

Ryedale Archaeology Services Ltd

**Research into the Cobbled Road and Dean's Park
for
The Chapter of York Minster**

Report undertaken by
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Background

The condition of the Cobbled Road in Dean's Park has been giving concern for some time. Cobbles in various areas have been breaking loose, either singly or in groups. In some areas the road has subsided, in others heaved and unsuitable repairs by utility companies have introduced a disharmonious appearance with the rest of the road surface finish.

The purpose of this report is to try and establish the history of the road and its surface material.

Methodology

As a starting point it seemed logical to try and trace the road back from the last known major intervention in the 1970s. In this respect it was thought worthwhile to also include here additional evidence, as it was revealed, during this research of works and changes within Dean's Park and flooding of the Undercroft, so that they come back into the public eye and are more widely known. In this respect they may well help to inform future decisions on that part of the precinct. The Chapter Minute Books were checked for specific periods of known activity that might have affected the road. The early nineteenth century Acts of Parliament for improving the close, the construction of the new Deanery in the 1820s and then its replacement in the 1930s. The collections of drawings and maps of the close were also checked and pictorial sources, including the extensive photographic collection of the City Library available online. Unfortunately very few of the plans and maps are dated which again hinders accurate sequential analysis.

The Cobbled Road

The remarkable thing about the Cobbled Road is its very name deriving from the actual road surface itself. This is because the road seems never to have been given a formal title and as a road situated on private property, never adopted by the City and therefore never formally named. It does seem remarkable, though, that the cathedral authorities appear to have never given any designation to it either. In searching through a large number of documentary sources I discovered only one nineteenth-century reference to 'Deanery Road' and it is clear that this nomenclature never gained current usage. Without a proper name searching for references to the road proved difficult to find and in recent records of the 1970s Chapter it is referred to simply as 'The Cobbled Road'. In the distant past it may have been simply seen as being part of Minster Yard and it is designated as such on the 1929 Ordnance Survey map but notably not on any other OS maps.

That the road is of ancient origin is suggested by its alignment- set close to and parallel to the north-eastern boundary of the old Anglo-Saxon enclosure identified by Prof. Christopher Norton in his study of the Dean's Park area (Journal of British Archaeological Association 1998 p 1-42). The earliest depiction of the road seems to be that included in Speed's 1610 map of York where it is clearly identifiable together with the various prebendal houses on its eastern side. Its history is inevitably bound up with that of the archbishop's Palace and later the Ingram Mansion and the subsequent development of Dean's

Park. In fact given the alterations to this area that are known it forms a distinct strand of continuity. Overall, given that the road gives access to the prebendal houses and that some of them contain fabric of medieval date, it seems safe to assume at least a medieval origin for the road.



Left Speed's map of York 1610

Acts of Parliament

For a goodly number of years in the first half of the nineteenth century the Chapter were trying to improve the precinct around the cathedral. They obtained several acts of Parliament to achieve this goal that authorized them to buy properties in order to demolish them. The first act was obtained in 1813-14 and given Royal Assent in 18 May 1814. It dealt mainly with properties in Minster Yard and it seems that whilst some houses were purchased and demolished some may have been retained or even rebuilt. This seems to have been partly motivated by a desire to gain clearance around the cathedral from houses that could catch fire and which could transfer flames to the cathedral itself. It was also clearly motivated by a desire to establish more clear distant views of the cathedral, particularly of the west end.

The second act was obtained in 1825 and received Royal Assent on the 30th May. The first Act had long lists of buildings and their occupants and owners. Notably quite a number were owned by prebends of the cathedral and leased to tenants. The second act included a new list including properties near or adjoining the Library and Ogleforth. St William's College was included and was owned by George Fox Esq- it had 15 adult residents. Overall it covered a large area. Both lists of properties covered by the Acts were numbered to a map, (possibly two) and though one is listed in the Library archives catalogue, it cannot be traced, similarly a copy in the Borthwick Institute listed as being there in 1980 also cannot now be traced. As the second act covered an area that included the Cobbled Road, the disappearance of these maps is all the more to be regretted.

