

Figure 3.

Plan of the Roman Road ditch segments 37, 48, 50, 52 and 54, and archaeological features 32 and 33.

Excavation Results

The Roman Road

The road surface was observed on a north-east south-west alignment along the entire length of the trench (Pl. 5), for a distance of c.26m. The exact width was not determined as the surface continued under the west baulk of the trench, but the exposed width was >6m. A 5m segment of the road surface was exposed. The road occupied, or had eroded, a c. 0.3m deep dished linear hollow. The road surface context 15 was overlain by a c. 0.2m deep deposit of sandy silt which contained two iron objects (Appendix 2).

The road consisted of a single thickness of stones, in a matrix of silty sand resting directly above weathered natural bedrock. The stones were within the range of 0.04m to 0.3m with most falling within the 0.06m-0.1m range. A concentration of larger stones towards the road's eastern edge may have represented repair. The stones were rounded and closely packed together. Traces of wheel-ruts occurred on the eastern edge of the surface running for c. 2m in length and having a width of c. 0.3m..

A linear ditch (cut 17, fill 16: Fig. 3) ran exactly parallel to the road and 5m from its south-eastern edge. This ditch was excavated in three separate segments (Fig. 3) Each cut was individually numbered as follows 48, 50 & 54. All the segments exhibited the same rounded V profiles and had sandy silt and clay silt fills (Appendix 1).

A number of cremation burials were cut into context 16, the fill of ditch 17, contexts 13, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, and 56. These features were represented by minute concentrations of burnt bone.

Ditch 19 was excavated in three segments (cuts 37, 52 & 54). The segments had rounded or flat based V profiles, with depth ranging from 0.3m to 0.5m. The widths were 1m to 1.2m. The fills were sandy silts or clay silts.

The relationship between ditch 17 and ditch 19 to its south, was clearly shown by the excavation of segment 54 and 52, two segments of the later ditch 19 (Fig. 3). After merging with ditch 17, ditch 19 gradually diverges from the earlier ditch running for 20m before taking a 90 degree turn to the south-east.

Finally two features were located at the extreme western end of the trench (contexts 32 -33). Context 32 was situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the trench (Fig. 3) and consisted of an area of angular limestones measuring 0.6m by 2.8m wide. The limestone blocks were between 0.2m by 0.1m in diameter and had a matrix of silty sand. Context 63 was more complex in that it consisted of a 1.2m by 0.6m sub oval cut, with a basal fill of silty sand, context 62. Context 33 filled the upper part of 63, and consisted of angular limestone, between 0.1m and 0.25m in diameter set in a silty sand matrix. It is likely that contexts 32 and 63 represented postpads for vertical timbers, but if a structure was involved, it must have lain largely outside the excavation area.

The deposits described above were covered by a layer of sandy silt (context 2). This colluvial deposit was 0.7m in depth where it covered context 14 over the Roman road.



Figure 4.
Plan of Building 1 and cremations 121, 128, 133, 156 and 171



Figure 5.

Plan of Building 1 and excavated features 81, 96, 145, 150, 151, 152, 172, 178, 188, 202 and 204.

Building 1

Building 1 was situated in the extreme south-eastern part of the site (Figs. 4 & 5: Pls. 1 & 2). The building was c. 18m long and was c. 7.5m in width, with its longest axis on a north-west south-east orientation. The southern half of the building was rather poorly preserved, with only stretches of foundation rubble and patches of limestone surfacing indicating its southern limit (Fig. 4). The poor state of the preservation coupled with the fact that only very small scale excavation was undertaken, mean that it is only possible to define a basic outline of this building's constructional history.

The north-east, north-west and south-west walls of Building 1 were constructed of faced unmortared oolitic limestone blocks, generally c. 0.3 by 0.18m by 0.15m in size. The internal and external facing stones were replaced by a rubble core. A maximum of two courses survived, context 147 at the north-west end of the building. The foundation of the wall was situated in a flat based foundation cut, context 106. The foundation trench was cut into a deposit of sandy silt (context 111) which must represent some form of pre-building activity. The foundation itself (context 149) consisted of irregular, not angular limestones up to 0.4m by 0.3m by 0.2m in size. A deposit of sand (context 148) had been laid onto the rubble foundation, apparently to provide a level surface to accommodate the limestone blocks of the wall. The remainder of the foundation trench was filled with a stony silty sand.

