



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE	Bakers Yard, 11A Walmgate, York		
CLIENT NAME	Mrs Beverley Proctor		
YAT PROJECT #	5920	YAT REPORT #	2016/75
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	N/A	GRID REFERENCE	NGR SE 46065, 45160
PLANNING REFERENCE #	16/00996/FUL	AAI OPS NOTICE #	N/A

On 1st and 2nd September 2016, York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief at Bakers Yard, 11A Walmgate, York. The objective was to record any deposits, features or buried structures exposed during works associated with the opening of 0.9m deep, 0.6m wide trenches for footings required for a single storey extension to the premises. The site lies within the City of York Area of Archaeological Importance.

The works involved observation of the excavation of the footing trenches and recording of the sequence and any features exposed in the course of the works as per the Written Scheme of Investigation. The modern concrete slab immediately over the footprint of the footing trenches had been broken out on 31st August. The steel mesh of the reinforced concrete slab was cut using a Stihl saw and broken up using a hand held hydraulic breaker. Further use of these tools was made to break out a substantial concrete step in the south west corner of the footprint and trim a nearby stone slab flush with the edge of the trench. Part of the groundworks team removed the rubble at the start of work on the 1st September while excavation for the southern footings trench began. Owing to the very narrow access and confined nature of the site and site access, excavation had to be done by hand and spoil removed by wheelbarrow to a skip on the street frontage. The southern footing trench and the short east footings trench were completed by close of work while the western and the northern footings trenches were started on the first day. The remainder of the northern and western trenches were completed by the close of the second day.

The excavation of the trenches and spoil removal was continuously monitored. The recording required was undertaken by means of written notes, measured sketch plans and sections, and colour digital photographs. No accessionable artefacts were recovered and no samples were taken

RESULTS

The earliest feature recorded on site was the offset limestone and brick footing (14) for the property boundary wall forming the west side of the site. The wall (15) built on these footings was predominantly of handmade brick, fairly uniform in appearance.

Parallel to, and 0.7m east of this property boundary was another wall, (06 north end, 37 south end) with limestone block footings supporting a brick wall, largely robbed out at the south end. The blocks were roughly squared but with no diagnostic features while the bricks were similar in appearance to those of the property boundary wall. The line of the wall appeared to continue beyond the site to the north and south.

No cut for the foundation of this wall was observed and the adjacent deposits appear to have been laid up against it therefore post dating the wall. Yellow sandy clay with occasional sandy or charcoal lenses and some fragmented CBM (01, 04, 33, 34) was observed abutting the wall in the north and south footing trenches, on both east and west sides of the wall. The base of this deposit lay below the limit of excavation and its depth could not be ascertained. Overlying this deposit and again abutting wall 06/37, was a layer of dark brownish grey mixed clays incorporating CBM and limestone rubble fragment, occasionally incorporating charcoal fragments (02, 05, 30, 31, 32). This deposit incorporated more CBM fragments towards the top of the unit where it was exposed in the north facing section of the southern footings trench, where it was initially recorded as a separate context (30).

A deposit of yellow clays with sand, charcoal lenses and occasional CBM fragments (03, 07, 36) overlay this deposit except in the southern footings trench where it had been completely removed by modern intrusions. Thin towards the western side of the site and thicker towards the eastern side, it appears to have been a levelling up of the ground surface in preparation for a surface or hard standing of mortared pitched (i.e. set horizontally on edge) bricks (10, 35). This surface was present throughout the north footing trench, except where cut away by later

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FINDS	0		SAMPLES	0		PAGE	1 of 14

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activity, and visible in the undercut south facing section of the east footing trench. It appears to have formed a floor or yard surface across the whole of the area east of wall 06/37. Incorporated into this surface was a brick soakaway or surface drain (17) partially exposed in the north footing trench. This feature was lined with the same type of brick as used in the floor, though placed horizontally on face, and had a base formed from a flat roof tile. The terminal or north side of this feature was within the excavated area and passed south beyond the edge of excavation. Whether what was uncovered is the northern half of a square feature or the north end of a linear feature is unknown. Its fill (18) was a very dark grey ash, charcoal and burnt debris.

