

brown silty sand (C1048). Animal bone and 16th century ceramic were recovered from C1048. This horizon of features cut an homogenous brown clay silt (C1049) which was augered to determine its depth and to locate subsoil. The results of which suggested C1049 to be approximately 0.80m in depth where it interfaced with a yellowish-brown soft sand subsoil at an overall depth of 7.11m AOD.

3.6 INTERVENTION 6

A series of six auger cores were taken at intervals along a NE-SW profile from the edge of Intervention 4, being 13.00m in length. The results showed topsoil to overlay a buried soil horizon of dark brown friable sand which interfaced with subsoil at depths of between 1.08m and 1.42m below present ground level (Figure 14). This probable layer has been interpreted as the continuation of layer C1056 identified in Intervention 4. No buried archaeological features were identified by the auger survey.

4.0 DISCUSSION (Figure 15)

Four broad phases of archaeological activity have been inferred from the results of the evaluation and are summarised below (Table 1). Dating relies on stratigraphy and ceramic dating (see Appendix D).

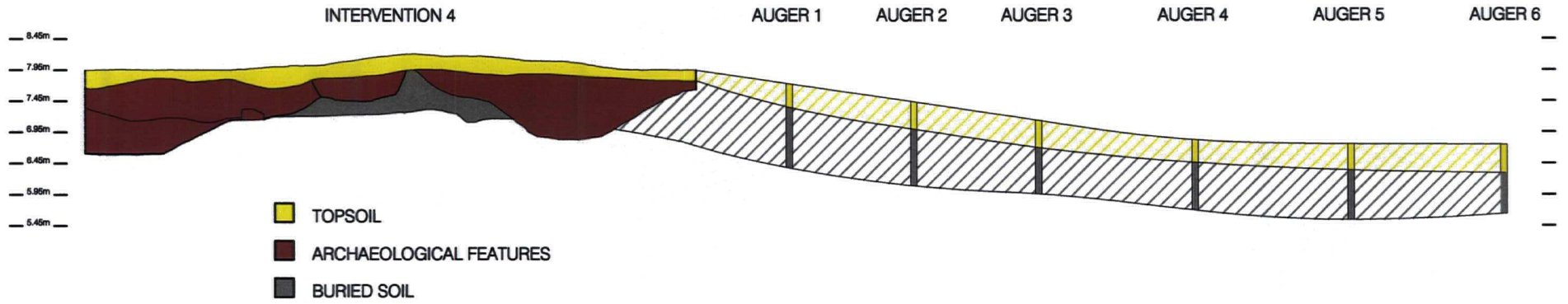
Table 1 Summary of phasing

Phase	Interventions	Activity	Date
1	1, 2, 4 and 5	structural and domestic activity and boundary ditch	16th century
2	4	structural activity and boundary ditch	16th to mid-17th century
3	1 to 4	construction and alteration of Church Hill Cottages and land reclamation	late 18th to 19th century
4	3 and 4	land reclamation	20th century

4.1 PHASE 1 (Intervention 1, 2, 4 and 5)

The results of the scheme of investigation demonstrate a phase of structural and domestic activity of the 16th century at the site. Earlier pottery, Yorkshire grittyware (11th to 13th century), was recovered during excavation, but was not present in sufficient quantity to suggest activity at the site. The features dated to the 16th century include a pit in Intervention 1 (F11), a collapsed stone wall footing in Intervention 2 (F25), a possible oven with associated cobble surface and posthole in Intervention 5 (F22 to F24), and a boundary ditch in Intervention 4. While the pottery recovered is relatively quotidian, the animal bone and shellfish from Intervention 5 and building material from Intervention 1 and 4 hint at elevated status. The remains are also relatively widespread across the area of investigation suggesting that St Mary's Church was accompanied by a small settlement during the 16th century.



