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Archaeological Evaluation

North Yorkshire

 MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. November 2002 02.09.02

## Brooklyn Youth Club, 68 Langton Road, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire

# Archaeological Evaluation

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Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Plate List	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Site Description	3
3. Geology and Soils	4
4. Archaeological and Historical Background	4
5. Aims and Objectives	5
<ul> <li>6. Methodology</li> <li>6.1 Evaluation</li> <li>6.2 On-Site Recording</li> <li>6.3 Plans and Sections</li> <li>6.4 Photographic Record</li> <li>6.5 Finds</li> </ul>	5
7. Results 7.1 Trench 1 7.2 Trench 2	6
8. Discussion	9
9. Implications and Recommendations	11
10. Bibliography	12
Appendices <ol> <li>Context List</li> <li>Finds Catalogue</li> <li>Archive Summary</li> <li>Photographic Listing</li> <li>Report on Human Remains</li> </ol>	22 24 30 31 34
6. Slag Report	36

<b>Figure</b> Li	ist
------------------	-----

Page	
------	--

1. Site Location. Scale 1:50000	13
2. Trench Location.	14
3. Phase 1 Plan. Trenches 1 and 2.	15
4. Phase 2 Plan. Trenches 1 and 2.	16
5. Phase 3 Plan. Trenches 1 and 2.	17
6. Phase 5 Plan and Sections. Trenches 1 and 2.	18
7. Sections of south-facing baulks. Trenches 1 and 2.	19

## **Plate List**

1.	Phase 2 - Road Surface 1020. Facing north-east.	20
2.	Phase 3 - Structure 1019. Facing south.	20
3.	Phase 3 – Structure 1034. Facing south-east.	21
4.	Phase 6 – Rubble 1008. Facing west.	21

## Brooklyn Youth Club, 68 Langton Road, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. on a plot of land at Brooklyn Youth Club, 68 Langton Road, Norton, Malton, North Yorkshire (Figs. 1 and 2 – SE 7931 7091), in September 2002.
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out on behalf of, and funded by, North Yorkshire County Council to satisfy an archaeological condition attached to the planning application by the Education Directorate (ref. 02/00345/CPO) for an extension to the existing car park and the creation of a new access route at the site.
- 1.3 The evaluation was designed to provide information to enable an appropriate mitigation strategy to be formulated, following the archaeology policy issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment contained in *Planning Policy Guidance 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG 16)*. The preferred option was stated from the outset to be preservation *in situ* for Romano-British burials and/or Roman roads and adjacent settlement, perhaps through sympathetic design (Falkingham, 2002).
- 1.3 Two areas, totalling c. 80 square metres were examined, at locations coinciding with the proposed access route and car park (Fig. 2).
- 1.4 The MAP site code for the project was 02-09-02.
- 1.5 All maps within this report have been produced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright, Licence No. AL 50453A.

## 2. Site Description

- 2.1 The site comprises an area of c. 0.1 hectares, consisting of an open area of grassland, bounded by timber fencing to the west, north and east, and a brick wall to the south. The topography of the site consists of a level expanse with a slight ridge running north to south across the centre, mean ground level being at c. 25.00m A.O.D.
- 2.2 The site lies immediately west of Langton Road, between a terrace of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings to the south, and a modern house, constructed c. 1980, to the

north. The buildings of Brooklyn Youth Club and the existing car park lie immediately to the south-west.

## 3. Geology and Soils

3.1 The geology at the site is recorded as chalky gravel (Mackney *et al.* 1983), with overlying soils consisting of coarse loams of the Landbeach Series (*ibid.*).

