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Between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological Watching Brief at St. Peter's School, York (Figure 1). Sited in a small court yard on the southeast side of Manor Boarding House, Area 1 was the site of foundation excavation for an extension. Located in an entrance alcove space on the north side of St. Peter's School House, Area 2 was the site of excavations for a new main entrance.

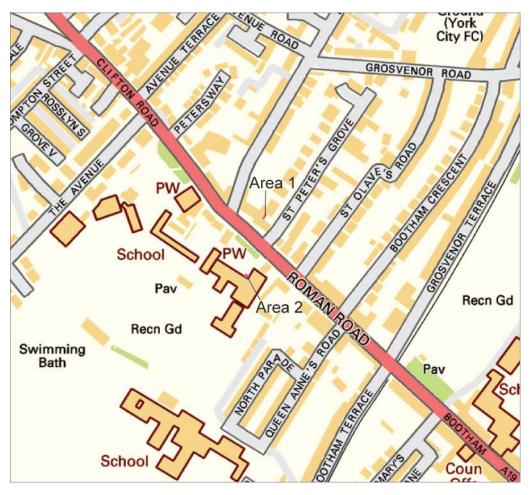


Figure 1. Site Location. (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010)

In both areas excavation works were carried out by means of a tracked mechanical excavator, using a flat bladed ditching bucket, and hand digging by site contractors, Eastwood Construction and Engineering Services Ltd. Archaeological recording was carried out with a series of measured sketch plans and descriptions in a site note book. Sections were recorded at a scale of 1:10 and a series of colour digital photographs were also taken.

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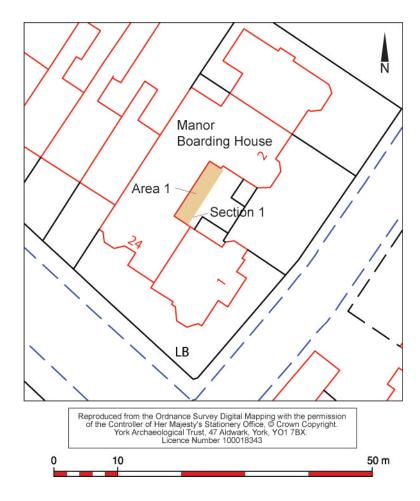
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Across Area 1 a network of services, both active and redundant, were encountered throughout the depth of excavation. These services truncated the remains of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, as well as made ground associated with the construction of the boarding house and the top of an extensive deposit of compact dark brown silt, interpreted as a plough soil.

In Area 2 the removal of a reinforced concrete slab revealed a basement structure situated along the southeast wing of the school building. The excavation of the north wall of the basement revealed a sequence of made ground overlying a deposit of compact dark brown silt, similar to that seen in Area 1 and again interpreted as a plough soil. This in turn over laid soft mottled brown and orange sandy silt.

### **AREA1**

Area 1 was located in a small court yard on the southeast side of Manor Boarding House (Figure 2). Aligned NE to SW and rectangular in plan it measured 10.15m long and 2.45m wide. It was excavated to a depth of 1.15m.



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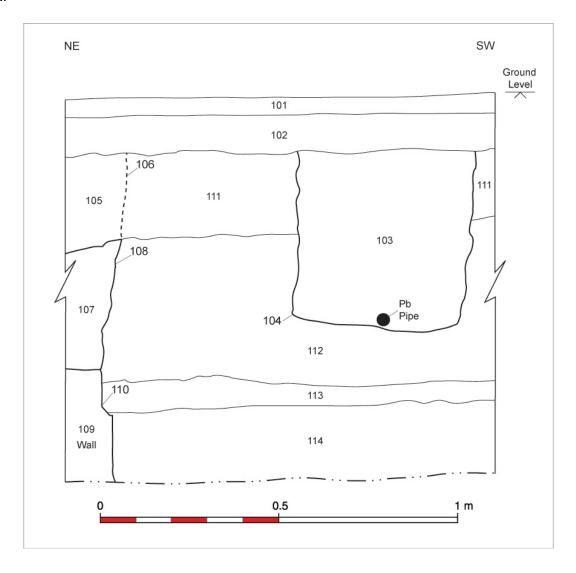
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Figure 2. Area 1.

The earliest deposit encountered was a deposit of dense dark brown silt, context 114, seen across the majority of Area 1 where not removed by later intrusion. This material extended from the depth limit of excavation at 1.15m BGL (Below Ground Level) to 0.85m BGL. Above 114 was a deposit of moderately compact small and medium sized CBM and cobble fragments, context 113, between 40mm and 80mm thick. Again this deposit was seen to extend across Area 1. Context 113 was over laid by a thick deposit of soft dark yellow brown clay, context 112. Between 0.40m and 0.45m thick, this material extended up to 0.40m BGL. As with 114 and 113, context 112 was observed to extend across Area 1 except where truncated by later intrusive activity, particularly at the northeast and south west ends of the excavation area.



