

York Art Gallery, York

City of York

Data Structure Report– Archaeological Watching Brief for the Investigation of Electrical Mains Cables

for

York Museums Trust

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Photograph Addyman Archaeology



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Data Structure Report (DSR) for archaeological watching brief

by Andrew Morrison

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Executive summary

Addyman Archaeology monitored the excavation of an investigation trench to establish the location of an electrical mains service cable along the NE extent of the York Art Gallery. The investigation relates to the refurbishment of the York Art Gallery by Simpson York Limited, with Simpson and Brown Architects, Edinburgh, for York Museum Trust. The investigation trench falls between the NE elevation of the York Art gallery and the NW-SE section of the St. Mary's Abbey Wall.

The ground revealed within the investigation trench was shown to be a single fill demolition deposit of multi-period detritus, filling the service trench containing gas, water, and electrical supplies running adjacent to the gallery. Heavily disturbed, this deposit contained finds from a wide range of periods: 20th-18th century ceramics, glass, clay pipe fragments, building material, and faunal remains (not retained); the Medieval ceramics, worked bone, and possible Roman ceramic and glass were passed on to the York Museums Trust. This deposit extended below the 0.80m limit of excavation; no secure contexts or finds were noted within the excavation area.

To fulfil the archiving requirements as part of the planning condition, a record of the archaeological watching brief has been deposited with the Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) website hosted by the Archaeological Data Service (OASIS ID addymanal-175416).

1. Introduction

i. General

Addyman Archaeology was contacted by Adam Parker of *York Museums Trust* to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the investigation of the location of underground mains power cables as part of the refurbishment of the York Art Gallery. The works refer to planning application 02508/FUL/12 – First floor extension above south gallery, rear extension including first floor balcony and external stair, roof-mounted plant and enclosure, and demolition of single storey timber building to north of building, York City Art gallery, Exhibition Square, York, YO1 2EW (SE 60059 52276). The archaeological investigation is a condition of the planning consent and states that

“No work shall commence on site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (a watching brief on all ground works by an approved archaeological unit)...the site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development will affect important archaeological deposits which must be recorded during the construction programme.”

The ground breaking works associated with the investigation into the location of the mains electrical cables was undertaken on 19 March, 2014. This was monitored by Andrew Morrison of Addyman Archaeology, as cover for York Museums Trust. This report presents the archaeological results from that investigation.

ii. *The site – location and geology*

The investigation area is located within the alley-way between the NE facing elevation of the York Art Gallery and the interior of the NW-SE running section of St. Mary’s Abbey Wall, within the historic city of York- an Area Archaeological Importance.

The underlying bedrock is of the Sherwood Sandstone Group. This sedimentary bedrock formed in the Triassic and Permian periods approximately 229- 271 million years ago. The local environment was previously dominated by rivers. These rocks were formed by rivers depositing sand and gravel within channels creating river terraces, while overbank flooding deposited silt and clays in the form of alluvium. The bedrock is covered by a superficial layer of gravelly sandy clay deposits formed in the Quaternary period, up to two million years ago. During these ice age conditions, seasonal and post-glacial melt-waters deposited sand and gravel till moraines¹.

