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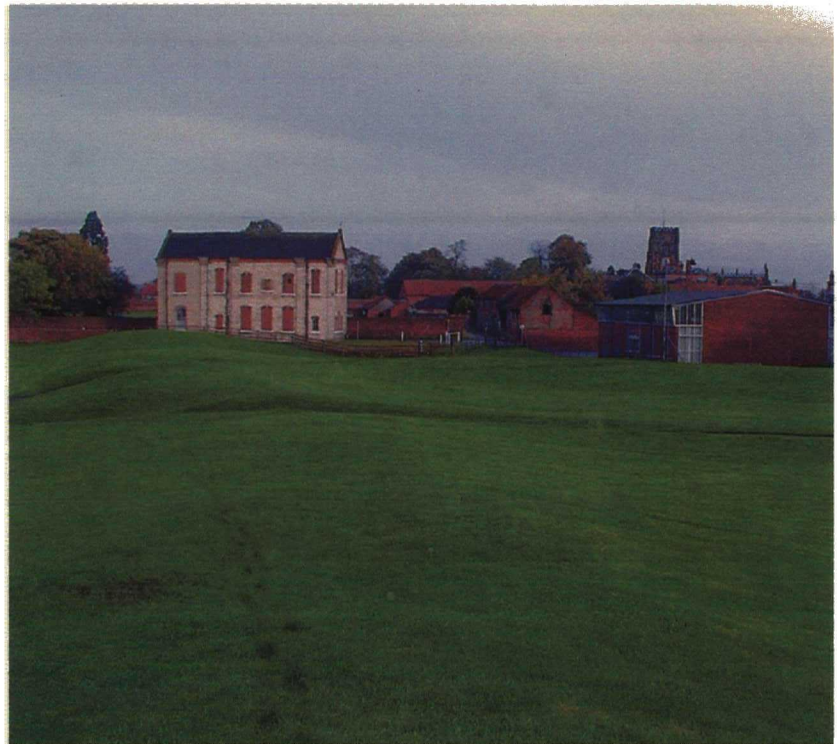
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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**LAND OFF MASONIC LANE,
THIRSK,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**



**REPORT ON AN
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EVALUATION**

**2001 FIELD REPORT
NUMBER 56**

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

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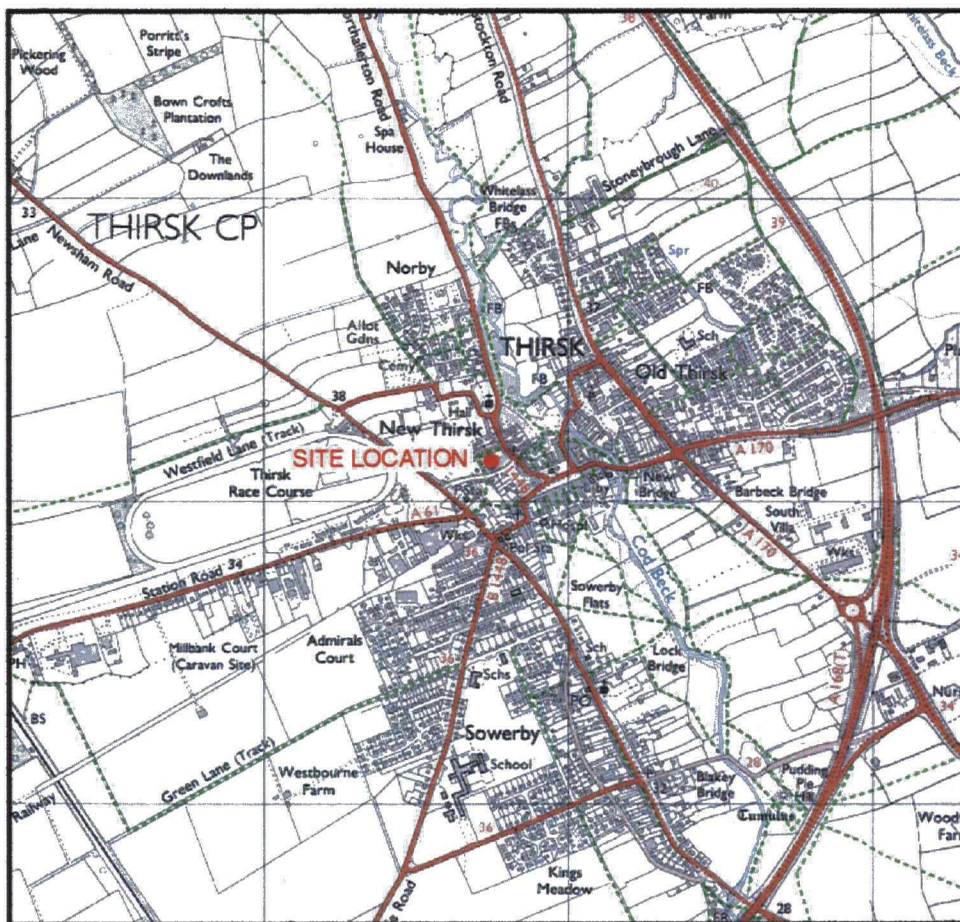


Plate 1, Looking north west towards the development site along the line of the earthworks associated with Thirsk Castle

ABSTRACT

In October 2001, York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological evaluation of land off Masonic Lane, Thirsk. The evaluation comprised the excavation of four trenches which identified c. 1.50m of post-medieval and modern overburden above the natural sub soils in the trenches located in the central part of the site. In the trench located close to Masonic Lane a significant medieval feature which was interpreted as part of a ditch was recorded c. 0.35m below the modern overburden indicating the survival of important evidence from this period in part of the site. Environmental preservation in the samples examined was found to be poor, resulting from the prevailing free draining conditions but most of the bones were reasonably well preserved and represented the usual range of domestic species. The artefact assemblage from the modern and post-medieval contexts was of little archaeological interest but a hunting arrowhead of probable 11th – 12th century date was recovered from the ditch.

Further archaeological work is recommended where below ground deposits in the area adjacent to Masonic Lane are likely to be disturbed by the development programme.



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Figure 1, Site Location

1. INTRODUCTION

Between October 18th and October 26th 2001, York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological assessment on land off Masonic Lane, Thirsk, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 4272 8211) (Figure 2). It was carried out to a specification provided by North Yorkshire Heritage Unit in advance of a proposed scheme of renovation and redevelopment by Seeger Homes Ltd. The proposed scheme involves the conversion of ranges of existing disused farm buildings and the building of new houses together with the installation of new services. The foundations and service trenches for this building work would cause disturbance in some areas of the development site to all deposits above the natural sub soil.

A planning application was submitted to Hambleton District Council in December 1999 (ref.2/00/152/0608) but was subsequently withdrawn in February 2000. The archaeological evaluation was carried out in respect of a further planning application (ref. 0608a).

