HAZLEWOOD CASTLE, TADCASTER NORTH YORKSHIRE

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SNY	10337
ENY	3081
CNY	
Parish	8070
Rec'd	1997

1997 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 3

YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

8070 parish

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HAZLEWOOD CASTLE,

TADCASTER, N. YORKSHIRE.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Between the 24th and 28th of February and the 24th and 26th of March 1997, York Archaeological Trust carried out a field evaluation at Hazlewood Castle, on behalf of Farquhar Associates Chartered Surveyors. The site lies some three miles south-west of Tadcaster overlooking the Vale of Towton. The area evaluated was situated on either side of an existing standing building known as the orangery, and just to the north of the main castle, a Grade I listed building. The evaluation revealed important evidence for the survival of medieval and post-medieval structures and deposits.

The earliest deposits discovered were medieval occupation layers which were cut by the construction trench for a thick medieval limestone wall. This contained an opening or doorway, and may have formed an external wall for a medieval courtyard, (a heavily truncated late medieval or early post-medieval well was located within the possible courtyard). When a 17th century North Wing was constructed, the doorway was probably blocked and several other limestone walls and footings which were also discovered probably relate to this later building. A thick garden soil built up west of the 17th century wing and an internal brick wall, possibly housing a range or fireplace was added prior to falling out of use in the later 17th century. The buildings were renovated and refloored in the late 18th century and probably survived unaltered until being finally demolished in 1908. The area was then used as a lawn and sun terrace in front of a large fountain.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

In February and March 1997 York Archaeological Trust carried out a field evaluation at Hazlewood Castle, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 4487 3981) (Fig 1), on behalf of Farquhar Associates Chartered Surveyors, in advance of the construction of a new two storey building to the west of, and incorporating, the orangery (an existing standing building just to the north of the main castle). The proposed development area covered approximately 315 sq metres, and the evaluation was carried out, on the advice of English Heritage, prior to detailed planning consent for the development by Selby District Council.

NYCC

1.2 Aims

i) The general purpose of the evaluation was to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area.

ii) To determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeology.

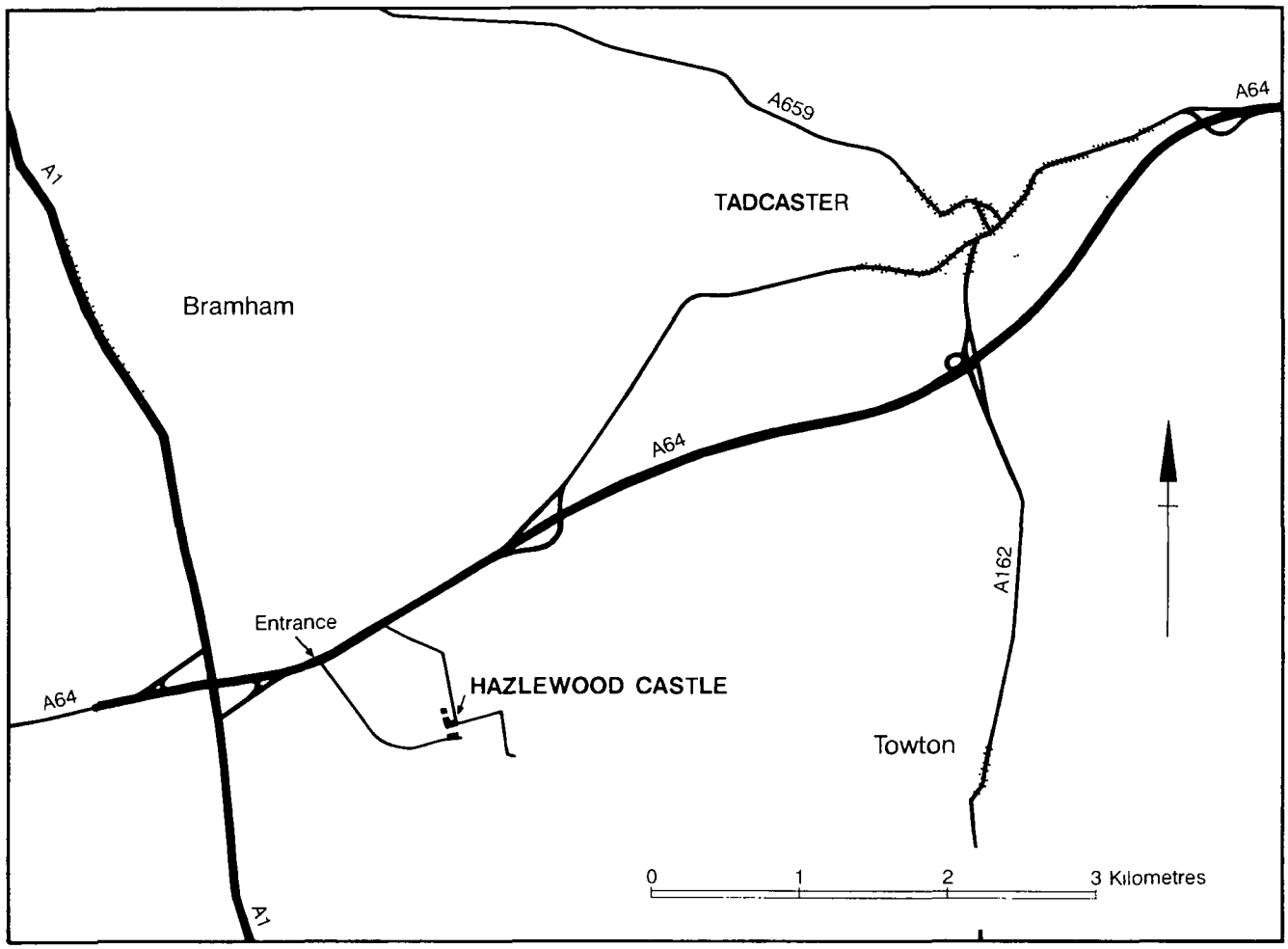

Figure 1 Site location

iii) To make available the results of the investigation

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation was based on a 5% sample of the development area, and consisted of three trenches (Fig 2), two 3 m x 2 m , and the other 2 m x 2 m

