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LAND SOUTH OF A64, SPITAL CORNER, STAXTON  
PROPOSED MOTEL DEVELOPMENT

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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESKTOP STUDY  
OSA REPORT No. 98DT02

National Grid Reference: TA 023 793

June 1998



**ON SITE**  
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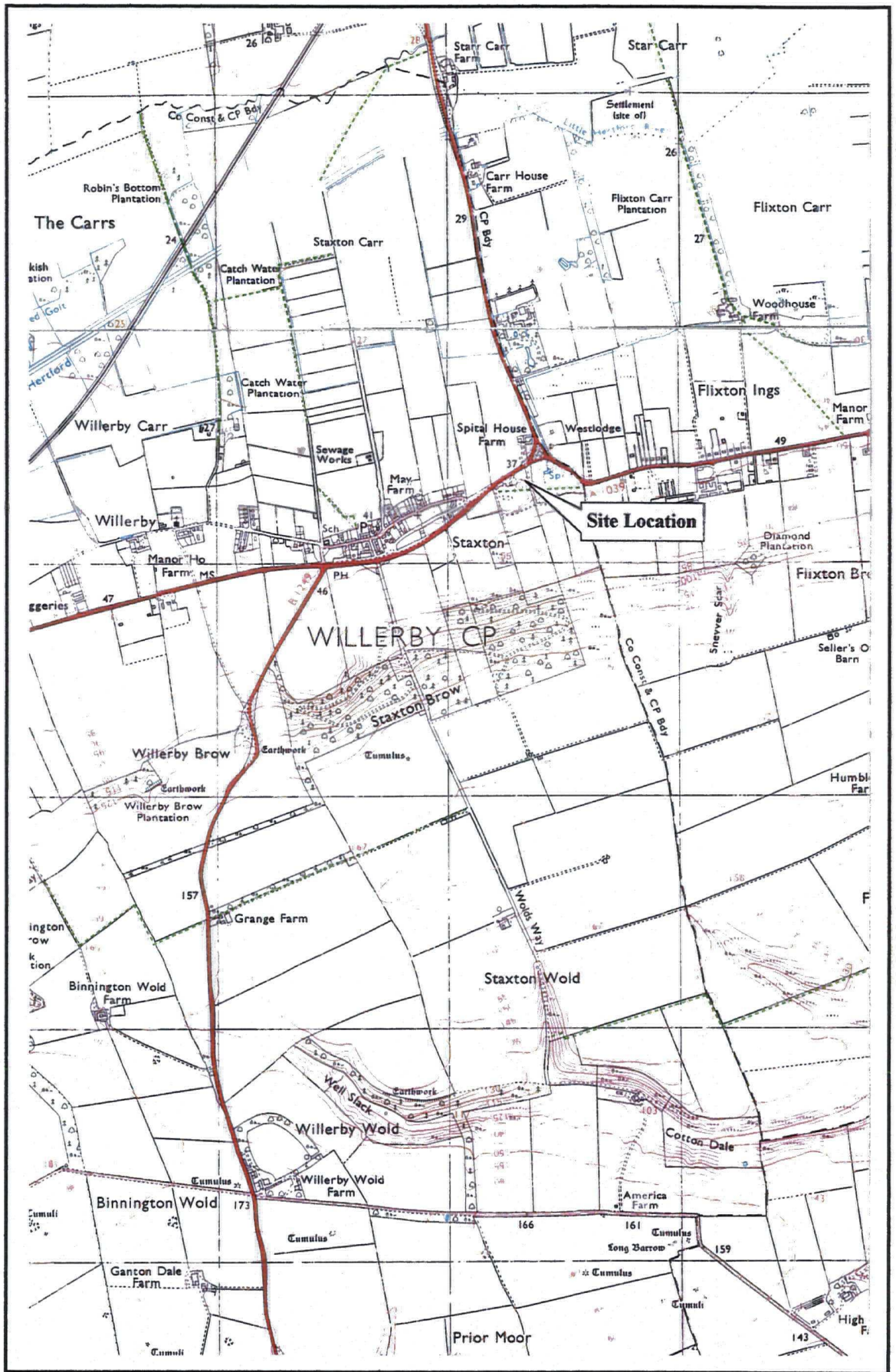


Figure 1. Location of the study area. (NGR TA 023 793)  
 Reproduced from the 1993 Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map, with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.  
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Summary