2. METHODOLOGY

Following an archaeological desk-top study an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by means of trial trenching with the intention of recording the complete archaeological sequence in each of a total of four trenches. Trenches 1 and 2 were located towards the western part of the site in a plot to the rear of 23 Kirkgate formerly used as a vegetable garden; Trench 4, in the adjacent plot, to the rear of 27 Kirkgate to the west of a building formerly used as a garage frontage and Trench 3 within a courtyard towards the southern part of the site, adjacent to Masonic Lane (Figure 2). The aim of the evaluation was to establish the character, extent, depth and state of preservation of any surviving archaeological remains in order that appropriate design mitigation and/or further archaeological work could be agreed and that the potential damage to surviving archaeological remains could be mitigated as far as possible.

The archaeological records compiled and artefacts recovered during the evaluation are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM 2000.2401.

3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The study area lies on the western edge of Thirsk and occupies a block of land covering approximately 0.35 ha. This block is located to the rear of building plots which lie on the west side of Kirkgate and is bounded by Masonic Lane to the south, Coach House Close to the north and an unnamed back lane running north at right angles from Masonic Lane to the west. The ground level slopes gradually down from north to south. The level of the ground surface along the back lane is some c.0.50m higher than the parkland immediately to the west, outside the development site. The drift geology of the area is glacial sands and gravels which overlie a solid geology of Triassic mudstones (British Geological Survey 1977 and 1979).

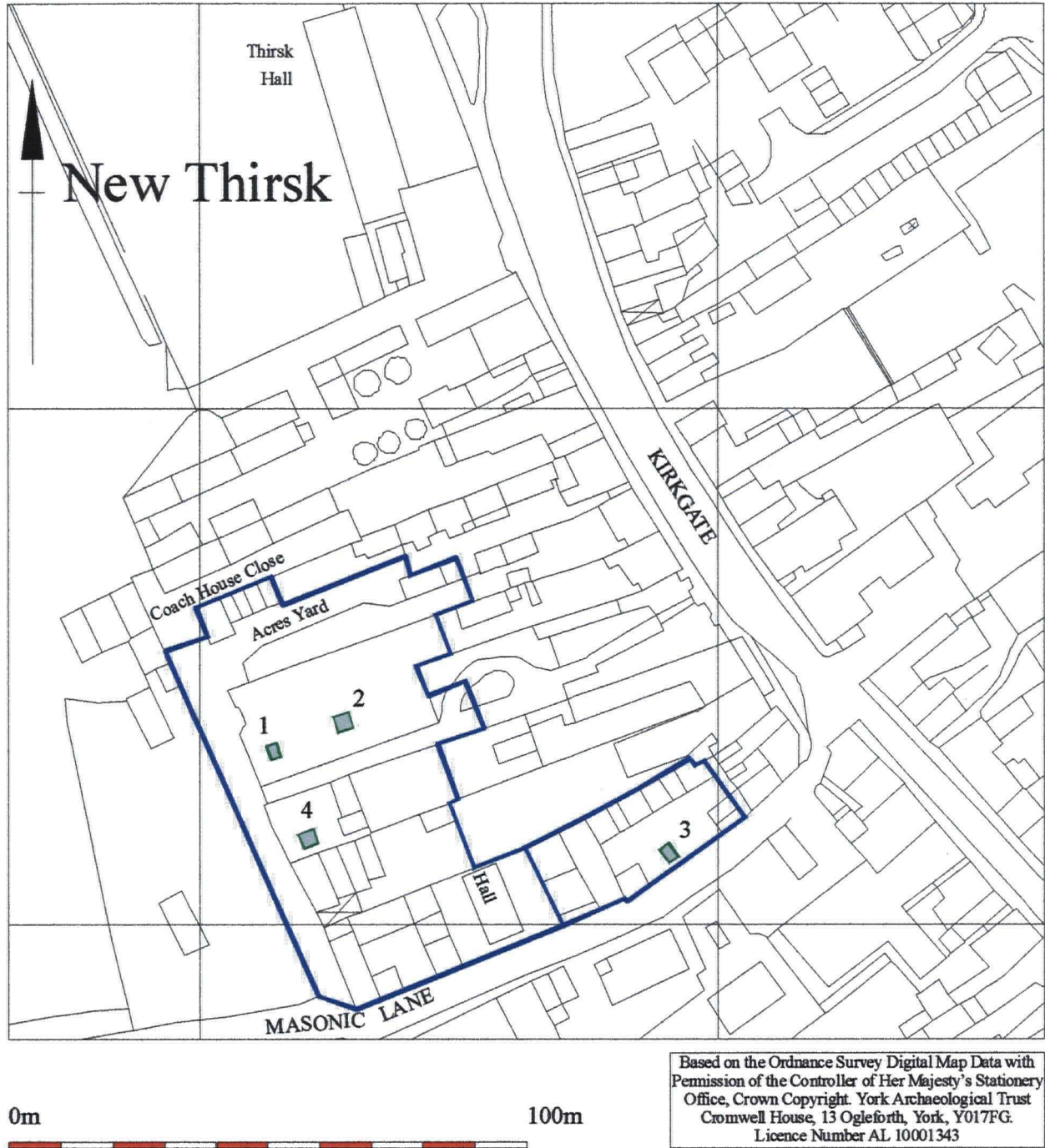


Figure 2, Area of Development and Trench Location Plan

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the evaluation a desk-top study was commissioned. This included an assessment of the of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) of North Yorkshire County Council, (records cards and maps), cartographic data (18th century to late 20th century), published and unpublished archaeological reports and works of historical and archaeological synthesis which related to this site (Finlayson 2000). The information in this section is based on that report and has been updated in the light of most recent archaeological investigations. The extents of the development area now include a plot of land adjoining the eastern extents of the site, occupied by former farm buildings placed around a courtyard. This area was not part of the original desk-top evaluation but its inclusion does not substantially alter the main points of that assessment of archaeology.

The development site lies within the historic core of the medieval settlement to the rear of plots on the west side of Kirkgate in an area of the town known as New Thirsk. It is located c.200m north of the site of Thirsk Castle, which survives as earthwork remains with Scheduled Ancient Monument Status. No previous archaeological investigations have taken place within the boundaries of the development site but there have been a number of excavations in the vicinity. Findings from these archaeological investigations and an examination of the documentary and cartographic evidence for the site are discussed below.

There is plentiful evidence of prehistoric settlement in the vicinity of Thirsk. Specific evidence close to the town is a Bronze Age round barrow located at Pudding Pie Hill near to Sowerby (to the south of Thirsk) and enclosures and prehistoric field systems which are visible as crop and soil marks on air photographs (Tyler 1978). When new houses were constructed in St Mary's Walk (NGR SE 4349 8273) in 1989 a collection of Bronze age metal work was recovered. Excavations at the castle recorded two undated linear features which, because of their stratigraphic position, were interpreted as being of possible prehistoric date. These excavations also recovered two pieces of worked flint as residual material in later deposits also suggesting a prehistoric presence in the area (MAP 1995).

A Roman road which ran parallel to Dere Street for part of its route is thought to have crossed Cod Beck near to Thirsk, and a now disused route, Saxty Way may represent a link between the two (Tyler 1978). It is possible that there was some settlement here in the Roman period but no evidence of such occupation has been recovered from the town, although Roman and Saxon burials have been discovered nearby at the prehistoric earthwork at Pudding Pie Hill.

