

YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

**FORMER VW GARAGE,
LAYERTHORPE,
YORK**

**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**



**2001 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 39**

FORMER VW GARAGE,

LAYERTHORPE,

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL

EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

In June 2001 York Archaeological Trust conducted an archaeological evaluation of the site of the Former VW Garage, Layerthorpe, York. A total of six trenches were opened and the results from each were practically identical. In three trenches, Numbers 1, 2, and 5, evidence for the 19th century housing known to have occupied the site was found. No significant archaeological features, deposits, or structures were identified in any of the trenches and it was observed that in all trenches modern levelling or demolition deposits lay immediately above the natural subsoil. It is therefore concluded that the demolition of the 19th century housing was accompanied by a site wide stripping of any topsoil and archaeological deposits. Although it is possible that deep features may survive within the limits of the site it is felt that this is unlikely and that the site is of little archaeological interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 12th and 18th June 2001 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation on land at the former VW Garage, Layerthorpe, York (NGR SE 6112 5228, Figure 1).

All records of the evaluation are currently stored with the York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM:2001.10750.

The aim of the evaluation was to record the character, date and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits, structures, or features which would be vulnerable to disturbance or destruction should the proposed development proceed. The work was carried out in accordance with a specification prepared by York Archaeological Trust and approved by John Oxley, Archaeologist for the City of York Council.

The work was undertaken on behalf of Barratt Homes Ltd.

2. METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork consisted of the excavation of six trenches each 3m by 3m. The specification called for the excavation of all trenches to a maximum depth of 1.5m below the prevailing modern ground level or to the natural sub-soil whichever was reached first. Prior to any machining the area of each trench was examined thoroughly with a cable detector and the presence of obvious services such as drains was noted and taken into account in locating the trenches. Particular care was taken with Trench 6 since it lay close to a working electricity sub station in the southern angle of the site. Similar precautions were taken in the siting of Trench 2 since the proposed location was immediately adjacent to the petrol storage tanks of the garage. After this obviously modern deposits were removed by machine and then each trench was cleaned and examined for any features. From this point all excavation was by hand. During machine clearance it became apparent that natural deposits were very close to the modern surface and to check that these deposits were indeed natural a sondage approximately 1.2m long, 0.6m wide and 0.8m deep was dug by machine in one corner of each trench.

