

Rec'd 11.9.96

*An Archaeological Excavation
at the former Convent School,
Queen Street,
Scarborough*

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SNY	19151
ENY	6383
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Parish	4899
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*by
Trevor Pearson*

**SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INTERIM REPORT NUMBER 24: 1996**

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*An aerial photograph of the site looking to the east showing the school
playground to the left and Convent School buildings to the right.*

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1:INTRODUCTION

From August 16th-26th 1996, a team of up to twenty members and friends of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society excavated five trenches in the grounds of the former Convent School in Queen Street, Scarborough (NGR TA 042 889; site code STS96). Further work to complete the investigation of Trench Eight and to recover soil samples for analysis (see appendix one) was completed between September 14th-18th. The work was undertaken on behalf of S. Harrison Construction Ltd of Malton in consultation with the County Council Heritage Section and followed on from an archaeological evaluation of the site which took place in May 1996 (1). Harrison Construction Ltd are to develop the site for residential accommodation and intend to convert the Victorian school building into flats and construct two block of houses with gardens and car parking in the area of the former school playground.

The excavation featured in the Scarborough Evening News, the Scarborough Trader and Weekly News, the Scarborough Gazette and Herald and the Yorkshire Post. Radio York and Yorkshire Coast Radio ran features on the dig open day which attracted approximately two hundred visitors to the site on the afternoon of Sunday, August 25th.

A summary report outlining the discoveries and their bearing upon the development was sent to S. Harrison Construction Ltd and the local and county planning authorities shortly after the end of the excavation. The present report is a more detailed discussion of the discoveries.

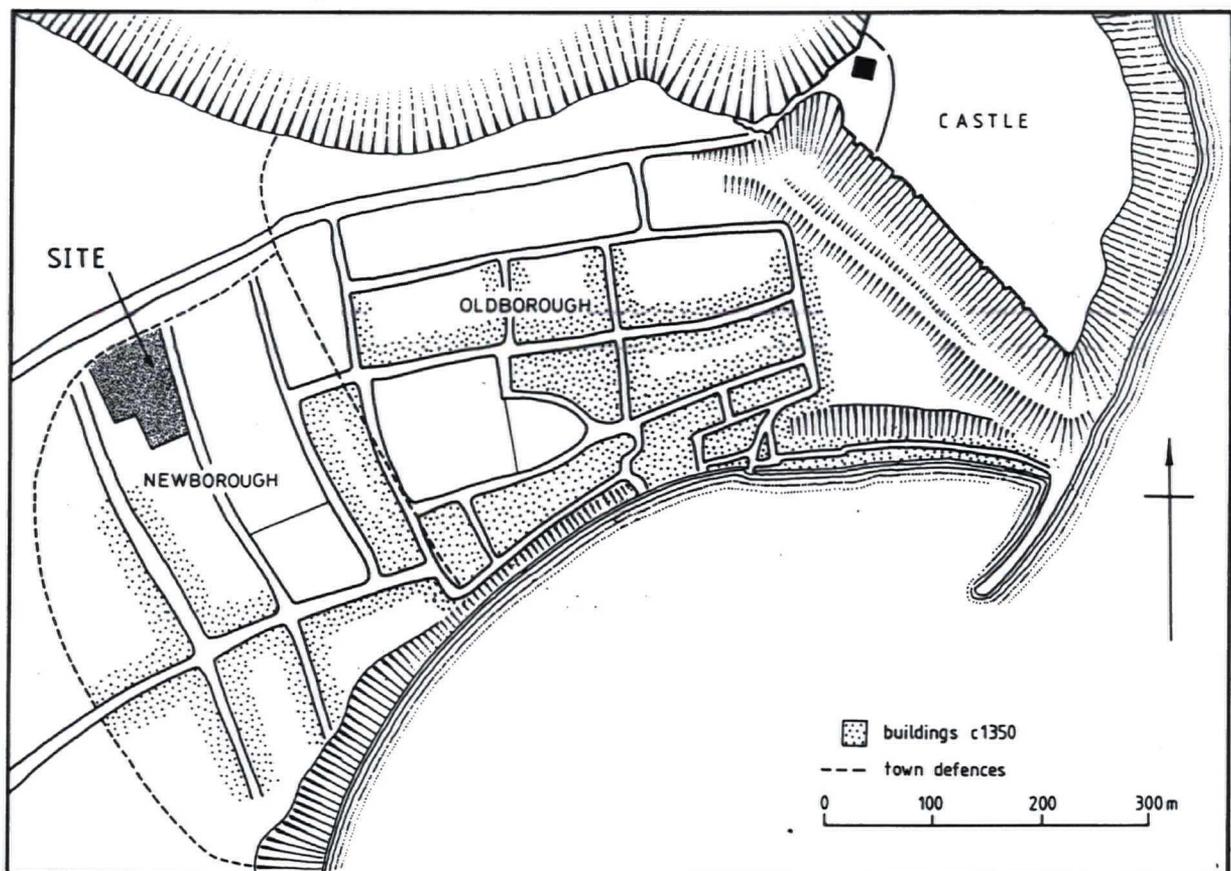


Figure 1 Medieval Scarborough showing the location of the site

2: THE SITE AND ITS SETTING (Figures 1 and 2)

