



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



**RAWCLIFFE INFANT SCHOOL,
EASTHOLME DRIVE, YORK**

EVALUATION REPORT

by M. Johnson and J.M. McComish

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YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Abbreviations

YAT York Archaeological Trust

AOD Above Ordnance Datum

ABSTRACT

Five evaluation trenches were excavated in a recreation field to the immediate east of Rawcliffe Infant School, Eastholme Drive, York. Natural sub-soil deposits were encountered in all of the trenches at c.0.25m below modern ground level, which was between 11-12.00m AOD. Medieval or early post-medieval ridge and furrow was present in four of the trenches, while modern field drains were present in all five trenches. No other archaeological remains were found.

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 5th - 8th January 2010 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological evaluation excavation at a site at Rawcliffe Infant School, Eastholme Drive, York (NGR SE 5838 5442, Figure 1). The work was commissioned by the City of York Council.

It is proposed that the site will be redeveloped for a new school, which will be constructed to the immediate east of the present school buildings, partly over the current recreation field. The remaining part of the recreation field will be remodelled as formal playing fields.

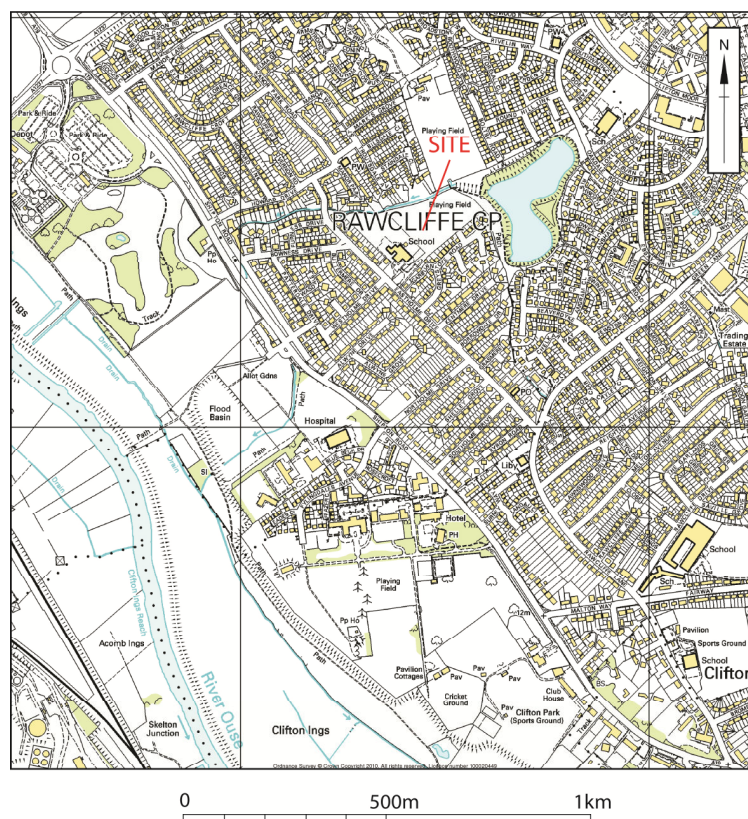


Figure 1 Site location

2. METHODOLOGY

Five trenches (Figure 2) were excavated; Trench 1 measured 17 x 2m, Trench 2 was 25 x 2m and the remaining three trenches (Trenches 3-5) measured 50 x 2m. Trench 1 was originally intended to be 25 x 2m in size but had to be shortened to avoid disturbing a football pitch. Trenches 1-3 were located within the footprint of the proposed buildings, while Trenches 4-5 were located within the general area of the proposed playing fields, but away from the present football pitch. The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator with a toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision.

Any archaeological features identified were excavated and recorded following procedures laid down in the York Archaeological Trust Fieldwork Recording Manual. All finds, site records and photographs are currently held by York Archaeological Trust under the project number 5312. The CBM and pottery recovered (6 sherds in total) was too fragmentary to merit retention.

It should be noted that the weather conditions during the excavation were atrocious; with deep snow on the ground and regular heavy snowfalls.

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The area of land evaluated was situated to the east of Rawcliffe Infant School which is located c.3km to the north of York city centre. The land is almost level varying from 11-12.00m AOD. The drift geology of the area is of Boulder Clay above Warp and Lacustrine Clay with sand and gravel that overlies a solid geology of Bunter and Keuper Sandstone (Geological Survey 1967).