*This report provides an assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed motel development at Spital Corner, Staxton, near Scarborough. There have been various previous archaeological investigations in the immediate vicinity, which have produced evidence for use or occupation from the early Bronze Age through to the Medieval period. The site itself, however, has been extensively quarried, and any archaeological features remaining will be confined to the baulks between the quarry pits.*

*This report was compiled by Guy Hopkinson & Marie-Claire Ferguson of On-Site Archaeology on behalf of P.R. Dukes, the agent for the developers, during June of 1998.*

*The frontispiece is an illustration of an Early Bronze Age Beaker, found at Newham's Pit, Staxton, immediately to the east of the proposed development site, and is taken from Brewster, 1951.*

### 1.2 Brief & Methodology

The site consists of a block of land lying to the south of the A64 Malton to Scarborough road, some 250 metres to the north east of Staxton and 100 metres south-west of Spital Corner. The national grid reference for the site is TA 023 793 (see Figure 1 for location).

The desk top study was based on enquiries made at archives, collections, and archaeological institutions likely to hold information pertaining to the area; the review of relevant maps, aerial photographs and publications; and discussions with people who had personal knowledge of the study area.

### 1.3 Geology, Topography and Land Use

The site is at an elevation of approximately 38m AOD, situated at the northern foot of the Yorkshire Wolds and the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering, on a slight incline of an undulating sand hill. The sand formations, deposited by glacial melt waters, vary in thickness and are underlaid by *in situ* chalk or boulder clay. This geology produces numerous springs which flow northwards into the carrlands, which are now drained by the rivers Derwent and Hertford but would in prehistory have been meres and lakes.

Extensive areas of the site have previously been quarried for sand extraction, with only a few baulks between quarry pits standing to the original ground level. At present the land is unused and partially overgrown with shrubs and small trees. The area of the site immediately adjacent to the A64 has at some stage been used as a car park, and currently has a tarmac surface (see Figure 2, below).

