

**YORK CITY ARMS SOCIAL CLUB,
FAWCETT STREET, YORK**

**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

By Isabel Mason

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ABSTRACT

In 2003 York Archaeological Trust carried out a watching brief on the site of the former York City Arms Social Club, Fawcett Street, York. This entailed observation and recording of archaeological features during the excavation of modern services trenches. The work was undertaken in two phases.

Valuable evidence for the character of this area immediately outside the medieval walled city included Roman plough soils and an Anglian pit. Two skeletons were found which are thought to be associated with All Saints, Fishergate, a church known to occupy a site in the vicinity from the 11th – 16th century. Subsequently the area appears to have been largely agricultural until the 19th century.

1. INTRODUCTION

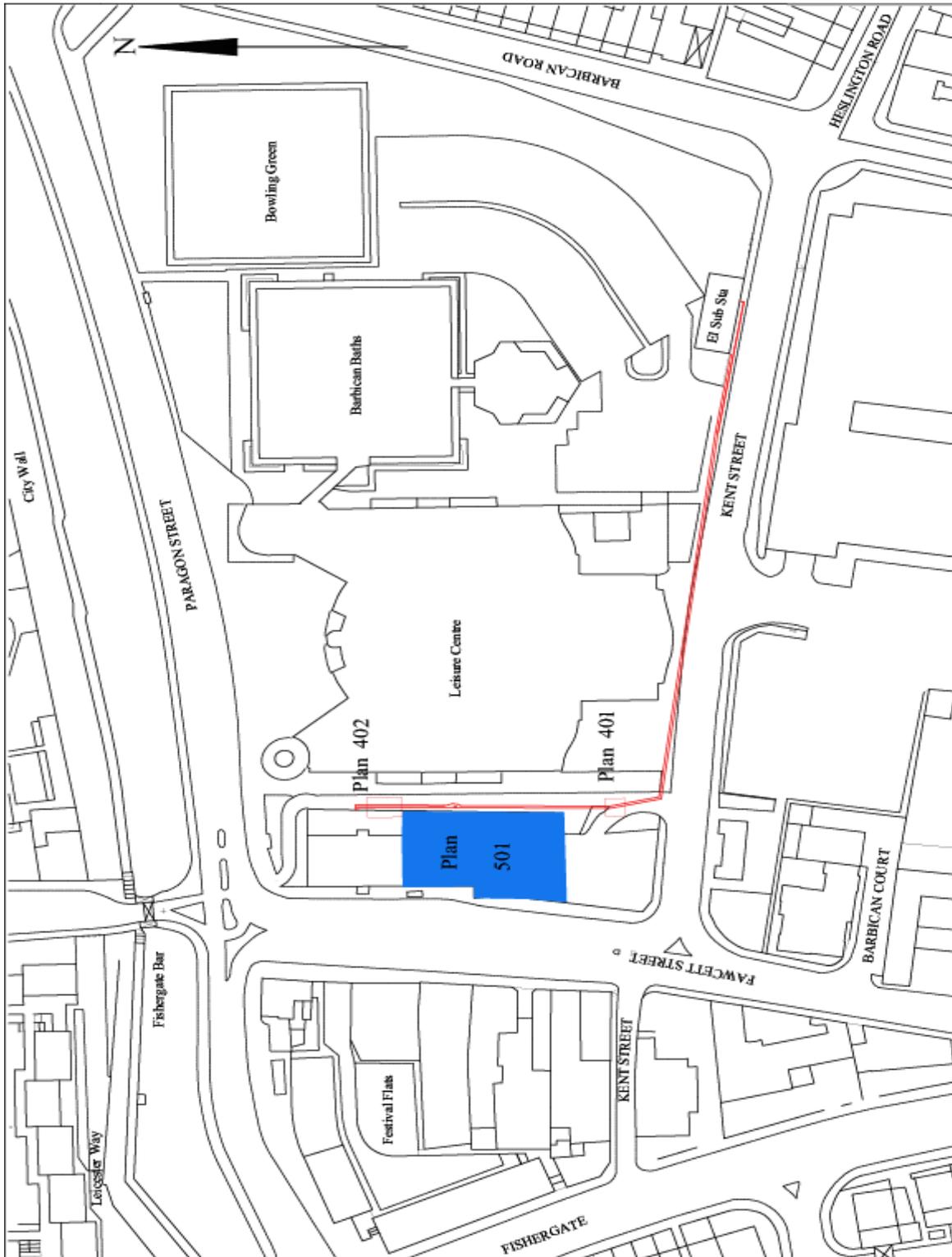
Between the 23rd October 2002 and 10th January 2003 York Archaeological Trust (YAT) conducted an archaeological watching brief at the former York City Arms Social Club, Fawcett Street, York (NGR SE 6097 5118). This work was carried out in two phases (Figure 1); the first, referred to as Area 5, took place during the excavation of the foundation raft and service trenches for a new block of flats. A 20th century extension to the southern gable end of the former social club was demolished prior to the commencement of the watching brief, the remaining fabric of the 19th century building was to be converted to form part of the new dwelling. The second phase, Area 4, was undertaken during the excavation of an electrical power cable.

The watching brief was undertaken at the behest of Jorvik Homes Ltd (York), and followed a specification of works issued by John Oxley, Principal Archaeological Officer, City of York Council.

2. METHODOLOGY

In Area 5 the watching brief involved the observation and archaeological recording of the groundworks for the formation of the foundation raft and service trenches of the new flats (Figure 1). It was restricted to an area lying to the south of the surviving elements of the City Arms and extended to cover the remaining area, including the former car park, machine removal of deposits took place down to a depth of approximately 0.36-0.45m BGL (metres Below Ground Level). The area was then built up with imported limestone rubble before the excavation of the service trenches commenced.

