



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

SITE ADDRESS	The Dutch House, 4 Ogleforth, York		
CLIENT NAME	Rogers Homes (Ogleforth) Ltd.		
YAT PROJECT #	5206	YAT REPORT #	2009/23
MUSEUM ACCESSION #	n/a	GRID REFERENCE	SE 6050 5222
PLANNING REFERENCE #	06/0019/LBC	AAI OPS NOTICE #	n/a

On 7th April 2009 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological watching brief at 4 Ogleforth, York (Figure 1) close to the Dutch House. The objective was to record any deposits, features or buried structures exposed during excavation work on site (Figure 2). After the demolition of a relatively modern structure the cellar floor was broken out but the cellar walls were retained to form part of the new development (Plate 1). The cellar area was to be converted into a self-contained apartment and the first part of the watching brief was to observe the excavation of the trenches for the dividing walls of the new apartment. These were generally c.0.6m wide and up to c.0.35m deep. Modern ground level in the vicinity is at approximately 15.5m AOD and the top of the cellar floor roughly 0.2m thick, lay c.3m below the modern ground level. Thus excavation of the new foundation trenches began at an approximate level of 12.3m AOD. The trenches were excavated using a mini-excavator which had been lowered into the cellar.

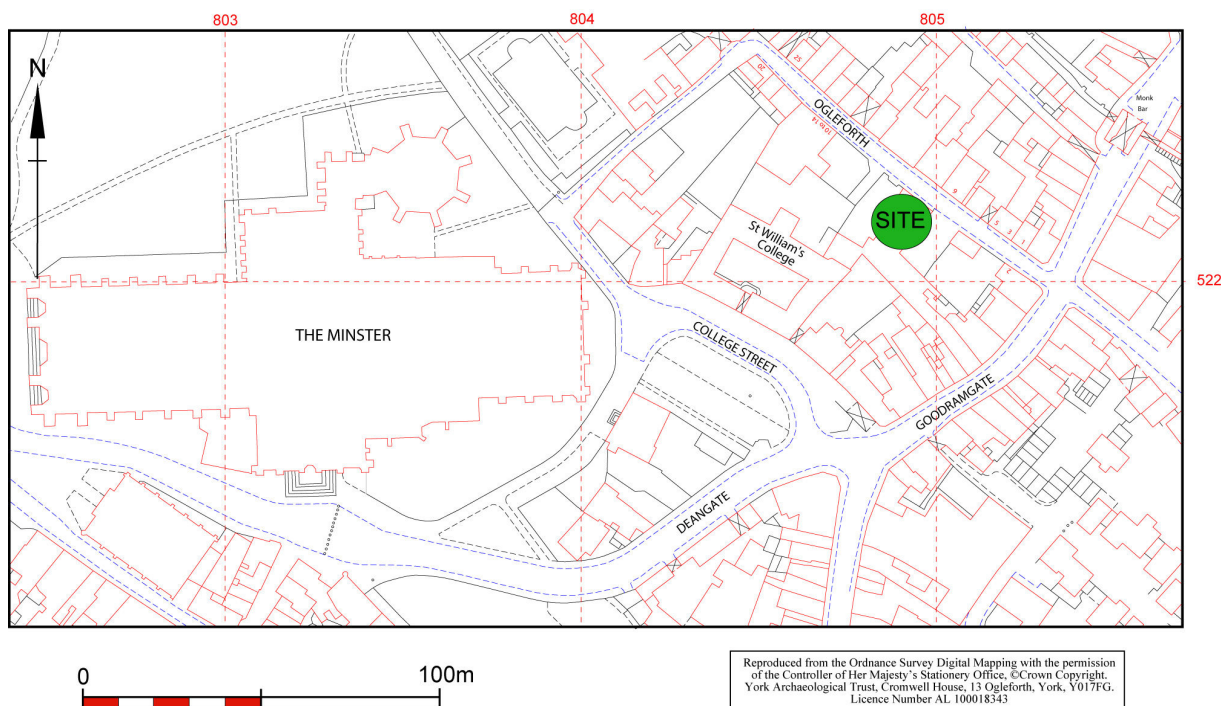


Figure 1 Site location

The site was again visited on 1st June 2009 in order to observe the cutting of a multi-service trench to service the apartments being created within the old warehouse to the rear of the Dutch House. A total of five short stretches of section along this trench, which was c.17.5m in length, were recorded and are described below after the observations within the cellar.

The recording was mainly in the form of written notes and measured sketches which were later related to an architects plan during the preparation of this report. A number of colour digital photographs were also taken, some general views and some to illustrate specific observations.

