



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE ADDRESS	16, Green Lane, Westgate, Belton, North Lincolnshire		
CLIENT NAME	Raceway Builders Ltd.		
YAT PROJECT #	5242	YAT REPORT #	2009/33
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	BFAM	GRID REFERENCE	SE 77125 07600
PLANNING REFERENCE #	2007/0117	AAI OPS NOTICE #	n/a

INTRODUCTION

On 8th June 2009, for one day, York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief during the cutting of house foundation trenches at 16 Green Lane, Westgate, Belton, North Lincolnshire, (Figures 1 and 2, Site and Works location plans).

BACKGROUND

The area forms a part of the Isle of Axeholme, a zone of slight elevation surrounded by the flat lands that were formerly marsh. The River Trent flows towards the Humber Estuary in the eastern side of the area whilst the River Don (since diverted during the drainage works of the 18th century) formerly flowed to the west and north. Forming part of a low lying area known as the Humberhead Levels, this region formed part of a large lake at the end of the last glaciation. The fertile soils of the area are underlain by a drift geology composed largely of sands with extensive areas of peat.

Westgate forms one of a series of hamlets within the parish of Belton that collectively form a larger polyfocal settlement. Today, this wider settlement pattern forms a near continuous ribbon development with only a few gaps that have survived infilling in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the origins of settlement within the locality are uncertain evidence of Middle Saxon occupation has been uncovered immediately south of Belton village. Belton was mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, whilst the village was recorded on a number of occasions during the medieval period. A number of burials, some confined and seemingly part of an organised cemetery have been excavated at a house known as The Smithy, some 50-60m north of the development plot of 16 Green Lane. These burials are thought to be of later Roman or medieval date. One of the burials has been radio-carbon dated to the fifteenth century AD. It has been suggested that the burials may be associated with a medieval chapel.

RESULTS

The watching brief comprised of the observation of a site strip of rubble and vegetation overburden (generally around 0.20m deep) and the stripping of foundation trenches. All major wall trenches were 0.70m wide with internal walls being of either 0.45m or 0.35m width. The depth of the trenches was between 0.40m – 0.60m below site strip level. This relative shallowness is owed to the fact that piles will be sunk below the bases of the trenches to counter the risk of any structural movement likely to occur due to the presence of a layer of peat some 1.5m – 2m BGL (below ground level). Electrical and water services to the new property are to be brought to the site via their former routes at the western part of the site (exposed at the time of the watching brief visit).

Until recently a modern structure occupied parts of the western areas of the development plot. Although demolished some time ago heavily overgrown remnants of parts of this structure were present on the site. These remains and areas of modern hard surfacing were removed by a mechanical excavator during a site strip, generally in the region of 0.20m deep, of the western part of the site. Within topsoil elements of the strip a number of sherds of 19th and 20th century pottery, together with bottle and widow glass and metal-work (galvanised steel bucket) were present, as were two fragments of clay tobacco pipe. No finds pre-dating the 19th century were evident.

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FINDS	No	SAMPLES	No	PHOTOS	Yes
				PAGE	1 of 4





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The foundation trenches were also dug by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket. The earliest deposits revealed were a variety of sands, all numbered 1002. These ranged from soft, silvery white sands to brownish orange sands to yellowish orange sands to dark brownish grey sands. These different sands were to some degree convoluted, their appearance within the sequence varying, whilst small pockets and lenses of slightly plastic, faintly organic material were present within the sands. These mixed sands undoubtedly represent part of the 'natural' drift geology at the site. The only features seen to cut through the natural sands 1002, were modern works associated with footings, drains and services, all numbered as 1003. Overlaying the natural deposits of 1002 was the extant topsoil 1001, a friable, dark greyish brown, sandy silt, typically around 0.35m+ deep. As with the site strip (which removed the upper parts of the topsoil) only finds of the 19th century and later were observed within the topsoil.

The absence of finds and features pre-dating the 19th century at this site is of some interest given the presence of burials and a possible chapel site some 50m-60m to the north and may suggest that the cemetery, and putative chapel, stood in relative isolation.

