

11 The Village, Wigginton, York: Archaeological Monitoring Report

for Churchill Retirement Living

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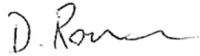
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Executive summary

This document presents the results of a staged archaeological monitoring of groundworks for the construction of new retirement accommodation on the site of the Old Tannery at 11 The Village, Wigginton, York. The works were monitored by archaeologists from Cura Terrae Land and Nature (formerly Ecus) between April 2024 and May 2025.

The archaeological monitoring recorded the remains of a 19th-century tannery complex, including two wells, in the north of the site, with earlier ridge and furrow cultivation to the south.

The earliest part of the tannery was mentioned in tithe records of 1842 and depicted on Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1848. One large building set back from the road in the northwest corner of the site had been demolished and rebuilt in the 1980s and had truncated most below-ground remains in the immediate vicinity, although well-preserved structural remains survived to the south and east, in the form of a second, large rectangular building and two tanning sheds.

The surviving large building was orientated north to south and set back from the road. It was subdivided into three rooms with intact stone and brick floors and has been interpreted as a beamhouse, where processing to prepare the hides for tanning would be carried out. Voids within the floor potentially indicated where hide processing devices were situated.

To the south of the beamhouse building were two smaller, rectangular sheds, each containing at least four wooden tanks set into the floor. The tanks were square and of wooden construction, lined externally with puddling clay to keep them watertight.

The western tanning shed was later subsumed by a larger building that expanded to the north, south and west, recorded on the Ordnance Survey map of 1891, that contained additional ordered rows of tanks. By 1909, the eastern expansion of the larger tanning shed was shown to be open along its eastern side. The open aspect of the structure either reflects a change in the tanning methodology that required a greater need for ventilation, possibly due to the use of chemicals rather than the traditional organic matter, or a change to a more agricultural purpose.

In total over 52 wooden tanks were recorded at the Site during the course of the archaeological monitoring, though more would have likely existed to the south but had been truncated by later activity. The Victorian tanning process involved many potentially hazardous substances, including animal fecal matter, acids and chromium salts and therefore hand excavation of the tanks was minimal. Excavation of one tank demonstrated a thick tree bark deposit synonymous with the vegetable tanning process

By 1928, the large tanning shed and external tanks along the eastern boundary are not shown on the Ordnance Survey and this suggests that operations at the tannery had either been scaled back significantly or that the site had been repurposed. No diagnostic finds were recovered from the excavations.

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document has been prepared by Cura Terrae Land & Nature for Churchill Retirement Living/Planning Issues (hereafter ‘the Client’) to present the results of archaeological monitoring of groundworks at the Old Tannery, 11 The Village, Wigginton, York, YO32 2PL (hereafter ‘the Site’). The Site is centred at National Grid reference (NGR) SE 60164 58572. Planning permission (City of York Planning Ref: 22/01315/FULM, Planning Inspectorate Appeal Ref: APP/C2741/W/23/3314331) has been granted for a new three-storey building comprising 45 retirement living apartments with associated access, car parking and landscaping.
- 1.1.2 The Site was the location of a former tannery, that later became agricultural buildings, then dwellings. One dwelling was demolished in the 1980s and materials reused in a modern domestic building.
- 1.1.3 An archaeological desk-based assessment (ADBA) was produced by Ecus in 2022 to inform the planning application. This report identified the potential for early remains to be present on the Site and that the plot had been a 19th-century tannery. A subsequent written scheme of investigation (WSI) in August 2023 outlined the methods, aims and objectives, etc., for archaeological monitoring to be conducted in line with Condition 5 of APP/C2741/W/23/3314331.

2. Location, topography and geology

- 2.1.1 The Site lies within the village of Wigginton, close to the border with the neighbouring village of Haxby. Wigginton is a civil parish within the unitary authority of the City of York and lies c.6km to the north of York city centre.
- 2.1.2 The Site address is 11 The Village, a roughly rectangular plot covering an area of c.0.3ha situated on the south side of the road, bounded to the east by Wigginton Recreational Hall and to the west by a private residential property. To the south is a footpath separating the Site from residential properties on Fletcher Court.
- 2.1.3 The topography of the Site is flat at c.18–19m above Ordnance Datum and comprises areas of gravel and concrete around the modern buildings to the north of the site, and an extensive grassed area to the south, interspersed with mature trees.
- 2.1.4 The underlying geology of the area is Sherwood Sandstone, a Sedimentary bedrock formed between 272.3 and 237 million years ago during the Permian and Triassic periods. The area also has superficial deposits, in the form of Sutton Sand Formation, a sedimentary superficial deposit formed between 116 thousand years ago and the present during the Quaternary period (BGS 2025).

3. Archaeological and historical background

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The information presented below summarises an archaeological desk-based assessment (ADBA, Ecus 2022) produced to inform the planning application. Additional information has been added based on entries in the York Historic Environment Record (HER).

Prehistoric and Romano-British

- 3.1.2 Several Romano-British trackways and enclosure systems (HER ref: MYO3594, MYO3595, MYO3596, MYO3598) have been recorded as cropmarks on aerial photographs across farmland to the north and northeast of Wigginton and Haxby as well as to the southwest in the vicinity of Glebe Farm, Skelton (MYO3606), indicating that Wigginton and the Site lie within a wider landscape of early activity.
- 3.1.3 Two Roman coin hoards (MYO4407) were found by metal detectorists on farmland to the north of Wigginton and Haxby. Both were contained in pottery jars and represented significant assemblages, the first of 508 coins and the second 330 coins. The dating of the coins suggests deposition dates of between AD348 and AD356. No direct evidence of Roman settlement has been recorded in the vicinity of the Site, although this cannot be discounted due to the proximity of the important Roman centre of York (*Eboracum*). The land to the north of the city would likely have been subject to rural land management and farming throughout the Roman period.

Early medieval and medieval

- 3.1.4 The etymology of the name Wigginton indicates origins around the 7th century, meaning “The village of the people/named after the people of Wicga”.
- 3.1.5 The settlement was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as being held by the canons of St Peter in York and was subsequently recorded as Wichestun and Wygynton in the 11th and 13th centuries (Palmer, *et al.* 2016). Settlement is likely to have been centred on a former parish church located where the 19th-century church of St Nicholas stands (HER ref: MYO4278) c.130m southwest of the Site. The earliest record of a church at Wigginton dates to 1424, but this was probably built on the site of a previous chapel, recorded as early as 1247.
- 3.1.6 The lower part of a 10th-century cross shaft (MYO4408) and a fragment of a decorative stone panel (HER ref: MYO419) were uncovered in the rear garden of 54 The Village, c.450m southeast of the Site and represent the only archaeological evidence for early medieval activity in the vicinity.

- 3.1.7 Throughout the medieval period, Wigginton probably continued as a minor agricultural village, with the surrounding countryside being farmed. Evidence for this use is recorded in the form of prevalent ridge and furrow earthworks.

