



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



## Archaeological Investigations at St George's School, Winterscale Street, York

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YAT Assessment Report 2018/107 August 2018





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**Abbreviations**

AOD – Above Ordnance Datum

BGL – Below Ground Level

CBM – Ceramic Building Material

YAT – York Archaeological Trust

## Non-technical Summary

On July 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2018, York Archaeological Trust conducted a test pit evaluation at St. George's School, Winterscale Street, York (SE 60901 50928).

The work was undertaken for St. George's School as part of a research project to investigate the archaeology of the school grounds. The works involved the excavation of two 1m x 1m test pits by pupils of the school. Topsoil and a make-up deposit were excavated in both trenches, however, finds ranging in date from medieval to modern were recovered. In addition to the excavation, staff from the JORVIK Group led a number of educational activities and a geophysical survey and educational sessions were carried out by Magnitude Surveys.

## KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	St. George's School, Winterscale Street, York
YAT Project No.	6075
Document Number	2018/107
Type of Project	Test Pit Evaluation
Client	St. George's School
Planning Application No.	N/A
NGR	SE 60901 50928
Museum Accession No.	N/A
OASIS Identifier	yorkarch1-324626

## REPORT INFORMATION

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018, YAT conducted a test pit evaluation at St. George's School, Winterscale Street, York (SE 60901 50928) (Figure 1). The work was undertaken on behalf of the school to evaluate the archaeological resource and to assess the potential of the site for a future research project on a larger scale.

Two 1m x 1m test pits were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m BGL. All excavation was carried out by pupils of the school under supervision from teachers and YAT staff. In addition to the excavation, the schoolchildren were led through a series of educational activities by staff from the JORVIK Group.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed a brief agreed between St. George's School and YAT.

### 2.1 Geophysical Survey

Prior to the test pit excavation, Magnitude Surveys were commissioned to carry out a series of educational activities and a geophysical survey of the playing field with school pupils. A fluxgate magnetometer survey revealed the buried remains of Winterscale Street, Elmwood Street and James's Terrace which were demolished in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 2). The report concluded that any earlier buried remains had been rendered invisible by the strong ferrous response of the 19<sup>th</sup> century horizon (Swinbank 2018, 10).

### 2.2 Test Pits

A total of two were excavated (Figure 1):

No.	Size (m)	Rationale
1	1m x 1m	Investigation of the remains of Winterscale Street
2	1m x 1m	Investigation of buildings fronting onto Winterscale Street

The test pits were situated in a location agreed with the school close to the north-east corner of the school playing field. Test Pit 1 was positioned to investigate the remains of the surface of Winterscale Street. Test Pit 2 was positioned over the remains of a dwelling fronting on to Winterscale Street. De-turfing was carried out by YAT staff and the turf was stored adjacent to the excavation area. All deposits were hand excavated by pupils of St. George's School under constant supervision from YAT and St. George's staff. Recording was carried out by YAT staff and followed the standard YAT single context recording system. All excavated material was dry sieved and stored on tarpaulins adjacent to the excavation area. Finds were retrieved and bagged by individual context number. Upon completion, the test pits were backfilled, compacted and re-turfed by YAT staff.

The two days on-site were broken into three sessions, with one session devoted to each year group. Each session began with an introduction to archaeology, before the schoolchildren were divided into smaller groups for individual activities. Around 20 minutes was spent on each activity, including excavation and introductions to planning, artefact recognition and environmental sample sorting.

### 3 LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

St. George's School is located on Winterscale Street in York (SE 60901 50928). The playing field occupies land to the east of the school and covers an area of approximately 0.70m hectares. The field is predominantly turfed, with mature trees around the periphery and is largely flat at a height of around 14.50m AOD.

The underlying geology comprises Sherwood Sandstone Group sandstone below superficial deposits of Naburn Sand Member sands, silts and gravels (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> - accessed 3/8/18).

### 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

St. George's School is located within Character Area 65: Fulford Road as defined by the 2013 City of York Historic Characterisation Project. This provides a detailed overview of the area's historical and archaeological background that is briefly summarised below. (MacRae 2013 [https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3600/area\\_65 - fulford roadpdf](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3600/area_65_-_fulford_roadpdf) accessed 3/8/18).

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the broader area is limited, however, a scatter of lithic material has previously been found close by on Fishergate (EYO610). Fulford Road is believed to be a Roman route with origins in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and several burial sites have been identified in the area, including a cremation cemetery between Melbourne Street and Winterscale Street close to the north-west boundary of the school (MYO2021, *ibid.*)

The Fishergate area to the north of the school has provided a great deal of evidence for Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian activity, although the St. George's site is yet to provide any evidence for these periods. The site will, however, have fallen within the sphere of influence of the nearby early-medieval and medieval ecclesiastical sites of St. Helen's Church and St. Andrew's Priory (*ibid.*).