During the excavation of a drainage trench in the Castle Garth in the 19th century "*a brooch or toga pin*" was recovered (Grainge 1856, MAP 1995). More recently archaeological investigation within the Castle Garth revealed a small cemetery comprising seven graves with associated inhumations and three disinterred burials. A group of grave goods including a cruciform brooch suggest an early 6th century date for these burials. The limits of this cemetery were not defined and MAP suggest that it was indicated that further burials exist to the north, west and east of excavated areas. This excavation also recorded a post hole, slot and pit from the same period (MAP 1995). Further Anglian evidence has been recovered in the form of a single sherd of Anglian pottery recovered from a turf line below the castle rampart during an archaeological evaluation at the rear of 33 Market Place (MAP 2000). Together this evidence clearly indicates that there was settlement in the vicinity dating from at least the 6th century but little is known of the extent, form or character of settlement in Thirsk at this time.

A fortified house is supposed to have been built at Thirsk in 979 (VCH 1913), but its location is not known. It is possible that the idea of a pre-Conquest date for the Castle foundation is derived from this source. Excavations at the castle indicate that part of the castle rampart may be a re-modelling of an earlier earthwork (MAP 1995) and this could be interpreted as evidence of pre-Conquest defences but it should be regarded as unproved. The first documentary evidence for settlement at Thirsk is found in the Domesday Book, 1086, where there are two entries "In Thirsk Thorr had 12 carucates of land taxable. There is land for 6 ploughs. Hugh (son of Baldric) has there 10 villagers who have two ploughs. Meadow 8 acres. Value before 1066 £4, value in 1086 10s" and "In Thirsk, Ormr, 8 carucates of land taxable. Land for 4 ploughs 20s" (Faull and Stinson 1986). This reflects the fact that land at Thirsk in the late Saxon period is known to have been held as two separate manors on either side of Cod Beck, that to the east was held by Orm and that to the west was held by Thorh. Tyler has suggested that settlement on the western side of the Beck may have developed around the church, opposite the river crossing which was probably a ford at the end of Stammergate (Tyler 1978) and that this may have provided the focus of a manorial *vill*. There may have been pre-Conquest defences on the site of the later castle, and it has been suggested that this settlement may have taken the form of a burgh, although there is no direct evidence to support this. Indeed evidence from the castle excavations suggest that in the period between the 6th and 11th centuries part of the site of the later Castle Garth may have been cultivated land, followed by its use as pasture, or possibly abandonment, before another layer of accumulated deposits preceded the construction of a clay bank associated with the castle on the site (MAP 1995).

The documentary evidence for the development of settlement of Thirsk in the medieval period is not clear cut. It is not known for certain when the settlement at Thirsk acquired borough status, and there is even some contradictory evidence of the location of the borough to the west or east side of Cod Beck. A 12th century charter of Newborough Priory is quoted by the historian Grainge as indicating that Old Thirsk, on the east side of the Beck, was a village and new Thirsk, on the west side had the status of a borough (FAS 2000). However, significant evidence suggests that the borough was located on the east side of the Beck, and became known as Old Thirsk. Tyler notes that Orm's manor on the east side of Cod Beck passed to the King at the time of the Conquest, and it is possible that it was during the 12th century, while Thirsk was in royal hands, that it became a royal borough with burgesses and a market place at St James Green (Tyler 1978). Thirsk is referred to as a borough by Henry II, who held the manor some time after 1106 (VCH 1913).

Hugh son of Baldric's manorial land held on the west side of the Beck was inherited by Robert de Stuteville but was forfeit to the king in 1106. A castle is thought to have been erected by Robert de Stuteville in c.1092 and it had certainly been built before 1130-31 although its original extent is not known. Some time before 1130 the land was granted to Neil Daubenay who was succeeded by his son Roger de Mowbray. The construction of the castle is thought to have provided a new focus for settlement (New Thirsk) with a manorial *vill* developing around the bailey of the castle (VCH 1913). Tyler also suggests that when the castle was built it "may have been responsible for moving the nucleus of settlement away from the church to the area between the castle and Cod Beck, now the Market Place", noting that the building plots around the market place were not held as burgages and New Thirsk remained a manorial *vill* distinct from the borough to the east (Tyler 1978). It is not known when markets began at New Thirsk but in 1398 the market place in Old Thirsk is recorded as the "Oldermerkat Sted", indicating that before the end of the 14th century a market place had been established in New Thirsk. Tyler states that there was probably a woollen cloth industry at Thirsk from the early medieval period,

but that the basis of the prosperity of the town mainly resulted from its position as a route centre and as a market town for a rich agricultural district (Tyler 1978).

The date of construction for the castle which lies on level ground to the west of the market place is not known with certainty. It was once thought to have been in c.975 but there is no substantive evidence of pre-Conquest foundation and the English Heritage Listing notes suggest that it dates from between c.1092 and 1130 when the earliest documentary reference to it occurs. Its life span was quite short since Henry II ordered its destruction in 1176 after Robert de Mowbray held it against the Crown in 1174. The Mowbray family continued to hold a manor there in the 13th and 14th centuries but it was not their main seat. In the 13th century there is a reference to the destruction of a house and dovecotes by the Scots in 1322. In 1376 Castle Garth is recorded as being used as a garden but by the end of the century it was laid to grass (Clarke 2000b). When Camden visited Thirsk in 1695 nothing could be seen of the castle "except the rampire" (MAP 1995). Excavations at the castle have confirmed it was in use for c.100 years and that in the period after its destruction the area became a garden (MAP 1995).

It is estimated that that Thirsk castle originally lay within an area bounded by Westgate, Castlegate, Kirkgate and Masonic Lane and therefore approximately 50% of the original area of the castle enclosure survives as earthworks, which are Scheduled Ancient Monument no. 20454. The northern, western and southern extent of the outer ditch of the motte and bailey castle have been traced, but the eastern extent has been obscured by development along the Kirkgate and Market Place frontage. The bailey rampart is located in Castle Garth and comprises an earthen bank 1.5-2.5m high with a length of 140m surviving with an outer ditch which, although it has become infilled, is estimated to be 10m wide and 2m deep. The northern end of the western edge of the rampart runs beneath the grounds of the 19th century Masonic Hall which lies on the opposite side of the road to the development site. To the east of the rampart is an open area which is the interior of the bailey and this contains a number of low, rectangular earthworks which indicate the layout of building plots and gardens within the enclosure. Along the eastern edge of the bailey is a motte (mound) which was separated from the bailey by a ditch.