### 4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The Roman Fort and *vicus* (civilian settlement) at Malton lies north of the river Derwent, with further settlement spreading southwards across the river to cover a substantial area of what is now the modern town of Norton.
- 4.2 From its origins as a medieval village, modern Norton greatly expanded from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards to form a large residential and industrial area, successive building works leading to the uncovering of substantial Roman remains.
- 4.3 Roman buildings were identified in 1946 during the construction of the Eastfield estate (Hayes, 1988). The remains of 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery kilns and associated buildings were recorded in 1948 at the Howe Road estate (Hayes and Whitley, 1950), with further kilns being observed during the building of The Chase, c. 200m south-east of the site in 1990 (ERART, 1990). Major cemeteries are known to exist c.300m south of the site on the west side of Langton Road in the vicinity of The Ridings and Millside (Robinson, 1978, nos. 354 and 355).
- 4.4 In the immediate vicinity of the site, Roman inhumation and cremation burials were found during the building of St Peters church in 1891, and the Church Hall in 1937 (*ibid.*, nos. 306-309).
- 4.5 A scatter of Roman and medieval sherds were found during the construction of Brooklyn Youth Club in 1967. A sewer trench which cut across the club's car park revealed an infant burial beneath a pitched surface of stone roofing tiles (*ibid.*, no. 312).
- 4.6 Directly relevant to the evaluation area are the projected lines of two Roman roads which Robinson shows crossing the site on approximate north to south alignments (*ibid.*, Fig. 2), to converge c.100m to the south. These roads ran through the Roman settlement at Norton, eventually forming the main Roman road to York (Margary 81a ibid., no. 237) and Brough on Humber. However, Wenham postulated a single route on the west side of Langton Road coinciding with the westernmost of Robinson's roads (Wenham 1974, Fig. 13), with a grid-like pattern of roads or streets c. 200m north of the site.
- 4.7 The projected line of the western of the two roads was backed up by solid evidence, having been traced to the south of the evaluation in the garden of Sutton Cottage (*ibid.*, no. 236) and in a former paddock (now occupied by the

present access to Brooklyn and a modern bungalow), where it survived as a slight ridge (*ibid.*, no. 235 and NMR map BB70/5682).

## 5. Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The aims of the evaluation were:
- 5.1.1 to determine by means of trial trenching the nature, depth, extent and state of preservation of archaeological deposits on the site,
- 5.1.2 to prepare a report summarising the results of the work, to assess the significance of the archaeological implications of the development,
- 5.1.3 to prepare and submit an archive to the appropriate museum.
- 5.2 The particular topic to be addressed was to determine any surviving evidence for the two putative branches of Roman Road, related settlement, burial activity, and industrial or manufacturing processes.

### 6. Methodology

#### 6.1 Evaluation

- 6.1.1 Two areas were subjected to evaluation, both c. 2m in width and 20m in length, positioned along the centre of the axis of the proposed access road, with Trench 1 at the west overlapping with the proposed car park.
- 6.1.2 The evaluation areas were stripped of topsoil and subsoil in shallow spits by a rear-acting excavator using a toothless blade, under close archaeological supervision. Machining ceased at the top of archaeological deposits, the underlying natural not being reached during this procedure.
- 6.1.3 All subsequent deposits were excavated by hand in stratigraphic sequence.
- 6.1.4 Ditches and gullies: sections were placed to provide representative profiles.
- 6.1.5 Postholes and pits were half-sectioned to determine function and record their form.
- 6.1.6 All work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1998).
- 6.1.7 All artefacts were retained for specialist analysis.
- 6.1.8 As required by the Written Scheme of Investigation a metal detector was used to collect metal finds from machine excavated and hand dug spoil. The handcleaned surfaces were scanned to aid in prioritising which areas should be excavated. In addition the excavated surfaces were scanned at the end of each day to recover finds that might otherwise be at risk from unauthorised and nonarchaeological detection.

#### 6.2 On-site Recording

6.2.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on MAP's *pro forma* context sheets which are compatible with the MoLAS recording system.

#### 6.3 Plans and Sections

6.3.1 The full extent of archaeological deposits were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20 on drawing film. Sections of features and individual layers were drawn at 1:10, also on drawing film, and included an OD height.