An excavated area on the north-eastern wall of the building showed that the rubble foundation was apparently absent, with a single course of faced limestone blocks (context 152) resting directly on a layer of silty sand (Context 157). It is possible that 157 was a deeper deposit of levelling sand, equating to 148 elsewhere, but the limited scope of the excavation of this foundation makes it impossible to say. Also at this location, a deposit of sandy silt (context 151) probably equates with context 111, the 'occupation' deposit present elsewhere. A c. 0.08m deep deposit of mortar (context 150: Fig. 5) lay above context 151 and seemingly represented part of a floor.

The stratigraphically earliest deposit examined within the interior of Building 1 was context 94. Context 94 was a layer of soft fine limestone gravel, located in a small area in the west of the building's north-east wall. This context presumably represents a floor.

Context 93 overlies 94, and was a deposit of silty sand, which included occasional large limestones. Context 93 could represent use of the probable floor (context 94).

Context 92 was situated over 93, and existed as a deposit of coarse, angular limestone gravel and larger pieces in a sandy silt matrix. This deposit was present across the majority of the interior of Building 1, but not outside it; it is therefore likely that it was a rough surfacing deposit rather than demolition debris. Two large limestone slabs were present within context 92 at the north-western corner of the building (Fig. 4 & 5 : Pl. 1). Removal of the two slabs revealed a deposit of sand (context 101), possibly representing the fill of a drain or similar feature, however, as excavation could not proceed any further the nature of this context remains unclear.

There are indications that structures butted up to the north-east wall of Building 1 (Figs. 4 & 5), notably a concentration of rubble (context 184) at the north-east corner of the building, continuing the line of the north-west wall. Again, the limited scope of the excavation makes only tentative interpretation possible, but it seems likely that some form of lean-to structure existed along Building 1's north-east wall.

A possible entrance was situated approximately midway along the north-east wall; where there was a discontinuity of the wall (Fig. 5 : Pl. 2) partly due to the presence of a linear cut (context 204). A group of iron objects (SF 52: Appendix II) could represent door furniture. In addition, a sub-circular cut (context 202) located at the northern side of the break in the wall (Fig. 5), is tentatively interpreted as a posthole relating to part of the superstructure of an entrance. Cut 202 was filled with a sandy silt context 201.

The linear feature mentioned above, excavated as segment cut 204 cut through the possible entrance on a south-west north-east alignment. Context 204 was 0.55m wide and had a round-based V profile (Fig. 5) with a depth of 0.14m. Clearly later than the wall, this feature presumably represents a shallow ditch of agricultural origin.

A feature (context 145) present at the north-western corner of Building 1 was possible related to it. Context 145 was a sub-oval cut, 1.2m in length and 0.95m wide. The flat-based U profile (Fig. 5) had a depth of 0.9m. The basal fill was a fine sandy silt (context 144), overlain by a deposit of rounded oolitic limestone in a sandy silt matrix (Context 143). Context 142 filled the eastern part of the feature above context 143, and comprised of a 'clean' deposit sandy silt. Context 137 formed the upper fill of the feature, being rounded oolitic limestones varying in diameter from 0.02m to 0.4m, in a sandy silt matrix. It is possible that the feature (context 145) could have functioned as a soakaway for the north-west corner of Building 1.

North of Building 1, three parallel linear features (Contexts 96, 98 and 172) ran on a north-east south-west alignment. Cut 172 was situated c 1m north of, and roughly parallel to, the north-west wall of Building 1. Context 172 was excavated for a length of 0.7m, before it butted out adjacent to the west baulk of the trench (Fig. 5). The flat based V profile had a width of c. 1m and a depth of c. 0.6m. The fill was a sandy silt (Context 173). The terminal segment of Ditch 172 was excavated as cut 178, and filled by context 179 (Fig. 5 : Pl. 6).

Parallel to and c. 1m north of, cut 172 was excavated in two segments (cut 96 and 188). Segment 96 was 2m in width. The rounded V profile had a depth of c. 0.6m. The basal fill was clay silt (context 103), which was overlain by a sandy silt (context 102). The latest fill of the feature (context 95) was a sandy silt which could represent a recut of this ditch, or perhaps deliberate backfilling of the ditch during the construction of Building 1. Ditch segment 188 continues into the north-western limit of the site (Fig. 5 : Pl. 6).

