
**English Martyrs Primary School
York**

**Watching Brief Report on Geotechnical Trial Pits
Diocese of Middlesbrough**



**September 2009
SLR Ref: 415.2776.00007**

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1.0 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Archaeological monitoring of two geotechnical trial pits at English Martyrs Primary School was carried out on 14th August 2009, in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (see Appendix C), approved by York City Council. The watching brief was undertaken following discussions between SLR and John Oxley, City of York Archaeologist, over the most effective method of undertaking intrusive further investigation. The work involved the monitoring of excavation for the trial pits and subsequent recording of the deposits and any artefacts recovered from the spoil.

The two trial pits were machine excavated to a depth of c.1.2m within the grounds of the school, towards Holgate Beck, to east of the present school buildings.

The trial pits showed a simple deposition sequence with moderately deep topsoil covering naturally occurring clay deposits. A possible make-up layer of mixed topsoil was observed immediately below the topsoil in the trial pit closer to the Holgate Beck (Trial Pit 1), suggesting that the ground had been subject to localised levelling, possibly when the site became playing fields in the Inter War period. Two 20th century pot sherds were recovered – a glazed body sherd and a fragment of plant pot rim, but on finding them to be undiagnostic and of relatively contemporary date these were not retained.

A consideration of the paleoenvironmental potential of the site was required as part of this work. Given the uniformity of the natural clay deposits discovered directly below the topsoil and that no waterlogged organic deposits were observed, it is not considered that the site contains significant potential for the recovery of paleoenvironmental information.

The deposition sequence shows that only moderate human disturbance has occurred on this part of the school site prior to the 20th century, and it is not considered likely that further works related to the development of the new school buildings will recover any information of significance, although it is acknowledged that the area sampled was very small and this is not considered to be a definitive conclusion. Given these findings, it is not recommended that further work is required on the site; however the final decision for this rests with the City Archaeologist.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

2.1 Introduction

SLR Consulting were asked to undertake a desk-based assessment and walkover survey of the site¹, prior to the possible redevelopment of the school. Following submission of this assessment, a request was made by York City Council for the monitoring of any trial pits being undertaken in relation to geotechnical investigations at the site. This report sets out the results of the monitoring to two trial pits carried out at the site during August 2009.

2.2 Summary History to the site

The historical and map evidence collated in the initial desk-based assessment suggests that prior to the 20th century the site was used as agricultural land – presumably meadow. Between 1897 and 1935 the site became a school sports field, and continued in that capacity until the development of the primary school on the site in the 1960s.

The development of the primary school is notable for the raised foundations upon which each of the buildings sit – this raises them up approximately 1m above the level of the surrounding ground, and was presumably a measure to protect the buildings against possible flooding from the adjacent Holgate Beck. It is likely that this episode of landscaping would also have included the development of the hard play area next to which Trial Pit 1 was located, along with any levelling of this area of ground.

¹ SLR report reference: 090709 415.2776.00007 EngMartyrs CH RA

3.0 RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS

3.1 General

An archaeologist was on site during the trial pit excavations to monitor and record the ground conditions and work. Each trial pit was recorded using photographs and a sketched section denoting depths of deposit.

The watching brief was carried out on 14th August 2009.

Weather conditions were fair but overcast.

3.2 Trial Pit 1

Trial Pit 1 was positioned approximately 5m from the eastern boundary of the site, approximately midway (north-south) and to east of the hard play area. Its position was relatively close to Holgate Beck, which lies just outside the site boundary to the east.

The trial pit was excavated to a depth of 1.3m. Four distinct contexts were noted. The uppermost context (01) consisted of dark brown topsoil 280mm thick overlying a mixed deposit of black-brown clayey loam (02) which was found to contain two pieces of pottery – one flowerpot rim sherd and a body sherd of glazed white earthenware. Both pieces were discarded on account of their relative lack of antiquity and lack of diagnostic characteristics. 02 was underlain by a mid to light orange sandy clay 630mm thick. This was interpreted as the uppermost level of naturally occurring deposits. This was in turn underlain by a mid-brown homogenous clay containing occasional river worn pebbles which continued to the base of the trial pit.

Interpretation

Trial Pit 1 showed a simple deposition sequence of topsoil overlying a make-up layer, which in turn overlay naturally occurring river-borne clay deposits. The position of the trial pit close to the beck and the site boundary suggests that the make-up layer (02) is most likely to have been a landscaping measure to reduce the slope towards the river – presumably undertaken for the creation of playing fields on the site in the early 20th century.

