Thornton Abbey Project

2nd Interim Report

2012

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Aims of the 2012 Field Season

The 2012 season, which ran between 1-7 April and 1-30 July, had seven key aims as outlined in the Revised Project Design, Version 2.1, submitted to English Heritage in March 2012 (Willmott & Townend 2012). All of these identified aims were completed, as well as several additional tasks, and these are summarised below.

April 2012

1.1 Reestablishment of a site grid
A site grid 20 x 20m was marked out on the ground following the British Ordnance Survey system over the 2011 season. The reestablishment of this grid allowed all earthwork and geophysical survey, as well as excavation to be tied-in to the OS grid. This was important as not all survey was undertaken using GPS but via a total station and offsetting from the site grid.

1.2 Resistivity survey of the inner & outer court
The second aim was to continue the resistivity survey in the pasture area to the east of the gatehouse, and west of the church and cloistral ranges. The aim of this was to join up with the resistivity survey undertaken the previous year (Product 2011-6) and reveal subsurface structures. This was intended to inform the placement of two trenches (Products 4-5) during Stage 3 of the project.

1.3 Magnetometer survey of the inner & outer court
The third aim was to undertake a magnetometer survey in the pasture area to the east of the gatehouse and west of the church and cloistral ranges. Again, the aim was to join this up with the magnetometer survey undertaken over the previous year (Product 2011-3) and reveal subsurface structures. This was intended to inform the placement of two trenches (Products 4-5) during Stage 3 of the project.

July 2012

1.4 Test Excavation of the Skinner Parlour
This intervention had two purposes. The first was to continue the evaluation of the remains of the Skinner mansion started in 2011 (Product 2011-4), which revealed that no in situ 17th-century structural remains were present outside of the building, and that the foundation had been completely robbed. This new product was to assess whether there are any surviving structural remains and occupation deposits within the house, and characterise the nature of these. The second purpose was to ascertain the depths of deposit inside the Skinner mansion, should they still exist, in order to aid the conservation of the monument which is suffering considerable erosion and tree root interference.

1.5 Test Excavation of the Service Range
The aim of this trench was to ground test the hypothesis that this was the location of the possible service range or stables belong to the Skinner mansion. At least three anomalies, apparently arranged around an open courtyard, were visible as both earthwork features and in the resistivity survey (Product 12-1), and the most northern of these had an unusually strong magnetic resonance (Product 12-2). Oswald has also suggested that these might be buildings that formed the nucleus of an earlier post-dissolution house, although it is equally possible that they might belong to the monastic phase of occupation.
1.6 Test Excavation of the Buildings West of the Church
Previous survey work by Oswald had identified a possible post-medieval terraced garden to the east of the Skinner mansion, and this hypothesis was confirmed by excavation in 2011 (Product 2011-5). Further geophysical survey (Products 2012-1&2) not only clearly defined this garden, but also revealed the presence of a second likely garden to the south (Product 2012-5), due west of the western cloisteral range. It is clear that both these features are on a slightly different alignment to the Skinner mansion, which also led Oswald to suggest that the terraced garden could belong to an earlier phase. It is now clear both from the resistivity survey (Product 2012-1) and a reanalysis of the earlier earthwork surveys by Coppack (1991) that there was a range of buildings in the area between the two gardens, and these possibly belonged to an earlier house on the site. During the course of the insertion of a land drain in this area in 1984, Coppack observed that there was at least one building ‘of some quality’ that was brick built with fine masonry dressings and which he thought must be late medieval in date. However, he conceded there were likely to be several phases of building on in this area, and his description is slightly at odds with his interpretation of the structure as a possible smithy or tannery (Coppack 1991, 42). The purpose of this trench was to sample the building, ascertain whether it is indeed post-medieval in date, or an earlier monastic structure, and in either case establish its relationship with the identified gardens.

