



**YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST**



**FORMER GRAIN STORE, WATER LANE,  
YORK**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

*by Mark Johnson*

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# YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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## **ABSTRACT**

*In October 2007 York Archaeological Trust carried out an evaluation of 15 trenches widely distributed across the site of the former Grain Store, Water Lane, York. None of the excavated trenches revealed evidence of significant pre World War II archaeological remains. All pre war features related to post-medieval agricultural activity. Heavy truncation of soils at the site took place at the time of construction of the wartime airfield.*

*Remains relating to the former wartime airfield were plentiful in parts of the site, particularly in Trenches 1, 5, 9, 12 and 15, and consisted for the most part of concrete surfaces and brick walls. Some of these may originate in the post-war period.*

*There are a number of works at the site that relate to alterations for conversion of the site to a grain store. Most obviously this consisted of re-cladding and fitting out of the hangars and the building of a few new structures. Less obviously, these works involved the laying of extensive areas of new tarmac surfacing. This surfacing involved the removal of all surfaces and natural clays down to a depth below the extant ground level of some 0.7m. It is probable that parts of the earth banks that surround the eastern side of the site were constructed of the removed material at this time and not during the war. Whilst the work to date suggests that only a low density of archaeological remains are likely to be present in the area, any such density will be reduced for those areas subject to later deeper stripping, with only the largest of features likely to partially survive.*

*The World War II buildings at the site are of some interest and merit recording.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007 York Archaeological Trust carried out an archaeological evaluation at the site of the former grain store, York, NGR: SE 5936 5442, Figure 1, Site location map. This work followed on from an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site prepared by York Archaeological Trust in April 2007(YAT 2007/19). The archaeological work was commissioned by Wilton Developments and followed a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by the City of York Council Principal Archaeologist John Oxley.



0 100m

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**Figure 1** Site location map

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

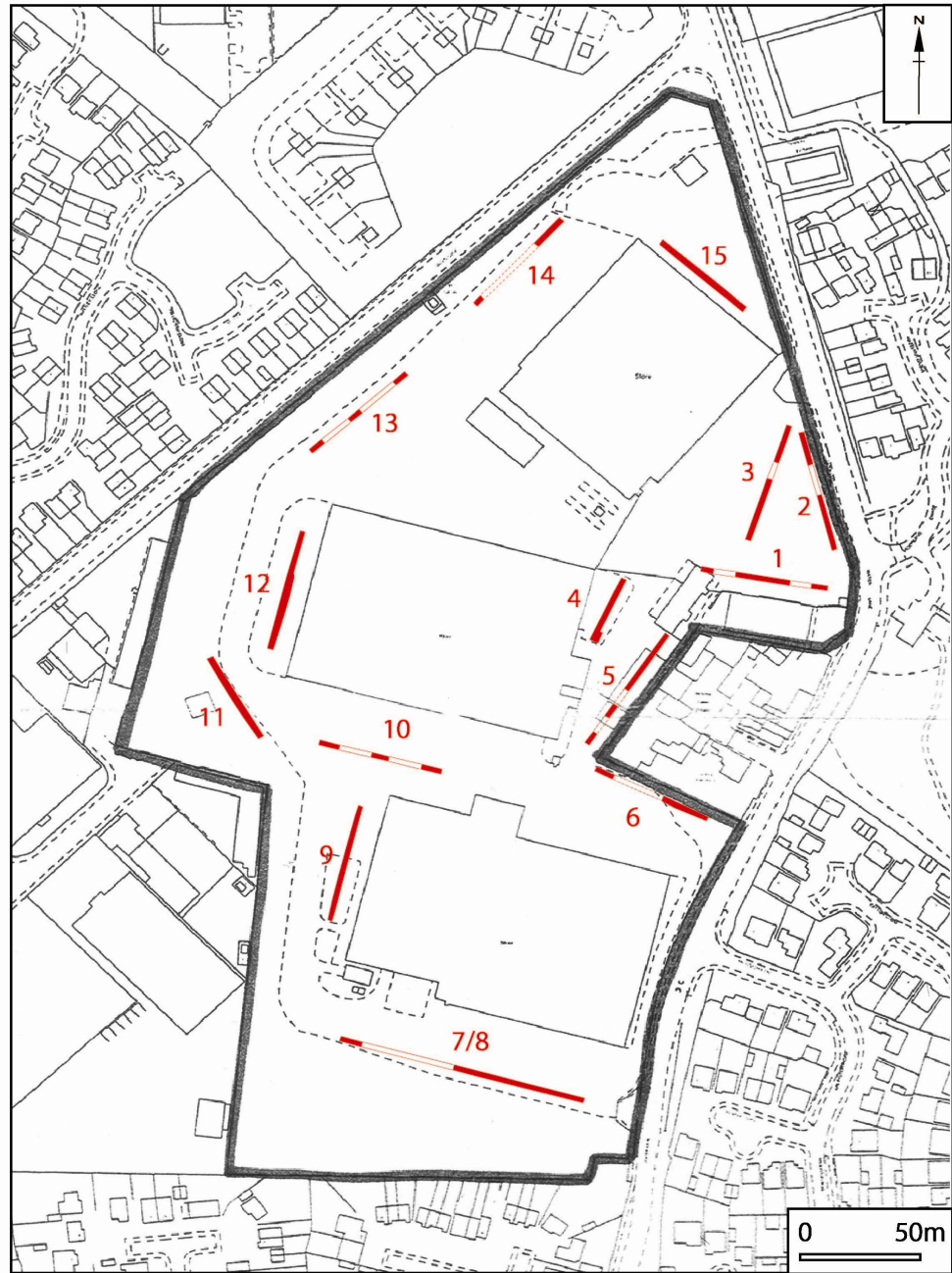
The evaluation consisted of fifteen trenches, numbered 1 – 15, that were distributed across the site with the aim of providing reasonably representative archaeological information about the site as a whole (see Figure 2, Trench location plan). The location of the trenches, each nominally of 100 square metres, had been provisionally agreed in advance of fieldwork with both Wilton Developments and the City of York Council. However, the presence of various live services, areas of deep truncation of deposits and areas of non-draining, potentially contaminated, standing water, necessitated some variation from the proposed distribution. Each trench were mechanically stripped of overburden under direct archaeological supervision and thereafter hand excavated. Hard surfaces of tarmac and concrete covered most of the trenches and required mechanical breaking prior to their mechanical removal. The treatment of drawn and written records, environmental sampling, photography and finds recovery were in line with standard York Archaeological Trust procedures.

