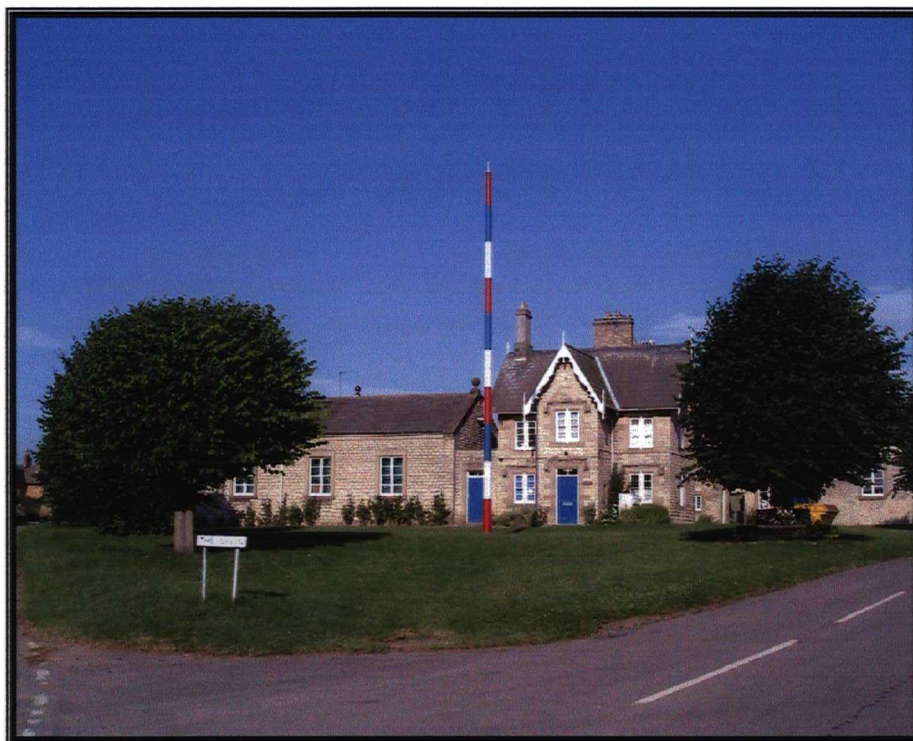


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ENY	1934
CNY	1427
Parish	3123
Rec'd	23/9/03

SLINGSBY SCHOOL.

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF.
OSA REPORT No: OSA03WB19.

AUGUST 2003.



OSA

ON SITE ARCHÆOLOGY

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Report Summary.

REPORT NO: OSA03WB19.

SITE NAME: Slingsby CP School, Classroom Extension.

COUNTY: North Yorkshire.

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: SE 6975 7480.

PLANNING APPLICATION No: 01/01233/CPO.

COMMISSIONED BY: PGT & Co. (York) Ltd,
 88 Tadcaster Road,
 Dringhouses,
 York.

telephone 01904 700188.

TEXT: Graham Bruce.

GRAPHICS: Marie-Claire Ferguson.

FIELDWORK: Graham Bruce.

TIMING: Fieldwork
 22nd and 23rd July 2003.
 Post excavation & report preparation
 24th July to 12th August 2003.

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PERIODS REPRESENTED: Medieval.

Table of Contents.

1.0 Abstract.....	3
2.0 Site Location, Topography and Land Use.....	5
3.0 Archaeological Background.....	6
4.0 Methodology.....	7
5.0 Results.....	8
6.0 Discussion and Conclusion.....	10
7.0 Bibliography.....	10
8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.....	11
9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.....	11
10.0 Appendix 3 ~ Pottery Assessment.....	12
11.0 Appendix 4 ~ The Plates.....	14

List of Figures & Plates.

