
EBOR CARPET WAREHOUSE, ACOMB, YORK.

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF.
OSA REPORT No: OSA06WB38

FEBRUARY 2007.

OSA

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Report Summary.

REPORT NO: OSA06WB22

SITE NAME: Ebor Carpet Warehouse, 83a Front Street, Acomb, York

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: SE 5724 5128

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PERIODS REPRESENTED: Late medieval

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1.0 Introduction.

An intermittent watching brief was carried out within the Ebor Carpet Warehouse, 83a Front Street, Acomb, by On Site Archaeology Ltd. The job involved the supervision of the excavation of a series of six narrow, shallow foundation trenches for new internal walls within the existing building.

56 57 58 59 60



Figure 1. Site Location (SE 724 5128).
 Reproduced from the 2005 Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 maps with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
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2.0 Site Location, Geology and Topography.

The area under Watching Brief was located at 83a Front Street, Acomb, (NGR SE 5724 5128). The solid geology of York is Bunter and Keuper sandstone, part of the Sherwood Sandstone Group (Ordnance Survey 1967). This is overlain by glacial boulder clay, in turn overlain by sands and gravels that were formed as part of the glacial moraine upon which York is situated. Previous archaeological work has shown that this part of Acomb is situated over clean orange sand.

3.0 Archaeological Background.

The site is removed from known major areas of Roman activity in York and is not in close proximity to any of the major Roman routes. However a scatter of pottery from Batchelor Hill to the SE is known (about 700m from the present site) and a Roman mosaic was apparently found in the 19th century behind Acomb House on Front Street, a few hundred metres from the present site, as well as two stone coffins from an unknown location within Acomb in 1776 (RCHM 1962, 64). A possible Roman pot containing 120 yellow beads was found somewhere on Beckfield Lane in 1929 (Richardson 1963)

There is no evidence of occupation during the Anglo-Saxon period although the name ‘Acomb’ is Anglo-Saxon in origin meaning “at the oaks” (MAP 1998, 6). A sword pommel from the Anglo-Saxon period found in Acomb in 1983 is thought to have been imported with garden topsoil (Hall 1983).

The medieval period is when the village of Acomb took on a known form with the focus of the village being between The Green and Front Street. The closest recent archaeological work took place on the site of 81 Front Street although no archaeological features were found apart from a Victorian period well. Another archaeological investigation in an area behind 20 The Green found evidence for medieval domestic activity and possible ploughsoil relating to medieval tofts or garden plots, (On Site Archaeology 2005).

The previous building on the site was the Ebor Carpet Warehouse, originally a non-conformist chapel. This building has not been demolished apart from the removal of floors where necessary for the internal building work.

4.0 Methodology.

Standard *On-Site Archaeology* techniques were followed throughout the excavation. As the areas were excavated, close archaeological supervision was maintained in order to identify the presence or absence of any surviving archaeological deposits. A photographic record was also maintained. All depths were taken from the existing surface.