Cut 98 was situated 0.6m north of 96 on the same south-west north-east alignment (Figs. 6-9). The profile was a wide flat broad based V profile with a width of 1.1m and a depth of 0.6m. The fill was a silty sand (context 97). This ditch was probably recut during its existence.

Building 2

Building 2 was situated c. 10m north of Building 1 (Fig. 1: Pl. 2) and was separated from it by the 3 ditches described above. Building 2 was orientated at c. 90 degrees to Building 1, with its longest axis having a south-west north-east orientation. Building 2 had an external length of c. 12m, and an external width of c. 6m. The building was a two-celled structure and part of its constructional history was recoverable by observation in plan and very limited excavation.

The probable western limit of the building was located by auguring and the limited excavation of a deposit of rubble (context 113).



Figure 6.
Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 180.



Figure 7.
Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 186.



Figure 8.
Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177, 191, 192 and 193.



Figure 9.
Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 191.

The western room of Building 2 was c. 6m long and c. 5m wide internally, and was earlier than the eastern room. The wall of the western room (context 162) consisted of unbonded, faced oolitic limestone blocks up to 0.45m in length with a core of angular oolitic limestone rubble. The wall rested on an irregular limestone rubble foundation (context 176) within a foundation trench (context 177).

A small area excavated alongside wall 162 revealed the remains of a probable hearth (contexts 192, 193 and 194) which had been cut through by a grave containing two infant burials (contexts 191, 195 and 200). Subsequent to the backfilling of the grave a group of contexts were laid down, consisting of alternating "occupation" deposits (contexts 180, 185 and 189) and floor or surfacing deposits (contexts 163 and 182: Figs. 6-9).

The eastern room of Building 2 was c. 4.5m long and c. 5m wide internally, and was bounded by a wall (context 161) which butted up to the earlier wall, context 162. Wall 161 was built from faced oolitic limestone blocks, with a rubble core. The wall was associated with a deposit of oolitic limestone grit, perhaps the remains of a decayed mortar. Wall 161 was built within a foundation trench (context 79), but did not have a separate foundation as such, although one course of the wall was contained within the foundation trench. Two surfacing or floor deposits (contexts 160 and 159) were observed within the room.

The line of the cross-wall of Building 2 was continued to the east outside the building by a short length of wall (context 164). Wall 164 was faced with oolitic limestone and had a rubble core, with no bonding. Wall 164 was clearly later than 162, as it butted 162 at its north-west end. The south-east end of 164 was disturbed and truncated, almost certainly by the cutting of ditch 98 through it.

To the immediate south of Building 2 and wall 161 two discrete sub-circular patches of limestone blocks, measuring 0.75m in diameter (contexts 165 and 166) were located. Context 165 was a group of five closely associated oolitic limestones situated c 1m south of wall 161. The limestone was 0.1-0.3m in diameter. Context 166 was very similar in form and was situated 2m east of 165. These contexts apparently were post-pads for vertical timbers.

Considering wall 164, and post pads 165 and 166 together, it seems likely that Building 2 had a verandah or external corridor added to it at some date after its construction.

There can be little doubt that walls 161 and 162 are of different dates of construction. Apart from the straight joint between the two walls described above, the two walls had different foundations; in effect wall 161 lacked a foundation at all, whereas wall 162 was founded on a rubble raft. In addition, wall 161 was perhaps bonded with a weak mortar, indications of which were absent from wall 162. The individual stones of wall 161 were also generally of a larger size than those in wall 162. Lastly the two walls were on a slightly different line to each other, wall 162 being slightly offset to the north along its northern circuit.

Assuming that rubble 113 represented the south-west limit of Building 2, it seems likely that the building began as a single roomed structure, c. 6m square, bounded by wall 162. The addition of a room (represented by wall 161) at the north-east end of the building, doubled the size of this building. This may have been contemporary with the addition of a verandah or corridor along the building's eastern edge.



Figure 10.
Plan of Building 3.

Building 3

Building 3 was only partially revealed in the excavation, the north-western and south-western sides of the structure continuing beyond the limits of excavation. Minimum dimensions for the structure of some 19m x 17m can be inferred, however from those parts that were exposed (Fig. 10; Pl. 4). The alignment of the building was noted as being slightly at variance with that of Buildings 1 and 2.