A new drainage system was designed to utilise a live sewer and was connected, at approximately 1.70m BGL, to an existing inspection chamber, which then continued to fall in a northerly direction to join with the main sewer located in Paragon Street. The depth of the existing system dictated the depth and fall of the new drainage system; all the pipe work was designed to fall towards the east and/or north via a series of new inspection chambers, to join with existing pipework. The deepest 'run' of the new drainage system was on the east side of the new structure. This was the only area to be cleaned and recorded archaeologically as the remaining



Key

-  Cable Trench Area 4
-  New Development Area 5

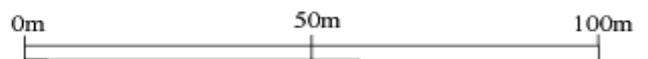


Figure 1 Site Location Plan

drains and inspection chambers barely penetrated the imported limestone rubble and thus were not observed.

In Area 4 work consisted of the observation and archaeological recording of a trench excavated in order to insert an electrical power cable (Figure 1). The machine dug trench began at the electrical substation at the eastern end of Kent Street and ran for a distance of approximately 122m before turning north-west for a distance of 10.5m and continuing to the north along the cycle path for 55m to the City Arms.

The watching brief in Area 5 was made difficult due to the extreme wet weather; the area covered by the footprint of the new building quickly became waterlogged which made recording difficult. This also impacted on the building works as the newly stoned and compacted areas were quickly churned up and became so loose that more stone had to be brought in to remedy the resultant soft and sunken areas before excavation could resume. The results of the watching brief were obtained by closely observing the progress of the mechanical excavator and, after a small area was cleared, checking for the presence of archaeology and recording, where necessary, before the area was submerged.

The drainage trenches in Area 4 also suffered due to the wet conditions. They were excavated section by section, and the drains constructed before continuing, to both reduce the risk of water logging and to control the unstable sides of the trench. Any areas of archaeological interest were then selectively cleaned and recorded as a drawn section, at a scale of 1:10, and recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets. A series of colour slide photographs were taken throughout.

All records and finds are currently stored by York Archaeology Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 2001.10748.

3. LOCATION AND GEOLOGY

The site lies approximately 100m south of Fishergate Bar, on the corner of Kent Street and Fawcett Street. To the north lies Paragon Street and the site is next to the Barbican Leisure Centre, which is to the east of the City Arms. The underlying drift geology of the area is warp and lacustrine clay above a solid geology of Bunter and Keuper sandstone (Geological Survey 1967).

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies to the east of the River Foss and 100m south of the medieval walled city. It is also a little to the east of St. Andrew's Priory (YAT Gazetteer, Site 1984-86.9). A number of excavations and watching briefs have been conducted in this area and have identified activity from the Roman period to the present, although in most cases at a low level of intensity (YAT Gazetteer, Sites 1973.12, 1977.1012, 1988.27, 1989.16, 1991.15; Johnson 2001a and Johnson 2001b).

The Roman activity recorded on these sites suggests primarily an agricultural function in the form of cultivation soils, ditches and occasional pits. The ditches discovered at the Barbican Leisure Centre (York Gazetteer, Sites 1987.27, 1988.27, 1989.27, 1991.15), the City Arms

(Johnson 2001b), the School Canteen, Fawcett Street (Macnab 1998) and Blue Bridge Lane (FAS 2002) have been interpreted as extra-mural land divisions. During an excavation by YAT in 1973, on the site of the former York Cattle Market prior to the building of the Barbican swimming baths, two ditches were discovered. These ditches were interpreted as being boundary ditches separating fields from associated farmsteads to the south (AY6/1, 76-8). The alignment of the ditches was normally north-east/south-west or north-west/south-east, thus respecting the principal axes of the Roman Fortress (AY6/2 in prep.). Pits have been recorded at the Barbican (York Gazetteer, Sites 1987.27, 1988.27, 1989.27, 1991.15) which also date from the Roman period. Although the function of these pits has been difficult to determine, the lack of artefactual content would appear to rule out the possibility of rubbish tipping. It is possible that they were dug out for clay to make pottery or tiles, and then immediately backfilled, it is also possible that they were cess pits which, although might explain the limited artefactual content, would suggest settlement for which evidence is at present lacking.

Roman cremations have been discovered at the Barbican Leisure Centre (York Gazetteer, Sites 1987.27, 1988.27, 1989.27, 1991.15) and at Fishergate House and Blue Bridge Lane (FAS 2002), which extends the extent of the Fishergate burial ground (RCHMY 1, 69) further to the north-east and the west. It is possible that the burial ground could have extended as far as the present day Kent Street.

A few features of the Anglian period, namely pits and possibly two slots, have been observed in the vicinity and are thought to represent peripheral activity related to the major Anglian settlement discovered on the site of the former Redfearns glass works, Fishergate (AY7/1).

There has been very little evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian activity in this area, although it has been proposed that All Saints, Fishergate, known to occupy a site in the vicinity by the late 11th century had earlier origins (Johnson 2001b). The church was granted to Whitby Abbey around 1091-95 (Wilson and Mee 1998) and went out of use after the dissolution in 1549. The precise location of the church is not known, although it was thought to lie near the modern junction of Kent Street and Fawcett Street (Johnson 2001b). Evidence of a structure, thought to be All Saints Fishergate, has recently been discovered in an archaeological evaluation carried out by On Site Archaeology on the corner of Kent Street and Fawcett Street (N. Pearson, pers. comm.)

The present day Fawcett Street was known as Fishergate until the 17th century when the name was given to what is now Fishergate (Johnson 2001b). Cartographic evidence from the 17th–19th centuries depicts the area as being largely devoted to fields and other open land use (Johnson 2001b).

