
LAND AT 6 GOVERNMENT HOUSE ROAD, YORK.

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
OSA REPORT No: OSA19EV10

June 2019.

OSA

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Report Summary.

REPORT NO: OSA19EV10

SITE NAME: 6 Government House Road York

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: SE 5900 5267.

PLANNING REF NO: 18/01783/FUL

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1.0 Abstract.

A two trench archaeological evaluation was undertaken prior to proposed development at No. 6 Government House Road, York. The trenches were required to evaluate the footprint of a proposed new dwelling as the site lies in an area with the potential to contain archaeological features. The evaluation was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to planning permission for the development.

Both of the trenches revealed a similar sequence of deposits, all of which appear to date to the 19th century or later. One trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1m whilst a sondage was excavated in the second trench, to a depth of 1.50m. The earliest deposit revealed in the two trenches was a levelling deposit, containing frequent brick rubble, probably associated with gardens that occupied the site in the 19th century. The uppermost deposits in the two trenches were both associated with mid 20th century ground raising dumps. The ground raising episodes were likely to relate to the sites riverside location and tendency for periodic flooding. A scheme of geotechnical investigation was also carried out on the site. This indicates that natural deposits were located at depths of between 0.80m on the northern edge of site and 2.20m further to the southwest.

No other archaeological features or finds were encountered during the evaluation. Any decision regarding the need for, nature and scale of further archaeological investigation on the site lies with the Local Planning Authority and their archaeological advisors. However, it is the opinion of On-Site Archaeology Ltd that based upon the results of the evaluation, further archaeological investigation is unlikely to produce any useful archaeological results.

2.0 Site Location and Geology.

The site is located approximately 1.2km to the northwest of the historic core of York, on the south side of the suburban village of Clifton, close to the River Ouse, centred at National Grid Reference SE 5900 5267 (Figure 1).

The proposed development is to comprise the construction of a new dwelling within the current garden of an existing dwelling, No 6 Government House Road, which is to be demolished.

The site is located on drift deposits of the Vale of York Formation comprising clay, sand and gravel. This overlies a solid geology of Sherwood Sandstone (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home>).

