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YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

13-17 NEW STREET,
YORK

REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF



1998 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 64

13-17 NEW STREET,

YORK

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL

WATCHING BRIEF

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Abstract

In October and November 1998 York Archaeological Trust observed the excavation of four trenches within 13-17 New Street, York.

Trench 1 was a hand dug test pit to examine the ground conditions immediately below the concrete slab floor and it penetrated to a depth of c.1.1m. Although examination of the sections revealed a number of different layers these all appeared to contain modern brick and are likely to represent previous demolition and levelling in the area. No deposits of definite archaeological significance were identified in this trench which lay close to the south-east wall of the property.

In Trench 2, close to Trench 1, the uppermost c.1m was made up of deposits which were either definitely or probably modern demolition and levelling spreads. However, below these were deposits, sometimes very organic, dating broadly to the 12th/13th century and probably representing domestic waste disposal in an area of gardens or backyards. No evidence of any stone structures was noted but a horizontal timber at the base of the trench could possibly have been a sill beam for a small wooden structure such as a shed or outhouse.

In both Trench 3 and Trench 4 everything recorded was modern, mainly concrete foundations and demolition rubble, and there was no indication of any deposits, features, or structures of archaeological interest surviving close to the present ground surface.

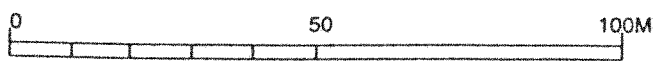
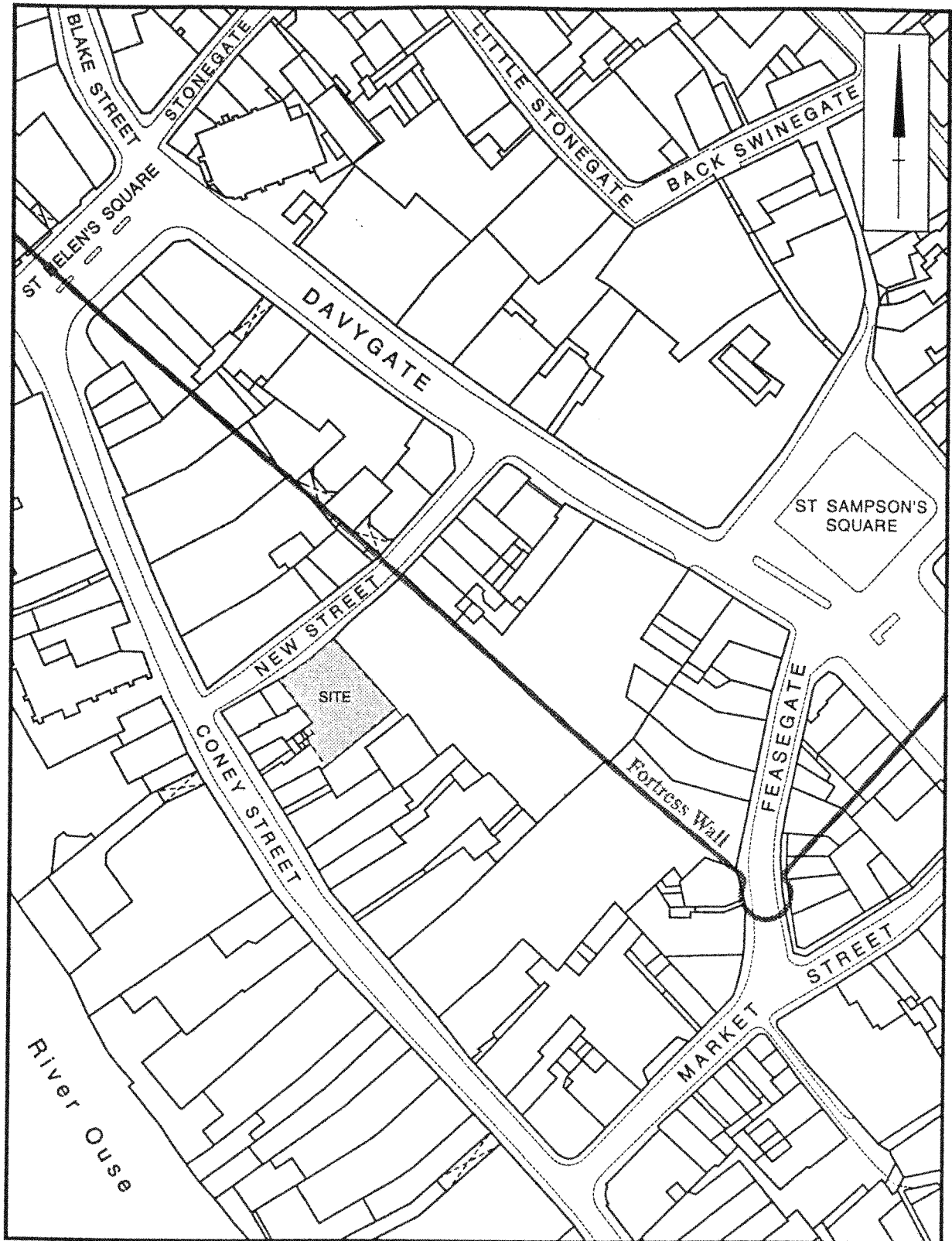
1. INTRODUCTION

