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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
T R U S T

**RENAULT SITE,
WATER SKELLGATE,
RIPON,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**By
D.T. Evans**



**REPORT NUMBER: 2003/44
ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP STUDY**

NYCC HER	
SNY	8529
ENY	1932
CNY	3366
Parish	6031
Rec'd	24/11/03

**RENAULT SITE,
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**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DESK-TOP STUDY**

By D.T.Evans

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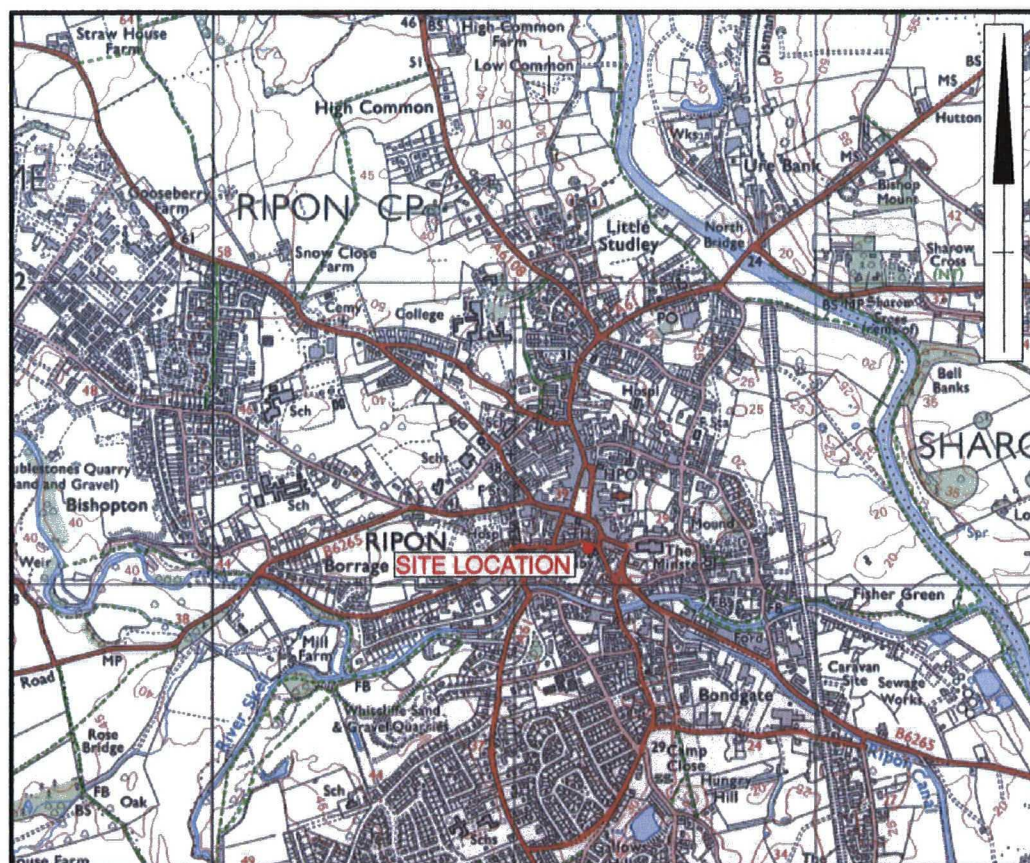
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Figure 1 Site Location Plan

ABSTRACT

This document forms the report on a desk top study, undertaken in October 2003 by York Archaeological Trust, of land at the Renault site (Walker Barker Dealership Premises), Water Skellgate, in Ripon, North Yorkshire. The study examined the Sites and Monuments Records of North Yorkshire County Council and the National Monuments Record, cartographic evidence from the 18th to the 20th century, published and unpublished archaeological reports.

The study identified a potential for the presence, in the northern half of the study area, of late pre-Conquest, 11th century, structural remains with possible associated deposits and features. There is convincing evidence that from the late 11th century until at least the 19th century the northern part of the study area contained structural remains, and possibly features and deposits, associated with the medieval and later mill known to be located close to the junction of Water Skellgate, Skellgarths and Duck Hill. There is some evidence that a stone mill race lies intact close to the Water Skellgate frontage heading eastwards towards Skellgarths.