Figure 1. Site Location (NGR SE 6975 7480).....	4
Figure 2. Detailed site location plan, (Scale 1:2500).....	5
Figure 3. Plan of ditch excavation area showing features [1006] & (1007). (Scale 1:100).....	8
Figure 4. South facing section showing ditch [1006]. (Scale 1:10).....	9
Figure 5. East facing section of western foundation trench. (Scale 1:10).....	9
Plate 1. Location of excavation area.....	14
Plate 2. East side of ditch [1006]. (Scale of 1m).....	14
Plate 3. South end of west foundation. (Scale of 1m).....	15

1.0 Abstract.

A watching brief was undertaken by On-Site Archaeology at the behest of Mr M. Baker of PG&T & Co. (York) Ltd, on the 22nd and 23rd July 2003, during excavations for the construction of a classroom extension. The watching brief was conducted according to a written scheme of investigation provided by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit. The excavations were to a maximum depth of 1.80 below the modern ground surface. Medieval to modern garden soil and make-up deposits overlay natural yellow sands and gravels, into which a large ditch had been cut. This contained a small number of sherds of medieval pottery. A second, possibly medieval feature was also observed, although ground conditions precluded detailed recording.



Figure 1. Site Location (NGR SE 6975 7480).

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2.0 Site Location, Topography and Land Use.

Slingsby County Primary School is situated on the west side of The Green, in the centre of the village of Slingsby, North Yorkshire. The site of the proposed classroom extension lies immediately to the west of the school buildings and has until recently formed part of the level tarmac surfaced playground.