Beginning on the 29th October 1998, York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological Watching Brief on the work undertaken during the alterations and refurbishment of 13-17 New Street, York (National Grid Reference SE 6021 5187)(Figure 1). The work was undertaken to fulfill a planning condition imposed on the development by the City of York Council.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by David Evans on behalf of the York Archaeological Trust to a specification supplied by the City of York Council. All records of the are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 1998.708.

The aim of the watching brief was to establish the character, date and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits which may be disturbed during any future operations on the site.

The owners of the site were Norwich Union Life and Pensions (managed by Norwich Union Investment Management Ltd) and Spring and Company Limited were the construction contractors.



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Figure 1, Site location plan

2. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological watching brief was instigated following archaeological investigations in the immediate area (YAT Field Reports 1996 Number 5 and 1997 Number 28).

There were three phases to the watching brief. The first involved the recording of a test pit (Trench 1), c.1.0m square and a maximum of 1.1m deep, dug by hand within the standing building close to the south-west wall of the property. Following this, observations were made as a pit (Trench 2), dug largely by a small machine, was excavated for a lift pit. It was approximately 3.3m by 3.1m and penetrated a maximum of c.1.85m below the existing ground level which lay at c.14.5m AOD. The third part of the work involved observation of hand and machine excavation along both sides of two pre-existing concrete ground beams in order to re-inforce them by increasing their width. These excavations (Trenches 3 and 4) were each c.7.5m by 2.0m and a maximum of c.1.45m deep (Figure 2).

The deposits revealed in section were at first, cleaned, sketched, measured and recorded until such time as it was thought unnecessary to proceed any further with the recording. Recording followed the procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust *Context Recording Manual* (1996).

