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YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



THE MOUNT SCHOOL
DALTON TERRACE
YORK

A Report on an
Archaeological
Watching Brief

by Brian Milner
and
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THE MOUNT SCHOOL YORK

A REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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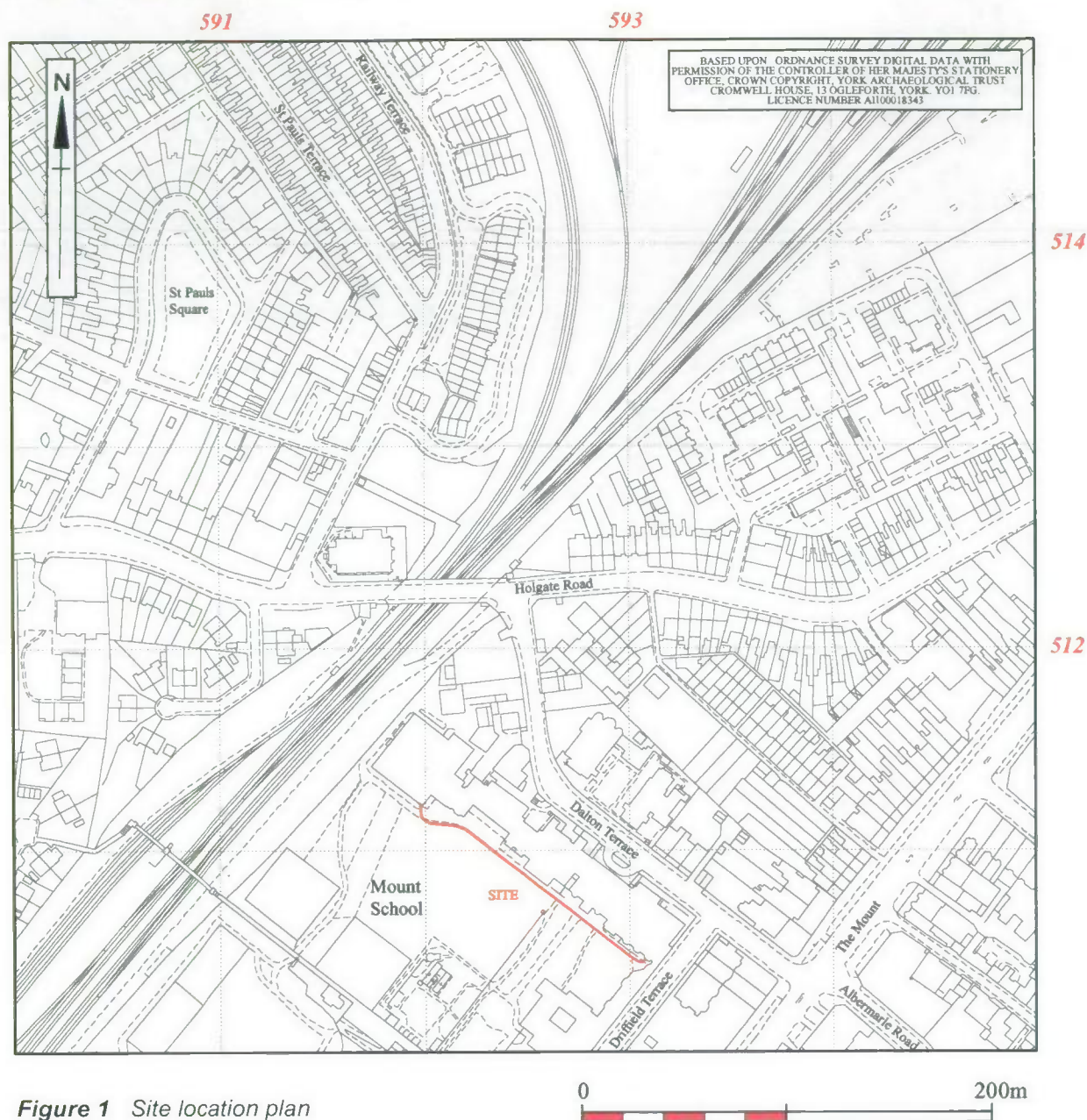


Figure 1 Site location plan

SUMMARY

During August 2004 York Archaeological Trust maintained a watching brief during the mechanical excavation of a cable trench on the south-west side of the main building of the Mount School, York.

