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Archaeological Watching Brief

Castlegate
Malton

An Archaeological Watching Brief of Castlegate, Malton.

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Introduction

This report sets out the results of observations made during an Archaeological Watching Brief condition placed by North Yorkshire County Council on British Gas, covering work on the installation of a new gas main on Castlegate in Malton (SE 7874 7165–SE 7907 7154, Fig. 1). MAP Archaeological Consultancy Limited were approached by British Gas (North East) to undertake this work. The Watching Brief's conditions stated that all excavation be watched and that provision be made for archaeological recording.

Figure 1.

The excavation and laying of the gas main was carried out by T. Bermingham Contractors Limited, contractors to British Gas, and observed by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Limited between 18th April and 17th June 1994. All work was funded by British Gas (North East).

Castlegate is located in the centre of Malton and is the main road to Norton and beyond. The soils located around Malton are brown rendzinas (Elmton 2) on a geology of jurassic limestone and sandy limestone; and, for the River Derwent's flood plane, pelo-alluvial gley soils (Fladbury 3) on river alluvium. South of the River Derwent, in Norton, soils are gleyic brown calcareous earths on glaciofluvial sand and gravels (Landbeach).

Historical Background

Castlegate in Malton has remained on its present alignment since the 1730's (Dickinson 1730), with only small alterations, involving the demolition of houses at the junction of Yorkersgate and Castlegate, and at the north end of Malton Bridge, taking place in the early 1960's to widen the road. Castlegate was also referred to as Low Street on some maps (Fig. 2). Prior to 1730, there is no documentary or cartographic evidence for the alignment of Castlegate.

In the medieval period, this part of Malton was dominated by the Castle, built in 1150 by Eustace fitz John. Its location took advantage of the Roman road system and the ford or bridge over the Derwent (Robinson 1978). These Roman Roads were probably still in use in the medieval period, but the ford or bridge crossing the Derwent had probably moved westward because of changes in the river's alignment. A bridge across the Derwent, on the present alignment, has been known since King Stephen's reign.

The castle, St Leonard's church and Castlegate lay outside the south eastern boundary of the borough of New Malton. The town wall was probably aligned along St. Leonards Lane and across Castlegate just south of Well's Lane, but its precise course is uncertain. A settlement or 'suburb' probably grew as a satellite to the castle, forming Castlegate itself.

Another medieval wall was noted by Channon (1865/6?) at the lower end of Castlegate. This probably enclosed and protected the settlement south of the Town Wall. However, earlier sources do not concur with this alignment (Dickinson, 1730 and Settrington, c. 1728). Robinson suggests a possible earlier source or interpretation of a visible feature for Channon's suggestions of a medieval suburban defence (Robinson 1978).

Burnt deposits were noted in Castlegate during drain laying in 1865 (Appendix 3, Robinson 1978). These could be attributed to a 'calamity' noted by Richard of Hexham in 1138 or the sacking of Malton Castle by Robert de Brus in 1322 (VCH, NYR 1, 1914).

The Roman Fort of Deventio was located approximately 60m from the southern extent of Castlegate, with a vicus situated beyond the south-eastern wall of the fort. The western-most buildings, discovered to date, associated with the vicus have been located in Sheepfoot (Finney 1989).

Roman roads radiated out from Malton to the south and east, providing transport to York, Brough on Humber, the Wolds, Howardian Hills and the Coast. The alignment of these roads can be seen on aerial photographs as they approach Malton, but under the present town and its modern road system, the alignment of Roman Roads is not known. The main drain excavated down Castlegate in 1865 located a 'well paved' road 'run together with a sort of cement' at a depth of 0.91m–1.22m (Appendix 3).

The river crossing, in the Roman period, lay at the foot of Sheepfoot Hill, based on the evidence of north–south aligned roads in Norton and the vicus.