3.3 Trial Pit 2

Trial Pit 2 was positioned to north of the hard play area, approximately 30-40m from the Holgate Beck.

A similar, albeit slightly simpler, sequence was noted in Trial Pit 2, with a humic loamy topsoil layer (05) of similar depth to 01 overlying a mid to light orange brown clayey deposit (06). Interestingly, no intermediate layer was found with similarities to 02, leading to the suggestion that this layer may have been imported to the site. Context 06 was approximately 500mm thick, and it overlay 07 – a clay deposit containing occasional river worn pebbles.

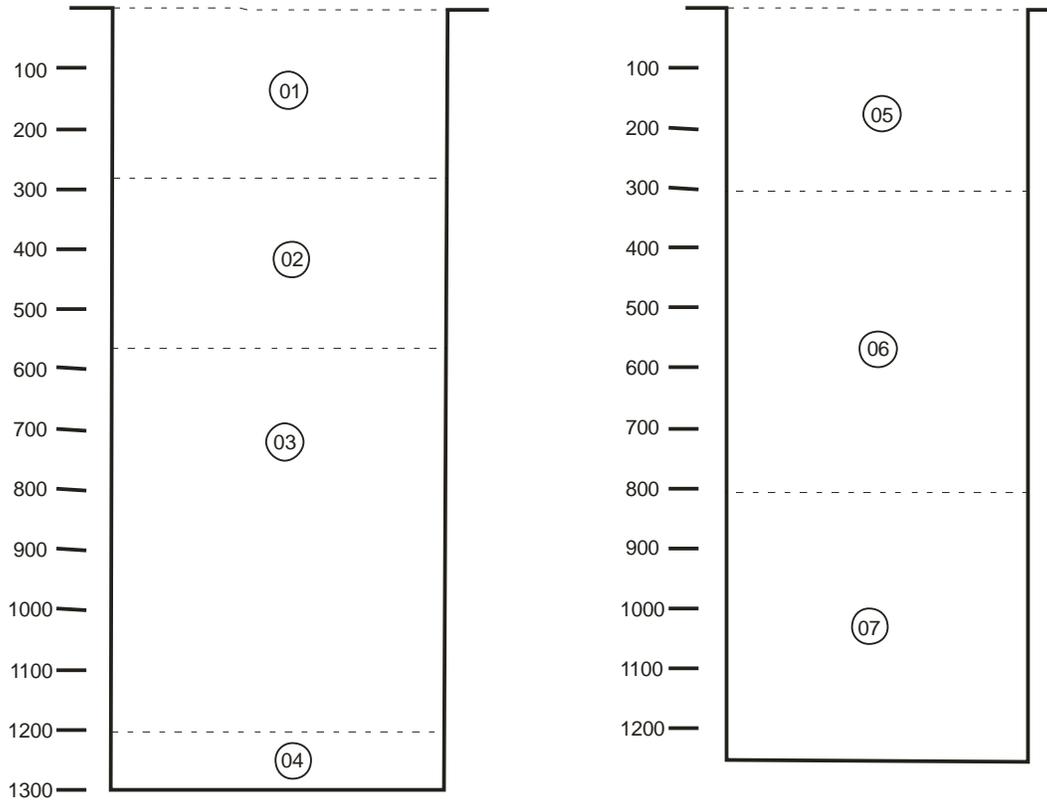
The similarities in the deposition sequence point to 03 and 06, and 04 and 07 being the same respective deposits. The lesser thickness of 06 when compared with 03 could be a result of being further away from the Holgate Beck – the closest source of alluvial material, and the mechanism for deposition of the material.

Interpretation

The sequence of deposits in Trial Pit 2 showed that further away from the river no anthropogenically redeposited material was present, with topsoil giving way abruptly to naturally occurring deposits. This shows a general lack of human disturbance on the site, although its previous land use of fields may suggest a cultivation of the topsoil, leading to a greater depth than would be seen to occur naturally. Notwithstanding, there is nothing to suggest anything other than agricultural or amenity land use from this trial pit.

Figure 1: Deposition Sequences

(depths in mm)



Trial Pit 1 schematic deposition sequence

Trial Pit 2 schematic deposition sequence

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Prior to its development as a school, the map evidence shows that site was used for agricultural purposes. This was probably a major factor in the uniform deposition sequence, in that there were few external factors influencing the natural processes on the site prior to the 20th century. The subsequent development of the school within the site would have inevitably required some landscaping to level the site, and it is possible that (imported) topsoil was used to extend the flat ground towards the Holgate Beck to produce a level area for this area of the playing field.