Evidence was found for a small number of disturbed inhumation burials. These were almost certainly of Roman date and some were seemingly re-interred in a charnel pit. At what date such disturbance took place is uncertain.

Three surfaces, probably roadways were also found. The most extensive of these is likely to form part of a Roman road that had previously been observed in Dalton Terrace and

to the south-west of the Mount School. The two smaller surfaces may have functioned as metalled paths or tracks providing access to parts of the Roman cemetery known to occupy parts of the locality.

1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological watching brief on the cutting of new electricity cable trenches was undertaken by York Archaeological Trust at The Mount School, Dalton Terrace, York between 3rd August and 10th August 2004, with brief visits either side of these two dates. The trench lay immediately south-west of the main school block (NGR: SE 5850 5190; Figs 1-2).

The watching brief was carried out on instructions of the Dossor Group acting on behalf of the Mount School and in accordance with Operations Notice 04004.

All site records and retained finds pertaining to the watching brief are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 2003.290.

Other sites in York are normally referred to below in the form 1990.111. Further details of these sites are available from the YAT online archive gazetteer (<http://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/gaz/index.htm>).

2. METHOD STATEMENT

The work carried out involved the observation and archaeological recording of a mechanically excavated cable trench on the south-western side of the main school building. Limited hand excavation was carried out in a number of areas where machining was halted above archaeologically sensitive deposits. The trench was nearly 135m long, 0.60 - 0.70m wide, and 0.80m deep. It was designed to carry electricity cables from a new electrical sub-station on the corner of Dalton Terrace and Driffeld Terrace to the school itself.

The deposits and features exposed in the trench were recorded as individual contexts on pro-forma record cards, and drawn as plans and sections at a scale of 1:20. Each of the sections and plans was drawn in reference to depths below the existing modern ground level (BGL) and all sections were south-west facing. Parts of the drawn sections are reproduced in this report as elements of Figure 3. The locations of drawn records, contexts and finds were logged in terms of distances along the trench from its south-eastern end.

3. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The Mount School is located on Dalton Terrace on the south-western side of the city. The school is bounded by Dalton Terrace on its north-eastern side, by Driffeld Terrace on its south-eastern side, by residential properties on its south-east side and by a large railway cutting containing the East Coast Main Line on its north-western side.

The solid geology of the site is of Bunter and Keuper sandstones that are overlain by a drift geology that is generally of Boulder clay over Lacustrine clays with deposits of sand and gravel, lying within and over the clay in places (Geological Survey 1967). The ground in the vicinity of the site is relatively level and lies at around, 20m above Ordnance Datum. Away from the school the ground falls principally to the south-west. The slightly elevated characteristics of the area are owed to the creation of a moraine during the last glaciation (RCHMY 3 xxxvii). This east – west aligned ridge extends fully across the city being absent only where it has been cut away by the River Ouse and Holgate Beck.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The primary goal of the watching brief was to determine whether or not any Roman remains were present in the area of the cable trench.

Two Roman roads are also known in the vicinity. The most important of these is the main approach road from the south-west (RCHMY 1, 1962; Road 10) which ran to York from Tadcaster (Calcaria). A minor road (*ibid.*, Road 11) is thought to have joined Road 10 near the present junction of Dalton Terrace and Tadcaster Road, and from this point extended to the west, possibly linking up with the approach road from Aldborough (Isurium) (*ibid.*, Road 9). It is thought that the principal function of Road 11 may have been to service parts of the cemetery. Observations by L.P. Wenham during the 1950s near the junction of Dalton Terrace with Tadcaster Road revealed parts of Road 11 (Wenham 1957). Further parts of Road 11 have also been revealed to the rear of the school (see Fig. 2). A small section of what is likely to have been Road 10 was observed in 1981 during work at the former Albert Hotel, 7 Driffeld Terrace (1981.1031).

Large quantities of Roman material, principally of a funerary character, were found in the locality of The Mount during the 19th century (RCHMY 1, 1962). A Roman tombstone dedicated to a soldier of the Sixth Legion, one Lucius B(a)ebius Crescens, was found in 1911 when making a drain close to the Mount School. In recent years a number of archaeological investigations, for the most part of modest scale, have taken place in the area, many of which have revealed further burials from the Roman cemetery (YAT sites 1980.1034, 1981.1034, 1987.15 and 1996.397). In 2004 excavations by F.A.S. and YAT at 3 Driffeld Terrace have uncovered a densely packed inhumation cemetery (F.A.S 2003).

