

Summary

- An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a new access road and four chicken sheds on land off Moor Road, North Owersby, Lincolnshire.
- Cropmarks and finds in the area suggest Romano-British settlement activity nearby. In the medieval period there were six Domesday Manors in the parish that developed into small hamlets. These were largely abandoned as a result of the Black Death in the mid 14th century.
- No archaeological features were observed during the groundworks, and no archaeological artefacts were recovered.

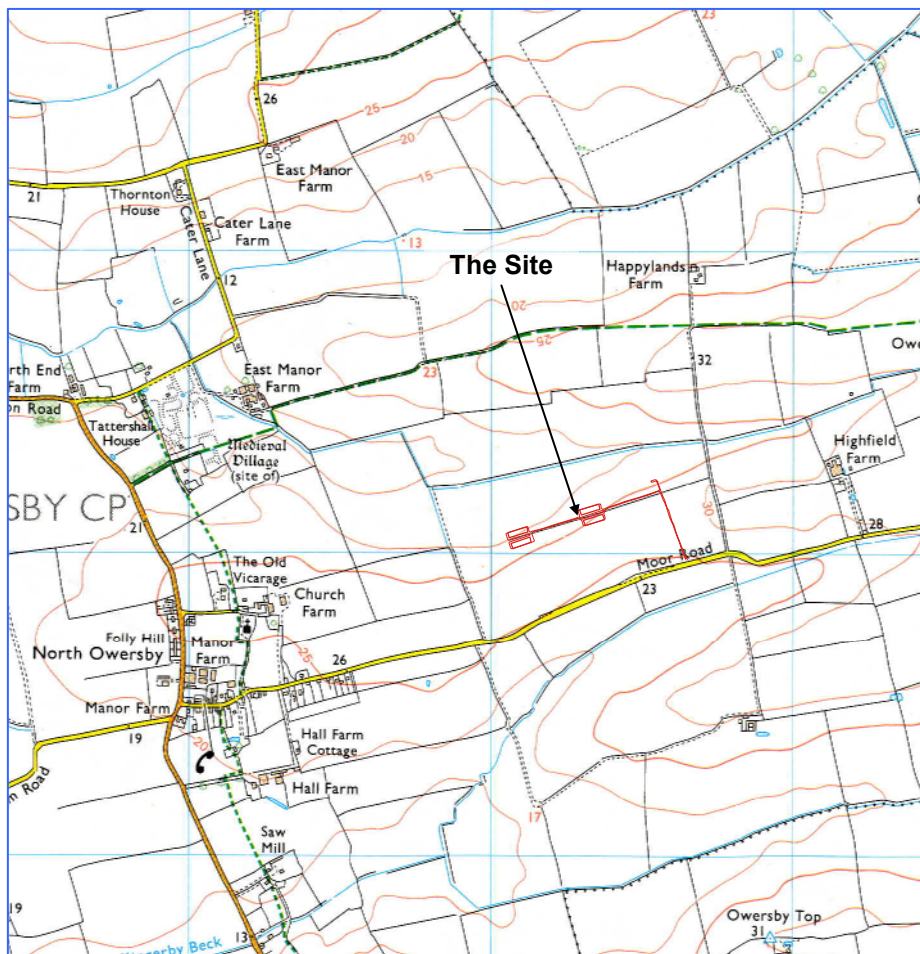


Figure 1: Site location showing the access road and chicken sheds in red, at scale 1:25,000

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeological Associates was commissioned by John Bowler (Agriculture) Ltd. on behalf of their client, Mr Paul Leonard to carry out an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for an access road and four chicken sheds on land off Moor Road, North Owersby, Lincolnshire.
- 1.2 The site monitoring, recording and reporting conforms to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Field Archaeologists 'Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs' (IFA 1999), the local guidelines set out in the *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC 1998), and a specification prepared by this company (Allen 2006).
- 1.3 The archive will be submitted to The Collection, Lincoln, within six months of completion of the project, and will be accessible under the LCC Museum Accession Number 2007.89

2.0 Site location and description

- 2.1 North Owersby is in the administrative district of West Lindsey, approximately 25km north-north-east of central Lincoln and 7.5km north-west of Market Rasen. The site is located 1.5m to the east of the village on the north side of Moor Road. The site centres on NGR TF 0720 9510.
- 2.2 The access road that has been built to connect the site to Moor Road runs north-north-westwards up a steep incline for c.150m, before levelling off and turning west-south-westwards along the north side of an existing field boundary that consists of a dyke and raised bank with a well established hedge running along its length. The land slopes downwards to the north of this field boundary. The four chicken sheds are arranged in pairs, with two on each side of the field boundary.
- 2.3 The site overlies geology that is part of the Ancholme Clay Group which can be attributed to the Jurassic period (British Geological Survey 1982). At the time of the fieldwork, the ground coverage was short grass.

