



Archaeological Evaluation Report

Lightfoot Lane,
Fulwood,
Preston,
Lancashire

Client:
WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff

Planning Ref:
06/2014/0352

Technical Report:
Oliver Cook

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Site Location: The study area comprises a greenfield site on the edge of Fulwood, in the Preston borough of Lancashire. The site is bounded by Lightfoot Lane to the south, Tabley Lane to the west, the M55 to the north, and an access road to Lightfoot Farm to the east.

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Author: Oliver Cook
Position: Archaeologist
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Editor: Ian Miller BA FSA
Position: Assistant Director
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Contact: Salford Archaeology, Centre for Applied Archaeology, Peel Building, University of Salford, Salford, M5 4WT

Telephone: 0161 295 4467

Email: i.f.miller@salford.ac.uk

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Summary

Redrow Homes Ltd (Lancashire) Ltd has obtained planning consent (Planning Ref: 06/2014/0352) to deliver a major new housing development in Fulwood, situated approximately 5km to the north-west of Preston city centre in Lancashire (centred on NGR 350800 433335). The site currently comprises agricultural fields that are bounded to the north by the M55 motorway, and to the south by residential developments along Lightfoot Lane.

At an early stage in the development design process, Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd commissioned a geophysical survey of the site, which was carried out by AOC Archaeology in 2014. This identified several anomalies that were considered to represent human activity, including former field boundaries and a series of ponds associated with post-medieval agricultural practices. A series of rectilinear anomalies that correlated with the position of possible temporary structures recorded on an aerial photograph dating to the 1940s were also identified, together with a group of anomalies that were interpreted as the remains of outbuildings associated with Lightfoot Farm.

In the light of the results obtained from the geophysical survey, Preston City Council attached a condition (Condition 7) to planning consent that required a scheme of archaeological investigation to be carried out in advance of development. In order to address the requirements of this condition, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, acting on behalf of Redrow Homes Ltd (Lancashire) Ltd, commissioned Salford Archaeology to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation, which was intended to establish the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains.

The archaeological evaluation was carried out in February 2017, and comprised the excavation of two trial trenches, providing a combined total of 80m of trenching. The trenches were targeted on anomalies identified by the geophysical survey, including the footprint of a farm building depicted on mid-19th-century mapping.

The evaluation revealed that no physical evidence for the former farm building survived *in-situ*, and the only features exposed in the trenches pertained to post-medieval field systems, represented by boundary ditches and drainage features that appear to have been infilled during the late 19th or early 20th century. These features were of very little historical interest and, based on the results obtained from the evaluation trenching, it is concluded that no further archaeological investigation in advance of construction works is merited.

1. Introduction

1.1 Circumstances of the Project

Redrow Homes Ltd (Lancashire) Ltd has obtained planning consent (Planning Ref: 06/2014/0352) to deliver a major new housing development in Fulwood, situated approximately 5km to the north-west of Preston city centre in Lancashire (Fig 1). A geophysical survey of the proposed development site was carried out in 2014, which identified several anomalies that were considered to be of an archaeological nature (AOC Archaeology 2014).

In the light of the results obtained from the geophysical survey, Preston City Council attached a condition (Condition 7) to planning consent that required a scheme of further archaeological investigation to be carried out in advance of development. In order to address the requirements of this condition, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, acting on behalf of Redrow Homes Ltd (Lancashire) Ltd, commissioned Salford Archaeology to undertake a programme of evaluation trenching to establish the presence or absence of buried any buried archaeological remains. This work was carried out in February 2017.

1.2 Site Location

The site is situated on the northern edge of the Fulwood area of Preston, Lancashire (centred on NGR 350800 433335). It comprises agricultural fields that are bounded to the north by the M55 motorway, and to the south by residential developments along Lightfoot Lane (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Recent aerial looking north, showing the development area boundary

1.3 Topography, Geology and Land-use

Topographically, the study area is located in the gently undulating lowland landscape of Central Lancashire. The region is characterised by a number of meandering brooks, tributaries of River Ribble located to the south of Preston.

The underlying geology of the area is composed of red and green mudstones, overlain by Pleistocene drift deposits of boulder clay. This was covered by a thin deposit of silty clay, mapped by the Ordnance Survey Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983).

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for this part of Lancashire defines the study area as belonging to ‘ancient enclosures’ with ‘post-medieval enclosures’ fronting Lightfoot Lane (Lancaster County Council 2006). The current layout of the fields in this area form a series of small- and medium-sized regular units and many of the modern field boundaries correspond with those recorded on the tithe map of 1838 and the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1848.

The surrounding countryside has since been dissected by motorways and encroaching suburban development around Preston. Despite this, the immediate environs around Lightfoot Road have retained a semi-rural prospect. The study area has until recently been used for pasture.



2. Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

The following section presents a brief summary of the historical and archaeological background to the study area. This contextual background is based on cartographic and documentary research, and provides a framework to the present study.

