

Figure 8 East Facing Sections through Trenches 1-3

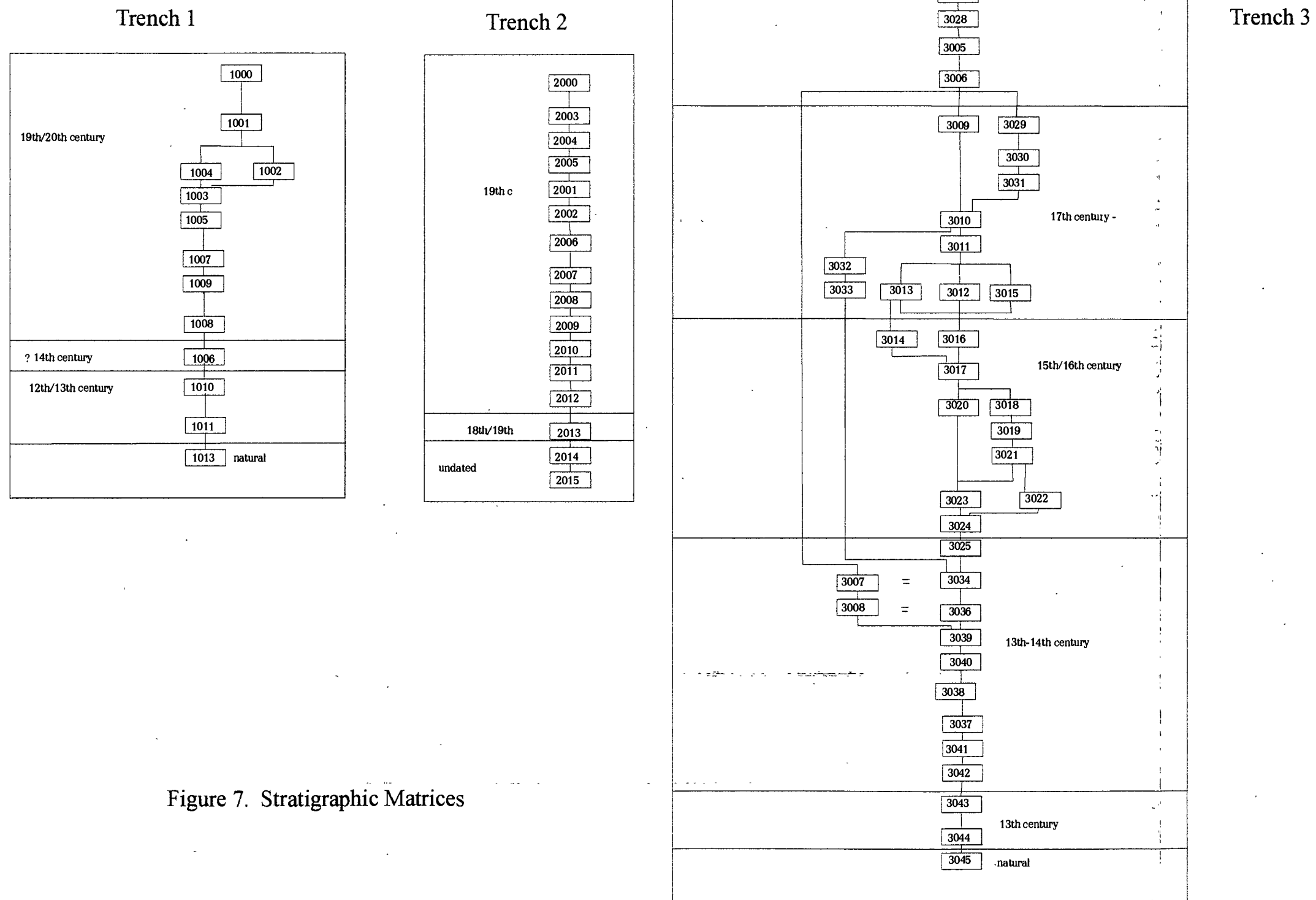


Figure 7. Stratigraphic Matrices

The remaining contexts in this trench relate to the disposal of waste in relatively recent times. The north side of a pit (1008) was visible at the southern edge of excavation and was recorded to a maximum width of 0.50m narrowing to c.0.20m with depth. The base of the feature was not reached due to depth restrictions. Its fills suggested that the pit was used for the disposal of industrial waste. It contained a clayey sand (1009), loose black very fine grained powdery sand (1007) and a more mixed deposit of sandy clay (1005). 1009 contained a significant quantity of butchers' waste and was probably the discarded waste from an adjoining pie factory which ceased to function in the recent past. 1007 was the same material as 1001 and is likely to be an industrial waste product (see below). Pit 1008 was sealed by overlying dumps comprising a clay sand (1003) and a mixed sand and pebbles with large brick fragments (1004). Both these deposits exhibited tip lines which sloped down from north towards the south and this material may have been intended as levelling. They were cut by a further pit (1002) which was filled with black powdery sand (1001) containing occasional pieces of lightweight clinker and lumps of the powdery material which retained a curved shape. This industrial waste product, together with context 1007, was possibly a casting sand derived from a brass foundry located in York Yard, Skellgarths and thought to have been operating during the late 19th century. The yard was cleared away in the Bedern Bank demolition in the 1950's (Ripon Civic Trust 1986, plate 30). Pit 1002 was sealed by a depth of c.0.20m - 0.50m of loose dark brown sandy silt and mixed brick/tile rubble (1001), a modern deposit which was removed by machine.

Summary

The height, 27.83m AOD, c.0.60m below ground surface, at which context 1010 was encountered represents the highest point at which medieval archaeological deposits survived at the rear of the site. This deposit followed the natural slope of the topography so that at the southern edge of the trench it was encountered c.0.95m below the ground surface. Above