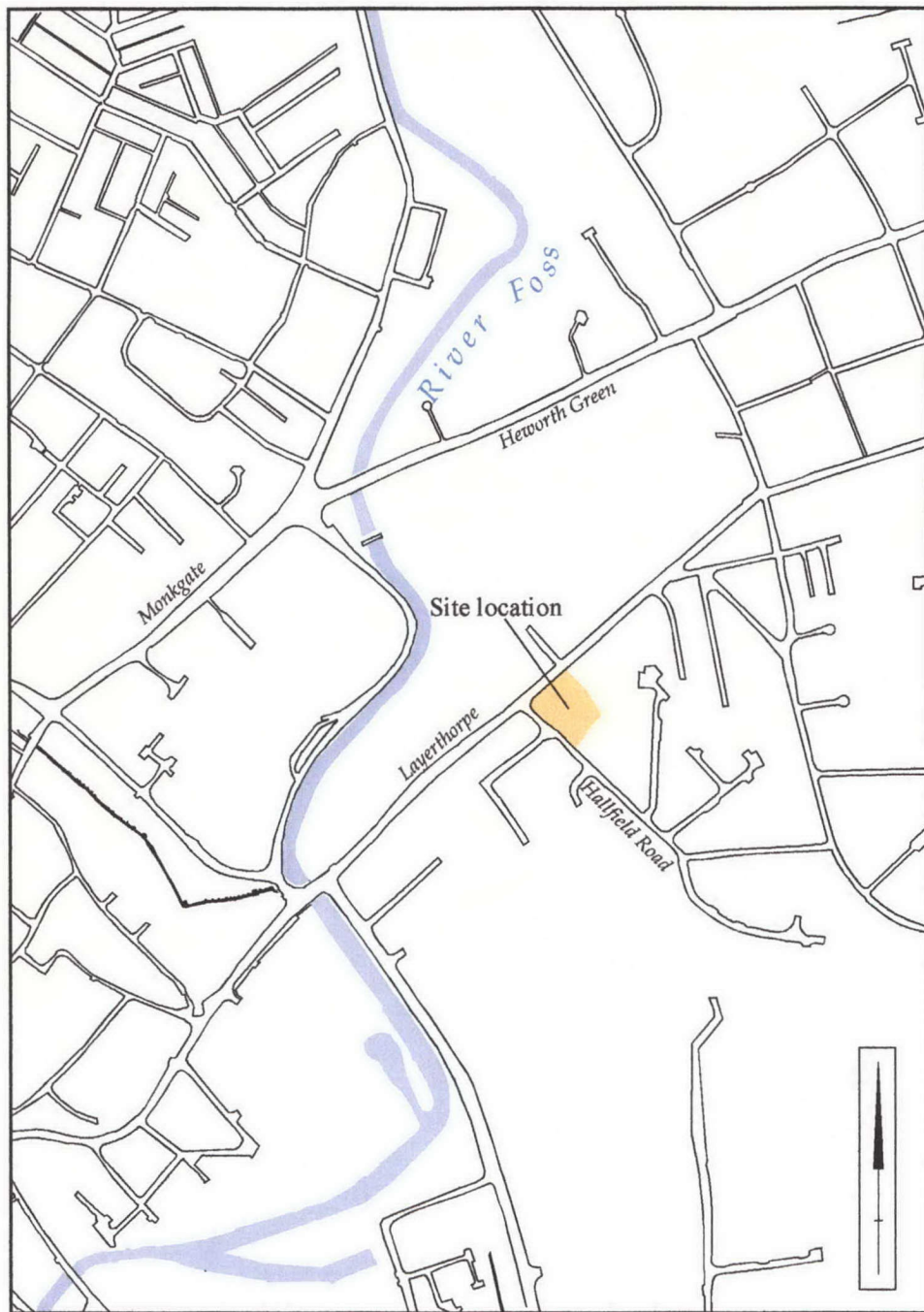


Figure 1 Site location plan

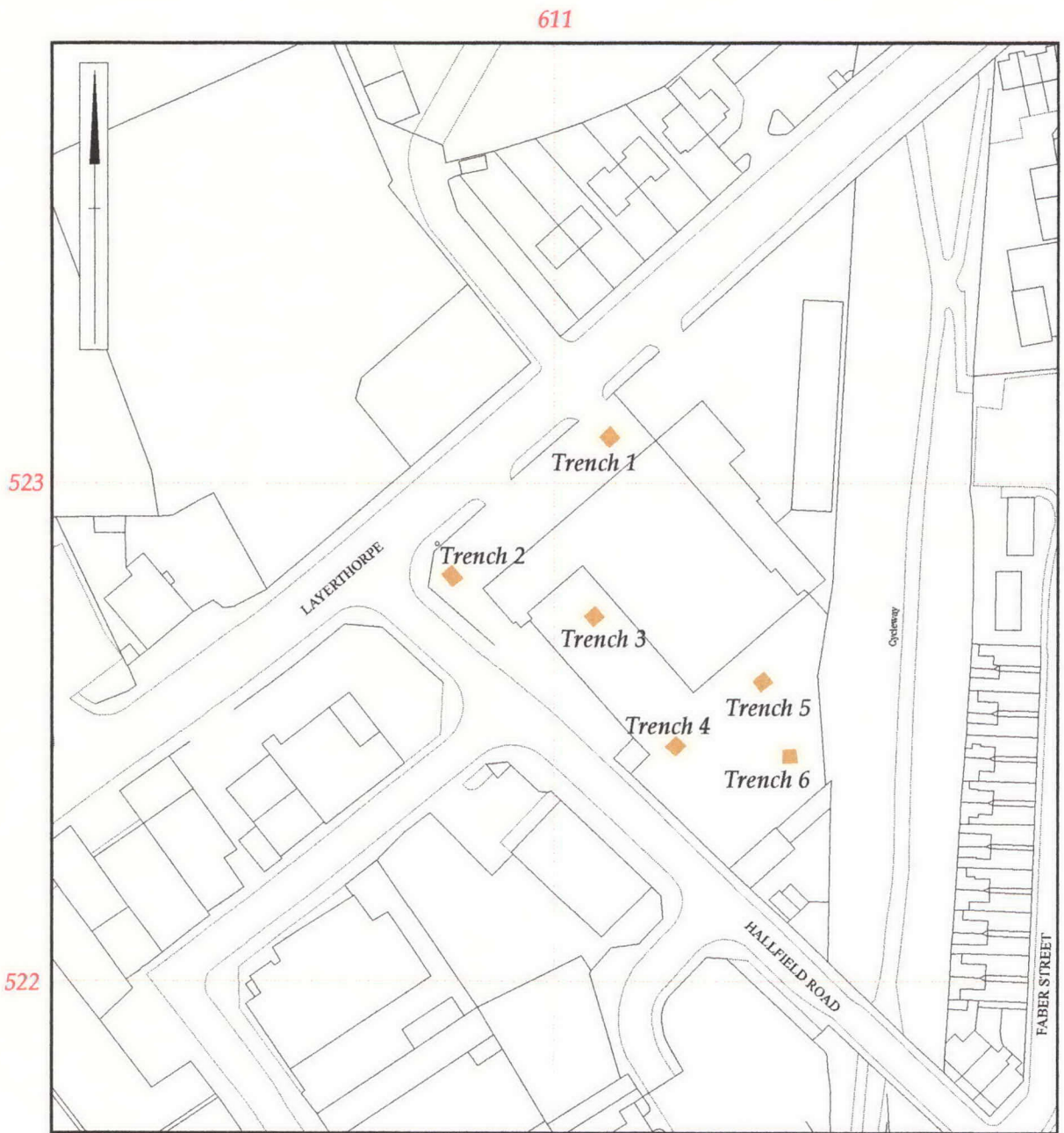


Figure 2 Trench location plan

Based on the Ordnance Survey Digital Map Data with
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0  50 metres

Recording followed the procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust *Context Recording Manual* (1996). At least one standing section of each trench was drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 and deposits and features within the trenches were normally recorded as single context plans at a scale of 1:20. Colour photographs were taken of any significant features and standing trench sections. A number of general record photographs of the site were also taken.

A programme of environmental sampling was agreed with the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, and English Heritage prior to commencement of the archaeological evaluation although this was to be subject to modification dependent on the nature of the deposits encountered. Since, after the work commenced, it became apparent that no archaeological deposits of great interest or significance existed on the site no soil samples were taken from this site. Also no bone, animal or human, was recovered from this site and there is therefore no environmental assessment included within this report. No pottery was recovered from this evaluation and the finds assessment is limited to a brief report on brick and tile from two of the trenches.

3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying drift geology of the site is Boulder clay over lacustrine clays. Beneath this the solid geology is of Bunter and Keuper sandstones laid down in the Triassic period some 225 million years ago (Geological Survey 1967).

The site lies c.400m north-east of Layerthorpe Bridge outside the walled medieval city north-east of the River Ouse and occupies the angle at the junction of the streets of Layerthorpe and Hallfield Road. To the east the site is bounded by a former railway line, now a cycle path. North-east of the site is a mixture of domestic properties and commercial premises. At the time of the evaluation roughly half the area of proposed development was occupied by the former garage buildings and the other half was open ground tarmaced, or in places concreted over, mainly for the parking and storage of motor vehicles although at the time of the evaluation this function had ceased and the site was vacant. The ground surface at the time of the works was fairly level and lay at c.12.4m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) with a slight rise to the south where the ground level was closer to c.13m AOD. The area investigated was roughly wedge-shaped and measured c.100m north-west to south-east and c.55m south-west to north-east.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 The site (Figure 1) lies approximately 0.4km outside the north-eastern defences of the medieval walled city north-east of the Ouse and close to the medieval village of Layerthorpe. The immediate area is poorly understood archaeologically and there has been almost no formal archaeological work close to the site. There have been a few investigations in the general area of the site carried out by the York Archaeological Trust, virtually all very small scale watching briefs, accession numbers 1983.39, 1984.1002, 1985.1025, 1985.1027, 1985.1037, 1986.13, 1987.1013, 1989.1021, 1992.1003, 1994.0222, 1995.0294, 1995.0316 (YAT 1997, Figure 1). Evidence from these investigations and an examination of the documentary and cartographic evidence for the site is discussed below period by period.