The extent of the castle enclosure is not completely defined but below ground evidence of the castle rampart and ditch, together with earlier stratification have been recorded in Thirsk by both antiquarian observations and by more recent archaeological investigations. Drainage work to cut a sewer from Kirkgate to Cod Beck via Finkle Street in 1856 is reported as cutting through a feature 16 feet deep in Kirkgate which was interpreted as the rampart ditch and waterlogged deposits of excellent preservation were observed (Grainge 1856). Although this feature has continued to be accepted as part of the rampart ditch, its depth might suggest that it could have been an old water course. A section through the inner rampart bank together with a cobble surface below it was recorded in the Castle Garth by Aberg in 1963, probably at the site of the electricity sub station (MAP 1995, 2000). The rampart bank was also observed to seal earlier activity and to comprise more than one phase of make-up during a watching brief at 11 Kirkgate (Hatch 1981). The line of the ditch, but no other features, were recorded in a geophysical survey by AML in the 1980's when the telephone exchange in Masonic Lane was constructed (MAP 2000). Work on the site of Calverts Carpets yard close to the southern area of the castle, outside the Garth, revealed what may have been part of a rampart bank and its associated ditch (Clarke 1991). A watching brief on the north side of the castle in Pick Lane exposed what may be part of a bank pertaining to the castle and showed that the bank was constructed of sands and gravels with a thin clay capping and below this make-up there was a series of earlier features including ditches. The bank was also shown here to have consisted of more than one phase of construction

(Clarke 1995). Further observations by Clarke at 2-4 Castlegate demonstrated the presence of a considerable depth of made ground suggestive of a castle moat (Clarke 1996). A map of 1796 shows the Castle Garth divided into two parts along the line of the bank with a small building in the centre of the boundary. There is also a suggestion of a pond to the south of the building and this may reflect the position of the ditch. The 1843 tithe map confirms the information on the earlier map with few alterations. The pond in the middle of Castle Garth and another near Masonic Lane in the vicinity of the telephone exchange are shown. These are roughly in line with the deep ditch noted to the rear of 33 Market Place and could represent the remains of the motte ditch (Clarke 2000b). The only extensive areas of excavation at the castle were those at the site of an electrical sub station and associated works in 1994. These excavations recorded evidence of the construction of the rampart banks, deposits sealed below and later deposits accumulated against the bank. The clay bank above the Anglo Saxon burials was dated to the 11th century which confirms the historical evidence for the construction of the castle but elsewhere to the south the bank may have been of later date and to the north it may represent a remodelling in the 11th century of an already extant earthwork. These excavations also revealed that 20th century service trenches, the construction of a tank trap in the second World War and an ATC building have caused localised disturbance to archaeological deposits in the area (MAP 1995). This wartime disturbance was confirmed by local residents who recalled the construction work.

The recent evaluation at Finkle Street has provided some evidence of a large clay bank and ditch, constructed in the late 12th or early 13th century, which was apparently redefined no later than the 15th century. This feature, which appears to have been constructed on open ground previously under agricultural use, may have defined an enclosed settlement area possibly associated with the castle. The ditch and bank may have provided some protection against flooding from the Cod Beck. Its fill indicated it was used as an open sewer or midden (FAS 2000). A settlement boundary can be interpolated from this evidence and could follow the alignment suggested by FAS, "*centered on the Market Place, and bound by Chapel Street and Castlegate on the southern and western sides respectively and the rear boundaries of possible burage plots elsewhere*" (FAS 2000). It should be stressed that this boundary is supposition and further archaeological investigation would be required to confirm or correct the true line, pointing to the potential significance of the development site.

The 1792 map of Thirsk (Figure 3) shows the meandering course of the Cod Beck. Of possible interest in relationship to the development site is a water course shown branching towards the west, but then apparently abruptly stopping, raising the possibility of an ancient waterway running westward along the course of Masonic Lane, which may even have been used to define an area of settlement. The 16 foot deep ditch recorded in the 19th century in Kirkgate (Grainge, 1856), (the location and alignment of which are not known) could represent part of a water course rather than a section of the castle ditch.

In addition to the castle, a number of significant upstanding medieval monuments lie close to the site, namely a moated site some 200m to the north-east (on the east side of the Cod Beck) and the 15th century church of St Mary (which is thought to include 12th century fabric) 200m to the north (Thompson 1913). The moated site, which is Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 20532, represents a well preserved example of a small homestead and has the unusual addition of an external building platform. It is one of the few remaining visible features relating to the medieval settlement of the town. Small scale archaeological work at the moated site has produced a

number of probable 13th century pottery sherds but did not reveal any archaeological structures or features (Robinson 1993).

The area immediately to the west of the current site was the site of an archaeological evaluation and watching brief (Johnson 1998). The earliest in-situ remains uncovered were a probable pit and adjacent garden type soil to the rear of 25 Kirkgate with pottery suggesting a possible 11th-12th century date for this feature. No other features or deposits on the site could be proved to be of medieval origin and indeed the amount of residual medieval material found was very small (Johnson 1998, 19).

Examination of available cartographic evidence permits some understanding of the development of the building plots at 17-25 Kirkgate and the properties on the Masonic Lane frontage over the last 200 years. During this time their respective land boundaries have remained largely intact apart from certain alterations to the rear. A map of 1792 (Figure 3) shows the development area was occupied by six building plots which fronted onto Kirkgate. To the rear these plots do not appear to be divided but buildings are shown to also occupy the back lane frontage to the rear of the southern most two plots, together with a further building at right angles to Masonic Lane in the middle the southern most plot. The only change represented on a 1796 map shows an additional building to the rear of the most northern plot within the area. The tithe map of 1843 shows that by this time the properties have buildings on the Kirkgate frontage although the architectural style of the buildings would suggest that they have almost certainly been rebuilt since the 1792 map. By this time there are additional ranges projecting to the rear of these properties, together with some additional buildings located at the west end of the plots. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1856 shows a similar arrangement of buildings and a few additions and subtractions are shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1912 (Figure 5). The present building at 23 Kirkgate dates from the early 19th century and was the former home and surgery of the veterinary surgeon "James Herriot"; it has now become visitor centre. It was probably built as one of a matching pair of houses with no. 21. The building at no. 25 is a later Victorian or Edwardian house. Masonic Lane takes its name from the masonic hall (first shown on the 1st edition OS map, 1856) located on the south side of the road, opposite the development site. The 1st edition OS map 1856 and 2nd edition OS map shows a series of buildings around a courtyard on Masonic Lane at the south eastern extent of the site which are likely to represent the brick buildings which currently stand in this area. To the west of this area on Masonic Lane there are further ranges of unoccupied 18th/19th century brick buildings previously known as Castle Yard Stables, together with a building which is currently used as a scout hut. The site is bounded by brick walls mainly of 18th/19th century date although some have been very recently rebuilt.

Archaeological evaluation of the area to the rear of these Kirkgate houses (Johnson 1998) recorded post-medieval structural remains in two trenches which were located closest to the street frontage. Indeed it was only in Trench 1 (which was by far the closer of the two trenches to Kirkgate) that structural remains were found which related to a building or outhouse; later yard surfaces were also revealed. An intriguing subterranean domed brick structure, possibly an icehouse or well, was dated as a post 17th century construction (Johnson 1998, 19). Evaluation trenches in the garden of 23 Kirkgate (Johnson 1998) all revealed loamy soils directly over the pale, sandy "natural" sub-soils (indicative of old garden or horticultural soils) that were in turn sealed by later build ups of soils. Within the excavated trenches features of either medieval or post-medieval date were found to cut the sub soil.

