

4 FISHERGATE

RIPON

NORTH YORKSHIRE

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Parish	6031
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

for

MR. BRIAN PICKARD

NOVEMBER 1993

Kevin John Cale

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SUMMARY

The physical archaeological evaluation of the site which was completed on the 19th August 1993, indicated that the area proposed for development had a high potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the medieval burghal plots within Ripon.

An archaeological watching brief was conducted during the following months on the ground disturbance and demolition of existing structures to the rear of 4 Fishergate, in advance of the development of this site.

The watching brief confirmed that the site had been developed by the late medieval period, the remains of a substantially sized magnesian limestone building, with associated cobble yard surfaces were identified and dated to this period. Whilst it can not be confirmed that these remains reflect the earliest activity on the site, it would indicate that the planform and alignment of this early property was carried through into the subsequent development of the site. The brick structure, presently occupying the street frontage on 4 Fishergate is early 18th Century in origin, with 19th Century domestic modifications and more recent commercial alterations.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1993 The Thomason Partnership, Building Surveyors acting on behalf of Mr. Pickard instructed Kevin John Cale, Archaeological Consultant to carry out an archaeological investigation of the site to the rear of 4 Fishergate, Ripon, North Yorkshire, according to a brief of works approved by Mr. N. Campling, Archaeological Officer, North Yorkshire County Council.

The evaluation of the site involved the hand excavation of three trial holes that indicated that it had been subjected to a relatively high level of 18th and 19th Century disturbance associated with the construction of out-buildings within the yard area. The investigation did, however, provide a useful chronological sequence to the development of a site adjacent to the market square.

Evidence was found to confirm the location and nature of the late medieval property on this site. The evidence indicated that a substantially sized structure, constructed out of magnesian limestone previously occupied the site, with its own cobble yard surface to the immediate west.

It was considered that the archaeological remains should not impede the proposed development of the site.

It was recommended that a watching brief provision should be maintained throughout those aspects of the development that may impact on the archaeology.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site, is located to the rear, and to the immediate west of a two storey, brick built, early 18th Century town house.

