

Archaeological Investigations at Kirk House, Mill Mount, York

By George Loffman

YAT Watching Brief Report 2019/16 December 2019





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CONTENTS

NON	I-TEC	HNICAL SUMMARY	3
KEY	PROJ	ECT INFORMATION	3
1	INTE	RODUCTION	4
2	MET	HODOLOGY	4
3	LOC	ATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY	4
4	ARC	HAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	5
5	RES	ULTS	5
5.	.1	Car park ground reduction	.5
5.	.2	Services excavation	.5
5.	.3	Cycle store foundations	.5
6	SUN	MARY	6
LIST	OF S	OURCES	6
REFI	EREN	CES	6
		/LEDGEMENTS	
		1	
		X 1 – INDEX TO ARCHIVE	
		X 2 – WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION	
APP	ENDI	X 2 - WRITTEN SCHEIME OF INVESTIGATION	.3
Plat			
		View of site	
		Car park area after topsoil strip	7
		Section 1, within car park area looking south-west, 0.5m scale	
		Car park area looking north-west	
Pla	te 4	Service trench looking south-east, 0.5m scale	8
		Service trench looking south-west, 0.5m scale	
		Foundation pit for cycle store looking north-west, 0.5m scale	
-			
Tab			
Tah	le 1	Index to archive 1	2

Figures

Figure 1 Site	e location	10
Figure 2 Wor	rks location	11

Abbreviations

Below ground level BGL

BGS **British Geological Survey**

York Archaeological Trust YAT

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Between the 14th January and the 26th November 2019 York Archaeological Trust (YAT) conducted an archaeological watching brief at Kirk House, Mill Mount, York (SE 59551 59540).

The work was undertaken for Carve Architecture to help inform a planning application that was under consideration by the City of York Council (18/01012/FU). The work was based on a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by YAT. The works involved monitoring groundworks associated with the renovation of Kirk House.

During the course of the watching brief no significant archaeological remains were encountered.

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name	Kirk House, Mill Mount
YAT Project No.	6094
Document Number	2019/16
Type of Project	Watching brief
Client	Carve Architecture
Planning Application No.	18/01012/FUL
NGR	SE 59551 59540
Museum Accession No.	N/A
OASIS Identifier	yorkarch1-341945

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V1	GL	03/12/19	MS	26/03/20	MS	26/03/20

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1 INTRODUCTION

Between the 14th January and the 26th November 2019 YAT conducted an archaeological watching brief at Kirk House, Mill Mount, York (SE 59551 59540; Figure 1).

The work was undertaken for Error! Reference source not found. Architecture to satisfy a planning condition from CYC (18/01012/FUL).

The scheme includes the enlargement and creation of new window openings of the current building, the creation of a new entrance lobby, the erection of a bin and bike store, along with new boundary treatments and amendments to the site layout.

The following archaeological condition was imposed:

No work shall commence on site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (a watching brief on all ground works by an approved archaeological unit) in accordance with a specification approved by the Local Planning Authority.

This programme and the archaeological unit shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development commences.

Reason: The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development will affect important archaeological deposits which must be recorded during the construction programme.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced by YAT in response to the above condition.

2 METHODOLOGY

The groundwork involved a number of different phases. Firstly excavation for the extension of the car park on the north side of Kirk House, from 14th - 17th January 2019. Secondly excavation of a service trench along the side of Kirk House, from 24th January - 21st February. Thirdly excavation of footings for a new cycle shed on the 26th November 2019. The methodology followed the WSI (Appendix 3).

Excavation was carried out with an excavator equipped with a 1.8m and 0.50m toothless bucket.

All groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist. Recording was carried out through digital photography and written notes.

3 **LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY**

The site is located at Kirk House, Mill Mount, York, YO24 1GH (Figure 1). The proposed site covers an area of 3,303m². The landscape is slightly undulating and levels vary across the site between 15.69m AOD to the north and 20.19m AOD to the south of the site.

The site is bounded by Scarcroft Road to the north-east, by terraces housing to the north-west, Mill Mount carriageway to the south west and a commercial building and car park to the south west.

The property is currently occupied by a two storey commercial office building and associated car parks.

The underlying bedrock consists of sedimentary bedrock of the Sherwood Sandstone Group, with overlying deposits of clay, sand and gravel making up the York Moraine which extends to south-west of York (BGS).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The main archaeological interest was four Roman burials left in-situ by MAP (1991) during previous work on the site. The site lies within a known area of Roman burials, see Appendix 3 for summary of historical and archaeological background.

