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BLENHEIM STREET, SCARBOROUGH.

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION.  
OSA REPORT No: OSA07EX05.

MAY 2008.

**OSA**

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4899 pashn SNY12M6  
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**Report Summary.**

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**REPORT NO:** OSA07EX05

**SITE NAME:** Blenheim Street, Scarborough

**COUNTY:** North Yorkshire

**NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE:** TA 04401 89068

**ON BEHALF OF:** Urban Conversions Ltd  
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**TIMING:** Fieldwork  
Autumn 2007  
Post excavation & report preparation  
May 2008

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## Table of Contents.

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1.0 Abstract.....	3
2.0 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use.....	5
3.0 Archaeological Background.....	5
4.0 Methodology.....	6
5.0 Results.....	7
5.1 Trench 1.....	7
5.2 Trench 2.....	9
5.3 Trench 3.....	11
6.0 Discussion and Conclusions.....	12
7.0 Bibliography.....	12
8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.....	13
9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.....	13
10.0 Appendix 3 ~ Finds Assessment Report.....	14
11.0 Appendix 4 ~ The Plates.....	17

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## List of Figures.

---

Figure 1. Site Location (NGR TA 04401 89068).....	4
Figure 2. Trench location plan.....	6
Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1.....	8
Figure 4. Southwest facing section of ditch [1018].....	9
Figure 5. Plan of Trench 2.....	10
Figure 6. East facing section of [2008].....	10

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## List of Plates.

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Plate 1. Trench 1 during clean up.....	17
Plate 2. Trench 1 pre-excavation. (Scale of 2 x 1m). ....	17
Plate 3. Ditch [1018], looking northeast. (Scale of 1m). ....	18
Plate 4. Ditch [1018] looking north. (Scale of 2 x 1m). ....	18
Plate 5. Ditch [1018], looking due south during excavation. ....	19
Plate 6. Trench 2 showing Trench 1 from the 2006 excavation. (Scale of 2 x 1m).....	19
Plate 7. Ditch [2008] looking west. (Scale of 1m). ....	20

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## 1.0 Abstract.

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*An archaeological excavation was carried out by On Site Archaeology during development on Blenheim Street within the Oldborough of the town of Scarborough. The presence of archaeological remains of significant interest was highlighted during initial evaluation in 2006. The excavation revealed a substantial width of the 12<sup>th</sup> century defensive ditch of the Newborough of the town, revealing a complex sequence of deposits reflecting the life of this important feature. Dating evidence recovered from its upper fills suggested that the feature remained open until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally a second medieval ditch was excavated running parallel to Castle Road, probably as a means of development control.*





Figure 1. Site Location (NGR TA 04401 89068)

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## 2.0 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use.

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The site comprises of a flat former car park at the end of a row of late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses close to the sea on the outskirts of Scarborough old-town. The site itself exists upon the steep hill connecting the old-town at the base to the promontory castle at the top. It is bounded by residential development to the north and west, by Blenheim Street to the east and Castle Road to the south. The site is centred at National Grid Reference TA 04401 89068 and the modern surface lies at approximately 48.30 to 48.60m AOD. The local drift geology is comprised of boulder clay.

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## 3.0 Archaeological Background.

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The development site lies within the Oldborough of the medieval town of Scarborough.

Archaeological investigations on a site to the north of Castle Road in 1966, revealed evidence for a 4<sup>th</sup> century AD Romano-British pottery, a medieval industrial complex with evidence for pottery manufacture, lime burning and/or iron smelting and a section of the medieval town defences. Other evidence for medieval pottery has come from areas to the south side of Castle Road, close to the area of development, including observations made in 1854 at 95 and 97 Castle Road, and excavations at St Peter's church in 1967. An investigation conducted in 1993 to the rear of 101 Castle Road revealed many medieval features including a possible timber structure.

Examination of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Ordnance Survey (1853) shows that although Blenheim Street itself has not yet been constructed there is a building, that probably occupies the site of the current development, immediately to the east of the northeast end of Wilson's Mariner's Homes.