The overburden was removed, under close archaeological supervision, by a 2 5 tonne mini mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1 20 using the single context planning system All excavated features, deposits and structures were recorded in section at a scale of 1 10 All significant archaeological deposits were photographed using colour print film Recording followed procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust *Context Recording Manual* (1996)

All finds and the the site records are currently stored with York Archaeological Trust under the Trust and Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM 1997 41

2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Hazlewood Castle is situated on a ridge of Permian magnesian limestone at 71 59 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) approximately three miles south-west of Tadcaster, overlooking the vale of Towton to the south-west The area under investigation lay to either side of an existing standing building known as the orangery To the west the area was laid to turf between the existing standing building and a large fountain, overlooking landscaped gardens, a driveway and Hazel Wood where the land sloped down towards the A1, to the east lay the existing courtyard Just to the south lay the main castle buildings

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although Hazlewood Castle was an important historical site, academic research into its architectural and archaeological background has apparently been limited to date and much of the information thus comes from popular magazines such as *Country Life* and the *Dalesman*

Hazlewood Castle is situated on a ridge overlooking the vale of Towton, and was the residence of the 'Vavasours' from just after the Norman conquest until 1907 The name 'Vavasour' (Franco-Norman meaning 'vassal of a vassal') was a term given to a person who held lands under a mesne lord rather than directly from the crown, and in dignity ranked next below a baron (Leadman 1895, Oswald 1957) Malger Vavasour is mentioned as holding land at 'Ezelwoode' for William de Percy in the Domesday book in 1086 (Wheater 1888)

A chapel was founded by Sir Walter Vavasour on the site in 1167 (DOE 1987) which suggests that a manor was probably m existence by this date

In 1265 the manor and church were burnt down during the Baron wars (Oswald, 1957), this being the first documentary evidence for the existence of buildings of high status

In 1286 Sir William le Vavasour was granted licence to crenellate his hall, probably the core of the castle, and constructed the present chapel However, it has been suggested (Oswald, 1957) that the part of the building with the thickest walls, which is the square projection at the western extremity, may represent a pele tower This could date part of the existing buildings to c1180 and these would thus have been in existence prior to Sir William's construction work

The main castle buildings were constructedof magnesian limestone from Thevesdale quarry on the Vavasour estate These quarries also supplied stone for the construction of York Minster and other churches and abbeys in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire and even prestigious buildings as far away as Cambridge and Eton In a charter datmg from 1225 Robert le Vavasour granted 'to God and Blessed Peter and the church of York' m pure and perpetual alms free passage in Thevesdale for the repair, rebuilding or enlargment of York Minster (Oswald, 1957)

A 15th century tower on the north west corner of the castle is the only visible late medieval addition and the castle is thus thought to have remained structurally unchanged until the 17th century

During the reformation, Queen Elizabeth I granted Thomas le Vavasour religious immunity for support during the battles against the Spanish Armada The family remained staunchly Catholic and the chapel has also remained strictly so for its entire history (Oswald 1957)

A two storey north wing was added to the original building possibly in the 17th century It has been alleged that the north wing was built to provide suitable accomodation for King James I as he travelled north to Scotland after his proclamation in 1603, but the King didn't stay at Hazlewood (Mitchell, 1987)

The sixth baronet Sir Walter Vavasour completely altered the intcmal and external appearance of the castle in the 1770s He added a third storey to the north wing, rebuilt its facade and probably constructed the west wing which attached the main castle buildings to the chapel Both elevations on the courtyard side were now of three storeys, with a blind arcade at ground level framing windows and doorways (DOE 1987, Oswald 1957)

The Vavasours sold the house in 1907 to Mr E O Simpson who demolished the North Wing and the majority of the west wing apart from the arcades and the eastern end close to the chapel which remamed until it too was demolished in the 1960s