The character of the site appears to have continued largely unchanged until the building of the cattle market in 1827, which occupied the area on which the Barbican Leisure Centre now stands until its removal in the early 1970s. During this time the City Arms was constructed in 1828, the cattle market was reconstructed in 1855 and accommodation for the wool market was added in 1862 (Johnson 2001b). The Barbican Swimming Baths were constructed in the mid 1970s.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Area 4

No significant archaeological deposits were encountered in the portion of the trench, 122m long, running east-west (Figure 1). The material uncovered by the machine in this area consisted of tarmac (4001) of a thickness between 80-90mm, and hardcore (4002), 0.5m-0.6m thick, over the majority of the length of the trench. The thickness of this layer ranged from 0.5-0.6m. A modern brick wall (4005) was located at the western end, approximately 76m west of the substation. This was found beneath a concrete layer (4004), of approximately 0.30m in thickness, which was beneath 4020, a modern cable trench and 4003, its modern backfill.

Two burials (4006 and 4009) were encountered in the portion of the trench running north-west / south-east at the south end of the cycle path (Figure 2). The graves contained articulated skeletons (4015 and 4016) which were in poor condition. It was difficult to determine alignment from such a small area, although they did appear to be aligned east-west. No dating evidence was recovered from the fill of the graves (4008 and 4007). However the proximity of the burials to the likely site of All Saints Church, Fishergate, and to previously excavated burials suggests they were associated with the medieval church. These burials were cut into context 4019, which was a layer of dark brown clay silt.

The burials were sealed by a dark grey silty clay (4014) which contained disarticulated human bone. This layer extended from 7.10m south of the northern end of the trench to 9.40m south of the burials and its thickness ranged from 0.15-0.35m.

Two pits were encountered at the northern end of the trench (4018 and 4017; Figure 3). The first pit (4017) contained a dark orange sandy clay (4012) which appeared to be clay capping. This was sealed by 4013, a friable, dark brown silty clay which seemed to be a post-medieval soil layer, c. 0.15m thick. The second pit (4018) was filled with a dark brown silty clay (4010). However, so little of this feature was exposed that it was impossible to determine its function. This feature was sealed by building hardcore (4002), and although the pit did not produce any finds it was considered to be fairly modern. Both of these pits appeared to be cut into natural soil (4011).

5.1 Area 5

The significant archaeological deposits encountered during the watching brief in Area 5 were recorded in section. Section 1 (Figure 5), labelled on the site location plan (Figure 4) as S1A, revealed that natural (5018) was discovered at the depth of 0.70m. Overlying this was Context 5012, a layer of loosely friable, pale grey mottled creamy white sand, 0.17m in thickness. It was a layer that appeared to have been formed, by leaching, worm action and root action, at the interface of human action and underlying natural. Context 5004, 0.14m thick, covered this layer and was a build-up of friable mid grey sand silt; it was interpreted as agricultural or horticultural topsoil. A similar deposit was discovered during earlier excavations on Fawcett Street and was interpreted as Roman plough soil (Johnson 2001b).

These layers were cut by Context 5015, which to judge by its fills (5014 and 5001) may have been a pit cut for the disposal of industrial waste. Its fills differed in their consistency. Context 5014, the basal fill of pit cut 5015 was a friable, mid-dark grey clay sand silt with moderate

