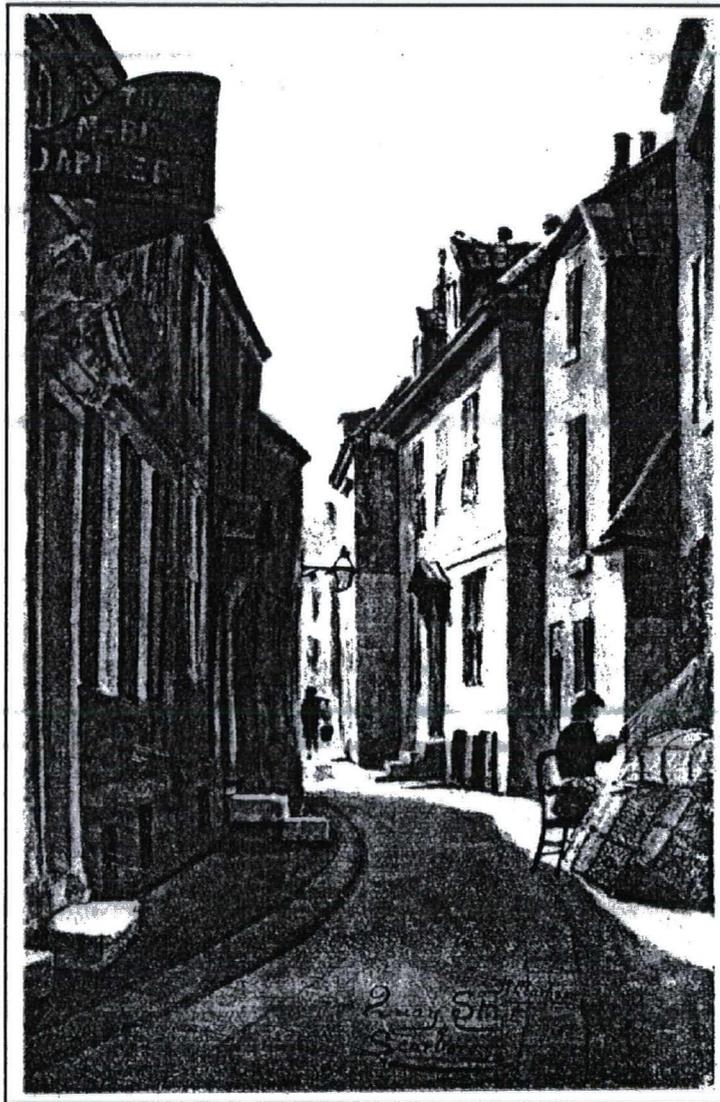


*An Archaeological Assessment of land
adjacent to 22A Quay Street,
Scarborough*

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by Trevor Pearson

SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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An Archaeological Assessment of land adjacent to 22A Quay Street, Scarborough

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(1) Introduction (Figure 1)

During the first two weekends of July 1996, the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society investigated an area of open ground on the east side of No. 22A Quay Street, Scarborough at the request of the site owners, Alliance Fish (Site Code QS96, NGR TA 0496 8885). The work involved the excavation of three trenches to assess the archaeology of the site and the drawing and photographing of areas of upstanding stonework principally in the east-facing exterior wall of No 22A Quay Street. The work was undertaken in advance of plans to develop both the vacant site and No 22A Quay Street which is currently occupied by workshops.

This report presents the excavation results and an analysis of the visible stonework. The archaeological discoveries are supplemented by a report from the Environmental Archaeology Unit of York University on two deposit samples taken from Trench Two and an assessment of the animal bone recovered from the same trench prepared by Dan Normandale, a third year student in the Department of Archaeology, Sheffield University.

