



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



**OSGOODBY HALL, OSGOODBY,
THIRSK, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

WATCHING BRIEF & BUILDING RECORDING REPORT

by Mark Johnson

REPORT NUMBER 2012/55



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was held on areas of minor extensions to the north and south sides of Osgoodby Hall. These did not encounter deposits of great archaeological significance. What may be a later medieval ground surface was exposed in the north area though all other deposits, to both sides, were of later post-medieval date.

Building recording to the south of the hall has served to provide a record of this part of the building prior to alteration.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 10th May and 16th July an archaeological watching brief was maintained by York Archaeological Trust (YAT) during ground-works associated with small-scale extension works at Osgoodby Hall, Osgoodby, Thirsk, North Yorkshire (NGR: SE 4924 8090), (Figure 1, Site location map). Osgoodby Hall is a Grade II* Listed Building. It is believed to contain 16th century fabric, was remodelled in the mid-late 17th century, has 18th century alterations and additions and underwent further alterations c.1800. The new building works are comprised of a small single storey extension to the south side of the hall to form a library and a small extension to an existing store on the north side. The archaeological monitoring was carried out in line with a planning condition (application No. 11/00731/FUL) issued by Hambleton District Council and followed the strictures of a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by YAT. A Design and Heritage Statement for the works had already been prepared by Mr R. O'Brien, architect, who commissioned YAT on behalf of Mr A Lumley.