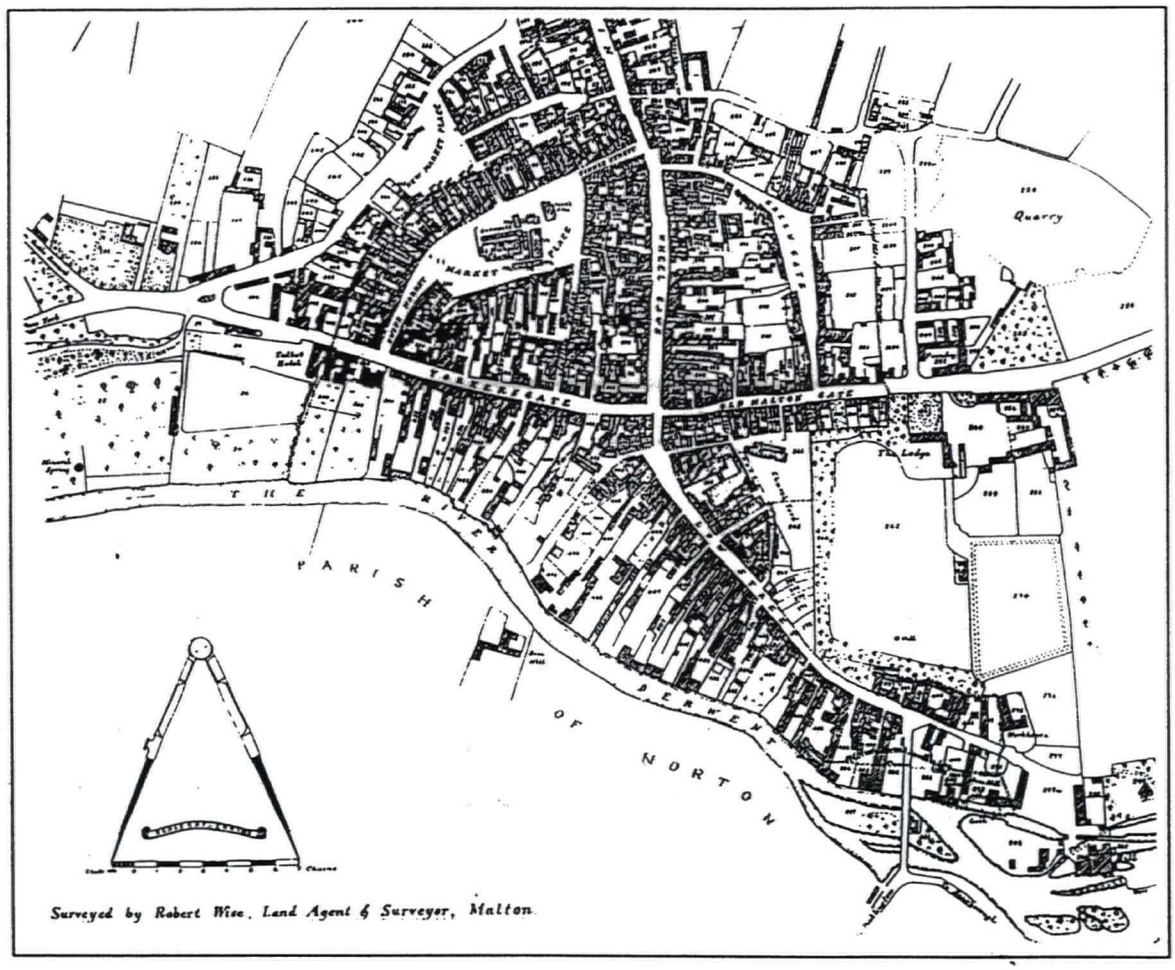

Figure 2.

Method

The trench was excavated using a JCB with a 0.5m wide tooth bucket, the modern road surface was removed with a pecker. Work started on the pipe trench at the north-western end on Sheepfoot and proceeded along the southern side of Castlegate. Excavation was observed and any archaeological deposits and artefacts were recorded. The sections were drawn at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50, the deposits were also photographed using colour print and slide films.

