

**WATCHING BRIEF AT THE "RECTORY"
WEST HESLERTON
22.1.1990.**

Prior to housing construction (plot 1) on grassed land some 50 metres south south east of the rectory, West Heselton, a watching brief was maintained during the process of machine stripping of topsoil. No previous archaeological work or in depth documented historical research is known to have been carried out for this piece of land or for its immediate environs. The area of ground stripped was that laying beneath the proposed house and drive only. This entire area with the exception of the southernmost 12 metres of the drive was stripped of all its topsoil, on average 20-25 cm deep, down to natural geological strata of reddish brown clay with some discontinuous isolated patches of lumpy chalk.

No archaeological features were observed cutting through any part of the topsoil although the badly decayed remnants of several tree roots were observed in the area of the proposed house. These tree remnants are known to relate to an old orchard, uprooted within the last decade. Several artifacts and ecofacts were recovered during topsoil removal, these included :

- 2 sherds of medieval pottery, both with green glaze.
- 2 sherds of unidentified ceramic, hard dark grey fabric with few inclusions, probably rooftile, date unknown.
- Several small fragments of non immediately local, medium grained yellow sandstone.
- 1 pair iron sewing scissors of probable 19th-20th century date.
- 1 complete small clear short necked cylindrical glass bottle with cork, 20th century date.
- Several sherds of corroded glass of probable post medieval date.
- Several fragments of unworked animal bone.

NYCC HER	
SNY	8136
ENY	1152
CNY	-
Parish	3060
Rec'd	-

It was noted that whereas the finds of medieval and probable medieval date occurred throughout the stripped area there was a concentration of post medieval finds in the central and southern stripped part of the drive. This clustering of post medieval finds is believed to relate to the presence of a refuse dumping ground of like date in an area immediately to the east.

Visual examination of the surface of the natural strata both during and after machine clearance revealed the presence of only one archaeological feature, in the central area of the drive (see drawing 1). This was an east-west aligned shallow cut with steep sides and an almost flat base that cut into the natural clay and continues to both east and west beyond the limits of the stripped area. The dimensions of the cut revealed within the area were : 4.72m x 1.4m x 0.28m. The fill of the cut was of loosely packed rubble containing a number of air spaces/voids. Its matrix consisted of : 65%, = angular fragments of chalk, the largest 27x19x15cm, but most, approximately 5-12cm. 20%, = broken fragments of brick, mostly of a size 10cm, some of these still had traces of mortar adhering to their surfaces. 15%, = silty loam, this tended to be thoroughly mixed up with the other constituents. There was some evidence of root disturbance of this fill though with the exception of the westernmost part this tended to be slight. A north-south section 1.1m wide was cut across the centre of the fill, this did not produce any finds or dating evidence save for the presence of post medieval brick.

The cut is interpreted as a foundation trench, probably of a building. The owner of the land, J. Wilson, informed the archaeologists that documents held at the Borthwick Institute of historical research, University of York, record a building built circa 1760 as being located approximately in this area. It is likely therefore that the excavated foundation trench relates to the north wall of this documented structure it being noted that no other indication of a wall was located to the north of it within a distance of 20 metres.

The shallowness of the foundation trench may owe to its originally having been so, or alternatively could be due to truncation/levelling of the old ground surface during or after the buildings demolition.

