

**STUDFORTH FARM, ALDBOROUGH
BOROUGHBRIDGE, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

Scheduled Monument Number 436

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



JB Archaeological Services

On behalf of

Mr & Mrs Freathy

May 2009

Contents

Summary

1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Background	2
	Location	
	Geology and Soils	
	Topography and Land Use	
	Historical Background	
3.0	Aims and Objectives	3
4.0	Methodology	3
5.0	Results	3
6.0	Finds	5
7.0	Discussion and Conclusion	5
	References	5
	Acknowledgments	5

Illustrations

Front Cover. Base of Roman greyware jar from Studforth Farm, Aldborough.

Plates

- Plate 1. Test Pit 1, looking north-east. Scale 0.30m.
- Plate 2. Test Pit 2, looking south-west.
- Plate 3. Test Pit 3, looking south-east. Scale 0.30m.
- Plate 4. Test Pit 4, looking east. Scale 0.30m.
- Plate 5. Test Pit 5, looking down. Scale 0.30m.
- Plate 6. Finds from Test Pits. Scale 0.10m.

STUDFORTH FARM, BACK LANE, ALDBOROUGH

BOROUGHBRIDGE, NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Summary

As the site lay within the Scheduled Monument area for Aldborough Roman Town (Monument Number 436), an Archaeological Watching Brief was required by the Scheduled Monument Consent on the excavation of five test pits which were to investigate the nature of the footings of the existing building. The building in question is a barn at Studforth Farm on Back Lane, Aldborough, North Yorkshire (SE 4061 6609).

The excavation of the test pits for the footings was undertaken on the 25th April 2009.

The results of the watching brief were generally negative due to the disturbance caused by the original barn construction and the small scale/shallow nature of the test pits. The current building generally has shallow footings and where they do cut into the underlying deposits they are of clean natural deposits.

The underlying natural sand/sandy gravel appears to lie at c.0.40m below current ground level (c.36.60mOD) above which there seems to have developed a humic topsoil probably derived from earlier agricultural use and material generated from the adjacent barns.

A single large piece of Roman greyware pottery was recovered from the topsoil along with small amounts of late post-medieval/19th century pottery. No direct evidence for Roman features was recorded and what Roman material survived had been re-deposited.

No other archaeological finds or features were recorded during the ground works.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on the excavation of five (5) test pits on a barn at Studforth Farm on Back Lane, Aldborough, North Yorkshire (SE 4061 6609). The watching brief was a requirement of the Scheduled Monument Consent prior to the submission of a planning application as the site lay within the Scheduled Monument area for Aldborough Roman Town (Monument Number 436).
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted by Simon Tomson for JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) on behalf of Mr & Mrs Freathy, and was carried out on 25th April 2009.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Historic Background

- 2.1 Much has been written about Aldborough and its Roman origins and it is not intended to repeat this here, only to provide a very brief setting for the recent archaeological work.
- 2.2 The modern settlement of Aldborough lies largely within the boundaries of the Roman town of Isurium Brigantum and contains a range of well preserved archaeological monuments. The Roman town is recognised as being a civilian administrative centre for the area of the Brigantes tribe. The post-Roman development of the settlement was as a small rural settlement based around and economy of agriculture with various domestic residences and small farms in and around the former Roman town.
- 2.3 The place name for Aldborough is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Burg* and then as *Aldeburg* in 1145. The name derives from the Old English (*e*)*ald* and *burh* meaning ‘old or disused stronghold’ (Mills, 1998, 4).

Geology and Soils

- 2.4 The underlying solid geology of the site is of Permian and Triassic sandstones (British Geological Survey, 2001) which are overlain by a quaternary geology of alluvium (British Geological Survey 1977). The soils that have weathered from this are the Bishampton 1 association which are deep, fine loamy soils which are occasionally seasonally waterlogged (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Topography and Land-use

- 2.5 Studforth Farm is situated on the southern side of Back Lane which in turn is on the southern edge of the Roman Town. The property stands on a level area of ground at a height of c.37mOD. To the south and east lie the remains of the earth banks which once formed part of the earlier Roman defences. The building under investigation is an L shaped barn which generally runs east-west and north-south with the east-west portion fronting onto Back Lane (Figure 1).