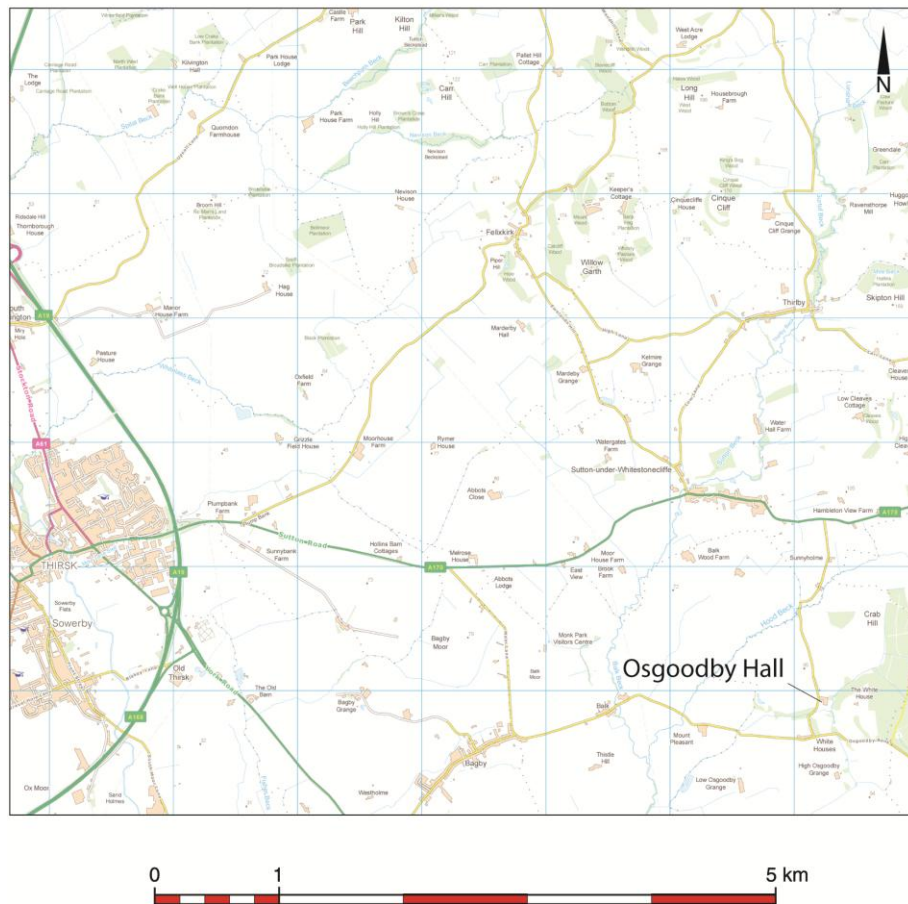


Figure 1 Site location

2. METHODOLOGY

The watching brief element of the archaeological monitoring was comprised of the supervision of the mini-digger mechanical excavation of the foundations for the new extensions. The mini-digger was equipped with a toothless bucket and removed all overburden and deposits in spits, in a slow and controlled manner. All archaeological recording was carried out in accordance with York Archaeological Trust fieldwork standards (YAT 2005). This included the entry of notes and descriptions within a site notebook, the drawing of plans and representative sections and the taking of a number of record photographs. The building recording element was comprised of the stone by stone hand drawing of that part of the southern elevation, including a basement window, that will be obscured by the construction of the new library. See Figure 2, Works location plan.

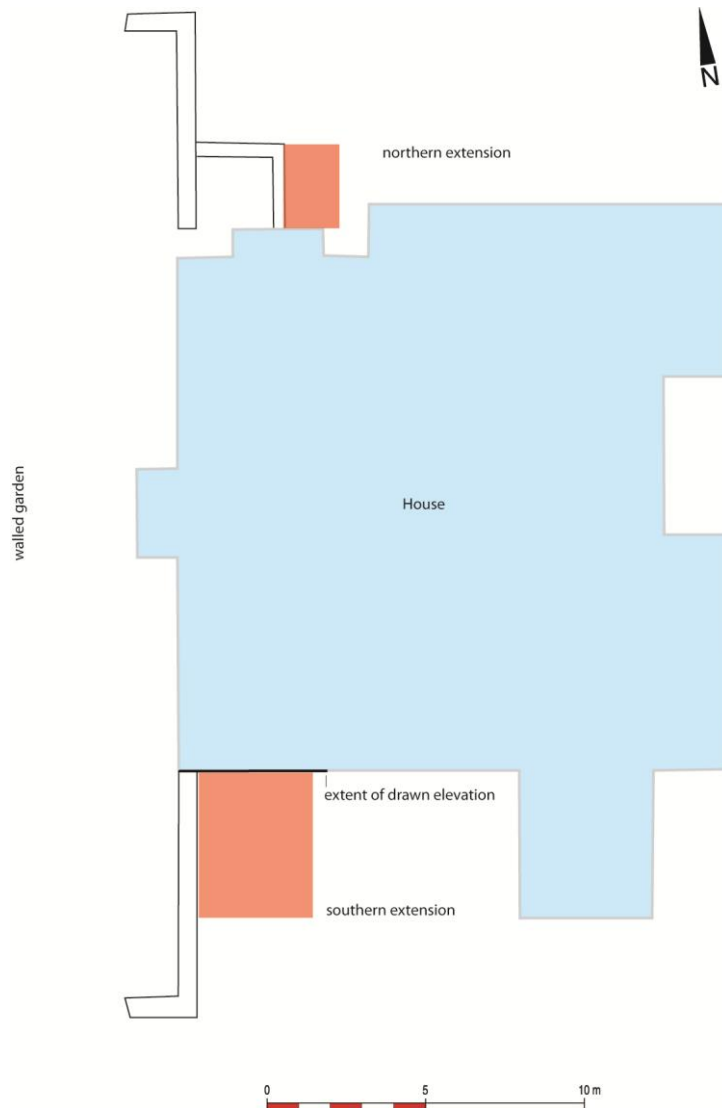


Figure 2 Works location

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site forms part of the dispersed rural hamlet of Osgoodby in the parish of Thirleby High and Low with Osgoodby and is located some 6km to the east of the market town of Thirsk. The geology of the area is complex though the superficial geology at the site is one of post-glacial Devensian Till over a bedrock geology of Whitby Mudstone (BGS). Sitting at the extreme eastern side of the Vale of York the site is located on undulating ground below the more upland Hambleton Hills which rise steeply to the east. The complexity of the geology in this wider locale is owed primarily to the Hambleton Hills. The hall is situated on ground that lies at around c.90m above Ordnance Datum whilst a small steep sided valley lies

immediately to its south. The hall is located adjacent and towards the southern end of an unclassified road that extends between Moor Lane and the A170 to the north.

4. BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Osgoodby Hall and its formal front gardens are both Grade II* Listed Buildings whilst two further Grade II Listed Buildings lie in close proximity (Listed Building). The listing details for the hall itself state that the house has origins dating back to the 16th century and that this was extensively remodelled in the mid-late 17th century. Further alterations and additions were made in the 18th century, the early 19th century as well as during the course of the 20th century. The Walled garden to the front of the house is believed to have origins in the mid-late 17th century. A two storey outbuilding, dating to around 1700, is located 12m to the north-east of the hall whilst to the north of this lies a further two storey outbuilding of similar date, with 19th century additions. A late 18th century barn, with later alterations forming the eastern side of the farmyard at the hall was de-listed in 2000.

5. RESULTS

5.1 FOUNDATION TRENCH FOR LIBRARY

The library extension is to have foundations comprised of a series of three mini-piles to the east and west sides connected at their tops by a ground beam to the west, south and east sides. The floor to the interior space is to be built over a stoned-up area within the beam. In terms of ground disturbance, this required the excavation of an area measuring around 4.6m by 3.6m by a depth of around 0.38m below existing ground level, with the area of the ground beam extending some 150mm below this depth. During the site visit, the entire area was reduced by around 0.40m BGL by mini-digger with the intention of the piles being sunk from this horizon and the ground beam trench being cut at a later date. In light of this, selected sections in the area of the ground beam were hand dug by the attending archaeologist to examine these slightly deeper parts.

The lowest deposits encountered, context 103, extending from around 0.65m BGL to 0.08m BGL, were a series of light coloured mixed soils and buff coloured clays containing occasional large cobbles, all thoroughly intermingled. Finds material recovered from this mixed deposit were comprised of four sherds of 19th – earlier 20th century pottery, several fragments of bottle glass and a fragment of window glass. Deposit 103 clearly represents disturbed, made ground. It was noted that the ground within the garden area immediately adjacent to the south, which forms one side of a small steep-sided valley, has been partially

terraced and it is possible that the disturbed ground of 103 relates to such landscaping activity. Above 103 lay a thin layer of sand, typically around 30mm deep, context 102, that forms a bedding for the existing surface across the area which is comprised of stone flags, context 101.



Plate 1 View of house and works for library extension. Note terracing in foreground. Looking NW.

The only other deposits encountered were a series of concrete settings of later 19th – 20th century date. The largest of these was a slab around 1.5m square and 0.13m thick located in the north-west corner area, in the angle between the house and wall of the walled garden, context 104. A ceramic drain set within this suggests that this slab may have served as the foundation for a small outbuilding, perhaps a wash-house or privy. No scarring on the adjacent walling of the house or garden wall, to which it is assumed any such building must have abutted, is evident. It is possible that 104 may not have had walling or roofing of its own but have been covered by a structure represented by contexts 105, 106. The concrete settings, contexts 105, 106, each related to sub-square slabs between 0.10-0.17m thick, located at the west and east sides of the trench and around 4m to the south of the walling of the house. Both of these settings contained a sub-square post setting around 0.16m across, each of which still contained remnants of decayed timber. It is assumed that posts within

these settings created a lean-to arrangement against the south wall of the house, indeed an iron fitting, and a void for a further example to the wall (at a height of around 2.7m above paving slab level), may well have been integral to this arrangement. The use of concrete to contexts 104, and 105, 106, suggests the likelihood that these elements were contemporary and 105, 106, may even have supported the cover for 104.



Plate 2 View of works for library extension. Note concrete setting to NW corner and two concrete settings for posts (on line with mini-digger bucket). Looking SW.

5.2 DRAWN WALL ELEVATION

The stretch of house walling to be obscured by the library extension was hand drawn, to stone by stone detail, at a scale of 1:20 (Figure 3). This was carried out after ground reduction to building formation level in this area. The walling is exclusively of regularly coursed faced blocks of yellow sandstone, with the heights of the individual courses being variable. A few blocks of much paler stone may be limestone. Coarse tooling is evident to some of the blocks. The walling has been re-pointed with what appears to be a pale grey cement-based mortar. The adjacent wall of the walled garden appears to abut the house wall. The lower 0.60m of the house wall (above the existing level of the flagged surround) projects around 0.08m beyond the walling above this height, and has an upper, chamfered, weathering course. At a height of almost exactly 3.5m (above the existing level of the flagged

