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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION

1998 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 9

23-25 KIRKGATE, THIRSK NORTH YORKSHIRE

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

In January 1998 five archaeological evaluation trenches were excavated at Kirkgate, Thirsk, North Yorkshire by York Archaeological Trust on behalf of Hambleton District Council. One of these was located in the garden to the rear of 25 Kirkgate, the remaining four were in the garden of 23.

Trench 1, the closest of all trenches to the street frontage, revealed the upper parts of a probable medieval pit. In addition to garden/horticultural soils this trench also produced evidence of post-medieval robbing of a wall, a series of fragmentary 19th century exterior yard surfaces and a number of very late pits.

Trench 2, behind the house at 23 Kirkgate, revealed a domed brick built structure (the function of which is not entirely certain) of post-medieval date, in addition to a number of probable 19th century cut features and a 20th century gravel path.

Trenches 3 - 5 were all situated in the rear portion of the garden of 23. In addition to evidence for 20th century garden features and disturbance two large partially revealed cuts, one in excess of 1.85m deep, were encountered. These appear to be of 19th - 20th century origin.

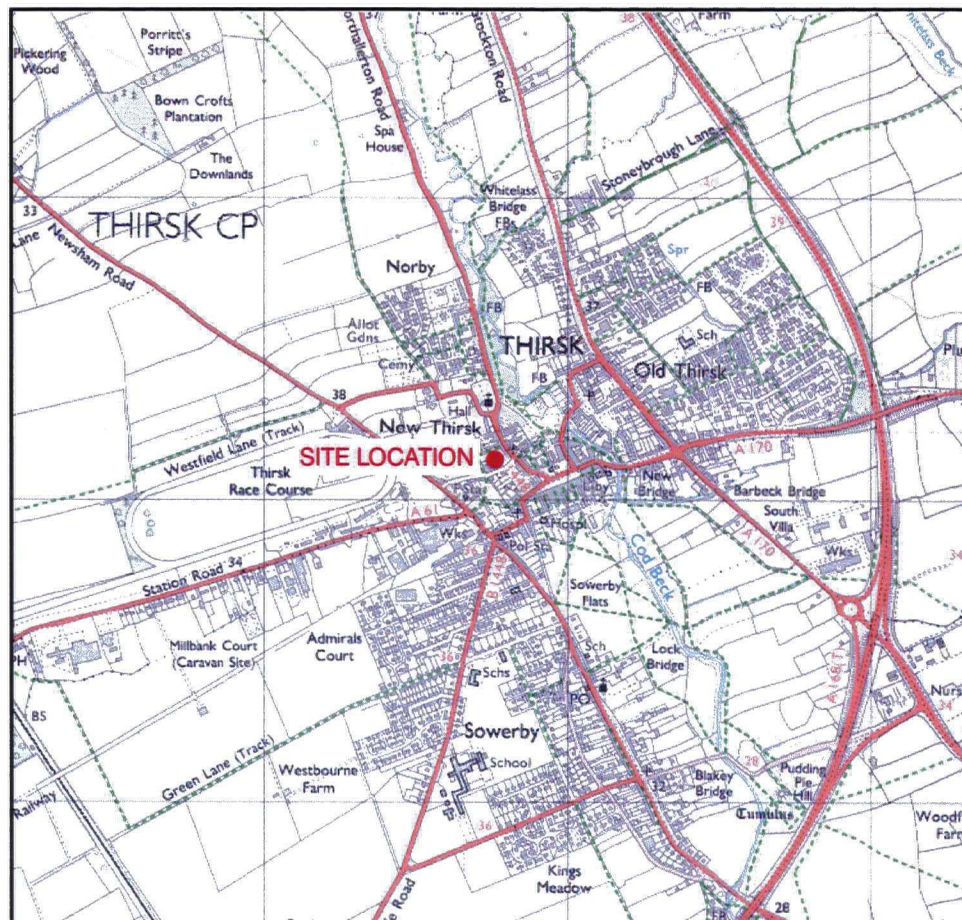
1. INTRODUCTION

Between 26th - 30th January 1998 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation on ground to the rear of 23 - 25 Kirkgate, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, (NGR SE427824), (Figs.1 & 2). 23 Kirkgate was the former home and surgery of the veterinary surgeon "James Herriot" and the archaeological work was prompted by proposals to convert 23 - 25 Kirkgate into a "James Herriot visitor centre". The present building at 23 is of the early 19th century and was probably built as one of a matching pair with the near identical 21 next door. The building at number 25 is a later Victorian or Edwardian town house.

The plots under investigation lay on ground that sloped down very gently from west to east. The drift geology of the area is of glacial sands and gravels overlying a solid geology of Triassic mudstones (British Geological Survey, 1977 and British Geological Survey, 1979).

The aims of the investigation were to establish the presence or absence of any archaeological remains within the area to be developed and to determine the location, extent, date, character and quality of any such deposits that may be threatened by the proposed development.

The evaluation followed a specification of works formulated by the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council and the works were carried out on behalf of Hambleton District Council.



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Figure 1 Site location.

