



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE ADDRESS	Clarence Street, York		
CLIENT NAME	City of York Council		
YAT PROJECT #	5773	YAT REPORT #	2014/21
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	YORYM:2014.152	GRID REFERENCE	460260 452518
PLANNING REFERENCE #	N/A	AAI OPS NOTICE #	TBC

INTRODUCTION

A watching brief was undertaken intermittently during 14th to 19th March 2014 on the machine excavation of a trial trench on the corner of Clarence Street and Lord Mayors Walk, on behalf of City of York Council. The main trench was approximately 2m x 3.5m in size and was aligned almost north-south. Following the excavation of the trench to a depth of 1.5m, metal shoring sheets were inserted along both the western and eastern sides of the trench, which were held in place by hydraulic shoring rams. The area within the shoring measured approximately 1.3 x 3.5m. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 3m, and observations were made of the excavation of the uppermost 2.7m of deposits.

This trench was then extended on the northern side, the extension measuring 2.4m (north-south) by 0.46m in size, the west edge of the extension being located 0.3m from the western side of the main trench. The extension was excavated to a depth of 1m. The scale unit in all of the photographs is 0.1m.



Figure 1 Site location
 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010

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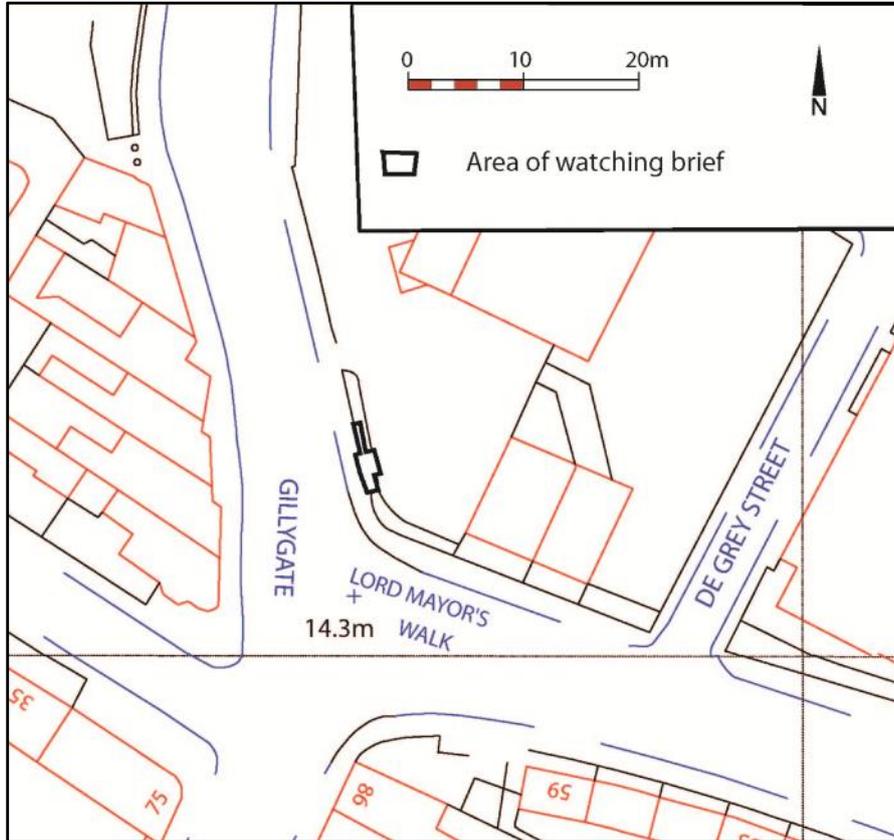