In 2006 two trenches were dug by On-Site Archaeology. Each of these evaluation trenches measured 3m x 3m. They both identified medieval archaeology. Trench 1, in the southeast corner of the site, encountered natural clay at a depth of between 0.80m and 1m below ground level (BGL). A ditch had been cut into the clay and this feature was dated to the medieval period through pottery recovered from its fill. The top of the feature was present at about 0.8m BGL or 47.60m AOD. The cut ran across the southern end of the trench and probably continued across the site in a WNW direction towards the second trench. This feature would also have continued to the south and WSW of trench 1 toward the corner of the site.

Trench 2 was located in the north-western corner of the site. In this trench medieval deposits were encountered at 1.1m BGL. These deposits were at least 1.5m thick and judging from pottery recovered they were medieval in date. They proved to be representative of the backfilling of the Newborough defensive ditch.

## 4.0 Methodology.

The overburden was removed by a 360 tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket down to the level of the first visible archaeological horizon. The exposed surfaces were then cleaned by hand in order to detect any archaeological features revealed through textural or colour changes in the deposits. Once this had been completed, sections were hand excavated through the archaeological features that had been identified.

Standard *On-Site Archaeology* techniques were followed throughout the excavation. These involved the completion of a context sheet for each deposit, structure or cut encountered, along with plans and/or sections drawn to scale. Heights above Ordnance Datum (AOD) were calculated by taking levels from a Temporary Benchmark (TBM) which was then tied in with an existing Ordnance Survey benchmark. A photographic record of the deposits and features was also maintained.

