).

Although all of the ridge and furrow is aligned the same way there appear to be three separate areas. In the south-east corner is a raised squarish platform (approximately 90m x 80m). The earthworks run right to the end and down the slope of this platform creating a prominent headland area of S-shaped earthwork (Plate 2). To the west is a slight bank dividing the ridge and furrow on this platform form that to the west. The earthworks fade in height towards the south-east corner.

North of this is a continuous band of ridge and furrow slightly off-alignment with the hedge to the east and the rest of the earthworks to the west (Approximately 130m x 80m). This may suggest that this was an irregular shaped area although two modern farm tracks running from the north to halfway down the eastern boundary and from the gate at the south-east corner and probably along the western boundary of the earthworks may have caused some disturbance. The earthworks fade considerably to the east of this area and trail off to the south. There is no indication of a uniform boundary to the northern edge and this has probably been disturbed by the railway.

The earthworks to the west (approximately 82m x 165) also fade out significantly to the north and west may well have been disturbed by the building of the barns in the north-west corner of the field. The land to the south has a steep slope and the ridge and furrow appear to be closer together here splaying out into wider earthworks as they run towards the flatter land to the north. At the far west end there is a single very large ridge intersected by a small furrow that only runs for *c.* 50m before fading out. Next to this is a very wide furrow again with a small ridge at the southern end and it may be that this marks a change of some kind – perhaps another boundary. The earthworks bounded by

the platform run up to the base of the bank; to the south they run beneath the fence and continue up-slope into the next field.

6.3 Discussion

Although some ridge and furrow can be as late in date as the 19th century (Astil 1988), their proximity to villages that date to medieval period suggest that they are of pre-enclosure date.

Although only a few sections of surviving ridge and furrow remain close to the villages, the earthworks were likely to have been far more extensive. There are traces of ridge and furrow visible in the fields to the south and also around Chadwell itself. The ridges in the south-east and western area are fairly consistently 6-7m wide while that in the northern area vary between 7 and 9m (the average size of medieval ridge and furrow was between 7-9m (Hall 1982)).

The remains at site 1 were probably contained within a smaller field whose boundaries have since been removed to create one larger one. There appear to be at least three separate systems within Site 2.

7. Watching Brief.

The watching brief was maintained on all construction work within pasture and arable fields as defined in the Brief. A total of ten access holes were excavated between Wycomb and Chadwell. These were visited between 13th and 21st May.

The work followed the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.*

The extent of the watching brief and location of access holes is shown in Figure 7.

7.1 Methodology

The holes were excavated using mechanical excavators utilising a toothed bucket on the back actor. Trenches varied in depth between 1m and 2m. Direct drilling was then used to connect between each hole. An archaeologist was present on site to inspect all access holes excavated by the contractors. Each hole was recorded as appropriate.

7.2 Results

Trenches 1 and 2

These trenches were located on the very edge of the ridge and furrow away from the extant earthworks. Each pit was approximately 0.9-1.3m deep. The stratigraphy comprised *c.* 0.3m of topsoil above a sandy orange clay with very little interface between the two (Plate 3). A sewer pipe was noted in the corner of trench 02. Trench 01 and probably Trench 02 are likely to have been affected by the railway line. No archaeological deposits were observed in either pit.

Trenches 3 and 4

These pits were located on the grass verges close to the road south of Wycomb village. Stratigraphy comprised *c.*0.25m of topsoil over orange clay and sandstone bedrock. No archaeological deposits were observed within the trenches.

Trench 5

This was a small drilled hole and not observed.

Trenches 6 – 8

These trenches were located on pasture fields just south of the dismantled railway. Trench 06 was approximately 2m deep and consisted of 0.4m of topsoil above orange sandy clay with fragments of sandstone within it. From 0.8m the trench comprised solid bedrock.

The field containing trenches 07 and 08 also contained faint traces of ridge and furrow. Trench 07 was located within a furrow and consisted of approximately 0.25m of orange brown sandy clay above orange plastic clay to a depth of 1.4m. No bedrock was noted here. A land drain was visible in upper section (within the furrow).

Trench 08 was located on a slight ridge with hardcore on the surface from a modern farm trackway. Beneath this was orange-brown slightly sandy clay. At approximately 0.5m beneath the surface this changed to a slightly grey brown plastic clay becoming more blue-grey with depth (total depth of 1.1m).

Trenches 09 - 10

Trench 09 was located just to the south and was *c.* 1.6m deep. It comprised a thin ploughsoil (0.25m) above a mixed orange clay overlying an orange plastic clay becoming more blue grey with depth.

