

Summary

- *An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to monitor the groundworks during a residential development in Crooked Billet Street, Morton, Nr. Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.*
- *Although the site is located within the Lower Trent Valley where there is evidence for human activity since the Palaeolithic period, nothing of archaeological interest was recorded.*
- *It was possible to establish that the footprint of the development falls within an area that is largely comprised of a sequence of levelling layers and demolition rubble.*



Fig 1: General Location plan at scale 1:25 000(O.S.Copyright licence no:AL 515 32 A0001)

1.0 Introduction

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) was commissioned by Chestnut Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks of a residential development at Crooked Billet Street, Morton, Lincolnshire.

These works were undertaken to fulfil the objectives of a formal specification prepared by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), approved by Lincolnshire County Council. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990), *Standards and guidance for archaeological watching briefs* (IFA, 1999) and the Lincolnshire County Council document *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: a manual of archaeological practice* (LCC, 1998).

2.0 Site location and description

Morton is situated 1.5 miles northwest of Gainsborough on the eastern bank of the River Trent. The development site is situated at a bend in the river, towards the north of the village below the 5m contour and is centred on NGR 480681 391551. The site topography is relatively flat, although it is difficult to be certain as the present ground surface incorporates re-deposited building material. At the south and east, the site is bounded by the remains of the external walls of demolished warehouses. These remain to a height of at least two storeys.

The underlying solid and drift geology consists of alluvium, 1st Terrace sands and gravels over Keuper Marl (British Geological Survey 1967).

3.0 Planning background

Planning permission was granted to Chestnut Homes Ltd by West Lindsey District Council for a residential development (planning ref. 03/0747/P/FUL) of 15 apartments and 4 houses. This was subject to the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during all stages of development involving ground disturbance in order to record any archaeological remains encountered as a result the development.

4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Due to extensive warping in the lower Trent Valley during the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the accumulation of modern floodplain deposits of alluvium, there is little evidence of prehistoric activity from Morton. This is in sharp contrast to other areas of the Trent Valley where systematic fieldwalking, supported by the results of excavation and watching briefs conducted during the stripping of terrace and floodplain environments have identified extensive sub – alluvial spreads of Neolithic and Bronze Age remains (Knight, & Howard 2004). Similarly, evidence for Romano - British occupation in the area appears to be confined to the higher ground northeast of the development site at Thonock (Gardner 2005).

The earliest mention of Morton is from the 1086 Domesday survey where it is given as *Mortune*. The name is derived from the Old English *Mor* + *tun*, or “ Farmstead on the moor or marsh” (Mills 1991).

Morton became a parish in 1846 when the church of St Paul was built by Thomas Johnson of Lichfield. The church, south east of the development site was re-built in the decorated style in 1891.

5.0 Methodology

The methodology included the monitoring of the removal by machine of all deposits.

Plan and section surfaces were cleaned and examined to determine the presence/absence of archaeological deposits and to understand the stratigraphic sequence of the site.

Sample sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20 and context information was recorded on standard pro-forma context sheets. A colour photographic record was maintained, examples of which are appended to this report.

The spoil was monitored for artefactual evidence.

6.0 Results

The earliest deposit (018) was encountered during the excavation of the drainage trench (Fig: 3) at a depth of 0.60m below the present ground surface. This was a layer of alluvium comprised of mid brown sandy clay suggesting that the development site was originally part of the floodplain of the River Trent. Also encountered in the drainage trench and immediately below the modern ground surface were the relict foundations of a possible boundary or garden wall (016) (Fig: 4). This was comprised of a single course of modern 7.50 cm hard-faced bricks.

Across the remainder of the site, the stratigraphic sequence consisted of demolition and levelling layers. These were more pronounced at the west of the site where several layers less than 0.50m thick formed a palimpsest of ground raising deposits.

At the south west corner of Block B were seven layers (012), (011), (010), (009), (008), (007) and (006) of re-deposited clay, rubble and sand. These were sealed by the remains of a sandstone flag surface (005) (Appendix 2, Figs 2: & 7). The surface was probably the remains of an internal floor of a warehouse. It is likely that the outer wall of this warehouse forms the southern boundary of the present site.

Contemporary with and abutting, surface (005), were three rows of 7.50cm hard-faced modern bricks that comprised the relict remains of the warehouse foundations (031) (Fig: 7).

A 0.30m thick layer of demolition rubble (004) with comparative brick sizes to those of (031) sealed the surface and foundations in Block B.

The northwest quadrant of the site (Block A) also showed a comparable sequence of levelling and demolition layers to that from Block B (Figs 9, 10, & 11) however, layers (022) and (021) contained frequent chalk inclusions within their matrix.

Towards the centre of the site, the sequence of levelling was confined to fewer, thicker, deposits of mostly demolition rubble and re-deposited clay (Figs 5 & 6). A layer of demolition rubble of variable thickness sealed all deposits and formed the modern ground surface.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

Despite the development being situated on the floodplain of the Lower Trent Valley where there is evidence for human activity and occupation since the Palaeolithic Period, no artefacts or features were revealed that pre – dated the modern structural remains of the warehouse in Block B. Additionally, there was no evidence for the feature recorded in the Sites, Monuments and Records Office for West Lindsey as a ‘probable moated enclosure’.

Apart from some of the drainage trenches, which encountered alluvial deposits at a depth of 0.50m below the modern ground surface, the new development remained within made or disturbed ground. Although this suggests that any trace of the enclosure (and any other archaeological activity) may have been destroyed by earlier structures, it cannot be discounted that archaeological deposits may have survived below the alluvial layers evidenced in Fig.6:

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology chosen was appropriate to the works undertaken. It allowed a rapid assessment of the archaeological potential of the site, which was deemed to be limited.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre –Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Chestnut Homes for this commission. Thanks are also due to the groundworkers for their help and co – operation.

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 (Lincoln). This will be deposited at The Collection, Lincoln within six months. The global accession number is 2007. 101.