



21 CLIFTON GREEN YORK

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

by Kurt Hunter-Mann

21 CLIFTON GREEN, YORK

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT by

Kurt Hunter-Mann

June 2006

Cover illustration:

View of house from south-east

© 2006 York Archaeological Trust, Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York YO1 7FG Tel: (01904) 663000 Fax: (01904) 663024 Email: enquiries@yorkarchaeology.co.uk Registered Charity No: 509060

CONTENTS

	page
ABSTRACT	
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. METHOD STATEMENT	4
3. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY	5
4. BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	5
5. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF	7
6. FINDS ASSESSMENT	12
7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	16
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	18
9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	18

List of Illustrations

Figures		page
1	Site location	3
2	Extract from the 1852 Ordnance Survey map of the area	6
3	Composite north-east facing section (south-east part)	10
4	Composite north-east facing section (north-west part)	10
5	Plan of main archaeological features	11
6	Extract from 1852 map showing the relationship of the earlier	
	buildings with the existing buildings	17
Tables		
1	CBM summary by context	12
2	Pottery summary by context	13
3	Small Finds summary by context	15
Plates		

1	Deposit 1010 (centre) extending beneath foundations 1019	
	and brick footings 1018 of Wall 1017. South-east lightwell	
	(south-west end) looks west	8
2	Rubble feature 1001 beneath the south-east wall of the house.	
	looks south-east	9

ABSTRACT

A watching brief during building work at 21 Clifton Green in 2005-6 revealed evidence for medieval and post-medieval activity, but no clear evidence of occupation preceding the current building. Although the line of Roman road 7 was thought to run through this site, no sign of the road or any related activity was found.

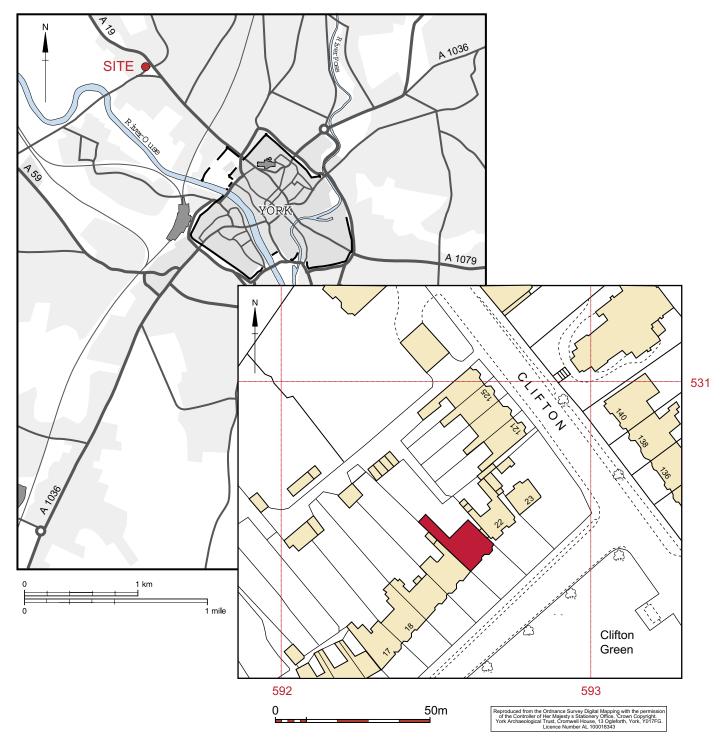


Figure 1 Site location

1. INTRODUCTION

York Archaeological Trust carried out an intermittent watching brief between 23rd May 2005 and 8th February 2006 at 21 Clifton Green, York (SE 5926 5304; Fig. 1). The ground works involved reducing the ground level inside and outside the house, in order to create a basement with light-wells to front and rear (Fig. 2). The watching brief was undertaken for the owner, Michael Hammill, in accordance with a brief prepared by the City of York Council because the site lies within York city centre Area of Archaeological Importance.

All artefacts and site records are currently stored at YAT under the Yorkshire Museum accession code YORYM: 2005.2210.

