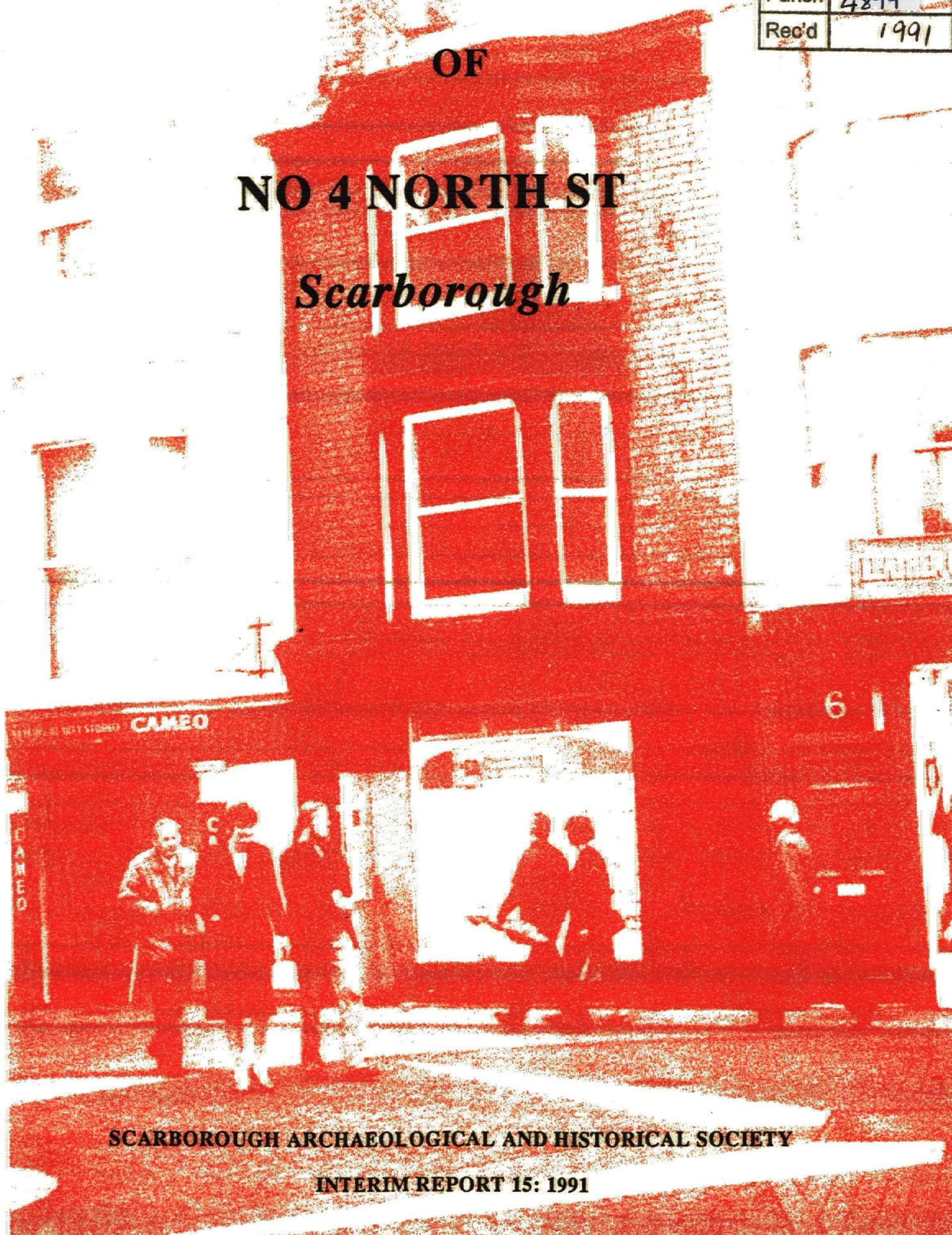


AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
OF

NO 4 NORTH ST  
*Scarborough*

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SNY	19144
ENY	6374
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Parish	4899
Rec'd	1991



SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERIM REPORT 15: 1991



# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF NO 4 NORTH ST, SCARBOROUGH

BY

TREVOR PEARSON

## INTRODUCTION

Between October 12th and November 30th 1991, the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society undertook an excavation inside No 4 North St, Scarborough (fig 1) at the request of the site owners, The Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd, prior to their proposed refurbishment of the property. No longer used by them as a shop, the site owners were aware of structural problems associated with this Victorian building and the County Archaeology Office advised that before submitting detailed proposals to renovate or rebuild the property, an assessment of the site's archaeological potential should be undertaken.