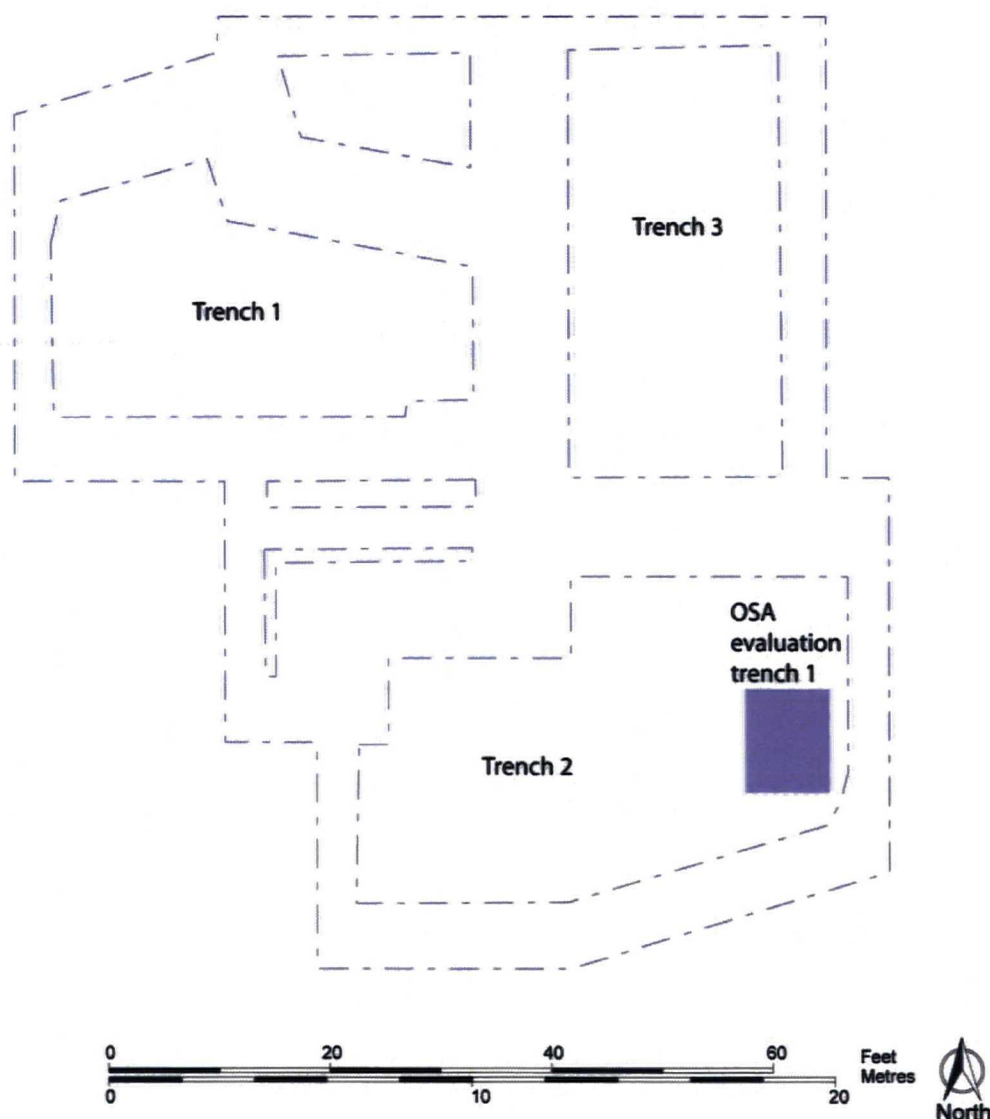


Figure 2. Trench location plan.



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## 5.0 Results.

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The excavation of the foundations of the new build property were arranged in such a way that they created three zones of excavation comprising of narrow trenches outlining three rough rectangular areas of dig with raised unexcavated central areas (See Figure 2). As these were sited above known significant archaeology the central areas were to also be reduced as part of the archaeological programme to create the three trenches. The results of the excavation in these three areas is outlined below.

### 5.1 Trench 1.

Trench 1 was located in the north-western corner of the site above Trench 2 of the 2006 evaluation (See Plates 1 & 2). It measured 7.50m along the east-west axis and 6.55m along the north-south. The trench edges were stepped in at the east end narrowing the width first to 4.50m then to 4m (See Figure 3). The trench was machined to a depth of 1.14m Below Ground Level (BGL), placing the base of excavation at 47.50m AOD. The lowest deposit encountered was the natural pale reddish brown clay (1008). This had been cut by five features comprising of two wall cuts, two postholes and a large linear.

The earliest of these was the large NE-SW aligned linear [1018] (See Plates 3, 4 & 5). This feature was present throughout the entire trench width at the eastern end. A slot excavated through this feature was some 3.25m in width and excavated to an overall depth 1.42m, or 46.60m AOD. This slot was positioned with Health and Safety considerations in mind and was not bottomed. Its northern edge was stepped to allow access to the base and help support the baulk above.

Such were the dimensions of the feature that only the southern edge was present within the confines of the trench. This comprised of a steeply sloping uneven edge of approximately 45° (See Figure 4). The break of slope at the top was quite sharp and the edge when viewed in plan was slightly uneven. The lowest deposit excavated within the linear was (1017) a dark brownish grey clay with occasional small sandstone fragments. This material was quite fine in texture and some 0.62m of it was present. It was overlain by a band (1016) of pinkish orange clay with rare small fragments of sandstone. This compact band of material was an average of 0.20m in thickness. It was sealed by a thick (0.46m) band of compact dark reddish brown silty clay (1015) with occasional fragments of poorly sorted sandstone. Pottery recovered from the fill was datable to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century but two fragment of clay tobacco pipe were also retrieved. Their stem form would suggest that they were 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. This was overlain by a thin (0.15m max.) band of very dark blue grey compact clay (1014) with moderate inclusions of sub-angular sandstone fragments and rare charcoal flecking. The material was seen to tip sharply at a 45 degree angle toward the northern edge of the excavated slot. This was itself sealed by the uppermost deposit (1013). This material comprised of a compact mid greenish red brown slightly silty clay with frequent fragments of sandstone and pebble present throughout. It had a maximum depth of 0.65m, but more commonly 0.25m of it were observed. Pottery recovered from it was dated to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, though its deposition was clearly much later.

