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A63 CASTLE STREET  
HULL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
REPORT



York Archaeological Trust

*A63 Castle Street, Hull*

*A Report on an Archaeological Evaluation*

*Contents*

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## *Summary*

Archaeological evaluation of that part of the town defences and old town area of Hull which may be impinged upon by upgrading the A63 was carried out by York Archaeological Trust on behalf of Acer Consultants in late 1994. The evaluation failed to locate the town walls but found deposits which have tentatively been interpreted as ditch fill outside the wall and rampart make-up within the town. Archaeological deposits of late medieval and post-medieval date were found within one metre of the surface in the old town.

### *1. Introduction*

Following a recommendation that field evaluation of the depth, nature and state of preservation of archaeological deposits was required in advance of the preparation of detailed proposals for mitigation measures in advance of the improvement of the A63 in Hull, York Archaeological Trust undertook the excavation of four trenches between 28th November and 16th December 1994. The work was done on behalf of Acer Consultants acting for the Highways Agency. Field evaluation was confined to the area within the old town of Hull and its brick defences. Two trenches were located to examine the town walls of Hull and a further two trenches to determine the depth and nature of deposits on the south side of Castle Street in the old town area.

## 2. The Excavations

### 2.1 Hull Town Walls

Two discrete trenches were excavated on either side of the imprecisely known location of Myton Gate in an attempt to locate and examine the state of preservation of the defensive walls which are known to have surrounded this part of Hull (Fig.1). The location and size of the trenches

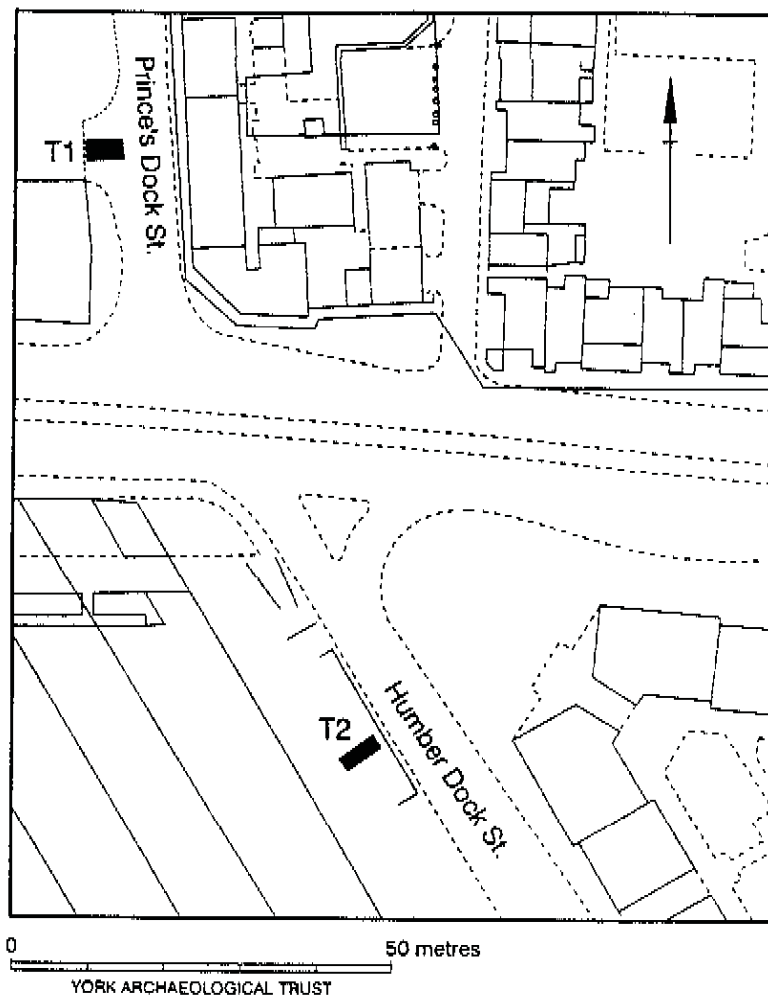


Figure 1 Location of trenches 1 and 2

were constrained by the need to maintain pedestrian and vehicular access to the adjacent areas. However, they were situated over both the postulated line of the town walls as defined in pavers on the surface by Hull City Council and as plotted from early maps by York Archaeological Trust. Trench 1, to the north of Myton Gate, was excavated in the roadway of Princes Dock Street (Fig.1). It measured 4.30m x 2.50m and was dug to a final depth of 3.50m. (0.90m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)). Trench 2, to the south of Myton Gate, was excavated in the walkway around Hull Marina, adjacent to Humber Dock Street. It measured 5.0m x 2.50m and was dug to a final depth of 3.50m (1.28m AOD).