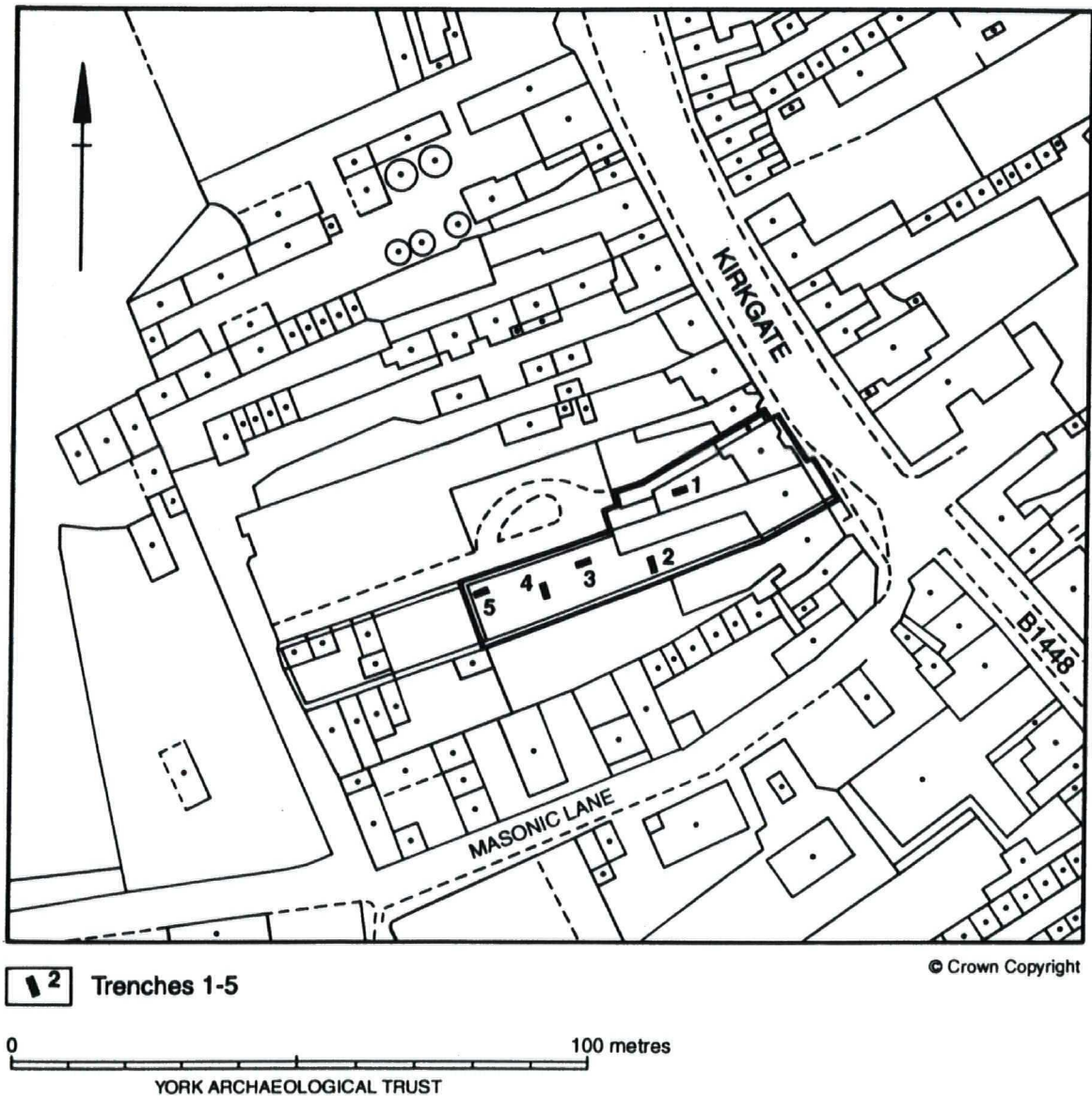


Figure 2 Trench location plan.

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The development site lies on the west side of Kirkgate in the area of the town known as "New Thirsk", to the east of the Cod Beck. The core of the scant earthwork remains of Thirsk Castle lie approximately 200m to the south. This castle was built prior to 1130-31 and its original extent is not known. It has been speculated that settlement on this east side of the beck grew up around the bailey of the castle in the form of a manorial vill, (VCH, 1923).

The street of Kirkgate leads off the north-west corner of the market place and forms part of the high road to Northallerton and the north. Kirkgate itself is a street of some antiquity that appears in documents from at least the 12th century. The pattern of long strip like plots which extend from the Kirkgate frontage westwards to a rear access lane is an arrangement typical within medieval towns.

In addition to the castle, a number of significant upstanding medieval monuments lie close to the site, namely a moated site some 200m to the north-east and the 15th century church of St Mary (which is thought to include 12th century fabric) 200m to the north, (Thompson, 1913).

Examination of available cartographic evidence permits some understanding of the development of the 23-25 Kirkgate properties over the last 200 years. During this time their respective land boundaries have remained largely intact apart from certain alterations to the rear. A map of 1796 shows that both properties were occupied by buildings at the fronts of the plots only. A tithe map of 1843 shows that by this time both properties still have buildings on the Kirkgate frontage though 23 (which on architectural grounds had almost certainly been rebuilt since the 1796 map) also had a range projecting from the main building along the southern property boundary. No 25 at this time had a series of three small outbuildings at the rear, also against the southern boundary. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1856 also shows ranges of buildings projecting to the rear of both buildings but that behind 23 was now shown against the northern boundary and those behind 25 had become more extensive. By 1912 the Ordnance Survey map indicates that 23 was relatively unchanged (a small extension has been added onto the west side of the projecting range since then) whilst 25 had been replaced by the existing building with a single detached outhouse to the rear.

A limited amount of small scale archaeological work has been carried out in Thirsk in recent years. Much of this has been centred on sites close to the castle. Work on the site of Calverts carpet yard close to the southern area of the castle revealed what may have been part of a bank and its associated ditch, (Clarke, 1991). A watching brief on the north side of the castle in Pick Lane exposed what may be part of a bank pertaining to the castle, (Clarke, 1995). Further observations by Clarke at 2-4 Castlegate demonstrated the presence of a considerable depth of made ground suggestive of a castle moat, (Clarke, 1996). The only extensive areas of excavation at the castle were those at the site of an electrical sub station and associated works in 1994. Although a report on this site is still awaited it is understood that parts of a possible castle mound and a number of pre-conquest burials were found. Other recent evaluations in Thirsk include trial trenches near St James Green which revealed nothing apart from a considerable raising of the ground level in the post-medieval period and small scale work at the

moated site. This latter investigation produced a number of probable 13th century sherds but did not reveal any archaeological structures or features, (Robinson, 1993).

3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation consisted of the excavation of five trenches, (Fig. 2), each measuring approximately 3.00m x 1.50m in surface area. Trench 1 was by necessity slightly smaller than this due to the presence of modern service pipes. The depth to which the trenches were excavated varied and ranged from 1.10m to 1.30m. Trench 1 was located in the garden to the rear of 25 Kirkgate, some 20.0m to the west of the Kirkgate frontage. Trenches 2 - 5 were all located in the garden to the rear of 23 Kirkgate at distances ranging from 32.0m - 61.0m to the west of the street frontage.

A small Kubota "mini digger", equipped with a toothless bucket, was used to mechanically strip topsoil and recent overburden under constant archaeological supervision. All archaeological and certain recent deposits were manually excavated.

A system of single context planning was used to plan archaeological features at a scale of 1:20. At the completion of excavation trench sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. A series of colour print photographs were taken at a number of horizons during the course of the evaluation.

All finds and site records are presently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM:1998.5

4. EXCAVATION

4.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

The earliest deposit encountered in Trench 1, context 1030, was observed at the west basal limits of the trench only, at a depth of some 1.22m BGL (34.42m AOD). This material was an orangish brown, gravelly sand, containing a small amount of silt. Judging by the "natural" drift and subsoils encountered in Trenches 2 - 5 it is considered likely that this context represents the upper part of an intact subsoil directly overlying the drift geology. Again at the western end of the trench only, a considerable depth of mid brown, friable, sandy loam, context 1029, was seen to directly overlie this subsoil. Containing only a small amount of pebbles and lacking any dating evidence it is probable that 1029 forms part of a relict garden soil. Two features were seen to cut the old garden soil, these were a large cut at the eastern side of the trench, context 1028, and a small pit at the western side of the trench, context 1026.

