



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

SITE	Towton Avenue and Mount Vale Drive, York YO24 1DW		
CLIENT NAME	Mulgrave Property Group Ltd		
YAT PROJECT #	6048	YAT REPORT #	2019/182
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	N/A	GRID REFERENCE	SE 5900 5089
PLANNING REFERENCE #	187/01655/FULM	AAI OPS NOTICE #	N/A

INTRODUCTION

A watching brief on ground works for a housing development was undertaken by York Archaeological Trust on behalf of Mulgrave Property Group Ltd between the 5th and 10th December 2019 at land to the rear of Mount Vale School Playing Fields near Towton Avenue and Mount Vale Drive, York YO24 1DW, NGR SE 5900 5089 (Figure 1 and 2). The objective of the watching brief was to record any archaeological deposits or structures exposed by the ground works.

METHODOLOGY

An area approximately 3000m² in size was stripped of vegetation and topsoil to expose natural geology to a depth of approximately 250mm-400mm by an 8-tonne rubber tracked excavator (Figure 1 and 2, Plate 1). An archaeologist monitored the majority of this area strip from either side and took notes and photos throughout. In addition, a sondage was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.05m BGL to assess the depth of the natural geological deposits (Plate 2).

After approximately 75% of the strip had been observed from either side of the works area, it was confirmed with the City Archaeologist Claire MacRae (pers. comm) that no further observation of the topsoil strip and later ground works was necessary.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A Desk Based Assessment (Loffman, 2018/72) was completed in June 2018 and consists of a thorough period by-period review of the history of the site and surrounding area. The historic and archaeological interest in the report will be briefly summarised here.

Prehistoric

No prehistoric features or finds have been encountered or recovered within the immediate area of site. However, the site does sit on the superficial geology consisting of the York Moraine, a glacial deposit which forms a ridge of land which aligns northeast/southwest across the Vale of York. The ridge would have served as an easily traversable high point across a predominantly low-lying and waterlogged landscape during the prehistoric period.

Roman

The site lies outside the civilian settlement, or *colonia* of Roman York (*Eboracum*). The site is within 200m of two of the Roman approach roads; Road 10, the connection to Roman Tadcaster (*Calcaria*) and Road 11, which connected *Eboracum* to Roman Aldborough (*Isurium*) (RCHMY1 1962). Road 10 broadly runs beneath the line of Tadcaster Road and converges with Road 11 at the junction of Dalton and Driffield Terrace. Road 11 itself runs through the Mount School grounds.

In a radius around Blossom Street, The Mount and Tadcaster Road a number of cemetery sites have been encountered. Of particular interest are the Mount School and Driffield/Dalton Terrace burial ground, focused primarily to the northeast of site, and the Trentholme Drive burial ground, focused primarily to the east of site. Burials around Driffield and Dalton Terrace have been encountered throughout the 19th and 20th century. The largest excavation occurred at 3 (1st to 2nd centuries) and 6 (3rd to 4th centuries) Driffield Terrace during the

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earlier 21st century and included 80 inhumations and 13 cremations across the two sites (Hunter-Mann, 2006). A number of the inhumations had been decapitated. At Trentholme Drive L. P. Wenham excavated a burial ground through the 1950s and early 1960s with inhumations dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries and cremations from the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Wenham, 1962). In 2017 YAT encountered further burials to the south of the Trentholme Drive excavation at the former Newington Hotel (Savine, 2017).

Anglian

Archaeological material from the Anglian period in the area is primarily related to death and burial. Excavations during the 1950s on Dalton Terrace and at 150 The Mount were in order to identify the extent Anglian Cemetery first encountered in the 1850s and 1860s during construction works. Eight cremations urns and a fragment of bone were recovered from a 19th century culvert fill suggesting the Anglian deposits are largely disturbed (Tweddle et al, 1999).

Anglo-Scandinavian

No Anglo-Scandinavian features or finds have been encountered or recovered within the immediate area of site. When considering the wider area there has been little archaeological evidence from this period on the south side of the River Ouse, consistent with the Anglo-Scandinavian city of *Jorvik* centring towards the convergence of the Ouse with the River Foss (RCHMY3, 1972).

Medieval

The area outside of the medieval City walls did not see large residential construction and expansion until the post-medieval period. Hence, most of the archaeological and historic material from the medieval period is agricultural. Richards' Map of York from 1685 shows the area was still field systems at this point which corroborates the extensive ridge and furrow, aligned east/west, visible on a 1936 photograph of the site. A number of windmills are known to have occupied points along the Mount through the period, recorded in the will of William Newland of York in 1425. This included one windmill in the general location of Dalton Terrace and The Mount School, to the north of the site (Raine, 1955). The Knavesmire, to the east of the site, was common land throughout the period.

Post-medieval

A civil war gun emplacement has been referred to in written accounts of the period, constructed by Royalists during the Siege of York. Further potential defensives in the area include a possible defensive ditch on Dalton Terrace encountered during excavations in 2014 at the Church Hall English Martyrs Church while lead musket balls were recovered from playing field of the Mount School in the 1970s (Milsted, 2014).