2. METHOD STATEMENT

The ground works were mostly carried out using a mini digger. Where there was already a basement, on the south-east side of the building and in the north corner, about 1m of deposits were removed to form the required reduced floor level. A similar depth of deposits was excavated in the front garden to form a light-well on the south-east side of the house. There was a solid floor in the hall and in the west corner of the house, and deposits were removed in much of these areas to a depth of some 2.6m. About 2.2m of material had to be removed to the rear of the house to form a light-well due to the higher ground level to the rear of the site. The excavation of the deeper basement deposits in sections, so that the walls could be safely underpinned, meant that it was difficult to identify small or insubstantial features overlying natural deposits within the basement.

The ground works were regularly monitored by an archaeologist from YAT. Written and drawn (measured sketch) records were made of any possible archaeological deposits and features, and finds recovered (other than modern material) from these contexts were retained for further study.

Possible stratified medieval deposits were observed during the digging out of the south-east light-well on its north-west side; an area of about 2m² was excavated by hand in order to obtain a more precise record of these deposits and to aid finds recovery. It was possible to correlate the building construction levels with the Ordnance Survey datum. Measurements relating to the depth of deposits are therefore given in metres above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Observations were made in several separate locations inside and outside the building, but the option of discussing each of the separate archaeological sequences in turn, has been refused for the sake of clarity. Instead the observations will be considered in stratigraphic order, from the bottom up.

3. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The site lies on the north-west side of Clifton Green, some 1.5km north-west of York city centre. There is a gentle ground slope upwards to the north-west, from about 10m AOD on the Water End frontage to around 11.5m AOD at the rear of the property.

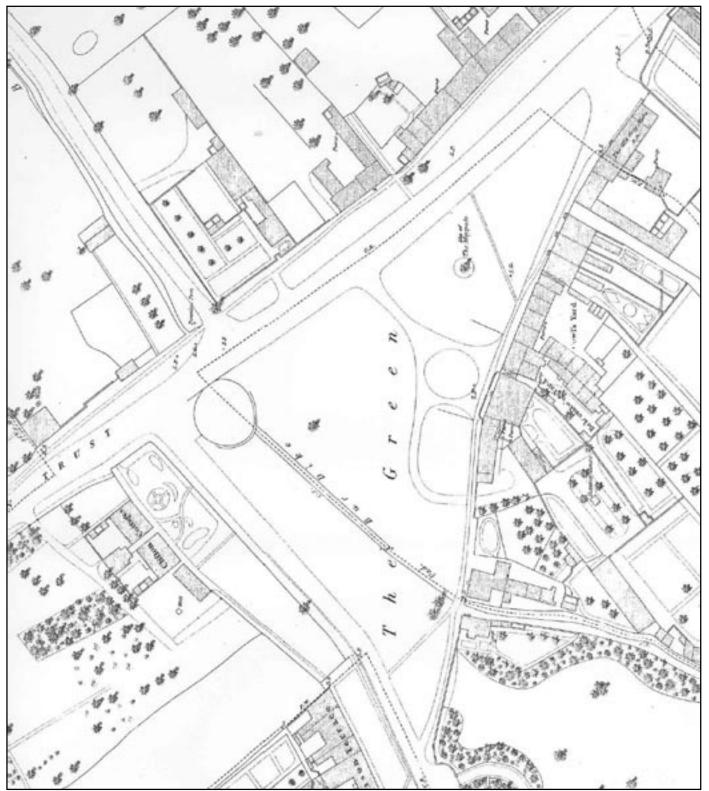
The solid geology is Bunter and Keuper sandstones that are overlain by drift geology of boulder clay (Ordnance Survey 1959).