The southern half of the site is more problematic but previous investigations close to the east, coupled with historical and topographical information may suggest that this part of the study area lay on, or close to a medieval course of the River Skell.

1. INTRODUCTION

In October 2003, York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological desk-top study on an area of land at Water Skellgate in Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 3123 7112) (Figure 1). The study was carried out under instructions from Turley Associates acting for Burley Development Ltd to assess the likely impact of proposed development on any archaeological deposits, structures or features that may be present at the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

The media consulted in the study consisted of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) of North Yorkshire County Council, (records cards and maps), the National Sites and Monuments Record, cartographic data (1733 to late 20th century), published and unpublished archaeological reports and works of historical and archaeological synthesis.

Research notes are currently stored by York Archaeological Trust.

Abbreviations.

NGR	National Grid Reference
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
OD	Above Ordnance Datum
NYCC	North Yorkshire County Council
YAT	York Archaeological Trust
NMR UI	National Monuments Record Unique Identifier
NY	North Yorkshire (Records number)
NYM	North Yorkshire Monuments (Records number)
HARGM:	Harrogate Museum (Accession code number)

3. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

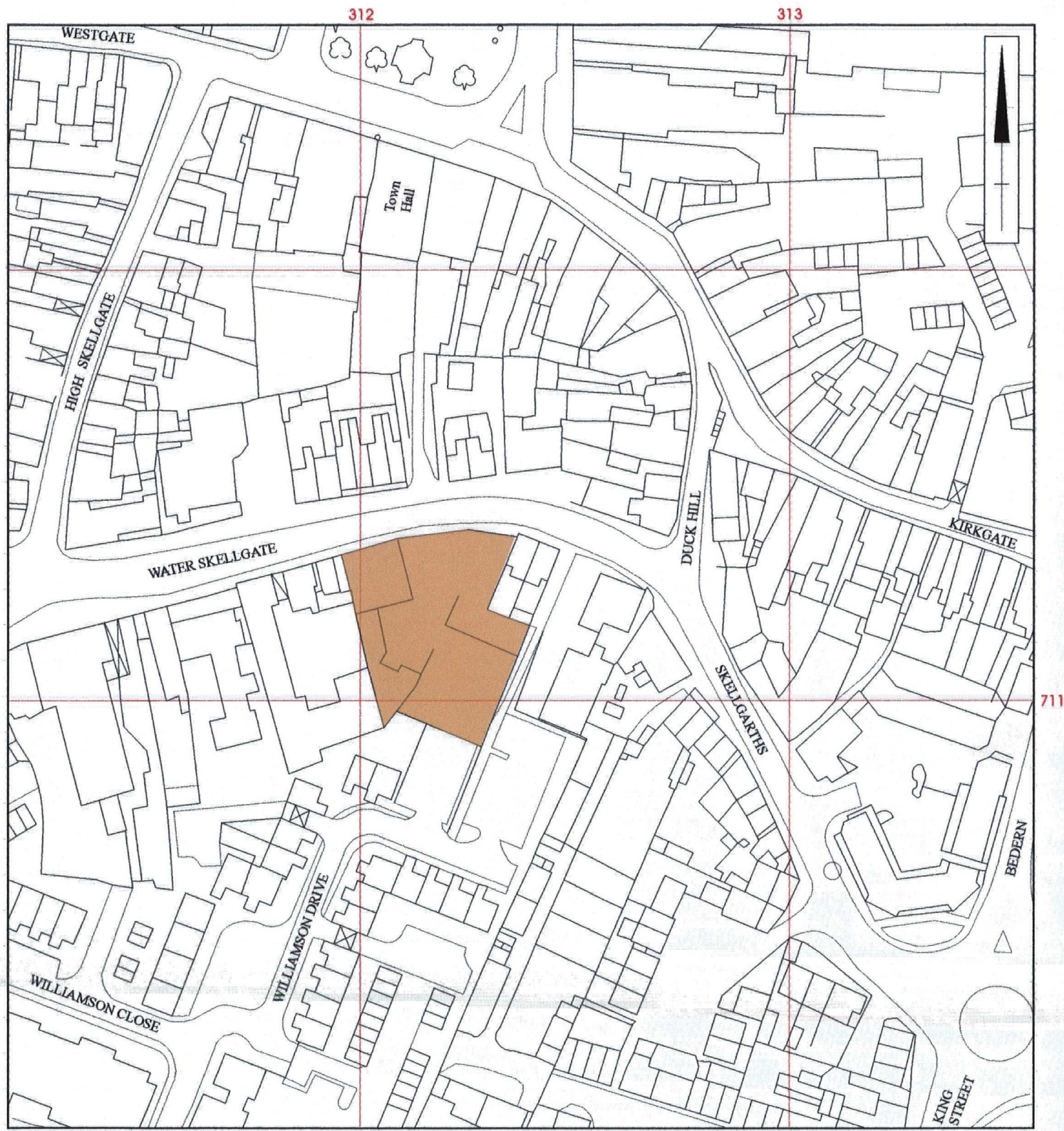
The underlying solid geology of Ripon is an outcrop of Magnesian Limestone and Permian mudstone, separated in many places by two distinct layers of evaporites (gypsum), which extends in a north-south direction between the Pennines, to the west, and the Vale of York, to the south-east (Geological Survey 1979). Also present in the area, above the mudstones, is a deposit of Sherwood (Triassic) sandstone. Overlying this solid geology is a series of glacially deposited sands and gravels, which formed a number of mounds and ridges (kames) in the area. Ripon is sited on an escarpment with Ripon Cathedral standing on a spur of this ridge.