#### 6.4 Photographic Record

6.4.1 The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour prints, and colour transparencies, in 35mm format, recording all archaeological features encountered.

#### 6.5 Finds

6.5.1 Finds were processed in accordance with English Heritage Guidelines (EH 1995). All finds were cleaned, identified, assessed, dated (where possible), marked (where appropriate), and properly packed and stored according to national guidelines.

### 7. Results

- 7.0 Both trenches were c. 2m x 20m in size, and aligned west-east to examine activity across the axis of the proposed access and car park. A total of seven phases were recorded. Natural deposits of yellow sandy gravel were observed at the eastern end of Trench 2, and in two sondages, one at the east end of Trench 1, the other at the centre of the trench.
- 7.1.1 *Phase 1* (Figs. 3 and 7) was represented by a 0.20m deep deposit of dark brown sandy silt (context 1033), excavated in a 2m wide sondage, and directly overlying the natural. This deposit was remarkably free of any inclusions, and was interpreted as a layer of buried topsoil, possibly an agricultural horizon partly created by wind-blown action overlying the natural. There were no associated finds.
- 7.1.2 An undated gully (context 2014 Fig.3) was recorded in Trench 2 and was assigned to this phase because of its stratigraphic position, sealed by the deposits of the next phase. The gully was a narrow south-west to north-east aligned feature visible in the base of the sondage at the west end of the trench, entering the trench from the south, and butting out in the middle of the excavated area. It was 0.20m wide and 0.18m deep. The brown sandy fill (context 2013) contained no finds.
- 7.2.1. Phase 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> century Figs. 4 and 7) activity consisted of a surface of limestone pebbles (context 1020) and a series of other deposits (contexts 1032, 1035, 1036, 1038, 1039, 1040, 2004, 2011 and 2011).

- 7.2.2 The pebble surface (context 1020 Fig. 4; Pl. 1) was situated in the extreme north-east corner of the trench so that only a small area was observed. It was composed of hard-packed, rounded limestone pebbles with an average diameter of 0.05m, founded on a layer of small limestone fragments (context 1041). Both of these deposits were unexcavated.
- 7.2.3 Two metres to the west of the limestone surface, a 1m wide sondage was excavated into a series of deposits (contexts 1032, 1035-6 and 1038-1040 Fig. 7). The earliest of these (context 1040) consisted of brownish yellow compact sand, overlain by a succession of deposits: dark sandy silts (context 1039), light yellowish brown sandy gravel (context 1038), mixed dark sand with lenses of ashy material (context 1036) and sandy gravel (context 1035). Contexts 1036 and 1038 contained 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> century sherds, with context 1035 yielding a miniature bronze bell (Appendix 2).
- 7.2.4 The hard-packed limestone pebble surface (context 1020), rounded by wear, is confidently interpreted as the surface of a road, with the layer of small limestone beneath (context 1041) forming a bedding layer. Although not excavated there is no doubt of its Roman date as rubble layer 1008, which contained only Roman material, lapped up over it. These two contexts therefore represent one of the Roman roads anticipated at the site.
- 7.2.5 In Trench 2 three deposits (contexts 2004, 2011 and 2012 Fig. 7) were laid down at the western end of the trench, and were recorded in a 1m wide sondage excavated at this point. The earliest of these (context 2012) directly overlay gully fill 2013, and existed as a 0.20m deep layer of hard, compacted yellowish brown sand. A slightly thicker layer of greyish brown sand (context 2011) overlay 2012, and this was in turn covered by a 0.12m deep layer of pale brown sand (context 2004). These deposits are similar to the sandy layers recognised in Phase 2 of Trench 1. Their hard-packed sandy nature indicates that they were surfacing material.
- 7.2.6 Interpretation of the sequence of the sandy deposits is more problematic. The packed nature of these layers shows that they formed surfacing deposits, either a succession of internal floors for buildings, or make-up layers for the road in the central part of the site. The interleaving of ashy layers within context 1036 suggests that this deposit was created during occupation, although there were no indications of associated walls at the horizon at which the evaluation ended.
- 7.3.1 Phase 3 saw the raising of two structures, contexts 1019 and 1034 (Fig. 5). Situated in the extreme south-west corner of the trench, Structure 1019 consisted of eight roughly squared limestone blocks, clearly forming part of a greater feature which extended westwards and southwards outside of the excavated area (Pl. 2). The blocks were roughly faced to the north, one course thick and had a flat, albeit uneven, upper surface. Structure 1034 consisted of an L-shaped band of limestones within a shallow construction cut (context 1037) which cut through deposit 1035 from the previous phase (Pl. 3). The limestones were roughly pitched but formed a reasonably regular face on their western side.