4.2 Prehistoric period (to 1st century AD)

No finds or activity dating to the prehistoric period have been discovered in the immediate vicinity of the development site.

4.3 Roman period (1st to 5th centuries AD)

The site lies east of the Roman fortress some 250m south-east of the main Roman road (RCHME 1, No 4) to Malton and the east coast. Some years before 1806 a tomb was found near Layerthorpe Postern built of tiles stamped by the Legion IX who were stationed in York until some time in the early second century AD. A lead coffin was found during the 19th century in a brick yard east of Foss Islands Road and south of Layerthorpe. It contained an inner wooden coffin in which there was a skeleton. A stone coffin is also known to have been found close to the lead coffin and pottery and other Roman objects are believed to have come from the general area of the coffins. A small cremation cemetery was disturbed during construction of the branch railway to Foss Islands in 1878. This lay some 400m to the north of the present site. In 1926 another small cremation cemetery of the Roman period was encountered. This was situated at the junction of Glen Road and Harcourt Street some 250m to the north-east of the current site. In the area of Peaseholme Green a trench excavated in the carriageway produced deep dumps of ash, kiln waste and tile and pottery wasters indicating an industrial zone outside the fortress active between c.100AD and c.300AD. Slightly closer to the present site archaeological investigations connected with the recent building works at Layerthorpe Bridge revealed an extensive cobbled area believed to be Roman in date stretching across the river and representing a fording point for a Roman road running to the east of York. There do not appear to be any modern finds dating to the Roman period from this area.

4.4 Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian periods (5th-11th centuries)

To date there is no evidence from investigations or chance discoveries to indicate activity dating to either period in the immediate area. Recent excavations connected with the new carriage ways of Layerthorpe Bridge, however, have revealed a pre-1068 sequence including a wattle revetted clay bank and a timber-revetted clay and cobble structure. These may be associated with a mill or possibly with leather preparation and of great significance regarding our understanding of the pre-conquest utilisation of the River Foss in this area.

4.5 Medieval period (11th-16th centuries)

Material of this period has not been found in any of the modern investigations by York Archaeological Trust in the area. A watching brief (YAT 1986.13) at the junction of Layerthorpe and Foss Islands Road suggested that the medieval church of St Mary and its churchyard had been largely destroyed at an unknown time in the past, only a limited amount of scattered human bone remaining. Foundations uncovered in 1921 towards the Foss Islands end of Layerthorpe have been interpreted as the remains of the church. More recently during the building of the new section of Layerthorpe bridge an extensive series of timber pile foundations set approximately in rows were uncovered on the site of the east abutment. Closely associated with these piles were many pegged timber beams and planks which may have been reused from an earlier building. These are thought to be the remains of the medieval bridge.

4.6 Post-Medieval period (16th-19th centuries)

Evidence for this period is not abundant but the investigation at the site of St Mary's Church (YAT 1986.13) did locate a post-medieval burial and evidence for a structure of unknown function belonging to the period. In an excavation and watching brief at 51 Heworth Green (YAT 1983.39) an 18th century drain was recorded and observations at Foss House Grange (YAT 1985.1025) included the identification of post-medieval flood deposits.

4.7 Modern (19th-21st centuries)

The area has produced much evidence for this period, both above and below ground. At 77 Layerthorpe (YAT 1995.0294) a modern cellar and dump deposits were recorded and modern deposits were also noted at Heworth Green Railway Bridge (YAT 1989.1021). Modern build-ups and dumps have been recorded from 51 Heworth Green (YAT 1983.39) and modern garden soils from 1 Villa Grove, Heworth (YAT 1985.1037) and Walkers Yard, Foss Islands Road (YAT 1985.1027). A number of other small sites in the area have produced limited evidence for the period (YAT 1984.1002, 1987.1013, 1992.1003, 1994.0222, 1995.0316).

4.8 Cartographic and Historical Evidence.

The earliest map of the area is one drawn by John Speed and published in 1610. This map shows that the area was mainly open ground or fields but with a few houses at the Layerthorpe street front which may be within the bounds of the present site. It also shows a road, probably HallField Road, leading south from Layerthorpe to a large structure which is probably the hall that gave the area, HallFields, named as such by the late 15th century, its name. Archer's map of 1682 also covers the present site but shows only open fields between the site and Layerthorpe Bridge as does Horsley's map of 1694. Drake's map of 1736 and Todd's of 1760 again show only fields but a few houses along the streetfront are marked on Baines map of 1822. By the time of Cooper's map of 1832 the area has been largely developed with domestic housing and this remains the case on all maps of the area during the rest of the 19th century and a little over half of the 20th century. Some interesting changes can be gleaned from the 19th century maps. The present Redeness Street no longer leads to Layerthorpe as it originally did and HallField Road has been altered in width and alignment at its junction with Layerthorpe. The present site was bisected by Duke of York Street, part of the early 19th century development of the area. The housing on the site was demolished during the early 1960's and the present garage buildings are shown on an Ordnance Survey map of 1970. On none of the maps mentioned is the site of St Mary's Church indicated but it is marked on a map of medieval York in Stacpoole's *The Noble City of York* (pp267) and on a plan in the *Victoria County History* (VCH 1961).