## **3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY**

The site occupies a corner of land between Green Lane and Water Lane some 2.5km north of the centre of York. To the north of the site the bulk of the land is occupied by the Clifton Moor industrial estate and retail park. The majority of the land to the east, south and west of the site supports residential housing, predominantly of the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the south-west of the site, part of the adjacent land is occupied by industrial buildings.

The drift geology of the area consists of boulder clay with warp and lacustrine clay overlying a solid geology of Bunter and Keuper sandstones (Geological Survey, 1967).

The ground is generally level across the site, at c. 13.60m - 14m AOD. Land adjacent to the site is again fairly level and of broadly similar heights.



**Figure 2** Trench location plan (solid red = fully excavated)



#### **4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The archaeological and historical background to this site has already been investigated and reported on at some length (YAT report 2007/19). For an in-depth consideration the reader is referred to this report. The principal findings of this study are summarised below on a period by period basis.

##### **4.1 PREHISTORIC**

No evidence was found for prehistoric activity in the area.

##### **4.2 ROMAN**

Parts of two practice or marching camps survive as very low earthworks some 500m north-east of the site RCHME 1962, 47). It is possible that further, non upstanding, examples survive in the locality. A series of postholes and ditches, excavated some 300m-400m south of the former grain store and interpreted as Roman land divisions were excavated in 1997 (YAT 1997).

##### **4.3 ANGLIAN - ANGLO-SCANDINAVIAN**

There are no known remains of these periods within the area.

##### **4.4 MEDIEVAL – POST-MEDIEVAL**

Some earthwork traces of medieval ridge and furrow plough field systems still survive in the locality. Evidence for post-medieval activity consists mainly of field boundaries and land drains (YAT 1997). The Victoria Farm complex on the eastern side of the site has later 19<sup>th</sup> century origins though has undergone much alteration over the years.

##### **4.5 MODERN**

A civil airfield was established immediately north of the site in 1936. This was commandeered by the RAF in 1939 who built a multi-runway airbase of heavy bomber type that occupied a considerably larger area. At various times throughout World War II the RAF station played host to a variety of aircraft and squadrons. Its most prolonged role was as a maintenance unit for the service and repair of Halifax heavy bombers. Ironically, at the end of the war the base was used as the main decommissioning centre for the dismantling and scrapping of Halifax's after which the base was itself closed. From the 1950's onwards parts of the former RAF station have been dismantled and given over to other uses. That part of the site occupied by the former grain store remained in state ownership after the war and served successively as a vehicle and equipment store for the government and civil service, and from the 1980's as a grain store. The large buildings that occupy much of the site were

built during World War II as aircraft hangars and subsequently used as storage facilities. These structures were re-clad, re-roofed and given some new internal steel fixings when converted to grain store usage in the 1980's. The old hangars remain on site but are given over to other industrial (mostly storage) usage.

## **5. RESULTS**

### **5.1 TRENCH 1**

Trench 1 was located in the eastern part of the development plot between Victoria Farm and the present entrance to the site. Modern services necessitated the leaving of two un-excavated parts within this trench. This resulted in the trench being excavated within three separate blocks.

Firm, mid yellowish brown clays of the natural drift, context 1008, were revealed along much of the base of the trench, where undisturbed at depths of around 0.5m BGL (around 13.30m OD).

The western block of Trench 1 revealed exclusively modern deposits above the level of 1008. This was comprised of a section of cement bonded brick walling, contexts 1026. This wall was sealed by a concrete surface 1028, which in turn had been cut by a service trench, cable and sand backfill, context 1025. Sealing this was a thin layer of rubbly levelling material supporting the extant surface of tarmac.