Post-medieval to late 20th century

- 3.1.8 The parish of Wigginton 1842 tithe map records the Site encompassing several parcels of land held by William Driffield and owned by William Scott. The composition of the Site is recorded as orchard, garden, tan yard, back garth and hall garth. The Site formed part of the landholding associated with a house, outbuilding, and fold yard adjacent to the west. The eastern extent of the Site also encompassed land occupied by Thomas Summons and held by the Constable of Wigginton Parish which is recorded as “hansey garth”.
- 3.1.9 A comparison of later Ordnance Survey (OS) maps suggests that the existing outbuildings on the Site dated from this period and would originally have been associated with the tanning industry.
- 3.1.10 The tannery at the Site operated throughout the mid-19th century and is labelled on OS mapping from the first edition of 1848 until 1891, by which time two ponds and a visible row of tanning pits were added along the east side of the Site. The south end of the Site appears undeveloped.
- 3.1.11 Further post-medieval activity in the vicinity of the Site relates to the rebuilding of the parish church of St Nicholas (MYO4278) in 1860 and to the construction of a Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1862, located c.250 m southeast of the Site (MYO4106).
- 3.1.12 Subsequent OS maps illustrate change within the Site throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries including the change in form of some buildings and the introduction and removal of others. It is understood from oral history that, during the 20th century, the Site was in use as a farm; this is confirmed by aerial photographs that record the presence of farm buildings in the north and ploughing/horticultural activity in the south.
- 3.1.13 During the 1980s, the former farmhouse in the north-west corner of the Site was demolished and its materials were reused for the current residential building. Aerial photographs supplied by the landowners illustrate the appearance of the former farmhouse prior to its demolition and the existing character and appearance of the Site is recorded on OS mapping from the 1980s onwards.

Archaeological potential

- 3.1.14 The ADBA summarised the archaeological potential of the Site as follows:

‘This desk-based assessment has documented evidence within the study area from the early medieval period to the present day, with a record of ridge and furrow features extending into the Site. In addition, there is substantial evidence for 19th-century domestic, light industrial, and backyard activity associated with

a tannery recorded within the Site. As such it is considered that there is a moderate potential for remains associated with medieval activity within the Site and a high potential for activity related to the post-medieval tannery to be present within the Site.' (Ecus 2022).

4. Aims and objectives

4.1.1 The archaeological monitoring was informed by research agendas identified in the Yorkshire Archaeological Research Framework (Roskams and Whyman 2005; 2007) and delivered the scope of works with adherence to the aims and objectives itemised in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Ecus 2023).

4.1.2 There was considered to be significant potential for remains of the 19th-century tannery buildings to be uncovered during the archaeological monitoring, which would contribute to the understanding of local industry and production in a rural village economy during this period. The prevalence of likely prehistoric earthworks along with Roman and early medieval findspots and medieval and post-medieval agriculture in the surrounding village hinterland means that the potential for earlier archaeological remains on the Site could not be discounted.

4.1.3 The programme of archaeological monitoring sought to recover information relating to the extent, date, phasing, character, function, status and significance of the Site and to make available the archaeological data from the monitoring in the form of a report and archive.

4.1.4 The aims of the archaeological work were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development site;
- To establish, as far as possible, the extent, character, stratigraphic sequence and date of archaeological structures, features and deposits occurring within the monitoring area;
- To establish the nature of the activities that occurred at the site during the various periods or phases of its occupation, with particular regard to the post-medieval tannery buildings;
- To explore evidence for social, economic and industrial activity; and
- To establish the palaeoenvironmental potential of subsurface deposits.

4.1.5 The objectives were:

- To ensure that any archaeological features discovered by the monitoring were categorised, sampled and recorded;
- To recover and identify any artefacts associated with archaeological deposits;
- To ensure that any deposits with the potential to yield palaeoenvironmental data were sampled and submitted for assessment to the appropriate specialists;
- To ensure that no excavation or other physical disturbance occurs outside the agreed area of investigation;
- To prepare a report on the results of the fieldwork for the client, the City of York Council Historic Environment Record and the Historic England Archive;

- To prepare an ordered archive for deposition with an appropriate museum;
- To make the results of the archaeological work available via the OASIS scheme/Archaeology Data Service;
- To inform decisions regarding requirement for any further archaeological mitigation at the site; and
- To undertake a programme of investigation that meets with national standards (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists 2020a–b, 2022, 2023a–b; Historic England 2015).

5. Standards and guidance

5.1.1 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with archaeological best practice based on the following published standards and guidance:

- *Guidance for Archaeological Work* (CoYC 2024);
- Roskams, S. and Whyman, M. (2005). *Yorkshire Archaeological Research Framework: resource assessment*. London: English Heritage);
- *Advice Note for Post-Excavation Assessment* (ALGAO 2015);
- *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2022);
- *Standard for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (ClfA 2023a);
- *Universal Guidance for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording* (ClfA 2023b);
- *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (ClfA 2020a);
- *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (ClfA 2020b);
- *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015a).

6. Methodology

6.1 Scope of archaeological monitoring

- 6.1.1 The archaeological monitoring occurred in stages, in conjunction with groundworks carried out at the Site as part of the development. The first stage ran concurrently with demolition of the extant structures within the Site and the removal of their foundations. The second stage monitored the reduction of ground level across the site for the installation of a piling mat, on which the new buildings were to be constructed.

6.2 Excavation methodology

Mechanical excavation

- 6.2.1 All mechanical excavation was conducted under the supervision and direction of a monitoring archaeologist. The initial stage of groundworks involved the removal of two large concrete pads, the building platforms for the later residential structures on the site. These were broken up and removed by the machine using a toothed bucket.
- 6.2.2 Removal of the concrete pads revealed remains of the tannery buildings directly beneath. A toothless ditching bucket was utilised to remove rubble overburden within and overlying the archaeological remains, which were subsequently cleaned by hand by the monitoring archaeologist and recorded. Following completion of the archaeological recording, the building remains were removed by machine under archaeological supervision and any earlier, sub-surface deposits recorded.
- 6.2.3 Where no extant building remains were present, the ground level across the Site was reduced using a toothless ditching bucket. Where sub-surface features and deposits were recorded, time was afforded to the monitoring archaeologist to record any such archaeological remains before mechanical excavation continued.

Hand excavation

- 6.2.4 Where archaeological features were exposed, they were cleaned by hand, excavated, and recorded in a stratigraphic manner to characterise the nature of the archaeological remains.
- 6.2.5 Where safe to do so excavation was carried out in accordance with guidance outlined in the WSI (Ecus 2023) and agreed with the client and City of York Council (CoYC).

Recording methodology

- 6.2.6 All archaeological deposits were recorded using continuous numbering on a pro-forma recording system in accordance with industry standards. The written record is hierarchically based and centred on the context record. Each context record describes the location, extent, composition and relationship of the subject and is cross-referenced to all other assigned records. Context recording was carried out digitally using the DiggIt app (<https://www.diggitarchoeology.com/>).
- 6.2.7 The trenches and excavated archaeological features were surveyed by means of a Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) with additional hand-drawn plans of excavated sections at 1:20 scale and section drawings at 1:10 scale. Drawings were made in pencil on permanent drafting film.
- 6.2.8 A full photographic record was created and maintained using a digital camera equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images are subject to managed quality control and curation processes which ensure long term accessibility of the image set. Output will be in TIFF/JPEG format. Digital records created as part of the project comply with specific data standards (Historic England 2015).
- 6.2.9 Where possible and beneficial the photographic record included a clearly visible, graduated metric scale, site code and context feature number(s). All digital photography was undertaken in accordance with national guidance (Historic England 2015c).

Finds recording

- 6.2.10 A small assemblage of modern finds was retrieved from the excavation. These were photographed on site and discarded, in agreement with the City Archaeologist for City of York Council.

Human remains

- 6.2.11 No human remains were present in the monitored areas of the Site.

