Summary

- *An archaeological strip, map and record exercise was undertaken prior to residential development on land at the former Church Hall site, Main Street, Aslockton, Nottinghamshire.*

- *Natural deposits and features were exposed; undated features were also exposed, and an Anglo-Saxon ditch, along with residual sherds of 13th century pottery.*

- *No other archaeological remains were uncovered within the investigated area.*

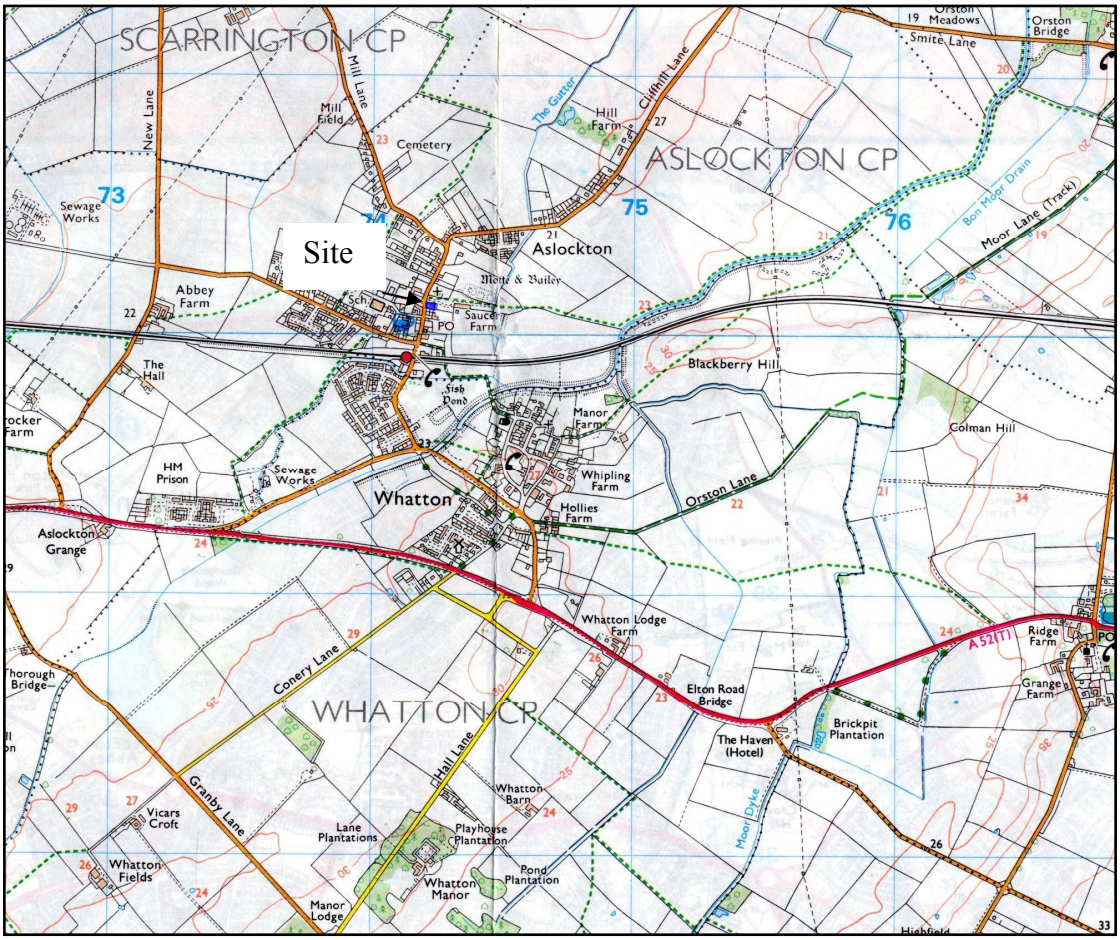

Fig. 1 General site location outlined in red.
Scale 1:25 000 (O.S. copyright licence no. AL 515 21 A0001

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Mr M Chester to undertake an archaeological strip map and record exercise during groundworks for a development on land at the former Church Hall site, Main Street, Aslockton, Nottinghamshire. These works were undertaken at the request of Nottingham County Council. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16), Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), *and standards and guidance for Archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999).

2.0 Site location and description

The site is situated on the site of the old Church Hall, Aslockton (Fig. 1,2). Main Street bounds the site to the west, housing forms the eastern border while the village post office is situated to the south. Saucer Farm and the church of St Thomas and its associated grave yard are to the immediate north. The site lies at 27m OD, centred on SK 474229 340113.

The drift geology of the area comprises of Fluvial sands and gravels. The solid geology is Upper Mudstone with subordinate indurated beds of dolomitic sandstone and siltstone (British Geological Survey, 1996).

