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**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**Ellis Patents, High Street, Rillington,  
North Yorkshire**

**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at Ellis Patents,  
High Street, Rillington, North Yorkshire.**

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## Introduction

This report sets out the results of a Watching Brief conducted at the Ellis Patents Factory, which is to the east of High Street, Rillington parish, North Yorkshire (SE 85607418) (Fig. 1). The site lies at an elevation of c.35m, on level land with well-drained soils overlying drift deposits of glaciofluvial sands and gravels.

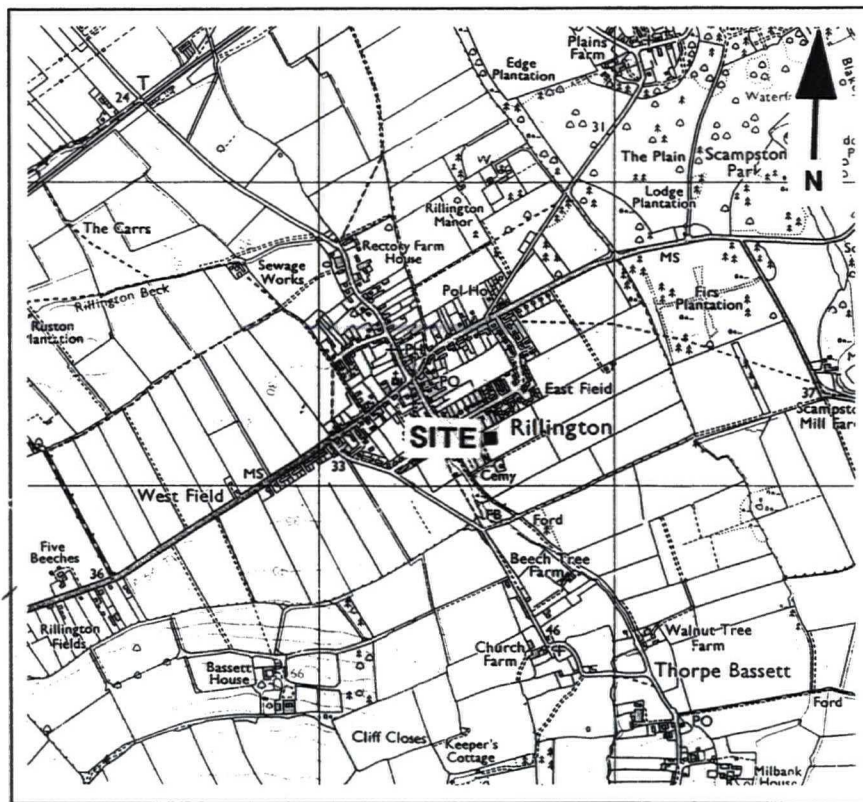


Figure 1.  
Site Location Map. Scale 1:25000.

A planned extension on land east of the existing Ellis Patents factory was identified by the County Archaeology Section to be in a potentially archaeologically sensitive area. The sensitivity lay in that the site was situated c.150m west of a major concentration of Iron Age cropmarks in East Field. The East Field site shows features of both funerary and domestic nature, scheduled as County Monument No. NY1117. Limited excavations took place in advance of housing development west of the scheduled monument and c.200m north of the Ellis Patents site, revealing both Iron Age and Anglian features (Turnbull 1983).

Following the identification of the site's potential sensitivity, MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. was approached by the site's owners to formalise an archaeological Scheme of Works. A magnetometer survey was arranged, and was carried out by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford. The survey was hampered by the presence of a car park which proved to be situated over the only part of the factory extension where archaeological features were revealed. The negative results of the survey led to a Watching Brief condition being placed, rather than calling for evaluation or open area excavation.

The Watching Brief was carried out over four days during the first week of September 1994 by the writer (M R Stephens). The work was funded by Ellis Patents, with the full cooperation of the contractors, A & D Sturdy of Rillington.

Figure 1 is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Licence No. AL50453A.

## Methods

Two stages of work were carried out in the field. The first stage involved the monitoring of topsoil stripping, which did not penetrate the colluvial layer (Context 2) and hence did not affect any archaeological deposits.

