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| ENY | 6411 |
| CNY | |
| Parish | 4035 |
| Rec'd | 1998 |

THE OLD POST OFFICE, 22 BAXTERGATE, WHITBY

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OSA REPORT No. 98WB01

National Grid Reference: NZ 8984 1093

March 1998

ON SITE
ARCHAEOLOGY

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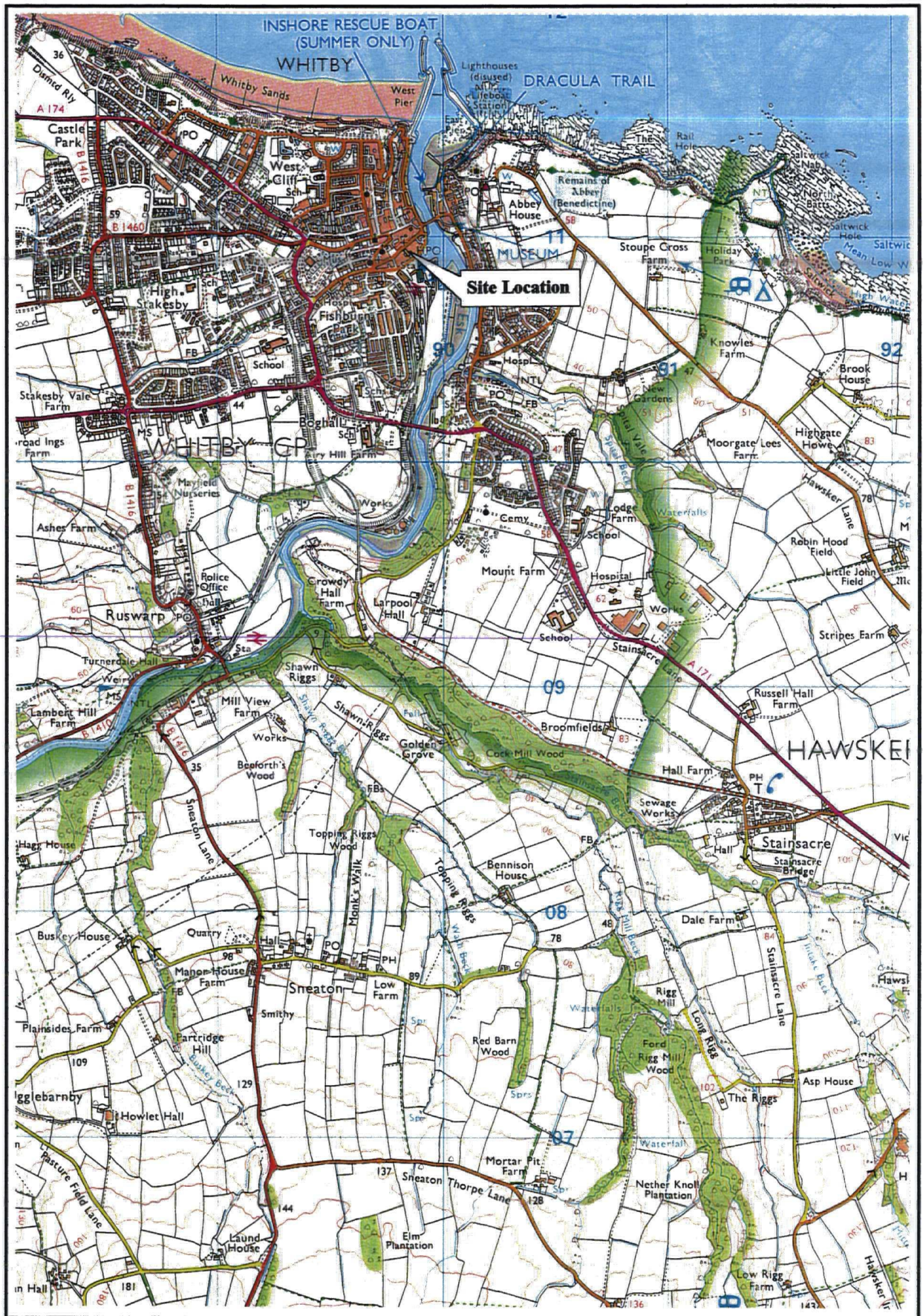


Figure 1. Site Location (NGR: NZ 8984 1093)

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1. Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on behalf of JC Nichols on the site of a proposed development at 22 Baxtergate, Whitby. This watching brief commenced on Tuesday 3rd February 1998 and was completed on Monday 23rd February 1998. No features or deposits of any archaeological significance were encountered.

