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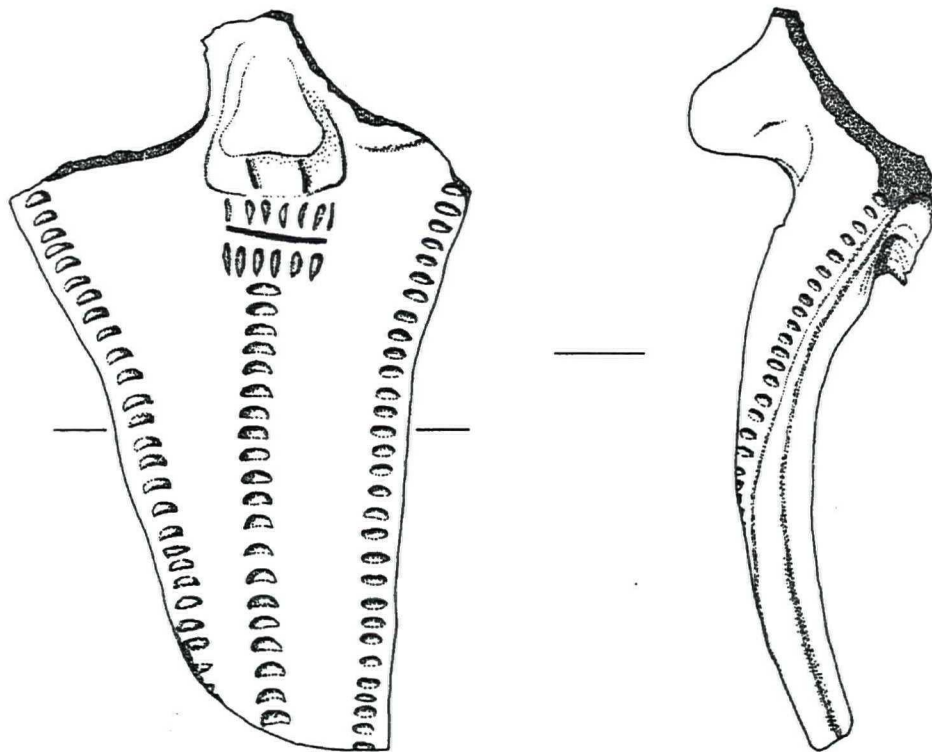
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*AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT 80 ST THOMAS STREET,
SCARBOROUGH*



BY

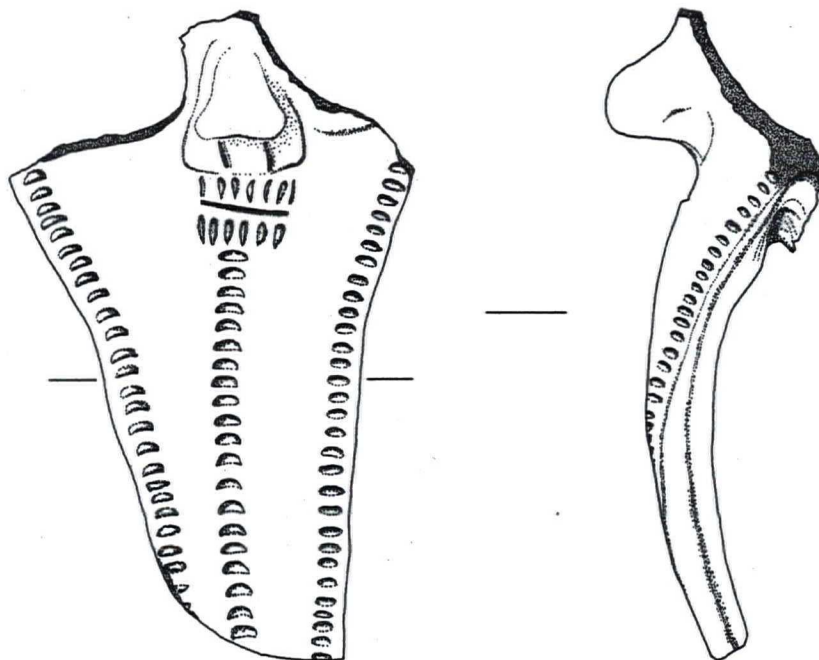
TREVOR PEARSON

SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERIM REPORT 29: 1997

*AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT 80 ST THOMAS STREET,
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*by
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A handle fragment from a medieval "Scarborough Ware" pot
decorated with a human face.
Found in Trench One.