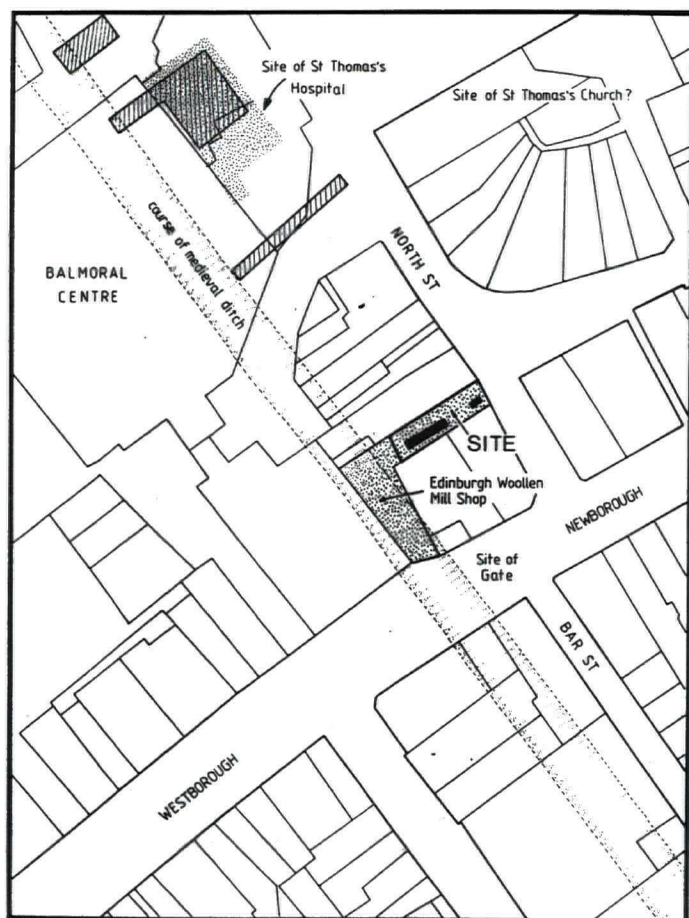
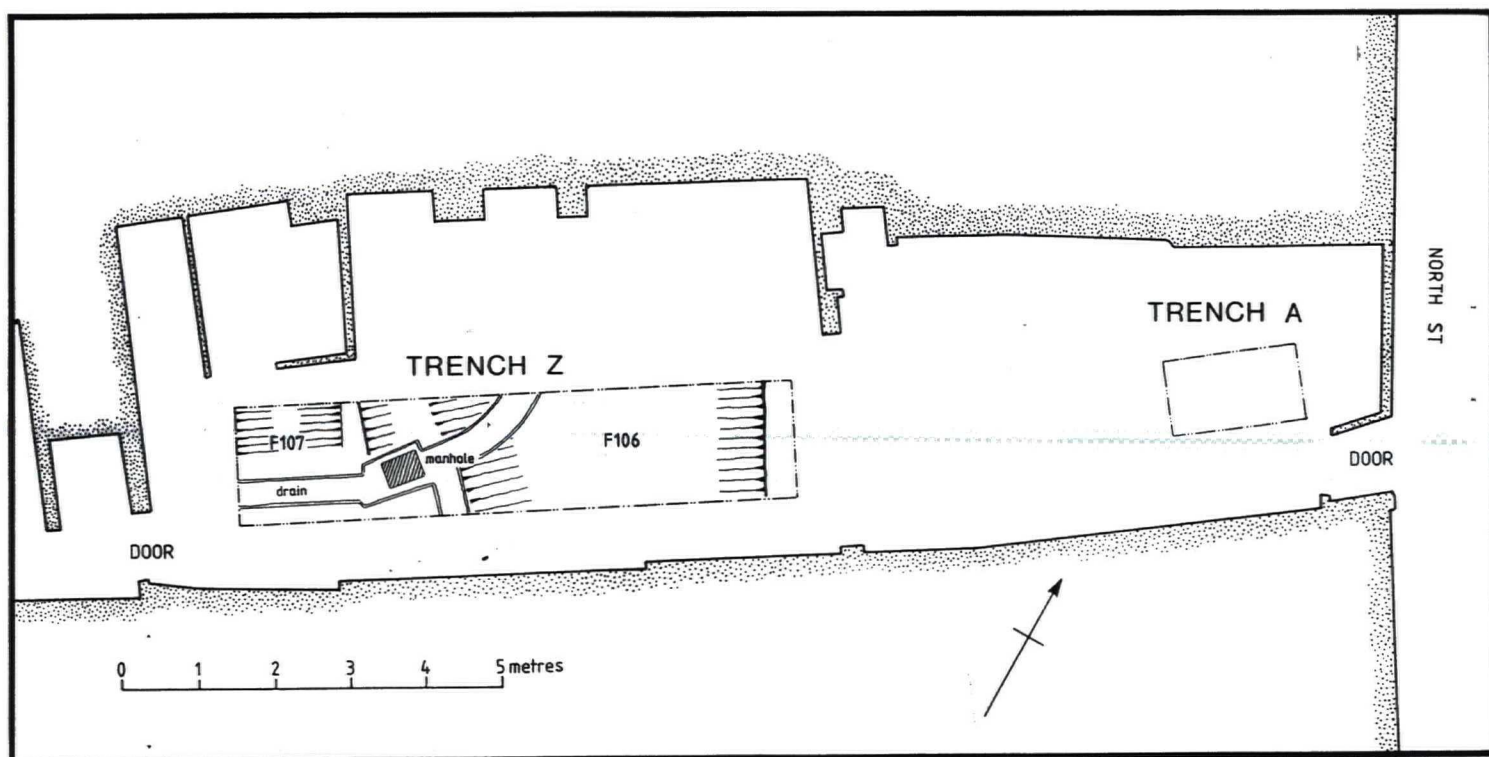