Environmental sampling

- 6.2.12 Contamination of the soils within the archaeological horizon arising from the tanning process meant that there were no deposits suitable for sampling. It was agreed with the City Archaeologist that no deposits associated with the tannery were to be sampled.

6.3 Archiving

- 6.3.1 The Site archive will include all project records and material produced by the project and prepared in accordance with industry standards (ClfA 2020b).

- 6.3.2 The Site archive will be deposited with Yorkshire Museum or similar repository within six months of the completion of fieldwork.
- 6.3.3 The digital archive will be deposited online using ADS Easy.
- 6.3.4 An OASIS record has been created under the reference number: curaterr1-534511. A summary of the OASIS entry is included below as Appendix B.

7. Results

7.1.1 The archaeological remains recorded during the archaeological monitoring mostly related to the 19th-century tannery. Elements of heavily truncated earlier ditches and ridge and furrow were recorded beneath the tannery buildings.

7.2 Remains pre-dating the 19th-century tannery

7.2.1 The earliest archaeological features recorded on the Site were a series of broadly north to south plough furrows (Plate 4; Figs. 2, 7, S.2) mostly located in the southern part of the site. The furrows cut orangey yellow sandy clay subsoil (201) that overlay natural geology of similar composition (209). Four slightly curving parallel furrows (202, 205, 206 and 207), each separated by c.4m, were recorded, running northwards from the southern excavation limit. Each furrow measured c.0.8m wide by up to 26m long and was c.0.2m deep. The furrows appeared to be truncated to the north by later structures and ponds, although a possible continuation of 202 was recorded c.30m further to the north between later disturbances. The southern furrows were sealed by subsoil (201). No finds were recovered. Two intercut possible boundary ditches, 372 and 208/370, were recorded west of and broadly parallel to the ridge and furrow. Ditch 370 was 1.3m wide, c.5m long and just over 0.5m deep, it was on the same alignment as the furrows but deeper. Ditch 372 continued into the limit of excavation to the north, west and south and its full width and depth could not be determined.

7.2.2 Further truncated ditches, which may also relate to earlier agricultural use of the plot (Figs. 2, 8 Phase 1), were recorded towards the north end of the Site. An east to west ditch (375/350) measuring up to 1.4m wide and c.0.1m deep was recorded running from the eastern limit of excavation for c.23m before terminating or shallowing out to the point of truncation at its west end. A section recorded towards its centre showed that ditch 350 had cut earlier ditches in the same location 356 and 358 (Fig. 7, S.4). The fills of ditches 356 and 358 (352, 353, 354, 357) were all mid to dark grey colluvial deposits of sandy clay that contained no finds or diagnostic material. The location of this ditch broadly coincides with a field boundary shown on early OS maps. The faint remnants of a discontinuous, multi-phase north to south ditch (387), (Plate 2) were recorded towards the northeast corner of the Site. Ditch 387 was visible over c.16m and measured up to 1.3m wide on a similar orientation, but with different spacing, to the ridge and furrow. The northern segment of this ditch was located immediately east of and parallel to a later structure shown in this position on the 1848 OS map, which could suggest an association with the tannery buildings and imply a later drainage function for the ditch.

7.2.3 Towards the north end of the Site, fine yellow sand (the natural geology, 09, Plate 1) was overlain by a 0.5m-thick, dark-brown relict topsoil horizon (102) containing sherds of post-medieval pottery and glass along with abundant coal and charcoal inclusions. The foundations of the later tannery buildings were excavated into this relict soil layer.

7.3 Tannery buildings

- 7.3.1 Structural remains of three distinct tannery buildings, identified from the 1848 OS map (Fig. 3), were recorded during the archaeological monitoring. A large rectangular, north to south building was recorded in the north-east corner of the Site, along with two smaller buildings to the south that housed pits containing wooden lined tanks associated with tanning.
- 7.3.2 The large rectangular building is shown on the 1848 OS map as originally being a symmetrical T-shape with a central eastern wing, whereas more recent versions of the building shown on Google Earth indicate that the southern third of the north–south element and the eastern wing have since been demolished. No large rectangular pits were recorded within the footprint of the original building, suggesting that no soaking operations occurred here unless they were in above-ground tanks. This could imply that the building was used for other stages in the process, and it is because of this that it has been nominally labelled as the ‘beamhouse’.
- 7.3.3 Another large east to west building is shown on the 1848 OS map set back from the road in the northwest corner of the Site, but this was demolished during the 1980s and its materials reused to construct a newer building in the same location. This later iteration of the building largely truncated the earlier structure and following its demolition all that could be identified during the archaeological monitoring were two stubs of brick wall footings (377 and 379) (Fig. 2 and Plate 5) and a section of Yorkstone pavement (118) (Plate 6), which may have run along the eastern edge of the building.
- 7.3.4 The two smaller buildings to the south of the main structures have been labelled tanning sheds 1 and 2 for ease of reference, but this does not reflect any clear sequence of construction or process.

Beamhouse

- 7.3.5 The building was orientated roughly north to south and was rectangular in plan, the recorded remains measuring 6.5m wide by 13.5m long (Figs 2, 3 and 8; Phase 2; Plate 7). The outer wall (103) was of red brick, 0.4m thick and constructed in English bond. A maximum of two courses survived above the original floor level, with an additional eight forming the foundation to a depth of 0.8m, the bottom course stepping outwards by 0.1m.
- 7.3.6 The northern room was accessed by an external doorway in the south-west corner, which had a brick threshold and led out to an external cobbled yard (117). A Yorkstone-flagged floor (105) measuring 1.5m by 1.5m was recorded in the northwest corner of the room (Plate 8). The eastern and southern floor areas were covered by tightly packed cobbles (107), through which ran a curving channel, 0.7m wide, packed with a loose deposit of burnt coal and cinders (101), the function of which is unclear (Plate 9). The central floor area was covered by a brick surface (106), where the bricks were placed on edge in north–south rows. The bricks were bonded with lime

mortar and installed directly onto a topsoil horizon 102. At a later stage, a roughly constructed east–west wall (104) divided the room, truncating brick surface 106 and cobbles 107.

- 7.3.7 The central room contained a well-used Yorkstone-flagged floor (110) across its western extent, which had been truncated by drains relating to the modern building on the Site (Plate 10). To the east, a brick surface similar in construction to 106 (111) covered the remainder of the floor area, although here east–west rows of brick were also used in addition to those running north–south (Plate 11). Two Yorkstone flagstones (112) were recorded in the northeast corner of the floor and perhaps indicated the siting of equipment that required a solid base such as a beam or drum, utilised in preparation of fresh skins for tanning. Several circular depressions were evident in the stone flags of floor 110, which could also have related to the siting of processing equipment. Irregular patches of brickwork within the floor indicated later areas of repair.
- 7.3.8 The southern room was accessed via a doorway towards the center of wall 109, connecting it to the central room. The brick floor (113) had been heavily impacted by later concrete foundations, the eastern half entirely missing, but it appeared to be of the same construction as brick surfaces 106 and 111 (Plate 12). A fragmentary sandstone flagstone remained in situ in the northeast corner.
- 7.3.9 Evidence of a fourth room was visible to the east of the southern room, albeit heavily truncated. The area is represented as an eastern annexe on the 1848 OS map. The vestiges of its eastern wall could be seen in the edge of the monitoring area and the room contained two very large, rectangular blocks of sandstone (115), which were sunk into the floor to a depth of 0.8m, level with the maximum depth of the building foundations (Plate 13). This platform was abutted to the south by the truncated remains of a brick floor (114). The foundations of a square, brick plinth (363, Plate 14) were recorded c.5m to the south of 114 and 115 and appear to represent a second addition to the east wall of the beamhouse building, added between 1848 and 1891. No clear interpretation for these eastern additions is evident, although the depth of the footings for both the sandstone and brick platform bases indicates they may have been the bases for heavy machinery. Based on its alignment and location Ditch 387 to the east may have been an associated drainage feature to the annexe.
- 7.3.10 Two additional lengths of outer wall (120) were recorded extending the building southwards and indicated a fifth room, which better matches the length of the building shown on the 1848 and 1891 OS maps. However, the full extent of this room was lost to later truncation.
- 7.3.11 Appended to the western side of the beamhouse building were two narrow, rectangular brick drains (119), 0.8m wide, that are located within the footprint of a small extension depicted on the 1891 OS map (Fig.3; Plate 15)