Although no part of Building 3 was excavated to examine its construction it was clear that only the lower parts of the foundations, consisting of limestone fragments, had survived and these were seen cut into natural strata. Only in one small area was there any evidence for coursed facing stone surviving. In some places, particularly at the north-east of the building, plough damage was so severe that parts of the wall lines had been completely removed and are consequently only inferred. Robbing of part of a wall (inner north-west) was evidenced by the absence of any stone in the wall surfaces associated with the building survived.

As well as being the largest building revealed at the excavations Building 3 also displayed the most complex ground plan. The major surviving elements consisted of two parallel walls both approximately 0.8m wide and spaced some 2.8m apart. Parts of two further walls on the same alignment and of similar width were observed in the north-east area of the building and were located some 1m away from the two (internal?) walls. Only a short stretch of these two latter walls were seen and it is not certain if they continue further to the south-west. Set at right angles to the four described walls were two further walls, one that formed the north-east end of Building 3 and the other that is likely to have formed an internal division.

No evidence was found to indicate a sequence to the series of walls and it is possible that all of the elements are contemporary and of one phase. Although not fully revealed it may be that Building 3 originally consisted of a series of rooms contained within the two inner parallel walls with the outer walls forming an access corridor.

The absence of features within Building 3 together with a low density of finds makes concise interpretation of the function of the structure untenable.

Archaeological features north-east of Building 3

The north-eastern part of the excavation lacked the buildings and associated rubble deposits encountered over much of the site, and was characterised by a series of cut features (Fig. 11). The most southerly of these was a north-west by south-east aligned ditch, that served to separate this area from the rest of the buildings.

The remainder of the features consisted of a number of small pits that produced a limited amount of pottery and bone assemblages. A larger sub-rectangular pit, context 90, produced a sample of charred grain, in what appears to be the south-western end of an enclosure. This enclosure appeared to have a narrow entrance and one of the ditches has clearly been recut, context 86, possibly on more than one occasion.

Pottery recovered from this part of the site suggests that most if not all of the activity relates to the Romano-British period.