1.7 Test Excavation of the South Garden
Resistivity survey, (Products 2012-1), undertaken in spring 2012 in the area immediately to the west of the cloister, revealed a square area enclosed by high resistance anomalies and with two crossing features running from corner to corner. This confirms previous results (Oswald et al. 2010, 120), although these were not fully interpreted. However, in light of the confirmation (Product 2011-5) of the presence of garden features to the north, this area could now be interpreted as a formal square garden with crossing diagonal paths. Although broadly corresponding on the cloister to the east, and thus conceivably medieval in date, it also aligns with the post-medieval terraced gardens to the north, suggesting that it more likely formed part of the post-medieval remodelling of the site. The aim of this product was to sample the possible outer edge and an inner path of the garden to ascertain its true function and date.

1.8 Test Excavation of the Quay and Boundaries to the East of the Presbytery
Resistivity and magnetometery survey, (Products 2011-1&2), undertaken in 2011 in the fields to the east of the presbytery revealed a particularly strong set of results that complement and supplement previous topographic surveys. Coppack has suggested that this area contained a series of fishponds fed from the beck (Coppack 1991, 42), and Oswald, suggested that the most prominent of these, an elliptical depression, might have been partially backfilled, explaining its odd shape (Oswald et al. 2010, 32). However, the resistivity plot suggested that this feature might have had a stone or brick revetment on three sides, and was open to the beck on its fourth, too substantial a construction for a simple fishpond, and raising the possibility it might be a small quay for the docking of barges. The resistivity plot also showed that between this feature and the church was an area enclosed by a high resistance feature (a rubble bank or possible stone wall), set at an odd angle to monastic buildings. Whilst this might have formed part of the monastic arrangement, it was also conceivable that this enclosure was a post-medieval garden feature. Consequently the purpose of this trench was to evaluate and identify these features, so this poorly understood area of the site might be better interpreted.
1.9 Test Excavation of the Skinner Kitchen and Great Hall

The purpose of this intervention was to continue the evaluation of the remains of the Skinner mansion started 2011 (Product 2011-4/2012-4), which revealed that no in situ 17th-century structural remains were present outside of the building, and that the surrounding foundations had been completely robbed. The aim of the trench was to assess whether there are any surviving structural remains and occupation deposits within the kitchen and great hall, as identified on the early 17th-century plan drawn by John Thorpe (Roberts 1984), and characterise the nature of these. Geophysical survey (Product 2012-1) within the area of the supposed great hall revealed an area of high resistance that may have represented intact archaeological deposits related to the Skinner house.

1.10 Additional activities

Although not outlined in the Project Design, time and the availability of equipment meant that further activities were undertaken which were either non-intrusive or already covered by the existing Section 42 licence. These include the resistivity survey across other areas to the north of the church and to the south of the main precinct to characterise the large mound for which there is currently no sure interpretation (see Section 3.3), and magnetometer survey across the area to the north of the church (see Section 3.2). Although not included within a specific product the collection of topographic data was continued using GPS and Total Station units with the aim of characterising the topography of the precinct (see Section 2.2).

Figure 1 Location of trenches for both 2011 and 2012 seasons
2 Topographic Survey

2.1 Methodology
Topographic survey was undertaken using two complimentary techniques, dependent on the ground environment. A Trimble GeoXR GPS unit was used to map principal features and additional referencing was carried out using a Leica 440 series Total Station. The Total Station was the primary equipment used to carry out the survey in the areas of dense foliage due to the presence of overhanging tree branches that hindered GPS satellite availability.

2.2 Model of the Abbey and the Surrounding Landscape

One additional outcome of the project was the initiation of data collection for the construction of a 3D model of the earthworks within and surrounding the central precinct. This model will be supplemented with further survey and the addition of LiDAR data, which will help to improve the resolution and set it within a wider landscape context.

Figure 2 shows a shaded plot of topographic map with the darker shades representing the higher ground. Although incomplete and requiring further data, the plot clearly shows the raised ground on which the church is built and the slope to the east towards the Skitter Beck. The earthworks of the Skinner House, as well as those to the north of the church forming the triangular enclosure, are clearly visible. In addition to this a ditch or linear depression can be seen dropping away from the abbey to the south-east that may represent the remains of the monastic drain.

