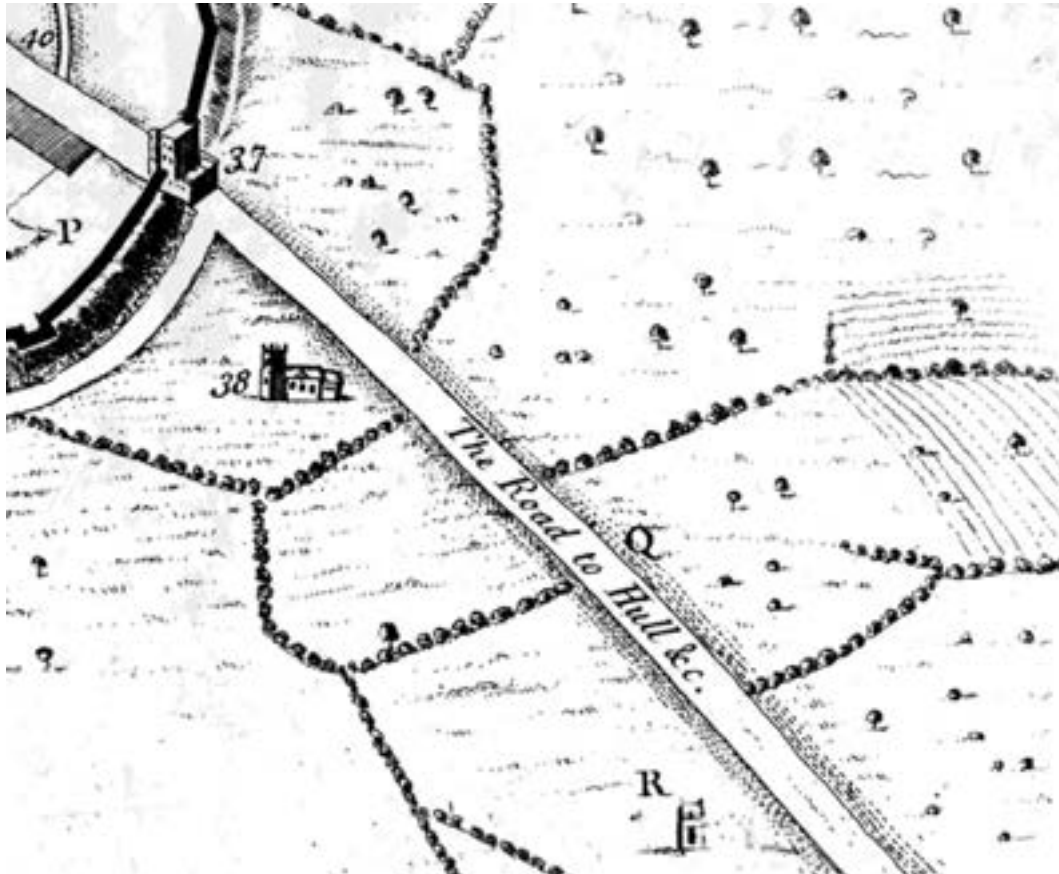




YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST



Beyond the Walls of York: the Road to Hull

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CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS PDF	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	6
2 DISCUSSION	8
2.1 Phase 1 – Roman	8
2.2 Phase 2 – Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian	10
2.3 Phase 3 – Medieval	11
2.3.1 <i>Anglo-Norman</i>	11
2.3.1 <i>Later Medieval</i>	13
2.4 Phase 4 – Post-medieval	14
3.0 Pottery	16
4.0 The artefacts	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	17
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	18

ABOUT THIS PDF

In 2001 York Archaeological Trust undertook excavations at the site of the former D.C. Cook site, Lawrence Street, York. The excavations uncovered remains of Roman to modern date.

This Pdf report represents a copy of a report which was designed as an interactive web report that was originally hosted on York Archaeological Trust's website. Due to changes in the design of this website the original interactive report is no longer available. This Pdf was produced to ensure that the information held in the original report remained widely available.

