



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

SITE	Duncombe Place and High Petergate, YO1 7EF		
CLIENT NAME	North Midland Construction		
YAT PROJECT #	N/A	YAT REPORT #	2019/54
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	N/A	GRID REFERENCE	SE 6021 5215
PLANNING REFERENCE #		AAI OPS NOTICE #	19005

INTRODUCTION

A watching brief on the excavation of a cable trench was undertaken by York Archaeological Trust on behalf of North Midland Construction between 1st April and the 4th April 2019 at Duncombe Place and High Petergate, YO1 7EF, NGR SE 6021 5215 (Figure 1). The objective of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits or structures exposed by the ground works as the site was adjacent to the Minster Precinct Scheduled Ancient Monument, and was within the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area and the York Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI).

METHODOLOGY

A cable trench was excavated in the footpath from existing ducting on Duncombe Place around the corner to the Jackson Stops estate agents on High Petergate opposite St Michael-le-Belfrey. The dimensions of the trench were approximately 40m long by 0.35m wide by 0.30m-0.45m deep.

All stages of works were carried out by hand, with an archaeologist monitoring all excavations. York stone flags were cut with a stone saw and removed. The trench was hand excavated using drainage shovels, providing only a very narrow window into the deposit sequence. The course of the trench started at an existing fibre optic cable to the south-west on Duncombe Place, then curved to the north-east and east around the corner of Duncombe Place towards the south-east side of High Petergate, and terminated at the north corner of the Jackson-Stops estate agents at 23 High Petergate (See Figure 1).

RESULTS

At the south west and north west end of the trench, the stone flags were lifted to reveal a thin layer of loose, dark grayish black, silty cinder bedding material that was between 50mm and 150mm thick. Below this was a mixed rubble deposit consisting of a friable to loose dark grayish brown silty sand (Plate 1). This deposit contained a fragment of antler tine and large amounts of 19th-century brick, tile and pottery, and continued beyond the limit of excavation. Within this rubble deposit, approximately 250mm–300mm BGL, were two walls made of sandstone (Plate 2, total wall visible to dimensions of 300x280x150mm) and brick, concrete and limestone (Plate 3, total wall visible to dimensions of 530x250x70mm). Below the sandstone wall were small fragments of 19th-century brick and tile. They were photographed, located on a plan (Figure 1), and then excavated. It was difficult to determine their alignment and how far beyond the trench edges they extend is unknown.

In the middle section of the trench the paving stones appeared to have been recently re-laid as they were bedded on a loose to friable light brownish yellow sand. Within this lighter material, approximately 350mm BGL, part of a limestone wall was exposed (Plate 4). It was made up of three different sized blocks of roughly shaped stone that each measured 400x240x200mm, 210x180x100mm and 270x210x120mm (Plate 5). This appeared to continue beyond the limit of excavation on a north-east / south-west alignment. Again this wall was photographed and located, then excavated.

At the eastern end of the trench the sequence changed slightly again with the paving flags laid on a 60mm bed of the same loose pale brownish yellow sand. This bedding overlaid a very mixed loose to friable, dark grayish brown silty sand deposit, and the pale sand had disappeared completely by the last two metres of the trench (Plate 6). The darker lower deposit contained frequent small to

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medium brick, tile and stone fragments, moderate charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of concrete. This deposit also contained animal bone, probably sheep and cow, and several fragments of fired clay tobacco pipe stems and bowls. It is likely this was the same deposit as that visible at the other end of the trench. There were also a few fragments of bone, possibly disarticulated human bone, which were reburied below the level of the cable ducting.

CONCLUSIONS

The walls exposed and recorded during the course of these works may relate to the old properties that originally extended from High Petergate along what is now Duncombe Place. The dark material below the footpath bedding would appear to be associated with the demolition of these houses, and the subsequent construction of Duncombe Place in the late 18th century. However, because of the limited 300mm wide window offered by the cable trench, it is very difficult to say if these walls definitely continue on either side of the excavation area, or to what depth. What few very broken up pieces of human bone were recovered were reburied and there were no signs of any articulated remains in the area of works. The brick, tile and pottery were typically 19th-century in date and accorded with material deposited during the demolition of post-medieval buildings. These items were not retained.

