



## YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST REPORT

<b>SITE ADDRESS</b>	The Squirrel Cottage, Acomb Grange, Grange Lane, Acomb, York		
<b>CLIENT NAME</b>	Mr S. Batty		
<b>YAT PROJECT #</b>	5297	<b>YAT REPORT #</b>	2009/81
<b>MUSEUM ACCESSION #</b>	n/a	<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	SE 5629 5067
<b>PLANNING REFERENCE #</b>	06/02507/FUL	<b>AAI OPS NOTICE #</b>	n/a

On 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009 a watching brief was observed during ground works at The Squirrel Cottage, Acomb Grange. The site is approximately 4.25km west-south-west of the centre of York, on the western outskirts of Acomb (fig 1). Observed ground works were undertaken in an area immediately south of a partly-demolished outbuilding adjacent to Squirrel Cottage and consisted of a machine-excavated strip foundation trench with an adjacent trench for an exterior stairwell (fig 2).

The Squirrel Cottage is part of a group of buildings known as Acomb Grange, a grange estate with 12<sup>th</sup> century origins which was a residence of Walter de Langton, Treasurer to Edward I. The grange land passed to the crown on the Dissolution and a manor house with associated buildings was recorded in c.1650 (Hunter-Mann, 1999, 5). The extant buildings appear to post-date 1694 (Hunter-Mann, *ibid*) and may therefore be associated with York architect John Etty who designed a farm house for Acomb Grange which is yet to be conclusively identified (Kaner, 1992, 14). The Squirrel Cottage itself appears to have been re-built in 1763 (Mr S Batty, pers com). The history of Acomb Grange is discussed in detail in Kaner, 1992, 2-18.

A cable-trench excavated to the west and north-west of the current development in 1999 was the subject of archaeological observation, during which a 13m wide ditch aligned north-south was identified 100m south-west of Squirrel Cottage (Hunter-Mann, 1999, 8). This was interpreted as the possible western side of a moat surrounding the medieval grange, although no dating evidence was retrieved from its backfill as the feature was not excavated (Hunter-Mann, 1999, 10). To the north of Squirrel Cottage, between Old Dairy track and Grange track, the remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building were also identified.

The southern part of an outbuilding adjoining Squirrel Cottage to the south had been partially demolished prior to the excavation of the strip footing (plates 1 and 6). This building had a stepped, brick-built footing three courses deep and a concrete floor (plate 2) and had been cut into a yard surface of crushed brick-rubble and soil (fig 2, plates 2 and 4). The strip foundation for the new extension was 0.80m wide and excavated to a point 0.60m below the exterior yard surface and 0.90m below the internal finished floor level, extending the line of the current outbuilding southwards by approximately 3m (fig 2).

The earliest identified deposit was a compact, orange clayey-sand at 0.50 – 0.70m below ground level (BGL) which was interpreted as an undisturbed natural deposit of probable glacial origin (plates 2-5). At the eastern junction of the new strip footing and the extant outbuilding, natural deposits were overlain by a mid-brown silty sand with occasional brick fragments, into which was cut the remains of a brick-lined structure (fig 2, plate 3). This was 1.5m long and projected 0.30m into the foundation trench from the east. This feature consisted of a single-skin brick wall, forming an L-shaped structure which contained two deposits. The earliest was a dark brown sandy silt which was identified at 0.40m BGL and interpreted as a backfill. On top of this was a dark grey silt, the surface of which formed the exterior yard surface, and which appeared in section to be the robber backfill of a probable demolition cut. This was truncated by the construction-cut of the part of outbuilding that had been demolished prior to the commencement of the current ground works. The small brick structure was interpreted as the remains of a cellar or underground tank associated with the various remnants of older farm buildings across the site, although it was not possible to precisely associate it with any specific building. It had clearly been demolished the make way for the outbuilding, and so was not thought to relate to this structure.

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To the south, in the west-east aligned part of the foundation trench, natural deposits were identified at 0.70m BGL, overlain by a 0.35m thick firm, slightly yellow-brown slightly clayey silt interpreted as a subsoil, above which was the 0.35m thick mixed brick rubble, soil and gravel which forms the current yard surface (plate 4).

On the western side of the foundation trench, a 1.2m wide trench was excavated to a depth of 0.60m below ground level (BGL). Natural deposits of compact red-orange sandy clay and compact orange sand were encountered at c.0.40m BGL, overlain by bands of dark grey silt and mixed orange sandy silt. These contained 19<sup>th</sup> century material and were interpreted as ground make-up deposits. They had been truncated by the construction cut for the outbuilding. To the west of the outbuilding, the make-up deposits were overlain by a mid brown silty sand containing modern material which formed the northern area of the current yard surface (plate 2). This had been cut by modern drains that were subsequently reincorporated into the new extension (plate 5).