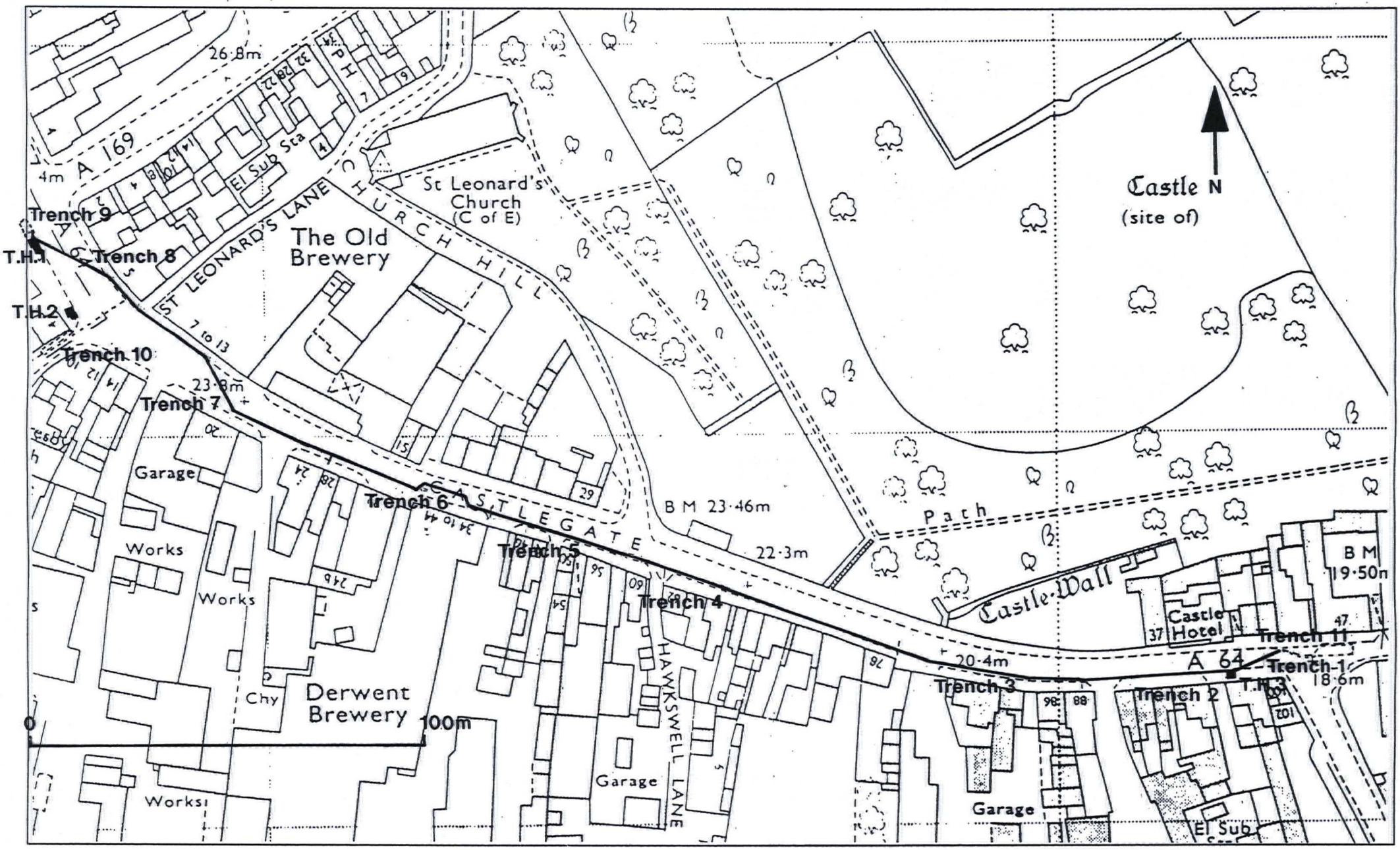
Trench 9
T.H.1
Trench 8
T.H.2
Trench 10
Trench 7
Trench 6
Trench 5
Trench 4
Trench 3
Trench 2
Trench 1
Trench 11
T.H.3
A 169
A 64
ST LEONARD'S LANE
CHURCH HILL
St Leonard's Church (C of E)
The Old Brewery
Derwent Brewery
CASTLEGATE
HAWKSWELL LANE
Castle N (site of)
Castle Wall
Castle Hotel
Path
Garage
Works
Chy
El Sub Sta
El Sub
B M 23·46m
B M 19·50m
22·3m
20·4m
18·6m
23·8m
26·8m
0
100m

Figure 4.

Results

The pipe trench was excavated in sections, approximately 30–60 metres in length; therefore each section could be excavated, the pipe laid and then the road surface re-instated within the week (Fig. 3). Initially three Testholes were excavated, before work started on the pipe line. The pipe trench was excavated in eleven sections, Trenches 1 to 8 for the pipeline and Trenches 9 to 11 were to connect to existing gas services (Fig. 4).

Testhole 1

Testhole 1 was located at the north end of Castlegate, opposite No. 1 Castlegate. No archaeological features were observed in this Testhole. The area had been heavily disturbed by services and the demolition of houses to widen the junction between Yorkersgate and Castlegate (Fig. 4).

Testhole 2

Testhole 2 was located north-east of No. 4 Castlegate. A brick and a limestone wall, contexts 2 and 4, were recorded below the modern pavement and hardcore surfaces, context 1. Cuts for the brick and limestone wall, contexts 3 and 6, were observed. The foundation trench, cut 6, was filled by a silty sand deposit, context 5. Some modern brick disturbance was noted, context 7 (Fig. 5). Silt and silty clay deposits, contexts 8, 9 and 10 were also recorded. No finds were recovered from this Testhole.