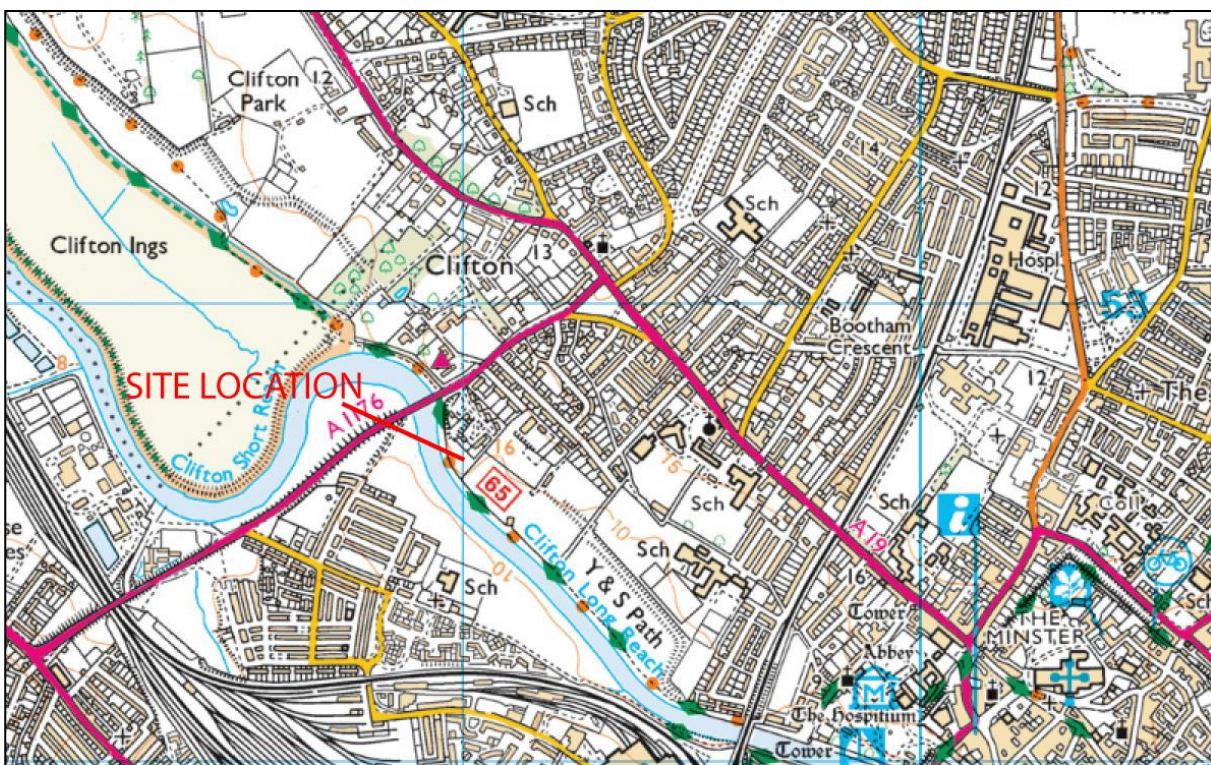


Figure 1. Site Location SE 5900 5267

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3.0 Archaeological Background.

Consultation advice issued by the City of York Council City archaeologist has identified that the site has the potential for Roman remains and features relating to the English Civil War.

RCHME (1962, p. 2) records the line of Roman Road 5. Road 5, from the northwest, enters the city at a point 275 ft. south of Shipton Road (N.G. 588533). Its course from the lane at the back of the Homestead Gardens to Water End (N.G. 58955315 to N.G. 59135291) was formerly marked by a parish boundary, now obsolete (*see* 60 ins. O.S. (1853), Sheet 4) but the laying out of the Gardens has obliterated both road and boundary. Opposite the entrance to the Gardens in Water End the road was exposed in 1893 in a sewer trench at a depth of 1½ ft; it was 24 ft. wide. Southeast of Water End the road was marked by another parish boundary, now also obsolete and represented by the boundary between the grounds of Clifton Croft and the back gardens of houses in Westminster Road; this continued the original alignment for 175 ft., then, after a slight change of direction at the north end of the outbuildings of Clifton Croft (N.G. 59145288), it marked the road for another 690 ft. to N.G. 593527. Some 770 ft. further southeast on the same alignment the road was found in 1954 in a position 26 ft. northeast of St. Peter's School Swimming Baths (N.G. 59455256); it was composed of cobbles and clay and approximately 25 ft. wide. Prolongation of the line would pass through the gateway of St. Mary's Abbey; according to a 13th-century document quoted by T. Widdrington, the abbey grounds included the site of an ancient street. The road was clearly designed to pass in front of the fortress, to the southwest gate and the river crossing before it. On the basis of the suggested alignment the site would be located approximately 200m to the southwest of the road.

An extensive cremation and inhumation cemetery was discovered in the late 17th and early 18th centuries in clay pits, for brick and tile works then situated S.W. of St. Peter's School, recognisable in fields to S.W. of the footpath between Queen Anne Grammar School and Westminster Road. The area is limited on the N.E. by Road 5, beyond which, in land occupied by playing fields and untouched by building-development, no discoveries are recorded. This site was first mentioned in 1681 by Dr. Martin Lister, who was more concerned to distinguish between different types of pottery than to describe individual finds from individual sites. More important accounts are by R. Thoresby and F. Drake. In 1692 the York schoolmaster, N. Hodgson, writing to Dr. Gale, described urns, small glass 'ampullae' and a hoard of 'above 100 copper coins' In 1696 a brick tomb was found, large enough to accommodate three or four corpses. In 1697 were found two cremations, pottery, including a flagon, and terracotta waterpipes; in 1698 a 'coffin' made of *tegulae* was found. In 1701 a lead coffin was found and in 1702 another, 7 ft. long and 9 ft. below ground containing a skeleton and enclosed in an outer casing made of oak planks 2½ ins. thick nailed together. In 1712 R. Thoresby described fourteen or sixteen small red urns surrounding a large one containing cremations, and three other urns also containing cremations. F. Drake describes 'graves for urns, square spots in the earth, the bottom covered with white sand on which the urns were placed, inverted, three, four, or more together', and two stone uninscribed sarcophagi 'lately discovered'. (RCHME, 1962, p.73-74). Further elements of this extensive Roman cemetery have been excavated more recently, for example at Wentworth House, The