Tanning shed 1

- 7.3.12 Eleven metres to the south of the beamhouse was a shed (Plate 16; Figs 4 and 5). The building was orientated broadly east to west and rectangular in plan, measuring 8.2m by 4.9m. The outer wall

(5) was 0.4m thick and constructed of brick in English bond. The building had two foundation levels, with the east half descending five courses below ground level, and the west half descending for a further eight courses, to c.0.9m deep. The greater foundation depth in the west side of the building facilitated the installation of four timber-lined pits or tanks (T1–4).

7.3.13 The tanks were constructed within two rectangular pits, one (10) in the northwest corner of the building and the other (11) in the southwest. Pit 10 measured c.3.9m by 1.9m while pit 11 measured 3.2m by 1.8m. Both pits were lined with c.0.15m of grey puddling clay (13) into which a timber tank had been constructed. The two tanks within pit 11 were constructed with timber planks (12), braced at the corners with square batons and secured by iron nails (Plate 17). Each tank was rectangular and measured c.1.55m by 1.35m and up to 0.8m deep. The tanks within pit 10 were square, each measuring 1.6m across. All four tanks were partially infilled with similar deposits of black organic material, which contained small fragments of leather and animal bone (14). Only minimal excavation of this material was carried out for cleaning purposes due to the nature of the substances used in the 19th-century tanning process. A section recorded across pit 11 (Fig. 7, S.1) demonstrated that the pits were latterly infilled with rubble (15) and clay (16), followed by a layer of brown sand (17). No evidence of a contemporary floor surface was identified. The tanks were finally filled with a black sandy clay midden deposit, which contained charcoal, burnt material and domestic rubbish (18). This was subsequently levelled with brown sand (19), over which a brick floor (20) set in a thin layer of concrete (3) was constructed. Section 1 (Fig. 7) shows that the brick floor was subject to subsidence as midden layer 18 later broke down and settled/compressed.

Tanning shed 2

7.3.14 One of the earliest representations of tanning shed 2, on the 1848 OS map, suggests that it was square in form, measuring c.7m across, and located c.4.9m west of and perpendicular to tanning shed 1. Based on the distribution of recorded tanning pits/tanks, the footprint of the shed suggests that it could have housed between six and nine pits, though it is difficult to know if any early pits survived or whether they were refashioned during the later expansion of the shed. Possible elements of the southern end of the west wall of the original building survived (401), with no definitive evidence for the remaining walls (Fig. 2).

7.3.15 By 1891, the 25-inch OS map showed that shed 2 had been expanded on all sides to two broadly north–south aligned linked structures with an adjoining yard in the northwest corner. The eastern side of the new structure encompassed the footprint of the early shed and measured between 8.1m and 10.1m wide by 23.7m long, with a dogleg halfway along the eastern wall. The western side of the new structure was smaller, measuring 5.8m wide by 14.2m long. The adjoining yard was 5m wide by 6.6m long, with a chamfered northwest corner, and contained two probable pits or tanks, a circular one to the north and a rectangular one to the south.

7.3.16 Variable survival, along with ground and weather conditions made feature identification difficult in places on Site, but despite this evidence for over 44 tanks was recorded within the new footprints of the expanded shed 2. The eastern side of the structure would probably have originally

housed around 32 tanks, though the evidence towards the northern and especially southern ends was less clear, representations of the building on the 1891 OS map could have allowed for an additional 5 or 10 tanks at the southern end. The western side of the new structure may have contained around 20 tanks, though again definition towards the south end was poor.

- 7.3.17 No clear evidence for either solid or timber post outer walls was recorded for the eastern side of the new structure. The tanks within varied in size and shape, square at between 1.5m and 2.15m across and rectangular at between 1.3m to 1.9m by 1.8m to 2.2m. The smaller tanks appeared to occupy the southern, wider half of the structure, with the larger tanks in the narrower northern half. Most of the tanks were constructed within clay lined pits. Three short channels were visible between four of the more centrally located rows of pits, the southernmost channel containing sections of clay drainage pipe. In the narrower northern half of the structure some smaller rectangular features, possibly tanks and possibly including T45, were visible at irregular points along the eastern side of the main tanks. It is possible these features represent later adaptations to the tannery, but their location suggests an association with some deeper timber conduits (362) recorded when monitoring later ground reduction (and mentioned below).
- 7.3.18 Remnants of the outer western wall of the expanded version of shed 2 were recorded, comprising c.6.3m of poorly preserved brick walling (400) over a 0.6m wide gravel foundation; the gravel foundation continued to the north and all the way round to the northeast corner of the structure. The wooden tanks within the western expansion of shed 2 were slightly more regular in size and shape, each being c.1.4m east–west by 1.1m north–south, arranged in two rows along the length of the structure. The tanks were truncated towards the southern end of the structure, meaning only the clay pit lining was visible, but the space within the structure would have allowed for four more pairs of tanks of the same size, making 20 in total.
- 7.3.19 A later disturbance affected a large portion of the adjoining yard to the northwest, but traces of at least two squarish clay-lined pits containing timber tanks were recorded. The most complete, southern, pit suggested tank dimensions of c.1.6m across. That this arrangement differed from that shown on the 1891 OS 25-inch map suggests there were at least two phases of construction within the yard. No clear evidence for yard walls was recorded.
- 7.3.20 Three interconnecting wood-lined conduits (362) were recorded inside shed 2, one beneath the southern edge of pits 21–22, another parallel one, 1m to the south beneath the north edge of pits 19–20 and a perpendicular north–south example along the east side of the pits. The east–west conduits appeared to run from vertical pipes set into the corners of pits 19 and 21, a maximum distance of 5.8m. The southern conduit connected with the north–south conduit, though the northern conduit stopped 1.2m short. This gap may relate to one of the smaller possible tanks mentioned above (T45), located to the east of the main tanks. The full extent of the north–south conduit was not seen but a cut was recorded alongside the tanks higher up in the deposits that suggested it ran from the next row of pits to the south for a distance of at least 5.7m. The purpose of these conduits was not totally clear, but may relate to overflow control, drainage or possibly even some form of filling.

- 7.3.21 By 1909, the OS 25-inch map of the Site represents the north, east and south walls of the later eastern structure of tanning shed 2 with dashed lines, indicating that these aspects of the building were now open, supporting the roof on a timber frame. By the time of the 25 inch OS map of 1928 only the western structure of the expanded shed 2 survived with an open sided eastern wall.
- 7.3.22 As with tanks T1–4 in tanning shed 1, only minimal excavation was undertaken of tank fills within tanning shed 2. Most of the excavation was conducted by machine to facilitate the recording of sections through selected examples, where feasible. A section recorded through T22 revealed a compacted layer of bark chippings, up to 0.5m thick, and suggests that vegetable tanning was still being used after the expansion of shed 2 (Plate 18).