INTRODUCTION

Between October 17th and 19th 1997, the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society undertook an archaeological evaluation of a site at the rear of 80 St Thomas Street, Scarborough (NGR TA 0418 8883; SITE CODE STW97). The work took place at the request of the site owner Mr. Peter Gardner of Lockwood Carpets in advance of the construction of a new carpet warehouse to replace one which had burnt down on the same site the previous year. The site lies within the area of the medieval town of Scarborough (figure one) and the County Council Heritage section requested that the archaeology of the site was evaluated prior to the start of construction work.

The site is approximately rectangular in outline and measures 45m north-south and 35m east-west. To the east of the site are a range of shops fronting St Thomas Street, whilst to the west is a low brick wall bordering North Street car park. Further shop units border the site to the north and to the south is the Equestrian public house and an electricity substation. The boundary wall between the site and the substation is partially constructed of re-used stone (plate three). At the time of excavation the site was covered in concrete.

SITE HISTORY

The Castle Headland at Scarborough has attracted settlement since prehistoric times and in the 4th century AD it was selected as the site for one of a chain of signal stations constructed by the Romans along the Yorkshire Coast (1). Castle Road, which runs 60m to the north of the present site, is probably on the line of a Roman road leading inland from the signal station (2).

Scarborough can trace its origins as a town back to the middle of the twelfth century when King Henry II began work on the present castle and established a new town on land outside the castle walls (3). The first part of the town to be laid out was situated next to the Castle Headland and was known as the Oldborough. Later the king extended the town inland by ordering the addition of a further grid of streets, called the Newborough. St Thomas Street probably dates from this time. From the outset the Newborough was protected with a ditch and rampart on the north and west and was further strengthened with a stone wall on the north side in the fifteenth century. The present site lies just within the line of the town defences at the north-west extremity of the Newborough (4) and it is possible that the stones visible in the south boundary of the site (plate three) were taken from the town wall after it had fallen into decay. The ditch was visible in the area of the present site until well into the nineteenth century as it is shown on Wood's survey of 1828 (figure two).

Aside from its proximity to the defences, little else is known about the site and its environs in the middle ages. Archaeological excavations which took place in 1996 in the grounds of the former Convent School, between 50m and 120m east of the present site, unearthed only small quantities of medieval pottery suggesting the area was only lightly settled in the middle ages (5). The same picture emerges from medieval documentary sources which indicate there were extensive areas of open ground on the north of the Newborough in the 14th and 15th centuries (6). At this date the site may have been used as pasture or gardens.

From the eighteenth century onwards, the development of the site can be traced through various town maps beginning with the map published by J. Cossins in 1725 which shows gardens on the site