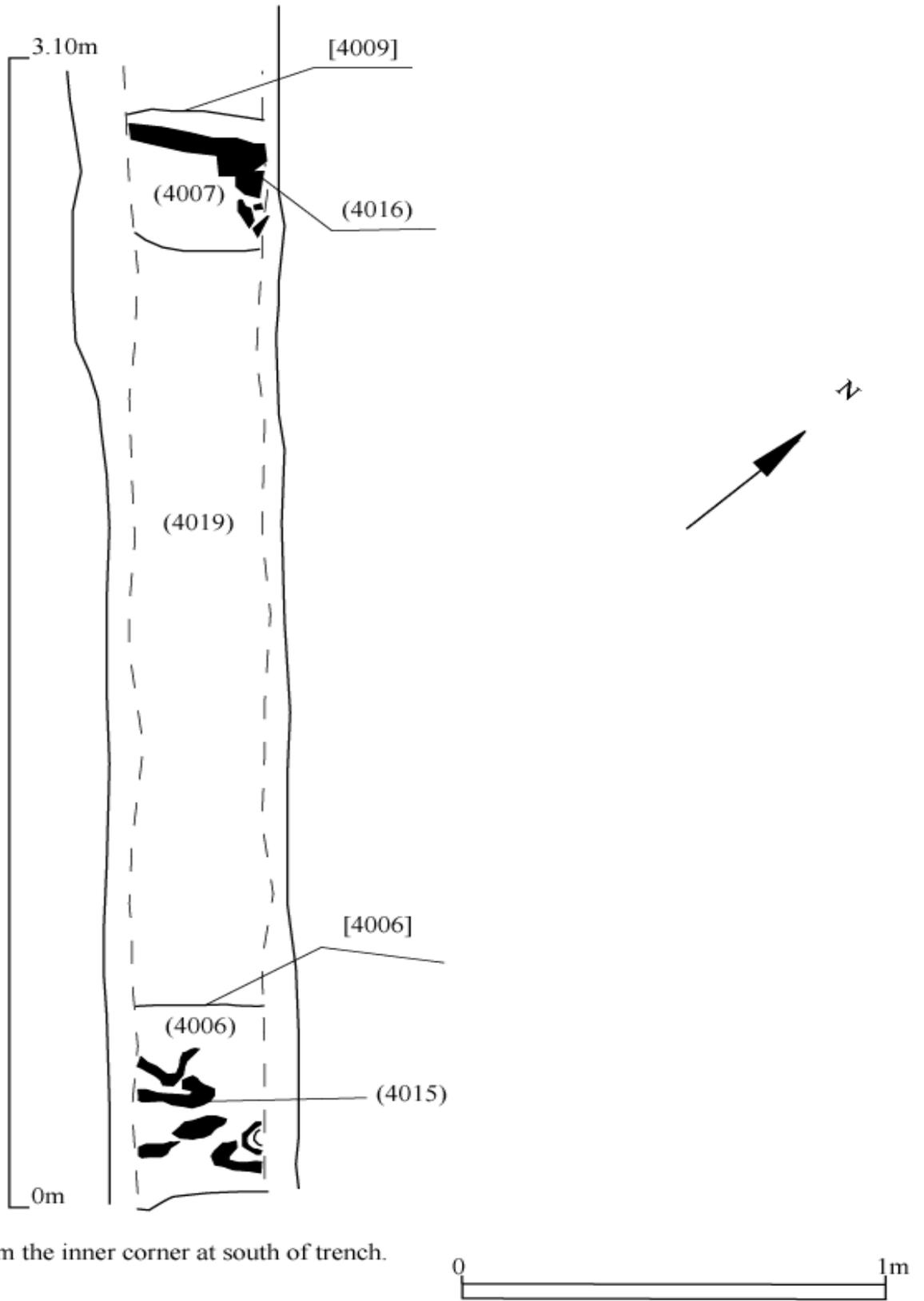


Figure 2 Plan 401

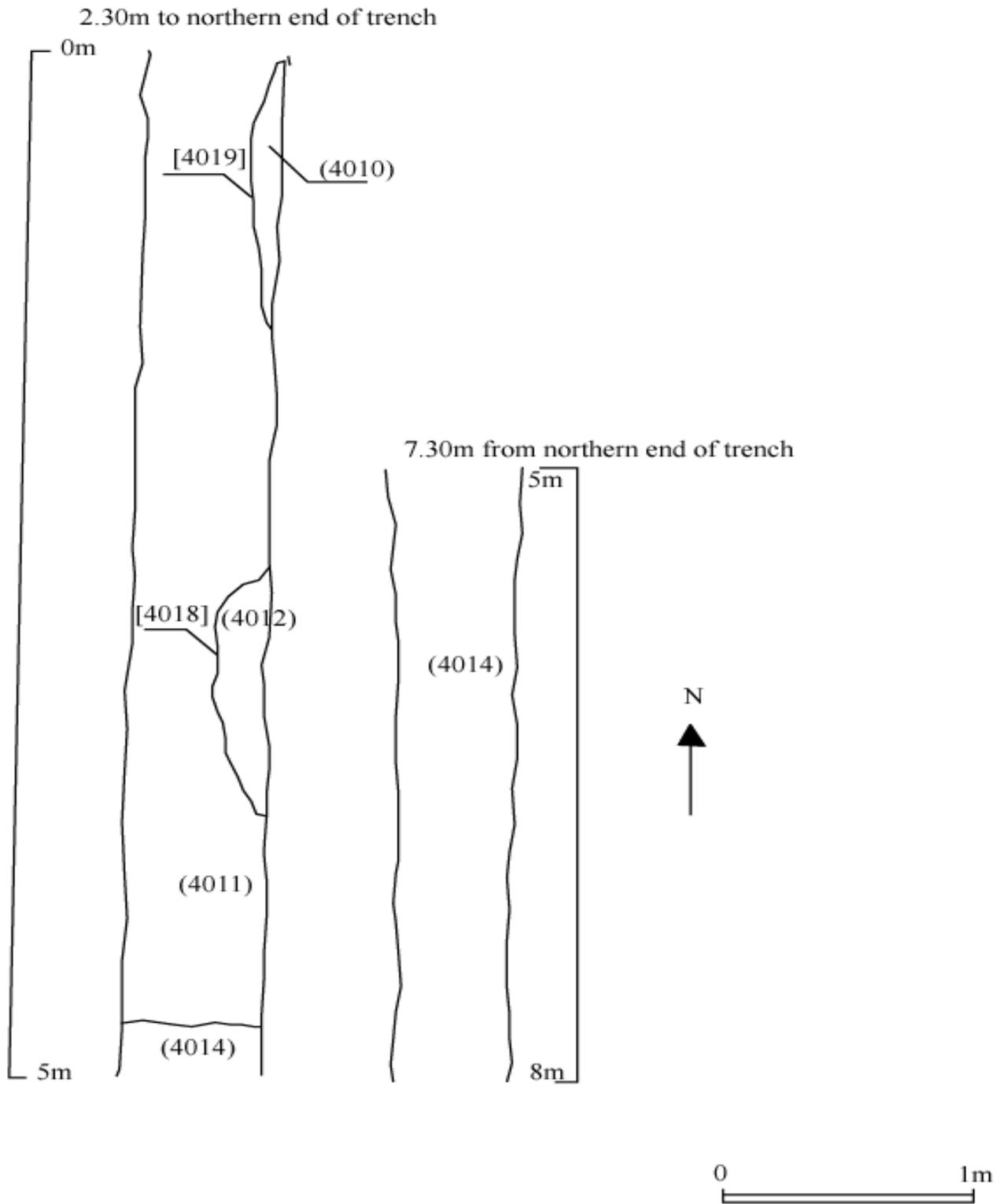


Figure 3 Plan 402

