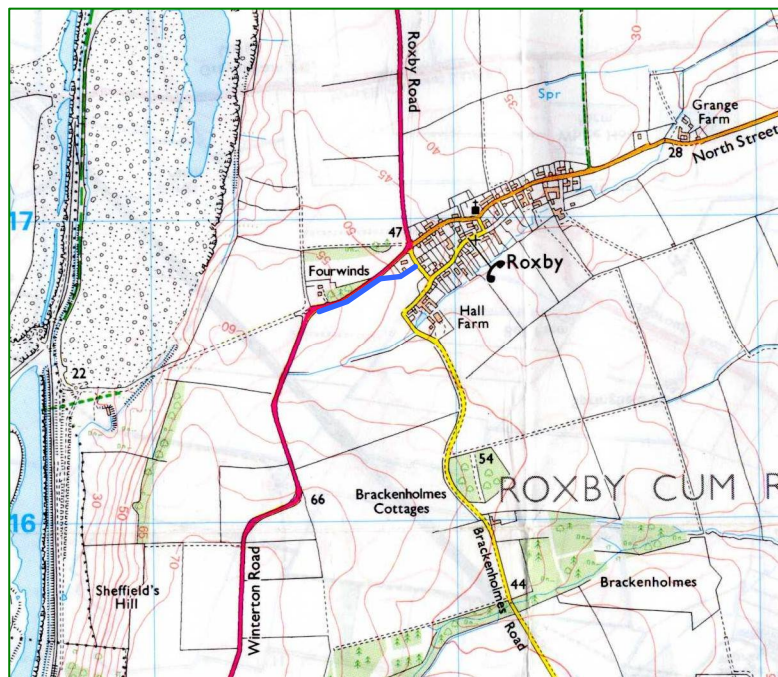


## Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the groundworks for a leachate rising main on land adjacent to the A1077 between Roxby Gullet landfill site and Roxby village.*
- *The pipeline runs through an arable field, in which finds of all periods from the Stone Age to the medieval have previously been recorded. A Roman villa has been found 150m to the east of the field.*
- *The pipeline route crosses the plotted course of an undated cropmark, thought to be a possible enclosure.*
- *No archaeological features were encountered during the watching brief. The limestone natural was found to contain solution features, which may have given rise to cropmarks.*
- *A Mesolithic or Neolithic flint bladelet and a sherd of Roman grey ware were found, but both artefacts were unstratified.*



**Figure 1:** Location map at scale 1:25 000.  
The pipeline route is shown in blue.  
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## **1.0 Introduction**

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Biffa Waste Services to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks for a leachate rising main at Roxby Gullet, near the village of Roxby, North Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken in accordance with the recommendation of the North Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record Officer, a project specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), and the recommendations of *'Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991) and *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999).

Copies of this report will be deposited with the commissioning body and the County Sites and Monuments Record. Reports will also be deposited at North Lincolnshire Museum, along with an ordered project archive for long-term storage and curation.

## **2.0 Site location and description (figs. 1 and 2)**

The village of Roxby lies within the county of North Lincolnshire, 6km to the north-east of Scunthorpe. It is situated on the limestone ridge dividing the valleys of the River Trent and the River Ancholme, on the south side of the A1077 (the main road connecting Barton-on-Humber and Scunthorpe prior to the construction of the M180, now a local route).

The pipeline route runs along the south-eastern side of the A1077, between the western edge of the village and the entrance to the Roxby Gullet landfill site: the surrounding land is arable farmland, generally sloping northwards and eastwards towards the Humber estuary. The west end of the pipeline at current ground level lies at 55.17m above Ordnance Datum, and the east end at 46.63m AOD. The affected area is a single large field, which at the time of the watching brief had been harvested, but not ploughed; the most recent crop had been oilseed rape. The pipeline runs along the north-western edge of the field, turning east to avoid the grounds of a house in the northern corner; the field directly borders the roadside verge, with no boundary hedge or ditch.

The British Geological Survey records no drift geology in the area. The local solid geology is Lincolnshire Limestone: a sub-division between Cleatham Limestone to the north and Grantham Formation to the south runs very close to the site (British Geological Survey, 1982).

National Grid Reference: SE 918 168 – SE 910 164.

### 3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted for the installation of a new pipeline, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological recording brief on all groundworks.

Planning application ref.: 1999/0051

### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

The North Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record lists finds of Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint in the area, sometimes in concentrations implying that there was occupation nearby. Bronze Age metalwork has also been found.

Roxby lies 2.5km to the west of the Roman road Ermine Street, and Romano-British activity is widespread in this area. A Roman villa is situated 150m to the east of the site: a mosaic pavement was recorded there at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Whitwell, 1992, p. 83). The pavement was re-excavated in the 1970s, and is preserved under a garden on the south side of Roxby churchyard (Pevsner, 1989, p. 616). Romano-British pottery has been found on the site itself, and a recent metal-detector survey of the field retrieved a number of Roman coins.

The place-name 'Roxby', which is first recorded in Domesday Book, is of Scandinavian origin, deriving from the Old Norse personal name *Hrókr* and the Old Danish suffix *-by*, 'farmstead or village' (Cameron, 1998, p. 103). The Scandinavian period is otherwise represented only by a Viking style brooch found on the site during the metal-detector survey.

In the Domesday Survey of AD 1086, Roxby lay principally within the estates of Ralph Paynell. His property in Roxby included both arable and meadow land, with some 'scrubland' (probably coppiced woodland), and had a total of 35 taxable households. Gilbert de Ghent and Norman d'Arcy also owned small amounts of land in Roxby, bringing the total population to 37 households. No buildings or commercial enterprises are recorded (Williams and Martin, 1992).