Common grazing land to the south of the site was enclosed in the late 1750s, creating a series of smaller fields that remained in use until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when rows of terraced housing began to spread outwards from the city (*ibid.*). The housing on Winterscale Street, Elmwood Street and James's Terrace was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, first appearing on the 1891 OS map (Swinbank 2018,2).

### 5 RESULTS

#### 5.1 Test Pit 1

The earliest deposit to be reached within Trench 1 was a make-up deposit relating to the construction of the playing field in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Context 101; Figure 3; Plate 1). The deposit was highly compacted and comprised a mid-greyish brown sandy silt with moderate inclusions of mortar, CBM, stones, coal, charcoal and slag. Ceramic finds ranged in date from 20<sup>th</sup> century to green glazed medieval wares and the deposit was present from a height of 14.43m AOD to the maximum excavated depth of 14.25m AOD.



**Plate 1. South-east facing view of Test Pit 1 (0.50m scale).**

Context 101 was sealed by the present surface of turf and highly compacted, dark-greyish brown sandy silt topsoil with moderate inclusions of coal, charcoal, pebbles, CBM and mortar (Context 100; Figure 3; Plate 1). This deposit was relatively flat at a height of 14.55m AOD.

## **5.2 Test Pit 2**

Test Pit 2 identified an identical sequence to that of Test Pit 1, with a topsoil deposit (Context 200; Figure 2; Plate 2) overlying a make-up layer relating to the laying of the playing field (Context 201; Figure 3; Plate 2). Context 201 was present between 14.40m AOD and extended beyond the maximum excavated depth of 14.32m AOD. The deposit was identical in composition to that of Context 101 and produced a similar artefactual assemblage, with the addition of a single sherd of Cistercian Ware and a small amount of animal bone.

The present topsoil and turf surface was laid flat at a height of 14.54m AOD (Context 200; Figure 3: Plate 2).





**Plate 2. West facing view of Test pit 2 (0.50m scale).**

## 6 DISCUSSION

The test pit evaluation and educational activities proved to be very successful in providing the pupils of St. George's with an introduction to archaeology. Despite the fact that the excavation did not reach material pre-dating the construction of the school, the residual assemblage of early modern, post-medieval and medieval finds recovered from 20<sup>th</sup> century contexts could suggest that earlier archaeological deposits may survive at a greater depth. The possibility of finds being introduced through imported soils, however, must also be considered.

The results of the geophysical survey suggest a high likelihood that the 19<sup>th</sup> century horizon survives in good condition beneath the playing field. This demonstrates that future works will have a good chance of uncovering significant structural remains that will help to elucidate how the site was used before the construction of the school.

### LIST OF SOURCES

<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

[https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3600/area\\_65\\_-\\_fulford\\_roadpdf](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/3600/area_65_-_fulford_roadpdf)

### REFERENCES

Swinbank, L., 2018. *Geophysical Survey Report of St. George's RC Primary School* Magnitude Surveys Report MSSE332

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to the staff of St. George's for their assistance with the delivery of the project. Special thanks to the pupils for their boundless energy and admirable desire to learn about the history of their school.

**APPENDIX 1 – CONTEXT LIST**

Context Number	Description
100	Turf/topsoil
101	Make-up
200	Turf/topsoil
201	Make-up