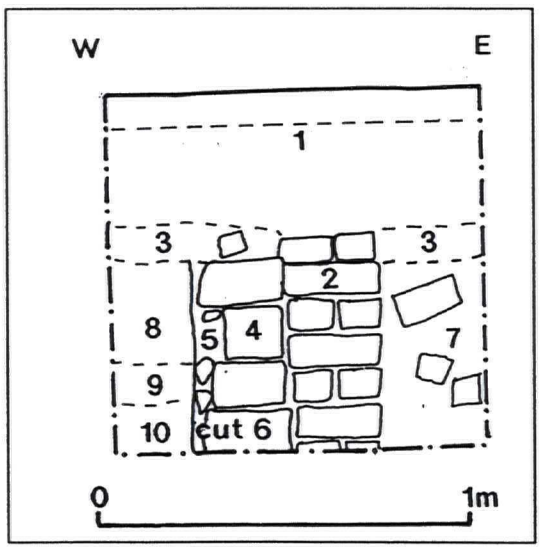

Figure 5.

Testhole 3

Testhole 3 was located outside No. 98 Castlegate. Beneath the hardcore and silty sand/sandy silt deposits, contexts 11–16, was a layer of compact rounded pebbles, context 17. This layer was located at the base of the Testhole at a depth of 0.94m (Fig. 6). Context 17 could be interpreted as a possible road surface of Roman or medieval date. No finds were recovered from this Testhole.

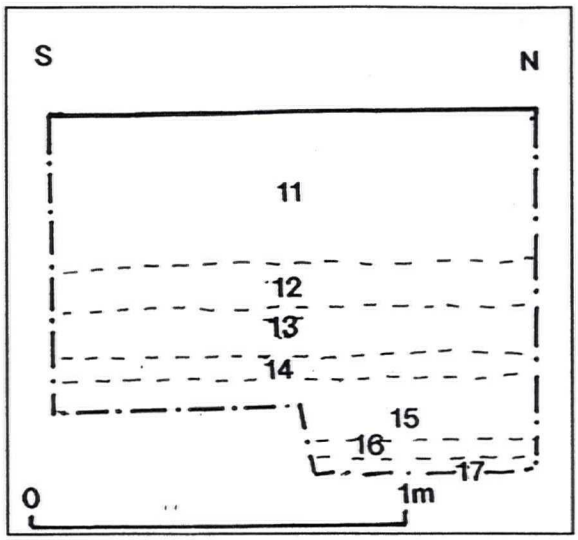

Figure 6.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated from No. 45 Castlegate to Testhole 3, on 26th April 1994. A section , 2.4m in length, was recorded (Fig. 7). At base of trench, below the hardcore, sand/sandy silt/clayey silt layers, contexts 18–22; was a layer of rounded gravel, context 23. Beneath context 23 was a cobble deposit, context 24. These deposits, contexts 23 and 24, represent a surviving road surface of presumably Roman date. A base sherd from a Norton Greyware jar, 3rd century AD was recovered from context 22.