No evidence of paleoenvironmental preservation was observed, with no peat or other waterlogged organic deposits being recorded. Whilst the trial pits were limited in their scope and distribution, it is felt that the potential for discovery of areas containing these types of deposits is unlikely within the scope of the project. Furthermore, since the scope of this work was very limited and no features were recorded within the trial pits, it should not be assumed that other remains do not exist within the site.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The deposition sequence suggests that there is a very limited amount of archaeologically sensitive deposits within the area investigated, and that this consists of relatively thin, disturbed and possibly imported secondary material of 20th century origin overlying naturally occurring subsoils. The significance of these deposits is therefore considered to be negligible, as they are highly limited in their informational value, and the potential for the discovery of significant deposits on the site is considered to be low. It is not recommended that further archaeological investigation is merited.

The monitoring work intended to record the presence or absence of waterlogged remains close to the Holgate Beck. None were noted during the course of the work, leading to the conclusion that there the likelihood of finding such deposits in this area is small. However, given the very limited size and extent of work, it should be stressed that the monitoring does not constitute an archaeological evaluation and therefore the potential survival of remains existing within the development footprint cannot be definitively ruled out. Consequently, whilst the recommendation that further work would not be appropriate in this case stands, the City Archaeologist has the final decision and may require further, more extensive investigation to be carried out.

6.0 CLOSURE

This report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the manpower and resources devoted to it by agreement with the client. Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected and has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of Middlesbrough Diocese; no warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Contexts

01 Dark brown humic clayey loam, sitting directly below the turf, and interpreted as topsoil. 280mm in depth, lying directly above 02.

02 Black brown clayey loam, containing occasional charcoal and 20th century pottery sherds, 290mm thick, lying below 01 and above 03. Possibly made ground.

03 Mid to light orange sandy clay with occasional river worn pebbles, 630mm thick, lying below 02 and above 04. Interpreted as the upper band of a naturally occurring alluvial deposits.

04 Mid brown clay with occasional water-worn pebbles, lying below 03. Not bottomed. Interpreted as alluvial deposit.

05 Dark brown silty loam with occasional charcoal flecks and brick fragments, 300mm thick, lying directly below turf, interpreted to be same as 01.

06 Mid to light orange-brown sandy clay with occasional river worn pebbles, 500mm thick, lying directly below 05 and above 07, interpreted as same as 03: a naturally occurring alluvial layer.

07 Mid brown clay with occasional river worn pebbles, over 450mm thick; not bottomed. Lying below 06 and interpreted as 2nd horizon of naturally occurring alluvial deposits.

Appendix B – Site photographs



Plate 1: General locational shot of Trial Pit 1



Plate 2: Trial Pit 1 following excavation



Plate 3: Trial Pit 1 showing dark banding of context 02 below topsoil (01).



Plate 4: Opening ground on Trial Pit 2



Plate 5: Trial pit 2 showing simple deposition sequence

Appendix C – Written Scheme of Investigation

ENGLISH MARTYRS, HAMILTON DRIVE, YORK
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION:
WATCHING BRIEF

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Site Description
3. Archaeological Programme
4. Summary

Directorate of City Strategy

Planning and Sustainable Development Group

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31 AUGUST 2009

issue one

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief on all groundworks linked to ground investigations is required in order to assess the likelihood of archaeological remains within the grounds of English Martyrs School, Hamilton Drive, York. This document sets out the details of the archaeological watching brief that the City of York Council considers will be necessary in conjunction with the proposed works.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is located on the north side of Hamilton Drive, centred at SJ 587510. Ground level is at about 10mAOD.
- 2.2 The site lies on the eastern side of Holgate Beck on an area of floodplain. Traditionally, this appears to have been used for water meadow and other agricultural purposes until the late 19th century and expansion of the City of York.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROGRAMME

