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**Cod Beck Moated Site
The Mirage
Thirsk
North Yorkshire**

SAM No. 20532
SE 4290 8231

Archaeological Watching Brief

Authorised by MAP.....
Date: 14/07/06.....

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Non-technical Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. on land to the north of Millgate car park and to the east of St Mary Magdalene's Church, Thirsk, North Yorkshire (SE 4290 8231), during June 2006. The site contains the remains of a medieval moat and house platform, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 20532). The work involved monitoring the removal of three electricity supply poles.

No archaeological deposits, features or finds were disturbed by the works.

1. Introduction

1.1 An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. on land to the north of Millgate car park and to the east of St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, on June 5th, 2006. The work was undertaken at the request of the Archaeology Section of North Yorkshire County Council and English Heritage, and involved monitoring the removal of three electricity supply poles, which were situated along the northern and southern boundaries of Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 20532, a medieval moated site that is situated adjacent to the Cod Beck (Figs. 1 & 2).

1.2 All work was undertaken in accordance with a Standard Watching Brief Scheme of Investigation prepared by the Archaeological Section of North Yorkshire County Council (Appendix 4).

- 1.3 The project was assigned the MAP site code 02-06-06.
- 1.4 All work was funded by Integrated Utility Services (NEDL, Northallerton).
- 1.5 All maps within this report have been produced from The Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. License No. AL 50453A.

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The site lies to the east of the Church of St Mary Magdalene and to the north of Millgate car park, at SE 4290 8231 (Figs. 1 & 2, Pl. 1-6). At the time of the Watching Brief, the site consisted of overgrown pasture.
- 2.2 The site contains the remains of a medieval moated site that was scheduled in December 1993 (SAM No. 20532).
- 2.3 The site lies on soils of the Newport 1 Association, which are characterised by deep well-drained sandy soils over a geology of glaciofluvial drift (Mackney 1984, p. 249).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.1 The name Thirsk derives for the Old Swedish *Thraesk*, meaning lake or fen (Ekwall 1974). The town is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Tresche*. There were two manors at the time of Domesday, one held by the king and the other by Hugh FitzBaldrick (Williams & Martin 2003). The twin manors are reflected in the growth of the town, which developed as Old Thirsk, to the east of the River Cod Beck, and New Thirsk, to the west of the river.
- 3.2 Roger de Mowbray's charter of foundation of the Priory of Newburgh suggests that a borough had been founded at Old Thirsk by 1145 AD

(Bulmer 1990). A market was established on St James' Green, to the east of the current development, but it is thought that the establishment of Thirsk Castle on the opposite side of Cod Beck stimulated the development of New Thirsk, the growing economic importance of which was reflected in change of focus of the market to its present location in Market Place.

3.3 The site is located to the north of New Thirsk and therefore away from the two foci of activity in the early medieval period.

3.4 Cartographic Evidence

3.4.1 The 1796 Sketch Map of Thirsk and 1843 Tithe Map of Thirsk shows the site as an open piece of land numbered '404' and '158' (Figs. 3 & 4 respectively). The site is listed as 'Tenters Croft' suggesting that the area was used as the drying ground for a dyer (Page 1968).

3.4.2 The 1856 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows the outline of an earthwork that is annotated 'moat' (Fig. 5), as does the 1914 Edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 6).

3.4.3 Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps show the moat earthworks and an additional sub-circular earthwork to the south-west of the moat (Fig. 2).

3.5 Archaeological Evidence

3.5.1 The moat is a well-preserved example of a small moated homestead of probable 13th/14th century date and an example of the A1a type series (Le Patourel 1973).

3.5.2 The moated island is 20m square, surrounded by a ditch 1.5m deep and 12m wide with an outer bank up to 10m wide by 1m high on its north-western, north-eastern and south-eastern arms. A causeway crosses the mid point of the north-eastern arm. Adjacent to the south-eastern arm of the moat is a 1.5m high platform, 30m by 25m across at its base. This unusual feature was constructed to provide a flood free platform for a medieval building associated with, but outlying the moat (EH 1993).

3.5.3 Excavations were undertaken on the site during the 1960s and 1990s. The small scale excavations in 1966 recovered flints and sherds of pottery (EH 1993). An archaeological survey undertaken in October 1993 reported that the augering and topographic survey suggested the moat was of limited depth, and work on the platform produced only subsoil-like deposits (material redeposited from the moat excavations).

www.hambleton.gov.uk/hambleton/transport.nsf/pages/Castle).