![Figure 2 3D Model of the abbey and surrounding landscape (incomplete)](image-url)
3 Geophysical Survey

3.1 Methodology
Both resistivity and magnetometer survey were undertaken. The equipment used for the resistivity survey was a GeoScan RM15 Resistance Meter. This resistance meter was set to a sample and traverse interval of 1m, producing a data set of 400 data points for each 20 x 20m grid surveyed. In the case of the magnetometer survey a similar methodology was followed using a GeoScan 256, Single Axis Fluxgate Gradiometer. The traverse interval for the magnetometer survey remained consistent with that of the resistivity, however the sample distance was reduced to 0.25m, resulting in 1,600 data points per 20 x 20m grid square. The data from both geophysical surveys was processed using the GEOPLOT software package.

The magnetometer and resistivity surveys identified a large number of previously unknown archaeological features, although the total number and character of each of these features is yet to be fully verified. Further processing of the data will be carried out to better understand the nature of the anomalies detected. This interim report should not be seen as a comprehensive examination of all anomalies visible within the geophysical plot, but rather a discussion of those features that are clearly archaeological and/or those that can be referenced to either aerial photographs, earthwork surveys or are identifiable on both geophysical surveys.

3.2 Central Precinct
Resistivity and magnetometer surveys were undertaken over the central precinct, between the gatehouse and the church, as well as within portions of the church itself and the area directly to the north (Figure 3). The iron railings surrounding the church and gatehouse heavily distorted data from the magnetometer survey in and around the abbey buildings. Two parallel, linear and highly magnetic anomalies run east-west through the centre of the church. These anomalies possibly represent the stone foundations that would have supported the load bearing pillars within the church. However, it is more likely that they are in fact the outer walls of the original first-phase church, which was reused as a footing for the new pier bases when it was rebuilt and extended, as was the case at Kirkham Priory (see Coppack et al. 1995). These features are also evident within the resistivity plot as high resistance linear anomalies following the same orientation as those shown within the magnetometery data. The resistivity data also reveals areas of high resistance running north-south across the church, most likely the remains of the foundations for screens or walls separating the nave, transepts and chancel. The only other features of archaeological interest within the priory buildings are the linear, high resistance anomalies within the cloister, possibly representing drains underneath the current ground surface, although a north-south feature could be an earlier phase of the west cloister walk.

The magnetometery plot of the centre of the precinct is limited, as with the majority of magnetic data for the site, by the underlying geology that appears to mask the results. However, the remains of garden features can be seen in the form of terraced banks, a section of which was excavated in 2011 (Willmott & Townend 2011, 14-5). These banks extend east to west at the north-eastern limit of the plot, directly to the east of the Skinner House. A group of anomalies of similar character can be seen to the south of the plot, represented on the ground by a number of linear earthworks, which given their magnetic signature are likely to be constructed of tile or brick. The north-west corner of the plot shows two oval areas of magnetic noise that match earthworks shown on the Ordnance Survey for the site. Subsequent excavation (see section 4.3) proved these to be of modern date. The final feature is a circular anomaly approximately twenty metres to the east of the Skinner mansion; this may represent the remains of an industrial feature,
such as a kiln or furnace. Given its proximity to the Skinner mansion it is possible that it may date to the period of construction or demolition of the house.

Figure 3 Magnetometer (above) and Resistivity (below) Surveys of the central precinct

Resistivity survey undertaken across the central precinct produced much more positive results. To the north of the church a number of high resistance spreads were encountered that probably represent demolition deposits cleared from the church by the Ministry of Works. However it is possible that the most westerly of these may indicate the presence of a building close to the small
medieval culvert that crosses east-west stream to the north. To the east of the church are the high resistance linear anomalies forming the feature interpreted as a formal garden, which subsequent excavation revealed to consist of cobbled paths (see section 4). To the north of the garden is another collection of small high resistance linears also excavated during the 2012 season (see section 4.5).

