



YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



**THE COACH HOUSE, STUDLEY ROYAL,
RIPON, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

EXCAVATION REPORT

by J.M. McComish and H. Pritchard

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YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Cover: General view of Studley Royal Hall and stables, date unknown

(from lh.matthewbeckett.com/houses/lh_yorkshire_studleyroyal_gallery.html, retrieved 06/11/09)

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List of Abbreviations

YAT York Archaeological Trust

AOD Above Ordnance Datum

AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

ABSTRACT

An archaeological excavation was undertaken on the 4-5th November 2009 by York Archaeological Trust at the Coach House, Studley Royal, Ripon, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 277 700); the work was commissioned by Mr. C. Briden, acting on behalf of Mr. S. Lloyd. The excavation work was carried out Mr. H. Pritchard and Mrs. J.M. McComish. The archaeological work was in advance of alterations to the sewerage system of the Coach House. The excavation revealed a modern drain together with several undated features including two post-holes, a cobble surface and a stone wall.

1. INTRODUCTION

Proposed changes to the sewage system for the Coach House, Studley Royal, Ripon, necessitated the insertion of a new sewage tank to the immediate north-east of the property. The excavation site lies adjacent to the Coach House which was originally built in the early 18th century as the stable block for the now demolished Studley Royal Hall. It is also in the vicinity of the deserted medieval village of Studley Magna. It lies within Fountains Park which is owned by the National Trust. Two small evaluation trenches, each measuring c.1 x 1m, had already been excavated in the area of the proposed sewage tank one of which to the north-east revealed a stone wall. This and the proximity of the medieval settlement meant that further archaeological investigation was required.

The excavation area is covered by a number of statutory designations namely: the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest Grade 1, Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site and the Nidderdale AONB. The adjacent Coach House is a Grade II* Listed Building.

2. METHODOLOGY

The uppermost deposits in the trench were removed mechanically, using a 3 ton JCB mini-digger with a toothless bucket. The machine clearance was archaeologically supervised. Firstly the turf was removed and stored to the south of the trench, the underlying deposits were then removed in 0.1m deep spits until either features were uncovered, or naturally occurring boulder-clay deposits had been reached. The resultant spoil was carefully stacked above polythene sheeting to the south-east of the trench, adjacent to the property boundary wall of the Coach House. Excavation then continued by hand, with the deposits being recorded to a standard YAT methodology. In total a depth of c. 0.65m of deposits were removed over the northern half of the trench and c. 0.2m over the southern half; this was a

reflection of a change in ground level in the area of the trench. The site archive is stored at YAT under the project code 5294.

The YAT trench partly incorporated both of the earlier excavation trenches, which were located on south-eastern and north-western corners of the YAT trench. The YAT trench measured 3.5m east-west and up to 3.8m north-south. The trench was made slightly larger than the specified 3.5m on the eastern side in order to incorporate the earlier evaluation trench.

Levels for the plans and sections drawn were taken in relation to a Temporary Bench Mark (TBM), which was located on the top of the northern end of the eastern boundary wall of the northern driveway into the Coach House. The TBM was given an arbitrary value of 100 and all levels were calculated in relation to this value. Table 1 below lists the levels taken, in relation to the TBM; the precise height of the TBM in relation to Ordnance Survey heights is unknown, but could be calculated if required.

