

Figure 3, Jeffrey's Map of Ripon showing The Market Place, 1772



Figure 5, 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of Ripon, showing the Market Place, 1854

5. THE EXCAVATION

The modern concrete Market Place surface was removed by mechanical means. Any further modern deposits were removed, under constant archaeological supervision, by machine using a toothless bucket. All archaeological deposits were carefully excavated by hand and were recorded at a scale of 1:20 using a single context planning system and following the procedures in the York Archaeological Trust Context Recording Manual (1996). All significant archaeological features, deposits and structures were recorded in section at a scale of 1:10, and were photographed using colour print film; where appropriate soil sampling was implemented to recover environmental evidence.

The excavation took place during a period of extreme rainfall in the area. During the excavation of Trench 4 these conditions made it impossible to ensure that deposits would not be contaminated by later material washed in from the sections of the trench. Following consultation with the North Yorkshire Heritage Unit the two earliest contexts in this trench were excavated over approximately a third of the trench rather than in full, allowing the recovery of the archaeological sequence whilst minimising the risk of contamination.

The levels in this report were calculated from the bench mark on the obelisk which has the value 39.70m AOD.

A survey station used by Mouchel North Yorkshire located on a temporary traffic island at the north eastern corner of the Market Place has the nominal value of 106.005m. The value of this point is 39.15m AOD. The AOD levels in this report can be converted to match Mouchel's nominal survey levels if the figure of 66.855m is added to the level Above Ordnance Datum.

5.1 TRENCH 1

Naturally deposited sand (1006) was encountered c. 0.70m below the ground surface at between 38.53m – 38.42m AOD. Within the upper 0.10 – 0.20m of this material charcoal flecks were observed and were interpreted as the result of biological contamination since below this depth the deposit (1007) appeared to be “clean” naturally deposited sand. The upper surface of this deposit was compacted, possibly as a result of the laying of a pebble/cobble surface (1005) immediately above it, although it is possible that it had formed an earlier surface.

The earliest archaeological context encountered was a surface that comprised a single layer of pebbles and small cobbles (1005), ranging in size between c.3cm and c.10cm in diameter and forming a compact surface (at c.38.50m AOD, c.0.60m below ground surface) which followed the slightly undulating natural topography. A single piece of tile was the only artefact recovered from this surface and therefore it is not possible to give a date for its deposition, although it will be of an earlier date than the overlying material which can be dated to between 1350-1450. Stratigraphically above the pebble/cobble surface was a dump of loose silty sand (1004) from 0.10m – 0.20m deep. Although this material included some large cobbles these did not seem to have formed a surface. Animal bone was found to be relatively well preserved. The pottery from this deposit, which mainly comprised fragments of cooking vessels dated from c.1350 – 1450, most likely from the beginning of this period. It included some large unabraded fragments, suggesting that 1004 may have been a primary dump at this location. The glaze on several of the fragments was of poor quality, and this might be an indication that the dump included kiln waste although with so small a sample of material this cannot be taken as certain.

The height (38.77m AOD, c.0.35m below ground surface) at which context (1004) was encountered represents the highest point at which archaeological deposits survive in this area of the Market Place. Above it was a layer of redeposited glacial sands and gravels (1002) found to have been used as a levelling deposit for a cobble surface represented by a few large cobbles (1001) which remained *in situ*. Sealing them was the concrete (1000) which forms the present surface of the Market Place (c.39.10m AOD).

5.2 TRENCH 2

Glacially deposited red/brown sand with small lenses of compact pink clay (2003) was encountered at c.38.76m AOD, c.0.30m below ground surface. Environmental contamination was observed in the top c.0.40m of the deposit where lines of worm action had introduced charcoal and pockets of pea grit; at a greater depth the deposit appeared to be “clean” glacially deposited material (2004) and it was observed to continue to a depth of at least 37.81m AOD, c.1.26m below ground surface.

One feature had been cut through the natural deposits from a depth of c.38.76m AOD, c.0.30m below ground surface. This feature, a construction cut (1002), was located in the south west corner of the trench, and was observed to extend beyond the southern edge of excavation. Within the area of excavation the cut measured 1.10m x 1m; its sides broke sharply from the surface and sloped almost vertically to a rounded base c.1.13m deep. It was backfilled with loose silty sand which included large cobbles and some fragments of post medieval brick. This construction cut may have been for a stanchion or other feature associated with a relatively modern structure in the market place, or possibly with the obelisk. The edge of the lowest step of the plinth to the obelisk lay c.0.70m from the construction cut, which continued obliquely towards the obelisk. The backfill of the cut was sealed by c.0.20m of concrete and make-up (2000) which formed the present surface of the Market Place (c.39.07m AOD).

5.3 TRENCH 3

Glacially deposited red/brown sand (3002) was encountered at c.38.28m AOD, c.0.30m below ground surface. Approximately 0.25m below the surface of this material its composition changed to mixed pebbles and cobbles in a matrix of sand (3003). Above this glacially deposited material was a deposit c.0.15m thick of yellow/brown sand and pebbles (3001) which may have been redeposited natural used as a levelling deposit for the concrete surface of the Market Place (3000) (c.38.62m AOD). No archaeological deposits were encountered within this trench.