surround) there is a plat band, which projects by around 50mm, and is formed of a single course of stone around 0.22m tall. The stonework to the elevation, although regularly coursed and of blocks that are overwhelmingly squared, is composed of blocks whose length varies considerably. A basement window providing light to a cellar is present and another lies a short distance to the east. This window measures some 0.65m tall by 0.60m wide and only around 0.10m of the top part of this lay above the level of the flagstone ground surface. The plain wooden frame of this window is set back towards the inner face of the wall, whilst it has a lintel formed of a narrow stone block some 0.94m wide. A short length of square section iron bar around 25mm across and projecting from the wall by around 50mm is present at a height of around 2.7m above the paving level, towards the eastern side of the drawn elevation. A void of similar size is present at the same height around 2.9m to the west. It has been suggested in 5.1 above that these may relate to a former lean-to arrangement.

The cutting through of the new doorway between the house and the new library was observed, see Plate 3. The walling was seen to be up to 0.67m in width, two courses wide with the coursed and dressed stone exterior not being matched by the stonework to the inner face of the wall. Instead this was generally of smaller stone that was often irregularly shaped and of somewhat rough appearance, seemingly so as to provide keying for the internal wall plaster. The stonework, particularly in the interior parts of the wall, was bonded with copious amounts of a creamy white coloured lime mortar.