The large cut 1028 occupied the lower parts of the eastern half of the trench and was seen to continue beyond the limits of excavation to north, south and east as well as beyond the basal limit. Constraints on the depth of excavation enabled only the uppermost 0.25m of this feature to be excavated and this revealed a near vertical western edge. The fill of this large cut, context

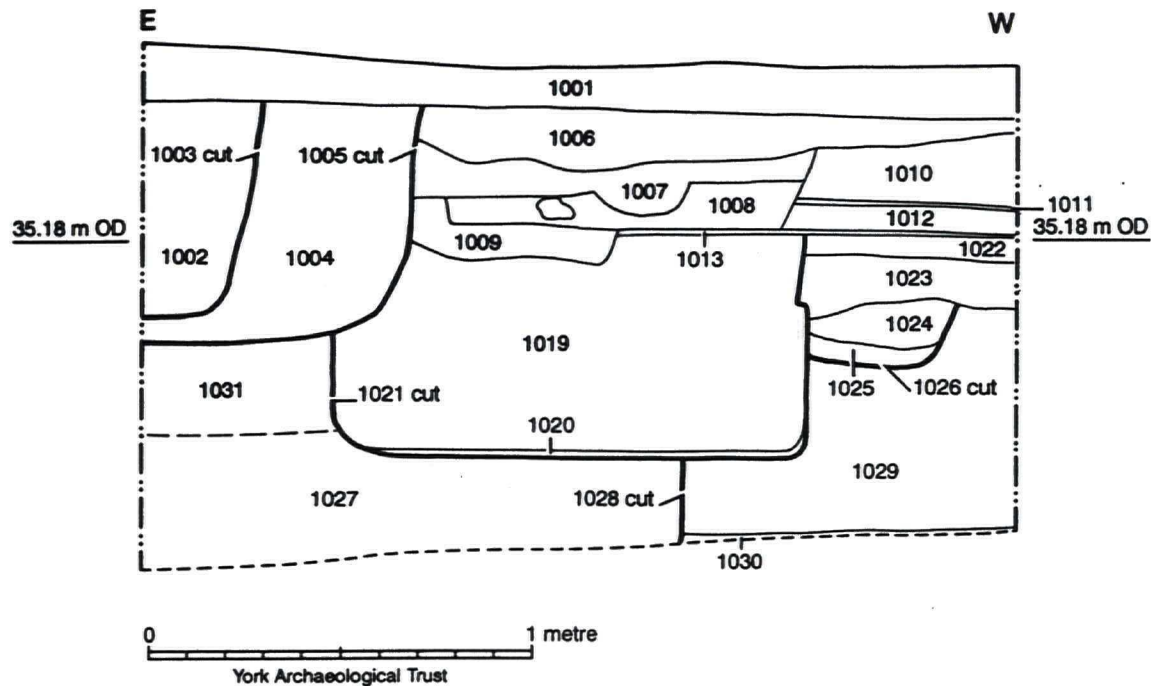


Figure 3 Trench 1, north facing section.

1027, was a brown, slightly silty, sand that produced four sherds of 11th - 12th century pottery. It is likely that cut 1028 represents the upper parts of a large pit of medieval date. A homogeneous mid brown, sandy silt, context 1031, that produced no finds sealed pit 1028 and may form part of a later garden soil rather than an upper fill to the pit. It was unfortunately not possible to correlate 1031 with deposits at the western side of the trench due to the presence of a later cut, context 1021, which served to sever links.

Cutting the garden soil 1029 at the west side of the trench was a small pit, context 1026, up to 0.18m deep that continued south beyond the trench limits and was truncated on the east side by the later cut 1021. The surviving parts of this steep sided, flat based feature suggest a shape that originally was probably sub circular, whilst its shallowness raises the possibility of later truncation from above. Two fills were seen to occupy cut 1026. The lower of these was a thin deposit of loose mortar flecks within a matrix of mid brown, compact, silty sand, context 1025. The upper fill, context 1024, was a mid brown, friable silty sand that contained occasional flecks of mortar and charcoal. No dating evidence was recovered from pit 1026.

A brown, friable, silty sand containing fine discontinuous lenses of mortar together with fragments of mortar, context 1023, sealed the small pit 1026. This was in turn overlain by context 1022, a thin deposit composed of lenses of light brown sand interleaved with fragments of mortar. Both of these contexts were comprised in large part of construction type materials. Whether this was derived from construction or destruction is not known. A single sherd of 19th century pottery was recovered from 1023 close to the interface with the later truncating cut 1021. Given the location of this pot sherd, the stratigraphic relationship and the fact that backfill in the robbed trench of 1021 was of a similar date, it is probable that this single sherd is intrusive and actually originates from the backfill of 1021.

A large linear feature, context 1021, cut through 1022 at the west side of the trench and the probable relict garden soil 1031 at the east. This cut was 1.25m wide, up to 0.58m deep and was aligned approximately north to south. Near vertical sides and a flat base were displayed by this feature which was seen to terminate just short of the north edge of the trench. The primary fill of this cut was context 1020, a patchily surviving very thin spread of clean sand. This material was overlain by context 1019 itself composed of mixed brick, mortar and plaster rubble. The mixed deposits of 1019 are indicative of backfilling of a robbed out wall which was originally within cut 1021. The thin band of sand at the base of the cut, context 1020, is likely to have formed original bedding material for the wall foundations that occupied the cut. The fact that the cut terminated close to the north edge of the trench and was not seen to return to either east or west suggests the presence of an entranceway at this point. A number of 19th century pottery sherds recovered from the backfill of 1019 indicate the likely date of robbing and backfilling. The date of the original construction of the wall is not known.

A level but patchy, thin spread of greyish coloured mortar, context 1013, was seen to overlie the backfill 1019 of the robbed wall cut and extend westwards towards the edge of the trench. This material clearly formed a surface and since it was cut by a large 19th century pit, context 1018, at the west of the trench, this was presumably an external surface.

The pit, context 1018, continued to west and north beyond the limits of excavation as well as beyond the base of the trench. Having steep near vertical sides, the true size and shape of this pit can only be guessed at though it was clearly of considerable proportions. The lowest observed fill of this pit was context 1017, essentially a mixture of brick, tile, mortar and plaster rubble within a sandy silt matrix. This material was overlain by context 1016, a greyish brown, sandy silt from which a number of pieces of 19th century pottery were recovered. A further rubble fill, context 1015, composed almost entirely of brick, tile, mortar and plaster fragments sealed context 1016. The uppermost fill of pit 1018 was context 1014, a deposit of very compact gravel. So compact was 1014 that it may have been a consolidating and levelling deposit over a depression formed on top of the looser fills of the pit and placed primarily to facilitate the laying of the later cobbled surface of context 1012. As such 1014 may not be a "refuse fill" in the sense that contexts 1017, 1016, and 1015 clearly were.

The cobble surface, context 1012, survived only in the extreme south-west corner of the trench as a number of rounded cobbles up to 0.15m in size set within a hard grey mortar. This cobbled surface was itself succeeded by a further surface, context 1011. Like the cobbled surface, 1011 survived only in the south-west corner area of the trench as a thin band of pale grey mortar. Given the nature of the overlying and underlying deposits it is probable that the cobble and mortar surfaces of 1012 and 1011 originally formed yard type exterior surfaces. It is highly probable that both surfaces were originally much more extensive and that subsequent disturbance has reduced their extent. That the succeeding surfaces overlie the 19th century pit 1018 indicates a 19th or earlier 20th century origin.