Fig 1: Site location

The Society spent a total of six weekends excavating two trenches inside the property (fig 2). Trench A, measuring 1.8m by 1m was excavated through a wooden floor at the front of the site. The much larger Trench Z, excavated through a concrete floor, measured 7.3m by 1.5m and extended from the middle of the building virtually to its rear wall. Lack of space to dump the spoil from trench Z and concern about the possible effect a trench this size might have on the stability of the structure meant that it was excavated in two stages. The middle element (sub trench D) was only opened after sub trenches B and C at either end had been excavated and backfilled, but for purposes of description and discussion Trench Z can be regarded as a coherent unit.



**Fig 2: Location of trenches showing principal excavated features**

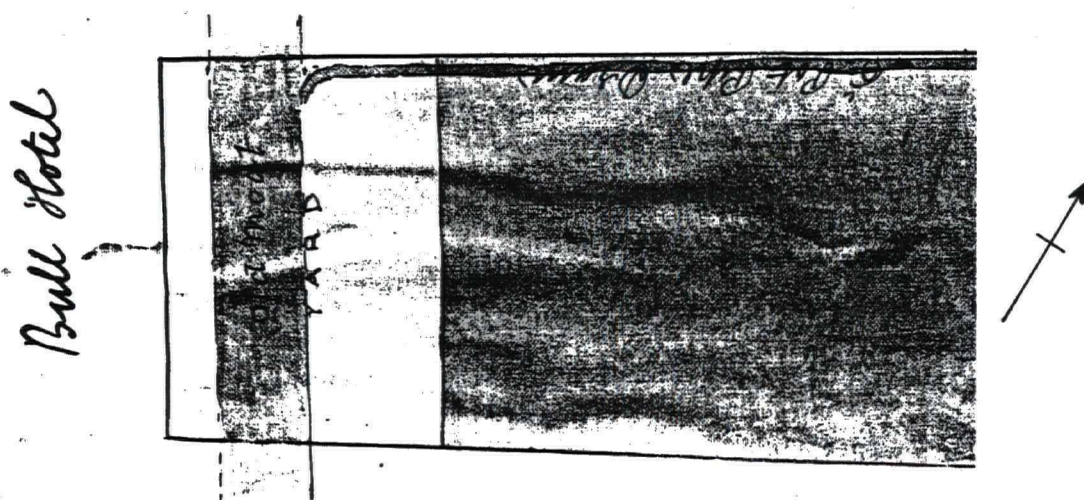
### **THE SITE AND ITS SETTING**

Prior to the start of the excavation a report was prepared by the Society at the joint request of Edinburgh Woollen Mill Ltd and the County Archaeology Office summarising existing archaeological knowledge about the area. The report pointed out that although North St is less than 150 years old, the site itself is just within the confines of the medieval town, adjacent to the defences which acted as Scarborough's western boundary virtually until the end of the 18th century.



These were constructed sometime towards the end of the 12th century and replaced an earlier line of 12th century defences further east towards the castle which had been rapidly rendered obsolete by the expansion of the town inland. During the middle ages, the principal entrance into Scarborough, Newborough Gate, stood less than 25 metres to the south of the site straddling what is now the town's main shopping street (fig 1). The existing Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop at 122 Newborough is therefore probably built over the medieval ditch, a suggestion which finds some support from a manuscript plan of the last century which has recently come to light (fig 3). This labels the back yard of No 4 North St, now the rear of 122 Newborough, as "Old Moat Yard" depicting some sort of drain or gully that was possibly the last vestige of the town ditch and which would have therefore crossed the site of the present Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop.