4. BRIEF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The watching brief at 21 Clifton Green was carried out because the building was thought to lie close to the line of Roman road 7, the main road from the north-west gate of the Roman fortress that ran northwards to Hadrian's Wall (RCHMY1, 3). The road has been plotted as running through this site (RCHMY1, monuments map). However, previous observations of the road suggest that it lay some 30m to the east of the site; this is supported by the evidence of obsolete parish boundaries, notably one running along Clifton (the continuation of the street Bootham), which indicate that the Roman road is on the same line as the modern main road in this vicinity. Nevertheless, Roman burials are known to lie alongside the Roman road; the tombstone of Flavius Flavinus, a centurion of the Sixth Legion, was found a little to the north in 1927 (RCHMY1, 76). It was therefore possible that the ground works would disturb Roman burials.

Another reason for maintaining the watching brief here was its position close to the centre of the ancient village of Clifton. The place name is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and has the meaning 'farmstead near a cliff or bank' (Mills 1998, 88-9), which presumably refers to the position of the settlement on high ground overlooking the River Ouse. There has probably been a nucleated village here, alongside the Roman road, since the Anglo-Scandinavian period. By the time of Domesday Book in 1086, the township contained one manor with two plough teams, along with at least two other villagers and four smallholders.

The earliest detailed map of the area, an 1836 estate map, shows dwellings on the north-west side of the village centre, fronting onto Clifton Green. By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1852, the north-west edge of the green had been converted into a small public garden, separated from the green by a road (Fig. 2). The 1852 map shows a small building on the site, but by the time of the next survey in 1891 the current building had been erected and part of the public garden had been incorporated into the property, forming the existing front garden.



5. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF (Figs 3- 5)

5.1 Undisturbed natural deposits

The earliest deposit encountered was compact light brown clay (1027); it is regarded as an undisturbed natural deposit, probably of glacial origin. The top of this deposit was about 10.1m AOD in the north-west light-well, but appeared to slope down steadily to the south-east, so that it disappeared beneath unexcavated deposits towards the south-east edge of the watching brief at 9.25m AOD.

Loose mid orange/brown sand at least 0.15m thick, with occasional clay flecks, was recorded in the east corner of the building at about 9.35m AOD (1024). This deposit is also thought to have been undisturbed natural, and it suggests that the natural deposits were a mixture of clays and sands.

Overlying Natural Clay 1027 in the north-west light-well was light orange sandy clay up to 0.3m thick (1028), which merged into the clay. This is interpreted as natural subsoil.

5.2 Medieval

Above the sandy subsoil 1028 in the north-west light-well was friable mid brown sandy clay loam with occasional charcoal flecks (1031). This deposit merged into Subsoil 1028, and is regarded as a soil, which had probably been re-worked. Its uppermost surface was about 10.45m AOD, and it contained 14th century pottery.

Cutting Deposit 1031 was a feature of indeterminate size and shape in the west corner of the light-well. It was at least 1.4m wide and 0.8m deep, with steep sides and a flat base (1033). It contained mid grey sandy clay loam, with occasional charcoal flecks and animal bone (1030). This feature is regarded as a rubbish pit, and contained pottery dating to the 13th/14th centuries.

A probable linear cut, aligned roughly north-east/south-west (1036), was observed in the north-east side of the north-west light-well, cut into the natural clay. It had a concave profile, was 0.35m wide by 0.2m deep, and contained dark grey silty clay loam (1029). It is undated, but may well be medieval; its form suggests that it was a beam slot, intended to accommodate the timber base for a building.

Several deposits were observed overlying natural in the south-east part of the site. Towards the south-east side of the building was friable dark grey sandy silt loam with frequent charcoal flecks, moderate small-medium brick/tile fragments and occasional pebbles-cobbles (1002). In the east corner of the building was friable mid grey/brown silty clay with occasional pebbles (1023). On the south-west side of the south-east light-well was dark brown clay loam, some 0.15m thick (1010; Plate 1). Beneath the middle of the south-east exterior wall of the house

was a more mixed deposit of light orange/ brown sandy clay and mid grey silty clay loam (1020); this deposit appears have to extended southwards, Deposit overlying 1010. The top of these layers was around 9.6m AOD and they were an average of 0.2m thick; a 14th century date is suggested by pottery and brick/tile found in Deposits 1002 and 1010. The absence of any underlying subsoil



Plate 1 Deposit 1010 (centre) extending beneath foundations 1019 and brick foundations 1018 of Wall 1017. South-east lightwell (south-west end) looks west

and the mixed nature of these deposits suggests they represent re-working of the subsoil and topsoil, or perhaps dumping following the removal of the subsoil.