A pale brown, sandy silt, context 1010, that displayed some colour and textural variation and contained small amounts of brick/tile and mortar fragments overlay the mortar surface 1011. This deposit represents a build up of material over the defunct yard surface. A series of deposits overlay context 1010. The earliest of these, context 1009, was a fairly clean, pale brown, sand that contained a small amount of silt. This in turn was overlain by a loose rubble deposit, context 1008. Context 1007, a pale brown, silty sand containing a small amount of rubble

sealed context 1008. Collectively these contexts occupied a hollow in the central area of the trench. Given the somewhat amorphous nature of these deposits it is perhaps more likely that they were deposited in order to fill the hollow than that they were fills within a deliberate cut. A dark greyish brown, sandy silt, context 1006, sealed the latest infill deposits and covered the entirety of the trench except for an area in the south-east corner. Minor variations in colour and texture and to some degree of inclusions were apparent across this context which it is considered may represent a levelling up of the yard/garden.

A succession of two pits, both partially present in the south-east corner of the trench cut through context 1006. The earliest of these, cut 1005, was steep sided, flat based and up to 0.60m deep. The fill of this feature, context 1004, was a rubbly, sandy silt, that produced two sherds of 11th - 12th century pottery in addition to a modern button. The medieval sherds are clearly residual in this pit. The later of the two pits, 1003, cut through parts of the earlier feature and was again shown to be steep sided, flat based and measured up to 0.55m deep. The fill of this pit, context 1002, was a brown, gravelly, silty sand that produced no finds. These two pits, in terms of stratigraphic position and finds content, are clearly of recent date and form only the latest episode of "cutting" evident within the trench. A thin layer of turf and topsoil, context 1001, forming part of the present garden surface, sealed the latest cut 1003.

4.2 Trench 2 (Figs. 4 & 5)

The presence of a rockery necessitated the relocation of Trench 2 some 5.0m to the east of its intended position onto slightly lower lying ground.

"Natural" strata in the form of yellowish brown sands and gravels, context 2015, were located at a depth of approximately 1.10m BGL (35.04m AOD). These were overlain by context 2011, a pale brown, friable, silty sand. The pale colouration and clean nature of this material (also observed in Trenches 3-5 at the same stratigraphic horizon) suggest this to be an intact subsoil.

A depth of mid greyish brown silty sand containing occasional charcoal flecks, context 2010, sealed the subsoil and is likely to be representative of an old garden or horticultural soil. This context was in turn cut by two features, cut 2014 at the north and cut 2009 at the south. Both features continued into the trench sides beyond the limits of excavation and so their true shapes are unknown. Cut 2014 was steep sided, had a "V" shaped base and was up to 0.30m deep. The fill of this cut, context 2013, was a mid brown, loose, sandy silt containing some gravel, and produced no finds or dating evidence. This feature is likely to have been either a post hole (though no packing stones were evident), a small pit, or the southern end of a narrow "V" profiled slot or gully. Cut 2009 displayed more gently sloping sides than cut 2014, was somewhat wider though of broadly similar depth. The fill of cut 2009, context 2008, was a mid brown, silty sand containing a small amount of brick fragments and charcoal flecks. It was noted that this material not only occupied the cut 2009 but also over-spilled to either side.

Two features cut through fill 2008. The smaller of these was a shallow, flat based cut with near vertical sides, context 2007. This cut was filled with a pale brown, loose, silty sand fill, context 2006, that produced no finds. The function and date of this small feature are not known.

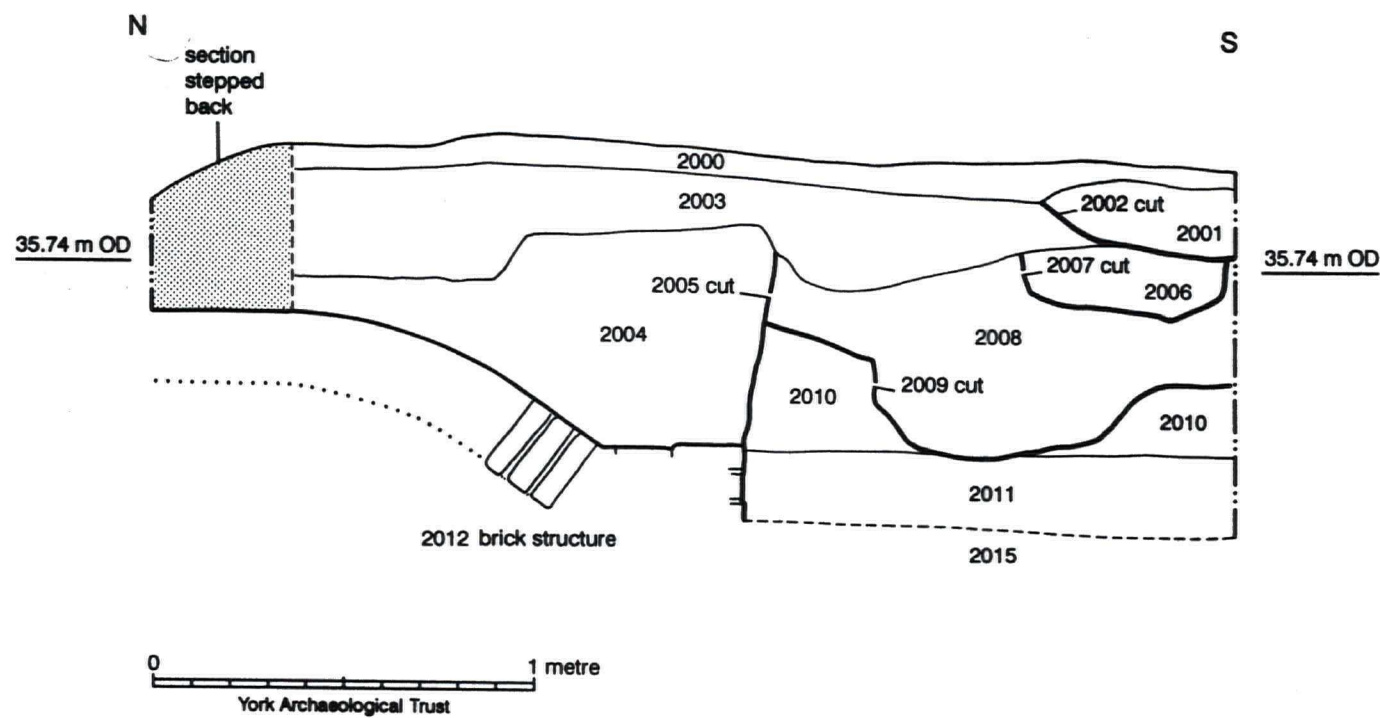


Figure 4 Trench 2, west facing section.

