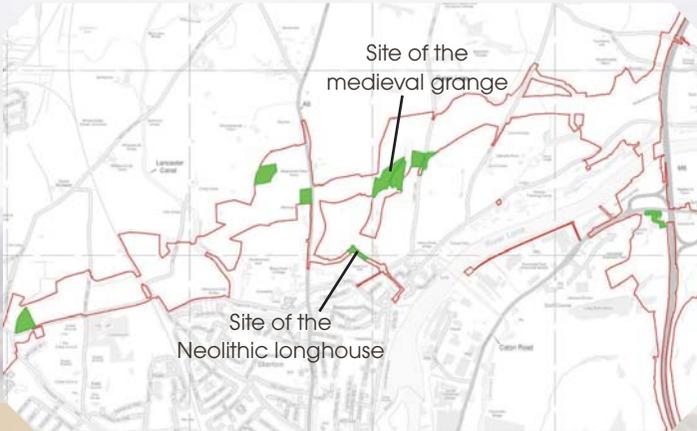


INTRODUCTION

The Bay Gateway is a road linking Heysham port to the M6 motorway. Preliminary archaeological works were undertaken in 2013 and revealed several areas of interest. These were investigated in more detail between January and June 2014, by Oxford Archaeology North on behalf of Costain, who built the road for Lancashire County Council and the Department for Transport.



The Scheme (red) and areas of archaeological interest (green) Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2016)

A NEOLITHIC LONGHOUSE

The most significant prehistoric activity was found next to a dried-up stream on a natural terrace overlooking the River Lune. A layer of soil was found to contain stone tools and flakes produced from their manufacture: nearly 1300 artefacts were recovered, most made from flint.



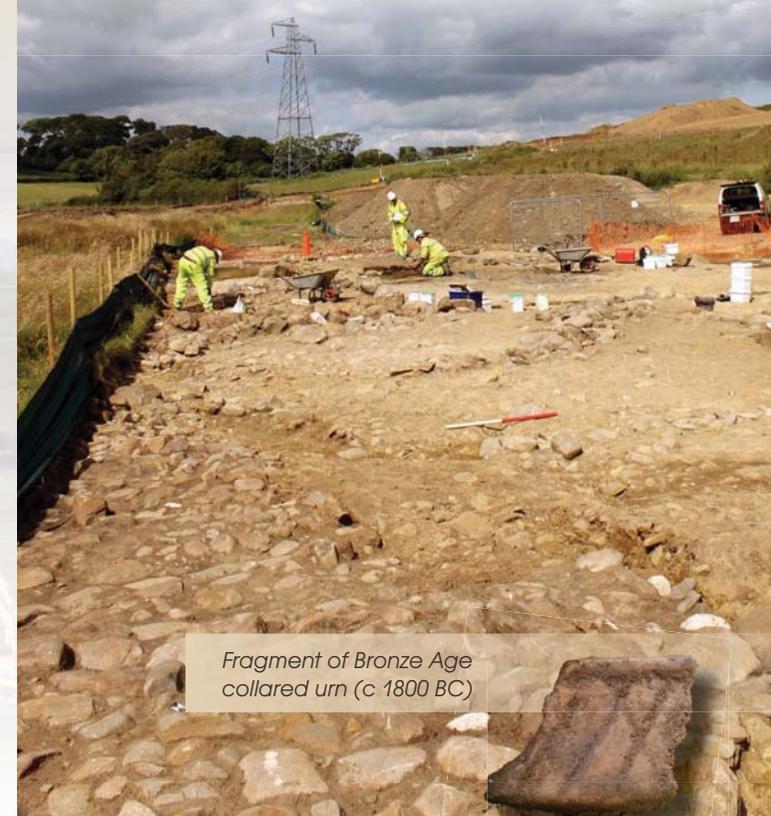
Oxford Archaeology (OA) North, formerly the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, has been serving the archaeological needs of the North West since 1979, and has considerable experience of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of both large and small scale projects throughout Northern England.

Lancashire County Council working in partnership with Costain and with funding from the Department for Transport has now seen the Bay Gateway open to traffic. This has seen a long-term commitment to the scheme being rewarded with this important new link from Morecambe and Heysham to the M6 Motorway'

Costain is recognised as one of the UK's leading engineering solutions providers. Using innovative engineering and technology-led solutions to meet the needs of our customers.



ARCHAEOLOGY of the BAY GATEWAY



Fragment of Bronze Age collared urn (c. 1800 BC)

Five sites were excavated along the route of the new Bay Gateway, revealing human activity dating from the Stone Age to the nineteenth century. Two of these sites, found in the valley of the Howgill Brook in the Beaumont area of Lancaster, proved to be highly significant. The oldest comprised the first Neolithic (New Stone Age) longhouse to be found in Lancashire, built around 5500 years ago. The most extensive site represented remains of a medieval settlement likely to have been owned by Furness Abbey.



Postholes forming the north-east corner of the Neolithic long house

Many of the flint tools were in the form of microliths. Several of these tiny flint flakes would be mounted on wooden hafts to make composite tools and weapons. They are characteristic of the Mesolithic period (the Middle Stone Age, c 8000-4000 BC) when small communities moved from place to place, hunting and gathering their food.

In around 3500 BC, the site was occupied by a substantial timber building supported on wooden posts planted in pits in the ground. Although the timbers have long since rotted away, rows of postholes were visible when the topsoil was removed. The structure is likely to have been a rectangular longhouse, and has been radiocarbon dated to the Early Neolithic period, when people first grew crops and kept domesticated animals. Soil samples from the postholes contained pottery, burnt stones from hearths, and remains of charred crops, including wheat, that was grown locally and threshed on site. There were also hazelnuts and charcoal

from alder, hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn wood, which may have come from hedges or managed woodland.

Radiocarbon-dated charcoal from other pits, and fragments of distinctive pottery found at the site indicated that people returned to the area on occasions through the Neolithic period and into the Bronze Age, c 1800 BC.

A LOST MONASTIC GRANGE



Excavating the foundations of the medieval buildings

An extensive complex of medieval remains was excavated on either side of the Howgill Brook, close to Green Lane. The earliest evidence for occupation was found on the west bank of the brook, and comprised the foundation gullies for wooden buildings likely to have been built in the twelfth century.

Also on the west bank of the brook were the remains of several kilns. These had been used to dry a variety of cereals such as oats and barley, as well as producing lime for either mortar or for spreading on the fields as a fertiliser.



Excavating the stone medieval buildings

During the fourteenth century the focus of the site seems to have shifted to the east side of the brook, where the remains of stone buildings, areas of cobbles and a possible mill leat were found. Among the artefacts were stone roof tiles and a copper-alloy candle stick, which is a rare find and is more typical of higher status sites.

It is possible that the finds are part of Beaumont Grange, which was an important estate belonging to Furness Abbey, near Barrow. The abbey held land at Beaumont by 1190, and this expanded in c 1200, when King John gave the monks the settlement of Stapleton Terne, including its inhabitants, to move into the grange. The estate centre was more than a farm: the Abbot would have periodically lodged and held court there. It was still a populous place when the abbey was Dissolved in 1538, when it was occupied by '72 tall fellows' and was known to possess some 280 acres that were divided among over 20 tenanted plots.