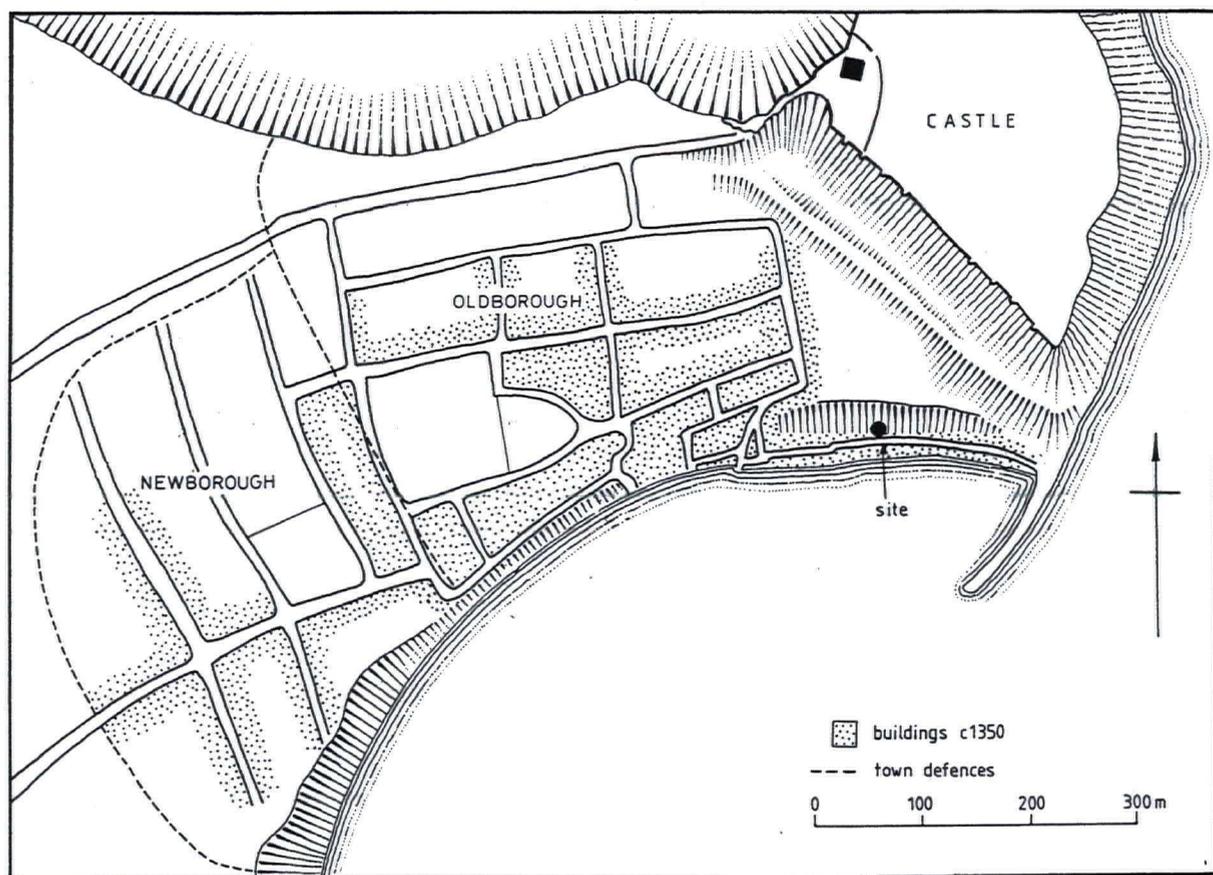


Figure 1 *Medieval Scarborough showing the location of the site*

(2) The site and its Setting (Figure 2)

The site lies on the north side of Quay Street, 60 metres to the south of the modern seafront. To the north the site is dominated by a steep, landscaped grass slope perpetuating the line of the natural boulder-clay cliff bordering the South Bay. To the east it is bordered by an alley called Bakehouse Steps whilst No. 22A Quay Street lies to the west. The southern part of the site is level with Quay Street and is mostly covered with a 20cm thick concrete raft into which are embedded three wooden raking shores supporting the eastern exterior wall of No 22A Quay Street. To the north the site rises part way up the slope of the cliff in two terraces both of which are surfaced with concrete. About half of the lower of the two terraces slopes down to the east to a brick retaining wall bordering Bakehouse Steps. Similarly, the south-east quarter of the upper terrace is paved with concrete slabs and slopes southwards down to the level of the lower terrace.

The lower part of the site is situated on what was probably originally the seashore at the foot of the South Bay cliff. Although claims have been made for Roman and Viking settlements around the South Bay (1), the documented development of the area begins with the emergence of Scarborough as a town and port during the second half of the 12th century (2). An excavation in 1978 at 30 Quay Street (3), 10m east of the present site, uncovered an area of stone paving on the natural clay surface and a second area of paving was reportedly found at the junction of Bakehouse Steps and Quay Street adjacent to the south-east corner of the present site in 1971 (4). Both may have been rudimentary slipways constructed on the natural shoreline before the construction of the first harbour wall in this part of the South Bay.

Quay Street could mark the line of the first waterfront which may have consisted of a stone and timber harbour wall. Subsequent reclamation meant that the harbour front moved progressively further south and by the middle of the 14th century it appears to have been mid-way between Quay Street and Sandside (5). Reclamation also involved raising the ground level behind the harbour front to provide some protection from flooding during high tides and heavy seas. The 1978 excavation at 30 Quay Street found that clay had been dumped to raise the ground level partially burying the earlier slipway whilst an excavation on the north side of The Bolts in 1990 discovered that domestic refuse had been dumped at the base of the cliff probably for the same purpose (6).

The area around the harbour was the most densely settled part of the medieval town as is indicated by the high rents paid for land here in the 14th century (7). Several houses along Quay Street still preserve possible medieval timberwork in their structures, most notably the former Three Mariners Inn on the south side of the street and No. 2 Quay Street on the north. Equally, the boundaries of the present site and the two adjacent properties of 22A and 22 Quay Street may well date back to the middle ages as their shapes mirror the typical outline of a medieval property holding known as a burgage plot where the long axis of the plot is aligned at right angles to the street (8).

Although Quay Street is shown on 18th century maps of the town, it is not until Wood's survey of 1828 that the site is depicted in any detail. On this map and on the first edition 1:1056 OS map of 1852, buildings are shown covering the entire site. In 1852 Bakehouse Steps was called Bakehouse Yard and was partially covered over as the building then standing on the east side of the alley was joined to that on the present site at first floor level (Figure 3). The building last appears on the OS 1:1250 scale map of 1965.