- 3.1 It will be necessary for a watching brief to be kept on all ground disturbances linked to the geotechnical test-pitting operations being carried out. An archaeologist from SLR Consulting will carry out the work. SLR Consulting is a Registered Archaeological Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists. SLR Consulting have been approved in writing by the Assistant Director (Planning and Sustainable Development) as being an acceptable organisation for carrying out the archaeological monitoring.
- 3.1.1 The watching brief will consist of the archaeologist observing all groundworks across the site as described in 3.1 above. Where it becomes clear during the watching brief that there is no likelihood of archaeological deposits surviving on the site the watching brief may be curtailed with the agreement in writing of the Assistant Director (Planning and Sustainable Development). Where it becomes clear that the extent of surviving archaeology is greater than the archaeologist had allowed for in their costing of the watching brief, the archaeologist must inform their client that this is the case. In this situation the client should consult with the City of York Archaeologist in order to determine what, if any, further archaeological work must be undertaken in order to meet the terms of the planning condition.
- 3.1.2 The watching brief must be carried out by the archaeologist in a manner that allows the contractor to proceed with their construction programme without unreasonable interference or delay. The contractor must allow the archaeologist reasonable access and resources to implement this archaeological scheme of investigation.

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- 3.1.3 Where archaeological deposits of national importance are revealed during the watching brief, the archaeological contractor must notify the City of York Council's Archaeologist at once. Consultations can then take place to determine what additional steps, if any, are appropriate in the circumstances relating to the deposits.
- 3.1.4 In addition the archaeologist will undertake the following work in association with the metal detecting survey:
- 3.2 The objective of the watching brief is to establish the following details:
- 3.2.1 the date and character of any archaeological deposits disturbed by the development
- 3.3 During the watching brief the following methodologies must be followed:
- 3.3.1 the archaeologist will be in attendance at such times during the excavation for the groundworks as he or she considers appropriate and necessary; the archaeologist will record the presence or absence of archaeological features and deposits and make all appropriate written, drawn and photographic records of any archaeological deposits which are revealed;
- 3.3.2 all records must be indexed, ordered, quantified, and checked for consistency;
- 3.3.3 all artefacts and ecofacts recovered and retained from the watching brief must be fully documented and packed and stored in the appropriate materials and conditions to ensure that minimal deterioration takes place and that all their associated records are complete;
- 3.3.4 all artefacts and ecofacts recovered from the watching brief must be assessed, and where appropriate processed analysed drawn and published, by a person or organisation with skills and expertise relating to the artefacts and ecofacts;
- 3.3.5 where inhumations or cremations are located during the groundworks programme, and in the absence of up to date guidance from the Department of Justice on licensed removal of human remains in an archaeological context, the archaeologist must alert the Coroner and the City of York Archaeologist and City of York Environmental Health Department. The archaeologist must identify the full extent of the deposit and excavate and remove the inhumations or cremations for analysis and retention in the Yorkshire Museum or reburial in a location agreed in advance with the Archaeologist, City of York Council.
- 3.4 The details and processes outlined in 3.3.1—3.3.4 will produce the following output as a concise report:
- 3.4.1 plan of site showing position of trench;

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- 3.4.2 portfolio of drawn sections, trench plans, and, where appropriate, drawings of artefacts;
- 3.4.3 an assessment of the artefacts and ecofacts and where produced reports on any further analyses;
- 3.4.4 a full description of and an interpretation of the archaeological sequence, setting the site into the context of the known archaeology of the area;
- 3.4.5 an index to and details of the location of the archive. The long term care of the watching brief archive must be provided for. All the original material and paper archive must be prepared for deposition with an approved archaeological depository such as the Yorkshire Museum. These Institutions will normally make a charge to cover the long-term curation of the archaeological archive. The requirements of the receiving Institution must be identified at the time of producing an estimate for this scheme of investigation.
- 3.4.6 The City of York Council UAD/SMR support the *Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations* (OASIS) project. The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer funded fieldwork. **The archaeological contractor must therefore complete the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>.** If the archaeological contractor does not have internet access a paper copy of the form can be obtained from the City of York UAD/SMR at 9 St Leonard's Place, York YO1 7ET. Contractors are advised to contact the City of York UAD/SMR prior to completing the form. **Four printed copies of the report must be deposited with City of York Council. In addition a copy of the report must be supplied in electronic form.** This must be done on a CD-ROM as a PDF file or files. If in doubt about formats please contact John Oxley on 01904 551346 or e-mail to john.oxley@york.gov.uk. Once a report has become a public document by forming part of a planning application, City of York Council will place the information on its WWW. Please ensure that you and your client agree to this procedure in writing as part of the process of submitting the report to the Principal Archaeologist.
- 3.4.7 The contractor must produce a written synopsis of the results of the watching brief and submit this to the City of York Council no later than two months after the completion of work on site.
- 3.4.8 The Contractor must give at least seven days notice in writing of the start of works on site to
*Assistant Director (Planning and Sustainable Development),
Planning and Sustainable Development, 9 St Leonard's Place,
York, YO1 7ET*
- 3.4.9 The Contractor will be subject to regular monitoring visits by the City of York Council. Reasonable access must be given at all