Another Act of Parliament was obtained by the City Council and obtained Royal Assent on 10 June 1825-

'An Act for paving, lighting, watching and improving the City of York and the suburbs thereof, and the Liberty of St Peter within the said city; and for regulating the Police of the same respectively'.

It replaced an earlier act of the third year of George III (1763) and gave sweeping powers to regulate paving and the new gas lighting then becoming fashionable. Each of the four city wards were to appoint ten commissioners and the Liberty of St Peter four to administer the Act. In terms of the streets it seems the Act gave control over road surfacing and pavements. It included regulation of ditches, sewers, tunnels, gates, sinks, lamps, lamp irons, lamp-posts, pillars, pilasters, pipes and other materials etc. Page 29 gave powers to repair highways, roads etc. Page 33 Stated no one was to alter pavements or carriageways. Page 34 gives mention of gas pipes and the pavements to be reinstated when they were laid or taken up. Page 35-6 dealt with the erection of lamp-posts, gas, oil or otherwise. Lighting times are given from dawn to dusk, from first day of September for eight months following. Whether this Act held sway within the cathedral precinct is a moot point but since the Liberty of St Peter appointed four commissioners to administer the Act it may have done so.

Dean and Chapter Minute Books 1810-1850

The Minute Books kept by the Dean and Chapter for the first half of the nineteenth century are singularly lacking in detail about the day to day running of the cathedral. They cover mainly the granting of leases for property of the chapter and also the appointment of clergymen to benefices. One can only assume that a sub committee, the Dean or another senior member of Chapter dealt with the administration of the more mundane aspects of the works department.

On the 27th September 1823 Page 230-232 they suggested intended works and improvements to Dean's Park. This included the demolition of buildings, mainly around the west end of the cathedral and in Petergate. Railings were to be installed on the south side of the cathedral. On the north side various walls were to be built in the area of the Library and a carriage road made from the west end of the Minster to Ogleforth. Leave was also given for the York Gas Company to lay gas pipes in Minster Yard providing they complied with the Gas Act to rectify damage to paving etc.

Some major items of change are signalled up such as on the 16 July 1826 when Chapter resolved 'to build a new Residency on the north side of the Minster to cost no more than £3600', plus a new school to the designs of the architects Watson and Pritchett. This proposed Residency is presumably the Gothick building known by that name now forming part of the recently redeveloped Purey Cust estate.

In addition on the 31 July 1827 they resolved 'That a new Deanery be commenced on the north side of the Minster'. A rider to this was that the money be restricted to that promised on the sale of the Grammar School.

In addition to these two major outlays the chapter was also actively using it's most recent Act of Parliament to improve Minster Yard and had borrowed £6000 for the purpose.

east side of the road it can probably be safely assumed that the road was of metalled construction and probably cobbled. The Cobbled Road then extended northwards only as far as the end of Minster Court where it gave access to a large square court forming a turning circle for carriages to the east of the Deanery. Subsidiary buildings to the east side of the Deanery encroached eastwards into what is now the area of the Deanery circle and blocked any access to the Library area beyond. That the road was cobbled in the nineteenth century is confirmed by a photograph in the City Library Collection which is dated to the 1880s.



Above coloured plan of Dean's Park showing carriage drive and other paths. Note the extent of the Deanery. **Below** 1852 OS Map showing similar paths.





Above The Cobbled Road in the 1880s (City of York Library Collection y21_26_a)