A linear feature (13) was cut parallel to the property boundary wall and at least 1 metre wide. This feature resulted in the removal of most of any deposits created between the boundary wall and wall 06/37, exposing the offset foundations of the former wall and partially robbing the footings of the latter. Essentially the west footing trench consisted of this linear cut and its fills and the eastern edge was not identified, seemingly coinciding with wall 06/37. At the south end of this cut, a fill of dark grey clays with limestone rubble and CBM fragments (26) seems to have been a levelling dump for a stone slab (24) supporting a concrete slab footing (23) for a brick wall (22) of modern date. Towards the north end the fills (08/09) were similar to (26) but also contained modern plastic and degrading fabric waste together with a buried 'time capsule'. At the east end of the north footing trench a breeze block foundation marked the eastern termination of the footing trench. All were overlain by the crushed stone hardcore (11) and concrete slab (12) of the just demolished modern outbuilding.

A modern service trench (27, dark grey brown clay fill 28) had been cut east to west along the south edge of the site and the south footing trench followed this feature. The footing trench had been cut some 0.15m south of the southern edge of the service trench but its northern edge still lay within the service trench fill. Observation of the section in the east footing trench indicate this service trench was around 1.0m wide. It included a second service trench passing into the southern footing trench at the east end. These service trenches were cut to install a 150mm diameter plastic drainpipe (29) taking waste or rainwater from the south and west of the site (pipe junction sited at the intersection of the east and south footing trenches) to the local drain system. The service trench (27) and modern brick wall (22) were overlain by a continuous band of gravel (25) with a blue plastic water hosepipe, and the topsoil and turf of the lawn (21). Into this lawn a shallow soakaway (19) had been cut, filled with gravel (20) to drain rainwater from the eaves of the adjacent new property.

The "Time capsule" Plate 10.

Apart from the various CBM fragments incorporated within the deposits just one identifiable object was recovered during the watching brief. This was a small box (100x50x50mm) made from brass sheet with a half round hinged lid placed within a plastic bag. The bag had filled with groundwater and this had entered the brass box through the joints. Within the box was an eclectic range of objects- two seashells, a lock of hair, a piece of slate and a fragment of transfer printed ware ceramic plate with a handwritten note on paper. All of this material was soaked through and the paper had almost disintegrated, the only legible lettering in blue ink reading "Day 1994". Sadly, this capsule has been discovered much sooner than the depositor may have intended, while the nature of the labelling and the imperfect sealing means the owner cannot now be traced. It does however date the deposition of the modern trench (13) to the last decade of the twentieth century.

DISCUSSION

Much of the observed depositional sequence was modern or very modern in date. Service trenches for plastic drains had removed the bulk of any earlier deposits from the south and west footing trenches. The south footing trench was offset to the south from the service trench allowing the depositional sequence to be recorded in its

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FINDS	0		SAMPLES	0		PAGE	2 of 14

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north facing section. The west footing trench seems to have coincided with a modern trench largely exposing the offset brick footings of the property boundary wall. Only the north footing trench exposed an undisturbed surface with a short depositional sequence largely reflecting what was seen in the south footings trench.

The property boundary wall incorporates limestone blocks that probably have a medieval origin. These would have been robbed from a demolished building in York but the brickwork associated with these blocks is nineteenth century in character. The brick wall with limestone block footings (06/37) parallel to the extant property boundary wall is probably an outside wall for an outbuilding within the back yard of 11A Walmgate- it seems too substantial to be the wall for a lean to building placed along the property boundary that would have been no more than 1.2 metres wide and there are no scars on the property boundary wall where a roof might have been attached. The space between the property boundary and this outbuilding would therefore have been a passage allowing access to the back of the property as a whole. It would seem to be broadly similar in date to the boundary wall.

The yellow and dark grey clays represent material brought in from elsewhere to raise the local ground level. Apart from fragments of CBM no artefacts were identified, suggesting this material was not derived from an intensively occupied area or redistributed from elsewhere in the property, but fairly 'clean' material brought in for a specific purpose. The site is close to the left bank of the River Foss and raising the ground level may represent nineteenth century concerns with potential dampness or flooding.

If the interpretation of the walls is correct, the pitched brick surface (10/35) would represent an indoor floor. Not enough of the surface was exposed to determine the function of this room and what was seen of the drain/soakaway (17) is not sufficiently diagnostic to help. No artefacts were associated with these or earlier deposits but they seem broadly consistent with a nineteenth-early twentieth century date.

