



Archaeological Services
University of Durham

**20-22 High Skellgate, Ripon, North
Yorkshire**

archaeological monitoring

on behalf of

Westgrove Street PI&C

ASUD Report 1044
November 2003

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1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a scheme of archaeological monitoring conducted in advance of a proposed development to the rear of 20-22 High Skellgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Westgrove PI&C, and conducted by Archaeological Services University of Durham in accordance with a Project Design provided by Archaeological Services (PC03.75).

Results

- 1.3 As part of the proposed development works involved the levelling of the ground surface surrounding a derelict building situated on the site and also the excavation of service trenches, a scheme of archaeological monitoring was undertaken.
- 1.4 No significant archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the areas where preliminary ground clearance operations were carried out. Where service trenches were excavated, these cut into the underlying natural sand.
- 1.5 During the initial clearance of the site, prior to the commencement of the restoration of the derelict building, a previously unrecorded cellar was discovered. This was subjected to a scheme of archaeological recording, with both a photographic record being made of its interior elevations and a detailed ground plan drawn.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located to the rear of 20-22 High Skellgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire, at grid reference SE 43114712. The site is situated a small distance to the south of the centre of the city and is surrounded by 18th and 19th century residential and commercial buildings.

Development proposal

- 2.2 The proposal is to re-develop a derelict two storey building on the site, converting it into residential accommodation.

Objective

- 2.3 The site lies close to the historic centre of the medieval town of Ripon and directly to the south of a 15th century timber framed building, known locally as the Wakeman's House. The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any surviving archaeological features within the proposed development area, so that an adequate record could be made of any deposits or features uncovered.

Specification summary

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Project Design provided by Archaeological Services (PC03.75).

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th July and 6th August 2003. This report was prepared between 10th and 14th November 2003.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Mark Douglas. This report was prepared by Mark Douglas, with illustrations by Linda Bosveld. The Project Manager was Peter Carne.

Acknowledgements

- 2.7 Archaeological Services is grateful for the assistance of Gail Falkingham of North Yorkshire County Council.

Archive

- 2.8 The site code is HSR03, for High Skellgate, Ripon 2003. The site archive is currently held by Archaeological Services and will be deposited in accordance with County Council guidelines.

3. Landuse and topography

- 3.1 At the time of the survey the subject of the proposed development was a derelict two storey brick built structure.



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20-22 High Skellgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire

Figure 1

Location map

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0 25m



scale 1:500 - for A4 plot



High Skellgate

proposed
development
site

Water Skellgate

- 3.2 The site is situated to the rear of commercial buildings which front onto the east side of High Skellgate, at a mean elevation of c.37m OD.

4. Historical and archaeological background

- 4.1 The history of the town of Ripon dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period when it was an important ecclesiastical centre. A monastery was established here in the 7th century, which by the 10th century had further developed into a college of secular canons. These forms of religious establishments frequently became the focus of urban developments in the Middle Ages (Sheeran 1998) and by the 12th century Ripon had expanded into a thriving market town. The initial concentration of medieval urban development appears to have been centred on an area to the north of the present cathedral, with Allhallowgate representing the main thoroughfare of the town at this date (Mackay 1982).
- 4.2 A further expansion of the town took place in the 13th century which resulted in the formation of the street pattern, including High Skellgate, which exists today. By 1320 the present market place had been established, moving from its original position, now referred to as the Old Market Place, a short distance to the north (ASUD 2001). It appears that at this time a pattern of burgages, narrow strips of land leased to shop owners and occupiers, was laid out over this newly occupied area, with each of the plots fronting onto the main streets of the town (Mackay 1982).
- 4.3 Ripon's geographical extent and street pattern was established during the 13th century expansion of the medieval town. This remained relatively unaltered for many years, until a further development of the town took place in the 19th century.
- 4.4 High Skellgate itself receives little mention in historic documents dealing with the history of the town. It was, and indeed still is, the main route from the south, leading from the bridge over the River Skell situated in Low Skellgate into the centre of the town. There is a reference, however, to a building at the rear of 22 High Skellgate, '*occupied by the Corporation, the rooms of which are used by them for Committee meetings and offices of their several officials- the Town Clerk, the Engineer etc*' (1895). It is not entirely clear however, as to whether this refers to the building which was the subject of the archaeological investigation.

5. The archaeological monitoring

- 5.1 The development undertaken at the site necessitated the removal of a substantial amount of overburden which had accumulated around the perimeter of the building. In addition, several services trenches were also excavated as part of the scheme of works. All of these groundworks were subjected to archaeological monitoring in order to investigate and establish the nature of any archaeological deposits, which may have been disturbed during these operations.