3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

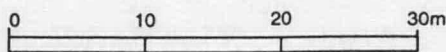
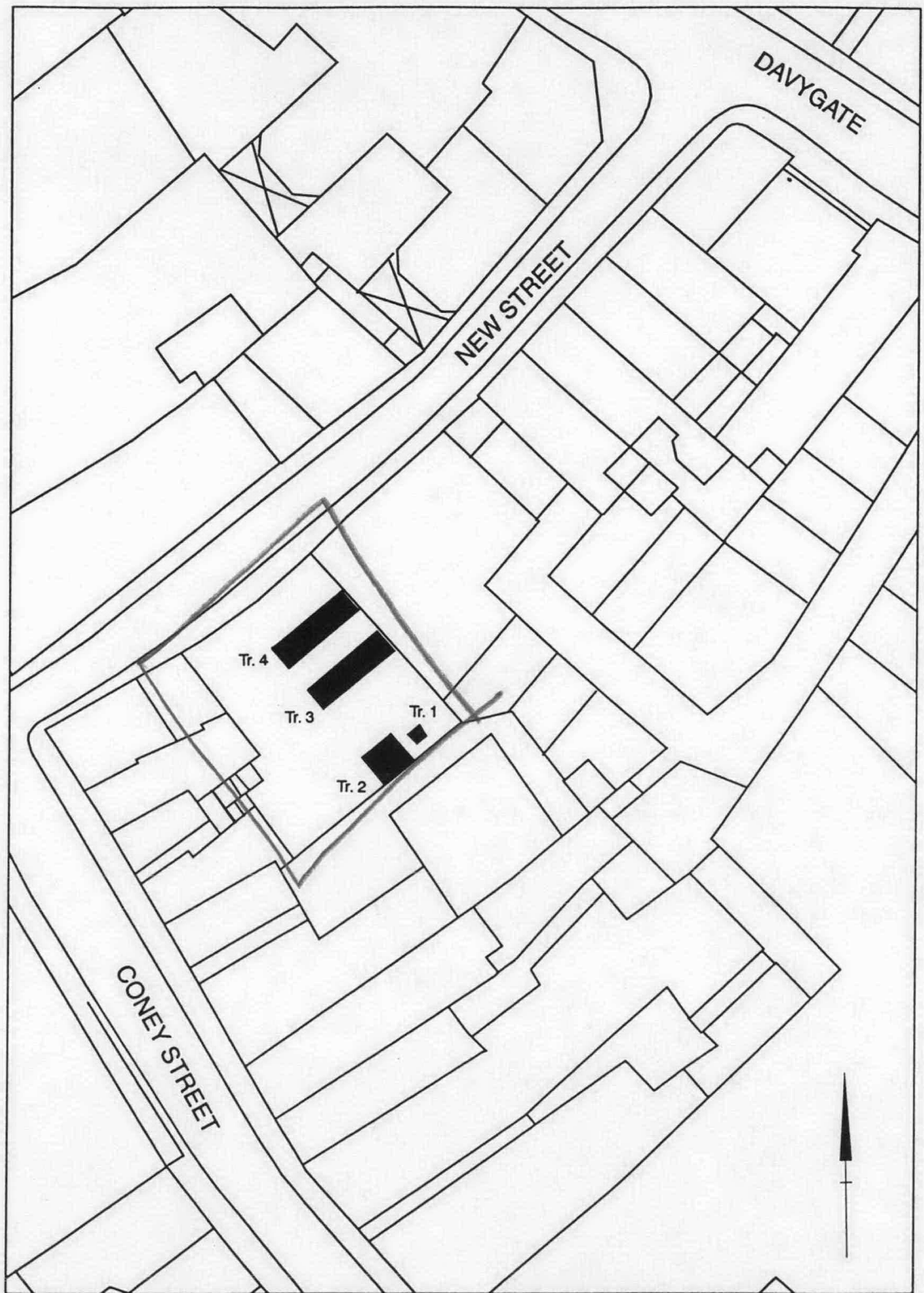
The underlying drift geology of the site is Boulder clay over lacustrine clays with sand and gravel. Beneath this the solid geology is of Bunter and Keuper sandstones laid down in the Triassic period some 225 million years ago

The site lies c.30m south-west of the curtain wall of the Roman Legionary Fortress and within the core of the medieval city north-east of the River Ouse. The area slopes gently down from Davygate at a height of c.14.80m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) to Coney Street at c.13.40m AOD. The site itself is level and lies at c.14.50m AOD and originally was composed of three separate properties now knocked into one.

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

This background to the immediate vicinity of 13-17 New Street has been compiled using easily accessible sources, from the results of previous archaeological investigations, and from cartographic evidence.

New Street, as its name suggests, is of relatively recent origin, being planned in 1745 and paved by 1747. Its construction involved the demolition of a derelict house fronting onto Coney Street and the removal of Davy Hall, a medieval prison and dwelling house of the hereditary lardiners (clerks of the kitchen) of the royal Forest of Galtres, at the Davygate end. Originally known as Cumberland Row, it was being referred to as New Street before the end of the 18th century and was generally known as New Street by the early 19th century.



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Figure 2, Trench location plan 5

Immediately to the north-east of the present site lay the New Street Chapel built for the Wesleyan Methodists in 1805. It closed in 1908 but the building was re-opened after conversion into the Tower Cinema in 1920. This was demolished in 1966 prior to the erection of the Davygate Centre which was itself demolished in 1997. The site is now occupied by a major new extension to the BHS Store opened earlier this year.

Adjacent and to the south-east is Judges Court, erected in the very early 18th century but possibly incorporating some parts of an earlier structure. All buildings close to the present site appear to be 18th century or later in date and the present structures occupying 13-17 New Street appear to be of the mid 20th century.