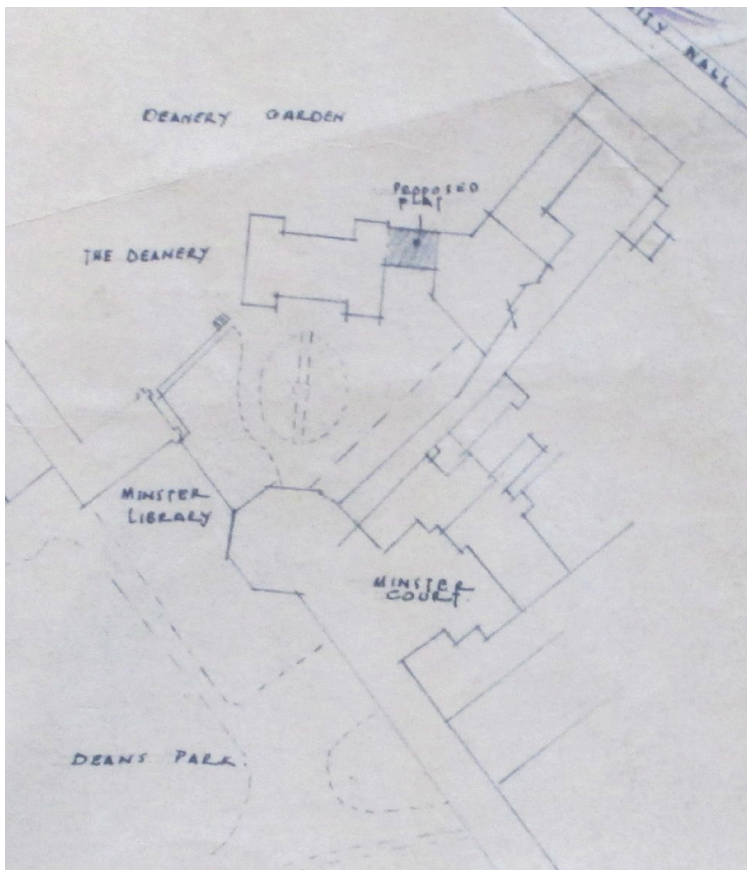
The New Deanery 1938

Following the appointment of Dean Bate in 1932 he soon found it impossible to live in the nineteenth-century Deanery. Instead he moved into one of the houses in Minster Court (Friends of York Minster Annual Report 1987 p.13-14). The Deanery stood empty for several years until it was resolved to demolish it, following a request by the Dean, and to build a new Deanery (CM19 October 1937). Attempts to find a new use for the old building had failed utterly and demolition was seen as the last resort. This raised £263 (CM 4 November 1938). The foundation stone for the new Deanery was laid in August 1938 (CM 30 August 1938). The house was designed by JH Rutherford of local architects Brierley, Rutherford and Syme. The new Deanery site had been suggested by Sir Charles Peers then Surveyor of the Fabric and Rutherford (CM19 Oct 1937) and involved the demolition of a cottage and outbuildings. The original designs and estimates were revised downwards and the eventual cost was £6551 plus £600 fees.

At this time there was also a proposal to build a new archbishop's Registry, adjoining the Library, which probably fell victim to the outbreak of war and nothing more appears in the Minutes about it (CM31 March 1938).

The rough outline drawings relating to the new Deanery show the evolution of the access to create the Deanery circle as an extension of the Cobbled Road. Photographs and the later Fielden designs for Dean's Park suggest that it wasn't surfaced with cobbles and was more likely compacted gravel, similar to the present road surface of the Deanery drive.

Below 1964 plan showing Deanery circle



One small aspect of the wartime drive to raise moral and contribute to the war effort is noted in the Chapter Minutes. The National Salvage Scheme approached the Chapter to ascertain if they would be willing to give up the railings surrounding the cathedral and precinct for the war effort. The Treasurer contemplated this request, calculated the replacement costs and finally sacrificed only the small length of railing between the Library and the early Gothic arcade of the archbishop's palace in Dean's Park (CM 25 July 1941).

The next great intervention in Dean's Park came in 1941 with the construction of the static water tank and associated pump house (CM 18 February 1941). This was intended for use during air raids in case the mains supply became disrupted due to bombing. The Minster would effectively have had a self sufficient water supply to fight fires. A schematic plan of the time shows the paths in the park and that the western garden boundary of the old Deanery had been maintained despite its recent demolition. Similarly the plan, shown above, made for a planning application to the City Council, shows the same boundary and similar

paths across the east end of the park. Most notably the wide former carriage drive from the west gates to the old Deanery. This plan importantly shows the outline of the Deanery circle as an extension to the Cobbled Road.

Below Outline plan showing static water tank and paths in the park.



The Fielden redesign of Dean's Park 1974-5

Following the massive engineering works to save parts of the Minster from potential collapse various areas adjacent to the building were in need of reconstitution or remodelling due to disruption by the building works. In addition it seems that suitable fire paths were thought necessary to allow the fire services closer external access to various parts of the cathedral. In the early to mid 1970s the government was awarding grants for the cleaning of public and privately owned buildings to rid them of the black grime with which many were encrusted. The Chapter took advantage of this scheme and obtained a £113,000 grant to water wash the exterior of the cathedral and this took place during 1973-4. This considerably changed the external appearance of the cathedral.