The development site falls within the southern part of the medieval town where the land falls steeply away towards the River Skell to the south, which meanders eastwards to its confluence with the River Ure c.1.25km to the east. The site on Water Skellgate (Figure 2) forms an irregular-shaped plot close to the junction of Water Skellgate and Skellgarths. The northern boundary is formed by Water Skellgate.

A recent ground investigation carried out by Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd. (2000), a short distance to the east in Skellgarths, recorded '*made ground*' extending to 3.3m below the existing ground level, and underlying this a layer of sand and gravel was found above sandy, gravelly clay, both deposits representing glacial deposits. Previous excavation results from a site at Bedern Bank c.140m to the east, would suggest that there may be considerable variation in the nature of the natural glacial deposits in the general area.

Ripon is situated on the River Skell c.1.25km west of the confluence with the River Ure, but the modern course of the Skell does not represent its changing, meandering historical course. The archaeological excavations at Bedern Bank in 1985 (SMR) located an upper and lower terrace to a meander of the Skell which, in the medieval period, flowed to the north of its present course. The modern ground surface in the area of the Bedern Bank excavations sloped down to the south from c.32.8m OD to 26.8m OD. In the northern excavated area (which is described as behind No.3 Bedern Bank) naturally deposited, sand, silt, gravel and pebbles were located directly below the make-up layers of the modern car park. This area was located on the upper terrace of the River Skell. The terrace sloped southwards to c.29m OD and Perring interprets the excavation results to suggest that the original ground surface here had been cut away. Within the central part of the site, naturally deposited sandy clay was found at c.25.85m OD. Within a distance of 13m to the south-west this material was seen to slope down irregularly, and in places was stepped, to a depth of c.24.9m OD. Beyond this point various waterlain silts and gravels were noted at and below 24.3m.

The lower terrace was occupied by part of a braided meander of the River Skell, which was observed as a shallow water course, c.4m wide and c.0.5m deep in which the flow would have been towards the south-east. Deposits on the banks of this water course indicated that it was prone to flooding and perhaps to slightly shifting water channels. The approximate locations of the excavated trenches have been established, but their precise location and the alignment of the terraces and the water course cannot at present be mapped with accuracy without significant further work on the Bedern Bank archive. The textual description in the archive report has been used to attempt to position the water course, and it would appear possible that it may run across the southern part of the study area, south of Water Skellgate.



