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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF NO 4 NORTH ST
SCARBOROUGH

BY
TREVOR PEARSON

A REPORT
FOR
PROPERTY DEPARTMENT
EDINBURGH WOOLLEN MILL LTD

SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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(1) INTRODUCTION

This report assesses the possible nature of archaeological deposits beneath No 4 North St, Scarborough based primarily upon the results of excavations undertaken in the vicinity by the local archaeological society in 1973 during the construction of the Balmoral Centre (see fig 1). Only the approximate position of the trenches are shown on fig 1 as no detailed site plan has ever been published of these excavations. Cartographic and documentary evidence relevant to the site has also been incorporated in this study.

(2) HISTORICAL DISCUSSION

North St, connecting Castle Road to the north with Newborough to the south, is a relatively recent addition to the street pattern dating back no more than 150 years. Eighteenth and early nineteenth century maps of the town show a ropewalk along the approximate line of the modern street and a line of buildings across the present junction of North St with Newborough (see fig 2).

Earlier still, in the middle ages, this area was just inside the western defensive perimeter of the town marked by a ditch and rampart running between the North and South Bays. Newborough Gate, the principal entrance into the town through the defences, was less than 25 metres to the south of the present site and there is a strong possibility, discussed in detail below, that No 4 North Street straddles part of the town defences.

The defences are thought to have been constructed in the late 12th or early 13th centuries and continued in use for over six centuries. They were substantially refurbished in 1642 during the English Civil War when Scarborough Corporation agreed to spend £50 repairing the town gates, filling gaps in the defences and scouring the ditch.

The defences were again made ready in 1745 when Scarborough expected an attack from Scottish forces under Bonnie Prince Charlie. Although the threat never materialised, cannon were placed along the defences including a battery in the vicinity of the present site, north of Newborough Gate (see Fig 2a). The defences disappeared during the early nineteenth century as the town expanded westwards.

(3) ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

(A) ALIGNMENT OF THE TOWN DEFENCES

The 1973 excavations in North St made the important discovery that in 1745 a new ditch had been cut on a slightly different alignment to its medieval predecessor.

From the excavation it seems the medieval ditch probably ran parallel to the 12th century hospital of St Thomas and as projected

southwards on Fig 1, *the medieval ditch possihly runs to the west of No 4 North Street.*

In contrast the 1745 ditch was aligned slightly more to the east, perhaps to allow for enfilading fire from the newly constructed bastion north of St Thomas's Hospital. Both the maps of 1747 (fig 2a) and 1828 (fig 2b), though innacurrate by modern standards, show the ditch turning slightly eastwards after passing the hospital building. With this alignment, *the 1745 ditch could well cross the site of No 4 North Street,* as shown on fig 1.

(B) THE MEDIEVAL DEFENCES

The 1973 excavation only partially sectioned the medieval ditch but it was probably no more than 7-8 metres wide. It was described by the excavator as being originally at least 7 metres deep though was only 3 metres deep by the middle of the 17th century and was finally backfilled in 1745. Adjacent to St Thomas's Hospital the backfilled ditch contained mainly layers of stone and clay. Here a rampart of dumped clay was found between the ditch and outer wall of the hospital.

(C) THE 1745 DEFENCES

The 1745 ditch was only partially sectioned during the 1973 excavation, but from the 1747 map (fig 2a) it seems to have been about 7-8 metres wide. The excavation report makes no mention of the depth of the ditch, but if dug in haste in anticipation of an imminent attack, it is unlikely to approach the 7 metre depth of the medieval ditch.

The fill of the ditch seems from the report to have been mainly uncompacted layers of soil and building rubble. The 1973 excavation trench nearest to the present site, additionally encountered "black layers" which had sunk so badly that a metre thick clay raft was found capping the ditch. The property formerly occupying this particular site was apparantly subject to considerable settlement due to being partially built over the 1745 ditch.

A brick defence wall dating from 1745 was reported to have been found behind the ditch in the northernmost trench excavated in 1973 along with part of the bastion shown on the 1747 plan (fig 2a).

(D) OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

The 1973 excavation reportedly uncovered traces of Saxon occupation in the area consisting of pottery ranging in date from the 6th to the 10th centuries associated with possible structural remains.

The 12th century church dedicated to St Thomas and which was demolished In 1649 is known to have stood somewhere to the north of Newborough gate in the vicinity of the present site. The discovery of skeletons on several occasions on the east side of North St suggest the church was probably situated on the opposite side of the road to No 4 North St.

During the demolition of properties along North St in 1973, prior to the construction of the Balmoral Centre, several pieces of medieval building slab were discovered built into their foundations. In view of the supposed proximity of St Thomas's Church, re-used architectural fragments could well be incorporated in the fabric of No 4 North St.