The linear was cut to the west by two postholes. The first of these [1010] was 0.40m in diameter but had a depth of just 0.08m. The single fill (1009) of firm reddish brown sandy clay did not contain any finds. The break of the upper slope was very sharp and the sides were very steep.

The second example [1012] located to 5m to the north was also 0.40m in diameter and 0.10m in depth. Its single fill of reddish brown sandy clay (1011) profited a single sherd of 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery. It was steep sided with sharp breaks of upper and lower slope with a flat base.

Finally the linear was cut by two wall construction cuts. These were arranged E-W [1004] and N-S [1007]. Though the walls themselves and the construction cut backfill were allocated context numbers the features were modern and removed by machine.

These deposits and features were sealed by modern dump deposits (1001) and a band of topsoil like material (1000).

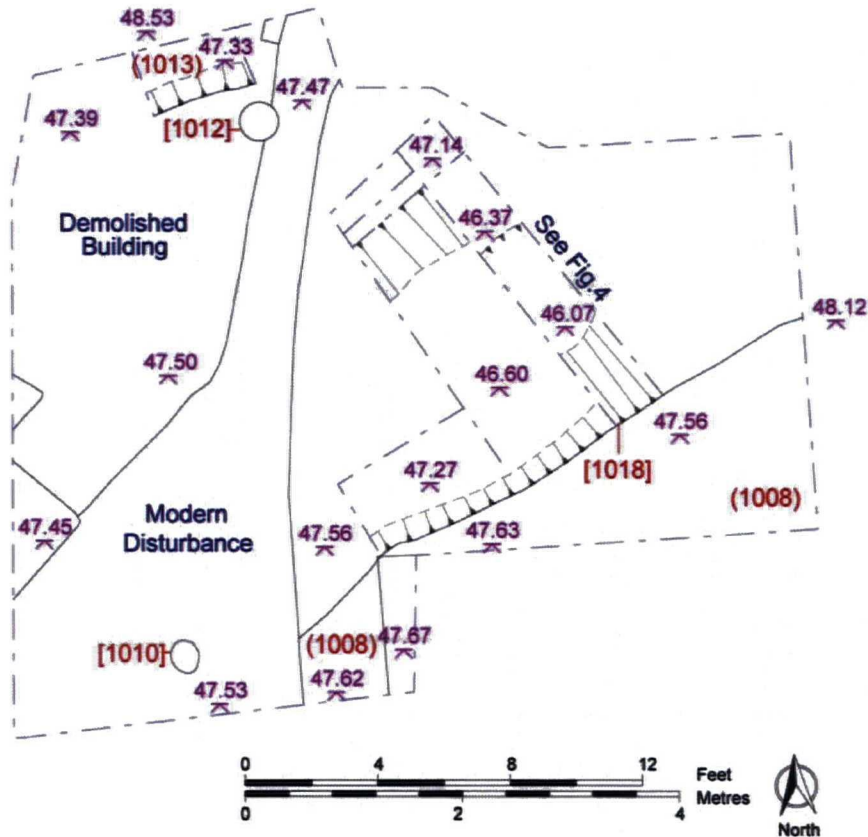


Figure 3. Plan of Trench 1.