The second stage of fieldwork involved the observation of the excavation of each of the eighteen stanchion holes, plus service runs at the north-west of the factory extension (Fig. 2). These excavations were carried out by a JCB excavator using a toothless ditching bucket on its rear actor. The opportunity was taken to hand excavate the archaeological features to the depth to which they were to be affected by the stanchion holes.

All relevant plans and sections were drawn, and a photographic record taken in monochrome.

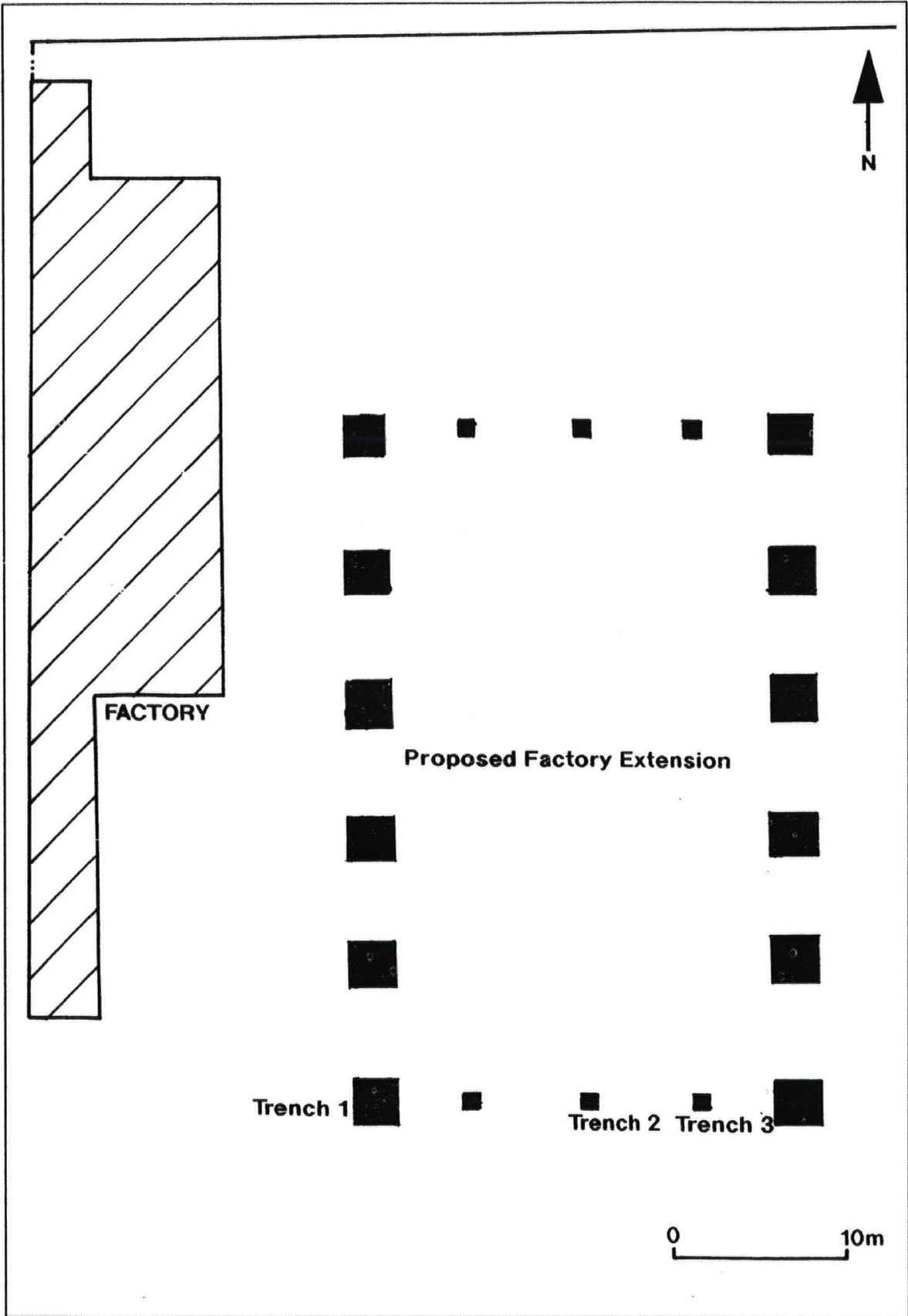


Figure 2.  
Site Location Plan.



