White Rose Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Archaeological Strip and Record

Summary

An area of 15,800m² adjacent to White Rose Way, Doncaster, was stripped by machine under archaeological supervision, and then the exposed area was planned using a total station. Other than a modern sheep burial, no archaeological remains were revealed. Other suspected archaeological features proved on excavation to be natural. No finds were recovered.

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Report Information

Client:	Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC)
Address:	Scarborough House, Chequer Road, Doncaster, DN1 2DB
Report Type:	Archaeological Strip and Record
Location:	Doncaster
County:	South Yorkshire
Grid Reference:	SE 589 001
Period(s) of activity represented:	Modern
Report Number:	1943
Project Number:	3354
Site Code:	WRW 09
Planning Application No.:	
Museum Accession No.:	-
Date of fieldwork:	19/01/09 – 27/01/09, 04/02/09, 19/02/09 and the 17/03/09
Date of report:	April 2009
Project Management:	Martin Lightfoot BA MA MIfA
Fieldwork supervisor:	Marina Rose BSc
Report and Illustrations:	David Williams BA

Produced by: Archaeological Services WYAS, PO Box 30,
Nepshaw Lane South, Morley, Leeds LS27 0UG
Telephone: 0113 383 7500
Email: admin@aswyas.com

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Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

Archaeological service WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council to undertake a programme of archaeological strip and record in an area of proposed landscaping which is designated as ecological mitigation for the forthcoming road scheme. This work was undertaken in advance of the widening of a 2km section of the existing A6182 road. The works were undertaken during January, February and March 2009.

Site location and topography

The site is situated within the Humberhead Levels and floodplain of the River Torne, 3km to the southeast of the centre of Doncaster (Fig. 1). The site forms a triangle of land, bound to the northwest by a dismantled railway, to the east by the A6182, and to the south by agricultural fields. The site is centred at SE 586 001 at approximately 5m above the ordnance datum (AOD).

Soils, geology and land-use

The underlying geology is glaciolacustrine clay overlying Permo-Triassic Bunter Sandstone (BGS 1969). The soils of the area belong to the Foggathorpe 2 association, described as 'slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged stoneless clayey and fine loamy over clayey soils' (SSEW 1983, 712i). Previous archaeological and geo-technical investigations within the site have further identified the presence of isolated peat deposits (Morse 2008).

2 Archaeological and historical background

The following draws on the specification for archaeological works produced by Mouchel (Morse 2008).

The site is within an area that contains numerous cropmarks identified through aerial photography. These were first mapped by Riley (1977 & 1980), who showed that they formed part of an extensive complex of field systems that run from North Nottingham through South and West Yorkshire. Many of these field systems appear to be associated with enclosures and double ditched features, probably representing boundaries or tracks. The excavation of some of these cropmark sites have provided a dating evidence for the Iron Age and Romano British period (Richardson 2008).

The site appears to have remained as wetland until the 17th century, following which attempts at drainage were made. By the 18th century, there was more concentrated efforts towards reclamation. This reclamation enabled much of the former floodplain to be converted to arable.

3 Project aims

In accordance with the specification (Morse 2008), the aims of the archaeological works were to:

- ensure the adequate record of any buried archaeological remains that may be exposed within the defined strip, map and record areas;
- produce a base plan of all archaeological features exposed within the defined strip, map and record areas;
- investigate and record exposed archaeological features/deposits in order to clarify both their date, character, and significance and to provide a clear understanding of their chronology;
- ensure that any artefactual/environmental evidence is recorded, assessed and - if appropriate - analysed to an acceptable standard;
- make available the results of the investigations;
- establish a clearer understanding of the date, form, function, evolution and economic status of any occupation activity identified;
- demonstrate whether any such activity is contemporary with, or can be directly related to, other known sites of prehistoric, Roman, medieval or post-medieval activity and land-use within the area, and;
- examine the influence of base geology on the character of landscape utilisation

4 Methodology

The area stripped was *c.* 15.8 hectares in total. The topsoil stripping was undertaken using a 360º mechanical excavator, fitted with a 2m flat, toothless ditching bucket, under the direct supervision of an archaeologist.

The machine excavation was undertaken in level spits, until the top of the first archaeological horizon or undisturbed natural deposits were encountered. The site was visually inspected and where the presence of features or possible archaeological features was located, these were hand-cleaned to ensure that the features were properly defined to a level sufficient to produce the base plan.

A full written and photographic record was made of all archaeological features in accordance with ASWYAS site recording manual (ASWYAS 2003) as well as all appropriate professional standards and guidance (English Heritage 1991, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2008b; IfA 1995, 2008a and 2008b).

A photographic record of the project was also produced. The photographic record also includes working shots to illustrate more generally the nature of the archaeological operation undertaken.