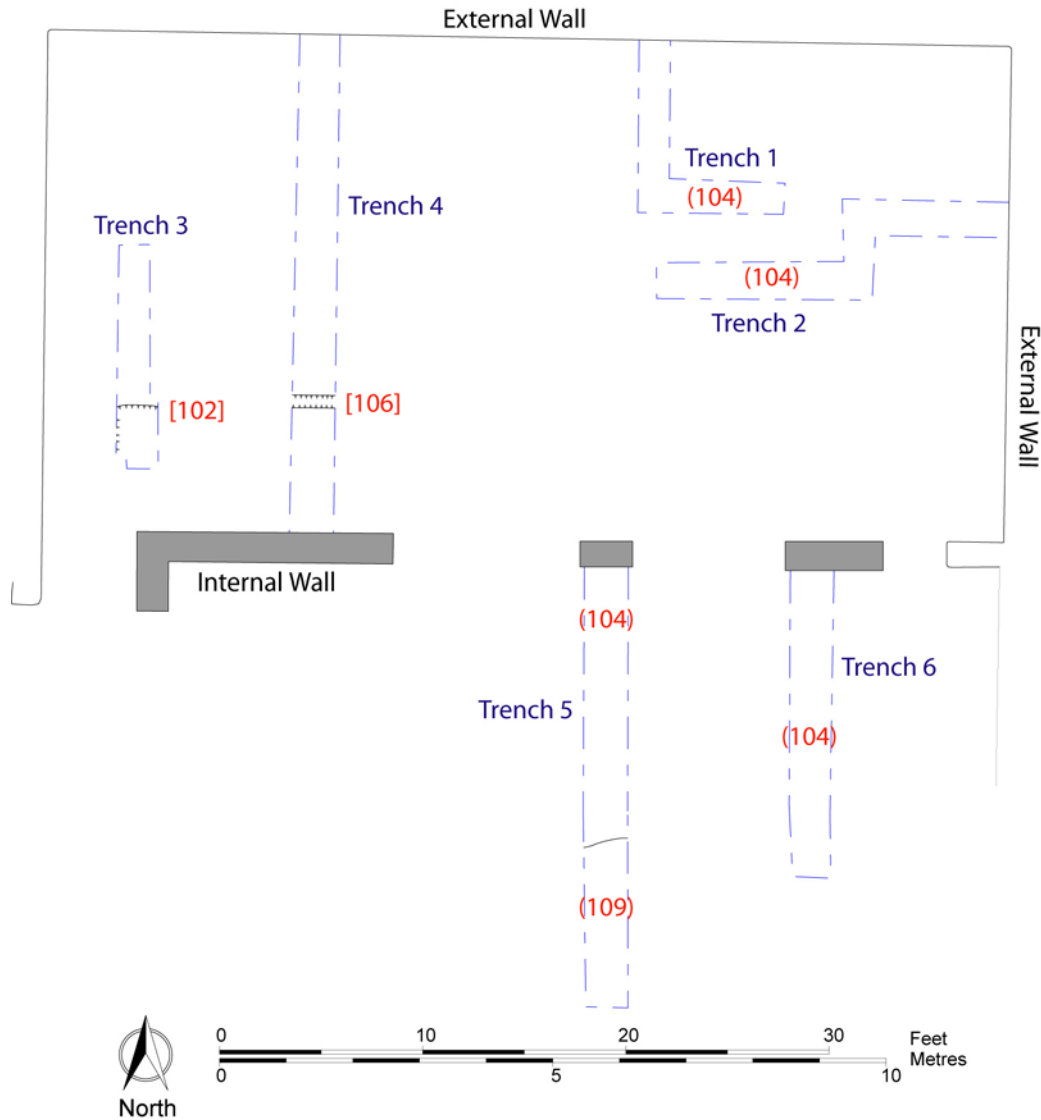


Figure 2. Plan showing location of trenches and features excavated.

5.0 Results.

5.1 *Trenches 1 and 2.*

Two trenches were dug in the northeast corner of the existing building for the construction of a bike store (Plate 1). The trenches were a total of 4.5m in length, measuring 500mm across and 500mm deep. These were devoid of archaeological features; the earliest deposit was clean orange Acomb sand (104) to an excavated thickness of 300mm. This sand was capped by a layer of modern concrete 200mm thick.

5.2 *Trenches 3 and 4.*

These were two parallel north-south aligned trenches in the northwest corner of the existing building. Each was 500mm wide and between 600mm and 700mm deep and both were originally overlain by concrete. The westernmost trench (Trench 3) was 3.25m long (Plate 2). It revealed the corner of a pit [102] with near vertical sides that cut natural sand (104). The pit was 400mm deep and its primary fill was light brown sand (101) that contained modern bricks and was 300mm thick. This was overlain by a secondary fill of mid brown silty sand (100) that was 100mm thick.

The easternmost of the two trenches (trench 4) was 7.25m long and revealed a very shallow indistinct linear feature with near vertical sides and a concave base [106] that cut natural sand (104). This feature ran east to west and was 320mm wide and approximately 400mm deep (Plate 3). It was filled with mid brown sand (105) and produced no finds. Trench 4 was capped by a shallow band of mid brown silty sand (103) between 200 and 300mm thick, which sealed linear feature [106]. This was probably the truncated remains of a garden soil or the b-horizon of a natural soil profile and may be the same as deposit (109) in trench 5.

5.3 *Trenches 5 and 6.*

These were two parallel north-south orientated trenches in the central part of the existing building. Each trench was 600mm wide and 350mm deep. The easternmost trench was trench 5 and measured 6.5m, while trench 6 was 4.5m long. The area had originally been covered by a concrete floor.

The earliest deposit in trench 5 was natural sand (104). In the southern part of the trench this was overlain by a deposit of soft brown sand with light brown mottling (109) that deepened towards the south, reaching a maximum depth of 350mm (Plate 4). This material contained an assemblage of pottery and roof tile of late medieval date. The latest type present is Ryedale ware, which is probably no earlier than the late 15th century. The nature of deposit (109) is slightly unclear although it does not seem to be within a cut. This makes it likely that it represents the truncated remains of a garden soil or the disturbed b-horizon of a natural soil profile and may be the same as deposit (103) in trench 4.

Trench 6 contained only undisturbed natural sand.