(4) SUMMARY

From the foregoing discussion it appears likely that the site is built over part of the town's defensive perimeter. From the evidence currently available as to the development and alignment of these defences, it seems the medieval ditch probably runs just to the west of the site whilst a ditch dating from 1745 could well cross the site. However the alignments shown on fig 1 are admittedly speculative and require confirmation by archaeological excavation. Trial excavations should also determine if any rampart or walls associated with either ditch survive beneath the property or any traces of the saxon occupation discussed in section 3d above.

(5) PRINCIPAL SOURCES

Farmer, P. (1973) Excavations on the Balmoral Site in 1973 in Transactions of the Scarborough and District Archaeological Society No 16, 1973.

Farmer, P. (1979) An Introduction to Scarborough Ware and a Re-assessment of Knight Jugs

Pearson, T. (1987) An Archaeological Survey of Scarborough

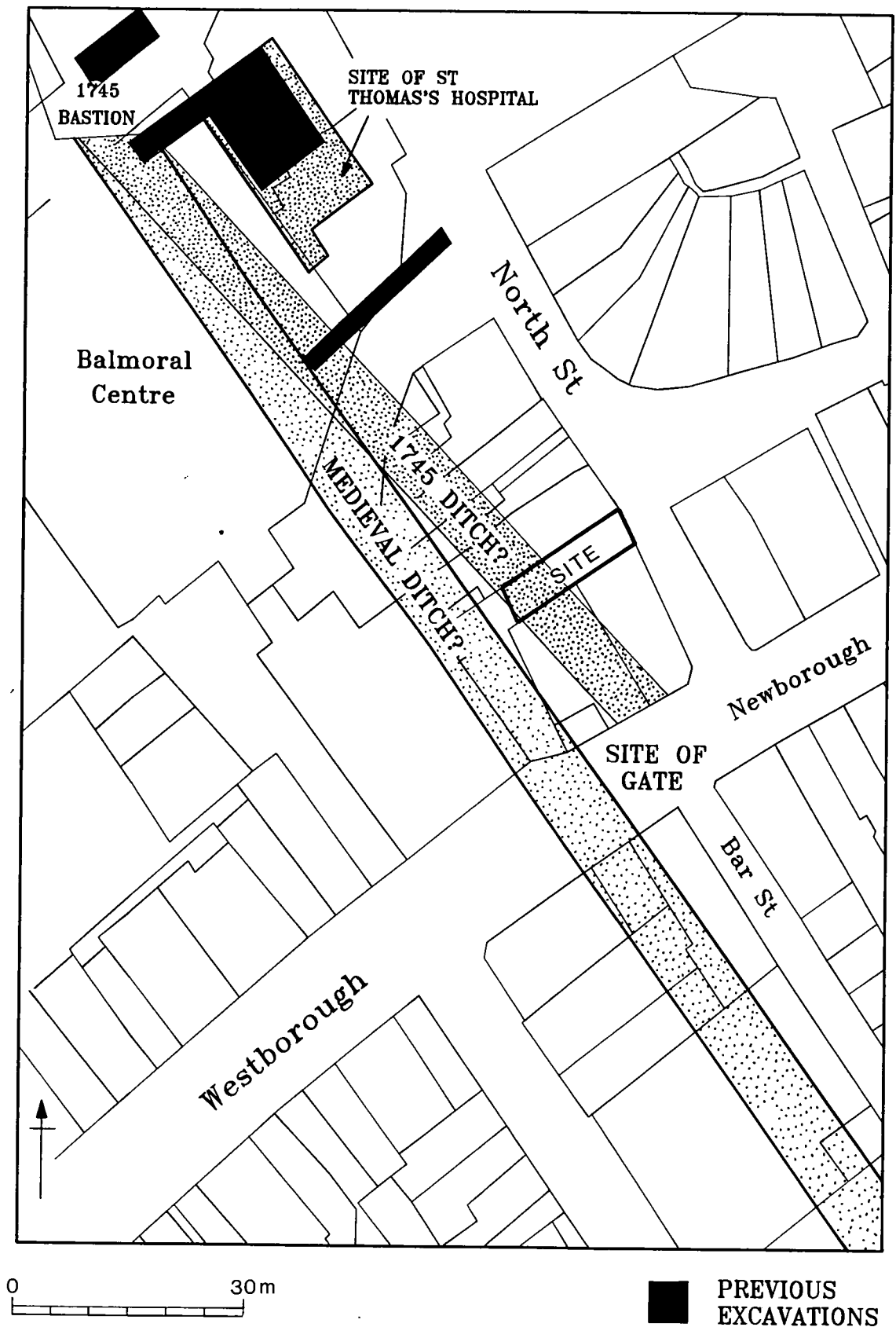
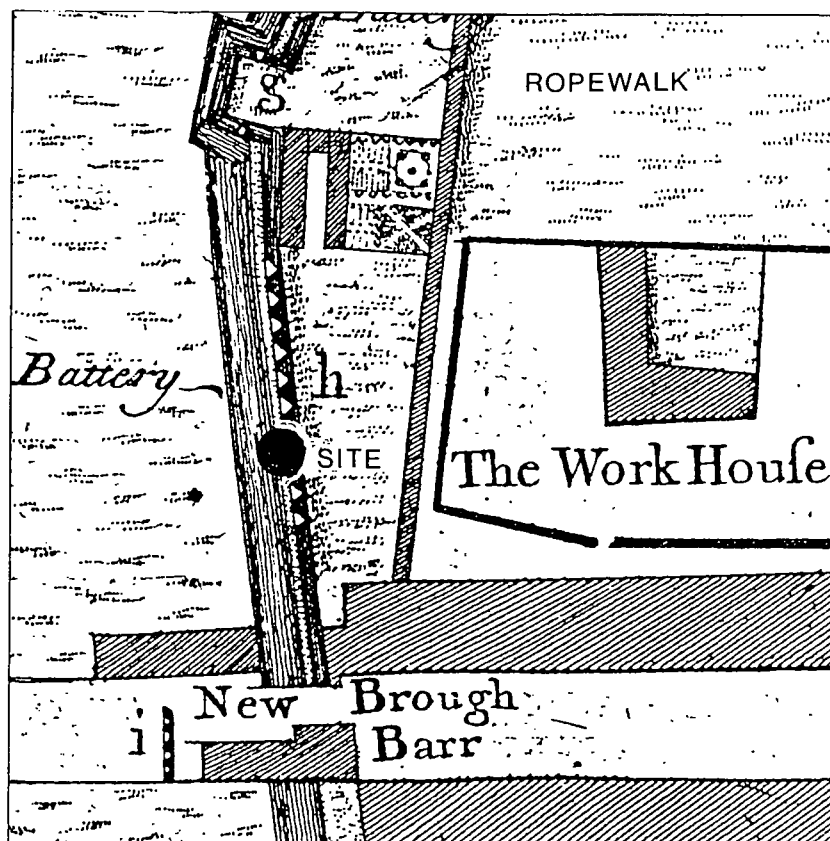
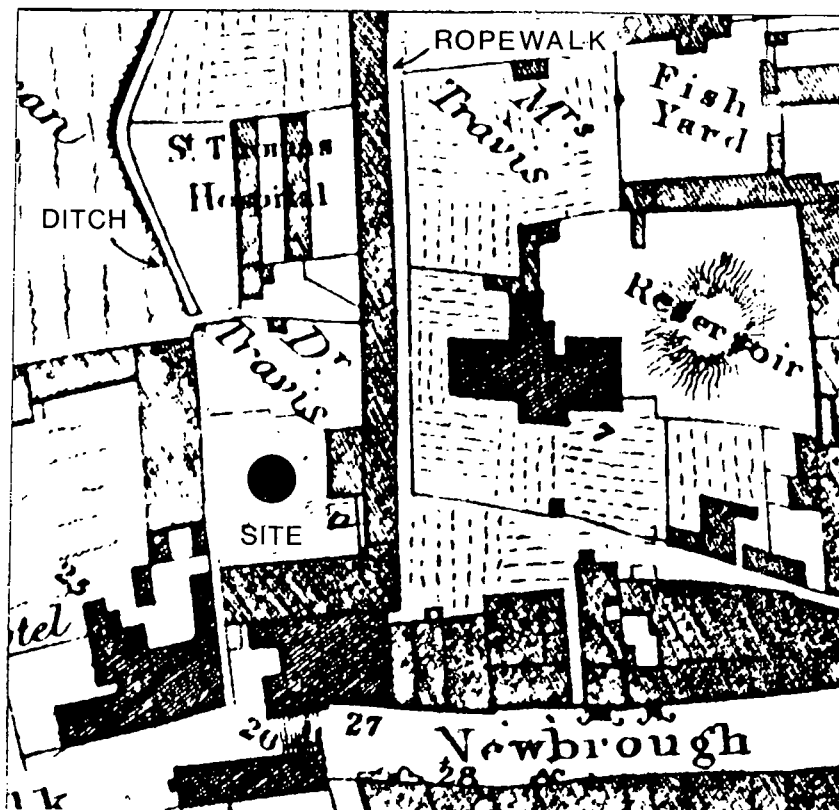


FIG 1



(A) VICINITY IN 1747 showing defensive measures taken during 1745 rebellion from a survey by W. Vincent



(B) VICINITY IN 1828 from a survey by J. Wood

FIG 2