Trench 10 to the east was approximately 2m deep with a thin topsoil (0.2m) over orange sandy clay overlying orange clay becoming more blue grey to base (Plate 4)

7.3 Discussion

There appears to be a change in geology between the trenches located south of Wycomb, which contained sandstone bedrock and that north-west of Chadwell, which had a much greater depth of boulder clay. With the exception of the ridge and furrow earthworks noted, no archaeological finds or deposits were observed in any of the holes.

8. Archive

The Archive consists of site notes, survey files and drawings, colour slides and black and white negatives and contact sheets and will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council Heritage Services under the site code CDP.2002.

9. Acknowledgements

The work was carried out by Vicki Priest, Sophie Clarke and Jon Cowards. The project was managed by Patrick Clay.

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V Priest
ULAS
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester LE1 7RH

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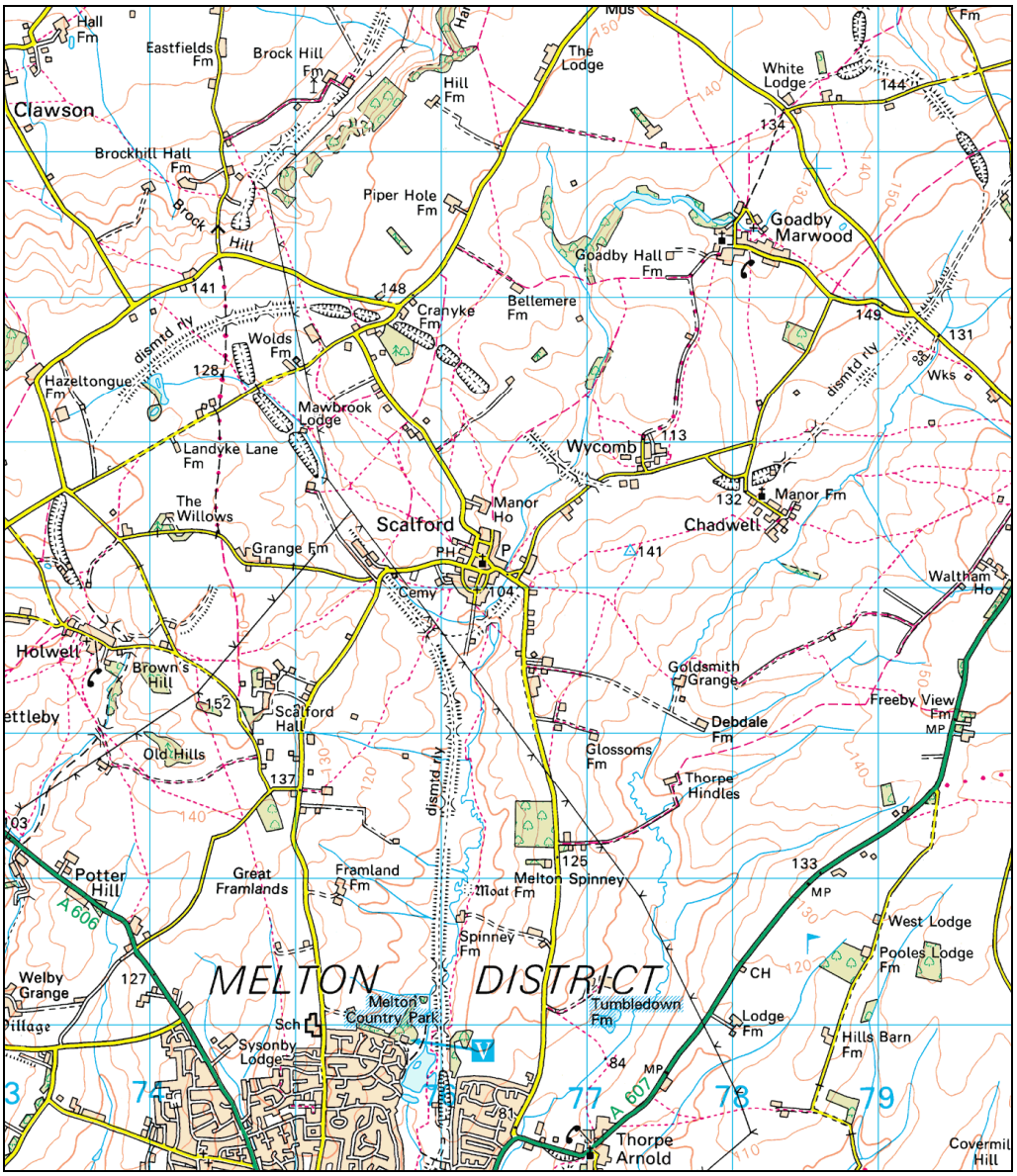

Figure 1 Location plan. Scale 1:50,000