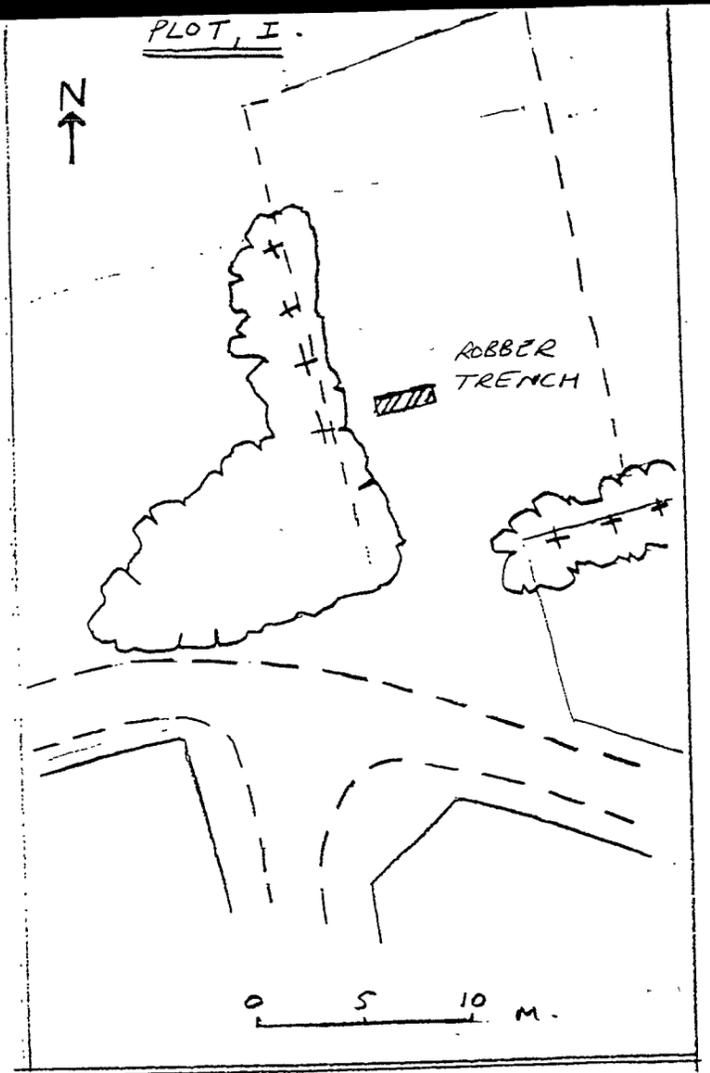
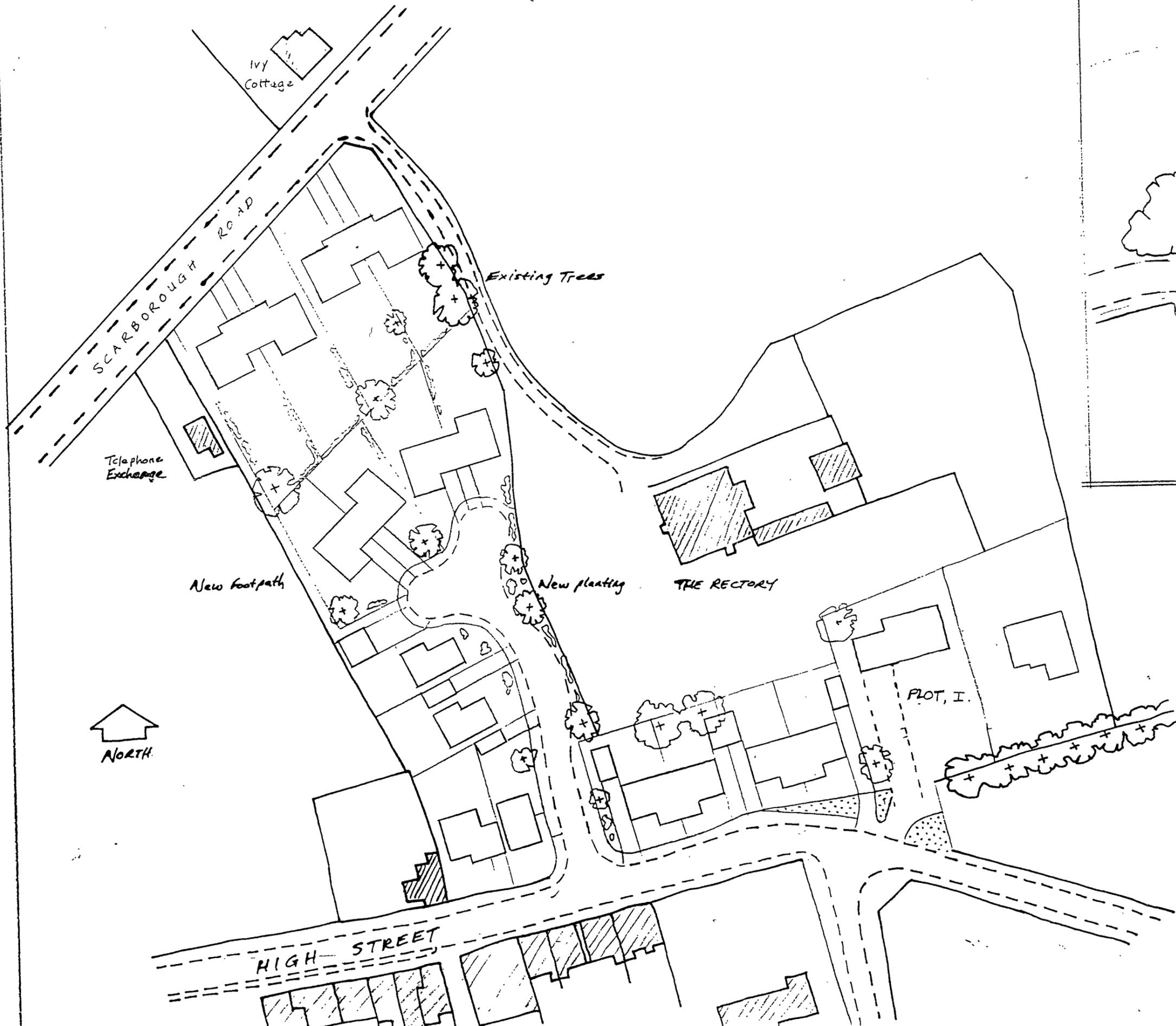
It is very unlikely that the fill of the foundation trench relates to an original rubble wall foundation. Rather, the loose, mixed nature of the fill suggests that it represents a backfilling of unwanted small fragments of building detritus left over from building and foundation trench demolition/robbing. This was further supported by a surface examination of the extreme west part of the foundation trench fill where its matrix consists primarily of a heavily rooted silty loam with very little in the way of brick and stone debris. It is suggested that this differential filling of the foundation trench was caused by a probable piecemeal approach to the final backfilling of the robbed foundation trench.