- 7.4.1 Phase 4 ( $3^{rd} / 4^{th}$  century) was represented by a single deposit (context 1012 Fig. 7), an extensive deposit of limestone gravel, around 0.15m thick, with occasional larger blocks, occupying the western half of the trench. Finds consisted of  $3^{rd} / 4^{th}$  century sherds (Appendix 2). This layer possibly represents the demolition of the structures of the preceding phase.
- 7.5.1 Phase 5 (4<sup>th</sup> century) comprised twelve cut features (Figs. 6 and 7): four postholes (contexts 1004, 1010, 1023 and 1027), three pits (contexts 1006, 1029 and 1031), two infant graves (contexts 1016 and 1025) and a ditch (context 1018). All of these were cut into deposit 1012. In Trench 2 a linear cut (context 2009) and a pit (context 2005) belong to this phase.
- 7.5.2 The four postholes (contexts 1004, 1010, 1023 and 1027 Figs. 6 and 7) were characterised by size, having diameters of around 0.5m. The fills (contexts 1003, 1009, 1022 and 1026) were dark brown sandy silts containing undiagnostic sherds; context 1003 also contained an illegible bronze coin (Appendix 2).
- 7.5.3 Three cuts (contexts 1006, 1029 and 1031 Figs. 6 and 7) were interpreted as pits, having at least one axis in the region of 1m. All had brown or dark brown sandy fills (contexts 1005, 1028 and 1030 respectively) and contained 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> century sherds; context 1003 also contained an illegible bronze coin (Appendix 2).
- 7.5.4 The two infant burials were situated c. 4m apart in the eastern part of the trench (Fig. 6 Appendix 5). Skeleton 1015 was buried in a very shallow cut (context 1016), whereas Skeleton 1021 was within a more substantial oval grave (context 1025).
- 7.5.6 Ditch 1018 was a shallow linear feature, 7m in length, crossing the western part of the trench on a north-west to south-east alignment (Fig. 6). The gravelly fill (context 1017) contained pottery of 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> century date, animal bone, ceramic building material and a bronze coin (Appendix 2).
- 7.5.7 An area of dark brown material in the north-western part of Trench 1 (context 1011 Fig. 7) probably also belongs to this phase; this contained 4<sup>th</sup> century sherds and a bronze coin (Appendix 2).
- 7.5.8 In Trench 2 activity in this phase comprised a pit (context 2005) and a linear feature (context 2009). Pit 2005 was an irregular cut situated at the west end of the trench; 0.25m deep, it had gently sloping sides and a flattish base (Figs. 6 and 7). The three fills (contexts 2003, 2006 and 2007) were brown sands, the latter two containing 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds, animal bone and ceramic building material; context 2003 contained an illegible bronze coin and context 2006 a bone pin (Appendix 2). Linear 2009 was 1.20m wide and 0.35m deep, crossing the excavated area on a north-south alignment (Fig. 6 and 7). The sole fill (context 2008) contained 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> century sherds, a 1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup>

century enamelled bronze belt slider, a glass vessel fragment, a facetted rectangular jet bead and a bronze coin (Appendix 2).