A small number of Anglian cremations have also been recovered from the Dalton Terrace area on a site immediately to the north-east of the junction of Dalton Terrace with The Mount in the mid 19th century (Stead 1958). There is little evidence to suggest activity other than that of an agricultural nature during the Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval periods. In the mid 17th century a large civil war fortification or sconce existed in the area, probably astride The Mount / Tadcaster Road.

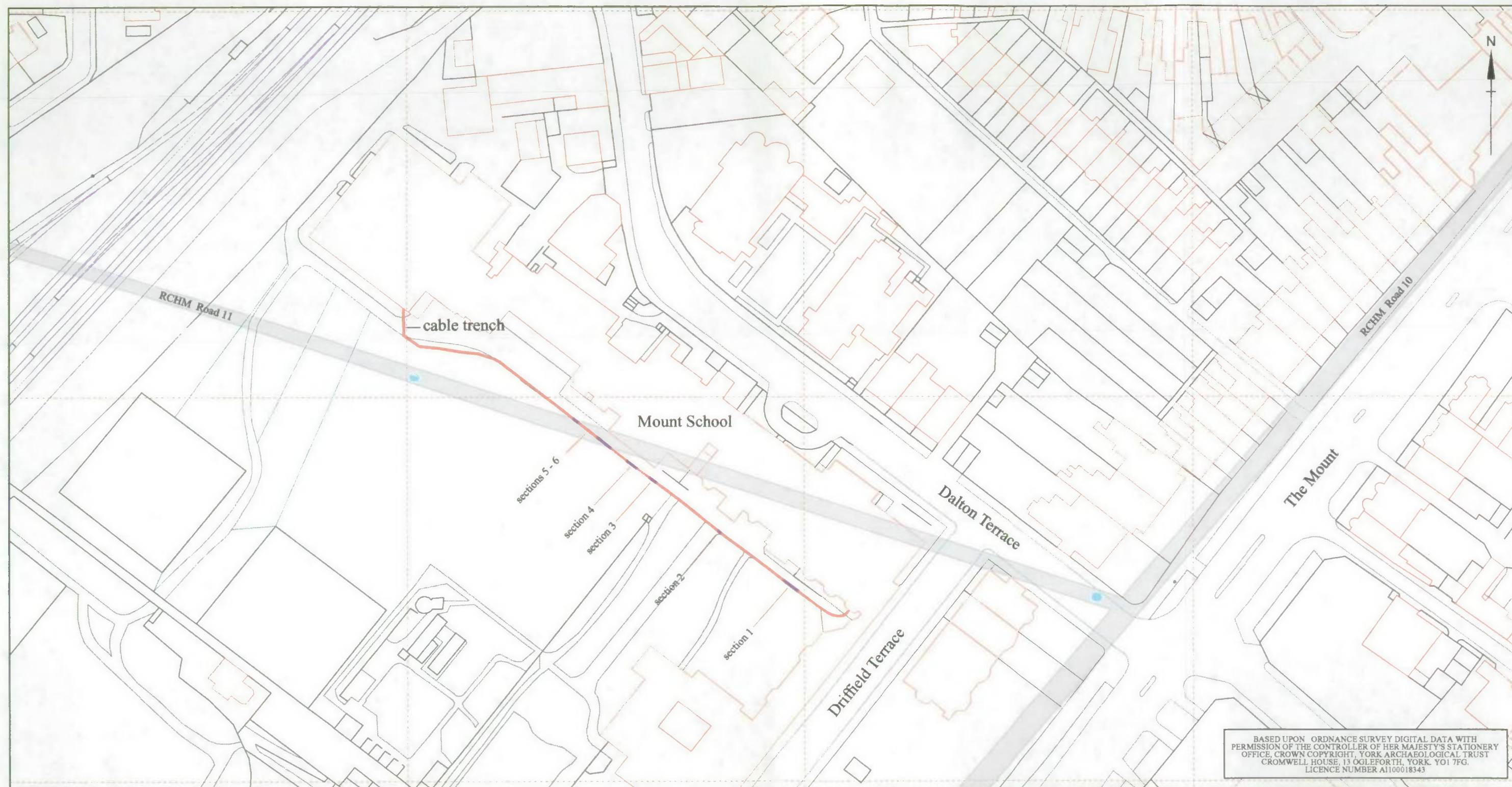


Figure 2 Works location plan, showing location of figure 3 sections, (RCHM Roads 10 and 11 also shown)

Cartographic evidence indicates that the area around Dalton Terrace and The Mount was largely occupied by fields and gardens throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. Indeed maps of the mid - late 19th century show the site of the Mount School as still being open ground.

5. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

5.1 Preamble

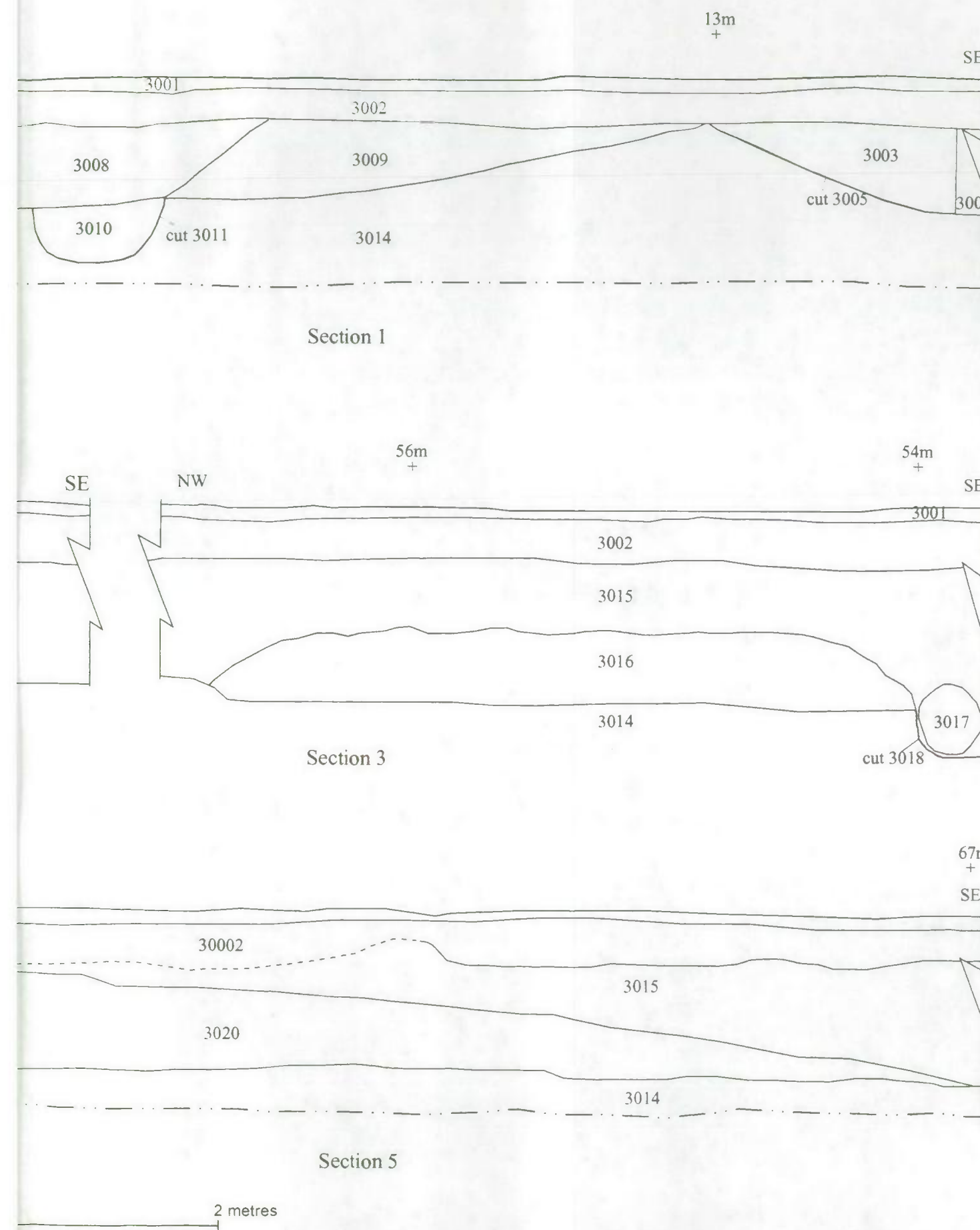
Work began at the south-east or Driffield Terrace end of the north-west / south-east aligned trench behind the school. In the text below all archaeological observations are described starting at the south-east end and moving towards the north-west end. The sections, numbered 1-6, on Figure 3 accompany the text, with the relevant section number appearing as sub titles.