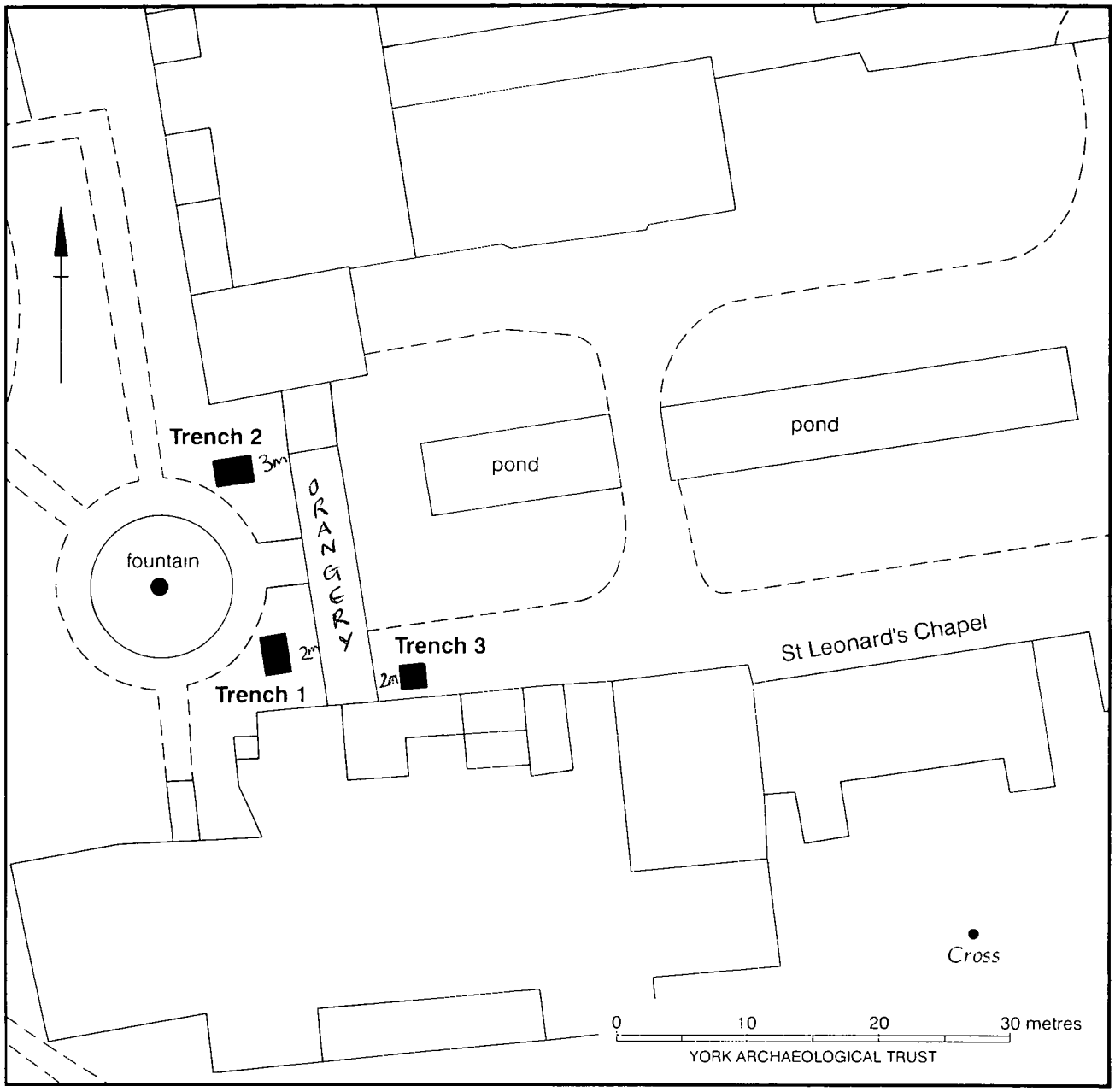

Figure 2 Trench location plan 1: 500

During the wars the castle was used as a maternity hospital for Leeds Afterwards, the Fawcett family acquired it and then in 1960 it was sold to Mr Donald Flart The Carmelite monks aquired the castle in 1967 and they used it as a monastery and retreat from 1972 until recently

The only part of the castle to remain complete in its medieval form is the chapel but the present castle clearly incorporates much of the original medieval structure which has been masked by later 17th and 18th century additions and internal decorations No previous excavations are known from the site, but the area under investigation lies beneath and adjacent to the probable 17th century north wing and the medieval courtyard areas which may have contained earlier medieval structures

4. THE EXCAVATION RESULTS

The trenches are discussed in numerical order Within each trench the contexts are considered in chronological order, from the bottom up

4.1 Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4)

The trench was aligned north-south and was machine excavated to remove topsoil and demolition material which was present to a depth of over 1 20 m at the south end of the trench These deposits were not excavated further for reasons of health and safety and natural geology was not reached

4 1 1 The earliest archeological deposits encountered consisted of a limestone footing (1006) and a limestone wall (1005) The limestone wall (1005) was aligned east-west, was 0 44 m wide, 1 18 m high and was faced on both north and south sides with a 0 04 m thick coat of yellowish white plaster It was constructed of roughly squared limestone facing stones with a core of limestone rubble bonded with a creamy white mortar Its construction and alignment suggested a medieval or early post-medieval date (perhaps functioning as an internal partition within the 17th century North Wing), and it would appear that it had been reused within later structures The limestone footing (1006) was found at a depth of 72 40 m AOD, (1 28m beneath the surface) and was only partially exposed beneath a later floor surface (1003) The fragment exposed consisted of two roughly squared limestone blocks which were mortared together with a similar creamy white mortar to 1005 It was impossible to determine withm the confines of the excavation area whether the footing (1006) was earlier or later than the limestone wall (1005) but both were thought to be broadly contemporary

4 1 2 A brick wall (1002) was constructed on top of the earlier limestone footing This was made of handmade mid orange coloured bricks containmg yellow and grey streaks and of 0 23 m x 0 11 m x 0 06 m average dimensions The wall remains were found to be 0 37 m wide and 0 87 m high and projected south from the limestone wall by up to 1 15 m At the junction with the limestone wall the brick wall turned east,

forming an 'L-shape', and continued beneath the eastern trench edge The brick wall appeared to be later than the plaster on the limestone wall which suggested that it was added within an existing room Once the wall was constructed it was also faced with a thin coat of plaster (0 01 m thick) on all exposed faces, which suggested a period of use as an internal division within a room prior to the insertion of a brick fireplace (1004 - see 4 1 5)

4 1 3 A deposit of dark brown silty sand with occasonal charcoal flecks and mortar and limestone inclusions (1008) which formed to the west of the brick wall (1002) and south of the limestone wall (1005) was found at a depth of 72 51 m AOD This sealed the limestone footing (1006) and the base of the brick wall (1002) to a depth of 0 06 m and suggested a period of disuse or dumping within this part of the building complex

4 1 4 This dark deposit was sealed by a layer of friable mid orange sand (1007) 0 06m thick which formed a level bedding for a stone floor (1003) again only found west of the brick wall (1002) The floor was constructed of light greeny yellow sandstone slabs of regular dimensions 0 55 m x 0 84 m x 0 06 m which appeared to butt both the limestone wall (1005) and the brick wall (1002) at 72 56 m AOD This floor suggests that this building was re-used in the 19th century

4 1 5 A roughly constructed brick fireplace (1004) was then constructed within the 'L-shaped' brick wall (1002) It was made of handmade bricks similar to (1002) and included fragments of sandstone slab bonded with a pinkish cream mortar which suggested that it was constructed after the floor (1003) The fireplace appeared to have been constructed against an obstruction to the south, now removed, as the mortar bond remained in place extruded out from between the bricks An iron grill was also cemented into the south face A gap, filled with limestone chippings and mortar, which was located between the fireplace and the brick wall (1002) to the north may have represented a flue, but this was not excavated The fireplace may have been constructed in the 19th century withm an existing larger brick range (1002)

4 1 6 All the earlier deposits were sealed by a demolition layer (1001), over 1 10 m thick in places, which contained limestone blocks, brick, mortar, plaster and tile and which also included a fragment of post-medieval painted plaster with a green flower design This layer is believed to represent the demolition of the three storied North Wing in 1908 The deposits in the southern end of the trench appeared to have been heavily truncated, especially the sandstone floor beyond the end of the brick wall (1002) This truncation could be linked to the 1908 demolition or to the construction of a new path in the 1970's linking the gardens to the west of the orangery with the courtyard Thus deposits between the end of the brick wall (1002) and the tower adjoining to the keep are likely to have been truncated to approximately 73 m AOD

4 1 6 Finally all deposits were sealed beneath a layer of friable dark grey brown sandy loam (1000), a garden soil which sealed and levelled off the demolition deposits at 73 68 m AOD