5 **RESULTS**

5.1 Car park ground reduction

An area of approximately 40m x 5m was excavated on the north side of Kirk House (Plate 1 and 3). This was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.8m in depth.

The earliest deposit encountered was friable, orange brown, clay at a depth of 0.72m BGL. This could be natural or redeposited material (Plate 2).

Above this was a demolition deposit consisting of friable, clayey silt with frequent fragments of building rubble. The top of the deposit was at 0.47m BGL and was 0.25m in thickness. This possibly relates to the demolition of the garden nursery depicted on the 1962 OS map.

This was sealed by a build-up layer found at a depth of 0.15m BGL. This consisted of soft, mid grey brown, sandy clay with moderate CBM and metal fragments. This may relate to landscaping relating to the Mill Mount School using the site in the 1970s.

The uppermost deposit was make-up for the present car park.

Services excavation

A service trench was excavated alongside the northern frontage of Kirk House (Plates 4 and 5). This was 0.70m in width and approximately 1.10m in depth.

The earliest deposit found was a natural deposit, consisting of friable mid brown yellow, sand and gravel. The top of this deposit was at a depth of 0.8m BGL.

Above the sand and gravel deposit was a firm, mid orange brown, clay with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. The top of the deposit was at 0.35m BGL. This was sealed by modern make-up and paving slabs of the present footpath.

5.3 **Cycle store foundations**

Eight foundations pits were excavated measuring approximately 1m x 0.8m and between 1m to 1.1m in depth (Plate 6).

A natural deposit was found within the pits at approximately 0.7m to 0.9m BGL. This consisted of friable, mid brown, sandy clay.

Above this was a layer of demolition consisting of friable dark brown grey, clayey silt with modern building materials. The top of the deposit was found a 0.7m BGL and was 0.2m in thickness.

The uppermost deposit was concrete and make-up for the present car park.

6 **SUMMARY**

During the course of the work no significant archaeological remains were uncovered.

LIST OF SOURCES

British Geological Survey www.bgs.ac.uk

REFERENCES

Stephens, M.R., 1991. An Archaeological Trial Excavation at All Saints School, Mill Mount, York. April- May, 1991. MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YAT would like to thank site manager Kevin McGowan for assistance during the works.