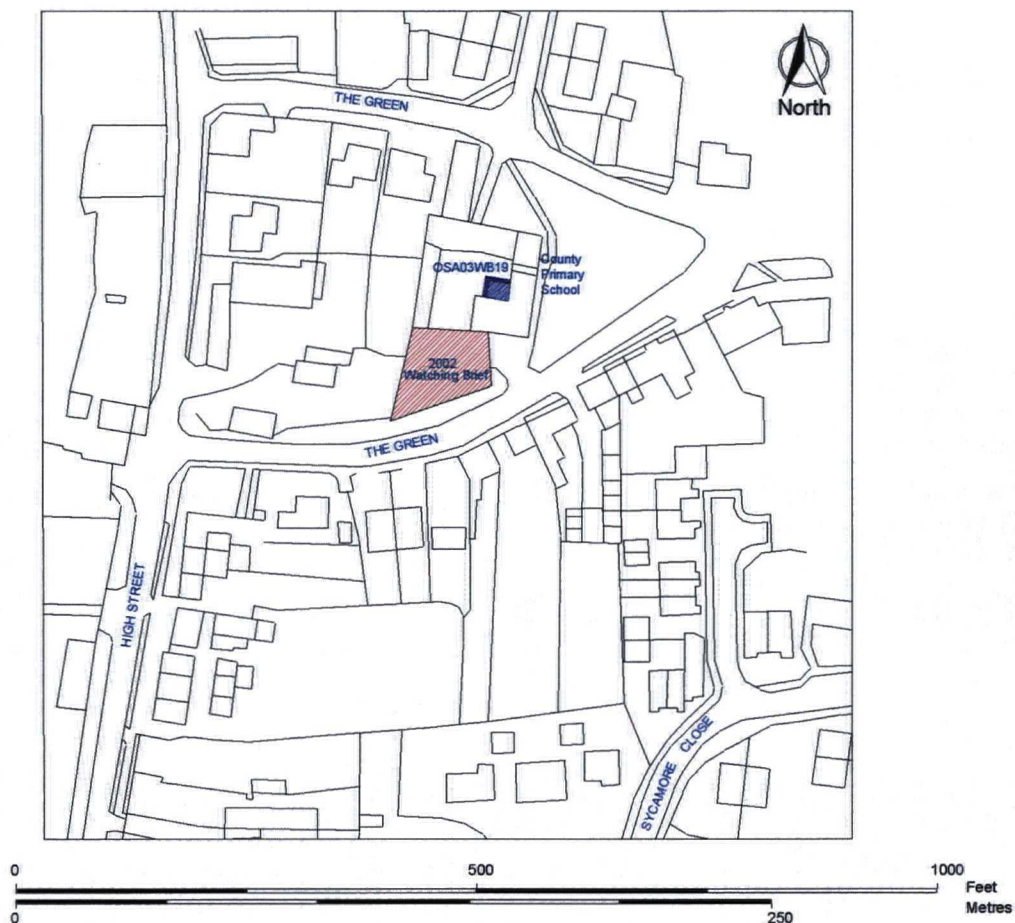


Figure 2. Detailed site location plan, (Scale 1:2500).

3.0 Archaeological Background.

The school lies within an area of considerable archaeological interest within the heart of the former medieval settlement and close to the Castle. Whilst the majority of the standing remains of the Castle are parts of the early 17th century mansion constructed by Sir Charles Cavendish, there are some elements of medieval masonry, together with a substantial ditch, presumably also of medieval date (Salter, 2001, p.99). Royal licence was granted in the first half of the 14th century to Ralph de Hastings for the conversion of existing buildings into a castle and park. The nature of the earlier buildings is uncertain, but these may have originally included a lodge of Norman date, (Ingham, 2001, p.106).

There is therefore high potential for the survival of remains dating from the medieval period. Archaeological evaluation of land to the north west of the school in 1995 encountered evidence for former medieval buildings and land-use at depths of between 0.50m and 1m below the present ground levels. A watching brief was carried out during the construction of a playground to the south of the current development (OSA, 2002), which encountered a single, shallow ditch, aligned east west containing occasional sherds of late 14th to 15th century pottery. (The above information has been provided by Gail Falkingham, North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Unit unless otherwise referenced).

4.0 Methodology.

Following the removal of the modern tarmac and underlying concrete the overburden was removed by a JCB excavator fitted with a toothless bucket down to a depth of 0.30m across the entire footprint of the proposed classroom (approximately 8m x 5.5m in area, see Plate 1). Excavation for two foundation trenches, each 1.00m wide, along the west and north sides of this area was then undertaken. Originally these foundations were proposed to be a maximum of 1.00m deep. However, at this depth the ground conditions were considered by the Buildings Inspector to be unsuitable. The foundation trenches were therefore excavated to depths of between 1.20m and 1.80m. The exposed surfaces were then cleaned by hand in order to detect any archaeological features revealed through textural or colour changes in the deposits. Once this had been completed, sections were hand excavated through the archaeological features that had been identified. Due to health and safety considerations hand cleaning and recording could not be undertaken in the deepest parts of the excavation, and indeed a substantial trench collapse vindicated this decision. Some of the recording was therefore conducted from the top of the trench, with no opportunity being available to collect stratified datable artefacts.

Standard *On-Site Archaeology* techniques were followed throughout the excavation. This involved the completion of written records for each deposit or cut encountered, along with plans and/or sections drawn as required. A photographic record of the deposits and features was also maintained.

5.0 Results.

Where untruncated the natural (1004) was found at a consistent depth of 1.00m below the modern ground surface. In the northeast corner of the investigated area the natural comprised compacted sandy gravel, but over the rest of the site a much looser sand was present.

The natural was cut by one certain and one possible archaeological feature. The certain feature was a large, north – south aligned ditch [1006] (see Plate 2). This ditch was 2.35m wide and at least 0.80m deep, with a straight east side which sloped at approximately 45°. The west side had been substantially truncated by modern disturbance, but appeared to be steeper. The single fill (1005), comprised mid yellowish brown sandy silt, which contained occasional fragments of possibly Roman tile and sherds of 12th-13th century pottery. The second, possibly contemporary, archaeological feature was found approximately 1.5m to the west of the ditch. This comprised an area of loose, rubblely sandy silt (1007) approximately 1.00m wide, which may have sat within a cut into the underlying natural. Unfortunately much of the overlying material was very loose, having been substantially disturbed by modern drains, and this collapsed over this possible feature before it could be examined in any detail. Even after the collapsed material had been removed by machine the trench was not considered safe enough to enter and therefore no additional recording could be undertaken.