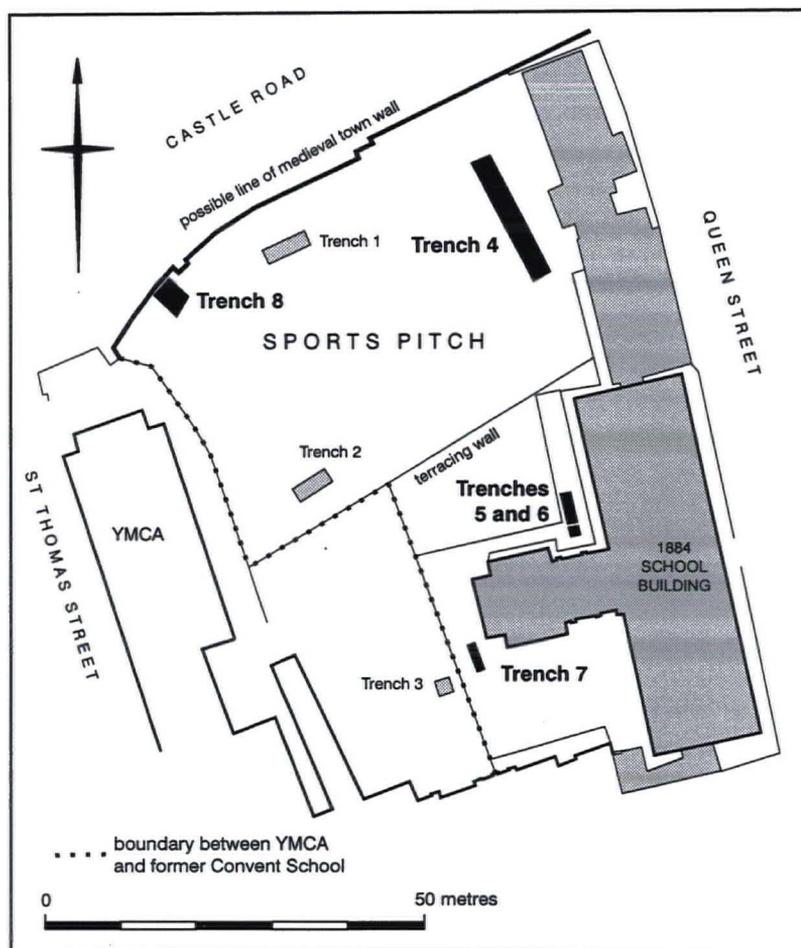


Figure 2 Location of trenches

The school playground is covered in tarmac and occupies the northern two-thirds of the site and is bounded on the west by YMCA property fronting on to St Thomas Street and to the east by buildings belonging to the former Convent School. To the south the ground level drops by some two metres and the southern third of the site encompasses the former school gardens. It was mostly covered by rough grass at the time of the excavation.

The northern boundary wall to the playground is of several periods of construction and includes coursed stonework on the west and 19th and 20th century brickwork to the east. The boundary is thought to be on the line of the town's medieval defences and the stonework, now mostly obscured by modern render, could be a surviving part of the town wall built in the late fifteenth century during the reign of King Richard III (see below).

Five trenches were opened during the course of the excavation. They were numbered from four to eight following on from trenches one to three excavated in May during the evaluation. Trenches Four and Eight were opened by a J.C.B. in the playground and Trenches Five to Seven were excavated entirely by hand in the garden area on the south of the site.

3: SITE HISTORY

A Viking age saga tells us that Scarborough was founded by an Icelandic warrior with the nickname of Skardi who is supposed to have established a fort here around the year 966, the name Scarborough meaning "Skardi's fort" (2). This is probably a legend and the documented history of the town starts several centuries later in the middle of the twelfth century when King Henry II founded a settlement around the time he ordered the construction of the castle on the headland overlooking the south bay (3). King Henry's settlement was divided between the old and new boroughs, the Oldborough being the earlier of the two and sited closest to the castle (figure 1). The present site lies in the Newborough which was added to the west side of the Oldborough to extend the area of the town sometime before the year 1163 (4). The Newborough extended inland as far as modern North Street and Bar Street where there was a line of defences. These defences then curved eastward along the south side of Castle Road, (probably along the north boundary of the present site) to link up with the Oldborough defences around the junction of Castle Road and Aurborough Street.

Apart from the fact that the most of the modern streets in the area of the Newborough date back to the middle ages, we know very little about the layout of this part of the town in the medieval period or before, nor has there been a great deal of archaeological investigation to fill out the picture. Castle Road, to the north of the site, may be on the line of a Roman route leading to the signal station constructed on the headland in the closing years of the fourth century AD and, as has already been mentioned, the northern boundary may mark the line of the medieval town defences. These are believed to have been constructed in the winter of 1167 when there is a record of a ditch being dug (5). The material excavated from the ditch would have been heaped up on the inside to form a rampart and this is how the defences remained until the closing years of the 15th century when King Richard III began to build a wall of squared stone. Although his intention might have been to build a wall along the entire length of the Newborough defences, by the time the Tudor antiquary Leland visited the town in the 1540s, the wall was far from complete (6). A view of Scarborough in the British Museum drawn up around the time of Leland's visit shows just two stretches of stone wall, one on the south-west, around the main entrance into the town at Newborough Gate and one on the north from a point about present day St Thomas Street on the west to a point at Auborough Street on the east (7). The north boundary of the site lies between these two points and it is significant that it is partially constructed of stones.

Since the Newborough was a planted settlement, it is likely that building plots would have been laid out along the main streets, including those to the east and west of the present site, in the middle of the twelfth century prior to building work starting. How many of these plots were actually developed is unknown and by the fourteenth century the northern part of the Newborough, including the present site, were probably part of the "Town Waste". This was unoccupied land used as pasture, or cultivated as gardens and orchards. Certainly, coming nearer to our own time, 18th- and 19th-century maps of the town show the site was open ground until the construction of the Convent School in 1884 (8). In the 17th and early 18th centuries the north-east part of the site was the town bowling green, though by 1828 this had moved to the south of the site.

The first phase of excavation in May 1996 illuminated several aspects of the site's development. The use of the area as gardens during the last two hundred years was attested by the discovery of a brick boundary wall in Trench One near to the north edge of the playground and by the large build up of soil both in this trench and in Trench Two near the south edge of the playground. In Trench Two this was so deep (up to 1.6m) it suggests a lot of earth moving has gone on to landscape the site. More importantly, medieval deposits were found in both these trenches though without any evidence for buildings or other structures such as pits or property boundaries. Some slight trace of medieval structures did come to light in Trench Three which was excavated in YMCA grounds on the south part of the site. These consisted of a "U" shaped gully and a possible posthole cutting the natural clay and indicate the likely survival of medieval building remains in this area.