The demolition of this outbuilding cannot be determined archaeologically, though the modern trench parallel to the property boundary could have been part of this process- cutting away much of wall 06/37 in preparation for the concrete slab 11/12. The "time capsule" recovered from the upper fill of this trench implies this took place as late as the early 1990s, while the brickwork and concrete slab of the modern wall (22) is recent. A better date for the service trenches, topsoil, lawn and gravelled soakaway is known as these features were created by the groundworks team, currently employed on the footings trenches, within the last ten years.

The footings of the two walls observed in this watching brief and the pitched brick surface are of some archaeological interest but not necessarily of great significance. No other archaeological deposits or features were disturbed in the course of the works and the deposits exposed have been fully recorded.

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10	PAGE	3 of 14

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Plate 1: Overall view of site end of day 1, looking NW



Plate 2. Overall view of site end of day 2 and completion of excavation work looking NW. Scale 1m.

COMPLETED BY	SJ Allen		CHECKED BY	D Aspden		FINISHED	18/10/16
FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10	PAGE	4 of 14

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PLANNING REFERENCE #	16/00996/FUL	AAI OPS NOTICE #	N/A



Plate 3. South footing trench, North facing section- west end. Scale 1m



Plate 4. South footing trench, North facing section- middle of section. Scale 1m

COMPLETED BY	SJ Allen		CHECKED BY	D Aspden		FINISHED	18/10/16
FINDS	0		SAMPLES	0		PAGE	5 of 14

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Plate 5. South footing trench, North facing section- East end and middle of section. Scale 1m



Plate 6. North footing trench, part of exposed brick surface looking E. Scale 1m

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FINDS	0		SAMPLES	0		PAGE	6 of 14

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Plate 7. North footing trench, overview of brick lined soakaway. S to top of image. Scale 100mm



Plate 8. North footing trench, South facing section. East end. Scale 1m

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10	PAGE	7 of 14

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PLANNING REFERENCE #	16/00996/FUL	AAI OPS NOTICE #	N/A



Plate 9. North footing trench, South facing section. West end. Scale 1m



Plate 10. West footing trench, "Time capsule". Scale 100mm

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FINDS	0		SAMPLES	0		PAGE	8 of 14