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Figure. 3 Section 1.

Two brick structures extended into Area 1. From the SE side of the trench, approximately 2.30m from the SW end, a brick wall, context 109, extended into the trench on a SSE - NNW alignment (Plate 1). Although disturbed by a later concrete encased drain a small fragment of the wall could be seen returning on a NNE alignment. The wall was three courses wide with the bricks laid in a stretcher bond and bonded with a hard light gray mortar. In section this structure was observed to survive to a height of five courses, extending up to 0.75m BGL. Despite the top of this structure being disturbed the original construction cut, context 110, was seen to survive to 0.40m BGL in section. Here the SW side of 110 was observed to cut clay deposit 112 (Figure 3). Above the intact remains of wall 109, context 107 consisting of loose rubble, filled in the upper extent of cut 110.



Plate 1. This Plate shows the area of Section 1 and includes Wall 109. Looking SE, 0.10m scale divisions.

At the NE end of Area 1 a second brick structure was encountered (Plate 2). This structure, context 115, survived up to ten courses in height in places despite considerable truncation from later services. A small stub of wall, 0.65m long, was seen to be tied into the footings of the NE wing of the boarding house. From there 115 extended on a NE – SW alignment for a distance of 2.60m. The wall then returned on a NW - SE alignment towards the NW wing of the boarding house. Here the full width of

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the wall was exposed. It was seen to be 0.35m wide with the bricks laid in a stretcher bond three courses in width and bonded with a hard grey mortar. It was truncated by a concrete encased drain at a distance of 0.50m from its SE end and again at 1.75m. This disturbance had dragged the wall out of alignment pulling it further to the north.



Plate 2. Brick structure, context 115, at NE end of Area 1. Looking East, 0.10m scale divisions.

Substantial disturbance from later services made it difficult to determine if context 115 was also stratigraphically above clay deposit 112. Towards the SW end of the trench where there was less disruption from services, a loose light brown sand and brick rubble deposit, context 111, was seen to overly clay 112 (Plate 1). Deposit 111 was c0.22m thick, extending up to 0.15m BGL (Figure 3). A range of services, including drainage, water and electricity, were encountered truncating from the top of 111. The services were found across the extent of the excavation area with some continuing beyond the depth of excavation (Plate 3). In an area extending c1.5m from the northeast end of the trench a reinforced concrete slab accounted for the top 0.15m of the stratigraphic sequence. Across the remainder of Area 1 the top 0.15m consisted of a loose sand and rubble bedding, context 102, with concrete paving slabs, context 101, 50mm thick, laid on top forming the court yard surface.

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Plate 3. Services at SW end of Area 1. Looking SW.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Significant truncation and disturbance of the stratigraphic sequence was encountered throughout the extent of the foundation trench during its excavation. One inspection chamber, and associated concrete encased drains, occupied the SW end of Area 1 and a second inspection chamber lay just beyond the SE side of the excavation area.

The two structures appear similar in terms of their form and construction materials. Context 115, located at the NE end of the trench, was found directly below the current entrance to the NE wing of the boarding house and it is possible that these remains are the footings of a previous porch. The alignment of 109 is rather different to that of 115 and the boarding house, the likelihood is that context 109 is the footings of a structure demolished before the construction of the boarding house.

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A 0.22m thick layer of rubble, contexts 111, may derive from the construction of the boarding house or the demolition of earlier structures. There is no indication that it had been truncated by the earlier structures wall, context 109, as was clearly the case with clay deposit 112 (Figure 3). It is likely that the thick layer of clay, context 112, was part of ground raising activity associated with the brick structure 109 and that the cobble and brick rubble layer, context 113, also derived from the construction of wall 109 or associated ground consolidation. Unfortunately the absence of any dateable material recovered from these deposits makes clarification beyond the stratigraphic relationships difficult. What can be said with some certainty about context 113, is that it's loosely structured form is suggestive of a spread of construction or demolition material rather than that of a surface. The dense, compact structure of the silt making up context 114 indicates that it was a plough soil, certainly the small size of inclusions within it are suggestive of sustained ploughing activity.

#### AREA 2

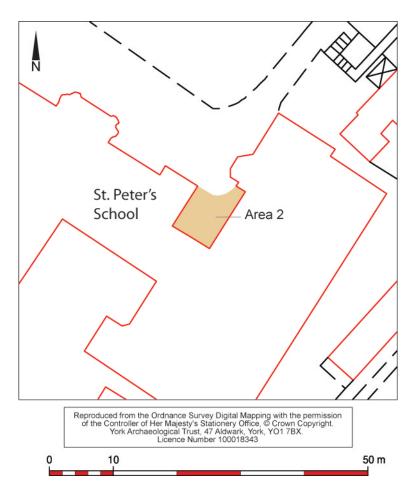


Figure 4. Area 2.