4. THE EXCAVATION

Trenches Four to Seven investigated the survival of medieval deposits on the east side of the playground (Trench Four) and on the south of the site, adjacent to the Victorian school building (Trenches Five to Seven). The fifth trench (Trench Eight) was located next to the north boundary wall to determine if the stonework it contains is an upstanding section of the late-medieval town wall.

TRENCH FOUR: A LATE VICTORIAN GARDEN (figures 3-7)

This trench measured 17m x 2.5m and was positioned between 3-6m from the east boundary of the playground. It was hoped the trench would encounter the remains of medieval properties running back from Queen Street.

Excavation was begun by J.C.B. which exposed a series of stone walls at a depth of 60cms from the surface. Subsequent hand excavation revealed two substantial stone rubble walls running across the trench on the south (F403 and F405), from the northernmost of which ran a lightly-constructed, curving wall across the northern part of the trench (F406). The surviving wall was partially constructed of stone roof tiles set on edge, whilst the two east-west walls were partially mortar bonded.

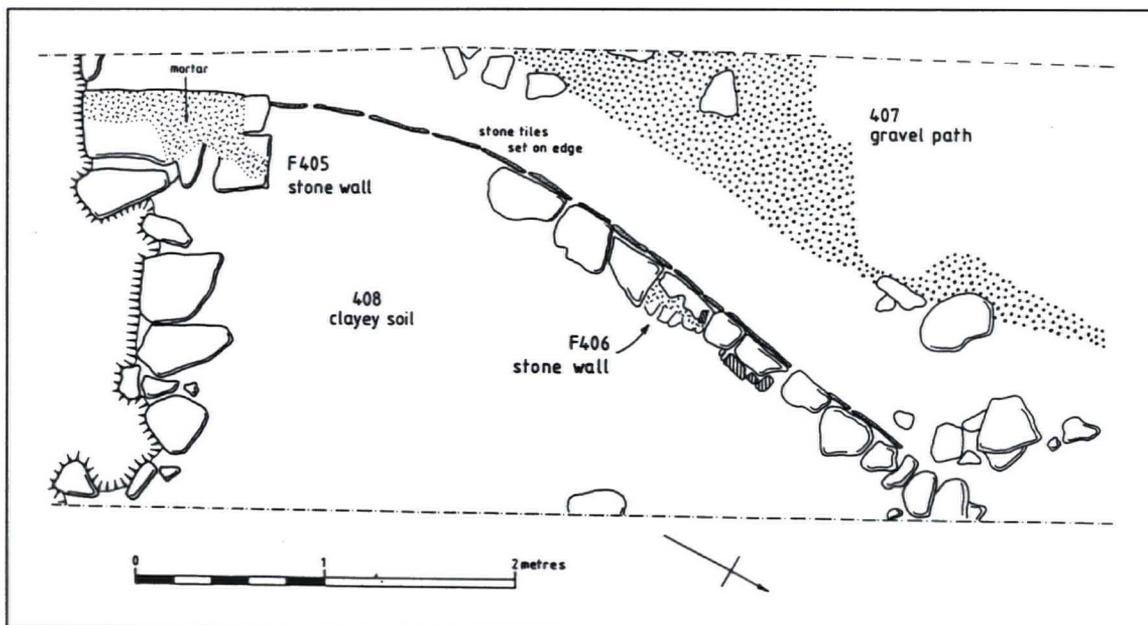
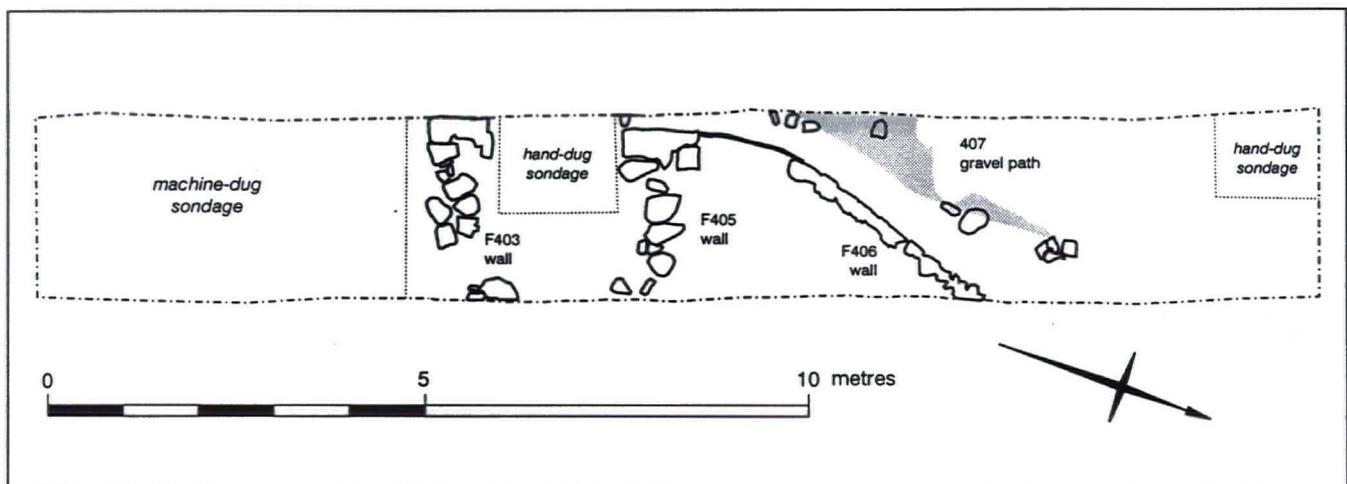


Figure 3 (above) Principal features encountered in Trench 4.