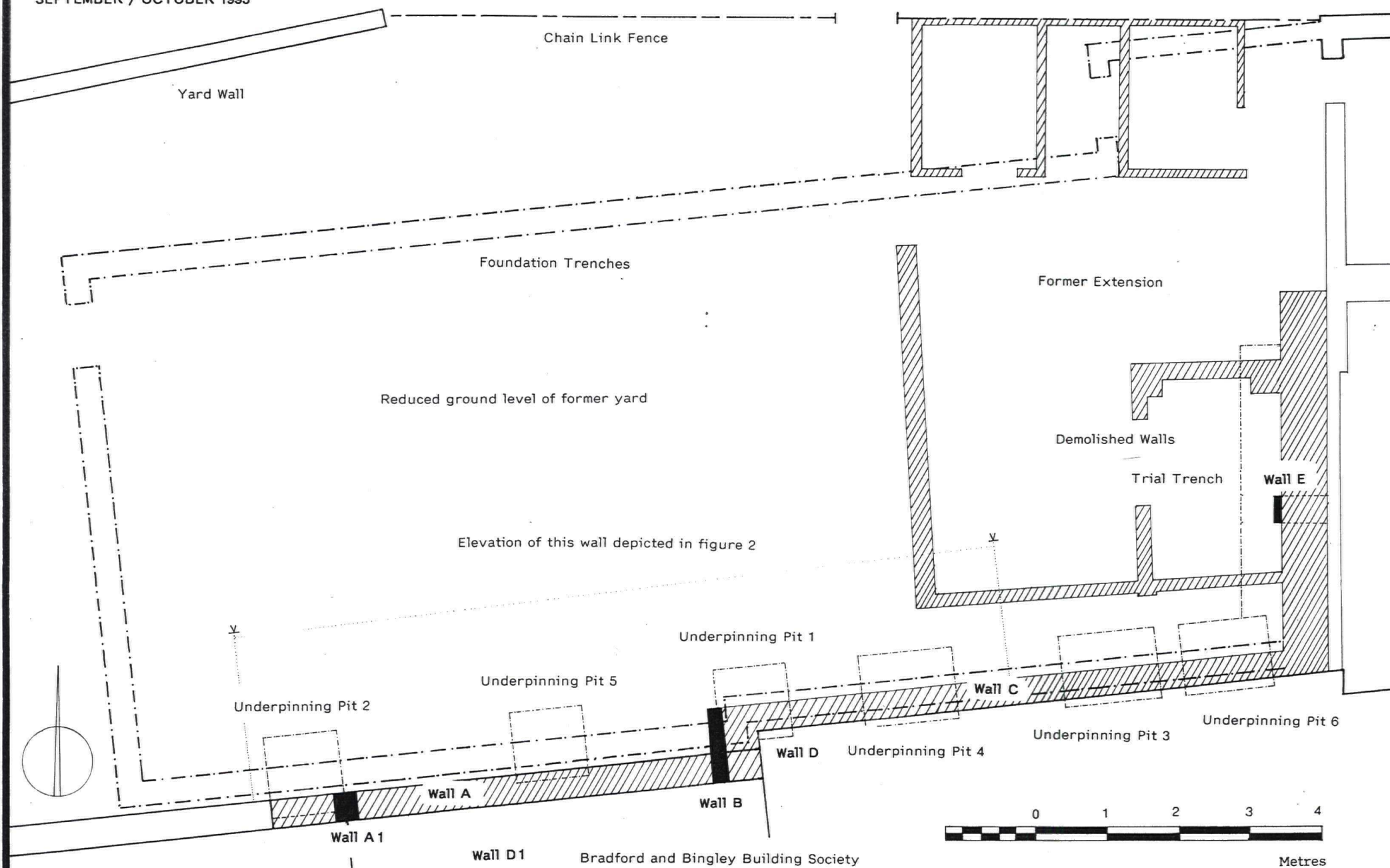
The property is situated within the north western corner of the market square, and is attached to properties of a similar style and period. The ground floor of the property has been heavily modernised and altered to accommodate a commercial unit. The upper two storeys have until recently been used for storage purposes, however the arrangement of rooms and the lay out of internal space is typically domestic and early 19th century in character, with surviving fittings and fireplaces.

The site, a sub rectangular yard space, measuring approximately 22 metres in length and 10 metres wide is contained within the boundaries of a yard wall. The juxtaposition of fabric types and the number of blocked pedestrian doorways, within this boundary wall, would suggest that the present wall derives from ancillary buildings that have since been demolished.

4 FISHERGATE
RIPON
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 1993

FIGURE 1

SITE PLAN



The yard was initially found to be heavily overgrown and nearly totally obscured by a dense thicket of mature Elderberry bushes and Brambles, with a single, large, Sycamore tree adjacent to the southern boundary wall. The encroachment and advanced growth of vegetation across the site would indicate that the yard has been un managed for at least 25 years.

METHODOLOGY

It was determined that the proposed development would impact on the stratified archaeological remains associated with the medieval frontage to Fishergate together with related deposits to the rear of this property.

It was therefore agreed that it would be necessary to maintain an archaeological watching brief in conjunction with the proposed part demolition and development of the site, so as to gather additional information concerning the extent, condition, character, quality and date of the archaeological features or deposits that are known to survive. These works will be phased to coincide with:

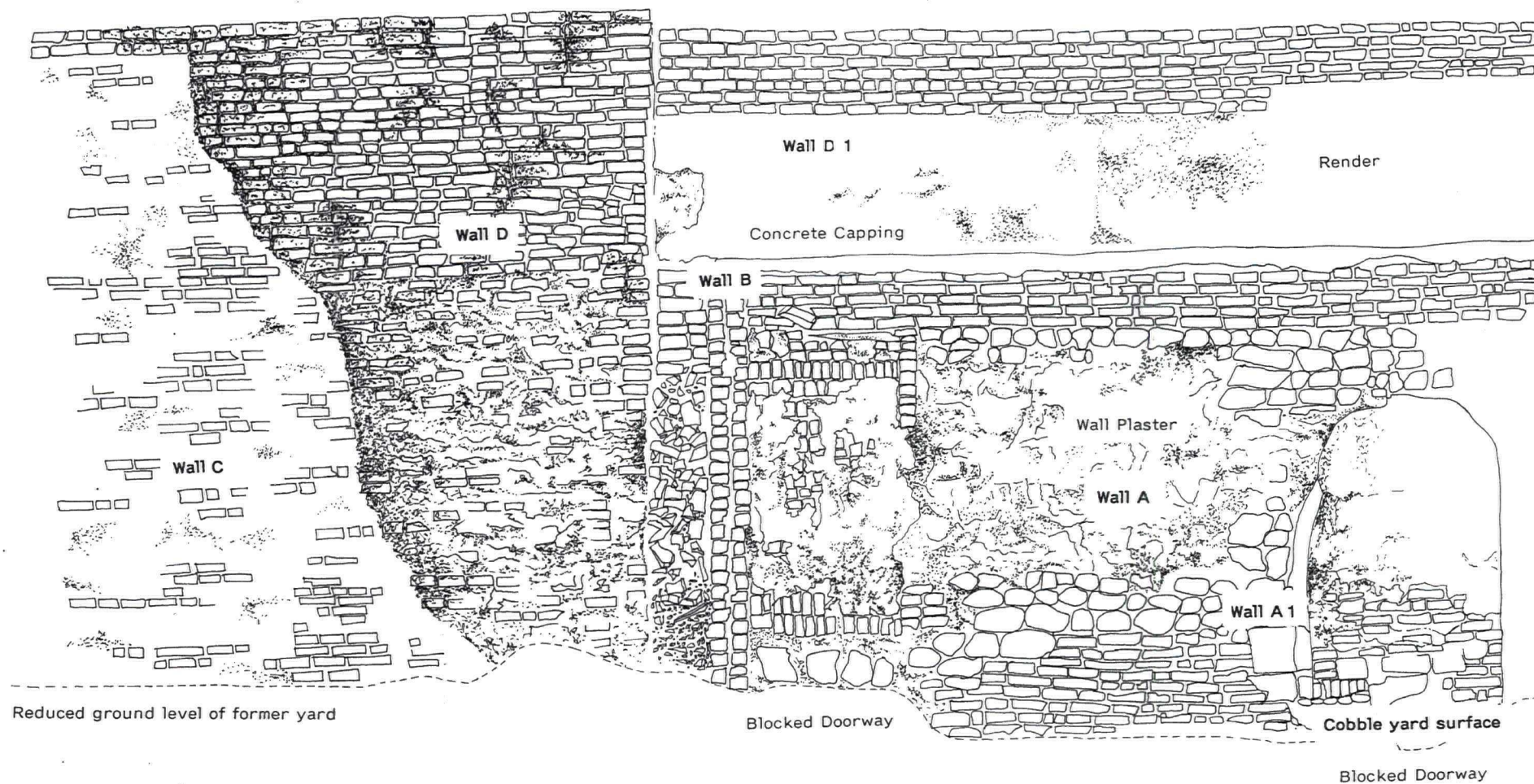
- i. the demolition of the lower levels of the western elevation of the existing building.
- ii. the reduction of ground levels and trench excavations for the foundations.
- iii. the underpinning of the adjacent, brick structure.

Prior to the commencement of these works the archaeologist and the Chartered Surveyor liaised concerning the means by which ground levels would be reduced, it was recommended that in view of the relatively shallow aspect of the stratified archaeology a hand dig approach would be favoured. However, due to the size and nature of the proposed works, the majority of excavations would have to be undertaken by mechanical means, and only where this proved impractical would an area be reduced by hand.

As it transpired, the order of works would be less well defined than that implied above, this was largely due to on site complications associated with the underpinning of the adjacent, brick structure. As a result of this, the works did not always proceed in the expected chronological sequence. For the purposes of this report the works shall be broken down into heads for discussion and considered in terms of their impact on the archaeology.

FIGURE 2

NORTH FACING ELEVATION OF YARD WALL



Not to Scale

DEMOLITION WORKS AND SITE CLEARANCE

Demolition

The demolition of the existing extension to the rear of 4, Fishergate was proceeded by the partial demolition of the yard wall to the north west of the site so as to afford vehicular access into the yard area.