#### **2.1.1 Trench 1 (KINCM:1994.481)**

##### *Stratigraphic Description*

The earliest deposits encountered were a light orange brown clay silt (1002) and a pale grey brown clay silt streaked with black (1007) which extended from the base of excavation at 0.90m AOD to 2.05m AOD (Fig.2). Above this was a layer of compact grey brown silty clay flecked with iron-pan (1006) which was 0.28m thick. All three of these basal deposits appeared to be of natural origin although the upper surface of 1006 appeared to have been compacted as if activity had taken place upon it. This surface was at 2.34m AOD.

Overlying 1006 was a 1m thick deposit of light grey brown clay silt mottled with grey and containing occasional small brick and tile fragments (1004). This was cut by a sub circular feature (1005) containing a fill of loose brick rubble and mortar in a matrix of grey silt (1001). 1004

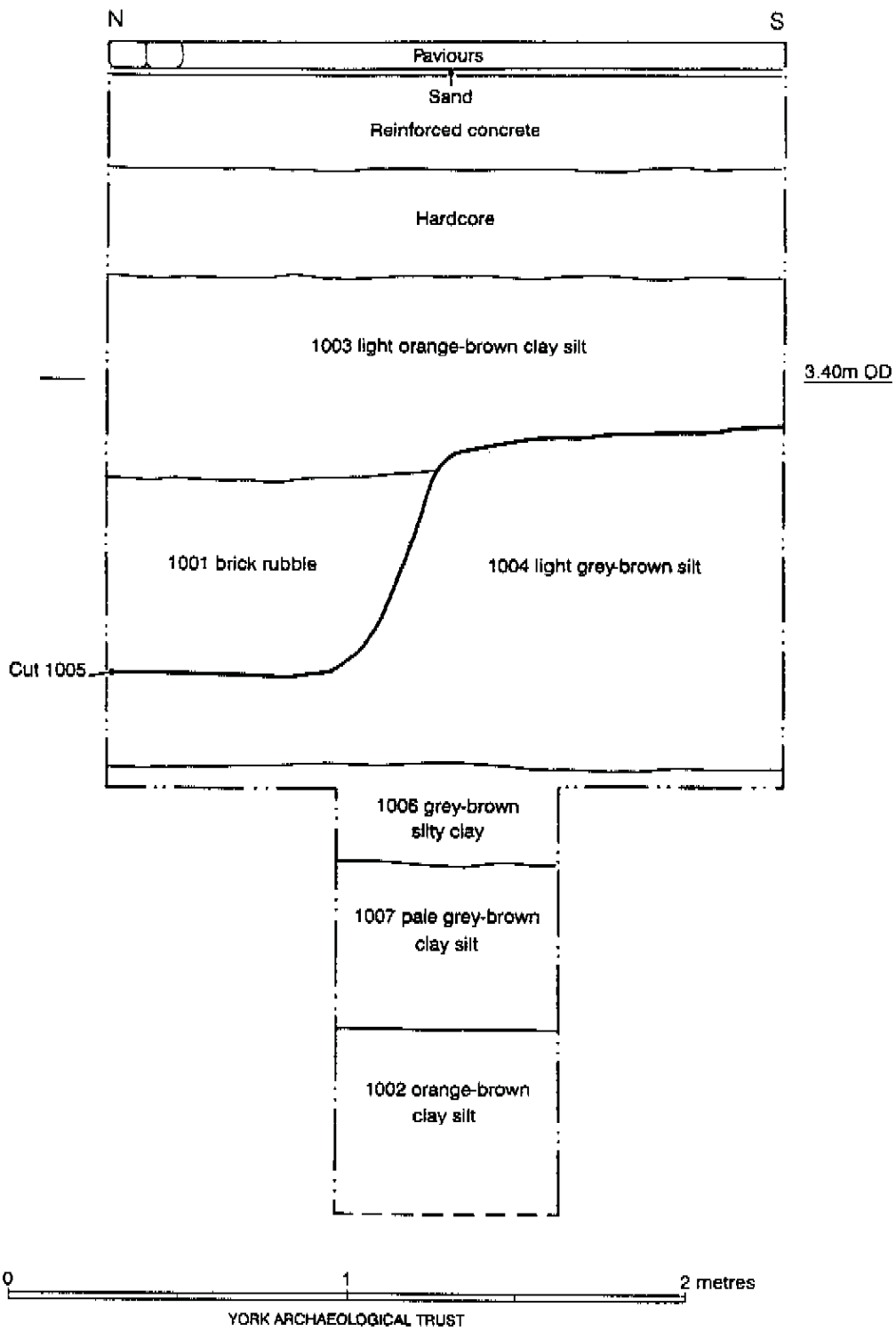


Figure 2 Trench 1 west facing section

appears to have been a levelling deposit whilst 1005 may have had a structural function.

Above these features was a further probable levelling deposit of light orange brown clay silt with small brick and tile fragments and occasional mortar flecks (1003) which underlay the hardcore and reinforced concrete base to the modern road.