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Figure 2 Extent of site and study area

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies within Ripon Conservation Area, a little to the west of what is possibly part of the boundary of the ecclesiastical precinct of Cathedral of St Peter and St Wilfrid. No archaeological investigations have taken place within the boundaries of the development site but there have been a number of excavations within the area of the ecclesiastical precinct the findings of which have been published by Hall and Whyman (1996) and Whyman (1997). The findings of the 1985 Bedern Bank investigations have not been published but a statement of the character of the archaeology of the site is amongst the reports in the NYCC SMR and the archive of the site has also been consulted. Findings from these archaeological investigations and an examination of the documentary and cartographic evidence for the site is discussed below period by period. The most recent, and closest, archaeological work in the area took place in March 2001 in Skellgarths.

4.1 Prehistoric period (to 1st century AD)

There is significant evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity of Ripon but no finds from this period have been recovered within the town.

4.2 Roman period (1st to 5th centuries AD)

While there is significant archaeological evidence of Roman activity in the vicinity of Ripon, to date, no evidence from this period has been discovered within the city apart from some sherds of Roman pottery from excavations during 1977-78 in the Deanery Gardens (Whyman 1997, 129), a Roman coin of the house of Constantine I (AD 330-47) was recovered from excavations to the rear of Wakeman's House (Finlayson 2001, 21, NY 273) and a small quantity of residual brick and a part of a hypocaust flue tile from the site of the New School, Priest Lane (McComish 2001, 46; NY 192, 212). A Roman coin has been found in Skellbank (NYM 19760) and a small quantity of Roman brick and tile was also recovered from an evaluation excavation at the Old Cathedral School, Low St Agnesgate in June 2003 (Evans 2003, HARGM:12000).

4.3 Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian periods (5th-11th centuries)

The development site lies to the west of the conjectured pre-Conquest ecclesiastical precinct which is defined as an area of archaeological interest on the NYCC Local Plan, 1991. The first documentary evidence of the Anglo-Saxon monastic site dates from the 8th century when Stephen of Ripon recorded the Life of Wilfrid c.AD 709/10 and Bede also wrote of the monastery c.AD 730. This evidence records the foundation of a monastery by Eata and its reallocation to Wilfrid. Although there is no evidence of its layout, or an accurate location for the site, post-medieval tradition suggests that Eata's monastery lay on land to the north of Residence Lane (Hall and Whyman 1996, 140). The site of Wilfrid's church is that of the present Minster where the crypt is generally believed to have been built by Wilfrid because of its similarity with the crypt at Hexham which is known to be Wilfrid's. After the Norman Conquest the Minster church became a part of the diocese of York and remained a significant ecclesiastical centre throughout the medieval period.

The earliest archaeological evidence for settlement at Ripon dates to the 7th century and relates to the monastic site. Archaeological evidence which has been recovered from within this area includes that from an excavation in 1955 by A. Paget-Baggs in the grounds of the former Deanery Garden Hotel (NMR UI 53730). This uncovered the foundations of a two cell church and associated cemetery believed to be the Ladykirk noted by the 16th century antiquarian John Leland. The findings of the 1955 excavation suggest that there was a church and cemetery on the

site by the early 11th century, and that both may have been present from the 8th century onwards (Hall and Whyman 1996, 130). What are likely to have been further remains of this cemetery were recorded on the other side of Marygate by P. Mayes in 1974 (NYM 19807). In 1977 the area immediately to the south of Paget-Baggs site was excavated by D. Greenhaugh (NMR UI 635478). A few contexts in the north-west corner of the site were identified as possibly pre-Conquest in origin and the 'Ripon Jewel' dating from the 7th century was recovered here. While the position of the pre-Conquest ecclesiastical boundary is not known with any certainty, the findings from these excavations, together with antiquarian observations and an examination of the cartographic and topographical evidence have allowed the area enclosed by Allhallowgate to the north and Marygate to east, encompassing the Minster, is to be seen as the core of Wilfrid's monastery (Hall and Whyman 1996, 136-44).

An undated skeleton was found at Bedern Bank and this may relate to the Minster graveyard (Hall and Whyman 1996, 141) but is unlikely to be an indication that burials might be found on the proposed development site.

