



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE ADDRESS	Road works, Fishergate Bar, York		
CLIENT NAME	City of York Council		
YAT PROJECT #	5693	YAT REPORT #	2013/37
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	n/a	GRID REFERENCE	SE 6078 5127
PLANNING REFERENCE #	n/a	AAI OPS NOTICE #	n/a

INTRODUCTION

Between 24th April and 12th June 2013, York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief on works at Fishergate Bar, York. These works involved the removal of surfaces and deposits north and south of, and below, Fishergate Bar in order to install new paving harmonising with the bar and adjacent walls. A watching brief was required since the area immediately below the bar is part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (local ref YO30, national ref HA 1004910) and the remaining area of works was within the Central York Area of Archaeological Importance. The works were undertaken under the conditions of Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent (EH ref S00052642) set by English Heritage. Recording was by a mixture of written notes, measured scaled drawings and colour digital photography. The results are described below and are split into three sections, south of the bar, below the bar and north of the bar.

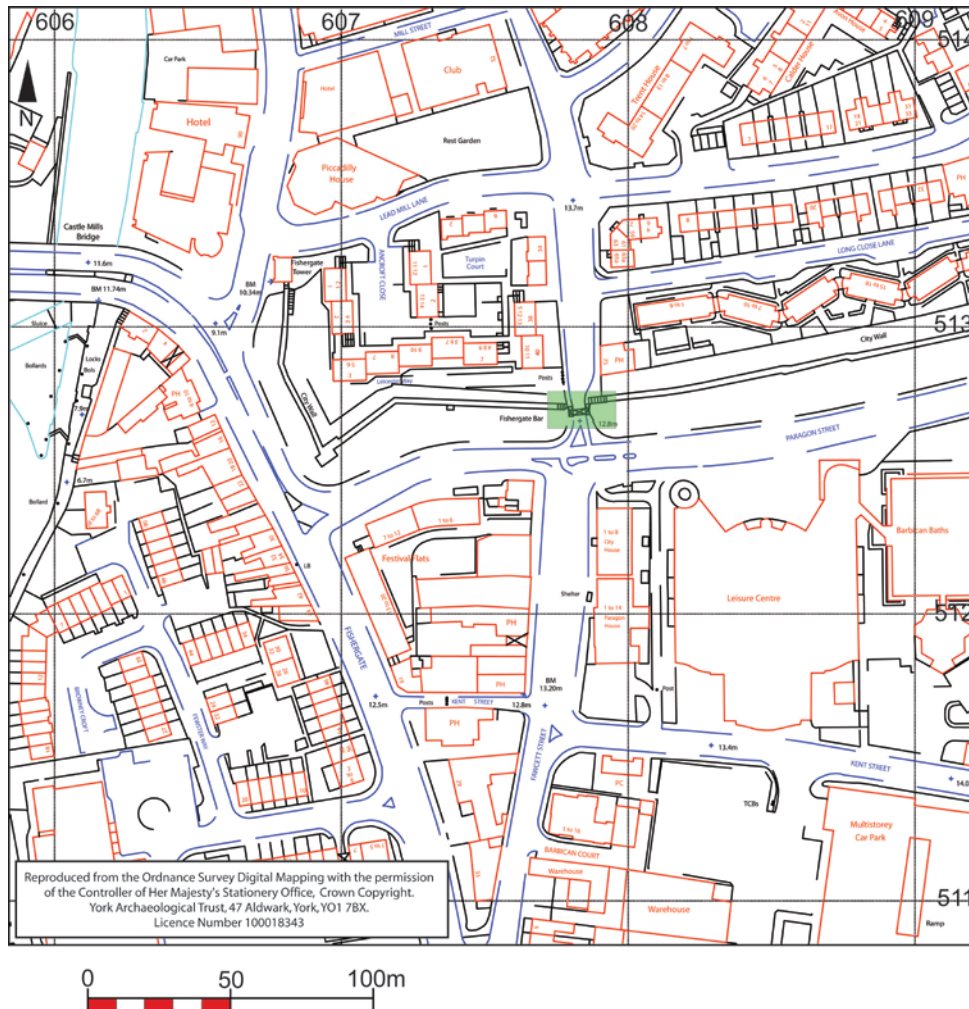


Figure 1 Site location (highlighted)

