

**189a HIGH STEET,  
NORTHALLERTON,  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**By Gareth Dean**

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### **Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at 189a High Street, Northallerton during work to assess the depth of foundations of existing buildings prior to redevelopment. Nine test pits were excavated, five outside the building and four within the building. Six of these test pits identified archaeological deposits. The significant archaeological deposits were the remains of cobble surfaces, a wall, surviving floor levels, and the possible barrel vault roof of a cellar. In addition foundations possibly associated with a building earlier than the current structure were exposed*

## **1 Introduction**

York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief at 189a High Street, Northallerton to observe and record archaeological deposits exposed during the excavation of trial pits. The purpose of the trial pits was to assess the depth of the foundations of the present buildings and boundary wall prior to the construction of an extension being added as part of the redevelopment of the property for Betty's Café.

The work was carried out on behalf of Nicholas Associates, architects.

## **2. Location and Methodology**

189a is located on the west side of the High Street within the medieval town. The watching brief carried out during the excavation of test pits to assess the depth of existing foundations prior to alteration for Betty's cafe. A total of nine test pits was hand dug against the walls to assess the depth of the existing foundations. Four of these test pits were located within the building against the north-western wall. Five test pits were located outside the building, two against the north-western property boundary and two against the boundary with 188 High Street. The fifth external test pit was located in the middle of the grassed area between the concrete path and the boundary wall. The test pits were up to 1m square and between 0.55 and 0.95m deep. Eight of the test pits were excavated for the developer and an extra test pit was opened for York Archaeological Trust. Archaeology was encountered in Test Pits 1-4, 8 and 9. Test Pits 6 and 7 exposed modern services.

The trenches that contained archaeology were cleaned and sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and plans drawn at a scale of 1:20. All depths are taken from the existing ground level.

All finds and records are currently stored by the York Archaeological Trust.

## **3. Watching Brief Results**



### **3.1 Test Pit 1**

Test Pit 1 was located within the rear wing of the building and measured 1.10m x 0.52m and was excavated to a depth of 0.54m BGL (Below Ground Level). The floor surface in this room was concrete (1000), 0.11m thick. Directly below this was loose yellow brown sand (1001) formed the base for the concrete floor. 1001 contained one piece of medieval jug rim fragment, possibly late 14th or early 15th century date. The deposit overlay a substantial brick foundation (1002) that acted as the support for what appeared to be the bricks of the top of a barrel vault, presumably part of a cellar. The bricks all measured 0.22 x 0.10 x 0.05cm.

### **3.2 Test Pit 2**

Test Pit 2 was within the rear wing of the building, measured 0.8m x 0.8m and was 0.95m deep. The earliest deposit encountered (2010) was firm dark gray silt 0.95m BGL. This had been cut by substantial stone foundations (2009) that support the present external wall and comprised three alternating layers starting with a course of cobbles, then a course of sandstone and a course of cobbles. The foundations were bonded with a soft lime mortar. This was overlain by one course of tiles (2008), presumably acting as a damp course. Directly above this was the present wall (2007) consisting of bricks 0.22m x 0.10m x 0.08m set in a hard white mortar. Against this wall was a series of make-up layers for floor surfaces. The earliest of these (2006) was loose grey brown sand with brick rubble and mortar, 0.50m thick. Directly above this was loose grey sand (2005) with brick and stone inclusions, 0.10m thick, overlain by 2004, clean brown sand, 0.07m thick. Above this was a layer of mortar, 2003, 0.03m thick for a floor surface 0.21m BGL. This was covered by a brown sand and mortar make-up (2002), 0.10m thick overlain by a 0.03m thick mortar bed (2001) for the terracotta tiles (2000) that were 0.22m squares and 0.04m thick that form the present floor surface.

### **3.3 Test Pit 3**

This test pit was located within the later extension at the rear of the property. The test pit measured 0.5m x 0.5m and was 0.71m deep. The earliest deposit located within the trench (3006) was loose grey brown silt sand, 0.10m thick, and was cut by the substantial cobble and sandstone foundations (3007) that were also observed in Test Pit 2. On top of this foundation was a brick wall (3008) that was comprised of bricks measuring 0.22m x 0.05m. Abutting the stone foundations (3007) was a cobble surface (3005) set in loose dark grey silt sand. Against the south-west edge of the trench was a deposit (3004) of dark grey loose silt sand, 0.05m thick. Overlying this were two make-up deposits. The first deposit (3002) consisted of light grey silt sand with occasional pieces of mortar 0.17m thick. From this deposit fourteen sherds of pottery were collected and consisted 18th and 19th century slipwares, brown glazed wares, post-medieval earthenwares and tin-glazed earthenwares with one possible late 17th century sherd. A fragment of clay pipe tobacco stem and a piece of animal bone were also collected. Directly above this



was a loose sand and cement deposit (3001) that formed the final make-up layer for the floor of the building (3000) that consisted of 0.15m thick concrete.