The earliest deposit in the central block of trench 1 above the level of natural 1008, was a firm, pale grayish brown, clayey silt, context 1014. This material, which contained a few finds of 19<sup>th</sup> century and slightly later date, probably represents the basal part of a former topsoil – the upper part of which appears likely to have been removed during development of the airfield. A later 19<sup>th</sup> – earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic land-drain, context 1023, was seen to cut through the soil 1014. A line of four square cuts, each vertically sided, flat based, around 0.4m square and of similar depth, cut through 1014, contexts 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021. Spaced fractionally over 3.5m apart these cuts held blocks of concrete that had clearly been cast in-situ, contexts 1016, 1018, 1020, 1022. Two sections of cement bonded brick walling were present in this central part of the trench, contexts 1024 and 1009. The former of these was aligned east – west, the other north –south.

Within the eastern block of Trench 1 natural 1008 had been reduced to a greater depth than elsewhere. Immediately above 1008 was a 0.2m thick slab of concrete, context 1007. This

slab was overlain by a mixed deposit of clay and building rubble up to 0.26m thick, context 1006, which was in turn overlain by a thinner deposit of rubble and clay, context 1005. A fairly small pocket of greyish brown clayey silt, context 1004, which capped off the eastern part of 1005, may have formed a levelling deposit for the overlaying steel reinforced concrete slab, context 1002. At a similar stratigraphic horizon to 1002 was a 0.7m wide and 0.7m deep concrete block, context 1003. The uppermost deposit in this area of the trench was context 1001, the extant tarmac ground surface.

Excluding the former soil 1014, the earliest feature of any archaeological interest in this trench were various walls concrete slabs and probable stanchion foundations that are almost certainly of World War II origin. The alignment of these features respects that of the World War II building immediately south of this trench. This northern end of this building is known to have been truncated and it may be that the features within the trench were formerly a part of it. Later deposits were comprised of a service trench and the extant tarmac surface with its associated makeup.



**Plate 1** Central part of Trench 1, looking W

## 5.2 TRENCH 2

Positioned immediately south of the main entrance to the site's eastern boundary, the central part of Trench 2 was not excavated due to the presence of electricity cables.

Mid yellowish brown clays of the natural drift geology were revealed along the base of the trench at depths generally just over 0.3m BGL (approximately 13.35m O D). Only two features, contexts 2007 and 2008, cut into the clays. Both features proved to be ceramic piped land drains. The very basal part of a dark greyish brown clayey silt topsoil, context 2003, survived in the northern excavated part of the trench directly over the natural clay. This material was not present in the southern part of the trench. A 0.2m thick layer of steel reinforced concrete succeeded the deposits detailed above. A 7m wide cut, context 2006, some 0.25m+ deep removed parts of the concrete slab 2002 in the southern part of the trench. This intrusion had been in-filled with compacted sandy rubble and stone, context 2005. Sealing both the concrete, 2002 and rubble fill 2005, was a 0.1m – 0.15m thick layer of tarmac that formed the extant ground surface.

None of the features within Trench 2 were of particular archaeological interest. However, the sequence does shed some light on the preparation of the site at the time of the construction of the World War II airfield. In particular it can be seen that the site was stripped of virtually all topsoil prior to the casting of a surface of reinforced concrete slabs. The rubble filled intrusion through the concrete appears to be of even more recent date and probably relates to the consolidation of a partially broken up concrete surface prior to resurfacing with tarmac.



**Plate 2** Southern part of Trench 2, looking NNW

### 5.3 TRENCH 3

Trench 3 was located close to the existing entrance to the site. Two portions of the trench, towards the central and southern parts, were not stripped or excavated due to the presence of detected electrical cables.

Firm mid yellowish brown clay, context 3004, of the drift geology was encountered at the base of nearly all of Trench 3, typically at a height of around 13.35m OD.

Close to the south-eastern end of the trench a north-west to south-east aligned stretch of cement bonded modern red brick walling, context 3007, was encountered. This walling is believed to represent part of a World War II structure. At the extreme northern end of the trench a deposit of mid greyish brown, clayey silt, context 3003, that measured up to 0.30m thick, overlay natural 3004. Some modern materials within this deposit suggest an origin as a levelling deposit. Sealing contexts 3007 and 3003 was a layer of steel reinforced concrete, 3002. This concrete was generally around 0.20m thick, almost certainly of World War II origin, and represents a former ground surface. Towards the southern end of the trench a small diameter lead pipe, context 3006, within a concrete housing, context 3005, was seen to lie within the upper part of the concrete surface 3002. The uppermost deposit in trench 3 was the extant modern tarmac surface which measured up to 0.20m thick.



**Plate 3** Trench 3, looking NNE

#### 5.4 TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was located in the east central part of the site and of somewhat restricted length owing to the presence of adjacent fences and buildings.

Firm, yellowish brown clays, context 4011, of the natural drift geology was located along much of the base of the trench, typically at depths of around 0.5m BGL (approximately 13.3m OD).

A number of 20<sup>th</sup> century service trenches, contexts 4008, 4010, 4007, 4009, were seen to cut into the natural clay. A further unidentified service, composed of a metal pipe housed between walls of brickwork and backfilled with rubble, also cut into natural deposits. At least two of the service trenches led to a brick built drain inspection chamber accessed via a cast iron cover.