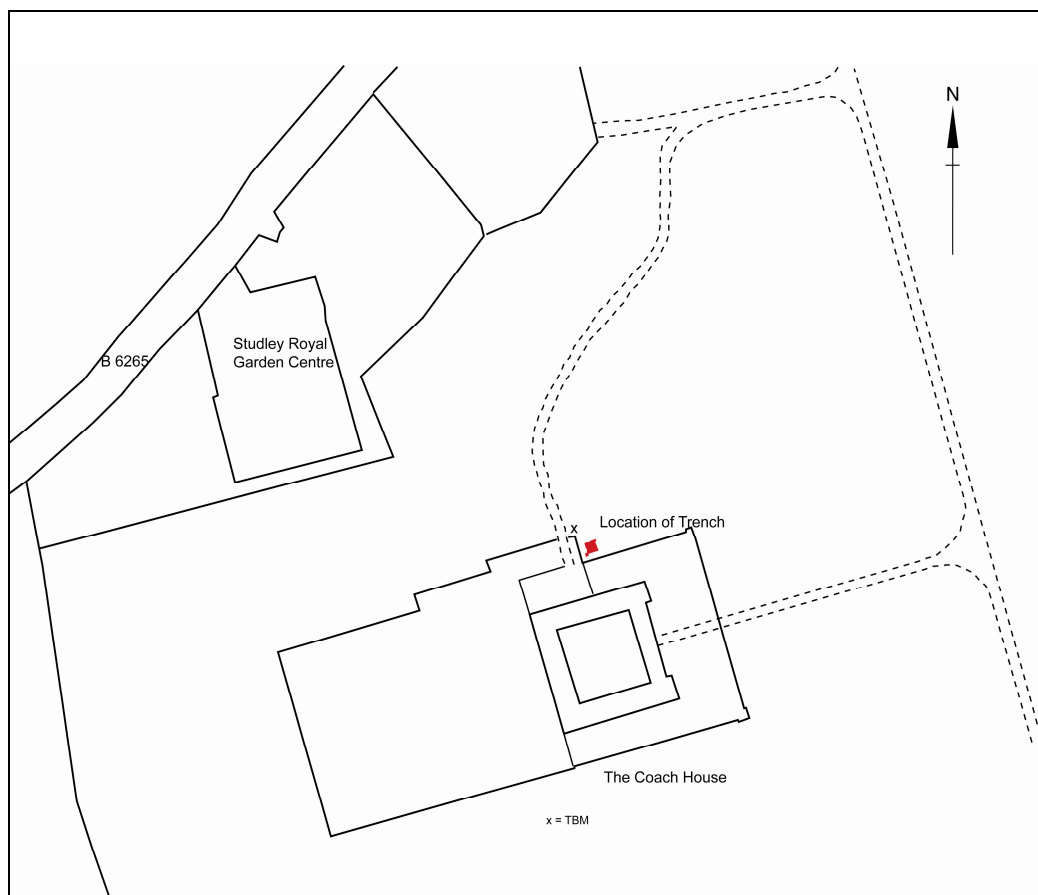


Figure 1 *The location of the excavations*

3. LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The excavation was located in the northern part of Fountains Park in heavily undulating land some 3.5km SW of Ripon. The underlying solid geology is Magnesian limestone covered with boulder clay.

The trench lay immediately north east of the Coach House in the angle formed by the northern entrance driveway and the north eastern boundary wall. It was positioned 2m distant from the two boundary walls.

The ground surface in the area to the immediate north-east of the Coach House is uneven; in the area of the excavation the ground surface slopes downwards from north-east to south-west, the difference in height being c. 0.4m over a distance of c. 4m. There are a series of earthworks nearby some of which are associated with the ha ha surrounding the Coach House. The park land is currently under grass grazed by deer.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest known occupation in the area the area are the medieval settlements of 'Stodlege', mentioned in the York Chapter Book c.1030 and 'Stollai' and 'Estollai', mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The first reference to 'Studley Royal' itself only dates from 1537.

The settlement of Studlei Magna, was established in the late 12th century or early 13th century, but by 1360 had dwindled to a few tenancies. A substantial manor house was established by the 15th century and much of the surrounding land was under the plough; ridge and furrow earthworks from this still survive. A deer park of medieval origins was established by 1577. The manor house and Studley estate was owned by the Mallory Family between 1452-1667, after which George Aislabie, recently married to Mary Mallory, acquired the property. The existing 15th century manor house was largely destroyed by fire in 1716 and rebuilt by John Aislabie between 1716-1730 and renovated in 1748. Along with Studley Hall, Aislabie also built the High Stables (now the Coach House) between 1728 and 1732. Designed by Roger Morris in Palladian style the architecture of the stables was high status intended to match that of the Hall and reflect the wealth and prestige of its builder (see cover illustration). The Studley Royal Estate was expanded in the 18th century with the acquisition of Mackershaw Wood in 1730 by John Aislabie and of the adjacent Fountains estate by his son William Aislabie from the Messenger family in 1767. During this time the land use

changed from agricultural to formal parkland and the wider designed landscape was created which survives to the present day.