Some investigations have recovered negative archaeological evidence this includes a watching brief on the opposite side of Kirkgate, to the rear of no. 18 Kirkgate, where natural deposits were observed at a depth of c. 1m below the ground surface. No medieval deposits were observed overlying the natural sand and sub soil to the rear of the standing buildings (NAA 1998). Closer to the development site a watching brief at The Bungalow, Masonic Lane observed deposits to a maximum of 0.40m below ground surface, which were interpreted as being associated with the construction of a former garage on the site (Clarke 2000). Subsequent to the original desk-top assessment some archaeological assessment work was carried out at the site of the new Tesco supermarket, lying to the south west of the development site and adjacent to site of the medieval castle but this did not reveal any archaeologically significant deposits (Falkingham *pers comm.*).

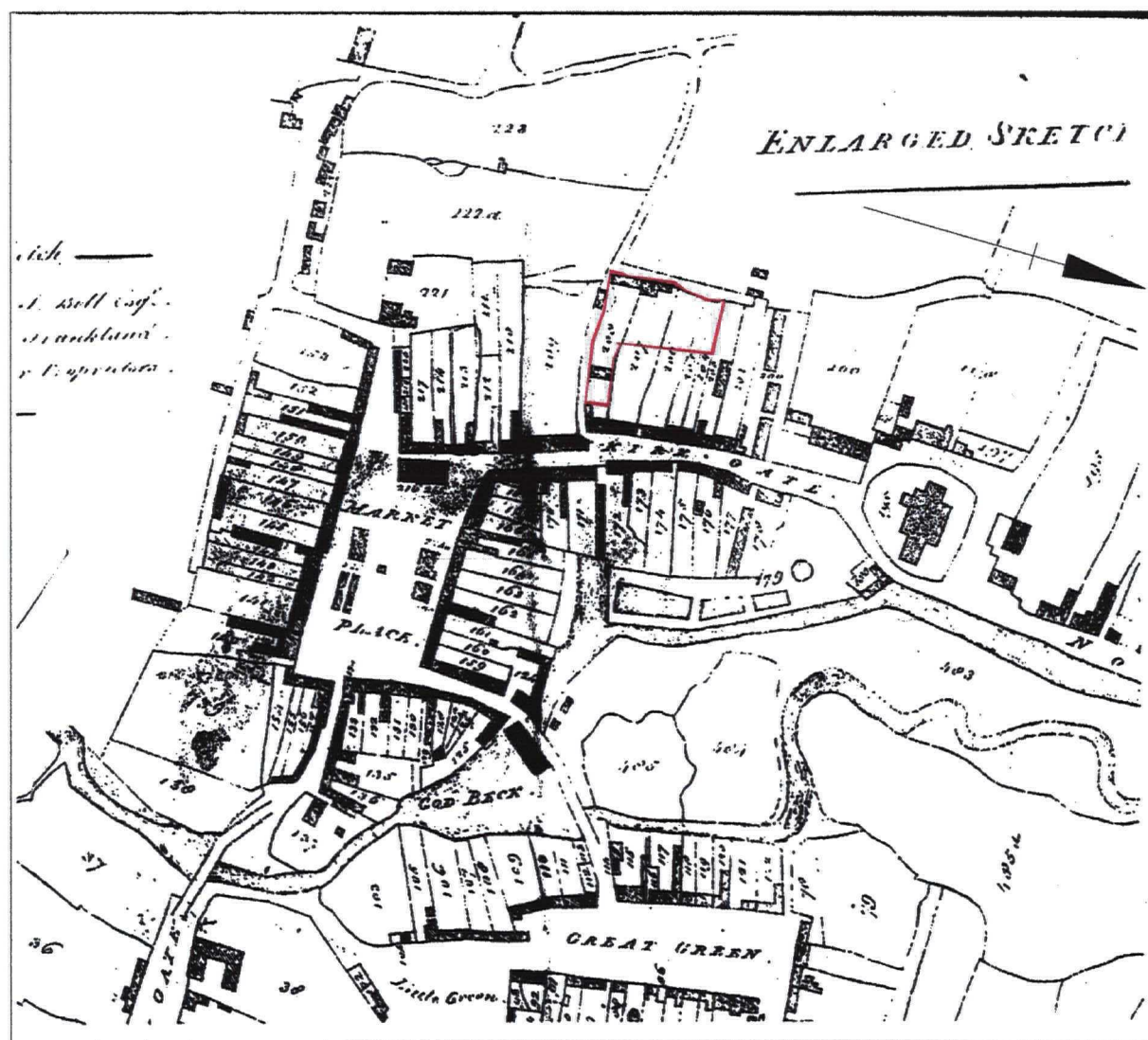


Figure 3, Plan of Thirsk, 1792, showing approximate location of development site.

