

YORK



ARCHAEOLOGICAL
TRUST

**MINSTER CLOSE,
RIPON,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**



**2001 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 27**

**MINSTER CLOSE,
RIPON, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

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**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF**

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ABSTRACT

In early April 2001 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief during the planting of three trees at Minster Close, Ripon. A single context in hole 2, context 2001, is likely to represent an in-situ archaeological deposit; possibly a demolition or dump layer. All other materials relate to extant topsoils and pulverised roots.

Additionally, it was noted that a tree immediately behind Abbot Huby's Wall in the grounds of The Old Deanery, a short distance to the west of the observed works, may soon impinge upon the structural integrity of the wall.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 6th April 2001 York Archaeological Trust maintained an archaeological watching brief during the planting of three young trees at Minster Close, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR: SE 315 712, Figure 1, Site location map; Figure 2, Works location plan). The planting was carried out subsequent to the authorized felling of four sycamore trees, the grinding of their stumps, and the thinning out of the crown of a further sycamore. The Minster Close is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Monument Number NY 1282) and the tree works were carried out subject to Scheduled Monument Consent with the proviso that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained. The felling and planting works were carried out by Four Seasons Tree Services on behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Ripon Cathedral. The site records are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Harrogate Museums Accession Code HARGM:10658.

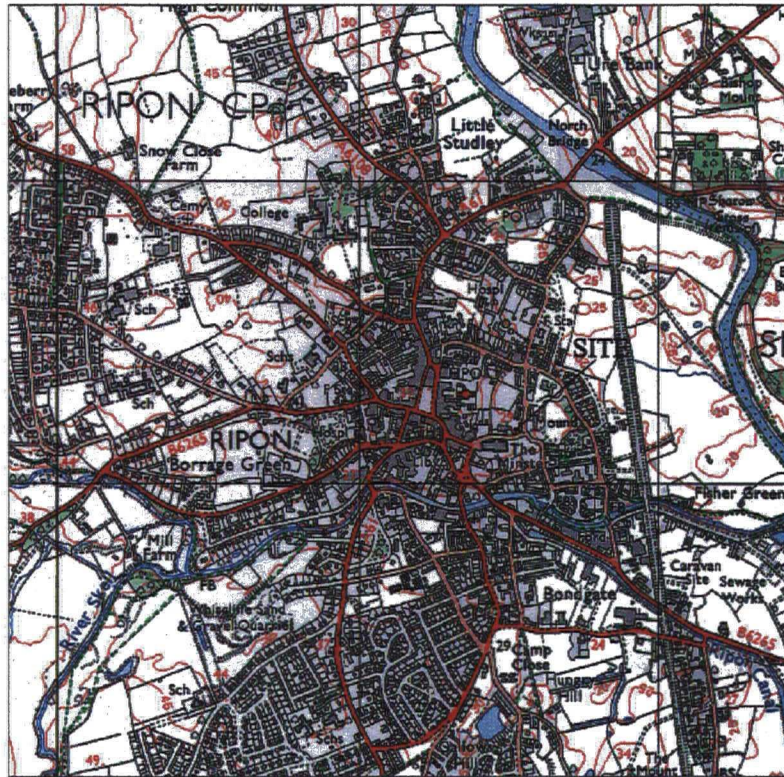
The site lies immediately to the north-east of the east end of the cathedral adjacent to Minster Road. A drift geology of periglacial sands and gravels overlies a solid geology magnesian limestone and Permian mudstones (Geological Survey 1979).

The three tree holes, which were sub-circular in shape and manually excavated, measured 0.60m - 0.70m across and up to 0.32m deep. After the trees were planted two wooden stakes were driven around 0.50m deep to either side of each tree and wired together to provide support. The position of the tree holes was plotted on a 1:1250 map of the area by an archaeologist and an annotated scale section of each hole was drawn in a site notebook. A series of colour print photographs were taken during the course of the works.

2. BRIEF BACKGROUND

An archaeological desk-top study has recently been prepared for the Old Deanery area of Ripon, which incorporates the site under consideration. For a fuller background to the archaeology and history of the vicinity the reader is referred to this work (Finlayson 2000).