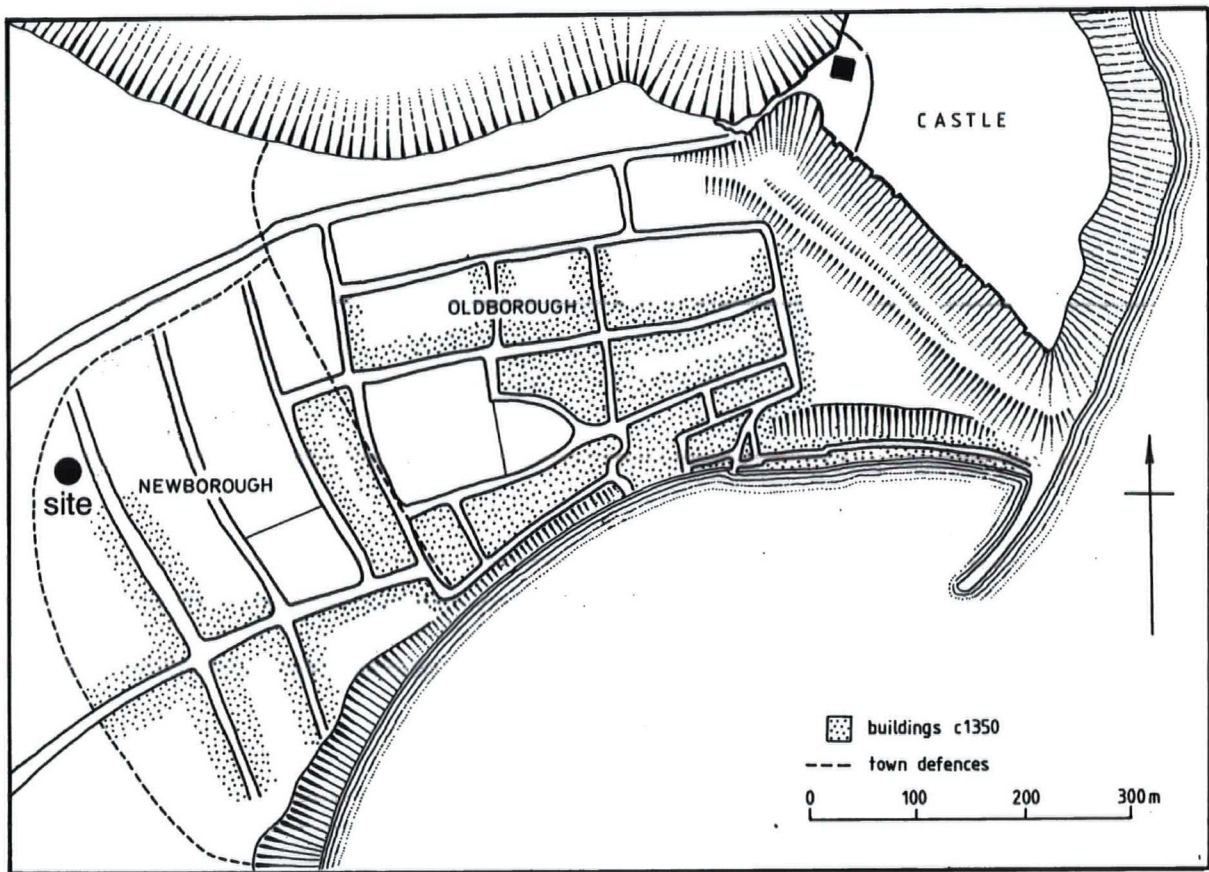


Figure 1: Medieval Scarborough showing the location of the site

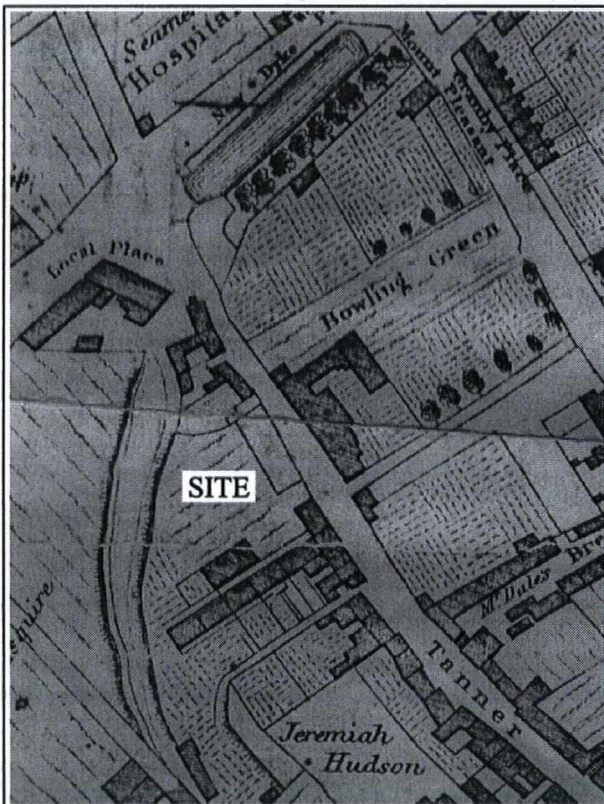


Figure 2:
The environs of the site in the early nineteenth century (from Wood's survey published in 1828)

with a ropery and brick kiln to the south. By the time of Wood's survey of 1828 (figure 2), the ropery had moved to the line of present day North Street though the site itself still appears as open ground. It is not until the first edition 1:1056 Ordnance Survey map published in 1852 that cottages and small workshops start to appear in the area including St Thomas Walk which was constructed along the line of the former moat between North Street and St Thomas Street, skirting the north-west corner of the present site. The character of the area changed yet again during the latter half of the twentieth century when many of the Victorian buildings were swept away to allow for the widening of Queen Street and the creation of North Street car park.