Additional tanks

- 7.3.23 A north–south row of five wooden tanks (T49–53) was recorded along the eastern boundary of the Site, to the east of tanning shed 1 (Plate 19). The tanks are depicted on the 1891 25-inch OS map, adjoining a pond (359) to the south (Phase 3). The tanks are not shown on the 1928 map.
- 7.3.24 Tanks T49–53 were built along the west side of a 16.5m-long E-shaped wall with three 2m-long projecting walls on the eastern side. The tanks were of comparable dimensions to those excavated elsewhere across the Site—c.1.7m to 2m by 1.5m to 1.9—and were filled with dark brown, organic clay. Only the base of the pits survived.

Additional features

- 7.3.25 Two circular brick-lined wells (121, 122) were recorded during the archaeological monitoring. Both were c.1.2m in diameter. Well 121 had a rectangular brick opening and was located at the northwest corner of tanning shed 1, whilst well 122 was located to the north of tanning shed 2 (Plate 20).
- 7.3.26 A circular pit (380) was excavated directly to the west of the beamhouse and was potentially a third well. It measured c.1.4m wide and was recorded to a depth of 0.7m but continued deeper (Plate 21; Fig. 7, S.5). A primary deposit of grey puddling clay (384) lined the well, into which was set a 0.5m-deep rectangular brick chamber comprising seven courses of brickwork (382) with an internal opening of 0.75m by 0.4m. The outer space between the bricks and the cut was filled with light brown clayey sand (381). The chamber had been infilled by a dark brownish-grey silty clay deposit (383).
- 7.3.27 To the southwest of 380, towards the north edge of tanning shed 2, was a large, circular pit (368) that measured 2m in diameter and was up to 0.75m deep. Pit 368 was filled by a brick rubble deposit (369).

8. Discussion

- 8.1.1 The archaeological monitoring works identified four distinct phases of historical activity at the Site, comprising initial agricultural use followed by three phases of tannery. Ordnance Survey maps of the Site indicated a progressive expansion of the business operations in the late 19th century.
- 8.1.2 The earliest mention of the Site was as a “tan yard” on the tithe map of 1842, in association with an orchard, garden and two yards or enclosures referred to as “back garth” and “hall garth”. Evidence of truncated segments of boundary ditches, and ridge and furrow cultivation to the south, suggest that early use of the Site was primarily agricultural. Ridge and furrow cultivation generally dates from the medieval to post-medieval periods, though the spacing of the furrows on the Site suggests a relatively late date. However, no finds were recovered to accurately date these features.
- 8.1.3 Three buildings from the earliest OS-mapped phase of the tannery (1848) were recorded. These were a probable beamhouse set back from the street frontage with two tanning sheds further to the south. A fourth building, shown towards the northwest corner of the Site was demolished and rebuilt in the 1980s, leading to a deep level of truncation in this area.
- 8.1.4 Beamhouse activities relate to processes that prepare animal skins for tanning. They include the cleaning and conditioning of skins prior to tanning. This comprises multiple steps including, curing, soaking, liming, unhairing, deliming, bating and pickling. The large building towards the northeast corner of the Site was divided into at least four internal spaces, voids within the floor surfaces suggest the siting of machinery or equipment, and it is likely that this was where the “dry” processes within the beamhouse took place. It was evident that the building had seen numerous alterations to its layout over time, with the addition of internal walls, removal and reinstatement of floor surfaces and additions to the exterior, indicating changes to the process flow and methodology involved in the tannery throughout its active period. The two tanning sheds were initially small, rectangular buildings to the rear of the beamhouse. Each housed four sunken wooden tanks. It is likely that each of these buildings represented different aspects of the tanning process, potentially one for curing, soaking and bating of the hides prior to tanning and one for the tanning operation.
- 8.1.5 As operations expanded at the Site, contemporary maps of 1891 show a significant expansion of tanning shed 2 and an additional row of tanks along the eastern limit of the Site, taking the total number of wooden tanks from a potential eight to in excess of 53. Tanning shed 1 did not appear to undergo any significant development during this period and most likely retained its original function.
- 8.1.6 The wooden tanks could have been involved in a number of “wet” processes such as soaking, curing and bating, and it is probable that each of these were contained within distinct areas within

tanning shed 2, although the only clearly defined area was the western annexe, which contained a bank of 12 smaller tanks aligned in two rows.

- 8.1.7 Due to the potential for hazardous material to be preserved in the waterlogged conditions of the Site, minimal hand excavation was conducted and it was agreed with the City of York City Archaeologist that no environmental samples were to be taken from tannery deposits. Where feasible, sections through tanks were excavated via machine to recover information concerning the processes involved. Mostly, the tanks were filled by deposits of undiagnostic grey clay, although three tanks contained material that was potentially significant. Tanks T1 and T2 in tanning shed 1 contained fragments of leather and animal bone that probably represents infilling with residual nearby waste. Tank T22, part of the expanded phase of tanning shed 2, had a thick layer of bark chippings at the base, suggesting vegetable tanning was employed at some point. Oak and several other types of tree bark were commonly used as a source of the tannin necessary for tanning.
- 8.1.8 Operations at the Site appeared to be scaled back in 1928, as noted from the OS map for that year. Tanning shed 2 had been all-but removed, aside from its western element, probably representing the period where the tanning tanks were infilled and the Site reverted to agricultural use, with the tannery buildings repurposed as barns or outbuildings. Early 20th-century pottery and glass from the backfill deposits in tanning shed 1 support this interpretation.
- 8.1.9 No archaeological finds or environmental samples were retained from the archaeological work, but the monitoring work has produced a detailed record of the structures of the 19th-century tannery and has recorded distinct phases of use and development at the Site to add to the industrial heritage of Wigginton.