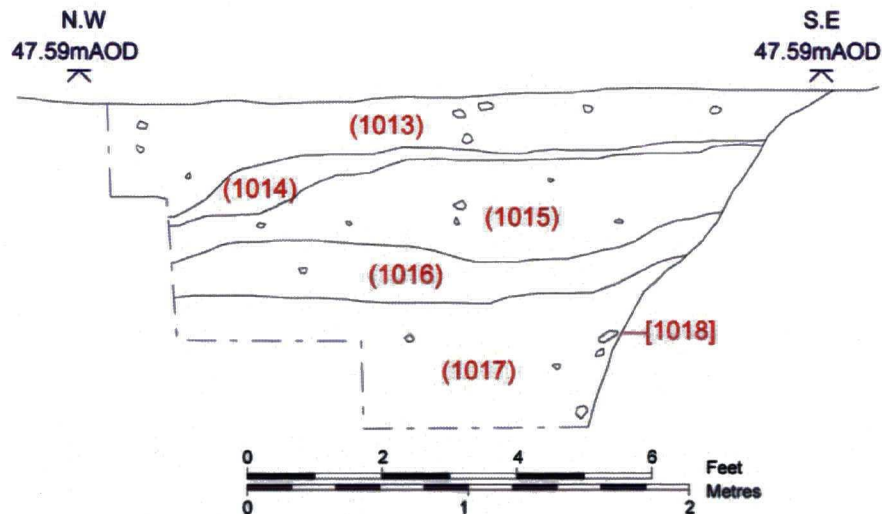


Figure 4. Southwest facing section of ditch [1018].

## 5.2 Trench 2.

Trench 2 (Plate 6) was located to the south of Trench 1. It measured 7.40m N-S and 7.20m E-W. It was wider in the east than the west and its southern edge was marked by the existing boundary wall (See Figure 5). It was machined to depth of 0.84m BGL placing the base at 47.66m AOD.

The lowest deposit encountered within the trench was the natural pale reddish brown clay (2009) which was present throughout. It had been cut by an E-W orientated linear (Plate 7) feature [2008]. It was seen to extend beyond the southern trench/site boundary. Its northern edge (See Figure 6) comprised of a gently undulating slope with gradual upper and lower slope breaks. It was quite shallow with an overall depth of just 0.60m and 1.60m of its width were present within the trench. It was filled initially by (2007) 0.20m of firm reddish brown slightly silty clay. This material was sealed by an upper fill (2006) consisting of 0.42m of compact dark reddish brown sandy clay with frequent well sorted fragments of sandstone. Pottery recovered from it was dated to the alter 13<sup>th</sup> century, providing the earliest possible date for the deposition of the fill.

The 2006 evaluation trench [2002] was visible in the south-eastern corner of the trench. To the south west a modern wall cut [2005] was visible containing foundation material (2004). Sealing these features were the truncated remains of a modern structure (2003) and successive dumping (2001) and topsoil (2000).