## Results

Only three stanchion holes revealed archaeological deposits, all situated on the southernmost row. For the purposes of recording, the three productive trenches were labelled 1, 2 and 3; all the other trenches were not numbered.

Trench 1 was 2.5m square; Trenches 2 and 3 were 1m square.

The entire site was overlain by a deposit of dark brown silty sand (context 2), which became deeper towards the northern end of the site, where it reached a depth of c.40cm. Context 2 contained a struck flint waste flake (Appendix 2).

### Trench 1 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Trench 1 was situated at the south-west corner of the factory extension. Two intercutting features (?pit cuts, contexts 12 and 14) were present at the southern baulk of the trench, and a further feature (context 16) was present at the western baulk.

?Pit cut (context 14) was severely truncated by the later feature, context 12. Context 14 was c.35cm deep, and had a flat base and a steep / vertical northern edge. The fill was a yellowish-brown silty sand (context 13).

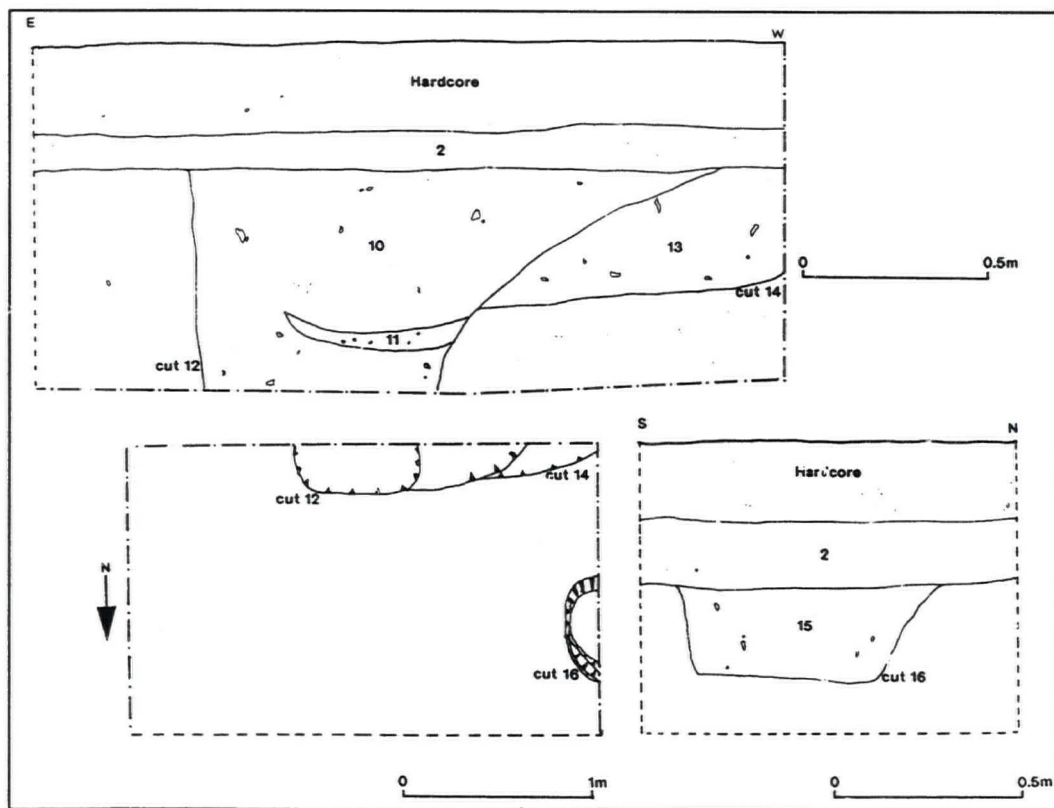


Figure 3.  
Trench 1. Plan and Sections.