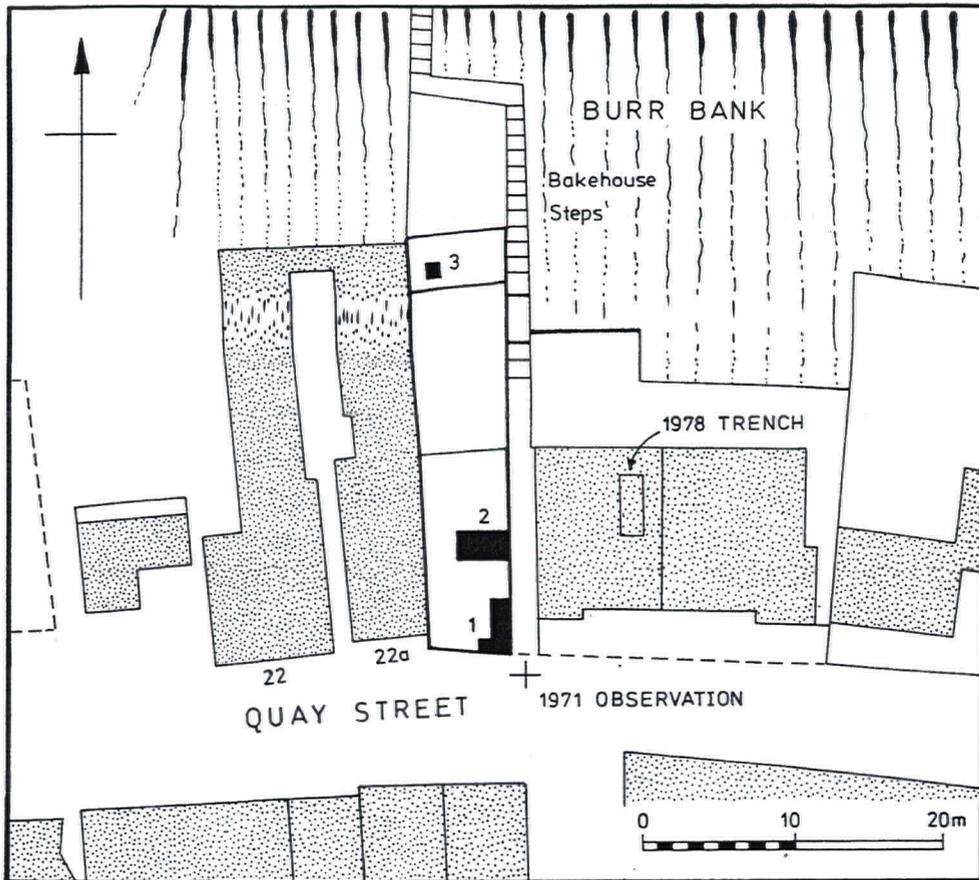


Figure 2 The site and its environs, showing the location of trenches 1-3

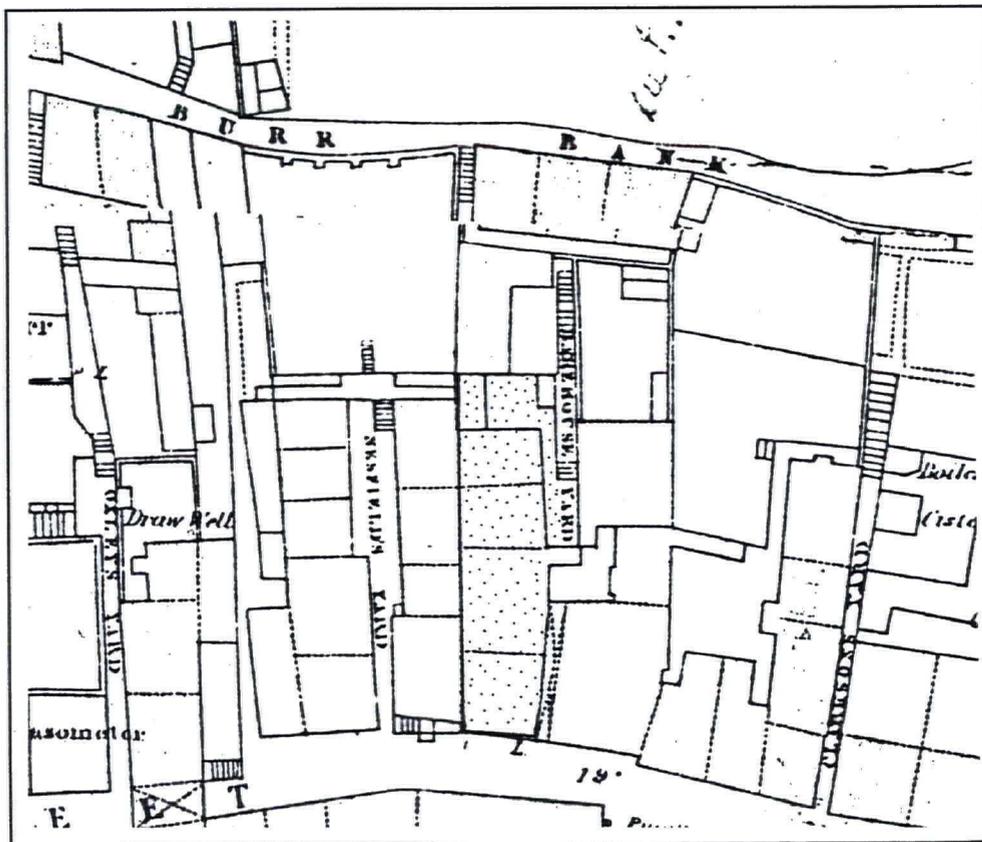


Figure 3 The site and its environs shown on the first edition OS map of 1852 (depicted at approx 1:500 scale)