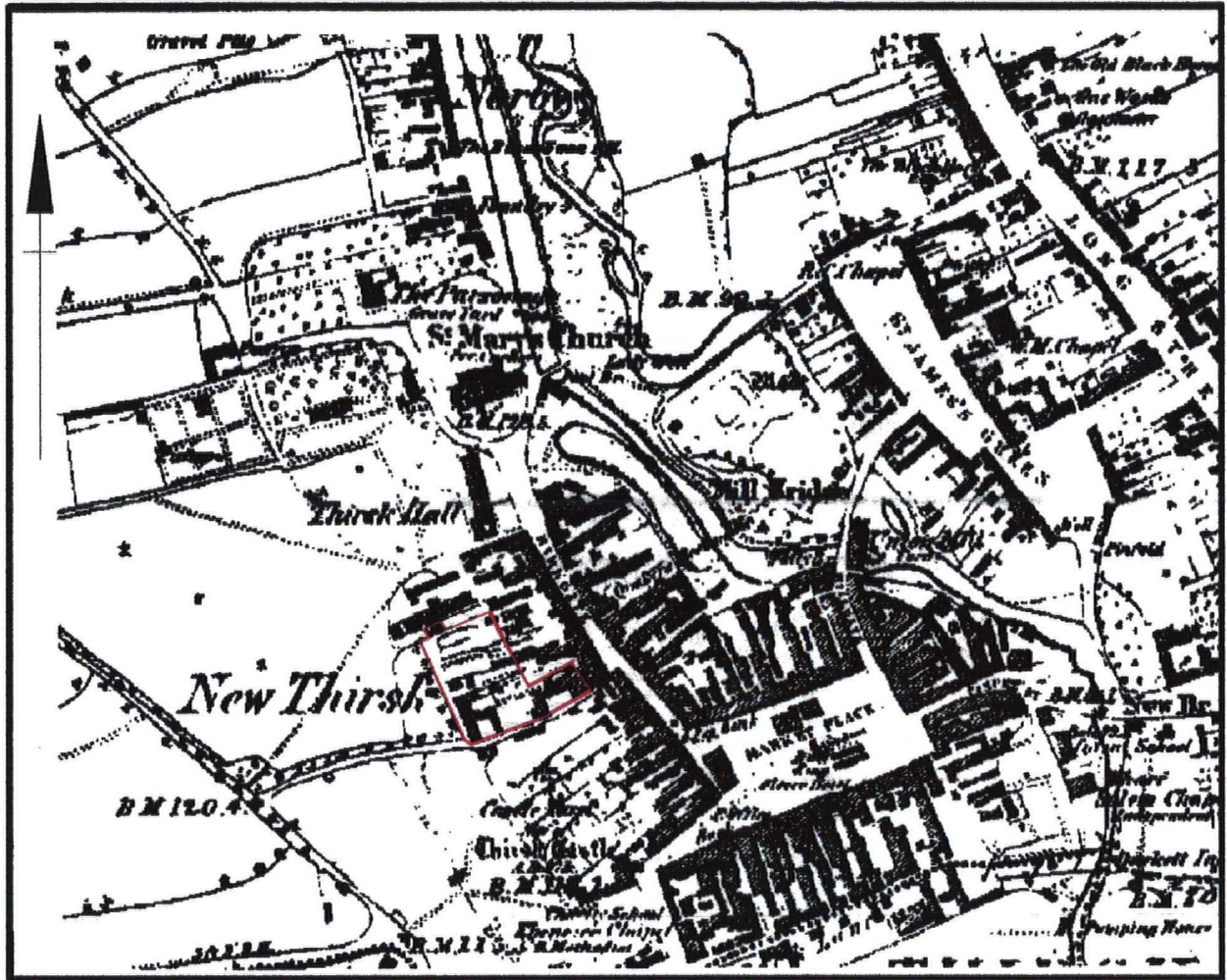


Figure 4, 1st edition Ordnance Survey, 1856, showing approximate location of development area

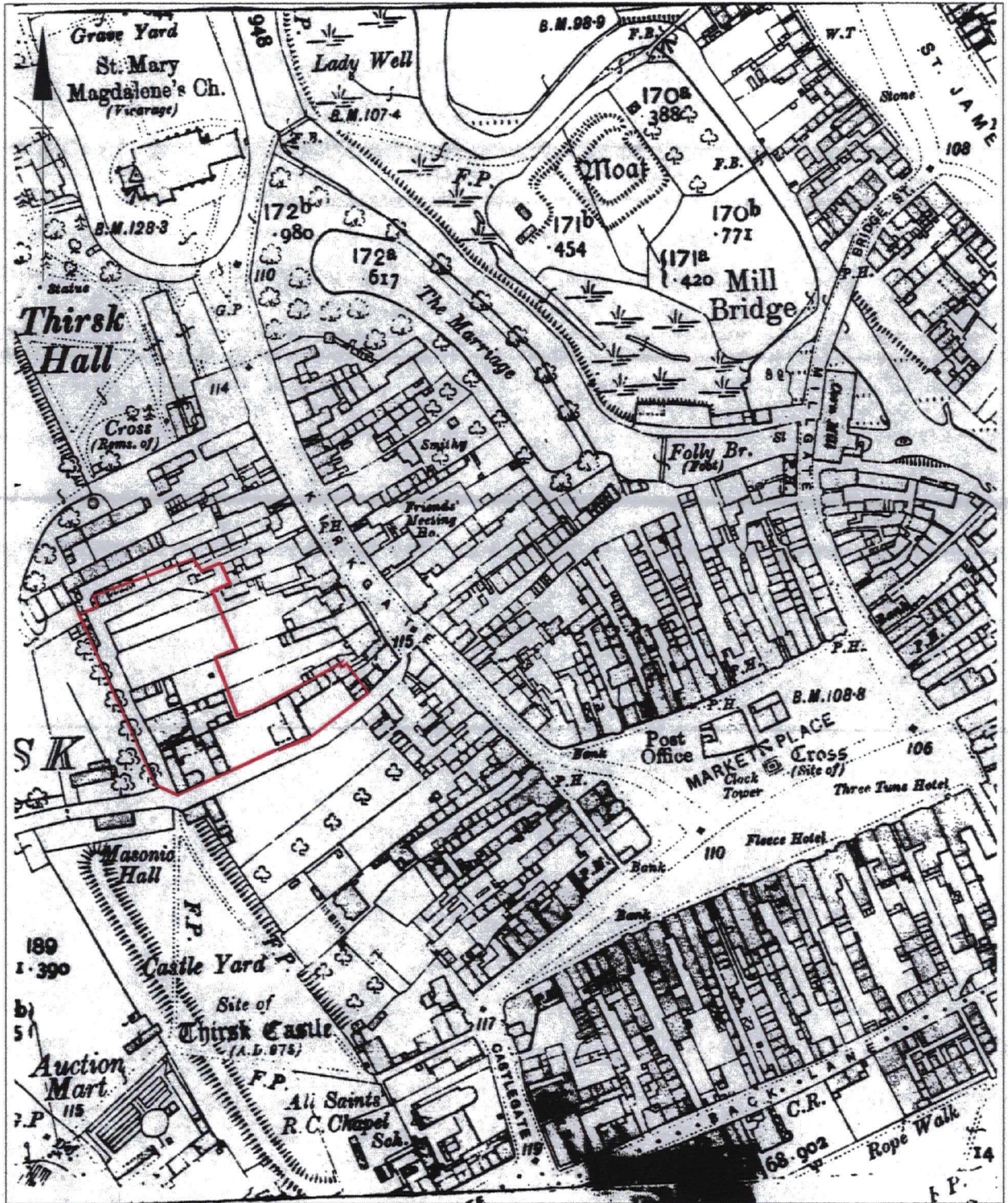


Figure 5, 2nd edition Ordnance Survey, 1912, showing approximate position of development area

5. THE EXCAVATION

Four areas of excavation were examined; towards the western central side of the development site two trenches (Trench 1, 3m x 2m and Trench 2, 3m x 3m) were opened in the area which was formerly a vegetable garden plot. One trench (Trench 4, 3m x 3m) was opened to the rear of the adjacent plot to the south and another (Trench 3, 3m x 2m) was opened in a courtyard of former farm buildings on the southern edge of the site adjacent to Masonic Lane (Figure 2). In all trenches modern material was largely excavated by machine, although sample areas were excavated by hand. The machine removal was carried out under constant archaeological supervision and subject to close archaeological monitoring and intervention. All features, including those of modern date were excavated by hand. The deposits were recorded by means of single context plans, drawn sections and photographs following the procedures in the York Archaeological Trust Context Recording Manual (1996) Where appropriate, soil sampling was implemented to recover environmental evidence.

The levels in this report were calculated from the bench mark on St Mary's church which has the value of 37.57m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

The excavated contexts with their descriptions are listed in appendix 1; their stratigraphic order is shown by matrices (Figure 11). The contexts are discussed below trench by trench in groupings which have been made on the basis of their close stratigraphic relationships, similarities in character and the processes of their deposition and phased into periods on the basis of initial dating of the pottery assemblage. The stratigraphy is then discussed period by period.