### *Interpretation*

The clay silts (1002, 1006 and 1007) excavated from beneath 2.34m AOD are believed to be natural in origin. A sample from 1002 has been analysed to determine if the material had been re-deposited and it is suggested that it is an in situ natural deposit.

The compacted surface of 1006 suggests that activity has taken place upon it and the overlying deposit of clay silt (1004) may represent the lowest level of an internal rampart constructed against the town walls in the 17th century.

This was disturbed by activity represented by the brick and mortar fill of cut feature 1005, which was then buried beneath a further layer of clay silt 1003. Both of these incidents could be part of the 17th century rampart building exercise or both could relate to dock construction in the 19th century.



### 2.1.2 Trench 2 (KINCM:1994.483)

#### *Stratigraphic Description*

The earliest deposit encountered in this trench was a light brown clay silt streaked with grey and containing medium to large fragments of brick and patches of organic rich grey/black silt (2009) (Fig.3). This was excavated from between 1.22m AOD and the base of the trench at 0.90m AOD. It was overlain by a layer of loose crushed brick and mortar (2008) which was 0.40–0.46m thick. Above this was a deposit of mid brown clay silt with occasional brick and mortar fragments (2007) 0.44–0.58m thick.

A further layer of crushed small to medium brick and mortar fragments in a matrix of mid grey silt (2006) overlay 2007 and was in turn overlain by a deposit of mid grey clay silt mottled with black silt and containing occasional small brick and tile fragments and small patches of crushed brick (2005). The surface of this deposit was very uneven as if it had been trampled and exposed to considerable weathering.

Above 2005 was a layer of pale brown clay silt streaked pale grey containing occasional flecks of iron pan (2004). This was overlain by a thin layer of pale grey gritty silt with moderate amounts of small and medium brick and tile fragments, and occasional charcoal flecks (2003). A thick layer of pale grey brown clay silt mottled with black and containing occasional small brick and tile fragments (2002) sealed 2003 and was overlain by a deposit of grey brown clay silt with frequent lenses of mid orange brown sand (2001). Above this was the hardcore and concrete make-up for the pavement surface around Hull Marina.