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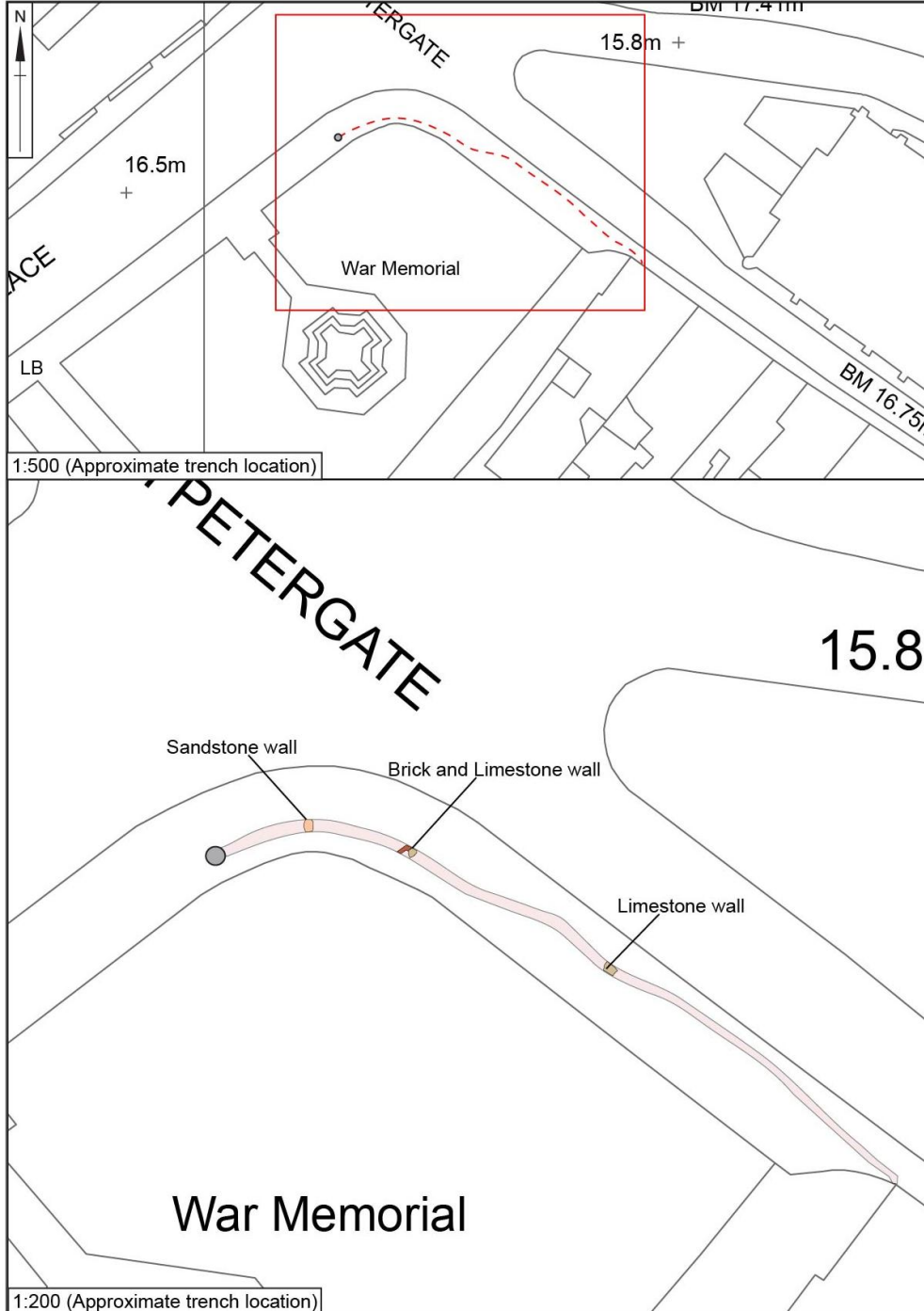


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Figure 1
Site Location
(not to scale)

Plate 1 South-west facing view of the cinder bedding and 19th-century mixed demolition/construction deposit. Scale 20cm.

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Plate 2 North-east facing view of part of a sandstone wall built on top of 19th-century brick and tile fragments. Scale 20cm

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Plate 3 East facing view of brick, concrete and limestone wall. Scale 20cm

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Plate 4 South-west facing view of limestone wall. Scale 20cm

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Plate 5 Detail shot of three roughly shaped limestone fragments from wall in cable trench

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Plate 6 South-east view of cable trench section at the Jackson-Stops end of the service trench showing the end of the sandy bedding material, and the re-emergence of the dark mixed demolition/construction deposit seen at the other end of the trench (Plate 1). Scale 50cm.

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