

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OF THE SOUTH WEST WATER YELLAND SEWER
REPLACEMENT SCHEME, DEVON**

by

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Summary

A watching brief was undertaken by Exeter Archaeology between December 2006 and May 2007 during construction of the Yelland Sewer Replacement Scheme. Archaeological monitoring revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance, although two undated drainage ditches were recorded. Unstratified medieval and post-medieval pottery is considered to derive from manuring. The profiles of seven hedgebanks were recorded during groundworks.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken between 6th December 2006 and 12th May 2007 by Exeter Archaeology (EA) during construction of the Yelland Sewer Replacement Scheme. The pipeline was laid from the Yelland sewerage works at the western end of Yelland (NGR SS 2485 1317) to Lower Yelland Farm (NGR SS 2493 1322), north of Yelland. Yelland lies within the parish of Fremington, approximately 7km due west of Barnstaple (Fig 1). The watching brief was commissioned by South West Water (SWW) on the advice of the Devon County Historic Environment Service.

1.1 The pipeline route

The pipeline is 0.95km long and runs from Yelland sewer works (0.6km west of Yelland), to Lower Yelland Farm, immediately north of Yelland (Fig 2). From the sewerage works, the pipe broadly follows the northern flank of the B3233 into Yelland for 0.9km, cutting across nine flat pasture fields at approximately 10m AOD. The final 50m of pipeline deviate southwest through a final pasture field and across the B3233 into Yelland.

1.2 Geology

The geology of the area is dominated by Carboniferous sandstone and shale of the Neath Association. Overlaying this is a well-drained fine loamy soil with small patches of similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background

No systematic archaeological work has been undertaken in the immediate locality prior to the works described herein.

2. AIMS

The principal aim of the watching brief was to monitor trenching and to ensure the adequate investigation and recording of any significant archaeological features or exposed deposits prior to their removal.

3. METHOD

The pipeline crosses through 10 fields that were numbered as Plots 1-10 from west to east. Visits were made during or immediately after topsoil stripping and included the checking of all spoil heaps for retrieval of artefacts. Stripping of the 10m wide working corridor was carried out using a 1.5m wide toothless grading bucket. Where initial topsoil stripping failed to expose natural subsoil, it was revealed during subsequent trenching operations. The pipe trench measured approximately 4m wide, narrowing to 1m, and was excavated to a depth of 1.50m.

The standard EA recording system was employed. Information was recorded on pro forma watching brief and hedgebank morphology record sheets. A photographic record was made using black-and-white prints and colour transparencies.

4. RESULTS

4.1 General

Of the 10 plots examined, Plots 2, 4, 5 and 7 were monitored during topsoil removal. Plots 1, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10 had already been stripped immediately prior to inspection. Excavation of the pipe trench was monitored within Plots 4, 8 and 9. All plots were stripped of light brown grey clay silt topsoil that varied between 0.13-0.30m in depth. The topsoil overlay 0.15-0.20m of light brown grey clay silt subsoil. Removal of this exposed a clean mid yellow clay subsoil with occasional medium to large sub angular stones, 0.2-0.3m in thickness. In turn this overlay mid orange yellow sand clay natural.

Plot 4

A well-defined V shaped ditch was observed within the pipe trench section towards the western edge of plot 4. The ditch [101] measured 1m wide by 0.45m deep and contained a single fill of homogenous light mid-yellow brown sandy clay with occasional small stones (100). The ditch was overlain by mid yellow clay subsoil at grade level.

Plot 5

A linear north-south aligned gully was observed in plan at the eastern end of plot 5. The gully [103] measured 0.64 metres wide by 0.12 metres deep and contained a single fill of homogenous light grey sandy clay with rare small stones and flecks of pot/brick (102). The gully cut into mid yellow clay subsoil.

Inspection of the remaining plots showed no evidence for any archaeological features cut into natural subsoil. There had, however, been subject to significant weathering and machine tracking within Plots 2, 8 and 9 prior to inspection that hindered observation. The mid yellow clay subsoil could may also have potentially masked underlying archaeological features and deposits.

4.2 Hedgebanks

A total of 7 hedgebanks were recorded along the pipeline route (A-G) prior to their breach. These were all prominent earthen banks of dark grey silt overlying a lower layer of redeposited yellowish clay subsoil. The banks varied between 2.00-3.10m in width and 0.9-1.5m in height. Hedgebanks B-G were planted with hedges, with the hedge of Hedgebank G interspersed with trees. Hedgebank A had only trees upon it. With the exception of Hedgebank D, each bank had a corresponding ditch that varied between 0.90-1.50m in width and 0.40-0.60m in depth. No buried soils were observed. No finds were retrieved during the breach of Hedgebanks A-G.

4.3 The finds

Several unstratified sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were recovered from the surface and spoil heaps of Plots 1,5,7 and 9. Plots 7 and 9, within the western half of the pipeline route, yielded a larger quantity of late medieval-early post-medieval pottery sherds. Closer inspection of these areas showed no evidence for associated archaeological features or deposits. Numerous finds of 19th and 20th date were found along the length of the pipeline, but were discarded on site.