Figure 2 Location of watching brief

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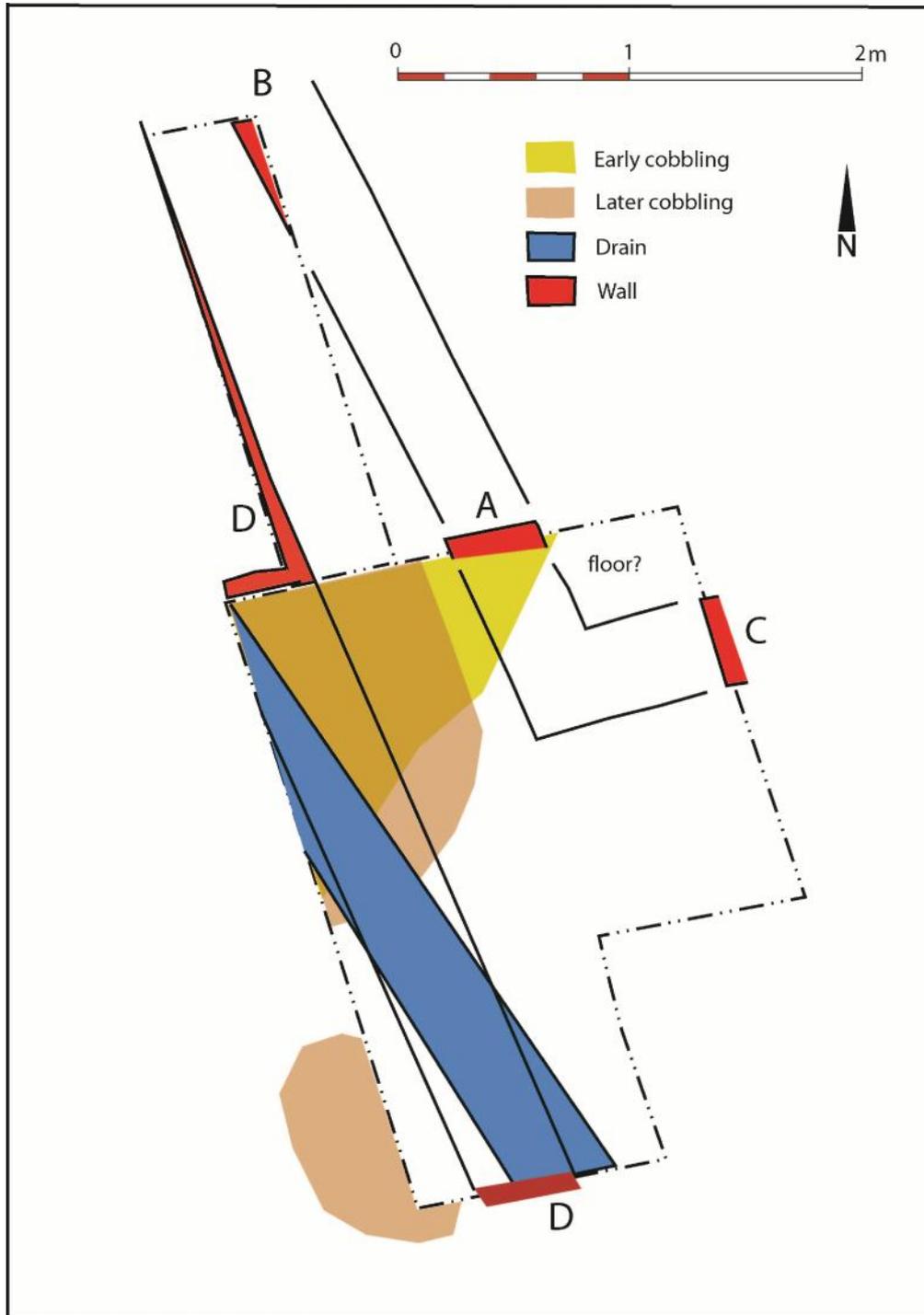


Figure 3 Plan of main archaeological features

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RESULTS (see Figure 3)

The earliest deposit seen was natural clay, the upper surface of which was at approximately 2m below present ground level (BGL). The natural comprised compact mid grey-brown clay with orange flecks.



Plate 1 Natural clay at the base of the trench, facing south.