- 2.6 The building itself is no longer in agricultural use and the area around Studforth Farm is urban residential.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the exploratory ground works for the proposed redevelopment of the above site. The specific aims were to:

- Archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed by the ground works and to:
- Recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the test pits

- 3.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Watching Brief (1999).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Prior to the arrival of the site archaeologist, the removal of hard overburden (e.g. demolition rubble, loose stone, concrete, hardcore, tarmac etc.) had been undertaken by Mr Freathy or his appointed contractors.
- 4.2 The five (5) test pits (Figure 2) were hand dug by Mr Freathy and his appointed contractors under direct archaeological supervision. During the excavation the test pits were inspected for archaeological features and the resulting upcast monitored for archaeological artefacts.
- 4.3 All of the excavated test pits were recorded photographically, on 35mm colour slide and black and white print film and digitally at 5m pixel resolution. A scale and a north pointer for orientation were used in all photographs.

5.0 RESULTS

- 5.1 The watching brief was generally negative due partially to the shallow nature of the footings of the current building but primarily due to the lack of any archaeological deposits.

Test Pit 1 (Figure 1, Plate 1)

- 5.2 The position of this test pit was moved from the outside of the north-eastern end of the building to the inside of the barn but against the same wall. This pit examined the footings of the two storey extension which had been built at 90° to the main barn.

- 5.3 The wall in the test pit consisted of three courses of sandstone blocks and cobble construction. Butting to the wall were two successive layers of concrete floor which had been laid over a bed of mixed cobble and brick rubble. This in turn overlay a compact dark grey topsoil which had a compact pinkish orange subsoil. Below this, two further layers were recorded – an upper one of compacted yellow sand and gravel with coal ash and charcoal and a lower one of clean natural sand which started at c.0.40m below ground level.
- 5.4 These layers represent earlier ground surfaces through which the footings have been dug. The presence of coal ash in the layer directly above the natural sand would seem to suggest a date from the 18/19th century onwards origin. This would then put a later date on the deposits above that.

Test Pit 2 (Figure 1, Plate 2)

- 5.5 This was located outside the building on its southern side in the right angle between the two wings of the barn. The extension wall of the barn is built from 19/20th century brick and constructed onto a single course of 0.22m thick cobbles. Below this was a 0.18m thick layer of dark grey humic topsoil which in turn sealed a pit/soakaway feature which was filled with loosely compacted brick, mortar and pebbles. Both of these features were cut into the underlying clean natural sand which started at 0.40m below ground level.

Test Pit 3 (Figure 1, Plate 3)

- 5.6 This was located in the angle between extension wall of the barn and the two storey extension on the northern side of the building. An existing down pipe limited the amount of access to inspect the test pit.
- 5.7 Here the barn wall is of brick construction on a 0.76m thick foundation of large undressed sandstone blocks with brick and cobble in filling. The footings for the wall had been built in a construction trench which occupied most of the excavated test pit and had been backfilled with a dark grey humic topsoil. The construction trench had been cut into the underlying natural sand.
- 5.8 The abutting two storey extension was constructed on a single 0.20m thick layer of cobbles; the live downpipe prevented any further inspection.

Test Pit 4 (Figure 1, Plate 4)

- 5.9 This was located in the angle between southern wall of the barn and a ‘porch’ which had been butted this side to the barn. The southern wall of the barn had been cement rendered obscuring the detail of its construction but appeared to be of sandstone blocks. The ‘porch’ was of sandstone and brick construction on a layer of large cobbles and extended to 0.70m below ground level as did the main barn itself. Both structures had been built in a construction trench cut into the underlying natural sand (at c.0.40m below ground level) and had been backfilled with topsoil.
- 5.10 Piled against the both the barn and ‘porch’ walls was a 0.65m deep deposit of humic topsoil which contained numerous fragments of smashed pantiles. This deposit overlay a humic dark topsoil which contained half of the base of a Roman greyware burnished jar (see cover).

Test Pit 5 (Figure 1, Plate 5)

- 5.11 This was located in the southern corner of the barn with the walls built on a 0.20m thick footing of sandstone blocks and cobbles. These had been built on a 0.18m thick layer of mixed topsoil and sand which in turn overlay a band of gravely sand (which appears to be a variation in the underlying natural geology) at a depth of 0.38m below ground level.
- 5.12 No other archaeological finds or features were encountered during the excavation of the new driveway.

