



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE ADDRESS	2 Bridge Street, Bedale, North Yorkshire		
CLIENT NAME	HACS Construction Ltd.		
YAT PROJECT #	5553	YAT REPORT #	2011/65
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	n/a	GRID REFERENCE	SE 267 881
PLANNING REFERENCE #	10/01895/FUL	AAI OPS NOTICE #	n/a

INTRODUCTION

Between the 15th and 30th of September 2011, York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief on ground works at 2 Bridge Street, Bedale, North Yorkshire (Figure 1). The objective was to record any deposits, features or remains of archaeological significance encountered during the excavation of foundations for several new commercial and residential units (Figure 2). The foundation trenches were up to 0.70m wide, between 1.8 and 2.4m deep and were excavated by the use of a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless bucket. The groundworks also included the machine reduction of the site in advance of the excavation of strip foundation trenches. The main contractors for the works were HACS Construction Ltd. One archaeological feature was observed and recorded during the course of these works and is reproduced as part of this report, along with two further sections used to show the general deposit profile observed across the rest of the site. Recording took the form of notes and scale drawings supplemented by a number of digital colour photographs.

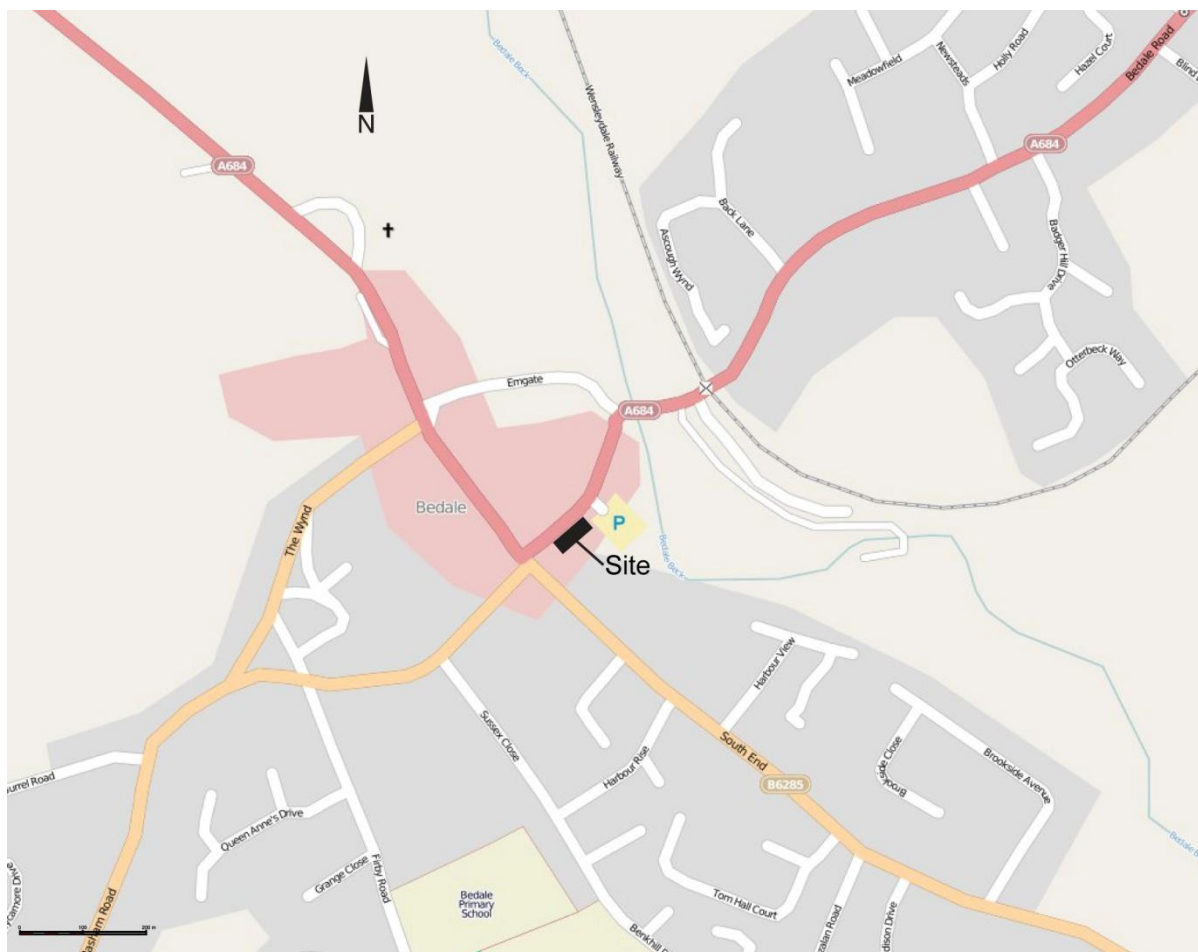


Figure 1 Site location

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FINDS	Yes (modern)	SAMPLES	No	PHOTOS	Yes
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Figure 2 Foundation trench layout and locations of sections

