# LEEMING LANE, CATTERICK NORTH YORKSHIRE



## 1995 EVALUATION REPORT NUMBER 2

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

S15794

# LAND TO THE REAR OF 54-72 LEEMING LANE, CATTERICK

## A REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Between 23rd January and 3rd February 1995 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation of land to the rear of 54-72 Leeming Lane, Catterick Village in North Yorkshire. (Fig.1). The site consisted of a small field of pasture surrounded by modern developments.

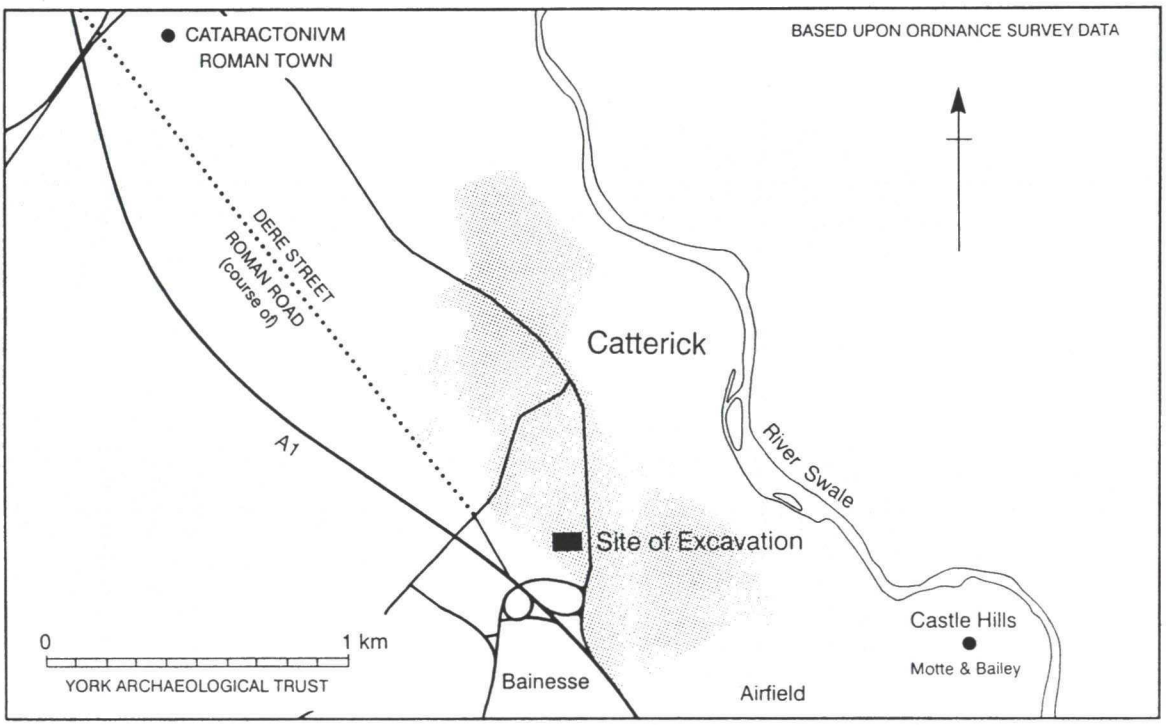



Figure 1. Site Location

The work was undertaken on behalf of Voysey Developments Ltd. acting for the North Housing Association to a specification provided by York Archaeological Trust amended and approved by the Deputy Archaeological Officer of North Yorkshire County Council.

A topographic survey of the field was carried out by Rhona Finlayson and Amanda Clarke. The positions of trial trenches based on the results of the geophysical survey carried out by GeoQuest Associates on behalf of York Archaeological Trust were also located as part of the survey.

The excavations consisted of five trenches centred on NGR SE 2408 9745 and were supervised for York Archaeological Trust by Bryan Antoni.

Following planing approval by North Yorkshire County Council the development proceeded with an archaeological watching brief being maintained over the construction of the access roads and house plot excavation. This took place during April and May 1995.

The site archive and finds are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Trust and Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM : 1995.57. It is intended that the archive will be deposited in the Yorkshire Museum.