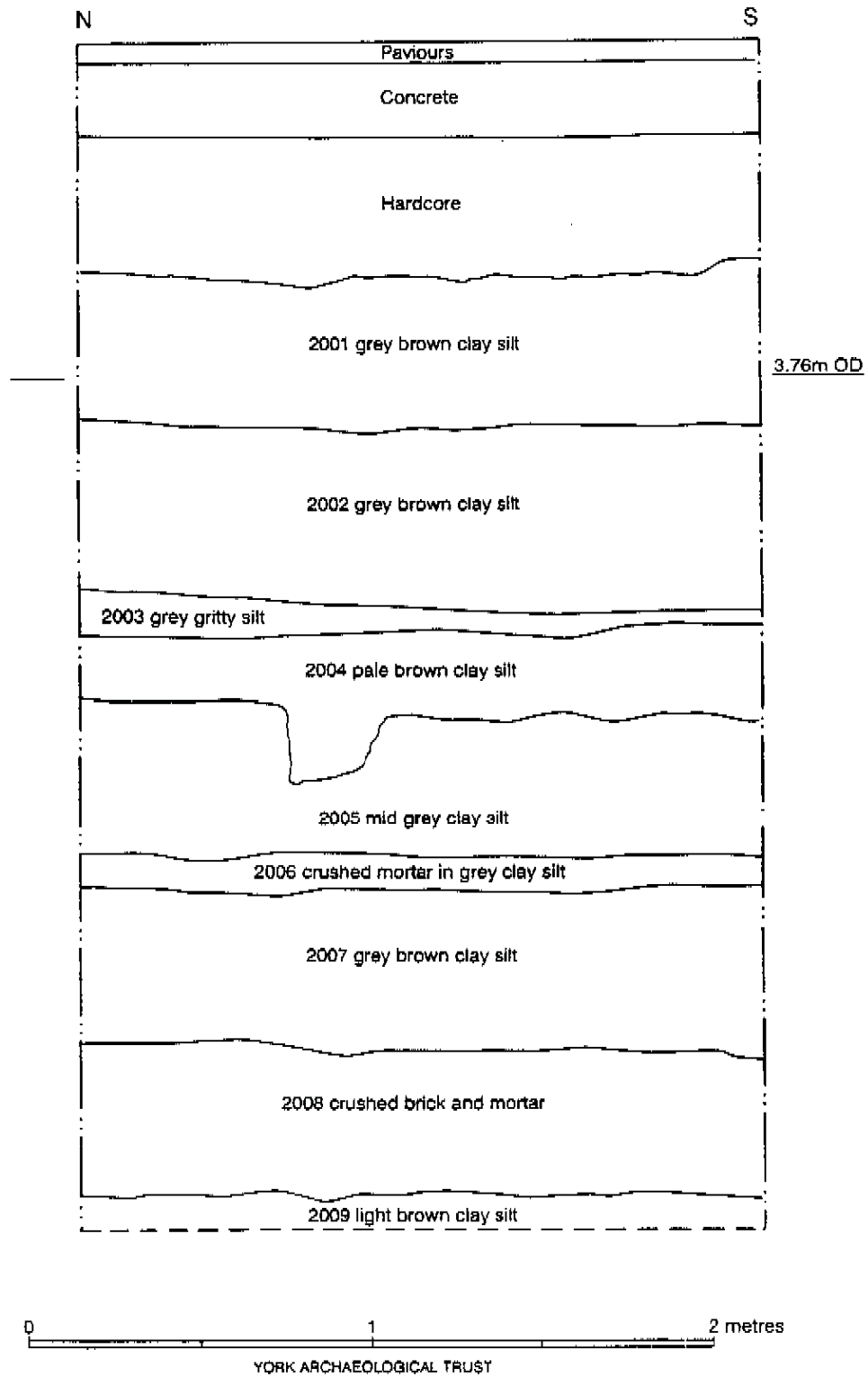


Figure 3 Trench 2 west facing section

### *Interpretation*

It is believed that deposits 2005–2009, which stretched from c2.75m AOD to the base of excavation at 1.28m AOD, represented material dumped in layers to fill an extensive feature. The organic black silt in 2009 has been analysed and it is suggested that it contained an insect assemblage typical of damp ditches together with apparently re-deposited remains of human occupation. It is thus possible that all of these deposits are dumps within the disused ditch on the outside of the town walls.

The pitted and irregular surface of 2005 may indicate that constructional activity has taken place at this level and the following deposits 2004 and 2003 may represent occupation of the area between the demolition of the walls and the construction of Humber Dock.

The uppermost layers of clay silt, 2002 and 2001, were probably deposited at the time of dock construction to raise the level of the surrounding ground.

### **2.1.3 Conclusions**

Although no trace of the Town Walls was found in either trench it remains probable that their remains are present at depth, close to the lines predicted by York Archaeological Trust in their original report and by Hull City Council on the ground. The evaluation trenches located what is believed to be an internal rampart beneath Princes Dock Street and an external ditch beneath the Hull Marina pavement. The possible ditch

contained evidence of a considerable depth of back-filled material with well-preserved organic remains at depth.

## 2.2 The Old Town

Two small trenches, each 3m x 1m, were excavated in the pavement on the south side of Castle Street (Fig.4). Both were largely dug by machine until archaeological deposits were observed and these were then cleaned and defined by hand. Trench 3 was located close to the junction of Castle Street and Sewer Lane and Trench 4 was approximately half way between Finkle Street and Queen Street.