3.5.4 The site was scheduled in December 1993.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aims of the Watching Brief were:

- (a). To determine the nature, depth, extent, and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits to be affected by the proposed work.
- (b). To prepare a report summarising the results of the work.

5. Methodology

5.1 Three separate excavations were observed. In each case, the electricity poles were cut down to leave an earth-fast stump. Excavations no larger than 1.5m x 1.5m were dug around the stumps, which were then sawn off below ground level. The pits were initially excavated by a tracked mini mechanical excavator, with the final clearance being undertaken by hand. All work was carried out under full archaeological supervision.

5.2 All work was undertaken in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1998).

5.3 All archaeological deposits were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on MAP's *pro forma* context sheets, which are compatible with the MoLAS recording system.

- 5.4 A photographic record was prepared of the site before, during and after completion of the work (Appendix 2).

6. Results

- 6.1 Pole 1 was located immediately south of the northern boundary of the site, outside the moated area (Pls. 1 & 2). Excavation was conducted to a depth of 0.50m below existing ground level. (Pls. 3 & 4) A modern concrete raft supporting the pole was identified at this depth, and was sealed by a mixed backfill deposit that contained modern rubbish (Context 1002). The backfill deposit was sealed by modern topsoil (Context 1001).

- 6.2 Poles 2 and 3 were situated on the southern boundary of the site (Pl. 5), and were excavated to a depth of 0.50m (Pl. 6).. Both excavations revealed backfill deposits of mixed sand and subsoil that contained fragments of modern brick and drain (Context 2002). The backfill deposits were sealed by modern topsoil (Context 2001).

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 All of the excavations were located outside the circuit of the moated area. In essence, the work involved re-excavating the pole foundation pits that had originally been dug at the time of their erection in the 1960s. As a consequence, no undisturbed deposits were encountered during the Watching Brief.
- 7.2 No archaeological finds other than of modern date were encountered during the Watching Brief.

8. Bibliography

Bulmer 1990 History and Directory of North Yorkshire

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Mackney, D. (ed) 1984 Soils and their Uses in Northern England.

Page, W. 1968 Victoria County History. A History of Yorkshire North
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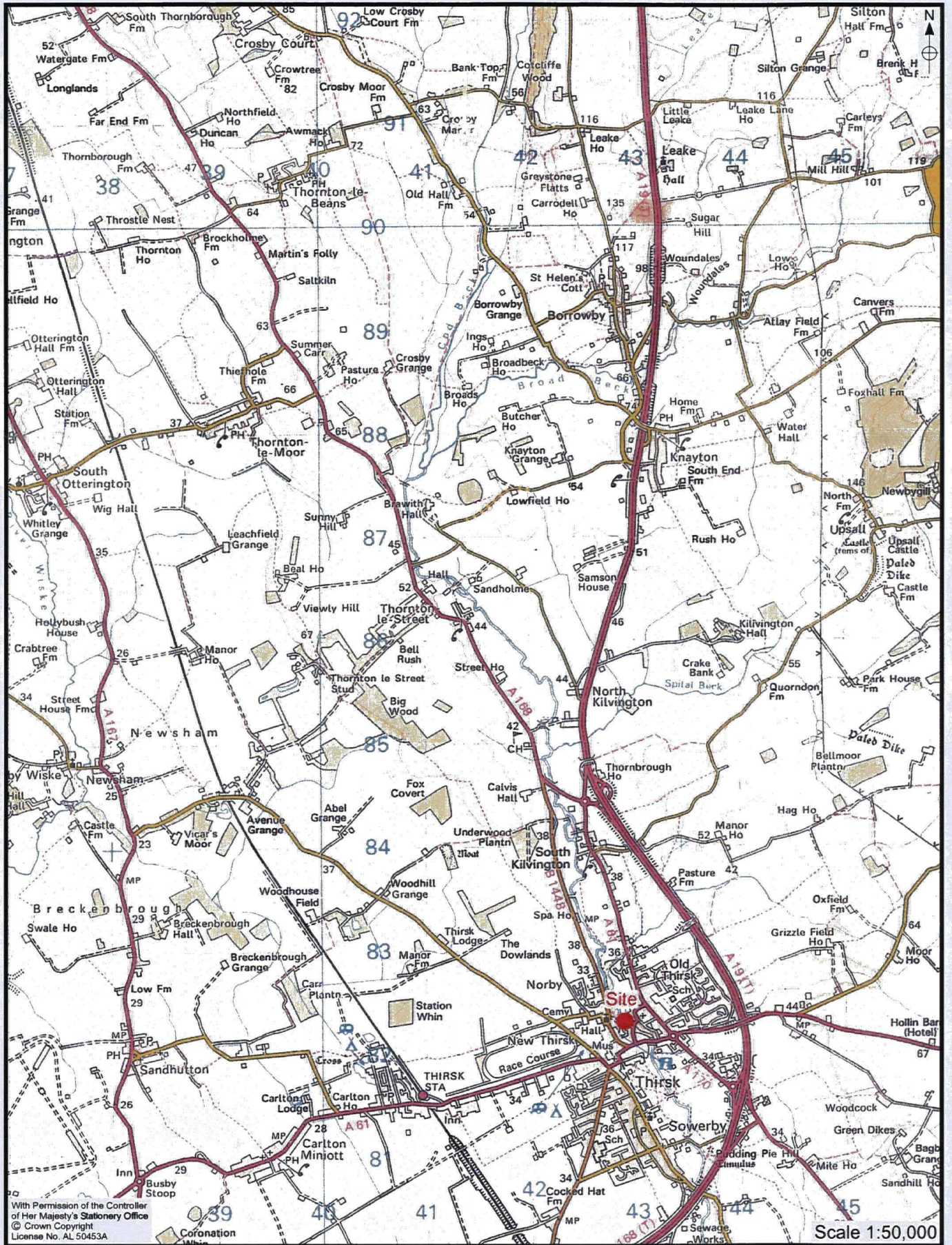