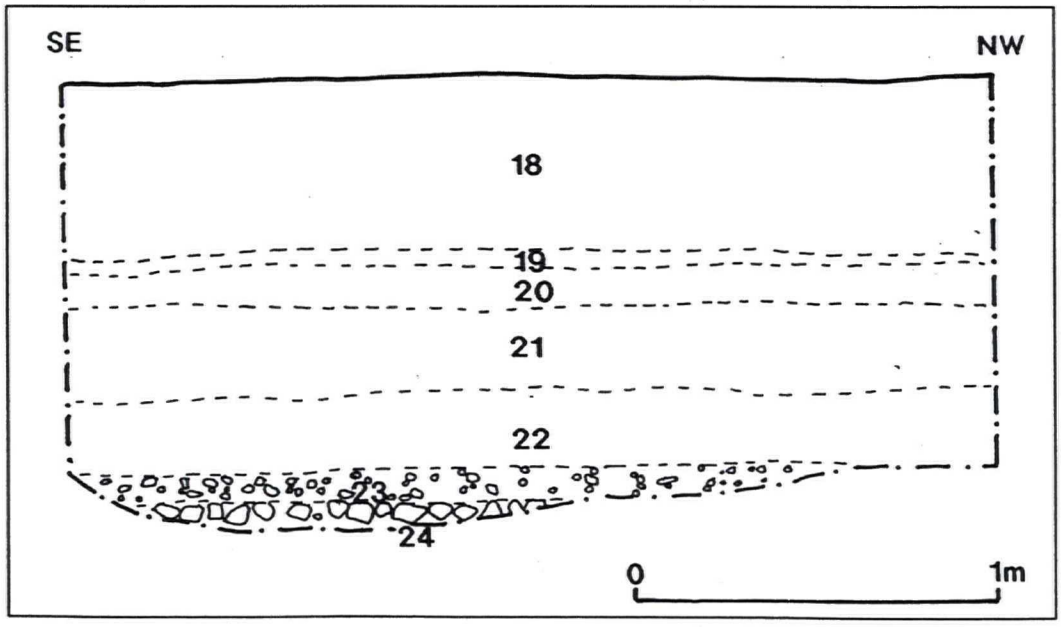

Figure 7.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated from Testhole 3 to No. 88 Castlegate, on 28th April 1994. No disturbance or archaeological deposits were observed. Concrete, sand and silty clay were noted, contexts 25, 26 and 27.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated from No. 88 to No. 76 Castlegate, on 3rd May 1994. A 48m length was excavated, of which 22.8m was recorded from 88 Castlegate to 84 Castlegate (Fig. 8). Stone cobbles were visible in the base of trench, context 28, beneath concrete, sand and silty clay, contexts 25–27. Disturbance of the road was noted at 88 Castlegate. A service trench was cut into Context 27 at 84 Castlegate, contexts 30 and 31. The possible road surface of Roman date disappears from the south facing section at 82 Castlegate.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was excavated from No. 78 to No. 62 Castlegate, on 10–11th May 1994. A 66m length was opened and 29.4m was recorded from No.78 to No.70 Castlegate (Fig. 9). The section showed another stretch of possible Roman road, contexts 33 and 34, and a wall, context 32. A sandy silt deposit, context 35, was noted east of the wall, context 32. The trench beyond No. 70 Castlegate was filled with limestone; the sandy silt deposit, context 35, was not present (Fig. 9).

Trench 5

Trench 5 was located from No. 62 to No. 46 Castlegate and was excavated on 17–18th May 1994. The limestone build-up continued beneath the modern road surface but dropped away to reveal sand deposits at No. 46 Castlegate. No archaeological deposits were visible in this trench.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was located from No. 46 to No. 28 Castlegate and was excavated on 24–25th May 1994. A sandy silt deposit was visible below the modern road surface and above a clean sand deposit. No archaeological features or artefacts were observed during excavation.

Trench 7

Trench 7 was located from No. 20 to No. 7 Castlegate and was excavated 30–31st May 1994. The trench crossed Castlegate at No. 20 to No. 13. The area was heavily disturbed by electricity, telephone, water and gas services. A layer of brick rubble was located at 13 Castlegate, this was probably modern or post-medieval levelling or demolition deposits. No other archaeological deposits or artefacts were observed during the excavation of this trench.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was the final segment across Castlegate to connect with the existing gas main at the north-western corner of Castlegate. It was excavated on 7–8th June 1994. This area was heavily disturbed. Beneath the modern road deposit was a brick cellar, partially demolished on the western side of the road. This disturbance was caused by demolition of the western buildings on Castlegate, north of Wells Lane to widen the road.

Trench 9

Trench 9 was an extension of Testhole 1 opened on 13th June 1994. This Trench was excavated to connect the new pipeline with existing gas main at the junction of Yorkersgate and Castlegate. The

area of the excavation was heavily disturbed by brick rubble filling a post-medieval cellar debris and two existing gas mains and other services. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were visible.

Trench 10

Trench 10 was located on Wells Lane and excavated on 14-17th June 1994. The north-eastern part of the trench was heavily disturbed by modern services, but otherwise the sandy silt deposits below the modern road surface were undisturbed. A narrow trench was excavated across Castlegate, to connect with the gas service in Wells Lane, at the same time as Trench 7. No archaeological deposits or material were uncovered.

Trench 11

Trench 11 was located at the junction of Castlegate and Sheepfoot at No.47 Castlegate and was excavated on 14th June 1994. The area was heavily disturbed by two existing gas mains, electricity, water and telephone services. A modern pavement extension was also removed. No archaeological deposits were visible.

