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Archaeological Watching Brief
and
Investigations

New Rugby Ground
Old Malton

COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT		
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New Rugby Ground, Old Malton Archaeological Watching Brief and Investigations

Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Plate List	3
Introduction	5
Archaeology and History of the Site	6
Archaeological Potential	8
Impact of Development	9
Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation Methodology	10
Results of Excavation	12
Roman Road	12
Building 1	15
Building 2	16
Building 3	23
Area north-east of Building 3	23
Conclusions	25
Bibliography	27
Appendices	
I. Context Listing	28
II. Finds Catalogue	32
III. Cremations	57
IV. Archive Listing	59
V. Geophysical Survey Report	70

Figure List

	Page
1. Site Location Plan.	4
2. Location plan of buildings and archaeological features.	7
3. Plan of the Roman Road, ditch segments 37, 48, 50, 52 and 54, and archaeological features 32 and 63.	11
4. Plan of Building 1 and cremations 121, 128, 133, 156 and 171.	13
5. Plan of Building 1 and excavated features 81, 96, 145, 150, 151, 152, 172, 178, 188, 202 and 204.	14
6. Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 180.	17
7. Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 186.	18
8. Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177, 191, 192 and 193.	19
9. Plan of Building 2 and features 70, 79, 98, 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 177 and 191.	20
10. Plan of Building 3.	22
11. Plan of area north-east of Building 3 and features 72, 74, 76, 82, 86, 88, 90, 105, 115 and 116.	24

Plate List

Page

- | | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1. | General View of Building 1, facing south-east. | 73 |
| 2. | Building 1, entrance and east wall, facing west-south-west. | 73 |
| 3. | General view of Buildings 1 and 2, facing south-east. | 74 |
| 4. | General view of Building 3, facing south-east. | 74 |
| 5. | General view of Roman Road, facing east. | 75 |
| 6. | View of ditch segments, cuts 178 and 188, facing north-west. | 75 |
| 7. | View of cremated bone , context 117, and pottery vessel, context 18, facing north. | 76 |
| 8. | View of cremated bone , context 154, and pottery vessel, context 55, facing north. | 76 |
| 9. | Copper alloy brooch in situ. | 77 |
| 10. | Silver and gold belt fitting in situ. | 77 |
| 11. | Cremation pottery vessel, context 155. | 78 |
| 12. | Cremation pottery vessel, context 118. | 78 |
| 13. | Cremation pottery vessel, context 170. | 79 |
| 14. | Cremation pottery vessel, context 127. | 79 |

