

EXCAVATIONS AT 10/10A ST. SEPULCHRE ST.

SCARBOROUGH

by

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SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Interim Report 6.

EXCAVATIONS AT 10/10A ST. SEPULCHRE STREET, SCARBOROUGH.

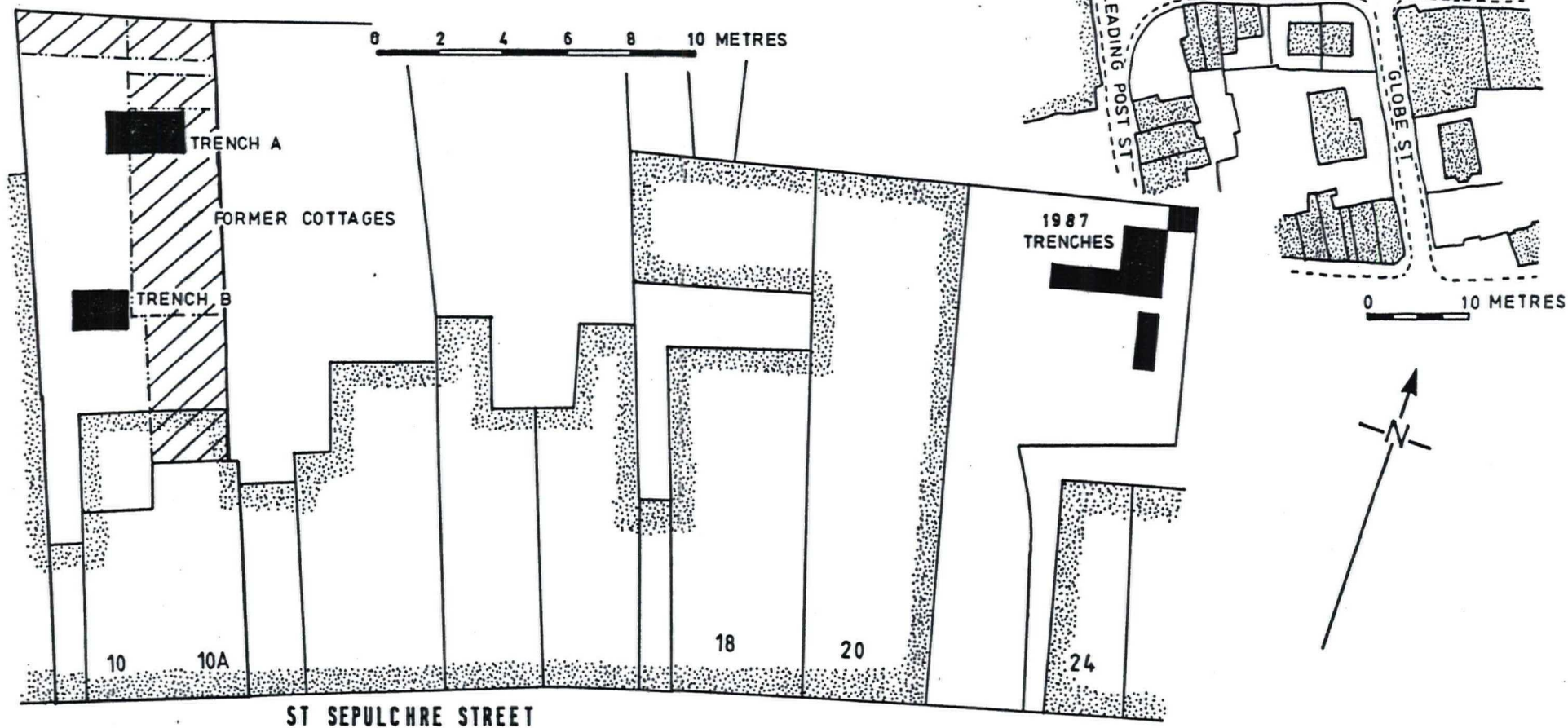
Introduction.

During the long weekend of 29th April - 1st May 1989, the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society excavated two trenches in the rear garden of this property. These excavations were made possible by building works being carried out at the property, and were carried out at the request of the owner.