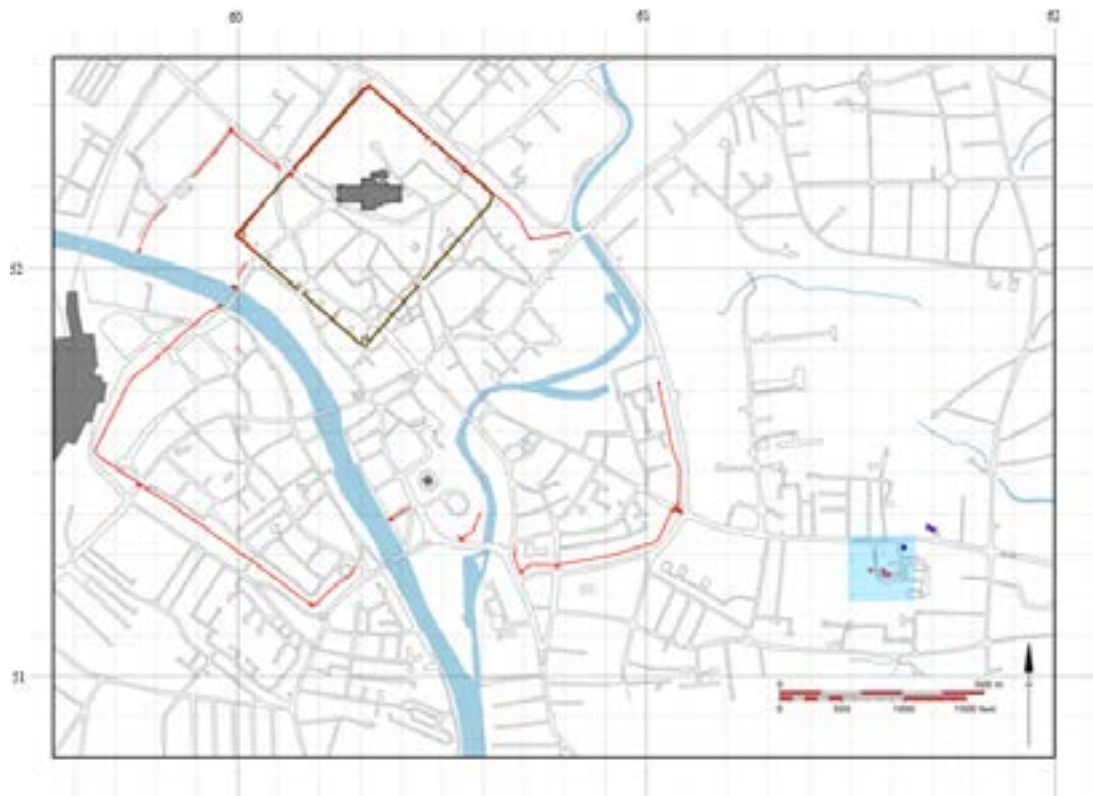
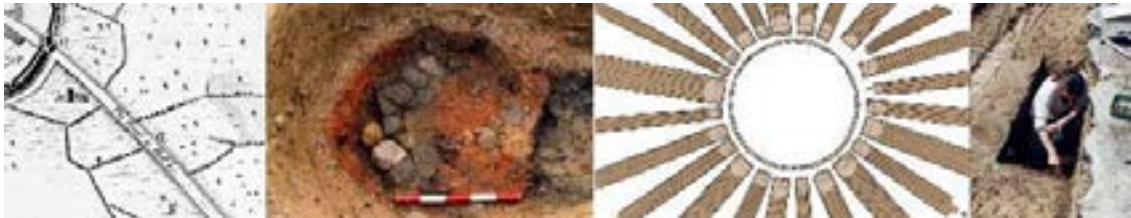
As the original report was designed for web-viewing, its' design did not follow conventional publication formats. There were some problems when converting the web information into this Pdf. Firstly the web report was designed to be entered via an interactive timeline, which cannot be repeated here. Secondly, for each chronological phase of site development within the web text there was originally an introduction with a clickable link taking the reader to a more detailed description. In this Pdf the introduction has been placed in italics with the more detailed description in plain text. Thirdly, the figures, which though perfectly clear when viewed on the web became slightly blurred when transferred into Pdf format. There were no Figure or Plate numbers in the web-text, as the images in question were originally simply embedded in the web-text at the relevant point; the images have therefore been placed as close to their original position in as possible within the Pdf. This Pdf follows the layout of the original web report as far as possible, though a more formal structure had to be imposed with headings and sub headings etc. Readers should bear these limitations in mind while reading the report.

The conversion of the original IADB report into a Pdf file was undertaken by J. M. McComish in July 2018.