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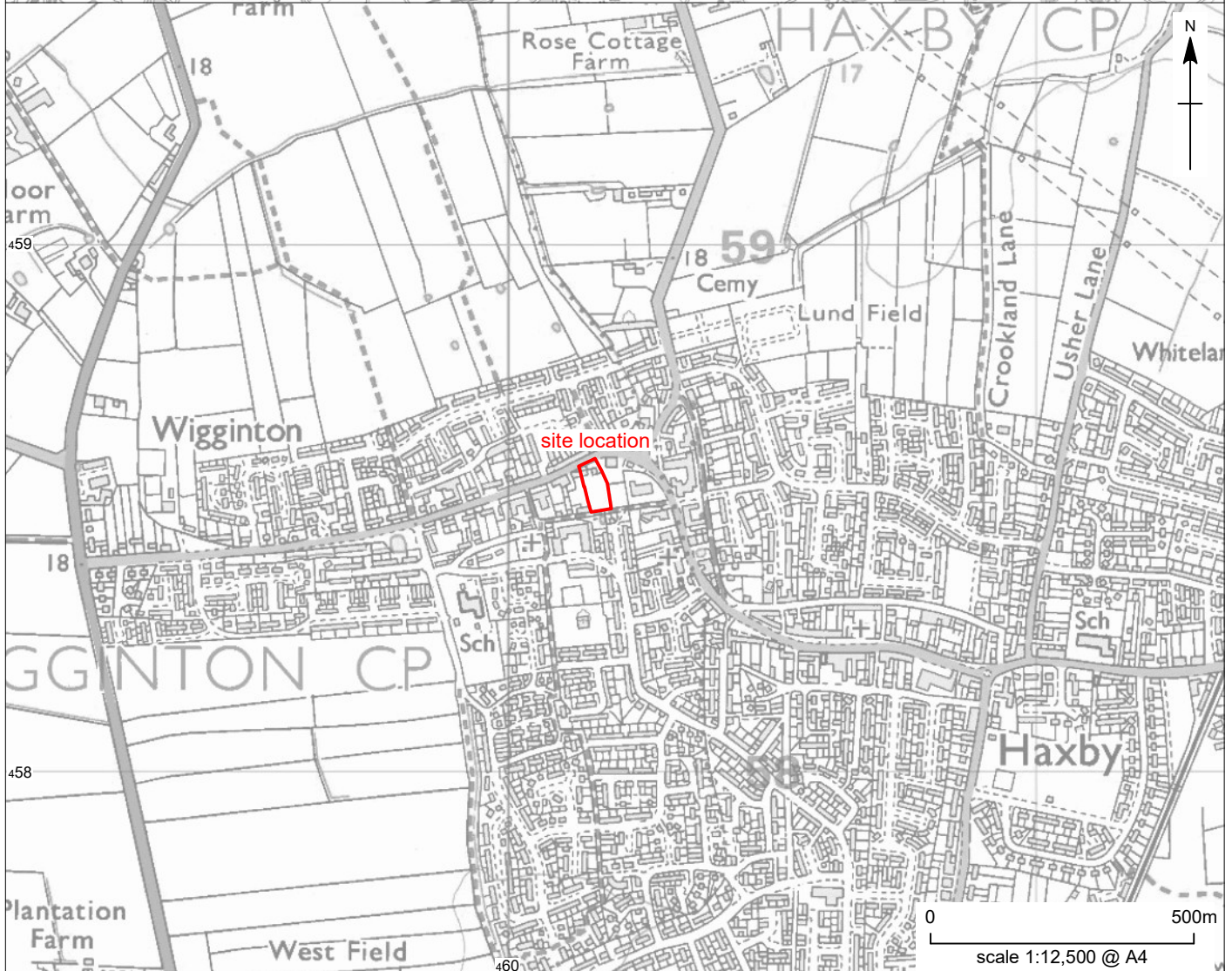
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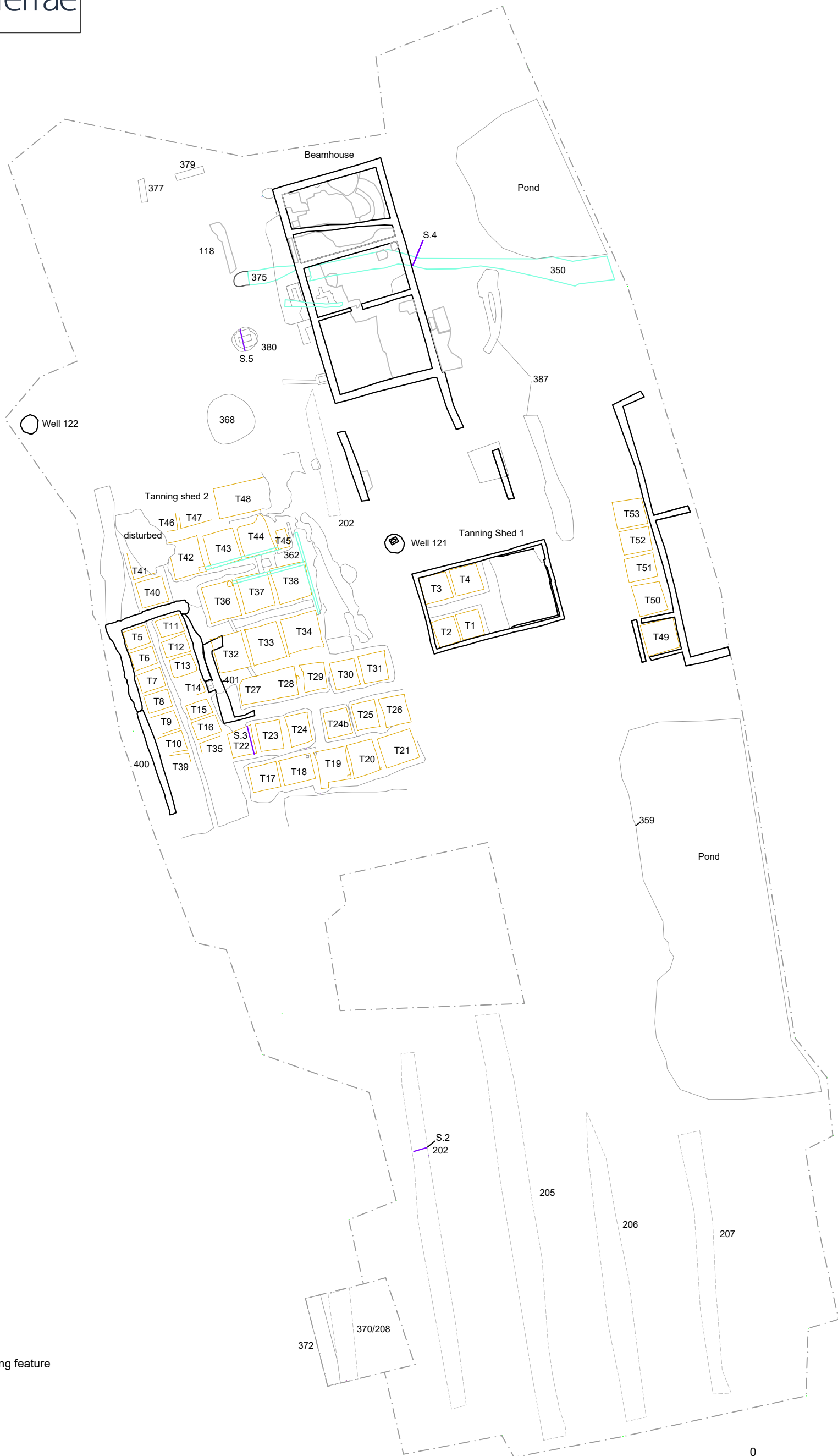
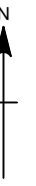
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10. Illustrations