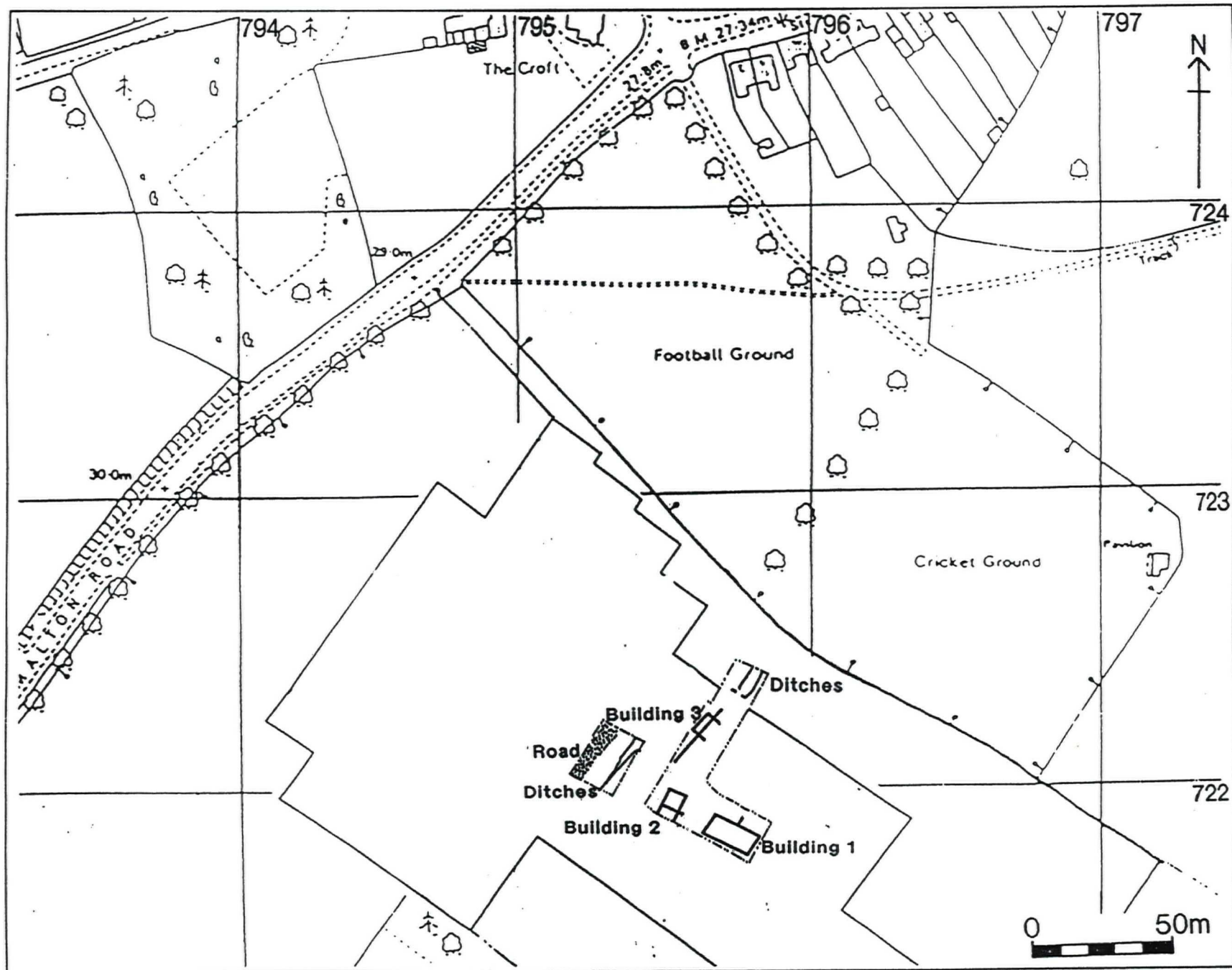


Figure 1.
Site Location Plan.

Introduction

The site is situated in an area of arable land to the south-east of Old Malton Road, Malton Parish, North Yorkshire, SE 796 722 (Fig. 1). The excavations took place in advance of a proposed development to create a new Rugby Ground.

The site lies on a south-east facing slope, which dips downwards to an artificial watercourse known as The Cut, with the River Derwent lying beyond. The elevation of the site drops from c. 25m AOD at the north-west to c. 21m AOD at the south-east.

The underlying geology consists of Coralline Oolitic limestone of the Middle Lias (OS 1960), with soils of the Elmton 2 Association (SSEW). It is likely that the geology of the extreme south-east of the site, where the slope levels out, consists of River Alluvium with overlying soils of the Fladbury 3 Association (*ibid*).

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Archaeology and History of the Site

Prehistoric activity in the environs of the site is suggested by the presence of a ploughed-down round barrow in The Gannock, c. 140m east of the site at SE 7975 7229 (Robinson, no. 12). Three further barrows occurred to the south-east of the Roman fort, c. 500m south-west of the site, centred at SE 793 717 (Robinson, nos. 21-3).

The site lies approximately 500m east of the Roman fort and civilian settlement of *Derventio*, at SE 7912 7172, the subject of a number of excavations this century (Corder 1930, Mitchelson 1964 and Wenham 1974). Roman remains are also known to exist in between the fort/civilian settlement and the development area. Two Roman coins were found behind Quarry Bank in 1951, c. 400m south-west of the site (Robinson, no. 38). Wenham implies the existence of Roman buildings in an area c.50-75m north of the fort (Wenham, Fig. 13), and also recorded the presence of Romano-British 'occupation' debris immediately east of the former Malton-Thirsk railway line. Indeed, such debris, in the form of pot sherds, animal bone and marine shells is currently visible over a large area centred at SE 7925 7183. In addition, a Romano-British feature has been recently observed and recorded in a service trench at SE 7920 7202, c. 300m south-east of the site (Finney, forthcoming). A Romano-British bronze bust was found in The Gannock, c.150-200m east of the site (Robinson, no. 42).

An Anglian presence in the vicinity of the site is suggested by the occurrence of an Anglo-Saxon brooch from the same source as the Romano-British bust above (*ibid*).

In the medieval period, the site apparently existed as open ground between the village of Old Malton, with its Gilbertine Priory, and the Borough of New Malton, which was a walled town with a castle.