An early medieval secular settlement in Ripon is likely to have pre-dated the important ecclesiastical centre, and its presence was demonstrated by excavations at Ailcy Hill in 1986-87 (Hall and Whyman 1996; NYM 19771, 19772, 19780, and 21611) which show that a non-monastic cemetery on the site dated from the 6th -7th century. An evaluation excavation at Low St Agnesgate (Evans 2003) in June 2003 uncovered a large pit, possibly a quarry pit, which contained much animal bone. This was dated to the 9th century by a number of decorated metal items. In another part of the Low St Agnesgate excavations remains of timber buildings were found but the date of these is uncertain and they may be medieval rather than pre-Conquest. However, nothing is known for certain of the form or layout of the early medieval secular settlement at Ripon although remains from this period are thought to be concentrated closer to and east of the Minster.

4.4 Medieval period (11th-16th centuries)

While the form of the early medieval monastic precinct and secular settlement is not yet fully understood, there is clear evidence of ecclesiastical development from the later 12th century onwards and the town may also have undergone a period of expansion at this time. Some time before the Conquest the monastery became a Minster church with a college of canons and in the later 12th century the rebuilding of the Minster church was begun. Bedern Bank is thought to have been the site of the Vicars' houses and chapel (or Bedern) (Ryder 1990, NYM 19770). An assessment of excavations on Low St Agnesgate by P. Mayes in 1974 and in the Deanery Gardens by D. Greenhaugh in 1977-8 revealed significant evidence of settlement in this part of Ripon dating from the 11th century onwards (Whyman 1997; 121, NYM 19789, 19790 and 19808). Whyman's interpretation of the excavation evidence from these sites suggests that they hint at a major reorganization of settlement and street plan in the 12th or early 13th century and also imply modifications to the layout of ecclesiastical property holdings to the north of the Minster. A large ditch feature found to the east of Low St Agnesgate may have been a pre-13th century boundary to the ecclesiastical precinct, and the suggested date of buildings constructed over the ditch is given as the 13th/14th century; 'suggesting that the ecclesiastical precinct was reduced and encompassed within a new street layout in the later 12th or early 13th century, the frontages of which rapidly began to build up' (Whyman 1997, 160). The coincidence of the earliest surviving documentation from the later 12th and the 13th centuries and the reorganization of the town is noted (Whyman 1997, 162). However the need for further excavation evidence to 'confirm, amplify or correct' this interpretation is also highlighted by Whyman (1997, 162). At the end of the 12th century, in 1194, Ripon is first referred to as a borough and Mackay argues

that the royal charters for a fair and market are granted in this period indicating flourishing secular activity (Mackay 1982, 73). Recent excavations to the rear of properties to the east of the Market Place indicate intensive domestic occupation of the area from the 12th/13th century onwards but there is also some indication of earlier features on the site dating from the 11th century. A large ditch, possibly dating from the 12th century, was found to closely follow early cartographic representations of the rear boundary of burgage plots fronting the Market Place (YAT 2000; NY 42).

Excavations at Bedern Bank in 1985 (NYM 19798), c. 110m south-east of the development site, indicated that this area of Ripon was also occupied in the medieval period. They show that 'in the early medieval period the Bedern Bank site was mainly occupied by a broad meander of the River Skell. Evidence was found to show that in the late 12th or early 13th century the river banks had been revetted by timber stakes and a terrace wall had been built. Two stone-lined hearths were found set in an open area between the bank and the wall. On the upper terrace 3-4m above the stream and opposite the western front of the Minster no occupation levels survived. During the 13th century water was drained from the lower terrace, probably by the construction of a mill stream which in the post-medieval period ran alongside Skellgarths. Reclamation dumps extending across the stream beds were rich in well preserved organic materials (including several shoes and a wooden bowl) and had been deposited in order to raise the ground level so that the area could be used as a garden or orchard. By the end of the 15th century the site had been divided into a number of separate properties with houses built against Bedern Bank and tan yards against the mill stream. The tanning industry was represented by liming pits, waste horn cores and clay floored buildings with stone footings, the earliest of which may have dated from the 14th century' (Perring, 1985).

The evaluation at Skellgarths (NY 336) in 2001 produced a linear feature, possibly associated with a mill (see below), deposits and cobble surfaces probably of medieval date. Deposits, and features were either definitely or probably present in most of the trenches excavated at Low St Agnesgate in June 2003.