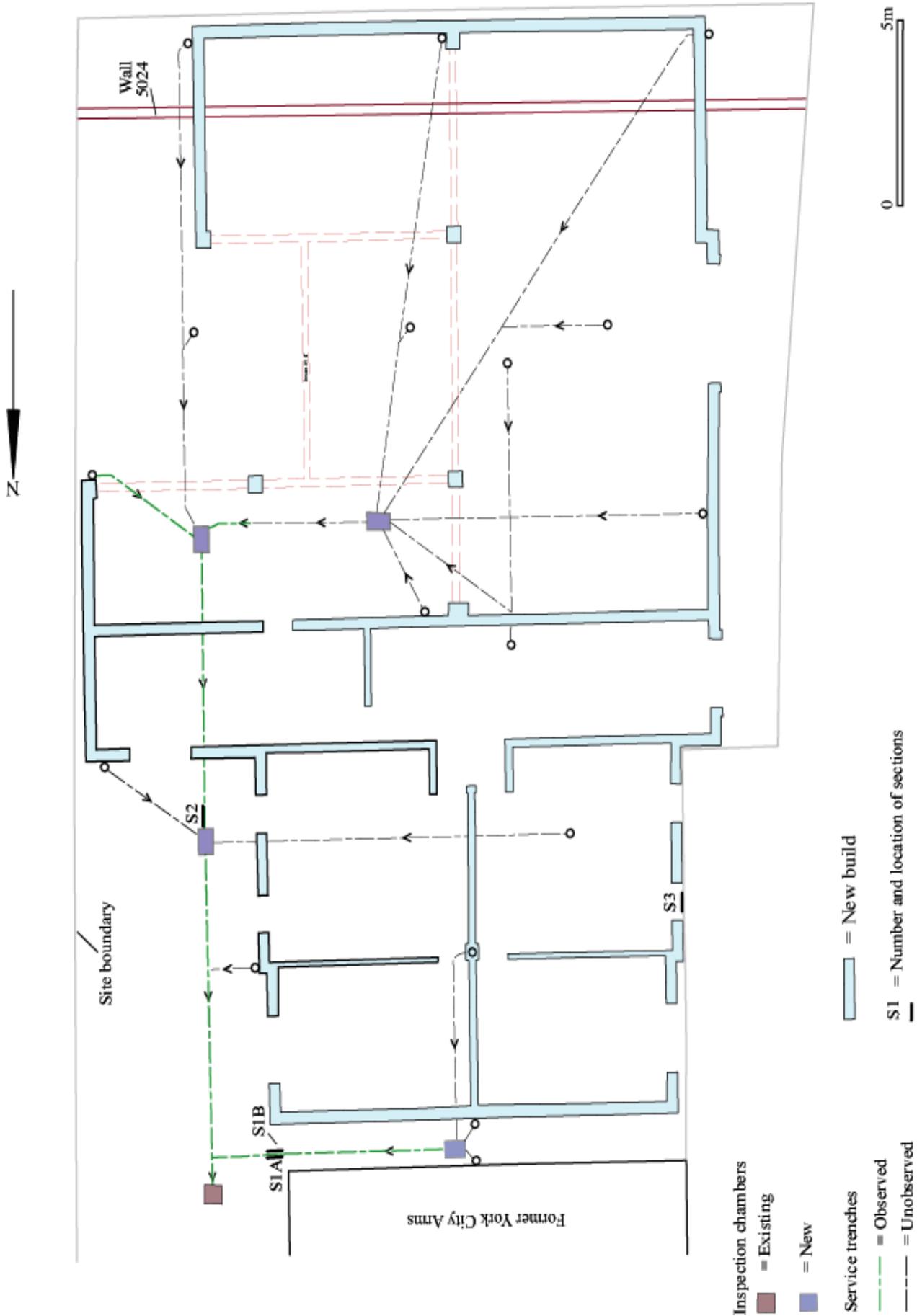


Figure 4 Plan 501, location of service trenches and sections

