

NYCC HER	
SNY	12036
ENY	4232
CNY	
Parish	2152
Rec'd	

DEVELOPMENT AT CALVERT'S CARPETS YARD, THIRSK
SCHEDULED MONUMENT COUNTY NO. 711 TOWN BANKS & CASTLE

INTRODUCTION

Scheduled Ancient Monument County No. 711 lies to the west of Thirsk Market Place and contains parts of the site of a medieval castle. The most prominent visible feature remaining is a bank running north-west to south-east along the western edge of the Monument (Pl. 1, 2, 3). It is known as Town Bank. This bank, which is between 1m and 1.5m in height, formerly showed the start of a corner turning to the east at its southern end.

This corner was lost when Calvert's Yard was constructed in the mid 1970's. At that time a 20m wide strip at the southern end of the Monument was levelled and laid to concrete to form a car park (Pl. 4). The ground level created in this car park was up to 2m below that of the Town Bank. A retaining wall was built against the remaining portion of the Town Bank to the north (Pl. 2, 3).

The outside, western edge of the Town Bank remained in part as a boundary bank with a retaining wall between Calvert's Carpets Yard and Woodhead and Bray's Garage to the west (Pl. 5).

At the time of the development no archaeological record was made and there is no information available on whether anything of archaeological interest was found.

The present development consists of a garage block over the western end of the existing yard. It involved cutting foundations through the concrete floor of the yard along the back (western side) of the site, approximately 19m long, and for between 7m and 10m along the south and north edges. Two holes 1.95m by 1.25m were cut along the front of the proposed building. The depth of the machine cut trenches was dependent on the ground conditions beneath the concrete.

In view of the fact that the existing ground level of the yard is up to 2m below that of the Town Bank surviving outside the yard, it was decided by the Secretary of State that a watching brief on any ground disturbance work would sufficiently cover any archaeological material which might have survived at that depth.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

A watch was kept on the machine dug trench described above, on 15th and 16th July 1991, and on two hand dug holes at the front of the building, on 9th and 11th October 1991 (fig 2).

Along the north side of the yard, the existing breeze block wall which backs onto and retains the Town Bank (Pl. 2, 3) was used as the side wall of the garage. The machine trench was therefore cut no deeper than the existing footings, i.e. 40cm deep. The trench was 9m long and 70cm wide. Beneath 15cm of concrete was a layer of clinker, rubble and disturbed soil, giving way in places to a fine medium brown loam (fig 2).

The western edge of the site, which forms the back of the new building, was also backed with a breeze block wall. This was topped for part of its length by a random stone wall c.1m high, running along the outside edge of the boundary bank which forms the remaining southern portion of the Town Bank (Pl. 5, 6, 7). The breeze block wall was partly demolished to create a straight line for the foundation trench of the new building. This revealed a section up to 1m above ground level and between 1m and 1.25m below it. The stone wall was left in situ above the bank.

In the section (fig 1), the concrete floor of the yard was visible for 9m from the northern end. Beneath it was variously the medium brown loam and clinker mix observed in the north trench, and a coarser dark brown loam with stones. On the southern half of the section, where the breeze block wall was removed, the very edge of the concrete floor was visible as lumps of concrete and small stones in a continuing layer at former ground level. Above this was a reddish sandy loam containing lumps of red or yellow clay and heavily disturbed by the roots of a tree. At the southern end of the section, a brick wall was demolished but its foundations remained visible.

Beneath these layers along all the section was a layer of red or brown sandy gritty loam containing clay lumps and in places stones and chalk. Root disturbance continued but to a lesser extent than higher in the section. At a depth of between 75cm and 90cm a layer of yellow clay became visible, continuing to the bottom of the machine trench.

The trench on the south side also backed directly onto the edge of the site. Here the demolition of part of the retaining breeze block wall revealed a section that in places reached to over 3m in depth (fig 3). The upper 2m consisted of heavily

disturbed soil below the edge of a garden backing onto the site. The ground level of this garden was 2m above that of the yard. Further disturbance was visible where the concrete floor of the yard extended to 75cm thick below an oil tank storage area.

However, below the modern disturbance it was possible to trace a band of yellow clay rising and falling in section, in parallel with the position of the Town Bank. This thick yellow clay overlaid a layer of dark red silty sand which in turn overlaid yellow sand continuing to the bottom of the machine trench. In the eastern part of the section the red sand was waterlogged.

