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23, Fishergate
York

Archaeological Monitoring of Geotechnical Boreholes

February 2010

Report No. 2023

CLIENT

RH Developments (Property) Limited

23, Fishergate
York

Archaeological Monitoring of Geotechnical Boreholes

Summary

A layer of possible archaeological potential immediately overlying the natural gravel deposits has been identified during the monitoring and recording of borehole cores taken at five locations at 23, Fishergate, York. However, this layer is at a minimum of 1.25m below current ground levels and so may not be impacted by an future groundworks at the site.

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Report Information

Client:	RH Developments (Property) Limited
Address:	Lenton Lane, Nottingham, NG7 2NR
Report Type:	Archaeological Watching Brief
Location:	23 Fishergate, York
County:	NorthYorkshire
Grid Reference:	SE 607 511
Period(s) of activity represented:	Unknown
Report Number:	2023
Project Number:	3517
Site Code:	FIY09
Planning Application No.:	06/02506/FUL
Museum Accession No.:	-
Date of fieldwork:	December 2009
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1 Introduction

Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by Martyn Jones of MPJ Design Associates Ltd on behalf of RH Developments (Property) to monitor the drilling of five geotechnical boreholes (BH) within an old warehouse at 23 Fishergate, York. The monitoring took place on December 10th 2009.

Site location and topography

The site, centred at SE 607 511, is located approximately 100m south-west of Fishergate Bar and south-west of part of York's city walls, at approximately 13m above Ordnance Datum. The property faces onto Kent Street and is bound to the east by the Woolpack Inn, to the north by the Sea Horse Hotel, to the south by the Edinburgh Arms public house and by residential buildings to the west.

Soils, geology and land-use

The underlying geology of the site is recorded as glacial sands and gravels (British Geological Survey, 1968 Selby sheet 71 solid and drift edition, 1:50 000 series), and the soils are in an unrecorded urban area (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

2 Archaeological and Historical Background

Although the Fishergate area is located outside both the line of York's city walls and the historic core of the city it has played an important role in the history of York since its foundation. One of the Roman roads into the city is probably located along the course of Fishergate and the land around Fishergate is also thought to have been the location of one the many Roman cemeteries located outside the Roman city of York. The area of Fishergate is also the suggested location of 'Eoforwic' the post-Roman settlement and trading centre of York.

The early medieval period saw Fishergate develop into a suburb area of the city. Further significant development took place during the 12th century with the establishment of the Gilbertine Priory of St Andrews in the western area of Fishergate. The high archaeological potential of the site is reflected in the fact that Fishergate lies within one of York's Areas of Archaeological Importance.

3 Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the boreholes was to provide geotechnical information that would inform decisions regarding the type and depth of foundation that may be required for any redevelopment of the site. However, it also afforded the opportunity to gain some initial information on the nature and depth of the deposits from an archaeological standpoint. The

monitoring aimed to ascertain the presence or absence of archaeological deposits, their depth and thickness, as well as the nature of the overburden and depth of natural across the footprint of the building.

Although the scope of the work was limited it was anticipated that the results would help inform upon the extent and character of the archaeology of the site in advance of the possible redevelopment of the site.

4 Methodology

All drilling was carried out using a compact drilling rig (see Plate 1). The location of the boreholes were determined by the Senior Geo-Environmental Engineer from Opus Joynes Pike in consultation with the monitoring archaeologist with the aim of providing a representative sample of the deposits across the full width of the site (see Fig. 2).

The boreholes were between 0.1m and 0.2m in width and achieved a maximum depth of between 5m and 6m below current ground level. The boreholes provided a very general and narrow view of the deposits located in the area. In some cases the cores were compressed by the drilling process and in places, due to the unconsolidated nature of the deposits, no sample was recovered.

Digital photographs of the cores were taken and the basic stratigraphy recorded on pro-forma Geotechnical Test Pit Recording sheets, which form part of the archive.

5 Results

Each of the boreholes revealed a similar sequence of deposits (Geotechnical Record sheets BH1-5) although with differing depths of material recorded in each core. Beneath the concrete floor surface (0.25m thick) was a layer of made ground that varied in depth between approximately 1m, in BH1 on the eastern side of the building, and 1.5m in BH3 and BH4 on the western side. This deposit was very black in colour and contained abundant brick fragments. This deposit is interpreted as demolition material or made ground from previous phases of construction. In BH2 and BH4 this made ground deposit could be sub-divided as it contained lenses with less brick inclusions at deeper levels.