The 18th century Studley Hall was, in turn, extensively damaged by fire in 1946 and was demolished soon afterward. The residence was subsequently transferred to the High Stables which became known as Studley Royal House. The estate was sold to the former West Riding Council in 1966 and acquired by the National Trust in 1983. The Coach House has remained in private hands.

The coach house comprises a square structure enclosing a central courtyard. The imposing eastern facade is colonnaded and was the grand entrance way facing the former Hall to the east. The surrounding boundary includes a ha ha with a wall and rail which is a later addition to the original design as it is not shown on an earlier illustration (see cover). It matches the style of railings surrounding the former hall visible in 20th century photographs. This boundary does not show on the 1938 OS map and it is thought that it dates to the 1940s conversion of the stables to the main residence when an area of gardens was established around the building using the existing rails from the old hall to provide a suitably prestigious boundary.

Excavations near the site of Studley Hall in 1989-91 discovered a number of features associated with the hall. Further research has shown that the hall had its own formal garden, a walled court by 1682 and an orchard by 1688 connected to the hall by a wall. The excavations also recovered the plan of a high status precursor to the hall and its attendant settlement.

5. RESULTS

Context number 1000 was allocated to any unstratified finds resultant from machining; these included two fragments of animal bone, one fragment of brick of uncertain date, and one 20th century machine made ink bottle.

The earliest deposit was the underlying natural boulder-clay (Context 1012) which consisted of compact mid brown clay with frequent angular stones and rounded cobbles up to 0.2 x 0.15m in size but typically of 0.1 x 0.08m in size. The stones made up c.40% of the volume of the deposit.

Sealing the northern half of the trench there was a deposit of firmly compacted, slightly silty clay with occasional small cobbles up to 0.1 x 0.1m in size and a patch of five larger rounded cobbles 0.25 x 0.1m in size, Context 1006, which contained a single sherd of 14-16th century pottery (dating supplied by Dr A Mainman). It was unclear if this represented a deliberate dump or levelling deposit, or simply represented natural boulder-clay disturbed by an activity such as ploughing. Context 1006 lay within a slight hollow in the upper surface of the underlying natural.

Sealing Context 1006 there was an almost north-south aligned wall (Context 1004) which extended beyond the limits of both the earlier trench and the YAT trench on the eastern side; it was in excess of 0.6m wide east-west and 1.62m long north-south and was composed of irregular courses of limestone blocks up to 0.6 x 0.3 x 0.1m in size. It survived to a height of c.0.2m high and was two courses deep in most places, but the southern end was three courses high resting upon a rounded cobble 0.14 x 0.07m in size. While mortar was clearly visible in an overlying demolition deposit (see Context 1003 below), there was no clear bonding between the lower courses of the wall. The wall had a definite terminus at the southern end, but its limits to the north of the excavation are unclear; using a metal fencing rod as a probe, the wall to be traced for at least another 4.75m northwards beyond the limits of the trench, though it did not seem to be present 6m to the north. Geophysical analysis of the area would be required to fully understand the precise location of this wall. There was no trace of a construction cut for this wall. No artefactual evidence was found in association with either the wall, or deposit 1003, so the precise date of the wall is unclear; it was above a deposit containing a fragment of medieval pottery, but could be of any date from the medieval period to the mid-19th century. C. Briden (pers. comm.) suggests that it is part of a mid 19th century garden wall.

Slightly to the west of the wall was a deposit of firmly compacted mid brown silty clay with frequent rounded cobbles (Context 1005). This deposit may represent the badly truncated remains of a deliberate cobble surface sited in relation to wall 1004.

Two small post holes were present in the south-western corner of the trench (Contexts 1008 and 1010). They were both c. 0.2m in diameter, and had slightly uneven bases, largely due to the stony nature of the underlying natural. The post-holes were both in filled with moderately compacted dark brown clayey silt with frequent nettle-roots and occasional small angular stones up to 0.02x0.02m in size (Contexts 1007 and 1009 respectively). No dating evidence was recovered from these deposits, so their date is uncertain, but spatially they seem to relate to wall 1004.