The demolition of the brick built extension commenced on Monday 23rd August 1993, the greater part of the extension was reduced by mechanical means and with only a limited area being demolished by hand.

Walls exposed during the demolition works

Throughout the demolition process it was possible to make a brief inspection of the differing wall types, this rapid fabric analysis provided a useful chronological sequence of the development of the site from the post medieval period to the present.

Wall A

Type: YARD BOUNDARY: STRUCTURAL
Alignment: east / west

Fabric: clamp brick and cobble
Features: two blocked doorways
Finish: plastered

Related to: wall B
Demolished: partially

Pit No's: 1, 2, 5
Fig. No's: 1, 2
Plate No: 5
Film / Frame No: 3 / 1-4, 7, 18, 21

Description:

This wall was presently functioning as a partition wall between 4, Fishergate and the property parcel to the immediate south, however it is clear that this was not it's primary function.

The upper courses of the wall had recently been dismantled and the remaining wall capped with concrete, it is therefore suspected that the wall was originally two storeys in height.

The remains of a lime based plaster across the surface of the wall indicates that it's north facing aspect had been originally an internal wall to a brick built structure.

The alignment of the conjoining wall, Wall B, and the ground plan of those brick foundations revealed during the evaluation and later ground disturbance would indicate that this building occupied a large area of the present yard, and furthermore the ground floor of which had been partitioned into a number of small rooms.

Inspection of the foundations of this wall during the excavation of the underpinning pits revealed that they were constructed from a variety of materials including clamp brick, water worn cobble and fragments of unworked sandstone. The clamp bricks had been set on edge where as the other materials had been loosely arranged and bonded with a white grey coloured mortar.

The two blocked doorways identified within this wall would suggest that when this brick structure occupied the yard there was freedom of access between the adjoining properties, this may indicate that the properties were at some time under single ownership and, or, shared a common usage.

If one compares the form and size of the two blocked doorways, further conclusions can be drawn. The door to the west with the rounded arch has the appearance of a external entrance way, which may have originally afforded access to an open area to the immediate south, this can be corroborated by the location and alignment of Wall Ai. If as suspected this much earlier magnesian limestone wall defines the western extent of the late medieval structure and the beginning of a cobble yard area to its rear, it would be reasonable to assume that the southern extent of the site may have functioned as a yard since the late medieval period.

The blocked doorway to the west is of a completely different character, with a regular rectangular frame. Comparison of the raised threshold level of this door with that to the immediate west gives the appearance that this afforded access to and from ground floor rooms. Furthermore the threshold of this door is raised approximately 60 cm above the present ground level suggesting that the floor levels within the structure varied from east to west, the rooms to the east having a raised floor level.

Wall A1

Type: STRUCTURAL
Alignment: north / south

Fabric: magnesian limestone
Features: none
Finish: well dressed

Related to: context 1024
Demolished: yes

Pit No: 2
Fig. No: 2
Plate No: 5
Film / Frame No: 3 / 3-7, 21

Description:

This wall was identified following the removal of the dense vegetation cover from the base of Wall A. This surviving fragment of magnesian limestone walling consisting of two large, dressed magnesian limestone blocks measuring 31 cm x 30 cm. It would appear that this stonework was aligned north south and had been incorporated into and utilised as a door jamb for the external doorway identified within Wall A.

Inspection of foundations of this wall during the excavation of the underpinning pits revealed that the dressed stonework was bedded on a single layer of water worn cobbles. The layer of cobbles would appear to have been part of a cobble floor surface, and was noted as continuing in a east and westerly direction. The cobbles were bedded into a layer of dark grey brown sandy clay, that contained the occasional sherd of late medieval pottery. It is suspected that this surface may well date to the late medieval period and may have functioned as an exterior yard. A similar if not the same cobble surface had been previously identified within Trial Hole No.3 (context 3013).

This wall corresponds in fabric type, size and treatment with the wall (context 1024) identified during the excavation of Trial Hole No:1. It is suspected that this may well be a surviving fragment of a 15th Century load bearing wall, that may well have been part of the same structure as that wall identified during the initial evaluation.