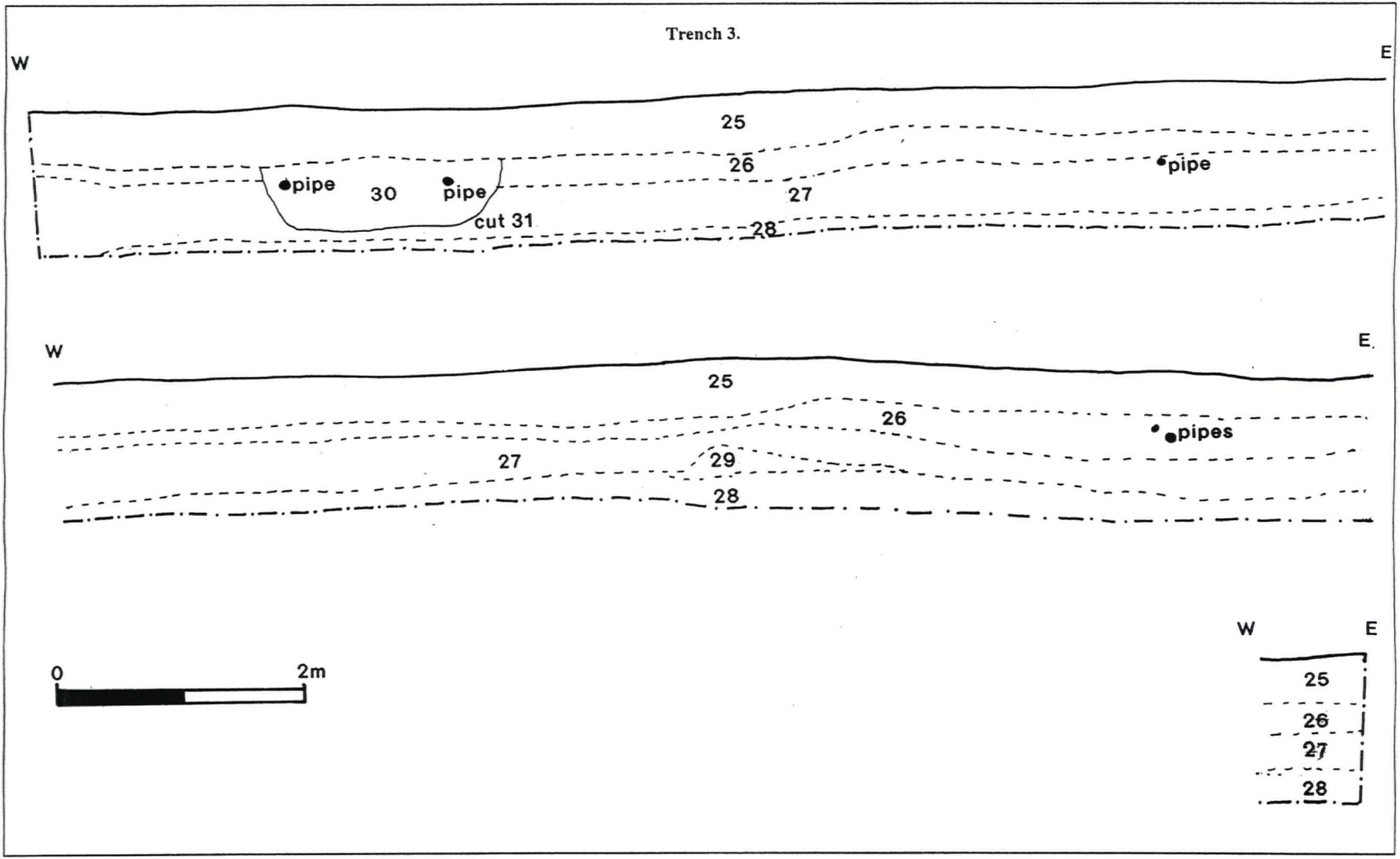
Trench 3.
W
E
25
26
27
28
pipe
30
pipe
cut 31
pipe
W
E
25
26
27
29
28
pipes
0
2m
W
E
25
26
27
28

Figure 8.