Avenue, where a total of twenty inhumations were recorded, which probably dated from the mid 4th century. A single earlier Roman ditch was also recorded, which had been backfilled prior to the laying out of the burials. (Ottaway, 2011. p.150-152).

In October 2002 On-Site Archaeology carried out a watching brief during the excavation for support posts around a new tennis court at Clifton Holme, Ousecliffe Gardens, immediately to the east of Government House Road. The excavations were very small but revealed a single pit containing occasional fragments of 11th to 12th century pottery, together with a single residual sherd of late 9th to early 10th century date, and a fragment of Roman tile. The pit was cut into natural deposits which were recorded at their highest to be within 0.40m of the modern ground surface. (OSA, 2002).

During the Spring and early Summer of 1644 Royalist forces were besieged within the city of York by Parliamentary armies totaling an estimated 30,000 strong. The northwestern part of the siege was under the control of the Earl of Manchester. The River Ouse to the south of the city, in the Fulford area was already secured by the use of a bridge of boats. Manchester constructed a similar bridge to the north. The precise location of this bridge is unclear as it was variously described as being 'to the west of the city', 'at Poppleton', 'Poppleton Ferry', 'over the Ouse' and 'in Clifton Ings'. Wenham considers the most likely location to be the latter, close to the site of the current Clifton Bridge, in close proximity of the site. In addition to the bridge the siege works included a number of forts and earthworks. Whilst there is no detailed documentary evidence for a redoubt on the Clifton side of the river Daniel Defoe in the 1720s referred to 'lines and bastions and demolished fortifications' and old additional works' which suggests a more extensive networks of smaller scale trenching. (For details see Wenham, P. 1970).

4.0 Methodology.

The aim of the archaeological evaluation was to gather sufficient information to establish the presence/absence, nature, date, depth, quality of survival and importance of any archaeological deposits. This would then enable an assessment of the potential and significance of the archaeology of the site to be made and the impact which development will have upon this. An informed decision could then be taken regarding the future treatment of the remains and any mitigative measures appropriate either in advance of and/or during development.

The evaluation comprised trial trenching of a sample of the proposed development area. There were two archaeological evaluation trenches each 2m wide and 10m long. The trial trenching configuration was agreed with the City Archaeologist. The locations of the trenches are shown on Figure 2. The trenches were initially excavated to a maximum safe working depth of 1.00m, at which depth 19th century dump deposits were still present. An additional 0.50m depth of these deposits was then excavated within a sondage in Trench 1. As natural deposits had not been revealed at this depth excavation was ceased.

Standard On-Site Archaeology techniques were followed throughout the evaluation. These involved the completion of a context sheet for each deposit, structure or cut encountered, along with plans and/or sections drawn to scale. A photographic and drawing record of the deposits and features was also maintained.