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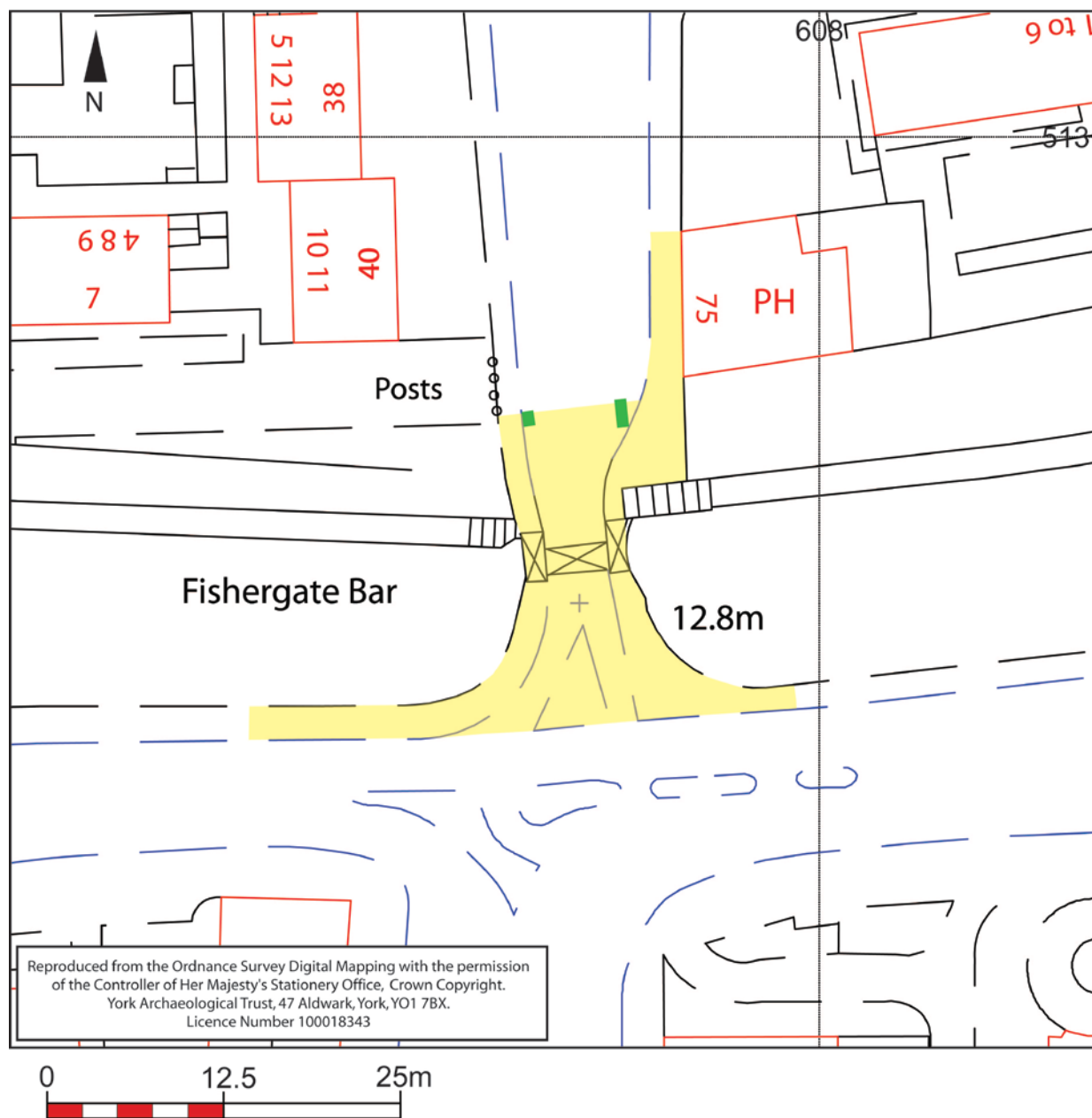


Figure 2 Approximate extent of proposed works (highlighted) with drain excavations in green

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RESULTS

SOUTH OF THE BAR

This area was lowered by an average of 0.25m overall. Nothing of any archaeological significance was noted across the area only modern levelling and surfaces being present.