5. CONCLUSION

Monitoring of groundworks undertaken during the Yelland sewer replacement scheme did not reveal features or deposits of archaeological significance. Ditch [101] in Plot 4 and gully [103] in Plot 5 are likely to represent drainage or boundary ditches. No dating evidence for these features was retrieved but it is supposed that they are of post-medieval date. Tracking of machinery across Plots 2, 8 and 9 during heavy rain prior to inspection may have obscured additional features. The unstratified medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds retrieved from the eastern end of the pipeline are probably derived from manuring rather than from *in situ* archaeological deposits.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SOURCES CONSULTED

Soil Survey of England and Wales. 1983. *Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales*.

Appendix 1: Plot Summary

Plot No.	Topsoil depth	Subsoil depth	Comments
1	0.17m	0.17m	A flat lying pasture plot of light grey brown clay silt topsoil overlying a light brown grey clay silt subsoil, exposing a brown yellow clay subsoil. 2 pottery sherds recovered
2	0.13m	0.16m	Flat lying pasture field which had been quite heavily tracked over prior to inspection.
3	0.15m	0.15m	Flat lying pasture field, exposing a yellow clay subsoil with moderate plant/tree disturbance
4	0.15m	(1) 0.15 (2) 0.20m	A flat lying pasture field of light grey brown topsoil, over 0.15m of light brown grey subsoil over 0.20m of brown yellow sand clay, overlying a mid orange yellow sand clay natural subsoil. A well defined V shaped ditch (1m x 0.45m) was exposed at the west end of the plot
5	0.15m	0.15-0.20m	A flat lying pasture field exposing a yellow clay subsoil. A well defined linear gully was observed (0.64m x 0.12m) towards the eastern end of the plot
6	0.30m	-	A flat lying pasture plot exposing a yellow clay subsoil.
7	0.30m	-	A flat lying pasture plot exposing a yellow clay subsoil
8	0.25m	(1) 0.10m (2) 0.20-0.30m	A flat lying pasture plot of light grey brown topsoil over 0.10m of light brown grey subsoil over 0.20-0.30m of yellow clay subsoil which overlie a orange yellow clay natural subsoil. Plot 8 had been heavily disturbed by machine tracking
9	0.25m	(1) 0.10m (2) 0.20m	A flat lying arable plot of over 0.10m of light brown grey subsoil over 0.20m of yellow clay subsoil which overlie a orange yellow clay natural subsoil, heavily tracked over. Observation of the pipe trench showed no archaeological deposits, although several pot sherds of post medieval date were recovered from the spoil
10	0.20m	0.10m	A small flat lying paddock, exposing a yellow clay subsoil.

Appendix 2: Hedgebank Morphology

Hedgebank	NGR	Bank Size (width x depth)	Ditch size (if present)	Description/Comments
A	248700,131850	3m x 1.1m	1.60 x 0.50m	A prominent tree lined earth bank consisting of 0.60m dark brown grey clay silt overlying 0.50m of redeposited yellow clay. Bounds plots 3 & 4
B	248750,131900	3m x 1.20m	1.50m x 0.60m	A prominent grass and hedge lined earth bank consisting of 0.50m dark grey silt sand overlying 0.70m of light brown yellow sand clay redeposited subsoil. Bounds plots 4 & 5
C	248850,131950	2.30m x 1.50m	0.90m x 0.50m	A prominent hedge lined earth bank comprising 0.30m of dark grey silt overlying 1.20m of redeposited yellow clay. Bounds plots 7 & 6
D	248900,131000	2m x 1.30m	-	A prominent hedge lined earth bank composed of 0.60m of dark grey silt overlying 0.70m of redeposited yellowish clay. Bounds plots 6 & 7
E	248950,132050	3m x 1.20m	0.90m x 0.40m	A prominent hedge lined earth bank composed of 0.80m of mixed dark grey silt and grey/yellow clay overlying 0.40m of redeposited yellow grey clay. Bounds plots 7 & 8
F	249050,132100	2.80m x 1.50m	1.40m x 0.50m	A prominent hedge lined earth bank composed of 0.50m of dark grey silt overlying 1m of redeposited yellow clay. Bounds plots 8 & 9
G	149200,132200	3.10m x 0.90m	1.50m x 0.50m	A prominent earth bank with poorly maintained hedge and tree lining. This bank had not been breached at time of inspection. Bounds plots 9 & 10

Appendix 3: The Finds (Jenny Wheeler)

Plot	No. of finds	Description
1	2	One sherd North Devon gravel-tempered ware, bowl rim, 15-16C One sherd South Somerset jug with green glaze and sgraffito decoration, 15C
5	2	One sherd South Somerset jug with green glaze, worn, 15C One sherd North Devon gravel-free, base angle sherd, internal glaze, 16-18C
7	7	One sherd coarse sandy ware jug, handle and bodysherd, internal glaze, 16-17C Five sherds North Devon gravel-tempered ware, Medieval One fragment ?Roman tile
9	6	Three sherds North Devon gravel-tempered ware, unglazed, 14-15C Two sherds South Somerset jug, one with worn external glaze, 14-15C One sherd ridge tile, North Devon gravel-tempered ware, post-1300