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RESULTS

SECTION 1

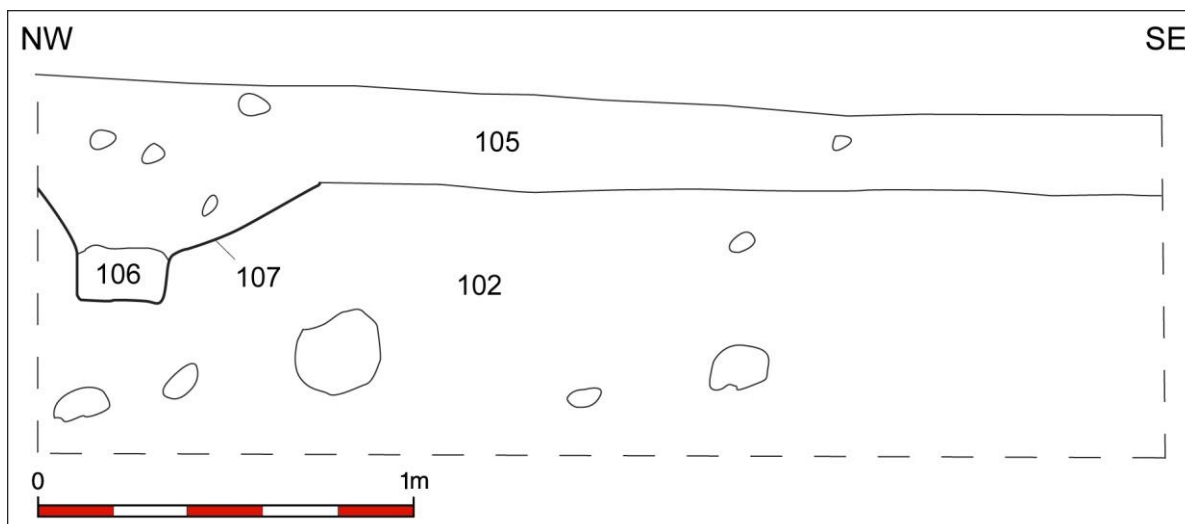


Figure 3 South-west facing section no.1

In this section, the earliest deposit observed was firm dark blue-grey slightly silty clay (102). This appeared in all sections dug below a depth of 1.2m BGL. It is likely this was a build-up of clay silts within a former palaeochannel. The top of it was truncated by a NW-SE aligned ditch (107; Figure 2), up to 0.8m wide and 0.40m deep. The sides broke sharply from the surface and then fell steeply (more so on the western side) to a 0.25m wide, 0.14m deep vertical sided slot which formed the base. It ran for a distance of 2.4m from the north-western trench edge, with a rounded terminus at its south-eastern end. The primary fill (106) comprised a very soft, dark reddish brown clay silt, 0.14m thick, and was thought to represent a gradual build-up of water-laid silts. The ditch was likely to have been a groundwater drainage ditch, as well as carrying surface water run-off from the higher ground to the north-west; no dating evidence was recovered. The top of it was sealed by a stiff dark greyish brown silty clay (105) with frequent sub angular stone inclusions, 0.48m thick. This may signify that ditch 107 had been insufficient to drain the area as deposit 105 also overspilled the top of the ditch and had been used to raise the old ground level (the top of 102) by up to 0.25m on either side of it, forming part of a land reclamation exercise. The top of this deposit was reduced slightly by the machine clearance and levelling of the site in preparation for the excavation of the foundation trenches.