Figure 4 (below) Detail of surviving garden features in Trench 4.



Figure 5 *View of Trench Four looking north showing garden features F405 and F406*

These features all appear on an 1892 1:500 scale OS map and are part of the formal garden layout of the Convent School which was built in 1884. The two substantial east-west stone walls (F403 and F405) appear from the map to have been part of a raised area, perhaps a gazebo or statue base, at the end of a straight path. The maps shows this structure was flanked by two curving walls, delineating an area planted with shrubs or trees, with a path on the outside. Only the north wall (F406.) and adjacent gravel path (layer 407) survived.

The J.C.B. excavated a sondage through uncompacted, featureless soil below the level of the garden at the south end of the trench. At a depth of 2.2m from the surface (35.50m OD) natural glacial clay appeared and the excavation was suspended. Two further sondages were dug by hand at the middle and north end of the trench through similar layers of uncompacted featureless soil. The middle sondage was excavated to a depth of 1.5m OD and discovered that the foundations of the possible gazebo rested on a layer of clayey soil (404) with dark brown silty soil below (409). The north sondage was excavated to a depth of 2.2m from the surface at which point work was suspended. The upper layers (410-11) were clayey in texture, those below (412-415) were silty and organic in composition. No medieval stratigraphy

came to light in this sondage or in either the middle or the southern sondages. Despite the considerable depth of deposit which was examined mainly 18th and 19th century pottery was recovered with only a few residual medieval sherds. The Convent School garden was therefore created on a ground level which had been artificially raised by dumping vast quantities of soil in the 18th or 19th centuries.

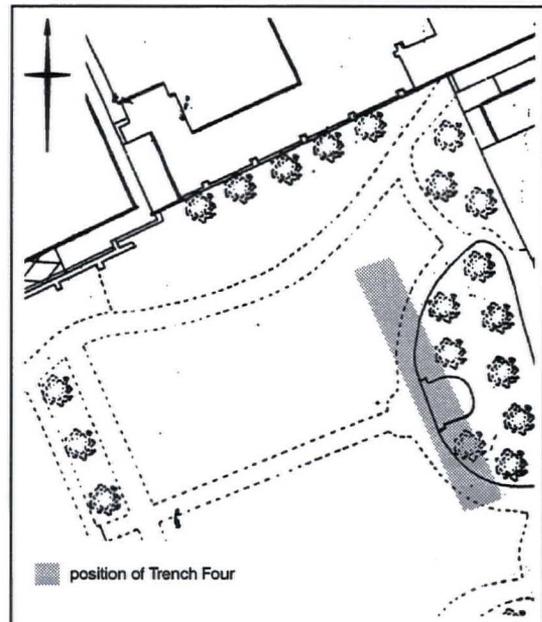
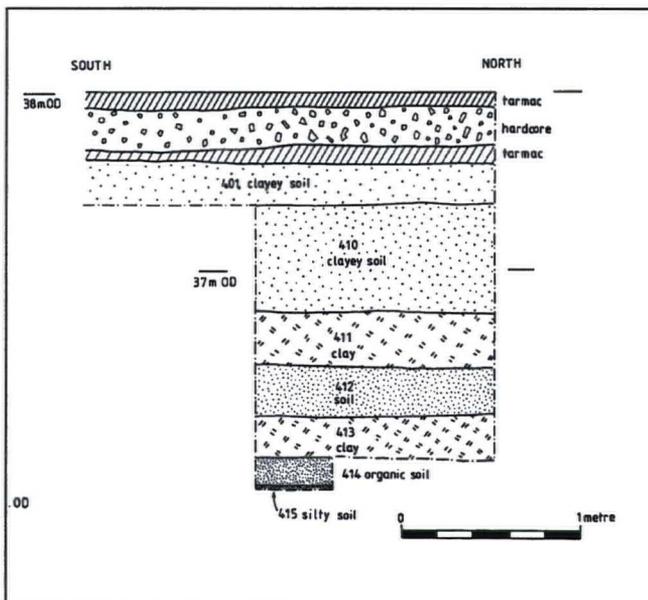


Figure 6 (left) *East facing section of northern hand-dug sondage*

Figure 7 (right) *OS map of convent gardens in 1892 with Trench Four superimposed (scale 1:500)*

TRENCHES FIVE AND SIX: CLAY QUARRYING (figures 8 and 9.)

Trenches Five and Six were excavated adjacent to each other 4m from the west wall of the Victorian school building. Trench Five measured 1.5m x 1.5m and Trench Six 4m x 1.5m and were separated by a 30cm wide baulk.