5.4 TRENCH 4

Naturally deposited sand (4007) was encountered c.0.60m below the ground surface at 38.40m AOD. The upper surface of this deposit was compacted and this may have been a result of the laying of a pebble/cobble surface (4006) immediately above it, although it is also possible that it had formed an earlier surface.

The earliest archaeological context encountered was a surface that comprised a single layer of pebbles and small cobbles (4006), ranging in size from c.3cm to c.10cm in diameter with occasional larger cobbles which was compacted into the underlying material at c.38.50m AOD. This material appeared to be similar to that found in Trench 1 (1005) and may represent part of an extensive surface for an earlier Market Place. Since the same deposit was not encountered

within the two southernmost evaluation trenches this earlier market place may not have extended as far south as its modern successor.

Stratigraphically above the pebble/cobble surface (4006) was a deposit which comprised - cobbles of various sizes, pebbles and fragments of limestone in a matrix of silty sand (4005) between 0.10m - 0.15m deep. This material appeared to have formed a cobble surface at c.38.62m AOD, c.0.30m below modern ground level. A quantity of animal bone fragments was recovered from 4005, much of which may have derived from butchery waste. Some iron slag was also found along with a few small pieces of pottery which were dated to the period between 1350 and 1400.

Stratigraphically above (4005) were a small posthole and associated slot for a ground beam (4004) which were located in the south west corner of the trench. The data recovered from so small an area is not sufficient to inform an interpretation of the likely function or form of the structure, but the presence of these features indicates the existence of a timber structure within the area of the Market Place in the later medieval period.

These features were backfilled (4003) and sealed by the remains of a surface of large cobbles (4002) recorded at c.0.30m, below ground surface, c.38.70m AOD. No dating evidence was recovered from this surface. Above it was c.0.20m depth of mixed dumps of levelling (4001), which included fragments of clay pipe stems. Sealing this was the modern concrete Market Place surface (4000) (c.39.00m AOD).

6. Ceramic Building Materials

6.1 Introduction

Two contexts were submitted for examination. The material is of medieval and post medieval in date.

6.2 Medieval Material

The medieval roofing material comprises plain tile. Plain tile can take the form of either nib tile or peg tile, or a combination of both. In this case, peg tile is present. There is one fragment of peg tile with a circular peg hole. It may be one of two pegholes in the tile as it is located in one corner.

There is one fragment of green glazed plain tile in a pale yellow-orange fabric. Material similar to this was found in the Ripon Deanery Gardens Excavations and may be from the Winksley kilns (Garside-Neville 1997, 145-6). The Winksley kilns are thought to be mid 13th century in date.

The rest of the plain tile has a red fabric, very different from the glazed piece. It may be later in date.

6.3 Post medieval material

The two bricks from context 2001 are probably post medieval in date as suggested by their measurements, fabrics and manufacturing traits. The bricks are slop moulded, where the mould was rinsed in water, and sand was not added. One of the bricks has a turning mark on the base, where the brick was removed from the maker's bench.

6.4 Conclusion

The sample points to a medieval phasing of building on the site (perhaps ceramic roofing and timber-framed building), followed by a post medieval brick building.

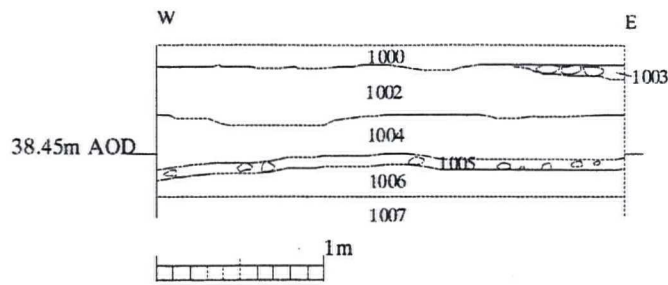
The sample should be retained for further study. At that point, the material should be fully recorded by a recognised ceramic building materials specialist. The information gathered will then be able to contribute to the study of building works in Ripon, and also to ceramic building materials in a wider context, such as regionally or nationally.

Reference

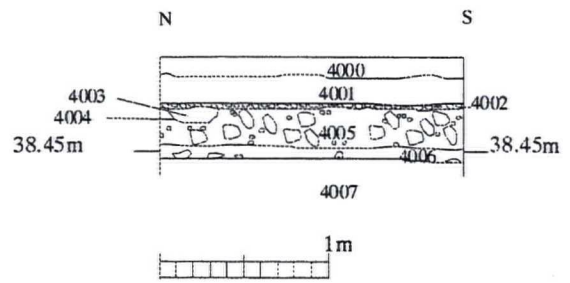
Garside-Neville S. 1997 'Ceramic building material', in Whyman M, 1997. 'Excavations in Deanery Gardens and Low St Agnesgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire' *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 69, 145-146