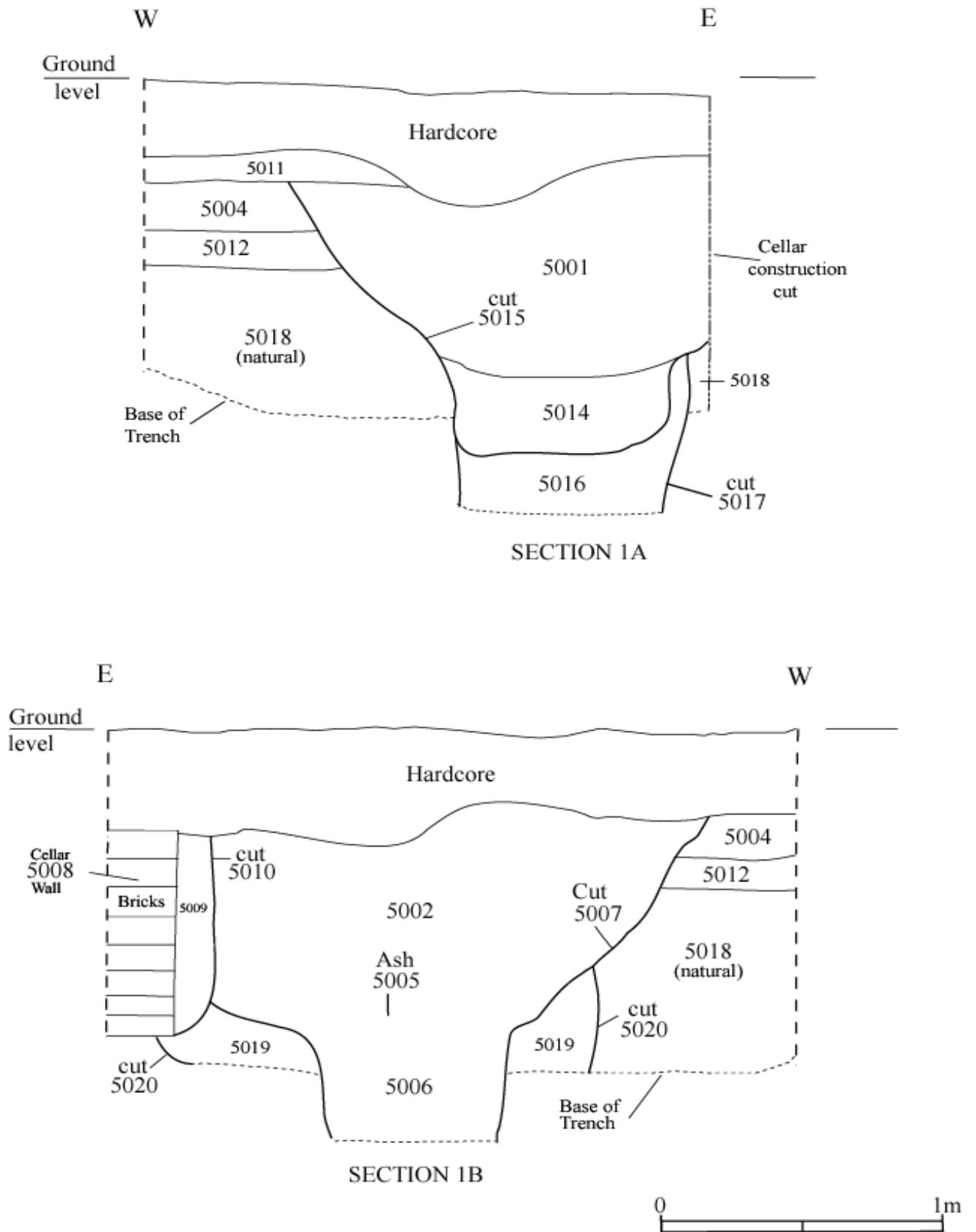
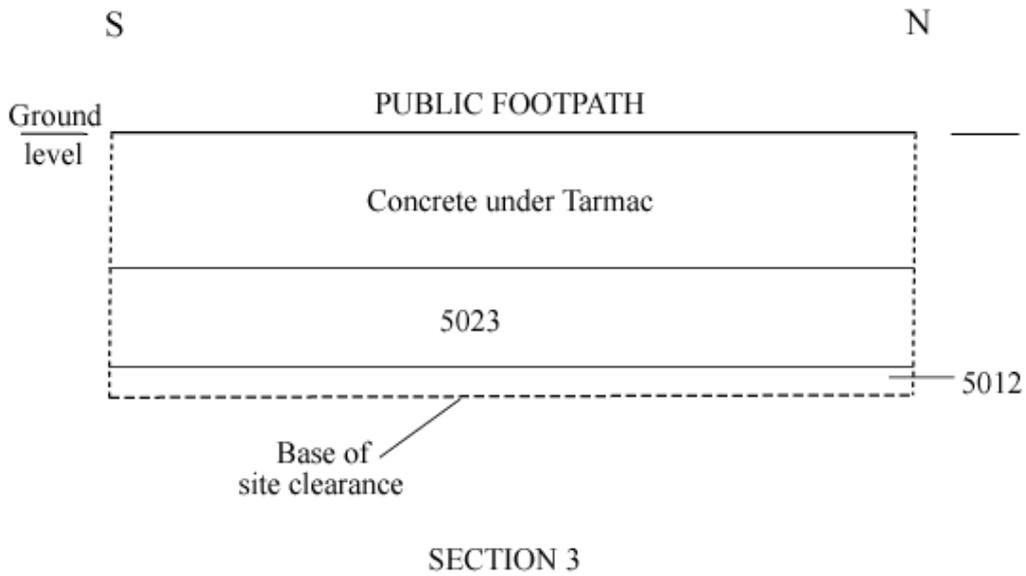
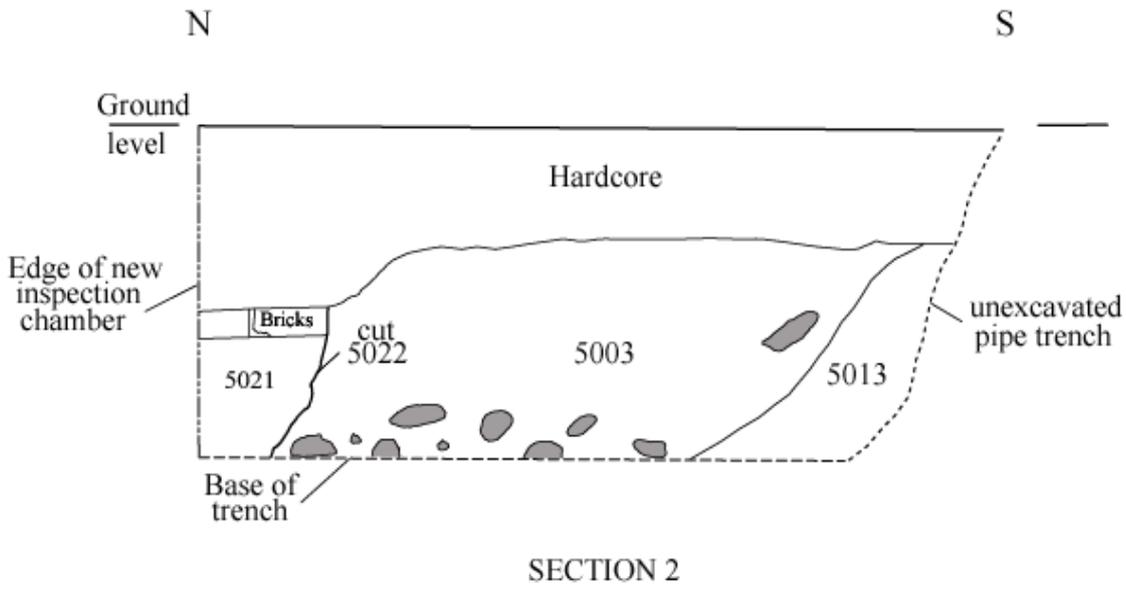


