

YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

42-48 MICKLEGATE,
YORK

REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF



1998 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 68

42-48 MICKLEGATE,

YORK

**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

1. INTRODUCTION
2. METHODOLOGY
3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY
4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
5. THE WATCHING BRIEF
6. CONCLUSIONS AND PERIOD ANALYSIS
7. LIST OF SOURCES
8. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Site location
Figure 2. Trench location
Figure 3. South facing section of trench

**© York Archaeological Trust: A registered charity
Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York, YO1 7FG.
Tel. (01904) 663000 Fax. (01904) 663024**

Abstract

In December 1998 York Archaeological Trust observed the excavation of a drain trench to the rear of 42-48 Micklegate during restoration of the property.

In the single rectangular trench excavated all of the stratigraphy was obviously or apparently modern although there some evidence for post-medieval foundations beyond the east end of the trench. Other than this, any deposits, features, or structures of archaeological interest had been destroyed by modern service trenches and other modern activity.

1. INTRODUCTION

On December 9th 1998, York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief on building work at the rear of 42-48 Micklegate, York (National Grid Reference SE 5997 5166). This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition placed 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 watching brief are currently stored with the York Archaeological Trust under the Trust's accession code YORAT:1998.18.

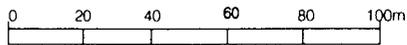
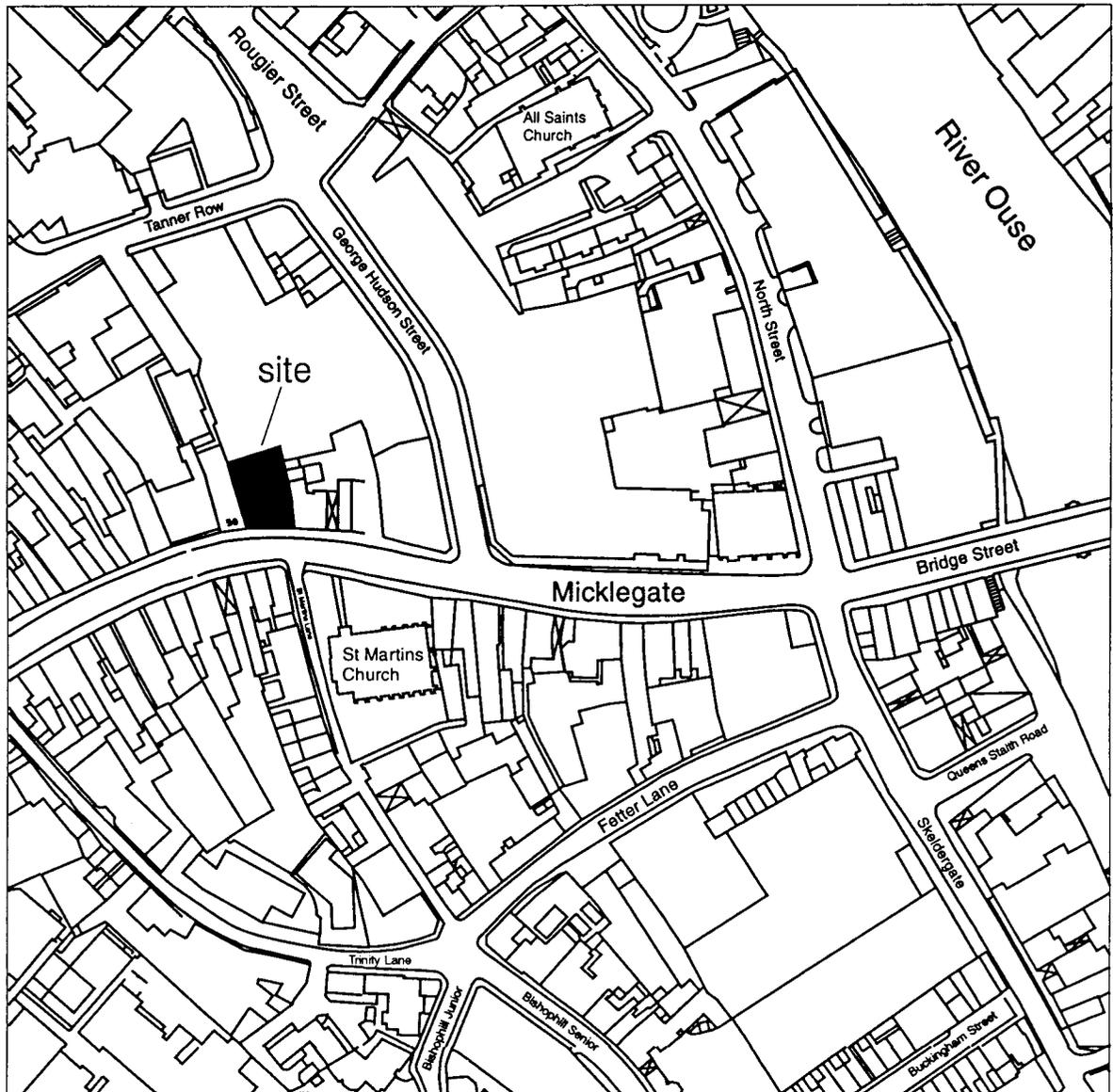
The aim of the watching brief was to establish the character, date and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits which might be disturbed during these works.