In the north-eastern corner of the trench there was a deposit of firmly compact dark brown sandy silt, with frequent fragments of mortar, frequent irregular limestone fragments up to 150 x 100mm in size, and occasional rounded cobbles of similar size (Context 1003). This deposit had been seen in the earlier excavation trench, and clearly resulted from damage to, or the partial demolition of, the underlying wall, Context 1004.

A drainage channel backfill, Context 1011, which was L shaped in plan, was located adjacent to the western and southern limits of the trench. Context 1011 was clearly of modern date and comprised redeposited natural boulder-clay above decayed hardboard which was painted white on one side, this sealed a layer of sacking material which was in turn above limestone hardcore chippings. A modern crisp packet was present wedged into the sacking. The limits of Context 1011 were exposed, but it was not excavated so as to avoid any damage to the drainage system; the precise depth of the cut containing this deposit is unclear.

Sealing all the deposits above was a c.0.2m thick deposit of moderately compact mid brown silty clay with occasional stones, Context 1002, which contained a single of residual 14-16th century pottery (dating supplied by Dr A Mainman). This deposit clearly represented modern subsoil.

The uppermost deposit seen, Context 1001, was of turf together with its associated root system which was in a matrix of mid brown sandy silt that contained two fragments of brick of uncertain date and one residual clay pipe stem.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The excavation revealed traces of four possibly related features including a north-south aligned wall, a small cobble surface and two possibly associated post-holes. Unfortunately no artefacts were recovered from these features so their date is unclear, though the wall did post-date a deposit containing a single sherd of medieval pottery. While these features could be medieval, they may equally be of mid 19th century date. The construction of the boundary wall to the coach house in the 1940s may have disturbed any archaeological features in the southern part of the trench. As the wall 1004 was located to the north-east of the YAT trench, little damage will be caused to this wall by the forthcoming insertion of a new sewage tank as this will be housed within the YAT trench.

6. SOURCES

Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site Management Plan 2008-2013
Consultation Draft: July 2008

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are expressed to the staff of the Coach House for their help throughout the excavation.

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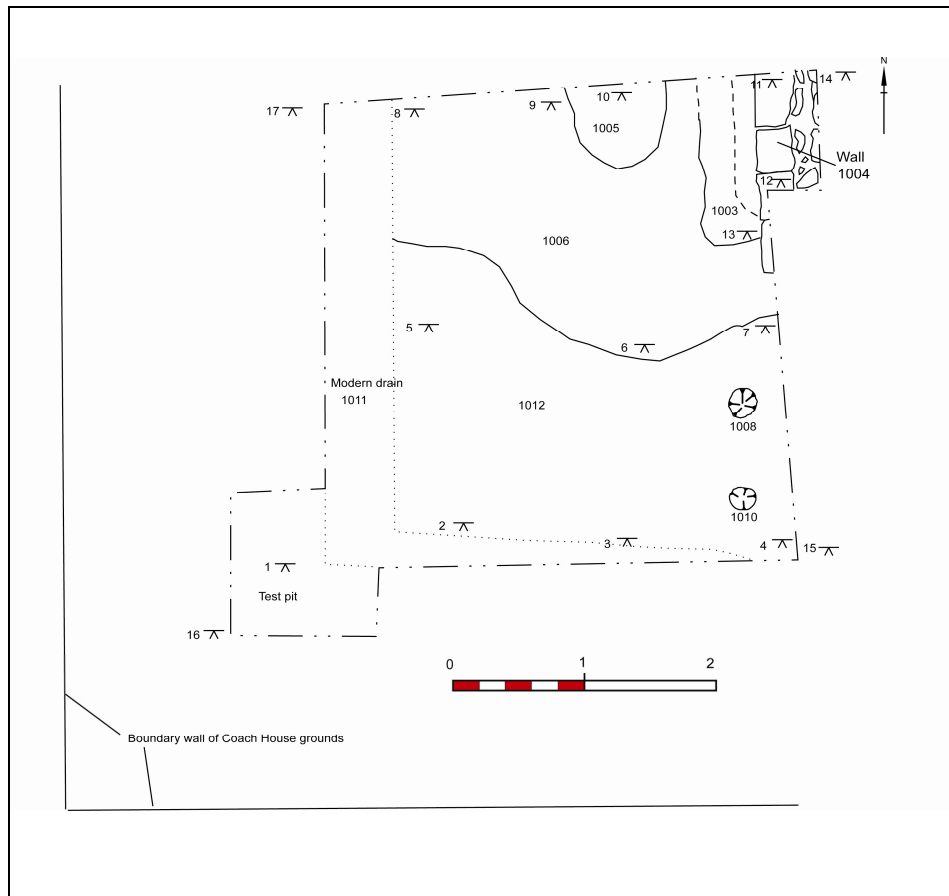