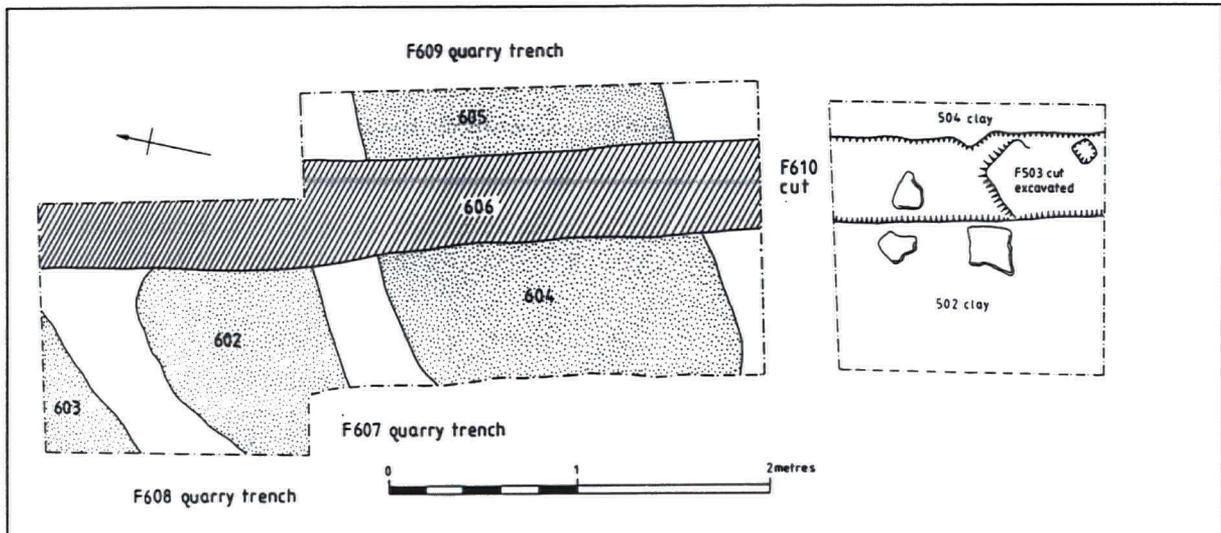


Figure 8 Plan of Trenches Five and Six

Natural clay came to light in both trenches 60cms from the modern ground surface (33.80m OD). The overlying clayey soil (layers 501, 502, 504 and 601) contained fragments of brick and had probably accumulated when the school building was constructed. Cutting the natural clay in Trench Six were the remains of three quarry pits (F607, F608 and F609). These had straight sides with vertical edges and were backfilled with a grey ashy soil. The soil was removed to a depth of 30cms without encountering the bottom of any of the pits. They ran parallel to each other in a roughly east-west direction and were separated with baulks of natural clay. There was nothing to indicate their purpose but their regular layout indicates they were positioned with deliberate planning.

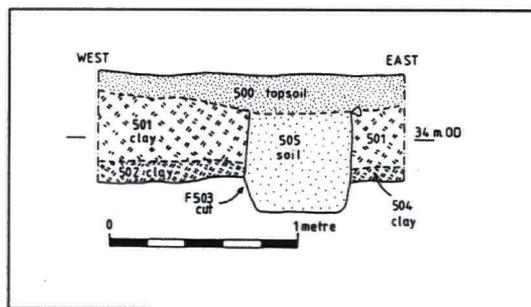


Figure 9 South facing section of Trench Five

They are most likely to be clay quarries dug to extract material for brick or tile making. A virtually identical pattern of linear features was uncovered around Paradise House on the northeast of the town during excavations in 1988 and these turned out to be the remains of a brickfield mentioned in a document of 1763 (9). Here the clay was extracted in a series of parallel trenches and as a new trench was opened the spoil was used to backfill the adjacent one, thereby reducing the impact the quarrying had on the environs of Paradise House. A similar date and purpose is likely for these quarry trenches which are therefore probably part of a much larger brickfield.

Cutting across Trenches Five and Six was a 50cm wide "U" shaped gully running parallel with the side of the convent building (F503 and F610). It was backfilled with dark brown soil containing pockets of clay and fragments of brick and sandstone (layers 505 and 606). As well as cutting across the backfilled clay quarries it also cut through the overlying layers (501 and 601) and therefore must be quite recent in date. There was nothing in the gully to explain why it had been cut but it probably marked the line of a robbed-out drain or wall foundation.

The clay quarrying in Trench Six had destroyed any medieval remains and in Trench Five, where quarrying does not seem to have taken place, nothing of any archaeological interest came to light.

TRENCH SEVEN: MODERN DRAIN (figure 10)

Trench Seven measured 4m x 1.5m and was positioned 5m south-west of the school chapel block. More importantly it was 4m from Trench Three, excavated in May in the grounds of the YMCA which had unearthed medieval features cutting natural clay. In the event, Trench Seven was devoid of medieval features. Natural clay was 60cm below the present ground surface (33.60m OD) and was cut by a drain pipe running diagonally across the trench (F706) and by a modern disturbance in the south-east corner (F703). Medieval pottery was recovered in quantity from the compacted clayey soil which overlay the natural clay suggesting there may have been occupation close by but beyond the confines of the trench.

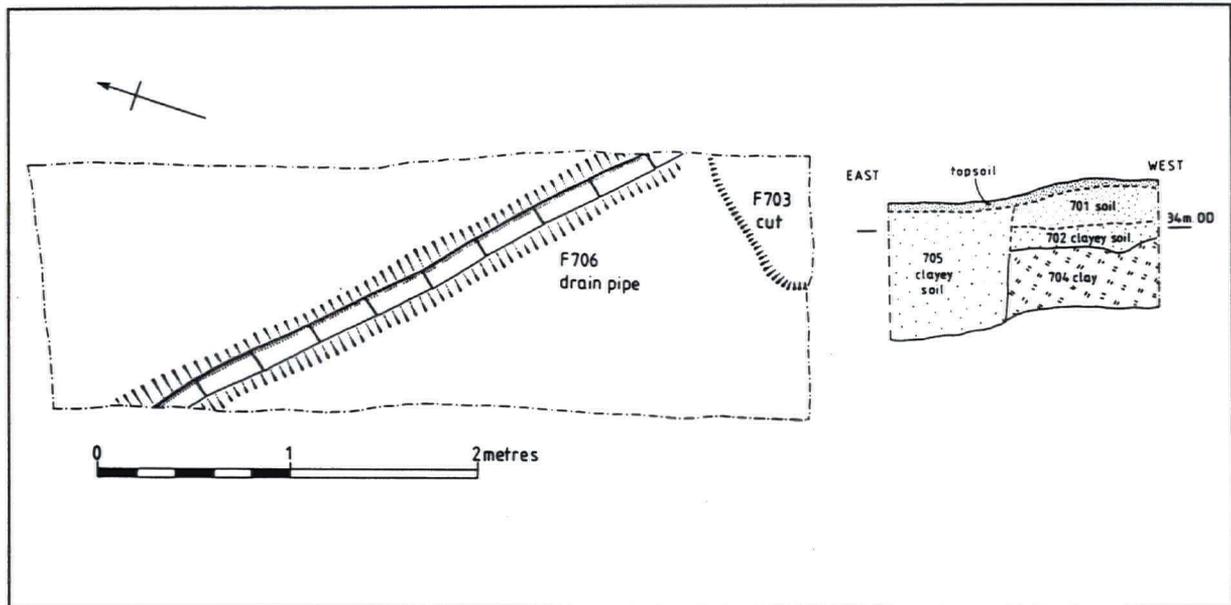


Figure 10 Plan and north facing section of Trench Seven

TRENCH EIGHT: MEDIEVAL DEFENCES (figures 11-15)