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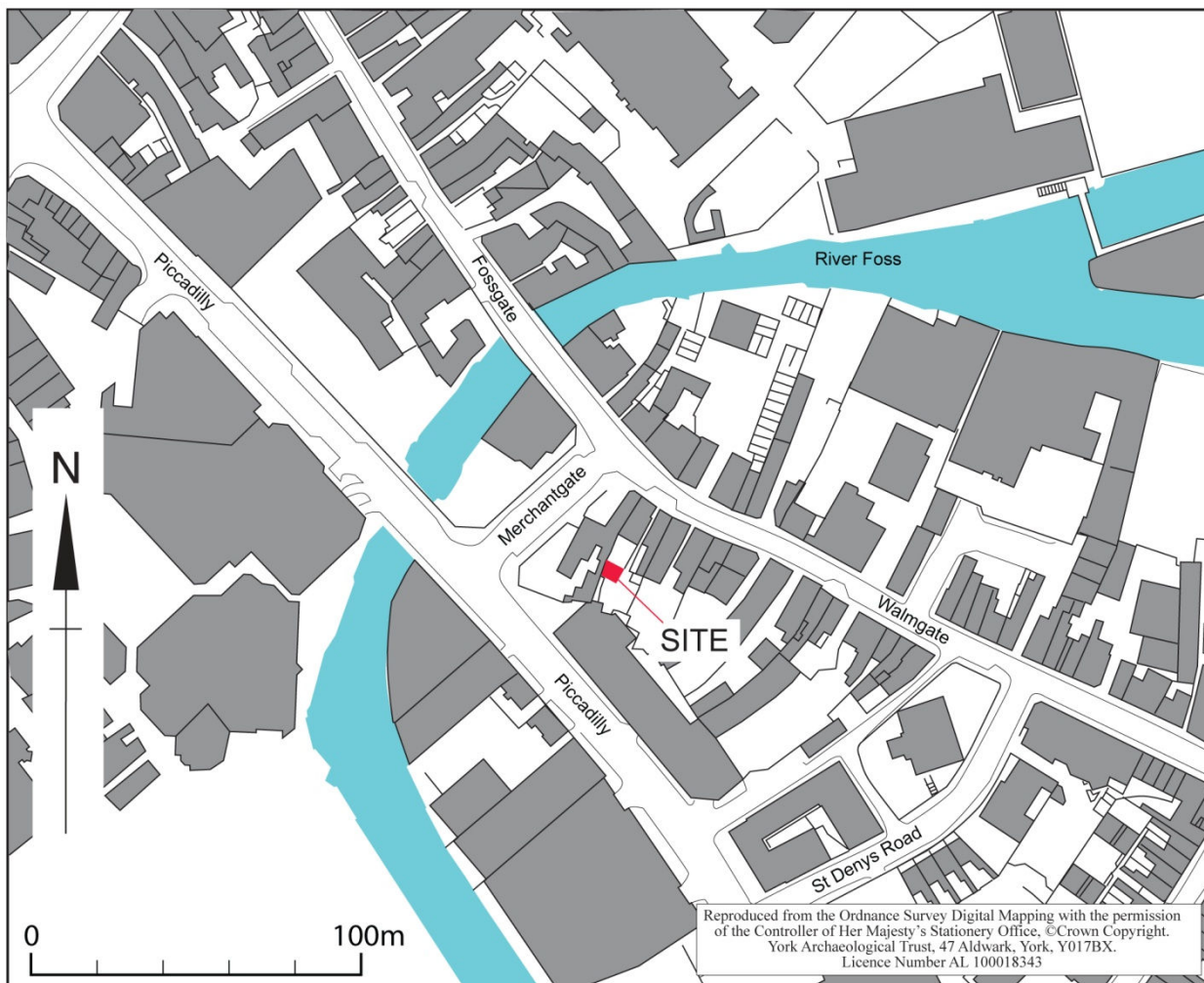


Figure 1. Baker's Yard, 11a Walmgate, Site location.

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10
				PAGE	9 of 14

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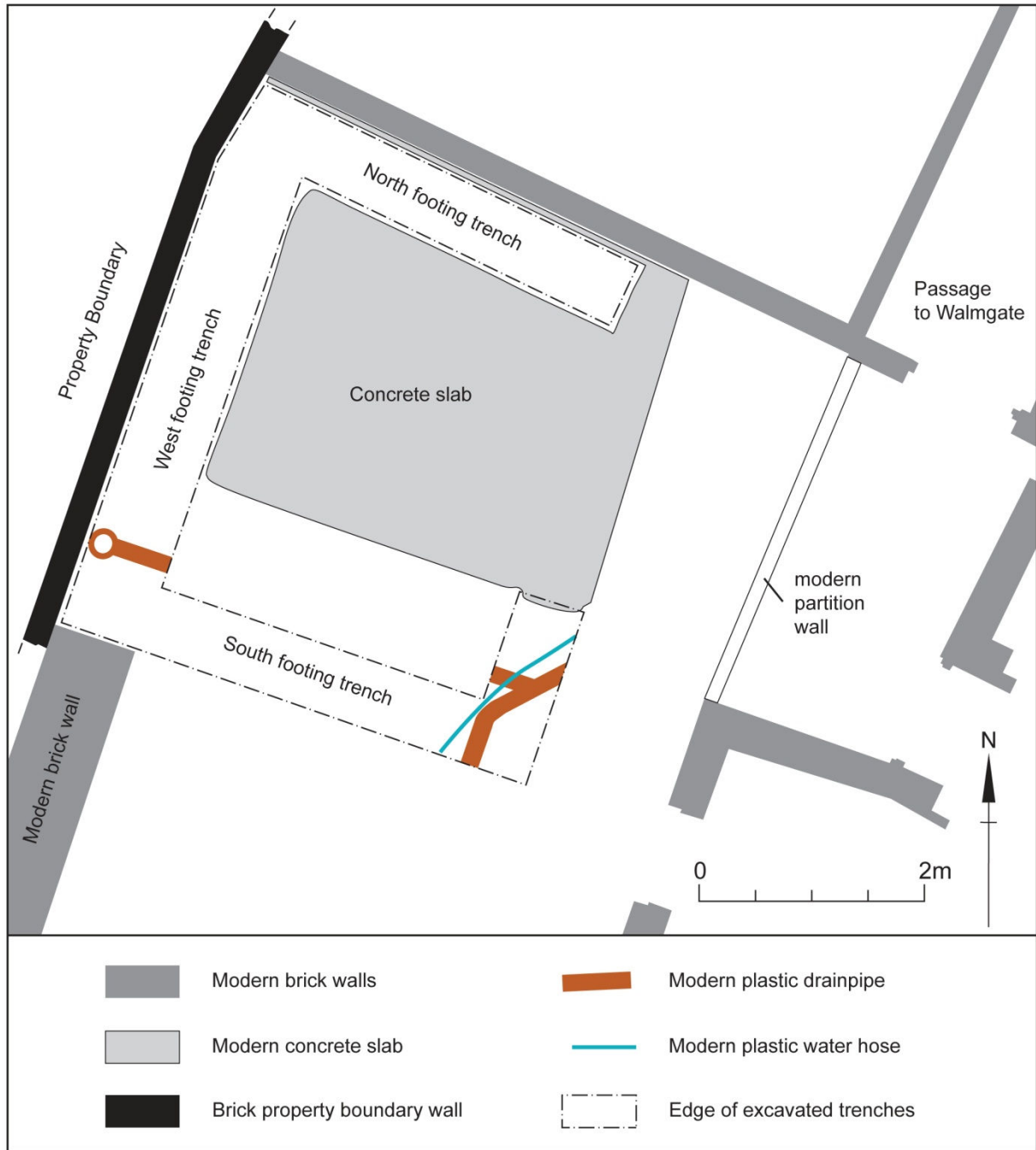