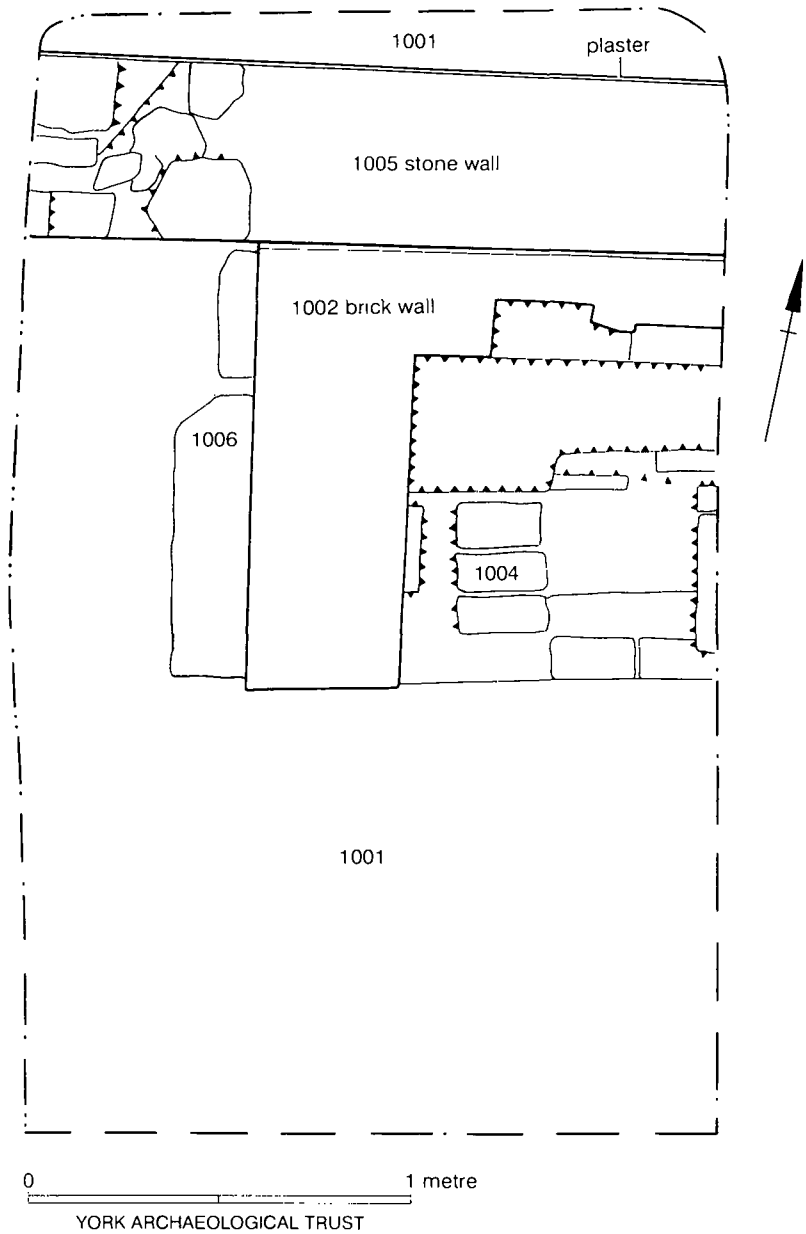

Figure 3 Plan of Trench 1

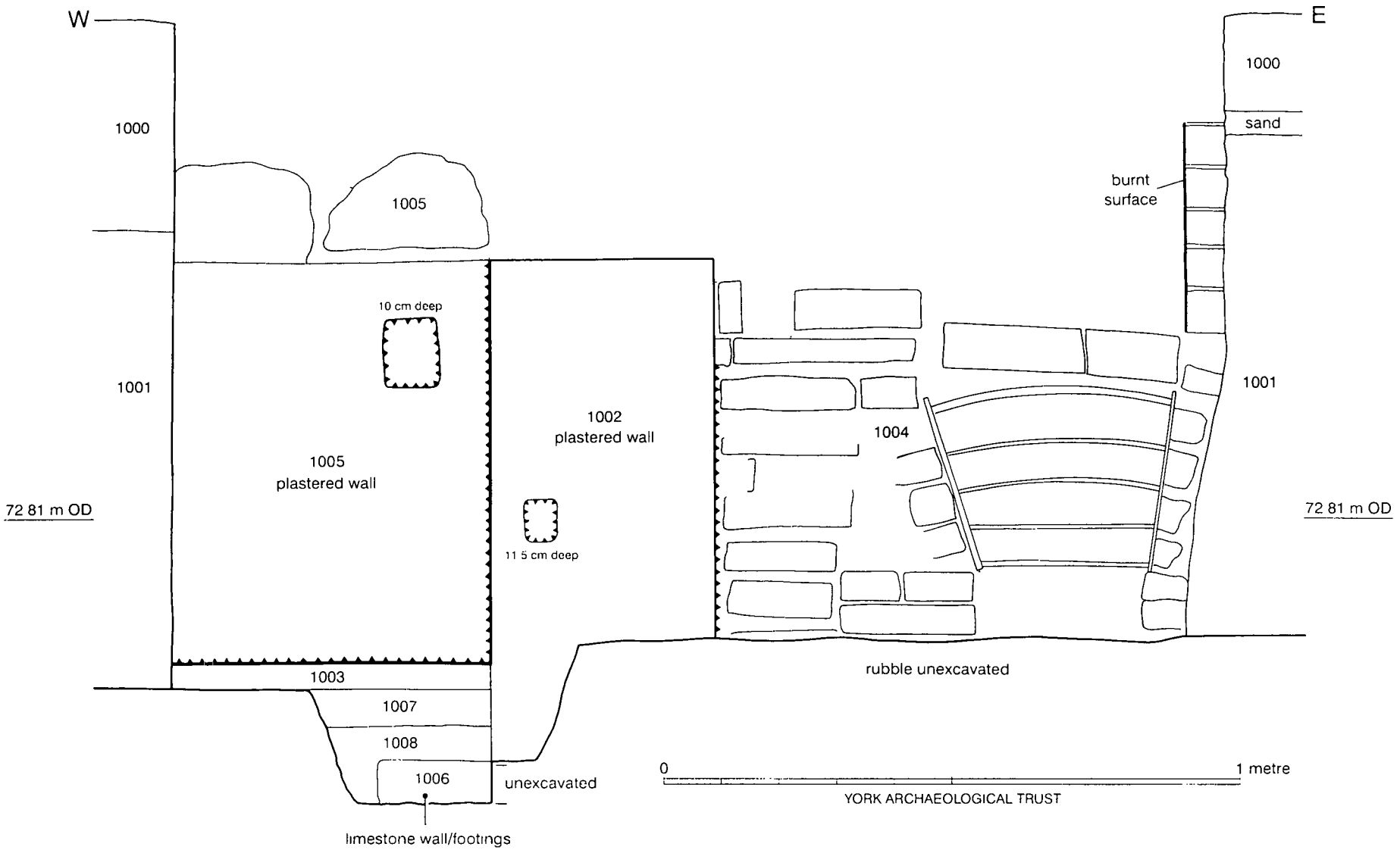

Figure 4 Trench 1, south-facing section

4.2 Trench 2 (Figs 5 and 6)

The trench was aligned east-west and was machine excavated to a depth of 0 85 m to remove topsoil and demolition materials Beyond this all deposits were hand excavated although natural geology was not reached

4 2 1 The earliest deposit, located at 72 50 m AOD, was a light yellowy orange clayey sand (2019) which contained occasional charcoal flecks and a large cobble It was found at the bottom of a sondage at the eastern end of the trench Sealing this was a second layer (2018) which consisted of a mid orange sandy clay with occasional charcoal flecks Both these layers are thought to be early medieval occupation layers, but the confines of the trench and health and safety restrictions meant that these deposits could not be investigated further

4 2 2 A construction cut (2016) which contained a limestone wall (2002) was cut through the sandy clays It was aligned north-south and could be seen to coincide with a demolished section of wall projecting from the south side of the standing building to the north of the trench known as the 'keep' The wall (2002) was 0 83 m wide and more than 1 12 m high, the construction cut was not fully excavated to its base It was faced with roughly squared limestone blocks with a core of limestone rubble and bonded with a creamy white mortar The eastern side of the wall was faced with a layer of light greyish cream plaster 0 04 m thick, but the corresponding western face appeared to have been unplastered, suggesting that this wall was the outer wall of a building, perhaps the 17th century North Wing The thickness of the wall suggested that it may have been of medieval date, possibly indicating the original line of a medieval courtyard wall The construction cut for 2002 was backfilled with a mottled reddish brown silty clay (2015) with frequent limestone chippings, mortar and moderate charcoal inclusions This suggested that the cut was backfilled shortly after construction The fill also contained a fragment of medieval vessel glass and a stem fragment of a wide bored post-medieval tobacco pipe which is believed to have been intrusive

4 2 3 The limestone wall (2002) appeared to terminate 1 43 m from the north trench edge A wall extension (2021) or possibly the backfill of a doorway was located to the south and continued the line of 2002 into the southern trench edge This extension was the same width as 2002 and stood to a height of 0 58 m but appeared not to have been built within a construction cut It was constructed in a similar fashion to 2002 but its core contained a fragment of reddish orange tile It is suggested that this represents a doorway through the medieval courtyard wall which was blocked when the North Wing was constructed in the early seventeenth century

4 2 4 A slightly tenacious sandy silt (2005) built up just west of wall 2002 and wall extension 2021 at a depth of 73 34 m AOD This is believed to be a medieval garden

soil which built up against the wall of the courtyard It contained fragments of medieval window glass and medieval tile