To the extreme north-east of the plot, linear anomalies match those observed within the magnetometry data and interpreted as tile banks. This is also the case in the south-west corner of the plot where the linear banks are on a north-south and east-west orientation. Other than these features, and those excavated during the 2012 season, the plot consists of large spreads of high resistance material, possibly the product of clearance of different areas of the site, including the church and gatehouse.

3.3 The 'mound' south of the central precincts
The data collected from resistivity survey over the mound to the south-west of the church were also of good quality. The results clearly show a number of archaeological features including areas of high resistance and the remains of later cuts or ditches through the mound. The area of high resistance within the centre of the plot is roughly rectangular measuring approximately 20 x 20m. One possible interpretation for the mound might be that it was formed from debris during the clearance of the cloister in the 1950s. However, the majority of the deposit appears to be made of low resistance material, making this unlikely. Future investigation of the mound would be best centred over this high resistance anomaly to allow better characterisation and interpretation to be carried out.

![Figure 4 Resistivity survey of the 'mound', south of the central precinct](image_url)
4 Excavation

4.1 Methodology
All the trenches were accurately laid out by GPS and excavated by hand. Excavation and recording were undertaken stratigraphically although all in situ architectural or structural remains encountered were not removed or damaged. On completion of the excavation all groundwork was restored to its original appearance, and reseeded. A full written, drawn and photographic record was made of all material revealed during the course of excavation. All archaeological features and deposits were drawn and fully recorded for archival purposes, with plans completed at a scale of 1:20, and section drawings at a scale of 1:10. Artefacts recovered from the excavation were collected and systematically recorded and each individual find, (with the exception of ceramic building material), was recorded 2 dimensionally as well as contextually. Any find of particular significance was given a Small Find number, 3-dimensionally recorded, and catalogued separately. All finds were retained with the exception of CBM, which was broadly quantified contextually, and representative samples kept.

Figure 5 Location of Trenches D (west) and C & H (east)

4.2 Trench C, The Skinner Parlour (A.Cassells)
A trench measuring 7 x 7m on its west and south sides (with the SW corner at 511608.34.73, 419062.35 and the SE at 511615.36.97, 419062.36) was located within the northern half of the Skinner Mansion. This joined on its northern edge the previous Trench C dug in 2011, thus forming a continuous western section through both the inside and outside of the building.

In 2011, the excavation of Trench C uncovered a possible late medieval monastic building dating to the 14th-15th centuries, and a large foundation trench, identified as the north wall of Sir Vincent Skinner's post-medieval house. Therefore, for the 2012 excavation season Trench C was re-excavated and extended to the south and east. The aims of this trench were to determine the extent of the survival of the foundations of the house, which were absent in the previous year’s trench, to half section a room, identified as the ‘parlour’ on early 17th-century plan drawn by John Thorpe (Roberts 1984), and excavate an interior wall between the ‘parlour’ and ‘lodging’. It was found that the foundation trenches for both the exterior and interior walls had been dug in one phase and were both flat-based, vertical-sided cuts and contained no surviving structural
foundations at all. In addition, a second re-cut was observed and interpreted as evidence for possible investigation undertaken by the Earl of Yarborough as part of an early 19th-century survey of the abbey (see Roberts 1984, figure 1).

Within the parlour, a north-south running brick and stone coursed wall with an east-west return at its northern end were uncovered. Both of these were cut by the foundation trench for the 17th-century house and must therefore pre-date them. Although the foundation trench removed any physical relationship between the walls observed in both the 2011 and 2012 Trench C, it is likely that these walls represent the same phase of small monastic out-buildings dating to the 14th to 15th centuries as both are built on top of the same layer of levelling sand observed in both trenches.

The lack of post-medieval structural remains within the foundation cut and the interior of the parlour, combined with the lack of structural finds such as iron nails, broken roof tile and plaster that would reasonably be expected to be encountered even if a house had been totally demolished, demonstrate that the building for which the foundations survive was in fact never built. This corresponds to the evidence encountered in Trench H, located in the front portion of the house (see section 4.7). The account of Abraham de la Pryme suggests that after Sir Vincent Skinner’s first house collapsed he began building a second before he went bankrupt (Jackson 1870, 145). It is therefore possible that the archaeological remains observed in both Trench C and H can be directly related to the building of this second house for which the foundations were dug but the building itself was never built. The location of the first house remains unknown.