(3) The Excavation

Trenches One and Two were excavated on the lowest part of the site adjoining Quay Street. Trench One was positioned in the angle of Bakehouse Steps and Quay Street where the tops of two walls were visible on the surface of the site. Trench Two was situated 6m from the street at the approximate centre of the lower level. Trench Three was excavated on the upper terrace to assess how the make-up of the site changed as it rose up the slope of the South Bay cliff.

TRENCH ONE (Figure 4)

Trench One was "L" shaped with a maximum length of 3m parallel to Bakehouse Steps and maximum width of 2m parallel to Quay Street. The concrete slab stops short of both these edges of the site leaving the top of a north-south brick wall and an east-west stone wall partially exposed at the surface. The excavation involved cleaning around the tops and sides of both walls to a maximum depth of 0.8m from the top of the concrete slab.

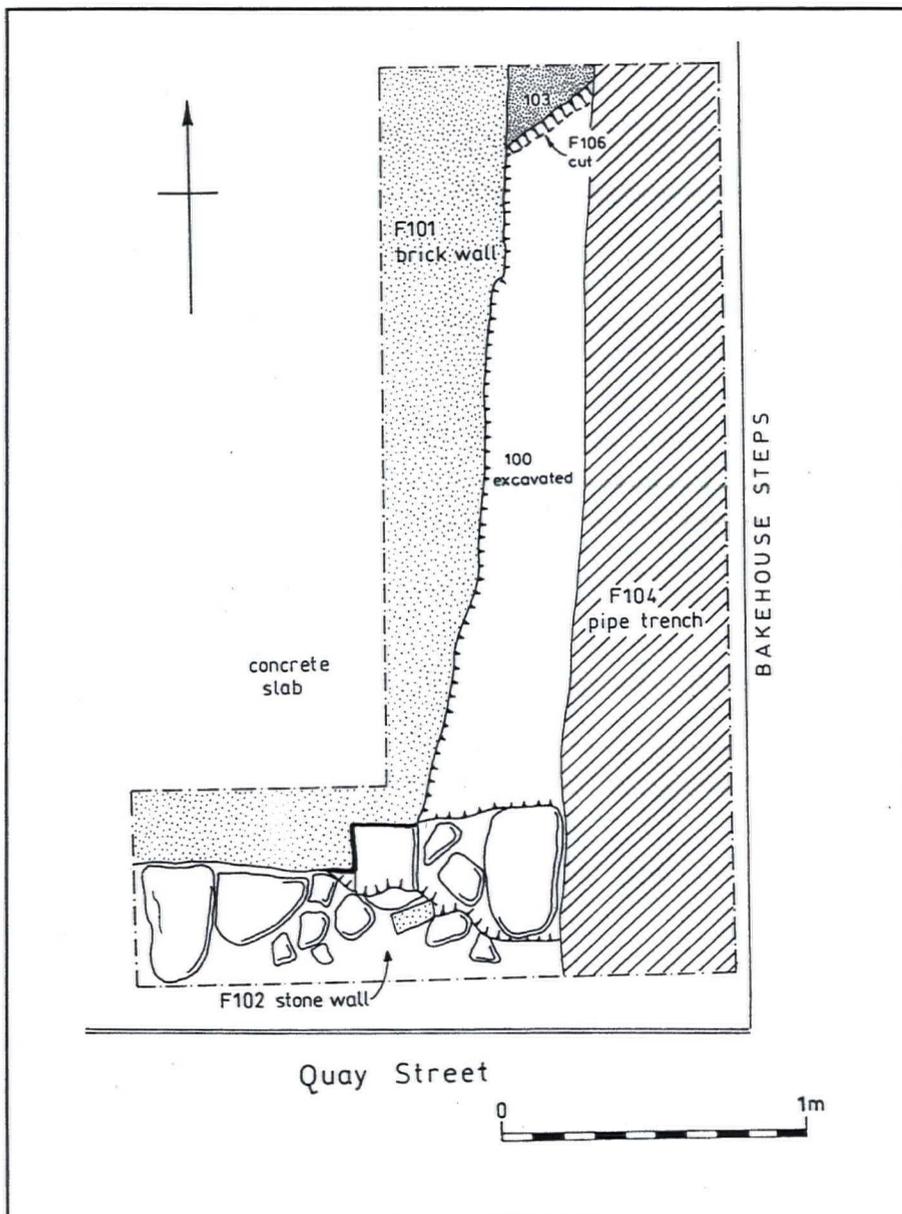


Figure 4 Plan of Trench One

The stone wall (F102) proved to be the earlier of the two as the brick wall (F101) butted up to and partially overlay it. The wall was poorly constructed of stone rubble with no sign of any mortar bonding. The brick wall was two courses high and rested on stone rubble foundations again with no sign of any mortar bonding. The wall F102 was cut by a modern foul water pipe encased in concrete (F104) running north-south immediately adjacent to Bakehouse Steps.

