

NYCC HER	
SNY	8570
ENY	2173
CNY	3558
Parish	6064
Rec'd	20-01-99

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

THE FIRS, LOW LANE

ALDBOROUGH ~~S.A.M. NO. 436~~ Not in SAM

NORTH YORKSHIRE

N.G.R. 440408 466571

COUNTY / PARISH NO. 6064

FOR

MR. & MRS.A.C.ROLLINSON

440397 466585

JULY 1999

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
LOCATION AND STATUS	2
PLANNING HISTORY	2
SITE LOCATION PLAN	3
SITE DESCRIPTION	4
HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	4
AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	7
PLATES 1 & 2 - GENERAL SITE PHOTOGRAPHS	8
SUMMARY	9
PLATE 3 & 4 - DETAIL OF TRENCH STRATIGRAPHY	10
CONCLUSION	12
APPENDIX A - ROMAN POTTERY	14

**THE FIRS
LOW LANE
ALDBOROUGH**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
JUNE 1999**

INTRODUCTION

An Archaeological Investigation was made in conjunction with ground disturbance associated with a small domestic development within the village of Aldborough. The nature of the ground disturbance relates to construction of a single storey extension to the north elevation of the existing dwelling.

The scope of the archaeological works included a rapid desk top study, and watching brief. The works were commissioned by the owner / occupier of The Firs, Mr. & Mrs.A.C.Rollinson.

LOCATION AND STATUS

The Firs is situated within the north western extent of the village of Aldborough, on the northern side of Low Lane. The study area is located to the rear of the existing property.

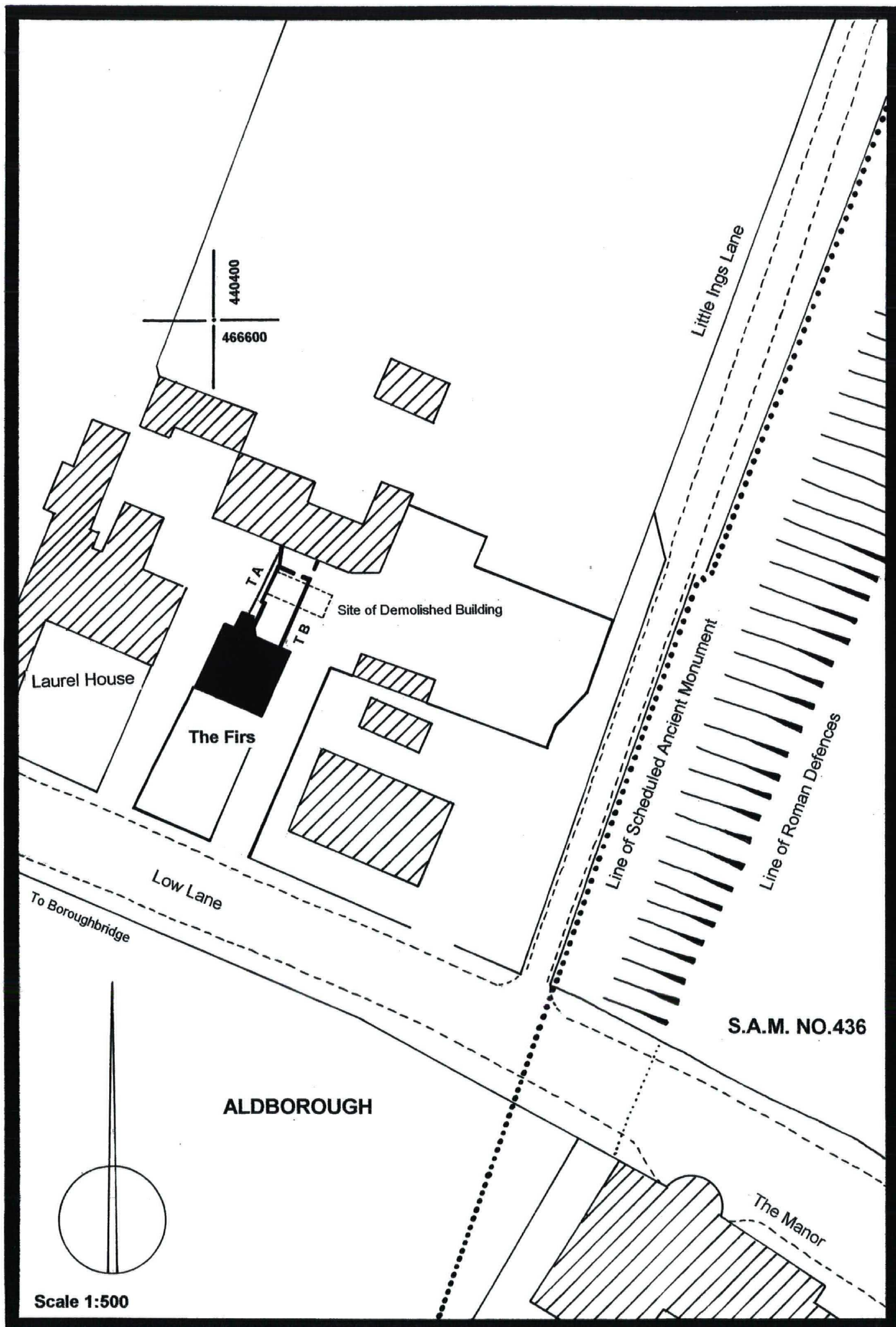
The site situated approximately 40 m west of the curtilage of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (Isurium Brigantum, North Yorks, SAM 436) located at SE: 440408 466571, at 20m AOD, within the parish of Boroughbridge.