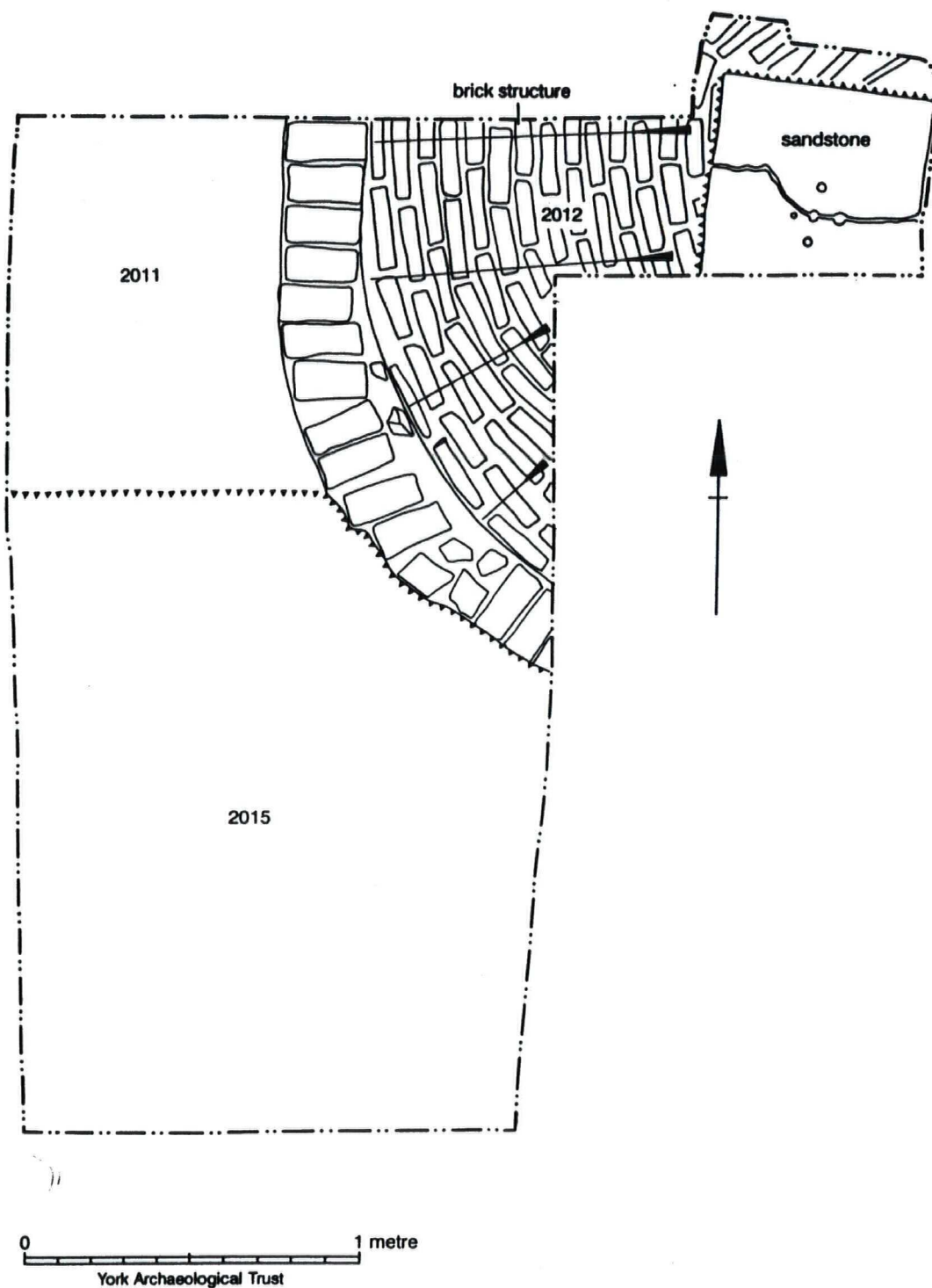


Figure 5 Trench 2, plan.

The other feature to cut through 2008 was a large cut, context 2005. Only a small arc of this cut, which is likely to be sub circular and have a diameter in the region of 3.25m, was observed. Where seen, this cut was near vertical. The depth of the cut is not known but is likely to be in the region of several metres. Butting hard against the edges of cut 2005 was a circular structure of brick and mortar, context 2012. This structure consisted of a vertical wall at least one brick length thick, these bricks being laid in a radial pattern. The uppermost 0.50m of the structure took the form of a dome, the bricks being laid long edge up. A circular opening approximately 0.50m in diameter was present at the top centre of the dome, this being sealed by an unmortared square sandstone slab in the centre of which were five small lifting holes. Removal of the capping slab showed a dry, rubble infill, of 19th - 20th century origin, to be present up to a height of approximately 1.20m BGL. A brief internal inspection of the chamber showed it to be lined with a hard, pale grey, mortar or cement. Three small holes approximately 0.10m across were visible on the inside lower parts of the domed top. These were located on the north, east and south-east (approximately) sides and from one of these openings a short piece of lead piping was seen to protrude. The uppermost parts of cut 2005 were backfilled with a slightly mixed, mid brown, friable, sandy silt, context 2004, in which small quantities of rubble and a number of tipping lenses were visible. Finds material recovered from this backfill of the large cut suggests a 19th century date for this material. It should be noted that finds from the backfill could be of a later date than that of the construction of the feature itself if the three openings noted above were alterations to an already present structure. Examination of the brick fabric shows this material to be of a type manufactured from the medieval period to the 19th century, although the brick dimensions do suggest a post 17th century date.

It has not proved possible to positively identify the purpose of structure 2012, although it is likely to have been for one of two functions; to serve as either an ice house or a well. The types of building materials and probable date of construction would fit with either function. The presence of a domed top is a common, indeed the dominant, roof style of ice houses, but is rare in wells, (the author has however seen a brick domed structure full of water referred to by local inhabitants as a well on a farm in the Vale of Pickering, though whether this was secondary usage of the structure is uncertain). The large internal diameter (in the region of 2.5m), is extremely large for a well and yet at the same time small for an icehouse; although a small number of icehouses with pit diameters around this size are known, (Ellis, 1982). Again the presence of the small aperture at the top of the feature is common to both structures. It appears that virtually all ice houses have side entrances, often with a small tunnel and more than one door. Although no entrance was seen it may be that such could lie beneath the level of the rubble backfill. In terms of social context wells occur on properties of highly varied status whereas icehouses tended (where not commercial ventures which were usually large) to be associated almost exclusively with the wealthy landed classes and their large houses, (Ellis, 1982). Against this background an icehouse associated with the present 23 Kirkgate seems unusual.

A mid greyish brown, loam, context 2003, that overlay the top of the brick structure and its backfill is likely to have formed the 19th century garden soil. Cutting into this garden soil was a moderately steep sided, flat based cut some 0.15m deep, context 2002, in which lay a gravel fill, context 2001. This feature forms a gravel path (parts of which are visible at the ground surface elsewhere in the garden). It is one of the paths that ran along either side of the garden as

recorded in the "Herriot" series of books and as such is likely to be of at least 1930's origin. Overlying this path was the present day turf.

4.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 6)

Small areas of "natural" brownish yellow sands and gravels, context 3009, were observed in parts of the base of the trench at a depth of 1.25m BGL (35.30m AOD). Directly over these sands and gravels lay a yellowish brown, slightly silty, sand up to 0.15m thick, context 3008, interpreted as a subsoil.