The loose soil fill (100) in the 30-40cm gap between F101 and F104 was excavated to a maximum depth of 85cm. The deposit filled a vertical sided cut (F106) whose edge, aligned NE-SW, was exposed at the northern edge of the trench. This feature cut into a much more compact deposit containing interleaved layers of humic soil, clay and silt (103) which disappeared beyond the northern edge of the trench and was left unexcavated. The chronological relationship between this cut and the stone wall was not established though it is probable that the cut is earlier and continues below the wall.

The bricks of F101 were Victorian and presumably are the foundations of the last building to stand on the site whilst the stone wall along the street frontage is part of an earlier structure. Layer 100 contained mostly medieval pottery and German stonewares of possible 15th and 16th century date along with some fragments of later pottery.

TRENCH TWO (Figures 5 and 6 and Plate 1)

Trench Two measured 2.6m x 2m and had a 60cm square extension at the north-east corner. The extension was dug during the latter stages of the excavation as a drainage sump to drain off groundwater and gave a valuable picture of the stratigraphy immediately adjacent to Bakehouse Steps. The deposits encountered in Trench Two were almost entirely of medieval date and could be divided into seven phases. These are described in chronological order below beginning with the earliest phase.

PHASE ONE OPEN GROUND

The upper surface of natural glacial clay sloped gently from north to south across the trench. It was sandy in texture and contained some stone fragments. A layer of earthy clay rested on top of the natural (layer 219) and was itself overlain by a thin layer of grey, silty soil (218). Both layers were excavated in a 30cm wide sondage 1.5m from the west section. They probably represent the natural build-up of soil on what was most likely unoccupied open ground.

No finds were recovered from layer 218 whilst layer 219 contained two sherds of medieval pottery, possibly Scarborough Ware.

PHASE TWO BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPATION

The soil layer 218 was buried beneath a deposit of clay (213) which butted up to the north side of an east-west aligned stone wall (F216) (Plate 1). The wall survived to a maximum of three courses high and patches of mortar adhering to several of the stones indicate that it had been at least partially bonded with mortar. The stones were roughly squared and were an average size of about 40cm x 40cm. The top course contained a number of smaller stones and was set back slightly from the two underlying courses.

To the south of the wall, a deposit of silty clay (214) had been dumped downslope which, along with layer 213 to the north, functioned as a raft stabilising the footings of the wall. Several large stones were discovered at the base of layer 214 presumably thrown downslope of the wall to increase the stability of the clay raft. A series of thin clay surfaces interleaved with layers of charcoal and ash (212) butted up to the north of the wall at the level of the top course of stones. These probably represent the build up of floor levels inside a building and since nothing similar was found to the south of the wall it is likely that F216 is the south exterior wall of a structure. A sample of layer 212 was examined by the Environmental Archaeology Unit of the University of York (see Appendix Two). A 1m wide gap in the top course of F216 might mark the position of a door, and one of the stones forming the possible threshold had a hollow in its surface marking the likely position of a doorpost. Towards the north-west corner of the trench, a group of small stones (F222) cut into layer 219. Their function is unknown.