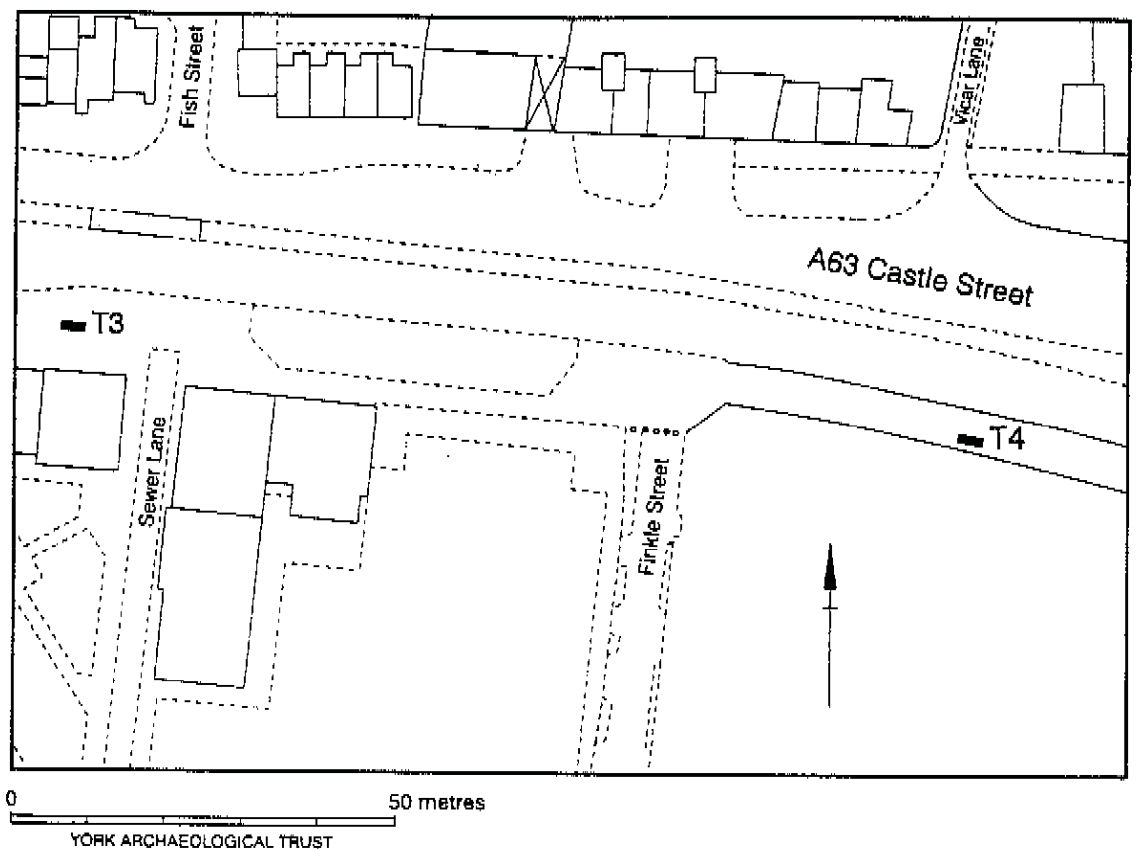


Figure 4 Location of trenches 3 and 4

### 2.2.1 Trench 3 (KINCM:1994.484)

#### *Stratigraphic Description*

The earliest deposit encountered was a friable mid grey brown sandy clay silt with occasional brick and tile fragments and charcoal flecks (3003) which was found at 3.19m AOD, 1.00m beneath the pavement surface (Fig.5). Above this was a thin layer of charcoal (3002) which was overlain by a thick layer of mixed grey sandy silt (3001) containing animal bone, brick and tile fragments, charcoal, plaster and mortar flecks. This was sealed by the concrete and sand bedding for the modern pavement surface which was at 4.19m AOD.

#### *Interpretation*

The basal sandy clay silt (3003) probably represents a cultivated garden soil deposit within the back yard of a property fronting on to the

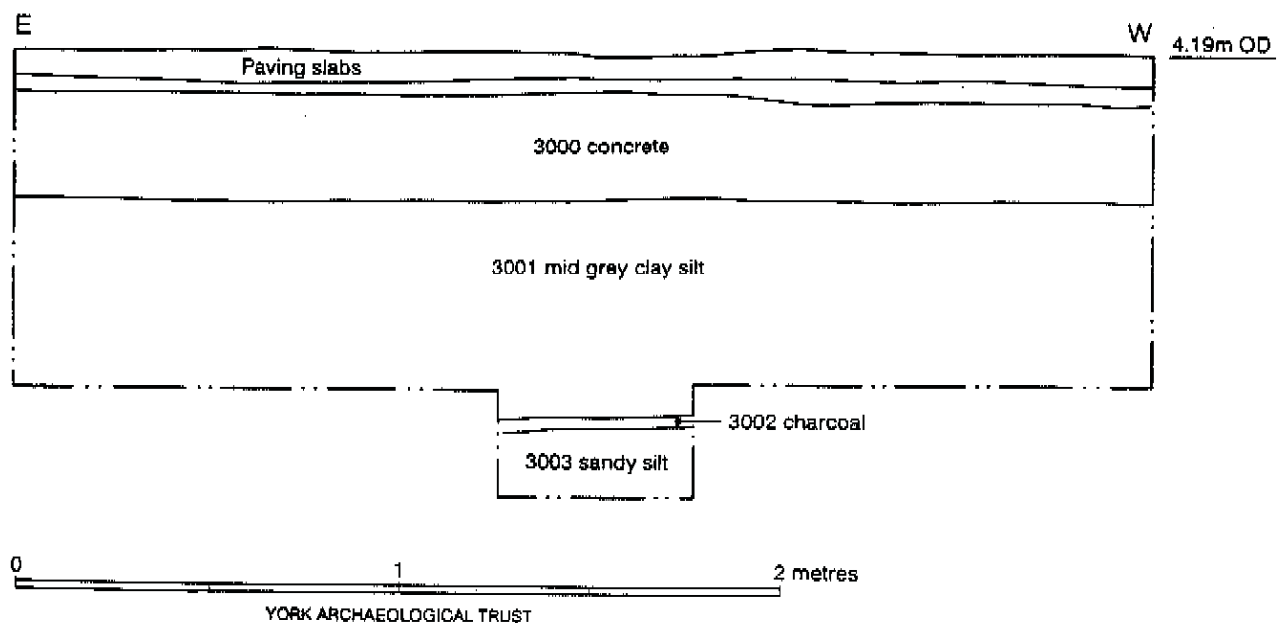


Figure 5 Trench 3 north facing section

medieval street of Mytongate. It was sealed by a probable occupation deposit in the form of the charcoal layer (3002). The uppermost layer (3001), which contained a considerable variety of material, is likely to have been a dumped demolition deposit resulting from the clearance of the area prior to the creation of Castle Street.