2.2 Prehistoric Periods

There is evidence to suggest hunter-gatherer activity in the North West from the Mesolithic period onwards. This is evidenced in the Preston area by material recovered from the Ribble Valley. Neolithic and Bronze Age material was unearthed in abundance at Preston Docks, in addition to two log-boats recovered nearby, suggesting that human activity was focused in the river valleys. The Fulwood area has produced isolated prehistoric stone tools, although no confirmed sites lie within the vicinity of the site.

2.3 Romano-British Period

Although firm evidence of Romano-British occupation in Fulwood or Preston is lacking, the North-West region as a whole has yielded substantial evidence of Roman occupation. Much of this evidence is derived from known Roman military sites, around which civilian settlements later grew up. In addition to these centres was Walton-le-Dale, a major industrial supply depot in the network of the Roman military (Shotter 1993). Preston it seems was somewhat peripheral to this network, although archaeological investigations have affirmed the presence of two Roman roads; the junction of these roads lay close to Fulwood and it has been suggested it could have been a locus for settlement. To date, however, corroborating evidence of such activity is sparse and represented by a small number of finds from the area. No sites from this period lay in proximity to the present study area.

2.4 Early Medieval

The early medieval period is poorly understood in the North West as a whole, and evidence of occupation is relatively scarce.

The origins of permanent settlement in Preston probably date to this period. *Prestune* mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 points towards the establishment of monastic house pre-1066. This has been corroborated by place name studies of the surrounding settlements, which are indicative of pre-Viking establishment, in the 9th and 10th centuries (Farrer and Brownbill 1912).

2.5 Medieval

Post-Conquest Lancashire is better documented historically. Despite attacks from Scottish raiders and the effects of the Black Death in the 14th century, the population in the Preston area retained a foothold and by the late medieval period was thriving. It was during this period that the cottage-based textile industry was established, contributing considerably to the local economy and stimulating economic and associated population growth (Lancashire County Council 2006).

Despite the heightened pace of development, no remains of medieval date have been recorded in Fulwood. This reflects the wider Lancashire region, in which the survival of medieval remains has been sporadic, and it is likely the study area remained undeveloped, part of the demesne forest of Lancaster.

2.6 Post-Medieval - Modern

The emergence of Preston in the 17th century as an administrative centre drew both wealth and workers, leading to the gradual expansion of the town. Following a hiatus of growth during the civil wars, the industrial revolution brought rapid and long-lasting changes to the settlement and its economy, namely to factory-based textile production, changes which would eventually impact on the outlying villages and hamlets such as Fulwood. The boom in industry above all else led to marked growth in population and house building.

The most significant changes to Fulwood came in the early to mid-19th century with the enclosure of common land. The extent of these changes can be gauged by a comparison of Hennet's 1830 map and the tithe map of 1847, showing the carving up of land and laying out of tracks and roads. This had not only social implications, but a bearing on the way the land was farmed. At a time of increasing urbanisation and increasing mechanisation of agriculture, the impact was considerable.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The proposed development area was investigated in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (*Appendix 1*). This comprised the excavation of two evaluation trenches, targeted on several geophysical anomalies (AOC Archaeology 2014), providing a combined total of 80m of trenching:

- **Trench 1:** this trench measured 50 x 2m, and was aligned north-east/south-west across the footprint of a building shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1848, and a series of adjacent geophysical anomalies;
- **Trench 2:** this trench measured 30 x 2m, and was placed across an historic field boundary shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1848 and rectilinear geophysical anomaly.

3.2 Methodology

Excavation of the modern ground surface was undertaken by a machine of appropriate power using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to the top of the first significant archaeological level. All machine work was supervised closely by a suitably experienced archaeologist. Thereafter, the opened trenches were cleaned manually to define their extent, nature, form and, where possible, date of all features and deposits exposed.

All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically. Results of the evaluation were recorded on *pro-forma* context sheets, and were accompanied with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and high-resolution digital photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

In total, an area equivalent to 160 square metres was exposed and recorded in the two evaluation trenches (Fig 2). The position of the trenches was informed by a geophysical survey, completed by AOC Archaeology Group in 2014, coupled with a study of historic mapping. This highlighted the potential for below-ground remains of post-medieval field systems and farming.

4.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to the south of extant farm buildings, and was aligned north-east/south-west and measured 50 x 2m. The trench targeted a potential building, shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1848 (Fig 3), and a series of geophysical anomalies.

The natural geology was exposed at the base of the excavated trench, and comprised light orange-pinkish brown clay with naturally occurring bands of sand and mid-greyish clay, reflecting the drift geology. This was overlain by a friable deposit of mid-reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil (**101**), which was 200mm thick.

Several linear features were observed cut into subsoil **101** (Fig 5), including three narrow land drains, of mid- to late 20th-century. These were aligned roughly east/west in the direction of a low-depression to the south-east of the trench. At the north-eastern edge of the trench was a shallow depression filled with a deposit of soft, mid-blackish-brown organic silty-clay, interpreted as rooting action.