Two square holes, 1.25m by 1.95m, were hand dug along the front of the new building to support the roof (fig 2). The fill of these was largely similar. Below the concrete floor of the yard was a layer of clinker as in the other sections. Beneath this was disturbed brown loam with patches of yellow sand, small stones and larger pebbles up to 10cm across. In the northern hole this layer was darker and wetter than in the southern one. At c70cm below the yard level a layer of yellow clayey silt appeared under which was red silty sand. In the southern hole a band of yellow-green clay lay between these two layers over the western half of the hole (fig 4).

The only finds from the watching brief came from the disturbed brown loam of the northern hole.

THE FINDS

Apart from modern material (drinks cans, crisp packets etc.) from the development of the 1970's, the only finds came from the northern hole at the front of the new building. These consisted of two pieces of bone and part of a tooth. The tooth is of a sheep and the bone, although too small to identify with certainty, are probably also sheep.

They were found at a depth of c. 50cm in a layer of dark brown disturbed loam with stones which was very wet and heavy. The date of the layer could not be established from existing information, and could be anything from medieval to 1970's.

INTERPRETATION

Despite the lack of dating evidence, it seems likely that the clayey layers observed in the sections of the foundation trenches were the remains of the Town Bank. It also seems possible that the waterlogged area in the southern section represented a ditch alongside and to the east of the Town Bank.

The bone found could come from a rubbish pit, but the area examined and the amount of material recorded is too small to reach any firm conclusions.

The current development has caused some damage to the Town Bank and to archaeological levels in its vicinity.

Not enough ground was exposed to gain any significant information about either the nature and date of the bank, or about occupation in the area.

The watching brief has however confirmed that the major part of the Monument within Calvert's Yard was destroyed in the development of the 1970's.