The cartographic evidence is consistent with the known history of the area with Benedict Horsley's map of 1694 showing the area well built up but with no New Street. The street is marked but not named on P.Chassereau's map dating to 1750, just three years after the construction of the street. A map of 1785 by Francis White names it as New Street and shows the street frontage fully built up as do all subsequent maps down to the present day.

The site is close to the line of the Roman fortress defences which cross the area to the north-east. Evidence from previous archaeological investigations suggests that the Roman road running outside the fortress wall may cross part of the site. Excavations by Peter Wenham in 1955/6 in the angle formed by New Street and Davygate encountered Roman buildings, drains, part of Interval Tower SW 3 and the remains of a timber tower. Further evidence was recorded during machine lowering of the area, by some 12 to 14 feet, during 1956-8. In 1965 contractors clearance for the erection of the Davygate Centre encountered portions of the fortress wall and some small parts of Interval Tower S.W.2. More recently, during March and April 1996, an evaluation excavation (YORYM:1996.85) by York Archaeological Trust within the empty Davygate Centre located well preserved deposits and features of the medieval period close to the New Street frontage. Further excavations, in advance of the BHS extension, close to the New Street frontage (YORYM:1997.125), produced features, structures and deposits of pre-conquest and medieval date.

5. THE WATCHING BRIEF

5.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

5.1.1 The earliest deposit observed in this trench, at c.13.40m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum), was a mid greyish-brown loam (1005) with a moderate number of flecks of pale yellow mortar. Above this was mid brown loam (1004) with flecks of white mortar and some patches of brown clay. Sealing 1004 was a layer of mid brown loam (1003) with flecks of white mortar.

5.1.2 Above 1003 was a spread of mainly brick rubble (1002) with some dark brown loam. Sealing this was a layer of concrete, c.0.20m thick. The uppermost context was the modern cement floor of the premises which was c.0.20m thick and lay at c.14.50m AOD.

