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ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
TRUST

**LAND OFF OSBALDWICK LINK ROAD,  
OSBALDWICK,  
YORK**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF**



**2001 FIELD REPORT  
NUMBER 13**

# LAND OFF OSBALDWICK LINK ROAD,

## OSBALDWICK, YORK

### REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Intermittently between February and July 2001 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief on land off Osbaldwick Link Road, York during the ground works for a housing development by Wimpey Homes, Yorkshire (now McLean Homes, Northern Ireland). Natural deposits of sand and clay were sealed by plough soils and modern dumps of material. No archaeological features were encountered.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

From the 5<sup>th</sup> February to the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2001 York Archaeological Trust (YAT) carried out an archaeological watching brief on ground works on land off Osbaldwick Link Road, York (NGR 6400 5150) (Figure 1 Site location plan). The observations were made during the development of the site for housing by Wimpey Homes (now Maclean Homes). The watching brief was carried out to a specification set by John Oxley, York City Council's Principal Archaeologist, on the development. The machine stripped areas and machine excavated trenches and test-pits were monitored for evidence of archaeological deposits such as archaeological features or stratigraphy, that may have survived in the area.

### **1.1 Methodology**

The topsoil strips and trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision by a JCB 360 degree mechanical excavator using both toothed and toothless buckets. The deposits revealed were sketched, measured and recorded. Recording followed procedures laid down in the YAT *Context Recording Manual* (1996).

The development area was divided up into two areas (Areas 1 and 2). Area 1 was situated on the eastern side of the site adjacent to Osbaldwick Link Road and is comparable to the area covered formerly by the MFI complex. Area 2 consisted of the two fields to the west of this.

Site records and finds are currently stored with YAT under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 2001. 4431.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

The development area is situated on Warp and Lacustrine clay drift geology just to the north of one of the Vale of York's glacial moraines, which follows the line of Hull Road. The glacial deposits rest on top of Bunter Sandstone solid geology laid down in the Triassic period 225 million years ago (Geological Survey of England and Wales 1967, sheet 63). The resultant topography therefore slopes down slightly from south-east to north-west from the top of the glacial ridge.



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0 500 metres

Figure 1 Site location

### **1.3 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Very few publications have been written specifically about Osbaldwick. The principal sources for this study have included *the Victoria County History of Yorkshire, The North Riding* and a local history: *Osbaldwick, The History of a Suburban Village* by the Osbaldwick History Group. No archaeological investigations have been carried out within the proposed development area or close to it.

#### **1.3.1 The Prehistoric period (to the 1st century AD)**

To the south of the study area is a ridge of higher ground on which the Hull Road is now situated. This is the remains of a glacial moraine, known as the York Moraine, left during a halt in the retreat of the glaciers at the end of the last ice age (Radley 1974, 10). To the north of this the area was a lake in the immediate post-glacial period, the waters gradually subsiding leaving a landscape of sandy heath, forest and peaty carr land (Radley 1974, 10). Radley suggested that this glacial moraine was used as a trans-vale prehistoric routeway which became important during the Bronze Age. Prehistoric settlement would therefore be likely along the ridge and perhaps just to the north or south of it.

#### **1.3.2 The Roman Period (1st to the 5th centuries AD)**

The trans-vale routeway along the York Moraine was fossilized by the construction of a Roman road (now Hull Road) along its spine probably c.70AD. This linked the Legionary fortress of York (*Eboracum*) with the fort at Brough (*Petuaria*) which guarded the crossing of the Humber. The road was seen in 1975 during excavations associated with the construction of York's outer ring road. The Roman surface was revealed some 0.80m beneath the existing ground level just to the south of Bingley House (SE 6466 5156) approximately 400m east of Osbaldwick Lane (Brinklow et al 1986, 87)

The only other evidence for Roman occupation close to the site was the discovery of a stray burial to the south of Hull road and a coin of Probus, dated AD276 to 282, which was recovered from a site on Murton Lane (NGR SE 6400 5200) to the north of the development area.