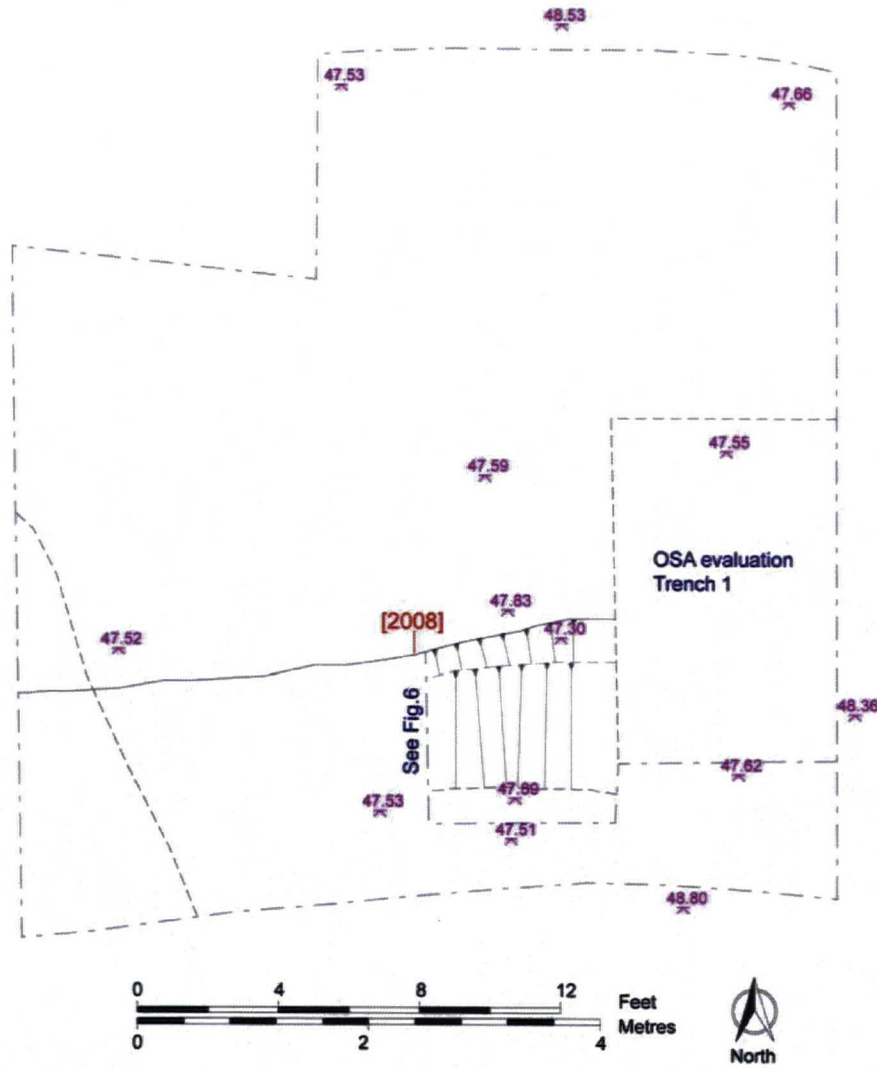


Figure 5. Plan of Trench 2.

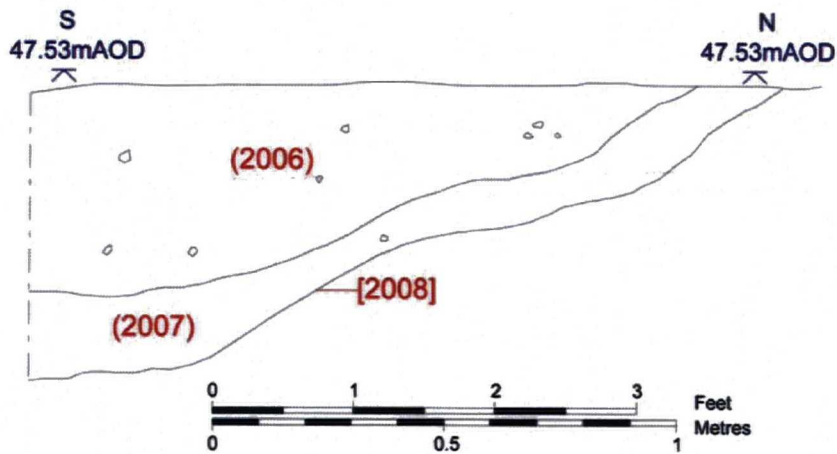


Figure 6. East facing section of [2008].

### **5.3 Trench 3.**

Trench 3 was located east of trench 1 and north of Trench 2. It measured 6.55m N-S and 3.30m E-W. It was machined to a depth of 1.14m BGL. Within the base of the trench the earliest visible deposit was the natural clay (3001). This was cut in the north-western corner of the trench by the continuation of linear [1018]. The location and extent of the feature within the trench were such that it was not excavated.



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## 6.0 Discussion and Conclusions.

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The earliest feature encountered within trench 1 [1018] was identified as the defensive ditch of the Newborough of the town. The Newborough of the town of Scarborough was founded in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though the actual defences themselves are probably of a thirteenth century date. The line of the Newborough defensive ditches runs from the top of Blenheim Street to the north before turning westwards and running along Castle Road. The line projected by Pearson (Pearson T, *The Archaeology of Medieval Scarborough*, Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society, Research Report 12, 2005, pg.20, Figure 9) shows the ditch running along the south side of the road toward the Auborough Gate. The large linear seen in trench 1 would now suggest, that at least in part, the defensive ditch was sited along the north side of the road. The feature continued beyond trench 1 into trench 3 heading north east where it would meet with the line of the Oldborough defensive wall thought to run northwards up the west side of Tollergate and along what is now Blenheim Street.