BELOW THE BAR

Although an archaeologist was on standby for this phase of the work when they were called to the site it was discovered that the area below the central arch had been stripped and the concrete base for the new paving had been poured. However, a number of record photographs taken during the stripping, although having no scale, strongly suggest that as with south of the bar only modern deposits were encountered. Some detail of the newly exposed stonework is visible but due to the oblique nature of the views and lack of scale it is unlikely that any accurate drawings can be prepared from them. Copies of these photographs are currently held by City of York Council and York Archaeological Trust.

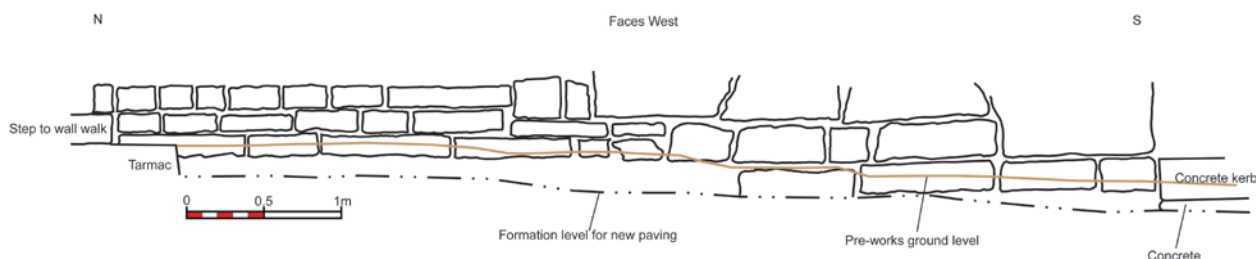


Figure 3 Lower stonework of west facing elevation, east footway

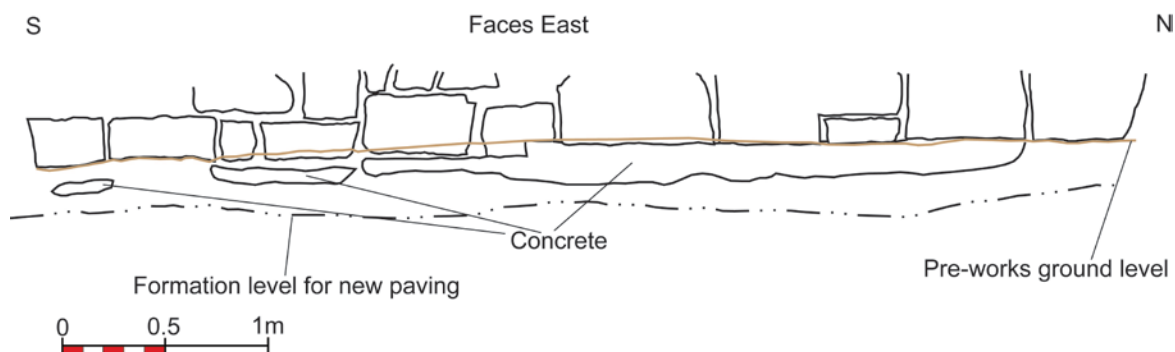


Figure 4 Lower stonework of east facing elevation, east footway

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The stripping within both the west and east footways was, however, observed and recorded. Again the material removed was in all cases clearly modern. The stripping, up to c.0.25m of material was removed, did reveal some previously below ground stonework. This stonework along both sides of both footways was drawn to scale and a full set of photographs with a scale was taken. Additionally some of the above ground stonework was recorded since there appeared to be no drawings lodged with City of York Council showing the side elevations of the footways. Along both footways concrete underpinning was observed below the lowest courses of stonework, possibly indicative of 20th century restoration work.