Deposits and features post-dating the above services consisted of a modern ceramic drain, context 4003, and a deposit of burnt ?coal, context 4004.

This area of the site was sealed by topsoil 4002 and the existing turf-line 4001.

#### 5.5 TRENCH 5

This trench was located in the east central part of the site, immediately west of Victoria Farm. The presence of live electricity cables in two areas necessitated Trench 5 being cut in three segments and extended in length towards the south. The northern segment measured 29m long, the central some 6.5m and the southern 6m long.

Light yellowish brown – brown clays, context 5005, of the natural drift geology (these being seen to darken with increased depth) were observed at the base of the northern and southern segments of the trench. In the northern segment natural clays occurred at as little as 0.25m BGL (around 13.30m O D) and in the southern segment at 0.48m BGL (marginally below 13m O D). No archaeological features were seen to cut into 5005.

At the extreme northern end of the northern segment a steep sided east – west aligned linear cut, context 5004, in excess of 1m wide was excavated. Below a clayey fill red clay tiles (each stamped 'electricity') capped a defunct electricity service, 5003. This service trench and the remainder of 5005 in this segment were overlain by a thin spread of limestone chippings that incorporated smaller quantities of coarse sand, context 5002. Chippings 5002 formed a bedding for a series of non-steel-reinforced cast concrete slabs, context 5001, that were generally around 0.2m thick.

In the southern segment two mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century services and their trenches were seen to cut into the natural clay 5005, contexts 5010 and 5011. One of these services was for water, the other – in a narrow ferrous pipe or casing was unidentified. Above the services and natural clay lay a sheet of geotextile covered by around 0.4m of limestone chipping hardcore, context 5009. The limestone chippings formed a bedding for the tarmac, 5006, that in this part of the trench formed the ground surface.

The central segment of Trench 5 was of different character, though all encountered remains were of equally modern date. The northern limit of the segment was defined by sub surface brick walling that on its southern face at least was rendered in a hard grey cement. South of this brick wall was a loose fill of brick and mortar rubble, context 5007. Both the wall and loose rubble fill were mechanically excavated to a depth of just under 1m BGL, before (due to standing water at less than 0.5m BGL) being rapidly backfilled. The machining did, however, demonstrate that the walling and fill extend to depths greater than 1m BGL. The rubble backfill 5007 was capped off by tarmac 5006 that in this area was up to 0.28m thick. Examination of a number of old plans of the development site suggest that the brick wall formed the northern end of an open, but largely sunken water tank; the rubble representing its infilling. A number of such tanks were formerly present at the airfield and functioned as emergency water supplies, presumably for fire fighting, in case of disruption of mains supplies.



**Plate 4** Redundant electrical service at NE end of Trench 5

## 5.6 TRENCH 6

Trench 6 was located close to the eastern boundary of the site immediately south of Victoria Farm. The north-western part of the trench was located on an area of hard surface (the north-western 9m only of which was excavated) and the south-eastern on an area of grass. The entirety of the 20m of the trench on the grassed area was excavated.

A yellowish brown slightly sandy clay, context 6026, of the natural drift was reached at a depth of 0.28-0.4m BGL (around 13.22m O D). This was overlain by a deposit of light brown, moderate, clayey sandy silt, generally less than 0.15m thick, context 6019. This material is interpreted as a sub-soil.

A series of 8 narrow linear cuts, all less than 0.3m deep and none wider than 0.4m, cut across the trench, most being roughly parallel to the short axis of the trench, contexts 6015, 6016, 6017, 6018, 6023, 6024, 6025 and 6018. The fills of these small features, 6011, 6012, 6013, 6014, 6020, 6021, 6022 and 6027, were predominantly of re-deposited natural clays together with some sub and top soil material. A small quantity of later post-medieval finds material was recovered from these fills. Although these small linear features did not contain land drains they did cut some way into natural clays and it is likely that they cut with the intention of improving drainage. An intact topsoil, context 6010, overlay the small drainage features. That the drainage cuts could not be seen cutting this soil suggests the likelihood that at some point prior to the establishment of the airbase it once served as a plough soil. The excavated area at the north-west end of the trench revealed modern deposits down to a depth of 0.7m (around 12.81m O D) at which point natural clay, a darker brown, stiff clay at this depth, was revealed. Modern materials above the clay were composed of a 0.3m thick layer of compacted limestone chippings, context 6008, underlain by a geotextile. A layer of concrete in excess of 0.2m thick, context 6006, capped off the limestone and in turn served as a firm base for the extant surface of 0.15m thick tarmac. At the interface of tarmac surface and grass, kerbing, along with its construction deposits, contexts 6007, 6009, was present.

The significant aspect of trench 6 was not archaeological remains but rather the light it sheds on the sequence of agricultural soils and natural deposits that prior to World War II occupied the entirety of the site.