No. 10/10A ST. Sepulchre Street is on the north side of the road (Fig. 1). It is a late 18th/early 19th century town house¹ which was divided into two cottages in 1906. Access to the back garden is by means of a narrow covered passage through the west side of the building, and until relatively recently this gave access to a narrow yard or lane known as Tinsley's Yard fronting a terrace of three small cottages. It was hoped that the excavations would cast some light on the date of building of these cottages and thus give some indication of the period during which pressure on the land in the old town was such as to necessitate the infilling of plots behind more substantial houses. Cossins' map of 1725² shows the presence of an orchard in the back garden, but the accurate representation of individual properties on this map must be doubtful. Certainly by the time of Wood's map of 1828³, the cottages were in existence.

Additionally, the excavation was seen as an adjunct to the work carried out by the Society at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street, Scarborough in July 1987⁴ where it was hoped to establish the relationship between the Franciscan Friary precinct wall, the alignment of St. Sepulchre Street and the intervening buildings. The relationship between the present site and the trenches at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street is shown on Fig. 1.

10-10A St. Sepulchre Street. FIG.1
Site and location plans—showing relationship
with 18-22 St Sepulchre Street excavations



Archaeology.

Two trenches were excavated (Fig. 1.). Trench B, measuring 2.0 metres by 1.5 metres and located 3.4 metres away from the house was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.5 metres. In this trench an area of severe, relatively modern disturbance was encountered down to the full depth. This disturbance was possibly associated with earlier building works at the house and no further archaeological interpretations can be gleaned from this aspect of the excavation.