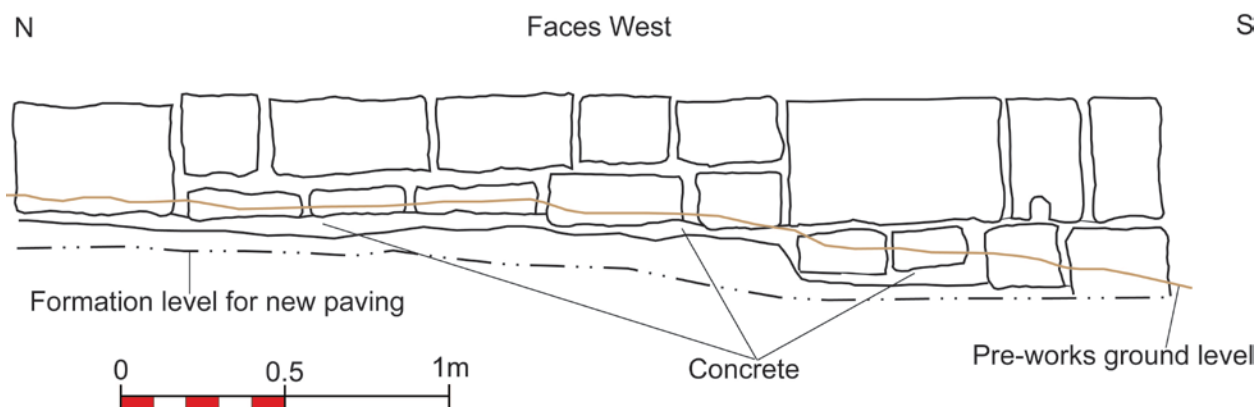


Figure 5 Lower stonework of west facing elevation, west footway

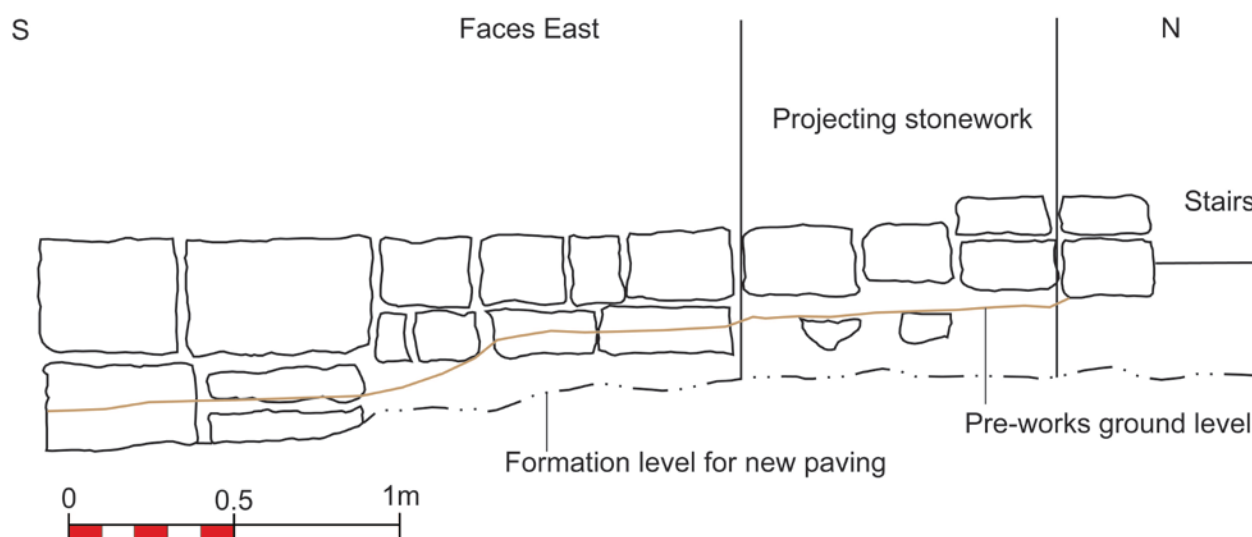


Figure 6 Lower stonework of east facing elevation, west footway

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NORTH OF THE BAR

This area was stripped to a depth of c.0.25 – 0.35m except in two discreet areas where removal of existing drains required excavation to a depth of 1m. For the most part the deposits seen appeared to be all modern although a semi-disturbed patch of cobbles in the central western area may have been an earlier road surface of possibly 19th century date. The removal of the western drain only produced modern brickwork and concrete but a sequence of possible archaeological deposits, believed to be of pre-modern date was recorded from the hole excavated to remove the eastern drain. This sequence was as follows; between 0.45m and 1m below modern ground level there was a mottled, light grey and brown clayey silt containing small patches of dark grey silt (1000). Overlying this was a 0.1m deep layer of mid grey slightly clayey silt (1001) and sealing this was a 0.15m deep deposit of mod orange-brown sandy gravel (1002). Between 0.1 and 0.2m below modern ground level there was an horizontal band of cobbles (1003). Above this was a 0.05m deep layer of tarmac pieces and dark brown silt (1004) forming the bedding for the modern road surface of tarmac (1005).