SE

NW

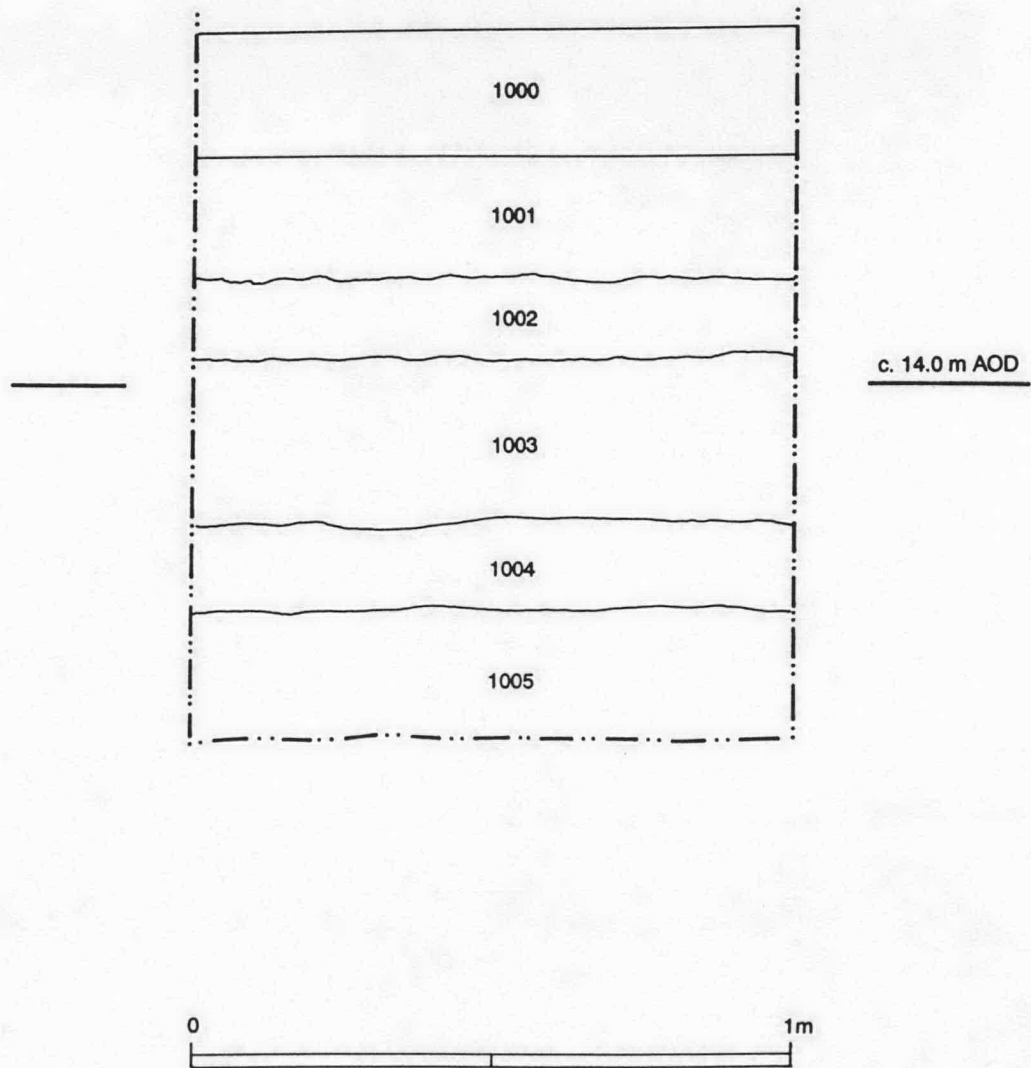


Figure 3, North-east facing section, trench 1

5.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

5.2.1 The lowest context recorded in this trench, at c.12.70m AOD, was a very dark greyish-brown slightly organic loam (2012). Within 2012 was a horizontal timber (2013). It protruded from the south-west section and appeared to run to the north-east but was only traced for a distance of c.0.24m within the trench. It was at least 0.19m wide. Sealing 2012 and 2013 was a mid brown very organic loam (2011) which was overlain by a mid grey slightly clayey loam (2010) containing moderate amounts of limestone and sandstone rubble and occasional flecks of mortar. Sealing this was a mid greyish-brown loam (2009) with occasional flecks of pale yellow mortar.

5.2.2 All other contexts seen during the excavation of this trench were or were thought to be modern. Above 2009 there was a layer of very dark grey slightly clayey loam (2008) which was below a mixture of limestone rubble and dark greyish-brown loam (2007) which contained moderate amounts of pale yellow mortar. Above this was a thin, c.0.10m, spread of brick rubble (2006) which formed the bedding for a 0.20m thick layer of concrete (2002). Over 2002 was the existing cement floor (2001) of the standing building. A number of modern contexts were seen at the extreme south-east end of the trench. These were; a setting of rough concrete (2005), above this was a concrete ground beam (2004) roughly 0.50m deep. Sitting on 2004 were mortared brick foundations (2003) which supported part of the south-east wall (2000) of the property. Modern ground level, on top of the floor 2001, was at c.14.5m AOD.

5.3 Trench 3 (Figure 5)

5.3.1 The maximum depth reached in this trench was c.1.45m below modern ground level, c.13.0m AOD. All contexts encountered were of obviously modern date. The lowest was a dump of brick and concrete rubble (3003) with much white mortar and some mid brown loam. This butted a thick, c.0.80m, concrete setting (3004) partly supporting the existing north-east wall (3002) of the property. Overlying concrete 3004 and butting wall 3002 was a 0.20m thick layer of concrete (3001) above which was the present cement floor (3000) of the building. Modern ground level was at c.14.50m AOD.

5.4 Trench 4

5.4.1 The excavation of this trench was to the same depth as Trench 3 and the results were identical, with no deposits, features, or structures of archaeological interest being identified within the trench. No detailed records were considered necessary for this trench but its location was noted and a general record photograph taken showing Trenches 3 and 4.