4 2 5 Unrelated to, but probably post-dating 2005 was a series of later post-medieval features which cut mto the medieval occupation layer 2018 to the east of 2002 at 72 65 m AOD The earliest of these appeared to be the remnents of a truncated shallow pit or scoop (2014) measuring 0 90 m long, 0 36 m wide, and 0 08 m deep This appeared at the eastern end of the trench and had shallow sides, a flattish base and was completely filled with a mid brown silty clay (2013) with frequent limestone chippings, mortar and charcoal inclusions This suggested that it was backfilled either durmg, or shortly after a period of construction or demolition The shallow pit was truncated by a linear feature (2012) which ran east-west from the limestone wall (2002) to the eastern trench edge Its northern edge was not located, possibly havng beentruncated by a yet later feature (2010) Cut 2012 was fairly shallow, 0 09 m deep, had a flattish base, and was filled with a mid greyish brown silty clay (2011), with frequent mortar, and charcoal inclusions, which also suggested that it was backfilled during or shortly after a period of construction or demolition Several large, roughly squared, limestone blocks were found at its eastern end beside wall 2002 Although these were not mortared together they hint that the linear cut was either a construction cut for a drystone wall from which the majority of the limestone has been robbed, or that it was a robber trench following the line of an original wall in which these blocks had been left 2010) was only partially visible close to the northern trench edge and was found to contain two fills The lower was a layer of pinkish white mortar (2020), which was not excavated, which may represent either a mortar mixing pit or a floor This was sealed by a dark brown silty loam (2009), which contained a high concentration of charcoal and mortar which may result from rapid backfilling after a period of construction activity close by All of the features were then sealed by a thin lens of mottled mid brown silt (2008) with a high concentration of charcoal and construction materials which suggested trampling activity over all of these features It is suggested that 2010, 2012 and 2014 all related to construction activities and alterations within the north wmg, in the 18th or early 19th centuries

4 2 6 A thick bedding layer of friable mid orange sand (2017) the same as 1007, overlay all of the earlier deposits east of the limestone wall (2002) to a depth of 0 25 m in places This formed the base for the construction of a stone floor (2003), using the same regularly cut sandstone slabs as (1003) This was located at 72 85 m AOD, a slightly higher level than in trench 1, indicating that the floor levels within the building were not consistent and appeared to be constructed at a lower level closer to the main castle buildings This floor was probably constructed in the 19th century and the eastern face of wall 2002 appeared to have been replastered after its construction

4 2 7 A demolition deposit (2001), up to 0 62 m thick, which consisted of limestone blocks, brick, mortar, and plaster overlay the floor and was only found to the east of the limestone wall It contamed fragments of 18th and 19th century vessel glass as well as a fragment of 19th century ceramic jar This surely represented the

