



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE	Ripon City Club, 3 Water Skellgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire		
CLIENT NAME	Spencer Dunkley		
YAT PROJECT #	5957	YAT REPORT #	2017/16
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	N/A	GRID REFERENCE	SE 31169 71102
PLANNING REFERENCE #	DCPEFULZ 16/03998/FUL	AAI OPS NOTICE #	

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 31st January 2017 York Archaeological Trust carried out a watching brief on groundworks for the re-development of the Ripon City Club, 3 Water Skellgate. This entailed continuous monitoring of strip foundation excavations where they extended outside and beyond the footprint of the recently demolished former rear range of the building. A visual inspection was made of the strip foundations excavated within the footprint of the former building. No archaeological deposits, structures or artefacts were encountered during the watching brief.

2 SITE LOCATION, DESCRIPTION & GEOLOGY

The site is located at 3 Water Skellgate, Ripon centred on SE 31169 71102 (Fig 1). The site is bounded to the north by the Ripon City Club which fronts onto Water Skellgate road and is bounded on all other sides by residential developments. The current ground level slopes gently north to south within the development site. The present site was occupied by a red brick building dating to the late 19th Century, a rebuild of Jepson's Hospital with one or two minor adjustments in the 20th Century (JB Archaeology 2008). This building was demolished prior to the commencement of the watching brief.

The underlying geology of the development site is Mudstone formed in the Permian Period formed approximately 251 to 271 million years ago. This is overlain with superficial deposits of sand and gravel formed during ice age conditions some 2 million years ago in the Quaternary period (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> - accessed 01/02/17)

3 DESIGNATIONS & CONSTRAINTS

The proposed development site lies within the Ripon Conservation Area. It also lies within the buffer zone of the Studley Royal Park (including the ruins of Fountains Abbey) World Heritage Site. 3 Waterskellgate is not a listed building.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

The information in this section has been compiled from the Desk Based Assessment produced by JB Archaeological Services (2008). The heritage gateway was accessed on 24/01/2017 in order to ascertain whether any further archaeological works within the vicinity of the proposed development site had taken place since the production of the desk based assessment. No relevant works were noted.

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- 4.1 The area around Ripon contains extensive evidence for occupation during the prehistoric and Romano-British periods. There is, however, very little archaeological evidence for prehistoric or Romano-British activity within the confines of Ripon.
- 4.2 The historic origins of Ripon can be traced to the 7th and 8th centuries with accounts of the foundation of a monastery in c. AD 709/10. The location and layout of this monastery and its holdings are uncertain but are commonly believed to lie to the east of the proposed development site in the area now occupied by the cathedral. Evidence for a settlement predating the monastery development was encountered during an excavation in the area around Ailcy Hill which may indicate that there was significant development in the area from the 6th century onward.
- 4.3 The town and its ecclesiastical areas grew during the medieval period (from the 12th century onwards) indicating the increasing importance of the settlement. During this period the settlement was located in the area between the modern Market Place to the west and Low St. Agnesgate to the east.
- 4.4 Excavations at Bedern Bank c.280m to the east of the proposed development site have demonstrated good survival of archaeological features dating from the 12th to 13th centuries, many of them containing waterlogged material. The earliest activity was in the form of the revetting of a meander of the River Skell. A further evaluation at Skellgarths in 2001, c.240m to the east of the proposed development recorded a range of features possibly associated with a mill, along with other medieval features.
- 4.5 There are various references to a mill being located at or near the junction of Duck Hill, Water Skellgate and Skellgarths (approximately 100m east of the site) from Domesday onwards. The mill appears to have variously been called Bymylne, Byemill and Bye Mill and was finally partially demolished in 1988 for road widening. During the site visit for the desk based assessment the building called Mill House was examined. At the northern end of the new building there are what appear to be the remains of a substantial, undressed stone wall which may represent the partial remains of the last phase of the mill. The existence of the mill is further attested to with a documentary reference from the 1340's to Skellgarths being called Walkmill Bank.
- 4.6 The water-course recorded during the Bedern Bank excavation would appear to form an early phase of the water management of the River Skell with the linear feature encountered at the Skellgarths site probably being part of this activity. This would appear to be supported by the remains of part of the mill race observed in the gardens to the rear of St Agnes Lodge and the ability to follow its course on various 18th century maps. With the establishing of a mill and

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water management it would be expected that the area around the mill and mill race would see further development.