Figure 2 Trench location

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Relatively little archaeological excavation has taken place in the immediate vicinity of the site. Late prehistoric remains were present at a site at Rawcliffe Manor, Manor Lane, located c.750m north-west of the site. These comprised a possible round-house, rectangular buildings, possible field boundary ditches and pits. (Hunter Mann 1992a, 23; Hunter Mann 1992b, 29).

Two Roman practice camps are known 1km and 1.5km to the east of the site; and although these features often occur in clusters no further examples have been located in the immediate area, though two were excavated at Monks Cross, 4km to the north-east of York (Johnson 2005). The presence of a cobble surface and Roman ceramic building material at Rawcliffe Manor was taken as possible evidence for Roman occupation, and the possible presence of a Roman villa somewhere nearby (Hunter Mann 1992b, 29).

There is little evidence for any Anglian or Anglo-Scandinavian remains in the area. A medieval moated manor with associated buildings and agricultural systems was excavated at the Rawcliffe Manor site (Hunter Mann 1992a, 24; Hunter Mann 1992b, 31-2). Further agriculturally derived deposits were present on a site off Shipton Road (NGR SE 5770 5460) roughly 600m north-west of the present site (Finlayson 831).

The site is shown as fields on the 1836 auction map of the Rawcliffe/Clifton estate which was sold by Earl de Grey.

5. RESULTS (FIGURE 3)

5.1 TRENCH 1

The earliest deposit in Trench 1 (Context 102) was naturally occurring firm yellow-brown silty clay, the upper surface of which was at 11.44-11.67m AOD. This was truncated by two parallel shallow linear cuts (Contexts 104 and 109) c.5m apart which were interpreted as plough-furrows. The furrows were c.1m wide and up to 0.26m deep, with gently sloping sides and concave bases and they were aligned north-west to south-east. The furrows were backfilled with Contexts 103 and 108 respectively; Context 103 was slightly plastic mid yellow-brown clayey-silt with three fragments of abraded Roman Brick and two sherds of very abraded possibly Roman pottery (A. Mainman pers.comm.) and pebbles, while Context 108 was slightly plastic mid yellow-brown clayey-silt with occasional fragments of ceramic building material and pebbles. A third linear cut, Context 106, 0.17m, wide and 45mm deep was present 1.2m to the west of Context 104. This had steep almost vertical sides and a

rounded base and was interpreted as a possible plough-score; it was backfilled with firm slightly plastic mid brown clayey-silt (Context 105). A modern field drain aligned almost east-west was also present; this was 0.15m wide and backfilled with gravel (Context 107). The uppermost deposit was friable mid to dark grey-brown sandy-clayey-silt (Context 101) which was topped with the turf of the present recreational-field. The modern ground surface was at 11.71-11.98m AOD. It should be noted that the trench ended up having a curving rather than a rectangular shape along the long axis; due to deep snow obscuring the layout pegs.

5.2 TRENCH 2

The natural in Trench 2 (Context 210) was firm light yellow-brown clay, the upper surface of which was at 11.67-11.77m AOD. The earliest feature was a linear cut (Context 209) located in the south-western corner of the trench which was interpreted as a furrow. This extended beyond the limits of excavation of the western and southern sides and had gently sloping sides and an almost flat base. The furrow was backfilled with moderately compact mid brown silty-clay with occasional fragments of ceramic building material (Context 208). A series of modern field drains was present (Context 202-7), three of which were aligned north-west to south-east and three aligned almost east-west. The drains were 0.11-0.15m wide and comprised linear cuts infilled with gravel. The uppermost deposit was friable mid grey-brown clayey-silt (Context 201) which was topped with the turf of the present recreational-field. The present ground surface was at 11.96-12.03m AOD.

5.3 TRENCH 3

The earliest deposit (Context 303) was firm light yellow-brown clay, the upper surface of which was at 11.04-11.76m AOD. A series of interconnected modern field drains were present (Context 302), with a main drain aligned north-west to south-east running centrally along the trench, and five cross-drains aligned almost east-west. The larger drain was 0.11m in width while the cross drains were 0.08m wide, and they comprised linear cuts infilled with gravel. The uppermost deposit was a friable mid grey-brown clayey-silt (Context 301) which was topped with turf. The upper surface of the trench was at 11.54-11.99m AOD.