PLANNING HISTORY

Outline Planning Permission for the erection of a single storey extension was granted by Harrogate Borough Council. One of the conditions placed on the consent was that the applicant engage the services of an approved Archaeologist in order to maintain an Archaeological Watching Brief on the proposed ground disturbance.

FIGURE 1

SITE LOCATION PLAN



SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is situated immediately adjacent to the north elevation of The Firs, an area, until very recently occupied by a single storey brick ancillary building and part gravel yard. The existing ground levels fall very gently to the north from 20 m AOD. The site is accessed via a gravel drive that runs down the eastern side of the property parcel from Low Lane. The site is contained to the south by the existing dwelling, to the west by the intermittent boundary with the adjacent property, to the north by a single storey ancillary building/garage, to the east by a gravel driveway.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Village:

The present village of Aldborough overlies the Roman town of Isurium Brigantum and remains relatively well contained within the ancient town's perimeter defences. The defences contain an almost rectangular area of approximately 74 acres.

The Roman settlement was a civilian administrative centre, or civitas capital for the territory of the Brigantes which covered much of the north of England. There is no substantial evidence of military occupation at Isurium.

The Site:

The study area is situated to the immediate west of the Roman town, outside and adjacent to the western perimeter defences and to the immediate north of the line of the Roman road exiting the town to the west.

Archaeology:

A preliminary consultation of the Sites and Monuments Record, NYCC has confirmed that:-

The site has not been the subject of any previous archaeological investigation. However a recent programme of Archaeological works were undertaken on an adjoining site prior to the construction of a dwelling to the immediate east. The works were conducted by R.P.Cross Esq. in 1987/8. Within the 2 m depth of dig archaeological features that were interpreted as Roman were identified. This consisted of a dump / demolition of Roman building debris that was suspended within pinkish brown sandy loam matrix.

The surface of the Roman deposits were identified at 18.17m AOD. This deposit was sealed by upto 1.83m of light brown sandy loam that contained post medieval artefacts.

Early Modern History:

It is understood from an oral communication with Mr. & Mrs. A.C. Rollinson that the existing dwelling, named The Firs, was constructed during the early 19th century as a private "green field" development and not associated with the Estate build that is so characteristic within the rest of the village at this time.

From available cartographic evidence details concerning the more recent history of the site and its environs can be established:-

1855:

In the mid 19th century (OS 6") the property is depicted within the central area of a small complex of buildings located within the western extent of the village, adjacent to an unnamed lane that runs north north east of Low Lane. The configuration of the developed area consists of four detached buildings. These are offset some distance from the main road and aligned parallel to same. It would appear that the small rectangular parcels of land to the south of the buildings are utilised as gardens, these support intermittent tree cover that is suggestive of orchards. To the rear of the building complex a large rectangular field extends northwards, the area is subdivided into at least seven small units, the majority of these are tree covered, the density of which are, again, suggestive of orchards.

The building identifiable as the study area is not named. The building consists of two detached buildings, namely the dwelling, the planform of which is a stepped S shape with a principal north north eastern alignment, access to the rear of which would appear to be via a driveway off Low Lane that is shared with the neighbouring property to the immediate west. The second building is detached and situated to the immediate east of the dwelling, this building is aligned east and may well be ancillary building / stables.

1898:

By the late 19th century (OS 6") the complex of buildings have undergone some modification, resulting in the consolidation of both property parcels. This included road side development at the neighbouring property and infill of the rear yard area within the study area, a small annexe attached to the detached ancillary building has been demolished and a new detached ancillary building has been constructed to the north of same.

