184

YORK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

1-1A LOW OUSEGATE, YORK

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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1-1A LOW OUSEGATE,

YORK

REPORT ON AN

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ABSTRACT

Four probe-holes and five trial pits were observed at 1-1A Low Ousegate, York. Well-preserved, organic deposits, presumably of Roman to post-medieval date, were recorded in all of the probe-holes.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

In August 1999 York Archaeological Trust carried out a watching brief on the driving of four probe holes and the excavation of five test pits at 1-1A Low Ousegate, York (N.G.R. SE 6027 5163; Figure 1). The work was carried out on behalf of British Land Universal in advance of proposed alterations to two former warehouses which front on to King Street and are now used as stores for the retail premises at 1 Ousegate.

1.2 Methodology

The probe holes were made by continuous drive window sampling, and were cored to boulder clay, reaching depths of 8.5-10.0m (Figure 2, P1-4). Recording of the resulting vertical cores followed procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust Context Recording Manual (1996), each distinct, identifiable deposit being allocated its own discrete context number.

The trial pits were excavated by hand (Figure 2, TP1-5). All were quite shallow, and were restricted to the investigation of the foundations of the brick walls of the standing 19th century buildings that front King Street.

The finds and the site records are currently stored with York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM:1999.944.

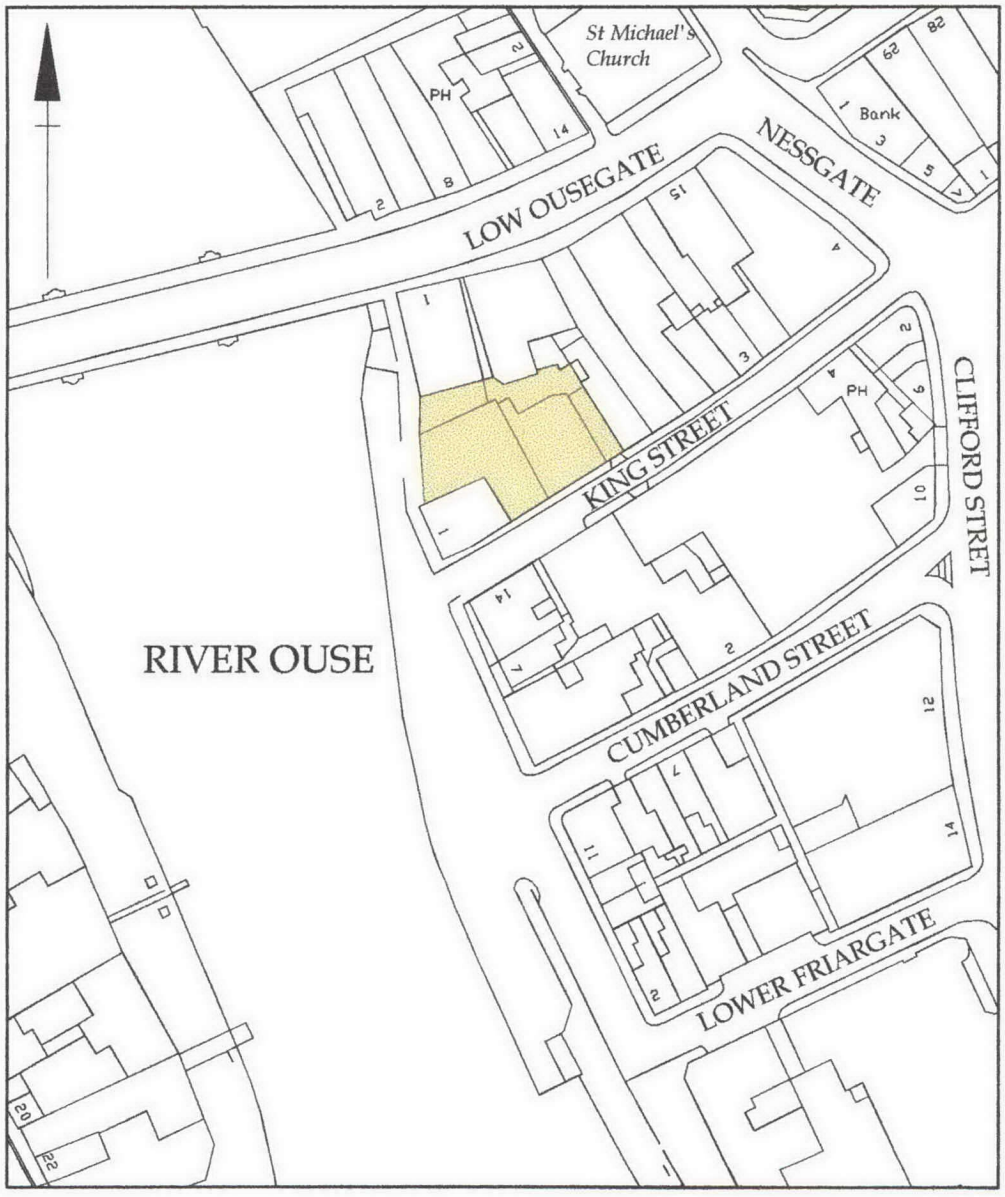
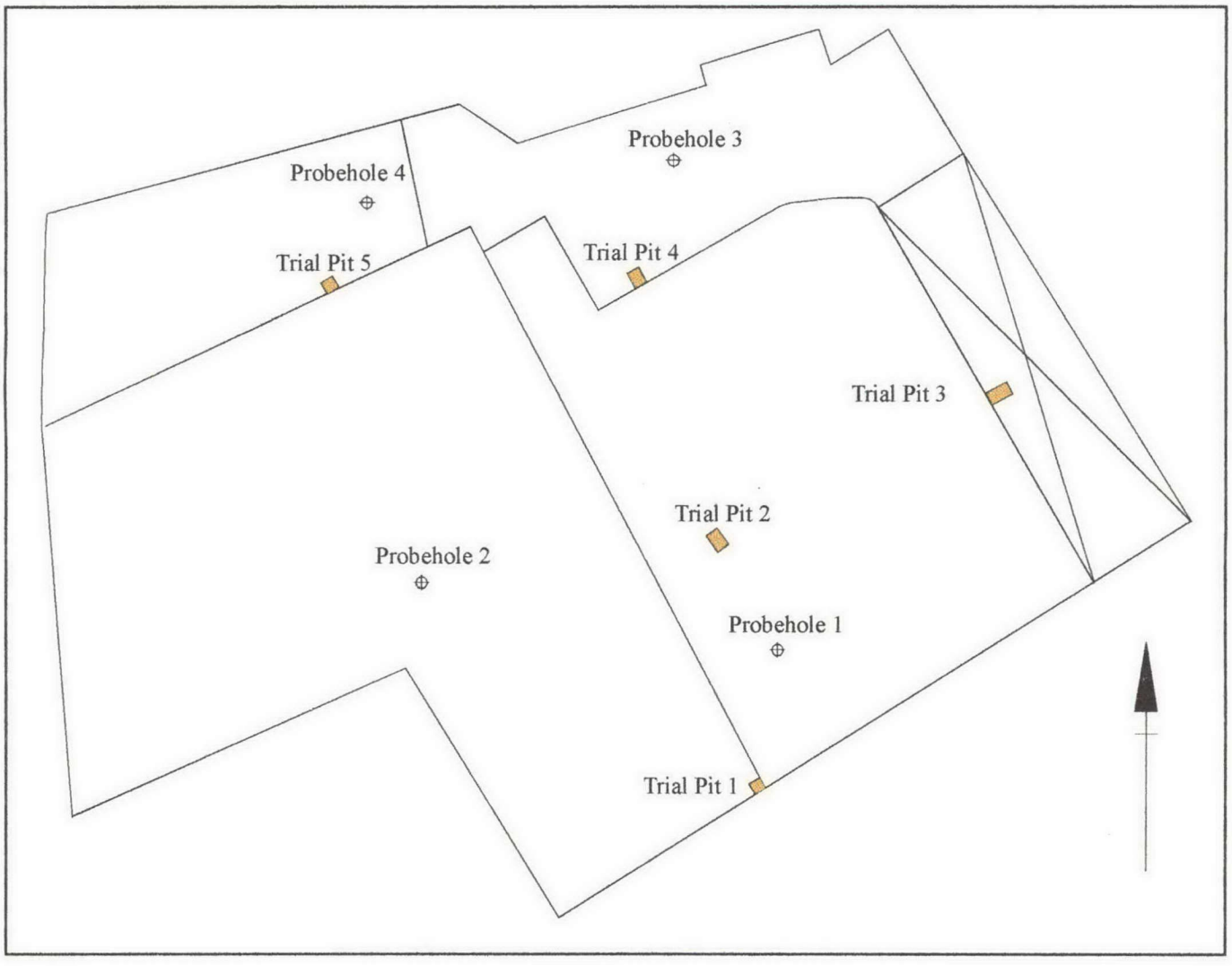