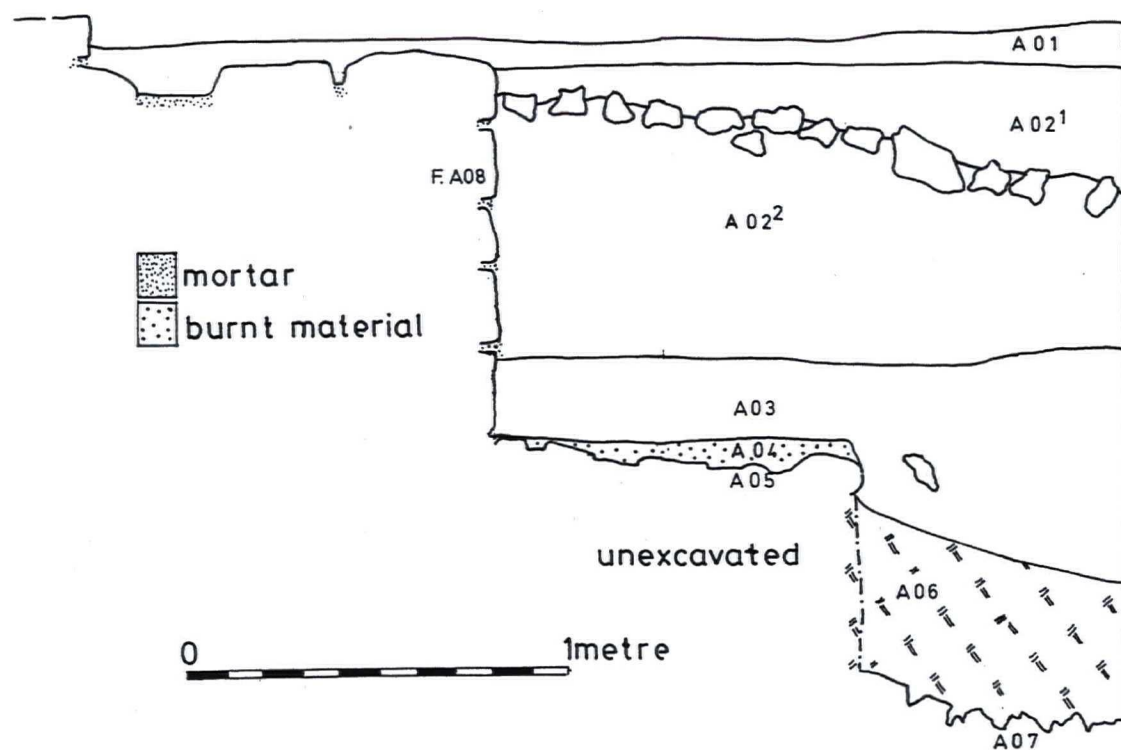
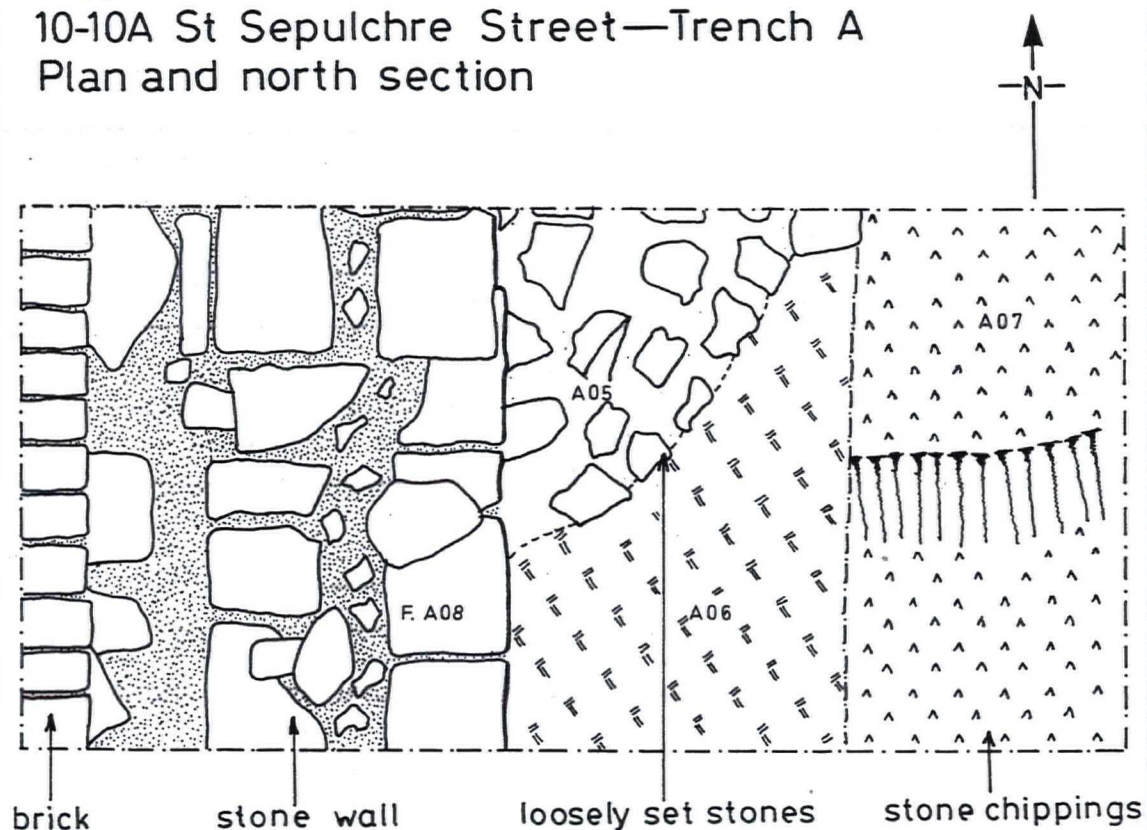
Trench A, measuring 2.9 metres by 1.4 metres was located towards the extreme northern end of the garden and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.8 metres. The following phases were recognised (Fig. 2):

Phase 1 (A07) - a layer of stone chippings intermixed with mortar flecks and lumps in a sandy/clay matrix. This material was recognised as being similar to the phase 2 layer encountered at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street in 1987⁵ where it was concluded that such a deposit could be derived from either the construction or demolition of a mortar bonded stone structure. At 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street it was felt that the latter was the more likely, due to the presence of green glazed floor tiles with mortar adhering to them. No such tiles were encountered at the present site, however.

Phase 2 (A06) - is also directly comparable with 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street, being a dense, compacted green/grey layer with high humus content. No artefacts were recovered and as at 18-22 it probably means the site was abandoned to natural vegetation following the demolition episode in Phase 1.