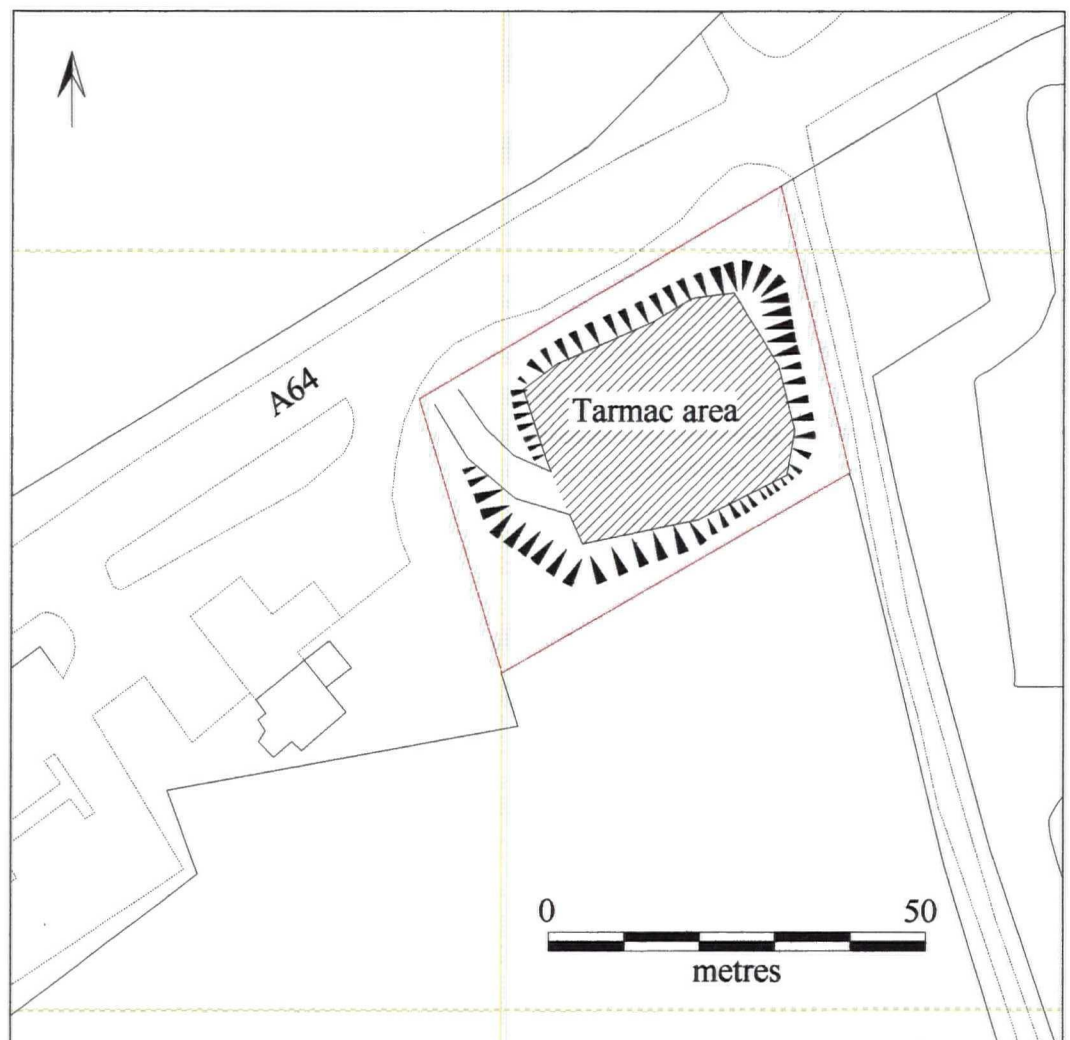


Figure 2. Measured sketch of quarry pit immediately south of A64. 1:1000

## 2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY

A number of excavations have been undertaken in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development, and the results of these are outlined below. Also included below are chance finds and features seen on aerial photographs of the region. This list has been limited to those features within a 500 metre radius of the site. The locations of each item found or site excavated are illustrated in Figure 5.

### 2.1 *Newham's Pit, 1947-48. Roman Camp/Romano-British Settlement* (NGR TA 02450 79350. SMR 7217)

Between 1947 and 1948, excavations were carried out at Newham's Pit, immediately to the east of the proposed development location. These revealed a double ditched ovoid enclosure. The ditches were 'v' shaped in profile, the outer enclosure being approximately 109m by 94.5m, the inner approximately 55m by 46m (see Figure 3 below).

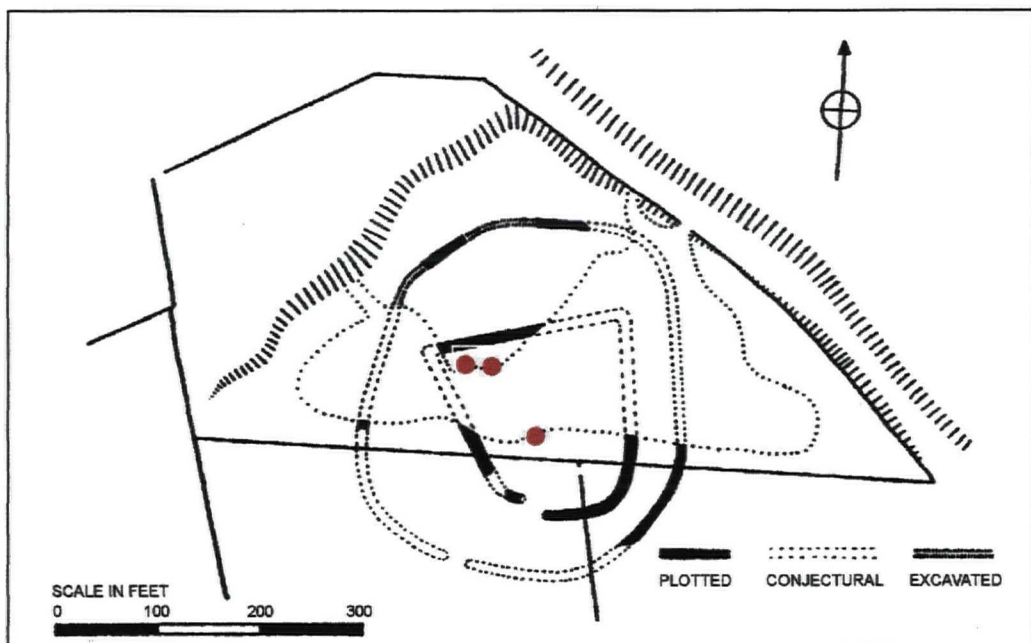


Figure 3. Ditched enclosure, Newham's Pit. Red circles indicate hut locations (Brewster, 1957)

