

Summary

- *An archaeological scheme of works was carried out by Pre -Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) during development of land situated between Thornton Road and Caistor Road, South Kelsey, Lincolnshire.*
- *A small but significant ceramic assemblage has confirmed settlement of the area between the Mid-Saxon and later medieval periods, though the character of this settlement remains elusive and the specific chronology of individual features has been impossible to assess due to exceptionally high levels of ceramic residuality (potentially, almost every find from this investigation was in a secondary context).*
- *Although the development site is located close to the traditional core of the medieval settlement, no early structural features (excluding a line of undated post holes) were identified, although the areas that were examined were at distance from the medieval frontages.*

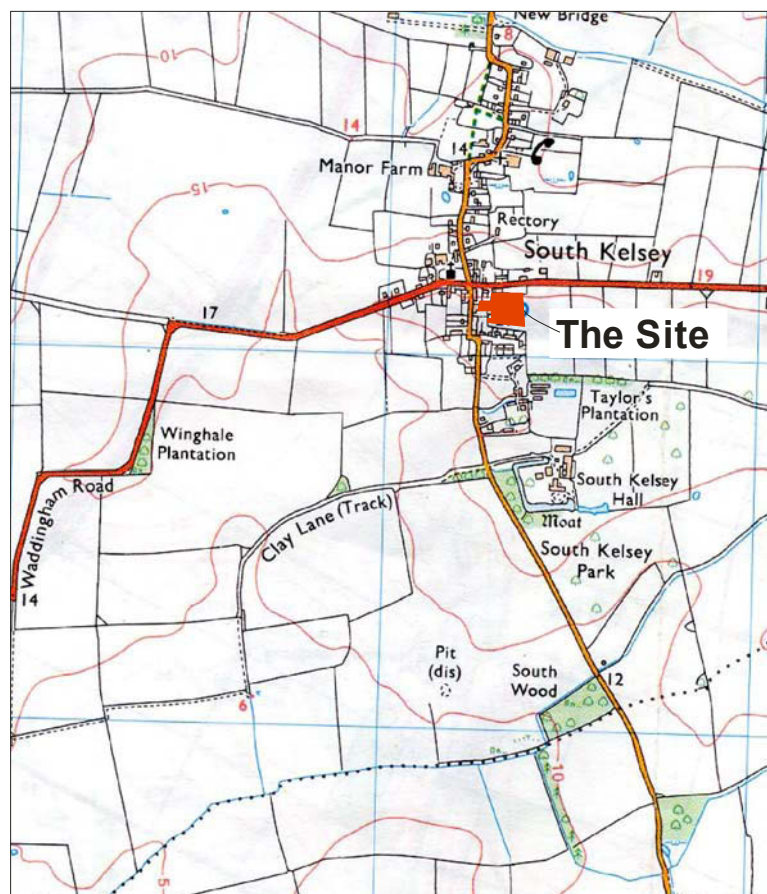


Fig 1: Site location at scale 1:25,000 (O.S. copyright licence no.A1 515 A0001)

1.0 Introduction

Planning permission was granted for a residential development on land off Thornton Road/Caistor Road South Kelsey, Lincolnshire. The consent was given subject to an archaeological scheme of works being implemented that would ensure the preservation, by record, of any archaeological remains disturbed.

These works were carried out in accordance with current best practice and are consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology & Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (Department of the Environment, 1990); *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 1991), and the Lincolnshire County Council *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: a manual of archaeological practice* (LCC, 1998).

2.0 Site location and description

South Kelsey is situated on the B1205 between the A15 and Caistor. It lies approximately 26km north-east of Lincoln within the administrative district of West Lindsey. The village is one of several small settlements situated on a low, north-south orientated ridge, the elevation of which is approximately 21.5m OD.

The development site is located towards the south of the village, c. 100m to the south-east of St. Mary's Church, to the south of Caistor Road and to the east of Thornton Road (Fig.1). To its north and south are residential properties and to its east are open fields. The ground surface undulates, and slopes downwards towards the north-west corner, with the development zone covering an approximate area of 100 m².

The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Upper Jurassic Kimmeridge Clays of the Ancholme Group (BGS 1982), and the site NGR is TF 04169 98191

3.0 Planning background

West Lindsey District Council granted full planning permission for residential development (planning ref; M/00/P/0909).

To evaluate the archaeological potential of the site, an initial gradiometer survey was undertaken in April 2000, followed by selective trial trenching in September of that same year. The trial excavation exposed archaeological remains of some importance, and a subsequent requirement for a scheme of works (to be carried out during all stages of development involving ground disturbance) was issued by West Lindsey District Council as a condition of planning.

Regrettably, due to confusion surrounding the transfer of lands from Hugh Bourn Homes to Kier Homes, a significant percentage of the development groundworks were completed

without any archaeological recording taking place. However, to negate these effects ensuing discussions between Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln), Kier Homes and the archaeological advisor to West Lindsey District Council established that the condition could be complied with via an alternative strategy: namely a strip, map and recording programme within two defined areas.