All human bone was returned to the trench after being photographed.

5.2 Section 1

The first area of archaeological interest was located 12m - 17m from the south-east end of the trench. The earliest deposit encountered was 3014, a light gingery brown slightly clayey sand containing moderate amounts of cobbles and interpreted as a natural deposit. This was cut by 3005, for a brick drain, 3004, and its backfill of greyish brown slightly gritty silt, 3003. Deposit 3009 also lay above the natural deposit 3014 and was seen to be comprised of a slightly greyish light brown, very slightly clayey fine sand with occasional small cobbles. This deposit did not appear elsewhere in the trench and could represent levelling or even be another natural deposit. A fragment of worked sandstone, 3012, measuring 0.29 x 0.23 x 0.05m was machined out at this point. One side, presumably the back or underside, was flat and smooth, while the other was covered with quite deeply- incised parallel tooling marks. Soil adhering to the stone clearly indicated that it had come from a lighter-coloured deposit such as 3009 and not the darker modern soils at the top of the trench. It has therefore been tentatively allocated to 3009.

Feature 3011(which was only present on the north-eastern side of the trench) also cut 3014, the upper part of it being located at about 0.50m. BGL. As this feature contained a number of human bone fragments it was excavated by hand as far as was practicable. Within the trench the cut was 0.50m wide and 0.25m deep. Its full dimensions were not ascertained as it continued into the south-west facing section, though perhaps not very far. The fill of Cut 3011, 3010, was a greyish brown clayey sand that contained a total of sixty two pieces of human bone and three sherds of 2nd century Roman pottery. The human bone included hand and foot phalanges, ribs, fragments of skull and jaw, two femurs and part of a pelvis. At least two individuals were represented in this assemblage. Cut 3011 was therefore interpreted as a chancel pit.



Cut 3011 was sealed by a deposit, 3008, of slightly greyish, brown clayey sand with occasional small cobbles and containing mortar, charcoal and brick/tile flecks which produced a single sherd of Roman grey ware pottery. Deposit 3008 was in turn cut by a broad shallow scoop, 3007. The fill of this feature, 3006, was a mix of grey brown slightly clayey fine sand and light brown fine sandy clay. Although no dating evidence was recovered from 3007/3006 it is likely that this feature was of fairly modern origin. A deposit of greyish brown topsoil containing some cinder, 3002, sealed 3006 and the brick drain (3003 - 5). A layer of turf, 3001, overlay 3002.

5.3 Section 2

At 36m from the south-east end of the trench (some 21m north-west of charnel pit 3011), two pieces of human bone were found at the base of the trench. One of these was a fragment of human skull, the other a piece of pelvis. These were derived from context 3015 which was a slightly greyish brown, slightly clayey fine sand with occasional small cobbles. At this point 3015 sat directly above the natural, 3014. Deposit 3015 was in turn covered by modern topsoil, 3002, and turf, 3001.

5.4 Section 3

At 54 metres from the south-east end of the trench the natural deposit, 3014, was present at the base of the trench and directly above this was a layer of cobbling, 3016, which appeared to slope down at its sides. This is interpreted as a metalled surface, possibly for a roadway, which was thought to be aligned north-east / south-west, although this should be seen as approximate given the narrowness of the trench. The maximum depth of metalling was about 0.30m and its width at least 2.30m, and possibly as much as 2.70m. The cobbles of 3016 did not appear to be well-compacted. A fragment of Roman brick, several fragments of animal bone, an iron nail and nine sherds of Roman pottery of the early 3rd century were recovered from 3016. At the south-east side of this putative road it was cut by a feature, 3018, 0.20m deep. Three pieces of sandstone or fine gritstone, 3017, were present within 3018 and arranged on the same presumed north-east / south-west axis as 3016. Two of these pieces of stone were quite small but the third measured 0.67 x 0.27 x 0.27m. As the cable trench was at its required depth at this point it was not possible to say how far cut 3018 extended away from the surface 3016 to the south-east. The stones of 3017 looked as if they may have formed an edging to 3016, though they may have served another purpose. Above both the metalling, 3016 and the stones, 3017 were deposits 3015, 3002 and 3001, which have been described above.