THE EXCAVATION

The construction of a new warehouse building necessitated lowering the level of the site by a maximum of 1.2m on the north decreasing to 0.2m towards the south end of the site. Since the depth of archaeological deposits on the site was unknown it was decided to excavate two trenches to investigate if the proposed levelling of the site would pose a threat to deposits of archaeological significance (figure three). Trench One, measuring 4.2m x 1.8m was positioned close to the north boundary of the site to look for evidence of the town's medieval defences. Trench Two, measuring 4.2m x 2.1m was excavated towards the south of the site to look for evidence of medieval settlement.

TRENCH ONE (figure four)

Trench One was excavated by a mechanical excavator in a series of spits to a depth of 1.2m. At this point it was decided to restrict excavations to the east half of the trench and a further 0.8m depth of spoil was removed by the mechanical excavator to reveal a feature cutting the natural clay. Excavation then continued by hand but was hampered by ground water flowing into the trench.

Natural red-brown clay was found at a depth of 2m from the surface (33.6m OD) at the north end of the trench increasing to a depth of 2.8m at the south end. The difference in depth across the trench was because the natural clay was cut by a feature F107 running approximately east-west (plate one). The north side of this feature sloped down at an angle of between 30 and 45 degrees and at its base were a number of rounded stones (F111) set into the clay.

The fill of F107 consisted of a small pocket of grey clay (layer 112) and a 0.4-0.5m thick layer of gritty soil (layer 108) which sloped down into F107 at the same gradient as the edge of the cut. Layer 108 was itself cut by a vertical sided feature F109 filled with a grey clayey soil mixed with pockets of a black organic deposit containing lumps of charcoal. At the base of this cut were the rounded stones F111 described above, and it is possible that the stones were contemporary with the vertical sided cut F109 rather than the earlier feature, F107.

Overlying layer 108 and the vertical sided cut F109, were two lenses of clay (layers 105 and 106), both of which dipped southwards into the cut F107. The northern of the two layers (105) was orange in colour whilst layer 106 was more greeny-brown in colour and contained occasional charcoal fragments.