Figure 2 The excavated features at 1:20

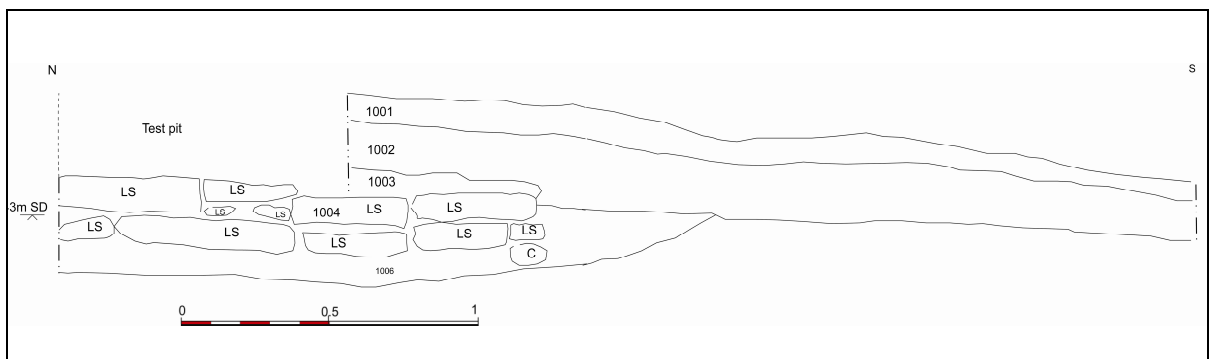


Figure 3 The west facing section of the trench at 1:10



Plate 1 General view of machining, facing south



Plate 2 General view of machining, facing south-west



Plate 3 *Wall 1004 sealed by Context 1003, in the original excavation trench, facing east, scale unit 0.1m*



Plate 4 *Context 1003, in the original evaluation trench north-facing section, scale unit 0.1m*



Plate 5 View of the YAT trench with the two adjoining earlier trenches, facing north-east, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 6 Post-holes 1008 and 1010 (to the right and left of the scale bar respectively), facing east, scale unit 0.1m



Plate 7 *Modern drain fill, Context 1011, facing north, scale unit 0.1m*



Plate 8 *Wall 1004, sealed by Context 1003, facing east, vertical scale unit 0.1m, horizontal scale unit 0.5m*



Plate 9 The trench on completion of excavation, showing natural boulder-clay (Context 1012) with the modern drain (Context 1011) on the right hand side and wall 1004 on the left hand side, facing south, scale unit 0.5m



Plate 10 General view of the land to the east of the trench, showing the variable height of the ground surface

Level Number	TBM	Backsight	Collimation	Foresight	Reduced level
1	100	0.53	100.53	2.21	98.32
2				2.32	98.21
3				2.23	98.30
4				2.20	98.33
5				2.31	98.22
6				2.16	98.37
7				2.14	98.39
8				2.17	98.36
9				2.13	98.40
10				2.04	98.49
11				2.04	98.49
12				2.08	98.45
13				2.07	98.46
14				1.65	98.88
15				1.97	98.56
16				1.98	98.55
17				1.92	98.61
18 (section string)	100	0.2	100.2	1.77	98.43

Table 1 Levels in relation to the TBM