- 5.2 The overburden proved to be recent in date, having contained within it a great deal of modern domestic and light industrial refuse. A cobbled surface was encountered on the north side of the building, at a depth of 1.5m. This was laid directly on the underlying natural sub-soil, a red sand.
- 5.3 Two service trenches were excavated, one to the south and one to the west of the building. These were cut into the natural sub-soil and showed no evidence of any archaeological deposits or features.

The cellar (Figure 2)

- 5.4 The cellar discovered during the initial ground clearance of the development site was investigated. The overall internal dimensions of the cellar are 13m by 4.5m; the exterior walls are of a rubble construction with a lime mortar bonding to a height of 1.50m above the floor surface. Above this point the walls are brick built.
- 5.5 The insertion of two brick walls has divided space into three rooms, each with a fireplace, suggesting that at some point the cellar was used for domestic or service purposes (**Figure 3**). There is also a window in the southern exterior wall where the exterior ground surface falls away. Access to the cellar is by a flight of 12 stone steps (**Figure 4**) situated in the west wall of the central room. The floor of the cellar, which is covered with 50mm thick stone flags laid on a bed of red sand, is 2m below the existing ground surface.

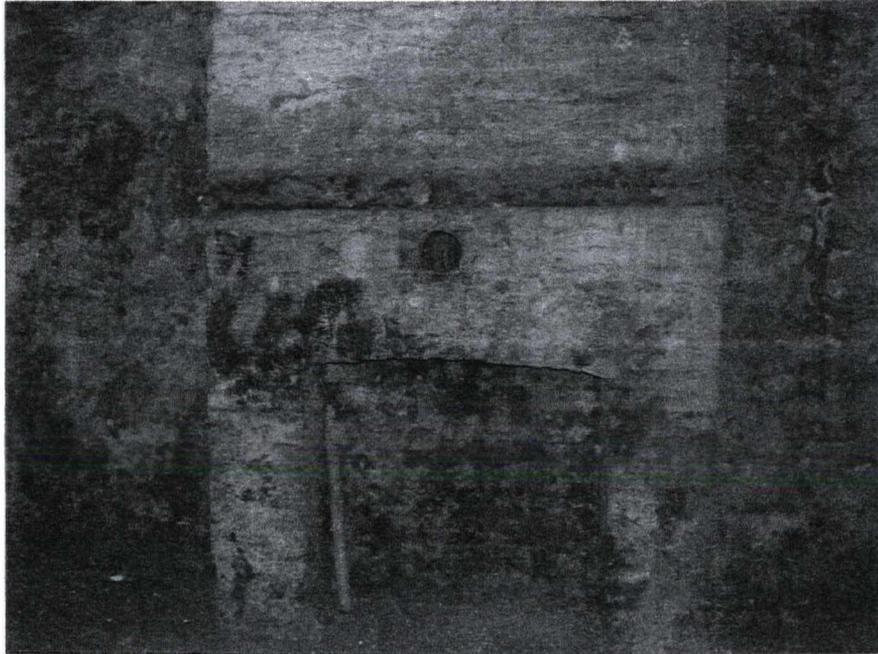


Figure 3; Fireplace in north wall of north room

- 5.6 The southern room is partly spanned east to west by a brick vault, (**Figure 5**) 1.9m wide. The reason for the insertion of this vault is unclear. It was presumably incorporated into the cellar in order to support some structure

above it; however, no evidence for any form of structure which would necessitate the construction of such a vault now exists.



Figure 4; Stairs in central room



Figure 5; The brick vault

- 5.7 There are blocked openings in the east walls of both the northern and central rooms. These are situated in the upper section of the east wall and do not appear to be doorways. It is possible that they are cellar drops, through which materials and goods could be placed in the cellar directly from the access road

on to Skellgate. It is probable that these are later insertions into the fabric, after the cellar ceased to function as domestic or service accommodation, and were created in order to avoid the need to negotiate the route around the building to the main stair.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Owing to the fact that no archaeological deposits or features were uncovered during the course of the development, and that the cellar is being incorporated into the overall design of the new building, there are no recommendations to be made regarding this development.

7. Sources

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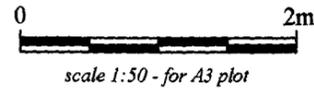
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brickwork



blocked opening

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Yorkshire

Archaeological monitoring

Figure 2

Plan of cellar