## 2. TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

A topographic survey of the development site was carried out by Rhona Finlayson and Amanda Clarke in January 1995 using a Sokkisha DT4 Electronic Theodolite coupled to a Red Mini 2 Electronic Distance Meter. The data was collected via a Psion data logger in SDRMap software and manipulated in the office in AutoCAD.

The purpose of the topographic survey was to record the visible topography present on the development site, which appeared to largely consist of the insubstantial remains of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation and to attempt to discover if any of the anomalies recorded by geophysical survey were visible as topographic features.

In the event, if the ridge and furrow was actually present then the differences in height proved too slight to record with confidence, although a possible north-west/ south-east trend is visible on the survey plot. The features which were apparent were a ridge aligned roughly north-east / south-west at the west edge of the site with a slight depression to the east, a gradual rise towards the northern edge of the site and the possible hollow-way or track which had been seen as an anomaly in the geophysical survey. However, there was no sign of the putative ditches on either side of the track and the precise alignment of the track itself was difficult to determine in detail.


Figure 2. Topographic Survey - contour interval 10cms

## 3. THE EXCAVATIONS

A series of trenches (Fig.3) was excavated by machine down to the first identifiable archaeological deposit or to natural whichever was the highest. Thereafter all excavation was completed by hand.

### 3.1 Trench 1

This was positioned to examine a possible trackway or hollow way identified by both topographical and geophysical survey and parallel negative geophysical anomalies on either side of the supposed track.

Turf and a thin layer of dark grey brown sandy silt topsoil (100) overlay a thick layer of friable mid grey brown sandy silt (102) with occasional charcoal flecks and small - medium pebbles. A thin band of light yellow sandy clay (103) with occasional gravel patches underlay 102 at the western end of the trench. This sealed a deposit of small - medium pebbles in a matrix of mid brown coarse grained clayey sand (101). (Fig.4).

Both 101 and 103 appear to be natural deposits. 102 would seem to be agricultural soil which has been disturbed by ploughing in the past. 102 was considerably thinner on the line of the trackway and it seems likely that the geophysical anomaly was caused by compaction of this layer and the consequent shallower depth of the stony natural deposit (101).

No dating evidence or other finds were recovered from this trench. It seems most likely that the trackway or hollow way was associated with a medieval or post-medieval farmstead nearby.

### 3.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was T shaped and located over the hollow way and possible activity to its west identified by geophysical survey.

A thin layer of turf and friable grey brown silty clay topsoil (200) overlay a thick layer of friable slightly greyish mid brown silty clay (201) containing occasional small pebbles. This sealed compact natural gravel (202) which contained many small pebbles, cobbles and patches of grey brown sandy silt. (Fig.5).

Once again the geophysical anomalies appear to be the result of the varying depth of overburden above the natural stony deposit and compaction in the area of the trackway.