5.3 Post-medieval

Cutting Deposit 1002 and lying beneath the south-east wall of the house was a linear cut with a concave profile (1003). It was aligned slightly more west-east than the house, so that it was inside the house on the south-west side (Plate 2), whereas further north-east it was seen extending beyond the external face of the house wall. It was not observed at the north-east end of the light-well, which suggests that it terminated or returned to the north-west. Overall, this feature was at least 5m long by 0.7m wide and 0.25m deep. It contained 90% cobbles set in mid brown silty clay loam, with occasional mortar flecks and small brick/tile fragments (1001=1015). The function of this feature is uncertain, although it could have been a wall foundation. Pottery and brick/tile suggest an 18th century date.

Overlying Feature 1003 inside the house was friable dark grey sandy silt loam, with frequent charcoal flecks and small pebbles, and moderate brick/tile fragments (1000). This layer was around 0.15m thick and apparently extended across much of the south-east part of the house. A very similar deposit (1014), found on the south-west side of the south-east light-well, is thought to have been the same layer, which is interpreted as a levelling or dump. Although only medieval pottery was recovered from Deposit 1000, an early 18th century date is suggested by pottery and brick/tile from Deposit 1014.

Along the south-east edge of the site, a mixed dark grey silty clay loam and dark brown silty

clay deposit was observed from the point at which the top of the natural deposits sloped down south-eastwards beneath the level of machining at around 9.25m AOD (1022); it was not excavated, and is of unknown thickness. Pottery of 12th century date and post-medieval clay pipe was recovered from the surface of this layer, which suggests it is a dump deposit, probably re-worked over a long period of time.

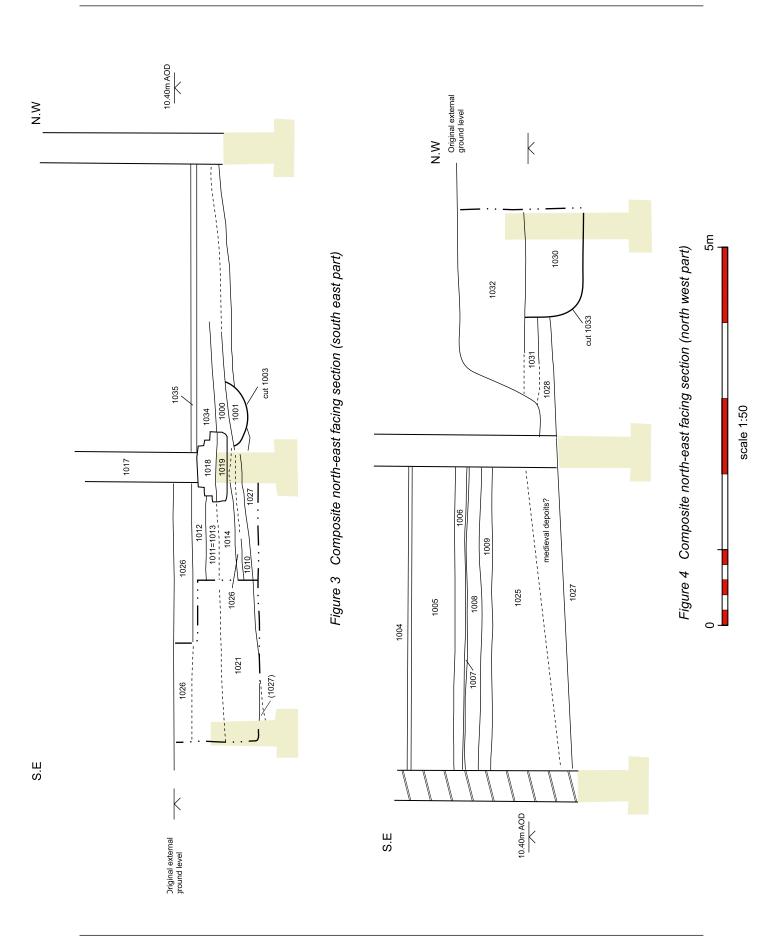


Plate 2 Rubble feature 1001 beneath the south-east wall of the house. looks south-east.