5.5 Section 4

Around 5m north-west of the putative road, 3016, another cobbled surface, 3019, was present 61.50 metres from the south-east end of the trench. This also lay directly above the natural deposit 3014 and displayed a slight camber on each side. Less well-defined and preserved than 3016, it had a depth of only 0.20m. A scatter of cobbles at its north-west end made its

exact width awkward to determine with precision, but it was certainly at least 2.20m wide and perhaps a little more. Once again the cobbles did not appear to be well-compacted. The presumed north-east / south-west alignment of the surface is again only approximate owing to the confines of the trench. Finds recovered from 3019 consisted of a copper alloy coin (probably a sesterius of Trajan 98-117AD), ten sherds of late 2nd – early 3rd century Roman pottery, a few pieces of animal bone and a fragment of Roman brick. As with 3016, 3019 is provisionally interpreted as a roadway, almost certainly of Roman date, and was again overlain by deposits 3015, 3002 and 3001 in turn.

5.6 Sections 5 - 6

At 67 metres from the south-east end of the trench a third cobbled surface, 3020, was encountered. This surface was of much wider than the other two previously described being



Plate 1 South-east end of 3020

15m wide. For the most part the cobbles of 3020 again lay directly above the natural deposit 3014, the exception being at its north-western end. Here a layer of slightly reddish mid-brown slightly clayey fine sand containing occasional pieces of bone, 3022, lay above 3014 and was in turn overlain by a thinner layer of redeposited natural, 3021. The cobbles of 3020 sat directly

over 3021 which is perhaps best interpreted as a levelling deposit below the road. As before, the cobbles of 3020 did not appear to be well-compacted, though they were densely packed and several of the lower cobbles measured as much as 0.20m across and in one or two instances 0.30m across. Slight cambering was again present on each side of this surface. At the south-east end there was a minimal depth of cobbling rose, but after 4m a maximum depth of 0.30m was reached, after which the depth was slightly less. Towards the north-west end a gradual tailing-off of cobbles was evident with this reduction in thickness occurring over several metres. Finds recovered from 3020 consisted of nine sherds of 2nd century Roman pottery, a few pieces of animal bone and thirteen fragments of ceramic building material. With the exception of four fragments of medieval roofing tile, which are thought to be intrusive, all

the ceramic building material was of Roman date. Once again this surface was overlain by deposit 3015 which in its turn was sealed by the modern deposits, 3002 and 3001. 3020 is thought to represent a road surface, almost certainly that of Road 11, and whilst its 15m width appears unusually great this is probably because the trench cut across the feature at an oblique angle.



Plate 2 North-west end of 3020, 3021 and 3022 below

Beyond road 3020 and beginning at about 87m from the south-east end of the trench the natural deposit, 3014 was covered by a thick layer of brown clay which was clearly made-up ground, probably associated with more recent school building construction at this north-west end of the site. Modern brick walls were encountered at 94m and 99.50m. A fragment of limestone with three worked faces was recovered at about 90m. It measured 0.30m x 0.18m x 0.11m and had clearly been deposited in the modern period.

6. CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIALS by Jane McComish

Context	Fabric	Form	W	T	Comments	Date
3016	R9	Rbrick	150	25		1-4th century
3019	R9	Rbrick	5	0		1-4th century
3020	M4	Plain	25	14		13-16th century
	M4	Plain	25	13		
	M4	Plain	50	0		
	R9	Rbrick	150	0		
	M4	Plain	25	13		
	R9	Tegula	175	0	Abraded, part of Betts type E lower cut away	
	R9	Tegula	150	0	Abraded, part of Betts type E lower cut away	
	R9	Rbrick	150	0	Abraded	
	R9	Rbrick	100	0	Abraded	
	R9	Rbrick	75	0	Abraded	
	R1	Rbrick	75	0	Abraded	
	R1	Rbrick	25	0	Abraded	
	R9	Rbrick	25	0	Abraded	

Table 1 Ceramic Building Materials summary

A total of 1.05kg of material was recovered from the site, and this was recorded to a standard

YAT methodology. Most of the material was of Roman date; and this consisted of bricks (Rbrick in the table below) and two tegula fragments each of which had part of a Betts type E lower cut away present. There were also 4 fragments of medieval plain roof tile of 13-16th century date. All of the material recovered was typical in terms of its dimensions and fabrics. The small quantity of material recovered means its only real use is in terms of providing dating evidence for the site. No further work is recommended.