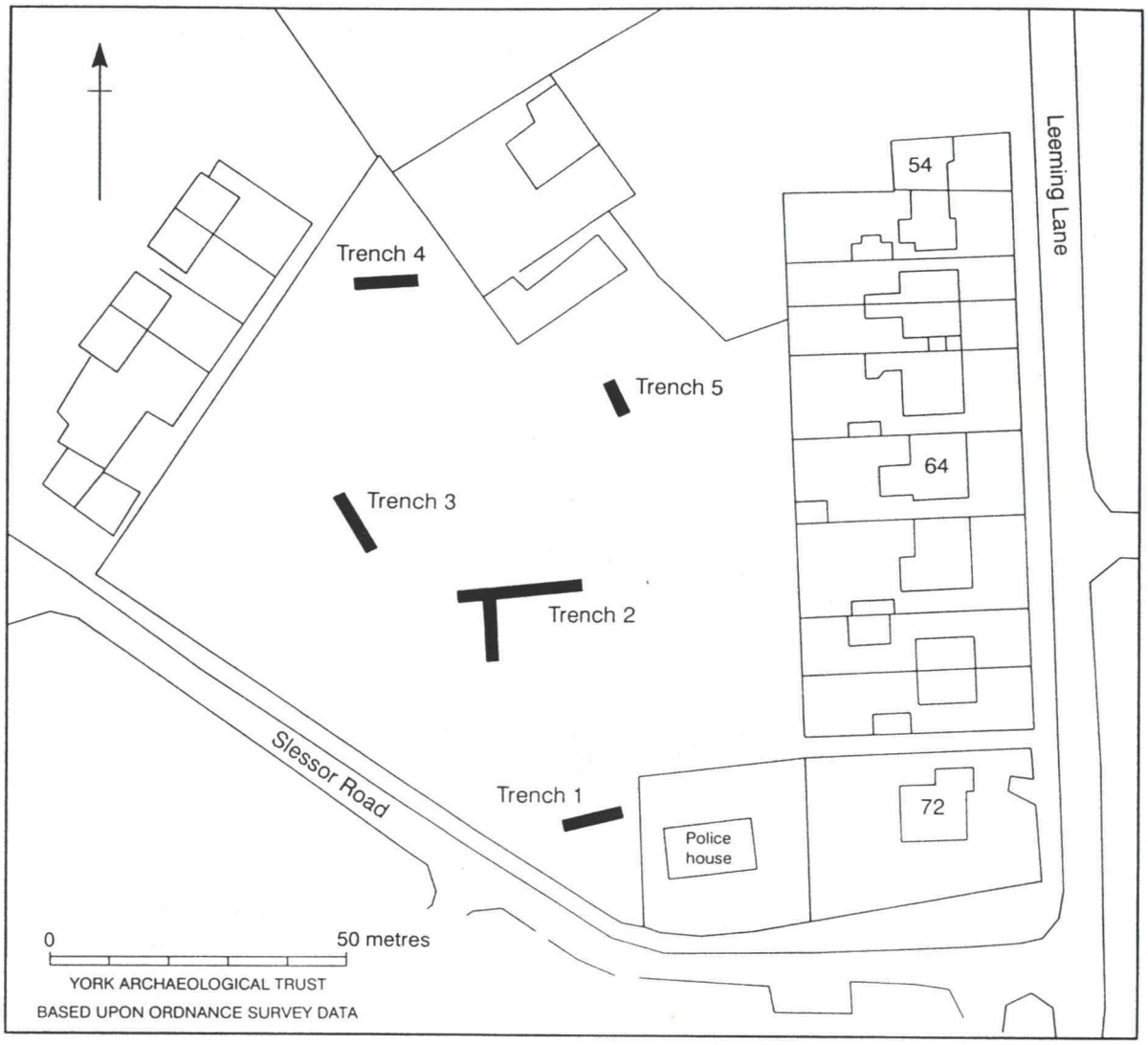



Figure 3. Location of trenches

The only dating evidence recovered from this trench was two sherds of early - mid 3rd century pottery and an iron object which after x-raying was identified as a perforated strip of unknown function. Both finds came from the topsoil (200).

### 3.3 Trench 3

This trench measured 10m x 2m and was located over a slight bank observed topographically and a possible bank and ditch defined from the geophysical survey.

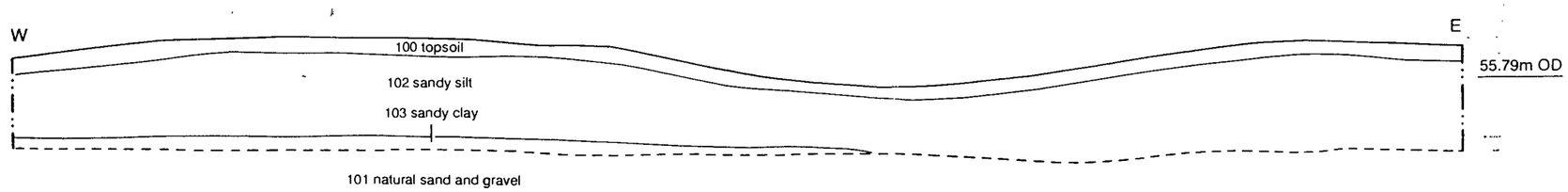
A fairly thick layer of friable greyish brown clay silt topsoil (300) overlay a deposit of friable slightly greyish mid brown clayey silt subsoil (303) which varied in thickness in the length of the trench and contained occasional pebbles. At the north western end of the trench this sealed a cut (306) into the natural gravel which extended beyond the excavated area. (Fig.6).