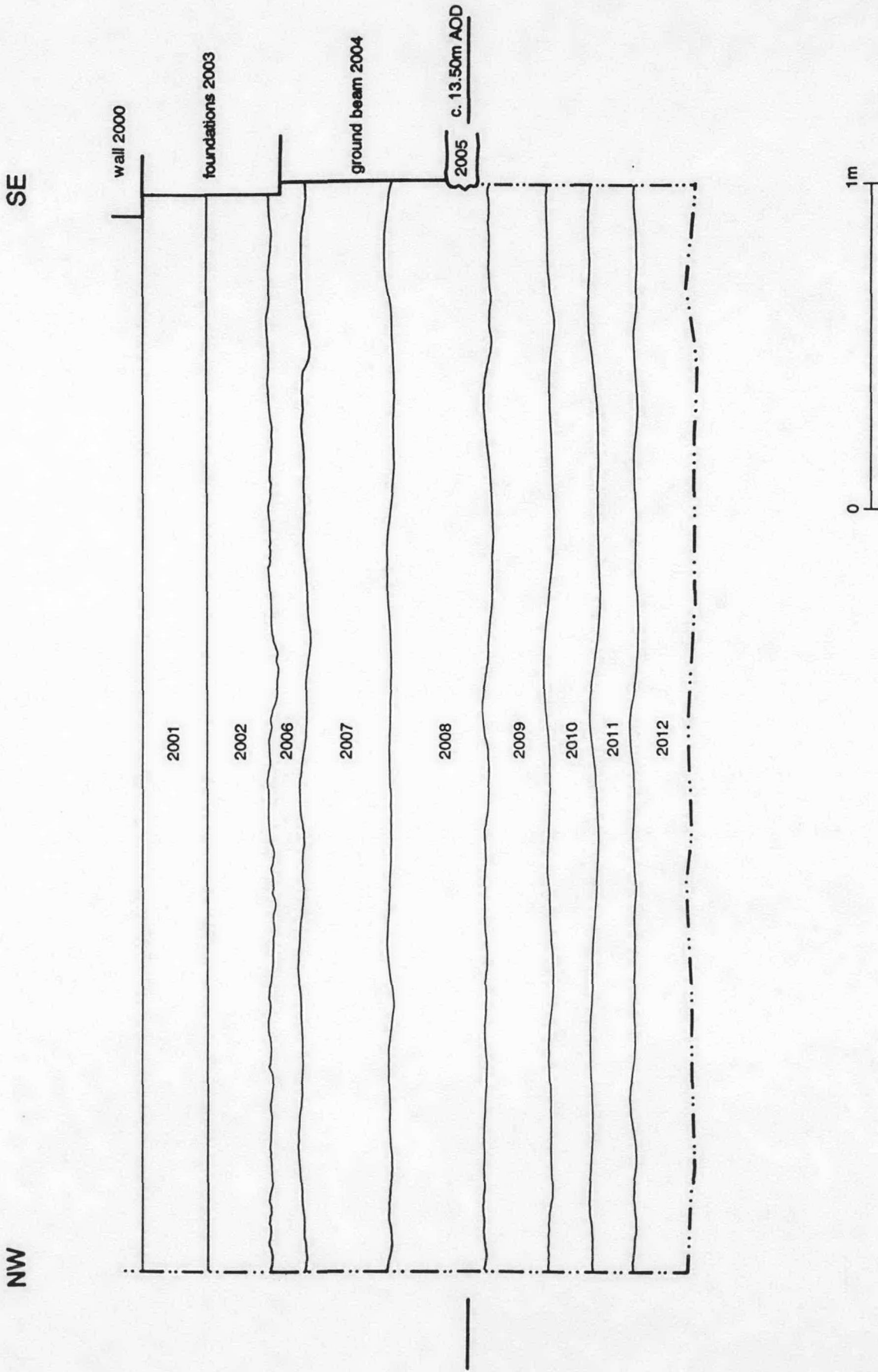


Figure 4, South-west facing section, trench 2

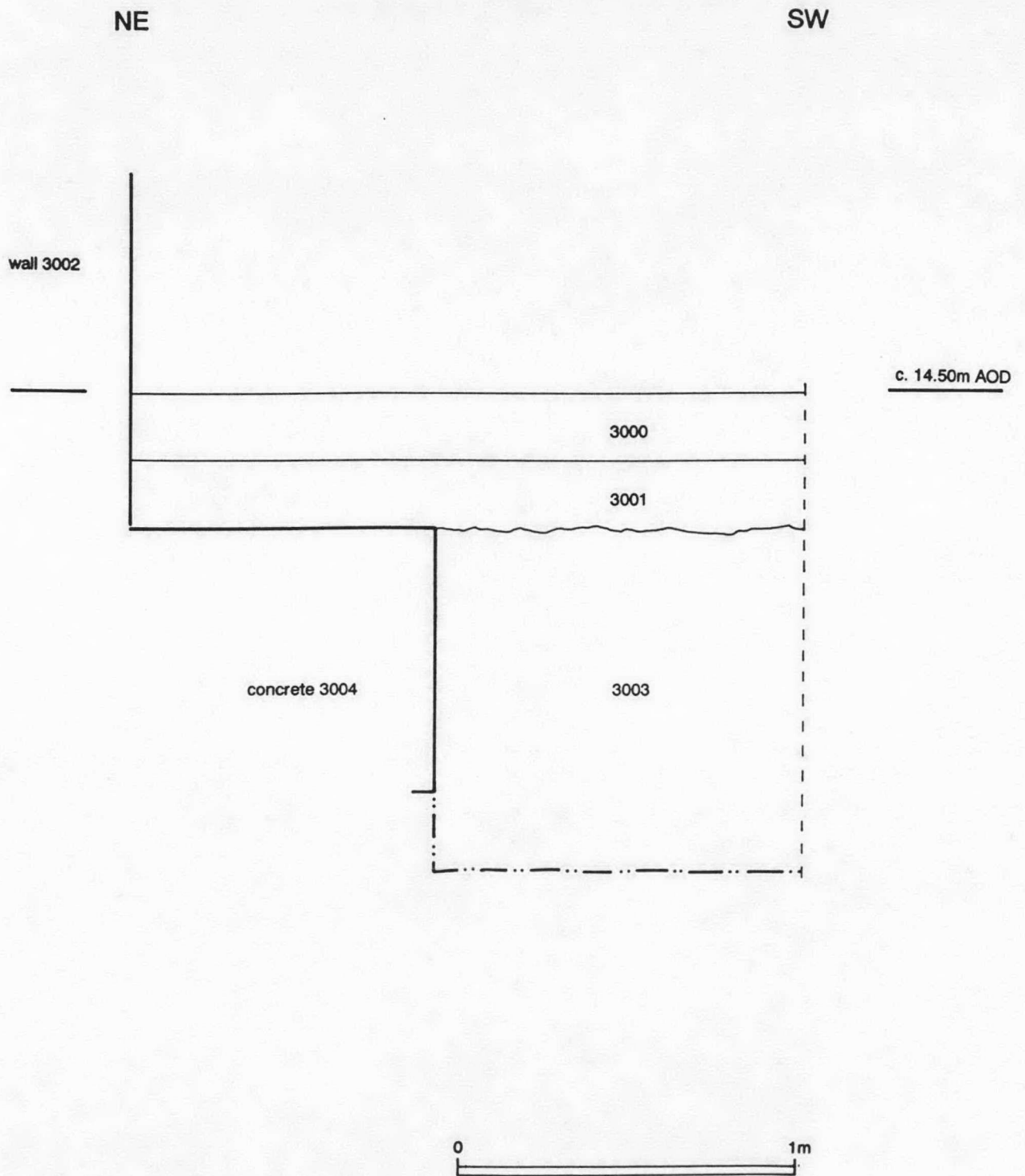


Figure 5, North-west facing, trench 3

6. Finds

6.1 Recorded Finds

A group of 14 small finds was recovered from the site. The group consisted largely of wood and leather fragments and a single antler tine tip and all of the material came from context 2009. The finds included seven offcuts of leather, six fragments of timber and an antler tine tip which may have been sawn. All are evidence for good organic preservation in the earlier medieval deposits but none is worthy of further study.

6.2 Pottery

All of the pottery recovered came from context 2009 which produced three sherds of Roman pot, two of which were 3rd century grey wares and the third a sherd of calcite-gritted ware of 4th century date. There were five sherds of gritty and splashed wares of late 11th and 12th century date; these include the rim from a cooking vessel. Two sherds of 13th century pottery including one local York Glazed ware and one imported 'developed' Stamford ware were also recovered. The two latest sherds were of post-medieval date, were clearly intrusive and comprised a sherd of 19th century earthenware and a sherd of late 19th or early 20th century transfer-printed ware.

6.3 Ceramic Building Materials

A single bag of ceramic building materials from the site was examined.

6.3.1 Roman material

One fragment of tegula (Roman roof tile) was identified from this site. There was also a fragment of material that may have been imbrex (Roman roof tile).

6.3.2 Medieval material

There was one piece of material that may have been a curved tile, which is a form of early medieval roof tile.