The origins of Layerthorpe, as with most suburban areas, are somewhat obscure but the "thorpe" element in the name is of Anglo-Scandinavian origin and means settlement raising the possibility of pre-conquest activity on or close to the site under investigation. The "Layer" element is not so clear but may derive from Leger meaning a burial place, or perhaps more likely, Laira or Leira, meaning a clayey place. There is evidence to suggest that prior to the Norman conquest Layerthorpe was variously known as Larethorp, Leirthorp, or Legathorpe. After the conquest the Foss was dammed at Castle Mills and the area between there and Layerthorpe was flooded becoming the King's Fishpool which was tightly regulated through the medieval period. By the

17th century it was shrinking and in decay forming an area of marshy islands rather than a continuous sheet of water. In the Layerthorpe area the northernmost part of the King's Fishpool was crossed by Layerthorpe Bridge which was in existence by 1200. A number of documents refer to it during the medieval and post-medieval periods and it appears to have survived until 1829 when it was demolished and a new bridge built on the same site. The local parish church during the medieval period, St Mary's, is first mentioned in the 12th century but is believed to have been in decay by the 15th century and it was united with St Cuthbert's, Peasholme Green, in 1586. Medieval documents also record that the Vicars Choral held land in the area and had two windmills and a tile works there in the 14th century. This association with ceramic products appears to have continued into the 19th century when it is recorded that Henry Kidd bought a brickworks on the Hallfields in 1836. It is possible that much of the local housing erected in the earlier 19th century was built with products from this brickworks. An outbreak of plague in York in 1538 led to a number of buildings in Layerthorpe being used to house the victims suggesting that the area was fairly isolated and not very populous. Much of the documentary evidence from the 18th and early 19th centuries involves the buying and selling of grazing land in the area but some of these references do shed light on the scale and nature of buildings in the area before it became largely built up. The area of the site was covered with domestic housing in the 1820's with some of the earliest streets being Bilton Street, Redeness Street, and Duke of York Street. A primary school to serve the new residents was opened in Bilton Street in 1832 and finally closed after years of contraction in 1956. This area was considered to be slum housing by the 1930's but not cleared until the 1960's.

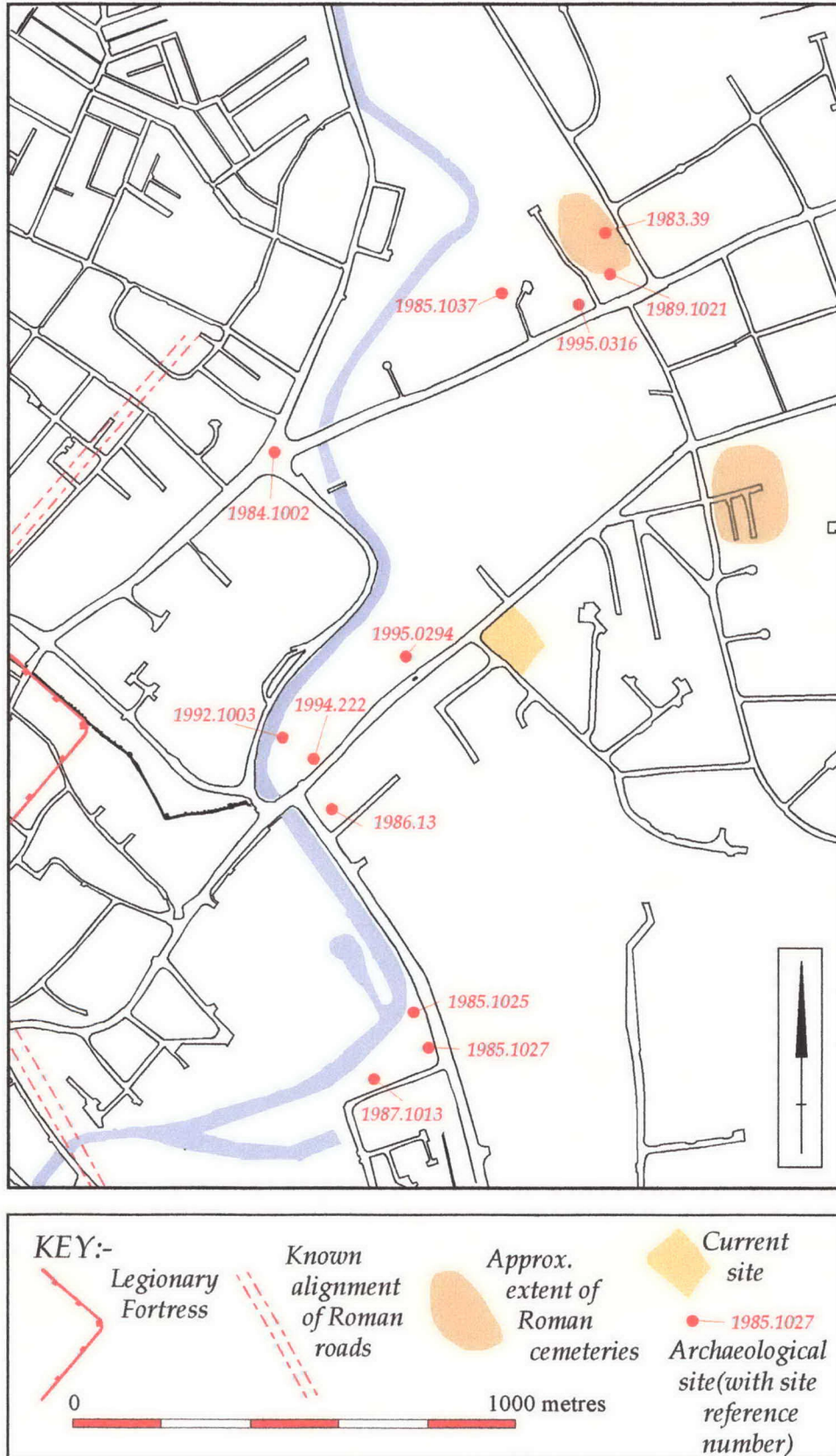


Figure 3 Archaeological evidence in the vicinity

5. THE EXCAVATIONS

5.1 Trench 1 (Figure 4)

5.1.1 The earliest deposit in this trench, at c.12.10m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum), c.0.25m BGL (Below Ground Level), was a very compact orange-brown clay (1002) which was the natural subsoil. Overlying it was a levelling deposit of pale yellow crushed limestone (1001) which formed the bedding for the modern tarmac surface (1000) which lay at c.12.35m AOD.