Such is the archaeological and historical background; the following two records are specific to the site.

A road is known to have issued from the eastern gate of the Roman fort, and to have proceeded to the area now occupied by the remains of Old Malton Priory (Robinson, no. 79), passing through the north-western part of the site, and through the Cricket ground/Football pitch to the north-east (Fig. 2). Robinson mentions the presence of a line of limestone rubble, representing this road, curving around the Cricket Ground along the 75' (23m) contour. This road is believed to join, or become, an extant south-west to north-east hollow-way situated behind 2-16 Town Street, Old Malton (SMR 1864.03.200) (Fig. 2).

The cropmark of a trapezoidal enclosure (SMR 1979) appears on an aerial photograph (CUAC SE 7971 BQR 014; NMR SF 966/043, 049), centred at SE 7947 7227. From a sketch plot of this cropmark (Fig. 2), it appears that the south-eastern part of this enclosure extends into the development area. The enclosure is aligned south-west to north-east with an approximate length of 70m, and a maximum width, at the north-east end, of 45m. An internal division occurs approximately midway along the northern ditch or boundary of the feature, extending c. 25m towards, but not meeting, the southern ditch or boundary. A large pit-like anomaly occurs in the north-western sector of the enclosure (Fig. 2).

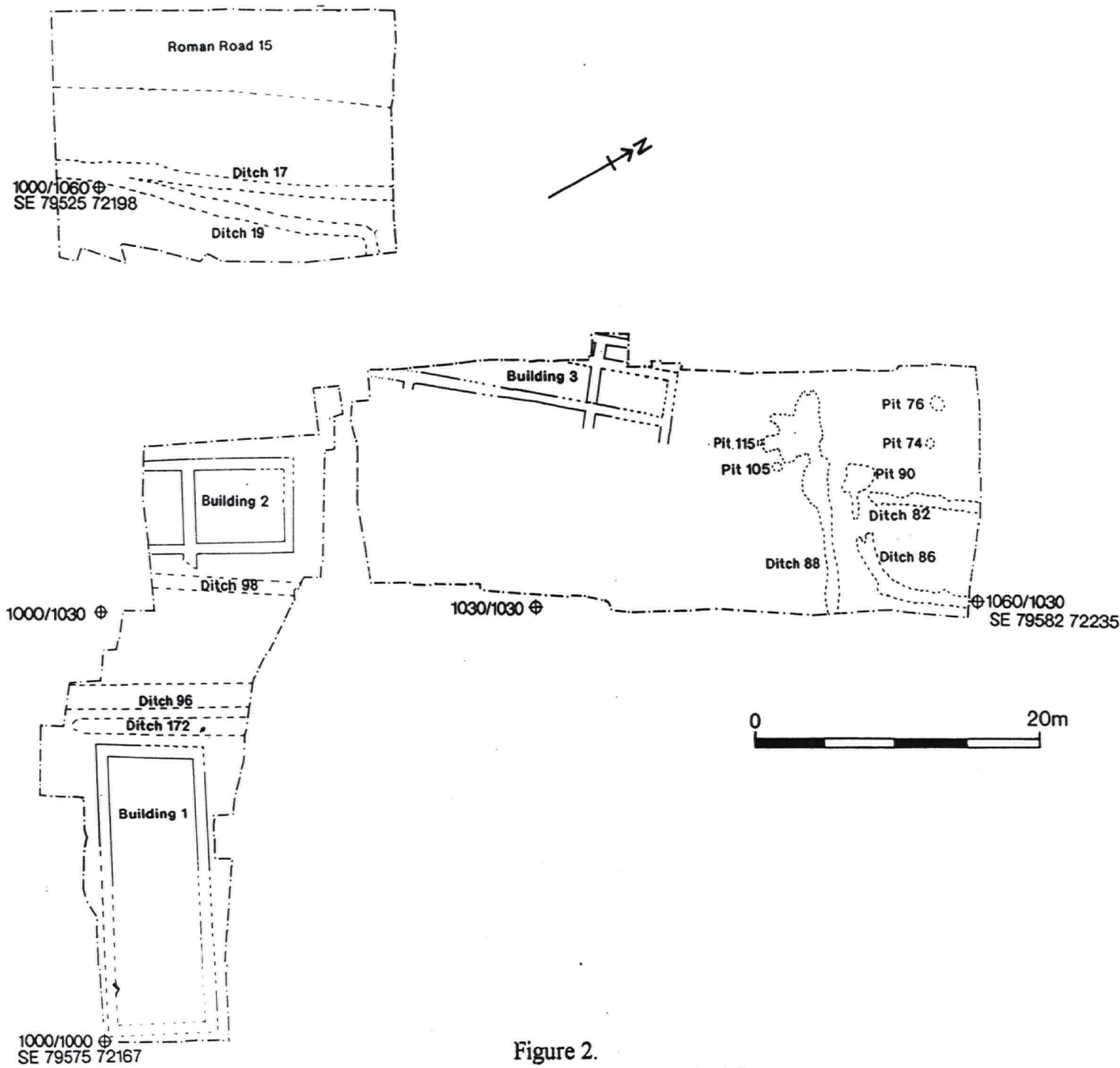


Figure 2.
Location plan of buildings and archaeological features.

Archaeological Potential

The trapezoidal enclosure described above is of clear archaeological significance. A natural origin for this feature can be discounted, because the limestone bed-rock of the site is not conducive to the formation of enclosure-like features, which were created in gravel sub-soils by peri-glacial ice-cracking elsewhere in Ryedale (e.g. SMR 3407.02.210 in Settrington parish).

Essentially, the enclosure is undated. The axis of the enclosure approximates to the line of the road which passes to the south of it. However, this need not imply contemporaneity, as this alignment represents the contours of the hillside. It may be relevant to mention an enclosure of similar size at Langton Road, Norton (Robinson, no. 355), which has been interpreted as a Romano-British walled-cemetery, although similarity in form need not necessarily reflect a similarity in function.

The road that crosses the site to the south of the enclosure, would appear to be of Roman origin, for it issues from the gate of the Roman fort. However, for the road to be visible as a hollow-way at the north-east end of its course, suggests re-use in medieval times at that location at least; but medieval use of the road might be anticipated if the ramparts of the Roman fort were re-used to enclose the bailey of the medieval castle, as Robinson suggests (Robinson, 13).

