

# Humber Field Archaeology

*Archaeological Consultants and Contractors*



Archaeological Observation  
Investigation and Recording

at

37-43 Towthorpe Road

Haxby

York

Site Code: WB2008.037

National Grid Reference: SE 61545843

Planning Reference Number: 06/01825/FUL

for

Hogg Builder (York) Ltd.

Watching Brief Report Number: 1207  
September 2010

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D. Jobling (BA Hons), September 2010

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## Summary

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A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording was undertaken by Humber Field Archaeology during groundwork associated with the construction of 5 no. detached dwellings to the rear of 37-43 Towthorpe Road, Haxby, York.

Monitoring the excavations at the site revealed an interesting sequence of archaeological deposits, although undated, are likely to be medieval or later in origin with the possibility of one feature being prehistoric based upon its form and nature.

A large boundary ditch was recorded in the western side of the site, oriented northeast/southwest, with a further shallow ditch with perhaps integral foundation slot oriented northwest/southeast together with further features such as modern pits and land drains within Plots 4 and 5. In the southern area of the site, 2 linear features were recorded which appeared in the garage foundations for Plot 3; one of these appears to be a further boundary ditch oriented west/east which has been heavily truncated by previous drainage installation, the other a small, curvilinear slot.

No artefacts were recovered during this programme of work.

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## 1. Introduction

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This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording undertaken by Humber Field Archaeology (HFA), on behalf of Hogg Builder (York) Ltd., during groundwork associated with the construction of 5 no. detached dwellings to the rear of 37-43 Towthorpe Road, Haxby, York (Figure 1, Plate 1).

Site Code:	WB2008.037
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Museum Reference:	Pending from York Museum

The development site is located in the northeastern quarter of the village of Haxby. The site is bounded on all sides by modern housing development apart from the west where it is bounded by a railway line, with access to the site from the north through New Forge Court.

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## 2. Archaeological Background

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The site is located at rear of 37-43 Towthorpe Road at SE 61545843. Ground level is at approximately 15.00m AOD.

There has been no recent archaeological work in this area. The housing development to the north was not observed archaeologically. This site is therefore the last remaining piece of undeveloped land to the east of the railway within the Haxby village envelope.

“Haxby was named by the Vikings; Haxeby "BY" meaning township or farm. Haxby has its roots in a Viking settlement established in the 9<sup>th</sup> century which is suggested by the presence of a Grade III listed Viking cross base in the churchyard of St Mary’s Church, and the discovery of a Viking cross shaft in a nearby garden in 1978. However, there is evidence of earlier occupation by the Romans; the site of a Roman villa on Haxby Moor was discovered in 1966, some Roman pottery has been found on Station Road and a silver Roman signet ring was found in April of 2003.

Haxby is located some four miles due north of York and, in during the medieval period, was a small township in the Royal Forest of Galtres, where its inhabitants were subject to forest law and took part in the occasional courts that devised and enforced it. When Charles I divested himself of the forest in 1629, Haxby acquired 1,776 acres of land to add to its size, resulting in the parish of some 2,100 acres. For many centuries, Haxby was not a separate parish. Initially it was divided between the parishes of Strensall and Drifffield but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it had its own church built and at some point became a chapelry to the parish of Strensall. In 1862 it became a parish in its own right. Much of the current centre is 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture but significant redevelopment took place during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of which the Memorial Hall (formerly the Board School), the present St Mary’s Church

and the Methodist Chapel are all important buildings. It was at this time, with the arrival of the railway in Haxby, that the village had an increase in population.”

Haxby Town Guide (Haxby Town Council, 2007)

Domesday boasts that Haxby was among the possessions of the cathedral of St. Peter of York. It was assessed at 6 carucates and an oxgang in 1086 and had land for four ploughs. Enclosure of the land was in 1769.

Haxby also boasted a Hall, built in 1790 on 22 acres of land. By 1950 the some of the lands were sold to create the Ethel Ward Memorial Playing Field. Later, in 1960, the Hall itself was demolished to make way for a residential home.