The natural and cut feature(s) were sealed by a thick layer of friable mid grey brown sandy clay silt (1003), containing occasional fragments of pottery ranging in date from the 14th to the 18th century. Except where it was truncated by later intrusions this layer was consistently around 0.60m thick. The homogenous nature of this deposit suggests that it has gradually accumulated, presumably as either an agricultural or horticultural soil (see Plate 3). This deposit was overlain by a 0.30m thick, make-up layer of mixed grey brown sandy clay silt (1002) containing fragments of limestone, concrete and CBM. This formed the base for the modern playground surface, which comprised 0.10m thick concrete (1001), sealed by tarmac (1000).

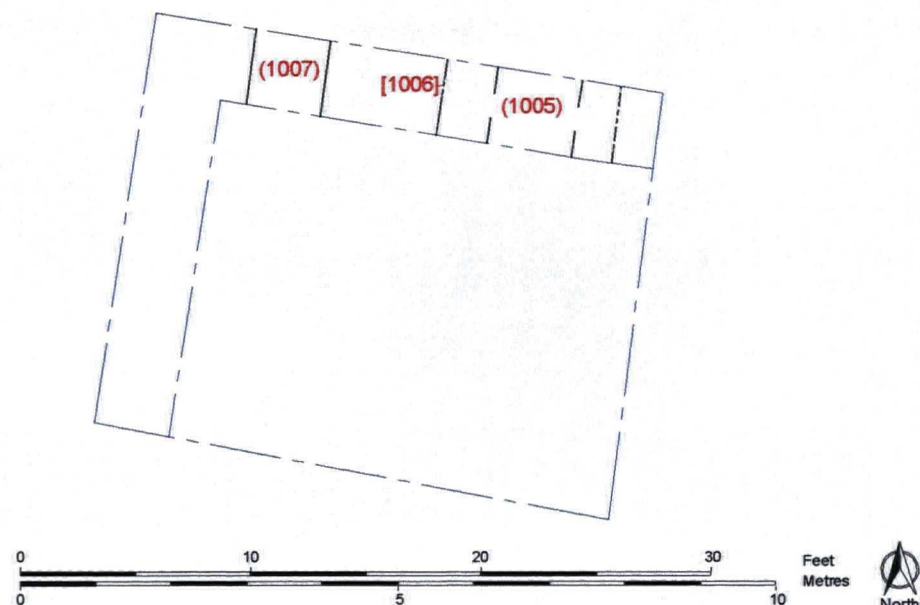


Figure 3. Plan of ditch excavation area showing features [1006] & (1007). (Scale 1:100).

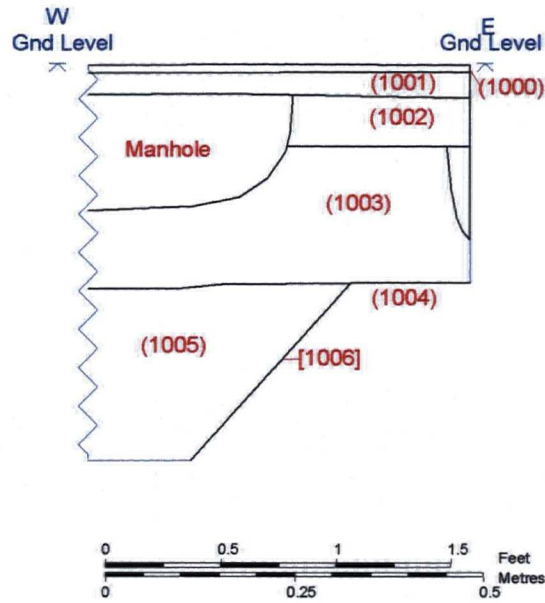


Figure 4. South facing section showing ditch [1006]. (Scale 1:10).