Figure 2. Baker's Yard, 11a Walmgate, Site plan

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10
				PAGE	10 of 14

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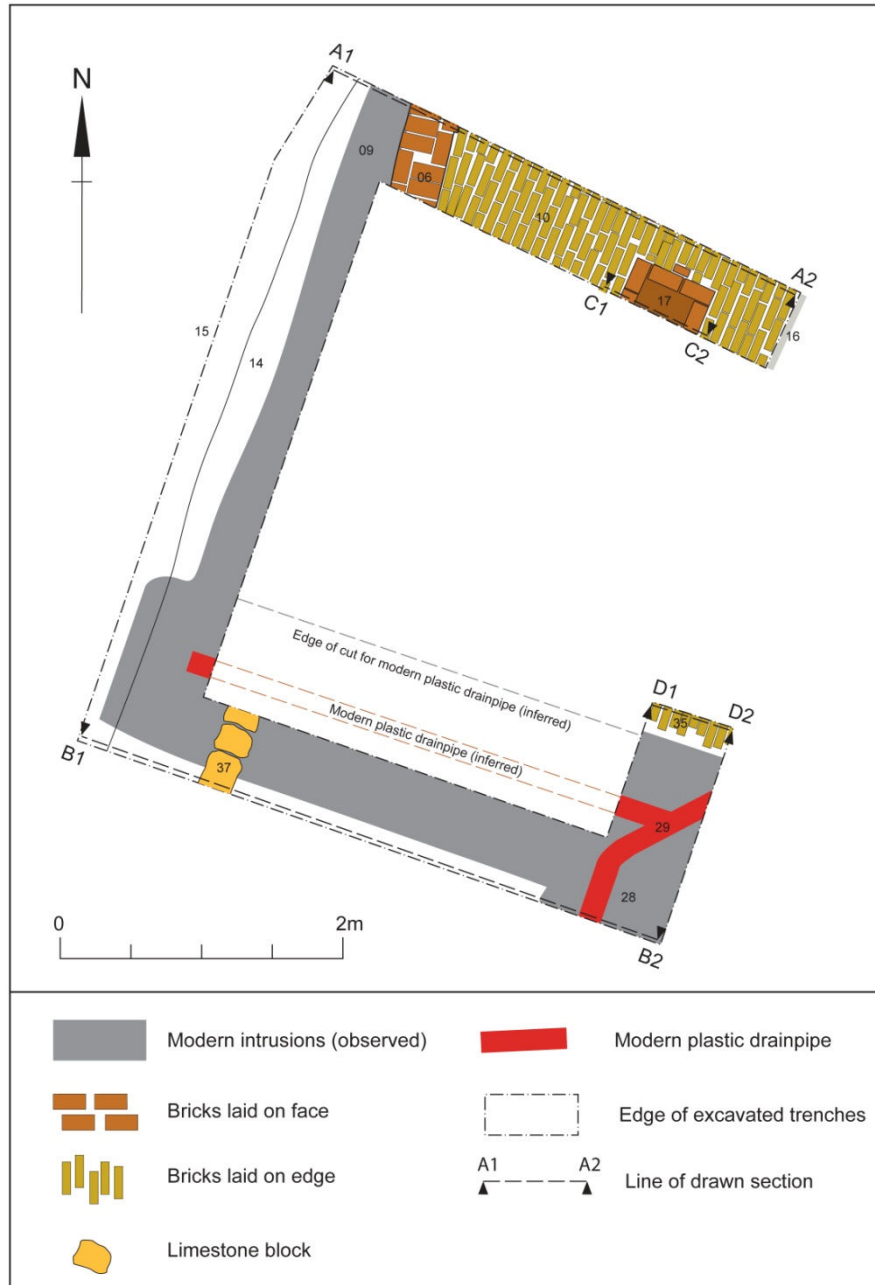