A mid - dark greyish brown loam containing occasional gravel and charcoal flecks, context 3007, lay directly over the subsoil. This material, which is closely paralleled by 4007 in Trench 4, is believed to be an old garden or horticultural soil.

A large feature, 3006, cut through the relict garden soil. This feature was aligned approximately east - west and continued beyond the limits of excavation to the east, west and south. The moderately steep northern edge and parts of the flattish/slightly concave base of the feature were visible within the trench and a maximum depth of 0.45m was noted. The fill of this cut, context 3005, was a mid brown loam that contained a few fragments of brick and small lumps of mortar but no closely datable finds. A thin discontinuous layer of gravel, context 3004, sealed fill 3005 and extended beyond to the upper parts of 3007 thus confirming the position of the upper level of the cut. The function of this large feature is unknown but it may correlate with cut 4006 in Trench 4.

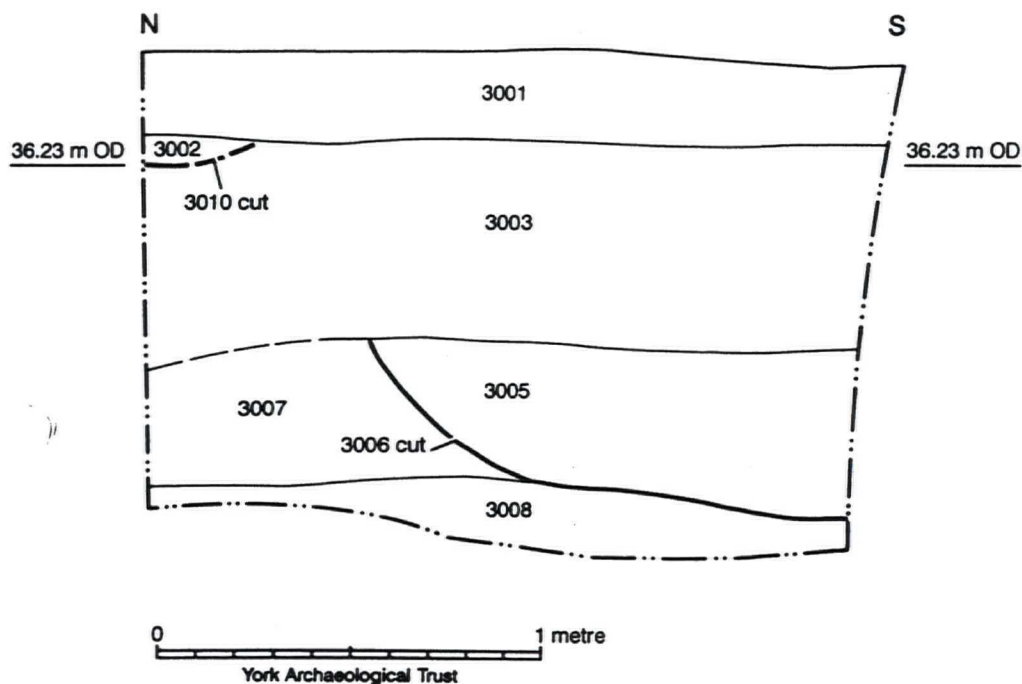


Figure 6 Trench 3, west facing section.

A 0.50m thickness of mid brown, silty loam, context 3003, sealed 3004. This material was certainly a garden soil and was cut into by context 3010, and its gravel fill, context 3002, and collectively form a garden path of fairly recent origin (again described in the "Herriot" books). The fact that a 0.50m garden soil had accumulated over the cut 3006 is suggestive of a deliberate build up of ground in this western part of the garden. Such a build up by redeposition may have occurred as a result of terracing in the garden (an abrupt step up in the region of 0.30m approximately in line with the western most extension to the north range of the property is apparent; it being noted that "natural" was reached at a shallower depth in Trench 2 than in Trenches 3 - 5). Other likely occasions for redeposition of soils at the west of the garden could include construction of the brick structure in Trench 2 or during the cutting of cellars for the house itself. The gravel path, contexts 3010/3002, was overlain by a thin spread of topsoil and turf, 3001.

4.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 7)

Sands and gravels of the "natural" drift, context 4009, were encountered at a depth of approximately 1.25m BGL (35.27m AOD). These were overlain by a thin, pale coloured sandy subsoil, context 4008.

A greyish brown, friable loam, context 4007, sealed the subsoil 4008. This material bore similar characteristics to context 3007 in Trench 3 both in terms of texture and stratigraphic location. Like 3007, context 4007 is interpreted as a relict garden or horticultural soil. Parts of a large cut feature, context 4006, were seen to cut through the relict garden soil; namely the northern edge and west corner area of the feature. The southern edge and lower basal parts of 4006 extended beyond the limits of excavation and so were not observed. The profile of the northern edge was one of a moderately steep upper edge (approximately 45 degrees), thereafter dropping sharply to a near vertical edge. The western corner edge was similar to the northern side but steeper in its upper parts. Despite exploration in a small sondage to a depth of 1.85m BGL the base of cut 4006 was not reached. The lowest fill excavated within this feature was context 4005, a light brownish grey, gritty loam that ran down from the upper northern edge of the cut into the lower parts. Finds material recovered from this fill included fragments of slate and brick indicative of a probable 19th century date. A dark greyish brown, loam, context 4010, that contained small amounts of rubble and charcoal sealed context 4005. An extensive fill of mid greyish brown loam, context 4004, that was noticeably cleaner in appearance than fills above and below, overlay 4010. The uppermost fill of this large feature was context 4003, a greyish brown, sandy loam that contained a large amount of building rubble and amounts of 19th - 20th century pottery. Dating evidence from the fills of cut 4006 indicate a 19th - 20th century date for the backfilling of this feature. It may well be that a similar date is applicable to the cut itself. Similarities to the much shallower cut 3006 in Trench 3 are apparent only in the uppermost parts of 4006. With no continuous stratigraphic link between the lengths of cut in both trenches it cannot be conclusively stated that both are part of the same large feature. Quite what the function of this large deep hole was is uncertain though it could for example have formed the pit for a World War II air raid shelter. It is highly unlikely that cut 4006 could relate directly to the earthworks of the nearby castle as the presence of roofing slate at depth would require a substantial earthwork to lie largely unfilled for several centuries within a medieval tenement.