Plate 2, East facing section Trench 1

5.1 TRENCH 1 (Figures 6 and 11, Plate 2)

Trench 1 was located adjacent to the back lane forming the western boundary of the site. Natural sand and gravel (1010) deposits were encountered c.1.50m below ground surface at c.34.96m AOD. A further c.0.50m depth of part of this material was excavated by machine to check that this material was an undisturbed natural deposit. A small portion of a cut (1009) which may have been a pit was located in the north western corner of the trench. C.0.40m depth of this feature was excavated and its fills (1008 and 1007) contained fragments of post-medieval building material, brick and tile together with some domestic debris inclusions which were identified as dating from the 19th/20th century. Above this pit was a series of dumps (1006, 1005, 1004, 1003, 1002, 1001) also containing inclusions likely to have derived from building demolition. These dumps appeared to have been deliberately compacted and were interpreted as being intended as levelling to raise the ground surface in this area by c.1.10m. Above this was c.0.40m of horticultural soil. The deposits in this trench appeared to have limited archaeological interest.

5.2 TRENCH 2 (Figures 7 and 11, Plate 3)

Natural sand and gravel (2011) was recorded 1.45m below the modern ground surface at c.34.86m AOD. Above this was a thin layer of build-up (2014) which probably represented a relict soil. It was cut by a large feature (2010), the eastern and western extents of which were outside the area of excavation. Parts of the northern and southern edges within the trench were defined and a sample area c.1m x 1m within the cut was excavated. A depth of c.0.70m was reached but the base of the feature was not discovered and excavation ceased at this point for safety reasons. The main fill of the cut excavated was a loose silty sand (2001) which contained large quantities of bottle glass dating from the 19th century and greater quantities of large unabraded pottery fragments which dated from the 19th- early 20th century. The top of a series of other fills (2015, 2013, 2012 and 2008) tipping into this feature were seen in section. These appeared to mainly comprise re-deposited natural and silty sand, with some mortar and charcoal flecks. The function of the cut is not known but since part of the northern side appeared to have almost vertical sides and the cut was made through loose sand and gravel it is likely that it was not open over a long period of time, otherwise it might be expected that evidence of slumping would be seen. The large scale of the cut might indicate that it had been made for the extraction of sand and gravel and the main material filling it was domestic refuse.

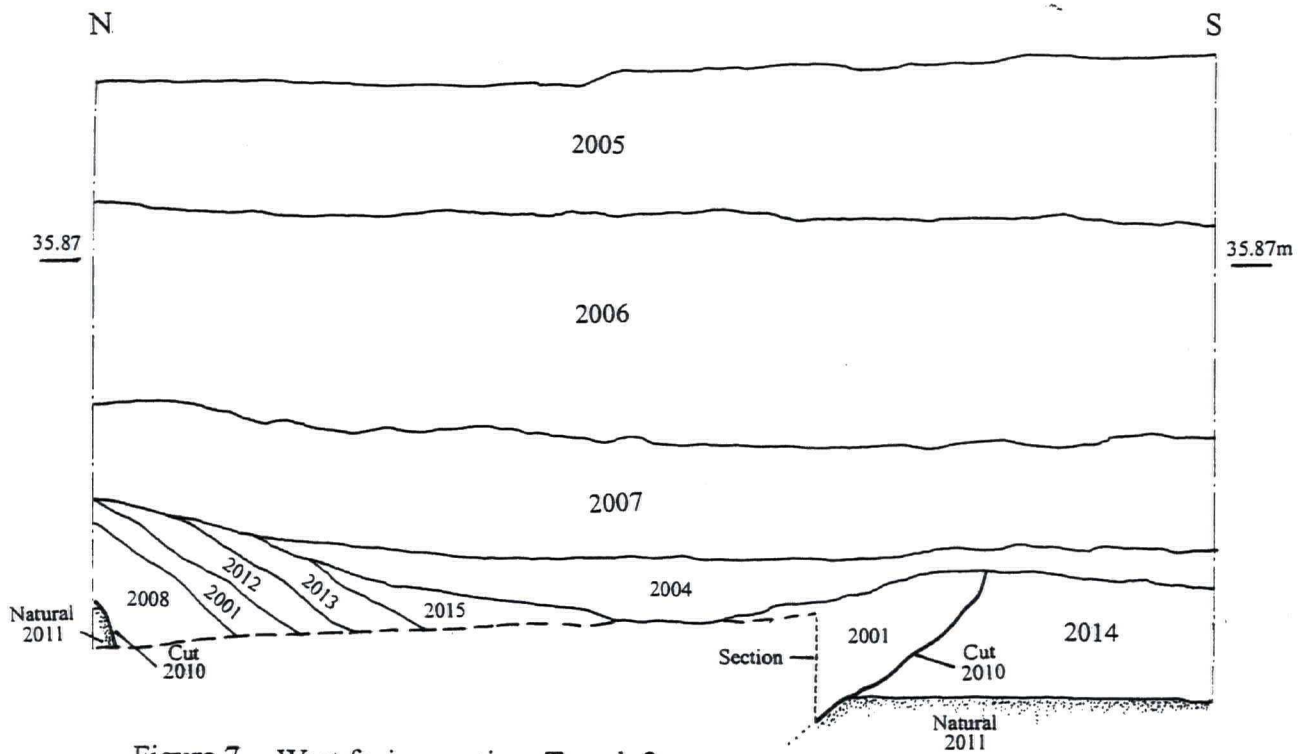
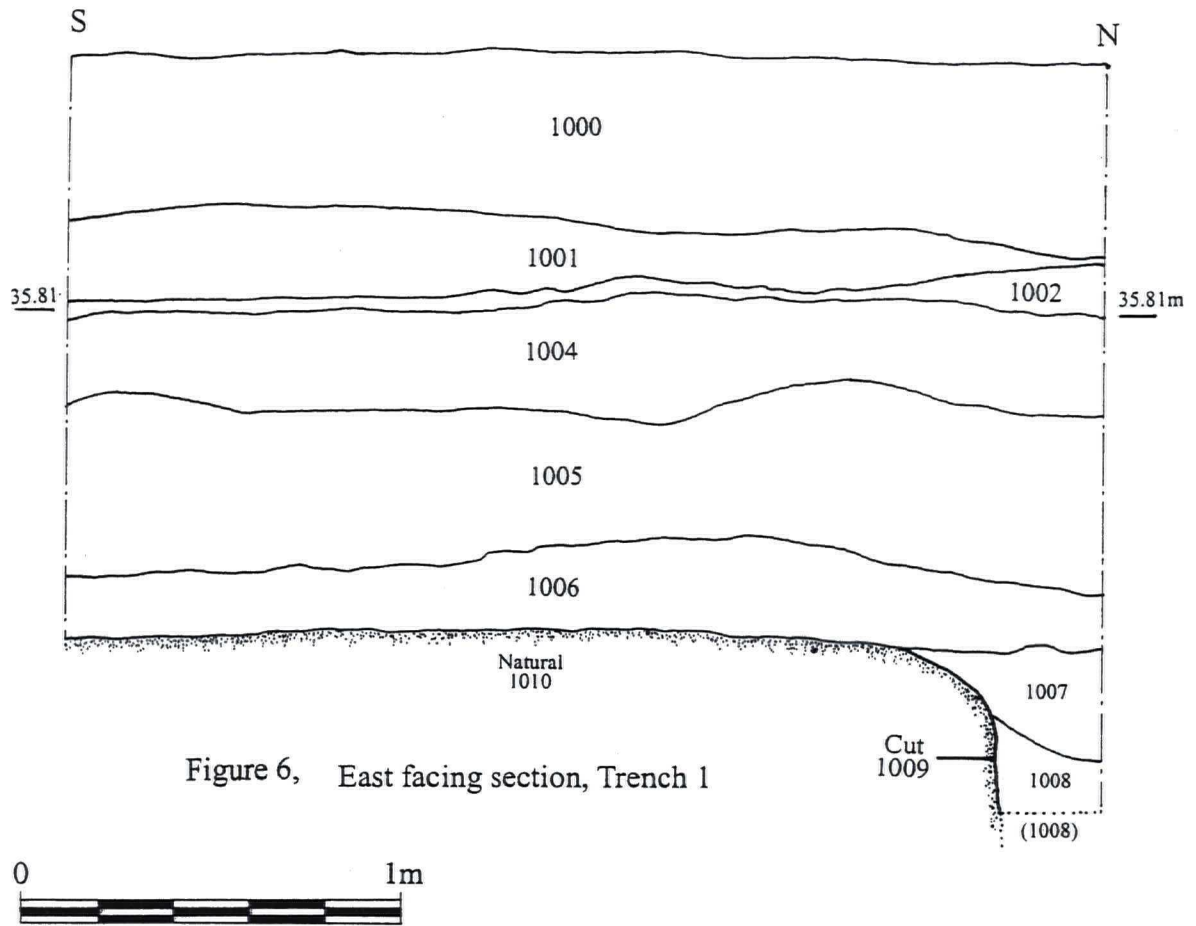
Above the fills of the cut was a series of levelling deposits. 2009 and 2004 filled the hollow caused by slumping of fills in cut 2010 and were a maximum of 0.15m deep. Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from context 2004 and dated to the 11th /13th century. These were, however, clearly residual. Above 2009 and 2004 a further 0.35m – 0.40m depth of silty sand (2007) had been used to raise the ground level. This material was a relatively “clean” silty sand, containing a few inclusions of small brick and cinder fragments together with mortar and charcoal flecks. A rectangular cut (1003), with vertical sides and a flat base, measuring c.0.5m deep, 1.80m north-south and 1.05m east-west, extending beyond the western edge of the trench was stratigraphically above this levelling. It was filled with loose mortar and sand (2002) from which modern pottery was recovered. The function of this cut is unknown. It was sealed by a further deposit (2006), similar to 2007 in characteristics and also likely to have been used as levelling, which raised the ground surface by a further c.0.60m. Above this was a build up of horticultural soil (2005), c. 0.35m – 0.40m deep. Local residents provided the information that the plot had been worked as a vegetable garden for some 50 years. Unstratified material from the machined layers was allocated the context number 2000.

