

Archaeological Investigations at Germany Beck, Fulford 2014-2016

Road, On-line Ponds, Topsoil Storage Area and Phase 1 Rapid and Intensive Metal Detecting Survey, Monitored Topsoil Stripping, Archaeological Excavation and Recording of the Stone Culvert

Rapid Metal Detecting Survey (Powerpoint 25-28)

The rapid metal detecting survey was undertaken in August and the beginning of September 2014 in Fields 1-5 (**Powerpoint 25**). 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

The survey uncovered a general scatter of material across all fields with no concentrations of material except in the areas of the lynchets (**Powerpoint 26**).

No artefacts dating or stylistic to the eleventh century was found.

No concentrations of metal working/reworking, slag or hearth material was found. Items assumed on collection to be hearth material proved to be modern when x-rayed (**Powerpoint 27 & 28**). Including tram wheels and heating coils, showing the area had been used for tipping/dump in the mid-twentieth century.

Intensive Metal Detecting (Powerpoint 29-35)

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 in the areas in Green: MD1 to MD5 (**Powerpoint 29**).

The intensive metal detecting survey was undertaken by Tim Sutherland Battlefields Lecturer at the University of York, assisted by Pete Smith, between September and November 2014. 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 (**Powerpoint 29-31**).

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.

The Intensive Metal Detecting of the Germany Beck Corridor only produced twelve artefacts datable to the medieval period and no large concentrations of metal working activity, either hearths or slag. The finds included six silver cross pennies dating to the 13th/14th centuries, two fiddle horse shoe nails dating to the 11th to 14th centuries, two knives and two arrowheads, dating to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The scatter was across the site (in MD1, MD3, MD4 and MD5).

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 (**Powerpoint 32-33**).

The earliest item found was Roman trumpet brooch (**Powerpoint 34**).

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 (Powerpoint 34-36)

The areas of topsoil stripping included the Topsoil Bund Area, the Road, rest of Field 2 and the On-line Pond Area (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 column samples taken by John Carrott of Palaeoecology Research Services Ltd (**Powerpoint 34**). 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.

C-14 Dating the base of the peat to 345-320BC and the top of the peat to 395-540 AD (**Powerpoint 35**).

Archaeological Excavations in the Topsoil Bund Area, Road and Phase 1 (Power 38-43)

Evidence of the activity dated from the Mesolithic to the Modern Field boundaries were found (**Powerpoint 38**)

*Features included several Prehistoric pits and part of a Romano-British brick work field system of ditches and gullies. Medieval plough Furrows and Post-medieval field boundaries and Modern intusions (**Powerpoint 39**).*

Phase 1: Mesolithic

The lithic finds assemblage dating to the Mesolithic period corresponded to the lithic assemblage found at Heslington East. No Mesolithic material had been found on site during the previous phases of archaeological work. The flint tools have parallels to the assemblage from Star Carr, however the small size of the flint scatter and the fact the finds were not associated with any prehistoric features make it difficult to draw any conclusions apart from showing early activity at Germany Beck. The lack of any evidence for prehistoric settlement suggests that the finds may relate to transient or seasonal occupation, for example by hunters exploiting marshland resources.

Phase 2: Neolithic/ Bronze Age (**Powerpoint 40**)

The flint scatter found across the Germany Beck Site of this date corresponded with the finds from the Fieldwalking and the Evaluation Trench excavation in 1996. There is a small number of artefacts of this date across the site, in three pits and residual others in later features.

One pit contained a large proportion of a Peterborough Mortlake Vessel dating to the mid Neolithic. There was no evidence of burial or cremated material with the pottery sherds, which appeared to be broken on deposition in the pit with a small amount of oak charcoal present suggesting a single use. This would suggest the occasional occupation of the site, possibly overnight visits rather than occupation or continual use. No similar material has been recorded in York.

A gully and undated pits may also be evidence of early, occasional occupation of the site (**Powerpoint 41**).