The thoroughfare to the east of the dwellings is named as Little Ings Lane.

By this time the garden areas surrounding both properties has contracted in size due to infill. Within the large field to the north of the building complex, a number of the small orchards have been amalgamated to form three larger units, the largest two of which are tree covered.

A small detached building has been constructed within the south west corner of the northernmost field.

1910:

During the early 20th century (OS 25") the building complex and surrounding land remains largely unchanged with no change in garden / field configuration or size with the exception that the orchard trees are not depicted in the northern most field.

1951:

In the mid 20th century (OS 6") the property parcel and surrounding land remains as depicted in the 1910.

1968:

By 1968 (OS 1:2500) the building complex has undergone some further development. The property at the western extent of the complex named as Aldborough Lodge has been heavily developed with a substantial extension to the west of same. The neighbouring property, named as Laurel House is largely unaltered with the exception of the construction of small ancillary buildings in the rear yard. The buildings within the study area have by this time acquired their present planform, size and layout i.e dwelling with three detached ancillary buildings to rear and east.

The garden and yard areas surrounding the developed area differ only slightly from that depicted in 1955, with some infill. However, the partition boundaries within the large field, OS.No.4467 to the north of the building complex have been removed forming a single unit with an acreage of 2.54. The field remains tree covered. The south western unit of the field has been amalgamated with the field, OS.No.3660 to the west and the northern extent of the field has become part of large field to the north.

1988:

It would appear that the garden within the south eastern corner of the study area was developed during the summer of 1988 when a detached two storey dwelling was erected within the central area of this holding. This property was accessed via a private drive off Low Lane from the south and a detached garage unit was constructed to the north of the dwelling.

1999:

The single storey ancillary building that was formerly situated in the rear yard was demolished during June 1999. This small detached brick building was aligned east. The demolition works exposed a sequence of fireplaces within the southern extent of the building at least one of which was associated with a "Copper" boiler / washing receptacle suggesting that it was used for part of it's life as the wash house. It is understood from John Lafford (Builder), that a further hearth was identified in the loft area of the building, the low pitched roof and restricted headroom of the recently demolished structure would suggest that it may have been formerly two storey's in height.

An inspection of the available map sources would suggest that this building was originally attached to the northern elevation of the dwelling, no evidence of this extension can be identified from the fabric of the dwelling.

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Prior to the commencement of works it was anticipated that, due to the above there was a low probability that archaeology survived in situ within the proposed development area. Should any archaeological deposits or features have survived the impact of 19th century development then it would be likely that this would be sealed by a Post Medieval buried cultivated soil.

It was therefore recommended that an archaeologist be appointed to maintain a Watching Brief on the hand excavations.

The aims of this archaeological investigation are as follows:

- a. to record any finds, features or structures of archaeological interest and obtain information on the presence, extent, character, date and depth of these remains;

PLATES 1 AND 2



General site location, facing south



General site location, facing north

- b. The archaeology will be recorded using professionally approved techniques, standard forms and conventions. All excavation trenches and archaeological features will be recorded by plans and photographs and sections where possible.
- c. to assess the importance of any remains found and interpret them in terms of their historical context.

The watching brief was required to be maintained during:-

The hand excavation of the proposed strip foundation trench's.

A total of 3 foundation trench's were excavated, measuring in total 22.300 m long x 0.60 m wide base width x 0.64m deep.

The excavation of overburden within the area of the proposed extension for oversite concrete and sub base.

In order to satisfy the archaeological condition placed on these excavations, it will be necessary for the principal archaeologist:- to be present, on site, during these excavations down to the required depth or to the surface of any archaeology that maybe encountered.

SUMMARY

The Archaeological Watching Brief commenced on Monday 28th June 1999 and concluded on Tuesday 29th June 1999.

The watching brief was maintained during the excavations in advance of the excavation of all strip foundation trench's and the part reduction of ground levels prior to the construction of a concrete slab floor.

The paucity and nature of the archaeological evidence resulting from these excavations led the archaeologist to revise the project design prior to the conclusion of the intended groundworks. It was decided not to observe the outstanding shallow excavations, these included the remaining excavations to reduce ground levels within the footprint of the building and the installation of a drainage gully pot.

PLATES 3 AND 4



Detail of typical stratigraphy, facing east



Detail of stratigraphy with brick drain, facing west

The Natural sub-soil was not encountered during the works.