The stripping of the footpath north of the bar was fully observed and a detailed description is given below.

This involved monitoring of the replacement of the pavement on the east side of George Street, from the city walls to outside the north end of the Phoenix PH. As well as the paving slabs, up to 0.2m of the bedding for the slabs was removed – mixed mid-dark brown friable sandy silt and firm silty clay, with occasional large tarmac lumps, small-large stone fragments and small brick fragments.

Alongside the city wall, the stone wall forming the north side of the steps up to the wall walk was found not to have any foundations. The lowest course of stonework (partially above ground level) rested on a layer of compact mortared stone rubble 70mm thick. This overlaid loose mortar and stone rubble (unexcavated). This layer tapered out within about 0.5m to the north and overlaid dark brown clay silt, which is regarded as a soil. It seems that the wall forming part of the steps up to the wall walk had been constructed fairly recently, perhaps in the 19th century, and had been set directly on the soil forming the ground surface at the time.

The brick wall forming the east limit of the watching brief between the city wall and the public house was of English Garden Wall bond. The ground works exposed the bottom two courses, a header course overlying a footing offset from the wall by 50mm. The brick wall butted against the city wall steps and rested on firm mid brown clay that had been laid against the stone wall, indicating that the brick wall was later than the city wall steps. The wall also butted against the south side of the public house. However, adjacent to the pub, the brick wall footings are at a higher level than those to the south and the lower courses of brickwork tend not to coincide with the courses further south; this suggests another phase of build to the lower part of the wall at least, in which case it is possible that the wall further south is earlier than the public house and the different build to the north represents the alteration of the wall to accommodate the pub. The lowest seven courses of the brick wall appeared to comprise L18/E19 century bricks, finely made and with narrow jointing; whereas the upper part was built of L19 century bricks and was less finely jointed. It is not clear whether the brick wall was originally built in the L18/E19 century and been heightened in the L19 century, or had been built in the L19 century and incorporated some re-used bricks.

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Alongside the pub, the only feature of note was a 1.3m-wide opening in the base of the front (west) wall of the pub, 1.45m from the south end of the building. Although partially covered by a horizontal timber at the base of the wall and a stone slab immediately to the west, a mortar surface sloping down about 45 degrees to the east indicated the position of a barrel chute, starting about 0.5m west of the pub, that had subsequently been blocked. The northern half of this structure had not been blocked by the timber and slab but by a poorly constructed brick wall, suggesting that one half of the chute (probably the north) had remained in use after the other half had been blocked.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

With the possible exception of the eastern drain excavation north of the bar no archaeological deposits of any significance were recorded. Some evidence for an earlier road surface was noted in the area north of the bar. The initial lowering of the road surfaces and footways did enable a certain amount of recording of the lower stonework of parts of the bar and interestingly this appeared to be quite often modern-looking concrete strongly suggesting that parts, at least, of the bar have been subject to previous restoration during the 20th century. It should also be noted that no detailed drawings of the inside (north facing elevation) of the bar or the inside elevations of the bar and the flanking footways appear to exist, although drawings for the exterior (south facing) were available. It is considered that no damage was done to any archaeological deposits or the structure of the bar during these works.



Plate 1 General view of area south of the bar, looking south

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Plate 2 Possible cobbled road surface north of the bar, looking west



Plate 3 General view of part of stripped area north of the bar, looking north

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Plate 4 View of eastern drain excavation, looking west



Plate 5 General view of works north of the bar, looking south-east

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Plate 6 South end of eastern footway after stripping, looking north



Plate 7 Lower stonework at north end of eastern footway, looking east

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Plate 8 Foundations in central part of eastern footway, looking east



Plate 9 Concrete underpinning below east facing stonework in eastern footway, looking west

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Plate 10 Footings below northern end of east facing stonework in west footway, looking west



Plate 11 Footings and stonework in centre of west facing elevation of west footway, looking east

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Plate 12 General view of west footway after stripping, looking south

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