As well as virtually abutting the town ditch to the south-west, No 4 North St is close to the sites of St Thomas's Church and St Thomas's Hospital, both of which were founded in the 12th century. The church was demolished in 1649 following damage incurred during the English Civil War and its precise location is unknown. It may well have stood in the vicinity of Chapman's Yard, whilst the surrounding churchyard possibly encompassed the present site. The location of St Thomas's Hospital, 70m to the north of the present site, is more accurately known because it was not demolished until ten years after the first large scale OS survey of the town appeared in 1852 and also because it was partially excavated in 1973 during the development of the Balmoral site.



**Fig 3: Victorian plan of 4 North St showing "Old Moat Yard" now part of 122 Newborough**

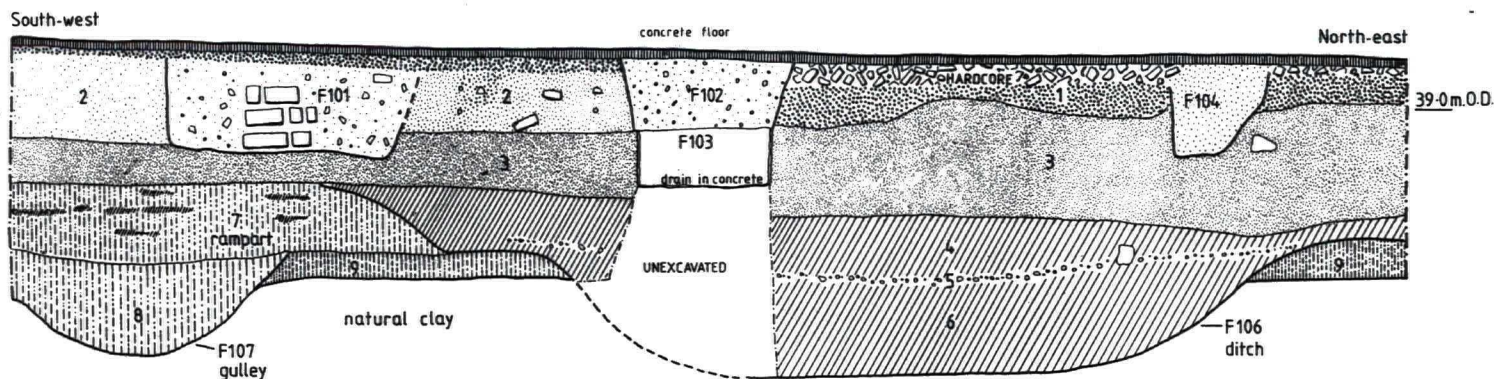


In addition to uncovering the remains of St Thomas's Hospital the 1973 excavations also encountered the medieval defences, discovering that they underwent extensive alterations in 1745 in anticipation of an attack on Scarborough during the Scottish rebellion led by Bonnie Prince Charlie. Of particular relevance to the present investigation was the discovery that the town ditch was recut on a different alignment in 1745. Although the 1973 excavation report is far from clear about the alignment of the re-cut ditch it was anticipated that it could well cross No 4 North St thereby accounting for some of the structural problems associated with the building.

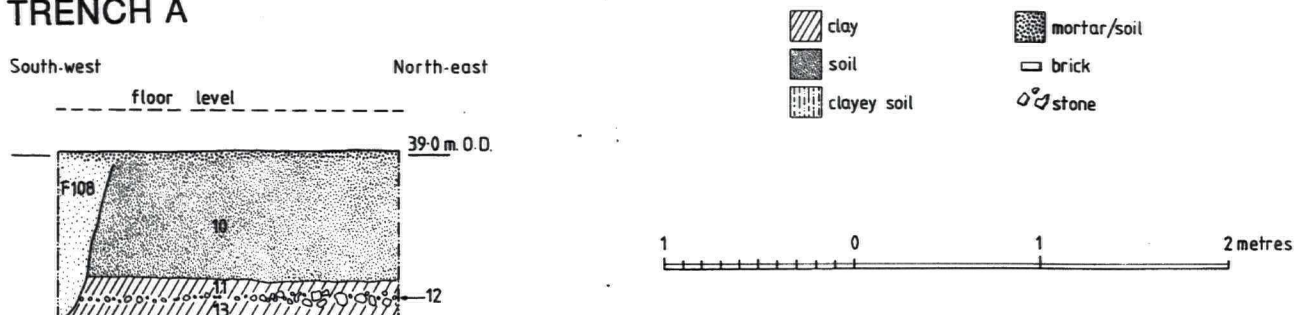
### THE EXCAVATION

Archaeological deposits ranging in date from the middle-ages to the 20th century were revealed in both trenches to a maximum depth of 1.7 metres below which natural reddy-brown clay was encountered (figs 4 and 5). The clay was augured in three places to a depth of 50 cms to confirm its natural origin, whilst the overlying archaeological layers and features divide into seven chronological phases.