Figure 1 Site location



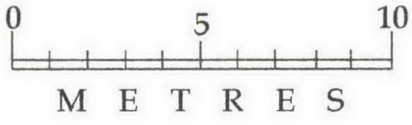


Figure 2 Location of Trial pits and Probeholes

2. TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

2.1 Site Topography

The study area lies on steeply sloping ground on the east side of the River Ouse valley, immediately south of Ouse Bridge. The highest point within the development area, towards Nessgate, is approximately 10.0m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), and the lowest point, towards the River Ouse, is at about 8.9m AOD. Because of the slope, level floors are created by stepping each floor above the adjacent downslope floor; for example, the floor of the former warehouse building to the east is approximately 1.0m above that of that to the west, and there is a vertical drop of over 1.5m from the level yard surface at the rear of the warehouses down to King's Staith.

Previous archaeological investigations in this area are limited. Organic deposits above undisturbed natural were observed in boreholes at 12 King Street, on the other side of the street opposite the site (Finlayson 1997, 455). Medieval deposits were recorded close to the surface at 9-11 Low Ousegate (ibid., 515).

2.2 Geology

The solid geology is Bunter and Keuper Sandstone, part of the Sherwood Sandstone Group (Ordnance Survey 1967), which was laid down during the Triassic period, some 225 million years ago (Warrington 1974). Over this lies boulder clay beneath sands and gravels, part of the glacial till and York Moraine that formed at the end of the last glaciation around 10,000 BC. Subsequent to the glaciation, the River Ouse cut a channel deep into the moraine in order to drain southwards, but after about 4,500 BC the channel began to infill with alluvium due to a relative rise in sea level (Institute of Geological Sciences 1980, 124-6).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistoric and Roman Periods (to the 5th Century AD)

Although no prehistoric archaeological deposits have been located within the immediate vicinity, artefacts of Neolithic to Iron Age date are widely distributed on the York Moraine, which was an area of dry land and a routeway across the Vale of York (RCHM 1972, xxxvii-xxxix). During the Roman period the site lay less than 200m south of the legionary fortress and appears to have lain within an area of intense activity. Excavations in the past along Spurriergate and High Ousegate provided evidence for two Roman roads and several large stone structures, including two baths (RCHM 1962, 59-61). More recently, grain stores were found at 39-41 Coney Street and the remains of substantial masonry buildings were located at 8 High Ousegate (AY 6/1, 5ff.). It is likely that much of this activity was devoted to provisioning the fortress. However, most of the evidence lies north-east of Nessgate; very little is known about the Roman riverside activity on the east bank of the River Ouse.

3.2 Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian Periods (5th to 11th Centuries)

There are a few indications of Anglian occupation in the vicinity, although this activity might be under-represented due to the lack of datable artefacts that can be assigned to this period. King Street was originally known as *Kergate*, an Old Norse name which indicates that the street was established by the Anglo-Scandinavian period (Palliser 1978, 7), presumably to provide access to the River Ouse waterfront. The site is adjacent to the main road into the York from the south and west, which crossed Ouse Bridge. It is likely that there was intense occupation along both King Street and the waterfront.

3.3 Medieval Period (11th to 16th Centuries)

King's Staith, the stone quay that forms the east bank of the River Ouse immediately south of Ouse Bridge, was constructed during the later 14th century, but has been raised or rebuilt on several occasions, most recently when Ouse Bridge was rebuilt in 1820. Medieval buildings presumably lined the staith; the lower part of the west wall of the study area, overlooking King's Staith, is built of magnesian limestone and incorporates 13th-century stone corbels (RCHM 1981, 104).

3.4 Post-Medieval and Modern Period (16th to 20th Centuries)

Speed's 1610 map of York shows King Street as completely lined with buildings. When Ouse Bridge was rebuilt in 1810-20, the approach roads were heightened, and it is likely that the properties fronting onto those roads, including 1 Ousegate, were rebuilt as a consequence (RCHM 1981, 157). Baines's 1822 map shows the block of land between King Street and Low Ousegate as heavily built up, expect for a backyard behind the street frontage that could be reached only via two passageways, from Low Ousegate and King Street. This layout was largely still in place at the time of the site investigation.

Although at the heart of York's trading activity, the Water Lanes (the streets leading down to King's Staith, of which King Street was one) became one of the city's poorest areas during the 18th and 19th centuries. Most of the houses there were slums, and the 1852 Ordnance Survey map shows that the site was occupied by many small houses. In 1876 it was decided to clear the houses from the Water Lanes (Tillott 1961, 284), and by the time the 1937 Ordnance Survey map was compiled the existing warehouses on the site along King Street had been built.

4. SITE INVESTIGATION RESULTS

The precise height above sea level of all interventions except Probe-hole 1 and Trial Pit 2 have been determined, and even the Ordnance Datum values assigned to the latter interventions can be regarded as accurate to a tenth of a metre. The levels are expressed in metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), rounded up to the nearest tenth of a metre.

The contexts in each probe-hole and trial pit are described from the bottom up. The limited dating evidence is referred to in the text where available (see 5.1).

4.1 Probe-holes

4.1.1 Probe-hole 1 (P1)

Probe-hole 1 was positioned inside 1A Low Ousegate towards the south-west corner (Figure 2). The top was at approximately 10.0m AOD and it was drilled to a depth of 11m (Figure 3).

The earliest deposit encountered was a mid brown sandy clay (1014). Its top was 2.0m AOD, and it was at least 2.0m thick. 1014 is regarded as a glacial natural deposit, part of the York Moraine. Overlying this deposit was a 2.6m-thick layer of friable light brown/orange sand (1013). This is also regarded as a glacial natural deposit, but fluvio-glacial in origin. Above 1013 was a thin layer of friable light grey silty sand (1012), which is thought to have been an alluvial deposit; its top was 4.7m AOD.

Above 1012 was a thin layer of friable mid grey/brown slightly organic silty clay loam (1011). It was overlain by a 1.4m-thick friable dark grey slightly organic silty clay loam deposit with occasional small wood fragments (1010), the top of which was 6.2m AOD. These layers are thought to have been levelling-dump deposits. 1010 was overlain by a friable light/mid grey silty sand with very occasional wood fragments, some 2.1m thick (1009). This layer could have been a natural, perhaps alluvial deposit, but it is more likely to have been a levelling deposit of re-deposited natural. Over 1009 was a friable dark grey/black slightly organic silty clay (1008), which was beneath a similar deposit but dark grey in colour and with moderate light grey clay flecks (1007). Both were 0.35m thick, and the top (of 1007) was at 9.0m AOD; they are tentatively interpreted as dump deposits.

Overlying 1007 was a 1.0m-thick friable mid brown silty clay with occasional tile fragments (1001), which is dated by the tile to no earlier than the 14th-16th centuries (late medieval period). It was beneath a friable dark grey/brown silty clay loam (1006), some 0.4m thick; its top was at 10.4m AOD. These layers are considered to have been levelling-dump deposits.