6.0 FINDS

- 6.1 A single large sherd of the base of a burnished Roman greyware jar was recovered from a post-barn construction deposit. As the topsoil containing the Roman pottery had been deposited against the building after its construction, this topsoil layer is not Roman in origin. However the large size and un-abraded nature of the piece suggests that it is close to its original place of deposition. In addition to the Roman pottery a very small amount of very late post-medieval/Victorian pottery was recovered from the topsoil and backfill deposits.

7.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 As can be seen from above, the results of the watching brief were generally negative due to the disturbance caused by the original barn construction and the small scale/shallow nature of the test pits.
- 7.2 The underlying natural sand/sandy gravel appears to lie at *c.*0.40m below current ground level (*c.*36.60mOD) above which there seems to have developed a humic topsoil probably derived from earlier agricultural use and material generated from the adjacent barns. This topsoil has been cut through for the building of the later extension to the barn.
- 7.3 No direct evidence for Roman features were recorded and what Roman material survived had been re-deposited.

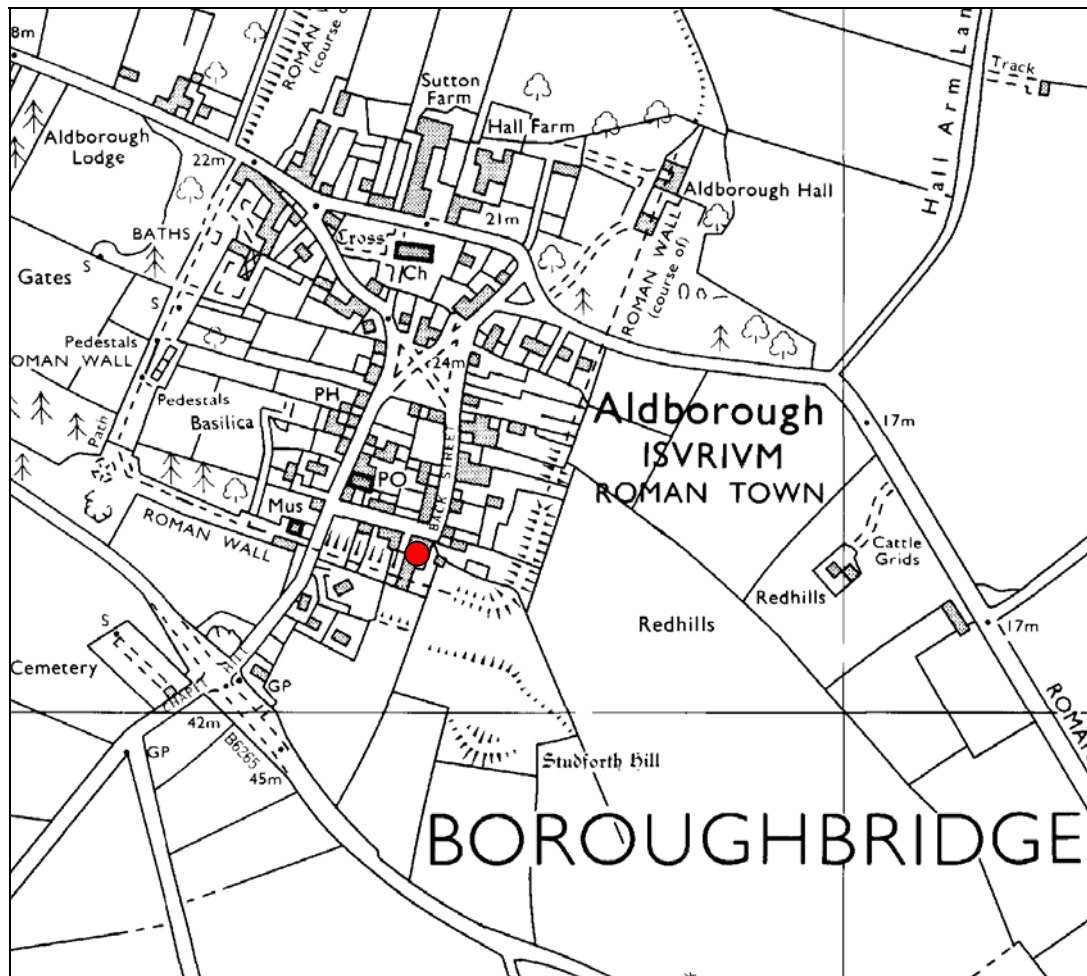
References

- Mills AD (1998) *Dictionary of English Place-Names*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- 1977 Geological Survey Ten Mile Map South Sheet Quaternary. British Geological Survey
- 1983 Soils of England and Wales. Sheet 1 Northern England. Soil Survey of England and Wales. Lawes Agricultural Trust, Harpenden
- 2001 Geological Survey 1:625,000 Map South Sheet Solid Geology. British Geological Survey