the *in situ* medieval material was a series of mixed dumps and pit cuts. The lowest of the dumps, context 1006, may have dated to the 14th century, but the mixed loose character of the deposit suggests that it may have been re-deposited during dumping and levelling on the site represented by the deposits and features above, which were dated to the 19th - 20th century. The two large pits were cut to a depth of c.1.35m (1002) and at least 1.50m (1008) below the ground surface truncating the medieval deposits below.

5.2 TRENCH 2 (Figures 7 and 8)

The lowest deposits encountered in this trench are interpreted as naturally deposited alluvial river silts. They were excavated within a small area central to the trench to establish their character with excavation ceasing at c.25.36m AOD. The uppermost of these deposits, a clay silt (2014) was encountered at c.2m below ground surface (c.26m AOD) and was c.0.35m deep. Beneath it, a sandy silt mottled with amorphous humic material (2015), was excavated to a depth of c.0.30m. 2014 is interpreted as ponded or river lain clay silts within a former channel of the River Skell and 2015 as an alluvial deposit within the same channel. Pebble inclusions graded from fine to coarse as depth increased. Humic content suggests that the river was being used for the disposal of rubbish. It was not possible to date these deposits as no pottery was recovered (Plate 5).

Above the alluvial material was a series of deposits which indicated that dumps in the river had been made to reclaim it to form dry land. The lowest of these was highly organic and consisted mainly of small wood/bark chippings in a dark brown silt with occasional large brick fragments, small cobbles and mortar fragments (2013). Above it (2012) was also humic but was a clayey

sand silt with occasional small pebbles and above this was (2011) which appeared to be an alluvial silt possibly formed in the slow running or stagnant water of the former course of the River Skell. These deposits were also only examined within a reduced area central to the trench. Pottery dating to the 18th/19th century was recovered from 2013 together with fragments of post-medieval tobacco pipe from 2012. Ground water was encountered at c.26m AOD.