- 7.5.9 Clearly some form of domestic activity is represented in Phase 5, perhaps best seen as refuse disposal (pits) alongside insubstantial or temporary structures (postholes). The presence of the two infant burials would conform with the picture of more informal activity.
- 7.6.1 Activity in Phase 6 (late 4<sup>th</sup> century / ?5<sup>th</sup> century) consisted solely of the deposition of an extensive deposit of limestone rubble (context 1008 Fig. 7, Pl. 4) over the eastern part of the trench, lapping over 'make-up' deposit 1041. The rubble consisted of sub-angular stones typically 0.2m x 0.15m x 0.10m in size, randomly laid and rarely more than one stone deep. It contained 4<sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds, animal bone and ceramic building material, including *imbrex* or box-flue tile (Appendix 2). This layer was not interpreted as a surface or hard-standing as it was because of its unevenness and irregularity, but probably represents the demolition of nearby buildings.
- 7.7.1 Phase 7 consisted of all post-Roman deposits (contexts 1001, 1002, 1007, 2000, 2001 and 2002 Fig. 7). Context 2002 was a layer of gravelly brown loamy sand covering the western part of Trench 2. Context 1002 was an even layer of brown sandy loam that covered the entirety of Trench 1, representing a standstill horizon of agriculture; this equated with similar material in Trench 2 (context 2001), which contained sherds ranging in date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries along with a rim fragment from a clear glass vessel (Appendix 2). Context 1007 formed the base of 1002 where it had sagged into a hollow along the southern baulk. A layer of dark loamy modern topsoil (context 1001 in Trench 1, 2000 in Trench 2) completed the sequence.

#### 8. Discussion

- 8.1 The evaluation was successful in identifying archaeological activity in both trenches, although the character of the deposits differed from Trench 1 to Trench 2, with the majority of structural and cut features being found in Trench 1.
- 8.2 The earliest archaeological activity was represented by the narrow gully present in the western end of Trench 2. Although no finds were found within it, this gully predated the overlying sandy deposits for which associated pottery suggested a 3<sup>rd</sup> century date.
- 8.3 The major targets of the evaluation were the putative Roman roads that were suspected to cross the site. Only one road was identified in the excavated area, supporting the theory of a single route southwards out of Norton as suggested by Wenham (Wenham, 1974, Fig.13). The relatively limited area examined by the evaluation cannot rule out the existence of the second, converging road postulated by Robinson (Robinson, 1978, Fig. 2); however, on present evidence it does not cross the site.

- 8.4 Only a relatively small area of metalling was observed, with the main part of the road surfacing extending eastwards to lie between the two trenches. That no surfacing was found in Trench 2 means that the road surface must have been less than 10m wide. Large deposits of hard-packed sandy material were observed in the eastern part of Trench 1 and the western part of Trench 2, i.e. on either side of the road surfacing. It is possible that these deposits formed a massive ridge of bedding material for the road, but this means that the total width must have exceeded 20m, perhaps not excessive for one of the major routes southwards from Roman Norton/Malton. It is worth mentioning here that the lowest surface of road metalling found for the Norton to Settrington Roman road at the Eastfield Estate was described as small gravel in very hard cement (Hayes, 1988, 83), which sounds very similar to the Langton Road deposits.
- 8.5 An alternative interpretation for the hard-packed sandy deposits is that they formed internal floors for structures, and this is supported by the presence of interleaving of ashy deposits within the deposits in Trench 1. The problem with this is that no associated walls were identified, although these may have remained obscured by Deposit 1012. The preferred interpretation remains road surfacing or bedding.
- 8.6 The evaluation showed no evidence for the parallel flanking ditches characteristic of Roman roads; gully 2009 situated around 30m east of the recorded road surfacing was surely too far away to have had any direct association with it, and was presumably a boundary feature.
- 8.7 The greater part of Structure 1019 unfortunately lay outside the excavated area, and so it remains unclear whether this was the corner of a wall or limestone surfacing. Structure 1034, within foundation cut 1037, existed as a narrow foundation of limestone rubble with a return indicating that much of this structure also lay outside the excavated area. Significantly, the alignment of Structure 1034 was not perpendicular to the road surface, and the indications are that it must have been built right up to, and even over, the road. Its foundation trench cut Deposit 1035 (whether internal surfacing or road-bed), indicating a major remodelling of the site in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 8.8 After the demolition or disuse of Structure 1034 a gravelly deposit (context 1012) accumulated or built up over it, and there was another change in the character of activity at the site, to a less intensive arrangement represented by cut features. The postholes and pits of this period, in both trenches, indicated temporary structures and casual rubbish disposal. The two infant burials did not necessarily represent marginal activity as such burials have commonly been found in close association with structures, as the 1967 find in Brooklyn's car park illustrates.
- 8.9 In Trench 1 the cut features were covered over by a substantial deposit of demolition rubble (context 1008) containing late 4th century sherds, and ceramic roof and box-flue tiles. The presence of the box-flue tile indicates the

