Summary

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Graham Raynor Planning and Architectural Design Ltd. (on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. R. Whittaker) on land to the rear of The Manor House, Thorpe in Balne, in the Doncaster district of South Yorkshire (centred on NGR: SE 5990 1110).

A single evaluation trench was excavated within the footprint of a proposed extension to the existing 'Manor House'. This building was constructed in the 1980's, replacing a farmhouse and associated agricultural building. The site is within a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument (Thorpe in Balne moated site, chapel and fishpond, National Monument No. 13220).

Well-preserved archaeological features/deposits were encountered within 200mm of the existing ground surface. These included wall footings and an associated possible surface. Negative features were also recorded, including an in-filled ditch and a possible pit or partial re-cut of the ditch. Stratigraphically, the ditch was the earliest archaeological feature encountered.

Pottery sherds recovered from fills within the ditch and a later partial re-cut or pit provided a broad date range for these features of 12th-13th and 13th-14th centuries respectively. Residual pottery was also recovered from these features, including a single sherd of a Middle Saxon vessel, dated to the late 7th-mid-late 9th century, and several sherds of Saxo-Norman material of late 10th-late 12th century date.

Two limestone wall footings were also identified and, although these remain undated, one at least appeared to have been built after the ditch had silted up. Worked stone, stylistically dated to the late 13th century or later, was recovered from demolition material associated with these walls. A clay surface sealed by a charcoal-rich deposit, possibly representing the floor level of one of the wall footings was also recorded.

Both footings and the clay surface were sealed below the construction horizon of the former farm, the surviving remains of which included a third wall footing and cobbled surfacing. Some modern intrusion was recorded in the form of a service trench associated with the existing building.