Two archaeological features were recorded in the central part of the trench (Plate 2). Feature **102** was aligned broadly north-west/south-east across the trench (Fig 5), and was 1.8m wide and 300mm deep with concave sides and flat base. It was filled by a deposit (**103**) of soft blackish-brown silty-clay with occasional inclusions of medium and large rounded stones and fragments of ceramic building material. Fragments of late 19th-/early 20th-century glass and pottery, and a clay tobacco pipe bowl, were recovered from **103**. The feature was interpreted as a ditch, and probably served as a field boundary.

To the south-west of ditch **102** was a narrow linear feature (**106**), aligned east/west across the trench. The feature was 850mm wide and 120mm deep, with gradual sloping sides and a concave base and ran. The shallowness and similar orientation to the land drains identified elsewhere in the excavated trench suggested that **106** may have functioned as a drainage gully.

Only feature **102** corresponds closely to an anomaly shown on the geophysics survey. No structural remains associated with the farm building were present in the trench. A spread of modern detritus, including scrap metal and glass was observed in the overlying topsoil (**100**), perhaps related to the nearby farmhouse.



Plate 2: View of 102 and 106 prior to sample excavation

Topsoil (**100**) comprised a layer of friable mid-greyish-brown silty-clay. The maximum thickness observed was 400mm, although in places it thinned out to approximately 100mm.

4.3 Trench 2

Trench 2 was located close to the northern boundary of the Site Area in the central part of the site (Fig 2). It was targeting a north/south-aligned field boundary shown on historic mapping (Figs 3 and 4), and a rectilinear geophysical anomaly.

The natural geology was very similar to that revealed in Trench 1, and was overlain by a 200mm thick layer of mid-reddish-brown silty-clay subsoil (**201**). Two irregular-shaped negative features were identified in the eastern half of the trench, cut into subsoil **201** (Fig 6). These were filled by blackish-brown organic-rich silty clay, and probably represent tree-throws.

At the western end of the trench an earthwork, aligned roughly north-north-east/south-south-west was observed prior to excavation. This was reflected within the trench as 2.3m wide linear cut (**204**), occupying the same alignment as the depression (Plate 3). The fill (**203**) comprised friable mid-greyish-brown silty-clay, containing well-sorted, medium-sized fragments of ceramic building material, including a fragment of modern glazed tile. This feature represents a substantial linear, clearly visible from aerial photographs, and has been interpreted as a field boundary. Although the position does not correspond with the field boundary shown on the 1848 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 3), this may derive from minor differences in map projection between modern and historic maps. No evidence of the rectilinear anomaly was found in the eastern half of the trench.

A shallow deposit of topsoil (**200**) was encountered across the site, sealing all the features identified in the trench. The topsoil was 300mm in depth.



*Plate 3: View of field boundary **204**, looking south-south-east*

4.4 Finds

A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered from sealed contexts in the trenches. This included six small and abraded fragments of pottery, together with two fragments of glass vessels, part of a clay tobacco pipe bowl and small fragments of hand-made bricks, which were all recovered from the fill (**103**) of a probable boundary feature in Trench 1. The group of pottery fragments included dark-glazed earthenware, almost certainly represent utilitarian kitchenware vessels, together with sherds of under-glazed transfer-printed ware plates. These fragments had a date range spanning the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, consistent with the fragments of glass that were also recovered from fill **103**. The fragment of clay tobacco bowl could not be closely date, but again is broadly consistent with a late 19th-century date.

The only stratified context in Trench 2 that yielded any artefacts was the fill (**203**) of the probable field boundary. This artefact comprised a single fragment of a glazed tile, almost certainly of late 19th- or 20th-century date.

In summary, the small assemblage of artefacts recovered from the evaluation trenches were of no intrinsic or archaeological interest. It is recommended that these artefacts are disposed.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion

The evaluation trenches established the presence of historic field boundaries within the study area, confirming the results of the preliminary research. These almost certainly represented post-medieval agricultural practice, whilst material recovered from Trench 1 suggests a late 19th- or early 20th-century date for the closure of ditch **102**. Limited datable evidence was recovered from ditch **204** in Trench 2, although the presence of the glazed tile similarly suggests that it was infilled during the late 19th or early 20th century.

No structural evidence was encountered during the excavation of Trench 1, located over a probable 19th-century building associated with Lightfoot Farm. This structure shown on the Ordnance Survey map from 1848 was correlated with a series of rectilinear anomalies. These were not matched with any significant changes in the deposits, although the ground surface was particularly uneven. The shallowness of the subsoil and topsoil suggest any post-medieval permanent structures would have left visible below-ground remains.

5.2 Conclusion

The features revealed in the evaluation trenches were of very little, or no, archaeological interest. Based on these results, it is concluded that no further archaeological investigation in advance of construction works is merited.

Sources

Secondary Sources

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Archive and Acknowledgements

Archive

The archive is currently held by Salford Archaeology, but will be deposited ultimately with the Lancashire County Record Office. The paper and digital archive consists of annotated survey drawings, digital photographs, historic and modern mapping and electronic data.

A copy of this report will be forwarded to WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff, and a further copy (in paper and digital formats) will be deposited along with the project archive within a receiving museum (where applicable) within six months of completion of the fieldwork.

Acknowledgements

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