3.0 Planning background

Full planning permission was granted for residential development, subject to the undertaking of an archaeological strip, map and record exercise during associated groundworks (planning refrence 06/0027/FUL).

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Archaeology of the prehistoric period has been recorded throughout the Aslockton area. Just over 1km west, a Neolithic flint scatter and stone axe were found, while 1km west an enclosure of uncertain date is known from aerial photography (ADS, 2006).

Just over 0.5 km to the north, an Anglo-Saxon burial was discovered in 1893, while immediately north is the medieval church of St Thomas. A motte and bailey castle with associated fish ponds and a hollow way are just to the east of the church (ADS, 2006).

The name ‘Aslockton’ is of early medieval origin and means ‘Farmstead or village of a man called Áslákr’ (Mills, 1991). The village is mentioned in Domesday Book: one bovate of land belonging to the king (Williams and Martin, 1992).

5.0 Methodology

The strip, map and record exercise required the monitoring the machine stripped topsoil and subsoil across an area approximately 51.50sqm in extent. This was to take place prior to any development groundworks.

All archaeological deposits identified were subjected to limited excavation, in order to access their nature, dimensions and to attempt to recover datable materials. These investigations resulted in the production of written descriptions on context record sheets. Colour photographs and scale drawings, in both plan and section, complement these accounts. The groundwork was carried out using a 360º wheeled excavator using a 0.50m toothless ditching bucket.

Four site visits were undertaken on: 30th October 2006, 8th, 19th and 22nd of January 2007 by Steve Williams.

6.0 Results

Eleven stratigraphic contexts were encountered across the area of investigation (Fig 3). The earliest was natural yellow/reddish clay (003). This was mostly consistent throughout the site and in places contained lenses of natural brown sandy clay (008). Above these deposits was 1.20m of topsoil (016), which was sealed by a modern sand levelling layer (017). An irregular feature (001) extended from the north-eastern corner of the site and this contained a brown silty sand fill. Close by was a sub-circular feature (002), which resembled a small pit and contained a similar fill to (001). Running obliquely across the trench on an south-west to north-east orientation was a linear [011], the fill of which was brown silt with occasional charcoal flecks. It was truncated by two modern service pipes. Three contexts; (005), (006) and (007) were irregular in plan and had the appearance of being natural. All three contained similar sterile brown silty/sand fills. Finally, three linear features [012], [013] and [015] were located towards the southern limit of the area. Feature [013] was the smallest orientated east-west; it had a dark grey loam fill and may represent a field boundary. Feature [012] was also orientated east-west and had a dark brown loam fill (009). This contained three sherds of 9th to mid 10th century Anglo-Saxon pottery and also a possible worked fragment of animal bone (see Appendix 3 and 4). Its north-eastern limit converged with [015]; a north-west to south-east orientated linear. This had an almost identical fill to [012] but did not produce any finds. Its eastern limit was unclear due to machining conditions. These last two linears could possibly represent separate field boundaries or settlement enclosure ditches, or may even have been part of the same feature.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

Contexts recorded across the site consisted of natural deposits and features, two possible pits, three undated ditches and one ditch dated to the late 9th to mid 10th Anglo-Saxon period. Four sherds of 13th century pottery were also retrieved from the topsoil.

The function of the undated pits and ditches are difficult to ascertain, this is due to the lack of dating material and any association with the one dated ditch encountered. The discovery of Anglo-Saxon settlement activity is not completely surprising; the origins of Aslockton are known to date back to the early medieval period and so it is not unreasonable to suggest that evidence of settlement relating to this period may existed within the contemporary settlement.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology required archaeological monitoring of a selected area prior to any groundworks. Machine stripping can produce a 'clean' surface suitable for archaeological observation if it is executed slowly and under direct archaeological control, but this is not always possible under field conditions: while contractors are usually willing to be as careful as conditions permit, their commercial margins depend on removing spoil as rapidly as possible. For this reason, the finished result is often unsuitable for archaeological observation, and only the largest and most obvious of features can be detected.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct (Lincoln) would like to thank Mr M Chester for this commission and the groundworkers for their cooperation during the fieldwork.

10.0 References

Archaeological Online Data Service 2007 (ADS).

British Geological Survey, 1996. *Nottinghamshire: England and Wales Sheet 126, Solid and Drift Geology.* 1:50 000 Provisional Series. BGS, Keyworth.

Williams, A. and Martin, G. H. (eds.), 1992, *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation.* Penguin Books, London.

11.0 Site archive

An archive of written, drawn, photographic and object elements is in preparation and will be deposited at a suitable receiving museum within six months of the completion of this report.