PLATES



Plate 1 Car park area after topsoil strip



Plate 2 Section 1, within car park area looking south-west, 0.5m scale



Plate 3 Car park area looking north-west



Plate 4 Service trench looking south-east, 0.5m scale

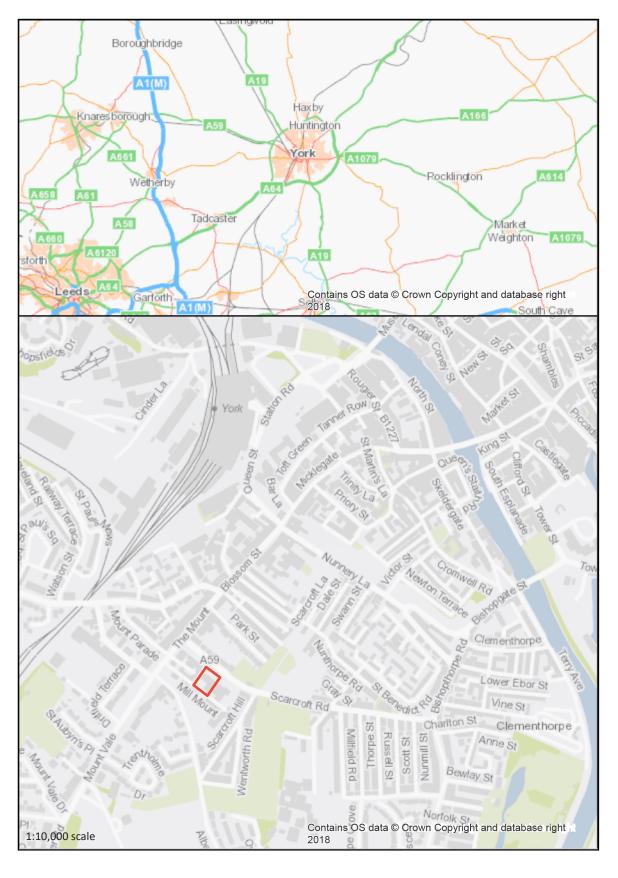


Plate 5 Service trench looking south-west, 0.5m scale



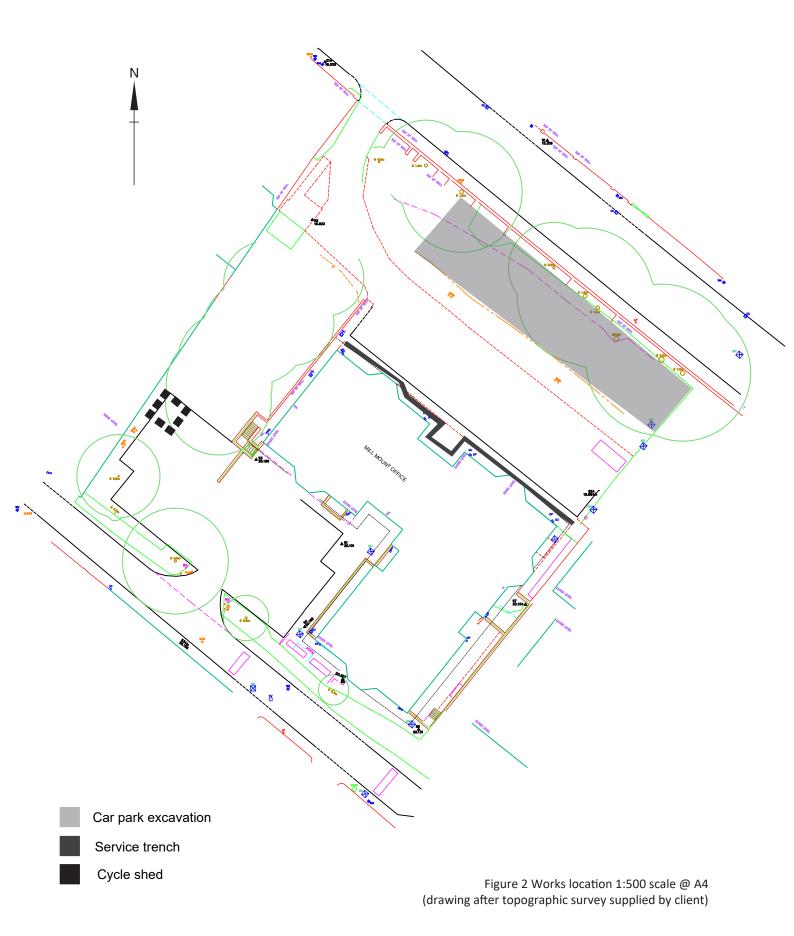
Plate 6 Foundation pit for cycle store looking north-west, 0.5m scale





Site location

Figure 1 Site Location



APPENDIX 1 – INDEX TO ARCHIVE

Item	Number of items
Context sheets	0
Levels register	0
Photographic register	0
Sample register	0
Drawing register	0
Original drawings	1
B/W photographs (films/contact sheets)	0
Colour slides (films)	0
Digital photographs	43
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1

Table 1 Index to archive

APPENDIX 2 – WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

SUMMARY

- Carve Architecture have received planning consent for Kirk House at Mill Mount, 1.1 York, YO24 1GH (SE 59551 59540). The scheme will include the enlargement and creation of new window openings of the current building, the creation of a new entrance lobby, the erection of a bin and bike store, along with new boundary treatments and amendments to the site layout.
- 1.2 The following archaeological condition has been imposed:

No work shall commence on site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work (a watching brief on all ground works by an approved

archaeological unit) in accordance with a specification approved by the Local Planning Authority.

This programme and the archaeological unit shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning

Authority before development commences.

Reason: The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Importance and the development will affect important archaeological deposits which must be recorded during the construction programme.

1.3 This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been prepared in response to the above conditions, written by York Archaeological Trust (YAT). The work will be carried out in accordance with this WSI.

SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The proposal site is at Kirk House, Mill Mount, York, YO24 1GH (Figure 1). The proposed site covers an area of 3,303m² with five different areas across the site requiring ground works. The landscape is slightly undulating and levels vary across the site between 15.69m AOD to the north and 20.19m AOD to the south of the site.
- 2.2 The underlying bedrock consists of sedimentary bedrock of the Sherwood Sandstone Group, with overlying deposits of clay, sand and gravel making up the York Moraine which extends to south west of York https://www.bgs.ac.uk/home.html.