**Table 1. Context list**

## FIGURES

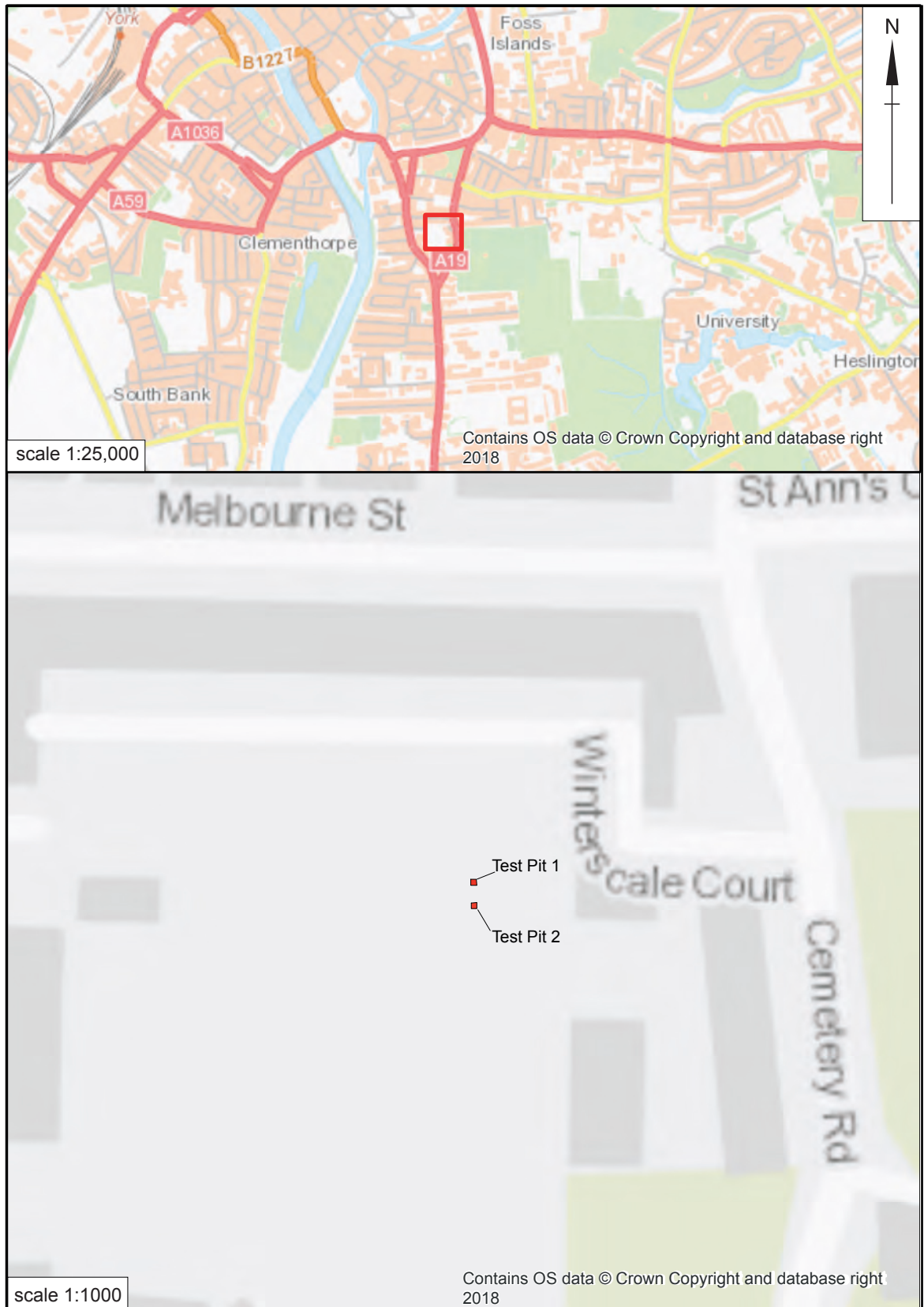
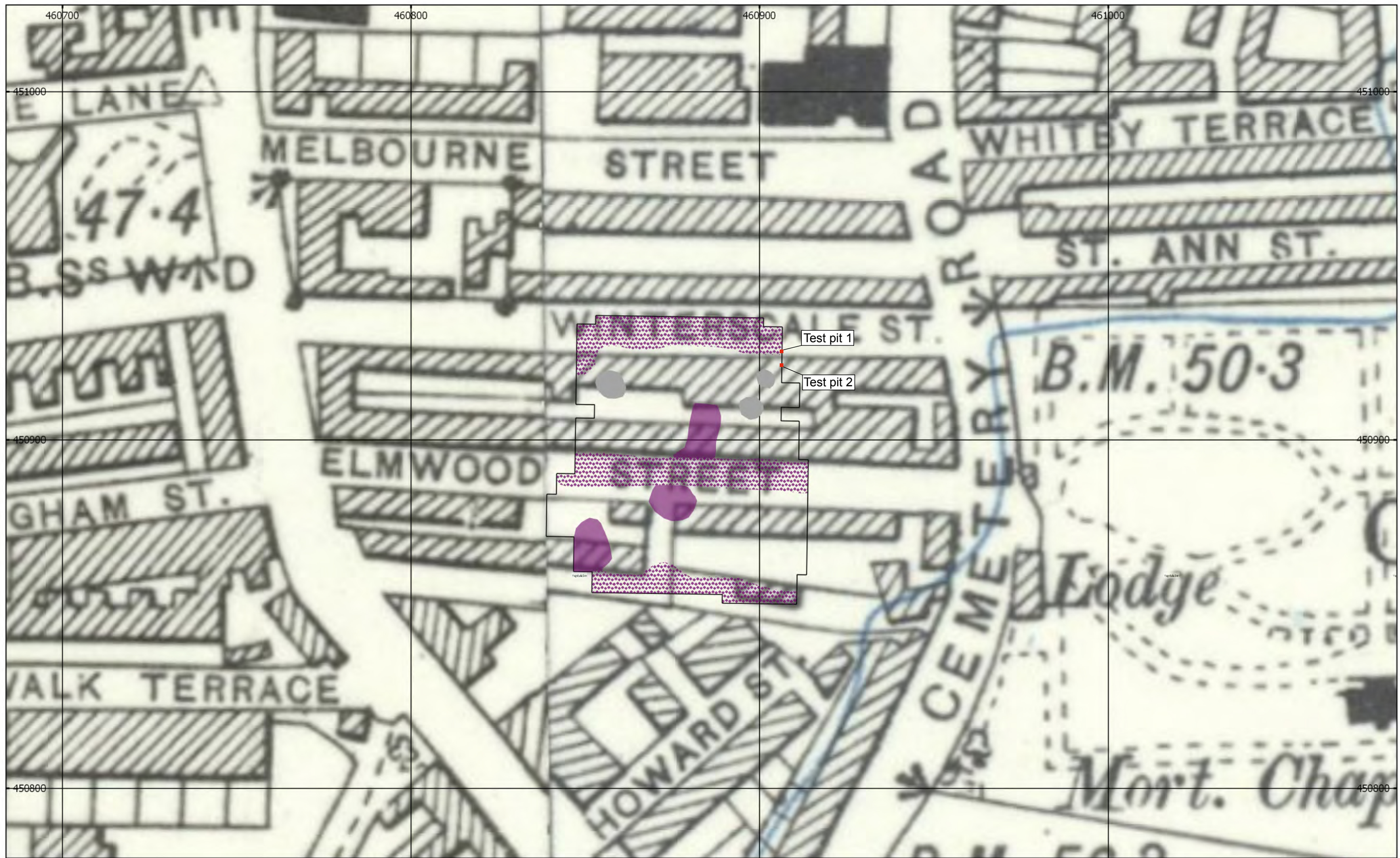


