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**Seamer Road Corner
Falsgrave
Scarborough
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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2006

Seamer Road Corner

Falsgrave

Scarborough

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Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

A Watching Brief was carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd over six days in September 2006 at land on a development site that lay immediately southeast of the junction of Falsgrave Road and Seamer Road, Falsgrave, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, during the reduction of the site to prepare a piling platform. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the Watching Brief.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an Archaeological Watching Brief carried out during the ground-works associated with a residential development at Seamer Road Corner, Falsgrave, Scarborough, North Yorkshire (TA 0330 8791, Figs. 1 and 2).

- 1.2 The ground-works had the potential to affect multi-period archaeological remains; accordingly the developer was required by Scarborough Borough Council, on the advice of the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council, to implement a Scheme of Archaeological Works to be carried out at the site (Planning ref. 01/00490/FL). The first stage of Archaeological Works comprised the excavation of an evaluation trench (carried out by On-Site Archaeology in January 2005, On-

Site Archaeology 2005). The findings of the evaluation were such as to lead to a Watching Brief on the ground-works associated with the development. MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd was engaged to undertake the Archaeological Watching Brief, which took place over eight days in September 2006.

- 1.3 All works were funded by the developer, Chevin Housing Group.
- 1.4 All maps within this report are reproduced under licence from the Ordnance Survey with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright licence no. AL 50453A.

2. Topography and Geology

- 2.1 The site lies immediately to the southeast of the junction of Seamer Road and Falsgrave Road, which form part of the main A64 trunk road (Figs. 1 and 2). This location was formerly occupied by commercial premises, which have been recently demolished to allow the redevelopment to take place (Pl. 1). The Tap and Spile public house and its grounds lie to the east, with 19th century dwellings to the south, beyond which the land drops fairly steeply into the valley along into which St James Road descends.
- 2.2 The underlying geology of the site consists of glacially-deposited boulder clay (Mackney *et al* 1983).

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 3.1 Trevor Pearson has rehearsed in detail the arguments for the historical development of Falsgrave (Pearson, 2001), and the following four paragraphs draw heavily on his definitive work.

- 3.2 According to the Domesday Survey, Falsgrave was one of the most important settlements in the district, being the head of a royal manor with jurisdiction over a large swathe of land that stretched from Staintondale to Filey. Scarborough, if it existed at all, was dependent on Falsgrave.
- 3.3 A major pre-conquest settlement therefore existed at Falsgrave, and a casual examination of the 1852 Ordnance Survey map suggests that the medieval settlement was centred in the vicinity of Town Street and Cambridge Place. However, two excavations in the area of Cambridge Place (in 1974 at Scalby Road and in 1994 at the Snowdrift Laundry) failed to provide any more conclusive evidence of medieval settlement than a medieval boundary fence. More recently, the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society has excavated three trenches in close proximity to the site: in the garden of the Tap and Spile public house (directly north-east of the site - February 2002), at land adjacent to Seamer Road (directly opposite the site - May 2001), and at West Park Terrace (c. 100m west of the site - May 2001). None of these three sites produced any evidence of medieval occupation, but all showed a great depth of soil above the natural that indicated prolonged agricultural activity (www.scarborough-heritage.org/exca/record).
- 3.4 It is equally possible that the original settlement lay to the southeast in the deep valley (perhaps the original *Hval's gryffa* or 'Hval's valley' from which the name Falsgrave derives). The later position of Falsgrave village may have been dictated by the 18th century turnpike road, which could have bypassed the earlier focus of settlement.
- 3.5 The present site lies between the two main candidates for early settlement at Falsgrave, and is therefore one of clear archaeological potential. It was that potential that led to the excavation of an evaluation trench at the site in January 2005. The evaluation recorded a small, undated pit that lay beneath a layer of

ploughsoil containing a possible Roman sherd. Another soil of cultivation was immediately overlain by the remains of the 19th century and later buildings and services that occupied the site (On-site, 2005).

4. Methodology

- 4.1 The initial phase of the groundworks consisted of a general site strip by a 360° excavator, which generally used a 2m wide ditching bucket. However, a toothed bucket was used for short periods to remove deep foundations. The initial strip was followed by the reduction of the entire site by a depth of between 0.86 and c.1.20m from the existing ground surface. The site was not visible as a whole at any one time, as it was stripped and stoned-up piece by piece.
- 4.2 The groundworks were observed at all times by an archaeologist, and the exposed surfaces inspected. A series of digital images were taken for record purposes.

5. Results

- 5.1 Natural deposits, consisting of compact reddish brown boulder clay, were identified at a depth of 0.65m from the present ground surface at the western side of the site, adjacent to the pavement, rising to c. 1.20m at the eastern side (Pl. 2).
- 5.2 In the northern and central areas of the site, the boulder clay was overlain by a c. 0.25m deep deposit of yellowish clay with varying concentrations of pebble inclusions. Although clearly different from the underlying boulder clay, this deposit would appear to be a variation in the natural rather than having been artificially brought into the site (e.g. as a raft for the 19th century buildings).
- 5.3 The natural boulder clay was covered by a deposit of greyish brown clay silt, which was around 0.40m thick. This layer contained 19th century sherds (not

retained), and was probably of agricultural or horticultural origin. The foundations and services of the demolished buildings cut into the cultivation soil.