### **3.4 Test Pit 4**

Tests Pit 4 was located outside the building against the north-west boundary wall with 190 High Street, approximately 4m from the end of the buildings. It was moved from the junction of the boundary wall and the outbuildings due to the extensive concrete footings uncovered. Test Pit 4 measured 0.9m x 0.75m and was 0.42m deep. The remains of a possible cobble surface (4004) set in a dark grey silt were identified partially in plan and in the section of the trench 0.42m BGL. This was overlain by a deposit (4003) of loose bricks and large cobbles in grey silt sand 0.12m thick that may be associated with the construction of the present boundary wall. Directly above this was the concrete plinth (4002) footing of the present brick boundary wall (4005). Abutting this was a rubble fill (4001) consisting of bricks and mortar in a mid grey brown silt sand fill, 0.19m, thick overlain by (4000) the dark grey brown sand silt topsoil 0.15m thick.

### **3.5 Test Pit 5**

Test Pit 5 was also located outside the building against the north-west boundary wall 1.0m from the edge of the car park. It measured 0.85m x 0.60m and was 0.69m deep. The earliest deposit encountered (5003) was a loose dark grey brown silt sand, 0.69m BGL. Cut through this deposit were stepped brick foundations (5005) aligned north-east/south-west and consisting of bricks measuring 0.24m x 0.11m x 0.06m, laid as headers in a hard white mortar. Above this were seven courses of bricks (5004) laid as stretchers also set in a hard white mortar. Overlying the foundation cut of this wall was a cobble surface (5002) set in a friable dark grey brown silt sand. This cobble surface and the wall (5005) had been cut through by the foundation cut (5006) of the present boundary wall. As in Test Pit 4 the foundations (5007) for this boundary wall consisted of a concrete plinth. Overlying the cobble surface (5002) and the boundary wall foundation (5006) was 5001, a loose dark grey brown silt sand with occasional brick and mortar inclusions, 0.14m thick presumably related to the construction of the boundary wall. Directly above this was dark grey sand silt topsoil (5000) that formed the present ground surface.

### **3.6 Test Pit 6 and Test Pit 7**

Both of these test pits were located in a space in the concrete hard standing at the back of 189a High Street against the boundary with 188 High Street. These trenches both exposed modern services.

### **3.7 Test Pit 8**

Test Pit 8 was located within the building, approximately 5m to the north of Test Pit 1 and was the closest to the present street frontage. The test pit measured 1.10m x 0.65m and was 0.70m deep. The earliest deposit encountered (8007) was a stiff grey clay silt with occasional charcoal flecks 0.70m BGL. This had been cut by a stepped brick wall



foundation (8008) that consisted of five courses of bricks measuring 0.22m x 0.05m in a rough stretcher coursing. Above this was the present wall (8009) that consisted of bricks of similar dimensions laid as alternating courses of headers and stretchers laid in a hard white mortar. Abutting this wall was a series of make-up levels and possible floor surfaces. The earliest make-up layer (8006) consisted of a firm clay silt with pebble and mortar inclusions that was 0.30m thick and extended to the top of the brick foundations (8008). Above this was a make-up layer (8005) of stiff brown clay 0.05m thick that was overlain by a 0.03m thick soft mortar layer (8004) that may represent the base of an earlier floor surface. Directly above this was (8003), a loose grey silt sand and occasional pebbles that either represents use of the possible surface (8004) or is a make-up layer. Overlying this deposit was a 0.04m thick layer of mortar (8002) that represents another floor level. This was sealed by (8001), a loose brown silt sand 0.04m thick that acted as the bedding for a floor of thin stone slabs 0.05m thick that formed the present ground surface.

### **3.9 Test Pit 9**

Test pit 9 was located in the middle of the grassed area on the north-west side of the plot between Test Pits 3 and 4, and 4m from the boundary wall. The test pit measured 0.5m x 0.5m and was 0.15m deep. A cobble surface (9001) was exposed that had a single width line of bricks (9002) running through it in a north-west/south-east direction. The bricks measured 0.22m x 0.05m and had the remains of a hard white mortar on the exposed surfaces. Overlying this was the dark grey silt sand topsoil (9000).

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Test Pits 4, 5 and 9 outside the building have shown the preservation of walls earlier than those now standing on the site and the remains of cobble surfaces, located 0.15m - 0.30m below the present ground surface.

Within the building Test Pits 2 - 3 have shown the survival of a possible earlier wall foundation. In Test Pits 2 and 8 there was the survival of several possible floors earlier than those visible on the surface and Test Pit 1 exposed the top of the brick barrel vault of a cellar. The archaeological deposits within the main part of the building in Test Pits 1, 2 and 8 were 0.10m - 0.20m below the present floor surface. Test Pit 3, in the later extension at the rear of the building, uncovered a cobble surface 0.64m below the present surface.

### **5.0 Contributions**

Watching Brief and Report

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Finds Analysis

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