The property and construction consultants were Lawrence Hannah and Partners, and the building work was undertaken by Guildford Construction Ltd.

2. METHODOLOGY

The work involved the recording of a short trench to the rear of the main building for a new drain leading into a pre-existing manhole. This trench was c.1.80m long, c.0.60m wide and up to c.1.30m deep.

The south-facing section was 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).



BASED UPON THE 1988 ORDNANCE SURVEY DIGITAL DATA WITH PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE, CROWN COPYRIGHT, YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST CROMWELL HOUSE, 13 OGLEFORTH, YORK. YO1 7FG. LICENCE NUMBER AL854123



Figure 1, Site location plan

3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying drift geology of the site is Boulder clay over lacustrine clays with deposits of sand and gravel overlying the clay in places. 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 towards the eastern end of Micklegate close to the base of the slope down to the River Ouse and within the presumed extent of the Roman Colonia or civil town and adjacent to the principal street through the medieval city south-west of the Ouse. The immediate area around the trench was quite level although this is almost certainly a result of modern levelling. The site lies at a height of c.15.00m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum).

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

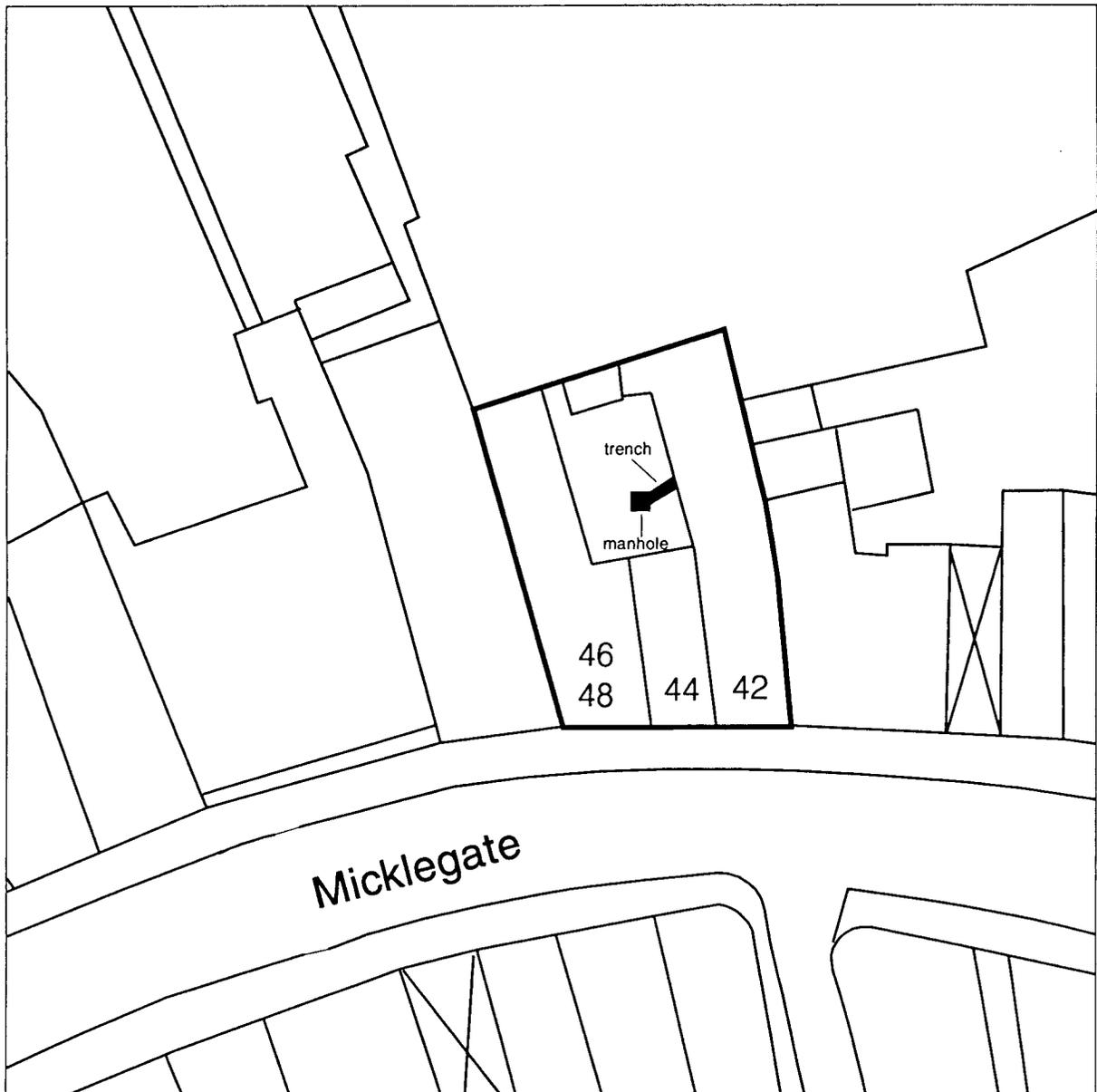
This background to the site has been compiled using easily accessible historical sources, from the results of previous archaeological investigations and from cartographic evidence.