**Plate 5** Topsoil, subsoil, natural clays and agricultural drains in eastern part of Trench 6



**Plate 6** Later post-medieval features in Trench 6, note height of natural clay in relation to adjacent tarmac, looking WNW

## 5.7 TRENCHES 7 AND 8

Trenches 7 and 8 were laid out as a single continuous 100m long trench in the southern part of the site. However, owing to the presence of potentially contaminated standing water (which could not therefore be pumped away) the central parts of this trench were left unopened.

The eastern 53m of Trench 7/8 was fully stripped and revealed the following sequence. The lowest deposit encountered was 7004, a stiff, yellowish brown clay (slightly sandy in places) of the natural drift. This material, which became darker and pure clay with increased depth, was seen to dip down very gently to the west. At the east end of the trench 7004 occurred at a depth of 0.5m BGL (12.75m O D) and at the western end of the 53m strip at some 0.7m BGL. Directly above the level of natural clays lay a deposit of limestone fragments, context 7003, the pieces ranging in size from 10mm to 300mm (unlike modern graded limestone hardcore). 7003 was typically of a thickness of 0.2-0.28m thick. At the western end of the 53m strip increasing quantities of brick rubble were present within 7003, particularly within its lower parts. The limestone hardcore, 7003, served as a bedding for a 0.2m thick surface of steel reinforced concrete, 7002. This concrete was in turn overlain by the extant surface of tarmac, context 7001.

The western 9m of Trench 7/8 was fully stripped and revealed a dark brown, stiff, clay, 7004, at a depth of 0.9m BGL (12.31m O D). This material represents natural clay of the drift geology and was directly overlain by context 7005, a deposit of brick rubble up to 0.25m thick. 7005 was in turn sealed by the limestone hardcore 7003. Steel reinforced concrete 7002 overlay the limestone hardcore and was itself capped over with the extant tarmac surface 7001.

No archaeological features were observed cutting into natural deposits in Trench 7/8. Observations made in Trench 6 suggest that the natural clays at the eastern end of this trench are likely to have been truncated by only a small amount and so features cutting into natural to any depth should have at least partially survived. The same is unlikely to be the case at the western end of the trench where truncation appears to be to considerably greater depths. It is probable that all deposits below the extant tarmac surface relate to the wartime airbase. The absence of any top and sub soils indicates that these were removed, presumably as they were considered too soft a bedding, prior to the laying of hard flat surfaces. The brick hardcore and limestone hardcore form a firm level bedding for the steel reinforced concrete outside the hangars. The extant tarmac surface is almost certainly of post-war date.



**Plate 7** Groundwater in western end of Trench 7/8, looking NW



**Plate 8** Southern part of trench 7/8, looking WNW

## 5.8 TRENCH 9

Trench 9 was located parallel, and immediately west of, the southernmost of the former World War II aircraft hangers. All non-natural deposits and features encountered in Trench 9 proved to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century origin.

A mid yellowish brown - dark brown, stiff, clay, context 9005, represents the natural drift geology in Trench 9. This was encountered at depths of around 12.77m OD (typically around 0.40m BGL). Five features were seen to cut directly through natural 9005. These consisted of two ceramic piped land drains, contexts 9006 and 9007 and two brick built inspection chambers and their associated drain runs, contexts 9008 and 9009. The final element of these features were comprised of a concrete base in excess of 0.20m thick which supported the lower three courses of brick walling (around 0.30m wide) of part of a rectangular structure, context 9004. An opening for a doorway was present on the eastern side of this structure. The walling was built directly over a concrete slab, context 9003 which occupied the south central part of the trench and had itself been cast over a levelling deposit of brown clayey sand, context 9011, that contained some fragments of brick/tile.

The latest deposits in the trench were a layer of building rubble, context 1002, and an area of tarmac towards the northern end of the trench and the existing turf-line, context 9001.

The ceramic land-drains in Trench 9 pre-date World War II and relate to agricultural usage prior to the construction of the airfield. The concrete and brick features relate to use of the airfield; either during its wartime role or to later governmental usage in the post-war period.



**Plate 9** Trench 9, looking N

## 5.9 TRENCH 10

Trench 10 was located between the southern and central hangar units in an area of tarmac roadway of relatively new appearance. The deposits in Trench 10 proved to be modern and deep. Accordingly, 8m long segments at either end of the trench, together with a 7m long segment in the central part of the trench, were excavated. The sequence of deposits, excepting a concrete encased drain pipe at the eastern end of the trench, was the identical in each segment.

Mid-dark brown, stiff, clay, representing natural drift geology, context 10004, was encountered at a depth of 0.67m BGL (approximately 12.55m O D). Evidence of heights for undisturbed natural deposits and of its colouration to darken with increased depth from other trenches, e.g. trench 6, indicates that the 10004 has been truncated by around 0.6m. A concrete encased drain, 10005, was observed in the eastern segment of the trench at a depth of 0.64m BGL. Sealing the concrete pipe and natural clay was a deposit of limestone hardcore, 10003, generally around 0.3m thick and resting on a geotextile. The hardcore was in turn sealed by 10002, a 0.2m thick layer of concrete. The uppermost deposit 10001, was formed of a 0.13m thick layer of tarmac.