Figure 5 Sections 1A and 1B



● = Pebbles



Figure 6 Sections 2 and 3

inclusions of charcoal flecks and occasional inclusions of small slag fragments and medium-sized pebbles. Its maximum thickness was 0.30m. The upper fill (5001) was a friable, sticky mid-dark grey clay sand silt with occasional charcoal flecks, small slag fragments and small to medium sized pebbles, it was 0.80m thick. The pit (5015) appeared to cut through Context 5016. This was only viewed in section but appeared to be the fill of a ditch or pit (5017) which cut through the natural. Its backfill, context 5016, was a friable, pale-mid grey brown sand clay silt, 0.54m thick. 5001, upper fill of 5015, was below Context 5011, which was a dump or levelling deposit 0.12m thick, which in turn was overlain by the hardcore.

Section 1B was opposite section 1A, at a distance of 1m. At this side of the trench natural (5018) was seen at 0.60m BGL. Again it was apparent that a layer of disturbed natural (5012) 0.10m thick, overlay the natural and was overlain by 5004, 0.16m thick, a build up of agricultural or horticultural soil. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from this context, one fragment of Ebor ware and one fragment of samian, both date from the 2nd/3rd century. It was assumed therefore that this deposit dated from the Roman period.

The relationship of deposits in the two sections was only apparent at the base of the trench, which revealed that the pit or ditch (5017) was cutting a pit (5020) visible in Section 1B. This pit was cut into the natural. Its backfill (5019) was a friable, mid-grey brown streaked with mid orange sandy silt clay, most likely to be re-deposited natural. Only a depth of 0.16m was revealed in the section. There were no finds from either of these pits (5017, 5020) and their relationship to the Roman plough soil cannot be ascertained.

Pit 5017, was then cut by another pit (5007) visible on Section 1B. This pit contained three fills. The bottom fill (5006), was a friable, sticky mid-dark grey brown silt, clay sand with occasional inclusions of large limestone fragments and pebbles, and moderate inclusions of charcoal flecks, 0.48m thick. The next fill (5005) was a pale mid-grey white ash below a friable, sticky pinkish orange mottled mid-dark grey sand silt with occasional inclusions of charcoal flecks, small to medium sized pebbles and fragments of slag (5002). This backfill had a maximum thickness of 0.80m. Artefacts recovered from 5002 include three sherds of 2nd or early 3rd century Roman pottery. An 8th-9th century copper alloy dress pin decorated with a spiral head was also recovered (sf. no. 12). A fragment of a large hone stone found in this context is also likely to be Anglian in date.

5002 was cut by a construction trench (5010) for a 19th century cellar wall (5008). Context 5010 was then backfilled with a highly mixed deposit (5009) after the construction of the wall. These features were then overlain by hardcore.

In Section 2 (Figure 4) two fills (5003 and 5013) of a pit were recorded. As the full extent of the pit was not observed in the trench its function cannot be determined. The primary fill (5013) of the pit was a friable, dark grey brown clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small to medium sized pebbles. It was 0.48m in thickness. The second backfill (5003) was a friable, dark grey brown sand clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks, moderate small to large sized cobbles and pebbles and frequent small clay patches. It was 0.60m in thickness. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from this deposit, one Roman and one of York Glazed Ware dated to the late 13th century. The pit was cut by a construction trench (5022) for a 19th century cellar wall (5021). These features were overlain by hardcore.

Section 3 (Figure 4) merely revealed a layer (5023) of friable, mid greyish brown sand clay silt with occasional inclusions of charcoal flecks, small to medium sized cobbles, animal bone, fragments of brick and tile, fragments of hard grey mortar. A fragment of transfer-printed pot suggests a 19th century date.

6. FINDS ASSESSMENT

6.1 Introduction

Pottery was recovered from four contexts during the watching brief. Context 5000 contained material with a date range from the 2nd or early 3rd century to the 19th century but the other contexts contained mainly Roman and Anglian material (and a single medieval sherd). The Anglian material was consistent with the range and date of material recovered from excavations nearby at 46-54 Fishergate where evidence of occupation from the late 7th century onwards was discovered (AY7/1).

6.1.1 Pottery spot dates by Ailsa Mainman

Context 5000

Pottery: 27 sherds including a mixture of 2nd and 3rd century Roman wares, Anglo-Norman gritty ware and medieval jug sherds (Brandsby-type and other oxidized medieval wares). In addition there was a post-medieval burned or wasted sherd and a single sherd of 19th century willow pattern plate.

Context 5002 (pit fill)

Pottery: 3 sherds of 2nd or early 3rd century Roman wares including 2 colour coated ware, and a late sandy Ebor ware rim

Context 5003

Pottery: 2 sherds, 1 Roman and one York glazed ware (late 13th century)

Context 5004

Pottery: 2 sherds of 2nd/3rd century Ebor ware and samian

Unstratified pottery

Two sherds of hand-made shell-tempered ware from a bowl form with upright pierced lugs comparable to find at 46-54 Fishergate (AY16/6, cat. 2421, 2412, 2423, fig 242) all found in contexts dated to the late 7th -early 9th century.