The layer above 1006, a mid grey silt loam with frequent mortar and occasional modern brick fragments (1005), could have been a dump, or perhaps a demolition, deposit. It lay beneath the light brown gravelly sandy loam bedding (1004) for the existing sandstone slab floor (1003).

4.1.2 Probe-hole 2 (P2)

This probe-hole was sited in the middle of the loading bay to the rear of 1 Low Ousegate (Figure 2). The top was at approximately 8.95m AOD, and it was 10.0m deep (Figure 3).

The earliest deposit encountered was a compact, mixed light-mid brown clay (1024). It was at least 1.6m thick, and its top was at 0.65m AOD. This layer is regarded as the top of glacial natural deposits, part of the York Moraine. Above 1024 was a 1.35m-thick friable light/mid grey sandy clay loam with occasional gravel (1023); this could have been a fluvio-glacial deposit, but was more probably a post-glacial alluvium.

Above 1023 was a 1.45m-thick friable mid grey slightly organic gritty sandy silt loam (1022). This deposit had the appearance of a levelling-dump deposit in alluvium. It was beneath an organic mid-dark brown silty clay loam (1021), which was probably a levelling-dump deposited in drier conditions. Overlying 1021 was friable mid grey silty clay with occasional tile fragments (1002); it was 1.0m thick and its top was at 5.2m AOD. The tile from 1002 was dated to the 14th-19th centuries (late medieval or post-medieval periods).

1002 lay beneath a friable, slightly organic dark grey silty clay with moderate small stones/gravel (1020), which was 0.75m thick. The deposit above was a very organic peaty dark grey silty clay loam with occasional wood flecks (1019), some 0.85m thick. This layer was overlain by an organic dark grey silty clay (1018), 0.6m thick; its top was at 7.45m AOD. These three deposits are thought to represent the accumulation of dump or build-up material adjacent to buildings, but could have been formed more rapidly as levelling activity.

Above 1018 was a friable mid/dark brown silty loam with moderate brick fragments and mortar flecks (1017). This layer was beneath a loose light brown gritty silt loam with moderate stones and mortar flecks-small fragments (1016). These deposits were 1.4m thick overall, and are regarded as levelling deposits that raised the ground level prior to the construction of the existing concrete floor (1015).

4.1.3 Probe-hole 3 (P3)

Probe-hole 3 was located in the yard to the rear of 1A Low Ousegate, in the north-east corner of the site (Figure 2). Its top was at 9.92m AOD, and it was 8.5m deep (Figure 3).

In the base of the probe-hole was a stiff mid brown clay with frequent gravel (1033). It was at least 0.4m thick, and its top was at 1.8m AOD. This layer is thought to have been a glacial natural deposit, part of the York Moraine. Above 1033 was a 2.2m-thick layer of friable orange sand (1032). This layer was overlain in turn by thin layers of friable/loose orange sand (1031), then friable light grey/brown sand (1030) and finally compact light brown sandy clay (1029). Overall, the layers above 1033 were 3.1m thick, and their top was at 4.9m AOD. They are interpreted as fluvio-glacial deposits.

Overlying 1029 was a 2.3m-thick layer of friable slightly organic mid grey silty clay with occasional wood flecks and fragments (1028). Above this layer was a friable dark brown silty clay loam (1027), some 1.1m thick; its top was at 8.3m AOD. It is not clear whether these were levelling deposits, laid down in a short space of time; or successive build-up/dump deposits, which accumulated over a longer period of time.

Above 1027 was a 1.5m-thick layer of friable mid brown gritty silt loam with occasional stone, brick and mortar fragments (1026). It is thought to have been a levelling deposit, laid down prior to the establishment of the existing cobble surface (1025).