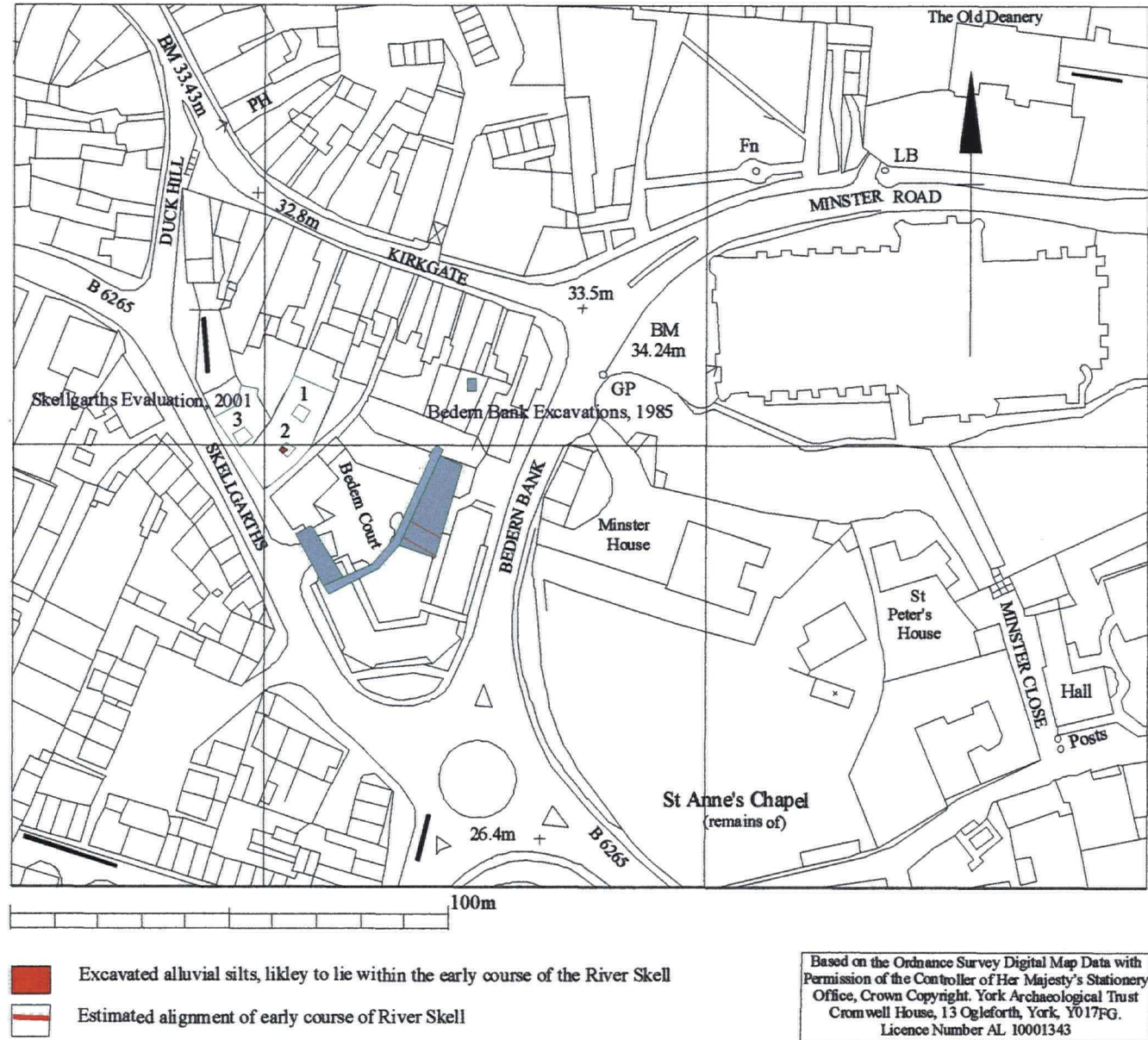
The following contexts were observed within a larger area of the trench and comprised dumped material. They consisted of loose brick rubble and mortar (2010), loose brick, tile and mortar rubble in a matrix of mid brown fine grained sand silt (2009) and small to large fragments of slag/clinker in a matrix of a powdery orange sand spotted mid - dark brown fine silt sand with occasional mortar flecks and small brick fragments (2008). They are interpreted as having been used to consolidate and level the bed of the former channel of the River Skell. 19th/20th century pottery fragments were found in context 2008 but not retained.