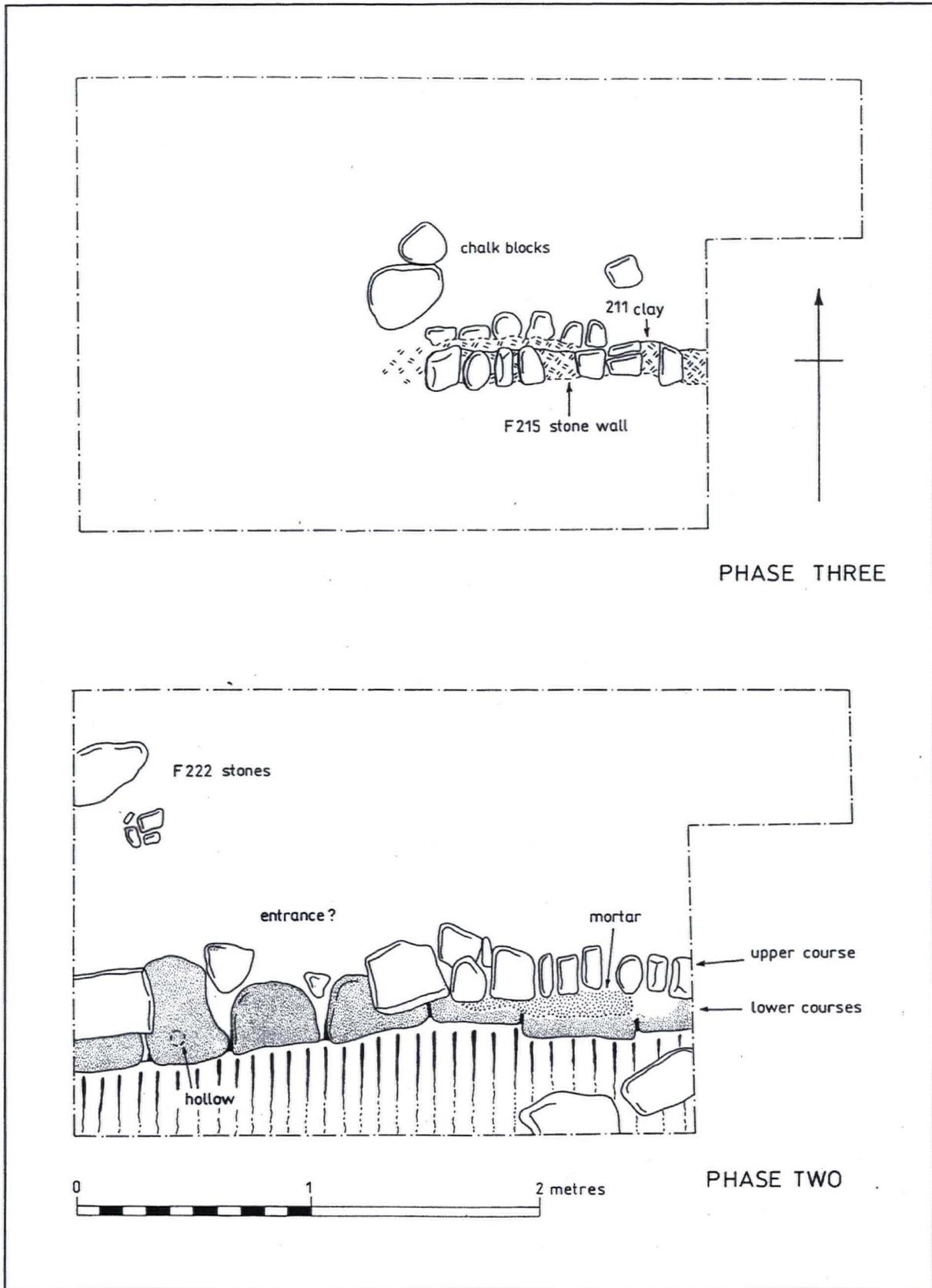


Figure 5 Plans of Trench Two in phase 2 (below) and phase 3 (above)

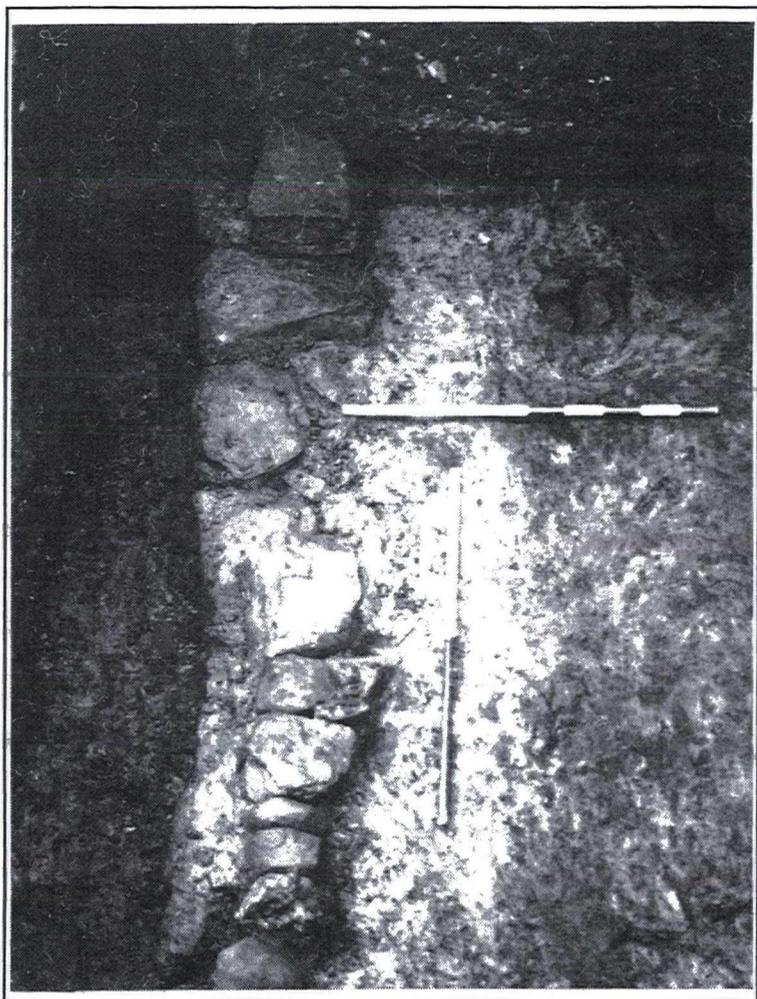


Plate 1 Trench Two: wall 216 viewed from the east

Pottery finds from layers 213 and 214 beneath the structure and from floor levels 212 were not numerous but included a mixture of Scarborough Ware and German stoneware as well as several unidentified forms. The Scarborough Ware points to a 13th or 14th century date for the building but is presumably residual as the stoneware suggests a later date, perhaps in the late 14th or 15th centuries.