### 2.2.2 Trench 4 (KINCM:1994.485)

#### *Stratigraphic Description*

The earliest deposit excavated from this trench was a compact dark grey clay silt with frequent charcoal flecks and occasional brick, tile and large plaster fragments (4003) which was found from 3.30m AOD to the base of excavation at 3.11m AOD (Fig.6). This was overlain by a similar but lighter grey brown silty clay (4002) with similar inclusions. Above this was a further dark grey silty clay (4001) with more charcoal, brick and

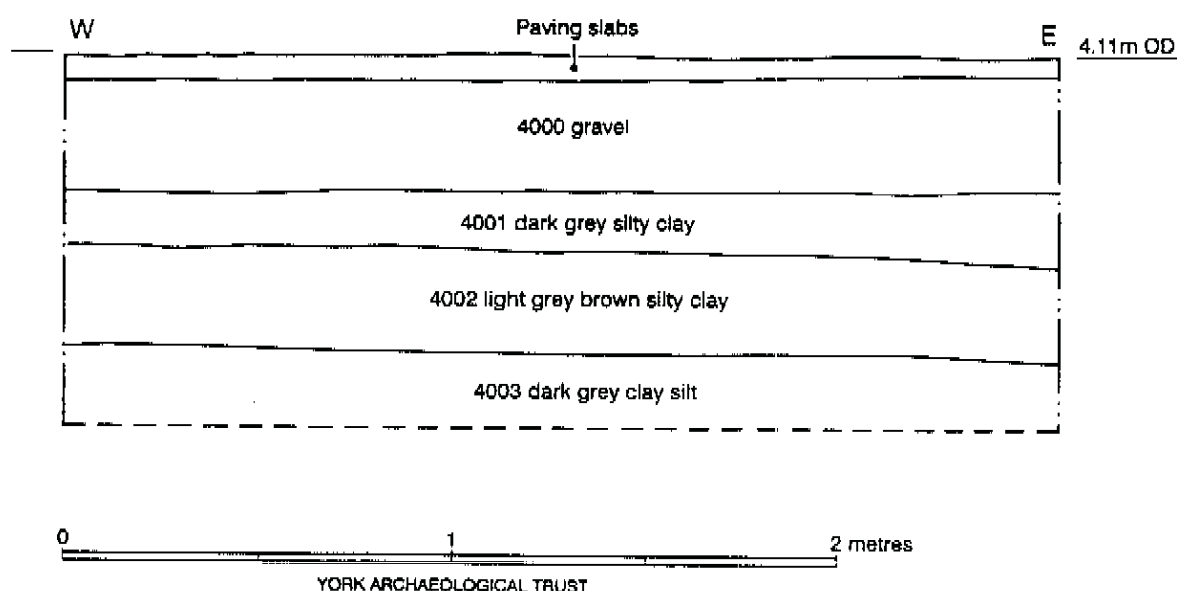


Figure 6 Trench 4 south facing section

tile, and plaster fragments which was beneath the gravel and hard core make up for the modern pavement surface at 4.11m AOD.

### *Interpretation*

All deposits encountered in Trench 4 appear to result from the dumping of material containing evidence of occupation and demolition. It seems most likely that 4001 is the result of land clearance in advance of the building of Castle Street whilst the lower two layers (4002 and 4003) are the product of building episodes, probably on the street front, in the late medieval or post-medieval periods.

### **2.2.3 Conclusions**

Stratified deposits of late medieval and post-medieval date were present less than 1.00m beneath the surface of the modern pavement. These deposits appear to be typical of those created by the activities normally expected to have taken place in the backyards of medieval and post-medieval domestic properties.

### *3. Pottery and Finds*

#### **3.1 Trench 1 (KINCM:1994.481)**

Nine sherds of post-medieval (17th/18th century) pottery and five fragments of clay tobacco pipe (sf1) were recovered from machine excavated deposits.

#### **3.2 Trench 2 (KINCM:1994.483)**

Context 2006 produced one sherd of post-medieval red ware.

Context 2007 produced one fragment of post-medieval glass, five fragments of leather (unconserved) including part of a shoe (sf1).

Context 2009 produced one sherd of 17th century black ware pottery, one sherd of late 17th/18th century slipware, a small blob of melted glass (sf2) and a clay tobacco pipe fragment (sf4).

A single flint chip (sf3) and four pieces of clay tobacco pipe (sf5) were recovered from machine excavated deposits.



### **3.3 Trench 3 (KINCM:1994.484)**

Four sherds of post-medieval (17th century) red wares were recovered from machine excavated deposits.