6.5 Context Listing

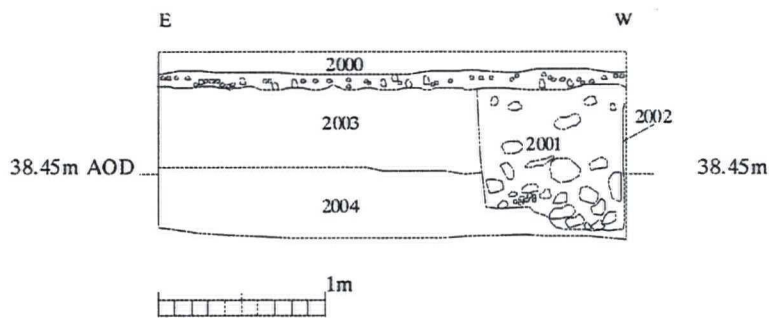
Cxt	Farm	Bre	Thi	Comments	Date range	Spot date
1004	Plain		14	Green glaze, pale fabric	mid 13th	13-16th
1004	Plain			x 14 frags, red fabric	13-16th	
1004	Peg		16	Circular peghole in corner (one of two?)	13-16th	
2001	Brick	112	50	Slop moulded, fine sand on base	16-18th	16-18th
2001	Brick	117	56	Slop moulded, turning mark, fine sanding on base	16-18th	



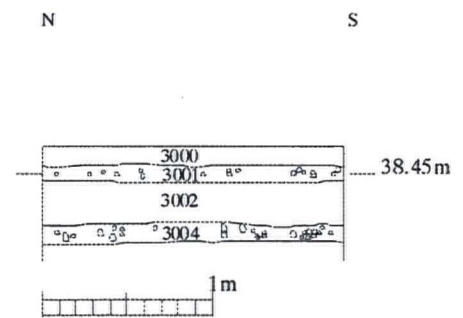
South Facing Section, Trench 1



West Facing Section, Trench 4



North Facing Section, Trench 2



West Facing Section, Trench 3

Figure 6, Sections Through Evaluation Trenches 1-4

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The sequences of deposition recovered from the evaluation trenches suggest that medieval deposits with a depth of 0.25m – 0.35m survived in the northern part of the Market Place and that they are likely to be encountered to a depth of c.0.30m – 0.35m below ground surface. The earliest deposit was a surface of pebbles and cobbles which appeared in both Trenches 1 and 4, but not in Trenches 2 and 3. Further investigation would be required to establish if there had been truncation of deposits in the southern part of the area or whether the extent of the early cobble surfaces defined a smaller market place in the medieval period. It was not possible to date this surface, but the overlying material dated to the period 1350 – 1450. This material comprised dumped deposits of different character in Trenches 1 and 4, together with (in Trench 4) a post hole and slot which were elements of a timber structure, probably of later medieval date. Later cobble surfaces and post medieval and modern levelling deposits were found immediately beneath the modern concrete surface of the Market Place. It appears that well preserved, undisturbed but vulnerable deposits survived close to the modern ground surface. These may have the potential to address some of the important issues surrounding the development of the town, the establishment of a market place in the medieval period, the medieval and post medieval use of the market and the development of buildings and structures within its boundary.

8. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Similar, but not identical, stratigraphic sequences were recorded in Trenches 1 and 4, which were located in the northern part of the Market Place. In these trenches medieval remains were located at 0.30m – 0.35m below ground surface and survived to a depth of c.0.60m – 0.70m below ground surface. No medieval deposits were found in the southernmost trenches (2 and 3). This clearly demonstrates that archaeological survival in the Market Place is not uniform, and suggests that medieval deposits are most likely to survive in the northern part of the square, with a depth of between 0.30m – 0.40m. On the basis of the evaluation trenches it is not possible to determine the precise extents of these deposits. Further investigation would be required to establish if there had been truncation of medieval deposits in the southern part of the area.

Elements of a timber structure were recorded in Trench 4, which probably dated to the later medieval period, but understanding of the form, character, and significance of such evidence can potentially only be achieved with a larger area excavation. The condition of the pottery fragments

within context (1004) may indicate the dumping of waste from a kiln in the nearby locality, but a larger sample of material is required to address this question. Likewise, dating evidence for the earliest surviving surface was not recovered from the small evaluated areas, but might be recovered if a larger area was examined.

Archaeological deposits are not present in great depth but it would appear that undisturbed medieval deposits here have the potential to address some of the important questions associated with the development of Ripon and specifically its Market Place. In addition further light may be shed on local pottery production and on other crafts practiced in the area. The proposed refurbishment work of the Market Place will be potentially damaging to a considerable area where the evaluation trenches have indicated a very good potential for the survival of medieval deposits of archaeological significance.

Further archaeological work is likely to be a requirement and if this is the case it could allow an unprecedented opportunity for a large area to be examined in the heart of the medieval town. The depth of deposition is relatively shallow and thus the likely volume of deposits requiring excavation could be dealt with, even over large areas, relatively quickly. The archaeology of an open space like a Market Place can best be understood by open area rather than keyhole excavation. While there are clearly constraints on the size of area which could be open at any one time, it is strongly recommended that a strategy should be adopted which allowed for large portions of the deposits to be examined at any one time to achieve the full potential of these archaeological deposits.