This report was prepared by Guy Hopkinson of On-Site Archaeology.

2. Site Location and Archaeological Background

The site is situated at the old Post Office, 22 Baxtergate, Whitby, which was first opened in 1862, and closed in 1993. The National Grid reference for the site is NZ 8984 1093 (see Figure 1 for location).

The town of Whitby has a long history. It was the site of a settlement at least in the Anglian period, then known as "Streoneshalh", when in accordance with the intentions of King Oswy of Northumbria, St. Hilda founded the Abbey. Archaeological evidence, and a passage from Bede, however, suggest that the Abbey may have been constructed on the site of a late Roman signal station (Daysh, 1958). The Abbey was destroyed by the Danes in AD 867, who also renamed the town (Edwards, 1924). Through later development and a number of landslides, however, little evidence remains of the Danish town layout.

The earliest mention of Baxtergate itself is in 1177, as recorded in the Victoria County History for the North Riding of Yorkshire:

"The charter granted by Abbot Richard [de Waterville] between 1177 and 1189 mentioned four principal ways into the town of Whitby. These may be supposed to be identical with the four principal streets of the old town, namely, Church Street, Haggergate, Flowergate, and Baxtergate, the three last meeting formerly on the west bank of the river." (VCH, 1968)

The VCH records the presence of an earlier bridge in the town, the first mention of which is in 1351. This was probably near to St. Ninian's Chapel (formerly known as "Bridge Chapel" and dated to at least 1396), which stood next to the site of the present Midland Bank. The junction between Baxtergate and Flowergate is also recorded in the VCH as the location of the medieval market place:

"The western town contained the medieval market place, which still stood in 1609 at the old meeting-place of the three ways, where the noted Golden Lion Inn stood in the eighteenth century, and Golden Lion Bank now stands.

On the west side of the river few of the houses are of any great age, but at the west end of Baxtergate is Bagdale Hall, a stone built T-shaped Elizabethan house, two stories high with attics" (VCH, 1968).

Baxtergate is built on a sand-bank, and old mooring posts have been found during past excavations. The Plough public house, separated from the old Post Office by Barclays Bank, is constructed over the old sandstone built harbour wall, a section of which was revealed during excavation of the modern cellar (Daysh, 1958).

The properties on Baxtergate preserve the medieval pattern of ancient plot divisions; the "tofts", which in late medieval and post medieval deeds are referred to as "burgages". These are essentially long narrow rectangular strips arranged in rows along either side of the street, with the shorter edge fronting the street. During the later medieval period the usual arrangement was for the house to be built at the front, behind which were the outbuildings and yard, followed by the "garth" between the yard and rear fence. Later construction has often resulted in the loss of the yards and garths, but the general pattern is still evident.

In the past, the properties on the south east side of Baxtergate would have backed onto Bagdale Beck. Although now culverted, this beck previously ran along the route of what is currently Bagdale, and was navigable by boats bringing grain to the old brewery. The first mention of Bagdale as a street is in 1742 (Sythes, 1996). It was on Bagdale Beck that Jarvis Coates (who built a house next to the old Post Office in 1714 (Sythes, 1996)) founded his shipyard, while many smaller boat yards were situated at the water's edge to the rear of the Baxtergate burgages (Daysh, 1958).

3. Methodology

The trenches were excavated by the contractors, using pneumatic drills for those within the existing building shell, and a JCB for the external trenches. These trenches were monitored by an archaeologist. Much of the work occurred while the rear of the building was being demolished, and a shallow layer of the demolition debris was left on part of the site to provide a layer of hardcore.