4.0 Archaeological Context

The earliest archaeology from South Kelsey derives from an assemblage of lithic artifacts. These date from the Late Mesolithic to the Bronze Age periods and were recovered from cover sands to the east of the village (3-4 km northeast of the development). An isolated Neolithic polished stone axe was also discovered c.700m to the north of the site.

At the site of the former Winghale Priory, c. 1.7km southwest of the development, small-scale gravel extraction has revealed evidence of almost continuous occupation dating from the Iron Age to the Middle Saxon period. The priory itself was not established until after the Norman Conquest, and during the 12th – 14th centuries it owned most of the land surrounding the village.

The village continued to expand during the medieval period, and was eventually divided into two separate secular and ecclesiastical administrative units, each centred upon a church: St. Nicholas' church was located at the north of the village and St Marys' at the south. Both were in existence by 1254 (St Nicholas' was demolished in 1795).

An archaeological evaluation carried out in 2000 on the development site itself identified three principal phases of archaeology, dating from; (a) the mid to late Iron Age, and (b) the late Saxon period and (c) the medieval period. Potentially stratified pottery of Iron Age date was recovered from only one feature, a ditch. However, residual sherds were also recovered from later features. The majority of archaeological deposits were associated with late Saxon and medieval settlement of the area (10th to 15th centuries), with a very tentative hiatus occurring between the 12th-13th centuries – the medieval archaeology of this area has not been extensively explored and so the superficial hiatus may in fact be little more than a gap in the present state of knowledge (Rylatt 2000).

5.0 Methodology

The strip, map and recording scheme required the investigation of two areas:

5.1 Area 1

This was located on the proposed footprint of house plots (HP) 4-6 towards the northwest of the site and comprised a block of land measuring 12m x 19m (Fig 2).

5.2 Area 2

The stripped area in this location was irregular, measuring approximately 34m north-south and 25m east-west, covering the footprints of the garage for HP 11; HP's 12 and 13 and their associated garages (Fig 2).

Within the stripped areas, modern deposits were removed using a mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.8m wide toothless blade, in spits of approximately 20cm, until the first archaeological/natural horizon was exposed. Following the removal of the overburden/topsoil, further excavation was carried out by hand. Stripped spoil was monitored for artefacts.

Following the excavation of features, section drawings were prepared at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20; plans at 1:20 and 1:50. Context information was recorded on standard pro-forma context record sheets, and a conventional colour and monochrome photographic record was maintained throughout the scheme, examples of which are appended to this report.

6.0 Results

During the current scheme, deposits encountered within almost all the cut features exposed comprised of very similar black/grey-brown silty clays with occasional flecks of charcoal and flint nodules. The only characteristics used to separate feature fills were slight variations in shade or density of inclusions.

6.1 Area 1 (Fig 3)

The topsoil (100) had an approximate even depth of 0.30m and consisted of dark silty clay. The basal geological stratum (101) consisted of light whitish-yellow sandy clay with frequent flint nodules and chalk flecks. All archaeological features were cut into this layer.

To varying extents, the ceramic artefacts from Area 1 reflected three broad phases of occupation: Saxon, medieval, and possibly post-medieval. Several undated features were also investigated, and these were tentatively grouped together due to similarity of form and close spatial proximity. One feature, although devoid of datable finds, appeared to be a modern posthole, still incorporating the base of its timber post.

6.1.1 Middle – Late Saxon

Evidence reflecting some form of Middle-Late Saxon occupation derives from a small, but significant group of pottery; recovered from the two larger cut features that were exposed in Area 1: pits [103] and [109]. The single residual sherd of Middle Saxon

Maxey-type ware was recovered from the lower fill of feature [109]; a context that also yielded Late Saxon, Saxo-Norman and medieval pottery (below).

6.1.2 Medieval?

Based on ceramic evidence, features [103] and [109] may be medieval, though the pottery report (Appendix 3) records that the entire assemblage from this phase of works, most of it deriving from feature [109], is unusual - in the case of both features [109] and [103], possibly entirely residual.

Feature [109] measured 4m x1.50m in plan and was unusually square at its west end (Fig 3). Its primary fill (102) comprised a 0.50m thick deposit of mid grey-brown silty clay containing pottery of Middle Saxon (single sherd Maxey-type), Late Saxon, Saxo-Norman and medieval date (range *c* 1250-1550, Appendix 3).

The upper fill of [109], (110), contained pottery displaying a similarly mixed chronology as well as a fragment of late/post-medieval brick. This was a 0.35m deposit of mid blackish-grey silty clay.

The surviving deposit within pit [103], context (104) was just 0.10m deep and this also contained a mixed, much smaller group of pottery of late Saxon to early medieval date (Appendix 3).

Interesting though they are, it is evident that the finds from both features cannot provide any reliable information from which to date them. Most of the vessel types identified were represented by a single sherd (there is only one cross-joining pot). This would imply that probably all of the pottery may have been deposited as part of a land clearing or dumping episode (Appendix 3) during or after the later medieval period. In this regard, it is unfortunate that it was not possible to identify the primary sites of some of these finds which, in effect, are without a context other than their general provenance on the southeast side of South Kelsey.