Underlying this deposit was a greyish silty clay deposit between 0.2m and 0.85m in depth. This deposit was recorded by the geotechnical survey to be the start of the natural levels but flecks of charcoal were noted in this layer in the cores from BH4 and BH5. This charcoal may have been intrusive and its presence may be as a consequence of the coring method. No archaeological material was recovered, and it was not possible to identify any stratified archaeological remains within this layer. The deposit was, however, noticeably different from

the obviously natural gravel deposit recorded immediately below. This layer was encountered at 1.25m below current ground level in BH1 and 2.5m below current ground level in BH3.

When considered with the imprecise way of the core recovery and the known presence of archaeology in the immediate area this deposit could have some archaeological potential.

Below this deposit the clearly natural levels were exposed which consisted of glacial sands and coarse gravels. The depth at which the natural layers was encountered is present in the table below. Copies of the records made of each borehole are also included in this report.

Table 1: Depth of natural below ground surface.

Borehole	BH 1	BH 2	BH 3	BH 4	BH 5
Depth natural reached (m below ground surface)	1.50m	1.90m	2.70m	1.70-1.90m	2.40m

6 Discussion and Conclusions

Only a single layer of possible archaeological interest has been identified in the borehole cores. However, a confident assessment on the archaeological potential of this deposit cannot be made by remains brought up through a borehole alone. Nevertheless this deposit is sealed by a layer of made ground and concrete to a minimum depth of 1.25m below the present ground surface. Any development above this level would therefore not impact on any potential archaeological deposits.