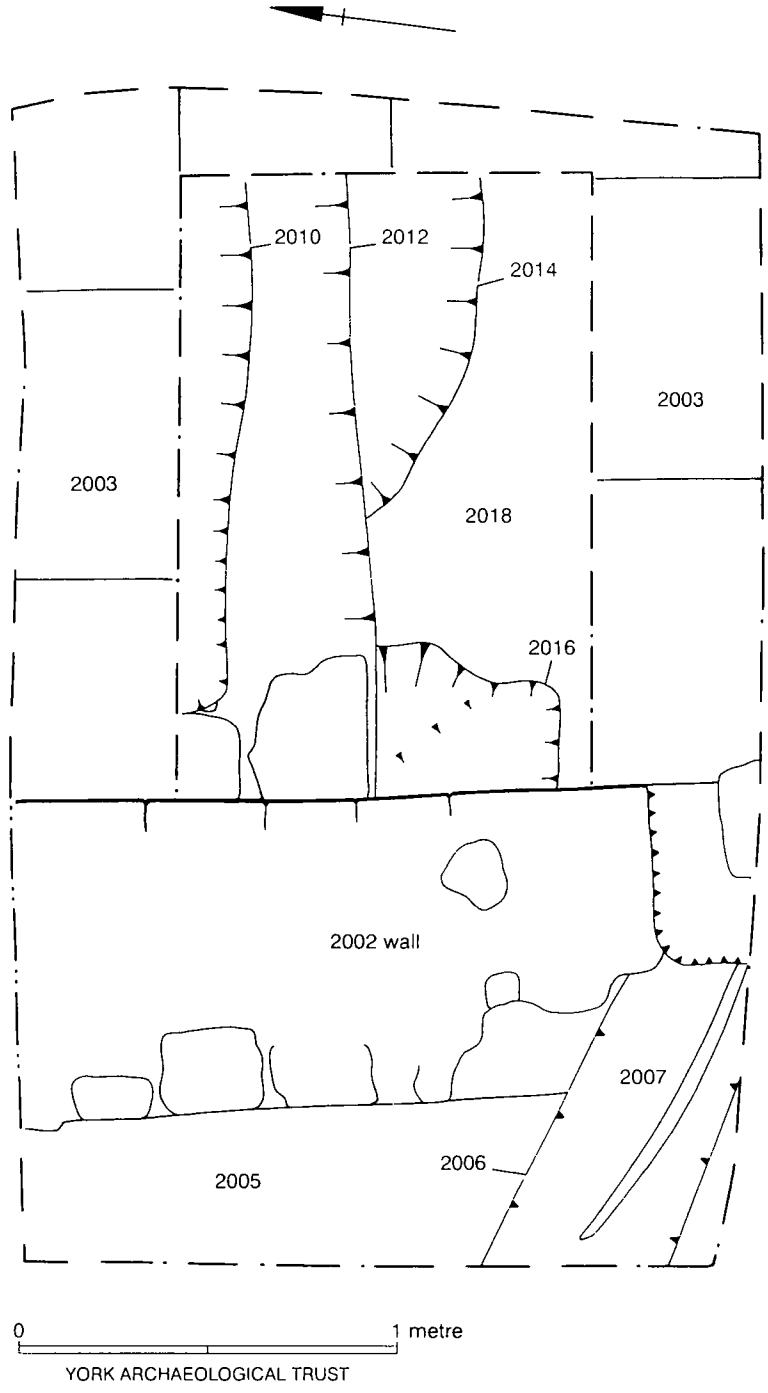

Figure 5 Plan of Trench 2

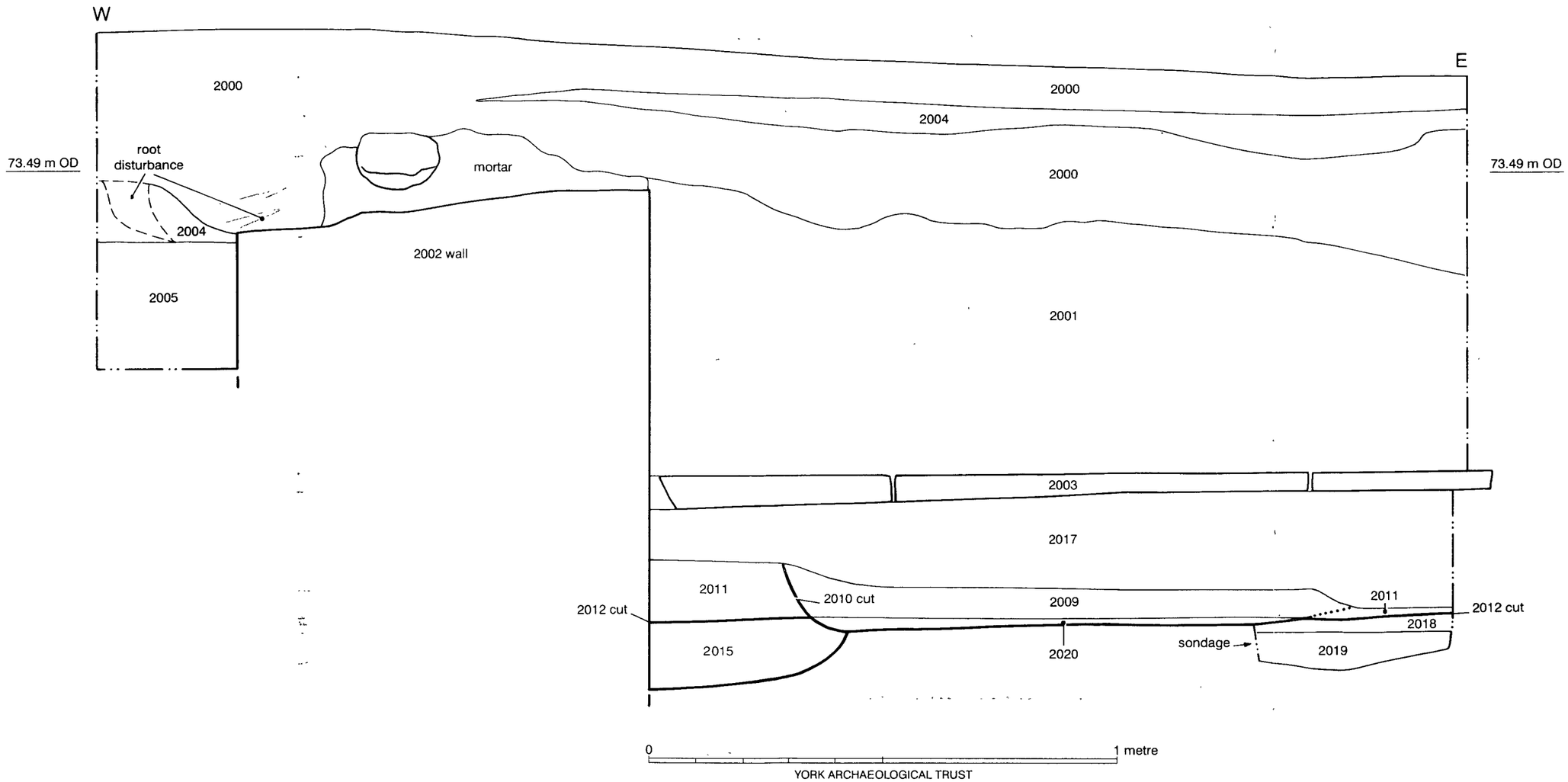

Figure 6 Trench 2, south-facing section.

demolition of the north wing in 1908 and suggests that this was carried out in a controlled fashion; rubble being only located within the buildings.

4.2.8 A dump of clean friable, light greyish orange gravelly sand (2004) was located at the western end of the trench and was found as thin lenses in the topsoil (2000). This probably represented a dump of construction material for the building of the orangery in the 1960s. A service trench for an electric cable (cut 2006) and (fill 2007) aligned north-west to south east was located in the south-west corner of the trench and was the latest activity within the trench.

4.2.9 The uppermost deposit was a slightly tenacious dark brown sandy loam topsoil (2000) which sealed and levelled off the demolition deposits at 73.70 m AOD.

4.3 Trench 3 (Figs. 7 and 8)

The trench was located close to the junction between the west and north ranges and was machine excavated to a depth of 1.0 m to remove topsoil and recent demolition materials. Below this the trench was hand excavated, natural geology being encountered on the northern edge of the trench. Work was hampered by modern services within the area which restricted work to two small areas 0.6 m and 1.0 m in width respectively divided by a concrete service capping, 0.3 m wide (3003) which ran the full width of the trench. To the south a ceramic pipe (3002) at 71.86 m AOD limited the investigation to a maximum length of 1.4 m.

4.3.1 The earliest deposit encountered was a natural yellow sand (3027) which was visible from 72.24 m AOD in the northern edge of the trench and extended only 0.20m. into the excavated area.

4.3.2 The earliest archaeological remains were those of a magnesian limestone structure (3004), (3005) which was heavily truncated by later interventions (3028), (3018). This was comprised of roughly hewn blocks of irregularly shaped stone, laid in a circular pattern and dressed on the inner face. These are believed to be the remains of an early well. The stones did not appear to have been bonded as the material between them was similar to one of the deposits within the well (3011). The construction technique suggested that the well was of late medieval date, although the lack of datable material makes this difficult to prove conclusively. The projected diameter of the well was between 0.8 and 1.0 m, with the top being at 71.57 m AOD. The full depth of 0.90m. into the natural sand was excavated.

4.3.3 The suggestion of a construction cut filled with a greyish brown gravelly sand (3006), was found to the west of the well.

4.3.4 The well had been backfilled with several layers of coarse sand (3012), (3007), (3011) and (3026). These sloped down to the north, suggesting that they had been dumped into a standing structure. All had leached together, and had worked their way between the stones of the well structure (3004) and (3005).

Figure 7 Plan of Trench 3.