In conclusion, no archaeological deposits or material relating to the medieval grange were identified. The presence of probable 19<sup>th</sup> century structures was to be expected following the earlier observations conducted in the area, as was the nature and depth of undisturbed natural deposits and the large amount of modern material present in the topsoil (Hunter-Mann, 1999, 9-10). Further work on the current buildings may provide the opportunity to relate the 19<sup>th</sup> century structures found in 1999 and 2009 to known buildings and functions, but otherwise the current observations found nothing further of note.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hunter-Mann, K, 1999. *Acomb Grange, York. Report on an archaeological watching brief*, YAT field report 1999/79

Kaner, J, 1992. 'Acomb Grange' pp2-18 in *York Historian*, Vol 10.

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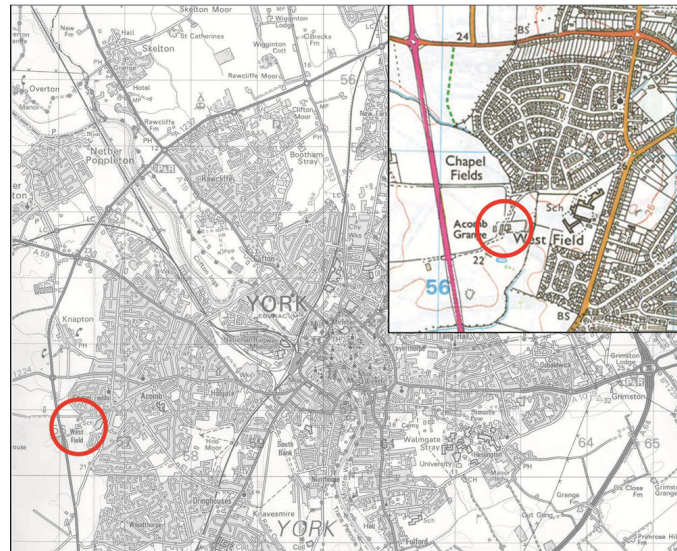


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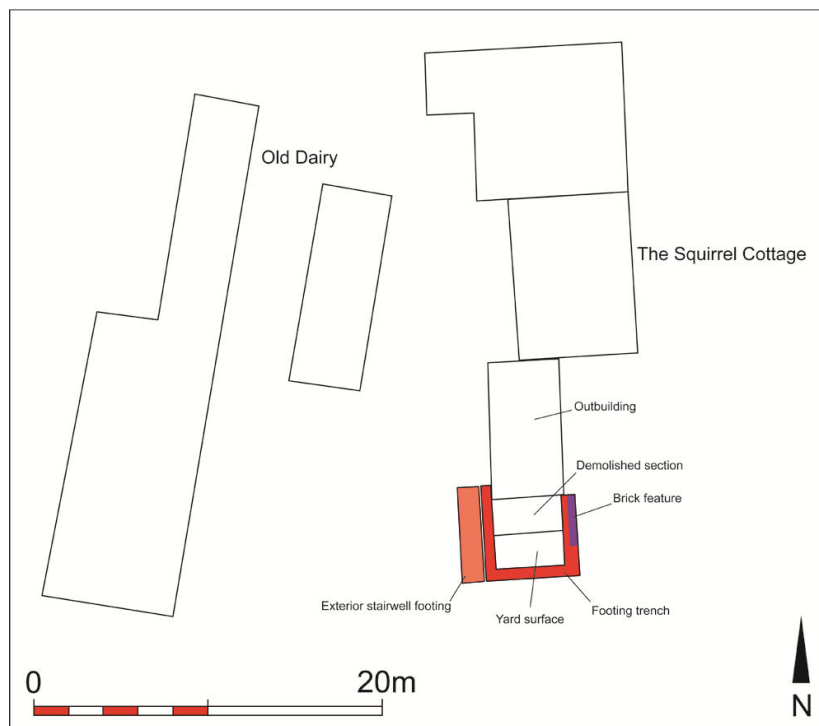


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**Figure 1** Site location



**Figure 2** Location of works. Adapted from Hunter-Mann, 1999.6

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**Plate 1** Partly demolished outbuilding, looking north, showing Squirrel Cottage behind



**Plate 2** South-facing section in western part of trench showing deposit sequence

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**Plate 3** 19<sup>th</sup> century brick-built structure looking north-east



**Plate 4** Southern end of foundation trench, looking east

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**Plate 5** Excavation of stairwell footing, looking south



**Plate 6** View of completed foundation trench looking north-west

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