6.0 Conclusions.

A total of two features of archaeological interest were uncovered as well as one modern pit. In Trench 4, a shallow and indistinct linear feature was revealed that contained no finds. In Trench 5, the truncated remains of a soil profile were found, which contained an assemblage of late medieval pottery and roof tile. This discovery reinforces the fact that this area of Acomb was the focus for medieval activity, but does not provide enough detail to be certain of the nature of that activity on this particular site.

7.0 Bibliography.

Hall, R 1983, *Treasure Trove? Interim* Volume 9 Number 3.

Hodgson, G 2001, *A History of Acomb (Richardson's History Revised and Enlarged)*. G H Hodgson, York.

MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd., 1998 *Land to the rear of 12-26 The Green, Acomb, York: Proposed residential development desktop study*. MAP August 1998.

OSA 2006, 81 Front Street, Acomb: Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief. On Site Archaeology August 2005.

RCHM 1962 *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the City of York Volume 1: Eboracum*. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.

Richardson H 1963, *A History of Acomb, York*. Yorkshire Philosophical Society, York.

8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.

Context	Description	Interpretation
100	Mid brown silty sand	Pit fill
101	Light brown sand	Pit fill
102	Pit cut	Modern pit
103	Mid brown silty sand	Truncated soil
104	Orange sand	Natural glacial sand
105	Mid brown sand	Gully fill
106	Gully cut	Undated gully
109	Mid brown sand	Truncated soil

9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Finds Assessment Report.

Alan Vince and Kate Steane.

9.1 Summary.

A small group of finds was recovered from a watching brief at Ebor Carpet Warehouse, 83a Front Street, Acomb, York (Site Code OSA06 WB38) carried out by on-Site Archaeology Ltd.

The finds form a small group of later medieval date of which the latest sherd dates to the later 15th century or later.

9.2 Description.

9.2.1 Ceramic Building Material.

Three fragments of flat roof tile were recovered. One of these has a salt-surface indicating that it was made from a briny clay. Such clays do not occur in the York area but are found in the lower reaches of the Ouse valley and it is likely that this tile, and probably all three, were produced at Cawood, which is documented as a source of tiles for construction work in York in the later medieval period and where production waste was found in 2004 (Vince and Steane 2004).

9.2.2 Pottery.

One fragment of Brandsby-type ware (BRAN); two sherds of Humberware (HUM) and one fragment of Ryedale ware (RYEDALE) were present. The Brandsby-type ware and Ryedale ware were both produced in the Hambleton Hills area and the Humberware may have been a York product (where it is also known as Walmgate Ware, Brooks 1987). A kiln producing this ware was discovered at Blue Bridge Lane, Fishergate (Vince and Steane 2005).

9.3 Assessment.

The finds all come from the same context, 109, and form an assemblage of late medieval date. The latest type present is the Ryedale ware, which is probably no earlier than the late 15th century.

9.4 Further Work.

No further work is recommended.

9.5 Retention.

The finds should be retained for future re-examination.

9.6 Appendix A.

Context	class	Cname	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Use
109	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	BS	1	1	5	
109	POTTERY	HUM		JUG	BS	1	1	11	
109	POTTERY	HUM		JUG/JAR	BS	1	1	16	WHITE DEP INT
109	CBM	MTIL	FRAG	FLAT	BS	1	1	4	
109	CBM	MTIL		FLAT	BS	1	1	39	SALT SURFACING
109	CBM	MTIL		FLAT	BS	1	1	75	
109	POTTERY	RYEDAL E		BOWL	B	1	1	52	

9.7 Bibliography.

Brooks, C M (1987) *Medieval and Later Pottery from Aldwark and Other Sites*. The Archaeology of York 16/3 London, York Archaeol Trust

Vince, Alan and Steane, Kate (2004) *Assessment of the finds from Cawood, North Yorkshire (OSA04EV07)*. AVAC Reports 2004/138 Lincoln, Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy

Vince, Alan and Steane, Kate (2005) *Blue Bridge Lane and Fishergate House: Artefacts & Environmental Evidence: The Humberware Pottery*.
http://www.archaeologicalplanningconsultancy.co.uk/mono/001/rep_ceramics_humber.html

10.0 Appendix 3 ~ The Plates.



Plate 1. Trench 2 looking west. (Scale of 0.5m).



Plate 2. Trench 3 looking north. (Scale of 1m).



Plate 3. Section of trench 4 showing linear gully [106], looking west. (Scale of 1m).



Plate 4. Trench 5 looking south, showing natural sand (104) in the foreground and deposit (109) in the south part of the trench. (Scale of 1m).