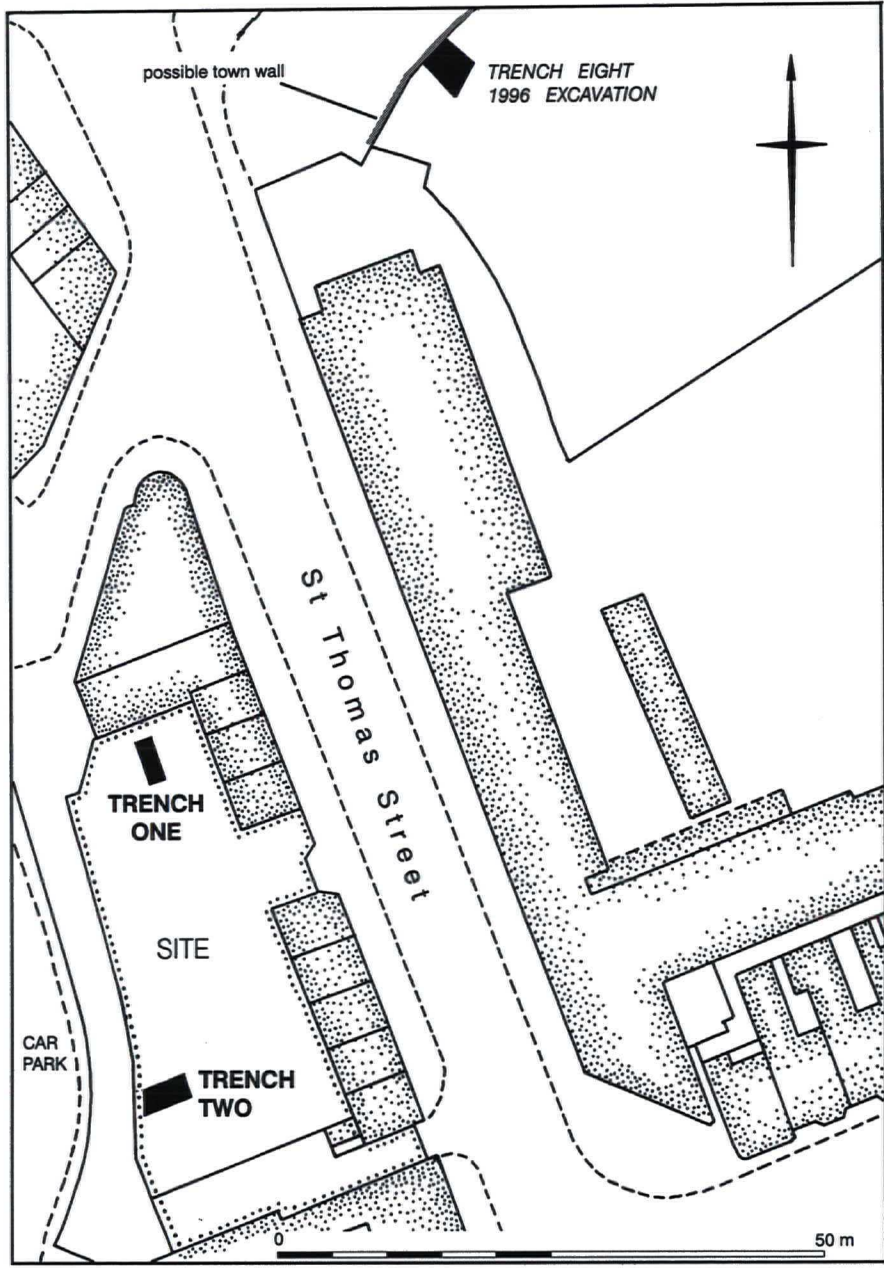


Figure 3: Location of trenches at 80 St Thomas Street

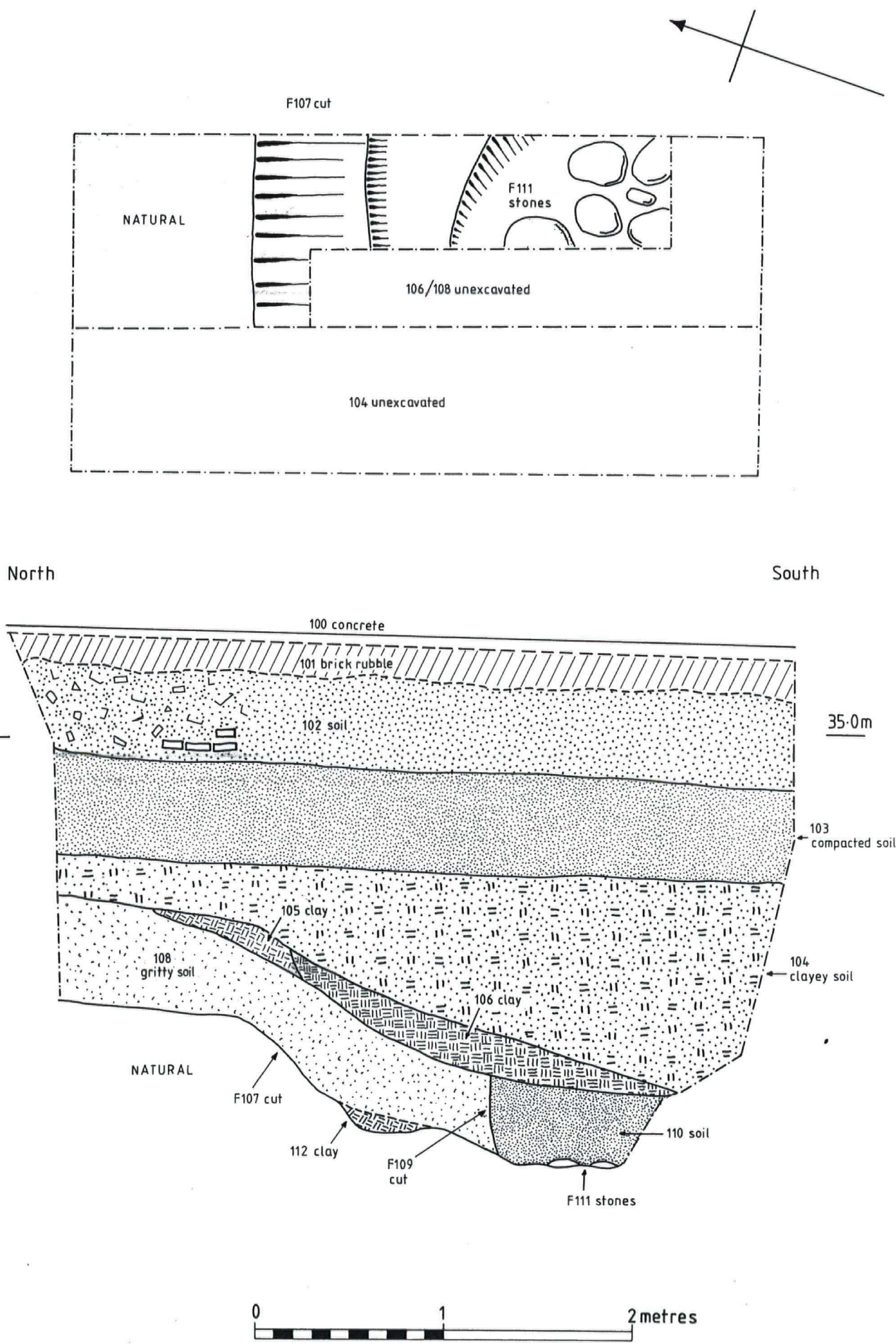


Figure 4: Trench One. Plan (above) and west facing section (below)

The uppermost layers in Trench One consisted of a sequence of soil deposits (layers 102-104). The lowest of these (layer 104) was a stone-free clayey soil containing charcoal fragments. The layer increased in thickness from north to south as it sloped into the cut F107 but was level at the top. It was in turn overlain by a deposit of compacted soil containing charcoal and brick fragments (layer 103) and by a loosely compacted soil (layer 102). Layer 102 likewise contained fragments of brick and charcoal and towards the north end of the trench it contained the damaged foundations of an east-west aligned brick wall.

The modern ground surface was formed by a layer of brick rubble (layer 101) on top of which was a layer of concrete (layer 100).

DISCUSSION

The earliest activity in Trench One comprised a feature cutting the natural clay (F107) and a later, vertical-sided cut (F109) dug into the fill of F107. Entirely medieval pottery came from the hand-excavation of both these features and therefore they are almost certainly medieval in date. Their purpose, however, remains obscure. Seen from above, F107 appears to run in a straight line suggesting it was one side of a linear feature running east-west such as a gully or ditch, the opposite side of which lies beyond the south end of the trench. However, this does not rule out the possibility that the feature is of a more irregular shape, such as a pit or a quarry, since so little of it was exposed by the excavation. Indeed, given the proximity of Trench One to the