

Germany Beck, Fulford, York
Road, On-line Ponds, Topsoil Storage Area and
Rapid and Intensive Metal Detecting Survey,
Monitored Topsoil Stripping and Archaeological Excavation

August to November 2014, April 2015, August to September 2015, July to December 2016

All the archaeological work undertaken at Germany Beck has complied with the agreed Written Scheme of Investigation.

Rapid Metal Detecting Survey (Fields 1-4)

The rapid metal detecting survey was undertaken in August and the beginning of September 2014 (Fig. 1). The survey was scanned by a team in lines 10m apart with all metal finds being collected. A team of four archaeologists undertook this survey using X-Terra505 metal detectors. Field 1 (the area of the online ponds south of Germany Beck) was stubble overgrown with weeds. Field 2 was the area of the topsoil storage area located north of Germany Lane, which was stubble c. 20cm high. Field 3 was located east of Germany Lane and north of Germany Beck and was stubble c. 25cm high. Field 4 was located south of Fulford School and the playground and was stubble 20cm high. Field 5 was located north of Field 2, south of Field 5 and west of Field 3, which was overgrown with weeds some over a metre tall.

The survey uncovered a general scatter of material across all fields with no concentrations of material except in the areas of the lynchets. The survey uncovered a series of ferrous artefacts. No material dating or stylistic to the eleventh century was found. No concentrations of metal working/reworking, slag or hearth material was found. All material was identified as nails, bolts and typical of post-medieval and modern agricultural activity. Large objects, collected as possible hearth bottoms, were identified on the x-ray as a tram wheels and heating coils, showing the area had been used for tipping/dump in the mid-twentieth century.

Intensive Metal Detecting

The programme of intensive metal detecting at Germany Beck, Fulford has been the most comprehensive and detailed metal detecting undertaken to locate a battlefield site.

The intensive metal detecting survey was undertaken by Tim Sutherland and Pete Smith. The areas included the road corridor (MD1, MD2 and MD5), the western part of field 2 (north of Germany Lane) and the western part of Field 1 (MD3), located south of Germany Lane (Fig. 1).

The intensive areas had the vegetation/stubble removed by machine before surveying commenced. The topsoil was machined off in spits.

The majority of the finds collected were post-medieval or modern in date, for example ferrous nails, bolts and small objects/fragments including door fittings, copper alloy radiator key, a cartridge casing, a ferrous bicycle brake handle, an adjustable spanner etc. 28 coins were identified as post-medieval and modern in date. There were a handful of finds dating to the 13th-15th centuries including four silver cross pennies, an arrowhead of late medieval type. A number of lead cloth seals and lead shot were found; as well as lead spillage and run off. There was a scatter of lead shot from the survey, probably relating to Civil War skirmishes. The earliest item found was Roman trumpet brooch.

Overall the results of the intensive metal detecting found no evidence of the eleventh century battle field and found only a small amount of datable material from the later medieval period and Roman period.

Monitored Stripping

The areas of topsoil stripping included the Topsoil Bund Area, the Road, rest of Field 2 and the On-line Pond Area and a watching brief on the Water Vole Relocation (Fig. 2). Archaeological Features were recorded in the Topsoil Bund Area and the Road in Field 2. No archaeological Features were noted in the areas south and west of the Road in Field 2. Natural geological deposits were uncovered over the entire stripped area.

The peat deposits were excavated and sampled on the route of the new road south of Germany Lane. The peat assessment was undertaken by John Carrott of Palaeoecology Research Services Ltd. The assemblage was of well preserved (by anoxic waterlogging) plant and invertebrate macrofossil remains were present within the organic 'peat' deposits exposed during the excavation. The assemblages from the bulk samples showed a broadly similar character with all three indicative of aquatic habitats and waterlogged ground conditions consistent with swampy ground with areas of standing water. Relatively frequent monocot stem fragments may suggest reeds and more substantial wood fragments were concentrated in the lowermost sample which perhaps indicates that tree cover declined through time. There was no direct evidence for human activity.

No Archaeological Features were noted in the Road area west of Fordlands Road, there were areas over 1m deep of modern disturbance and a modern service trench beside the A19.

There were no archaeological features noted during the Archaeological Watching Brief on the new road route or the area of the Water Vole Relocation.

There were no features noted in the area of the online ponds, where a machine excavated trench recorded 2m of alluvial deposits.

Archaeological Excavations in the Topsoil Bund Area and Road

Evidence of the Iron Age/Roman-British Field system found during the 1996 trial trench evaluation were further excavated in Field 2 (the topsoil bund area and the haul road corridor). Ditches, gullies and pits were recorded (Figs. 2 & 3) and pits dating to the Prehistoric period. The enclosure was made up of ditches and gullies and dated to the Roman period. The enclosure ditches were aligned north-south, with gullies aligned north to south and east-west. Medieval plough furrows were also recorded, aligned east to west.

The environmental samples produced quite low amounts of carbonised plant remains from the ditch features. Several pits produced concentrated amounts of burnt material, mainly charcoal. A large amount of hazel nutshells recorded from one small pit. Some of the gully features, which had greater concentrations of domestic or agricultural type burnt waste including a mixture of cereal grain, charcoal and other fuel waste, may relate to settlement activity. Some of the sterile ditch features could reflect field or enclosure boundaries.

Pottery found included Greyware, Calcite Gritted ware and Samian ware.

Archaeological Excavations in Fields 4 & 5 (Persimmon Areas A & B)

Excavations in the Fields north of the Topsoil Bund Area began in August 2016 and are due to finish in the first week of December 2016 (Figs. 2 & 3).

A series of enclosure ditches, gullies, pits and the full excavation of the ring gully found in Evaluation Trench 5 have been undertaken. The ring ditch dated to the Prehistoric period. The enclosure is aligned from the north-west to south-east before turning to the east and then further enclosure ditches are aligned to the north and south. The enclosure dated to the Roman period.

Later features include Medieval plough furrows, hedge boundaries and modern sheep burials.

Finds include flint artefacts, Roman pottery, Roman brick/tile and later pottery and CBM.

The samples are still to be processed from this phase of excavation.

Discussion

Whilst no evidence has been found to locate the Battle of Fulford, a pattern of land use from the Prehistoric period to the present day has been revealed.