Figure 1. Site and test pit locations



St Georges' School, York  
 Figure 6 - Magnetic Interpretation Over Historic Maps  
 1:1000 @ A3  
 Copyright Magnitude Surveys Ltd 2018  
 Contains historic maps: Ordnance Survey, 6" 2nd edition c. 1882-1913 ©  
 National Library of Scotland

- Ferrous (Dipolar)
- Former Road (Spread)
- Industrial/Modern (Strong)

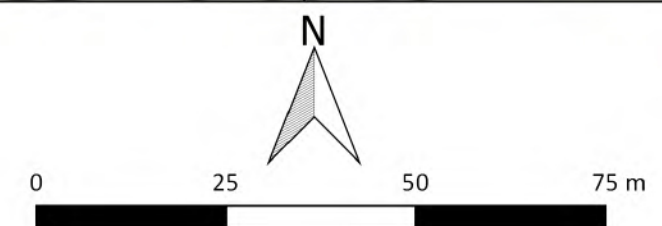
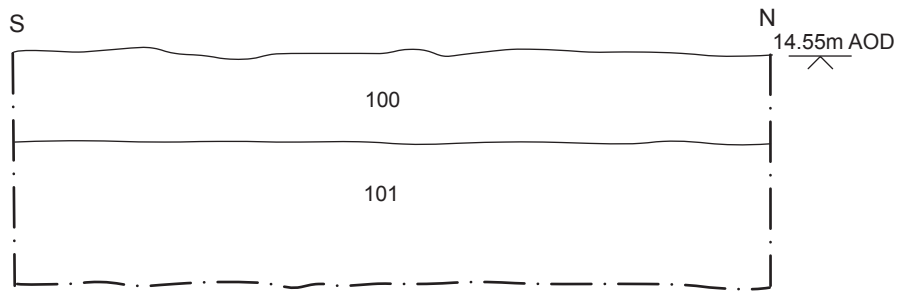


Figure 2. Test pit locations overlaid on geophysical survey

Section 1, Test Pit 1



Section 2, Test Pit 2

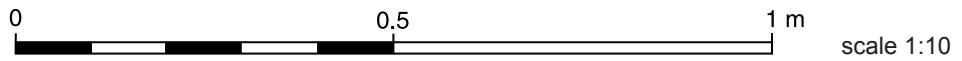
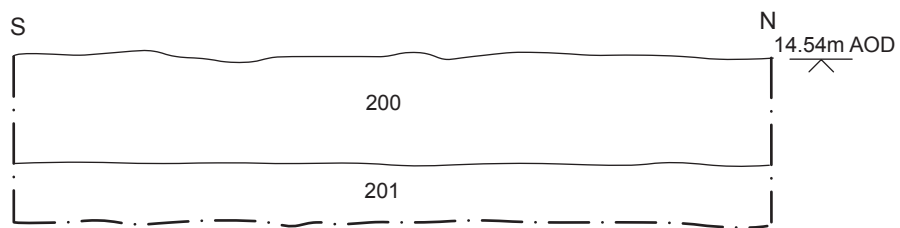


Figure 3. Test Pit 1 and Test Pit 2 sections



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