The deposit sequence in trench 10 points towards deep truncation in the area. The presence of the geotextile and other modern materials indicate that this has taken place in recent years. This is likely to have been in the 1980's when the grain store was established and represents an upgrading of the roadways on the site, presumably to bear the loads of heavy grain carrying lorries.



**Plate 10** Trench 10, looking N

### 5.10 TRENCH 11

This trench was located in an area of rough grass on the western side of the site adjacent to the mounded perimeter.

Light yellowish brown, firm, clay of the natural drift was revealed at depths of between 0.3m – 0.46m BGL (generally around 12.95m O D). Cutting into natural deposits were a series of six ceramic piped land drains, contexts 1007, 11010, 11004, 11006, 11008 and 11009. The first four of these were aligned south-east to north-west and the latter two, which cut through two of the former, aligned north-east to south-west. The land drains were sealed by context 11002, a mid-dark brown, slightly sandy silt clay that forms the existing topsoil. Quantities of brick and concrete rubble together with steel and other modern materials (including plastic) were present throughout this deposit. The amounts of these modern materials indicates that this is not a disturbed in-situ soil but one that has been deposited here in recent years; probably in the 1980,s when it is thought that the perimeter bank in this area of the site was constructed. A turf-line, context 11001, sealed the topsoil and was itself cut by a single feature 11005, a recent geotechnical test-pit.



**Plate 11** Trench 11, looking SE

### 5.11 TRENCH 12

Trench 12 was located at the eastern part of the site, immediately adjacent, and parallel to, the eastern side of the central former aircraft hanger.

The lowest deposit encountered in Trench 12 was context 12010, a mid brown, stiff, clay interpreted as representing the natural drift geology of the area. In parts of the trench 12010 was overlain by mid yellowish brown silty clay, context 12011. This material is considered likely to have 'naturally' originated as a sub-soil. A single ceramic piped land-drain, context 12044, cut through these deposits and relates to 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural usage of the site.

A fairly thin and level deposit composed of fragments of brick, mortar, concrete and stone, context 12003, overlay the natural soils at the site and is believed to represent an episode of levelling, probably after removal of the topsoil. A topsoil of dark brown clayey silt containing occasional fragments of brick/tile, concrete and steel, context 12002, sealed 12003. This topsoil material is clearly re-deposited. Contexts 12003 and 12002 were probably deposited, subsequent to a large scale topsoil strip of the site, for compaction and levelling purposes at the time of airfield construction. The deposition of these materials may relate to a requirement to 'make up' the ground in this particular part of the site during construction.

A series of structural deposits were present in the central part of the trench occupying construction cuts 12008 and 12007. These were associated with an unexcavated service trench containing concrete and stone chippings (probably a drain), context 12005, and a small area of brick filled modern disturbance, context 12006. The structural deposits were comprised of an area of tightly butted cast concrete slabs, context 12009, that were surmounted by the lower course of a series of brick walls.

The earliest element of the sequence within Trench 12, a land drain, relates to later post-medieval agricultural activity. Subsequently the site was stripped of topsoil, and some subsoil, landscaped, and a series of structural deposits seemingly relating directly to the adjacent aircraft hangar constructed.



**Plate 12** Trench 12, looking S

### 5.12 TRENCH 13

Trench 13 was located close to the north-western perimeter of the site between the central and northern hangar units in an area of new tarmac roadway. The deposits in Trench 13 were both modern and deep. Three 6m long segments were excavated at both ends and the central part of the trench. The sequence of deposits was identical in each segment except for a concrete footing in the central part.

Mid-dark brown, stiff, clay, representing natural drift geology, context 13004, was observed at a depth of 0.7m BGL (approximately 12.81m O D). As in several other trenches, evidence pertaining to natural deposits 13004 indicate that these had been truncated by around 0.6m. A wide concrete footing, 13005, was observed in the central segment of the trench at a depth of just over 0.6m BGL. Sealing the footing and natural clay was a deposit of limestone hardcore, 13003, around 0.3m thick and resting on a geo-textile. The hardcore was in turn sealed by 13002, a 0.2m thick layer of concrete. The uppermost deposit 10001, was formed of a layer of tarmac up to 0,2m thick.

The deposit sequence in Trench 13 points again indicates deep truncation in this part of the site. The geo-textile and other modern materials indicate that this truncation has taken place in recent years. This was probably in the 1980's when the grain store was established. These works represent an upgrading of the roadways on the site at that time, presumably to support heavy grain carrying lorries.





**Plate 13** Trench 13, looking SW

#### **5.13 TRENCH 14**

This trench was situated in line with, and immediately north-east of, Trench 13. Deposits within Trench 14 were both deep and modern. A 15m long segment was excavated at the north-eastern end of the trench and a 5m long segment at the south-western end. The sequence of deposits proved to be identical in each segment.

Mid-dark brown, stiff, clay, of the natural drift geology, context 14004, was encountered at a depth of 0.7m BGL (approximately 12.92m O D). Evidence relating to sequences of natural deposits in e.g. trench 6, suggests that the 14004 has been truncated by around 0.6m. Sealing the natural clay was a deposit of limestone hardcore, 14003, generally around 0.3m thick and resting on a geotextile. The hardcore was in turn sealed by 14002, a layer of concrete of a thickness up to 0.26m. The uppermost deposit 10001, was formed of a 0.1m thick layer of tarmac.