The cut sloped on its south eastern edge at c.45° and was approximately 0.40m deep with a flat base. It contained an upper fill of friable slightly yellow brown clayey sandy silt (301) which included 79 sherds of mid to late 3rd century Roman pottery (including four large sherds of amphora), two sherds of glass and a quantity of animal bone showing signs of butchering. The basal fill was grey brown sand and gravel (302) with occasional bone and charcoal fragments and a possible worked bone object. Continued excavation of context 301, designated 307, produced a further 36 sherds of mid - late 3rd century pottery.

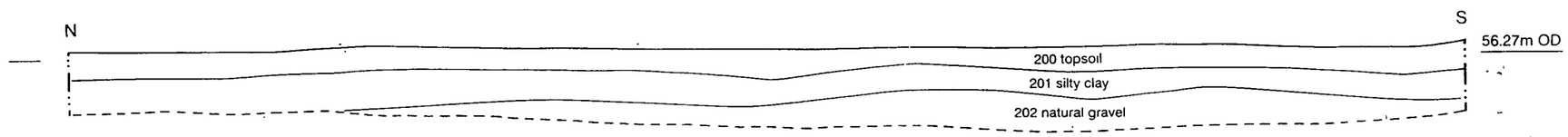
At the south east end of the trench the subsoil (303) overlay a layer of friable slightly yellow brown clayey sandy silt (305) from which no material evidence was recovered but which resembled the matrix of the upper fill of cut 306. Beneath these deposits was the compact natural gravel (304) with cobbles, pebbles and patches of sand.

The geophysical anomaly interpreted as a bank appears to be explained by the relative closeness of the natural gravel to the surface along this alignment. The possible ditch identified by geophysics may be that identified by excavation as a cut of Roman date in which domestic rubbish had been deposited. The layer of clayey sandy silt at the south east end of this trench may be a contemporary Roman deposit building up on the natural ground surface.

Trench 1 south facing section




Trench 2 west facing section




Trench 3 east facing section

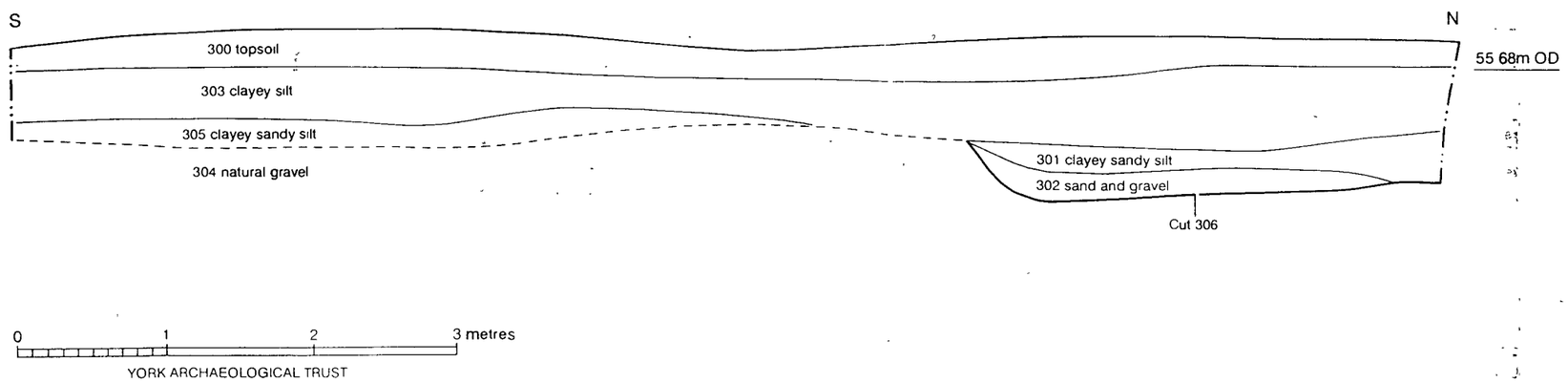





Figure 4. Trenches 1, 2 and 3 : Sections

### 3.4 Trench 4

This trench measured 10m x 2m and was located in the north west corner of the development site in an area in which no geophysical anomalies had been observed and in which a greater depth of overburden was predicted.