presence of a substantial building in the vicinity; this is a rare indication from Norton of a high status building with a hypocaust heating system. The demolition of this building in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries marked the end of occupation at the site.

8.10 In conclusion, the evaluation excavations at Brooklyn identified a range of Roman activity at the site that varied in intensity from period to period. The single Roman road present formed a division from structural and domestic activity on the western side to less intensive occupation to the east. Subsequent activity consisted of a 'standstill' period of agriculture, followed by modern horticulture when an orchard occupied the site.

#### 9. Implications of the Development

- 9.1 The conjunction of a Roman road, burials and settlement features should be seen as of regional, if not national, importance, and meriting preservation *in situ*. The site is unique in that it is the sole remaining plot fronting Langton Road within the Roman settlement not effected by house or road building, making the archaeological remains at the site doubly important.
- 9.2 The most intensive archaeological activity lies in the central and western areas of the site. Judging by the location of Structure 1019 in the south-west corner of Trench 1 significant deposits extend into the area of the proposed car park. At its highest, the surface of the Roman road at the east of Trench 1 lies within 0.27m of the present surface at c. 25.03m AOD. In the central part of Trench 1 significant archaeological deposits lie within 0.36m of the present ground surface at c. 24.09m AOD. The rubble covering Structure 1019 at the extreme western end of the trench lies c. 0.56m from the present surface at 24.56m AOD. In Trench 2 deposits at the western end of the trench occur 0.44m from the modern ground surface at c. 24.82m AOD. Coverage at the eastern end of the trench is greater, c. 0.80m from the modern ground surface (24.20m AOD). It can be seen therefore that over the western and central parts of the site significant archaeological deposits will be vulnerable to all but the most shallow ground disturbance.
- 9.3 Preservation beneath the proposed access road and car park, development, established at the outset in the Written Scheme of Investigation as the preferred option (Falkingham, 2002), would therefore depend upon a design that limited ground works at the western and central areas of the site to within 0.20m of the present ground surface, i.e. no deeper than the modern organic topsoil (contexts 1001 and 2000). It is understood that the lower lying deposits at the east end of the site will in any case be covered by fill once the topsoil is removed.
- 9.4 The excavation of drains remains to be considered. It is understood that drainage for the access road will be limited to surface run-off onto the adjacent verges. However, the greater surface area of the car park would require the excavation of a drain south-westwards for a length of c. 30m to a manhole in the present car park. The depth of the drain will be 0.80m, which will be sufficient to impact on both Structure 1019 and the pitched tile surface (which

covered a burial) recorded in the present car park in 1967. Provision should therefore be made for the proper record of deposits within the proposed drain run; given the likely sensitivity of these deposits. From an archaeological point of view the drain run should be archaeologically excavated to the level to be affected by the associated ground works.

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Figure 1. Site Location



Figure 2. Trench Location