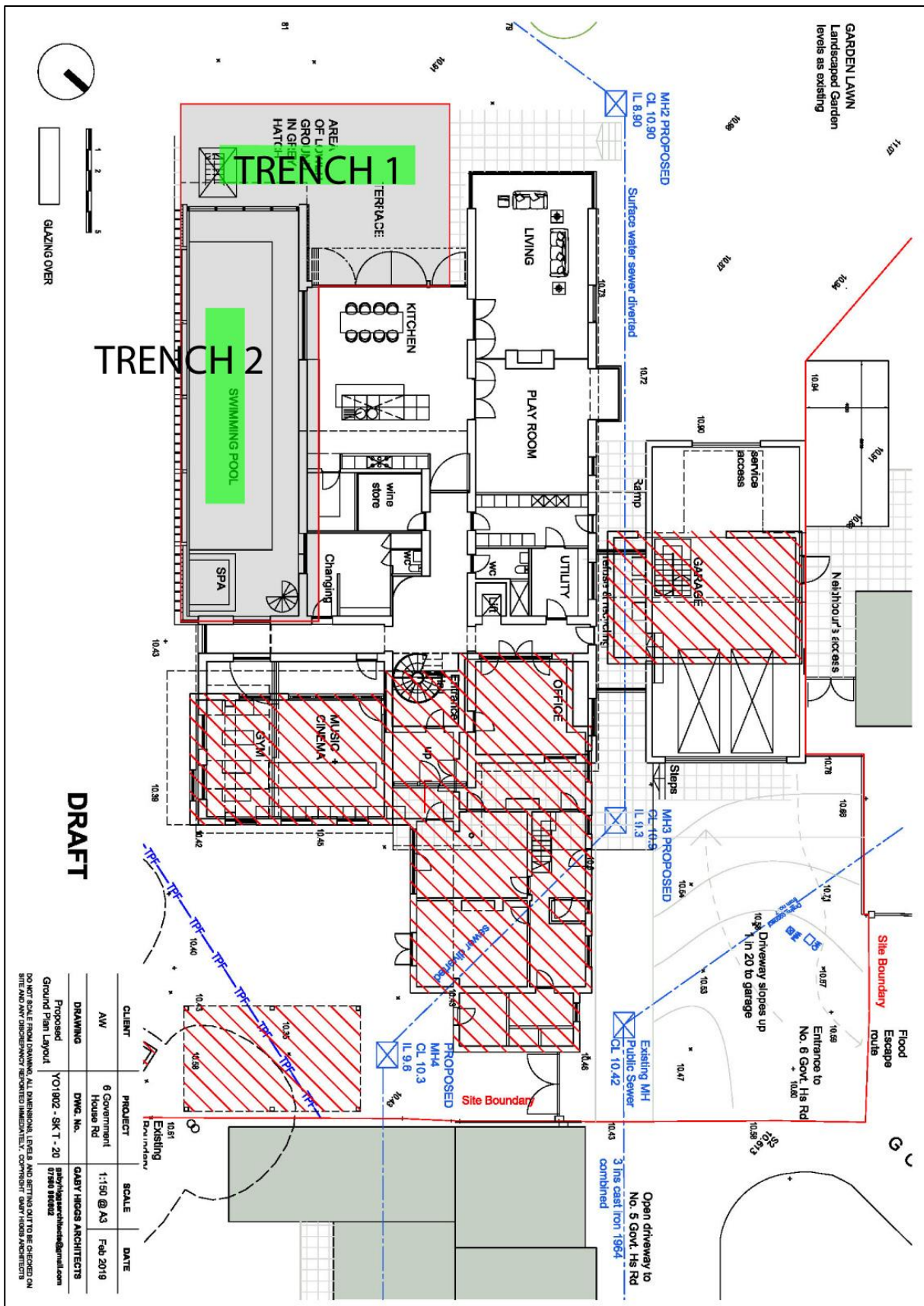


Figure 2. Trench locations, relative to the proposed development footprint.

5.0 Results.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the southwestern part of the new building footprint, was aligned southeast to northwest and was 10m x 2m. It was initially excavated to a safe working depth of 1m from the modern ground surface. A sondage was then excavated for a further depth of 0.50m, down to a level of 9.30m AOD. Natural deposits were not reached at this level.