A thick, up to 0.56m, layer of friable mid brown sandy silt agricultural soil (400) with occasional charcoal flecks and small to medium pebbles overlay the natural loose small to medium pebbles in a matrix of coarse grained clayey sand (401).

A single sherd of mortaria of uncertain date and a small quantity of abraded animal bone was recovered from the agricultural soil.

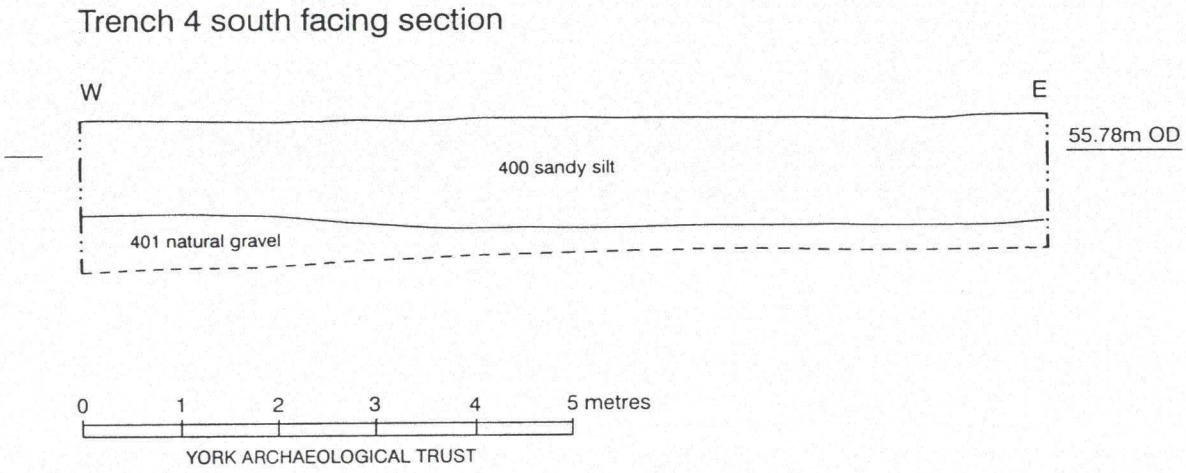



Figure 5. Trench 4 : Section

### 3.5 Trench 5

This trench measured 6m x 2m and was excavated in the raised area to the north east of the development site to investigate a series of geophysical anomalies which indicated a continuation of the trackway observed in trenches 1 and 2.

A thin layer of dark brown sandy silt topsoil (500) overlay a thick layer of friable mid brown sandy clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small pebbles (501). This sealed a layer of light to mid grey brown sandy clay silt (503) which contained occasional small pebbles and overlay the banded natural gravels and sandy clay silts (502).

No dating evidence was recovered from this trench. It seems likely that 501 is an agricultural soil and that 503 is a disturbed natural deposit.