5.4 TRENCH 4

The natural in Trench 4 (Context 402) was firmly compacted yellow to yellow-brown silty-clay with some patches of clayey-silt and very occasional cobbles, the upper surface of which was at 10.64-11.26m AOD. The earliest features were five parallel linear features interpreted as agricultural furrows (Contexts 404/406/408/410/412). These furrows were all c.3m wide and between 0.13-0.36m deep with gently sloping sides and concave bases. The furrows were spaced c.7m apart and were aligned north-west to south-east. The furrows were backfilled with Contexts 403/405/407/409 and 411 respectively. Context 403 was a firm

slightly plastic light grey-brown clayey-silt with very occasional pebbles, small fragments of ceramic building material and coal; Context 405 was a firm slightly plastic light to mid brown-grey clayey silt with occasional fragments of ceramic building material and one sherd of possible pottery; Context 407 was moderately firm mid grey-brown clayey silt, with occasional pebbles and flecks of coal; Context 409 was firm slightly plastic light to mid grey-brown clayey silt with small fragments of ceramic building material, charcoal/coal flecks and very occasional pebbles and Context 411 was firm slightly plastic mid brown-grey clayey silt with occasional flecks of coal and pebbles. The only dating evidence recovered from these furrows was a single fragment of abraded Roman oxidised ware (A. Mainman pers.comm.), but this was probably residual.

A modern land drain of segmental ceramic pipes (Context 415) was aligned north-west to south-east; this was not fully excavated to avoid damage to the drainage system for the field. There were two further land drains, each 0.15m wide (Contexts 413 and 414). These were of a similar type to drains seen elsewhere on the site, i.e. backfilled with gravel, the only difference being that they both also contained a blue plastic corrugated drainage pipe. Context 414 was aligned north-west to south-east while 413 had a north-west to south-east pipe and an associated east-west pipe. The uppermost deposit was friable mid grey-brown sandy-clayey-silt (Context 401) which was topped with the turf of the present recreational-field. Context 401 contained one fragment of factory made modern earthen ware (A. Mainman pers.comm.). The upper surface of the trench was at 11-11.56m AOD.

5.5 TRENCH 5

The earliest deposit in Trench 5 (Context 210) was naturally occurring firm light yellow-brown clay, the upper surface of which was at 11.61-11.74m AOD. The earliest features were five parallel linear features interpreted as agricultural furrows (Contexts 504/506/508/510/512). These furrows were all between 3-5.5m wide and between 0.18-0.32m deep with gently sloping sides and concave bases. The furrows were spaced 4.5-7m apart and were aligned north-west to south-east. The furrows were backfilled with Contexts 503/505/507/509 and 511 respectively. Context 503 was firm slightly light-mid yellow-brown clayey-silt with occasional pebbles, fragments of coal, flecks of ceramic building material and very occasional small cobbles; Context 505 was firm slightly plastic light to mid brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of ceramic building material small cobbles and flecks of cinder; Context 507 moderately firm slightly plastic light yellow-brown clayey silt, with occasional small cobbles and flecks of ceramic building material, Context 509 was firm very pale brown silty-clay with occasional flecks of charcoal and ceramic building material and Context 511 was moderately compact mid grey-brown clayey silt with occasional flecks of coal/charcoal and ceramic building material.

A series of seven modern field drains were present (collectively numbered Context 513), four of which were aligned north-west to south-east while three were aligned almost east-west. The drains were 0.15m wide and comprised linear cuts infilled with gravel and blue plastic corrugated pipes. The uppermost deposit was dark grey-brown sandy-silty-clay with occasional pebbles and tree roots (Context 501) which was topped with the turf of the present recreational field. Several sherds of 19-20th century pottery were present within 501, but these were not retained. The present ground surface was at 11.93-12m AOD.

