

## Sheet 1 - Looking Back at Hungate Exhibition



### The Story of the Dig Hungate project

From the autumn of 2006 to the end of 2011 a team from York Archaeological Trust investigated the archaeology of the Hungate area of York, as part of the regeneration of an often overlooked corner of the city. The project was called Dig Hungate.

What the archaeologists discovered during their investigations was a rich and changing story, reflecting how people adapted the use of this low lying parcel of land that sits within an elbow of the River Foss. The Looking Back at Hungate exhibition, currently hosted within DIG, uses artefacts, photographs and video to tell the story of a changing city landscape over the last 2,000 years.

#### Where is Hungate?

Hungate is a street in the city centre of York, which runs from St Saviourgate (where DIG is based) down to the River Foss. The Stonebow was cut through as a new road in the 1950s so that Hungate is no longer a through road along all its length. However, its full route can still be traced on old maps.



Hargrove Map, Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century

## **Some Basic Facts About Hungate**

- The street Hungate is over 1000 years old!
- The butchers in the Shambles used to dump their waste in Hungate 500 years ago!
- The Romans buried some of their dead in the Hungate area!
- By the start of the 20th century, the biggest flour producer in Britain had a huge flour mill in Hungate!
- The Hungate excavation is three times larger than the Coppergate dig in the 1970s that unearthed the Viking-age city of JORVIK!
- The name 'Hungate' means 'street of the dogs'!

## **About the Archaeological Excavations**

Dig Hungate was the single biggest excavation in York ever. From late 2006 until the end of 2011, York Archaeological Trust excavated at Hungate to reveal the rich heritage and archaeology of this important area of York's city centre.

The archaeological investigation was funded by Hungate (York) Regeneration Ltd., a joint venture between Crosby Lend Lease, Evans Property Group and Land Securities Group PLC, as part of the work being carried out to create the new Hungate urban neighbourhood. The close working relationship between Hungate (York) Regeneration Ltd, York Archaeological Trust and City of York Council enabled the development of this exciting archaeological project which included unparalleled views, tours and access to the live excavation of York's past. The archaeologists of York Archaeological Trust revealed past chapters of the buried history of Hungate, whilst a new chapter was written, and a new Hungate community was created.



## Timeline of Hungate, based on archaeological excavation and historical research

### **Roman** - Late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **Burial** People were buried at Hungate in Roman times. Some of the graves discovered contained beautiful jewellery and other grave goods. One burial was placed in a lead casket. Further investigation is needed to discover more about this individual.
- **Defence** Lying outside the main fortress area in Roman Eboracum, we now know Hungate had a role in defending the city. Military ditches were found enclosing parts of the site.
- **Farming** We know the area was used for farming, the large ditches dividing the land for agricultural purposes.

### **Anglo-Saxon** - Mid 6<sup>th</sup> to late 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **Farming** The area was open fields most probably used for growing crops and keeping animals.

### **Viking Age** – Late 8<sup>th</sup> to mid 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **Development** The land was organised into plots of equal size – an example of early town planning.
- **Industry** Hungate was the biggest industrial site of Viking Age York. The hearths, ash and charcoal waste from this industry have been excavated, but nothing else remains to give us a clue to what was being produced or processed here. Could it be a centre for smoking foodstuffs or part of the dyeing industry?
- **Warehousing** Industrial use declined and the area became used for storage. We have found the cellar warehouses which probably housed goods being traded in the city.
- **Recycling** One of these cellar buildings was constructed in part using the timbers from an Anglo-Saxon boat. Using dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) the timbers have been traced to South-East England. Perhaps the boat was no longer sea-worthy after its last voyage to York and was therefore broken up at a boat yard by the river at the bottom of Hungate?
- **Burial** Three burials were discovered dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. We had not expected to find Viking age burials at Hungate so it is very intriguing!

## Medieval – 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **Open ground** The lake created by the damming of the River Foss turned Hungate into a dead end. Much of the area was left open and undeveloped.
- **Dumping** The area was used as a city dump for four centuries. Lots of rubbish and cess pits were discovered.
- **Wells** Excavation revealed that a number of wells had been dug at Hungate, serving the population living in the city centre. Some wells were lined with wicker work, others with large barrels.
- **Communal cooking** The area was used by townsfolk for baking their bread in one of the ovens uncovered on site.

## Post-Medieval – late 16<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- **Major buildings** Evidence for the Guild of Cordwainers (Shoemakers) buildings included a plaster and mortar mixing pit, the material used for the upkeep of the building. Archaeologists also excavated part of the stone footings for the building which was probably timber framed.
- **Market gardens** Fields and orchards occupied much of the land. The soil levels built up, partly due to manuring with rubbish brought down from the city centre.

## Modern – 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries

- **Housing** Houses were excavated including examples of one-up-one-downs, two-up-two-downs and tenements (one dwelling upstairs, a separate dwelling downstairs).
- **Toilets** A communal toilet block was discovered, the toilet being a tipper flush type, which although an improvement on a dry pit toilet was still considered very unsanitary.
- **Industry** Evidence of large scale industry within the city centre was uncovered, including the Gas Light Company and Leethams Flour Mill. Leethams was the biggest flour mill in Britain by the start of the twentieth century. (See **Sheet 2** for more details)
- **Poverty** The area was declared by Seebohm Rowntree as one of the poorest in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. (See **Sheet 3** for more details)
- **Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Redevelopment** Evidence of slum clearance proceeded reoccupation of the site by light industrial buildings