Trench Eight measured 3.5m x 1.4m and was laid out next to the northern boundary wall at a point where stonework is visible in the fabric. The J.C.B. cleared away the modern tarmac surface and underlying hardcore from the trench and from a strip 1.4m wide to the west. The modern render was also removed from a 3m wide and 40cm high stretch of the boundary wall to reveal more of its fabric.

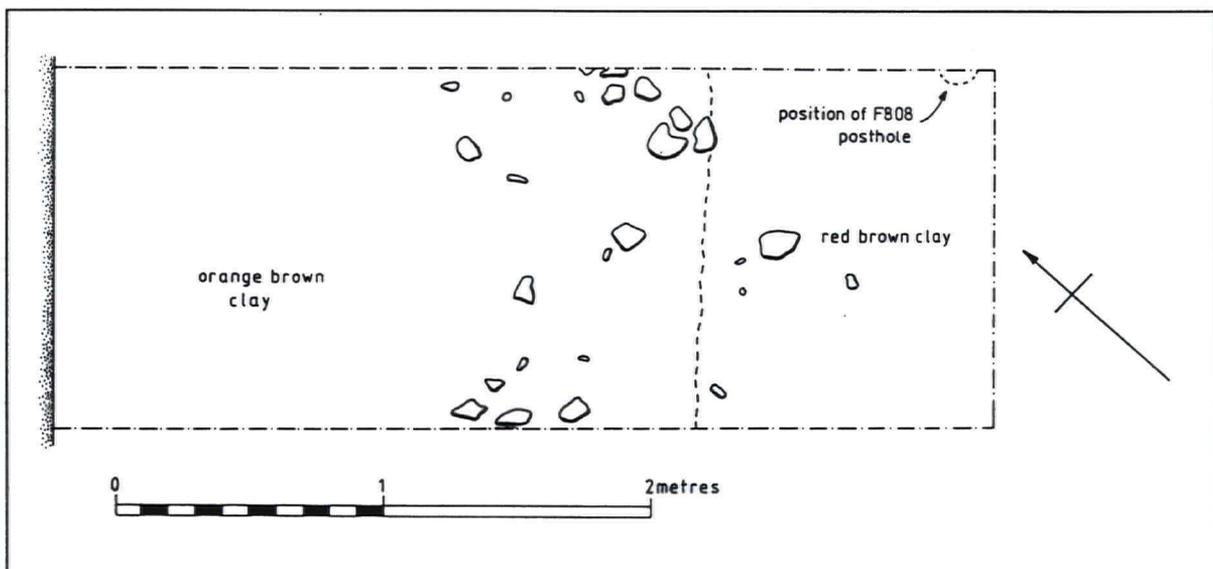


Figure 11 Plan of Trench Eight

The exposed section of boundary wall is constructed of squared stones laid in regular courses with mortar bonding which looks fairly recent. The lowest course of stones rests directly on a layer of clayey soil (layer 801) with no sign of a foundation trench although this could have been cut away by the construction of the playground. A thin layer of black, humic soil separated the base of layer 801 from a sequence of underlying clay layers (802-805) which together were a maximum of 80cm thick. The uppermost of the clay layers was a reddy-brown colour and only survived adjacent to the boundary wall where it was excavated in two spits (layers 802 and 803). Below it the clay turned more orange in colour (layer 804) and this deposit survived throughout the length of the trench. A number of small stones lay on the upper surface of layer 804 (see figures 11 and 14). The orange clay sloped quite gently down to the south and towards the south end of the trench the clay turned back to a more reddy-brown colour. Though this was still numbered as layer 804, it is probably the same deposit as layer 802/3 indicating that it also sloped down to the south. Layer 805 at the north end of the trench was also reddy-brown in colour.

The clay layers rested on top of a 10-20cm thick deposit of silty soil (806) flecked with charcoal, a sample of which was sent to the Environmental Archaeology Unit at York University for analysis (see appendix one). Below the soil layer was the top of the natural clay 1.1m below the level of the playground (37.0m OD). Cutting the natural clay and buried below the soil layer was the base of a posthole (F808). This was 30cm in diameter and 20cm deep and packed with eight small stones. It was situated in the south-east corner of the trench and was cut in half by the east section. One badly abraded sherd of pottery came from the clayey fill of the feature which is impossible to date, though from its stratigraphic position, the posthole is clearly the earliest feature to come to light in Trench Eight.