Figure 6 Trench C fully excavated (looking south)

4.3 **Trench D, The Service Range** (R. Askew)

A trench measuring 3 x 8m (with opposing corner coordinates of NW 511552.73, 419076.87 and SE 511555.97, 419069.06) was located immediately to the south of the east-west running bank shown on the Ordnance Survey maps and visible on the resistivity survey as a high resistance feature.
Removal of topsoil revealed extensive deposits of building rubble over 1.2m in depth, which had been deposited against the east-west bank. The rubble contained large pieces of concrete, bricks and large water-worn pebbles, and was dated artefactually and through local reports concerning repairs and renovations undertaken in gatehouse during the 1970s. The homogeneity of individual fills and the depth of the deposit suggested the feature was artificially deepened and filled using a mechanical excavator which had destroyed all archaeological features in the centre of the trench.

At the southern edge of the trench, evidence was found of another bank running parallel to the northern east-west bank. A thin, humic dark brown soil layer indicated the presence of a turf line over the bank prior to the deposition of material in the 1970s. The bank itself was composed of two separate deposits, which, due to the lack of finds and homogeneity of the layers, had been formed in quick succession. A single potsherd towards the base of the bank suggests it was constructed no earlier than the 14th or 15th century.

Although the removal of all archaeological material in the centre of the trench created difficulties in interpretation, the positioning of the banks and evidence from the geophysical survey and aerial photography suggests the bank was part of a late-medieval, or early post-medieval, rectangular banked feature which was visible until the late-20th century clearance.

Figure 7 Trench D (west section)
4.4 **Trench E, The Buildings West of the Church** (M.Huggon & F.Massey)

A trench measuring 5 x 15m (with opposing corner coordinates of NW 511703.94, 418973.05 and SE 511718.94, 418968.045) was located over a series of geophysical anomalies interpreted as a possible range of buildings to the west of the abbey church.

![Figure 8 Location of trenches E (north) and F (south)](image)

Below the topsoil were a series of demolition layers, mostly consisting of broken and whole bricks, with some building stone, and in one area along the southern edge of the trench there was a spread of sandy mortar material containing broken architectural stone. The demolition varied in depth across the trench, being approximately 0.2m deep in the northern half of the trench, whilst in several areas of the southern half of the trench the layers combined to a depth of approximately 0.4m. This demolition appears to date to the latter half of the 16th century, and is probably associated with remodelling of this area of the site under the occupancy of the Tyrwhitts or possibly Sir Vincent Skinner. Cut into these spreads were two postholes, approximately 0.3m in diameter and 0.4m deep, almost certainly from one of the documented mess tents erected by the Lindsay Battalion across the monastic precinct between 1866-70 (see Oswald *et al.* 2010, 90).

The top demolition layer just covered an L-shaped wall with the internal floor surface to the southwest of the wall. The wall was constructed from a mix of brick and often roughly-worked stone, and appeared to be constructed in at least two phases, with larger faced stones forming the base pads for posts placed periodically along its length. However, the wall itself was leaning slightly to the south, suggesting the thicker layer of deposit in the southern part of the trench may be caused by some of the wall collapsing as part of the dumping of demolition material to its north. To the east of the main wall was another L-shaped section of wall, of a less substantial construction being only a few courses high and mostly made of poorly mortared brick with some shaped building stone included. What the purpose of this wall was, or the function of the internal space, is unclear as a large, irregular, undated pit filled with broken tile and brick had truncated much of the stratigraphy in the south-east corner of the trench. Between the two L-shaped walls was a gap 0.3m wide, which was floored with a patch of bricks.
To the north and east of the trench were a series of mixed dumping layers, some very dark, soft, and suggestive of some burning, while others were lighter, more yellowy brown and more compact, all with scatters of pottery, window glass, lead window came and copper alloy objects, associated with demolition and clearance of the site during one or, more probably, phases of activity in the immediate post-dissolution period. Against the northern section, covered by one layer of dumping, and cut into another layer, was a small hearth, made from fired clay and roof tile. The hearth had been used for melting lead, with several strands of melted lead having leaked out of the sides, and at the base of the bowl of the hearth was an ashy layer, residue from the last firing. The hearth itself was under 0.5m in diameter, slightly squared off sides, with a shallow bowl, and very similar to several cupellation hearths found on other monastic sites. This also explains the large quantity of lead window came and broken window glass found across the trench in the demolition and dumping layers, although whether the hearth was used for silver extraction through cupellation, melting lead down into ingots, or some other process, is at present unclear.