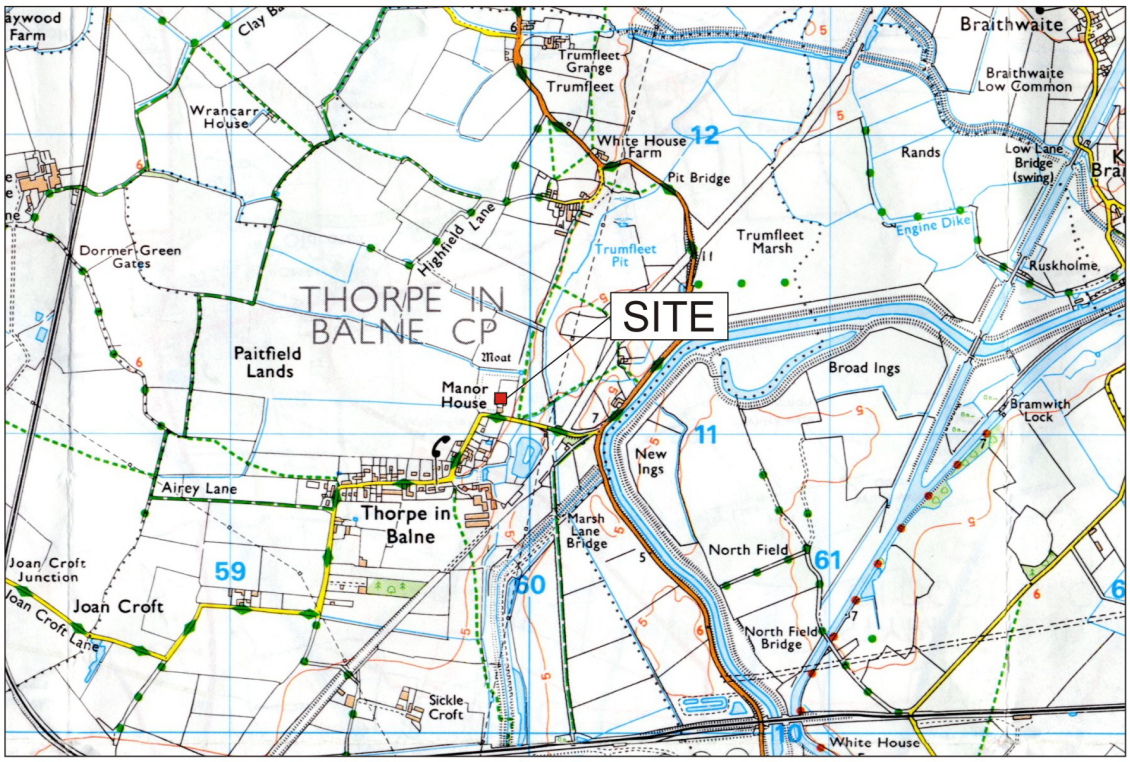

Fig. 1: Site location map (Scale 1:25 000) (O.S. Copyright licence no: A1 515 21 A0001)

1 Introduction

Between the 2nd and the 6th October 2008 Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) (PCA Lincoln) carried out an archaeological evaluation for Graham Raynor Planning and Architectural Design Ltd. on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. R. Whittaker to the rear of The Manor House, Thorpe in Balne, in the Doncaster district of South Yorkshire (centred on NGR: SE 5990 1110). This work was undertaken on the recommendation of the South Yorkshire Archaeological Service and the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Yorkshire Region) to determine the archaeological potential of the site and inform a planning application for a proposed extension to The Manor House (Planning ref. 07/00152/FUL).

The investigation was carried out in accordance with an Archaeological Works Specification for evaluation by trial trenching produced by PCA Lincoln (PCA Lincoln 2008) and was subsequently granted Scheduled Monument Consent (HSD 9/2/10500) as the proposed development site lies within a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument (Thorpe in Balne moated site, chapel and fishpond, National Monument No. 13220).

The scheme of investigation complies with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Dept. of Environment 1990) and also follows the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1999), *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (EAA Occasional Paper 14) and the *Management of Archaeological Projects II* (English Heritage 1991).

2 Site location and description (Figs. 1, 2 and 3)

The site is within the parish of Thorpe in Balne, in the Doncaster district of South Yorkshire (formerly the West Riding of Yorkshire), *c*.7.5km north of Doncaster and *c*.5km northwest of Hatfield. It is beyond the northern limit of the village, and lies to the north of Thorpe Lane which runs through the village to the south (NGR: SE 990 1110).

The site is located in a low-lying area of the valley of the River Don in a region known as the Humberhead Levels. It is *c*.400m west of a meander in the modern course of the River Don which has been traversed by the Dun Navigation and New Junction Canal. These form part of an extensive network of drains and waterways, some now redundant and reduced to linear lakes, demonstrating a long history of artificial drainage within the local area.

The site lies close to a change in drift geology, from the silt and clay on which Thorpe in Balne village stands to the alluvium of the Don Valley to the east. The underlying solid geology is mapped as Sherwood Group Sandstone (formerly Bunter Sandstone) of the Permo-Triassic era overlain by drift deposits of silt and clay of the Pleistocene and Recent era (British Geological Survey 1969).

The existing residence is within a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument (Thorpe in Balne moated site, chapel and fishpond, National Monument No.

13220). This consists of the well-preserved earthworks of a moated manorial site and includes the remains of a Grade II* listed 12th century chapel; incorporated into a range of later farm-buildings.

The moated site covers a rectangular area *c.* 140m by 120m, including the mostly dry and partially in-filled moat, which is up to 10m wide. Most of the eastern half of the site is occupied by the slightly elevated and level 'manorial platform'. The standing buildings within the moated area are generally located within the south-eastern quadrant of the site on the 'manorial platform'. With the exception of the gardens and outbuildings, the rest of the site is under pasture.

The current building, for which the extension is desired, dates from the 1980's and replaced an earlier 18th-19th century farmhouse on the same site. The former buildings are believed to have replaced the original medieval manor house (PCA Lincoln 2007). The proposed extension is located to the north of the existing building and lies at approximately 7.70m AOD.