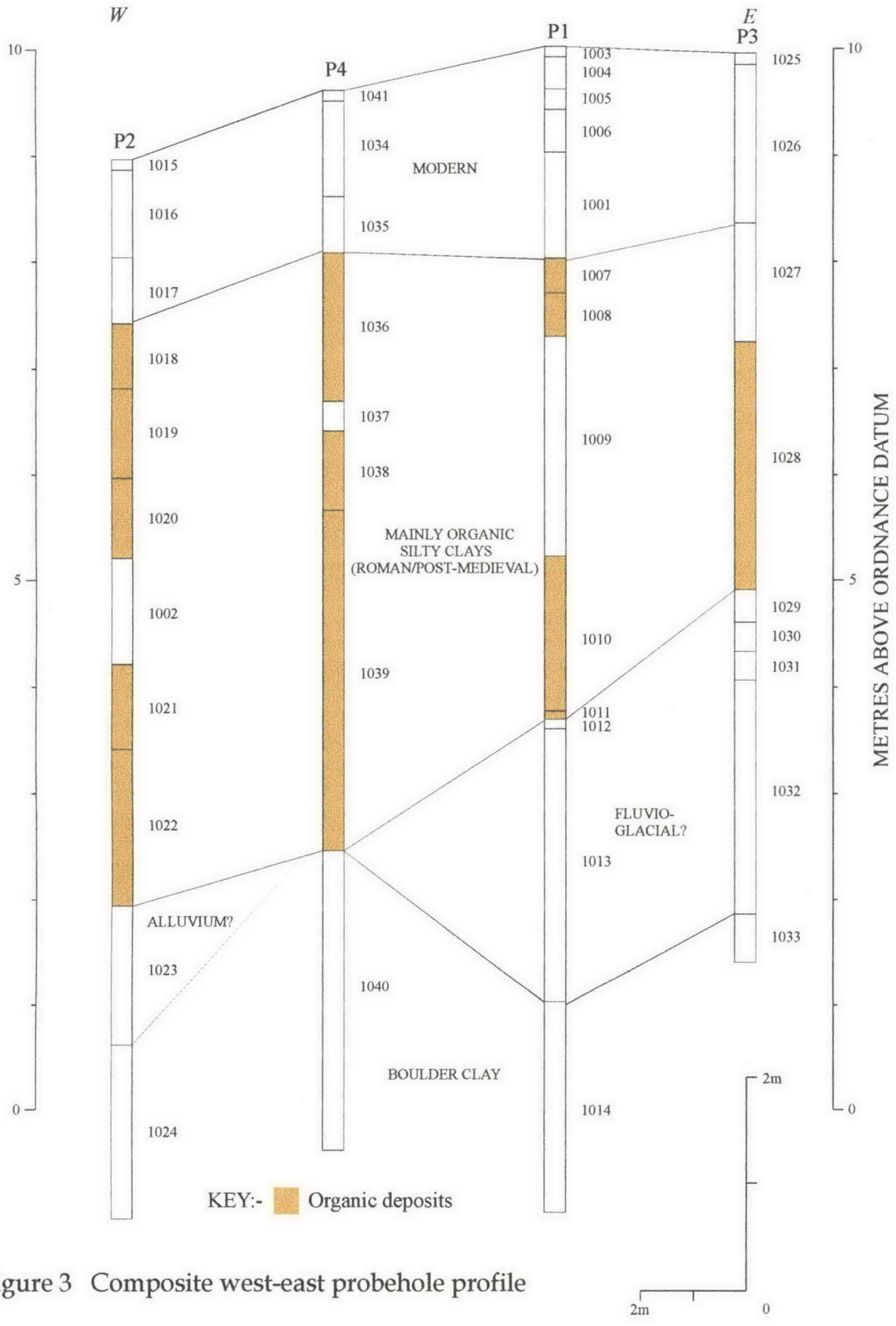


Figure 3 Composite west-east probehole profile

4.1.4 Probe-hole 4 (P4)

Probe-hole 4 was positioned towards the north-west side of the site, in the yard between 1 Low Ousegate and the loading bay to the rear (Figure 2). Its top was at 9.58m AOD, and it was drilled to a depth of 10.0m (Figure 3).

The earliest deposit encountered was a compact mid brown slightly gritty clay (1040); it was at least 2.9m thick, and its top was at 2.5m AOD. This layer is regarded as a glacial natural deposit, part of the York Moraine.

Above 1040 was a succession of friable organic deposits: a 3.2m-thick layer of mid brown very organic fibrous silty clay loam with occasional wood flecks and bone fragments (1039); mid grey organic silty clay (1038), some 0.75m thick; and mid grey slightly organic silt loam, 1.4m thick (1037). The only break in this sequence was a 0.25m-thick layer of sandstone with occasional mortar and brick fragments (1037) that lay between 1036 and 1038, and which may have been a demolition deposit. Overall, these deposits were 5.6m thick, and the top was at 8.1m AOD. They are thought to have been build-up or dump deposits that accumulated over a long period of time, interrupted by an episode of building-related activity, although it is possible that some or all of these deposits had a levelling function.

Overlying 1036 was a friable slightly organic silty clay loam with moderate mortar, tile and charcoal flecks (1035). It was below a friable light brown silty sand with frequent brick fragments and mortar flecks (1034). Both are probably levelling-dump deposits, 1.4m thick in total, which were intended to raise the ground level prior to the laying out of the existing cobble surface (1041).

4.2 Trial pits

4.2.1 Trial Pit 1 (TP1)

This trial pit was positioned in the south-east corner of the loading bay at the rear of 1 Low Ousegate, at the junction of the south wall fronting King Street and the east wall that formed the boundary with 1A Low Ousegate (Figure 2). It was 0.4m square, the surface was at about 8.95m AOD, and it was 0.9m deep (Figure 4).

The earliest feature encountered was a squared block of worked limestone (1047), which was visible in the base of the trial pit. It measured at least 0.35x0.25m in plan by 60mm high, but the north, south and west sides were beyond the limits of excavation; its upper surface was at 7.6m AOD. There was a chamfer along the east edge, indicating that it was an architectural stone.

Overlying the limestone block was a friable dark grey silt loam with frequent small-medium limestone and sandstone fragments and occasional mortar flecks (1046). The function of this deposit is unclear. If it was not part of the fill of the cut for drain 1045, it was presumably truncated by that drain. Neither is it clear whether 1046 pre- or post-dates the east wall of the property (1048). This wall comprised mortared bricks approximately 2.75 inches thick, which point to an 18th–early 19th century date for its construction. It base was at 7.6m AOD, the level

of the top of stone 1047 immediately to the west. There were several offset courses mid-way down the wall, suggesting that the below-ground brickwork had acted as a wall foundation from the beginning.

