

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Beginning on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1997, York Archaeological Trust carried out a watching brief during the excavation of a number of trenches dug for engineering purposes inside the Davygate Centre, Davygate, York (National Grid Reference SE 6028 5188) (Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to determine the character, date and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits disturbed by these excavations.
- 1.2 This watching brief was undertaken by Russell Marwood on behalf of the York Archaeological Trust. Records of the work are stored with the Yorkshire Museum and York Archaeological Trust under the accession code YORYM: 1996.85.

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Davygate Centre lies between Davygate, Coney Street, New Street and Feasegate/Market Street. Many of the surrounding buildings are of historic interest and are discussed at some length in the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, volume 5 on Central York.
- 2.2 The name Davygate is derived from the Davy Hall, the residence of the family of David, Kings Larderer in the Forest of Galtrees in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.3 New Street was first laid out in 1745 when it crossed the ground cleared by the demolition of a derelict house facing Coney Street and Davy Hall. It is first recorded by Chassereau's 1750 street plan of York.
- 2.4 The Davygate Centre was constructed straddling the south-west wall of the Roman Legionary Fortress. Archaeological excavations by L.P. Wenham in 1956 under 2/4 New Street identified the Roman rampart, fortress wall and traces of three barrack blocks.
- 2.5 Preliminary excavations for the British Home Stores building in 1956, identified the fortress wall and a portion of one of the wall's stone interval towers, SW2, (RCHM Volume 1, p16) (Fig. 2).
- 2.6 In recent years York Archaeological Trust has undertaken two investigations within the Davygate Centre. In November 1995 the excavation of a series of trial trenches was observed, which exposed a number of concrete piles for a programme of dynamic pile testing. A series of soil survey boreholes were also recorded. During March 1996 an archaeological evaluation excavation took place, consisting of two small trenches in the main thoroughfare of the centre, near the New Street entrance. The results of both these investigations are stored with York Archaeological Trust and the Yorkshire Museum under the accession code YORYM: 1996.85.

### **3.0 RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF**

- 3.1 A total of sixteen small trial excavations were observed in various locations across the site (Figs. 3-24). It was found necessary to number the trenches from 9-24 to continue the numbering sequence of earlier archaeological investigations.
- 3.2 Of these excavations, trench 19 could not be observed due to instability of the trench sides. Due to the depth of modern material on the site many of the excavations did not reach archaeological deposits. Trenches 9 (Fig. 4), 13-18 (Figs. 10-19), 20 (Fig. 21) and 22-24 all encountered only modern building debris around concrete ground beams and footings. Indeed, the excavations observed on the ramp, trenches 22-24, were dug through exclusively modern brick rubble and their sections were unrecorded. This modern material was found as deep as 2.10m BGL across the site and in places was clearly continuing down beneath this level.
- 3.3 A black silty, slightly organic soil containing inclusions of charcoal fragments and flecking together with an occasional oyster shell was encountered c.1.50m BGL in trench 10, (Fig. 5). There was, however, a large amount of modern brick rubble within this deposit. A similar deposit was encountered in trench 11 (Fig. 7) beginning at 0.60m BGL and in trench 12 (Fig. 8), where it was encountered some 0.65m lower.
- 3.4 Trench 21 (Fig. 23), proved to be the most revealing of the excavations. The loose modern material through which it was cut made it necessary to close sheet the sides to a depth of c.1.40m BGL. Modern material was present to c.1.90 BGL whereupon the same black, silty slightly organic material was exposed. Here it differed from a similar layer in trench 10, as it was without any modern brick rubble inclusions. Two thin fragments of wood were encountered, one c.2.10m BGL and the other 0.60m deeper. This wood had been damaged during excavation and it was not possible to remove them from the section. At 2.70m BGL were a series of laminated layers of grey and very dark grey sandy silts with inclusions of charcoal fragments and flecking together with moderate but significant amounts of oyster shell. This layer continued down beneath the bottom of the trench at 2.80m BGL.
- 3.5 A basement or cellar was located to the east of the site (Fig. 1). This was recorded as being 23.58m along its long axis running approximately north-south. Its width was c.6.10m running east-west. It was of a brick construction with a brick roof consisting of a single span arch falling away to the ground level on each side of the longest axis. The brick floor of the cellar, was found to be 1.66m below the floor level in the Davygate Centre.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Almost all of the material encountered during these excavations was of modern date, resulting from the construction of the Davygate Centre in 1965.

- 4.2 The archaeological deposits seen in trench 21 show that small areas of undisturbed deposits can survive relatively close to the surface in certain part of the site. A lack of dating evidence however allows only a tentative suggestion of an Anglo-scandinavian date for this material.

## **5.0 LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS**

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**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
THE DAVYGATE CENTRE, DAVYGATE, YORK.**

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