3 Archaeological and historical background

There is very little evidence relating to human activity in the prehistoric period in this area; attributed to higher sea levels at the time rendering much of the surrounding area marshland. The Humberhead levels appear to become more systematically exploited during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, with population growth and large-scale drainage schemes (PCA Lincoln 2007).

At the end of the Roman period much marginal land appears to have been abandoned, and there is little evidence for settlement in the immediate area during the Anglo-Saxon period. This appears to be supported by the absence of any record of a settlement recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 (*ibid.*).

The manorial site is believed to have been created towards the end of the 12th century (based upon similarities of masonry between the surviving chapel and like sites of the period) (Tomson 1997). As such the site may be an early example, which are generally accepted to have been most frequent between AD 1250 and 1350, representing the prestigious residences of the local nobility (PCA Lincoln 2007).

Previous archaeological work at site has included a geophysical (resistance) survey, carried out by the South Yorkshire Archaeology Unit in 1987. This appears to have concentrated upon the western side of the moated area and is outside of the proposed development zone, although the survey did record the presence of potential undated structural remains (JMM 1987).

Also in 1987 an archaeological watching brief was undertaken on three trial pits, to the northeast, east and south of the main house. A charcoal-rich layer, interpreted as a previous ground surface, was identified 0.25m below ground level in the northeastern pit and 0.4m below ground level in the eastern pit. No corresponding layer was observed in the southern pit, and no structural remains or artefactual materials were observed in any of the pits (DB 1987).

In 1994, as part of a conservation project, a full survey of the chapel building was undertaken. This constitutes the most comprehensive archaeological work on the Scheduled Ancient Monument site and provides evidence of the high status nature of the site during the medieval period. However, it provides no direct evidence for the potential survival of archaeological remains on the rest of the site (Tomson 1997).

The Humber Wetlands Project carried out a borehole survey on the western and northern section of the moat, recording good potential for the survival of organic remains (Fenwick 1997).

As part of the process for obtaining planning permission for the current development, Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) produced a Desk-Based Assessment which outlines the known history of the site, providing greater detail of the previous archaeological work undertaken at the site (PCA Lincoln 2007).

4 Aims and objectives

The aim of evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, quality of survival and importance of any archaeological remains within the proposed development footprint. This information would assist an informed decision as to whether any development within the Scheduled Ancient Monument may be permitted, and further inform the future treatment of the remains and any mitigatory measures, such as sympathetic foundation design, incorporation within areas of open space and/or further archaeological work in advance of, or during, any subsequent development.

5 Methodology

The evaluation methodology required the excavation of a single trench, 9m long and up to a maximum width of 2m. Initial excavation was carried out using a tracked excavator fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless ditching blade. All overburden was mechanically removed down to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon/feature. Where archaeology was encountered, all further excavation was by hand.

A sufficient sample of the exposed archaeology was sample excavated, in order to meet the aims of the evaluation. A full written, drawn and photographic record was made during the course of the evaluation. Plans and sections were completed at a scale of 1:20, and written accounts were prepared on pro-forma context record sheets. A photographic record (monochrome, colour side, and digital) was accumulated throughout the scheme, and selected views have been reproduced in this report.

6 Results

The evaluation identified three wall foundations, a clay surface sealed by a charcoal-rich deposit, a large ditch with a possible re-cut, and a number of made-ground/levelling deposits, mostly comprising demolition materials. These deposits

survive as little as 200mm below the current ground level (Fig. 4, photographs in Appendix 1).

Initial mechanical excavation revealed that a surprisingly shallow depth of overburden, consisting of redeposited topsoil (001) covered what appeared to be the partial remains of structures associated with the former farm buildings, including brick and stone wall footings (008) and a cobbled surface (002). These were encountered as little as *c*.200mm below existing ground level.

Continued excavation revealed that potentially significant archaeological remains were also present close to existing ground level, sealed beneath the remains of the former farm buildings and extending throughout most of the area covered by the evaluation trench. Ultimately, the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.72m below existing ground level, where the underlying orange-yellow clay natural substrate (026) was encountered.