The glazed ceramic drain (1045) had evidently been inserted after the construction of wall 1048, as its unconsolidated backfill of dark grey silt loam with occasional small-medium brick, limestone and sandstone fragments (1044) appeared to have been deposited against the wall. Overlying 1044 was a 0.1m-thick layer of small-medium brick and limestone fragments, in a compact mid grey silty clay loam (1043), which is regarded as the bedding for the existing concrete floor (1042).

4.2.2 Trial Pit 2 (TP2)

This trial pit was dug against an internal brick wall that forms the north side of a room in the south-west corner of 1A Low Ousegate (Figure 2). It was 0.55m long (north-south) by 0.4m wide, its top was at roughly 10.0m AOD, and it was 1.62m deep (Figure 4).

The wall (1053) was found to continue 1.57m below the current floor level; its brick were 2 inches thick, which suggests a 17th-18th century date. At the base of the trial pit an offset brick course (1054) was encountered.

Overlying 1054 and lying against wall 1053 was a 1.25m-thick layer of friable dark brown silty loam with occasional small-large brick/tile fragments and mortar flecks-small fragments (1052), which is interpreted as a levelling deposit. Above 1052 was a loose light brown sand and gravel (1051) beneath a layer of hardcore (1050); they were around 0.27m thick overall, and are interpreted as the bedding for the existing sandstone slab floor (1049).

4.2.3 Trial Pit 3 (TP3)

Trial pit 3 was sited in the passageway at the east end of the site that provides access from King Street to the yard behind the warehouses. It was dug against the wall on the west side of the passage that forms the east wall of 1A Low Ousegate (Figure 2). This trial pit up to 0.65m long (east-west) by 0.4m wide, its top was at around 10.0m AOD, and it was 1.62m deep (Figure 4).

The brick wall (1059) extending for some 1.57m below ground level. Its bricks were an average of 2 inches thick, indicating a 17th-18th century date. However, from 30mm above ground level upwards the bricks were about 3 inches thick (1058). This feature is interpreted as the modern rebuilding of a post-medieval wall. An offset brick course beneath 1059 was observed in the base of the trench (1060).

Overlying 1060 and lying against 1059 was a friable light-mid brown silty loam with frequent mortar flecks-small fragments and occasional small-medium brick and stone fragments (1057), which was about 1.1m thick. It is regarded as a levelling deposit. Above 1057 was a friable mid grey silty loam with frequent small stones/gravel (1056), approximately 0.3m thick. This deposit is thought to have been the bedding for the passage surface, which consisted of squared limestone blocks measuring 0.20m in each dimension (1055).

4.2.4 Trial Pit 4 (TP4)

Trial Pit 4 was situated in the yard to rear of the warehouses, towards the north-east corner of the site. It was dug against the north wall of 1A Low Ousegate (Figure 2). This trial pit was up to 0.46m long (north-south) by 0.4m wide, its top was at about 9.9m AOD, and it was a maximum of 0.8m deep (Figure 2).

A squared limestone block at least 0.4m long, 0.15m wide and 0.11m thick was observed in the base of the trench (1066). It is believed to have been part of a wall, but it is not clear whether it formed part of the foundations for the standing building, or represents an earlier wall. Above 1066 were the brick footings for the standing wall, the top of which was 0.25m below floor level; there were seven courses, six of which formed a stepped offset that protruded a total of 0.25m beyond the face of the wall, but which were set back 0.1m from the north edge of the limestone wall beneath (1065). These bricks were 2-2.25 inches thick, indicating a 17th-18th century date. The brick wall that rested on these footings, however, comprised bricks some 2.5-3 inches thick, indicating that the wall itself dated to the 19th century (1064).

Overlying 1065-66 and lying against 1064 was a friable mid brown sandy silt loam with moderate small-medium stones and mortar flecks (1063), which is considered to have been a demolition deposit. It was probably at least 0.66m thick, although the presence of limestone fragments at the base of the trial pit could represent a change to a different, possibly demolition, deposit. Above 1063 was a compact mid brown silty clay loam with moderate small stones and mortar flecks (1062), which is interpreted as the bedding for the cobble yard surface (1061).

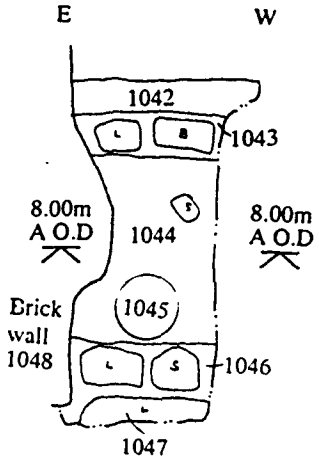
4.2.5 Trial Pit 5 (TP5)

Trial Pit 5 was positioned towards the north-west corner of the site, in the yard to the rear of the warehouses. It was dug against the north wall of the warehouse behind 1 Low Ousegate (Figure 2). This trial pit measured a maximum of 0.4m long (north-south) by 0.3m wide, its top was at 9.58m AOD, and it was 1.37m deep (Figure 4).