6.1.2 Small finds by Nicola Rogers

Context 5002 (pit fill)

Finds: sf 11 - copper alloy binding strip, bent into an L shape
 sf 12 - 2 fragments of a copper alloy dress pin with a spiral head. The spiral formed by splitting the top of the shank axially, flattening and inwardly spiralling each side. Only one half of the head and a fragment of shank survives. Comparative evidence from 46-54 Fishergate suggests a date in the 8th or 9th century (AY17/9, cat 5368, fig 664, sf 5357).
 sf 13 - fragment of a perforated iron sheet
 sf 15 - a small piece of slag
 sf 16 - fragment of a large hone stone with worn surface probably of Anglian date.
 plus a splinter of worked wood and two oyster shells

Context 5003

Finds: sf 14 - fragment of slag

6.2 Ceramic Building Material by Jane McComish

6.2.1 Introduction

A total of 0.821kg of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) was examined from the site, all but two fragments were of Roman date. A number of forms were identified including Roman brick (Rbrick), combed flue tile, medieval peg tile and medieval plain tile. The material was studied using standard YAT methodology.

6.2.2 Fabrics

The fabrics present are summarised on Table 1. Clearly fabrics R6 and R9 were the dominant types, accounting for roughly 80% of the CBM on site. There are too few fragments present to establish a link between fabric and form. Both the medieval fabrics are commonly seen on sites in York.

Fabric	Weight (gm)	Weight as a % of total	Forms present
R0	1	0.12%	Rbrick
R6	300	36.54%	Combed box flue
R9	385	46.89%	Rbrick
R10	15	1.83%	Rbrick
M4	105	12.79%	Peg
M15	15	1.83%	Plain
Total weight	821		

Table 1 Fabrics present

6.2.3 Forms

Most of the fragments present could only be classified as Roman brick which was in use throughout the entire Roman period, and they are therefore of relatively little help in dating. The combed flue tile fragment however had narrower date range of 2nd century or later date. The two

medieval fragments were of peg and plain tile respectively and date from 13-16th centuries. The peg tile had a circular hole 11x11mm in size, which is a typical size.

Form	Total weight (gm)	Weight as a % of total
Combed box flue	300	36.54%
Roman brick	401	48.84%
Medieval plain tile	15	1.83%
Medieval peg tile	105	12.79%
Total weight	821	

Table 3 Forms present as a percentage of the total CBM on site

6.2.4 Conclusion

Although the quantity of material recovered is relatively small the presence of a combed flue tile is of interest as it may imply a high status Roman building nearby. More research is needed into the Roman material from this site and other excavations within York to fully understand the significance of the various fabrics used in CBM manufacture. The site is therefore of use in the contribution it can make to building up a wider picture of the development of CBM throughout the Roman period.

CONTEXT	FABRIC NUMBER	FORM	WEIGHT (GM)	LENGTH	BREADTH	THICKNESS	COMMENTS	SPOT DATE
5000	R6	Combed flue	300	0	0	19		13-16TH
5000	M15	Plain	15	0	0	9		
5000	R9?	Rbrick	360	0	0	0	Grass impression? on surface	
5002	R9	Rbrick	15	0	0	0		1-4TH
5002	R9	Rbrick	10	0	0	0		
5002	R10	Rbrick	15	0	0	0		
5003	M4	Peg	105	0	0	11	Circular peg hole 11x11mm in size. Faint grip marks on read	13-16TH
5004	R0	Rbrick?	1	0	0	0		1-4TH
Total weight			821					

Table 4 Ceramic Building Material summary.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Roman Period (1st-5th centuries)

This watching brief has added to the evidence of Roman occupation in the area (AY6/1, AY6/2 in prep.) located in the excavation of the City Arms property itself, and the Barbican Leisure Centre. Context 5004, which was seen in both Section 1A and 1B, was thought to be a Roman plough soil. Two sherds of pottery were recovered from this layer and its make-up was very similar to plough soils previously excavated in this area (Johnson 2001). Two undated cut features may also be Roman. They were cut by Anglian pit (5017) but contained no finds

There were thirteen sherds of Roman pot, all 2nd and 3rd century, both stratified and unstratified. There is, however, still no clear evidence of settlement on this site and the plough soils appear to confirm earlier evidence of the site function as mainly agricultural.

7.2 Anglian (5th-9th centuries)

Valuable evidence for the Anglian period took the form of a pit (5007) dateable by the artefacts found within it. They included two fragments of a copper alloy dress pin decorated with a spiral head (sf. no. 12). A similar object was discovered from 46-54 Fishergate and suggests a date in the 8th or 9th century (AY17/9). A hone stone of Anglian date was also recovered in addition to three sherds of 2nd or early 3rd century Roman wares. This pit is further evidence that Anglian activity extended as far east as Fawcett Street from the main settlement located at 46-54 Fishergate (AY7/1).

7.3 Anglo-Scandinavian (9th-11th centuries)

No evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian activity was encountered during this watching brief.

7.4 Medieval (11th- 16th centuries)

Further evidence for the church of All Saints, Fishergate, known to occupy a site in this vicinity between the 11th and 16th centuries, took the form of two burials thought to be associated with it. Unfortunately as no artefacts were discovered within the graves it was not possible to be any more precise as to their date.

There was also a pit at the northernmost edge of the site which, as it was sealed by a post medieval soil layer, could be medieval. This pit was approximately 55m north of the burial ground and appears to denote an activity unrelated to the church, being possibly associated with properties on the east side of Fishergate. Boundary ditches for small plots along the former Fishergate, now Fawcett Street, were discovered in excavations in advance of the Barbican Leisure Centre.

7.5 Post-Medieval (16th-18th centuries)

The post-medieval evidence for this area was mainly attained from cartographic sources. Those maps illustrated the area of the site as being mainly agricultural until the 19th century. No evidence came to light in the watching brief which would add to the existing knowledge.

7.6 Modern (19th and 20th centuries)

The majority of the modern material discovered on the site was related to the City Arms or to modern services. The locations of all the modern features were known prior to the excavation of the site.

8. LIST OF SOURCES

8.1 Public Records

City of York Sites and Monument Record
YAT Gazetteer

8.2 Printed Works

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