A bulk environmental sample taken from fill (110) produced small quantities of carbonised cereal grain and a single fragment of oak charcoal (Appendix 5). Exploitation of heath and peat land environments was indicated by the presence of sedges and heathers, although as noted above a date for the (probably secondary) deposition of this context has not been established. A sample from context (102), the lower fill of [109] was for the most part barren.

6.1.3 Late/post-medieval?

Feature [111] was towards the south-east of the stripped area, immediately north of evaluation Trench 2 (Fig 3). In plan this was approximately 1.70 x 1m. Its profile was shallow (0.50m). A flat roof tile of medieval/post-medieval date and a hand-made brick

of late/post-medieval date (Appendix 4) were recovered from its fill, context (112), as was one fragment of un-identified animal bone.

6.1.4 Undated features

Four likely post-holes and one shallow pit-like feature were exposed towards the northwest of Area 1. Three of the post-holes appeared to form a line, with a fourth, much deeper hole being adjacent to the pit.

Post-holes [113], [115], and [117] were approximately 1.50m apart and aligned north/south (Fig 3). Although undated, their close spatial proximity, and similarity of depth (0.10m) and profile (Fig 4) suggested contemporaneity. This is further indicated by the homogeneity of their fills, of dark grey-brown silty clay.

The other post-hole [107] was significantly deeper, and this contained a relatively large amount of fresh-looking wood, suggesting that this was a more modern feature.

The fill of the adjacent small sub-rounded pit [105] contained just a single fragment of animal bone (Appendix 6).

6.2 Area 2 (Fig 2)

No cut features were identified within the footprints of HP's 12 and 13. However, a large late/post-medieval feature, possibly a drainage/boundary ditch, was identified during the excavation of the foundation trench for the garage of HP 11.

The topsoil (100) in this area was approximately 0.25m deep and this was overlain by a layer of re-deposited clay and chalk (122). The geological profile was the same as that in Area 1.

6.31 Garage foundation trench, HP 11

Orientated northwest to southeast, the southwest edge of a substantial, potentially ditch-like feature ditch [119] was exposed. The depth of this feature was 1.10m+ (Fig 4). Its lower fill (120) a 0.40m thick layer of mid grey-brown silty clay, contained late to post-medieval ceramic building material (Appendix 4), and some animal bone (Appendix 6). Sealing this was a secondary deposit of mid brown sandy clay, 0.60m thick.

The topsoil (100) in this area was overlain by a layer of light brown sandy clay (122) re-deposited as a result of the present development.

7.0 Discussion and conclusion

Although the present scheme has identified a broadly collaborative post-Roman chronology to that evidenced by evaluation in 2000, no finds, stratified or otherwise, were recovered that can further characterise the pre-Roman (Iron Age) occupation of the area.

The small pottery assemblage (most of it from feature [109]) confirms that some form of activity took place on (or close) to the site between the Mid-Saxon to late or post-medieval periods.

Residual or not, the provenance of some of the medieval pottery is of some interest, placing South Kelsey within the wider national context. For example, two sherds of Nottingham Splashed Ware (c. mid 12th -13th century) is a relatively unusual find within a rural context (Appendix 3); one which reinforces the hypothesis that South Kelsey Hall (350m to the south of the site) may have been built on the site of the medieval manor (Hardwick 2000) - the present development may have been located within its demesne.

During the 2000 evaluation, a morphologically similar feature to features [103] and [109] was part-investigated in Trench 1. This contained residual Iron Age pottery and also two sherds of 14th century pottery, which the author cited as potentially reliable dating evidence. It was suggested (based on environmental evidence, coupled with the observation within the fill of burnt daub-like material) that it was possibly a corn-drier (Rackham 2000) although its actual function remained inconclusive.

The morphological similarities between [103] and [109] and the putative corn drier identified by evaluation would imply a common link, although the absence of any traces of *in-situ* burning (particularly on the sides of the features) inevitably introduces some doubt.

Although it is apparent from both ceramic and spatial evidence that the development site is located close to the traditional core of the medieval settlement, no early structural features (excluding undated post holes) were identified within the stripped areas, although a more likely place for these would be adjacent to the medieval frontages – the areas sampled may well have lain within predominantly open zones, and this situation is largely bourn out by the evidence. Rectilinear enclosures / boundary ditches that were previously identified by evaluation where not exposed during the current scheme, although feature [119] may be considered, assuming that this large feature was in fact a ditch.

8.0 Effectiveness of methodology

The methodology proposed for the original scheme of works (watching brief) was ineffective due to confusion associated with the transfer of lands from Hugh Bourn Homes to Kier Homes and consequently a significant percentage of the development

groundworks were completed without any archaeological recording taking place (specifically the area adjacent to Thornton Road where medieval building remains may well have existed). However, to mitigate the failure of the earlier scheme, a second methodology (a strip map and recording scheme) was implemented. This was partially successful by demonstrating a similar post-Roman chronology for the site as that evidenced by the 2000 evaluation, although the character of the archaeology at this particular site remains to a large extent both unquantified and unqualified.

9.0 Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) would like to thank Kier Homes (Northern Division) for this commission.

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 for this scheme is LLN CC: 2007. 240.