

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE



***ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
20, STONEBRIDGEGATE, RIPON
(SE 31547142)***

A report to Clive Ekin, esq.,



29th May 2003

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
20, STONEBRIDGEGATE, RIPON,
(HARROGATE DISTRICT)
NORTH YORKSHIRE
(SE 31547142)**

A report to Clive Ekin, esq.,

**Percival Turnbull
29th May 2003**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT
20, STONEBRIDGEGATE, RIPON
(SE 31547142)**

INTRODUCTION

1. On instructions from Mr Clive Ekin, of T.C. Developments, an archaeological investigation was carried out on land to the rear of 20, Stonebridgagate, Ripon (a short distance to the north of Allhallowgate). This work was required in advance of determination of a planning application for residential development of the site, involving the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of ten new dwellings (application ref. 6.31.502.c.FUL).
2. Work was carried out according to a specification prepared by the office of the County archaeologist (with whom archival material shall be deposited), and to the Standard Procedures of this Practice. Fieldwork was carried out on the 15th and 16th of May 2003, by Percival Turnbull and Deborah Walsh.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3. The proposed development area occupies a site between the north side of Allhallowgate, and the west side of Stonebridgagate. All existing buildings on the site are of modern date, and most of those on Allhallowgate not earlier than the nineteenth century: nevertheless, the streets forms part of the pattern of mediaeval development, and the lower end of Allhallowgate in particular is believed to lie within the earliest, pre-Conquest, historic core of Ripon: the crossroads formed by the junction of these two streets is an obvious possible *focus* for early settlement.
4. The area to the rear of No 4, Stonebridgagate (to the south-east of the present site) was investigated in 2000 by On-Site Archaeology. A stratified sequence of mediaeval deposits and pits, with a date-range between the 12th and 14th centuries, was recorded. However, evaluation in 1996 by the Brigantia Archaeological Practice at the rear of the former Fleece public house, at the bottom of Allhallowgate, showed extensive terracing and excavation for cellars which had removed any trace of whatever deposits may have preceded in date the early 19th century. Further evaluation by the Brigantia Archaeological Practice was carried out in 2001 at 47, Allhallowgate, a site which is contiguous with and to the south of the present evaluation. Here was found evidence for widespread and radical post-mediaeval disturbance and landscaping (partly through use of the land as a garden), though one trench did suggest the possibility of extremely truncated mediaeval survival.
5. The development site drops very sharply in level towards the east. On the northern side, too, there is a substantial change of level: the northern boundary of the development site is a retaining wall overlooking a drop of over a metre. Similarly, there is evidence of terracing (observed in 2001) to the west of the site, where ground level at

the rear of 49, Allhallowgate, is approximately a metre lower than that of the British Legion Club immediately to the west. There is, of course, no reason why at least some of this terracing might not itself be of mediaeval date.

6. It is understood that the frontage of 20 Stonebridgegate has a modern cellar which is cut into the natural slope at the rear of the building. The development site at the rear, however, appeared to retain some potential for survival of deposits associated with the rears of the properties on the two street frontages (or, of course, for early deposits which might antedate the mediaeval street pattern).

THE EVALUATION

7. Two trenches were excavated, in locations shown on Fig. 2. Modern asphalt surfaces were first cut with a Stihl saw, and then removed, together with modern overburden, by a "mini" mechanical excavator fitted with an edentate bucket. Surfaces and sections were cleaned by trowel for recording and further investigation. Levels were taken from an old O.S. benchmark in Allhallowgate, value 34.30 m.a.O.D.: this is the same benchmark used for the 1991 evaluation.

Results were as follow (vertical measurements are taken from the adjacent asphalt surface):

8. TRENCH 1

This was situated at the foot of a concrete approach ramp to one of the modern buildings, on a flat area of ground west of which the surface slopes quite sharply down towards Stonebridgegate. The trench measured 2m. x 2m. The modern ground surface was at 28.89 m.a.O.D.

[101] 0-7 cms Modern asphalt

[102] 7-12 cms Brick and dolomite hardcore

[103] 12-33 cms Dark grey, compact clay loam with coal, small fragments of limestone and brick.

[104] 33-49 cms Dark brown clay soil with inclusions of small stones, a very little badly eroded animal bone, and three small sherds of late mediaeval pottery.

[105] At the eastern extremity of the trench, in a band 40-50 cms wide and underlying [104], was a cluster of stones or cobbles which appeared to be the upper fill of a gully or other cut feature. On excavation, however, it proved that the stones were simply embedded into the surface of the natural sand below, and that removal of the stones left so little of the "feature" as to be imperceptible.

Ginger-coloured natural sand lay below 49 cms. The natural and primary nature of this

was confirmed by the geotechnologist on site.

9. TRENCH 2

This lay close to the north-west corner of the development site, near the northern boundary with its abrupt change of level on the other side. Because of restricted access, the size of this trench was reduced to 1.5m. x 1.5m. The northern end of the trench was disturbed by a modern trench containing a plastic pipe used as a conduit for an electrical cable. The modern surface was at 29.09 m.a.O.D.

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|-------|---------------------------------|--|
| [201] | 0-8 cms. | Modern asphalt |
| [202] | 8-25 cms. | Dirty, crushed dolomite and other hard-core. |
| [203] | 25-47 cms. | Compact black loam with asphalt and other modern rubbish |
| [204] | 47-91 cms.
of clay-pipe stem | Grey-black, compact, sandy loam containing two fragments |
| [205] | 91cms.+ | Compact, mid-brown sand without discernible loam content, but containing small rounded fragments of limestone >1.5 cms. These pieces of limestone were the only inclusions, and became less frequent as the depth increased. Excavation finished at a depth of 1.5 m., at which point the natural and primary character of the deposit was unmistakable. |

DISCUSSION

10. The results of this investigation, though archaeologically fairly negative, do help to advance our understanding of this area at the rears of Stonebridgegate and Allhallowgate. They are also consistent with the results of the 2001 investigation. In that earlier evaluation, one trench (Trench 3), located *circa* 20 metres to the south of the Trench 1 of this present (2003) investigation, revealed a layer (designated [303]) of chestnut-brown sand which contained mediaeval pottery (though of earlier date than that recovered in 2003) and a very slight setting of cobbles (at 28.03 m.a.O.D.). Given the natural slope of the site, this cobble setting may readily be associated with that represented by [105] in the present 2003 evaluation, and surviving at 28.40 m.a.O.D.

11. In trench 2, it was fairly clear (and confirmed by the geotechnician on site) that the natural surface lay at the base of [204], at around 28.18 m.a.O.D. The natural sands locally do vary markedly from one location to another, and have a variety of natural inclusions (such as lenses of gravel or clay): the small, rounded fragments of limestone seem to be a variation on this theme. The (probably) nineteenth-century deposit [204] is a levelling or make-up deposit similar to some observed in 2001, but at least at this point does not seal or overlie any earlier deposit. Over this area as a whole, it is clear that nineteenth-century terracing of yards and gardens has been a significant factor.

12. It now seems very unlikely that any significant pocket of archaeological deposits will survive within the development area as a whole. We do, however, have a tantalising suggestion of a truncated mediaeval sequence in Trench 1, with [105] representing the badly damaged mediaeval horizon which we have already seen in 2001, probably disturbed by the early horticultural activity which formed [104], itself apparently truncated. Already badly damaged, the deposits are not deeply buried and are liable to disturbance from proposed building activity. It is recommended, however, that the condition and potential importance of this archaeology is insufficient to suggest formal excavation of deposits before development, though a watching brief maintained during groundworks would be an appropriate safeguard to ensure recording of any further survival.