5.4 The extant house

The foundations on the south-east side of the extant house were cut into the post-medieval layers, but further north-west the foundations were cut into natural clay due to the slope of the natural deposits. The main exterior brick walls of the house (1017) rested on two or three courses of offset brick footings (1018), which in turn rested on mortared stone and brick rubble foundations about 0.2m thick (1019). The foundations were set in a shallow cut (1037), but it seems that the offset brick footings on the south-east side of the house had been built above ground and then buried, whereas the north-east wall was set in a trench some 0.3m deeper than on the south-east side; apparently much of the weight of the building was carried on the north-east wall rather than the south-east wall, perhaps because the bay windows and main entrance door in the latter wall reduced its load-bearing capacity.

In the basement, the south-east wall was buried beneath a layer of brick rubble and mortar fragments (1034) that was up to 0.3m thick but tapered out to the north-east, creating a level surface against the prevailing ground slope. Above this make-up layer was the brick basement floor (1035), the surface of which was 10.15m AOD.



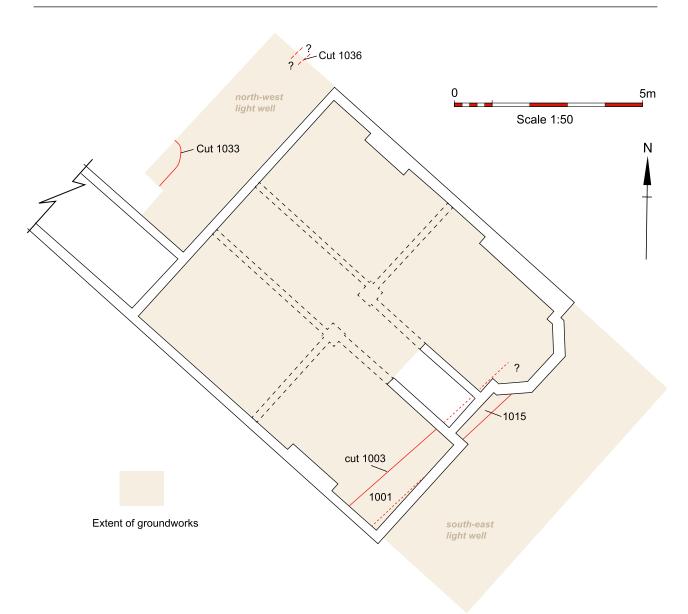


Figure 5 Plan of main archaeological features

In contrast, the solid floor of the hall and the western corner of the house, a ceramic tile floor (1004) was at 12m AOD. Overlying the post-medieval deposits here was a series of mixed silty loam, silt loam and cinder/clinker layers, about 1.5m thick overall on average (1006, 1007-9, 1025). Above them, and forming the base for the tile floor, was a 0.6m-thick layer of stone, brick/tile and mortar (much of it plastered) rubble (1005). Pottery of the 18th/early 19th century (not retained) was found in these deposits.

Outside the house, the brick footings and the lowest part of the wall of the standing building on the south-east side were buried by layers of dark grey/brown silty clay loam with moderate brick/tile fragments and mortar and charcoal flecks, about 0.4m thick overall (1011-13), which are dated by pottery and small finds to the late 18th/19th centuries. They are regarded as levelling deposits, with the additional function of supporting the footings of the house. Above

these deposits was 0.3m-thick dark grey silt loam topsoil under turf (1026), forming the front garden with a surface around 10.35m AOD. Outside the north-west side of the house, the post-medieval deposits were overlain by silt loam topsoil about 0.9m thick, forming an external ground surface at about 11.3m AOD.

6. FINDS ASSESSMENT

6.1 Ceramic building material

A total of 7.625kg of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) was examined from the site. The material ranged in date from Roman to post-medieval (see Table 1). The CBM was recorded following standard YAT procedures.