#### TRENCH Z



#### TRENCH A



**Fig 4: South-east facing sections of trenches A and Z**



A preliminary assessment of the pottery and other finds from the excavation is included at the end of this report as Appendix A

#### PHASE ONE

The earliest deposit on the site was a greeney grey clayey soil (layer 9) 15cms thick surviving only in areas of Trench Z where it had not been cut away by later gullies or rendered inaccessible below modern service pipes. The portion that was excavated yielded no artefacts and most probably the layer is a natural deposit, probably the original soil cover on top of the glacial clay. No trace of this layer was found in Trench A.

#### PHASE TWO

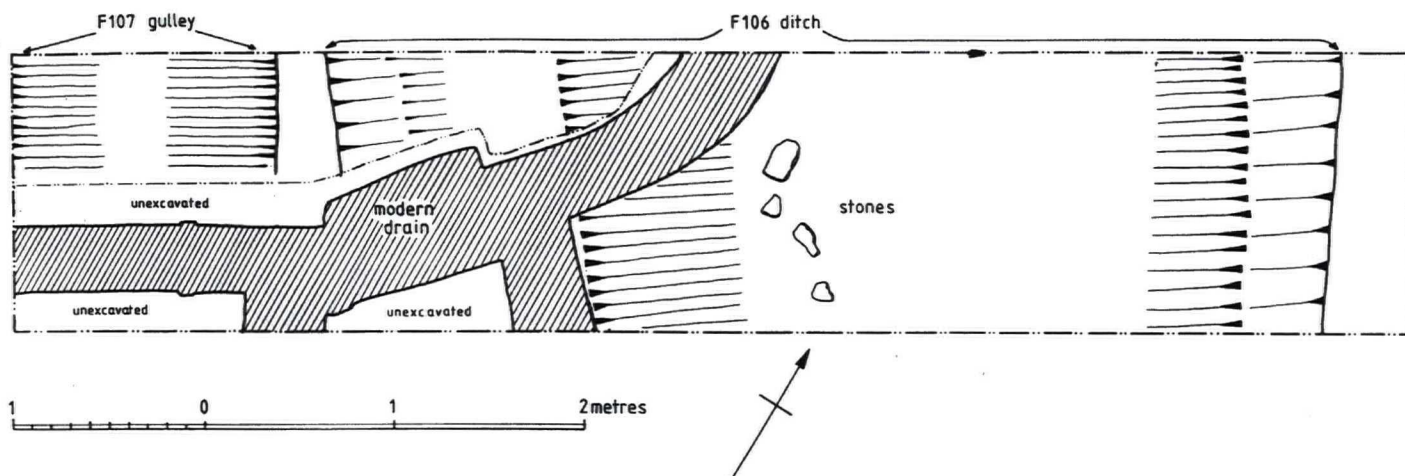
The earliest feature to cut layer 9 was a 1.4m wide U shaped gully (F107) at the south-west end of Trench Z, filled with layer 8, a greeney-grey clayey soil flecked with charcoal (plate 1). Due to the intrusion of modern service pipes into the trench, only a 90cm wide section of the feature was accessible for excavation. Although this was insufficient to conclusively establish its purpose, it was most probably a boundary or drainage ditch dating to the medieval period judging by the one sherd of pottery recovered from the fill.



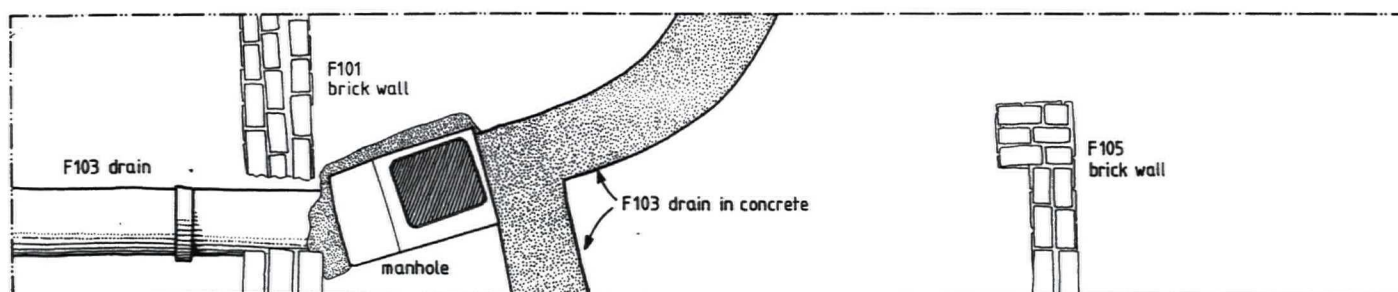
**Plate 1: Phase two gully (F107) in Trench Z viewed from the south-east**



## TRENCH Z phases 2-4 Medieval and later features



## TRENCH Z phases 6-7 Victorian and Modern features



**Fig 5: Plans of excavated features**

### PHASE THREE

A 40cm thick deposit of greeney grey clayey soil covered layer 9 and the infilled gulley F107 at the south-west end of Trench Z. Mottled with lenses of orange and yellow clay this deposit (layer 7) had probably been dumped on to the site, explaining the intermixture of different clays within it. No trace of this layer was found in Trench A and little survived of it in Trench Z owing to the intrusion of later features, but sufficient pottery was found in the excavated portion to establish its medieval date.