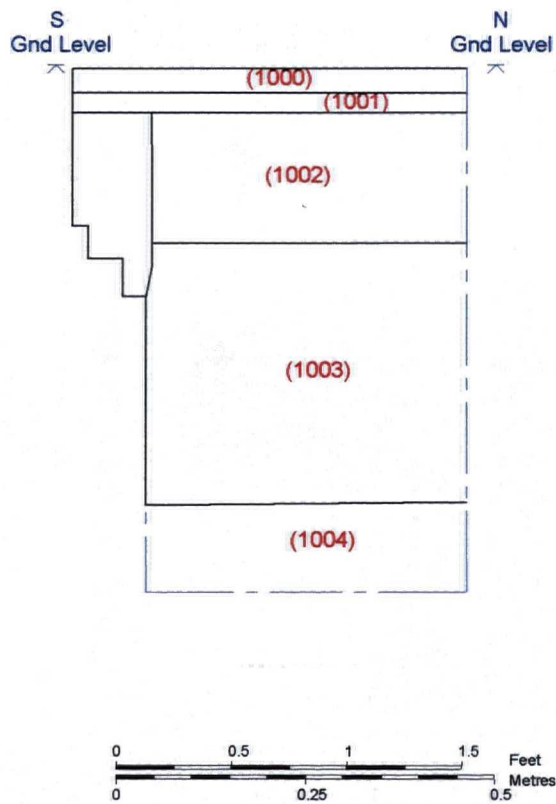


Figure 5. East facing section of western foundation trench. (Scale 1:10).

6.0 Discussion and Conclusion.

The ditch found during the watching brief is unlikely to have acted for drainage due to the light sandy character of the natural subsoil. In view of its scale, being almost 2.5m wide and over 1m deep, it would have acted as a significant boundary. The orientation of the ditch, approximately north south may indicate that it separated the medieval green from private property to the west of this.

The dating of the ditch, by the pottery, to the late 12th to 14th century, does not obviously relate to the known historical development of the castle. This excavated boundary post-dates the conversion of the Norman buildings and pre-dates the emparkment in the first half of the 14th century the construction of the Elizabethan mansion. This larger ditch is also earlier than the smaller east-west orientated ditch found during the previous years watching brief (OSA 2002).

7.0 Bibliography.

Ingham B. (2001). Yorkshire Castles.

OSA (2002). Slingsby School. Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief. (Report No. OSA02WB19)

Salter M. (2001). The Castles and Tower Houses of Yorkshire.

8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.

Context	Description	Extent	Depth
1000	Tarmac	Trench	0.02m
1001	Concrete	Trench	0.10m
1002	Mixed mid grey brown sandy silty clay with flecks charcoal and mortar and fragments of CBM, concrete, limestone (19 th – 20 th century ceramics observed but not kept)	Trench	0.30m
1003	Friable mid grey brown sandy clay silt with occasional flecks of charcoal, mortar and CBM, occasional pebbles and fragments of limestone	Trench	0.60m
1004	Compacted mid yellow brown sandy gravel to loose mid yellow brown sand (Natural)	Trench	N/A
1005	Friable mid yellowish brown sandy silt with occasional flecks of charcoal, pebbles and fragments of CBM, limestone and animal bone.	2.35m x 1.00m	0.80m +
1006	N-S aligned ditch, with 45° sloping side, base not reached	2.35m x 1.00m	0.80m +
1007	Loose, mid brown sandy silt with very frequent fragments of limestone rubble. (recorded rapidly from above trench due to instability of trench sides which subsequently collapsed)	1m x 1m	?

9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.