Figure 1. Site Location

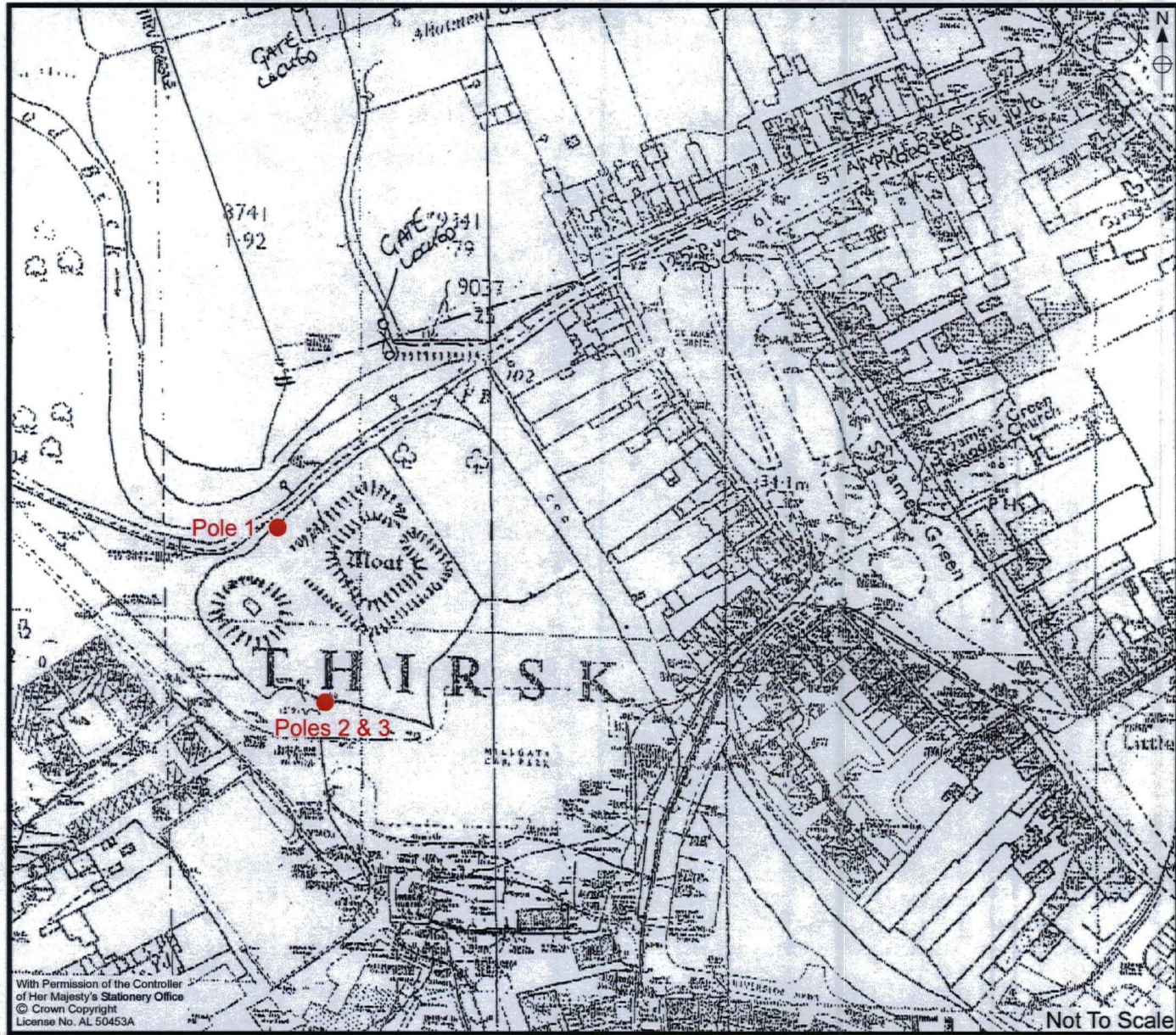


Figure 2. Area of Development

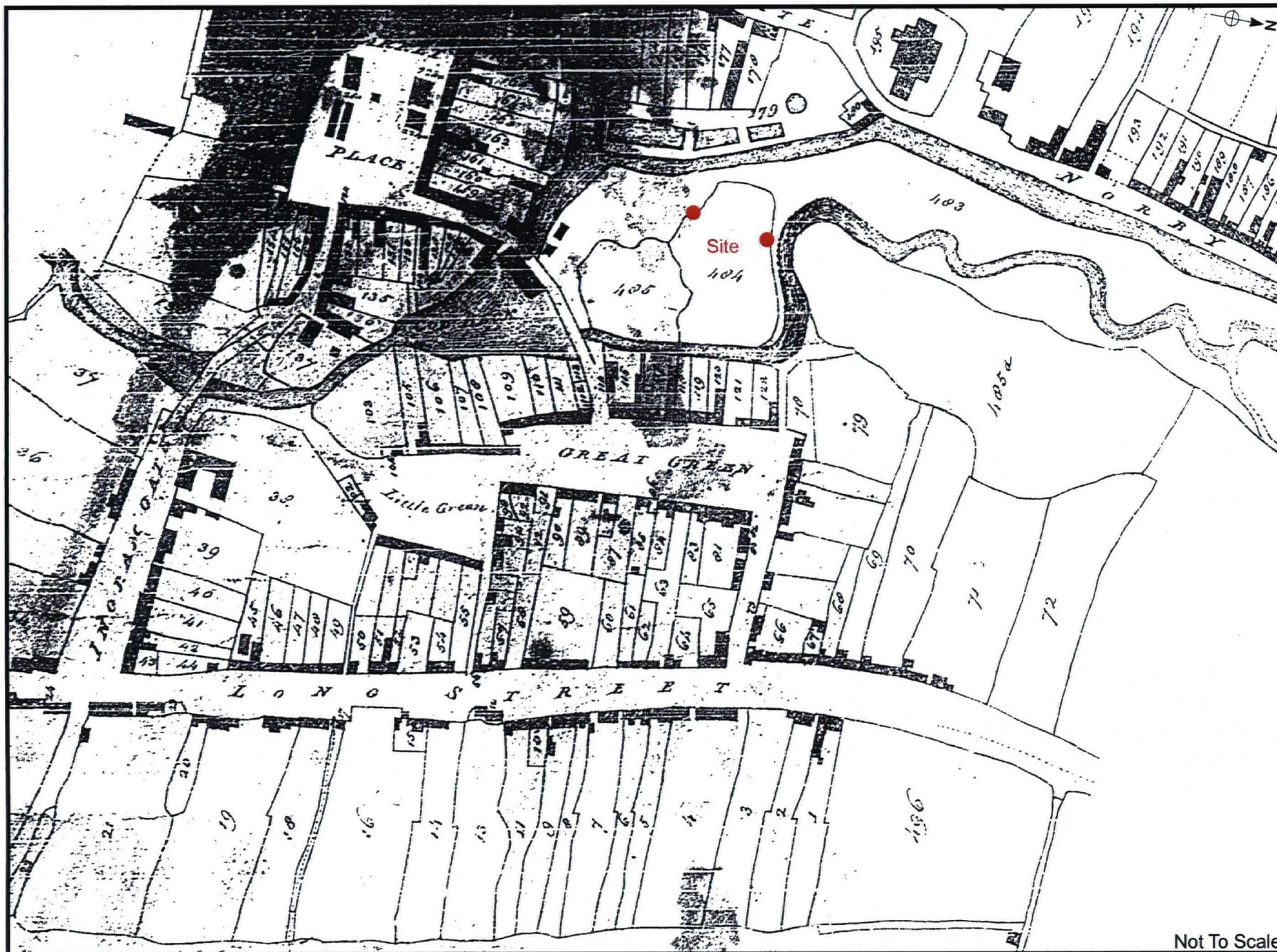