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### **3. Methodology**

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The work associated with this project was carried out by staff from Humber Field Archaeology, in accordance with the archaeological specification produced by the City of York Council, Date: 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007, planning reference: 06/01825/FUL in response to a condition placed upon the planning application.

The scheme of works comprised the monitoring of the excavation for plots 4 and 5 and the garage associated for Plot 3. A series of 14 visits were made to the site between the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Any exposed areas of subsoil and lower stratigraphic units were examined for archaeological deposits. The excavated dimensions of the foundation trenches were recorded, as were the depth sequences of any exposed stratigraphy. Where archaeological deposits/features were identified, context numbers were assigned and detailed descriptions were made, plans and sections were drawn and a photographic record was maintained.

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### **4. Results**

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Prior to describing the results from the archaeological monitoring at the site, there must be a description of the evolution of the site from a development viewpoint in the first instance.

When the development was initiated onsite in May 2008, there was a flurry of activity, with the excavations for the garage associated with Plot 3 in addition to the groundworks for Plots 4 and 5 completed in relatively quick succession. However, with a downturn of the housing market at the end of 2008, development at the site was in abeyance for a considerable amount of time. Following re-establishment of communications with the developer during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2010, it became clear that due to a lack of liaison, that plots 1, 2 and 3 in addition to the access road to the site had been completed without archaeological monitoring. Although this is unfortunate, it must be stated that the results from the remainder of the archaeological monitoring were positive and undertaken in good faith by HFA and Hogg Builder (York) Ltd.

The site had been partially stripped of topsoil (101) prior to the initial visit to the site; this whole area was walked over. Neither archaeological features nor artefacts were recovered at this time.

### **Garage for Plot 3**

The dimensions for this plot measured 7.20 northwest/southeast and 6.00m northeast/southwest. The depth of the excavation was approximately 1.00m throughout.

The basal layer exposed was (302) light orange brown sands, slightly waterlogged in nature with smearing by the bucket on the machine in the eastern third of the base.

The earliest feature encountered here was undated curvilinear slot (309) measuring 2.41m in visible length and 0.25m wide, terminating at the north. The fill (308) consisted of mid to dark grey brown silt sands containing very occasional un-worked natural flint inclusions (Figure 2, Plate 3).

This was truncated to the south by linear ditch (307) measuring 4.39m in visible length and greater than 1.72m wide. It was filled by (306) mid to dark grey brown silt sands containing very occasional un-worked natural flint inclusions (Figure 2, Plate 2).

Sealing these two features was mid brown sandy subsoil (303) viewed up to 0.50m thick.

Cutting through (303) was 6.00m long (extending outside the area of excavation) and 0.15m wide land drain (310) in the eastern area of the excavation.

Sealing this was (301) topsoil, mid to dark brown sandy loam. Along the southern border of the garage plot, modern drainage cut (304) was noted (which appears to have truncated (307)); 4.61m long and greater than 1.06m wide and backfilled with modern Type 1 hardcore (305).

### **Plot 4**

The dimensions for this plot measured 10.00 northwest/southeast and 11.50m northeast/southwest (Plate 4). The depth of the excavation was approximately 1.00m throughout.

The basal layer exposed was (402) natural yellow brown sands, waterlogged in the southeastern corner of the plot. Four features were noted cutting into this deposit.

A single, isolated pit (406) measuring 0.60m in diameter was recorded in the central, western area. It contained a single, undated fill (405) of mixed dark grey and orange sands (Figure 2). This is interpreted perhaps as a small tree bole.

At the south, a shallow ditch feature with basal straight sided slot (404) which is perhaps construction related was recorded. The feature was greater than 1.90m wide and over 4.00m long (extending outside the area of excavation to the west). The basal

fill (403) consisted of mid to dark grey organic silt sands greater than 0.17m thick, overlain by (412) mid brown silt sands taking up the remainder of the 0.90m visible depth of the feature (Figures 2, 3 – S.1, Plate 6).