At the northern end of the trench the natural substrate (026) was sealed by a *c*.0.17m thick layer of very similar material (025), which had a more 'dirty' appearance and contained some charcoal flecks. It was not clear if this was redeposited material or just the surviving interface between the lower 'clean' natural and the overlying deposits. No artefactual material was recovered from the excavated section through this deposit and it appeared to be of uniform appearance and thickness throughout. Potentially, this may be an *in situ* sub-soil.

Deposit (025) was cut by a broad, shallow flat based feature [024], probably a ditch, aligned *c*. east-west. This was filled by a homogenous, fine silty, grey clay soil (023), which appeared to be the product of natural silting, and contained within it a number of Saxo-Norman and early medieval pottery sherds, most probably dating from the late 11th-12th century.

The fill of ditch [024] was cut by feature [022] which extended to the west and was only partially exposed within the evaluation trench. It appeared to be an entirely distinct feature, possibly a pit, although it was contained entirely within the original footprint of the putative ditch [024] and levelled out at the same base. As such, this may have been the product of partial re-cutting of the ditch itself.

Pit/ditch re-cut [022] contained a primary fill (021), which consisted of dark grey silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks. This deposit also contained two Saxo-Norman pottery sherds, similar to those recovered from the earlier ditch fill (023). It was sealed by a second fill (020) which consisted of orange-brown silty clay, which incorporated ceramic material dated to the mid 13th-14th century, as well as residual Middle Saxon material and two sherds dated to the late 12th-13th century.

Both secondary deposit (020) and ditch fill (023) were sealed by a thin layer of yellow-brown silty clay (019) which appears to have accumulated as a result of settling of these earlier deposits.

Layer (019), fill (020) and the possible sub-soil layer (025) were sealed by a relatively deep, brown silty clay deposit (018), possibly a former topsoil.

Although not entirely clear, it appeared that this possible former topsoil horizon was cut through by an east-west aligned construction trench [017], which contained the remains of a largely robbed limestone wall footing (013).

Construction cut [017] and the remains of wall (013) were difficult to distinguish from deposits (014) to the south, and (004) which overlay soil horizon (018) to the north. Both of these deposits contained similar limestone fragments with flecks of mortar and charcoal, and together may be the remains of a demolition horizon. Notably, a fragment of limestone ornamental vaulting was recovered from layer (004), dated stylistically to the later medieval period. Wall footing (013) appeared to survive at varying heights within the limits of the evaluation trench; its greatest height of 0.47m was recorded at the western limit of the excavated area.

The greatest surviving part of wall (013) was abutted by a thin layer of crushed limestone (003) which appeared to be a levelling off horizon sealing demolition layer (004), which itself may also have served as a ground raising deposit. Deposit (004) was also sealed by a cemented crushed stone surface (002) which lay to the north. This relatively modern-looking surface contained fragments of brick and appeared to be part of a possible yard surface associated with the former farm.

To the south of wall (013) and aligned parallel with it, was a similar, though narrower wall footing (015). Like wall (013) this had also been almost completely robbed out/dismantled, and the relationship between it and an adjacent demolition deposit (014) was not clear, as wall footing (015) only survived to a single course. Furthermore, both wall footing (015) and demolition deposit (014) were sealed by another demolition-like deposit (006) which was very similar in appearance and there was no clear definition between the two.

Deposit (006) and wall footing (015) were both truncated to the south by a modern service pipe trench. This pipe trench removed all stratigraphic relationships between the archaeological deposits to the north and south of it.

The earliest deposit encountered to the south of the pipe trench was a mid-brown sandy silt (027). This was only observed where the pipe trench had removed overlying deposits. Deposit (027) was sealed by a compacted and heat reddened clay and stone fragment layer (012). This layer appeared to be a surface at which a fire had been set, possibly, a hearth or the floor surface of a building that had been burnt-down/demolished. It was in turn sealed by a thin charcoal-rich layer of sandy clay, from which a 10ltr sample was taken (011). Further assessment of this deposit yielded evidence of burnt hazel and peat, suggesting that local resources were being used as fuel.