- 4.7 A trial excavation of a single trench closer to the proposed development at the rear of the former (c.180m to the east) recorded a sequence of archaeological deposits dating from the late medieval period through to the early 20th century. The top of the post-medieval archaeological horizons were encountered at a depth of c. 0.78m below the current ground level and extended to a depth of c.1.50m below ground level.
- 4.8 An archaeological evaluation prior to the redevelopment of part of the former Renault Car Showroom (c.100m to the east) recorded a range of archaeological deposits. The post-medieval deposits were encountered immediately below the modern topsoil/disturbance at around 0.6m below ground level and the medieval remains extended to between 0.8m and 1.36m below ground level. The remains recorded included post-holes and cobble walls along with a range of artefacts which suggested domestic activity and possibly iron working being carried out in the area.
- 4.9 A watching brief carried out on the re-development of a former car showroom on the corner of Low Skellgate and Water Skellgate to the west recorded the remains of what appeared to be part of a substantial medieval building now apparently completely below ground level. The top of the medieval deposits surrounding the structure were encountered at c.0.80m below the current ground level and extended to c.1.50m below ground level.
- 4.10 Post-medieval cartographic evidence shows a millrace drawing water from the River Laver and running along Water Skellgate (hence its name) and Skellgarths before joining the River Skell at Bondgate to the east of the proposed re-development site. Work within the last 10 years on the boiler room for the Renault show room to the east revealed the remains of part of a stone culvert, probably part of the mill-race or associated water management along Water Skellgate.
- 4.11 Langdale's Plan of Ripon (1818) continues to record the mill-race but in 1880 the watercourse had been covered over and become a roadway. Various road works along Water Skellgate have revealed a cobbled surface at c.0.6m below current ground level.
- 4.12 Jeffrey's map of 1772 appears to show the northern part of the proposed development site occupied by buildings. By the 1818 Plan of Ripon these buildings appear to still be present but there was an additional structure running south from the earlier frontage and the site was now occupied by Jepson's Hospital. In 1672 Zacarias Jepson endowed a 'Bluecoat' school for the poor which was rebuilt in 1878 and is the red brick building that currently occupies the site. This school was closed in 1927.
- 4.13 The site visit undertaken for the desk based assessment showed that the present layout of the

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majority of the buildings on the site date from the rebuild of 1878 with one or two minor late 20th century additions. The ground level of the site sloped gently to the south, with a drop of c.0.8-1m along the length of the whole plot. Trial geo-technical investigations were undertaken on the site (c0.5m deep) and only showed modern topsoil. Further geo-technical investigations had been carried out in 2004 which recorded made ground to a depth of between 0.60m and 0.70m below ground level (the third trial hole encountered a concrete slab at 0.5m and was terminated). Below c.0.70m the two deeper trial holes noted sand, cobbles and silty clay which from their limited description would seem to relate to the descriptions recorded from the archaeological investigations at the sites to both the west and east at about the same depth.

5 METHODOLOGY

Groundworks were carried out by a mini excavator equipped with a 0.70m wide toothless bucket. Excavations outside of the footprint of the original standing building were monitored by an archaeologist. A visual inspection of foundation footings excavated within the footprint of the demolished existing building was undertaken where possible (Fig 2).

The foundation footings were 0.75m wide and at the southern end were excavated to a depth of 0.90m. At the northern end of the site footings reached a depth of 1.40m due to the natural ground slope of the site from north to south.

Recording proceeded by means of written notes and digital photography with an appropriate photographic scale. Due to the depth of some of the excavations and the relatively loose material it was not always safe to enter the trenches. Therefore inspection was carried out from the top of the trenches.

6 RESULTS

The earliest deposit encountered was a soft, orangey brown, clayey sand deposit with bands of river gravels and pebbles. This was present at the north side of the site at a depth of 1.2m BGL, and is likely to be naturally deposited sediments.

Directly above this deposit was a loose, brownish grey, pebbly silty sand deposit with occasional larger cobbles. This is possibly a build-up deposit or a redeposited natural deposit. The top of this deposit was found at 0.80m BGL. This could relate to the medieval occupation of the site as it is similar to build-up/dump deposits recorded at Skellgarths (Finlayson 2001a) and at land to the rear of Wakeman's House (Finlayson 2001b). However no structural remains, floor deposits or cut features were observed during the groundworks relating to the medieval period.

Overlying these deposits was a friable, brownish grey, sandy silt topsoil/build-up deposit. This

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deposit contained occasional inclusions of charcoal and grey mortar flecks. A single find of a 19th Century glass bottle base was recovered from within the deposit - not retained. The homogenous nature of the deposit appears to suggest a gradual build-up of material rather than deliberate dumping of material. The top of this deposit was at 0.20m BGL and this was sealed by modern overburden.

7 DISCUSSION

During the course of the watching brief no definitive archaeological remains were observed, and no finds were recovered. A build-up/redeposited natural deposit was observed that possibly relates to medieval activity, due to its similarity to deposits excavated in previous excavations in the area. This could relate to widespread dumping of material in order to provide flood free land to build on. However no structural features above this deposit could be discerned within the foundation footings observed during the course of the watching brief.

