



FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY SPECIALISTS

WATCHING BRIEF

PRECEPTORY FARM TEMPLE HIRST
NORTH YORKSHIRE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on the results of a watching brief undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists (FAS) Ltd on behalf of Preceptory Lodge during the excavation of foundation trenches for a detached dwelling to replace the existing day care centre at Preceptory Farm, Temple Hirst, Selby, North Yorkshire. The watching brief was carried out between 4th and 13th December 2006.

1.1 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The development area lies in the village of Temple Hirst, Selby, North Yorkshire (Figure 1; NGR SE 5976 2512) within the grounds of Preceptory Farm. The site is located to the rear of the main farm house, in a large grassed area bounded on all sides by trees. The proposed site for the new dwelling was situated between two existing buildings; a workshop to the northwest and the existing day care centre to the southeast (Plate 1).



Plate 1 General site view

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the watching brief was to identify, characterise and record any archaeological deposits encountered during groundworks which would be destroyed or disturbed by the development. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the North Yorkshire County Council Standard Written Scheme of Investigation for Limited Archaeological Recording.

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

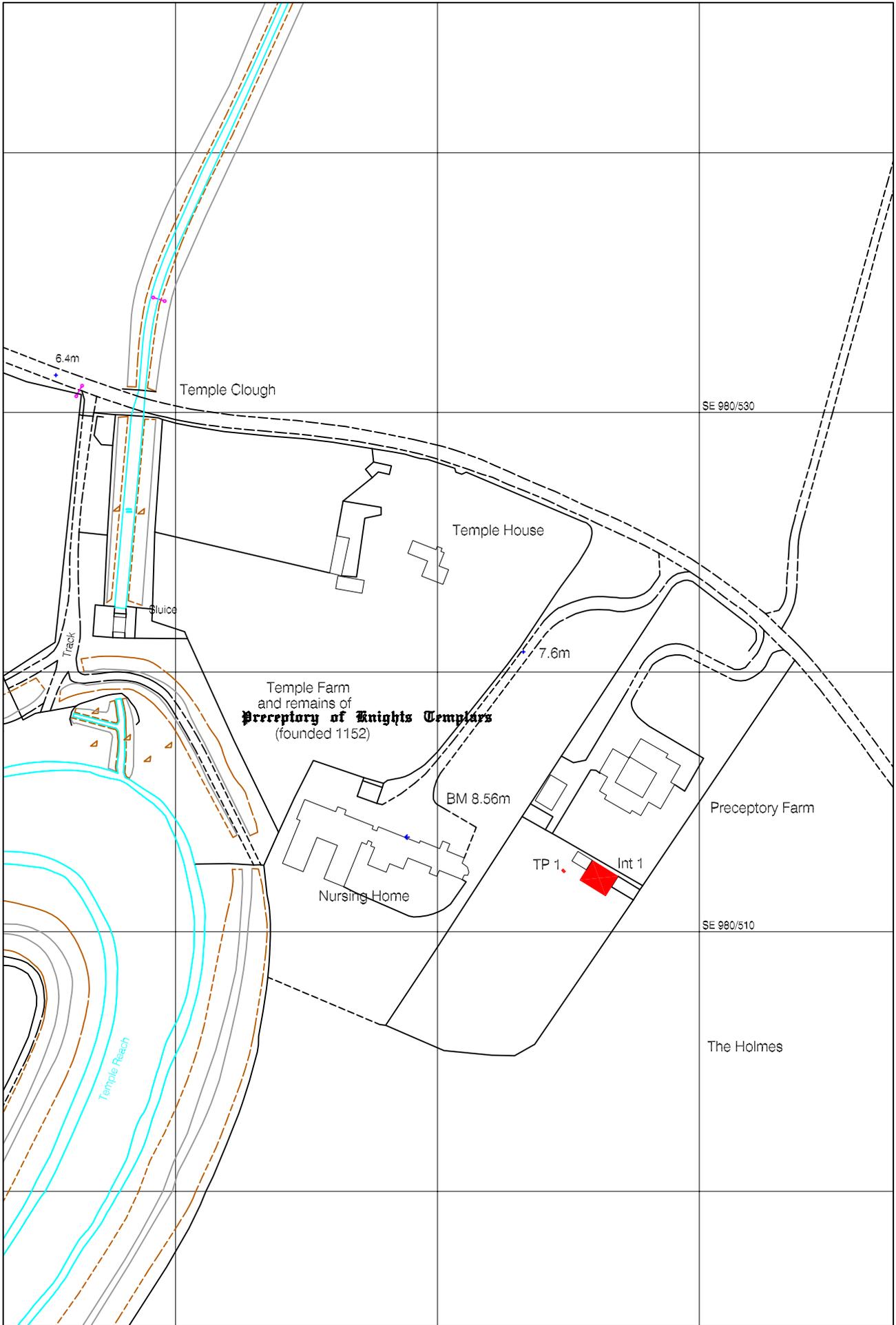
The proposed development lies within an area of archaeological interest, in the area of the Preceptory of the Knights Templar at Temple Hirst (Plate 2), a site which is reflected in the name of both the farm and the village. The preceptory was a monastery for military men, which included provision for worship and communal living.