Curvilinear, undated boundary ditch (409) appeared in the central, northern area of the plot, curving to the south and east, continuing outside both edges of the excavation. The visible dimensions of this feature were 3.20m wide at the top with upper concave sides changing to convex sides towards the probable convex base over a greater than 10.00m length. Basal fill (407) consisted of very dark charcoal grey silt sands up to 0.30m thick sealed by (413) mixed dark grey and orange sands (perhaps a natural slump on the eastern side) in turn overlain by the thickest deposit (408) mid brown silt sands up to 0.65m thick (Figures 2, 3 – S.2, Plate 5).

A single land drain cut (411) was recorded running north/south in the eastern area of the plot, measuring 0.30m wide and greater than 4.05m long extending north outside the area of excavation. The full depth was not ascertained, however, it was at least 0.70m deep. The fill (410) consisted of mixed dark grey and orange sands (Figure 2, Plate 7).

Sealing all of these was the topsoil (401) in this area up to 0.60m thick.

## **Plot 5**

The dimensions for this plot measured 10.00 northwest/southeast and 11.50m northeast/southwest. The depth of the excavation was approximately 1.00m throughout.

The basal layer exposed was (502) natural yellow brown sands, with a layer of hardcore spread around the western half of the excavation prior to monitoring.

Cutting into this was north/south oriented land drain (504) and associated mixed dark grey and orange sand fill (503) measuring over 11.83m long and 0.30m wide. It appears to be the same land drain which was viewed in Plot 4. This was greater than 0.70m deep.

Undated ditch (507) (a continuation to the north of (409) in Plot 4) was mostly obscured in plan by the presence of the hardcore layer; however, its alignment could be traced between the two section faces which appeared in the profile sides of the trench. Here, the ditch exceeded 13.50m in length, extending outside the area of excavation to the north and was potentially greater in width at 4.92m. The full depth was not established, but was greater than 0.70m. Two fills were visible; underlying fill (505) consisted of mid to light grey sands, visible only in plan which was sealed by (506) dark brown silt sands.

At the northwest, this ditch was truncated slightly by a grubbed out tree bole (509) with a 1.30m diameter and greater than 0.70m depth with light sandy backfill (508).

All of these features were sealed by the topsoil (501) viewed up to 0.60m thick.

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## 5. Discussion

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The following is solely the opinion of Humber Field Archaeology, and may not reflect that of City of York Council.

The monitored excavations revealed a sequence of undated archaeological features, but based upon observations at the site, it can be suggested that they range from the medieval period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The earliest phase recorded was small, curvilinear slot or gully (309) within Plot 3's garage raft foundation. Interpretation of the gully is a little more problematic, without dating evidence it is very difficult to ascribe the feature to a particular era in time, however for descriptive purposes it could potentially be a drip or eave's gully for a small circular structure – therefore ranging in date from perhaps the prehistoric period to the medieval period. Like the pits in Plots 4 and 5, the fill for this feature was rather leached containing un-worked flint inclusions, however, due to its shape, the author leans more towards a human related activity in origin rather than something naturally occurring.

Of the most interest were the probable boundary ditches that were observed in all the open raft foundation trenches. The largest of these was (409)/(507) which ran through both Plots 4 and 5 on a northwest/southeast alignment, turning to the east-northeast at the south. This is perhaps an enclosure ditch of some description, given the presence of a return – but without having viewed any of the road excavation or that of Plot 1 and 2, it is difficult to determine if this is the situation. In any event, this undated feature is probably medieval based upon the dark silt sand deposit which takes up the majority of the fill for this feature.

Ditch (404) may or may not be associated with (409)/(507) and may hold a construction-related element with a slot cut into its base – perhaps as a foundation, or setting for posts or stakes – a defensive element?

The pits recorded within Plots 4 and 5 can possibly be interpreted as tree boles based upon their fills, essentially a mix of re-deposited natural sands with some silt content, although one should not rule out other purposes other than for refuse, as no indication of any inclusions referring to that type of use was identified.