The earliest exposed deposit within the trench was a compact mixed pale yellow brown clay containing frequent crushed brick rubble (104). This was predominantly recorded within the deeper sondage excavated in the centre of the trench and was a minimum of 0.40m deep, extending below the basal limit of the trench. Occasional fragments of pottery, dating to the 19th century, were recovered from this deposit. This deposit appear to form part of an extensive episode of ground raising or landscaping.

Deposit (104) was sealed by a 0.15m thick layer of friable mid brown clay silt (103), followed by a 0.20m thick layer of friable dark brownish grey clay silt (102). Both of these layers contained occasional flecks and small fragments of ceramic building material (CBM). They are likely to represent soil horizons dating to the late 19th and early 20th century landscaped gardens that occupied the site.

Former soil horizon (102) was overlain by a 0.80m thick layer of mixed mid grey brown sandy clay silt with very frequent brick, concrete, mortar, and metal rubble (101). This is clearly derived from demolition rubble, dating from the mid 20th century and is likely to represent a further episode of ground raising prior to the construction of Government House Road. This was sealed by a thin modern topsoil (100) forming the current surface of the existing garden. The modern ground surface was at a height of 10.82m AOD

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the southeastern part of the new building footprint, was aligned southwest to northeast and was 10m x 2m. It was excavated to a safe working depth of 1m from the modern ground surface, down to a level of 9.65m AOD. Natural deposits were not reached at this level.

The earliest deposit recorded within the trench was a compact mixed pale yellow brown clay containing frequent crushed brick rubble (204), which was recorded throughout the base of the trench. This is clearly a continuation of deposit (104) recorded in Trench 1, which contained late 19th century pottery.

The sequence of deposits recorded in Trench 2 was clearly the same as in Trench 1, with the earliest dump deposit being overlain by soil horizons (203 and 202), followed by a 20th century rubble filled dump (201) and modern topsoil (200). The modern ground surface was at a height of 10.82m AOD.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations.

No archaeological features were discovered in the two trenches excavated for this investigation. Both trenches showed a similar sequence of deposits. The earliest deposit revealed was a thick dump, containing frequent fragments of brick rubble together with occasional pottery dated to the 19th century at the earliest. Cartographic sources indicate that the site formed part of extensive gardens associated with the substantial residential property of Ousecliffe in the later 19th century (Figure 3). The earliest dump deposits are likely to be the result of landscaping associated with this property. The earliest dumps were sealed by a soil horizon suggestive of a burial topsoil, which is probably the garden soil of the 19th century property.