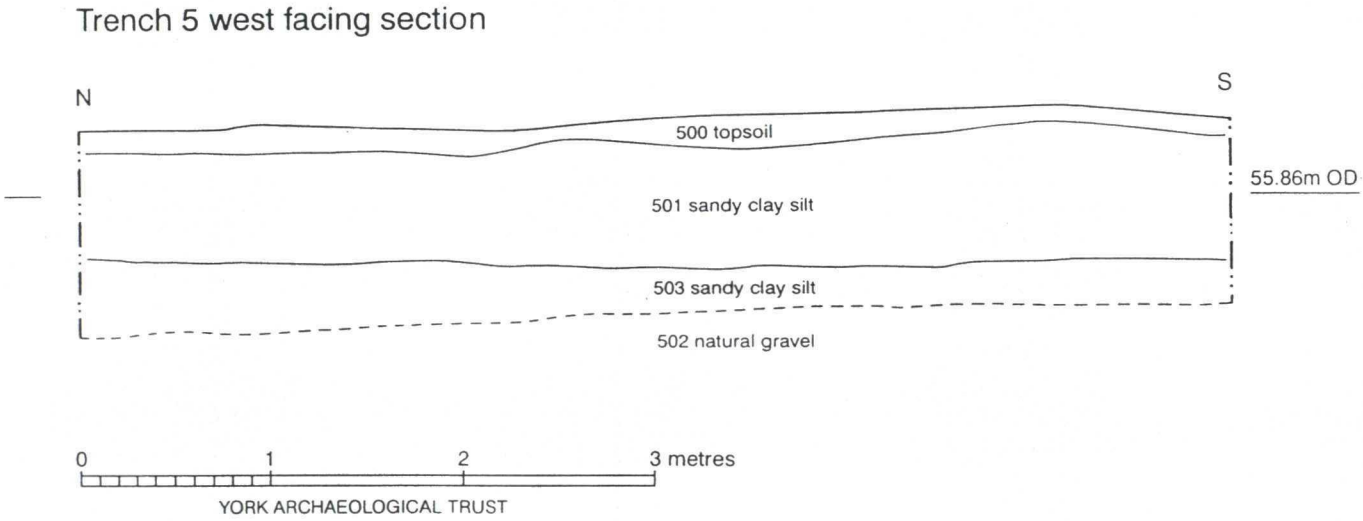



Figure 6. Trench 5 : Section

## 4. THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watching brief was maintained over the stripping of topsoil for road construction and for the various house platforms and during the excavation of the road base level. The watching brief was carried out by Bryan Antoni, Rhona Finlayson and David Brinklow during a series of site visits in April and May 1995.

The site was initially stripped of turf and topsoil to a depth of 0.3 - 0.5m. During this exercise a single feature of archaeological interest was encountered. This consisted of an alignment of loose large cobbles and limestone fragments running from the south-west corner of the site north-eastwards towards Leeming Lane (Fig.7, Plate 1). This mirrored the linear "bank" identified by geophysical survey but was more than 10 metres to the north-west of this feature and was thus outside the limits of Trench 3. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature although the boulders had clearly been disturbed in the past, perhaps by ploughing. The stripped topsoil was banked up around the north-western site boundary to form a sound and visual barrier prior to re-use as garden soil on the development.

Road construction required the removal of up to a further 0.3m of material to allow for the base course of construction. This revealed the upper fill of cut 306, which had been recognised in the evaluation excavations. This was recorded only in the road area adjacent to site plots 13 and 14 (immediately adjacent to trial trench 3) and a further quantity of 3rd century pottery was recovered. Stripping was too shallow to allow the alignment of the cut to be definitively identified and once again, only the eastern edge was within the area investigated.