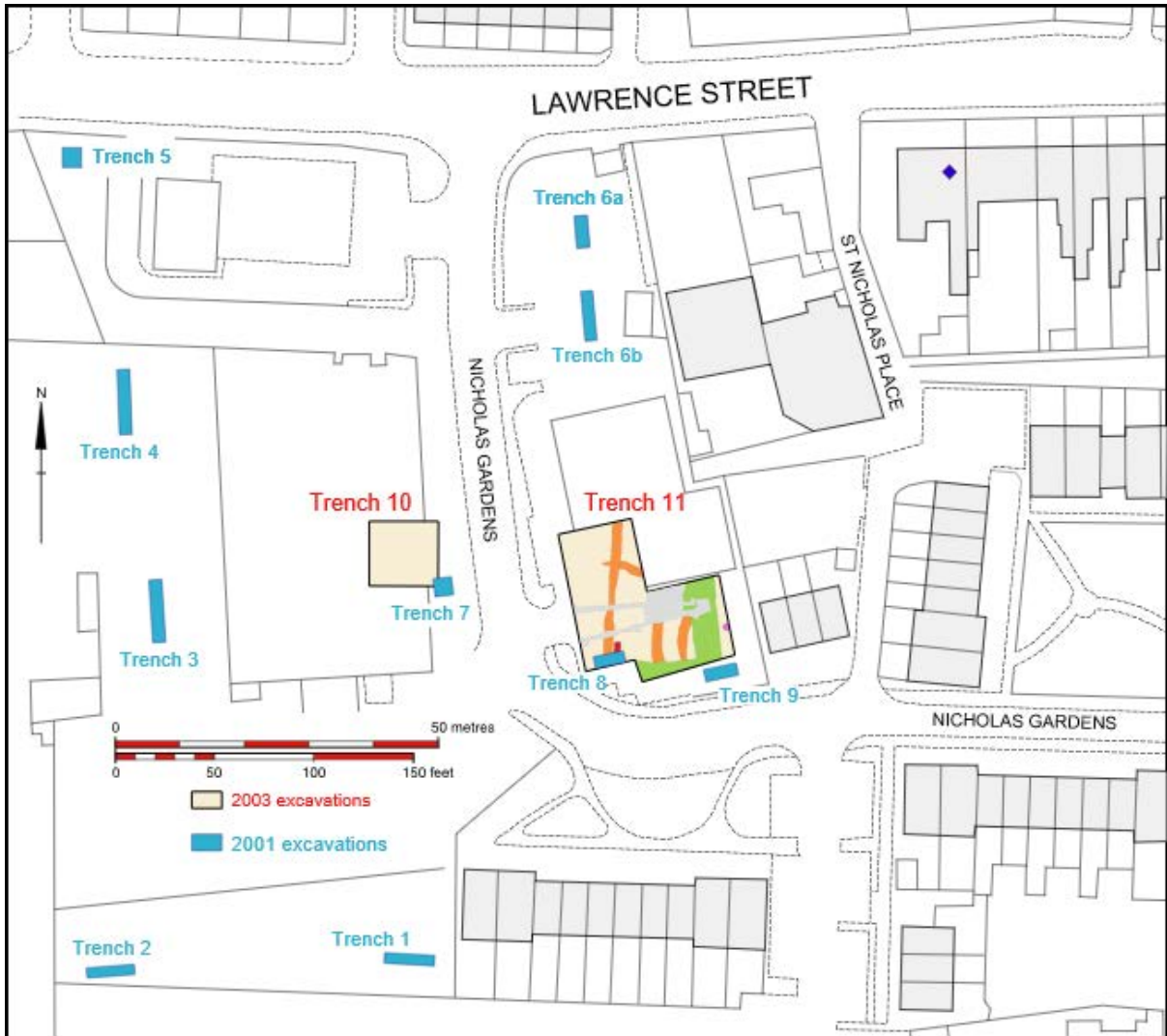
1 INTRODUCTION

By Dave Evans

The former site of the D.C. Cook car showrooms in Lawrence Street, York, was the subject of an archaeological evaluation in 2001 and an excavation early in 2003. Roman ditches were identified and excavated and there was some evidence, in the form of pottery, for the Anglian period (8th/9th century). The site appears to have been occupied from the 12th century and features of the medieval period included a large boundary ditch, a barrel-lined well and an oven. During the post-medieval period evidence for activity on the site lessened considerably but a ditch and possible horticultural features were uncovered, as was much evidence for the 19th century and later use of the site. Investigation of plant and invertebrate remains gave a very rare view of rural conditions on the eastern edge of York.



Site location



Trench locations

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By Dave Evans

Lawrence Street, named after the church of St Lawrence (RCHMY 4, 80) c. 350m to the west of the site under consideration here, was in the medieval period normally referred to as Walmgate or 'Walmgate without the bar' (Wilson and Mee 1998, 93, 139). This area was the location of four churches in the medieval period, those of St Lawrence, St Michael, St Edward and St Nicholas.

The church of St Edward (RCHMY 4, xxxviii) was first mentioned in the 13th century but had become redundant and was demolished in the reign of Edward VI, possibly by 1586 when it was united with St Nicholas. It is thought that the site of this church lies close to the junction of Lawrence Street and Landsdowne Terrace (Wilson and Mee 1998, 80). The church of St Michael is reputed to have stood close to Walmgate Bar on the south side of Lawrence Street, as depicted on Skaife's map of 1864. Little is known of its history but there is documentary evidence that it was in existence by 1277 and that it was united with St Lawrence in 1365 (Wilson and Mee 1998, 138). The earliest documentary evidence for the church of St Lawrence is c.1194, a date supported by architectural evidence. The base

of the tower and a very fine carved doorway both date to the 12th century. The church is known to have undergone repairs and rebuilding in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries (Wilson and Mee 1998, 93). The church of the hospital of St Nicholas may have been founded c.1142 and by 1280 served as a parish church, with the choir being used as the chapel for the hospital (Wilson and Mee 1998, 138). The hospital was the largest and richest of York's four medieval leper hospitals.

The earliest map of the area is one drawn by John Sped and published in 1610. This shows that the area was mainly open ground or fields but a house on the street front may be within the bounds of the present site. The church of St Nicholas is shown adjacent to the east. Horsley's map of 1694 is very similar but the house on the street front seems to have gone, quite possibly as a result of the Civil War activity in the area. By 1736, when Drake published his map of York, the area seems still to be open ground but there is some evidence to suggest that at least part of the church of St Nicholas had been demolished, possibly just leaving the tower. Lund's drawing of 1772 is not very detailed and the area is depicted as open, with the caption 'Grounds not Common'.

The church of St Lawrence was badly damaged, as was much of the surrounding area, during the Siege of York in 1644. It was repaired in 1669 and survived for another two centuries. It was dismantled, except for the tower, when it was replaced by the present church in 1881-3. Several views exist showing the old church before demolition (Wilson and Mee 1998, figs.66-71).

The Hospital of St Nicholas did not survive the Dissolution although the church apparently continued in use. Masonry from the site is said to have been used to repair Walmgate Bar in 1648 and in 1717 more stone was used to repair the church at Dunnington. The church ruins were used as cover for sniping during the Civil War and as a result appear to have attracted return fire which caused large-scale destruction (VCHY 1961, 160). Remains of the church were still standing in 1730 but it appears that by 1736 any surviving parts had been removed, probably in 1730 when it is recorded that stone from the site was used to make a pavement along Lawrence Street. Some architectural details, however, are available from Speed's map of 1610 and a watercolour of 1718 attributed to Francis Place (Wilson and Mee 1998, Fig.105).

The Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1852 indicates that former site of the church of St Nicholas. Development of the eastern part of Lawrence Street did not begin in earnest until the middle of the 19th century (Pevsner and Neave 1995) when terraced housing began to occupy much of the area to the north of the site and Lawrence Street. Some terraced housing was constructed to the west of the site but most of this area became St Joseph's Convent of Poor Clares Colettines, often known simply as the Poor Clares. The principal buildings of the convent were erected in 1872-5 but some of the street front properties used today were built earlier in the 19th century. The OS map of 1909 shows the D.C. Cook site as small enclosed fields with no buildings on the street front. Part of the area around the evaluation and excavation was apparently at one time occupied by a confectionery firm. The York Trade Directories reveal that Lazenby and Son, Chocolate Manufacturers, had been based in Lawrence Street from the 1930s until at least 1959. Russell's Garage, which was situated in the eastern part of the site of the excavation, was in existence by 1931 and was still there in 1953, but by 1959 had moved to the Stonebow. The garage business was continued as Parish's Garage throughout the 1960s and 1970s until the site was taken over by D.C. Cook. It would appear from 20th-century maps that some of the western part of the site was an orchard within the Convent of the Poor Clares up to at least 1970. Since then the garage in the eastern part of the site has been demolished and a new garage built

across much of the central part of the site, with car showrooms on the street front; these were demolished in 2002. The land to the south, currently a school playing field, seems always to have been open ground or fields. To the east of the site was the church and hospital of St Nicholas, more recently an auto-wrecker's yard and today occupied by houses built in the 1990s.



Detail of the 1909 OS map of York showing development in the Lawrence Street area

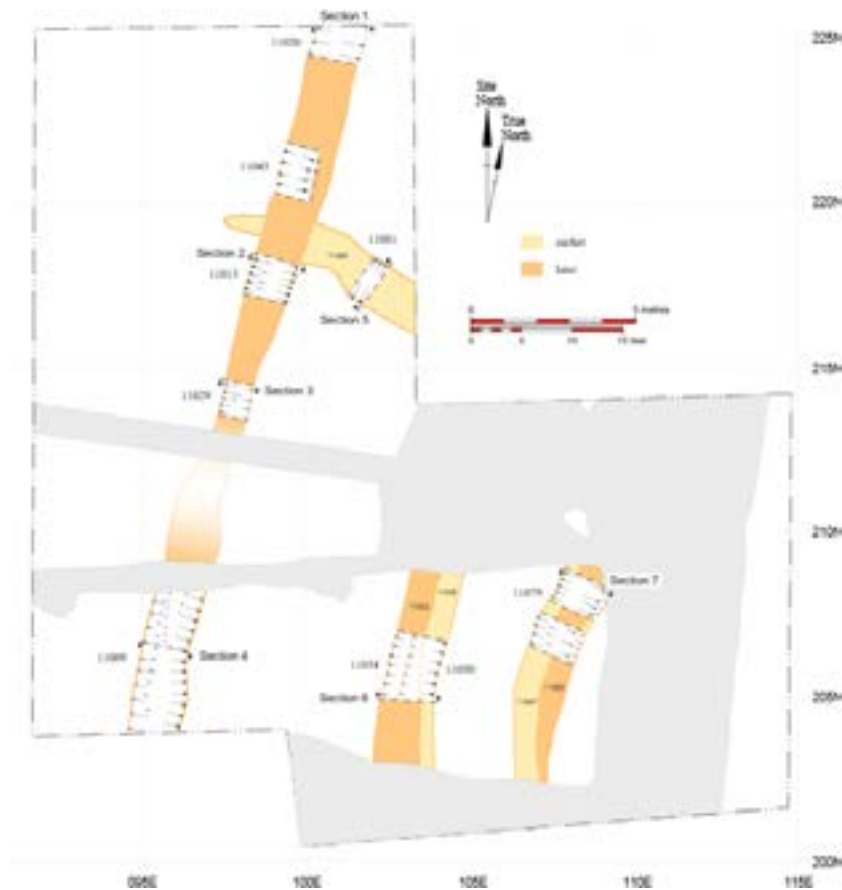
2 DISCUSSION

By Dave Evans

2.1 Phase 1 – Roman

A ditch aligned approximately north-west/south-east was found within Trench 11. It had been partly truncated by at least one later Roman ditch and by other later features. The main element of this phase was a series of three roughly parallel ditches in Trench 11, at least one of which had been recut. All three ran approximately south-west/north-east, at right-angles to the earlier ditch, but the eastern two had been truncated by later features. Elsewhere two intercutting features in Trench 7 and a post-hole in Trench 9 were ascribed to this period.

A number of Roman ditches, post-holes and uncertain, but possibly linear, features broadly dated to the 2nd-4th centuries (O18) were found. The ditches, two of which showed evidence for re-cutting, belonged to at least three phases and were perpendicular to Lawrence Street which is known to follow the line of the main Roman approach road from the east originating in Brough-on-Humber. Roman field systems are frequently laid out with respect to the nearest Roman road and this appears to be the case here.



The O18 ditches



Excavated section across one of the Roman ditches (C8010)

The size and layout of the ditches may suggest that they are boundary or drainage ditches associated with long narrow plots of land perpendicular to the Roman road. One of the ditch fills (C8009) produced a Roman ballista bolt-head (FSF00001), but how it got there is uncertain. Similar ditches associated with possible Roman fields are not uncommon around the fringes of York, and examples are known from sites at 46-54 Fishergate, Paragon Street/Kent Street, 35-41 Blossom Street, 52-62 Tadcaster Road and Manor Lane, Rawcliffe.