There was a single fragment of residual Roman brick. There were medieval roofing tiles (plain tiles) of 13-16th century date which were typical in terms of both thickness and fabrics. The only exception was a single fragment from context 1014 which had an unusual fabric, and had both a possible paw print and tally mark on the upper surface. There were also several fragments of 14-16th century brick which were made in sanded moulds and were in fabrics typical for York. One of the bricks had straw marks on the base implying it had been dried on the ground rather than in a drying shed (hackstead). There were two fragments of 16-18th century brick one of which, from context 1011, had a worn upper surface implying it had been used in a floor. There were two fragments of pan tile of 17th century or later date.

There was a highly unusual fragment from context 1001. The fragment is in a coarse fabric typical of both medieval and post-medieval brick manufacture, but the form resembles part of a shallow flat bottomed bowl. The precise function of this object is unclear; it could have been industrial, or related to drainage. The fragment could be of any date from the 14th century onwards.

Context	Date	Forms
1001	14th century +	Unknown
1010	13th - 16th century	Plain
1011	16th - 18th century	Brick
1012	17th century +	Pan
1013	14th - 16th century	Brick, Peg, Plain
1014	16th - 18th century	Stone Tile? Brick, Plain
1015	1st - 4th century	Rbrick
1021	13th - 16th century	Plain

Table 1CBM summary by context

The CBM is of use in providing dating evidence for the various contexts on site, and these are listed in Table 1 above. The only fragment of note was the unusual sherd from context 1001 of unknown function. Otherwise the collection was typical in terms of both the forms and

fabrics used. Given the small quantity of material recovered, no further work on the CBM is recommended.

6.2 Pottery

6.2.1 Introduction

A total of 116 sherds from 13 contexts, ranging from the 11th century to the 19th century, were examined (see Table 2). Few of these were abraded suggesting that, for the most part, they were found in, or fairly close to, where they were deposited. The earlier sherds tend to be smaller (approx <4cm). Medieval and post medieval sherds range from <6cm to >10cms.

The assemblage appears to be entirely of a domestic nature. There is little to suggest high status in the medieval period as there are no foreign imports at this time. Vessels are mainly plain, though one Brandsby jug has rectangular roller stamped decoration and one flanged bowl has incised wavy line decoration on its upper surface.

Context	Quantity	Spot date	Details
1000	15	15th century	3 joining sherds of Ryedale ware 1 Brandsby-type open form 3 joining sherds of S. Yorks coal measures pottery 1 Brandsby-ware jug sherds 1 Humber ware 1 gritty ware 5 Brandsby ware sherds
1001	17	Late 17th / Early 18th century	3 sherds of late 16th/early 17th century yellow ware 2 Brandsby pellet jug Fragments 1 Brandsby jug handle 2 Brandsby type open forms 2 17th century ware 1 earthenware with internal glazew 17th/ ealy 18th century 6 Brandsby-type wares
1002	6	14th century	1 Brandsby type ware cooking pot rim 3 grey wares - unidentified 2 Brandsby-type sherds
1010	6	14th century	1 Brandsby flanged bowl with incised wavy line decoration 3 Brandsby jug with lime green glaze and ribbed rod handle 2 Humber
1011	11	Late 18th century	5 Staffordshire white salt glazed stoneware flat ware 1 Grey ware with traces of brown glaze (continued below)

· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	I.		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
			1 Grey ware with traces of brown glaze 2 Staffordshire slip ware mug 1 Brown glazed stoneware 1 Frechen stoneware 1 Brown glazed earthenware
1012	16	Late 18th and 19th century	1 Staffordshire white glazed stoneware with moulded decoration 1 Staffordshire slipware 2 Late Humber ware 6 Brown glazed stoneware 1 Terracotta pot 2 Slipware bowl 3 Post medieval red earthenware with green brown glaze
1013	11	Late 17th / Early 18th century	 Black glazed red earthenware Oxidised Ryedale ware jar with thumbed horizontal strip below rim Tin glazed ware albarello. Blue and white Tin glazed ware dish. Brown and yellow 6 Green glazed red earthenware
1014	16	Early 18th century	1 Gritty ware. Abraded 1 Brandsby. Sooted and abraded 1 Black glazed ware. Early 18th century? 2 Brandsby green glazed jug 1 English stoneware with brown interior and white exterior 1 Staffordshire slip ware 4 Post medieval red earthenware 1 Hambleton 4 Ryedale jar
1015	2	18th century	1 Slip ware mug base with yellow glaze 1 Green glazed ware jar rim
1021	17	Early 18th century	1 Brown shiny glazed stoneware bowl 1 Brandsby jug with rectangular roller stamp 4 Staffordshire slipware 3 Sandy red ware 8 Ryedale ja
1022	2	12th century	1 splashed ware rim sherd 1 small splashed ware strap handle both later 12th century
1030	2	13 / 14th century	1 York ware cooking pot sherd - 9th/10th century 1 Brandsby-type ware - 13th century
1031	1	14th century	14th century unglazed cooking pot rim with thumbed strip under rim - unusual pinkish sandy fabric

Table 2	Pottery summary by context
---------	----------------------------

6.2.2 Discussion

The earliest dated ware is potentially Anglo-Scandinavian. This may attest to a low level of activity in this period. This is also true of the Splash glazed [1022] and Gritty ware [1014], though they shows evidence of abrasion and may have been re-deposited.

There are very few pre-late 13th century wares and it is interesting to note the absence of York Glazed ware (YGW) which would normally be present in late 12th and early to mid-13th century contexts in York. The majority of the medieval green glazed jugs and bowls are of the locally made Brandsby-type which takes over from the YGW wares in the late 13th century and is also common in the 14th century here.

The post-medieval period sees more emphasis on regional pottery types than the previous period. These include Staffordshire white salt glazed wares and tin-glazed wares from London, Bristol or Liverpool. However, the local green glazed tradition is represented by Hambleton wares and Ryedale-type jars which were made up until the early 18th century.

These regional wares may attest either to a little more wealth and status or simply wider contacts in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, there is only one sherd of Frechen-type stone ware which may have emanated from Germany though this type was copied in England.

6.2.3 Conclusion

The pottery above groups into three ceramic phases; Anglo-Scandinavian/early medieval, late 13th to 14th century and late 17th to 19th century. The earliest pottery is represented by a few abraded sherds, perhaps suggesting garden activity or some other cause for redeposition. The medieval material is more substantial and may represent the occupation of a pre-Victorian domestic building of late 13th and 14th century date. The most post medieval material also attests to domestic activity, perhaps related to the more recent buildings on the site.

The material is of a fairly mundane nature and consequently no further research is recommended.

6.3 Small Finds

Context	Date	Forms
1012	18th - 19th century	Clay pipe
1012	18th - 19th century	Glass bottle, base
1013	18th - 19th century	Clay pipe
1022	18th - 19th century	Clay pipe

Table 3Small Finds summary by context

All of the small finds were of 18th or 19th century date. They have little potential for further research, and have not been retained.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

Evidence for past human activity on the site was found, despite the difficulties involved in identifying such evidence during piecemeal machine excavations.

The archaeological deposits were shallow and lay quite close to the surface, and so were not waterlogged. Consequently, anaerobic conditions were lacking, and the preservation of organic material is likely to be limited.

7.2 Period-by-period discussion

7.2.1 Prehistoric to Roman (to 5th century AD)

No features or deposits assignable to these periods were observed, and finds were restricted to one fragment of Roman brick. Evidence for activity of this date may have been removed as a result of later intensive activity, although it is unlikely there were ever any Roman burials on the site.

7.2.2 Anglo-Saxon to Anglo-Scandinavian (5th-11th centuries)

Evidence for activity from these periods was limited to a single fragment of 9th/10th century pottery. Later activity could have removed evidence for occupation of this date.