Although Domesday Book records no church at Roxby, one may have been built not long afterwards, as the present church of St. Mary retains one window that appears to be of Norman date; the church itself dates partly to the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and partly to a 19<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction (Pevsner, 1989, p. 616). Medieval pottery has also been found in the field through which the pipeline runs. Aerial photographs show cropmarks in the field, one of which is crossed by the pipeline route: the cropmarks have not been dated, and are thought to relate either to the medieval settlement or to the Roman villa.

The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889-1891 (fig. 3) shows that the field has retained the same size and shape until the present day, although a footpath across its south-eastern corner does not appear on the modern map. The property in the north-eastern corner of the field is shown, but is not the same size as the modern property, nor is the house depicted in the same place. The 19<sup>th</sup> century house plot extends much further to the west, and the pipeline runs across its western end.

## 5.0 Methodology

The watching brief began on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2006. Topsoil was initially stripped off the pipeline route using a mini-digger with a flat-bladed bucket (plates 2 and 3); the pipe-trench was then excavated with a toothed bucket (plate 4). The initial strip was 2.0m wide and the trench itself 0.40m wide, and so all drawn sections are stepped: the total depth of the trench was generally 0.90m.

In accordance with the project specification, all deposits observed were recorded on standard context record sheets. Sample sections at scale 1:20 were drawn at intervals, and located on the developer's site plan. The spoil heaps were examined for stray finds after the topsoil strip, and again after trenching. A colour photographic record of all groundworks monitored was also maintained: a selection from this record is reproduced in Appendix 1.

The groundworks were concluded on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2006, and were monitored by the author.

## 6.0 Results (fig. 4)

The base deposit along the course of the pipeline trench was context 002, which was principally limestone brash, and was interpreted as natural geology. Near the north-eastern edge of the field, the limestone brash became more solid, becoming bedded in the length of trench adjacent to the house plot. It contained irregular, dispersed patches of clayey sand, which became larger and deeper towards the north-eastern end of the field: these were interpreted as natural features.

At the north-eastern end of the field, natural 002 was overlain by context 003, a deposit of mid greyish-brown clayey sand up to 0.20m deep. This deposit, apparently a subsoil, was only present in the area closest to the house plot in the northern corner of the site, extending some 5m beyond the south-western corner of the plot. No dating evidence was retrieved from it.

The site was sealed by layer 001, a sandy mid brownish-grey ploughsoil containing frequent limestone fragments. 001 varied widely in depth: along the edge of the field it was up to 0.60m deep, while in the stretch that ran diagonally across the field to avoid the house plot, it diminished to 0.35m (plates 5 and 6). Brick rubble was visible near the house plot, and towards the south side of the field near the farm; fragments of modern glass and glazed pottery were widespread, but were not retrieved. A Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic bladelet was found on the surface of the ploughsoil on the edge of the trench (appendix 3), and a single fragment of Roman grey ware, also on the surface of the ploughsoil, near the north-eastern end of the field (appendix 2).

Where the pipe-trench ran parallel to the road, the north-eastern section was very disturbed: areas of modern back-fill, containing recent refuse such as a canvas plimsoll, extended almost to the base of the trench. It is possible that this represented the edge of modern service trenches running alongside the road, but the contractors had not been informed of any such services. Fragments of glazed earthenware pipe

lying on the surface along this edge of the field suggested that the field may have encroached on a culverted boundary ditch. Apart from modern refuse, no finds were seen on the spoil heaps at any time.

## **7.0 Discussion and conclusion**

There was no visible earthwork at the edge of the field to account for the variation in topsoil depth: if there was a change in height, it was too gradual and even to be perceptible. It seems unlikely, therefore, that the variation can be ascribed to a medieval headland, cast up by regular strip ploughing, particularly since the field edge alongside the house plot also showed deeper ploughsoil. The most likely explanation is that topsoil has piled up against the modern field boundary by the process of wind erosion, as the field is large and exposed, with no windbreaks.

The presence of a subsoil in the vicinity of the house plot at the northern corner of the field may be associated with a difference in land use: the modern field has encroached on the house plot shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map, and it is possible that this area in general was previously a private plot, and that the field was extended eastwards before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, this deduction cannot be confirmed, as subsoil 002 produced no dating evidence.

No feature that could have been interpreted as part of a cropmark enclosure was encountered during the watching brief. However, it was observed that the natural solution features in limestone brash/bedded limestone 002 became wider and deeper towards the north-eastern end of the pipeline. The largest of these features was encountered 13m from the south corner of the modern house plot: it occupied a 16m length of the trench, and was the only such feature that was deeper than the trench (plate 4). It is entirely possible that a natural feature of these dimensions could have given rise to a cropmark.

No definite conclusions can be drawn from the two finds retrieved, as they were both stray finds observed on the surface of the ploughsoil; the flint bladelet showed post-depositional damage, indicating that it had been dragged by a plough.

## **8.0 Effectiveness of methodology**

The methodology employed was entirely adequate to the requirements of the archaeological record. Had archaeological features been present, they would have been observed, and there would have been no constraints on excavation and recording.

## **9.0 Acknowledgements**

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Biffa Waste Services for this commission, and Murphy (contractors) for their co-operation during the watching brief.

## 10.0 References

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## 11.0 Site archive

The documentary archive for the site is currently in the possession of Pre-Construct Archaeology. This will be deposited with North Lincolnshire Museum within six months from the completion of the project.