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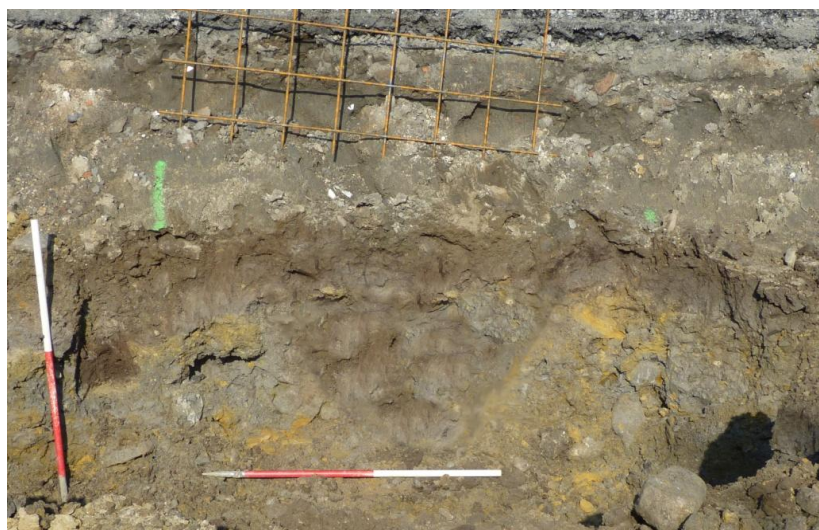


Plate 1 Profile of ditch 107, looks north-east (0.5m scale division)

SECTION 2

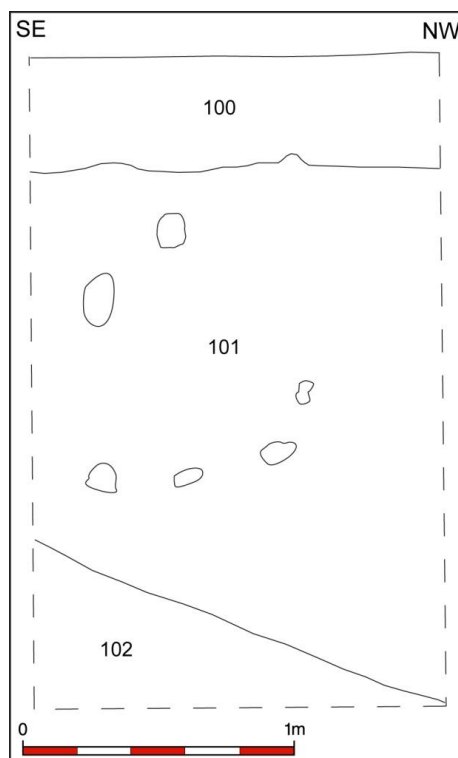


Figure 4 North-east facing section no. 2

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In Section 2 (Figure 4), the earliest deposit observed was deposit 102, although in this instance it was up to 0.62m thick and the surface of it fell steeply from south-east to north-west, where it ran below the base of the trench. Sealing this was a loose, light brownish yellow gravelly sand, with frequent sub angular stone and large pebble inclusions (101), which was thought to have been the fill of a later palaeochannel. The sand / gravel nature of this deposit suggested that the channel was a secondary cut-down event brought about by increased energy water flows which, although uncertain, could have been indicative of a change to much wetter climate conditions. Directly above this was an up to 0.42m thick deposit of mixed brick rubble, mortar and concrete (100). This was observed across the majority of the site and had arisen from the demolition of a range of 19th/20th century buildings recently occupying the development area.