An overall layer of made up ground dominated the stratigraphy of the trench sections, the required depth of dig was achieved within this layer. This deposit of medium brown (10YR3/3) loamy silty sand was moist, well compacted and contained a low quantity of inclusions, namely sandstone chippings, lime and charcoal flecks. The layer contained a small quantity of 19th Century pottery and glass together with clay tobacco pipe stems. The surface of the layer was identified at 19.60 m AOD and sloped gently downwards to the north to 19.45 m AOD.

It's surface had been subjected to a high level of disturbance and trampling associated with the construction of the now demolished outbuilding and the installation of a drain.

This activity resulted in the deposition of dark brown (10YR3/2) sandy loam across the majority of the site. The layer was moist and loosely compacted and contained a high quantity of inclusions. With the exception of the trench fill associated with the reinstatement of the former drain the inclusions were stratified into a sequence of shallow lenses, of brick, pink sand, and cinder with ash. The layer contained 19th century pottery, bottle glass, together with a single sherd of Roman Pottery. The layer increases in depth to the south and east, measuring upto 0.44m in depth. The deposit accounts for the existing ground levels across the site.

Within the western excavation edge a drain was identified. The drain consisted of a single course of purpose made drainage bricks arranged end to end, the bricks were individually covered by a fired clay tiles that were convex in section to increase the capacity of the drain. The bricks each had a dished upper surface and were uniform in size, each measuring 0.27m x 0.15m x 0.09m. The invert of the drain was identified at a minimum of 19.60m AOD this increased to the north on a gentle gradient. The drain had been laid on the surface of the loamy silty sand and was surround by a loosely compacted fill.

Towards the southern extent of the site, immediately adjacent to the existing brick garage / store, a cobble yard surface was identified. The surface of this single course of water worn cobbles was identified at 19.10m AOD, immediately beneath the existing gravel drive. The cobbles measured <0.08m in size and were bedded level on the layer of sandy loam.

CONCLUSION

The recent archaeological watching brief conducted by Mr.K.J.Cale on behalf of Mr.&Mrs.A.C.Rollinson at The Firs, Aldborough has provided a useful picture of the recent development of this site.

The watching brief identified three main phases of activity on the site:-

Phase 1:

The deposition of a loamy silty sand across the entire site during the 19th century. This deposit is similar and most probably the same as that encountered 14m to the south east during previous archaeological investigations (R.P.Cross 1987/88).

In both contexts the layer dominated the stratigraphy of the site. The reason for its deposition is less clear, the silty nature of its matrix is suggestive of alluvial sediment, however with the depth of this layer exceeding 0.54m in the study area and over 1.45m on the adjacent site it would seem unlikely its provenance can be attributed to flooding. It would seem likely that the layer was imported onto site to significantly raise / level ground levels during the early 19th century.

It is possible that with the site being located within close proximity to the line of the Roman perimeter defences the area has been subject to landfill in order to consolidate undulating ground. The line of the western defences that are presently identifiable as a linear bank, date to the 3rd century, this bank would have supported a 2.438m wide by 6.096 high wall that would have been faced in red sandstone ashlar. To the front of the perimeter wall and running parallel to same there was likely to have been a berm measuring approximately 4.267m wide adjacent to an outer ditch measuring 5.182m wide and upto 1.892 in depth.

It is the last dimension that I feel is significant and relevant for the study area. It would seem very plausible that in order to consolidate and reclaim land in the vicinity of these massive earthwork defences a considerable quantity of spoil would have to be brought onto site. As to establishing a date for this programme of landscaping, an early 19th century date is likely.

Phase 2:

The raising of ground levels within the southern extent of the site immediately prior to the construction of a brick outbuilding, that may have functioned as a wash house. It is likely that the brick drainage, down the western side of the site, was also formed at this time, together with the cobbled yard surface to the north.

It would seem likely that this programme of development dates to the early-mid 19th century.

A small quantity of finds were recovered from these excavations, this assemblage was predominantly 19th century and was not removed from site. However a single sherd of 2nd century Roman pottery was removed and is detailed within Appendix A. The sherd is being returned to Mr.A.C.Rollinson for his private collection.

Kevin John Cale

July 1999

APPENDIX A

The Roman Pottery

One sherd was recovered from this recent programme of excavations from a layer of heavily disturbed buried sandy loam.

Furthermore it should be noted that together with the Roman material a moderate quantity of 19th century pottery and glass was identified within the same deposits, these artefacts were not retained.

Samian Ware

Type:	Samian: rim sherd: bowl
Decoration:	Beaded Rim with lateral incision
Manufactured:	Lezoux, Central Gaul
Date:	II
Size:	length - 36mm width - 27mm body thickness - 4mm
Condition:	Exterior: slightly abraded Interior: chipped
Quantity:	1
Other Comments:	None