#### **1.3.3 The Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian periods (5th to 11th centuries AD)**

To date there is no firm archaeological evidence to suggest occupation within the study area of this date. From historical sources, principally the Domesday Book written in 1086, the village of Osbaldwick or *Osboldeuic* can be traced back to the pre-conquest or Anglo-Scandinavian period (Smith 1969). The name derives from an Old English personal name *Osbald* and the Old English word *wic* meaning dwelling place. In later 12<sup>th</sup> century sources it is known as *Osbaldewyk* or *Osebaldewyke*. It is likely from the place-name and documentary evidence that there was a settlement here possibly from the late Anglo-Saxon or early Anglo-Scandinavian periods, but its position in relation to the present village and Osbaldwick Beck is as yet undetermined.

### **1.3.4 The Medieval Period (11th to the 16th centuries AD)**

At the Norman Conquest in 1066, the Manor of Osbaldwick was held by the cathedral church of St. Peter's, York (York Minster). In the Domesday Survey of 1086 this still appeared to be the case, the reference reads:

*"In Osbaldwick the Cannons land of six carucates where three ploughs can be. Now the Cannons have there two and a half ploughs and six villagers and three small holders who have two and a half ploughs (Morris 1986).*

The Canons of York Minster were important church and state officials, drawing their main income from manors in and around York. The prebend (estate) of Osbaldwick was probably defined in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas the first Norman Archbishop of York. In 1294 Robert de la Ford, prebendary of Osbaldwick, held a manor and thirteen oxgangs in demesne there (VCH 1914).

In the Anglo-Norman period Osbaldwick was probably within the Royal Forest of Galtres (Cowling n.d, 153; Wilde 1980) a large belt of well wooded country extending up the east side of the vale of York. Before 1316 King Henry II is said to have deforested the area and after this date Osbaldwick was then outside (on the bounds of) the forest (Wilde 1980).

A moated site is situated at the western end of the village. It was filled in and the site developed in the 1960s but up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was known as Hall Garth (Wilde 1980). It has been suggested that this is likely to have been a moated demesne manor house of York Prebend (Le Patourel 1973, 120). Important seigniorial manors of this date were often moated and it seems likely that the moat and the name Hall Garth equate with such a moated manor. Medieval tofts and crofts were also situated on the south side of Osbaldwick Beck to the east of this area, and to the south of these an Old Barn (possibly a medieval Tithe Barn) and a Dove Cote were located (Wilde 1980).

At the eastern end of the present village stands the medieval church of St. Thomas. This is predominantly of 12<sup>th</sup> century date, with later 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century additions. The church was apparently appropriated to the prebend of Strensall in 1485.

Later in the medieval period the prebendary of Strensall was also assigned land in Osbaldwick. Eventually approximately half of the land in Osbaldwick came to be held by the prebend of Strensall (Wilde 1980, 15) and half by the prebend of Osbaldwick. The development area may have been cultivated at this time, medieval ridge and furrow has been observed in the vicinity of the site.

### **1.3.5 The Post-Medieval and Modern Periods (17th to the 20th centuries)**

Enclosure of the agricultural fields may have occurred in the parish of Osbaldwick as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, the first written reference to enclosure is in 1648 when landowners petitioned the Court of Chancery for a division to be made of the common arable fields of the township. This was sanctioned in 1650 and Garend and Townend Fields to the north and north-west of the village were enclosed at this time (Wilde 1980, 61). In 1660 King Charles II obtained an Act of Parliament for further division and the enclosure *of the forest* (Wilde 1980,

12) possibly a reference to the area formerly covered by the Royal Forest of Galtres. An enclosure Act specifically for the parish of Osbaldwick was passed in 1769 (VCH 1914).

The fields have probably been laid to pasture since medieval times and the field boundaries follow the traditional medieval S shaped lines characteristic of medieval ridge and furrow fields which were simply enclosed with hedges in the early post-medieval period.