6.3.3 Post medieval material

There was one fragment of Victorian dust pressed tile. It showed signs of burning and probably came from a fire-surround.

6.3.4 Conclusions

This site shows evidence of Roman and medieval activity which has been disturbed by modern foundations.

6.3.5 Context listing

Context	Form/s	Date range	Spot date
2009	Tegula (small), ?Curved, ?Imbrex, Victorian dust pressed tile (B51T9, dark green mottled glaze)	Roman-Post medieval	Post medieval

7. CONCLUSIONS (including period by period analysis)

The excavation of these trenches has shown that over much of the immediate area lies a dump of modern material between 1m and c.1.5m or more thick. Also, towards the New Street frontage, modern concrete foundations penetrate quite deeply into the ground and may have destroyed a good deal of the later medieval and post-medieval stratigraphy in the area. However, in the vicinity of Trench 1 and Trench 2 in the south-east part of the site well preserved deposits of the medieval period do survive from c.1m below the modern ground level. There was no evidence of any stone structures, indeed the clean mortar free deposits in the lower part of Trench 2 argue against the presence of such buildings in this area. Considering that in the medieval period the site lay well away from any of the principal streets this may not be unexpected since such areas were normally used as gardens or for rubbish disposal. Although it was not possible to investigate timber 2013 to any great extent it did appear to be generally horizontal with a flat upper surface raising the possibility that it may have been a sill beam for a relatively insubstantial timber building such as a outhouse or garden shed. The moist organic layers below c.1.5m yielded small pieces of quite well preserved wood and some scraps of leather and may indicate that fully waterlogged deposits exist lower down. The damp deposits on this site are unexpected in view of the location of the site on the slope down towards the River Ouse and may be due to proximity to the ditch of the Roman fortress which would have attracted and retained water even when completely backfilled. These conclusions, concerning the medieval period, are to an extent tentative since they are based on the evidence of the only excavation, Trench 2, which revealed definite undisturbed deposits of the period.

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

None of the trenches went deep enough to reveal any evidence of prehistoric or Roman occupation but prehistoric activity in York is apparently absent apart from a very few objects which may be casual losses. Three sherds of late Roman pottery from Trench 2 hint at deposits, features and structures of the period at a lower level.

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

The depth reached by the trenches was not sufficient to reveal any activity of this period. Anglian occupation in York is, however, scarce and difficult to recognise and none of the finds hinted at occupation of the Anglian period. Although no finds were distinctly of the Anglo-Scandinavian era deposits, structures, and features of the 10th/11th century were discovered just north of the present site during excavations prior to the construction of the BHS extension. It is likely, therefore that such remains might be encountered on the present site at a lower level.

7.3 Medieval (11th - 16th centuries AD)

Deposits of medieval date were encountered within Trench 2 where they appeared to date to the 11th -13th centuries. Lower down these became richly organic and at the base of the trench they contained a piece of timber that may have been part of a small wooden building. Generally the nature of the deposits suggested that this area was gardens and/or backyards during the medieval period.

7.4 Post-medieval (16th - 18th centuries AD)

Intensive modern activity had apparently destroyed much, if not all, of the evidence for the post- medieval period which should be well represented on this site since New Street and its attendant buildings were initially creations of the 18th century. The only hint of structural activity in the period came from Trench 2 where a modern wall sat partly on top of an earlier wall which had been reduced in height and re-used as foundations.

7.5 Modern (19th and 20th centuries AD)

Modern activity was very extensive and appeared to constitute the only activity in Trenches 1, 3, and 4. It was mainly of a structural nature but deposits of brick rubble and mortar seen in all four trenches may represent modern demolition of post-medieval buildings with the demolition debris spread across the site to build up the ground level for the most recent buildings. Such a technique was observed nearby during excavations in the Former Davygate Centre raising the ground level by anything up to c.1.5m. The evidence from Trench 2 clearly demonstrates that modern activity here had raised the ground level by c.1.0m or more.

8. LIST OF SOURCES

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9. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Watching brief:	David Evans
Finds Assistant:	Jonathan Bateman
Report production:	David Evans
Recorded finds	Erica Paterson
Pottery	Ailsa Mainman
Ceramic Building Materials	Sandra Garside-Neville, Brick and Tile Services
Illustrations:	Mark Johnson
Editor:	David Brinklow