The most striking feature of the sequence recorded in this trench (and also in Trench 1) was the absence of medieval or post-medieval deposits, and the fact that modern deposits total a considerable depth, 1.45m and deeper within the cut feature (2010). Also, perhaps surprisingly, there was only a very small amount of residual material from earlier periods recovered from the modern deposits; namely two sheds of medieval pottery (2004) and a coin (sf1, c 2000), which was a silver long cross halfgroat dating from the reign of Henry VII, c. 1490-1500.

The characteristics of the deep layers of levelling suggest that material has been brought in from elsewhere and used to substantially raise the ground level in this area, although not necessarily in one operation, since a cut (2003) was recorded stratigraphically between the two main levelling deposits (2006 and 2007). The levelling may have occurred over quite a large area, since all the ground to the east of the back lane and the lane itself is higher by c.0.50m than the ground to the west of it. Trench 2 provides very limited evidence of earlier activity in the area. One deposit may represent an earlier surface immediately above natural in Trench 2 (2014), but the extents of 2010, which was clearly a modern cut truncated any earlier features that may have been present within this excavated area.



Plate 3, Trench 2, showing the part excavation of the modern fills of cut 2010, excavation ceased due to safety reasons



5.3 TRENCH 3 (Figures 8, 9 and 11, Plate 4)

Natural sands and gravel (3007) was encountered c. 0.40m - 0.50m below ground surface at c.34.38m AOD, some 0.50m lower than in trenches 1, 2 and 4. In the sides of cut features this was seen to be a band some 0.40m deep which gave way to a coarse grained yellow/brown sand below. Within the trench part of a linear feature (3008) was seen to cut through the natural deposits. Part of the southern edge of this feature fell within the excavated area. It was aligned north north east - south south west and may have been turning slightly towards the south, although since the eastern part was truncated by a modern feature (3003) this was not certain. 1.30m of the width and c.1m depth of the feature, which was interpreted as a ditch, was visible within the trench. It contained two fills (3006 and 3001), both of which were fairly homogenous silty sands. From each of these fills two and three sherds respectively, of pottery were recovered. Those from 3001 dated from the 11th-13th century and those from 3006 from the 11th/12th century, indicating a possible 12th century date for this feature. Further artefactual evidence found in association with medieval pottery provided further confirmation of the date of this context. This evidence took the form of a hunting arrowhead of probable 11th - 12th century date (sf10) and one small fragment of daub which shows a wattle rod impression measuring 18mm across. The daub may have derived from house walls, or perhaps from an oven and could be of medieval or earlier date. Environmental analysis of samples of each ditch fill revealed evidence which did not add significantly to the interpretation of this feature. A few charred cereal grains were found together with duckweed, *Lemna*, presumably once growing in the ditch.

While the full extents of the feature were not revealed within the area of excavation, it appeared that the scale of the ditch made it too small to suggest an association with the medieval castle which lay to the south of the development area. It seems more likely to represent a property or settlement boundary. This interpretation is also supported by the similarity of the alignment of the ditch with that of Masonic Lane some 2m to the south south east.

This feature and its fills were the only strata which it was possible to assign to the medieval period. It was sealed by a sequence of deposits which were all of modern date. These included a series of levelling and make-up deposits for surfaces (3013, 3012, 3016, 3011) in the courtyard area. Stratigraphically above 3011 a large post pit (3004) was found filled with sand and gravel (3002) within which a post void was seen. The post pit was located at the northern edge of excavation; it measured 0.80m east-west, 0.45m north-south, continuing beyond the northern edge and was c.1m deep. This feature may have been a part of a structure, possibly a lean-to building adjacent to the brick wall forming the southern boundary of the site. It was sealed by a sequence of deposits (3018, 3010, 3015, 3014) which included a quantity of cinders. This sequence formed the levelling and make-up for later surfaces of the courtyard area. These deposits were cut by a later pit, or post pit (3005). This feature truncated the medieval ditch (3008) and was located in the south eastern corner of the trench, a 0.70m radius was visible and it was 1.25m deep. It contained rubble fills (3003 and 3017) and was sealed by a mixed deposit (3009) which may have derived from demolition and was used to level and consolidate farmyard surface.



Plate 4, East facing section of Trench 3 together with ditch 3008 and post hole 3004



Plate 5, Trench 4, Looking east, showing gully 4016 and brick soakaway 4001