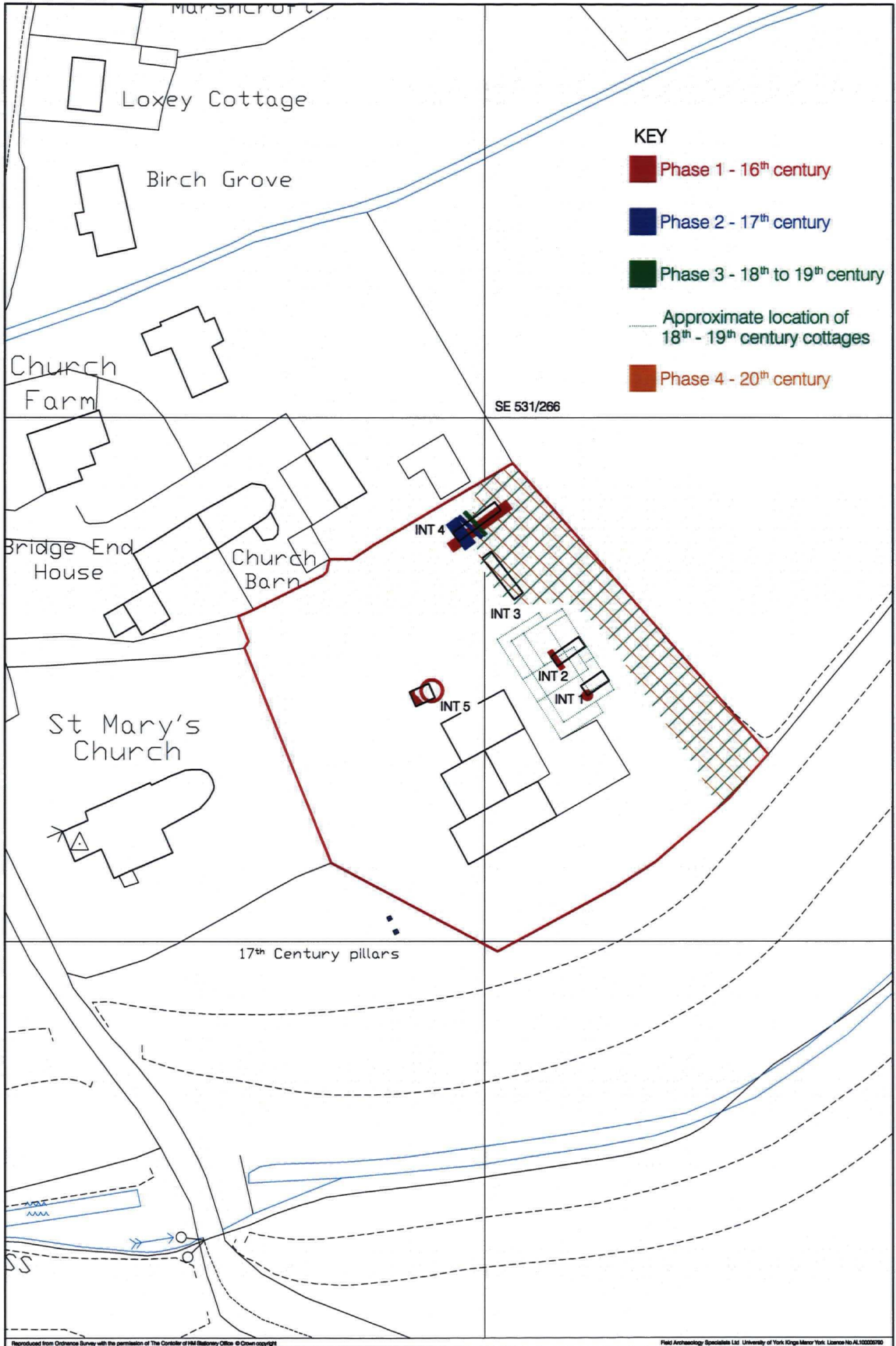


- TOPSOIL
- ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES
- BURIED SOIL

NE - SW profile - Intervention 6

Scale 1:100

Figure 14



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Results of scheme of investigation by phase

Scale 1:1000



Figure 15



4.2 PHASE 2 (Intervention 4)

Only in Intervention 4 is Phase 1 superseded by activity in a relatively short space of time. The 16th century ditch, once backfilled is sealed by a buried soil which prepares the ground for a stone structure with a flanking boundary ditch (F19 and F20). The nature of the stone structure is not clear and may have been a boundary wall or a stone building with a contemporary drainage ditch. The phase is indirectly dated to the mid-17th century by residual pottery recovered from the overlying demolition layer; in any case the wall had been robbed and the ditch backfilled by the 19th century. The ceramic assessment notes that the ceramic recovered from the demolition layer C1037 is 'closest in date to the ornamental gate posts' but this phase, if it can be realistically dated to this period at all, is confined to the northern corner of the site.

4.3 PHASE 3 (Intervention 1 to 4)

Phase 3 consists of the construction of Church Hill cottages in the late 18th century and was encountered in Intervention 1 and 2. The cottages are known to have stood at the site for nearly 200 years and the southern cottage underwent considerable modification during the 19th century. This cottage originally included a brick and stone cellar with brick stair access manifested during evaluation by F5 to F9. During the 19th century the cellar was backfilled and a foundation for a brick wall at ground-floor height was inserted (F2 and F8). The backfilled cellar was overlain by two areas of machine-made quarry tile floor dating the floor to at least the mid-19th century.

In the vicinity of the cottages some reclamation of land was undertaken, extending the plateau of the area of investigation into Hall Garth Field. This involved the importation of a large quantity of soils represented by the earliest layers encountered in Intervention 3. Nearby Intervention 4 contained the brick-built drain F18 which is also included in this phase. Phase 3 appears to have confined itself to the strip of land overlooking Hall Garth Field and 19th century pottery recovered from the topsoil overlying Phase 1 features in Intervention 5 suggests that this area of the site was under cultivation or pasture.