5.2 Trench 2 (Figure 5)

5.2.1 In this trench the lowest deposit, at between c.11.77m AOD and 12.02m AOD, 0.54m and 0.26m BGL, was a mid orange-brown slightly silty clay (2008). It was cut by a construction trench (2023) aligned approximately north-east to south-west. It was approximately 0.36m wide and at least 0.36m deep with near vertical sides and a flat base. Within it was a culvert made up of several different components. The base consisted of a horizontal row of tiles (2021) measuring c.0.21m by 0.02m in cross section. On top of each side of the row of tiles was a brick wall (2018) one brick thick and three bricks high. These bricks measured 0.23m by 0.11m by 0.07m and one that was retained was dated to the 18th - 19th century. In the channel formed by 2021 and 2018 was moist deposit of very dark grey slightly clayey, slightly sandy, silt (2026). The space between the culvert, overall number 2028, and the construction cut 2023 had been backfilled with compact, slightly orange, dark brown sandy clay (2024).

5.2.2 Immediately above culvert cut 2023 was another construction cut (2014) along the same line. This cut was up to c.0.42m wide and c.0.20m deep with moderately sloping sides and a flat base formed by a layer of grey concrete (2017) which was c.0.02m thick. The cut had been capped with a row of thin bricks (2019). This upper channel had been lined with a dark brown sandy clay (2013) and during use filled up with a moist very dark grey slightly clayey sandy silt (2025). A brick from the capping was dated to the 17th - 19th century.

5.2.3 At a similar stratigraphic level as 2014 was a wall construction cut (2012) which was at least 0.46m wide and 0.22m deep with a steeply sloping south-east edge and a flat base. Within this cut was a brick wall (2010) aligned south-west to north-east and standing a maximum of three courses above the foundations, c.0.24m, high. Examination of the section suggested that the wall proper was c.0.25m wide and that the foundations, a single course of brick, were c.0.36m wide. The bricks were bonded with a hard off-white mortar and measured c.0.23m by 0.11m by 0.07m. A brick from 2010 was retained for examination and found to be 19th century in date. The construction trench, 2012, for this wall had been backfilled with a dark brown sandy clay (2011). The three components of this structure, 2010, 2011, 2012, were given the overall number 2029.

5.2.4 Approximately 0.9m north-west of 2029 was another fragment of brick wall (2007) running parallel to it. No construction cut was noted for this wall which consisted of a single foundation course of bricks c.0.36m wide capped with a single course of upstanding brick wall c.0.22m wide. The bricks were c.0.11m by 0.06m in cross-section and were bonded with a hard off-white mortar.