Plate 2 The remains of Temple Hirst

The origin of the preceptory dates back to 1152 when a grant of Hirst manor in Birkin was made to the order of the Templars by Ralph Hastings. Other grants of land at Potterlaw and Fenwick as well as the church at Kellington and a chapel at Norton were also included in the





Reproduced from Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd. Unit 13 Riverside Centre Terry Avenue York. Licence No. AL10000190

Location of watching brief

Scale 1:2000



Figure 1



preceptory's holdings (Page 1974, 256-60).

The precise extent of the medieval preceptory is not known, however, when the Templar's lands were seized in 1308 Temple Hirst consisted of 200 acres of land and the preceptory itself (*ibid.*). Considerable remains of the greater precinct still exist including a hall, chapel, kitchen, larder and outbuildings (*ibid.*). There is a complex of fish ponds believed to be associated with the site in the fields to the south and southeast of Preceptory Farm.

2.0 FIELDWORK PROCEDURE

The excavation of all foundation trenches was undertaken using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The foundation trenches, allocated Intervention 1 (Int.1), measured 0.60m wide and were excavated in machined spits to a depth of between 1.30m to 2.40m below current ground level. The foundations measured 11.55m in length and 8.95m wide forming a roughly rectangular shaped plot orientated NW-SE (Figure 2). Due to the existence of trees along the northeastern boundary of Intervention 1 it was necessary to excavate the adjacent foundation trench, and all other trenches within 3.0m of the trees, to a depth of 2.40m. A small test pit (TP1) was excavated to the south of the existing workshop to establish subsoil depth. This measured 1.30m long, 0.8m wide and was 1.50m deep (Plate 3).