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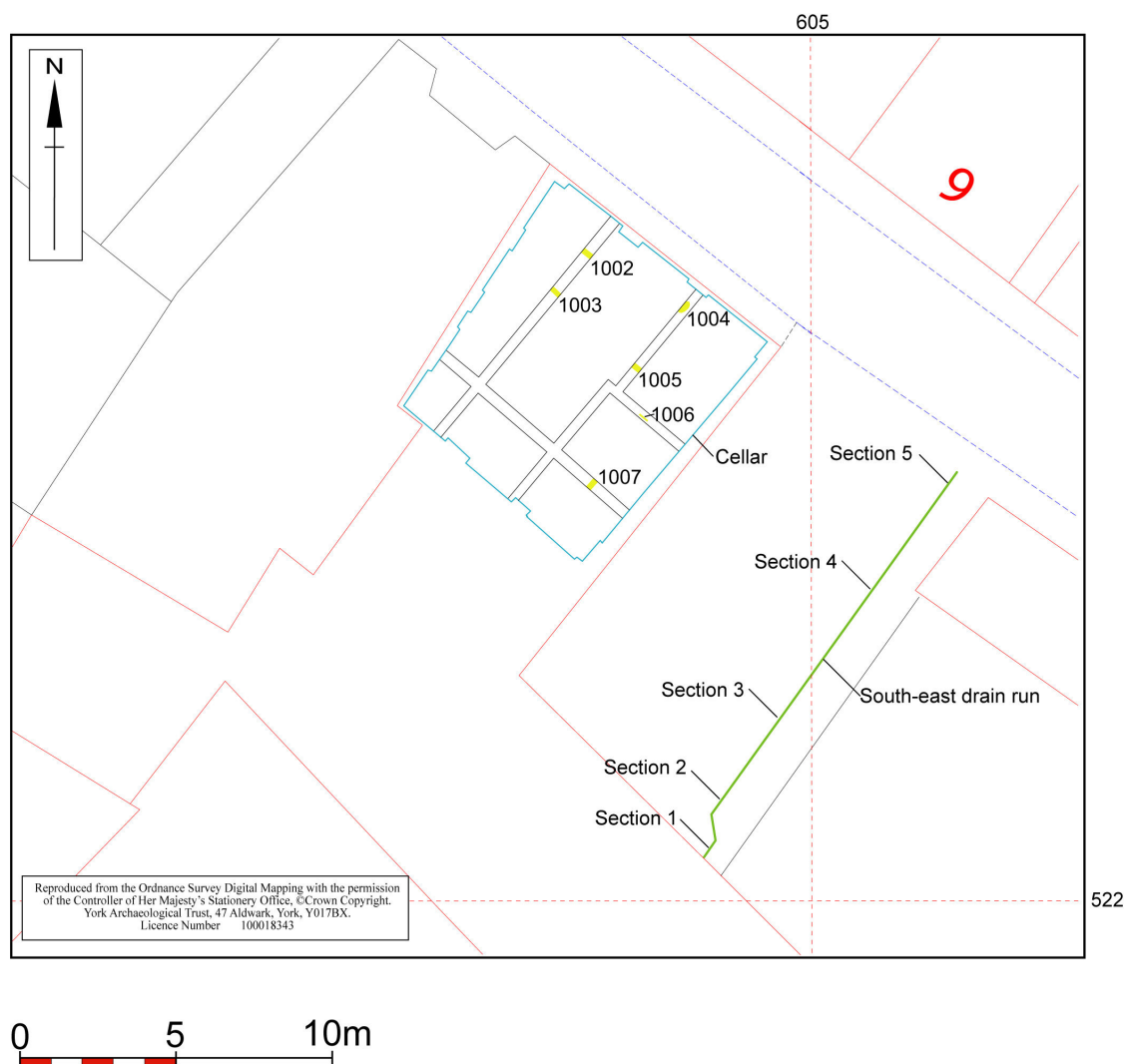


Figure 2 Location of observations and recorded sections

The earliest deposit noted in the cellar was a firm, light brown-yellow clay (1000) which became very sandy in some areas and towards the eastern corner of the cellar turned into almost pure sand. Sealing the clay was a dark brown slightly clayey silt (1001) which was at least 0.05m thick but appeared to have been truncated during the insertion of the cellar.

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Plate 1 North-east corner of cellar at start of work, looking south-east

Probably cutting 1001 were a number of definite or probable features as represented by their backfills. Towards the northern angle of the cellar was a linear stain of dark greyish-brown slightly clayey silt (1002) aligned approximately north-west / south-east (Plate 2), and was 0.3m wide. Around 1.5m south-west of 1002 was a similar stain running almost parallel. It was 0.2m wide and was composed of a mid greenish-grey slightly clayey silt (1003). East of this was an area of dark reddish-orange burnt sand (1004) was noted which was roughly oval, c.0.8 x 0.5m. South-west of this was another possible linear feature, aligned roughly north-west / south-east, and with a fill of dark greyish-green slightly clayey silt (1005). It was at least 0.2m wide and did not appear to line up with either 1002 or 1003. To the south of 1005, seen only in section, was an area of hard, burnt dark reddish-brown clay (1006) which was at least 0.6m across (Plate 3). South-west of this, in the base of another foundation trench, another fairly definite linear feature, aligned north-east / south-west, was seen and recorded. This had a backfill of mid brown very slightly sandy clay (1007) and was 0.3m wide (Plate 4).