medieval defences, it is possible that F107 was a quarry pit dug to get clay for the rampart. The purpose of the vertical sided cut F108 and the setting of stones F111 defy interpretation beyond the fact that the former, and possibly the latter, are later than F107.

Aside from the medieval activity described above, the only other structural remains to come to light in Trench One were the damaged brick foundations contained in layer 102. Judging from map evidence, the brick building was probably one of the series of cottages and small workshops which were built in the area in the second half of the 19th century. From the medieval period until the construction of this building, the area appears to have been open ground which accounts for the build-up of thick deposits of featureless soil found in Trench One. They probably accumulated both through natural processes and the deliberate dumping of soil and the process started in the medieval period with the infilling of F107 by layer 108. It is possible that the overlying clay layers 105/106 and the soil layer 104 also date to the medieval period although pottery dating evidence was absent from these deposits.

The most recent use of the site as a warehouse was represented by the existing concrete yard surface (layer 100) and the underlying layer of hardcore (layer 101).

TRENCH TWO (figure five)

Trench Two was excavated by a mechanical excavator in a series of spits to a depth of 1m when a feature was observed cutting natural clay. Excavation then continued by hand over the west half of the trench but the east half was left untouched because two voids appeared during the machining from which emanated a smell of petrol suggesting the existence of a buried tank or sump.