11 The Village, Wigginton: site location

Figure 1



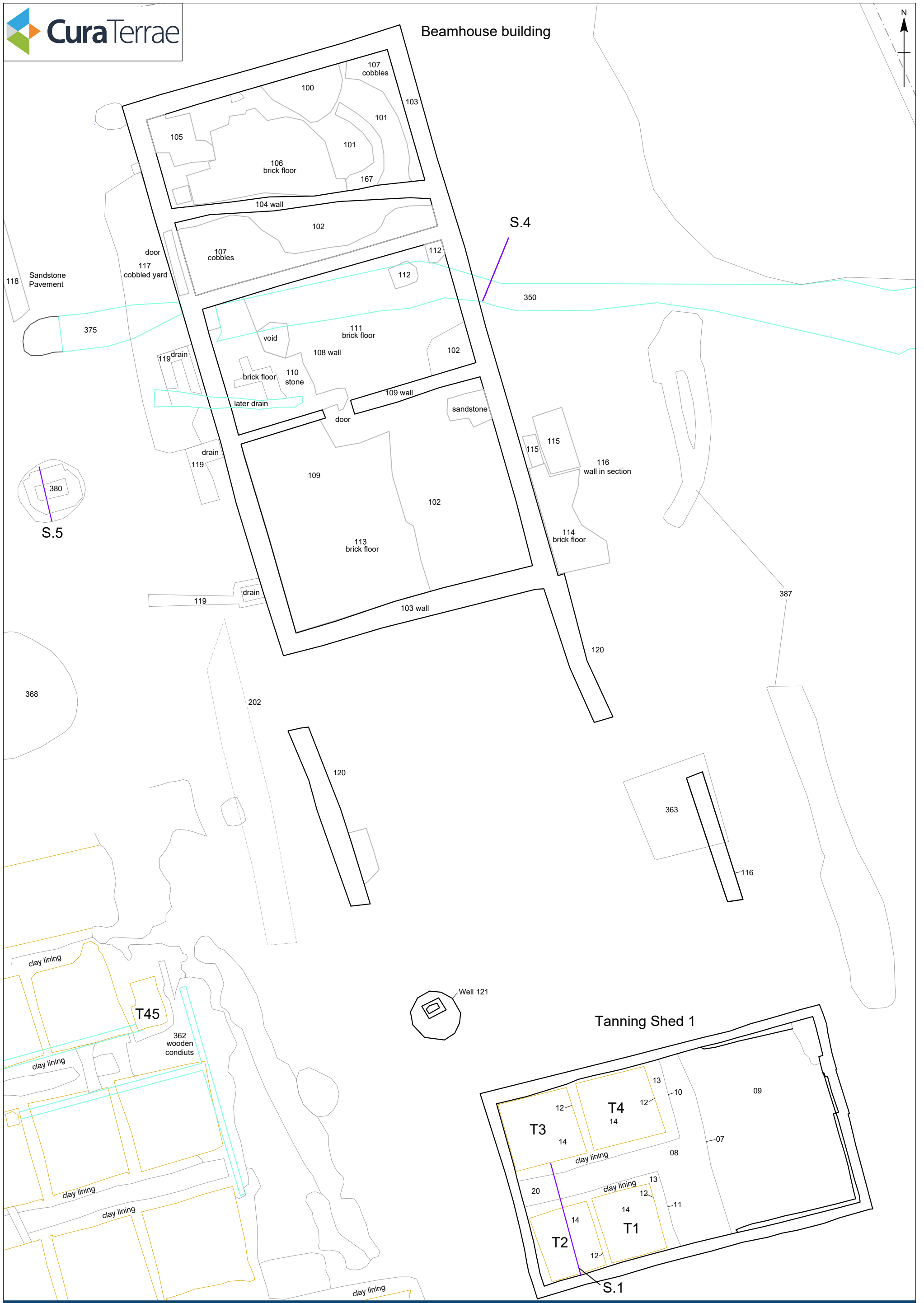
- KEY**
-  wall
 -  feature
 -  floor
 -  tank
 -  underlying feature
 -  furrow

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scale 1:250 @ A3



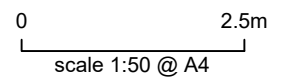
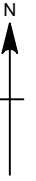
11 The Village, Wigginton: site plan overlain on historic mapping

Figure 3

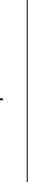


11 The Village, Wigginton: Detail of Beamhouse building and Tanning Shed 1

Figure 4



Tanning shed 2



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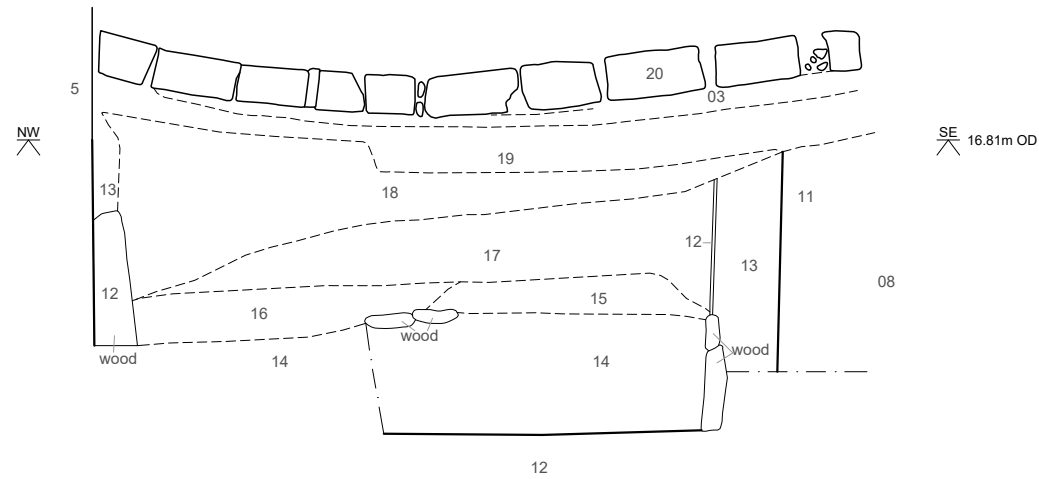


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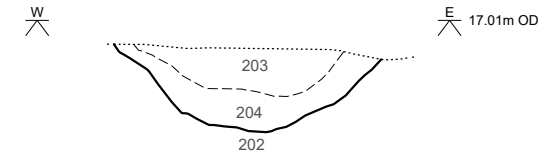


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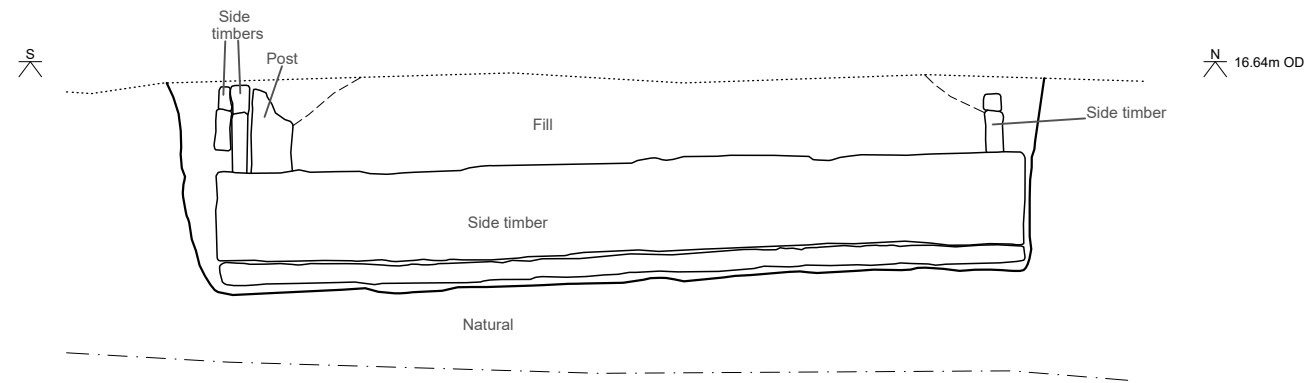
Section 1 East facing section of T2 in tanning shed 1