The levelling deposits had been cut by a pit (2007) which was backfilled with a very hard compacted concretion of ash, slag and clinker (context 2006). This material both back filled cut 2007 and appeared to have been used as a means of forming a stable consolidated surface prior to the building of wall 2001 which was constructed from this level. The wall appeared to have been built at ground level (c.27.06m AOD) and was constructed in a shallow hollow (context 2002) rather than in a significant construction cut. The wall was made up of limestone blocks, with sizes which ranged from 0.10 x 0.20 x 0.20m up to 0.20 x 0.38 x 0.20m, as well as some millstone grit blocks and occasional large cobbles bonded with a soft pinkish white mortar. The make-up included re-used masonry. A single limestone and two sandstone blocks bore traces of rendered plaster to one face. Four courses of the wall remained intact together with part of the fifth. The wall was aligned east-west and stood to a height of c.0.85m (Plate 1). Wall 2001 is likely to have been constructed in the 19th century to act as a reveting wall to stabilise and retain the substantial dumps of material (2003, 2004 & 2005) which were used to raise and level the ground surface in the vicinity of Skellgarths. These dumps, which were c.0.70m thick were loose small - large brick, tile and mortar fragments in a matrix of a loose powdery brick/tile/mortar flecked mid brown silt sand (2005), friable mid to dark brown sand silt with occasional small brick fragments and small mortar fragments (2004), loose re-deposited natural sands and gravels with occasional small brick fragments (2003). They and the remains of the wall were sealed by a further c. 0.20m depth of loosely friable dark grey brown slightly clay sand silt with occasional small concrete fragments, pebbles, grit patches and brick/tile fragments (2000) which formed the present day ground surface at c. 27.96m AOD.

Summary

Ponded or river lain silts with a humic element were seen to a depth of 0.75m and continued below the base of excavation. They are interpreted as being part of the channel of the River Skell. Immediately above these silts, from c.26m AOD, c.1.25m depth of dumped deposits, the earliest of which dated from the 18th/19th century, appear to have infilled the river channel. The remains of a stone wall were seen to have retained a further c.0.60m depth of dumped levelling deposits and these were sealed by modern material.

Figure 9, showing approximate position of the early course of the River Skell



Skelgath's, Ripon, North Yorkshire

5.3 TRENCH 3 (Figures 7 and 8)

At a depth of 1.50m below the ground surface hand excavation of this trench continued within an area c.1.50m square, stepped in from the original trench edges. Ground water was encountered at c.25.15m AOD but work continued to complete the excavation of a feature which cut through natural. Naturally deposited fine gravel pebbles and coarse grained sand (3045) was encountered c.2.36m below the ground surface at 25.15m AOD and 0.40m depth of this deposit was observed but depth constraints and the ingress of water meant that further investigations were not possible.