7.2.3 Medieval (11th-16th centuries)

A surprisingly large quantity of pottery and brick/tile of medieval date was recovered during the watching brief. The large, unabraded sherds indicate that they had been deposited here originally, presumably as part of rubbish dumping from nearby dwellings. The presence of dumps, a pit and perhaps a beam slot also point to occupation close by, if not on the site. It is quite likely that this was the site of a house in a toft fronting onto the village green during the medieval period.

The pottery assemblage is dominated by 13th/14th century wares, but there is comparatively little 15th/16th century pottery. It is tempting to see this as reflecting the fortunes of the site, perhaps even of the village as a whole; occupation beginning around the Norman Conquest, with a high point during the 13th/14th centuries, followed by a decline due to successive plagues (beginning with the Black Death) and other socio-economic misfortunes. However, it is possible that later activity has removed later medieval deposits (and pottery), so this model cannot be relied upon at this stage.

7.2.4 Post-medieval to modern (16th-20th centuries)

The main feature from this period identified during the watching brief was the 18th century possible wall foundation found beneath the south-east wall of the standing building. The 1852 Ordnance Survey map shows a building on the site before the construction of the current house, and it is possible that the possible wall foundation, apparently with a north-west return at the north-east end, is the foundation of the preceding house. A comparison of the 1852 map with the modern map (Fig. 6) does not provide an exact match, but the 1852 map is often a metre or so out; alternatively the feature marks the position of the north-east boundary of the garden shown lying between the house and the green on the 1852 map.

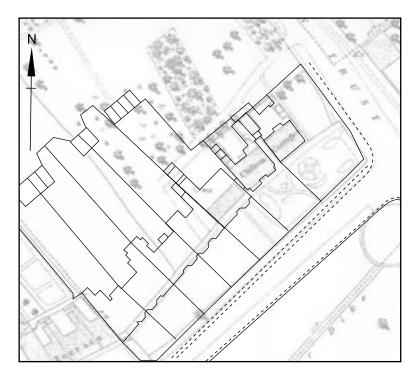


Figure 6 Extract from 1852 map showing the relationship of the earlier buildings with the existing structures

The construction of the current house with basement in the later 19th century involved the truncation of earlier deposits down to undisturbed natural in the north-west part of the house. However the prevailing ground slope down to the south resulted in the survival of medieval and post-medieval deposits, under make-up layers, beneath the south-east side of the house.

7.2.5 Conclusion

The watching brief and limited excavation provided evidence of occupation in Clifton village, adjacent to the green, extending back to the 13th/14th centuries if not earlier. Further building work in the vicinity similar to this project might benefit from controlled archaeological excavation in order to obtain a more detailed stratigraphic sequence and perhaps structural evidence.

8. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

8.1 Secondary works

Mills, A.D., 1998. Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names (Oxford, 2nd edition)

RCHMY. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England, an inventory of the Historical Monuments of the City of York. **1**: Eburacum, Roman York (1962)

Domesday Book: Yorkshire (Phillimore)

8.2 Maps

1836 estate map of Clifton and Rawcliffe (York City Archives)

1852 Ordnance Survey 60", sheet 174/4

1892 Ordnance Survey 1:500 scale, sheet 174/6.2

1959 Ordnance Survey Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 63

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Watching Brief	David Evans, Kurt Hunter-Man, Ben Reeves
Illustrations and Report production	Russell Marwood
Editor	David Evans



- ...undertakes a wide range of urban and rural archaeological consultancies, surveys, evaluations, assessments and excavations for academic, commercial and charitable clients.
- ...can manage projects, provide professional advice and monitor archaeological works to ensure high-quality, cost-effective archaeology.
- ...staff has a considerable depth and variety of professional experience, and an international reputation for research, publication and maximising the public, educational and commercial benefits of archaeology.

Based in York, its services are available throughout Britain and beyond.



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Cromwell House 13 Ogleforth York YO1 7FG

Telephone:(01904) 663000Fax:(01904) 663024email:enquiries@yorkarchaeology.co.ukweb:www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk

York Archaeological Trust is a Registered Charity (No. 509060) and a Company limited by guarantee without share capital (No. 1430801)