3.0 Planning background

- 3.1 Full planning permission was granted for the construction of four organic free range egg production units and an access road (Planning Reference M05/P/1358). This was subject to an archaeological watching brief on all the groundworks by a suitably competent archaeologist.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 Records held at the Historical Environment Record at Lincolnshire County Council (hereafter HER) show that known prehistoric activity in the surrounding area is limited to the recovery of a single fragment of polished stone axe from the north of the village of North Owersby (HER ref.53435).
- 4.2 Evidence of Roman activity in the vicinity is more abundant. A scatter of Roman pottery and possible kiln debris was recorded approximately 0.7km to the north-east in 1944 (HER ref. 53430). Cropmarks of a possible Romano-British settlement have been identified by aerial photography further to the north (HER ref. 53711), and a Roman lead statuette and four Roman coins were discovered during a metal detector rally to the north and north-west of the development area (HER refs. 54432, 54476, 54480).

- 4.3 Owersby is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, from the Old Norse meaning 'Avarr's farm/settlement' (Cameron 1998). At this time the parish was not divided into the two settlements of North and South Owersby, but was shared between six major landowners; the Bishop of Bayeux, the Bishop of Lincoln, Roger of Poitou, William of Percy, Norman of Arcy and Siward the Priest. The lands of the Bishop of Lincoln, William of Percy and Siward the Priest each included a mill, while William of Percy also counted a church with a priest among his possessions (Morgan and Thorne 1986).
- 4.4 The six Domesday Manors served as nuclei for settlement along the line of the road between Kirkby and South Kelsey. In 1219, the settlement is referred to as '*Long Ouresbi*', suggesting a straggling, polyfocal settlement (Cameron 1998). In the mid 14th century however, the parish is said to have been almost totally depopulated by the Black Death (Everson et.al. 1991). North Owersby and South Owersby are likely to have begun as the seats of two of these manors. The earthwork remains of the deserted medieval village of Cauthorpe (NGR TF 057 958) can be found c.1.8km west-north-west of the development, to the north of North Owersby. A settlement was documented here in the early 13th century, but only six houses were documented in 1563. Earthworks of another of the medieval manors at Thornton-le-Moor were destroyed in 1964 (TF 050 962). Fieldwalking of the site recovered pottery from the Middle Saxon period to the 16th century. At Beasthorpe (TF 048 967), further to the north-west, a settlement was documented in the 14th century, but only a single house existed in 1563 (Everson 1991).
- 4.5 The parish was subject to a series of Enclosure Acts between 1634 and 1694, leading to further population decline (*ibid.*) and resulting in the current landscape of open agricultural land.

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 The first phase of works involved the construction of the access road off Moor Road, the excavations for which were carried out using a tracked excavator fitted with a 2m wide toothless dykeing bucket, to a width of 3.5m and a depth of 0.2m.
- 5.2 The second phase of the development comprised the removal of the topsoil by bulldozer in the areas to be occupied by the chicken sheds. The excavation of the chicken sheds involved a 'cut and fill' exercise, removing up to 0.5m of material from the higher ground on the south side of the sheds, piling some of the spoil on the lower north side, to provide a level surface for the sheds.
- 5.3 During excavation, all exposed plan and section surfaces were examined and periodically cleaned, in order to determine the stratigraphic sequence. Context information was recorded for each individual deposit on context record sheets. A photographic record was maintained throughout the watching brief, including general site shots and photographs of the sequence of deposits with appropriate scales and a north arrow. The groundworks were monitored by Phil Chavasse and Chris Clay between March 19th and April 4th 2007.

6.0 Results

- 6.1 The access road excavations were of insufficient depth to fully remove the topsoil, a dark brownish grey silty clay, 01. Patches of the natural geology were exposed by bulldozer in some areas of the excavations for the chicken sheds. This consisted of mixed orange/brown sand with pockets of compact grey/brown clay, 02. No archaeological features or finds were identified.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

- 7.1 No archaeological features or artefacts of significance were exposed during the watching brief, due mainly to the nature of the groundworks and shallow depth of excavations.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

- 8.1 The watching brief methodology was appropriate to the scale and nature of the development. It demonstrated that the development has had a negligible impact on the archaeological resource.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeological Associates would like to thank John Bowler (Agriculture) Limited for this commission, in particular Mr Tony Lee for his help throughout the project.

10.0 References

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11.0 Site archive

- 11.1 The documentary archive is currently in the possession of Allen Archaeological Associates. It will be submitted to North East Lincolnshire Museum Service within six months, where it will be stored under the accession number 2007.89.

Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: The access road during machine stripping, looking north-north-west from Moor Road.



Plate 2: The access road running along the north side of the existing field boundary, looking east-north-east from the eastern end of the development area.



Plate 3: The stripped area of the north-eastern chicken shed, looking west-south-west.



Plate 4: The stripped area of the south-eastern chicken shed, looking west. The south-western chicken shed is being machine stripped in the background, and the stoned up area of the north-eastern chicken shed is visible to the right of the shot.

Appendix 2: List of archaeological contexts

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
01	Layer	Dark greyish brown silty clay with rare small angular flint fragments. Ploughsoil
02	Layer	Mid-light orange brown clayey sand. Natural drift geology.