The land was still predominantly agricultural throughout the 17th century with residential development not occurring until between 1800 and 1850. With the construction of these properties an extensive amount of landscaping also occurred which has been encountered during archaeological interventions in the Mount Royale Hotel gardens (Millward, 2016).

Modern

Residential properties continued to be slowly constructed during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Mount School was founded in its current location in 1856. In 1873 the main school building was enlarged and more land was

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acquired.

RESULTS

No archaeological remains were present at this site. There was limited residual pottery in the topsoil which dated to the 20th century. A circular concrete base for a former shot-putt platform was overgrown with grass to the north-west of the site (Plate 3). Multiple modern ceramic and gravel field drains ran on various alignments across the site. Natural was encountered at just 250mm-400mm BGL (Plate 4). The topsoil across the site was a friable dark grey brown silty clay. The natural was a firm to friable mid brownish orange clayey sand, with frequent small to large angular stone fragments and gravels and pebbles. At around 0.85m-0.90m BGL the natural transitioned to a cleaner, firmer mid to dark orangey brown sandy clay with occasional gravel and chalk flecks.

CONCLUSIONS

No archaeological remains were present on land to the rear of Mount Vale School. The limited amount of residual material in the topsoil was 20th century in date. The nature of the topsoil and natural suggested that the area had been cleared or planed off, possibly related to landscaping for the nearby railway line or of the school playing fields, or a combination of the two.

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FIGURES

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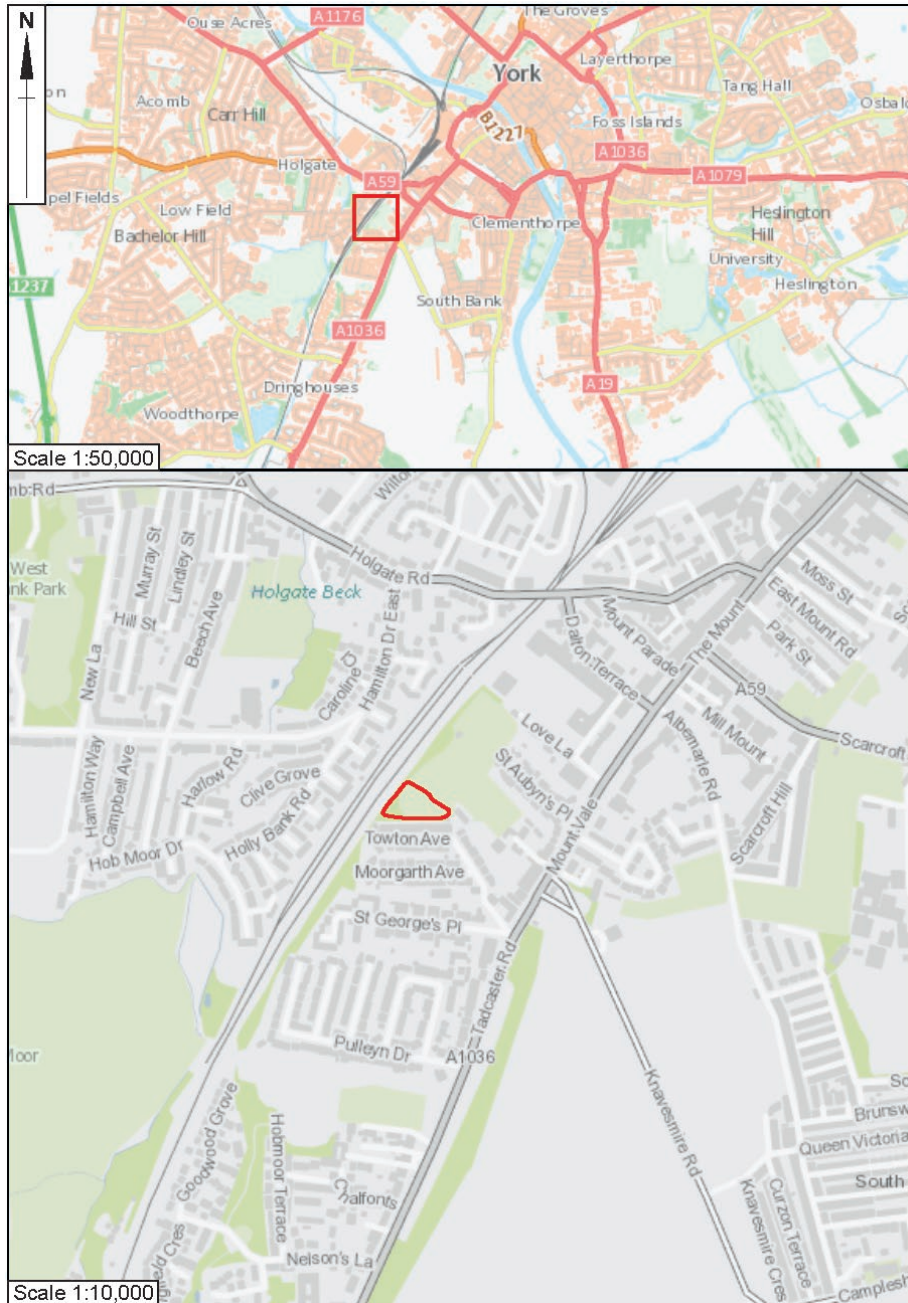


Figure 1 Site Location (not to scale). Crown copyright reserved. Reproduced with the permission of OS on behalf of HMSO. Licence number 100018343.