Post-medieval maps show a mill race, which draws its water from the River Laver, running along Water Skellgate and Skellgarths before joining the main course of the River Skell near Bondgate Green Bridge. Mackay locates the Archbishop's Mill adjacent to the mill race on Skellgarths. The mill is referred to in Domesday Book as standing on the archbishop's demesne, and is recorded as the Archbishop's Mill called Bymylne in 1228 (Fowler 1881, 60). There is an 18th century reference to a watermill at the bottom of Duck Hill, no more than 50m east of the current site, called Byemill (Mackay 1982, 77). In 1893 part of Bye Mill - Duck Hill, was sold due to road widening and the remainder became a house in 1988 (Taylor 1998, 15). There is a documentary reference to Skellgarths being called 'Walkmill Bank' in the 1340s (Fowler 1881, 140-143) which indicates that the mill here may have been a fulling mill.

The natural water course located by the excavation at Bedern Bank (1985) may have been used as a source of water power before its course was more formally manipulated into the mill race as documentary evidence suggests that a mill may have existed here from at least the 11th century. Recently part of the construction of the mill race was observed in the gardens to the rear of St Agnes Lodge (Younge, pers.comm.) and its line can be followed from 18th century maps (Figure 7). The 1744 Enclosure Map for Ripon shows that the course of the River Skell has been manipulated to form a mill race at Bondgate Green. Jeffrey's map of Ripon, (1772) shows the course of the mill race with the bridges which cross it most clearly and a path runs along the line of Skellgarths. This map also marks a mill at the bottom of Duck Hill, on Skellgarths, and there appears to have been a mill on this site from the 11th century. This mill lies outside the

development site, but it is possible that other structures associated with the mill could encroach upon it.

4.5 Post-medieval period (16th-19th centuries)

Cartographic evidence provides an indication of the development of the Renault site from the 18th century onwards. Jeffrey's map of 1772 shows the whole of the study area. The mill race and the site of the mill on Skellgarths are features which continue into the post-medieval period and post-medieval maps show a mill race, which draws its water from the River Laver, running along Water Skellgarth (so called because it was part of the mill race) and Skellgarths before joining the main course of the River Skell near Bondgate Green Bridge. Within the last 10 years work in the boiler room of the Walker Barker premises exposed part of a stone culvert, very probably part of the mill race (Walker Barker staff pers. Comm.). In 1776 an engine was installed at Duck Hill Mill to pump water to stand pipes in the town. This 'water works' is wrongly identified on Jeffrey's map as at Union Mill (Taylor 1998, 15). The mill race is shown clearly on Jeffrey's 1772 map and Langdale's 1818 map running along the line of Skellgarths. In 1880 the mill stream along Water Skellgate was covered over and the road macadamised. It is understood that road works at an unspecified time in the past along Water Skellgate revealed, at a depth of c.2ft, a cobbled surface, presumably a post-medieval or earlier road surface.

Jeffrey's map of 1772 shows the whole of the Water Skellgate street frontage, and a considerable area to the rear, to have been built up, but this may be a stylized representation. The study area is occupied by buildings labelled 'Charity School'. Langdale's map of 1818 shows the study area fully built up along the street front but as with Jeffrey's map, little detail is shown. The school still seems to be present although there appear to have been alterations and it is not clearly identified. The 1854 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows the whole of the Water Skellgate frontage with buildings, but away from the street frontage there appear to be gardens or orchards. A map of 1983 shows the garage with workshops to the rear.

5. WALK-OVER SURVEY

The site, currently still occupied by Walker Barker, was visited on November 5th 2003. The site was seen to be fairly open with brick-built showrooms and workshops along the western side and the rest of the area devoted to tarmaced car parking spaces. The western side side of the site outside the showrooms sloped down moderately from north to south but the eastern side consisted of an upper and lower level area with a height difference of c.1m. During the walkover the author of this report was informed that the upper car parking area had been created by the dumping on site of large quantities of building rubble. For topographic reasons it would appear the the lower level had also been created in this way but this cannot at present be confirmed. None of the buildings on or immediately around the study area appeared to be earlier than the 19th century.