They were also negotiations with the City Council which paved the area west of the cathedral and College Street with stone setts. This was seen as being part of the redevelopment of the city centre recommended in the Esher Plan (CM June 1972).

The first part of the development of Dean's Park was the demolition of the Pump House servicing the wartime static water tank, though Chapter expressed concerns that the cost might fall on them (CM May 1972). Unfortunately we are not entirely sure of the exact location of the pump house. At this time wholly grant-aided archaeological excavations commenced on 3 July 1972 on the south

and north sides of the cathedral (CM June 1972). These continued for an extended period but by December that on the south side had finished and that on the north was to recommence at Easter 1973 for two months (CM Dec 1972).

The first mention of a possible Department of the Environment grant for the precinct occurs in January 1973 (CM Jan 1973). In March Chapter rejected what they called the 'Barefoot Plan' for Dean's Park (CM March 1973) suggesting that such a scheme had been in hand for some time. By the end of April Fielden proposed a new plan re landscaping and this was approved in principle (CM 30 April 1973). Unfortunately it has not proved possible to locate a copy of this or any subsequent plans though copies may have been lodged with the City Planning Department.

It was also resolved to fill in the archaeological dig on the north side of the cathedral as soon as possible yet fate intervened with flooding of the undercroft that was alleviated by pumping water out of the excavation (CM 7 May and 21 May 1973). This might explain why Fielden was then prompted to include a drainage scheme in revised proposals sent to the DOE (CM 4 June 1973). Chapter was then assured that a DOE grant would be forthcoming- the Undercroft had been closed for a week and plans were made to improve the drainage (CM 7 June 1973). New plans were then produced that included four ground pumps to protect the Undercroft (CM 2 July 1973). Unfortunately there was more flooding that occurred over a weekend and Fielden had a meeting with the council Engineer and Planners about improvements and the basic elements of his scheme were outlined (CM 9 July, 16 July, 13 August 1973).

Part of the tidying up process involved the disposal of a large amount of archaeological stone recovered in the excavations both within and without the cathedral. This was offered to the Yorkshire Museum which fortunately agreed to take it into their collection (CM 10 Sept, 17 September, 10 December 1973, 28 January, 25 February 1974).

Part of the new scheme for the precinct envisaged provision of car parking and various sites were proposed, principally the Residence garden area (70 cars) and Chapter House Yard. In discussions with the City Council the number of parking places allowed was curtailed from those proposed (CM 4 September 1973, 5 November 1974). By March 1974 the relaying of the road to the Purey Cust Hospital had been done (CM 4 March 1974). By this time it was also hoped that a £50,000 grant from DOE would soon be forthcoming for the precinct (CM 7 March 1974). The car parking issue was agreed with the council with 12-15 at the Residence garden area and 4-5 in Chapter house Yard, a plan was shown and approved (CM 18 March 1974).

Things gathered pace by May 1974 when the grant of £50,000 was 'accepted with gratitude' by Chapter and the closure of the Cobbled Road and Dean's Park was scheduled from 1st June. Mention was also made of laying a new drain on the north side of the Minster (CM 15 May 1974). In early June Fielden submitted a new plan for the works and Chapter resolved that some minor adjustments be made to this (CM 3 June 1974).

By July the works seem to have been well underway and a schedule dated July 1974 composed by Bob Littlewood detailed the suggested scheme of works. This included the grubbing up of the old carriage drive and other paths in the park. Later in July Derek Phillips lodged two official complaints that the works had uncovered, then recovered and destroyed archaeological remains without recording them. This related to the area immediately north of the nave of the cathedral and six photographs taken by Phillips dated 23rd and 29th July show what was happening. A large trench had been cut from the west end of the nave to near the north-west corner of the north transept to accommodate a very large drainpipe and then a deep excavation made with a machine near the transept corner to install a sump pump. The ground level must have been reduced by skimming off the soil and this was followed by extensive laying of crushed stone to create fire paths for heavy fire brigade vehicles. (CM 22 July, 29 July 1974, Acc 2007/11). Curiously apart from noting the receipt of the protests there is no indication of a response by Chapter. July also brought quotes for repairs to the railings of the Library area to Chapter (CM 29 July 1974). Photographs show that the present eastern boundary wall to Dean's Park was being built at this time.