The deposit sequence in Trench 14 again points towards deep truncation in this part of the site. The geotextile and other modern materials indicate that this truncation has taken place in recent years. This is likely to have been in the 1980's when the grain store was established and can be seen to represent an upgrading of the roadways on the site for heavy lorries.



**Plate 14** Trench 14, looking NE

#### **5.14 TRENCH 15**

Located in the extreme north-east corner area of the site Trench 15 was aligned parallel to the north-eastern side of the northern hangar complex, in an area of rough grass.

A light brownish yellow, stiff, clay, context 15015, of the natural drift geology was reached at a depth of a little over 0.3m BGL (around 13.42m O D). It was noted that the interface between 15015 and overburden above was in many places 'fuzzy' and slightly intermixed. Four small, shallow features or depressions were seen to cut into the natural clay, contexts 15008, 15010, 15012 and 15014. One of these was linear, the other two sub-circular; none were over 0.03m deep. The fills, contexts 15007, 15009, 15011 and 15013 were mid brown clayey silts which contained a few flacks of ceramic building material and very small fragments of rusted iron/steel. The shallow, somewhat ephemeral nature of these features combined with their finds and a disturbed topsoil above suggests that these are not archaeological features as such, but rather depressions probably created by machines during previous construction works at the site.

Towards the north-western end of the trench two brick walls, each around 0.26m wide, bonded with grey cement and aligned at 90 degrees to the adjacent hangar were observed. The gap between these walls was about 1.80m and in-filled with yellow, coarse, sand. These

structural remains were clearly of 20<sup>th</sup> century date and may relate to structures that formerly adjoined the north-eastern side of the northern hangar complex.

The deposits detailed above were overlain by a dark greyish brown, slightly sandy clay silt, context 15003, that presently forms the topsoil. A number of fragments of brick, concrete and metal were present throughout this material and it seems certain that it has been heavily disturbed in modern times – possibly even removed and replaced? A series of late 20<sup>th</sup> century drains, context 15002, (plastic land drains in gravel filled cuts) cut through the soil 15003. The uppermost deposit was formed by the existing turf-line.