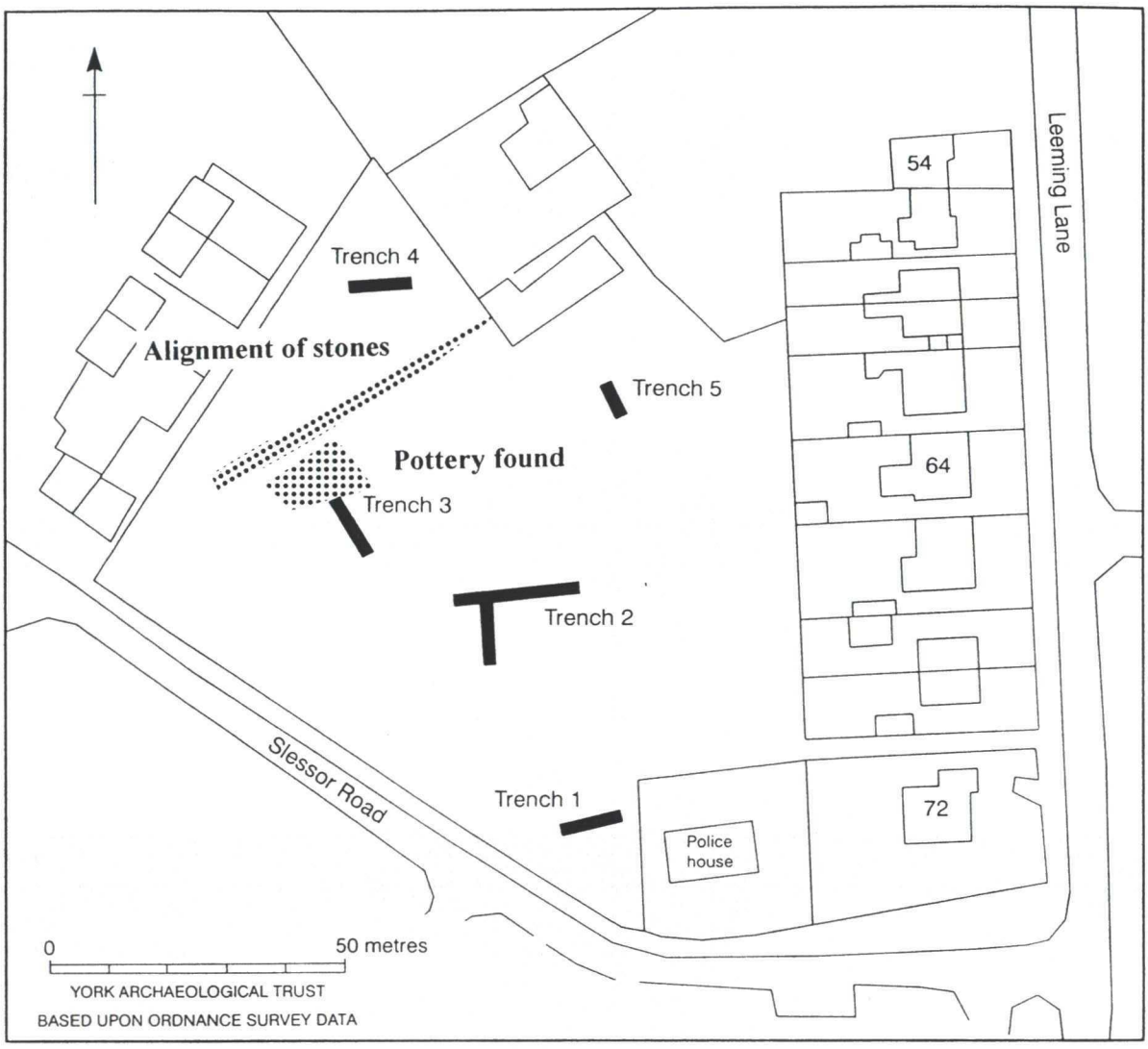



Figure 7. Watching Brief Observations

Plate 1. Alignment of stones revealed in watching brief - looking north-east.

## 5. THE FINDS

The artefactual evidence from the site consisted of the following:

### 5.1 Ironwork

context 200 sf 1 is a perforated strip of unknown function
context 301 sfs 2, 3, 4 are hobnails
context 400 sf 6 is a nail

### 5.2 Fired clay

context 302 sf 7 is a counter cut down from a piece of Samian pottery
context 302 also produced a piece of tile also cut down to a small square

### 5.3 Bone

context 302 sf 5 is a worked bone fragment

### 5.4 Stone

context 400 sf 8 is a fossil
context 301 produced a small piece of unworked flint

### 5.5 Glass

context 301 two sherds of glass. One is a melted fragment from the base of a blue/green prismatic bottle. The fragment retains a raised pellet and thus probably originally came from the corner of the base. Such bottles were very common from the later first to early third century. One fragment of colourless glass was also found. This may be of second or third century date but could easily be modern.

### 5.6 Pottery

context 200 2 sherds of early-mid 3rd century pottery
context 301 79 sherds of mid-late 3rd century pottery including 4 large pieces of amphora
context 307 36 sherds of mid-late 3rd century pottery
context 400 1 mortaria sherd of uncertain date

A further 15 sherds of 3rd century pottery were recovered during the watching brief. All were from the vicinity of Trench 3.

### 5.7 Summary:

There is little of great significance amongst this collection. The pottery includes some earlier wares with rounded edges but other sherds are quite sharp and unabraded. The assemblage as a whole fits into the 3rd century.

## 6. THE ANIMAL BONE

### 6.1 Introduction

A small assemblage of hand-collected animal bone, amounting to a single box (31 x 31 x 22cm) was recovered from two of the five trenches excavated. Bone from Trench 3 was recovered from deposits of 3rd century date, whilst a small quantity of very fragmentary material, associated with a single sherd of mortaria, came from agricultural soil.