4.4 PHASE 4 (Intervention 3 and 4)

Reclamation of land from Hall Garth Field continued during the 20th century and was manifest in the latest layers of made ground in Intervention 3 and C1036 in Intervention 4, all of which appeared to be imported soils and most contained concrete.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

The scheme of archaeological evaluation would seem to have corroborated the cartographic evidence in so far as evidence for a stone building, dated by pottery to the early post-medieval period, in the vicinity of Church Hill Cottages, has been encountered. The evidence takes the form of stone wall footing F25, encountered at the southwestern end of Intervention 2. While the feature is unlikely to be the 'coursed plinth of an earlier building' observed incorporated in the south front of the brick-built cottages, a stone structure pre-dating the cottages has seemingly been contacted. The chamfered plinth along with the moulded architectural stone reused in F2 in



Intervention 1 suggest that building material, derived from a stone building, was still available during the 19th century, when at least the southern cottage was altered. Pit F11, filled with stone roof tile, suggests that demolition or alteration of a stone building took place some time before the cottages were built. Structural remains encountered closer to St Mary's in Intervention 5 would appear to be of a domestic nature and may represent service buildings.

Some indication of the status of the building may be suggested by the nature of the building material discarded and reused near the cottages. The architectural stones, the 17th century gateposts, and stone and glazed roof tile from Intervention 1 and 4 suggest a building of some status nearby. The animal bone recovered from Intervention 5 suggests that animals associated with elevated status, boar and deer, both of which are likely to have been hunted, and shellfish which would have been rare in such an inland location, were enjoyed by the inhabitants of 16th century Birkin.

A gap in the ceramic history of the site between the mid-17th century and the late 18th century may be the only evidence for discontinuous activity at the site. The stone structure possibly incorporated into Church Hill Cottages may have belonged to a stone building that stood there previously, possibly from the 16th century and by the late 17th century had been furnished with an ornate gate-posted entrance. Given the gap in occupation suggested by a lack of pottery the structure might have lain unoccupied for up to a century from the late 17th to late 18th century and could well have been in a ruinous state by the time the cottages were imposed on its foundations. This apparent hiatus also suggests that this possible manorial seat had shifted or become defunct altogether by the early 18th century.

The late 17th century gateposts may well be associated with the refashioning of a high status building, perhaps that glimpsed in Intervention 2, during this period, but certainly do not belong to an entrance to St Mary's Church and are a good distance from the church (25.00m). A blocked entrance corresponding with a footpath seen on the 1907 OS map can be seen in the southern churchyard wall indicating a modest entrance to the churchyard from the south (see Plate 2).

The moated site postulated from cartographic evidence and aerial photography appears to be a misinterpretation of local topography. The large square enclosure of Hall Garth Field represents and is expressed by hachures as low lying land surrounded by banks. While the results of the evaluation do support the possible presence of a high status post-medieval residence, very little evidence was recovered for a medieval predecessor.

Later phases of land use appear to be modest and include isolated structural activity in the northern corner of the area of investigation dated to the mid-17th century. After a hiatus during the 18th century, the construction of the cottages and land reclamation followed and continued in the 20th century. The persistent land reclamation, against the flooding River Aire and its tributary the Old Eye, may also explain the disuse of the original cellar of the southern Church Hill cottage.

6.0 MITIGATION

The archaeological evaluation of Hall Garth Farm has demonstrated that the site contains significant post-medieval archaeological remains; however, no earlier archaeological activity was defined. In some areas of the site, these features and deposits lie as little as 0.25m below the current ground surface. While substantial deposits of modern made-ground derived from 19th and 20th century land reclamation were identified along the eastern edge of the site, the extent of these deposits has not been defined clearly.

It is recommended that the proposed development on the site utilises a sympathetic foundation design to minimise the impact of any construction on below ground archaeological remains. Where possible raft and/or pile foundations should be employed as opposed to more invasive and potentially destructive foundation methods. Due consideration should also be given to the raising of the current ground level to accommodate new foundations and services.

7.0 ARCHIVE

Forty-one sherds of vessel ceramic and clay tobacco pipe were retained during fieldwork and have been the subject of an assessment and catalogue (Appendix D). An on-site sub-sampling strategy for ceramic building material was implemented during fieldwork, and involved noting but discarding modern material and sampling late post-medieval forms. The retained medieval and early post-medieval material (12.66kg) has been the subject of a full catalogue (Appendix E). Twenty-nine fragments of animal bone were hand-collected during evaluation and have been the subject of a zooarchaeological assessment (Appendix F).

A copy of this report is held by the Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council on behalf of the County Sites and Monuments Record (the SMR). A copy of this report is also held by FAS.



References

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