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ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
T R U S T

**20-21 NEWTON TERRACE,  
YORK**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF**



**1999 FIELD REPORT  
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# **20-21 NEWTON TERRACE, YORK**

## **A Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A watching brief at 20-21 Newton Terrace, York revealed deposits which appear to relate to the use of the former bailey of the Old Baile as open space prior to the establishment of the existing street layout in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

During rebuilding works at 20-21 Newton Terrace, York (NGR SE 6016 5122), York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological watching brief on behalf of Dossor Taylor (Figure 1). The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between 5<sup>th</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> August 1999.

Newton Terrace lies within Bishophill on the south-west side of the River Ouse. This area is thought to have been within the Roman walled town of *Eboracum*, which stood on the south-west side of the River Ouse, opposite the legionary fortress. The importance of the Roman town is reflected in its status as a *colonia*, and it was also the capital of one of the provinces of Britain (RCHM 1962, xxix-xxxix). Previous archaeological investigations and discoveries in the vicinity have revealed considerable evidence of activity dating to the Romano-British period (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). A large town-house was found at the former site of the church of St. Mary Bishophill Senior, 170m to the north (AY 4/1, 32f.). The presence of Roman burials in the vicinity, some in tile-built tombs, suggests that this part of York was initially used as a cemetery and then incorporated within the expanding town (RCHM 1962, 107).

The site also lay within the walls of the medieval town. Soon after the Norman Conquest a castle, the Old Baile, was established on the south-west side of the River Ouse, and this site lay within the castle bailey. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Old Baile was given over to grazing and was held by the archbishops of York, although the walls continued to be maintained as part of the city defences. The bailey was used for musters until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and two cannons were positioned in the castle to defend the town during the Civil War. The military function of the Old Baile ceased thereafter. It was planted with trees, and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century a prison occupied the north part of the bailey. In 1882 the bailey was sold to builders, and the existing streets of terraced houses, including Newton Terrace, were established (RCHM 1972, 87-9).

No archaeological investigations have previously been undertaken in the immediate vicinity of 20-21 Newton Terrace, and the precise character of past human activity in this part of York remains unclear.