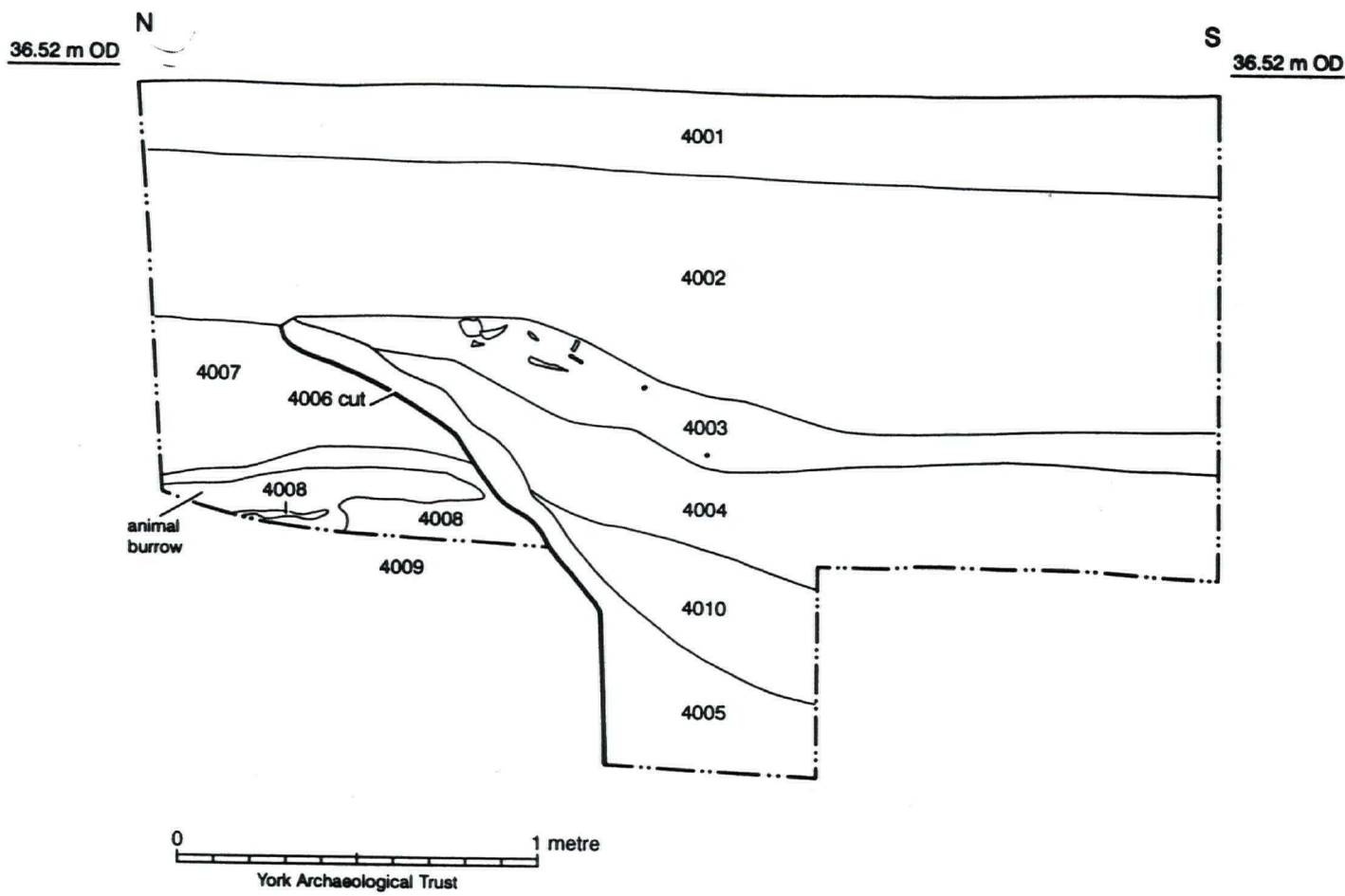


Figure 7 Trench 4, west facing section.

A greyish brown, silty loam, context 4002, sealed the feature 4006 and its fills. This material lay at the same stratigraphic horizon as 3003 in Trench 3 and like that context is considered to represent a garden soil. This material was overlain by the present turf and topsoil, context 4001.

4.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 8)

Sands and gravels of the "natural" drift were encountered at a depth of some 1.15m BGL (35.31m AOD), context 5014. These were overlain by a thin, pale, sandy subsoil, context 5012.

Above the subsoil lay up to 0.60m of mid brown coloured loam. Due to the presence of an intrusive feature causing physical separation, this material was issued two number, contexts 5010 and 5011; of these context 5010 produced pottery of 19th - 20th century date. It was noted that in places this loam was stonier in its upper parts than in the lower. It is possible that this material, which is likely to represent a garden or horticultural soil, correlates with context 3007 in Trench 3.

A large irregularly shaped and profiled cut, context 5013, cut through the garden soils of 5010/5011 and continued beyond the limits of excavation to east, west and north and beyond the base of the trench also. The earliest excavated fill, context 5009, was a mid brown, soft, silty loam which produced no finds or dating evidence. This early fill was overlain by a series of further fills, contexts 5006, 5007 and 5008 that were composed predominantly of brick, mortar and plaster rubble of 19th century and later origin. Although it is possible that these and subsequent fills belong to a later intrusion the manner in which 5006 overlay 5009 at their western edge suggests that they occupy one and the same cut, albeit irregularly shaped in places. These rubble layers were overlain by a series of light brown, gravelly loams, contexts 5002, 5003, and 5004. Two sub-circular, vertical-sided, flat-based pits cut through these gravelly loams, contexts 5016 and 5017. The fill of pit 5017, context 5005, produced a number of modern finds including plastic sheeting. Although the fill of pit 5016, context 5015, did not produce any finds there is little reason to suppose anything other than a modern date.

Turf and topsoil, context 5001, sealed the fills of the two late pits.