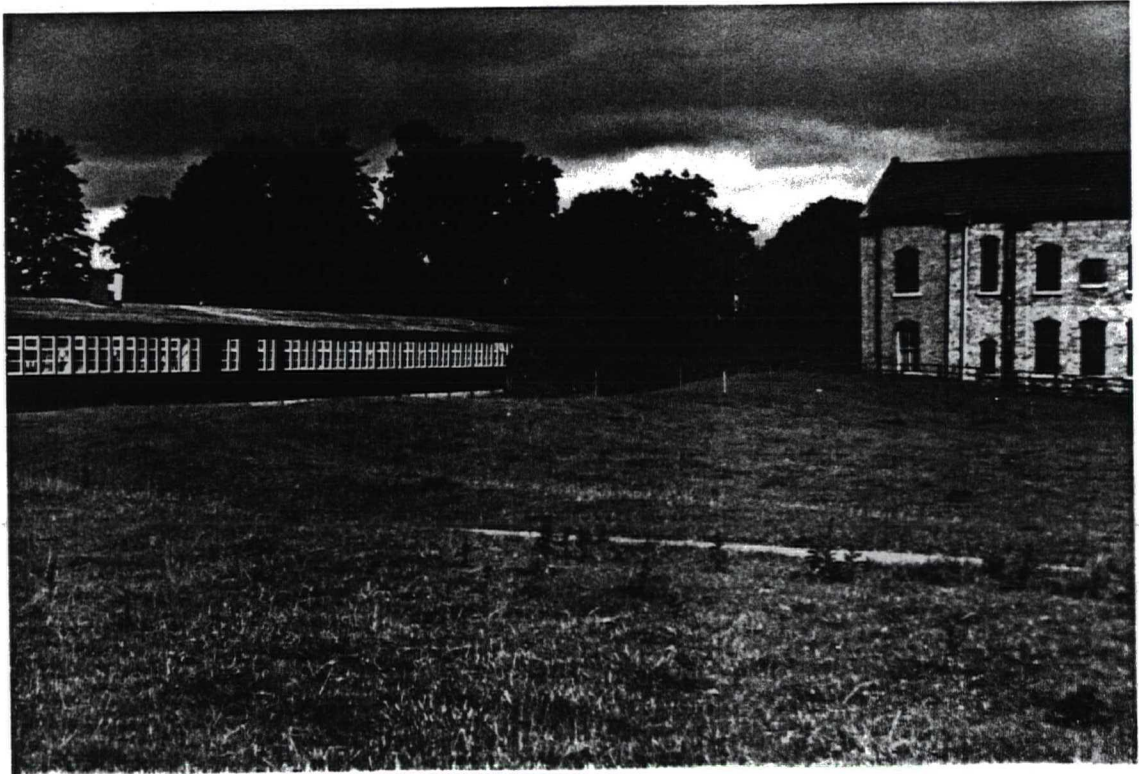
Alison Clarke 19 . 12 . 91

KEY TO FIGURES 1 - 4

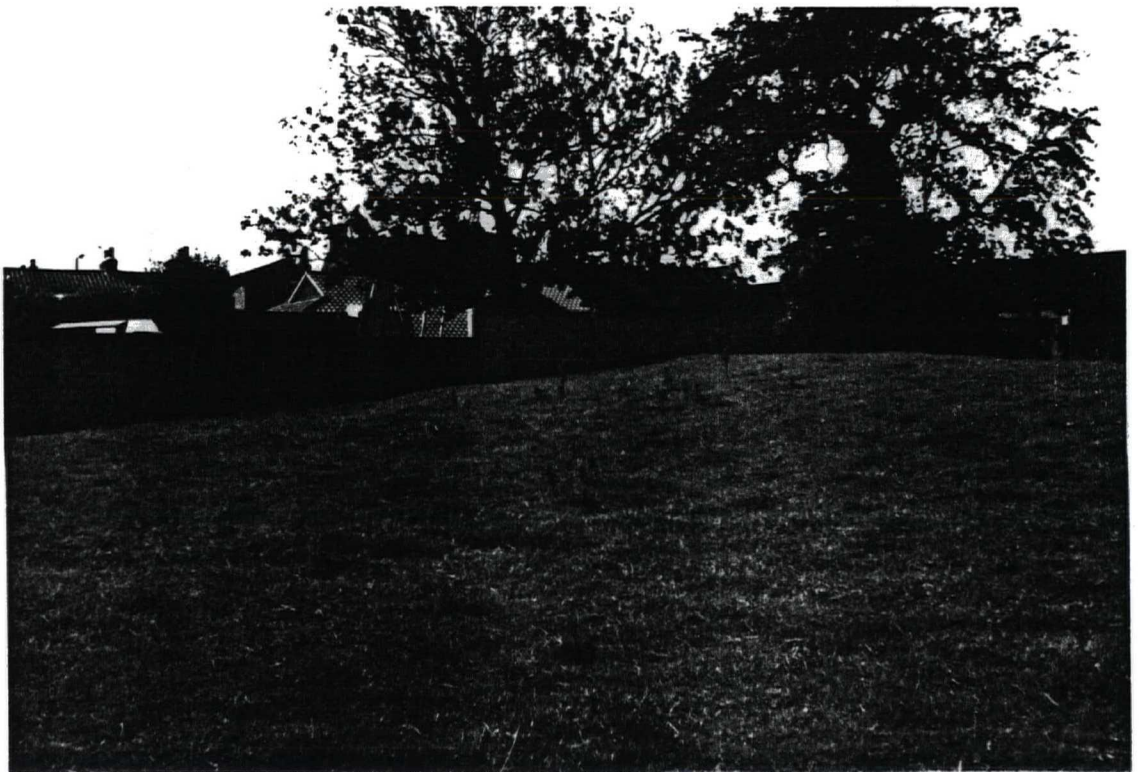
1. Topsoil
2. Mortar/rubble with bricks
3. Red/brown clayey loam with yellow clay. (Heavily root disturbed)
4. Densely packed small stones and pieces of concrete
5. Concrete
6. Clinker/road leavings
7. Black clinker with ash and polythene
8. Dark brown loam with small stones
9. Very fine soft brown loam
10. Dark brown loam
11. Brown loam with clayey, sandy and gritty patches and variations in colour from yellow/brown to red.
12. Yellow clay
13. Disturbed brown loam subsoil
14. Rubble
15. Medium/dark brown loam
16. Dark red silty sand
17. Yellow sand
18. Yellow/green clay

PLATES

1. Town Bank north of Calverts Yard looking northwest.
2. Town Bank north of Calverts Yard looking southeast.
3. Town Bank north of Calverts Yard looking south.
4. Calverts Yard looking south.
5. Line of east facing section looking northwest.
6. Part of east facing section looking west.
7. Part of east facing section looking west.