DESIGNATIONS & CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 The site lies within the York City Centre Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) and York Conservation Area.
- 3.2 There are several listed buildings which stand within 100m of the site. Directly opposite the site along Mill Mount road lies the former coach house and attached stableyard gateway (UID: 1257282) which is Grade II listed. All Saint's School is also a Grade II* listed building (UID: 1257280), along with the conservatory to the rear of All Saint's School (UID: 1257281), Mill Mount Lodge (UID: 1390549) and Mill Mount House and Railings (UID: 1257283).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

4.1 Prehistory

The site lies on top of the terminal glacial moraine that runs through this part of the city. Work at St Paul's Green, Holgate, 400m NNW of the current site identified kettleholes in the clayey moraine natural where peat had formed (Antoni and Hunter-Mann, 1999). Pottery of late-Neolithic/Early Bronze Age date was recovered from the uppermost peat deposits. Prehistoric activity is rarely identified in York but this site may present an opportunity to sample more of this landscape.

Roman

Roman funerary archaeology represents the primary archaeological activity in this area. The Mount area has provided many of the best known monumental tombs and funerary inscriptions from Roman York, many recovered before the mid-nineteenth century. Discoveries made at the junction of Dalton Terrace and The Mount, and at No.2 Dalton Terrace, which is 200m from the current site, where the inscribed coffin of Aelia Severa was found in 1859 (RCHMY 1, 99). The inscribed lid from a different burial, that of a Flavia Augustina, had been used to cover this coffin, which despite the inscriptions contained a male skeleton, indicating re-use of monumental funerary material.

More recently, in 2005 work was undertaken by YAT at 6 Driffield Terrace, 150m northwest of the current site and revealed an extensive area of decapitated, largely unfurnished Roman burials (Kurt Hunter-Mann, 2005) that were in stark contrast to the cemetery remains found elsewhere in the area. An evaluation by York Archaeological Trust in 2015 at 2a Trentholme Drive, 350m south-west of the current site revealed one Roman burial at a depth of 0.60m. In the 1950s at 2a Trentholme Drive, 200m southwest of the site, a total of 34 Roman burials across the front and rear gardens were recovered, at a depth of 0.48-0.59m (McComish, 2015).

During excavations in 2017 at Newington Hotel, Mount Vale, which lies 400m to the south- west of the site, a further part of the Roman cemetery was uncovered by YAT, consisting of inhumations with grave goods (Savine, 2017).

Anglian

There is limited evidence for Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian activity, however, the discovery of 5th-century cremations during antiquarian excavations within the Roman cemetery suggest that early medieval archaeology could be present.

4.2 Anglo-Scandinavian – Medieval

No significant material of this date range is known from this area

4.3 Post-medieval

The remains of a Civil War sconce have long been held to lie in the area of the Mount, and the disturbance of the area's Roman burials is often ascribed to the building of this midseventeenth century feature (RCHMY 1, 97). Some evidence for the sconce may have been revealed in the 2004 Driffield Terrace excavations (B. Antoni, pers. comm.) but definitive evidence for this has never been confirmed.

4.2 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 4.2.1 YAT undertook the recording of a well discovered at the Mount Royale Hotel site in 1981. The well was barrel lined with surviving timbers and measured 1.9m across by 1.1m deep. The fill was a mixture of ash and clinker and had been truncated by a later storm water drain. The well was provisionally interpreted as being of Civil War date and associated with the sconce but no dating evidence was obtained to confirm this (YAT archive 1981.19).
- 4.3.1 YAT has excavated most recently at the Mount Royale Hotel in 2016 (Millward). This evaluation revealed, two substantial levelling and landscaping events within the gardens from the 19th century onwards. Natural deposits were encountered between 0.65m and 0.85m BPGL in the trial pits on the higher terrace and there were no significant archaeological deposits within 1m of the current ground level (a depth of approximately 18.90m AOD) on the lower garden terrace.
- 4.3.2 In 2002 On-Site-Archaeology carried out an evaluation on Mill Mount Road, where a single Roman burial was discovered at a depth of 0.50m (Palmer, 2002). A further archaeological watching brief revealed one Roman burial to the south-east of the site at Mill Mount House (Kausmally, 2004), as well as in 1993 a Roman inhumation was revealed as part of a watching brief at All Saint's School (MAP, 1993).
- 4.3.3 Regarding the immediate site area, work undertaken in 1991 revealed four Roman burials, these were left in-situ, and are believed to be where the 'cycle store and bin store' ground works are to be undertaken (MAP, 1991).