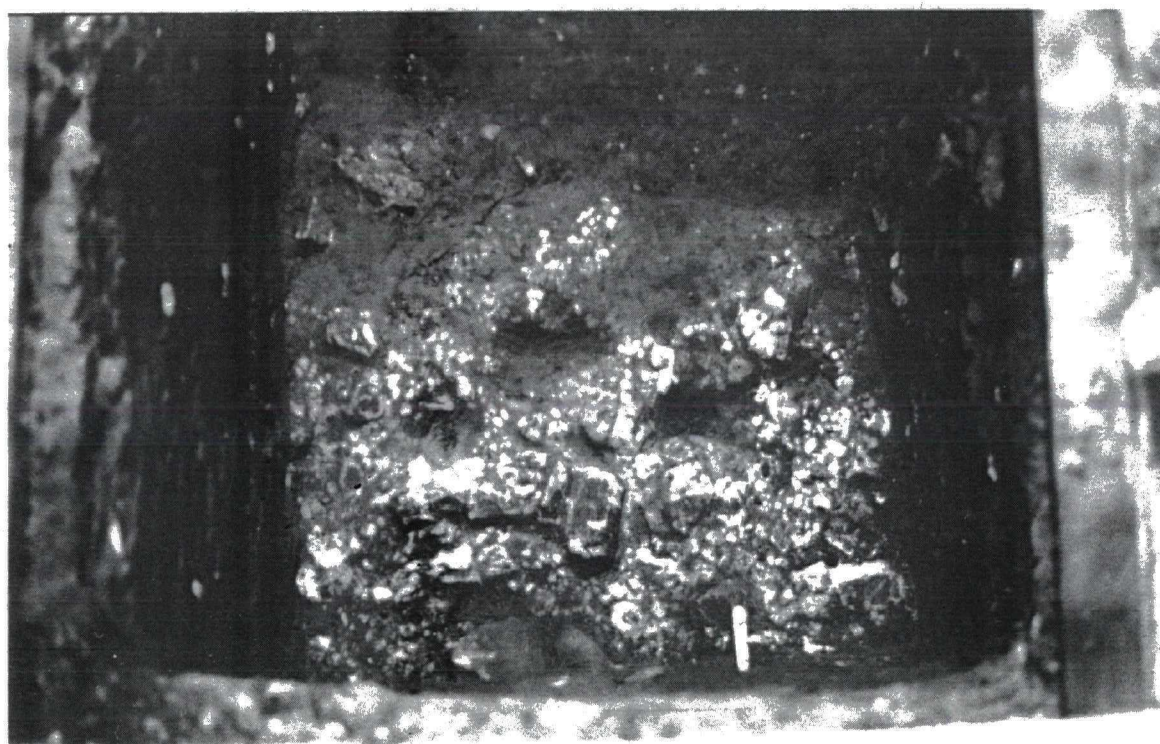
### PHASE FOUR

Cutting through the layer of dumped clay and penetrating 50cms into the underlying natural was a massive gulley or ditch, 5m wide, covering two thirds of Trench Z and crossing the trench virtually at right angles. Looked at in profile, the feature (F106) was a metre deep with sides gently sloping down to a level base. The south-west side incorporated a slight ledge 50cms wide about a third of the way down but otherwise there was nothing distinctive about the shape of the feature to explain its purpose.



The same was also true of the fill, which apart from a distinct horizon of stone chips and small rocks (layer 5) was entirely redeposited reddy-brown natural clay. Although the same deposit, the red-brown clay above stoney layer 5 was numbered separately to that below; respectively layers 4 and 6. Several fragments of stoneware were found in layer 4 which suggests the fill, if not the ditch itself, is 16th century or later in date.

An horizon of stone chips and rock fragments was also found in Trench A, (layer 12) presumably equivalent to that found in the F106 in Trench Z, although the two deposits were not exactly similar. Trench A contained many larger and more densely packed stones than in Trench Z and the layer was within an orange-brown clayey soil (layers 11 and 13) as opposed to the red-brown clay in the other trench (plate 2).