The truncated linear (307) in Plot 3's garage foundation is also interpreted as a boundary ditch which may be associated with (404) to the north based upon their similar alignment.

As mentioned in the results section of the report, over half of the development was unfortunately not archaeologically monitored. Initially, when development started, there was a flurry of activity and 2 house plots and a garage foundation were monitored. During the housing market crisis of late 2008 into early 2010, much of the site was in abeyance, with no work being undertaken, and several visits to the site at that time attested to that fact, the last being on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009. However, since that time, the access road, and the remaining plots, had been completed with HFA not informed of the re-instigation of development. This is unfortunate, as archaeological deposits have been recorded in all the other monitored excavations at



the site; it would have proved beneficial to view these other excavations as it is likely that further deposits would have been revealed which would have added to the corpus of knowledge already gleaned, in addition to perhaps some dating evidence to secure such knowledge.

It is therefore likely that the archaeological deposits identified during this programme of work extend outside the current area and into adjacent ones. It is therefore our recommendation that should any further development take place in these areas then a suitable scheme of archaeological work should be implemented.

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## **6. Acknowledgements**

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Thanks are accorded to Hogg Builder (York) Ltd for help and co-operation during the course of this project.

The work was carried out in accordance with a specification prepared by the City of York Council. The onsite recording was undertaken by the author, as were the reports, illustrations and plates. The report was edited by D. Atkinson. Administrative support was provided by J. Rooney and G. Richardson.

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## **7. References**

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Directorate of City Strategy, Planning and Sustainable Development Group, City of York Council, 2007. 37 Towthorpe Road, Haxby. Archaeological Scheme of Investigation: Watching Brief.

Haxby Town Council, 2007. Welcome to Haxby, North Yorkshire. Haxby Town Guide.

Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2), English Heritage, 1991.

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## 8. Appendices

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### Appendix 1

#### Context list

(101) – Topsoil

(301) – Topsoil

(302) – Natural sands

(303) – Subsoil

(304) – Modern cut

(305) – Modern hardcore fill

(306) – Ditch fill

(307) – Ditch cut

(308) – Curvilinear gully fill

(309) – Curvilinear gully cut

(401) – Topsoil

(402) – Natural sands

(403) – Fill for ditch 404

(404) – Ditch cut

(405) – Tree bole fill

(406) – Tree bole ‘cut’

(407) – Ditch fill of 409

(408) – Ditch fill of 409

(409) – Ditch cut

(410) – Land drain fill

(411) – Land drain cut

(412) – Ditch fill for 404

(501) – Topsoil

(502) – Natural sands

(503) – Land drain fill

(504) – Land drain cut

(505) – Ditch fill of 507

(506) – Ditch fill of 507

(507) – Ditch cut

## **Appendix 2**

### **Archive**

#### **Project Details:**

Archaeological observation, investigation and recording at 37-43 Towthorpe Road, Haxby, York.

**Site Code:** WB2008.037

**National Grid Reference:** SE 61545843

**Planning Reference Number:** 06/01825/FUL

**Museum Reference or Accession Number:** Pending from York Museum

**Author** D. Jobling (BA Hons) **Date of fieldwork** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009

**Report Number.** Humber Field Archaeology Report Number: 1207  
September 2010

#### **Quantity**

There were no finds

6 x A4 plastic sleeves contain the paper archive

#### **Summary of work**

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Monitoring the excavations at the site revealed an interesting sequence of archaeological deposits, although undated, are likely to be medieval or later in origin with the possibility of one feature being prehistoric based upon its form and nature.

A large boundary ditch was recorded in the western side of the site, oriented northeast/southwest, with a further shallow ditch with perhaps integral foundation slot oriented northwest/southeast together with further features such as modern pits and land drains within Plots 4 and 5. In the southern area of the site, 2 linear features were recorded which appeared in the garage foundations for Plot 3; one of these appears to be a further boundary ditch oriented west/east which has been heavily truncated by previous drainage installation, the other a small, curvilinear slot.