An aspect of Roman roads is that they often formed the focus for human burials, which were forbidden by law to be carried out within the boundaries of settlements. The walled cemetery at Langton Road, Norton, is an example of an organised burial ground adjacent to a Roman road, being situated alongside the road from *Derventio* to York. Therefore, there is the possibility that Roman burials may be present on the site, associated with the Roman Road.

Impact of the Development

The following processes involved with the development of the site could be identified as potentially disturbing or destroying archaeological remains:

- (a) the scarping of the slope to create a relatively horizontal surface for the three new Rugby pitches; this will be most severe at the north-west end of the site (unfortunately, the location of the trapezoidal enclosure and road).
- (b) The creation of vehicular access to the site; this will cut through or pass over the line of the road.
- (c) The erection of a clubhouse and stand.
- (d) The provision of drainage for the playing surfaces.
- (e) Services to the clubhouse, flood-lights etc.

Archaeological Watching Brief and Excavation Methods

Under PPG16 a staged archaeological evaluation was instigated which consisted of a desktop study and a geophysical survey. The desktop study revealed a cropmark, the probably route of the Roman Road and the potential for significant archaeological remains.

The geophysical survey (Appendix V) did not reveal any significant archaeology and an archaeological watching brief was placed on the site, instead of the suggested trial trenching.

The topsoil was removed to reveal a subsoil clear of any archaeological features. Removal of the subsoil produced a cremation, which caused all work to be halted and a team of archaeologists came to assess the potential of the site. It soon became apparent that the box scraping had begun to reveal and damage several buildings.

The Archaeology Section at North Yorkshire County Council was contacted and an emergency plan of works was advised. Buildings which had been revealed by the box scraping were to be hand cleaned and assessed for damage. The area of the future club house was to be stripped to reveal the extent of the archaeology and fully excavated in advance of development.

Plans were drawn at 1:20 or 1:10 where necessary, section were drawn at 1:10. A photographic record was taken in colour transparency and monochrome and written record was maintained under the continuous recording system. A Burial Licence was obtained from the Home Office to enable the lifting of any inhumations or cremations revealed during the excavation.

Nighthawks raided the site, but fortunately the police had been alerted and prevented them from doing much damage to the site. English Heritage suggested a metal detecting survey, which was undertaken by A.L. Pacitto. The survey not only secured the site, but located a number of interesting finds including a silver and gilt belt fitting (Caligula), now at the British Museum for analysis, an enamelled brooch and several pieces of silver and bronze jewellery.