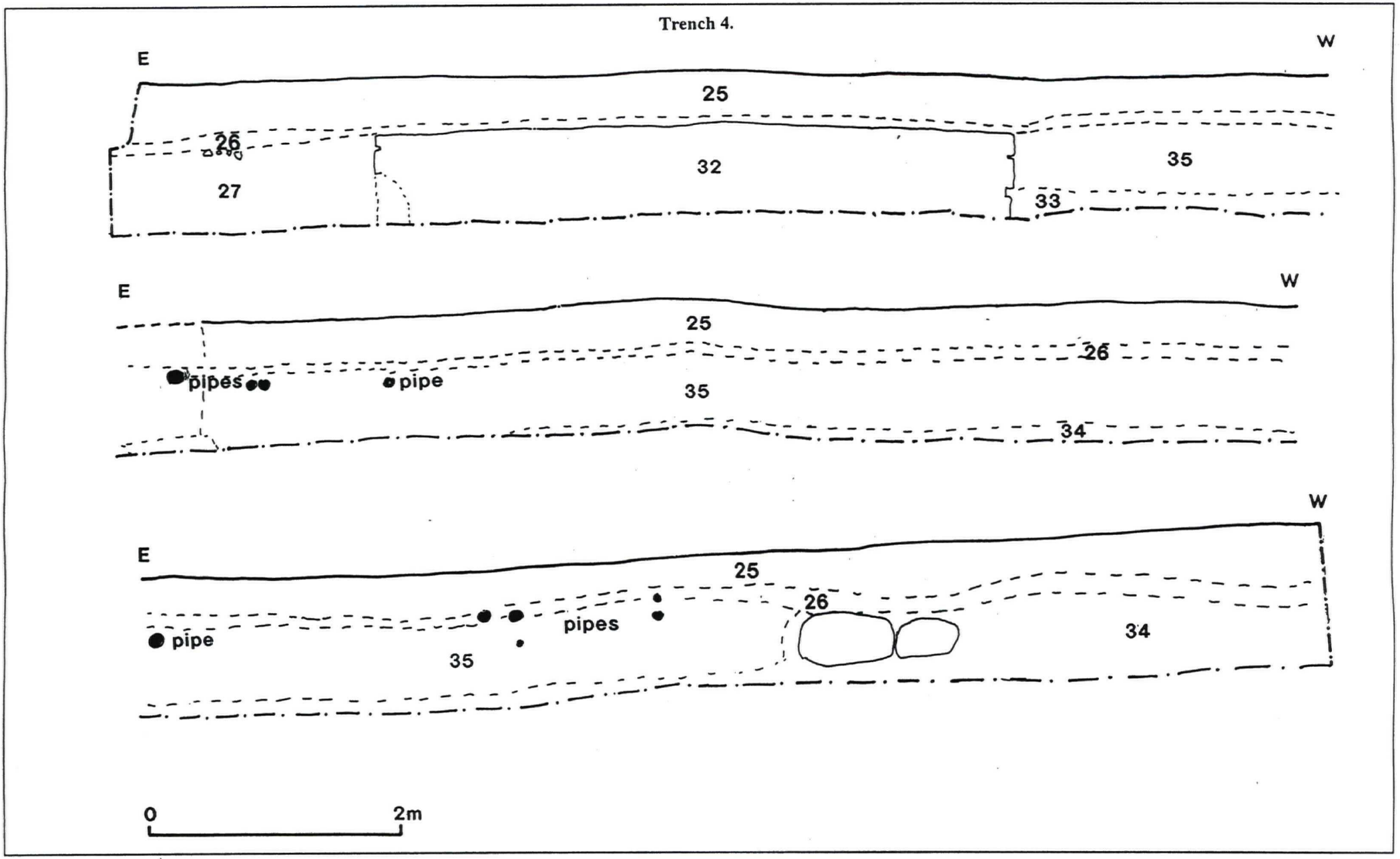
Trench 4.
E
W
25
26
27
32
35
33
E
W
25
26
pipes
pipe
35
34
E
W
25
26
pipes
pipe
35
34
0
2m

Figure 9.

Discussion

The supposed alignment of the medieval town wall was heavily disturbed by modern services, demolition and cellar deposits at the junction of St. Leonard's Lane, Well's Lane and Castlegate; this area was covered by Testhole 1 and Trenches 8–10.

A cellar wall was seen in Testhole 2, this was apparently the cellar of the former Castle Vaults Public House, one of the demolished buildings at the north–west end of Castlegate. The deposits cut by the foundation trench in Testhole 4, contexts 8 to 10, could be medieval or early post–medieval, and represent *in situ* occupation deposits.

A large build up of stone was noted in Trenches 4, 5 and 6. This limestone deposit, context 34, included some large boulders directly below the modern road surface. Its purpose is not known, but may be defensive and relate to the medieval town wall or castle defences. The alignment of such a defence contradicts documentary evidence (Robinson 1978). This limestone could also be an accumulation of road or geological material.

A north–south aligned wall was uncovered in Trench 4. Its position adjacent to the supposed Castle wall, which is situated in the garden of No. 37 Castlegate, suggested it could possibly be a boundary wall protecting the medieval suburb around the castle (Robinson 1978). The facing stones were removed during excavation of the trench and no artefacts were recovered to date the structure. This wall pre–dates the Georgian house plots still extant, and may be a medieval or Roman structure.

Several stretches of a possible road surface were uncovered in Testhole 3, Trenches 1, 3 and 4. This links in to the road surface uncovered during the excavation of drains in 1865 (Malton Mercury, Robinson 1978). Although no firm dating evidence was recovered to date the road to either the Roman or medieval period, a Roman sherd was recovered from the deposit immediately above the road surface in Trench 1.