Bolt-head FSF00001 after air abrasion treatment

The other evidence for the Roman period, post-holes and unidentifiable features, was too scattered for any conclusive interpretation. Activity on the site probably continued into the later 4th century judging by the recovery of a quantity of calcite-gritted ware.

Apart from the ditches a number of other features and deposits were thought to be Roman. In Evaluation (Trench 7) two intercutting and probably linear features (C7018) and (C7019) were considered to be possibly Roman. The shape and dimensions were uncertain as much of the features lay beyond the limits of excavation. No dating evidence was recovered from either but it is certain that they were cut by features containing pottery of the 11th-12th century. A possible Roman post-hole (C9011) was encountered in Evaluation (Trench 9). This post-hole was partly cut away by a later feature but was probably originally circular and c.0.6m in diameter. It was at least 0.35m deep and much stone, probably packing material, was found in the backfill of compact, mid-brown, silty, sandy clay (C9010). Three deposits (C11123), (C11139) and (C11164) within Trench 11 may also have been Roman but did not produce any dating evidence. Context 11164, in the north-west corner of the trench, was not excavated but may have been the uppermost surviving backfill of a quarry pit of uncertain date truncated by modern building activity.

2. 2 Phase 2 – Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian

There was no evidence of activity on the site during the 5th-7th centuries. No features or deposits could be confidently assigned to the Anglian period, but five sherds of 8th century pottery suggest some late Anglian activity in the area. A number of probable structural features, post-holes and/or slots, excavated in Trench 5, were dated by pottery to the Anglo-Scandinavian period and may suggest occupation close to the main road to the east. A number of pieces of Stamford ware, including Stamford glazed ware, were recovered as residual finds from Trench 11.

No features, structures or deposits were encountered in the evaluation or excavation but three sherds of possible Ipswich ware of the 8th century came from Evaluation Trench 9 and two further sherds of Anglian pottery were recovered from Trench 11. These were, perhaps, associated with activity along the Roman road which is generally believed to have survived into the medieval period as a major route. Unfortunately, other dating evidence showed the Anglian pottery to be residual but the recovery of five pieces from such a relatively restricted area may be of significance.

There was considerable evidence for the succeeding Anglo-Scandinavian period. Apart from pottery, there were structural elements including post-holes within Trench 5. This was the nearest trench to Lawrence Street and it would appear that the road attracted some form of occupation activity, although the site lies well outside the known areas of settlement and the attested city defences in the 9th-11th centuries. Structural features of a similar date were excavated at 17-23 Lawrence Street in 1989. Although at both sites the area exposed was too limited for a clear and detailed interpretation of the remains, these two sites do raise interesting questions concerning the pre-conquest development of this area of York.

Within evaluation Trench 5 where three possible post-holes or slots (C5013), (C5017) and (C5022), could be dated by pottery to the later pre-Conquest period (9th-11th centuries). No other features or deposits were thought to be of this date, although a backfill (C11018) within the oven (C11057) produced two pieces of 10th-century Stamford glazed ware and a backfill (C11042) in the large medieval ditch (C11055) = (C11064) = (C11098) = (C11102) yielded one piece of Stamford ware. Other pottery dating evidence, however, made it clear that these pieces were residual.

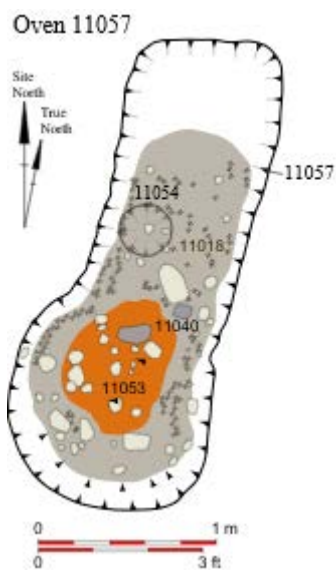
2.3 Phase 3 – Medieval

2.3.1 Anglo-Norman

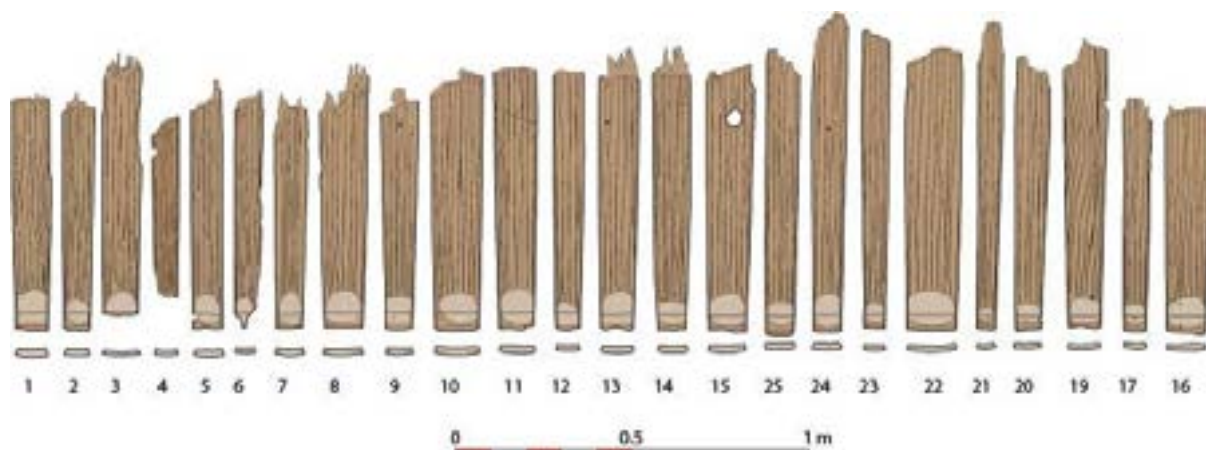
Features of Anglo-Norman date, 11th-12th century, were relatively plentiful across the site and included post-holes, pits, cuts of uncertain function, and the cutting and early silting up of a large right-angled boundary ditch.