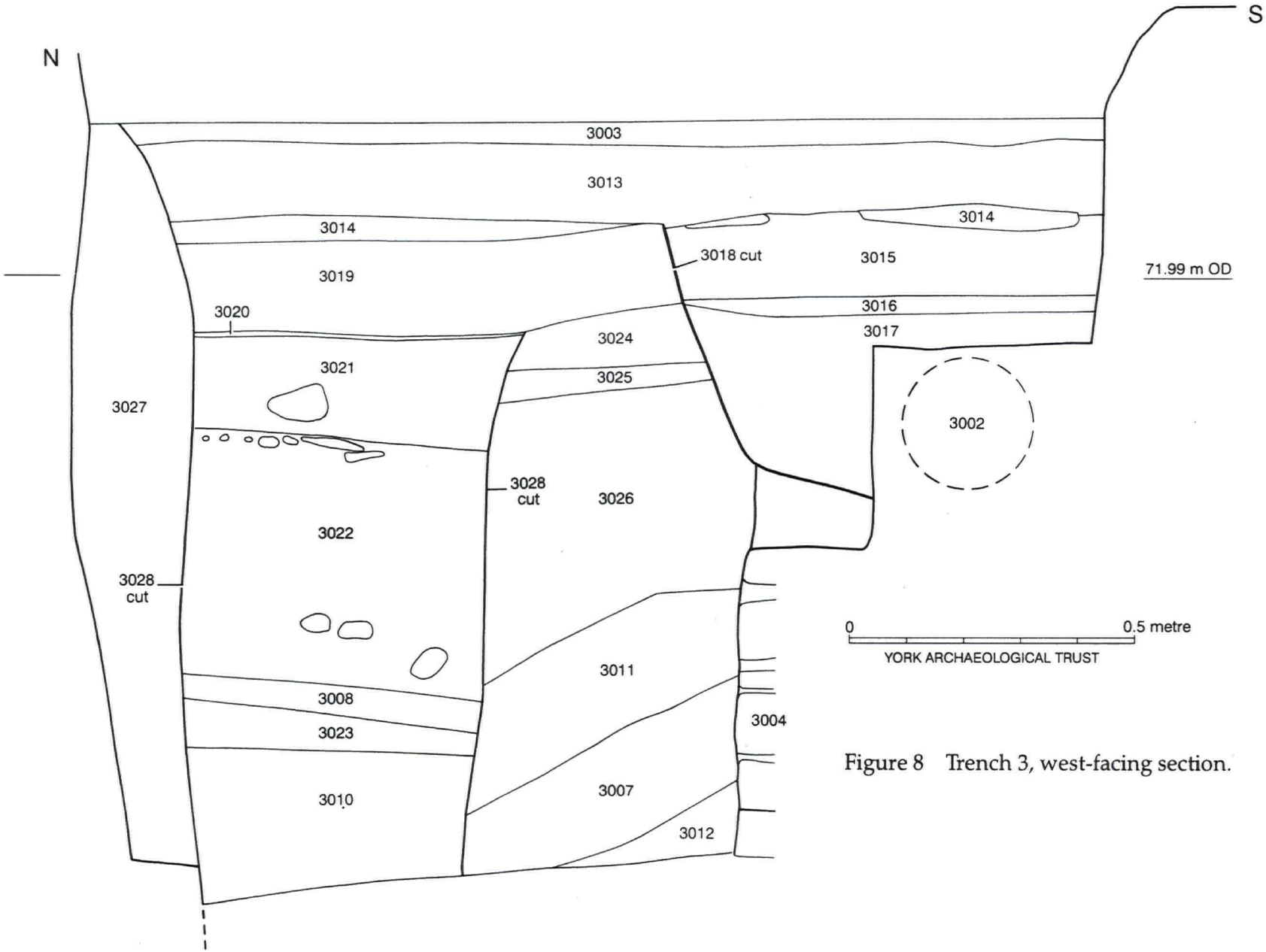

Figure 8 Trench 3, west-facing section.

4.3.5 The well was sealed by two thin and deposits of levelling material which had been truncated by surrounding cuts and were hence only located in section. They consisted of a light brown compact coarse gravel (3025) and a light yellowy-brown pebbly gravel (3024).

4.3.6 To the north of these deposits a deep cut (3028) was encountered. This was 0.5m. wide and it extended east-west across the trench. It was excavated to 70.89 m AOD and contained a number of different fills (3010), (3023), (3008), (3022), (3021), and (3020), ranging between pebbly gravels (3010) to more sandy fills (3008), (3021). It is believed that 3028 was a modern service trench, although the service was not reached for health and safety reasons.

4.3.7 Cut 3028 was sealed by a yellowy-brown sandy grit (3019) which is thought to be a levelling deposit for a previous courtyard surface.

4.3.8 Into 3019 was cut the trench (3018) for the ceramic pipe (3002). This extended up to 0.8 m into the trench and contained fills of pebbles (3015), asphalt (3016) and yellow sand (3017).

4.3.9 Thin lenses of asphalt (3014), 0.02 - 0.05m thick, sealed all earlier layers, in a spread that covered the whole trench. This was overlain by a deposit of orange sand (3013), 0.2 m thick, which in turn was covered by the concrete (3003) at 72.26 m AOD. This was believed to be the capping to an electrical service and was therefore left in place. It formed the top of a baulk running north-south, which divided the trench.

4.3.10 Finally, the whole trench was sealed by limestone rubble (3001) which lay directly beneath the present tarmac surface of the courtyard, at a height of 72.53 m AOD.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation revealed structures and deposits of archaeological significance in all three trenches. The earliest deposits were two early medieval occupation layers found in trench 2; which were probably laid down within the original castle courtyard. A thick limestone wall which was then buuilt within a deep construction cut can best be interpreted as a medieval courtyard wall which contained an opening or doorway. This was later blocked when the Jacobean North Wing was constructed in c.1603. The east -west limestone wall and the limestone footing in trench 1 probably relate to divisions within this building. A thick post-medieval garden soil built up to the west of the building (trench 2) and a rough dry-stone well was constructed within the courtyard (trench 3). An 'L-shaped section of brick wall was then constructed in trench 1 possibly indicating the insertion of a large range or fireplace. The building then fell out of disuse in the later 17th or early 18th century, with a dump layer being deposited over the limestone footing in trench 1 and possible wall robbing and other

disturbance taking place in the area covered by trench 2. The building complex was repaired, however, and a new floor was constructed with large sandstone slabs probably in the 1770's when Sir Walter Vavasour was remodelling and transforming the rest of the castle. Fragments of this floor were then incorporated into a new fireplace, reducing the size of the original in trench 1. The whole complex survived without further major alterations until Mr. Simpson bought the estate in 1907 and he then demolished the Jacobean North Wing in 1908. This produced the demolition deposits in trenches 1 and 2. A layer of soil was then dumped over the demolition deposits, and this was only disturbed in the 1960s when some sand and gravel was dumped in the area of trenches 1 and 2 while the orangery was being constructed. Service trenches were the last things to disturb the archaeology within trench 2 and trench 3. Finally a thick garden soil was laid over the area of trenches 1 and 2 and a series of modern surfaces and tarmac sealed earlier deposits in trench 3.

6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The evaluation has suggested that the remains of medieval and post-medieval walls and structures relating to the castle courtyard and a 17th century North Wing survive in places just below a thick garden soil. Within the building complex itself a thick layer of demolition overlies a sandstone floor and a sand bedding layer which preserve medieval deposits within the courtyard at a depth of 1.04 m in trench 2 and 1.20 m in trench 1. Although modern services have disturbed the area to the east of the orangery it is clear that archaeological deposits may survive here as well as is evidenced by the medieval well encountered at a depth of c.1m. in trench 3 and the two other wells preserved beneath inspection hatches in the flagged area.

It is recommended that all foundation trenches for the new building should be closely monitored by an experienced archaeologist and that every effort should be made to ensure that the medieval and 17th century structures and any archaeological deposits or surfaces relating to them are not disturbed during development. To the east of the north wing, within the courtyard, it appears that medieval and post-medieval surfaces have been removed by modern courtyard landscaping and service trenches and that only deep intrusive structures, such as wells, survive in this area. A full record of these should be made in advance of any necessary disturbance.

The western courtyard wall appears to be 18th century in date but is almost certainly a facade which obscures an earlier structure, probably the remnants of an early 17th century North Wing. Elements of this earlier obscured structure, such as round headed arches, can be seen through the west windows of the orangery, and these are significantly different from the 18th century arcades. Stub walls of an earlier structure are also visible in the archway from the courtyard to the orangery.

It is further recommended that very serious consideration is given to any suggestion to move the courtyard wall. If permission is granted a detailed watching brief by an experienced archaeologist should be maintained to ensure that a full record of any structural details revealed during the removal of stonework is made and that a more

informed structural history of this part of the building complex than has been possible to date is written.

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