Above the natural was a deposit of compacted gravel in a matrix of grey-brown to orange clay. This deposit was only present in the northern portion of the trench, extending the full width of the trench on the northern side, and approximately 1.7m along the northern portion of the western side of the trench. The deposit was 0.24m thick on the western side and 0.13m thick on the eastern side, and the upper surface was at 1.80m BGL. These cobbles are visible directly beneath the scale on Plate 2, running across the full breadth of the photograph. No artefacts were recovered from this deposit.

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Above the cobbles was a deposit of compact dark grey brown silty clay, this was 0.28m thick on the eastern side of the trench, and 0.1m thick on the western side of the trench.



Plate 2 The clay and cobble deposits, facing north. Scale unit 0.1m.

This was in turn sealed by a second layer of cobbles which were in a band 1m wide along the northernmost 2m of the western side of the trench. This gravel was up to 0.1m thick and the upper surface was at 1.6m BGL. The gravel acted as the bedding for a compacted layer of cobbles up to 80mm in size. The deposit was 0.1m thick and the upper surface was at 1.5m BGL. The gravel and cobbles are visible on Plate 2, directly behind the scale, extending across the left hand side of the photograph. No artefacts were present within this deposit. It should be noted that these cobbles were also visible to the immediate west of the southern end of the trench; this area had been undermined by the contractors to determine the location of services cables/pipes. The cobbles therefore seem to be aligned NNE/SSW.

Overlying the cobbles was dark brown clay silt with very occasional mortar and charcoal flecks,

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about 0.8m thick; it extended northwards along the length of the extension. Visible in the north side of the main trench in the upper part of this deposit was a brick wall, three bricks wide and built of alternating header and stretcher courses, with a footing of roughly-squared sandstone blocks about 0.2m wide by 0.15m thick (A; Plate 3). A similar wall (B) was observed in the north-east corner of the extension and is almost certainly the northern continuation of Wall A. Another, similar wall, observed in the east side of the main trench and aligned east-west (C; Plate 3), is considered to have been the east return of Wall A. Overall, these walls are thought to form the south-west corner of a building extending southwards for about 3.2m from the north end of the extension. The bricks in these walls measured around 230x117x50mm (9x4.5x2"), indicating a 16th-18th century date. As no construction cut was observed in the clay silt deposit south and west of the walls, it is likely that the deposit was intended to raise the ground level and had been dumped against the walls as part of the construction of the building. Within the angle of the brick walls was a clinker layer 0.8-1.05m BGL, which is thought to have been bedding for a mortar and brick floor.



Plate 3 Post-medieval walls A (left) and C (right) looking north-east

Cut into the clay silt deposit towards the west side of the trench was a drain comprising brick and medium limestone block side walls with a sandstone slab capping, aligned south-south-east/north-north-west; the internal dimensions of the drain were roughly 0.3m square (Plates 4 and 5). A layer of silt in the base of the drain could mean that it did not have a base originally, although a base of flat-laid bricks was found overlying the silt layer. At the north end of the trench the drain appeared to

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widen to the west, beyond the limit of excavation and may have been associated with an area of medium cobbles; this feature may have been a soakaway, although too little of it was visible to be certain. The bricks in the drain measured an average of 230x120x60mm (9x4.5x2.25”), pointing to a 17th/18th century date. A thin layer of gravel and small cobbles, observed overlying the drain construction backfill at the south end of the trench around 0.6m BGL, may have acted as a surface external to the brick building.



Plate 4 drain below Wall D looking south

Overlying the brick building was a dark grey/brown silt loam with moderate mortar and brick flecks, which is thought to have formed a levelling deposit associated with a brick wall aligned north-south

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towards the western side of the trench (D; Plates 4 and 5). This wall was four bricks wide and of stretcher bond, with a footing course of half-bricks and cobbles. The bricks measured about 230x111x72mm (9x4.25x2.75"), indicating a later 18th/earlier 19th century date.