Within the fill of the outer ditch was "debris of various periods from the late first century A.D. onwards" (Brewster, 1957), including sherds imitating Samian Form 37, and also amphora sherds, gritted ware, a stamped mortarium rim, and an enamelled bronze disc fibula. The upper fills of the outer ditch also contained some Anglian pottery. The inner ditch, however, proved almost void of artefacts, as did the zone between the two ditches (apart from a stone lined medieval pit).

Although the majority of the area enclosed by the inner ditch had been destroyed by sand removal prior to archaeological excavation, three hut stances were discovered in the

remaining area, two of which were excavated. One of these contained a hearth, and both produced a rich array of ceramic, metal and faunal remains including a Vespasian coin. A saddle quern rubber found to the west of Hut III was probably associated with a nearby Iron Age site<sup>1</sup> (Brewster, 1957).

Also within the perimeter of the inner ditch two pits were discovered, which appear to have been for rubbish disposal (Brewster, 1957)

Brewster suggests that the site witnessed two separate phases of occupation, these being AD 80-90 and AD 100-120, and has interpreted the site as a probable camp or fortlet under military control.

## **2.2 *Newham's Pit, 1939-46. Saxon settlement (NGR TA 02450 79350. SMR 7218)***

The North Yorkshire SMR records two chalk floors found between 1939 and 1946, located within the outer enclosure ditch mentioned above<sup>2</sup>. The floors were associated with Anglo Saxon pottery sherds, and probably represent the remains of a 6<sup>th</sup> Century settlement, perhaps contemporary with the nearby Anglian cemetery<sup>3</sup>. This area was destroyed during WWII, after which Brewster commenced his excavation on the site.

## **2.3 *Filling Station, 1957. Early Bronze Age flat cemetery (NGR TA 02280 79360. SMR 7210)***

Excavations carried out in 1957 on land adjoining the filling station immediately to the west of the proposed development location revealed eleven skeletons, two of which were associated with Beakers (see Figure 4 below). Most of these remains were in a poor state of preservation and a number had been disturbed by ploughing. Some inhumations had been placed within well-defined grave cuts whilst others had merely been placed on top of the subsoil with stones packed on top of the body. The nature of the burials were either crouched, contracted or flexed, and the majority of them were orientated e-w. However one was found to be orientated north — south and another north-east — south-west. All these burials have been dated as prehistoric, and given the lack of evidence for a barrow, have been interpreted as being part of an Early Bronze Age flat cemetery (Stead, 1960). The nearest example of a similar flat cemetery is thought to be at Middleton-on-the-Wolds, which also contained a number of Beaker burials.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 2.6, SMR No. 7235

<sup>2</sup> See Section 2.1, SMR No. 7217

<sup>3</sup> See Section 2.5, SMR No. 7270



Between the Beaker burials and the area of the Anglian cemetery<sup>4</sup>, three parallel ditches were found<sup>5</sup>. These contained no dating evidence, but the confinement of medieval pottery sherds to the topsoil above the ditches suggests they are pre-medieval, and they have been interpreted as possible field boundaries associated with the nearby Romano-British settlement<sup>6</sup> (Stead, 1960).

Several groups of chalk blocks<sup>7</sup> were located at the northern end of the excavation, and although no post holes were visible, it appears that they may have been packing stones to support posts, possibly marking the line of a fence. Their date, however, is unknown (Stead, 1960).