The pit or posthole, context 12, was 1.4m wide at the top, narrowing down to 60cm towards the base; the depth was at least 56cm. Context 12 was vertically edged on its eastern side, but the top of the western edge was more gradual, presumably because it had slumped into the softer fill of 14 (context 13) through which it had cut. The base of the cut remained unexcavated as the bottom of the trench had reached its required depth. Context 10 filled the bulk of cut 12, and was a dark yellowish-brown silty sand. Context 10 contained four calcite-gritted sherds and two animal bone fragments (Appendix 2). A lens of yellowish-brown silty sand (context 11) probably represented slumping of material from context 13 into the feature.

Context 16 was a pit-like feature which cut into the natural sands and gravels. Context 16 appeared to have a sub-circular plan, being 70cm wide at the top, narrowing to 50cm at the flat base, with a depth of 25cm. The southern edges were steep / vertical; the upper part of the northern edge fell at c.45 degrees for half its depth, before becoming much steeper. Cut 16 was filled by a dark yellowish-brown gravelly, silty sand (context 15), which contained six animal bone fragments.

#### Trench 2 (Figs. 2 and 4)

A pit or posthole (context 5) was present cutting into the natural sand and gravel at the north-east corner of the trench. This feature was apparently sub-circular with a diameter of 45cm. The edges were steep / vertical and the base was slightly rounded. The depth was 47cm. There were two fills, contexts 3 and 4. Context 4 was the lowermost fill, consisting of dark yellowish-brown gravelly medium sand. Context 3 occupied the remainder of the cut, existing as brown / dark brown silty sand. Context 3 contained two calcite-gritted sherds (Appendix 2).

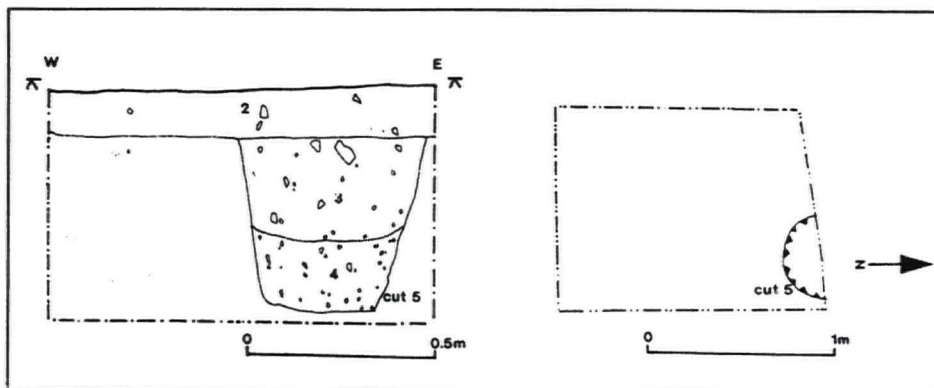


Figure 4.  
Trench 2. Plan and Section.

#### Trench 3 (Figs. 2 and 5)

Approximately 40% of Trench 3 was taken up by the cut of a pit, context 9. This pit was at least 1.2m wide and 50cm deep. The edges present in the trench, ie. the eastern and northern, fell at c.75 degrees towards the base which lay deeper than the base of the trench. There were three fills. Context 7 filled the bulk of the revealed

part of the pit, and was a light yellowish-brown silty sand, which yielded a single calcite-gritted sherd (Appendix 2). Context 8 formed a lens of dark yellowish-brown silty coarse sand within 7. Context 6 was the latest fill in the pit, consisting of dark yellowish brown silty coarse sand.