### 6.2 Results

Preservation was variable, with some bone appearing battered and friable. Colour was mostly gingery brown, with little variation apparent within the material from each context. Few of the bones showed evidence of dog gnawing, although fresh breakage was noted in quite a high proportion (20-50% of the entire assemblage) as was butchery.

From Trench 3 a total of 208 fragments were recovered, amongst which cattle remains predominated (46 fragments), with only six fragments of sheep/goat and a single pig element represented (Table 1).

Many of the cattle long bones had been split longitudinally and trimming of the epiphyses was also observed. Of particular interest were the cattle scapulae, most of which had been trimmed around the glenoid cavity; in some cases the spinus had also been removed. It is possible that this type of butchery represents "brined" and cold-smoked joints, the trimming allowing access for the salt into the muscle mass. Additionally tow scapulae exhibited knife marks on the medial surface of the blade.

The remaining cattle fragments were mostly non-meat bearing elements (i.e. lower limbs, feet and heads) suggesting waste from primary butchery. The nature of the butchery observed indicates the presence of commercial butchery waste with systematic splitting of the shafts for marrow extraction.

Horse remains (from Trench 3) were mostly represented by upper and lower teeth and mandible fragments. Knife marks were noted on the shaft of a single

metacarpal. Also present were five fragments, identified as dog, which appeared to be part of the same small and robust individual.

Eleven measurable bones (mostly cattle) and two mandibles with teeth were recorded from this assemblage.

Animal bone from Trench 4 was mostly unidentifiable because of its very fragmentary nature. Only three fragments were identified as cattle, whilst the remainder consisted of cow-sized shaft and vertebra fragments.

### 6.3 Statement of potential

The animal bone assemblage from this site is limited in its interpretative value by its small size and the small number of fragments providing biometrical and age at death data. However, the cattle bones from Trench 3 are of interest since they show characteristic butchery noted from other assemblages of Roman date from both Catterick (Hodgson 1977; Meddens 1990) and Carlisle (Stallibrass 1993), and from the wider region, e.g. York (O'Connor 1988; Carrott et al. 1995) and Lincoln (Dobney et al forthcoming) and beyond e.g. Chichester (Levitan 1989), Exeter (Maltby 1979) and Gloucester and Cirencester (Maltby 1984).

### 6.4 Recommendations

It is likely that a moderate-sized bone assemblage would be recovered should further excavation be undertaken. Systematic recovery procedures (as recommended by Dobney *et al* 1992) would also ensure that a more representative range of species and elements was recovered. Large assemblages from Catterick would be useful in enabling comparisons to be made between the diet and economy of the military and civilian Roman settlements.

**Table 1. Animal Bone from Trench 3**

| Taxon | Total fragments | No. measurable | No. mandibles |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Bos* f. domestic | 46 | 7 | - |
| Caprine | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| *Sus* f. domestic | 1 | - | - |
| *Equus* f. domestic | 15 | 2 | 1 |
| *Canis* f. domestic | 6 | - | - |
| Unidentified | 139 | - | - |
| **Total** | **213** | **11** | **2** |

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Well drained sands and gravels underlay the whole of the development site, mostly at shallow depth. The majority of features observed in the topographical survey appear to relate to farming of the area in the medieval and post-medieval periods. This farming seems to have resulted in a hollow way or trackway across the site and vestiges of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing. In the north east and north west corners of the site a considerable build up of agricultural soil seems to have taken place. Very few of the apparent anomalies identified by geophysical survey were observable as archaeological features.

The evidence for Roman activity in the area was confined to Trench 3 and that area of road construction which took place nearby and was characterised by large unabraded pottery sherds and large pieces of animal bone. This is typical of domestic rubbish dumping and is not likely to have been carried very far. It is thus possible that Roman occupation is nearby. However, Roman material is widely found at Catterick and this should not occasion surprise.

No evidence of Roman structures or of building material was found. The alignment of stones observed during the watching brief was presumably the remains of some historic property division but was unfortunately undatable.

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