Phase 3 (F. A08) - apparently built directly off the compacted

FIG.2
10-10A St Sepulchre Street—Trench A
Plan and north section



green/grey layer was a massive stone wall of coursed, generally squared block work set in mortar (Fig. 3), the course heights varying between 150mm and 200mm. A small fragment of plaster survived on the face. This wall appeared to be the outer leaf of a very much thicker rubble-filled wall, but as it was considered neither possible nor desirable to remove this structure its true founding material, its full width, its date and use remain tentative. It is almost certain, however, that a wall of this size and quality of construction would not have originally been built as part of the modestly sized cottages, although it is likely that the wall would be used as a foundation course for the later buildings.

Phase 4 (A05) - consisted of a series of stones partially cut into and partially loosely set into the green/grey compacted layer and forming a roughly semi-circular shape against the stone wall. These stones were topped by a dark ashy layer (A04) to a maximum thickness of 300mm and this may represent a hearth butting up against the wall, although no burning was apparent on the masonry itself.

Phase 5 (A03) - a thick deposit of mid-brown soil incorporating patches of charcoal was dumped on top of the humus and hearth. This layer yielded a small amount of predominantly (but not entirely) medieval pottery, i.e. 37 sherds out of 39, and appears to represent a casual dumping of rubbish against the stone wall.

Phase 6 (A02² and A02¹) - consisted of an extremely thick layer of light brown soil containing a substantial quantity of pottery and butchered bone. The upper layer (sub-referenced A02¹) is the same material separated from the lower stratum by a

FIG. 3
10-10A St. Sepulchre Street Trench A
Elevation to cross wall

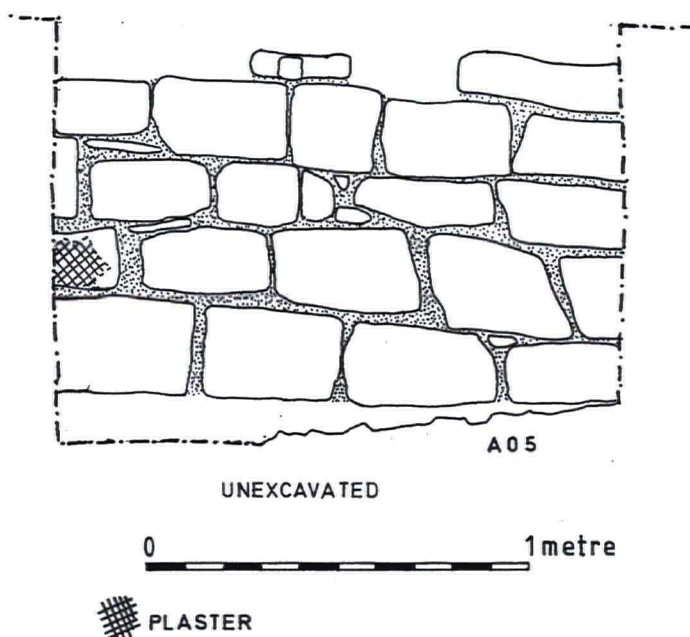
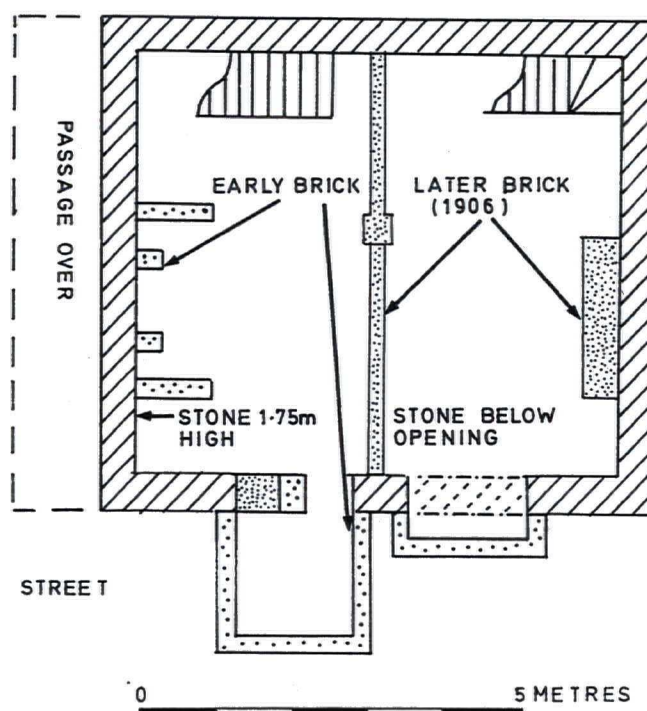


FIG. 4
10-10A St. Sepulchre Street
Cellar survey



scatter of stones. Devoid of pottery, this upper layer appears to represent a very slightly later phase of the same sequence of dumping which seems to have taken place from the west. A preliminary examination of the pottery suggests an 18th century date and the presence of fragments of limestone roof tile indicates that this phase was associated with the demolition of a building and levelling of the site, possibly as a preliminary to the erection of the cottages.