Resources

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> - accessed 01/02/17.

References

Finlayson, R., 2001a. Report on excavations at Skellgarths, Ripon, North Yorkshire. 2001 YAT Field Report Number 16.

Finlayson, R., 2001b. Land to the Rear of Wakeman's House, High Skellgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire. 2001 YAT Field Report Number 6.

JB Archaeology. 2008. 3 Water Skellgate, Ripon, Archaeological desk based assessment. Unpublished grey literature report.

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Plates



Plate 1 south end of foundation trench facing east. 0.50m scale

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Plate 2 north end of foundation trench facing east. 0.50 scale

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Figures

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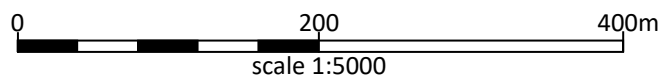


Fig. 01 Site location

Water Skellgate

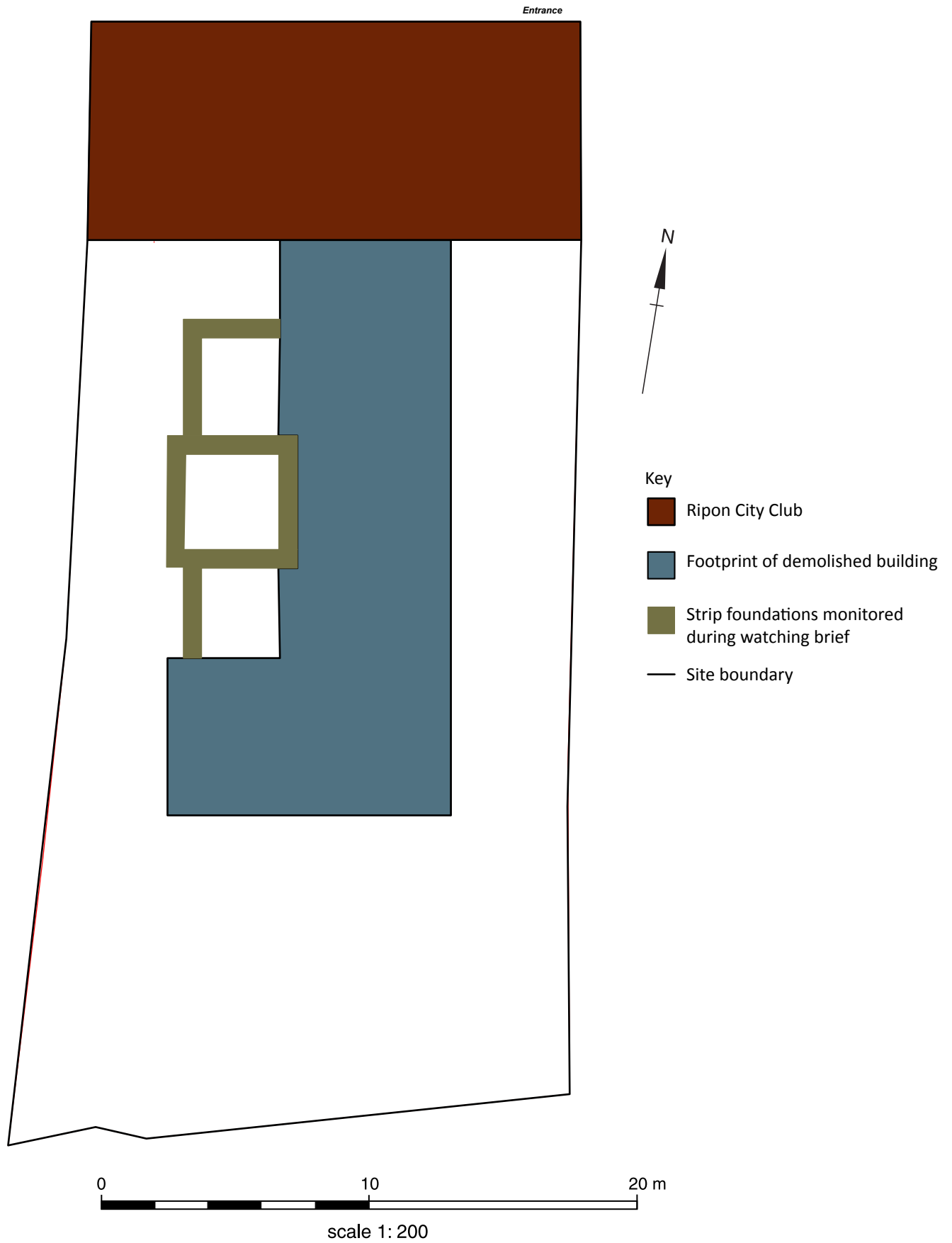


Fig. 02 Location of areas monitored during watching brief