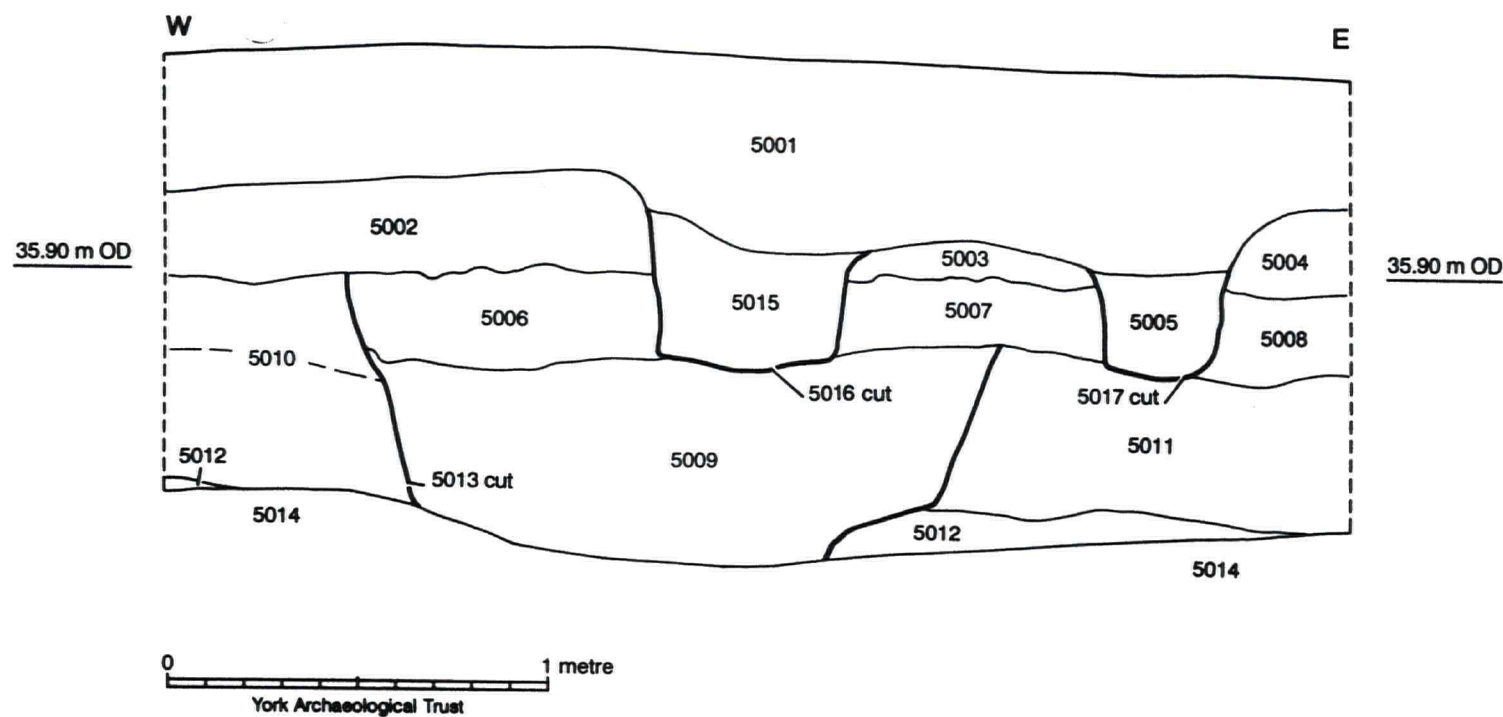


Figure 8 Trench 5, south facing section.

5. FINDS ASSESSMENT

5.1 Small Finds and Pottery

There was only one small find (sf 1), a modern button from context 1004.

The earliest pottery was a single sherd of 10th or 11th century pottery from context 2004. In Trench 1, context 1004 produced two sherds of 11th/12th century pottery but also the button referred to above. A further four sherds of 11th/12th century pottery were found in context 1027. These six sherds are all body sherds from both cooking pots and pitchers.

Twenty sherds of modern (19th/20th century) pottery were recovered from contexts 1016, 1019, 1023, 3003, 5001, 5010 and a further four unstratified sherds were also collected.

5.2 Ceramic Building materials

Most of the material observed fits into an 18th - 20th century framework. The brick identified as slop moulded is hand made and of irregular appearance. This type of brick was manufactured from the medieval period to at least the late 19th century. From the measurements it is probable that the brick is post 17th century. There are other fragmentary pieces of brick which are probably from the post-medieval period due to the refined nature of the clay. There is also pantile which was used from the 17th century onwards. The sample also contained a group of plaster fragments painted with several different colours which appears to be of post-medieval date due to the soft colours and regularity of the mortar.

It is recommended that the sample be kept for further study. No detailed work has previously been undertaken on ceramic building materials from Thirsk, so this sample will be able to contribute to the study of this type of material.

Context Listing

Context	Forms	Date
u/s Tr. 2	modern brick	19 th +
1016	plaster: white, yellow & blue	?19 th +
1023	pantile, plaster: yellow	19 th +
2004	modern brick, plaster: white	19 th +
2012	Brick (L228xB107xT64mm, ?slop moulded)	17 th +
4003	slate	18 th +
4005	brick (T56mm, slop moulded), brick & mortar (reused)	19 th +
4010	pantile/field drain	18 th +
5001	brick	18 th +
5002	brick	med+
5005	calcium silicate tile (brown glazed)	20 th
5007	brick, mortar, plaster: yellow	19 th +
5008	brick (slop moulded), plaster: yellow	19 th +
5010	brick	med+

6. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

A single environmental sample, from context 3005, and a small assemblage of animal bone were submitted for assessment. Following a visual inspection it was concluded that the sample was unlikely to yield any useful biological remains and no further work on the sample took place.

The animal bone assemblage was all from modern contexts and was thus not felt worthy of further analysis or record.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The earliest in-situ remains uncovered by the evaluation was the probable pit 1028 and an adjacent garden type soil 1029 within Trench 1 to the rear of 25 Kirkgate. Pottery suggests a possible 11th 12th century date for this feature. No other features or deposits on the site could be proved to be of medieval origin and indeed the amount of residual medieval material found was very small. This evidence points towards the likelihood that medieval structural remains are most likely to occur closer to the Kirkgate street frontage. The absence of evidence for medieval pits (with the exception of Trench 1) also suggests that such features may lie closer to the old frontage rather than further back in the plots, at least at 23. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the ground beneath the main building of 23 has been entirely cellared.

For the post-medieval period definite structural remains were limited to Trenches 1 and 2 which were those closest to the street frontage. Indeed it was only in Trench 1 (which was by far the closer of the two trenches to Kirkgate) that structural remains related to a building or outhouse together with later yard surfaces were revealed. The subterranean domed brick structure of Trench 2 is of post 17th century construction and despite its function being uncertain is nonetheless of some interest.

7160 House?

The trenches in the garden of 23 all revealed loamy soils directly over the pale, sandy "natural" sub-soils (indicative of old garden or horticultural soils) that were in turn sealed by later build ups of soils. Were post-medieval or earlier remains to be present in this garden then it seems that they would survive only as features cut into this or the subsoil beneath. Within the excavated trenches no such features were revealed. Trenches 3, 4, and 5 in particular demonstrate the amount of intrusive cutting and build up of materials within the garden of 23 Kirkgate. All the major cuts revealed, including 3006 in Trench 3 and 4006 in Trench 4, appear to be of later post-medieval to 20th century origin and yet considerable depths of garden soils lay above the upper parts of these backfilled features. The source of much of this material is likely to have been the excavation of the cut features themselves, including the pit of the brick structure, that is likely to have been levelled out across the garden. Quantities of rubble and rubbish within the backfill of these features testify to the fact that it was not solely material excavated from the features that eventually went back into them.

8. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The evaluation has provided evidence for probable earlier medieval and later post-medieval remains. Nearly all of this evidence was recovered from those trenches closest to the Kirkgate frontage. The proposed erection of a building towards the rear of the garden of 23 Kirkgate is unlikely to encounter any in-situ archaeological remains. With regard to the proposed extension to 25 Kirkgate, any loss of archaeological deposits (which may be present at depth) will be determined by the nature and depth of foundations and services and the presence or otherwise of a pit for the lift. Judging by the results from Trench 1 medieval archaeology may be reached at depths of less than 1.0m. Careful design of the foundations and services employed should greatly reduce any impact that development will have in this area.

The possible brick icehouse is a feature which could be exploited in the proposed development. Minimal further investigation would allow an proper identification to be made and it would be possible to empty the feature of its modern fill. At that stage a decision could be made as to whether or not it was a displayable structure in the development scheme.

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