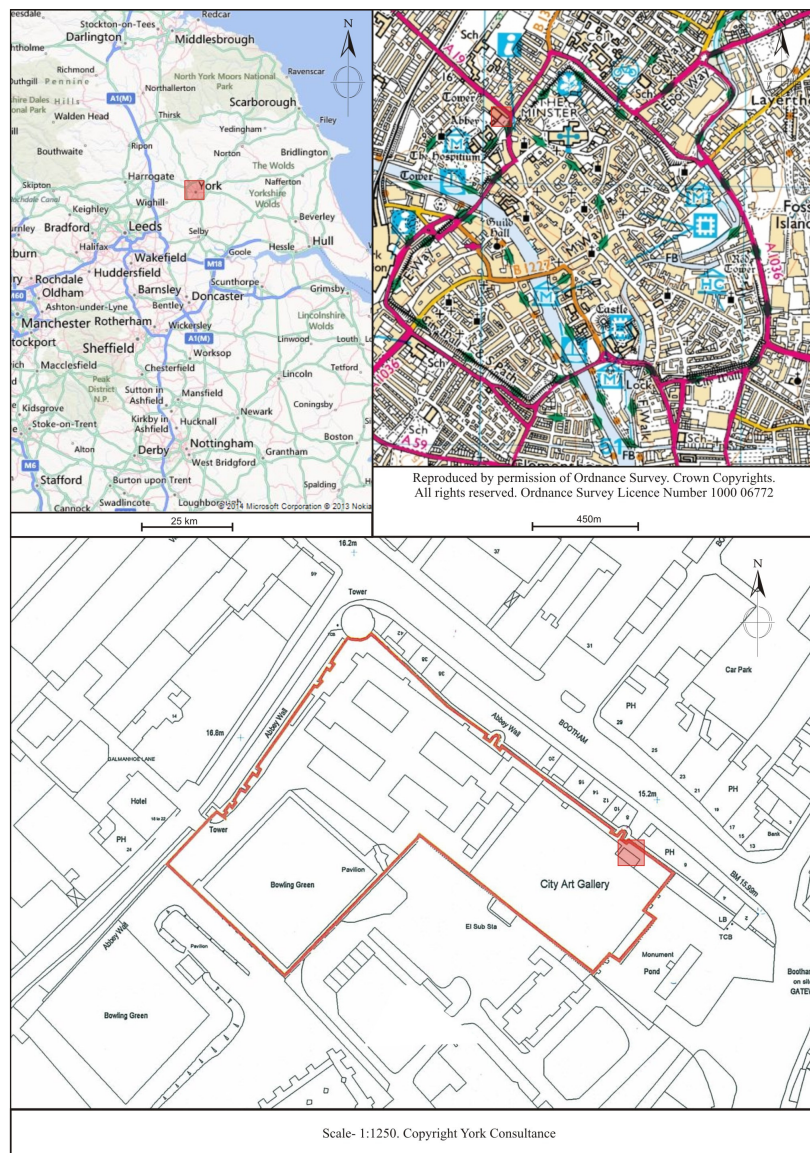


Figure 1 Site location plan.

¹ www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/ - accessed 21 March 2014

2. *Archaeological watching brief of mains electrical cable investigation*

i. *Excavation*

The ground breaking works associated with the investigation into the location of mains electrical cables relating to the refurbishment of the York Art Gallery occurred on 19 March, 2014. Works were completed using a single mini-digger fitted with a jack-hammer and a 0.55m wide toothed bucket, while monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

The investigation trench was located in the alleyway between York Art Gallery and the medieval NE perimeter wall of St. Mary's Abbey, at the foot of the wall tower E². The trench was oriented NW-SE, following the orientation of the alley, and measured 5.20m in length by 1.40m in width, extending to a maximum depth of 0.80m.

A thin layer of concrete (0.10m – 0.15m deep), context 001, was removed. This directly overlay a deposit of mid-dark greyish brown clay-rich organic soil of moderate compaction, context 002. This level was interpreted as a redeposited fill of multi-period detritus located within the modern gas, electric, and water services trench. The water mains, context 003, gas supply, 004, and two electrical services, 005-006, were seen running NW-SE, with the electrical mains cable running into the timber and brick outbuilding attached to the gallery.



Figure 2 Post-ex view of trench facing NW (015)

As the services were located relatively near to the surface and were grouped fairly close together, the width and depth required of the trench meant that the limits and full depth of the multi-period fill (002) was not located – i.e. no trench cut was identified with the excavation limits. Owing to the fact that the investigation trench was positioned to reopen a pre-existing service trench, and the excavated depth did not extend below that redeposited single fill (002), no secure archaeological finds or features were encountered during this operation.

² English Heritage, 1972.

ii. *Finds*



Figure 3 Finds handed over to the York Museums Trust (photo 004)

Finds from (002) covered a wide range of periods and types: 18th-20th century ceramics, brown bottle glass, clay pipe stem fragments (including glazed), building materials, faunal remains, etc... These finds, though plentiful, were not retained due to the highly disturbed unstratified context within which they were discovered. Earlier finds (Figure 3) included: an intact medieval green-glaze jug handle, a small body sherd of Medieval green apple glaze, a worked bone object with CuA staining, a Roman black burnished ware rim-sherd, and a bottle neck shard of opalescent, possibly Roman, glass. These three ceramic sherds, one glass shard, and one piece of worked bone were logged as small find (SF) 001, and handed off to Adam Parker of the York Museums Trust.

Bibliography

City of York Council 2012, Planning Application reference 12/02508/FUL

English Heritage, 1972. St.Mary's Abbey Wall, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York, Volume 2: the defences*, pp.160-172.

www.bgs.ac.uk, accessed 21/03/2014

Appendix A : Photographic register and thumbnails: Watching Brief York Art Gallery, York

Shot Num.	Direction facing	Description	Date	Initial
001	NW	Pre-ex, breaking concrete with mini-digger	19/03/14	AJLM
002	N	Mid-ex, revealing services, Single fill C.002	19/03/14	AJLM
003	N	Mid-ex, revealing services, Single fill C.002	19/03/14	AJLM
004	-	SF.001, small finds passed on to York Museums Trust	19/03/14	AJLM
005	SE	Post-ex, NW facing section	19/03/14	AJLM
006	NE	Post-ex, SW facing section, SE extent, 1	19/03/14	AJLM
007	NE	Post-ex, SW facing section, Mid-SE extent, 2	19/03/14	AJLM
008	NE	Post-ex, SW facing section, NW-Mid extent, 3	19/03/14	AJLM
009	N	Post-ex, SW facing section, NW extent, w/ SE facing section, 4	19/03/14	AJLM
010	NW	Post-ex, SE facing section	19/03/14	AJLM
011	SW	Post-ex, NE facing section, NW extent, 1	19/03/14	AJLM
012	SW	Post-ex, NE facing section, Mid, 2	19/03/14	AJLM
013	SW	Post-ex, NE facing section, SE extent, 3	19/03/14	AJLM
014	S	Post-ex, NE facing section, SE extent, w/ NW facing section, 4	19/03/14	AJLM
015	NW	Post-ex, Overall	19/03/14	AJLM
016	W	Post-ex, Overall	19/03/14	AJLM