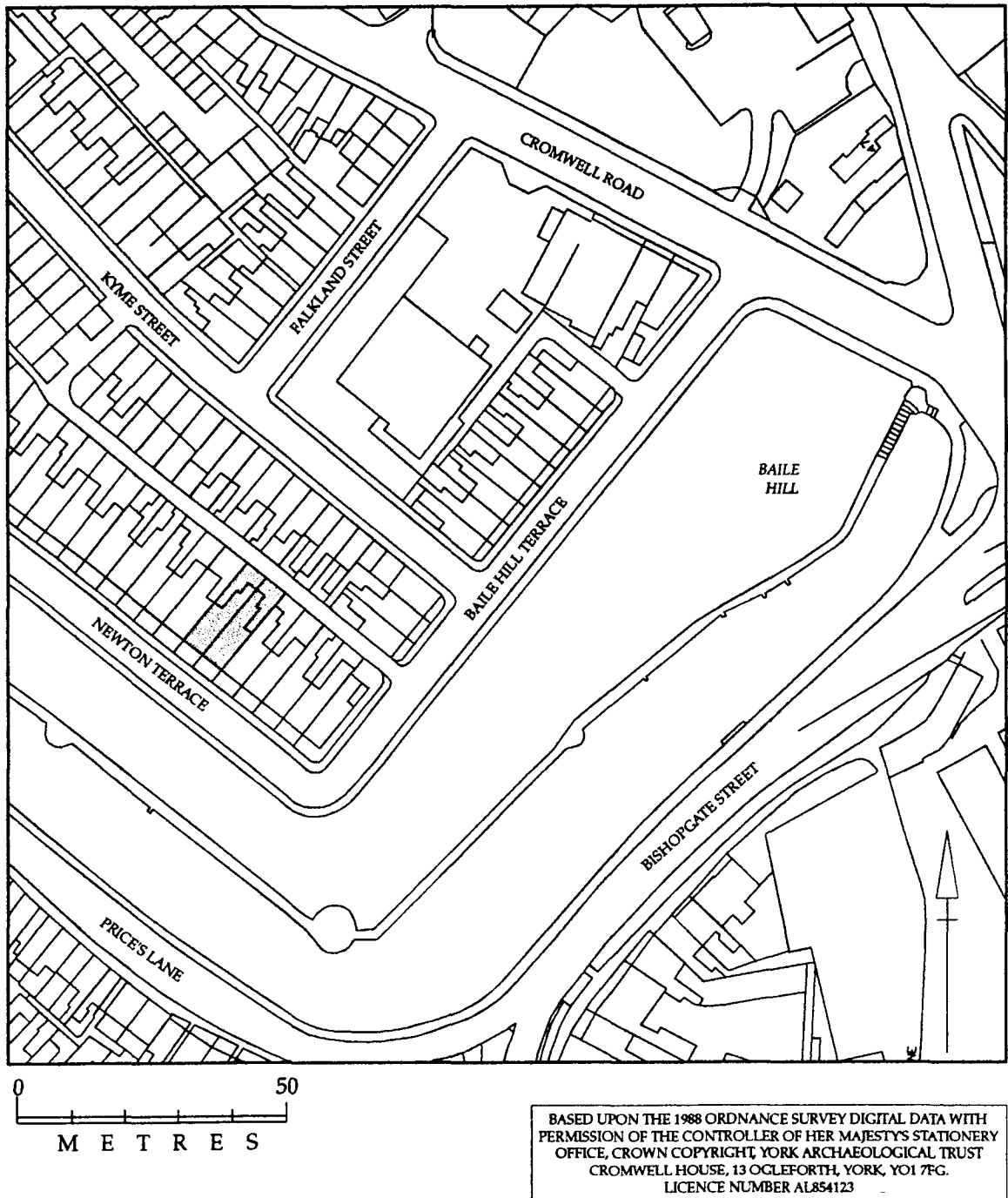


Figure 1 Site location

## 1.2 Brief and methodology (Figure 2)

The ground works involved digging out the floors of the kitchen and utility rooms of both 20 and 21 Newton Terrace, to underpin the main walls with piled foundations and to relay the concrete floors. In addition, the external drain to Number 20, which led to a manhole at the north-east end of the property, was dug up and replaced. The excavations reached a depth of 300mm within the buildings, but the drain trench steadily increased in depth to the north-east and reached a maximum of 1.0m.

A watching brief was undertaken during all three stages of the ground works. The records comprised notes and measured sketches. No finds were recovered during the watching brief. The site records are currently held by the Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession codes YORYM:1999.846-7

## 2.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

The earliest deposits encountered within the houses were extensive layers of friable dark brown silty loam, with frequent mortar flecks and occasional tile flecks-small fragments and charcoal flecks. The top of these deposits generally formed the base of the excavations at 300mm Below Ground Level (BGL). Adjacent to the piles the excavations were slightly deeper, and this showed that the deposits were at least 100mm thick. Around 1m from the north-east end of the utility room in No. 21, the silty loam layer tapered out and there was instead a thick deposit of friable light brown mortar. These deposits had been laid down against the brick walls of the houses, and are regarded as make-up for the original floors.

On the north-west side of the kitchen in No. 21 two brick stub walls were located in the base of the excavations. They were adjacent, and at right-angles, to the north-west kitchen wall, and were 1.1m apart. The walls as observed comprised a double brick width course on an offset course, and measured 500mm long. However, it was evident that these walls had once stood to a higher level, but had been hacked back to the face of the north-west kitchen wall. This feature is interpreted as a fireplace, which had been demolished when the concrete floor was laid.

Overlying these deposits throughout was a layer of brick rubble beneath concrete, some 300mm thick overall, which formed the floor in the kitchens and utility rooms prior to the building works. The concrete had a plastic membrane, indicating that the floor had been laid in recent years.

In the drain trench to the rear of No. 20, all but the top 50mm of the trench comprised layers of silty loam up to 0.2m thick, ranging from mid brown to dark grey in colour, with few inclusions. The uppermost layer of silty loam was sealed by a layer of brick rubble, the bedding for the concrete yard surface.