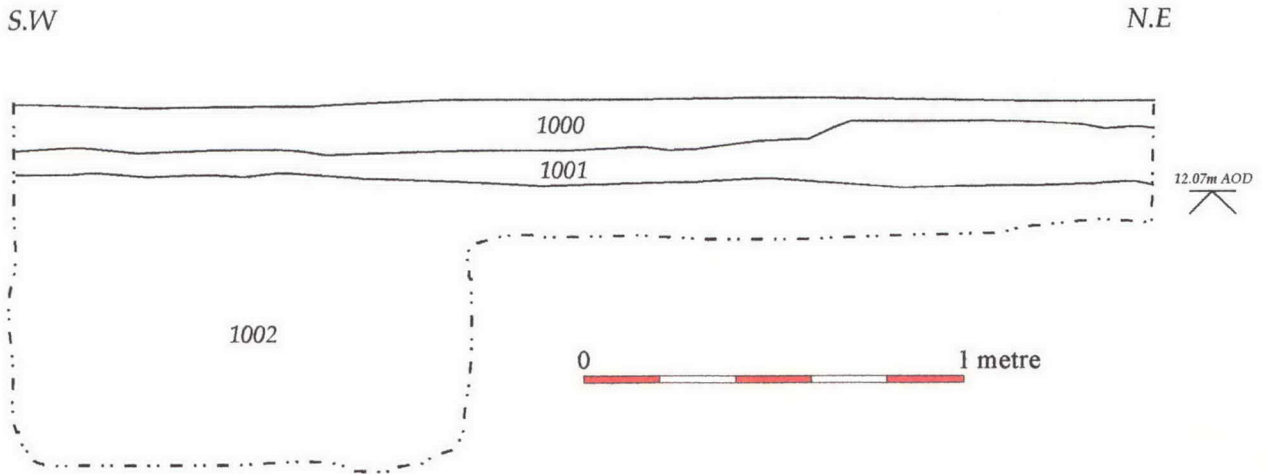


Figure 4 Trench 1 south-east facing section

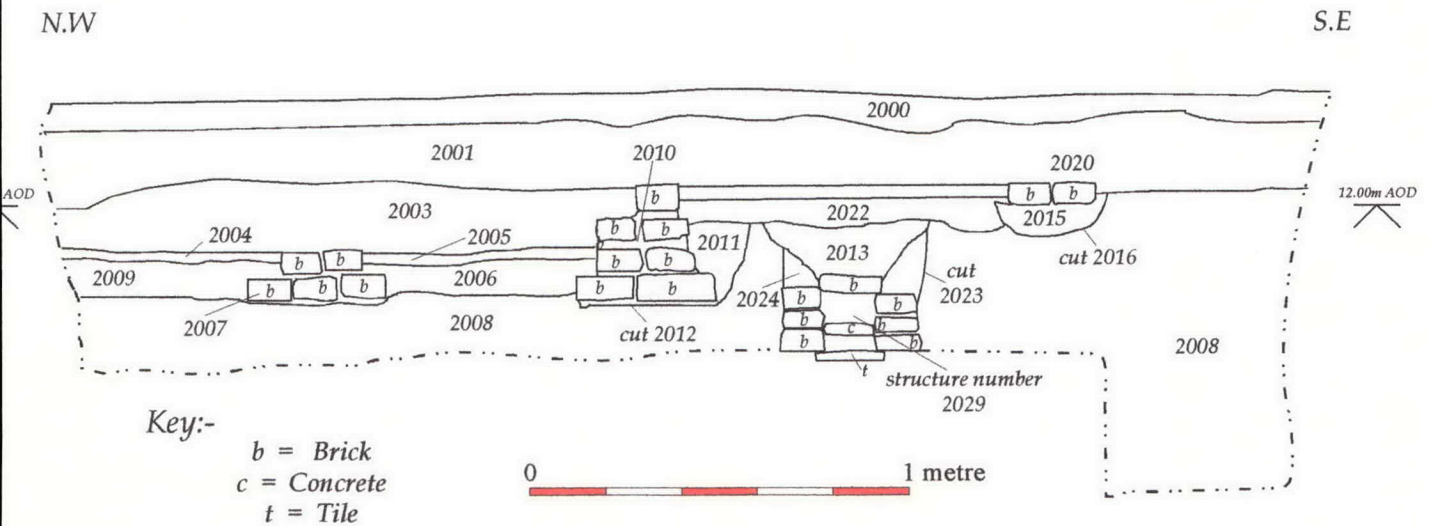


Figure 5 Trench 2 south-west facing section

5.2.5 Butting the south-east face of 2029 was a levelling deposit of brick rubble and mortar fragments (2022). This was cut to the south-east by a wall construction cut (2016) aligned north-east to south-west. It was c.0.28m wide and no more than 0.1m deep with very steeply sloping sides and a gently rounded base. This cut had been backfilled with a light greyish-brown sandy clay (2015) on top of which was a single course of brick wall (2020) with a width of c.0.23m. The two bricks observed were c.0.23m by 0.11m by 0.07m and were bonded with an off-white mortar. This structure was given the overall number 2027.

5.2.6 North-west of 2007 was a levelling deposit of dark orange-brown clay and brick rubble (2009) above which there was floor of mid grey concrete (2004). Between 2007 and 2029 was another levelling deposit of mixed gravel, brick fragments, broken tile, and small cobbles (2006). This was capped by a floor of mid grey concrete (2005). Further south-east, between walls 2029 and 2027, there was another floor of mid grey concrete (2002).

5.2.7 Overlying 2004 and 2005 was a probable demolition deposit of brick rubble and loose dark grey gravel (2003). It was sealed by a levelling deposit of crushed limestone (2001) which formed the bedding for the modern surface of tarmac (2000). This lay at c.12.3m AOD.

5.3 Trench 3 (Figure 6)

5.3.1 The lowest deposit recorded in this trench, at 12.05m AOD, 0.4m BGL, was a very compact orange-brown clay (3003) which was believed to be natural. Overlying it was a friable loose silty, sandy, ashy, black clinkery material (3002), possibly the result of burning after demolition. This was sealed by a levelling deposit of crushed limestone (3001) which formed the bedding for the modern surface of tarmac (3000). In this area it lay at c.12.45m AOD.

5.4 Trench 4 (Figure 7)

5.4.1 The earliest deposit in this trench was a firm brown clay (4004) which lay at c.12.45m AOD, c.0.25m BGL. Overlying this, in the north-east corner of the trench, was a mixed levelling deposit of dark grey loam and crushed limestone (4002) above which lay a modern surface of tarmac (4000). Much of the south-east edge of the trench appeared to have been re-surfaced after the laying down of the tarmac although it was not possible to confirm this. Above the natural along much of the south-east side of the trench was a levelling deposit which was a mixture of pale brown mortar and crushed limestone (4003). Above this was a c.0.15m thick layer of reinforced concrete (4001). This concrete and tarmac 4000 formed the modern ground surface which lay at c.12.7m AOD in this area.