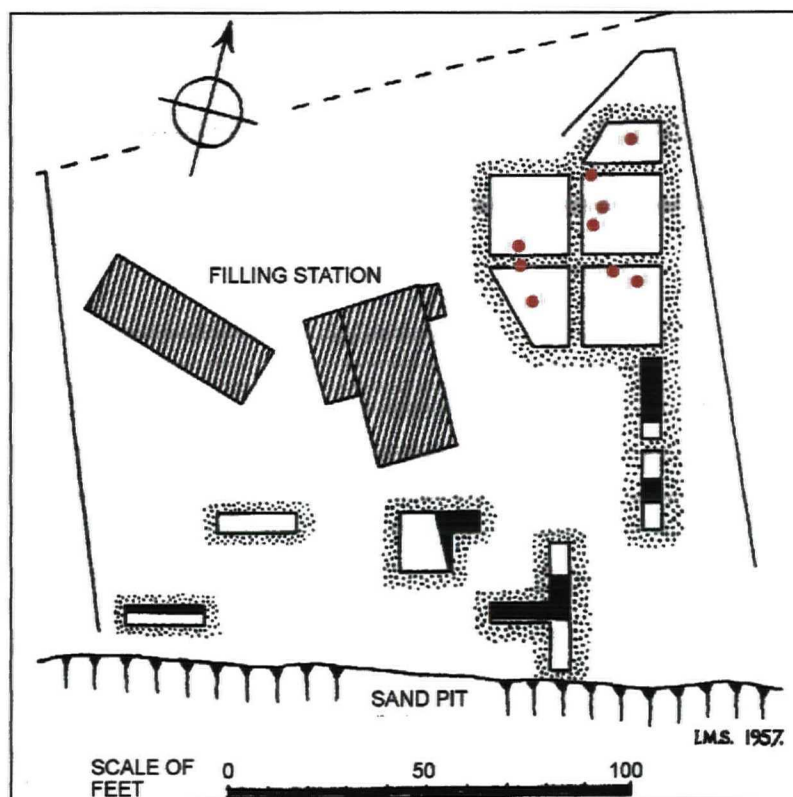


Figure 4. Filling Station. Location of excavation trenches. Red circles indicate approximate burial locations. (Stead, 1960)

#### 2.4 Filling Station, 1994. Inhumation

In 1994 Malton Archaeological Project undertook a watching brief at the Staxton filling station. The area to the South-east of the filling station was found to contain a number of features of archaeological significance. These included a crouched inhumation, discovered in a sub oval grave cut measuring 1.5m by 0.8m the upper fill of which

<sup>4</sup> See Section 2.5, SMR No. 7270

<sup>5</sup> SMR No 7211.

<sup>6</sup> See Section 2.1, SMR No. 7217

<sup>7</sup> SMR No. 7214

contained large flint boulders, two ditches and a post hole. The ditches were aligned SE-NW and were found to contain fragments of medieval pottery.

**2.5 *Grainger's Pit, 1936-52. Anglian Cemetery***  
**(NGR TA 02280 79300. SMR 7270)**

An Anglian cemetery was discovered at Grainger's Pit, immediately to the south of the filling station, during sand quarrying operations. Initially thirty-eight burials were excavated by Brewster between 1936 and 1937, of which twenty-one had associated grave goods. The records and many of the finds from this excavation, however, were lost during the War. Subsequent excavations revealed a further eighteen burials, but little material has been published. Artefacts recovered include iron spear heads, a key, chatelaines, fibulae, and a small bucket made of yew (Sheppard, 1938). There is, however, some confusion as to the exact provenance of the artefacts from the excavations, and the extent of the cemetery. Stead's excavations to the east of the filling station<sup>8</sup> produced no Anglian burials, and his trenches immediately to the south of the filling station produced no burials at all.

**2.6 *Grainger's Pit, 1949. Iron Age settlement***  
**(NGR TA 02260 79270. SMR 7235)**

During the process of sand quarrying at this site, the remains of an Iron Age settlement have been recorded by Brewster. These remains comprised a palisade trench and a series of pits containing pottery, bones, bone needles and saddle querns and rubbers.

**2.7 *Hospitium of St. Mary***  
**(NGR TA 02350 79350<sup>9</sup>. SMR 7219)**

Part of the grounds of the Hospitium of St Mary, to the north of the A64, was excavated by Brewster. This was founded in 1180 and dissolved before 1535. These excavations, mainly confined to the paddock south of the current farm, revealed a complex comprising the main hospice building south of Spital House Farm, a large univallate enclosure to the west, and a graveyard to the east of the hospice.

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<sup>8</sup> See Section 2.3, SMR No. 7210

<sup>9</sup> This grid reference is taken from the SMR, but appears to be incorrect as it places the Hospitium on the south side of the A64. A more likely grid reference is TA 02250 79475.