Layer (011) was sealed by deposit (010) which consisted of a greyish orange sandy clay that may have been the construction horizon associated with adjacent wall (008). This wall was notably different from the other footings in that it was constructed of a mix of limestone and sandstone blocks as well as bricks. It was clearly constructed over the top of, and slightly cutting into, or settling into, the charcoal-rich deposit (011).

To the south of wall (008) a similar construction horizon to (010) was recorded as (009). Both of these deposits were sealed by demolition layers (005) and (007). The inclusion of brick fragments within these two deposits suggests that they were contemporary; with each other and the demolition of wall (008) and represent the demolition horizon of the former farm buildings.

7 Discussion and conclusion

The evaluation has confirmed the presence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed extension. Potentially significant archaeological remains survive relatively close to the existing ground surface, although for the most part these remains appear to be sealed by demolition/ground-raising materials, probably associated with the construction of the farm buildings which had formerly occupied the site. Fragmentary structural remains of the former farm buildings are also present overlaying the more significant archaeology.

The earliest positively dated feature exposed within the evaluation trench was ditch [024], possibly dating from the late 11th-12th century. Although the relatively poor condition of the pottery sherds recovered from this should be noted (where a later date for the feature is a possibility), the ditch-like feature appears to indicate some form of division or delineation, likely to be of medieval date.

The exact relationship between ditch [024] and pit or partial ditch re-cut [022] remains unclear although a mid 13th-14th century date for the latter is indicated by the inclusion of two relatively unabraided sherds of this date. If this feature was a partial re-cut, then an extended period of use for the original ditch may be assumed. If, however, this is an entirely separate feature, then the opposite would appear to be the case, indicating some change in land-use in the immediate area during the medieval period.

The pottery recovered from this relatively small investigation includes a single sherd of Middle Saxon material, dated to the late 7th – mid/late 9th century, several sherds of Saxo-Norman date, and numerous sherds of medieval date. Together they may indicate a prolonged period of occupation within the immediate area, potentially pre-dating the creation of the moated site.

Although the surviving building remains, particularly wall footings (013) and (015), could not be precisely dated, stratigraphically at least, wall (013) appeared to post-date the in-filling of pit [022]. A possible date for at least one of the walls may be indicated by the fragment of worked stone recovered from demolition layer (004), dated to the late 13th century or later (assuming this material is *in situ* demolition and not imported material).

The sequence of construction/demolition and the exact relationship between the two wall footings (013) and (015) was not clear within the excavated area. However, their close proximity would appear to make it unlikely that both supported walls at the same time, where a sequence of re-building may be assumed. Furthermore, the proximity of the clay surface (012) would appear to be

part of a surface associated with one of these footings, possibly (015). No direct physical relationship could be established because of the presence of the modern service trench. Together the two wall footings and the clay surface indicate the presence of structures probably of medieval or early post-medieval date which may be assumed to be the surviving archaeological remains of at least part of the historic manor house.

The presence of wall (008), built directly over the top of clay surface (012) and associated burnt material (011), would appear to provide evidence of not only the farm buildings that formerly occupied the site, but also evidence that archaeological remains survive beneath this and subsequent modern phases of construction, at least within the area investigated.

8 Mitigation

Following a site visit on the 2nd October 2008 by the English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Yorkshire Region), and following subsequent discussions, it has been recommended that the proposed development should go ahead but with a revised foundation design that will restrict any intrusive groundworks to a maximum depth of 300mm below existing ground level.

The section drawing within this report demonstrates that, despite this limited foundation depth, there may be some superficial impact caused by the groundworks to the upper reaches of walls (013) and (008), although it is unlikely that this will include real damage to the actual courses of wall (013). It is recommended that this potential impact be mitigated by a scheme of archaeological monitoring works, to be undertaken at the time of the groundworks, to record in plan the upper reaches of both walls if they are revealed, along with any other unanticipated archaeology.

9 References

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