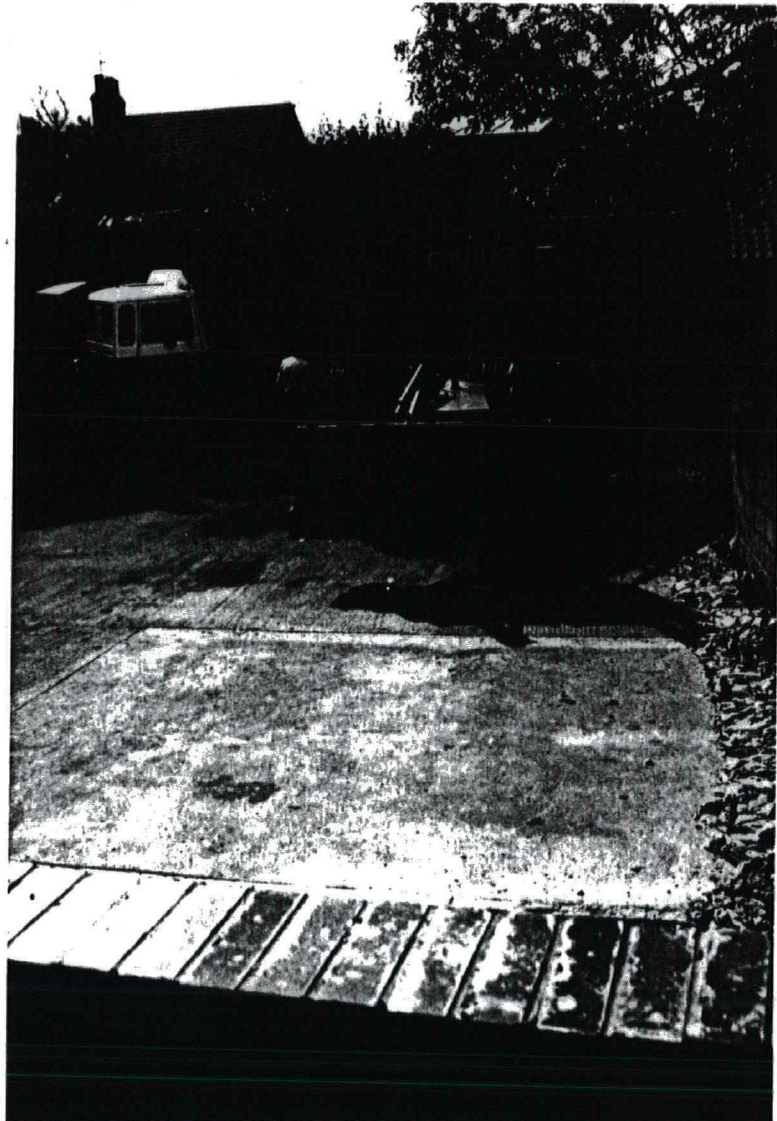
Pl. 1



Pl. 2



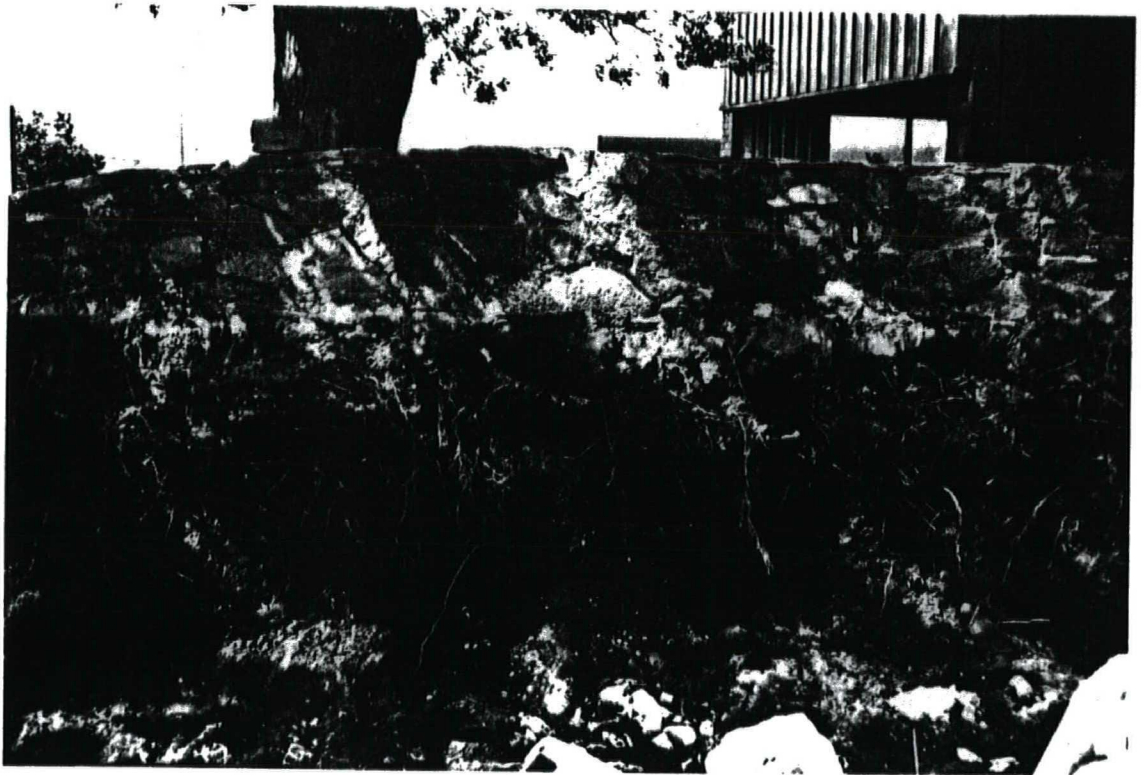
P. 3



P. 4



Pl. 5