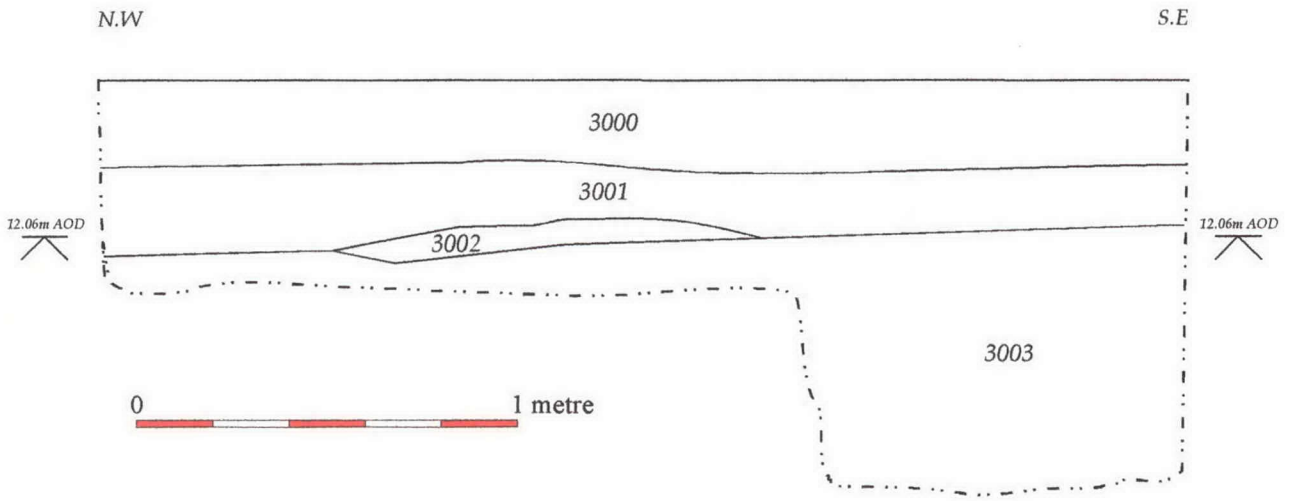


Figure 6 Trench 3 south-west facing section

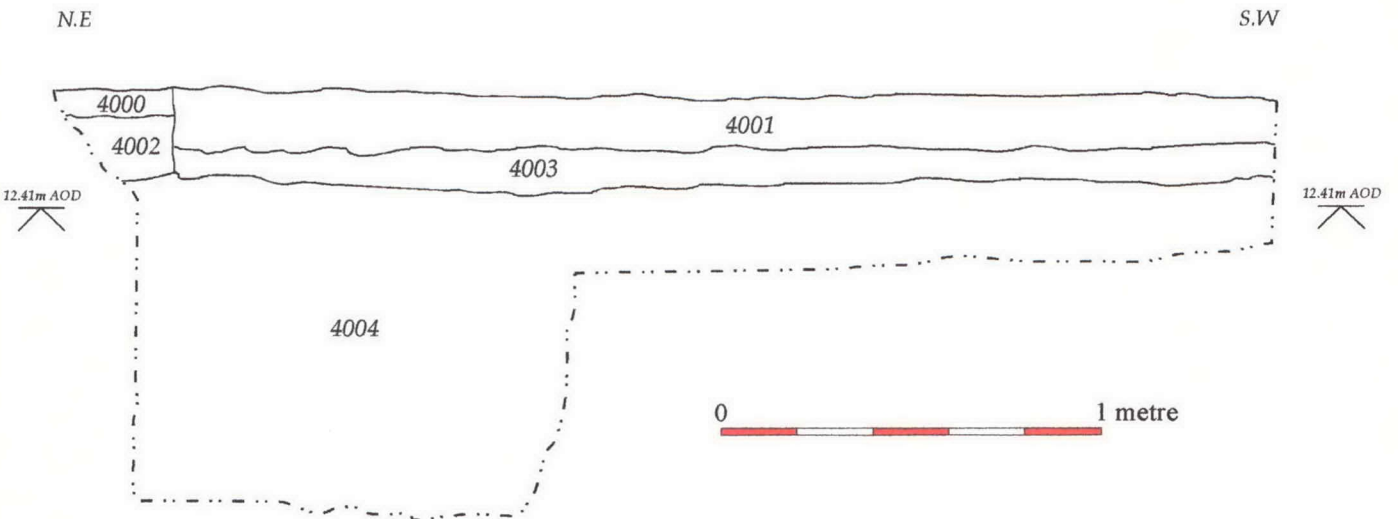


Figure 7 Trench 4 north-west facing section

5.5 Trench 5 (Figure 8)

5.5.1 In this trench the lowest deposit encountered was a firm mid brown clay (5004) which lay at c.12.6m AOD, c.0.4m BGL. This was thought to be the natural subsoil. Cut into it was brick-concrete encased ceramic pipe (5003) aligned approximately south-west to north-east. No attempt was made to remove this due to its solid construction. Overlying 5004 and 5003 was a possible demolition or levelling deposit consisting of a mixture of brick rubble and pale brown mortar (5002). It was sealed by a levelling deposit which was a mixture of brick rubble, yellowish-brown mortar, and mid red crushed brick (5001). This was overlain by a modern layer of tarmac (5000) which formed the present ground surface which in this area lay at c.12.95m AOD. Two unstratified bricks recovered during machine clearance of this trench were dated to the 19th century.

5.6 Trench 6 (Figure 9)

5.6.1 The earliest deposit recorded in this trench was a compact orange-brown clay (6002) which was thought to be the natural subsoil. It lay at c.12.8m AOD, 0.25m BGL. Overlying it was a mixture of brick rubble and crushed limestone (6001) which was a levelling deposit for the modern surface of tarmac (6000). This lay at c.13.05m AOD in the vicinity of this trench.