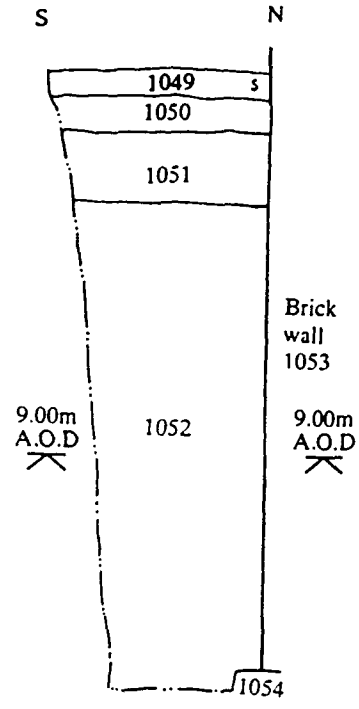
The brick wall (1071) extended for 0.38m below ground level. It rested on a brick foundation offset by 60mm, which continued downwards for at least 1.0m (1072). However, a layer of compact light brown mortar with moderate small tile fragments, encountered at the base of the trial pit and lying against wall foundation 1072, is tentatively interpreted as the backfill of the construction trench for the wall. The brick in both elements of the wall were 2.5-3 inches thick, indicating a 19th century date. Examination of the standing wall showed that it originally formed the north wall of two properties, each with a doorway and window at ground floor level, perhaps houses. The openings had been infilled with modern brick, presumably when the structure was converted into a warehouse.

Overlying 1072 and lying against 1071 was a 1.22m-thick layer of friable mid/dark brown silt loam with occasional mortar flecks and small lenses, and small brick and stone fragments (1069). This is regarded as a levelling deposit. Above 1069 was a compact mid brown silty clay (1068), which formed the bedding for the cobble yard surface (1067).

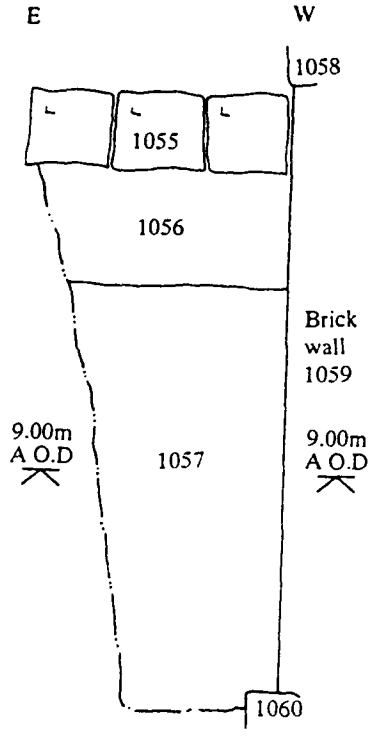
TRIAL PIT 1
NORTH-FACING SECTION



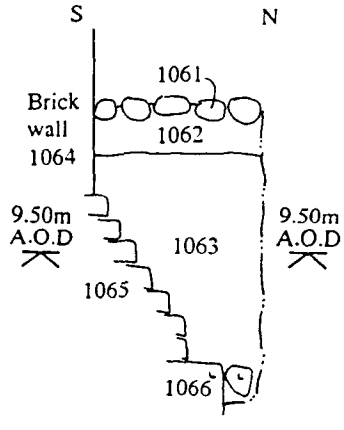
TRIAL PIT 2
EAST-FACING SECTION



TRIAL PIT 3
NORTH-FACING SECTION



TRIAL PIT 4
EAST-FACING SECTION



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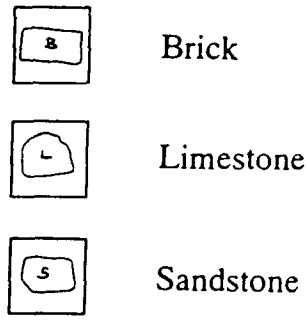

TRIAL PIT 5
EAST-FACING SECTION

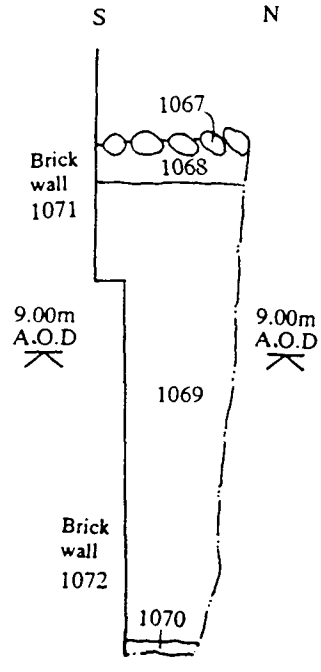

Figure 4 Trial Pit sections

5. FINDS ASSESSMENT

5.1 Ceramic Building Materials

5.1.1 Introduction

Two small bags of material were submitted for evaluation.

5.1.2 Medieval material

The medieval material consists of plain roofing tile, and there are no diagnostic fragments to suggest the method of suspension. One of the fragments has a fabric associated with the 14th century or later.

5.1.3 Post medieval material

There is one small fragment of brick. It is possible that the brick is medieval in date, however, the fabric does not appear to be within the usual range of medieval fabrics, and the fabric has been reused. It is likely that this fragment is of post-medieval date.

5.1.4 Conclusion

These fragments should be retained for further study, so that they can be incorporated into the study of ceramic building material in York

5.1.5 Context Listing

Context	Form/s	Date range	Spot date
1001	Plain (14th+), Plain	13-16th	14-16th
1002	Brick (reused, 14th+)	14-19th	14-19th

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

It should be noted that the deposit profiles and their interpretation are tentative, due to the imprecise nature of the probe-hole data. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the stratigraphic evidence from a probe-hole can be misleading, for example if it has been drilled through a deep, localised feature, such as a pit, that is not representative of the archaeological deposits in the vicinity. Secondly, many forms of stratigraphic information, such as the presence of timber buildings, are too subtle to be identified from a probe-hole core. Thirdly, the small sample of dating evidence obtained from the probe-holes could provide a misleading picture of the date of the stratigraphic sequence. Controlled archaeological excavation would be required

to provide a reliable indicator of the character and date of the archaeological deposits within the study area.