PHASE THREE WALL RECONSTRUCTION

A layer of dark organic soil (205) accumulated over the uppermost of the floor surfaces and the eastern part of the stone wall F216 suggesting the building may have fallen into decay or dereliction. A sample of layer 205 was examined by the Environmental Archaeology Unit of York University (see appendix two). The wall line was partially re-established by the laying out of an east-west line of stones (F215) set in a layer of clay (layer 211) over the eastern half of F216. At the same time as the wall was re-built, a layer of clay (210) was dumped to the north perhaps

to make a fresh floor surface. Two chalk boulders set into the clay could mark the line of a right-angled return on wall F215. The range of pottery from layers 210 and 205 was similar to that found with the phase two structure described above and therefore a roughly equivalent date is possible for this phase. No finds were recovered from layer 211.

PHASE FOUR REFUSE DUMPING

Following either the demolition or natural decay of the structure described above, soil accumulated on the site to a maximum depth of 80cm. At the time of excavation this layer was wet and was generally dark grey to black in colour containing patches of charcoal and fragments of shell.

Stratification within the deposit was difficult to detect and therefore it was excavated in a series of spits each about 10cm deep (layers 200-204 and 206). The deposit changed with depth from an ashy to a more shelly composition. The large quantity of animal bone (see appendix one below) and pottery recovered from throughout the deposit suggests it may have originated as domestic refuse which had been dumped onto the site. That it was then left undisturbed is indicated by the large size of most of the pottery sherds which would have been more fragmented if the deposit had been displaced by later activity.

The pottery from this deposit consisted predominantly of German stoneware and Low Countries red ware with a few fragments of Scarborough Ware and Staxton Ware. A date in the 15th century is therefore likely for this deposit with the 13th or 14th century Scarborough ware and Staxton Ware probably residual.

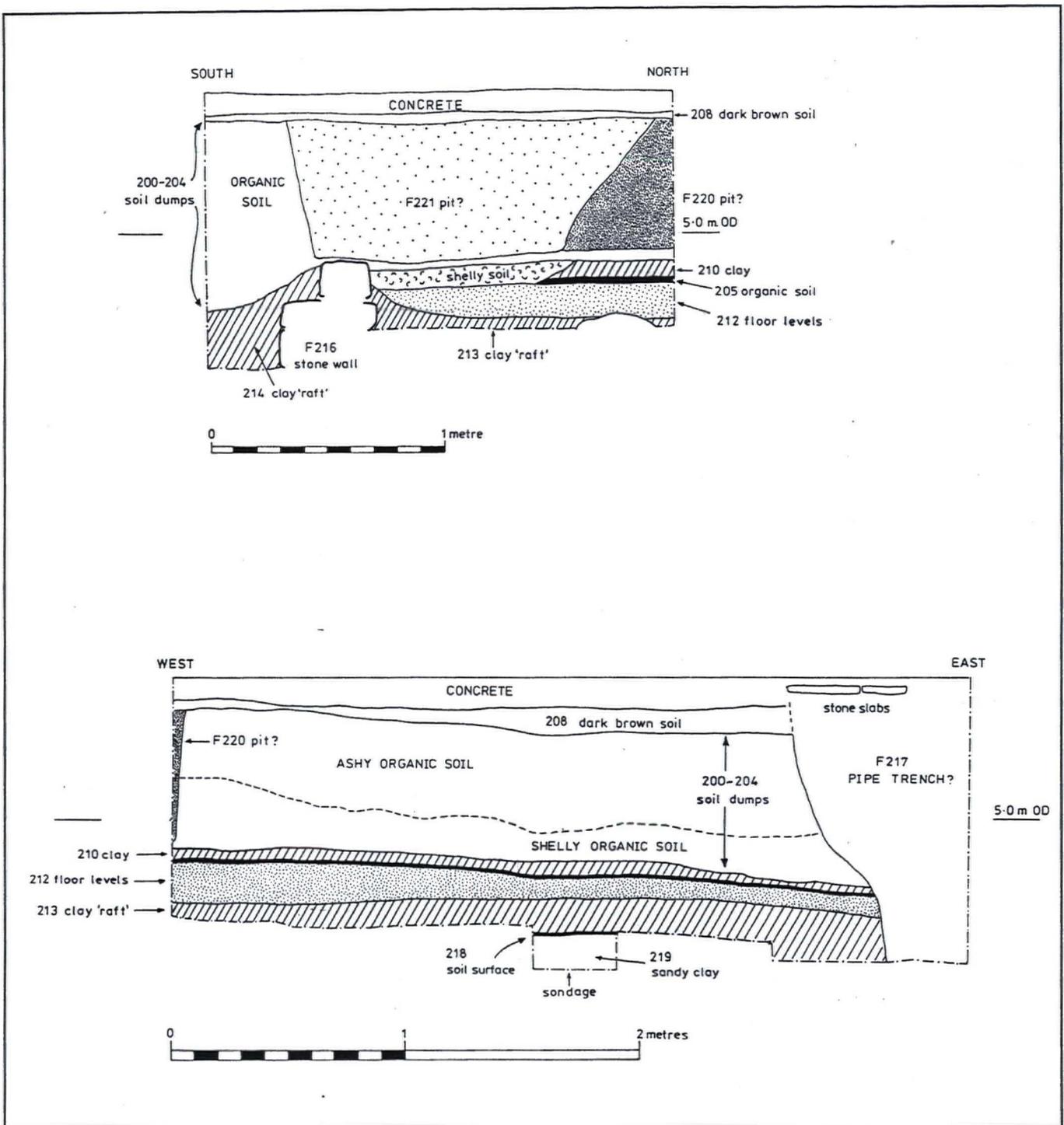


Figure 6 South and east facing sections of Trench Two

PHASE FIVE PIT DIGGING

Two intercutting features F220 and F221 were clipped by the west end of the trench. Both features had steeply sloping sides and level bases and cut down almost to the bottom of the wet organic layer described above. The fill of F220 was a dark brown organic soil which was itself cut by F221 which was more stony in texture. Neither feature continued into the trench for more than a few centimetres so little can be said about their possible date or purpose.