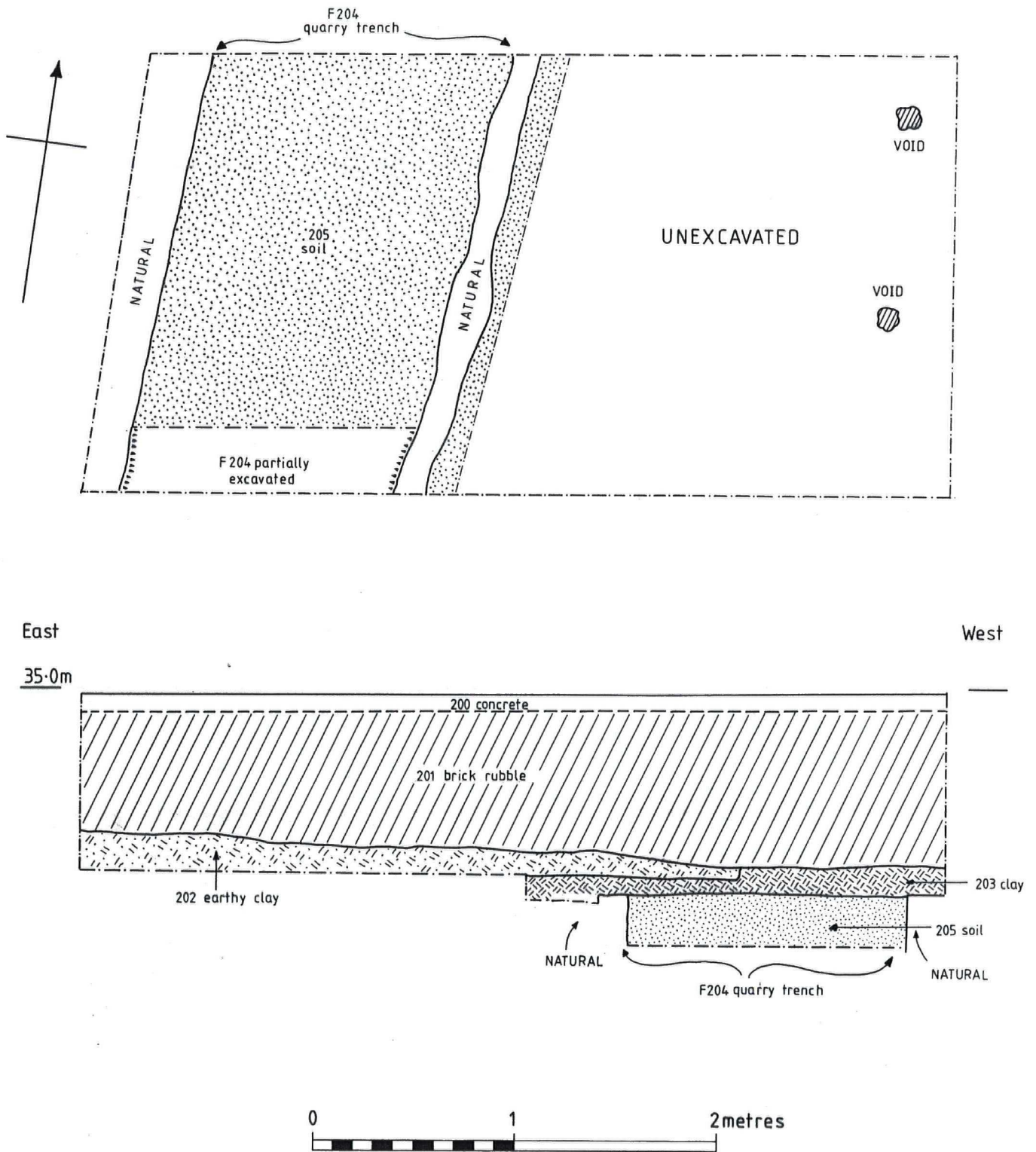


Figure 5: Trench Two. Plan (above) and north facing section (below)

The natural red-brown clay came to light at a depth of 1m from the surface (33.95m OD) in a parallel strip along the west end of the trench and in a band 0.2m wide across the middle of the trench (plate two). A cut 1.4m wide (F204), filled with dark soil (layer 205) separated these two strips of natural clay. The cut was partially excavated of its fill in a strip 0.2m deep and 0.4m wide against the south section of the trench. Layer 205 was found to contain occasional lumps of charcoal and clay as well as a mixture of medieval and post-medieval pottery and the cut itself was found to have vertical sides. Further excavation of the fill of this feature was considered unnecessary because its form was typical of 18th and 19th century clay quarries encountered elsewhere in excavations in the old town. The narrow strip of clay running across the middle of the trench separated F204 from a second and parallel quarry trench underlying the unexcavated east half of the trench.