The area that was stripped and trenched and substantially disturbed by these works comprised the site of the gatehouse to the archbishop's Palace and of the Collegiate Chapel of St Sepulchre's. Today it might seem ironic that these works were carried out on a Scheduled Ancient Monument without any archaeological recording and paid for by the same government department then responsible for the protection of Scheduled Ancient Monuments!

In August it was agreed that there would be no stone paving around the edge of the Deanery circle at the end of the cobbled road. Agreement was also reached to obtain cobbles for road surfacing at £1.50 per ton and that they should be stored in front of Minster Court (CM5 August, 19 August 1974). This is confirmed by another photograph showing piles of cobbles in this area.

December brought more flooding to the Undercroft due to failure of the switch gear on the newly installed sump pumps (CM16 December 1974). As part of the wider scheme Chapter agreed to repaving at Minster Gates for £2500 with a 50% grant (CM 9 January 1975). By February railings were being erected by Bootham Engineers in Dean's Park and the work was expected to last two months (CM 10 February 1975). By March it seems that some new cobbles were laid because Bob Littlewood reported that no cars are to be parked there for the time being to allow the new cobbles to settle (CM 3 March 1975). In April there was agreement to electrify the gas lamps in Dean's Park and also of grass seeding (CM 29 April 1975). By June the Treasurer could give a comprehensive report of the works which, though behind schedule, were going well. This encompassed grass seeding, gas lamps rewired for electricity, setts laid at the west end and restoration of the west gates but some of the refurbished and new railings were still awaited from Bootham Engineers. These seem to have been for the south side of the choir (CM June 1974).

In July it was agreed to replace the existing wooden fence from the Chapter House to the Cobbled Road with iron railings already in store. They did not agree to the suggested fencing in of the N-W perimeter road from the Library to the west gates. (CM7 July 1975). In August it was agreed to cobble the Deanery circle at the end of the Cobbled Road and also patch up the road with the work to take one month (CM 4 August 1975). This seems curiously at odds with Bob Littlewood's earlier comments cited above when he spoke of allowing cobbles time to settle. The work had evidently been carried out by September when it was said that access to the garages from the Cobbled Road would be open by the 3rd September and thanks were expressed for the work done (CM 1 September 1975). Dean's Park would be reopened to the public by 19 September with notices of 'No Ball Games and No Dogs' displayed (CM15 September 1975). Finally a meeting was agreed on site in Dean's Park to discuss possible planting proposals in various areas (CM 20 October 1975). The remodelling of Dean's Park was completed and is essentially what we see today. The complex issue of car parking continued to be an issue that has come down to the Minster Authorities today.

Conclusions

Whilst it has not proved possible with this research into the archives of the Dean and Chapter and other records to establish when the surface of cobbles was first laid on the Cobbled Road it has established a series of changes to the area. The Cobbled Road was certainly in existence by the 1880s and the long continued efforts of the Chapter to improve the views of the cathedral and environs of Minster Yard in the early years of the nineteenth century suggest that the road would not have been left unsurfaced. Given that permission for gas pipes to be laid and presumably lamp-posts to be erected in the 1820s with the rider that pavements and surfaces be made good, then it is possible to speculate that the Cobbled Road was already in existence before 1820. Notably it seems that the cobbles shown in the 1880s photograph above, extended further south than they do today and possibly into College Street. Today this area up to the electrically operated cathedral gates has been relaid with setts, presumably in 1972 when the city council provided setts for College Street.

Sources Consulted

Dean and Chapter records of Chapter meetings 1972-75, 1938-42, 1810-1830
Acts of Parliament obtained in 1815 and 1825 by the Dean and Chapter for improvements to the cathedral precinct.

The large collection of plans relating to Dean's Park held by the Minster Library.
Imagine York online catalogue of photographic images held by York Library.
Friends of York Minster Annual Reports.