The nature of the various fills of [1018] provide clues to the life of the ditch. The lowest fill (1017) was quite fine grained and would seem to suggest the gradual silting of the feature included material gently eroded from the banks over time. This was sealed by a coarser deposit (1016) which resembled the natural into which the feature was cut, possibly indicating a more intensive phase of the erosion of the features sides. The deposit sealing this (1015) seemed to represent a phase of deliberate backfilling during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After remaining open for a period of time the ditch was finally backfilled with (1014). The tip of this material toward the northern edge of the slot may indicate that the slot has revealed approximately half the overall width of the feature, with the deposit dipping toward the centre. If so this would suggest an overall width of at least 6.50m.

The remaining features in trench 1 are of a much more recent phase of activity, perhaps the postholes and walls were related to one another, probably indicating the presence of an out building and a fence line.

The earliest feature within trench 2 was ditch [2008]. This ran along the southern edge of the trench at a slight angle which meant it mirrored the line of Castle Road rather than the existing property boundary. Whilst the cut may represent terracing of the natural slope it would seem more likely that it represents an earlier property boundary. Such ditches are a common feature of the built up medieval environment preventing encroaching development.

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## 7.0 Bibliography.

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On-Site Archaeology. 2007. Blenheim Street, Scarborough, Archaeological Assessment of Building Design.

## 8.0 Appendix 1 ~ List of Contexts.

Context no.	Description	Thickness	Extent
<i>Trench 1</i>			
1000	Topsoil	0.10m	Tr
1001	Modern dump layers		Tr
1002	Fill of [1004]		
1003	E-W wall		
1004	Cut for E-W wall		
1005	Fill of [1007]		
1006	N-S wall		
1007	Cut for N-S wall		
1008	Natural clay	Un-ex	Tr
1009	Fill of posthole	0.15m	0.40m
1010	Posthole	0.15m	0.40m
1011	Modern posthole		
1012	Posthole		
1013	Ditch backfill	0.65m	Tr
1014	Ditch silting	0.15m	Tr
1015	Ditch backfill	0.46m	Tr
1016	Ditch silting	0.23m	Tr
1017	Ditch silting	0.60m	Tr
1018	Ditch cut	1.50m+	Tr
<i>Trench 2</i>			
2000	Topsoil		
2001	Modern dumping		
2002	Cut of evaluation trench		3m
2003	Building truncation		
2004	Foundation		
2005	Wall cut		
2006	Ditch fill	0.42m	Tr
2007	Ditch fill	0.20m	Tr
2008	Ditch cut	0.62m	Tr
2009	Natural clay	Un-ex	Tr

## 9.0 Appendix 2 ~ Archive Index.

### 9.1 Drawing Register.

Drawing no.	Description	Scale	Initials	Date
1	Tr 1 final plan	1:50	TPR	09/11/07
2	Section [1018]	1:20	JS	09/11/07
3	Tr 2 final plan	1:50	TPR	14/11/07
4	Section [2008]	1:10	JS	14/11/07



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## 10.0 Appendix 3 ~ Finds Assessment Report.

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*Alan Vince & Kate Steane.*

### **10.1 Summary.**

A small collection of finds from an archaeological excavation at Blenheim Street, Scarborough, undertaken by On-Site Archaeology Ltd, was submitted to the authors for identification and assessment.

The finds are mostly of medieval date but include 17<sup>th</sup>-century clay tobacco pipes.

### **10.2 Description.**

#### *10.2.1 Ceramic Building Material.*

A single fragment of flat roof tile was recorded from context 1015.

#### *10.2.2 Clay Tobacco Pipe.*

Four fragments of clay tobacco pipe representing two pipes were recorded from context 1015. In both cases the pipes were heeled but had fragmentary bowls. They could be dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century by their stem bore diameters.

#### *10.2.3 Copper Alloy.*

A roughly square sheet of copper alloy with seven nail holes was recorded from context 1015. It was probably used as a binding strip, for example on a composite wooden object.

#### *10.2.4 Pottery.*

Twenty-nine sherds of pottery were recorded. All could be dated to the medieval period. The earliest types present were probably sherds of Staxton-type (STAX) ware jars and York Glazed ware (YORK) jars and a jug.