GROUNDWORKS TO BE MONITORED

5.1 This work will comprise a continuous watching brief, on the excavation of all foundations, trenches services and any subsequent groundworks involving excavation. The watching brief may be stepped down to intermittent monitoring, depending on the results, and following agreement from the Archaeologist for City of York Council, John Oxley.

DELAYS TO THE DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

- All earth-moving machinery must be operated at an appropriate speed to allow the 6.1 archaeologist to recognise, record and retrieve any archaeological deposits and material.
- 6.2 It is not intended that the archaeological monitoring should unduly delay site works. However, the archaeologist on site should be given the opportunity to observe, clean, assess and, where appropriate hand excavate, sample and record any exposed features and finds. In order to fulfil the requirements of this WSI, it may be necessary to halt the earth-moving activity to enable the archaeology to be recorded properly.
- 6.3 Plant or excavators shall not be operated in the immediate vicinity of archaeological remains until the remains have been recorded and the archaeologist on site has given explicit permission for operations to recommence at that location.

RECORDING METHODOLOGY

- 7.1 If a base plan of intervention areas is available, the areas being monitored will be determined using this information. If a plan is not available, or the watching brief work involves monitoring of long linear works, interventions which are not mapped, or large open areas, the location of the monitoring will be determined using a handheld GPS to provide accuracy.
- 7.2 Unique context numbers will only be assigned if artefacts are retrieved, or stratigraphic relationships between archaeological deposits are discernible. In archaeologically 'sterile' areas, soil layers will be described, but no context numbers will be assigned. Where assigned, each context will be described in full on a pro forma context record sheet in accordance with the accepted context record conventions.
- 7.3 Archaeological deposits will be planned at a basic scale of 1:50, with individual features requiring greater detail being planned at a scale of 1:20. Larger scales will be utilised as appropriate. Cross-sections of features will be drawn to a basic scale of 1:10 or 1:20 depending on the size of the feature. All drawings will be related to Ordnance Datum. Where it aids interpretation, structural remains will also be recorded in elevation. All drawings will be drawn on inert materials. All drawings will adhere to accepted drawing conventions.
- 7.4 Photographs of archaeological deposits and features will be taken. This will include general views of entire features and of details such as sections as considered necessary. All site photography will adhere to accepted photographic record guidelines.
- 7.5 Areas which are inaccessible (e.g. for health and safety reasons) will be recorded as thoroughly as possible within the site constraints. In these instances, recording may be entirely photographic, with sketch drawings only.
- All finds will be collected and handled following the guidance set out in the CIfA guidance for archaeological materials. Unstratified material will not be kept unless it is of exceptional intrinsic interest. Material discarded as a consequence of this policy will be described and quantified in the field. Finds of particular interest or fragility will be retrieved as Small Finds, and located on plans. Other finds, finds within the topsoil, and dense/discrete deposits of finds will be collected as Bulk Finds, from discrete contexts, bagged by material type. Any dense/discrete deposits will have their limits defined on the appropriate plan.
- 7.7 All artefacts and ecofacts will be appropriately packaged and stored under optimum conditions, as detailed in the RESCUE/UKIC publication First Aid for Finds, and recording systems must be compatible with the recipient museum. All finds that fall within the purview of the Treasure Act (1996) will be reported to HM Coroner according to the procedures outlined in the Act, after discussion with the client and the local authority.
- 7.8 A soil sampling programme will be undertaken for the recovery and identification of charred and waterlogged remains where suitable deposits are identified. The collection and processing of environmental samples will be undertaken in accordance with Historic England guidelines (Campbell, Moffatt and Straker 2011). Environmental and soil specialists will be consulted during the course of the evaluation with regard to the implementation of this sampling programme. Soil samples of approximately 30

litres for flotation (or 100% of the features if less than this volume) will be removed from selected contexts, using a combination of the judgement and systematic methodologies.