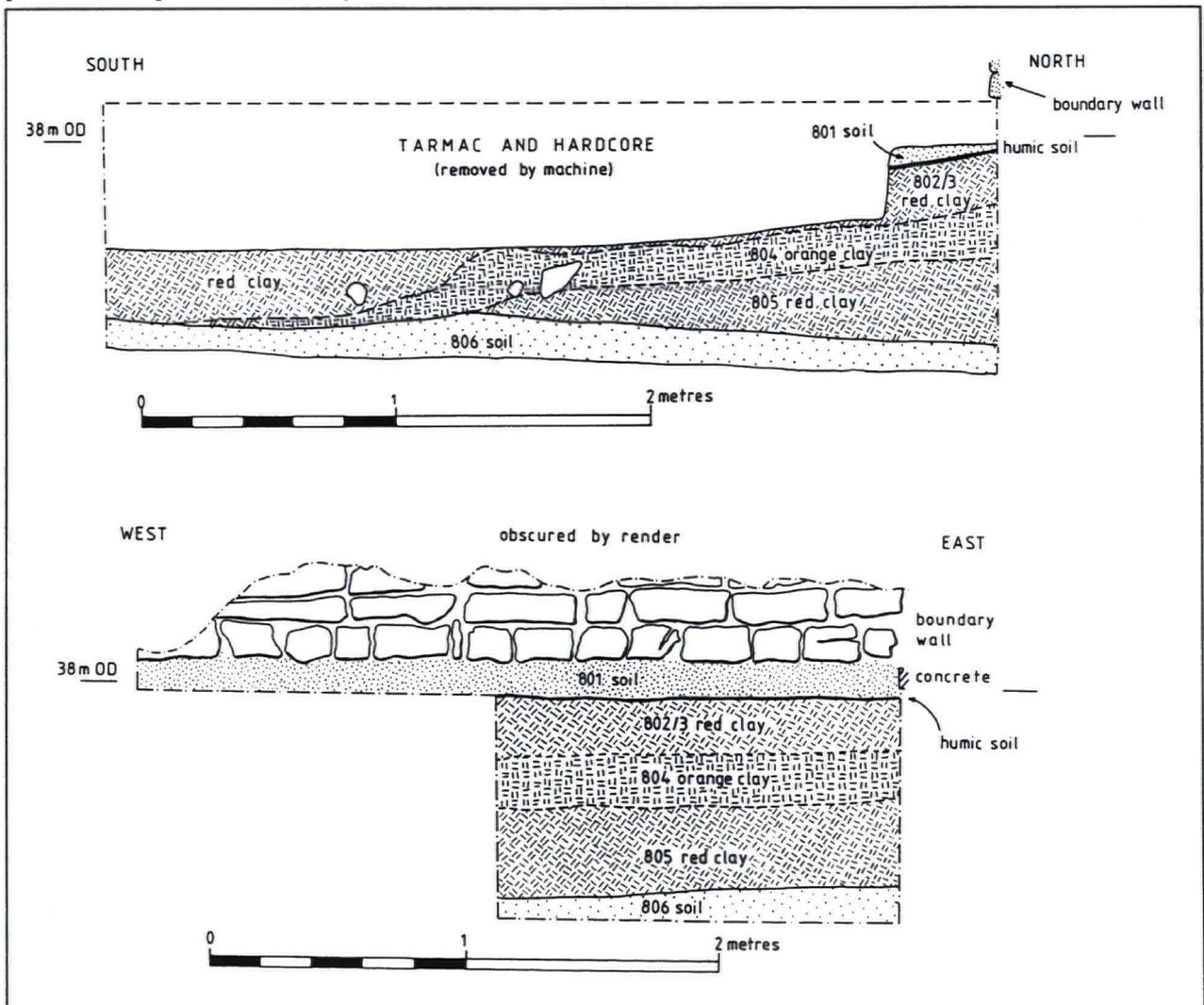


Figure 12 (above) East facing section of Trench Eight.

Figure 13 (below) South facing section of Trench Eight with exposed stonework in wall above.

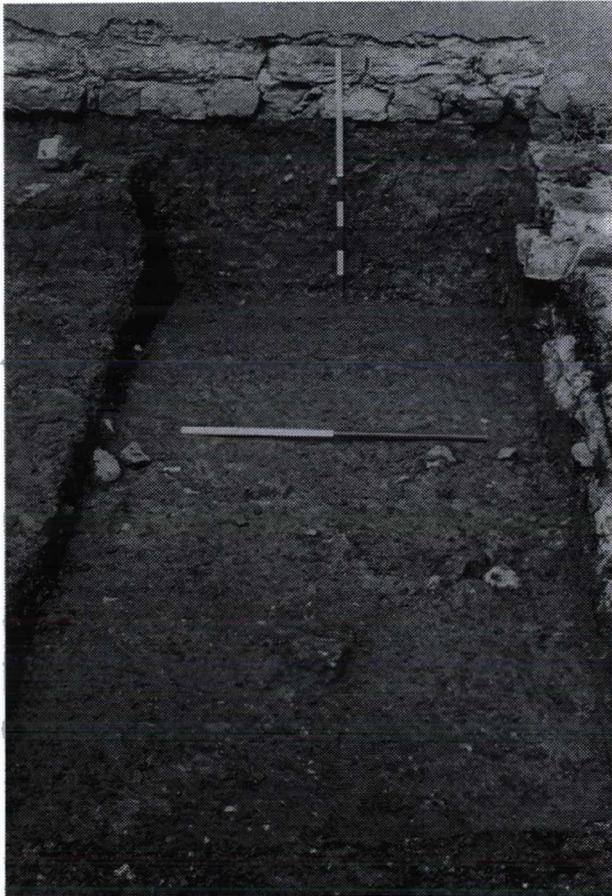


Figure 14 *View of Trench Eight looking north showing make-up of town rampart.*

The fact that there was no foundation trench meant the archaeological information which might have confirmed the date the wall was constructed is absent, at least in the area of Trench Eight. The rampart stood barely a metre high when the wall was erected suggesting it may have been partially levelled prior to the construction of the wall. The stones on top of layer 804 could be the remains of a medieval road or track following the inner edge of the rampart or could have been placed in the fabric of the rampart to strengthen its construction.

The thick deposit of clay encountered in this trench almost certainly is the base of the medieval town rampart. The clay is presumably spoil piled up when digging the town ditch which ran further to the north outside the boundary of the site. The texture of the clay was very homogenous and compacted indicating it had not built up gradually but had been rapidly dumped onto the site. It also sloped down to the south at a far steeper angle than the natural gradient again indicating that it had been piled up deliberately. The clayey soil (801) on top of the main make up of the rampart might have been put there later to raise the height of the structure. The soil layer (806) and underlying posthole (F808) pre-date the construction of the rampart and it is unfortunate that so little can be gleaned from them. The posthole presumably indicates there was some occupation in this part of the town before the expansion of the Newborough and the build up of soil suggests agricultural activity was taking place.