Quite a number of the structural features excavated adjacent to Lawrence Street, in Trench 5, were datable by pottery to the 11th/12th century, indicating that structural activity there perhaps began in the Anglo-Scandinavian period and continued into the Anglo-Norman era. By the 13th century suburban development outside the walled town had taken place along a number of approach roads including Fishergate, Bootham, Gillygate, Monkgate and Lawrence Street (RCHMY 4, xxxvii-xxxviii). Archaeological evidence from a site at 148 Lawrence Street may indicate structural activity nearby during the 11th century.

The 12th century probably saw the construction and use of an oven and the digging and initial silting of the large boundary ditch defining an enclosure to the south of Lawrence Street. It is also possible that the construction of the barrel-lined well took place in the 12th century. Both the ditch and the barrel-lined well seem to have been filling up during the 14th century but the north-south line of the ditch appears to be respected even today by a modern property boundary. A property boundary seen on the 1852 OS map of the area may mark the line of the east-west arm of this ditch.



The oven



Staves from the barrel well

Ovens and barrel-lined wells are relatively common features on both urban and rural sites of medieval date. An oven was excavated at 1-5 Aldwark (AY 10/02, 71), a possible corn-drying oven was recorded at the Trinity Lane Car Park site and an oven, kiln or corn drier was discovered at 35-41 Blossom Street. Good examples of medieval barrel-lined wells come from 1-5 Aldwark (AY 10/02, 74), Bedern (AY 10/03, 168-9) and the ABC Cinema site at 22 Piccadilly. The medieval levels at 16-22 Coppergate produced no fewer than four barrel-lined wells (AY 10/06, 725-6, 811-12; AY 17/13, figs.1066-7, 1089).

The ditch, oven and barrel-lined well all produced interesting environmental evidence. Charred sprouting cereal grains from the oven suggested it might have been used for drying grain as part of the malting process. Samples from the well and the ditch give a rare view of rural conditions well beyond the city walls. They suggest a roadside settlement with farmland behind it, resembling the layout of many villages in the area until the past few decades.

Similar archaeological activity was recorded at the Bootham Engineering site (FAS 2000), north-east of the present site and north of Lawrence Street. Taken together, these sites suggest a concentration of occupation in the area dating to between the 11th/12th century and the 15th/16th century. It would appear that both the former D.C. Cook site and the Bootham Engineering site are parts of a complex centred on the church and leper hospital of St Nicholas, some 90m to the east, remains of which were investigated in the 1990s (1992 and 1993).

The date of foundation of the hospital is uncertain but the church may have been founded c.1142. There is later documentary and possibly cartographic evidence that parts of the hospital complex were situated north as well as south of Lawrence Street. There is archaeological evidence that both the present site and the activity below Bootham Engineering were surrounded, at least in part, by substantial boundary ditches. There may have been a number of good reasons for this: firstly, to define the limits of the individual elements of the hospital; secondly, to prevent unauthorised entry to the hospital grounds from the no-doubt busy medieval predecessor to Lawrence Street; and, thirdly, to restrict access to the hospital proper, an important consideration since St Nicholas's Hospital was the largest and richest of York's four medieval leper hospitals.

2.3.1 *Later Medieval*

This phase covers the 13th-16th centuries. A roadside ditch was excavated, as well as cuts of uncertain function, a barrel-lined well, an oven and a possible ditch. This phase also includes the backfilling and recutting of the Anglo-Norman boundary ditch and a number of features within it.

Medieval deposits, features and structural elements were recognised in a number of the evaluation trenches. Probable agricultural soils were recorded in Trench 3, (C3021), (C3022) and Trench 4, (C4005). In Trench 5, adjacent to Lawrence Street / Hull Road, possible structural features (C5016), (C5023) and (C5024), post-holes (C5013), (C5015) and (C5021) and a ditch (C5012) running parallel to Lawrence Street were all securely dated by pottery to the medieval period. Three post-holes (C7006), (C7014) and (C7015), and two features of uncertain function (C7010) and (C7012) were excavated in Trench 7, and possible medieval agricultural soil was recorded in Trench 8, (C8003).