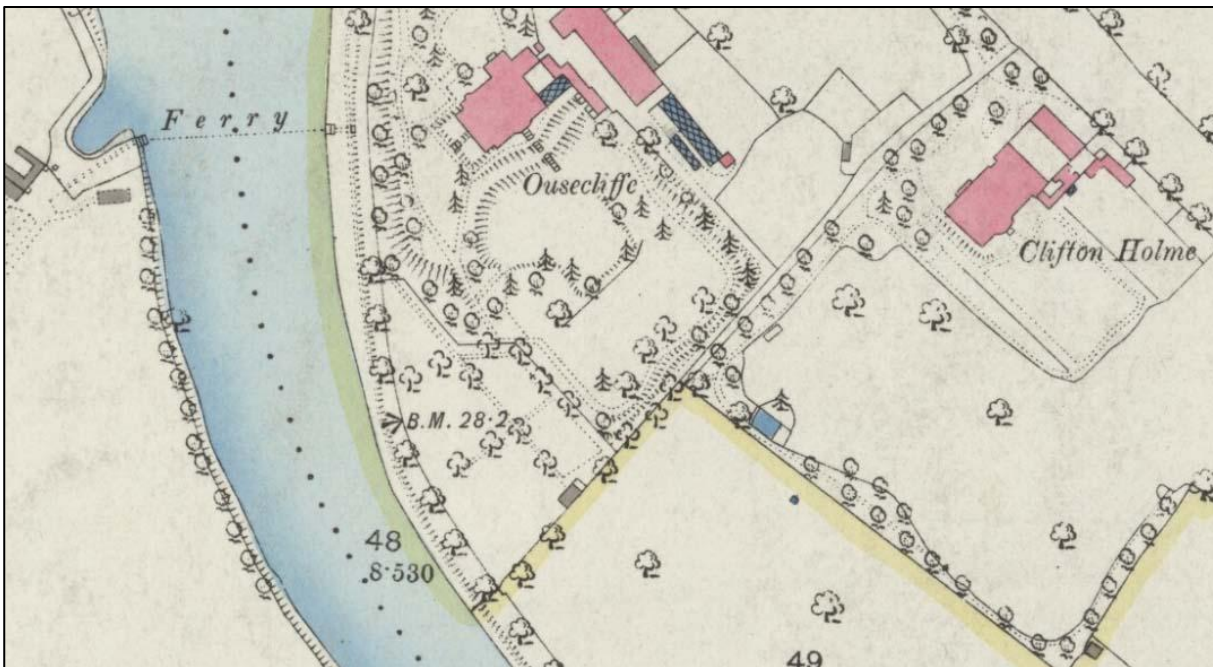


Figure 3. Extract from the 1892 Ordnance Survey map

During the mid 20th century the site was redeveloped and the 19th century Ousecliffe was renamed Government House (Figure 4). Further development within the former gardens to the southeast of the main building took place but these were subsequently demolished and replaced by the residential properties forming Government House Road by the 1970s. The uppermost dump deposits are likely to relate to the construction of Government House Road, utilising demolition material to raise the ground levels in a further attempt to prevent flooding. It is notable that the modern ground level within the gardens of Government House Road properties is approximately 1m higher than the St. Peter's School playing fields immediately to the southeast. This difference in level is almost certainly a result of the mid 20th century dumping represented by deposits (101) and (201) as the brick boundary wall, of probably 19th century date, was constructed at the lower level of the playing field.

A geotechnical investigation carried out in association with the proposed development of the site revealed made ground deposits to depths varying from 0.80m to 2.20m. The deepest of these were recorded to the southwest, towards the river end of the site.