Figure 3. Baker's Yard, 11a Walmgate. Observed features.

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10
				PAGE	11 of 14

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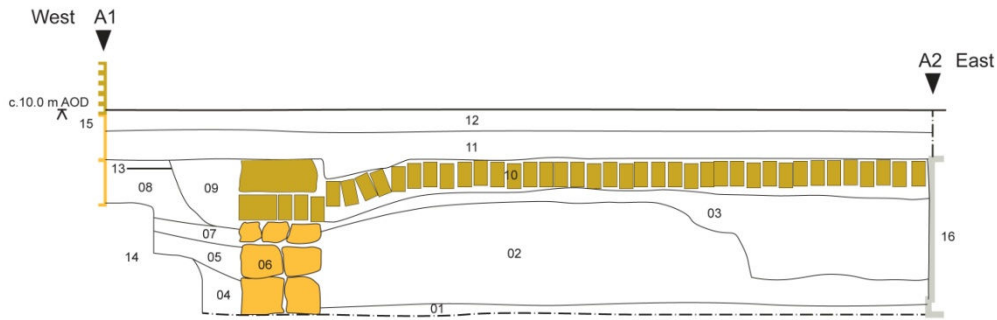


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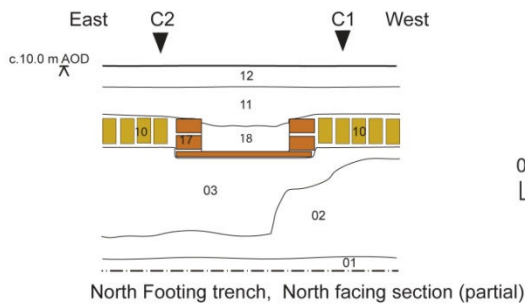


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North Footing trench, South facing section



North Footing trench, North facing section (partial)