The earliest archaeological feature encountered was a linear feature (3044) orientated south-east/north-west (parallel to Skellgarths) which continued beyond the north, east and west facing sections and to the north was cut by 3038. It was approximately 1.40m wide and a length of c.1.20m was visible within the trench. The northern side broke gently from surface and fell steeply to a gently rounded base. Thin layers and very fine lenses of basal humic slightly clay silts (3043) suggested that cut 3044 was used intermittently for holding water. The lack of coarse particulates within the deposit suggested that it was formed by ponding or stagnation. There was also a lack of any down wash from the sides of the cut or evidence for scouring both of which also suggested either a very slow flow rate or ponded water which was allowed to soak away. The feature may be related to the mill that was located in the vicinity and it may have functioned as an infrequently used relief channel to the mill race. It seems unlikely that cut 3044 functioned as a boundary or drainage ditch due to the instability of the sands and gravels into which it was cut. The lack of any indication of slumping from the sides associated with such features was also lacking. Biological analysis of a sample from 3043 supports the interpretation of the formation of this deposit. There were abundant remains of aquatic invertebrates "representing temporary water, or pools among emergent or overhanging vegetation". The background fauna did not suggest adjacent grazing land and a single fragment of the puparium of a sheep ked may have derived from wool cleaning. While there was evidence to suggest human habitation nearby there was no evidence indicative of waste disposal in this deposit. The anaerobic condition of this deposit enabled excellent preservation of both biological evidence and of organic artefacts. The state of the fragments of a turned wooden bowl (sf 1) and wood off cut (sf 2) recovered from 3043 show that these conditions appear to have been maintained since the objects were deposited. Pottery dating from the 13th century was recovered from context 3043.

This linear feature was backfilled in one operation with a sand deposit (3042) which was also used to raise and level the ground surface by some 0.40m. Further consolidation and levelling deposits, a sand and coarse gravel and pebbles (3041) and a sandy silt with cobbles (3037) raised the level by a further 0.30m. This activity is likely to date to the 13th century as pottery of this date was recovered from both contexts 3042 and 3037 and a buckle with a buckle plate (Sf15), recovered from context 3037, had a form which confirmed the c.13th century date. A linear feature (3038) was cut from this raised level and was located immediately to the north of 3044 and followed a similar alignment. The feature continued beyond the east, west and north sides of the excavation. The southern edge of 3038 broke gently from the surface before falling steeply to a rounded bottom edge leading to a flat base with a steep sided depression towards the western limit of excavation. This feature was difficult to interpret as little direct evidence of its purpose was found within the trench. A small deposit of loose pebbles and gravel (3040) was found at the eastern side of the cut above which two further silty pebbly backfills (3039 and 3036 = 3008) were recorded but these did not suggest any specific use for the cut. Biological analysis of a sample from 3039 recovered some charred cereal grains. 14th century pottery was recovered from the later of these fills (3036).

The backfills of 3038 were sealed by a substantial layer of silty clay levelling deposit (3034 = 3007) which raised the ground surface by c.0.40m and this activity probably also dated from the 14th century. The southern area of the surface of this deposit sloped down towards the south as did the deliberately laid surface above. This was formed by small pebbles (3025) of a fairly uniform size and formed a hard compact trackway, path or standing (Plate 4). The surface fell markedly from north to south where it became thin and patchy which may have been due to subsidence or erosion. If erosion, it suggested that the better preserved section was the northern limit of an east - west aligned thoroughfare, or standing, hence less traffic and erosion taking place. The lack of repairs or patching to this surface suggested that subsidence caused by settling of deposits below was the cause of the development of the slope. Pottery recovered from 3025 dated from the 12th/13th century which was likely to have been residual as this surface was stratigraphically above activity which dated to the 14th century.

3025 was sealed by a deposit of small to large cobbles and irregular limestone fragments and angular sandstone fragments in a matrix/bedding of soft mid to dark brown silt sand (3024). This may have been a deliberately laid uneven surface which sloped down towards the south (Plate 3) but it may represent the initial dump in a levelling operation over surface 3025. The dating evidence of pottery recovered from 3024 indicates that it was deposited in the 15th/16th century. A subsequent series of sandy clay deposits (3023, 3022, 3021, 3020, 3019, 3018) dated from the same period. None of these contexts were greater than 0.10m deep and together they amounted to less than 0.20m depth. They were likely to have derived from dumping and build up and their effect was to level the southwards slope which had been apparent in the preceding surface. A further deposit (3017) of compacted loose angular stone and cobbles (40% limestone, 30% cobbles, 20% sandstone) may have been a part of this levelling or possibly the remains of a surface formed at this level and also dated to the 15th/16th century. Above it was a further sandy clay dump or levelling (3016) also a dump of material used to level up the north - south slope in the underlying deposits.