5 Results

Two areas were stripped and inspected for archaeological remains (Fig. 2). The northern area (Plate 2) was 5,797m², and the southern area (Plate 3) was 9,989m². The monitored topsoil strip took place between 19 and 27 January and 4 February 2009. The surveying of the site took place on 19 February, by which time due to heavy snow and rainfall nearly half the site was inundated (*c.* 45%, see Fig. 2). The remaining area was however planned and some potential archaeological features were identified. The site was inspected on 10 March to determine if its condition was amenable to further surveying. Unfortunately the site was still inundated and showed no sign of draining. Therefore subsequent to discussion between ASWYAS, SYAS and the client, it was determined that the possible archaeological features exposed in the northern part of the site would be sample excavated to determine if they were archaeological or not. This took place on 17 March 2009.

The features excavated are shown on Fig. 2, with annotation describing their interpretation. A summary of contexts forms Appendix 2. The most significant feature encountered was an animal burial (Plate 1). The burial was within a slight depression in the natural (103), 0.8m in length and 0.25m in width. The skeleton was within a matrix consisting of topsoil and would appear, by the conditions of the bone, to be a recent sheep burial. This was confirmed by ASWYAS faunal remains specialist, Jane Richardson.

To the north of the sheep burial were two small, roughly circular features. One held a modern post (105) which had been driven into the clay. The upper portion of the post was within a topsoil deposit. The wooden post itself was 0.20m in diameter and had been driven, at least, 0.53m into the clay. No finds were recovered from the posthole. The other roughly circular feature (104) was to the northeast of the sheep burial, upon excavation this turned out to be a depression in the natural clay 0.57m in length, 0.35m in width and 0.18m in depth and filled with topsoil.

Protruding from the northern edge of the area was what appeared to be a small linear feature (108) terminating within the stripped area. Upon cleaning and excavation, this was determined to be a depression within the natural clay rather than an archaeological feature. The slot excavated through this natural feature was.

Most of the southern area was covered by standing water (approximately 7,160m²). Two possible features were investigated within the northern portion. These were also revealed to be non-archaeological, consisting of a shallow plough scar (109) filled with topsoil and a tree bole (111).

6 Discussion and Conclusions

Despite the fact that nearly half the site was inundated, the lack of archaeological remains on the portion available for sample excavation indicates that in all probability that no significant archaeological remains are present within the area. This is supported by the fact that though much of the southern area was unsurveyed, no likely archaeological remains were identified during the monitoring of the stripping.

There is extensive evidence of field systems identified by cropmarks and confirmed through excavation to the north and south of the site. The environs of the site were evidently exploited at least from the Iron Age and Romano-British period onwards. It may be that activity which might have left archaeological evidence did not extend onto the site. This may have been because the site was too wet, though had it been necessary or desirable to drain the site then it would have been well within the capability of people during the Roman and later medieval periods to do so. It is perhaps likely that the site was maintained as a large open area of spring pasture, or as woodland, throughout these periods and perhaps not drained and brought into cultivation until as late as the 17th century.

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Appendix 1: Inventory of primary archive

File/Box No	Description	Quantity
1	Context Register	1
	Context cards 100-111	12
	Daily site recording forms	10
	Digital photograph record sheet	2
	Risk Assessment	1
	Specification for programme of archaeological works	2
	Works information	1
	Site location plans	2
	Directions to site	1

Appendix 2: Contexts summary

Context	Description
100	Topsoil; loose black peaty clay ploughsoil, located across site
101	Subsoil; Dark brownish black clay localised in limited areas to the north of the site
102	Natural clay deposits; very firm yellow brown clay
103	Roughly circular depression 0.80m in length, 0.55m in depth and 0.10m in depth contains a modern sheep burial and topsoil (100)
104	Roughly circular cut 0.57m in length and 0.35m in width, 0.18m deep contains topsoil and evidence of extensive rooting.
105	Black timber post. Modern post driven into natural clay 0.20m in diameter
106	Cut for post 105, driven into the natural clay, also contained traces of topsoil (100)
107	Orange gray clay deposit located within 108, appears to be a subsoil.
108	Linear feature with a broad, shallow U-shaped profile 0.70m wide and 0.25m deep
109	Cut of a plough furrow 0.08m deep, contained a topsoil deposit
110	Dark greyish clay with orange sandstone inclusions. Single fill of tree bole
111	Cut of tree bole

Plate 1: General shot of site during the topsoil strip

Plate 2: Modern sheep burial located in northern area, looking southeast

Plate 3: General shot of southern area looking southeast, during the site inspection on 10 March 2009

Plate 4: General shot of the northern area during sample excavation