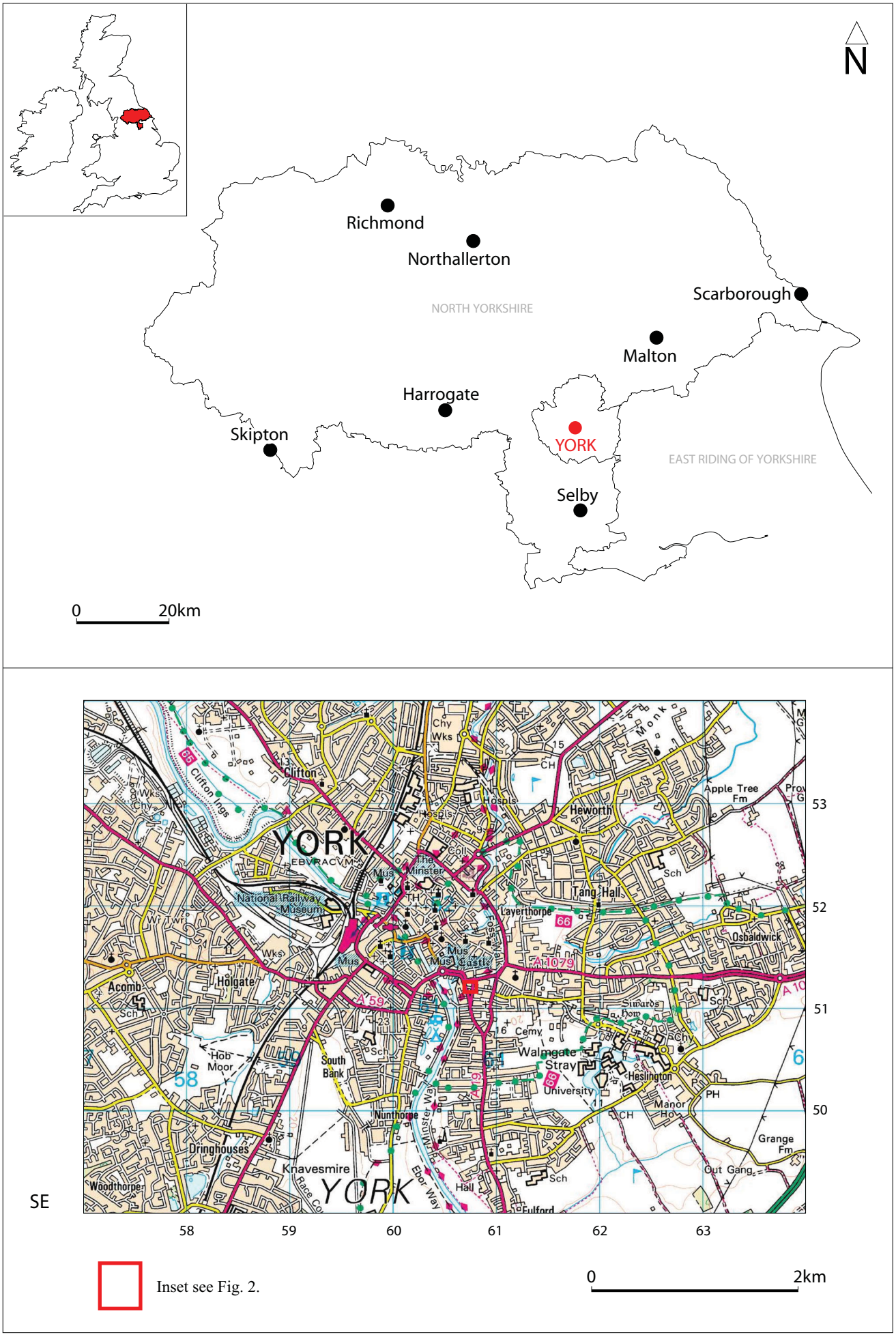

Fig. 1. Site location

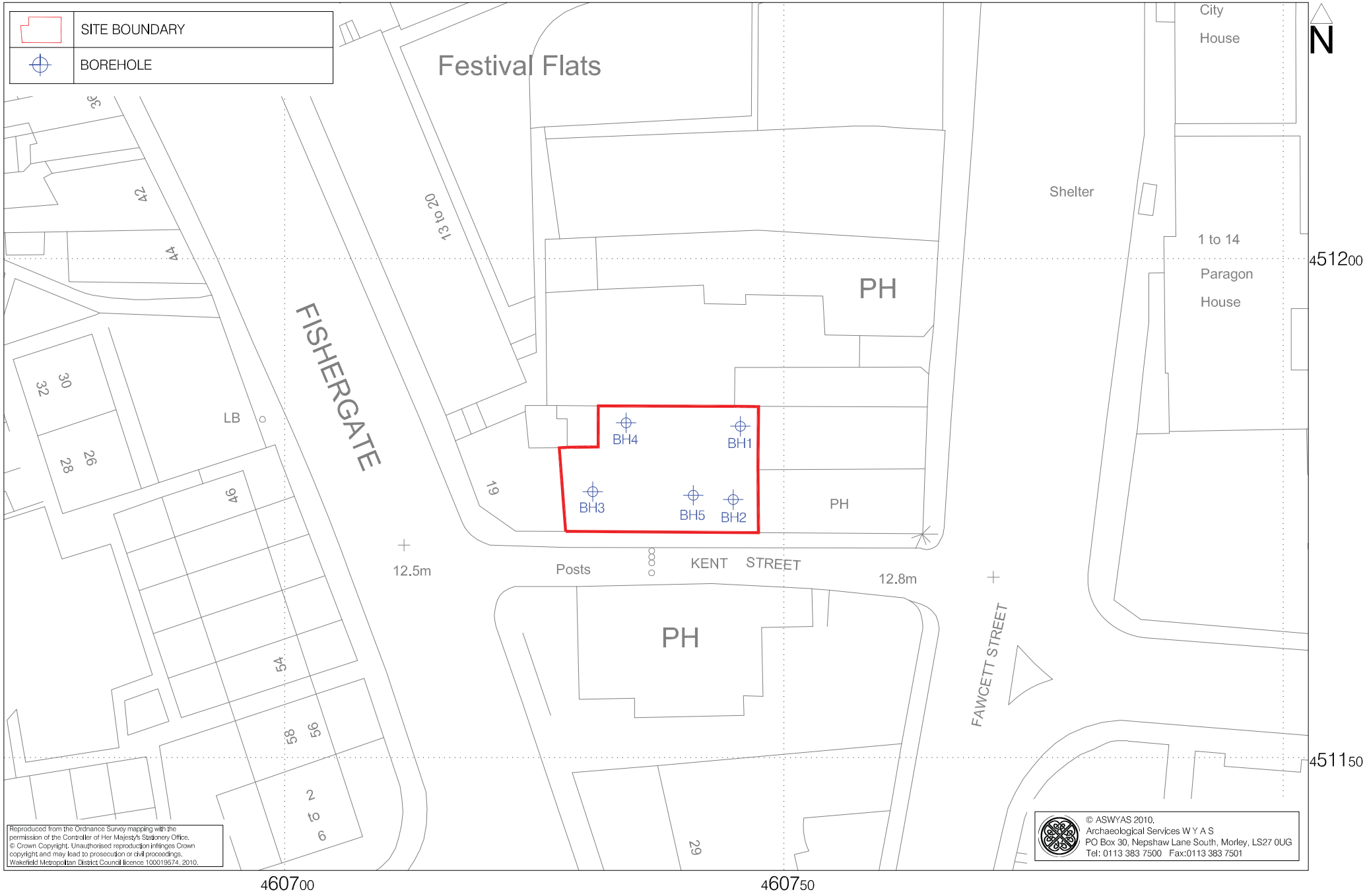

Fig. 2. Site location showing borehole position (1:500 @ A4)

Plate 1: General working shot; drilling BH3

Plate 2: Cores from BH3