6.2 Depth and character of archaeological deposits

This watching brief has added significantly to our understanding at a basic level of the state of archaeological preservation and the depths of archaeological deposits within the study area. It appeared that all four probe-holes reached glacial natural deposits in the form of glacial till or boulder clay, although the character of the overlying natural deposits is less certain. It is cautiously suggested that the sands and gravels overlying the glacial till at the east end of the site were fluvio-glacial, and had been deposited by the end of the last (Devensian) glaciation about 10,000 BC. On the other hand, morainic deposits appear to be absent, and the surface of the boulder clay is relatively low-lying (around 2.0m AOD). It is possible that down-cutting by the River Ouse removed much of the York Moraine in a broad channel, and the sands and gravels would then have been deposited by the river during a subsequent rise in sea level. In any case, the prevailing ground slope down to the west reflects the natural topography of the River Ouse valley. The alluvial deposits in the west end of the site were probably deposited during the latest relative rise in sea level, which began around 4,500 BC (see Section 2.2).

Broadly speaking, the overall thickness of the archaeological deposits (beneath approximately 1.5m of modern material) varied from 3.5m at the east end of the site to around 5.5m further west (Figure 3). This phenomenon is mainly due to the accumulation of thick deposits adjacent to the River Ouse, partly in order to raise the ground surface above the flood level of the river, and partly to reduce the steepness of the ground slope from the high ground to the east. The bulk of these deposits are likely to be waterlogged, as organic material (including wood) appears to be preserved in even the uppermost archaeological deposits. It is likely that the remains of activity on the site dating from the Roman period to the post-medieval period survives, although the character and precise date of this activity cannot be deduced from this watching brief. Unusually, even the later medieval deposits, and perhaps buildings, appear to survive intact, having been protected from modern disturbances by thick 19th century levelling dumps.

6.3 Period-by-period assessment

6.3.1 Prehistoric to Roman (to 5th century AD)

It has been suggested that prior to the construction of Naburn Lock in the 18th century the mean high tide of the River Ouse in York was about 3.4m AOD, and that this level had remained largely unchanged since around 1,000 BC (Briden 1997, 165-7). The later Prehistoric and Roman riverbank would therefore have been at about this level or a little higher; which would place it in the eastern half of the site. It is likely that the riverbank was used as a waterfront that served the legionary fortress and the densely-occupied extra-mural area to its south.

6.3.2 Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian (5th-11th centuries)

It remains a strong possibility that there was Anglo-Scandinavian and perhaps Anglian occupation within the site, probably along both the waterfront and King Street. The lowest

organic deposits encountered in the probe-holes most probably accumulated at this time, both as build-up or dump deposits in the backyards of properties fronting onto the river, King Street and Low Ousegate (in the eastern part of the site), and as levelling-dump deposits to reclaim land from the river (in the western part of the site).

6.3.3 Medieval and later (11th century onwards)

Occupation on the site probably became more intensive as the city expanded. It is likely that the upper part of the organic deposits were laid down during the medieval period. Less organic deposits, notably the thick silty layer 1009 (Probe-hole 1) could represent short ground raising episodes in an otherwise continuous sequence of occupation. The layer of building debris 1037 (Probe-hole 4) might have been derived from the construction or demolition of a substantial late medieval building close by. The limestone block 1047 (Trial Pit 1) could have been an in situ part of a medieval building.

The increased use of brick as a building material in York from the 17th century onwards resulted in the construction of steadily larger buildings, which occupied the bulk of most properties, clearing away the medieval structures. This site was no exception; parts of the brick buildings standing on the King Street frontage of the site, including wall 1048 (Trial pit 1) are thought to date to the 17th-18th centuries. The post-medieval ground level was probably 7.5-8.5m AOD.

The early 19th-century rebuilding of Ouse Bridge and the associated re-modelling of the surrounding landscape appears to have had a major impact on this site, particularly its northern part. Walls 1053, 1058-9 and 1071-2 (Trial Pits 2, 3 and 5 respectively) are thought to have been built on the post-medieval ground surface, and the foundations formed by burying these walls to a depth of at least 1.3-1.6m, raising the ground surface to its current level. Wall 1058 might have been built on an earlier wall (1059), but it is more likely that this represents the re-use of older brick in the foundations. The backyard, instead of sloping down towards the river, now formed a fairly level surface that extended to King's Staith 1.5m below, the levelling deposits that raised the ground level apparently being retained by the stone wall of a medieval building. The north walls of two slum houses constructed at this point on the south side of the backyard, adjacent to the staith, survive incorporated in the existing warehouse. Wall 1064-5 (Trial Pit 4) was constructed from much closer to the current ground level, presumably as part of the construction of the extant warehouses.

6.4 Summary

The site investigations have shown that deep, well-stratified and waterlogged archaeological deposits, probably dating from the Roman to the later medieval periods, survive relatively intact beneath modern layers over most of the study area. The later medieval deposits, and possibly buildings, occur within 2m of the existing ground level.

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