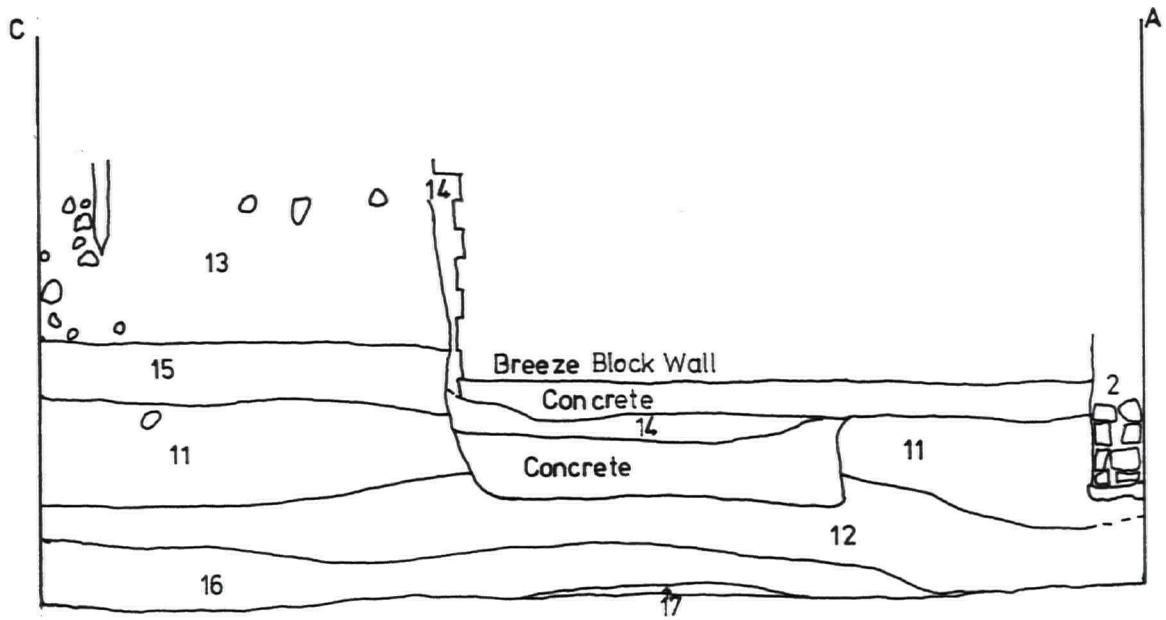


Pl. 6



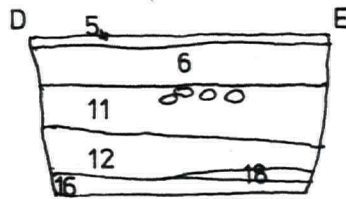
PI 7

FIG 3



SCALE 1:50

FIG 4



SCALE 1:50