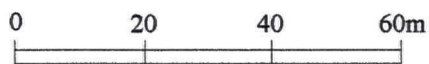
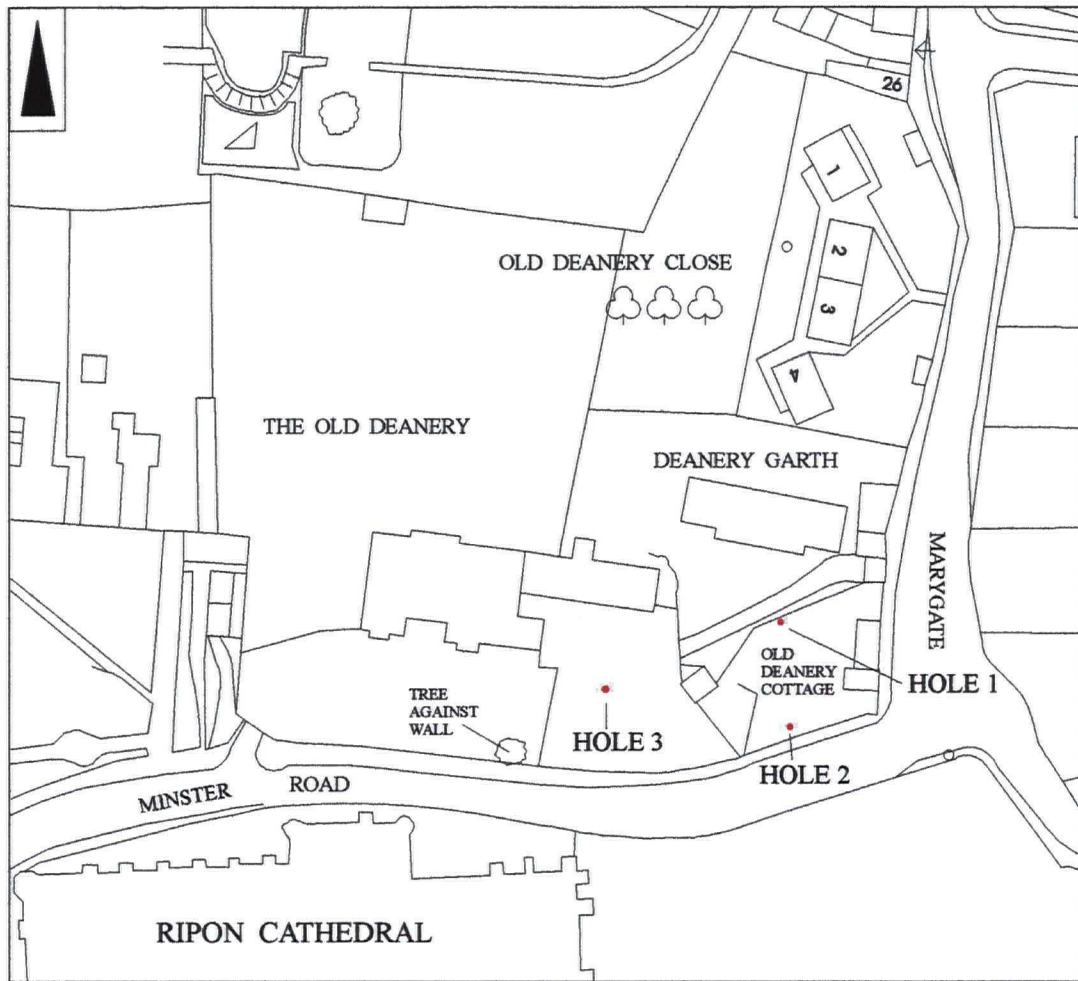
Ripon was and remains an important ecclesiastical centre. The site lies within the ecclesiastical precinct and close to the cathedral, a fine medieval edifice that contains the important 7th century Wilfridian crypt. An archaeological excavation was carried out within the Minster Close in the later 1970's and subsequently reported in 1997 (Whyman 1997). This work uncovered traces of settlement in the form of timber buildings and garderobes dating from the 11th century onwards.



Scale 1:25 000

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Figure 1, Site location map



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Figure 2, Works location plan

Two geophysical surveys were carried out in the close in 1999 to the west of the tree planting areas. These surveys suggested the possibility of survival of a number of medieval - post-medieval features (YAT, 2000). A tall and stoutly built wall, constructed primarily of limestone ashlar bounds the site on the south and east sides. Known as Abbot Huby's Wall, this boundary is thought to date to c.1500 but may contain fabric of an earlier date (Finlayson 2000).

3. RESULTS

3.1 Hole 1

The newly excavated tree hole 1 was dug to a depth of 0.30m only as large roots were present beyond this depth. All material removed proved to be a dark greyish brown, friable loam, context 1001; this forming the extant topsoil. A single small piece of animal bone (not retained) was recovered from the topsoil.

3.2 Hole 2

Extending from the base of the trench (0.32m below ground level) up to a depth of 0.27m a mid greyish brown, moderately compact, clayey loam, context 2001, was observed. This contained frequent small cobbles, moderate sub-angular limestone fragments up to 0.07m in size and occasional small fragments of brick/tile. This deposit, which was clearly not of a natural origin, may form part of a demolition or dumped layer. A deposit of dark greyish brown, friable, loam, context 2002, sealed 2001. Two fragments of animal bone (not retained) were noted within this material. Context 2002 represents the extant topsoil and can be equated with 1001 in hole 1.

3.3 Hole 3

Hole 3 was located in an area that had contained one of the felled trees. All material from this hole, was comprised of a mixture of pulverised roots and the churned up dark coloured loam topsoil, context 3001. No finds or features were noted in the area of hole 3.

3.4 Further observation

It was noted at the time of the visit that a mature tree immediately north of Abbot Huby's Wall in the grounds of The Old Deanery, now a hotel, may soon give some cause for concern. The trunk of this tree lies within a few millimetres of the scheduled wall. It is likely that in a short period of time this tree will cause structural damage to the monument.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Only a single context, 2001, in Hole 2, is likely to represent in-situ archaeological deposit; possibly a demolition or dump layer. All other materials relate to extant topsoil's and pulverised roots.

It was noted that a tree immediately behind Abbot Huby's Wall in the grounds of The Old Deanery immediately to the west of the observed works, may soon impinge upon the structural integrity of the wall.

5. LIST OF SOURCES

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Field Report Number 64
- Geological Survey 1979 Geological Survey of Great Britain 1:625000
- Whyman, M., 1997 Excavations in Deanery Gardens and Low St Agnesgate, Ripon.
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6. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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