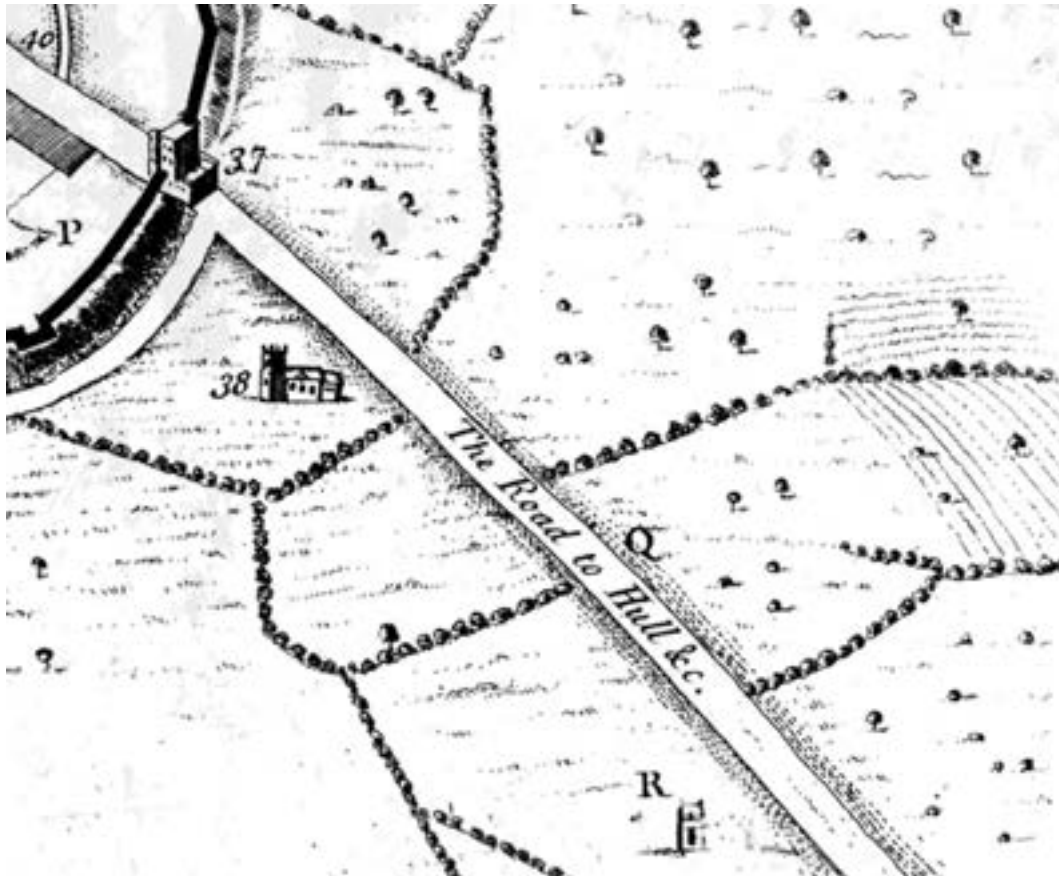
Two possible pits were excavated in Trench 9, (C9004) and (C9006). A third pit (C9009) in this trench was found during the main excavation to be part of the large medieval ditch (C11055) = (C11064) = (C11098) = (C11102) in Trench 11. A fragment of iron knife blade (FSF00004), was recovered from a backfill (C9008) in feature 9009.

In the main excavation area there was little stratigraphy above natural except for remains of modern activity, but two deposits (C11123) and (C11139) were tentatively dated to the medieval period. A few features other than the boundary ditch, the oven and the barrel well were probably medieval. Towards the south-east corner of Trench 11 a possible pit or ditch (C11105) = (C11149) was seen only in section but it may have been c.1.2m or more wide and probably more than c.0.7m deep. Approximately 8m north of this, and close to the eastern limit of excavation, a c.3.5m length of drain or gully (C11122) was identified and partially excavated. It was aligned roughly north-north-east/south-south-west and was found to be c.0.45m wide and at least 0.2m deep, with a concave base. It had been truncated by a later feature (C11120), possibly a post-hole. This may have been square or rectangular, and was at least 0.65m x 0.5m and 0.26m deep. It had been partly cut away by the large ditch (C11098). Clustered around the east end of 11120 were a number of small circular wooden stakes (C11071), (C11072), (C11073), (C11108) and (C11110), none more than c.0.04m across. It was not clear whether these stakes were directly associated with feature 11120 and they formed no coherent pattern.

The hospital did not survive the Reformation and the artefactual evidence from the former D.C. Cook site may even suggest that it was in decline during the 15th century.

2.4 Phase 4 – Post-medieval

Although often truncated by modern activity a number of deposits were believed to belong to this phase. Also assigned to this period were a number of linear features of uncertain function, a post-hole, a drain, a ditch, and two depressions possibly created by trees or bushes.



Detail from Francis Drake's plan of York, 1736, showing St Lawrence's church (38), site of St Edward's church (Q) and site of St Nicholas's Hospital (R)

Firm evidence for this period was very sparse in the evaluation, perhaps a result of truncation by modern building and earth-moving activity. Two sherds of pottery of the 18th century were recovered from a backfill (C3026) of post-hole (C3027) in Trench 3. A backfill (C4003) in field drain (C4004) in Trench 4 produced medieval pottery and a single piece of 18th-century pottery but both features were believed to be modern, certainly no earlier than the 19th century.

In Trench 10 backfill (C10015) = (C10032) of a linear feature (C10033) aligned north-south, possibly a drain, produced a five pieces of 18th-century pottery although the feature was probably modern.

There was a little more evidence for this period from Trench 11. Two irregular banjo-shaped features (C11003) and (C11005), each c.1.2-1.4m long and 0.6-0.65m across, were excavated. Neither was more than c.0.14m deep and they may have been formed by the action of trees or shrubs. These features may date to anywhere between the 16th and 19th centuries.

More firmly dated was a ditch (C11022), aligned east-west, and apparently following the centre of the east-west arm of the medieval ditch, (C11055) = (C11064) = (C11098) = (C11102). Much of 11022 lay beyond the southern limit of excavation so it was not fully excavated. It was, however, at least 1.1m wide and 0.8m deep. Some seventeen pieces of 18th- or 19th-century pottery were recovered from the backfill (C11021) of this feature as well as a quantity of residual material including medieval tile and pottery.

