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**YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST  
for Excavation and Research Ltd.**

**PROJECT REPORT 1993.5003**

**LOCATION: Rear of 14 High St. Knaresborough**

**GRID REF: SE 35195701**

**CLIENT: APMA**

On 12th May 1993 York Archaeological Trust undertook a watching brief at the rear of 14 High Street, Knaresborough. A planning condition required the implementation of an approved scheme of archaeological work in advance of development. To allow such a scheme to be drawn up observations took place of a trial trench required for engineering purposes. This was positioned close to the supposed line of the medieval town dyke.

The town dyke is believed to have been an earthen bank which enclosed the medieval borough of Knaresborough and its position is shown on an early 17th century map of the borough. Its supposed line has been traced by the rise and fall in ground level with the highest part of the bank being at the top of Berry's Passage off High Street. There is some documentary evidence for its existence with such references as "with garth or garden in the town dyke".

The medieval borough of Knaresborough was first mentioned in 1169 in a reference to burgesses. Though designated a borough in 1310 it was never an incorporated borough and remained under the control of the Honour Court. The exact date of the creation of the town dyke is unknown but it was probably constructed in the 13th or 14th century.

The site at the rear of 14 High Street slopes gently down towards the north-east away from the rear of the buildings on the street front. The trial trench was placed with one end as near to the top of the slope as possible, the other end half way down the slope. It was carefully machine dug and measured 7.40m long, 0.60m wide and had a maximum depth of 1.05m.

The uppermost c. 0.20m of deposit excavated from the trench comprised of broken bricks, cinders and other modern surfacing material.

Beneath this was a 0.60m thick homogeneous layer of reddish sandy clay containing many rounded medium sized cobbles of fine grained stone and red sandstone. This would appear to be an in-situ natural sub-soil since it showed no sign of layering. If it had been brought to the site and dumped or cast up from a ditch to create an embankment it would have shown some evidence of layering.

The layer beneath the sandy clay, at a depth of c.0.80m BGL, was a yellow silty sand containing rounded and angular cobbles and fragments of rotted sandstone, clearly a natural sub-soil. There was a fairly gradual transition between this layer and the one above, suggesting that both were naturally deposited. The interface between these two layers was parallel to the sloping surface and showed no evidence of levelling.

No evidence of archaeological activity on the site was seen below the top 0.20m of modern surfacing material.