The street name Micklegate, first recorded in the 12th century, means The Great Street and reflects the fact that it was the principal street of the city south-west of the Ouse from the Anglo-Scandinavian period to the present day. The site lies close to the centre of the medieval city on this side of the Ouse and also is within the known area of Roman occupation, the Colonia.

Micklegate also led to the medieval dockside and many of York's greater citizens, made wealthy by trade, chose to build their town houses along the street. In the late 13th century at least one hundred and eighteen tofts along the street were liable for the house tax, husgable, and this suggests that even at this relatively early period the street frontages were all built up. Up until the 19th century the street remained occupied by the upper classes and merchants with a few shops belonging to artisans. During the 19th century the numbers of shops and premises increased and the occupiers of the mansions and town houses began to move to suburban properties in Blossom Street and The Mount. This mixture of professional, commercial and official buildings along with a number of hotels and inns remains characteristic of Micklegate today.

The present building on the site being investigated dates to 1747 although it includes a back wing of c.1710 and began as two buildings. By 1791 the whole property was owned by George Beal, a butter factor, and the property included a third house in the yard to the rear of the main building. Much remains of the original structure although a modern shop front has been added. Many of the 18th century fittings remain and the property also contains re-used stop-chamfered ceiling beams of the 17th century.

Maps of the 17th and 18th centuries show the street frontage as fully built up. Some, such as Drake's map of 1736, also show yards and gardens behind the main properties but by the mid 19th century even these are largely built up as is the area today.