Since the excavation found part of the medieval defences, it reinforces the possibility that the overlying stone wall is the town wall constructed by King Richard III and described by Leland. His reference to a wall constructed "*quadrata saxo*"-with squared stones, mirrors the fabric of the north boundary wall though the excavation failed to unearth anything to confirm the date.

5: SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The primary aim of the excavation was to build up a clearer picture of the archaeology of the site to insure that nothing of importance was threatened with destruction by the new development. The work has shown that on the east side of the playground any medieval remains which survive are likely to be so deeply buried as to be unaffected by the development. On the south of the site, clay quarrying has already destroyed medieval remains over part of the area whilst more could well survive beyond the limits of the quarrying. Further excavation would be needed to map those parts not touched by clay extraction but as the area is going to remain as gardens this is probably unnecessary as any medieval remains should be preserved.

The excavation shed important new light on the medieval town defences, demonstrating how the rampart was formed from upcast clay, dumped on an existing ground surface and that it was later surmounted by a stone wall which matches the description of that constructed by King Richard III. Questions still remain however, and it is therefore important that the new development preserves as much of the northern margin of the site as possible including the upstanding stonework. For example, the medieval pottery recovered from the rampart make-up appeared later in style than the mid-twelfth century date given to the construction of the Newborough defences which means either the pottery or the rampart are wrongly dated. Furthermore, the course of the rampart and wall to the east of Trench Eight is unclear. Did they follow the line of the northern boundary wall along its entire length or did they curve less sharply and therefore cross the area of the car park on the north of the site

The excavation was arranged in consultation with Ashley Wilkinson of S. Harrison Construction Ltd and Veronica Fiorato of the County Council Heritage Unit. That so much was achieved on the site in such a short space of time is entirely due to the hard work of the following members and friends of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society:- Lucy Magson, Dan Normandale, Tim Upson-Smith (supervisors), Joan Barker, Martin Bland, Christine Cooper, Allison Clapham, Gareth Davies, Ron Davies, Kay Dunderdale, Peter Goodwin, Lynne Gray, Cath Hodgson, Mike Horncastle, Maureen Jeffries, Ash Marsh, Clair Maudsley, Angus McGarry, Pat Mercer, Carolyn Milner, Teresa Mitchell, Judy Oldroyd, Lucie Pastuch, Pavel Pastuch, Ann Phipps, Helen Rowley, Lucy Spurrier, Roseanne Spurrier, Ron Storr, Jackie Taylor, Jo Warburton and Cynthia Zissler. John Petty and Wendy Wilson assisted with the open day.

Bill Broadmore is thanked for supplying refreshments and Mr Wilby of the YMCA for storing the tools. Norman Murphy kindly lent items of equipment and Frances Large of the Environmental Archaeology Unit at York University arranged for the processing of the soil sample from Trench Eight.



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APPENDIX ONE:
**Report from the Environmental Archaeology Unit,
University of York 96/54**

Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough (site code: STS96)

by Allan Hall, Michael Issitt, and Frances Large

Summary

One sample of sediment from a medieval deposit revealed by excavations at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough, was submitted for an evaluation of its bioarchaeological remains. Very little plant material, one charred cereal grain, and a single amphibian bone were recovered. Further work on this deposit is not recommended.

Keywords: Former Convent School; Queen Street; Scarborough; evaluation; medieval; plant remains; charred grain

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29th November 1996

Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough (site code: STS96)

Introduction

Excavations were carried out by Scarborough Archaeological Society at The Former Convent School, Queen Street, Scarborough, during 1996. One General Biological Analysis sample ('GBA' *sensu* Dobney *et al.* 1992), from Trench 8, was submitted for an evaluation of its biological remains. The sample was from a layer interpreted as a buried ground surface of mid 12th century date.

Methods

The sample was initially inspected in the laboratory and a 1 kg subsample was taken for extraction of macrofossil remains, following procedures of Kenward *et al.* (1980; 1986). The remaining material was retained as a voucher.

The washover and residue resulting from processing were both examined for their content of plant and invertebrate macrofossils, and animal bone. Notes were made on the quantity of fossils and principal taxa. The sample was allocated a sample number by the EAU.

Results and discussion

Context 806, Sample 800601/T

Moist, mid brown, stiff (working plastic), slightly sandy silty clay with orange patches locally, and millimetre scale particles of yellowish silt. Some mineralised patches were noted, and charcoal was present.

The very small washover was mostly fine charcoal and coal with a little, very decayed wood and herbaceous detritus, all of these less than 5 mm. The only identifiable plant remains were a very few whole or fragmentary elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L.) seeds and one charred cereal grain which was tentatively identified as rye (*Secale cereale* L.).

The very small residue consisted of sand with a little gravel, and some concreted root moulds and casts, together with traces of coal (to 5 mm), two very eroded fragments of pottery (to 2 cm), and a single amphibian bone. This sample did not yield sufficient biological remains for interpretation.

Recommendations

Further work on the bioarchaeological material from this particular context is not considered worthwhile and it is unlikely that very much more useful information would be obtained by processing larger subsamples. However, it should be noted that this may not necessarily be true for material (not examined here) from the other contexts revealed during these excavations.

If further excavations take place at this site then every effort should be made to investigate any revealed deposits, including an intensive regime of sampling, and commensurate funding for post-excavation analysis should be made available.

Retention and disposal

The sediment remaining from this sample need not be retained.

Archive

All extracted fossils, the washover, and residue are currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Trevor Pearson (Scarborough Archaeological Society) for providing the material and archaeological information and to English Heritage for enabling AH to work on this material.

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