Plate 5 Wall D (right) and drain (bottom left) looking north-north-west

Overlying the brick wall and associated deposit was a layer of hardcore about 0.3m thick, which was

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the bedding for the existing paved surface. In the extension trench dark grey-brown silty clay with occasional flecks of mortar and occasional fragments of animal bone overlay the walls. A clay pipe stem, two sherds of modern bottle glass and an oyster shell were recovered from this context (none of which were retained). This deposit was beneath a layer of limestone chippings up to 0.3m thick which acted as the bedding for the existing paving.

FINDS ASSESSMENT

The contractors carefully saved material recovered from within the trench which included a selection of animal bones, including a horn core, a sherd of Roman brick weighing 0.75g, three sherds of Roman amphora, several sherds of pottery ranging from Roman to early 18th century in date, a clay pipe stem, a sherd of modern transfer print pottery and several sherds of modern machine made wall tiles with a white fabric and clear glaze. This material was all effectively unstratified. Of this material only the Roman and medieval pottery was retained.

In addition, a small fragment of an attached column shaft was recovered by the contractors, this was 0.90m in diameter and 0.21m high, though one end had been broken off. Shafts of this type were used from the time of the Norman Conquest to the mid 16th century, and are not therefore closely datable. This architectural fragment was badly abraded and did not merit retention.

Pottery Assessment by A. Jenner.

Fourteen sherds were retrieved from one context (U/S). They range in date from the Roman period to the early modern period (see Table below). There is a notable absence of Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval wares. There are no 18th century fine wares such as cream and white salt glazed plates and dishes. There are also no notable 19th or 20th century fine table wares such as transfer printed and no 19th and 20th century coarse kitchen wares such as pancheons and food storage jars.

Fabric	Form	Number of sherds	Part	Date	Comment
Buff white	amphora	3	2 x rim 1xhandle	Roman ?2 nd century	SW Spain?
terracotta	bowl	1	base	modern	
English stoneware	Closed form	1	neck	?19 th century	Buff fabric yellow glaze
Miscellaneous earthenware		1	body	unknown	
Post medieval oxidised earthenware with light green glaze	bowl	1	Lid seated rim	17 th century	
Nottingham type stoneware		1	body	18 th century	Incised decoration
tile		1	n/a	modern	Polychrome

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Ryedale type	jug	1	Neck/rim	17 th century	
terracotta	Plant pot	1	body		
Osmotherley type		1	body	Post medieval	Buff with grey core and patch of light green glaze
Reduced green glazed		1		?early 18 th century	Dark reduced fabric fine green glazed surfaces
Cistercian		1	Neck/body		Narrow

CONCLUSIONS

The earliest gravel and cobble surface directly overlaid the original ground surface and was probably aligned south-west/north-east, following the main alignment of the Roman fortress. Furthermore, the contractors claim to have recovered sherds of Roman amphorae from this deposit. This feature may well therefore be Roman in date, perhaps an extra-mural road with a localised function.

The cobble layer above this appears to have been aligned more north-south and was separated from the underlying surface by a deposit. It could represent the eastern edge of the Horsefair, an area between Gillygate and the junction of the Wigginton and Haxby roads to the north, which was used as a horse market during medieval period (Richards et al 1989, 5).

It seems that the medieval surface was no longer extant when the post-medieval brick structure was built at the north end of the trench, perhaps representing a narrowing of the horse fair into the existing street later known as Clarence Street. The brick structure seems to have been the south-west corner of a building, perhaps a house on the corner of Clarence Street and the road that ran south-east to the Newbiggin suburb. An earlier post-medieval (16th century?) date for this building is suggested. As the limestone and brick drain to its west is at a higher level than the construction level of the building and is on a slightly different alignment the drain is presumably post-medieval in date, and post-dates the construction of the building. An 18th century date is suggested for the drain.

The large brick wall overlying the drain is regarded as the western boundary of a garden to the south of a house fronting onto Clarence Street, as shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Richards, JD, Heighway C and Donaghy, S, 1989. *Union Terrace: Excavations in the Horsefair. The Archaeology of York 11/1*

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