BASED UPON THE 1988 ORDNANCE SURVEY DIGITAL DATA WITH PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE, CROWN COPYRIGHT, YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST CROMWELL HOUSE, 13 OGLEFORTH, YORK. YO1 7FG. LICENCE NUMBER AL854123

Figure 2, Works location plan

Archaeological evidence from the area is quite plentiful. Various works, mainly in the 19th century have brought to light features, structures and deposits of the Roman period in the vicinity. During the digging of a cellar for this property or one very close by in 1747, a Mithraic altar stone was found (RCHM 1962, 120). More recently excavations at the General Accident site in Tanner Row have revealed timber and stone buildings of Roman date and concrete floors found in excavations at 47-55 Tanner Row may belong to the Roman period.

Although no formal excavations have been undertaken in the immediate area chance finds and observations of contractors trenches have produced evidence for Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval activity in the general area. More would be expected considering the proximity of the site to Micklegate.

5. THE WATCHING BRIEF

5.1.1 The earliest context observed, at the east end of the trench, was limestone rubble mixed with very pale brown mortar (1006). Overlying this was the west end of a rectangular limestone block (1005) most of which lay beyond the limit of excavation. Above 1005 was a brick wall (1004) forming part of the rear of the property.

5.1.2 Forming the western limit of the trench was a modern mortared brick manhole (1003). Apparently butting 1006 and manhole 1003 was a loose mid greyish-brown loam mixed with much brick rubble and pale brown mortar (1002). This layer was at least 1.0m thick and was still present in the base of the trench at c.13.70m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). Above 1002 and butting 1003, 1004 and 1005 was a 0.25m thick mixture of dark grey loam and brown mortar (1001) with occasional fragments of brick. Over 1001 was the latest context, the stone flagged floor (1000) of the backyard of the property. This lay at c.15.00m AOD.

6. CONCLUSIONS (including period by period analysis)

No finds were recovered from the trench. Observation of the trench section, however, made it quite evident that there was no indication of any deposits or features of archaeological significance within the trench. To the east, 1005 and 1006 are probably part of the foundations for the present building although disturbance in this area by a modern service trench made interpretation a little uncertain.

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

Evidence for prehistoric activity is normally absent from the walled city and its immediate environs and would not be expected in this location even if the trench had been much deeper. There is, however, abundant evidence for deposits, structures, and deposits of Roman date from various sites close by and the absence of any such evidence from this trench probably indicates that it did not penetrate deep enough to encounter remains of the period.