No artefacts were recovered during this programme of work.

**Site Code:** WB2008.037

**National Grid Reference:** SE 61545843

**Museum Reference or Accession Number:** Pending from York Museum

## **Index to Archive**

### **1 Background:**

1.1 Specification

1.2 Correspondence

### **2 Site Data:**

2.1 Site notes

2.2 Staff site visit log

2.3 Site plans

### **3 The Photographic Record:**

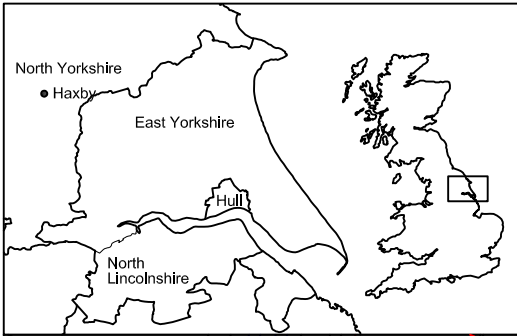
3.1 Photographic Catalogue

3.2 Contact Sheets

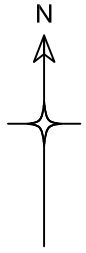
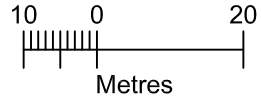
3.3 Reference Prints

### **4. Final Report:**

Archaeological Observation, Investigation and Recording at 37-43 Towthorpe Road, Haxby, York., Humber Field Archaeology Watching Brief Report Number 1207, September 2010.



1:1000



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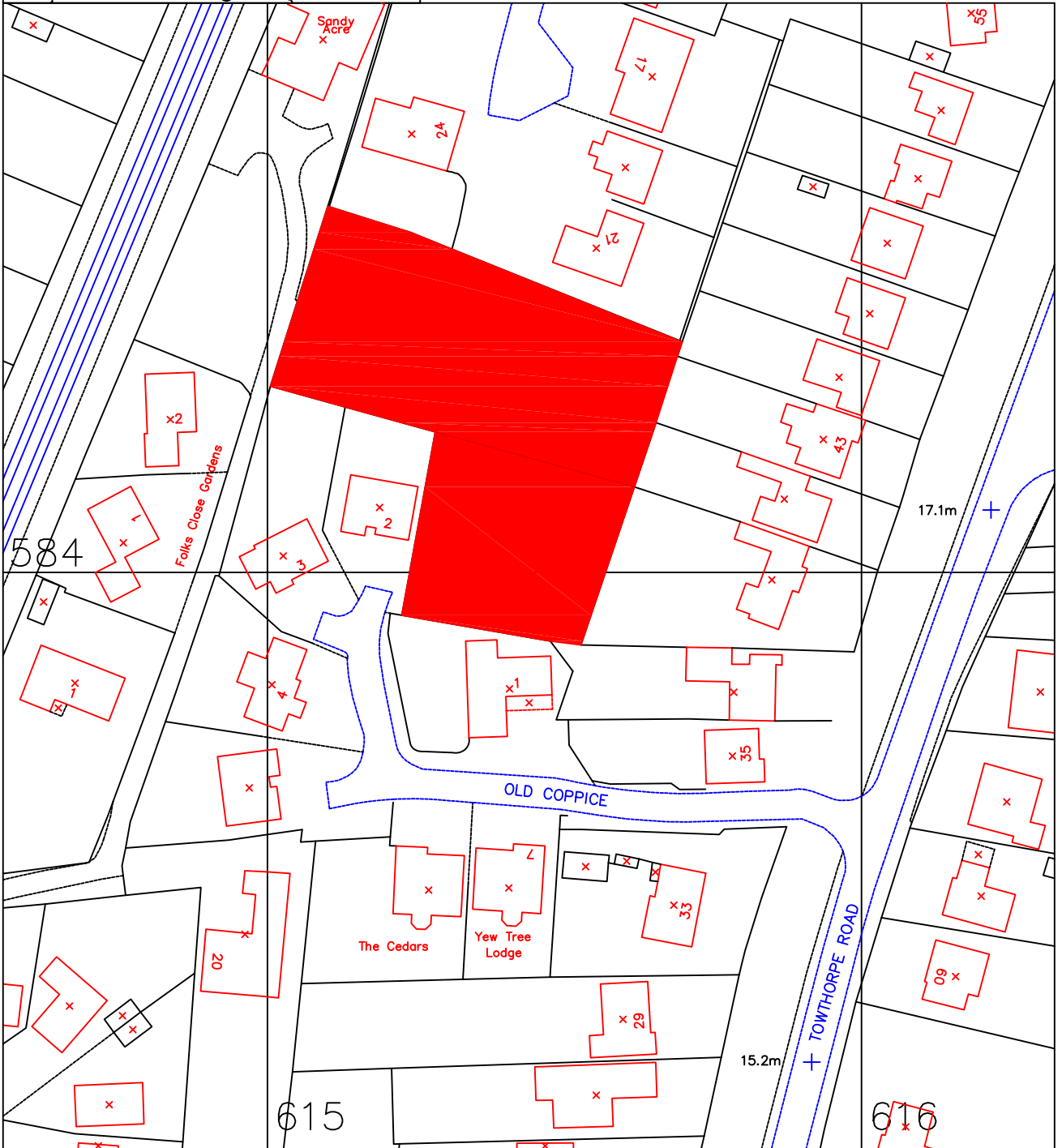
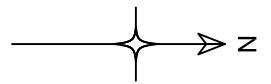