A small group of deposits (C11137), (C11143), (C11146) and (C11154), possibly dumps or levelling deposits, were believed to be slightly later than features

The archaeological evidence from the post-medieval period is consistent with the documentary and cartographic evidence; it suggests that the site was deserted between the 16th and 18th centuries, although St Nicholas's church was used during the Civil War. A very short stretch of ditch excavated in Trench 11 dated to the 18th century; it may correspond to a boundary shown on the 1852 OS map of the area. Until the 19th century the site of the hospital was generally open ground and possibly orchards, although most of the evidence for this period has been destroyed by 20th-century construction work.

2.5 Phase 5 – Modern

Modern remains were extensive. They were mostly levelling deposits although a number of drains were encountered as well as a few features of undoubtedly modern origin but uncertain function.

Modern development in the area began in the 19th century and has continued to the present day. The old D.C. Cook garage showrooms were demolished in 2002 and the new domestic dwellings being erected are just the latest use of a site with a history stretching back some 1800 years.

Remains of this period were, not surprisingly, abundant in both the evaluation and the excavation trenches. In the former, modern material formed the only evidence, apart from natural, in Trench 1, in Trench 2, Trench 6A, Trench 6B. All the evaluation trenches produced some modern material, mainly in the form of levelling and demolition deposits.

In the excavation, Trench 10 was found to contain almost entirely modern contexts associated with now demolished structures. Buried modern remains were also frequent in Trench 11 and included wall footings, drains and floors. Modern pottery and other finds were frequent.

3.0 Pottery

By Ailsa Mainman

Seven hundred and seventy-four sherds were recovered from the eleven trenches, covering a wide chronological span from the 2nd to the 20th century. Few of the trenches provided a good ceramic sequence. Trenches 1, 2, 6 and 10 can be disregarded as they produced only a handful of sherds. Trench 3 produced a scrappy and disturbed sequence which included Roman, Norman, medieval, post-medieval and modern pottery in almost all contexts. Trench 4 had a greater quantity of Norman and medieval wares but again sherds were small, scrappy and abraded. Trench 5 produced a similar range but also two sherds (one of Torksey-type ware and one of York ware) which are of Anglo-Scandinavian date. Trench 7 produced a few Roman and a few Norman sherds, while Trench 8 produced exclusively Roman pottery, spanning the later 2nd and early 3rd centuries. Trench 9 produced Roman pottery of the same date and, in addition, three sherds of possible Ipswich ware (650-850). These, and further sherds of Torksey-type ware, represent the only evidence for the Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian periods in this trench. The remaining material from this trench is Norman and medieval in date. The ceramic material from Trench 11 offers the best sequence, with over 50 sherds being attributed to Roman activity on the site. These span the period from the 2nd to the 4th century and are, like much of the material on the site, very abraded, possibly the result of ploughing. There is a possible Anglian sherd and a few sherds of 10th- or 11th-century Stamford ware. The sequence then continues from

the 12th century into the 15th century. Later levels include post-medieval and modern wares, together with another two Anglian sherds. The pottery from the site as a whole is not an unusual assemblage, being of a typically domestic character and representing a range of activities over the period of occupation. These activities probably included manuring and the periodic disposal of household rubbish. The presence of a few sherds of Anglian pottery is of interest and consistent with the pattern now being recognised from investigations outside the old Roman centre of York. The paucity of Anglo-Scandinavian pottery suggests that there was little activity during the 9th-11th centuries and that the real expansion of occupation was after the Norman Conquest when splashed and gritty wares become the main ceramic types current in the city. The ceramic sequence continues through and beyond the medieval period, with the typical range of domestic pottery known from elsewhere in the city. Number of sherds recovered from each trench. Trench 1: 5 Trench 2: 4 Trench 3: 198 Trench 4: 97 Trench 5: 81 Trench 6: 1 Trench 7: 16 Trench 8: 55 Trench 9: 81 Trench 10: 6 Trench 11: 230

4.0 The artefacts

By Nicky Rogers

The artefact assemblage is small, but contains objects ranging in date from the Roman through to the modern period. Two Roman objects are of particular interest. SF00001 is a military bolt-head, a penetrating iron tip which would have been socketed to a wooden shaft and fired from a catapult, with a range of up to 300m. Bolt-heads have been found on numerous Roman military sites and were in use throughout the Roman period; a smaller bolt-head was found within the fortress at York (AY 17/10, 1533, 6262). The squashed tip of SF00001 suggests that it may have been fired and hit something hard at some velocity, but its presence on this non-military site is curious; although recovered from a late Roman ditch backfill, it seems unlikely to have been fired here. Made of copper alloy, SF00040 is a simply shaped ring, probably a finger-ring, made of a single strand of twisted wire; it too was found in the backfill of a Roman ditch. Roman finger-rings often imitated arm-rings in their decoration, and a similarly formed arm-ring was found at Colchester (Crummy 1983, 45, 1590). A fragment of an iron knife blade (SF00004) was found in an 11th- or 12th-century pit, and may date from this period; it is too fragmentary to be diagnostic, however, and could equally be residual from the Roman period. The remaining artefacts include many post-medieval tobacco pipes and glass fragments, iron nails and a few fragments of slag, none of which adds to our understanding of the site, and are thus not discussed further.

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