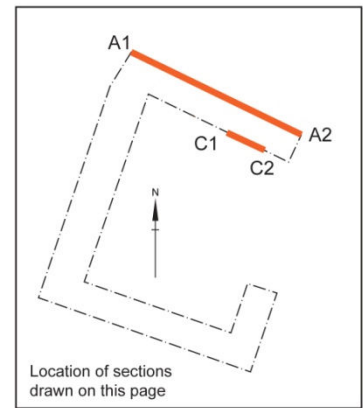


Figure 4. Baker's Yard, 11a Walmgate. North footing trench sections

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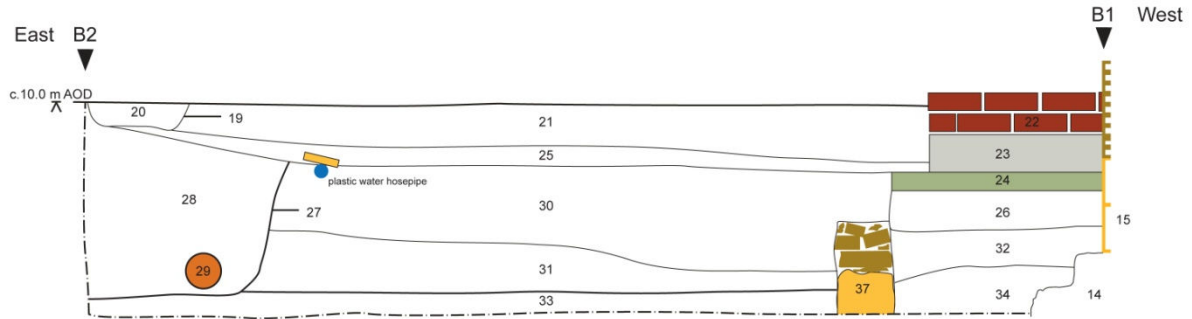


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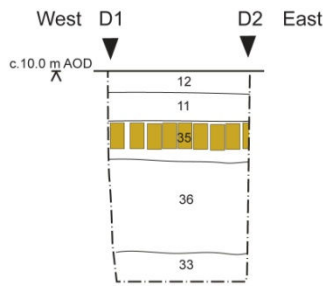


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South Footing trench, North facing section



East footing trench, South facing section

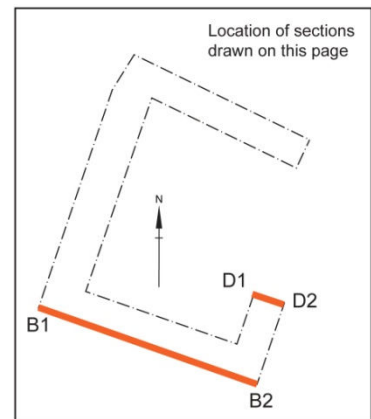


Figure 5. Baker's Yard, 11a Walmgate. South and east footing trench sections

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FINDS	0	SAMPLES	0	PHOTOS	10	PAGE	13 of 14

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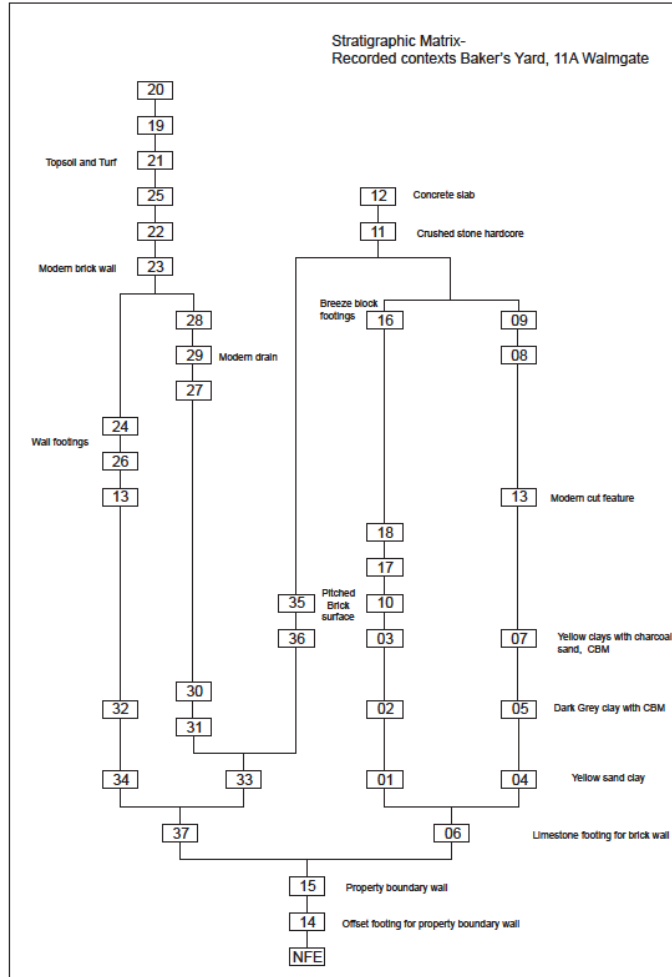


Figure 6 Stratigraphic Matrix

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				PAGE	14 of 14

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