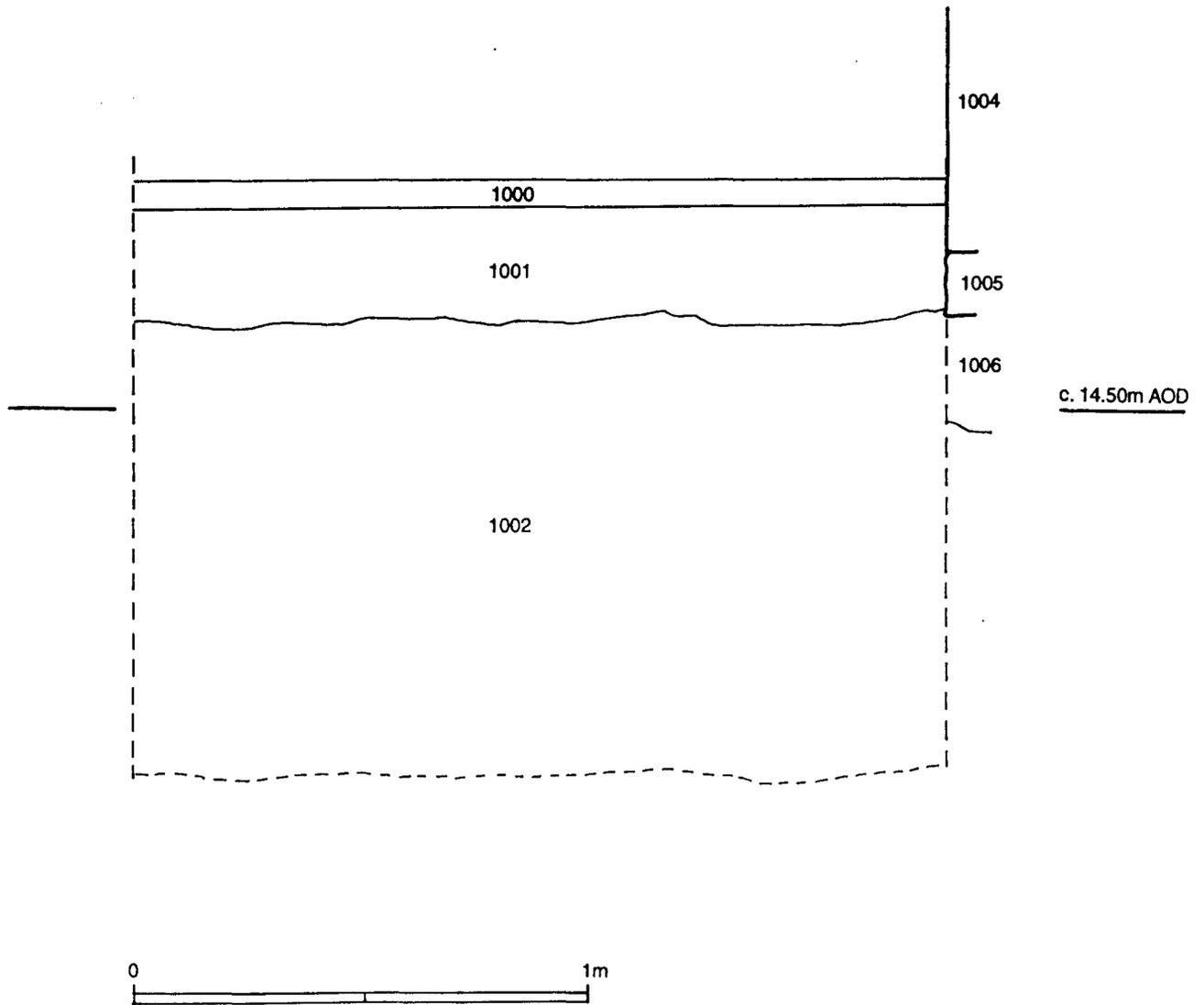


Figure 3, South-east facing section

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

There was no suggestion of any Anglian activity from this trench but any evidence from this period is very rare and would not be expected in such a relatively shallow trench. There is some evidence for Anglo-Scandinavian activity in the general area but once again the trench was not deep enough to reveal any evidence of this period.

Medieval (11th - 16th centuries AD)

The location of the trench to the rear of the property should have placed it in an area of medieval backyards and gardens. Deposits and possibly features of this period would normally be expected, even if only in a truncated form, in a trench of this depth. The total absence of such deposits suggests that they have either been truncated by later activity or that they have been sealed below thick layers of later dumping or demolition.

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

No definite evidence for this period emerged from the trench but it is likely that the probable foundation deposits seen to the east of the trench belong to the construction of the present building in the 18th century. It is, however, possible that they belong to an earlier building on the same spot and have been re-used although it is impossible to verify this. Modern activity, in the form of drains and other services, may have removed much of the archaeological evidence for this period although it is possible that post-medieval deposits lie below the modern material.

Modern (19th and 20th centuries)

The nature of deposit 1002 suggested that it was of relatively recent origin but the section shows it to extend well below the level of the presumed 18th century foundations. This may indicate that at some point in the recent past deposits in the backyard have been removed and the level built up again using demolition material, presumably from building work close by. The looseness of 1002 and also 1001 suggests that they have not been in their present position for any great length of time.

7. LIST OF SOURCES

RCHMY (1962) An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, Volume 1, Eburacum, Roman York

RCHMY (1972) An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, Volume 3, South-west of the Ouse.

8. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Watching brief:	David Evans
Report production:	David Evans
Illustrations:	Mark Johnson
Editor:	David Brinklow