5.4 No features or finds were observed that pre-dated the cultivation soil.

6. Discussion

6.1 The Watching Brief at Seamer Road Corner reinforced the picture gained from the other archaeological interventions in the immediate locality, showing an absence of medieval or earlier activity. The location of the original settlement at Falsgrave remains to be discovered.

7. Bibliography

- Mackney, D. *et al.* 1983 Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 1: Northern England.
- On-Site Archaeology 2005 Seamer Road Corner, Falsgrave, Scarborough. Report on an Archaeological Evaluation.
- Pearson, T. 2001 Falsgrave Soke and Settlement, in Crouch, D. and Pearson, T. eds. *Medieval Scarborough – Studies in Trade and Civic Life.*

8. Project Staffing Details

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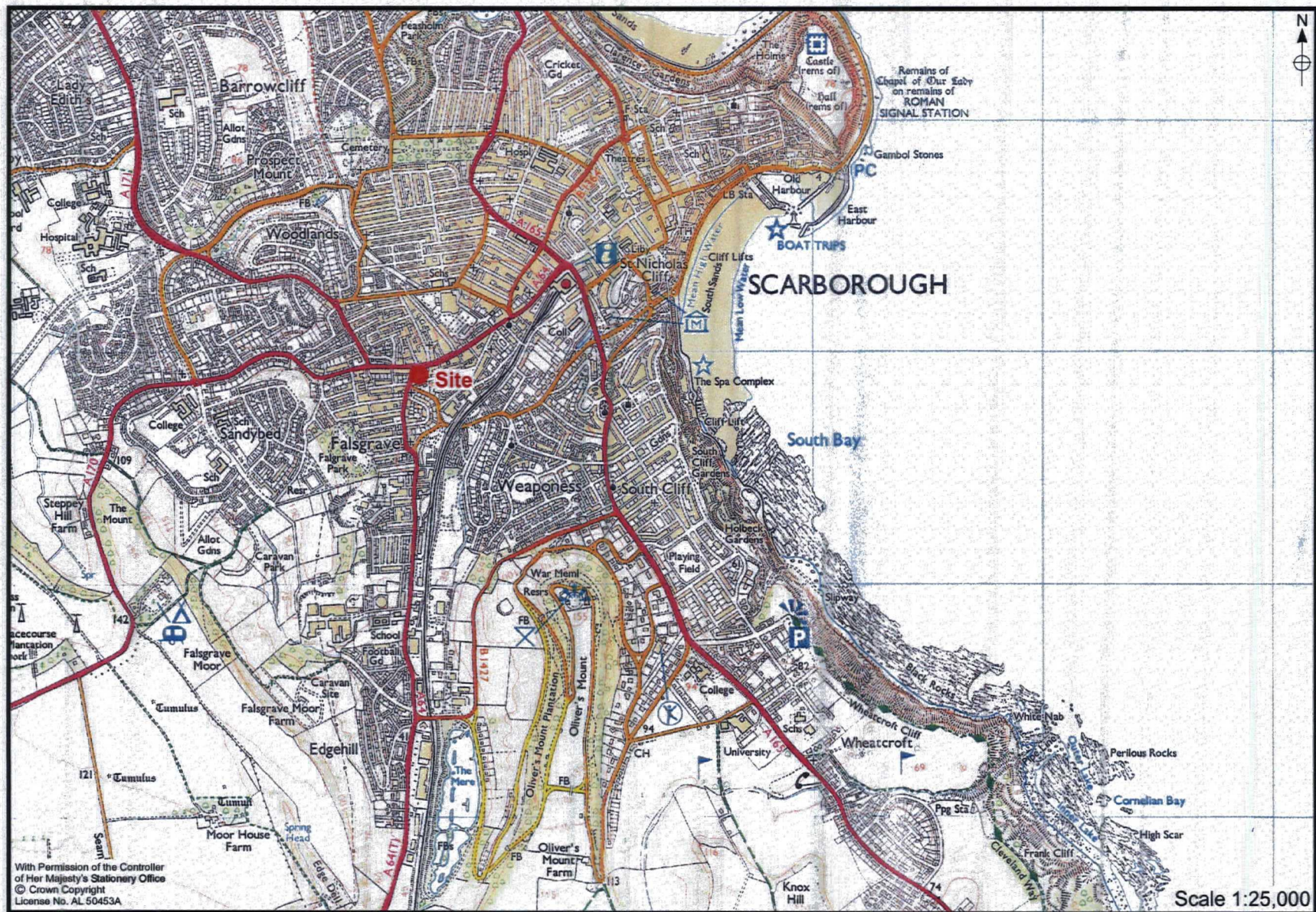


Figure 1. Site Location



Figure 2. Area of Watching Brief



Plate 1. General View of Site. Facing South West



Plate 2. Southern Area of Site after Stripping. Facing South West