The infilled clay quarry was capped by a layer of orange clay (layer 203) presumably redeposited from quarrying operations elsewhere in the vicinity and by an earthy brown clay containing charcoal flecks which may have accumulated naturally (layer 202). These were in turn buried beneath a 0.7-0.8m thick layer of uncompacted brick rubble (layer 201) on top of which was the present concrete yard surface (layer 200).

DISCUSSION

The excavation of Trench Two revealed the existence of at least two parallel clay quarries similar in form to those found by excavation elsewhere in the north of the old town, namely around Paradise House; at the former St Peter's School in Auborough Street and in the grounds of the former Convent School in Queen Street (7). The quarrying takes the form of long parallel trenches cut into the natural clay with narrow baulks of clay left to separate one quarry trench from its neighbours. The quarrying at the present site is likely to extend well beyond the confines of Trench Two and presumably provided the raw material for the manufacture of bricks. A brick kiln is shown on the town map published by J. Cossins in 1725 several hundred yards south of the site and it is conceivable that the kiln drew some of its supplies of clay from the present site.

The brick rubble 201 which was by far the thickest deposit encountered in Trench Two presumably derived from the demolition of Victorian cottages and workshops in the vicinity prior to the construction of the present concrete yard.

SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The purpose of the excavation was to determine the depth and character of archaeological remains on the site prior to the start of building work. The conclusion drawn from Trench One is that medieval remains survive towards the north end of the site at a depth of 2m below present ground level. Further excavation is needed to interpret their function, although it is possible the feature F107 may have been dug to get clay to build the town's defensive rampart which ran close by the site. Trench Two demonstrated that the south part of the site has been quarried for clay in the post-medieval period probably to provide material for brick making. The quarrying will have destroyed all evidence for medieval occupation.

The development will not damage the medieval features at the north end of the site because they are 0.8m deeper than the maximum depth which the development will destroy. The remains of the post-medieval clay quarries at the south end of the site are of little archaeological interest although they are likely to survive the more limited disturbance which will take place in this area.

The excavation took place at the request of the site owner Mr P Gardner following discussions with Veronica Fiorato of the County Council Heritage Unit. Mr P Bradley of Gibsons Plant Hire undertook the machining whilst hand excavation and recording was done by the following members and friends of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society:- Harald Berghoff, Alex Charles, Kay and Hannah Dunderdale, Chris and Frances Hall, Carolyn and Vanessa Milner and Dan Normandale. Our neighbour Bill Broadmore is thanked for supplying refreshments.

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Plate 1: Trench One looking north-east showing ditch F107.

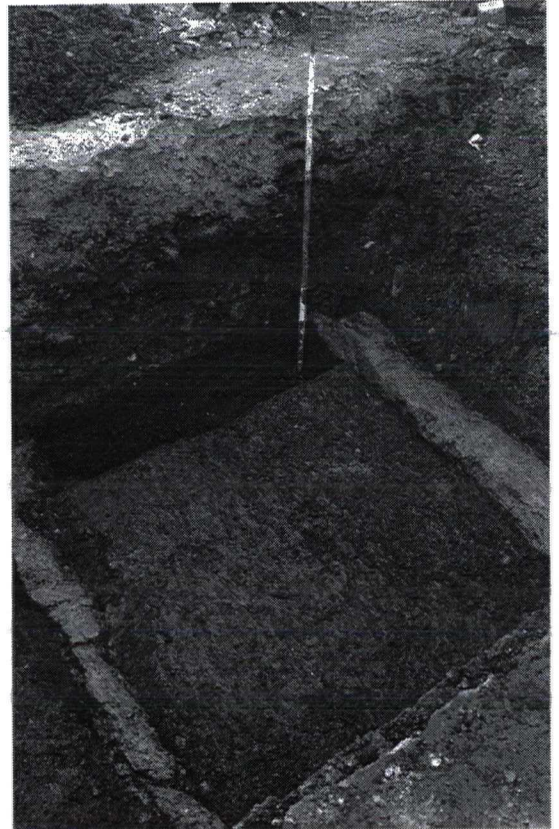


Plate 2: Trench Two looking south-west showing the backfilled clay quarry F204.



Plate 3: Stone wall forming part of the south boundary of the site