Figure 3. Extract from the 1796 Estate Map of Thirsk

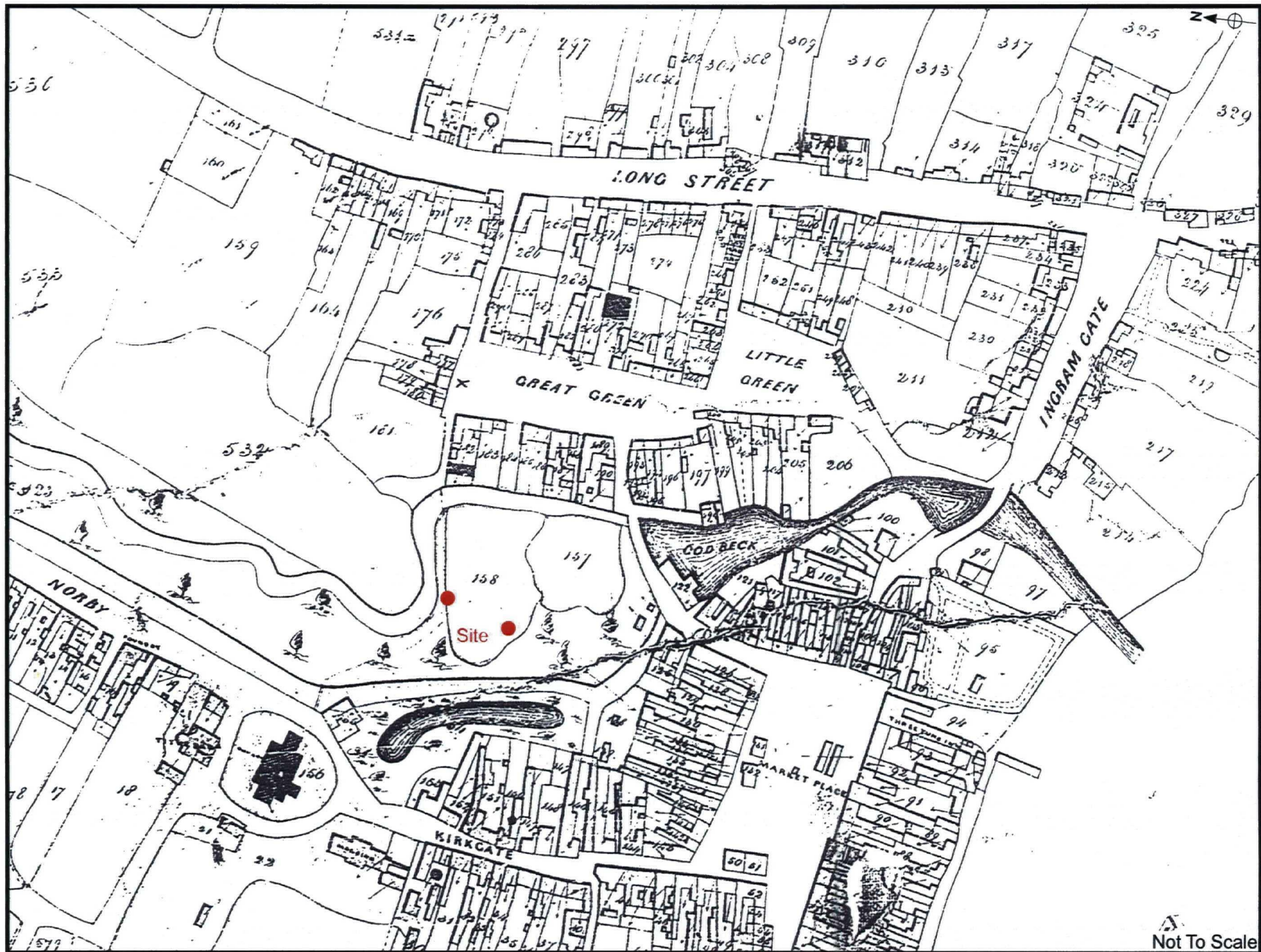


Figure 4. Extract from the 1843 Tithe Map of Thirsk



Figure 5. Extract from the 1856 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map



Figure 6. Extract from the 1914 Edition Ordnance Survey Map