The main building excavated in the trench appears to have been a post-dissolution bakehouse, as a circular, brick-built oven was encountered against the southern section, although this would originally have been towards the centre of the room. The oven was partially built on top of a floor surface formed from reused ashlar blocks, one of which was formerly a grave marker with a cruciform motif identical to one still extant in the north transept of the abbey church. A thin layer of ash at the bottom of the oven does suggest that it had been used, although the entrance and a possible external wall to the oven area had been damaged when the building had been partially truncated by a 19th-century posthole. To the northwest of the oven was a broken stone tank butting up to the wall, most likely a dough trough. To the west of the trough was a brick-built fireplace base, constructed against the wall. To the east of the oven and the reused ashlar flooring (and apparently running underneath the latter), was an earlier mortar surface which was cut in part by the post-dissolution walls, suggesting it was of late medieval date.
4.5 **Trench F, the South Garden** (C.Finn)
A trench measuring 2 x 12m (with opposing corner coordinates of NW 511730.34, 418909.10 and SE 511732.27, 418897.14) was located within the south-east corner of the main precinct field, lying to the west of, and running parallel to, the ruins of the cloister. This trench was located to intersect the corner of a possible post-medieval formal garden revealed by the resistivity survey: a high resistance square with two diagonal crossing lines. The trench was positioned across the southern corner, where the diagonal path of the garden met the square garden boundary. Below the topsoil was encountered approx. 0.2m of dark humic soil, at the base part of which could be seen the first stones of the NW-SE running pathway. The entire southern end of the trench and the path were covered with a thin demolition spread of crumbled brick and soil. Once the rubble layer was removed, the path was fully revealed. The path was formed of several lines of thin rectangular cobbles, with a core and edgings of larger square stones, which was up to 1.2m wide at its largest extent.

At the northern end of the trench, about 0.3m below the topsoil were revealed two large patches of gravel running approximately parallel to the path. These gravel patches were found to be only a few centimetres thick, and were in turn overlaying patches of mortar lying on top of a bank of yellow sand. This bank was approximately 1m wide and also ran on a NW-SE angle, although it was no longer quite parallel to the path. A 0.2m wide slot was put in to investigate this bank, which was formed from alternating layers of sand, mortar and gravel. The high water table in the trench prevent any further work on these features. An area of yellow sand was also identified to
the south of the path, as well as partially underlying it. This was again excavated using a 0.2m slot along the western section of the trench, and revealed a similar pattern of mortar and sand layers as was found to the north. These layers continued down to a depth of approximately 0.4m from the surface. Although the exact sequence of these various sand and mortar layers could not be determined due to the flooding experienced in the trench, it seems highly likely that bands of different coloured gravels and sands were being carefully arranged in between the planting beds of the garden for ornamental purposes.