The earlier houses within the village appear to be of 18<sup>th</sup> century date (VCH 1914) including the Old Hall, which is characteristic of many of the rural villages around York. A Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built to the south of the study area, on the south side of the beck in 1871. The chapel closed in 1937 but is still in use as a community building.

The population of Osbaldwick varied little between 1801 and 1921, being between 120 and 260 individuals. However with slum clearance in the 1920s and 1930s in the centre of York and the building of new estates to the south and west of the village the population increased to nearly 2000 by 1931 and by 1986 it was nearly 3000.

## **2. RESULTS**

For convenience the site can be split into two areas (Areas 1 and 2).

### **2.1 Area 1 (The eastern side of the site)**

All deposits within this area had clearly been disturbed by the construction of the MFI complex. Two test pits and a sewer were monitored, all the piles and ground beams simply truncated hard-core and were not monitored.

The earliest deposits located within the test pits and sewer were of natural origin. A dark grey clay (7) located at 2.00m below the existing ground level (BGL) in the sewer trench was sealed by a light yellowish orange sand (6) from between 0.87m and 1.5m (BGL) in all of the ground-works monitored. A dark grey clay (5) sealed the natural sand in places.

A mixed deposit of dark grey brown silty loam, mid yellow brown silty loam and yellowish orange sand (4) was deposited on top of the natural in Test Pit 1 (TP1). This was up to 0.25m thick and probably represents disturbance during the construction of the MFI building. Between 0.60m and 0.95m of crushed limestone (3) was then used to raise the ground level across the whole of this area. Followed by a layer of tarmac (1) or concrete (2) depending whether the area was inside or outside the MFI building.

Along the northern boundary of the site a modern pond which was created as part of the MFI retail development, was drained and back filled with materials that formed a bank along the northern boundary of the site.

### **2.2 Area 2 (Western side of site)**

In this area only the topsoil strip and the continuation of the sewer run were observed.