The character of the road surface observed in Castlegate was similar to the construction of the Norton–Settrington Roman road noted during an Archaeological watching Brief at Bright Steels, Wood Street, Norton (Stephens 1994).

Bibliography

Soils of England and Wales	1983	Sheet 1 Northern England, Scale 1:250000.
Finney, A.E.	1989	Sheepfoot Hill – Malton. Archaeological Testhole Survey, Testholes 1 and 2. ERARC.
J.F. Robinson	1978	The Archaeology of Malton and Norton, YAS.
Stephens, M.R.	1994	An Archaeological Watching Brief at Bright Steels, Wood Street, Norton. MAP Archaeolgical Consultancy Limited.

Appendix 1

Context Listing

Context Number	Description
1	Pavement surface and hardcore.
2	Brick wall.
3	Deposit – brick and mortar.
4	Limestone wall.
5	Fill of cut 6 – silty sand, 10YR4/6.
6	Cut for foundation trench.
7	Deposit – brick and mortar rubble.
8	Deposit – compact silty clay, 10YR4/1.
9	Deposit – silt, 10YR2/1.
10	Deposit – silty clay, 10YR4/2.
11	Road and hardcore.
12	Deposit – silty sand, 10YR4/2.
13	Deposit – silty sand, 10YR6/4.
14	Deposit – sandy silt, 10YR4/1.
15	Deposit – silty sand, 10YR4/1.
16	Deposit – sandy silt, 10YR3/1.
17	Road surface of compact rounded pebbles.
18	Road and hardcore.
19	Deposit – sandy silt, 10YR4/3.
20	Deposit – sand, 10YR6/4.
21	Deposit – sandy silt, 10YR5/2.
22	Deposit – clayey silt, 10YR5/1.
23	Road surface of rounded gravel.
24	Road.
25	Road and hardcore.
26	Deposit – sand, 10YR6/6.
27	Deposit – silty clay, 10YR5/1.
28	Road surface of compact rounded pebbles.
29	Deposit – silty sand, 10YR5/3.
30	Fill of cut 31 – sandy silt with concrete and hardcore, 10YR3/1.
31	Cut for modern services.
32	Limestone wall.
33	Road surface of compact rounded pebbles.
34	Limestone.
35	Deposit – sandy silt, 10YR5/1.
36	Deposit – sand, 10YR5/4.

Appendix 2

Finds catalogue

Context Number	Description
22	1 base sherds, Norton Greyware, 3rd century AD 1 oyster shell 2 fragments of animal bone
27	3 fragments of animal bone.

Appendix 3

Documentary Evidence

Malton Messenger
28th October 1865

"CUTTING THROUGH ROMAN ROAD – During 2 weeks past, the Malton Board of Health has been constructing a main drain down Castlegate, Malton. The workmen have all the way had to cut through a well paved Roman road formed of hard boulders run together with a sort of cement. The concrete like road thus formed, from 9 to 12 in. thick, and is hard as solid rock. The road is between 3 and 4 ft. below the present level of the street. Near the surface of the road, two coins of Constantine and a few pieces of pot (one Samian ware) have been found. The road is laid immediately on limestone grit. The 3 or 4 ft. of accumulated rubbish above it abounds in semi-fossilised bone of deer, oxen and swine and there is in some parts indication of fire. The rubbish, doubtless, of the burning of the town by Archbishop Thurstan in 1135. The ancient line of the road thus discovered lies between the supposed site of Roman Malton and the large military station (Derventio) on the top of the hill, and has doubtless been the way to the Praetorian Gate of the camp and the ford across the Derwent, recently discovered in draining Norton."

Malton Messenger
4th November 1865

"ANCIENT MALTON – On Thursday the workmen, employed in putting in the side drain in Castlegate, met with a piece of perfect paving composed of large flints from the neighbourhood, placed edgeways. This paving was upon the layer of burnt rubbish found in all parts of the town and seemed to indicate the level of the street after the burning of the town in the 12th century.
The pavement did not extend across the street, but appears to have been about 10ft. wide. A singular feature was that there were well defined grooves or 'ruts', showing the tracks of vehicles, the grooves from the centre to centre only 2ft. 6in. These grooves had been carefully preserved, at where the original paving stones had failed the grooves had been repaired with new stones lengthwise. The road is about 3 ft. deep and is covered in earth, showing that the street has been raised at some period. Below this pavement was burnt rubbish, bones of deer etc. and about 2 ft. below the old Roman road was found."