Plate 2 Profile of section no. 2, looks south-east (0.5m scale division)

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SECTION 3

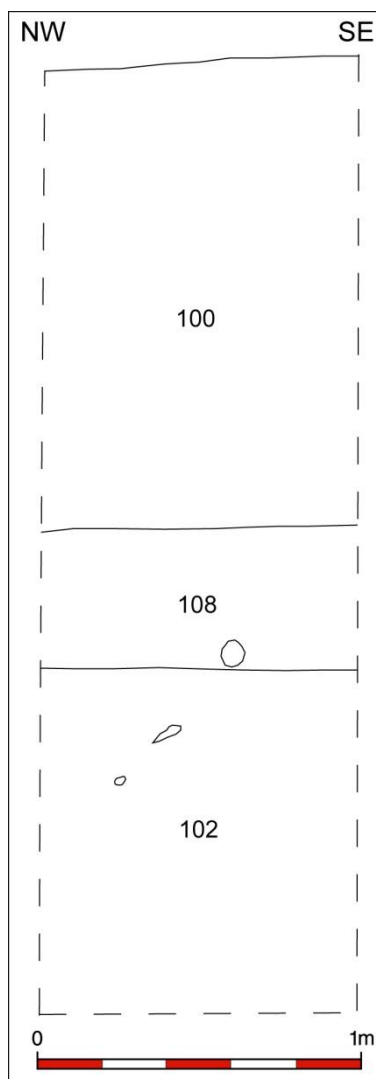


Figure 5 South-west facing section no.3

Section No. 3 (Figure 5) is representative of the deposit model at the eastern limit of the site. In this location the ground surface was much lower than that at the western limit of the site. The earliest deposit observed was once more in the form of Deposit 102. In this location it was 1.07m thick and continued beneath the base of the trench. Directly above was a 0.44m thick peat rich, dark blackish brown silty clay (108). This was indicative of a period where, in this location, slow, sluggish or standing water had been present within localised, ponded hollows formed in the top of deposit 102. It was present (and continued beyond) in all the foundation trenches on the eastern end of site. Deposit 102 was sealed by demolition deposit 100 which, at 1.45m thick, probably represented the infilling of a cellar or sub-basement attached to one of the buildings recently occupying the site.

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Plate 3 Profile of section no. 3, looks north-east (0.5m scale division)

CONCLUSION

During the course of the works no significant archaeological remains were disturbed. The earliest sequence of events did however show that the development plot occupied an area formerly cut through by a sequence of palaeochannels draining down from higher ground in the north, towards south-east, to meet with Bedale Beck and the base of the valley. The initial channel sequence had started to dry out and had been subjected to sluggish water flows. This allowed for the build-up of clay silts 102 before a probable change to a period of wetter climatic conditions occurred. This was signified by a second palaeochannel cutting event brought about by the incision of a new channel bed into the top of deposit 102 (Figure 4, section no.2). The fill of this channel comprised pebble rich sands and gravels (101), some of a considerable size, which would have needed a high energy water flow to transport them to that location, before they settled out in the channel bed. The water flows eventually became sluggish and almost ceased to flow, resulting in the formation of a substantial water filled, ponded hollow(s) in the eastern side of the site. These appeared to have been present for a substantial time period as was attested by the formation of peat rich silt clays of deposit 108 (Figure 5; section no.2). A failed attempt was made to drain off these areas by the

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cutting of undated ditch 107 (Figure 3; section no. 1. The presence of a silt build up (106) within its base inferred that it was operational for at least a short time before the decision was made to both infill it, consolidate, level and raise the ground surface by up to 0.48m with dumps of stone rich silt clays (105). The top of deposit 105 was sealed by an extensive deposit of demolition rubble which was most likely generated by the demolition of the buildings which formerly occupied the site. The efficacy of the demolition works was attested to by the complete removal of all foundations and drainage systems associated with the same.

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