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Area 2 was located in the small space of the entrance alcove on the north side of St. Peter's School House, adjacent to the SE wing of the school buildings and the main pupil entrance to the SW. The extent of excavation covered an area approximately 10.50m long and 6.75m wide on a NE to SW axis (Figure 4). Although an excavation depth of c0.30m was intended across the area the discovery of a basement along the NW side of the SE wing required additional unexpected work. It was decided that it was necessary for the basement to be infilled with concrete and the full extent NE wall of the basement removed to ensure stable foundations for the extension. From its NW end, butting up against the School House, the wall footing extended on a straight NW-SE axis for a distance of c2.50m at a depth of c0.50m. From this SE point the wall, articulating with the NW wall of the cellar, curved through 90° to the NE and extended to a depth of c1.65m (Plates 4 and 5).

Throughout the latter part of the ground works the conditions were not safe to carry out detailed investigation and recording of archaeological deposits. The depth of excavation and instability of the trench edges were determining factors in this.



Plate 4. The NE end of the excavated trench after the NE basement wall had been removed. Note the bricked up basement door and on the right of frame and a later wall inserted to create a light well.

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Looking NE.



Figure 5. The NW end of the excavated trench after the NE basement wall had been removed; part of the concrete infilling of the basement can be seen on the left. Looking SW.

The earliest deposits were encountered in the trench excavated for the removal of the NE basement wall. A mottled mid brown and light brown orange silty sand was observed from 1.65m to 1.45m BGL. This material was over laid by a deposit of dense dark brown silt, approximately 0.40m thick this material extended to a depth of 1.00m BGL (Plate 6).

In section at the north end of Area 2, a 0.65m stony infill of the construction cut for the standing SE wing of the school building was observed, this cut a thick deposit of loose rubble that overlay the compact dark brown silt (Plate 6), this in turn was overlaid with the current asphalt ground surface.

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Plate 6. Loose rubble made ground overlying a dark brown silty plough soil. The construction cut and light coloured stony infill of the SE wing of the School building is visible on the right. Looking North, 0.10m scale divisions.

Located in the entrance alcove and running adjacent to the SE wing of the school, the basement structure had a sub rectangular shape in plan and was orientated on a NE to SW axis. It measured 10.50m long and between 1.40m and 3.00m wide with the floor at c1.10m BGL, the excavated NE wall footings however were found to extend to a depth of c1.65m BGL. The NE end of the curving NE wall butted up against the standing SE wing of the school building from a point directly below a buttress (removed as part of the extension works), and adjacent to the NW side of the doorway used to access the basement (Plate 4). The SW end of the NW basement wall butted up against part of the school that post dates the SE wing (Plate 7).

The basement was constructed with bricks laid in a stretcher bond, three courses wide (0.35m) and 15 courses high. The interior faces of the walls were painted white. A doorway accessed the basement at its NE end (Plate4). A series of brick walls were later inserted into the basement creating light wells for the basement windows of the SE wing of the school (Plate 7). These walls appear to be mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century in date.

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Plate 7. Basement in Area 2. The curving NE wall can be seen in the foreground and the NW wall in the centre of the frame. The later walls run from left to right. Looking South.

Beyond the NW wall of the basement rubble identical to that seen at the north end of the excavation area was encountered, this extended to the formation depth.

A concrete pad between 0.15 m and 0.18m thick covered the entrance alcove space.

#### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

It is probable that the top of archaeologically significant deposits were reached where the curving wall was removed. Unfortunately the depth of excavation and the instability of the overlying deposits severely limited their investigation. Very little of the nature and date of these deposits could be directly established and no finds were recovered. There is however a significant difference with the overlying accumulation of dark silt, perhaps representing a significant change in land use. This plough soil, with a thickness of 0.40m, identifies a period of reasonably intense agricultural activity as attested by its dense, fine composition. It is also notably similar to that found in Area 1.

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St. Peter's School House, including the SE wing for which part of the construction cut was seen in section, date to 1838. The gap between the SE wing and the Memorial Hall wing of the school was gradually infilled by building work carried out at some point between 1858 and 1873, and then finally in 1905. The NE wall of the basement clearly butted up against the 1838 phase of buildings and where visible the NW wall appeared to butt up against the edge of the late 19th century phase of building. It's positioning in relation to this later 19<sup>th</sup> century phase of building is an indication that the basement is likely to have been constructed at around that time. This would also suggest that the doorway leading into the basement from the SE wing was almost certainly a late 19<sup>th</sup> century insertion. The curved wall also provided footings for a three arched, single storey stone wall or 'screen', traces of which remain visible where its NW extent articulated with the school building. The wall potentially remained in place up until the early 1950's. The 1954 Listing description does not mention the wall, suggesting that it had been dismantled by this point. The change in use of the basement, where brick walls were inserted preserving light wells to windows in the basement level of the SE wing, appears to be mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in date. It is possible that reworking of this space happened around the same time as the removal of the three arched stone wall. Information on dates and documentation has been provided by archive research carried out by HarmerFitz.

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