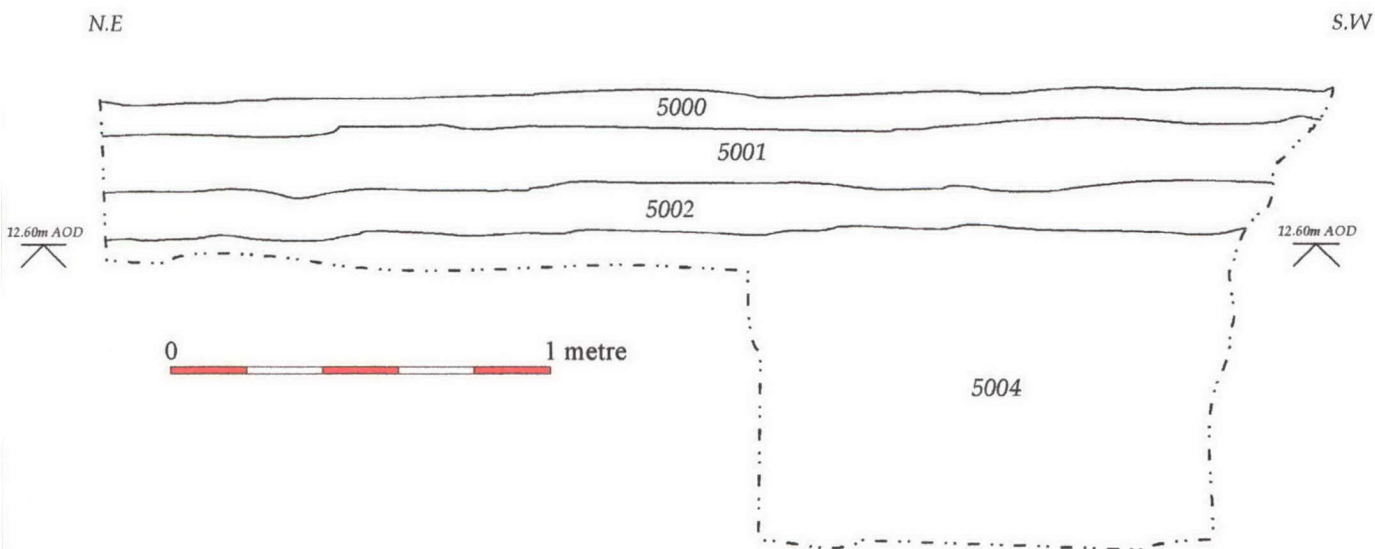


Figure 8 Trench 5 north-west facing section

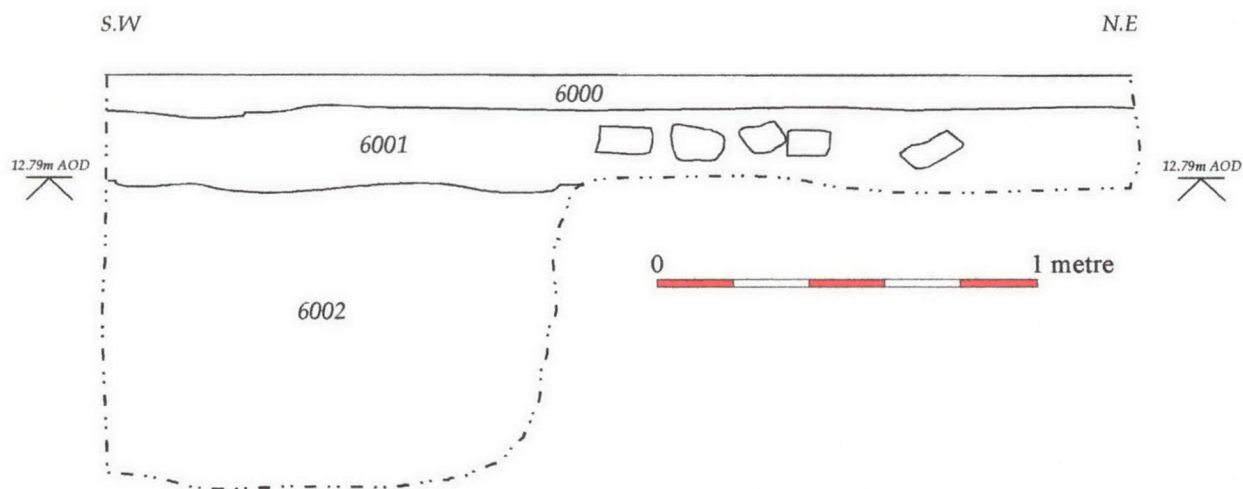


Figure 9 Trench 6 south-east facing section

6. FINDS ASSESSMENT

6.1 Ceramic Building Materials

6.1.1 Introduction

A small amount of material was submitted for examination. It dates from the post-medieval period.

6.1.2 Post-medieval material

Material present includes brick and one fragment of floor tile. The brick is hand-made and slop moulded, where the making mould is only wetted and not sanded. In addition some show turning marks on the base, where the brick was turned off the maker's table. One of the bricks appears to have raindrop marks where the brick was laid out in the open to dry. The floor tile would have been 10 inches square, is appears to have a typical local fabric. It has been used as flooring, as the top surface is worn.

6.1.3 Conclusion

This material is all safely post medieval in date, showing very typical post-medieval manufacturing processes. Considering that the site is close to a major centre of brickmaking in York during the 19th century, it is of particular interest and should be retained for further study by a ceramic building materials specialist, at which time it could fully recorded and some pieces might be discarded.

6.1.4 Context Listing Table

Key

Cxt = Context *L* = Complete length *B* = Complete breadth

T = Complete Thickness *FH* = Complete Flange Height

Date range = date range of form *Date* = estimated date of context

* = only minimum measurement available

NB: This list indicates only forms present and any variations (such as slag attached, or pawprints). It does not list every fragment of CBM

Cxt	Form	L	B	T	Comments	Date range	Date
Trench 5 u/s	Brick	22 8	11 3	7 0	Slop moulded; raindrop impression; turning mark; straw marks	19 th	19 th
Trench 5 u/s	Brick	22 9	11 1	7 4	Slop moulded; turning mark	19 th	19 th
2010	Brick	22 8	11 2	7 0	Slop moulded; mortar	19 th	19 th
2017	Floor		25 6	5 0	10 inches square; worn; finely sanded mould; local fabric	17-19 th	17-19 th
2018	Brick	22 9	10 9	5 5	Slop moulded; turning mark	18-19 th	18-19 th

7. CONCLUSIONS (including period by period analysis)

The complete and total lack of any buried remains, deposits, features, or structures, pre-dating the 19th century is extremely unusual for any site in a similar location to that of this site. It can be demonstrated, using documentary and cartographic evidence, that the area was mainly fields during the medieval and early to mid post-medieval periods and yet no evidence at all of agriculture was recovered during the evaluation. It was, however, clear that modern levelling and demolition deposits lay directly above the 19th century houses or the natural subsoil, which was only 0.25m below the surface in places. This and the vestigial remains of the housing on the site must indicate that at the time of demolition or shortly thereafter, in the 1960's, the site was subjected to a massive clearance and levelling programme which artificially lowered the ground level across the whole site and in doing so destroyed most, if not all, of the archaeology in the immediate area.

7.1 Prehistoric and Roman (pre 1st - 5th centuries AD)

No prehistoric remains were recovered from this site and given the location of the site and the provenance of previous prehistoric finds from the York area this is not unexpected. The total lack of Roman finds is, however, surprising since the site is known to lie in an area where finds of the period are not uncommon.

7.2 Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian (5th - 11th centuries AD)

Evidence for Anglian York and its environs is still uncommon and none was found on the present site. Finds and features from the Anglo-Scandinavian period are also rare in this area and again none were found during the evaluation.

7.3 Medieval (11th - 16th centuries AD)

No finds, features, or structures were located belonging to this period which must be considered most unusual given its location, immediately adjacent to a known medieval route of some significance.

7.4 Post-medieval (16th - 19th centuries AD)

The remains of the 19th century housing, erected by c.1832, could be attributed to the very late post-medieval period. Walls, floors, and drains of this period were definitely or probably seen in Trenches 1, 2, and 5 but were absent elsewhere. No deposits, other than a few in Trench 2 associated with construction and use of a structure, were noted from this site belonging to the period.

7.5 Modern (19th - 21st centuries)

Across the whole site much, and sometimes all, of the evidence from the trenches could be securely dated as modern although it consisted almost entirely of levelling deposits and modern

surfaces. The standing buildings on site are also of comparatively recent origin having been erected during the 1960's.

8. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

There is little doubt that all, or virtually all, the archaeology in the area of evaluation has been destroyed during the demolition and redevelopment work of the 1960's. Although it is possible that features of sufficient depth to escape this destruction may exist on the site no sign of any such features was located during the evaluation and it is therefore considered unlikely that any archaeological remains of any significance will be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development.

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