Phase 7 - the uppermost layer (A01) represents the relatively recent accumulation of soil.

Cellar Survey(Fig.4).

As part of the assessment of the site, the cellars of Nos. 10 and 10A were investigated.

The four main walls were constructed in squared coursed stone. The stone walls rise to the full height of the cellar i.e. 1.75 metres, the junction between the stonework and the brickwork of the house above lying at ground floor joist level. The appearance of the cellar stonework bears some resemblance to the wall found in Trench A and as in the case of that structure the course heights varied between 150mm and 200mm. Brickwork had been inserted in two phases.

i) The early phase consists of the west chimney breast and two areas excavated under the street, one a 'coal hole' and the other possibly the foundations to a bay window which existed here. These sections seem to have been cut through the stonework.

ii) The later phase was part of the alterations of 1906, principally the cross wall and a chimney breast.

The cellar does not extend below the passage and it is suggested that this, along with the sections cut through under

the street, indicate that this part of the structure pre-existed the present house.

There are strong similarities between this cellar construction and that surveyed at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street⁶.

Discussion.

It has already been noted that there are similarities between Trench A and the results of the 1987 excavation at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street some 30 metres to the east. At both sites an horizon of stone chippings and mortar fragments was found overlaid by a compact layer of humic soil devoid of artefacts which in turn was buried by dumps of earth in the 17th or 18th centuries. It was concluded that the 1987 trench must have been located within the precinct of the medieval Franciscan Friary which occupied $3\frac{1}{4}$ acres of land between St. Sepulchre Street and Longwestgate. The demolition of buildings following the dissolution of the Friary in 1536 was thought to be the most likely derivation of the stone chippings and broken floor tiles encountered in 1987 and a similar explanation is likely for the layer of mortar and stone fragments (A07) found in Trench A. This would mean that the Friary's boundary wall must have crossed the present site somewhere to the south of Trench A. As in 1987, the overlying humic soil (A06) points to the abandonment of the area following the dissolution until the yard at the rear of 10/10A St. Sepulchre Street (as at 18-22 St. Sepulchre Street) was extended into the former Friary grounds in the 18th century. This episode is represented by deposits A02¹, A02² and A03 dumped to raise the ground to the same level as the street.

The one major difference between Trench A and the 1987 excavation is that nothing was found in 1987 to compare with the wall A08 either in size or date. This wall was built after

the dissolution of the friary since it overlies the demolition layer A07 and before the 18th century because the levelling deposits at that time largely buried the wall. An isolated fragment of wall plaster adhering to one of the stones suggests that the stones were probably re-used from an earlier structure, presumably one of the friary buildings. As yet one can only speculate as to the function of the wall. Its massive construction and its association with a semi-circular hearth suggest it was part of a building rather than a simple boundary wall, and its apparent similarity to the stone cellar walls at 10/10A St. Sepulchre Street could point to their being contemporary. One can envisage that the sudden availability of building stone following the dereliction and destruction of the friary must have occasioned much new building along St. Sepulchre Street in the latter half of the 16th century.

Little was discovered about the row of cottages known as Tinsley's Yard beyond that they must have been constructed some time after the 18th century levelling episode. The brick wall of one cottage rested on wall A08 but this does not imply that the cottages were in any way successors to the earlier stone building, but rather that the cottage builders simply made use of an existing solid foundation.

Acknowledgments.

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References.

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4. Hall, C. and Pearson, T., '18-22 St. Sepulchre Street. An Archaeological Evaluation', 1988.
5. Hall, C. and Pearson, T., Op. cit.
6. Hall, C. and Pearson, T., Op. cit.