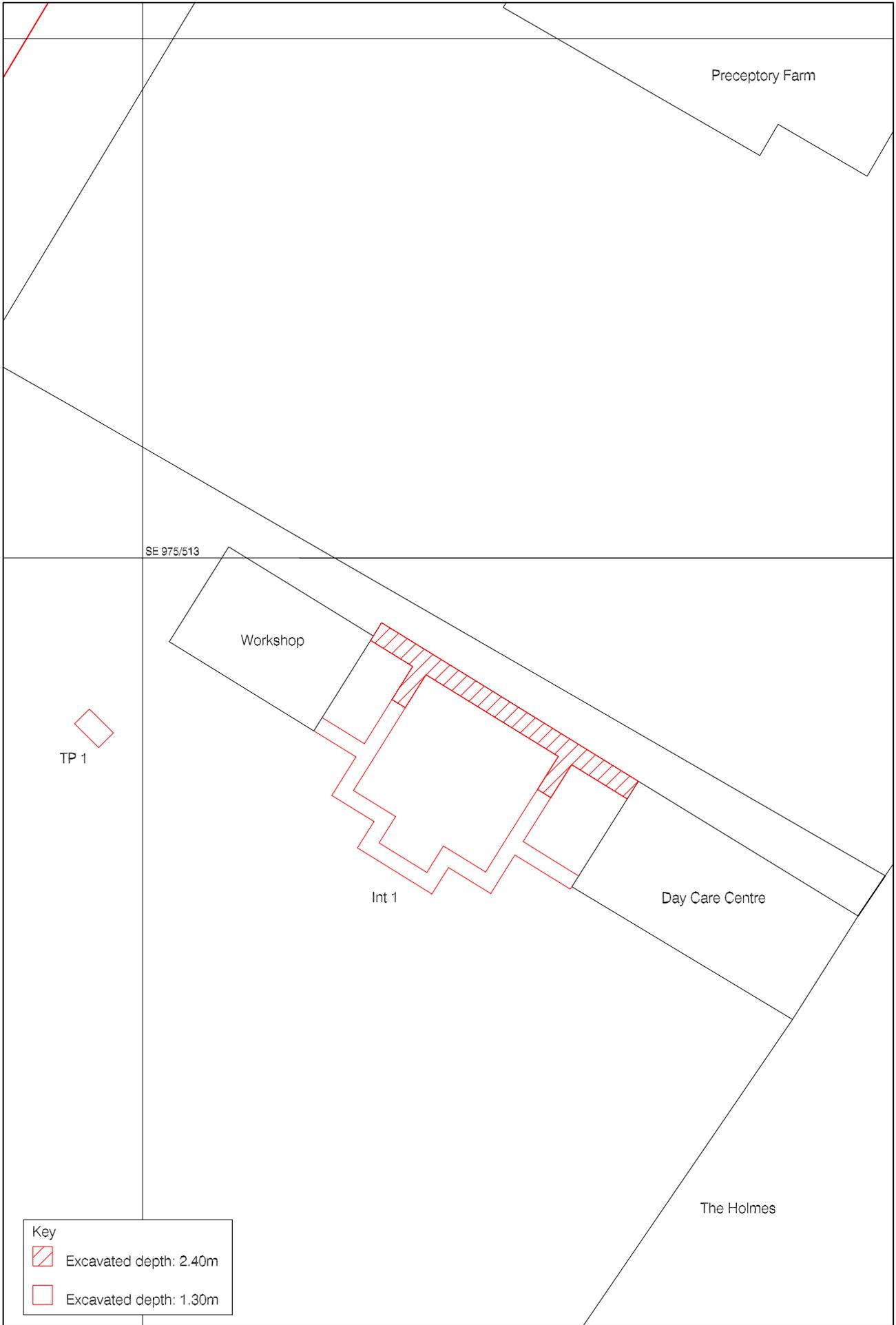
Plate 3 Machining trenches

3.0 FIELDWORK RESULTS

The deposits visible across the site were seen to be consistent and revealed no evidence of archaeological remains. Subsoil was encountered within Intervention 1 at a depth of 1.25m below the present ground surface and was seen in section to varying degrees throughout. Within Test Pit 1 subsoil was visible at a greater depth of 1.50m. In both cases subsoil was identified as a light yellowish-brown clay sand with frequent patches of bluish-grey clay sand and was allocated C1004.

In both Intervention 1 and Test Pit 1 a layer of overburden overlay subsoil. This was allocated C1002 and consisted of a reddish-brown sand layer with frequent patches of grey sand and was otherwise sterile. C1002 was evident across the site measuring on average 0.60m in depth. This, in turn, was sealed by a second overburden layer (C1001) identified as clean yellowish-brown silty sand with no inclusions, which was seen to a depth of 0.40m. All deposits encountered within Intervention 1 had been disturbed heavily by a series of modern services traversing the site. All services were allocated F1 and had been backfilled with dark yellowish-brown clayey sands which represented redeposited subsoil and overburden.

Within Test Pit 1, a thin layer of dark yellowish-brown sandy clay with frequent fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), stone and flecks of mortar was seen to overlie C1001 directly beneath subsoil with a depth of 0.20m. CBM recovered from this deposit was identified as slop-moulded and can be dated to the post-medieval



period, although it is more likely that this material is redeposited and that this layer relates to modern building activity in the area.

Topsoil (C1000) was identified sealing all modern services (F1) identified in Intervention 1 and layer C1003 in Test Pit 1. It consisted of a light reddish-brown sandy clay, with occasional fragments of CBM, frequently disturbed by tree roots and modern services (F1). The topsoil had been reduced by 0.10m across Intervention 1 prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches; a further 0.20m of topsoil was identified in section. No material was recovered from any of the deposits encountered within Intervention 1.

Table 1 Summary of contexts

Context	Identity	Description
1000	topsoil	allocated to a light reddish-brown sandy clay, with occasional fragments of CBM, frequently disturbed by tree roots and modern services (F1)
1001	overburden	clean yellowish-brown silty sand with no inclusions, disturbed by modern services
1002	overburden	reddish-brown sand layer with frequent patches of grey sand, no inclusions, disturbed by modern services
1003	layer	identified within Test Pit 1 as a dark yellowish-brown sandy clay with frequent fragments of CBM, stone and flecks of mortar
1004	subsoil	light yellowish-brown clay sand with frequent patches of bluish-grey clay sand
1005	backfill	allocated to dark yellowish-brown clayey sands used to backfill modern services, F1, seen during excavation

Table 2 Summary of features

Feature	Contexts	Description	Profile
1	1005	allocated to all modern services encountered during excavation	U-shaped

4.0 DISCUSSION

No archaeological remains were encountered during the watching brief. The lack of disturbance suggests that this land may have been left open within the preceptory precinct.

5.0 ARCHIVE

A copy of this report is held by FAS and the North Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

Acknowledgements

FAS would like to thank Gill Prior for her cooperation during fieldwork and Gail Falkingham of the North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit for her advice and assistance.

References

Page, W. 1974. *Victoria History of the County of York: Volume 3* (London)