Scarborough ware (SCAR) was represented by eight jug sherds but a further seven sherds appeared to be of similar fabric but were unfamiliar either in texture, firing or form. These may be examples of Scarborough products not produced for export (SCAR?). The sherds include two jugs, four jars and a bowl.

Seven sherds of Brandsby-type ware (BRAN) and a sherd of Humberware (HUM), all jugs, were recorded. Both of these wares were current in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and probably date to this period here although the Brandsby industry was certainly in existence in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, since this is the date of the kiln excavated by Jean Le Patourel.

### ***10.3 Assessment.***

The dating of the medieval pottery industry in Scarborough has been disputed since the 1970s but it is highly likely that it actually dates in the main to the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. If this is correct, then the pottery at Blenheim Street ranges in date from the late 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries through to the later 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but with a concentration in the later 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. If so, then the earliest possible date for the deposition of contexts 1013 and 2006 would be the later 13<sup>th</sup> century. Context 1015 contains mostly medieval finds but with two clay tobacco pipes.

The flat roof tile and the copper alloy sheet are not closely datable and both come from the same context as the two 17<sup>th</sup> century clay tobacco pipes.

### ***10.4 Further Work.***

No further work is recommended.

### ***10.5 Retention.***

Since all the finds are stratified they should be retained for future re-examination.

**10.6 Appendix A.**

Context	class	Cname	Description	Form	Part	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Condition	Use
1013	POTTERY	SCAR		JUG	BS	2	2	9		
1015	CBM	MTIL		FLAT	BS	1	1	48		
1015	COPP	COPP	ROUGH SQUARE OF SHEET COPPER WITH 7 NAIL HOLES	BINDING PIECE	BS	1	1	3		
1015	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY	17TH CENTURY BORE	CLAYPIPE	STEM;HEEL;BOWL	3	1	8		
1015	PIPECLAY	PIPECLAY	17TH CENTURY BORE	CLAYPIPE	STEM;HEEL	1	1	4		
1015	POTTERY	SCAR?		JUG	BS	2	2	10		
1015	POTTERY	BRAN		JUG	BS	7	7	75		
1015	POTTERY	YORK		JAR	BS	1	1	2		
1015	POTTERY	YORK		JAR	BS	1	1	9		SOOTED EXT
1015	POTTERY	YORK	VERT THUMBED STRIP	JUG	BS	1	1	10		
1015	POTTERY	HUM	THUMBED RIM	JUG	R	1	1	14		
1015	POTTERY	SCAR	ROD HANDLE, SQUARED 13 ACROSS	JUG	H	1	1	6		
1015	POTTERY	SCAR?		JAR	BS	3	2	4		
1015	POTTERY	SCAR?		JAR	BS	1	1	7		WHITE DEP INT
1015	POTTERY	SCAR?		BOWL	BS	1	1	1		
1015	POTTERY	SCAR		JUG	BS	1	1	2		
2006	POTTERY	SCAR	IRON RICH VERT STRIP	JUG	BS	1	1	7		
2006	POTTERY	STAXT		JAR	BS	2	2	9		
2006	POTTERY	YORK		JAR	BS	1	1	5		
2006	POTTERY	SCAR		JUG	BS	2	1	2		
2006	POTTERY	SCAR	CORDON	JUG	BS	1	1	1		WHITE DEP INT



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## 11.0 Appendix 4 ~ The Plates.

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*Plate 1. Trench 1 during clean up.*



*Plate 2. Trench 1 pre-excitation. (Scale of 2 x 1m).*





*Plate 3. Ditch [1018], looking northeast. (Scale of 1m).*



*Plate 4. Ditch [1018] looking north. (Scale of 2 x 1m).*





*Plate 5. Ditch [1018], looking due south during excavation.*



*Plate 6. Trench 2 showing Trench 1 from the 2006 excavation. (Scale of 2 x 1m).*



*Plate 7. Ditch [2008] looking west. (Scale of 1m).*