9.1 Drawing Register.

Dwg No	Description	Scale	Date	Initials
1	Plan of Excavated trench	NTS	22/23-07-03	GJB
2	S facing section [1006]	NTS	22-07-03	GJB
3	E facing section, S end of W foundation	NTS	22-07-03	GJB

9.2 Photographic Register.

Frame	Description	Scale	Date	Initials
Film #D/230703				
1	Front of school	No scale	220703	GJB
2	Front of school and green	No scale	220703	GJB
3-5	E end of N foundation trench	1m	220703	GJB
6-8	E side of ditch [1006]	1m	220703	GJB
9-11	S end of W foundation trench	1m	230703	GJB
12	N foundation trench following collapse of side	No scale	230703	GJB
13	W foundation trench	1m	230703	GJB
14-15	"Working shot"	No scale	230703	GJB
16-17	Trench location	No scale	230703	GJB
18	W foundation trench	No scale	230703	GJB
19	N foundation trench	No scale	230703	GJB
20	Trench location	No scale	230703	GJB

10.0 Appendix 3 ~ Pottery Assessment.

Alan Vince¹.

Six fragments of pottery were recovered from a watching brief at Slingsby School, Slingsby, North Yorkshire, carried out by On Site Archaeology (Site Code OSA03 WB19) together with a single fragment of ceramic building material. The pottery ranged in date from the later 12th/early 13th century to the late 16th or 17th century whilst the ceramic building material is probably of Romano-British date.

10.1 Description.

The finds came from two contexts: the fill of a large ditch (1005) and an overlying thick homogenous soil (1003).

10.1.1 Pottery.

Six sherds of pottery were recovered. Two came from the ditch fill and both of these were of York ware. One is an unglazed jar body sherd and the other is a body sherd from a decorated jug with a plain lead glaze and a vertical semi-circular-sectioned applied strip. It is likely that York ware was produced in the same area of the Hambleton Hills as the later Brandsby-type ware, for which kiln sites are known, but it is also possible that blocks of similar clay were moved southwards to the York area by glaciers and that these were exploited by 12th/13th-century York potters. York ware was certainly in production by the 1180s as a vessel of this type was found at Lurk Lane in a dated fire horizon, but continued in production, probably to the middle of the 13th century.

Four sherds were recovered from the overlying soil, 1003. Two of these were Brandsby-type ware jug sherds and the other two were Ryedale ware, made in the same area in the later 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries. The Brandsby-type ware sherds are both from vessels with a dark, carbon-rich core and inner-surface. This characteristic seems to be much more common in the later medieval period (late 14th and 15th centuries) than earlier and was clearly a deliberate effect. Since the outside of the vessels is often oxidized and oxygen would react with the carbon the interiors of these pots must have been sealed, probably through each pot being stacked on top of the base of the one below, as opposed to the overlapping stacking which was more common and which allowed kiln gases to circulate inside and outside the pots. The Ryedale vessels include a body sherd from a large vessel, possibly a bowl or a large cistern, and a miniature jug or cruet base.

None of the sherds showed any sign of abrasion and it is therefore unlikely that they were subjected to ploughing. Thus, it is perhaps unlikely that the ditch was a field boundary or that the soil was solely the result of ploughing. It would have been possible, however, for the soil

¹ 25West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW

to have been the result of late and post-medieval dumping on the site of which only the top was ploughed.

10.1.2 Ceramic Building Material.

A single fragment of tile was recovered from the ditch fill. It was abraded, unlike the potsherds, and is a thick, featureless fragment. The thickness, abrasion and to a lesser extent the fabric all suggest that this is a Romano-British tile rather than a medieval one. If so, it is probably from either a tegula or a brick. The former were used as roof tiles, either on timber or stone Romanised buildings whereas the latter were used either in hypocausts or in walling, both implying a much higher degree of sophistication. Therefore, the tegula identification is preferred.

10.2 Assessment.

None of the finds is of particular intrinsic interest and their value comes from what they can tell us about the site. The possible Romano-British roof tile may have been scavenged from the site of a Roman building for reuse but still implies that somewhere fairly close there should be Romanised occupation. The ditch was open until at least the late 12th or early 13th century and the overlying dumping or soil accumulation is of late and post-medieval date.