7. POTTERY by Ailsa Mainman

Context	Find Number	Spot-date	Details
3008	00009 1	2nd century	1 grey ware sherd
3010	00010 3	2nd century	2 Ebor sherds, 1 fine grey ware sherd
3016	00011 9	Early 3rd century	6 abraded sherds, red slip ware 1 sherd grey ware 1 sherd Dales ware, 1 small abraded sherd samian
3019	00012	Late 2nd- early 3rd century	2 joining sherds of large samian bowl, 2 sherds grey ware, 2 joining sherds from small samian cup with stamp, 2 abraded Ebor, 1 rim-sherd samian, 1 possible post-Roman coarse tempered ware- or possibly a coarse RB native ware
3020	00013 8	2nd century	7 sherds Ebor including base from a thick jar or possible head pot, 1 abraded colour coated beaker base, 1 samian bowl base

Table 2 Pottery by context

The trench produced pottery from five contexts. With the exception of a possible post-Roman sherd from Context 3019 (road make-up in Section 4) the pottery was all Roman, largely of 2nd or early 3rd century in date. Large, unabraded pieces of samian ware were also found in Context 3019. The presence of fragments of one (or possibly 2 head pots) and the quality of the samian pottery suggests funerary rather than domestic activities in the Roman period.

8. ANIMAL BONE by Charlie Dean

8.1 Method

A total of 15 fragments of animal bone weighing 420g were examined from the site. Fragments were recorded to species where possible. When this wasn't possible, they were recorded as either large mammal (cow, horse, large deer, large pig), medium mammal (sheep, goat, small deer, small pig) or completely unidentifiable.

8.2 Species present

There were relatively few species present. Large mammal fragments were most abundant, followed by cow and then sheep/goat. Three bones showed evidence of butchery, consisting

of chop marks in one case, and the reducing of bone by chopping in the other two cases.

Preservation was good, although most bones showed some signs of root etching. There was a little evidence of gnawing, with two specimens (from different contexts) exhibiting tooth marks. There was no evidence of burning, and no evidence of any pathology. Only one bone would be suitable for metrical analysis.

8.3 Conclusions

The quantity of material recovered is small and contained little of interest. The range of species represented is normal for an urban site of any period, and it is difficult to say anything meaningful about this assemblage because of its size, although, if this material is to be discarded, it should be fully recorded first.

<i>Species/Context</i>	<i>3016</i>	<i>3019</i>	<i>3020</i>	<i>3022</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>cow</i>	1	1			2
<i>deer?</i>			1		1
<i>large mammal</i>	1	3		1	5
<i>medium mammal</i>				1	1
<i>pig</i>				1	1
<i>sheep</i>			1		1
<i>sheep/goat</i>	1				1
<i>sheep/goat?</i>			1		1
<i>unidentified</i>	1			1	2
TOTAL	4	4	3	4	15

Table 3 Animal bone (numbers and species) by context

9. CONCLUSIONS

Clear evidence has been found for further burials, almost certainly of Roman date, in an area already known to lie within a major cemetery. All the human remains encountered appear to derive from disturbed inhumations, with some seemingly re-interred in a charnel pit. At what date disturbance took place is uncertain.

The three surfaces, or putative roads, are of some significance. It is probable that the most extensive of these, 3020, formed a part of RCHME's Road 11 previously observed in Dalton Terrace and behind the Mount School, (Wenham 1957). Quite what the other two relate to is uncertain, though they could have functioned as metalled paths or tracks providing access within the wider Mount cemetery. It may be noted that they appear to respect the alignment of the main Roman approach road from the south-west (RCHMY1; Road 10) suggesting the presence of a formally planned landscape in this area.

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