A build up of garden soils and features indicative of horticultural activity indicated the subsequent use of the site. This activity spanned the 15th/16th - 17th century. The lowest of these deposits was 3014 which had been cut by three linear features (3013, 3012, 3015) all orientated east - west and truncated to west and north by the limit of excavation. The sides of these features broke gently from surface to fall steeply to a rounded base. The equally spaced cuts had the appearance of lazy beds or other garden features. A similar feature (3033) was also identified in the south facing section. The material within these cuts was slightly clayey sand silt and appeared to be horticultural soil (3011). Biological analysis of a sample of this deposit indicated that preservation of environmental evidence at this level was poor. Above 3011 there was a further build up of similar, probably garden soil (3010) of c.0.20m depth. Above this was a more mixed soil (contexts 3009 and 3031) which may have been further build up of horticultural soil but also included some elements of dumping. 3009 was excavated by hand but the greater part of 3031 was removed by machine as a part of the modern overburden.

Modern deposits (3000) were c.0.90m deep and were removed by machine. They were individually described and identified in section as 3031, 3030, 3029, 3028, 3027, 3026, 3047 and 3046 and are discussed below. The upper levels of the fill of the robbing cuts (3006 and 3004) were also removed by machine but the lower parts of these features were excavated by hand.

There was evidence for a sequence of walls built on a north-east/south-west alignment which may have acted as a boundary. The earliest wall was represented by a robbing cut (3006), which

measured c.0.55m deep, c.1m wide and 3m of which, with a squared terminus to the south-west, lay within the trench. The wall itself had been completely removed and the robbing cut was backfilled with loose silty sand with frequent mortar flecks and small fragments and small-medium limestone fragments (3005). Pottery dating evidence from the backfill suggested a 16th century date and artefacts recovered from the deposit included tobacco pipe stems. A fragment of stone thought to be part of a medieval or possibly Anglo Scandinavian hearth lining was also found in this deposit indicating the importing of deposits from elsewhere or the disturbance or re-working of earlier deposits from the vicinity during the course of demolition, dumping and levelling activities.

A later wall had been constructed along a similar alignment to 3006, and again the evidence for this comprised a robber cut (3004), orientated north-east/south-west which continued beyond the edges of excavation (Plate 2). A small portion of the make-up of the wall foundation of limestone and cobbles (3003) remained *in situ* but the construction cut for the wall had been removed by the robbing activity. The backfill of the robbing cut comprised demolition derived material; mortar rich gritty silt with frequent fragments of plaster, moderate charcoal flecks, occasional limestone and brick fragments (3001) and dated from the 19th century. To the east of the cut was a thin layer of compacted material (3002) which may have been formed by trampling whilst robbing of wall 3003 was taking place. The size and depth of robber cut (3004) suggested a substantial structure running at 90 degrees. to Skellgarths. It may have acted as a boundary wall as no return, or associated structural features were observed within the confines of the trench. The present boundary wall lies c.1.70m to the south-east, and takes a slight angle from the main part of the boundary wall running northwards.

There was further evidence of a build up of garden soil (3028). Stratigraphically above this was a pit (3047) containing demolition debris (3046). The edge of this pit was clipped by the eastern edge of the trench and was recorded in section only. The bricks within this material appeared to be relatively modern. A layer of white mortar (3027) surrounding and overlying a partially demolished wall stub seen in the east facing section indicates the demolition of buildings which occupied the area to the west of the trench. The evidence for the removal and demolition of structures was sealed by a very mixed deposit consisting of cobbles, pebbles, brick/tile rubble and mortar in a matrix of friable mid grey gritty slightly sandy clay silt with moderate pockets pale brown coarse sand (3026).