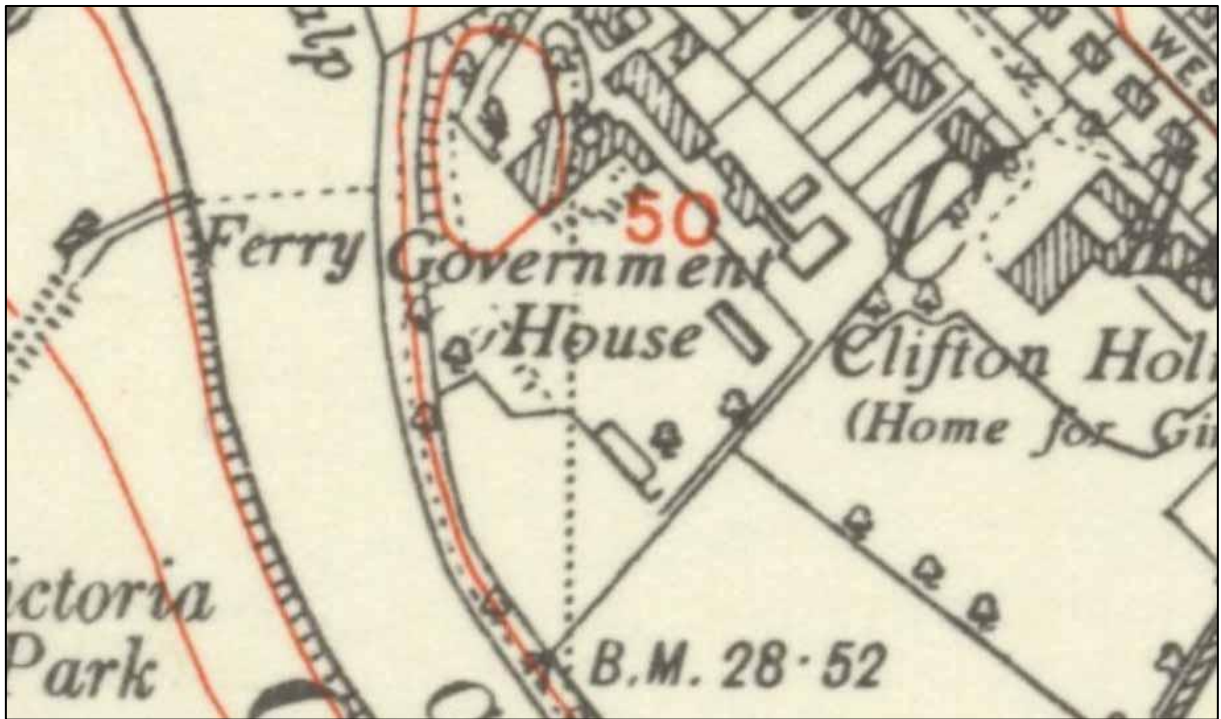


Figure 4. Extract from the 1952 Ordnance Survey map.

Any decision regarding the need for, nature and scale of further archaeological investigation on the site lies with the City of York Archaeologist. However, it is the opinion of On-Site Archaeology Ltd that based upon the results of the evaluation, further archaeological investigation is unlikely to produce any useful archaeological results.

7.0 Bibliography.

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8.0 Appendix 1: Archive Index.

8.1 List of contexts.

Context no.	Description	Thickness	Extent
Trench 1			
100	Mid grey brown sandy clay silt topsoil	0.15m	Tr.
101	mixed mid grey brown sandy clay silt with very frequent brick, concrete, mortar, and metal rubble	0.80m	Tr.
102	friable dark brownish grey clay silt	0.20m	Tr.
103	thick layer of friable mid brown clay silt	0.15m	Tr
104	mixed pale yellow brown clay containing frequent crushed brick rubble	0.40m +	Tr
Trench 2			
200	Mid grey brown sandy clay silt topsoil	0.15m	Tr.
201	mixed mid grey brown sandy clay silt with very frequent brick, concrete, mortar, and metal rubble	0.70m	Tr.
202	friable dark brownish grey clay silt	0.10m	Tr.
203	thick layer of friable mid brown clay silt	0.10m	Tr
204	mixed pale yellow brown clay containing frequent crushed brick rubble	0.05m +	Tr

8.2 Photographic register.

Frame no.	Description	View	Inits and date
1-11	Pre-start views	various	GB 220519
12-16	Man hole	various	GB 220519
17-56	Trench 1	various	GB 220519
57-65	Trench 2	various	TPR 220519
66-82	General views of existing garden	various	GB 220519
83-104	Backfilling	various	GB 220519

8.3 Drawing register.

Drawing no.	Description	Scale	Initials	Date
1	Tr.1 NE fac section.	1:20	GB	22/05/19
2	Tr 2 NW fac section	1:20	TPR	22/05/19

9.0 Appendix 2: Pottery Assessment.

by Berny McCluskey

On-Site Archaeology Ltd recovered two sherds of pottery during an archaeological investigation at 6 Government House, York. This report details the provisional identification and assessment of the pottery from this investigation.

Post-medieval and early modern pottery

The two sherds were recovered from context (104) and represented two vessels. The sherds were blue and white printed porcelain typical of pottery types during the 19th – 20th centuries.

Conclusion

The pottery is typical of early modern domestic discarded waste.

Retention

The two sherds are typical of 19th century domestic pottery and are of very low scientific value. Therefore they could be discarded following consultation and agreement with the City of York Council Archaeologist.

Bibliography

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10.0 Appendix 3: Plates.



Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south.



Plate 2. Trench 1, detailed view of trench section, looking southwest.



Plate 3. Trench 2, looking southwest.