PHASE SIX PIPE TRENCH

In the north-east corner of the excavation, a 60cm wide sondage was dug up to the edge of Bakehouse Steps and revealed the western side of a backfilled trench running adjacent to, and parallel with, Bakehouse Steps. The feature (F217) was backfilled with a crumbly grey soil (209) containing shell and rock fragments. The overall extent of this feature was not ascertained. It extended beyond the maximum depth of the sondage and its eastern side lay beyond the confines of the excavation. It could be a pipe trench or may mark the line of a robbed-out wall. The pottery recovered from the backfill was little use for dating purposes as the sherds were small and undiagnostic.

PHASE SEVEN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION

The bottom two courses of a north-south brick wall survived along the eastern edge of the trench running up to the boundary with Bakehouse Steps. Probably contemporary with the brickwork were several stone slabs found in the north-east corner of the excavation. The bricks appeared to be Victorian and the demolition of this property was followed by the laying of a concrete slab across the lower part of the site. This rested on a thin layer of mixed soil (layer 208) which probably accumulated whilst the site was open ground before the concrete slab was laid.

TRENCH THREE (Figure 7)

Trench Three measured 1.2m square and was excavated on the upper terrace. A deposit of uncompacted clayey soil was encountered below a 10cm thick concrete slab which covers the upper level. The soil layer was excavated in three spits (layers 300-302) to a maximum depth of 1.2m (8.7m OD). At this level a cobbled surface (F303) came to light sloping gently downhill from north to south. A possible step in the surface was marked by an east-west line of larger slabs and a stone block partially exposed in the north-west corner of the trench could belong to a wall. The excavation was suspended at this point to preserve the cobbles in situ.

The fact that the cobble surface was not level suggests it is more likely to be a yard surface than one inside a building. The homogenous character of the deposit overlying the cobbles indicates that it was dumped onto the site in a single episode rather than accumulating gradually. It contained mostly medieval Scarborough Ware pottery and German stonewares of possible 15th and 16th century date, with later pottery coming from the top 20cm (layer 300).

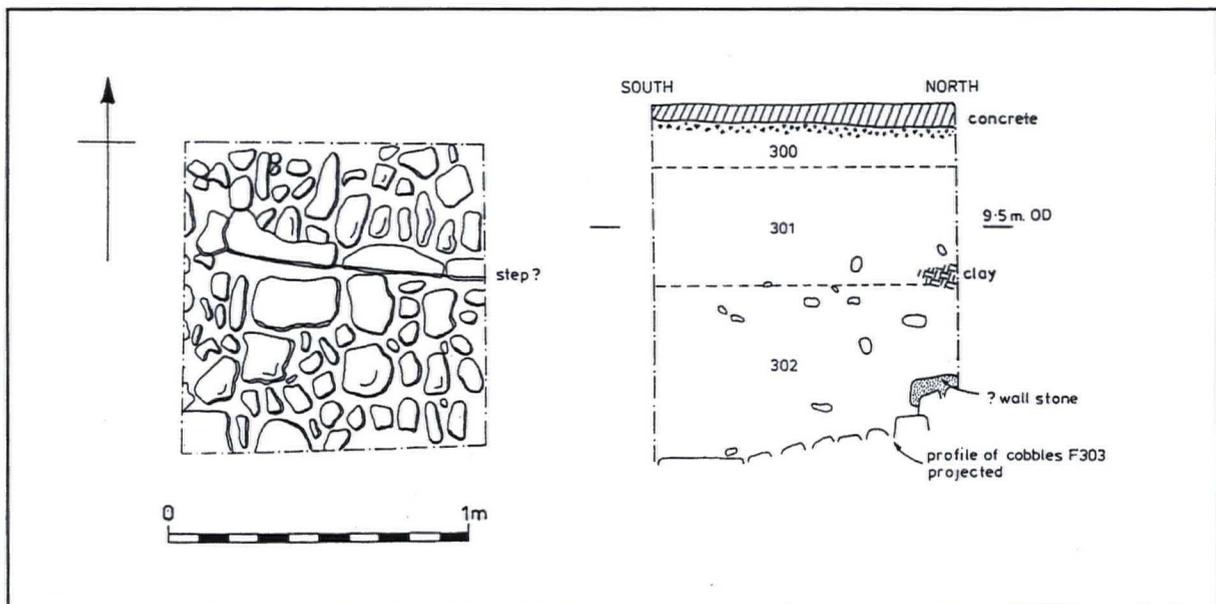


Figure 7 Plan and section of Trench Three