times to the Principal Archaeologist, City of York Council or his agent to the site and to premises used for the purposes of post-excavation work to allow this monitoring to proceed. This will ensure that the scheme of investigation is being followed and that high professional standards are being maintained. It can be anticipated that the City of York Council will want to inspect a 10% sample of all archaeological records generated by the project.

4.0 SUMMARY

- 4.1 This document sets out the background to and outlines a programme for the watching brief which the City of York Council considers is reasonable and necessary on this site.

APPENDIX

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This appendix describes a set of procedures which must be implemented by all contractors.

2.0 Procedures

2.1.1 All work must be undertaken in a professional manner paying attention to the Institute for Field Archaeologist Standards and Guidance:

- [Introduction to Standards and Guidance](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for desk-based assessment](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for field evaluation](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for Excavation](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures](#) (PDF)
- [Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials](#) (PDF)
- [Appendices to Standards](#) (PDF)

All documents are available from either the City of York Council or from the IFA website at <http://www.archaeologists.net>

2.2 All finds processing, conservation work and storage of finds from this site must be carried out in accordance with the standards agreed by the Yorkshire Museum, the Castle Museum, and YAT those set by the UKIC. These standards form the basis of current practice in York and all contractors will be expected to base their estimates on the implementation of those standards (see section 3 below).

2.3 Finds specialists must be able to document and demonstrate levels of professional competence and technical expertise and access to comparative material.

2.4 Where the conservation of archaeological objects is necessary, this work should be undertaken either by or in consultation with the Conservation Section of the York Archaeological Trust.

3.0 Finds Processing Standards

3.1 The following finds-processing standards must be followed by all contractors

3.2 *On-site finds processing*

3.2.1 All bulk material must be washed

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- 3.2.2 All bulk material except animal bone marked. Marking and labelling materials indelible and irremovable by abrasion
- 3.2.3 All bulk finds must be appropriately boxed and recorded on computer
- 3.2.4 Identification of stone-type and tile must be undertaken on site
- 3.2.5 All the above to be completed within two months from the end of the excavation
- 3.2.6 All small finds recorded both in the finds register and on computer
- 3.2.7 Small find recording system must be compatible with Yorkshire Museum accessioning system
- 3.2.8 All small finds must be appropriately packaged for optimum survival of data
- 3.2.9 All the above to be completed within two days of the object having been excavated
- 3.3 *Off-site Finds Processing*
- 3.3.1 All small find and bulk find data must be made available to finds researchers, conservators and curatorial staff
- 3.3.2 Computer system should be used to monitor location of objects to allow rapid access
- 3.3.3 All material stored in optimum conditions to ensure survival of data. Includes
- Controlled environment storage where appropriate
 - Correct packaging with inert materials
 - Regular checking of the condition of objects
 - Immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material
- 3.3.4 All material stored in buildings with appropriate security (see storage below)
- 3.4 *Conservation*
- 3.4.1 All metal objects will be x-rayed, then selected for conservation. Non-conserved material stored in controlled conditions.
- 3.4.2 All organic materials will be appropriately treated, including prior specialist recording for materials where there is possible information loss in the process of conservation

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- 3.4.3 Specialist advice must be taken for wood, leather, osseous material and textile conservation and research
- 3.4.4 All other classes of material must be treated where appropriate
- 3.4.5 Special packaging undertaken must be provided for all vulnerable objects. All textiles, coins, and painted glass stored in specially-designed systems.
- 3.5 *Storage*
- 3.5.1 All objects stored in appropriate materials and storage conditions
- 3.5.2 All objects stored to allow rapid access on demand
- 3.5.3 All storage at appropriate security levels, eg:
- Small finds in storage approved by National Security Adviser or Area Museums Service
 - Bulk finds in storage with lower security rating but still physically secure and alarmed
- 3.5.4 Safe secure and environmentally controlled storage must be provided for all material between excavation and the deposition of the archive with the receiving body.
- 4.0 All contractors must follow the above guidelines.