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Plate 2 Linear backfill 1002, looking north-east

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Plate 3 Possible hearth 1006 in section, looking south-west



Plate 4 Linear backfill 1007, looking north-east

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All of the above observations were sealed by the cellar make-up composed of mainly crushed brick rubble with occasional fragments of concrete (1008). Above this was the concrete cellar floor (1009), mostly removed at the time of the watching brief.

The first section along the new south-east service trench was located approximately 1m north-east of the old warehouse. In this section the earliest deposit, noted between 0.5m and at least the base of the trench at 0.7m BGL, was a very dark brownish-grey slightly clayey silt with moderate flecks of white mortar and occasional brick / tile (1010). Overlying this was a 0.25m deep layer of dark brown very slightly clayey silt with moderate brick / tile and flecks of white mortar (1011). It was sealed by a 0.15m deep layer of pale grey concrete (1012) above which was the modern ground surface of black tarmac (1013).

Approximately 4m north-east of the first section a second short, c.1m, stretch of the drain run was recorded. Here, the lowest deposit, recorded between 0.7m and the base of the trench at 1m BGL, was a dark brown clayey silt with occasional large charcoal flecks (1014). Above it, lying between c.0.25m and 0.7m BGL was the apparent remains of a limestone wall (1015) possibly aligned south-east / north-west. It was at least 0.7m wide and was built of limestone blocks, and some brick / tile, bonded with a soft pale brown mortar. No details of any foundations were noted but it is possible that what was seen may have been foundations. It had been sealed by a 0.15m deep layer of concrete (1016) and above this was the existing ground surface of black tarmac (1017).



Plate 5 Typical section along south-east

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Section three lay some 3m north-east of the second section. The earliest deposit, between 0.5m and at least 0.7m BGL, as a dark brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of charcoal and very pale brown mortar (1018). Overlying it was a 0.25m deep layer of dark brown slightly clayey silt with moderate brick / tile (1019). This was sealed by a 0.1m deep deposit of pale yellow crushed limestone (1020) which formed the bedding for the modern ground surface of black tarmac (1021).

The fourth recorded section lay c.4m south-west of the Ogleforth pavement and 5m north-east of the third section. The lowest recorded deposit, between 0.7m and at least the base of the trench at 1.2m BGL, was a clean, very dark greyish-brown clayey silt (1022). Overlying this was a 0.35m deep layer of dark brown slightly clayey silt with occasional brick / tile and white mortar (1023). Above it was a 0.15m deep deposit of dark brown slightly clayey silt with moderate brick / tile and limestone blocks (1024). It was sealed by a layer of pale yellow crushed limestone (1025), 0.1m deep which formed the bedding for the current modern surface of black tarmac (1026).

The fifth and last recorded stretch of section along this drain run was immediately adjacent to the Ogleforth pavement. The earliest deposit noted, between 0.5m and at least 1m, was a clean, very dark greyish-brown clayey silt (1027). Overlying it was a very mixed layer of mid brown silt with moderate brick / tile and pale brown mortar (1028) which was 0.35m deep. It was sealed by a 0.05m deep layer of pale yellow crushed limestone (1029) which was the bedding for the existing surface of black tarmac (1030).

Although none of these features within the cellar were excavated and no finds were recovered during any of the works, some speculation and interpretation of the features can be attempted. All lay over 3m below the modern ground and although they could have been cut from higher their narrowness makes this very unlikely. The linear features are all roughly on the line expected of structures within the legionary fortress and this, coupled with their width may indicate that they are backfilled beam slots belonging to timber buildings of the early Roman period, probably late 1st to early 2nd century A.D. The fact that 1005 did not line up with 1002 and 1003 need not be a problem since it is known from elsewhere within the fortress that there was more than one phase of timber buildings which can move slightly from phase to phase. Burnt sand 1004 and burnt clay 1006 are most likely the remains of hearths within one or more timber buildings which in this area of the fortress, a good distance from the central Headquarters' building, are likely to be barrack blocks. Unfortunately too small an area was exposed to be certain of this interpretation but it seems likely that this watching brief afforded a tantalising, but brief, glimpse of a tiny portion of this part of the fortress which has seen no modern archaeological investigations.

The probable wall, 1015, seen in the service trench was also of interest. It appeared to run parallel to the street front but it is set well back from it and there was no sign of any wall closer to Ogleforth although this may be due to modern disturbance, possibly during road widening and the digging of service trenches. It is also of note that in places deposits of at least local archaeological significance lie relatively close, c.0.5m, to the modern ground surface and would be liable to destruction or at least severe damage by any further modern development in the surrounding areas.

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