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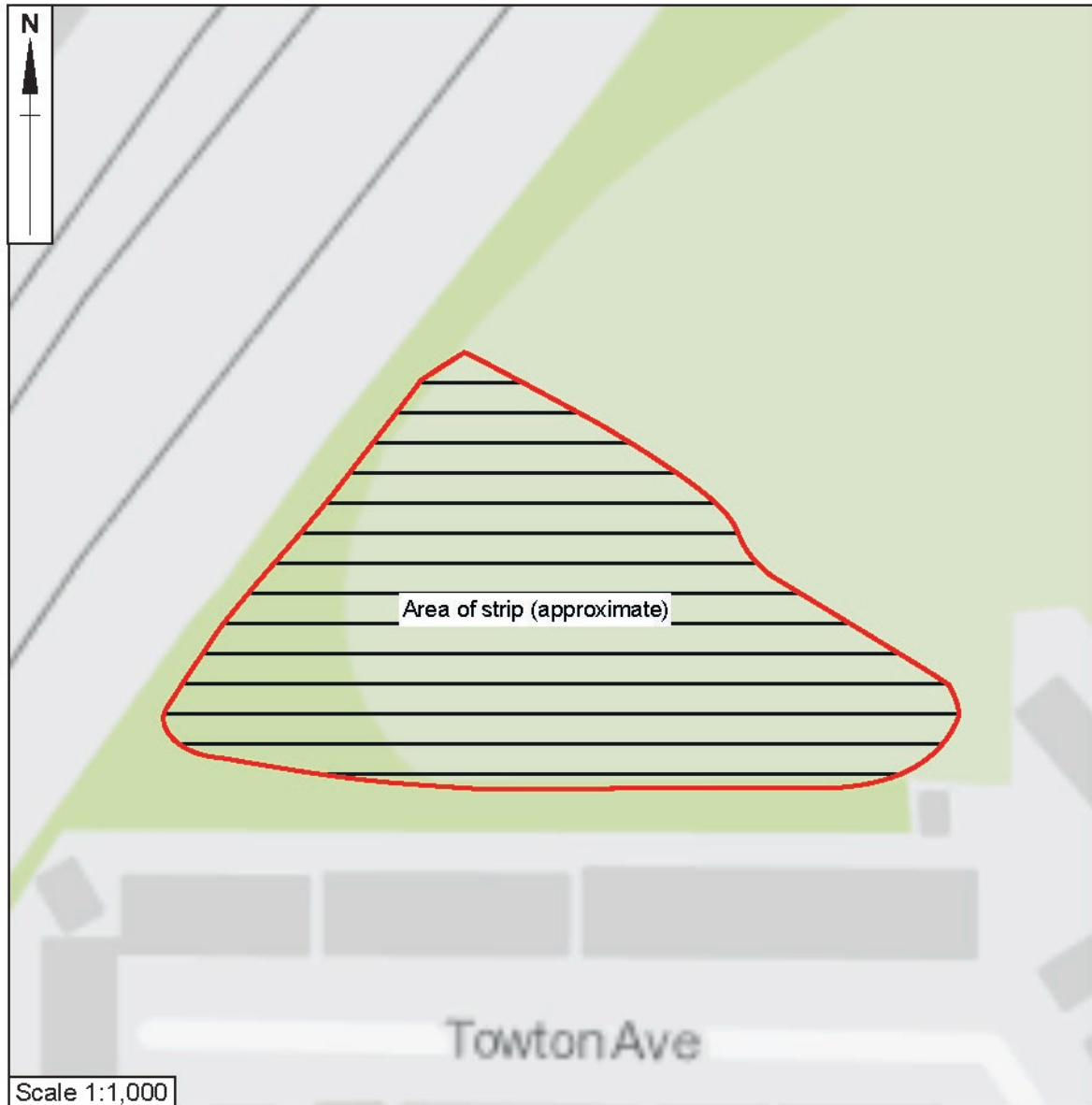


Figure 2 Detailed Site Location. Crown copyright reserved. Reproduced with the permission of OS on behalf of HMSO. Licence number 100018343.

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PLATES



Plate 1 View of stripped are looking north west.

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Plate 2 View of sondage into natural geological deposits.

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Plate 3 Shot putt platform at north west side of site.

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Plate 4 Closer view of natural geology just below topsoil (250mm- 400mm BGL).

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