**Plate 2: Phase four layer of rock fragments (layer 12) in  
Trench A viewed from the north-east**

#### PHASE FIVE

In both trenches above the clay or clayey soil layers of Phase Four was a loose greeney brown soil flecked with charcoal and small fragments of stone, brick and tile (layer 3 in Trench Z and layer 10 in Trench A). Containing pottery sherds from medieval to 19th century in date, the layers probably represent the gradual accumulation of garden soil on open ground over several centuries.



#### PHASE SIX

Two brick wall foundations crossed Trench Z (F101 and F105), cutting into the top of soil layer 3. Since there were no associated features to suggest either had been an external wall, they were most likely internal partition walls before the property was opened out into a shop.

#### PHASE SEVEN

A system of modern foul-water pipes was exposed at the south-west end of Trench Z (F103) emanating from a manhole set in concrete. The pipes, themselves encased wholly or partially in concrete, stretched for virtually half the length of the trench curtailing the area available for investigation. Care was taken not to disturb the system which, apart from the laying of existing floors, represents the last phase of activity on the site.



## DISCUSSION

The excavation has established that natural glacial clay occurs at a height of 38.10m O.D., 1.2m below the existing shop floor. Archaeological deposits on top of natural clay begin with a buried soil surface, followed by a sequence of medieval and later deposits, barely disturbed by any of the wall footings and service pipes found crossing the site.

No structural remains came to light during the excavation other than 19th or 20th century walls associated with the existing building and it must be concluded that the area was unoccupied, open ground for much of the medieval and post medieval periods. The overall paucity of artefacts, particularly pottery, reinforces this suggestion.

The lack of medieval occupation on the site is probably due to the proximity of St Thomas's Church and churchyard and the town defences restricting the amount of building land. Although no trace of the church or churchyard came to light, remains of what may have been the town's medieval rampart was revealed at the south-west end of Trench Z. This was the phase three dump of clayey soil (layer 7) which buried an earlier field boundary or drainage ditch (F107). The dump contained pockets of natural clay, as might be anticipated of a rampart partially made of spoil from cutting the town ditch. However it is chiefly the proximity of the medieval ditch, probably little more than 4 metres to the south west, which presently constitutes the best evidence for this being part of the town rampart.

Less clearly part of the defences was the wide flat-bottomed ditch or gully (F106) in Trench Z which cut into the rampart in phase four and penetrated the underlying natural clay. With virtually parallel sides, this feature probably continues well beyond the confines of Trench Z following a north-west to south-east alignment. Easily explained as a clay pit or quarry, its association with the rampart nevertheless suggests the feature may be associated with the town defences.

One possibility is that it was dug to rob the stone foundations of a medieval town wall, explaining the layer of stone chippings in the backfill. However with sides gently sloping to a level base, the feature seemed too carefully dug to be a robbing trench. It is also by no means certain that the town was ever walled at this point. Although an early view of the town dated about 1538 (fig 6) shows a wall immediately to the north-west of Newborough Gate, other evidence suggests this could be artistic licence. A century after the defences were first constructed, an Inquisition of 1283-4 recommended they be strengthened by the construction of a wall but it appears the order may never have been carried into effect. In 1416 a parcel of land somewhere close to the present site is described as stretching from the town ditch to St Thomas's Churchyard





Fig 6: 1538 view of Scarborough showing Newborough Gate and St Thomas's Church



suggesting there was then no intervening town wall. If there was never a town wall to rob, then F106 alternatively could have been the foundation trench for a wall that was never built; testimony to an abortive and as yet undated attempt to provide the town with masonry defences. This would certainly explain the care with which the feature had been cut.

Other possibilities associate the feature with later episodes in the history of the town defences. For example on December 5th 1642, in response to the outbreak of the English Civil War, the town council ordered the excavation of a new ditch near Newborough Gate, which, if only partially completed, could explain the presence of this feature. Less likely is that it is the re-aligned ditch of 1745 discovered in the 1973 Balmoral excavations. The fill, then described variously as loose soil, building rubble and "black layers" was wholly different to the uniform red-brown clay filling the present feature.

The layers and features comprising phases 5-7 bring the history of the site up to the present day. They indicate that until the construction of the present property the area seems to have been open ground with a considerable depth of soil accumulating on top of the medieval deposits.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing discussion has attempted to assess the significance of the archaeological deposits revealed by the two trenches excavated at No 4 North St. Layers to a depth of 80cms, spanning phases 5-7 are devoid of interest and could be disturbed or removed without any great loss.

In contrast those layers and features which span phases one to four and lie at a depth below 80 cms contain important information about the town defences which as yet has been barely examined. Preservation should be the priority for these deposits in view of their likely destruction elsewhere by the cellars of adjoining properties. If this is not possible then further excavations are recommended to insure the remains are at least preserved by record.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Edinburgh Woollen Mill are thanked for giving permission to excavate, in particular the Property Manager, Stephen Baxter for initiating the project and Jill Roberts and her staff at Scarborough for their kind support during the course of the work. The staff of the County Archaeology Office are thanked for their assistance with various aspects of the excavation whilst particular advice on structural problems was given by the owner's consultant engineer, Colin Arbon.