### **3.4 Trench 4 (KINCM:1994.485)**

One sherd of Cistercian ware (15th century), two sherds of Humber ware (15th century) and two small unidentified pottery fragments were recovered from machine excavated deposits together with a single piece of slag (sf1).

## *4. Ceramic Building Materials*

### **4.1 Roofing Material**

The sample has several pieces of pantile, which dates from the 17th century onwards, though the glazed examples may begin at a later date. There are examples of plain roofing tile, the method of suspension is unknown. There is one fragment of hip tile which would have covered the corners of a roof. This and the plain roofing probably date to the medieval period, from the 13th century onwards.

### **4.2 Bricks**

The dating of the bricks is problematical. The two examples from 2003 are convincingly medieval in date — the indentations on the top surface are characteristic of the period. The measurements are larger than that of material from York, however, examination of literature for the Beverley/Hull area indicates that these measurements are probably within the range for that period. The fragments are very abraded, and are a pale pink in colour, which may indicate under-firing. They could be examples of 'sammel' bricks, which would not have been used for the exposed face of a wall.

The other bricks are more difficult to date. The saddleback coping or capping brick from Trench 2 u/s would have been used to finish the top of a wall. The corners of the brick are missing so that it is impossible to

tell whether it is a coping brick, the edges of which would have projected beyond the wall thus throwing rain water away from the body of the wall, or a capping brick which would not have had the same effect. This is a 'special', so that its thickness cannot indicate the date. The complete example from 2001 is overfired, so its measurements are likely to be distorted, particularly the thickness. It is however, very long (260mm) which again is a characteristic of medieval bricks in the Hull/Beverley area, so it is possibly medieval. The brick fragment from 2009 has a very similar fabric to the saddleback coping/capping brick from Trench 2 u/s. The combined measurements of 112mm width and 61mm thickness (ie. relatively narrow and thick) probably indicates a later date, perhaps from the 16th century onwards. The brick from 2007 is slightly broader and narrower in thickness than 2009, but is too borderline to advance a guess at the date.

The walls and gates of Hull would have needed maintenance over the years, so that the probable later bricks could well have been used for this purpose in the defences. None of the bricks recovered from the excavations match the measurements of those in the town walls which are dated to the late 14th or early 15th century. However, since the defences took nearly a century to build, the brick products could easily have varied in size over that period of time.

## *LISTING*

### Trench 2 (KINCM:1994.483)

| <b>Context</b> | <b>Form</b>                                            | <b>Date</b>       |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| u/s            | Plain Pantile, Plain roofing, Capping/<br>Coping brick | 17th century +    |
| 2001           | Brick                                                  | ?medieval         |
| 2003           | Brick                                                  | 14th–15th century |
| 2007           | Brick                                                  | ?16th century     |
| 2009           | Brick, Plain roofing                                   | 14th century +    |

### Trench 3 (KINCM:1994.484)

| <b>Context</b> | <b>Form</b>                                     | <b>Date</b>    |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| u/s            | Glazed Pantile, Plain Pantile,<br>Plain roofing | 17th century + |

### Trench 4 (KINCM:1994.485)

| <b>Context</b> | <b>Form</b>             | <b>Date</b>       |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| u/s            | Plain roofing, Hip tile | 13th–15th century |

## 5. *Biological Remains*

### 5.1 Methods

Two samples of sediment from the excavations ('GBAs' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992) were submitted by York Archaeological Trust for analysis. The samples were inspected in the laboratory of the Environmental Archaeology Unit of the University of York and their lithology recorded using a standard *pro forma*. Subsamples of 1kg were taken from each of the samples for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). Plant macrofossils were examined from the washover, the 'flot' and from the residues resulting from processing. The flot and washover were examined for invertebrate remains. A 1 kg voucher of unprocessed sediment from each sample was retained and the remainder sieved to 500 $\mu$ m, primarily to recover small bones and artefacts, the latter to be returned to the excavator. Neither of the samples was thought to be suitable for examination for the eggs of parasitic nematodes.

### 5.2 Results

The results of the investigations for each sample give context information provided by the excavator in brackets.

### 5.2.1 Trench 1 (KINCM:1994.481)

Context 1002 [Earliest deposit from Trench 1. Reason for sampling : ? in situ natural or redeposited].

Sample 002.

Moist, light pinkish brown, stiff and internally layered (working soft and sticky), very slightly sandy, slightly clay silt with orange streaks and patches of mid grey sediment. Modern rootlets and root channels (some lined with grey and some with orange sediments) were present in the sample.

The small washover was mostly plant detritus with some charcoal, disaggregated sediment and invertebrate fragments. The latter were all outdoor forms associated with natural or semi-natural habitats.

Unusually, there was no residue from sieving to 300 $\mu$ m.

The tiny residue from sieving of excess material (8 grammes from 9kg of sediment) was sand and a few plant remains of no interpretative value.