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr & Mrs Freathy for inviting me to undertake the project and Mr S Tomson for undertaking the site work.

Figure 1. Site Location.



Based on Ordnance Survey Digital Map Data with Permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Crown Copyright, John Buglass Archaeological Services, Rosebank, Newby Wiske, North Yorkshire DL7 9EX Licence Number 100048796.

**STUDFORTH FARM, BACK LANE, ALDBOROUGH
BOROUGHBRIDGE, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

ILLUSTRATIONS



Plate 1. Test Pit 1, looking north-east. Scale 0.30m.



Plate 2. Test Pit 2, looking south-west.



Plate 3. Test Pit 3, looking south-east. Scale 0.30m.



Plate 4. Test Pit 4, looking east. Scale 0.30m.

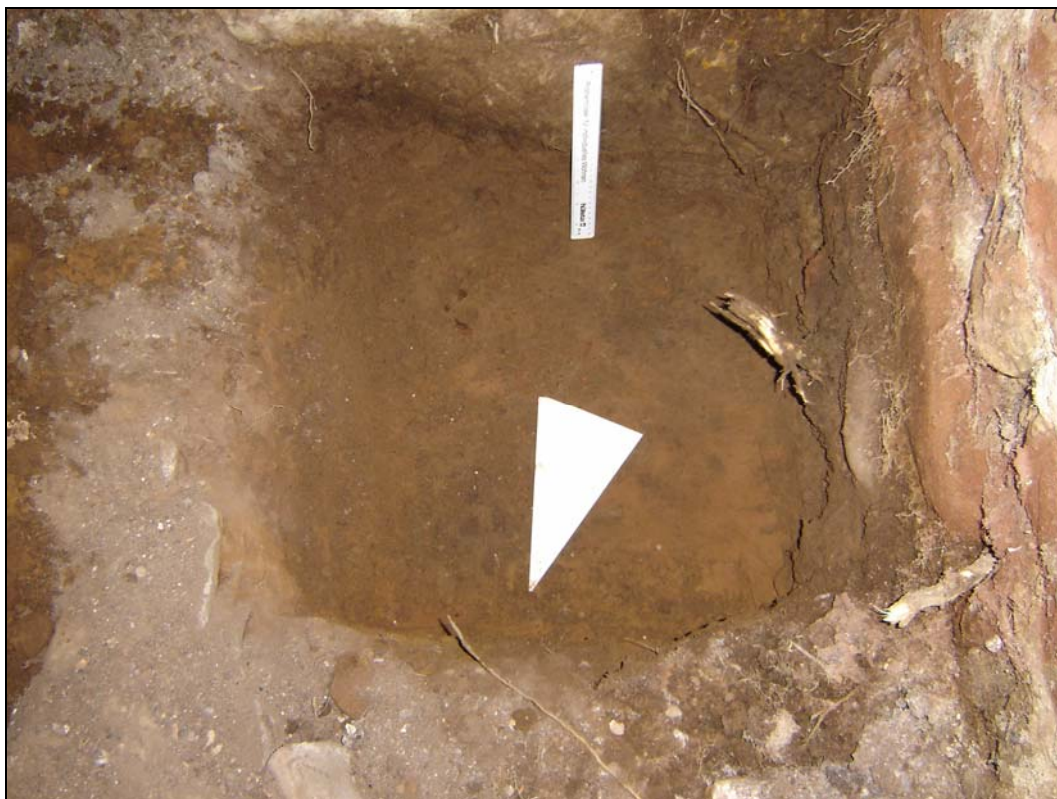


Plate 5. Test Pit 5, looking down. Scale 0.30m.



Plate 6. Finds from Test Pits. Scale 0.10m.