Figure 11  Trench F looking north

Approximately 1.2m from the south end of the trench, these layers were interrupted by the cut of a ditch. This feature, recognised as the outer boundary to the square of the garden and originally thought to be a wall when seen on the resistivity survey, was revealed to actually be a ditch filled with brick, stone and chalk rubble. The southern edge of this feature lay outside the boundaries of the trench, and although this feature was not a wall as expected, its alignment with the path still suggests it acted as a boundary for the garden. Given the problems with flooding experienced at this part of the site during the 2012 excavation, and therefore possibly in earlier periods too, it is likely that this rubble-filled ditch served to drain the garden.
4.6 Trench G, Possible Quay and Boundary East of Presbytery (A. Mattison)
A trench measuring 2 x 10m (with opposing corner coordinates of NW 511905.51, 418956.97 and SE 511921.85, 418954.75) was located over high resistance features relating to a bank running north-south, to the east of the abbey church. After removing the topsoil three distinct areas were apparent. At the east end of the trench was a circular hollow feature filled by a deposit containing a range of artefacts dating from medieval to late post-medieval periods. Upon excavation this was found to be the edge of an oval hollow, which could be seen on the geophysics to extend much farther to the east than the trench and had been subsequently used for the dumping of material.

There were three layers of such dumping. The oldest layer contained a large quantity of pottery, which included a small amount of medieval material but the majority was of 18th to 19th century date. The middle layer consisted of a medium brown soil mixed with mortar. The latest layer encountered, that just under the topsoil, held a mixture of deposited artefacts, from clay pipe ends to architectural stonework originally from the monastery as well as modern material. Under these three deposits was a layer of buried topsoil. Although the date for the original oval feature could not be determined, the earliest dumping within it appears to relate to activity in the 19th-century, quite possibly the clearance of the church by Lord Yarborough, whilst the latest dumping belonged to subsequent Ministry of Works activity on the site in the 1950s.
Just under the topsoil in the middle portion of the trench a thin layer of very pebbly soil running north-south. This soil sat on the top of what was found to be a medieval bank. The bank consisted of layers of compacted rocky soils, which were built up in several phases, and interpreted as being a defence against flooding from the Skitter beck, which runs just a few metres to the east. Based on two distinct lenses of alluvium present between the layers of compact bank, it is clear that at least twice the bank was of inadequate height to contain flooding and was overwhelmed before being heightened further.

To the west of the bank a silty orange-brown soil had accumulated against it. Although few datable artefacts were encountered, a number of animal bones were recovered and were most likely medieval in date. With the exception of the relatively recent dumping in the oval hollow, there was no evidence for earlier post-dissolution activity in this part of the site.

4.7  **Trench H, the Skinner Kitchen and Great Hall** (C. Howsam)
A trench measuring 2 x 10m (with opposing corner coordinates of NW 511599.05, 419040.36 and SE 511609.05, 419038.365) was located towards the south-west of the Skinner Mansion to investigate a high-resistance anomaly identified from the geophysical survey. This area was excavated in order to explore the possible survival of the front portion of the Skinner house and to understand the relationship between the great hall and kitchen as identified on the surviving 17th-century architect's plan. The trench traversed a north-south running ditch, which has been interpreted as a foundation trench for an internal wall between the great hall and kitchen. The excavation of the ditch revealed no structural foundations, similar to the foundation cuts excavated in Trench C. Similarly, there was a nineteenth-century re-cut which is possible evidence for the wall-chasing of the outline of the house by Lord Yarborough.

![Figure 14 Trench H south section of foundation cut between the kitchen (left) and hall (right)](image-url)
The western section of the trench overlay what was identified as the kitchen area of the Skinner house. Following excavation, it appeared that there were no features or structural remains to suggest the presence of a kitchen or indeed any other kind of room. Finds recovered from this area of the trench included fragments of pottery, animal bone and some window glass. The eastern portion of the trench overlay what was the presumed great hall of the Skinner house. Excavation revealed several built-up layers of mortar surfaces. However, these were cut by the foundation trench and clearly predated the construction of the post-medieval earthwork. Below these mortar layers was an accumulation of late medieval soil, dated by several fragments of pottery. Several large pieces of dressed stone were also recovered from this area, below the mortar surface. The excavation of this area revealed the foundation trench of a possible house; however, as with Trench C, the lack of any fragmented building materials or structural remains demonstrates that no building was actually built in this location.
5  References


6  Acknowledgements

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