- Judgement sampling will involve the removal of samples from secure contexts which appear to present either good conditions for preservation (e.g. burning or waterlogging) or which are significant in terms of archaeological interpretation or stratigraphy. (Given the nature of an archaeological watching brief, it is anticipated that the implementation of a systematic sampling methodology will not be possible).
- It is unlikely that there will be any industrial activity present on the site, however, if industrial activity of any scale is detected, industrial samples and process residues will also be collected. Separate samples (approx. 10ml) will be collected for microslags (hammer-scale and spherical droplets) (Historic England 2015).
- 7.10 Other samples will be taken, as appropriate, in consultation with YAT specialists and the Historic England Regional Science Advisor, as appropriate (e.g. dendrochronology, soil micromorphology, monolith samples, C14, etc.). Samples will be taken for scientific dating where necessary for the development of subsequent mitigation strategies. Material removed from site will be stored in appropriate controlled environments.
- 7.11 In the event of human remains being discovered during the evaluation these will be left in-situ, covered and protected, in the first instance. The removal of human remains will only take place in compliance with environmental health regulations and following discussions with, and with the approval of, the Ministry of Justice. If human remains are identified, the Ministry of Justice and curator will be informed immediately. An osteoarchaeologist will be available to give advice on site.
 - If disarticulated remains are encountered, these will be identified and quantified on site. If trenches are being immediately backfilled, the remains will be left in the ground. If the excavations will remain open for any length of time, disarticulated remains will be removed and boxed, for immediate reburial by the Church.
 - If articulated remains are encountered, these will be excavated in accordance with recognised guidelines (see 7.12) and retained for assessment.
 - Any grave goods or coffin furniture will be retained for further assessment.
- 7.12 Where a licence is issued, all human skeletal remains must be properly removed in accordance with the terms of that licence. Where a licence is not issued, the treatment of human remains will be in accordance with the requirements of Civil Law, CIfA Technical Paper 13 (1993) and Historic England guidance (2005).

REPORT & ARCHIVE PREPARATION

- 8.1 Upon completion of the groundworks, a report will be prepared to include the following:
 - a) A non-technical summary of the results of the work.

- b) An introduction which will include the planning reference number, grid reference and dates when the fieldwork took place.
- c) An account of the methodology and results of the operation, describing structural data, associated finds and environmental data.
- A selection of photographs and drawings, including an overall plan of the site accurately identifying the areas monitored.
- Specialist artefact and environmental reports as necessary.
- Details of archive location and destination (with accession number, where f) known), together with a catalogue of what is contained in that archive.
- A copy of the key OASIS form details g)
- h) Copies of the Brief and WSI
- Additional photographic images may be supplied on a CDROM appended to the report
- 8.2 Copies of the report will be submitted to the commissioning body and the HER/SMR (also in PDF format).
- 8.3 The requirements for archive preparation and deposition will be addressed and undertaken in a manner agreed with the recipient museum. In this instance Yorkshire Museum is recommended and an agreed allowance should be made for the curation and storage of this material.
- 8.4 Provision for the publication of results will be made as outlined in the Brief.
- 8.5 The owner of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the information and documentation arising from the work, would grant a licence to the County Council and the museum accepting the archive to use such documentation for their statutory functions and provide copies to third parties as an incidental to such functions. Under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), such documentation is required to be made available to enquirers if it meets the test of public interest. Any information disclosure issues would be resolved between the client and the archaeological contractor before completion of the work. EIR requirements do not affect IPR.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 9.1 Health and safety issues will take priority over archaeological matters and all archaeologists will comply with relevant Health and Safety Legislation.
- A Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the start of site works.

TIMETABLE & STAFFING

- 10.1 The timetable shall be as agreed with the client and dependant on their schedule of works.
- 10.2 Specialist staff available for this work are as follows:
 - Human Remains Malin Holst (York Osteoarchaeology Ltd)
 - Palaeoenvironemtal remains PRS limited
 - Head of Curatorial Services Christine McDonnell

- Finds Researcher Nicky Rogers
- Medieval Pottery Researcher Anne Jenner
- Finds Officers Nienke Van Doorne
- Archaeometallurgy & Industrial Residues Dr Rod Mackenzie & Dr Roger Doonan
- Conservation Ian Panter

MONITORING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

11.1 As a minimum requirement, John Oxley, City of York Archaeologist will be given a minimum of one week's notice of work commencing on site, and will be afforded the opportunity to visit the site during and prior to completion of the on-site works so that the general stratigraphy of the site can be assessed. York Archaeological Trust will notify John Oxley of any discoveries of archaeological significance so that site visits can be made, as necessary. Any changes to this agreed WSI will only be made in consultation with John Oxley.

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For the latest Historic England guidance documents see:

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/latest-guidance/



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