## Conclusion

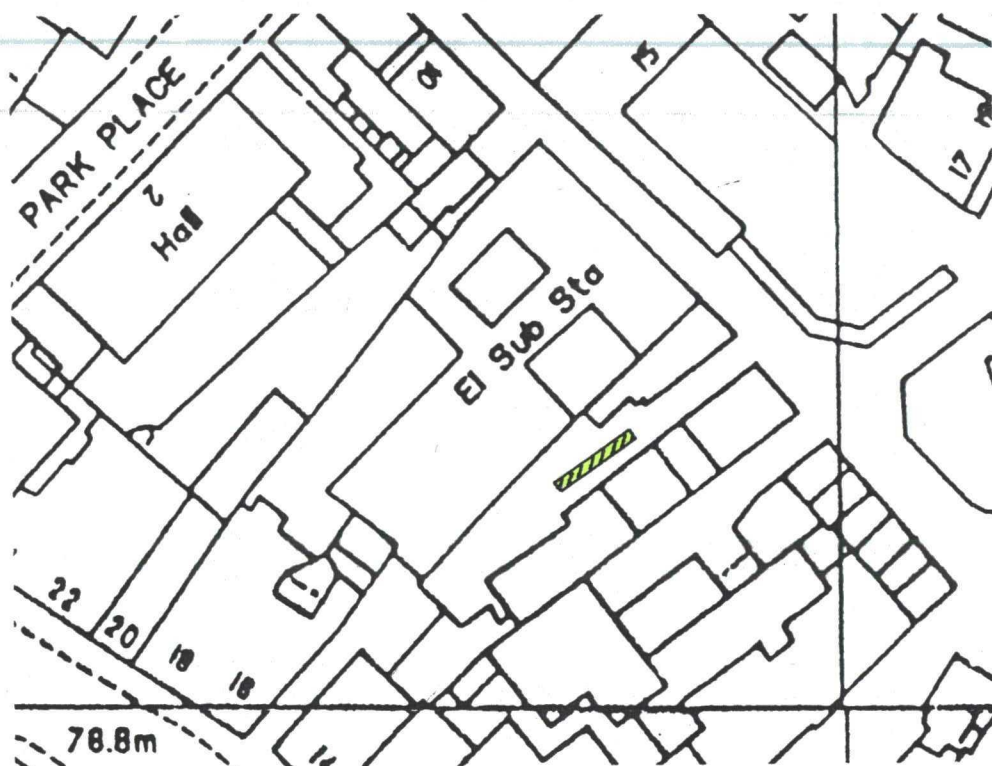
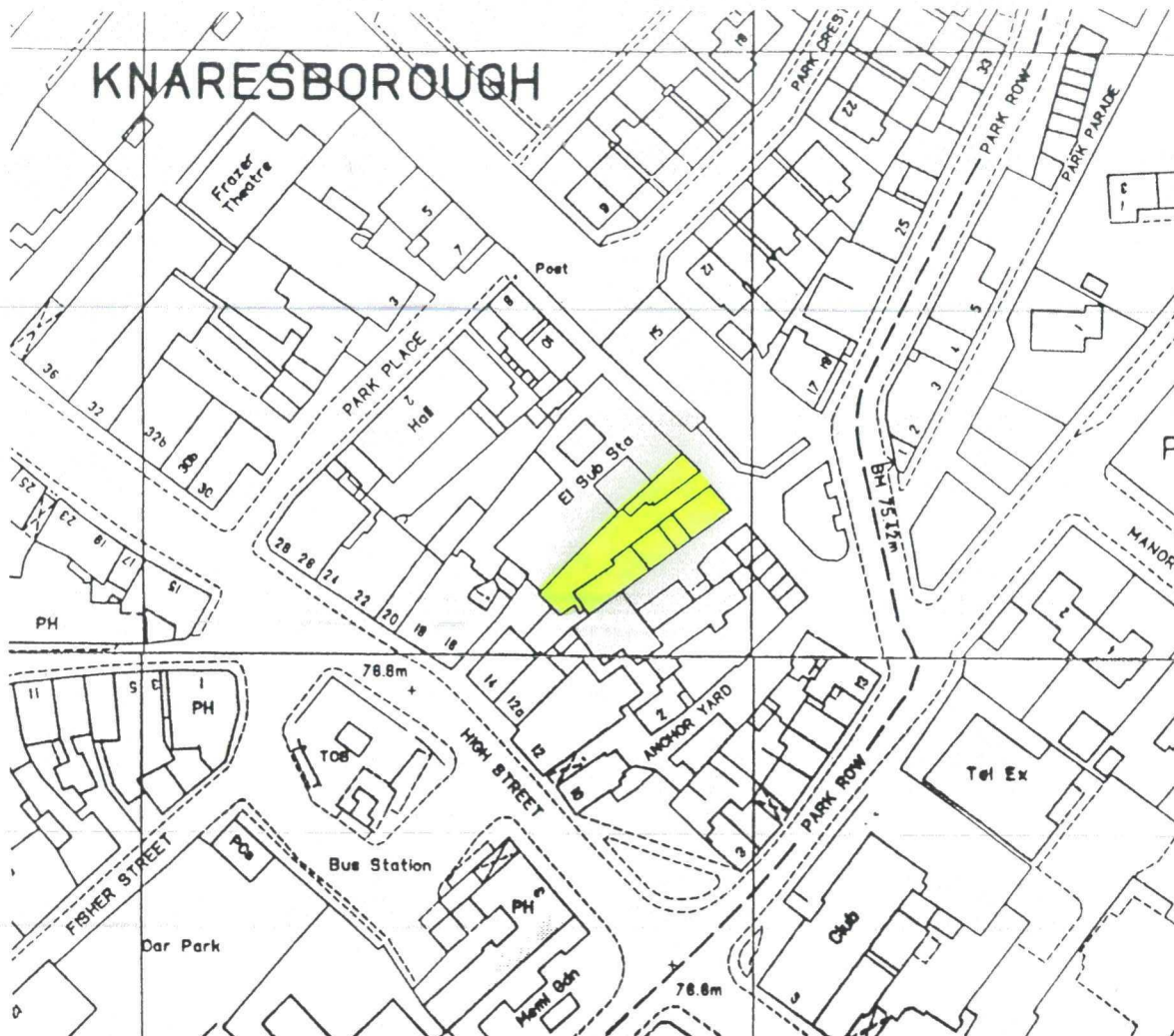
The material within the trial trench appears to be continuous layers of natural-subsoil showing no layering or levelling of interfaces which might be expected if this was part of an embankment. Apart from the top 0.20m of modern material no topsoil was found, nor was there any evidence of human activity (apart from intrusive modern drains). Unless extensive truncation and levelling has taken place there would seem to be no evidence in this trench for a dyke.

If further excavation to depths greater than 0.30m is required by the development it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief be carried out by a professional archaeologist.

York Archaeological Trust, 19th May 1993



# KNARESBOROUGH



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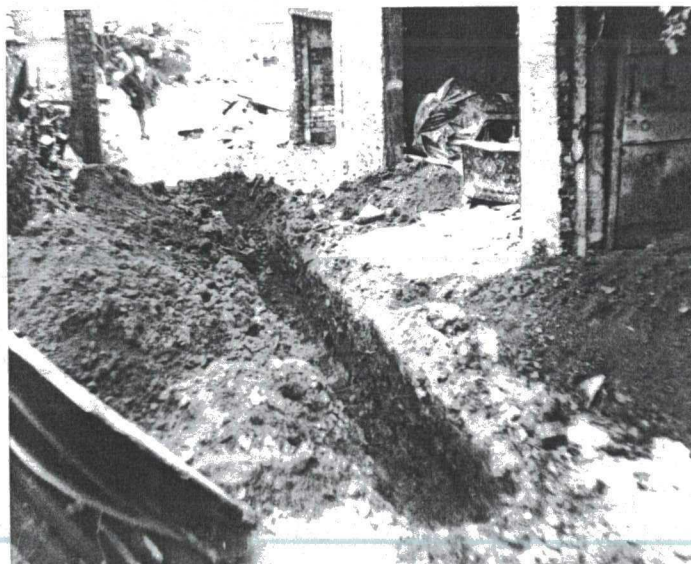
Rear of 14 High Street,  
Knaresborough

Site code: 1993.5003

NGR: SE 35195701

Scale top map: 1:1250

Scale bottom map: 1:625



View of trench looking north-east