Summary

A total depth of c.1.50m of medieval deposits was recorded in Trench 3. The earliest feature, dating from the 13th century, may have been associated with the mill and its race known to be located in the vicinity. It was encountered at c.25.15m AOD, c.2.30m below the ground surface. The fine lense of organic silts (3039) formed in the base of this feature indicated excellent organic preservation of deposits at this depth. The backfill of this feature and further levelling dated to the 13th century and a further linear cut, backfilled in the 14th century was recorded. A pebble surface 3025 may have been the highest deposit dating from the 14th century and was encountered at c.26.15m AOD, c.1.30m below ground surface. It was sealed by another possible surface and a series of 15th/16th century dumps and levelling deposits above which was a substantial build up of garden soil. This part of the site appears to have been used for horticultural purposes from the 15th/16th century through to the 17th century. Later a boundary wall was demolished, another was constructed to replace it and this in turn was also demolished in the 19th century.



Plate 1, above, Wall 2001 Plate 2, below, Robbed wall cut 3004





Plate 3, above, cobble surface 2024



Plate 4, worn pebble surface 2025

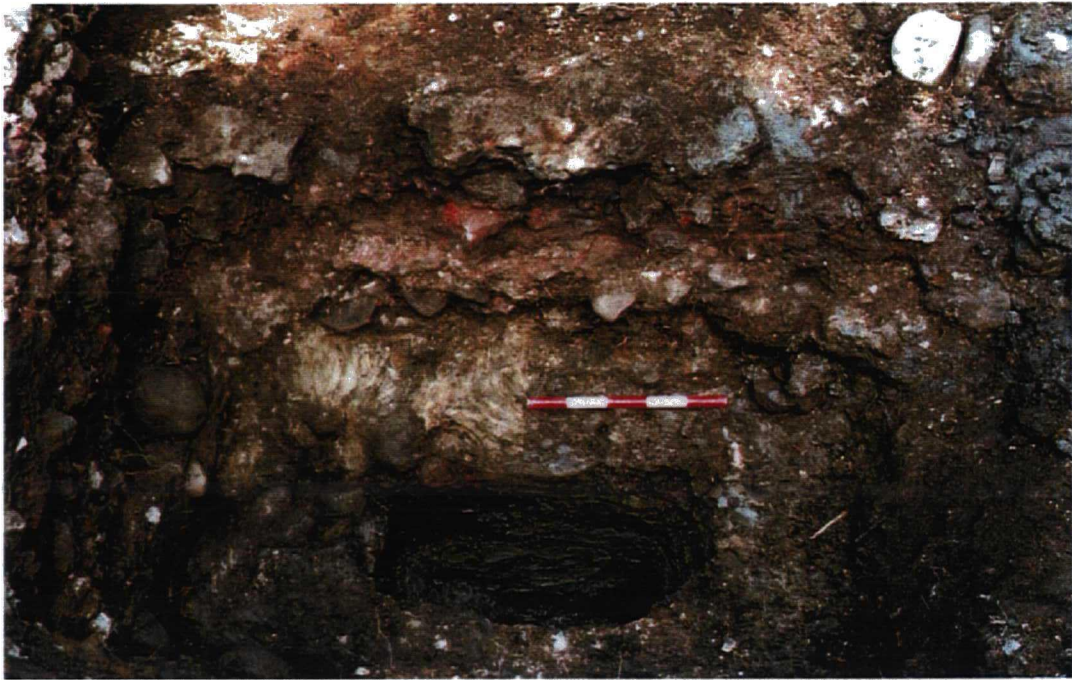


Plate 5, South Facing Section of Trench 2, showing small area of excavated alluvial material



Plate 6, East Facing Section of Trench 3