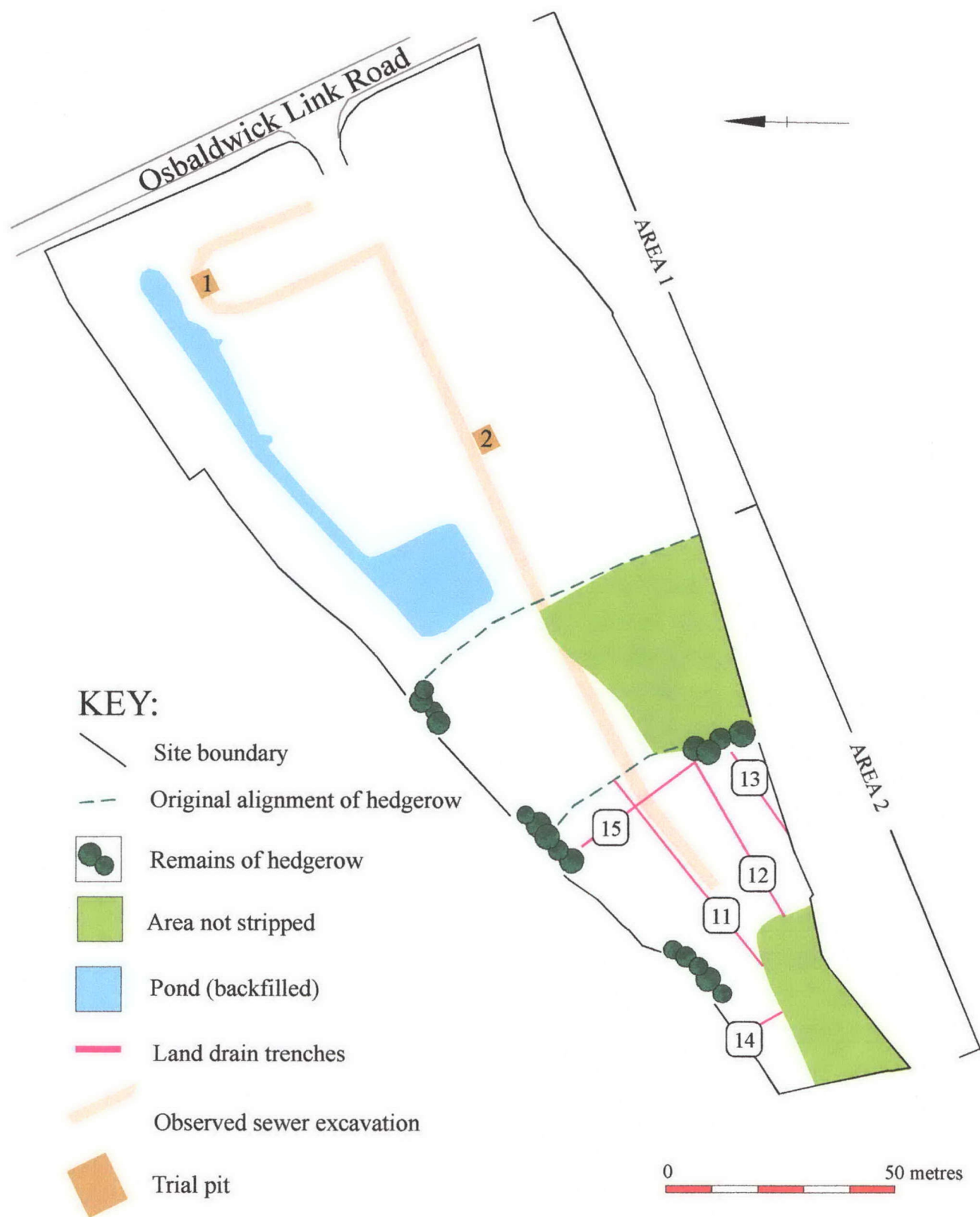


Figure 2 Plan of Results

The earliest deposits revealed were of natural origin. These consisted of friable orangey yellow sands and compact light brownish yellow clays (8) which were located at 0.50m BGL.

This was sealed in most areas by a firm mid yellow brown silty loam (9) which was interpreted as a sub soil or former plough soil. It contained sherds of pottery dateable from the medieval period to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and small fragments of brick and tile. A possible ridge (part of a medieval agricultural system – ridge and furrow) was located in the western most field and was aligned north-west to south-east across the area. This corroborates the evidence from the field boundaries which suggests that the medieval strip field systems had simply been enclosed by hedges and initially were unimproved.

In the south-eastern corner of the western most field a large modern dump of friable grey brown gritty clay silt (10) sealed the subsoil. This contained frequent small brick and tile fragments, charcoal flecks, glass with occasional large pieces of baler twine and wire. This probably relates to farm dumping/infilling.

All of the above deposits were truncated by the trenches for four modern ceramic field drains (11-14). Three of these (11-13) were aligned north-east to south-west across the field and the other (14) at right angles to them suggesting a partial herring bone pattern. The latter headed towards the north-western corner of the field suggesting that there may be a culverted drain in the vicinity.

A further modern drain (15) was located on the eastern side of the west field. Sealing all of the drain backfills was a firm dark brown silty loam topsoil (16). This was covered on the southern side of the site by further similar material (17) that was placed here as part of the landscaping to the north of the new B & Q Warehouse.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

No significant archaeological deposits were located in any of the monitored ground works.

Natural deposits were located at varying depths, from 0.5m in Area 2 and in Area 1 between 0.87m and 1.5m. The earliest archaeological material relates to the use of Area 2 for agriculture from the medieval period through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A dump of farm waste was then laid down prior to the cutting of field drains. The area was then further used for agriculture before the construction of the MFI store in Area 1 which removed all archaeological deposits and landscaping associated with B & Q to the south.

### **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The archaeological watching brief of the ground works located a possible medieval agricultural feature (a ridge from a medieval ridge and furrow agricultural system), medieval to 19<sup>th</sup> century plough-soil, modern dumps, drains, construction disturbance and landscaping. These directly overlay natural glacial clays and sands. No evidence for the preservation of significant archaeological deposits in the form of archaeological features, structures or stratigraphy was located. There are no recommendations for further work.

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## 6. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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