**Plate 15** *Trench 15, looking SE*

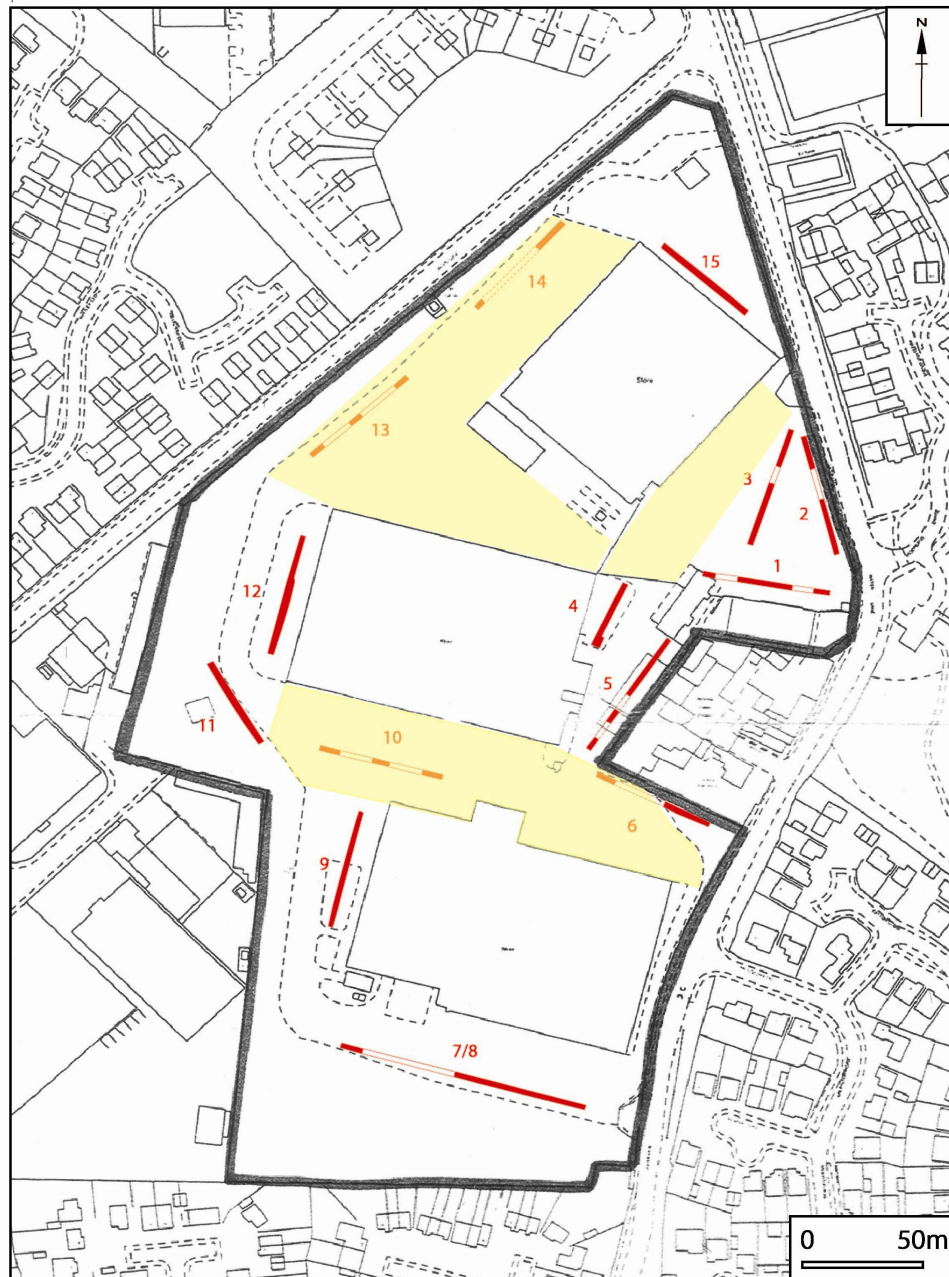
## 5.15 CONCLUSIONS

None of the excavated trenches revealed evidence of significant pre World War II archaeological remains, all pre war features seemingly relating to post-medieval agricultural activity. The observed trench sequences were seen to lack in-situ topsoils, and, where subsoils were present these too appeared at least partially truncated. Given the evidence for later post-medieval agriculture at the site it appears certain that truncation of soils took place at the time of construction of the airfield during the later 1930's. The reasons for such truncation are likely to have been twofold; firstly this will have served as some use in levelling off parts of any minor undulations at the site, and secondly, will have provided a firmer base for the construction and laying of airfield surfaces.

Remains relating to the former wartime airfield were plentiful in areas of the site and consisted for the most part of concrete surfaces. Remnants of some demolished structures were encountered in Trenches 1, 5, 9, 12 and 15 and were built exclusively of concrete and brick. The majority of these probably relate to the wartime use of the airfield with others perhaps originating in the post-war period. It is likely that the specific contexts of these remains will only become apparent when studied in relation to historic plans of the airfield site and in relation to adjacent still standing structures.

There are a number of works at the site that clearly relate to alterations for conversion of the site to a grain store. Most obviously this consisted of re-cladding and fitting out of the hangars together with the building of a few new structures. Less obviously, these works also involved the laying of extensive areas of new tarmac surfacing. This surfacing was clearly designed for heavy vehicles as below the layers of tarmac were deep deposits of concrete and compacted stone laid over geo-textile. This work had involved the removal of all surfaces and natural clays down to a depth below the extant ground level of 0.7m. It is possible that some of the earth banks that surround the eastern, and other parts, of the site were constructed of this removed material at this time and not during the war. These areas have were stripped to greater depths than happened during the site strip of the late 1930's.

Whilst the work to date suggests that only a low density of archaeological remains are likely to be present in the area, any such density will be reduced for those areas subject to later deeper stripping, with only the largest of features likely to have survived. Areas subject to later deep stripping are shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Estimated extents of area of deepest truncation shown yellow

## 6. OBSERVATIONS ON STANDING BUILDINGS

A number of buildings representative of former usage of the site still remain upstanding. The overwhelming majority of these originate with the World War II use of the site as an RAF airbase and have subsequently been adapted for later, different, uses. The largest of the structures are aircraft hangars arranged in multiple conjoined units. These hangars (probably adapted T2 types) have all had their upper sides and roofs re-clad, had later ventilation systems installed, probably been re-floored and had some further internal works inserted. The original steel frameworks, sliding door frameworks, brickwork to much of the lower walling as well as a few other details however, remain almost completely intact. Such hangar complexes have in the post-war decades tended to succumb to demolition and conversion, with many disappearing with little or no record. A small number of brick built RAF ancillary ranges are attached to certain of the hangar complexes whilst a single free-standing unit also survives on the site. A lesser number of post RAF buildings, all seemingly relating to the grain store, are also present.

The buildings at the site are worthy of some recording prior to their eventual demolition. The suggested level of recording would broadly equate to Level 3 of the English Heritage standards (English Heritage 2006). Lesser recording may be justified for certain of the grain store structures. Otherwise, recording should include:

**Photography:** general views of the buildings and their wider setting, photographs of all external elevations of the buildings, interior views of the principal rooms and spaces, detail views of selected features and structural details, selected views of signage and fixtures.

**Written account:** Details of location, statutory and non statutory designations, description of the building's forms, materials, layouts and functions. Description of any evidence for successive development of the buildings.

**Drawings:** Presentation and use of relevant and readily available existing drawings and maps.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The low density of archaeological features combined with the degree of truncation limits the archaeological potential of below ground remains at the site. This low potential is likely to be exacerbated in those areas subjected to the deeper post-war truncation. These latter areas probably warrant no more than a watching brief.

The above ground wartime structures merit some building recording whilst the post-war structures may be catered for with a photographic record (see Section 6).

## 8. LIST OF SOURCES

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## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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