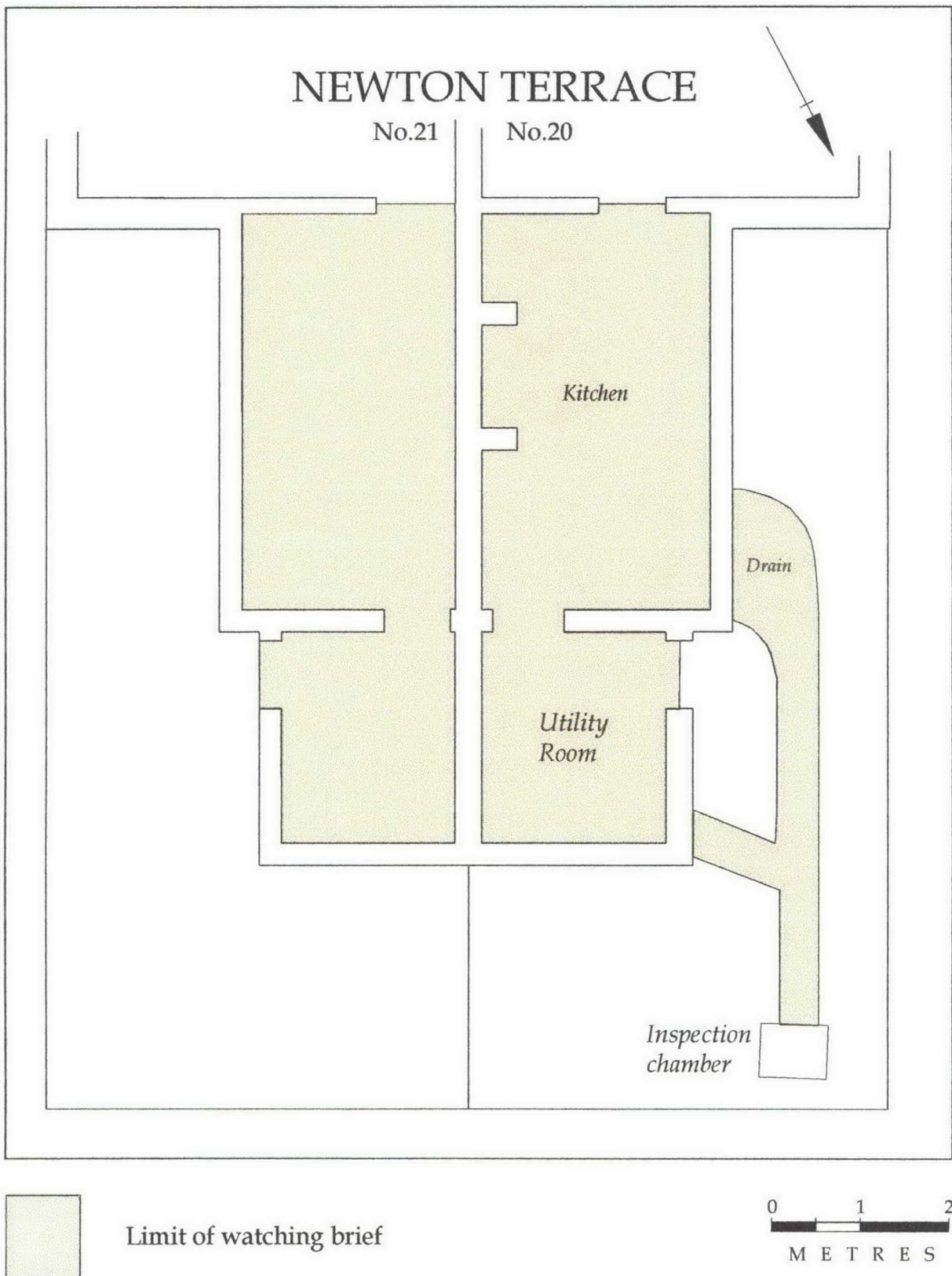


Figure 2 Location of watching brief

### **3.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The majority of the deposits observed during the watching brief relate to the construction and occupation of the extant late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. The silty loam deposits to the rear of 20 Newton Terrace appear to reflect the use of the castle bailey as an open space from the later medieval period onwards, although the lack of dating evidence means that these deposits cannot be interpreted or dated more precisely.

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