A hand auger was kindly loaned by Roger Maughan, Maughan Associates. The following members and friends of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society assisted with the work; Patrick Argent, Bill Broadmore, Ron Davies, Kay Dunderdale, Deborah Fennelly, Chris Hall, Alan Harland, Gary Marshall, John Petty, Helen Pickering, Maureen Smith, Richard Ward, Wally West and Cynthia Zissler. Frances Hall is thanked for bearing the many organisational burdens associated with a project of this nature.

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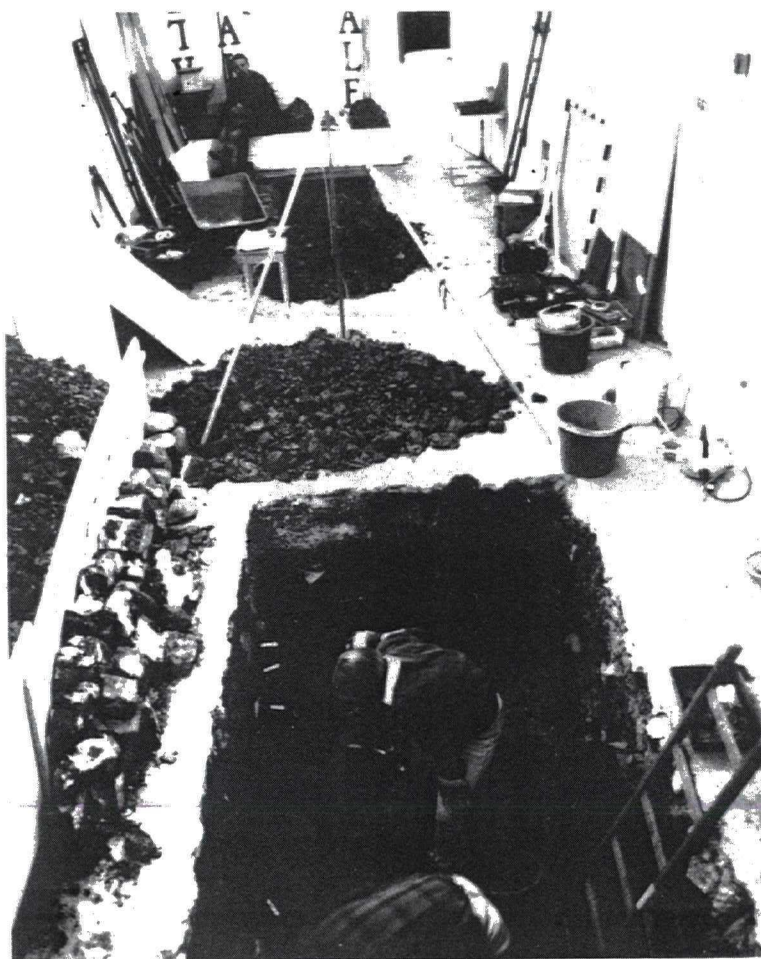
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## APPENDIX A: FINDS CATALOGUE

NO 4 NORTH ST

(SITE CODE: NS91)

### TRENCH A

LAYER	POTTERY (sherds)	BONE	SMALL FINDS
10	6 stoneware 1 orangeware 16 Scarborough Ware 28 unidentified	32	19 clay pipes 14 iron fragments 1 flint 7 glass fragments 1 leather fragment 1 stone object
11	9 Scarborough Ware		1 flint
12		(no finds recovered)	
13		(no finds recovered)	



# APPENDIX A: FINDS CATALOGUE

NO 4 NORTH ST

(SITE CODE: NS91)

## TRENCH Z

LAYER	POTTERY (sherds)	BONE	SMALL FINDS
1	(no finds retained)		
2	7 stoneware 19 18th century 1 modern 11 unidentified	37	3 fragments and 1 ink bottle 2 clay pipes 3 iron fragments 5 copper alloy
3	9 stoneware 5 Humber Ware 3 Scarborough Ware 14 unidentified	70	5 clay pipes 2 iron fragments 4 copper alloy 13 glass fragments
4	8 stoneware 44 Scarborough Ware 4 Staxton Ware 3 unidentified	15	3 iron fragments 1 flint 10 copper alloy
5	(no finds recovered)		
6	19 Scarborough Ware 4 Staxton Ware		1 iron fragment
7	5 Scarborough Ware 2 Staxton Ware 8 unidentified		1 flint
8	1 Scarborough Ware	4	2 iron fragments
9	(no finds recovered)		