It is almost certain that further land development to either east or west of the area already investigated will reveal further archaeological remains.

All records and photographs together with the finds from this investigation are presently in the custody of the Landscape Research Centre.

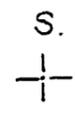
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

(J. WILSON) WEST HESLERTON.



1:500

JOHN WILSON - 1st HOUSE SITE



CUTS INTO UNDISTURBED
RED BROWN IL SILTY
CLAY



WEST FACING SECTION A - A

1:10 M J 22.1.90.
W FACING SECTION OF ROBBED OUT
WALL TRENCH

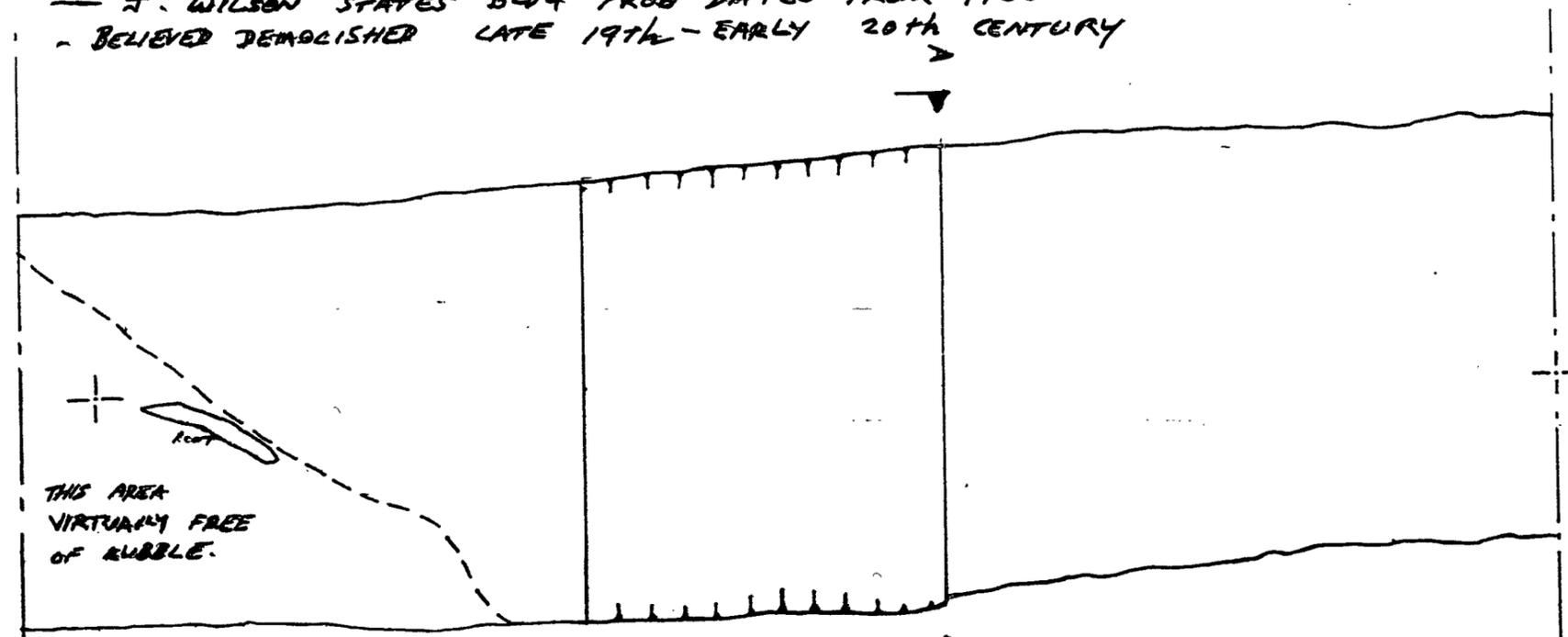
MATRIX = 65% CHALK FRAGS - ALL ARE
ANGULAR < 27 x 9 x 18 cm BUT MOSTLY
APPROX 8-12 cm
- 20% = BROKEN FRAGS OF BRICK - SOME
WITH TRACES OF MORTAR STILL ADHERING
- THESE MOSTLY 4-10 cm.
15% = SILTY LOAM - THIS THOROUGHLY
MIXED UP WITH OTHER CONSTITUENTS.

FILL GENERALLY QUITE LOOSE - NOT FIRMLY
COMPACTED ANYWHERE
NO FINDS APART FROM FRAGS OF BLDG MAT.
SLIGHT ROOT DISTURBANCE.

? SHALLOENESS OF TRENCH NOT DUE TO JAN 1990 MACHING - DUE TO
EITHER : ① ORIGINALLY SHALLOW TRENCH , ② POST DEMOLITION
LEVELLING PROCESS.
- J. WILSON STATES BLDG PROB DATES FROM 1760.
- BELIEVED DEMOLISHED LATE 19th - EARLY 20th CENTURY

W.

E



THIS AREA
VIRTUALLY FREE
OF RUBBLE.

PLAN 1:20

WALL TRENCH BELIEVED TO BE ROBBED - FILL NOT BELIEVED TO BE FOUNDATIONAL
MATERIAL AS IS V. MIXED MATRIX WHICH IS V. LOOSE - EVEN HAS AIR BUBBLES
IN IT. FILL ∴ PROB. UNWANTED DEBRIS FROM DESTRUCTION / ROBBING THROWN BACK
INTO TRENCH.

Note: This plan has been
reproduced & is no longer to
the scales cited. LM/Nov. 2012.