The biological remains did not give a clear answer to the question posed in the field, but the rather variable lithologies and presence of some charcoal perhaps indicate some disturbance.

### 5.2.1 Trench 1 (KINCM:1994.481)

Context 1002 [Earliest deposit from Trench 1. Reason for sampling : ? in situ natural or redeposited].

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Moist, light pinkish brown, stiff and internally layered (working soft and sticky), very slightly sandy, slightly clay silt with orange streaks and patches of mid grey sediment. Modern rootlets and root channels (some lined with grey and some with orange sediments) were present in the sample.

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The biological remains did not give a clear answer to the question posed in the field, but the rather variable lithologies and presence of some charcoal perhaps indicate some disturbance.

## 5.2.2 Trench 2 (KINCM:1994.483)

Context 2009 [Earliest deposit from Trench 2. Reason for sampling : ? dumping or ditch fill].

Sample 001

Very jumbled, moist, light to mid grey-brown, with patches of mid grey, soft and sticky (working slightly plastic), clay silt. Very small to medium sized stones (2-60mm), flecks of ?mortar/ dry clay and fragments of coal were present.

The small flot was mostly plant detritus with some sand, charcoal, coal, invertebrate remains and a few seeds. The invertebrates were mostly fragments of beetles with a few mites and fly puparia. The beetles were outdoor forms with some aquatic species, providing no evidence of dumping during occupation or of any other strong human influence.

The small residue consisted mostly of small stones (to 12mm) with some sand, brick/tile, slag/cinder, coal, bone fragments (some burnt) and plant detritus and two very small fragments of eggshell (to 3mm).

The small residue from sieving the excess material (from 12kg) was sand, brick/tile, cinder, mortar/plaster and coal with stones (to 55mm), pottery, slag, glass, metal, plant remains, small fragments of shell and bone (including fish bone) and beetles. The latter were, again, mostly outdoor forms associated with natural habitats — including ground



beetles and weevils. The plant remains comprised a few *Atriplex* sp. seeds, hazelnut (*Corylus*) fragments (one with a ?bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum* (L.)) frond embedded within it) and scraps of wood, a single burdock (*Arctium* sp.) fruit and half of a hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) achene.

The range of occupation debris present indicates that the fills were probably deliberately introduced. Rather than representing waste disposal, however, these may have been surface deposits used to backfill the ditch.

### 5.3 Discussion

Context 1002 is most likely to be an in situ natural deposit.

The invertebrate assemblage from Context 2009, though too small for definitive interpretation, subjectively suggests a natural outdoor community typical of that expected from a damp ditch or nearby surfaces. The material indicative of human activity was probably redeposited during backfilling of the ditch. The plant remains recovered were unfortunately insufficient to provide supporting evidence, but are not inconsistent with this hypothesis.

## References

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- Kenward, H.K., Engelman, C., Robertson, A. and Large, F., 1986. 'Rapid scanning of urban archaeological deposits for insect remains', *Circaea* 3 (for 1985), 163-72
- Kenward, H.K., Hall, A.R. and Jones, A.K.G., 1980. 'A tested set of techniques for the extraction of plant and animal macrofossils from waterlogged archaeological deposits', *Science and Archaeology* 22, 3-15

## *6. Recommendations*

### **6.1 Hull Town Walls**

Structural remains of Myton Gate were recorded by the Humberside Archaeological Unit in 1976 during the construction of the existing A63. The displayed remains of Beverley Gate demonstrate the levels to which the town walls may stand and the state of preservation which is possible in the Myton Gate area. It is unlikely that the walls were completely robbed away close to Myton Gate but left in situ close to Beverley Gate. There is, therefore, certainty that the brick gateway and every likelihood that the brick town walls survive beneath the surface of the Princes Quay footpath, Castle Street itself and the roadway of Humber Dock Street, although their precise location has not been identified.

The quality of the monument at Beverley Gate has been shown to merit scheduling and it would be wise to assume that that at Myton Gate also merits scheduling. If excavation for the pedestrian subway encounters well-preserved defences or other archaeological deposits of national importance, an appropriate scheme of archaeological excavation should be developed in consultation with English Heritage and Humberside County Council and undertaken under controlled archaeological conditions. An archaeological watching brief should be maintained over all necessary excavations associated with the scheme, including those for services.

## 6.2 Old Town Area

Archaeological deposits which represent the later development of properties along the Mytongate street front have been shown to be present within one metre of the existing ground surface.

It is therefore recommended that two sample areas, each of 20m x 2m, straddling former property boundaries be excavated to the depth of the proposed construction level under controlled archaeological conditions as a representative record of the archaeological deposits which will inevitably be destroyed by the proposed widening of Castle Street. During the construction scheme an archaeological watching brief should be maintained over all necessary excavations, including those for services.

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