Plate 4. Trench 2, trench section, looking southeast.

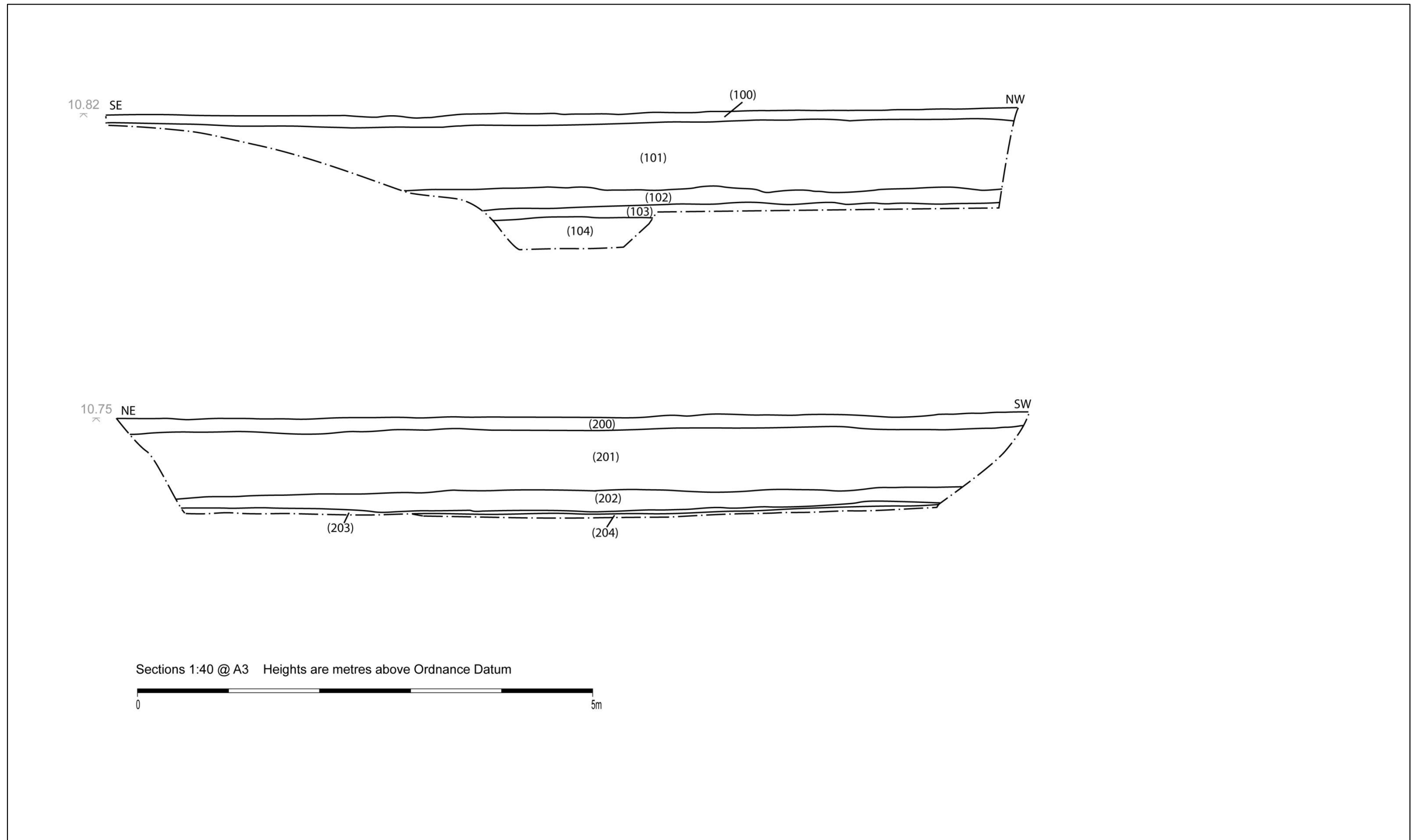


Figure 5. Trench sections.