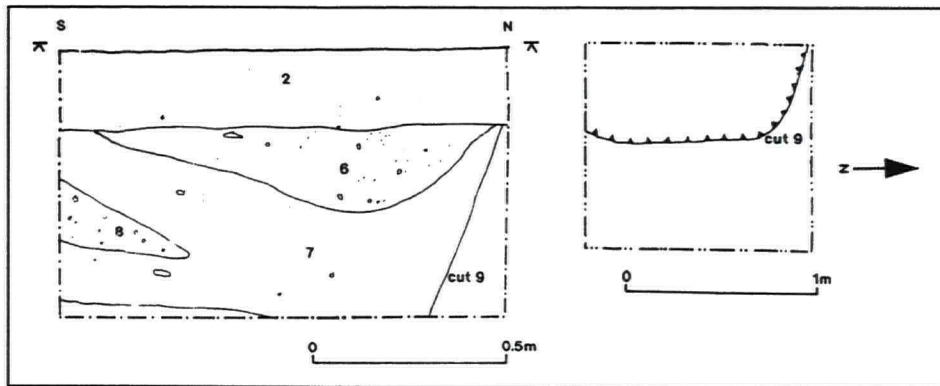


Figure 5.  
Trench 3. Plan and Section.

## Discussion

The archaeological features clearly form a cluster at the south-west corner of the site. The features would appear to be of domestic origin, with pits and postholes being represented, and that factor coupled with the relatively heavy density of features argues for an occupation site at or close by the site. To the east of the factory extension, the magnetometer survey identified two pit-like anomalies which were interpreted at the time as being probably of modern origin; in retrospect, these features could relate to those revealed during the Watching Brief.

The 1980 excavations at Rillington (Turnbull 1983) took place within an apparent multi-ditched enclosure. The Ellis Patents site lies outside that enclosure but apparently represents (?unenclosed) domestic activity away from the major focus of sites known from cropmarks on aerial photographs, including the aforesaid enclosure. The two sites would seem to be broadly contemporary, with a similar Iron Age ceramic tradition of hand-made, thick-walled, heavily calcite-gritted vessels present at both sites. At West Heslerton, 7km east of Rillington, major archaeological excavations took place on a site of similar date. Aerial photographs in the County Sites and Monuments Register at Northallerton show that a 'ladder settlement' (ie. a line of ditched enclosures linked by trackways) extends along the northern scarp of the Wolds from the Sherburn area in the east to Scagglethorpe in the west. The Ellis Patents factory lies c.400m south of the assumed line of the 'ladder', which is represented in the Rillington area by the cropmarks of trackways and enclosures northwest of the village (SMR 3449), as well as the East Field scheduled site. The Ellis Patents site is thus set within a large landscape of Iron Age sites and features.

In conclusion, although the archaeological observations at the Ellis Patents site were of limited scope, they established that a series of domestic features were present at the south of the factory extension. How this activity relates spatially to the major focus of contemporary domestic and funerary cropmark sites situated c.150m to the north-east remains unclear.

## References

- Turnbull, P 1983 Excavations at Rillington, 1980. *YAJ* 55: 1-10.
- Powlesland D, with Haughton C and Hanson J 1981 Excavations at Heslerton, North Yorkshire, 1977-82. *Archaeol. J.* 143: 53-173.

## Appendix 1 - Context List

Context	Description
1	Topsoil; 10 YR 3/2, sandy loam
2	Colluvium; 7.5 YR 3/4, silty sand
3	Upper fill of 5; 10 YR 4/3, silty sand
4	Lower fill of 5; 10YR 4/6, medium sand
5	Pit / posthole cut
6	Upper fill of 9; 10 YR 4/6 silty coarse sand
7	Fill of 9; 10 YR 6/4, silty sand
8	Fill of 9; 10 YR 4/6, silty coarse sand
9	Pit cut
10	Fill of 12; 10 YR 4/6, silty sand
11	Fill of 12; 10 YR 5/4, silty sand
12	Pit / posthole cut
13	Fill of 14; 10 YR 5/4, silty sand
14	?Pit cut
15	Fill of 16; 10 YR 4/6, gravelly, silty sand
16	?Pit cut



## Appendix 2 - Finds Catalogue

Context	Description
2	1 flint waste flake, grey patina, cortex remnants
3	2 calcite-gritted sherds, incl. 1 heavily gritted, hand-made base sherd 2 animal bone frags.
7	1 calcite-gritted body sherd
10	3 calcite-gritted body sherds 2 animal bone frags., incl. 1 juvenile sheep mandible
15	6 animal bone frags.