Table A. List of identified finds

Context	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Part	Use	Condition
1003	BRANDSBY	BLACK CORE AND INT	JUG	1	1	PLAIN GL	BS		FRESH
1003	BRANDSBY	BLACK CORE AND INT	JUG	1	1	CUGL	BS		FRESH
1003	RYEDALE		BOWL	1	1	PLAIN GL INT AND EXT	BS	DEPO INT	FRESH
1003	RYEDALE		JUG	1	1	MINIATURE VESSEL	B		FRESH
1005	RTIL		TEG/BRICK	1	1	ID?	BS		ABR
1005	YORK		JAR	1	1		BS		FRESH
1005	YORK		JUG	1	1	PLAIN GL;VERT APP	BS		FRESH

11.0 Appendix 4 ~ The Plates.



Plate 1. Location of excavation area.

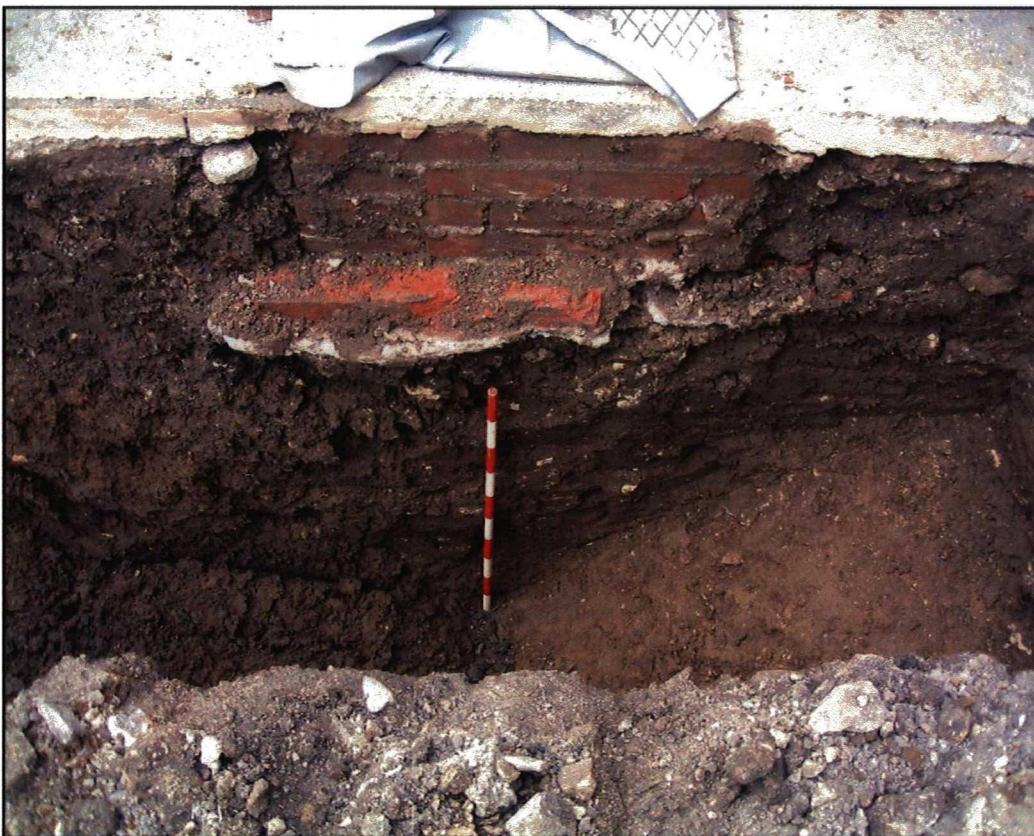


Plate 2. East side of ditch [1006]. (Scale of 1m).



Plate 3. South end of west foundation. (Scale of 1m).