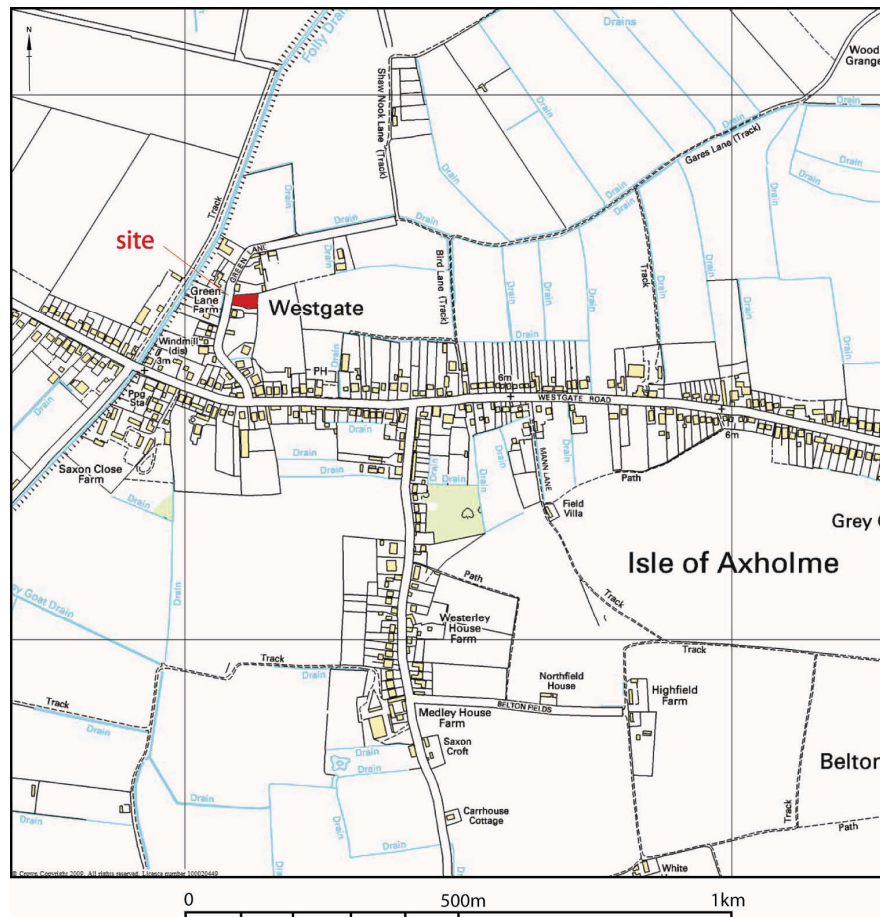


Figure 1 Site location

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				PAGE	2 of 4





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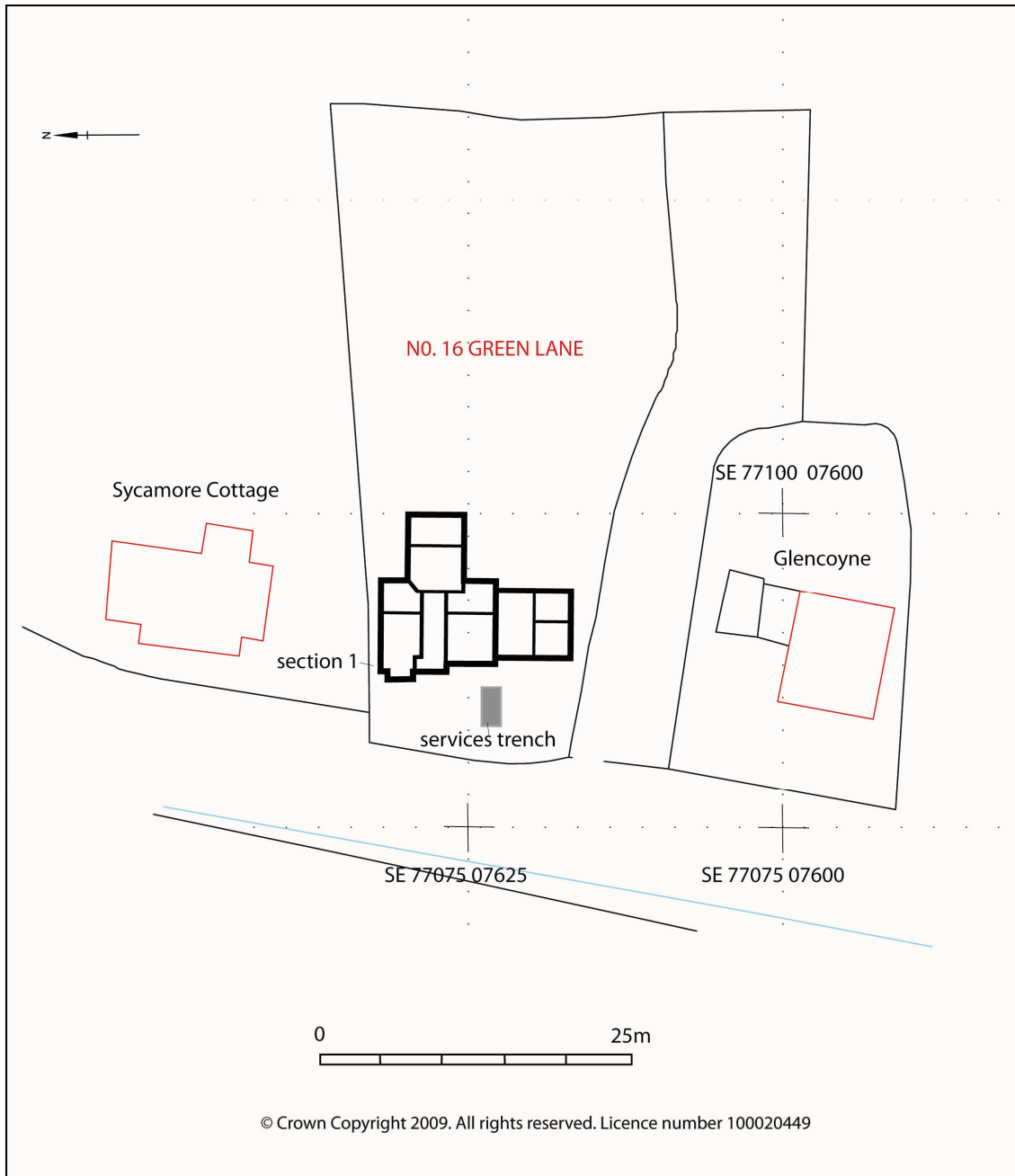


Figure 2 Works location plan showing foundation trenches, plot boundaries and adjacent structures in relation to national grid

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				PAGE	3 of 4





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Plate 1 Section 1, typical profile through deposit sequence showing banded 'natural' sands below topsoil. Walling to rear forms part of northern boundary of development plot



Plate 2 Overall view of surface strip and foundation trenches in northern 2/3rds of site

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				PAGE	4 of 4