Figure 1 Site location plan. Scale 1:1000.



Garage Plot  
Area of smearing  
310

Private Drive

Public Drive

Plot 3

Plot 2

Plot 1

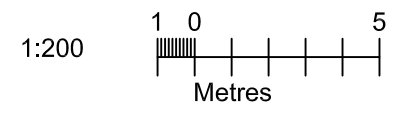
Plot 4

Plot 5

Key

Monitored Excavations 

Completed Works 



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Figure 2 Plan showing the completed works and monitored excavations together with the exposed archaeological deposits. Scale 1:200.

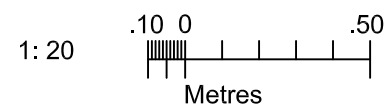
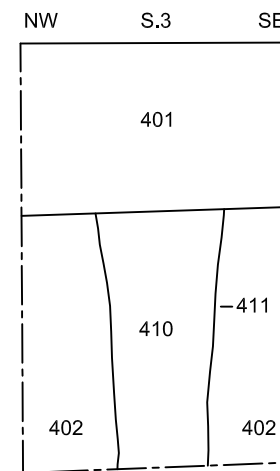
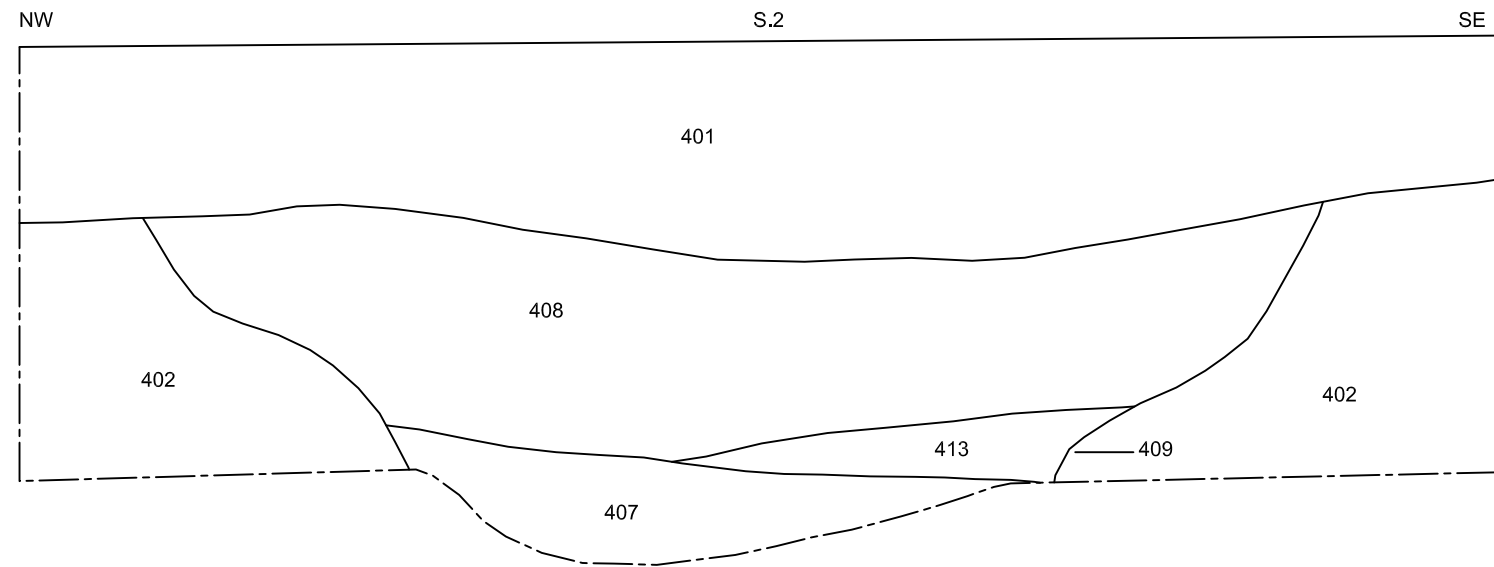
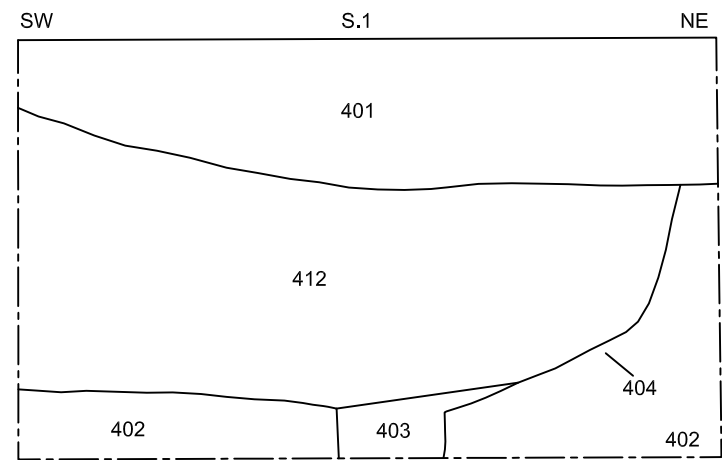


Figure 3 Recorded features in section. Scale 1:20.



Plate 1 The site of development entrance, viewed from the north.



Plate 2 Garage foundations for Plot 3 at the southern end of the site with linear (307) on the left, looking west, 1.00m scale.





Plate 3 Curvilinear linear slot (309), looking northwest, 1.00m scale.



Plate 4 Plot 4, viewed from the northwest.





Plate 5 Former boundary ditch (409), viewed from the north. 1.00m scale.



Plate 6 Shallow pit (404) viewed from the east, 1.00m scale.





Plate 7 Land drain cut (411) looking north, 1.00m scale.



Plate 8 Ditch (507) in Plot 5, looking south.



Plate 9 Land drain (504), looking south-southeast.

# Humber Field Archaeology

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Project Management • Desk-based Assessment • Field Survey • Excavation Watching Briefs  
• Finds Research • Post-excavation Analysis • Inter-tidal Work

Humber Field Archaeology is an independently-funded part of the Humber Archaeology Partnership, a partnership serving The East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Kingston upon Hull City Council