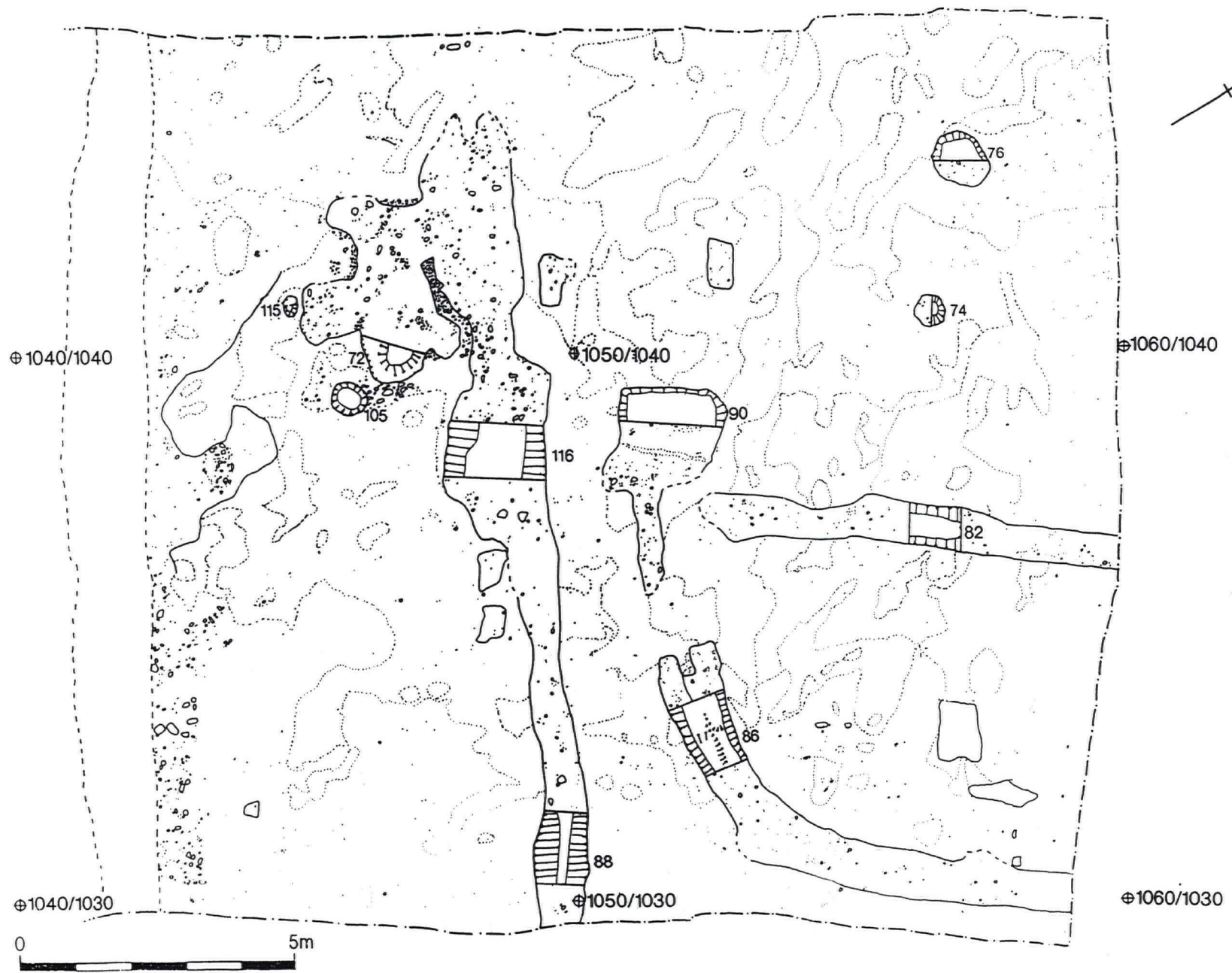


Figure 11.

Plan of area north-east of Building 3 and features 72, 74, 76, 82, 86, 88, 90, 105, 115 and 116.

Conclusions

The circumstances of the excavation were not ideal and as much information was gained in the time allowed. The extent of the archaeology is unknown and the nature and use of the buildings can only be postulated at this stage.

Building 1 measured 18.5m by 7m and was constructed in unmortared limestone. A doorway was located 11m from the northern corner on the north-eastern side of the building, and door fittings were also recovered. The amount of metal finds suggests possible industrial activity. Coins and pottery found dated from the 2nd century.

Five cremations were located at the north-western corner of Building 1. One cremation was deposited in a mid 3rd century Nene Valley colour coated ware indented beaker.

Building 2 measured c. 10m by 6m, and was constructed in several phases. Pottery from this building dated from the 2nd to early 3rd century. Two infant burials were revealed in the foundation cuts of this building.

The area located north-east of Building 3 was characterised by a series of cut features. A north-west to south-east aligned ditch served to separate this area from the buildings. The remainder of the features were a series of small pits, producing little pottery or animal bone. A large sub-rectangular pit produced a large quantities of burnt grain and appeared to be the south western end of a small enclosure. Pottery recovered suggests a Romano-British date for these features.

This site has enormous archaeological potential, revealing previously unknown Roman buildings in this area of Malton. It also raises the question whether this activity extends to the fort. No Crambeck or Huntscliffe ware was located on site and a general date of 2nd and 3rd century can be assigned to it.

The limited evaluation work at the site has produced as very interesting flint assemblage composed of both tools and waste. Flint used for these artefact is predominantly of the local Wolds type but there is also a high occurrence within this small assemblage of high quality flint.

The limited excavation of the investigations was such as not to allow definition of any earlier occupation on the site and considering the flint assemblage and the indication of prehistoric pottery occurring within the pottery assemblage it would appear that prehistoric use of the site prior to Roman occupation should not be ruled out. The occurrence of a spring line to the south of the site and the presence of the River Derwent would have provided good reliable sources of water and the light nature of the soils would have had a considerable influence on choosing such an area for settlement in the prehistoric period.

Previous work to the west of the site has shown that this area was utilised in the Neolithic through to the Iron Age as illustrated by stray finds during the construction of the Railway line in the 19th century (Channon 1865) and work on the drainage of the area to the south of Orchard Fields (Robinson 1978). In addition excavations within the Fort (Corder and Kirk 1932) and the vicus (Wenham 1974) have also suggested the presence of earlier occupation prior to Roman occupation.

Crambeck comes into production at the end of the 3rd century and continues to 5th century A.D.

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