The ring ditch located on the highest part of the site may be remains of a round barrow or early structure, but without any dating evidence or evidence of a burial, this is

conjecture. This feature was truncated by the Phase 4 enclosure and a residual flint knife fragment was uncovered in the Phase 4 ditch in 1996, suggesting funerary activity in the vicinity.

Phase 3: Iron Age

The pits containing Iron Age pottery suggest the site continued to be seasonally or occasionally used as in the Neolithic/Bronze Age, with single use of hearth/cooking.

Phase 4: Romano-British (Powerpoint 42 & 43)

The excavation revealed clear evidence of a Romano-British boundary ditch system forming enclosures in the western part of the site, possibly for stock, with recuts and realignment over time. The eastern part of the site comprised a brick-work style field system and may suggest arable cultivation. The ceramics assemblage suggests that this system evolved from the late 1st/early 2nd century onwards and was probably abandoned and discontinued during or after the late 2nd/early 3rd century.

With the exception of several pits, the Romano-British features consisted almost entirely of boundary ditches and the ditches and gullies of the field. However, the Roman ceramic building material and worked stone fragment found in the ditches indicates that a settlement comprising Roman buildings with tiles roof and a hypocaust, were located in the vicinity of the site.

The pattern of enclosure at Germany Beck to the west corresponds to similar to the findings at St. Oswald's School, where pastoral, rather than arable, farming regime was recorded with the small, enclosed fields perhaps representing horse corrals.

The environmental evidence at Germany Beck produced sparse evidence of oat, spelt wheat, bread wheat, barley and rye from the ditch and gully fills, suggesting arable cultivation on the site.

The peat deposits sampled suggested the formation of the peat in the late Iron Age through to the late Roman period, with marsh plant pollen and remains present. The topography of this low-lying land was marshy as suggested by the archaeological features petering out around the 10m contour.

The lack of human activity in the low lying areas of the site is borne out by the results of the field walking and metal detecting.

Phase 5: Medieval

The Archaeological work showed the site was covered in east-west aligned ridge and furrow, cutting through the earlier features and a large pit/quarry was also found.

Conclusions

Like the findings at Heslington East, early human activity dating to the Mesolithic and Neolithic was found at Germany Beck. The Peterborough Mortlake vessel is of particular importance, and a first for York and its hinterland.

The enclosures at Germany Beck have a close date range similar to the findings to the north at St. Oswald's School (2nd Century AD). The enclosures and field systems at Heslington East had a much broader date range, from the Iron Age to late fourth century. The site appears rural in character, the enclosures and field systems suggested both pastoral and arable. The pottery and ceramic building material assemblages indicated close links to York, a high status rural character indicating settlement nearby, but not on the site itself. There was no evidence for industrial on the site.

The Metal Detecting Survey was the most comprehensive for any studied battlefield and did not yield any scatters of military artefacts or large scale smelting or metalworking on the site. The corridor of wet marshy nature of the ground in the vicinity of the peat, showed sparse evidence of human occupation prior to the 12th-14th century. The Ridge and Furrow was aligned east to west across the site and was dated to the Post-conquest period. There was no indication of Post-Roman, Anglian, Anglo-Scandinavian or Pre-Conquest Activity on the site. There was no evidence for the Battle of Fulford found on this site during the Metal Detecting Survey nor this phase of Archaeological Excavation.

Recording of the Stone Culvert on Germany Beck/A19 (Powerpoint 43)

In December 2016, The building survey of the Culvert was undertaken, in advance of carriageway works commencing. The structure had been re-pointed and masked in places by concrete. The concrete above the stone retaining wall is cracked and broken.

The roughly dressed stonework is quarry faced. The pointed arch has a highly rusticated construction.

Documentary evidence stated the York to Selby road in Fulford was raised and widened in 1767. The rough construction of the culvert is likely to date to the mid-18th century, as its style and design reflects the fashion at the time for rustic garden features, follies and ruins, influenced by romantic rustication and gothic revival.

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