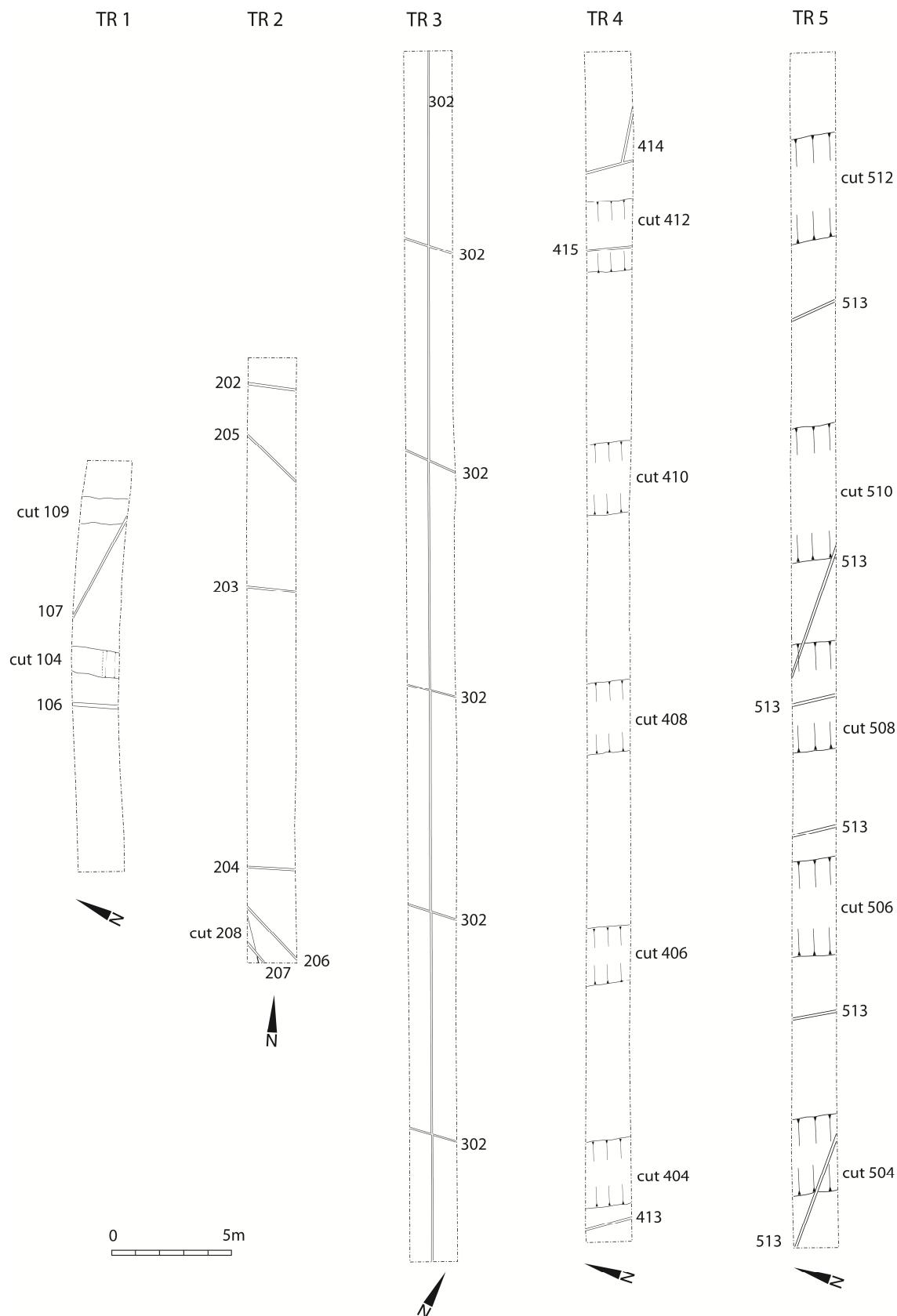


Figure 3 Plans of Trenches 1-5

6. DISCUSSION

The evaluation revealed no evidence for intensive occupation at any stage. The only archaeological features present seemed to relate to agricultural usage in the form of furrows from ridge and furrow agriculture and a possible plough-score. It should be noted that no trace of the ridge and furrow system was visible on the ground surface. While these features were largely undated, they are of a type typical for the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The only other features present were modern field drains. On the basis of these results no further work is merited.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Plate 1 Trench 1 facing east, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 2 Trench 2 facing north, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 3 Trench 3 facing north-west, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 4 Machining Trench 4 facing east, scale unit 0.5m

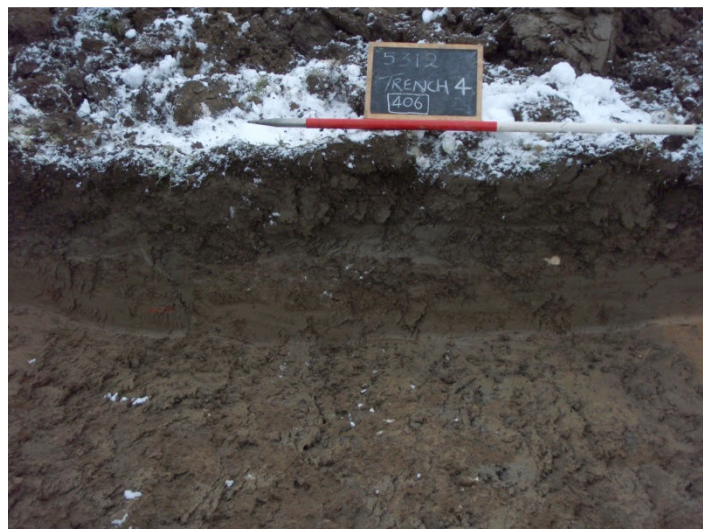


Plate 5 Trench 4 detail of furrow 406 facing south, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 6 Trench 5 facing east, scale unit 0.1m