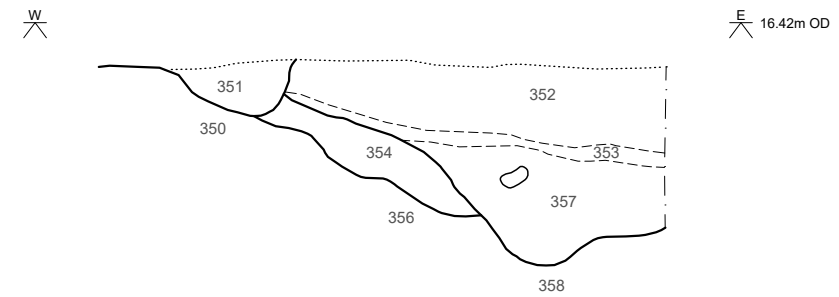
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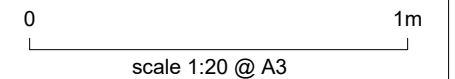
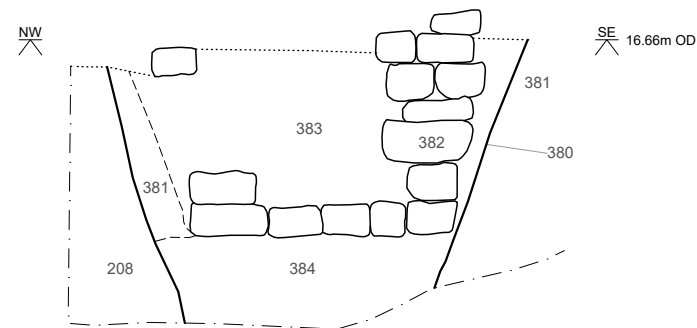
Section 3 West facing section of T22 in tanning shed 2



Section 4 Southeast facing section of boundary ditch group



Section 5 West facing section of well 380





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Natural sand beneath the 19th century tannery foundations.

Plate 1



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Pre-excavation of north to south ditch 370.

Plate 2



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Excavated terminus of ditch 375.

Plate 3



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South-facing section through furrow 202.

Plate 4



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Remnants of the north-western building, walls 377 and 379, looking southeast.

Plate 5



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Yorkstone pavement 118, looking south.

Plate 6



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Overview of the Beamhouse building, looking south.

Plate 7



© ECUS 2025

Overview of the northern beamhouse room, looking southeast.

Plate 8



© ECUS 2025

Curving channel within
cobbled floor 107.

Plate 9



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Yorkstone floor 110 in the central beamhouse room.

Plate 10



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Brick floor 111 in the central beamhouse room.

Plate 11



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Brick floor 113 in the southern beamhouse room.

Plate 12



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Sandstone and brick platform 115.

Plate 13



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Base of brick plinth 363.

Plate 14



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Brick features 119, appended to the western wall of the beamhouse building.

Plate 15



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Overview of Tanning Shed 1, looking northwest across the Site.

Plate 16



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Wooden tanning tanks in Tanning Shed 1, looking northwest.

Plate 17



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Machine-excavated section through tanning tank 22 (T22), showing compacted layer of bark chippings.

Plate 18



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Tanks T49 and T50 at the eastern limit of the Site.

Plate 19



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Brick well 122, revealed under the foundations of the modern building.

Plate 20



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Possible well 380. The circular cut can be seen continuing into the natural clay, below the brick chamber.

Plate 21



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Drainage channels beneath tanks in Tanning Shed 2.

Plate 22

Appendix A: Context register

Context	Title
01	Concrete platform
02	Made ground (modern hardcore)
03	Concrete
04	Hard-core / post-med floor
05	Wall of tannery Structure 1
06	Drain
07	Wall foundation cut
08	Clay fill within building
09	Natural sand
10	Cut for N row of tanning pits
11	Cut for S row of tanning pits
12	Wooden tanks
13	Clay lining in cuts 10 & 11
14	Black organic material
15	Rubble infill in tanks
16	Clay capping over tanks
17	Brown sand
18	Backfill of Structure 1
19	Sand levelling layer
20	Irregular brick surface
100	Concrete
101	Cinders and burnt waste
102	Brown sandy clay soil
103	Outer wall Tannery
104	Potential internal wall
105	Sandstone surface, N room
106	Brick floor N room
107	Cobble surface
108	Internal E-W wall
109	Internal E-W wall
110	Stone surface
111	Brick floor

Context	Title
112	Stone pads
113	Brick Floor
114	Brick Floor
115	Large stone blocks
116	N-S wall in E L.O.E
117	Cobble yard surface
118	Stone floor
119	Wall
120	Wall extending south from the tannery building
121	Well
122	Well
200	Topsoil
201	Subsoil
202	Cut - Furrow [202]
203	Fill - Furrow
205	Furrow
206	Furrow
207	Furrow
208	Furrow
209	Natural geology
350	Boundary ditch
351	Fill of ditch
352	Fill of ditch
353	Fill of ditch
354	Fill of ditch 356
356	Boundary ditch
357	Fill of ditch 358
358	Boundary ditch
359	Pond
360	Fill of pond NE corner
362	Cut of drain
363	Cut for brick plinth
364	Brick plinth
365	Tanning pit
368	Cut - Pit [368]

Context	Title
369	Fill - Pit [368]
370	Cut - Ditch
371	Fill - Ditch [370]
372	Cut - Ditch
373	Fill - Ditch [372]
374	N-S wall
375	Cut - Ditch
376	Fill - Ditch [375]
377	Wall stub
378	Occupational deposit
379	E-W wall
380	Cut - ?Well/tanning pit
381	Fill - ?Well/tanning pit [380]
382	Well lining - ?Well/tanning pit [380]
383	Fill - ?Well/tanning pit {382}
384	Fill - ?Well/tanning pit [380]
385	Fill - Pit [386]
386	Cut - Pit [386]
387	Cut - Ditch
389	Fill - Ditch [387]
400	Outer wall 1891 tannery
401	Possible wall of early phase Tanning Shed 2

Appendix B: OASIS summary

OASIS ID (UID)	curaterr1-534511
Project Name	Watching Brief at 11 The Village, Wigginton
Sitename	11 The Village, Wigginton
Sitecode	22101
Project Identifier(s)	22101
Activity type	Watching Brief
Planning Id	22/01315/FULM
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Cura Terrae
Project Dates	01-May-2024 - 02-Jun-2025
Location	11 The Village, Wigginton NGR: SE 60164 58572 LL: 54.0196544967561, -1.083232877379263 12 Fig: 460164,458572
Administrative Areas	Country: England County/Local Authority: York Local Authority District: York Parish: Wigginton
Project Methodology	A watching brief was undertaken to monitor demolition and groundworks across the site of historic tannery in the village of Wigginton. Reduction of the ground level across the site exposed building remains and the remains of tanning pits which were recorded during the works.
Project Results	Significant remains of the 19th century tannery buildings were uncovered including the footprint of the potential beamhouse - where processing of the raw hides would have occurred - and in excess of 54 square, wooden tanks, where soaking and tanning of the hides would have taken place. The remains of the tannery could be allocated to three distinct phases, based on its depiction on Ordnance Survey maps from 1821 to 1909. A series of truncated ditches were uncovered below the tannery buildings which related to earlier use of the site, the presence of furrows to the south of the tannery buildings indicated this was likely agricultural in nature, however no datable evidence was recovered from these features.
Keywords	Tannery - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Boundary Ditch - POST MEDIEVAL - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Ditch - UNCERTAIN - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types

Funder	Private or public corporation Churchill Retirement Living Ltd
HER	City of York HER - noRev - LITE
Person Responsible for work	Damien Ronan
HER Identifiers	
Archives	Digital Archive - to be deposited with Archaeology Data Service Archive;