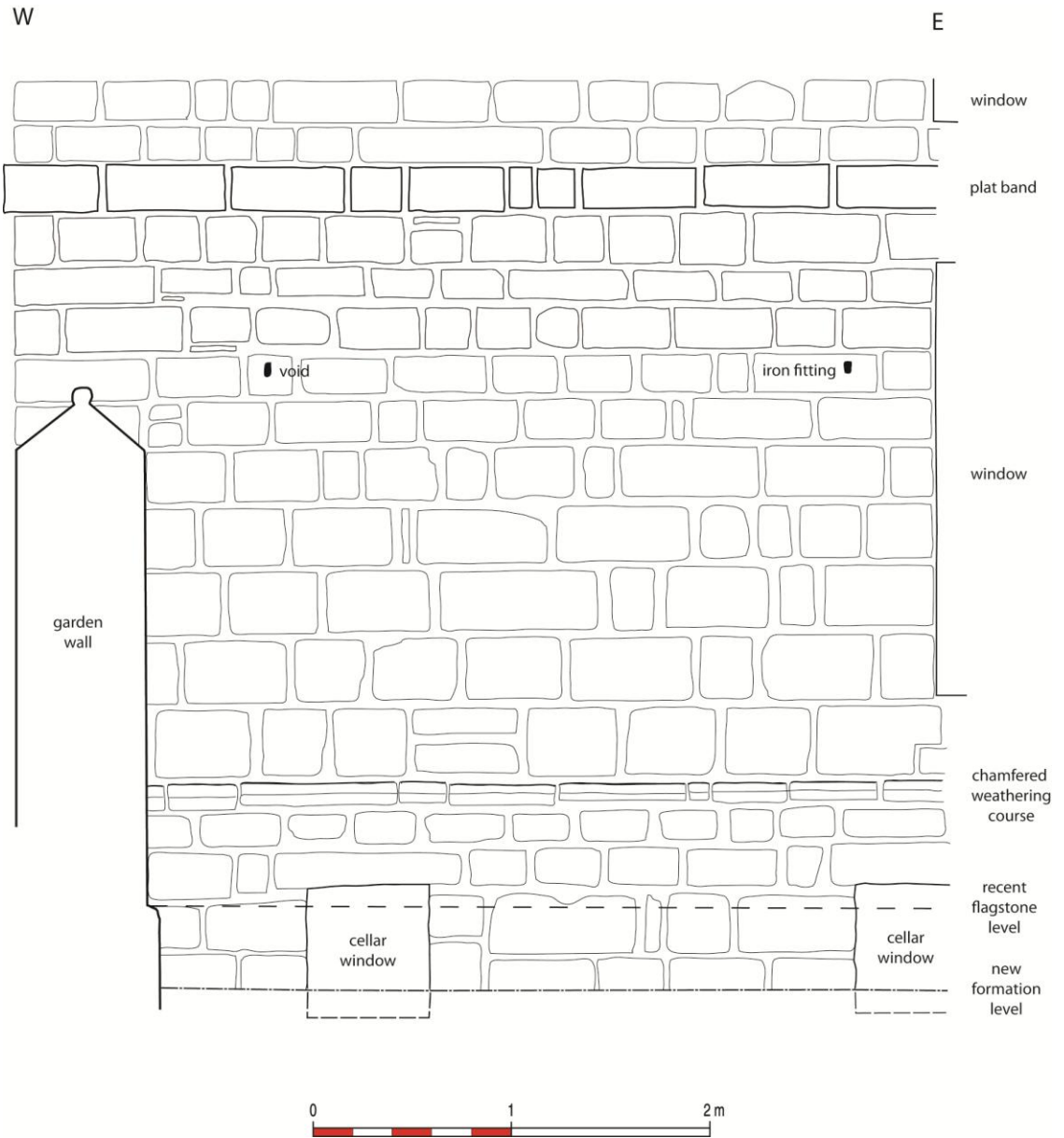


Figure 3 Elevation of wall to be obscured by library extension. See Figure 2 for location.



Plate 3 View of area of drawn walling, note the two basement windows.



Plate 4 View of west basement window (to be blocked-up).



Plate 5 View of internal part of wall in area of new doorway to the library. Looking N.

5.3 FOUNDATION TRENCH FOR EXTENSION TO STORE

The extension to the store is to have foundations comprised of a series of three shallow foundation trenches to the north, south and east sides. The floor to the interior space is to be built over a stoned-up area. In terms of ground disturbance, this required the excavation of an area measuring around 2.6m by 1.9m by a depth, in relation to existing ground levels, of between 0.26m – 0.34m. During the site visit, the entire area was reduced to these formation levels by mini-digger.

The lowest deposit encountered in the stripped area was context 201, a stiff, orange brown, silty clay that extended across the entirety of the reduced area and seems likely to represent natural deposits of the glacial till. The northern part of this material was of patchier and occasionally darker appearance, this being the result of the action of recent tree roots and

related garden activity, including a ceramic land drain. In the north-west corner of the reduced area a small patch of mid greyish brown sandy silt clay containing occasional flecks of charcoal, context 202, was encountered. This contained a single sherd of pottery and seems likely to represent a former ground surface. The pottery was a rim sherd of a reduced sandy fabric with a greenish brown glaze. It appears to be part of a jug in the Humber Ware tradition, probably of 15th century date – though pottery of this tradition was in production between the late 14th – 16th centuries. At the southern end of the trench the lower courses of walling, 203, of what is believed to be the 16th century part of the Hall, cut through the natural deposits. Levelling deposits of re-deposited natural and a mid brown clayey sand, contexts 204, 205, overlay 201 and 202, and were in turn sealed by garden soils, context 205, and areas of gravel, context 206. The foundations of the existing store, which are of brick of a probable later 19th century origin, cut into the garden soil 205. This brickwork appears to provide a fairly secure general date for this late addition. The walling of the store itself was seen to formed of coursed stonework, two stones deep, bonded with a creamy white lime mortar.



Plate 6 View of reduced area of ?natural ground in the area of extension to the store, Looking S. Note the dirtier appearance of that part in the foreground which is owed to the presence of tree roots, land drain and other disturbance.



Plate 7 NW corner of the excavated area, looking W. The scale is stood on deposit 202 and deposit 205 lies immediately to the left. Garden soil 205 is visible immediately below the brick foundations of the existing store.



Plate 8 Cross section of store walling after removal of the east wall. Looking W.

5.4 DISCUSSION

The watching brief held on areas of ground disturbance to the north and south sides of the hall did not encounter deposits of great archaeological significance. In the southern area the earliest deposits exposed appear likely to relate to an episode of later post-medieval landscaping whilst the flimsy lean-to structures post-dating this are likely to have been of 20th century origin. In the northern area part of what may be a later medieval ground surface was exposed whilst deposits above this related primarily to a slight raising of the ground level and to later garden soils.

The building recording to the south of the hall has served to provide a record of this part of the building prior to alteration.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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