4. Results.

4.1 Trench 1.

Situated just inside the entrance on Baxtergate, this trench was excavated using mainly pneumatic drills to a depth of approximately 1.08 metres. This revealed the following sequence of deposits (all levels given are metres below floor level):

- 0.00 \Rightarrow 0.04 Concrete floor slab
- 0.04 \Rightarrow 0.15 concrete with brick rubble inclusions
- 0.15 \Rightarrow 0.35 fairly loose gravel and pebbles with occasional fragments of modern glass, brick and tile fragments.
- 0.35 \Rightarrow 0.67 rubble and pebbles
- 0.67 \Rightarrow 1.00 earlier concrete slab (frequent brick rubble inclusions)
- 1.00 \Rightarrow 1.05 rubble and stones
- 1.05 \Rightarrow 1.08 stones (mainly sub-angular and sub-rounded sandstone) in a sand matrix

4.2 Trench 2.

Situated to the south east of trench 1, this was again excavated using pneumatic drills to a depth of 0.70 metres, and revealed the following sequence of deposits:

- 0.00 \Rightarrow 0.10 concrete slab
- 0.10 \Rightarrow 0.40 concrete with very high proportion of brick rubble inclusions
- 0.40 \Rightarrow 0.70 stones (mainly sub-angular and sub-rounded sandstone) in a sand matrix

4.3 Trench 3.

The southern three quarters of this narrow drainage trench were not excavated below the remaining demolition debris spread across the site. The northern quarter was excavated to a greater depth, but the area was almost completely obscured by modern wall footings.

4.4 Trench 4.

This trench, excavated by machine to a depth of 0.75 metres, revealed the following sequence of deposits:

- 0.00 \Rightarrow 0.15 concrete slab
- 0.15 \Rightarrow 0.25 rubble
- 0.25 \Rightarrow 0.29 stone (flags?)
- 0.29 \Rightarrow 0.43 hardcore
- 0.43 \Rightarrow 0.75 hardcore and gravel
- 0.75 \Rightarrow concrete

4.5 Trench 5.

This trench, excavated by machine to a depth of 0.76 metres, revealed the following sequence of deposits:

0.00 ⇒ 0.16concrete slab
 0.16 ⇒ 0.24rubble
 0.24 ⇒ 0.29stone (flags?)
 0.29 ⇒ 0.45hardcore
 0.45 ⇒ 0.76hardcore and gravel
 0.76 ⇒concrete

4.6 Trench 6.

This trench, excavated by machine to a depth of 0.75 metres, revealed the following sequence of deposits:

0.00 ⇒ 0.16concrete slab
 0.16 ⇒ 0.24rubble
 0.24 ⇒ 0.29stone (flags?)
 0.29 ⇒ 0.44hardcore
 0.44 ⇒ 0.75hardcore and gravel
 0.75 ⇒concrete

4.7 Trench 7.

This trench was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.80 metres, and revealed the following sequence of deposits:

0.00 ⇒ 0.10concrete slab
 0.10 ⇒ 0.18sand
 0.18 ⇒ 0.28brick footings
 0.28 ⇒ 0.32sand
 0.32 ⇒ 0.51gravel and hardcore
 0.51 ⇒ 0.61sand, gravel and hardcore rubble
 0.61 ⇒ 0.80concrete with frequent rubble inclusions.

4.8 Trench 8.

This trench was situated across the end of the site adjacent to New Quay Road, and was excavated by machine to a depth of 1.16 metres. The wall of the neighbouring property had a damp course at a depth of 0.95 metres below the pavement level, suggesting that the ground had been raised quite considerably. The following sequence of deposits was revealed:

0.00 ⇒ 0.06Tarmac
 0.06 ⇒ 0.19Sand and gravel bedding
 0.19 ⇒ 0.27Concrete slab

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 0.27 ⇒ 0.36 | concrete and rubble |
| 0.36 ⇒ 0.60 | sandstone blocks and fragments in a matrix of hardcore and sand |
| 0.60 ⇒ 0.92 | sand, gravel and hardcore mixture |
| 0.92 ⇒ 1.07 | concrete |
| 1.07 ⇒ 1.16 | hardcore and gravel |
| 1.16 ⇒ | brick (footings?), covered in layer of mortar |

4.9 Trench 9.

This trench ran north-west, south-east, along the eastern boundary at the New Quay Road end of site. It was excavated by machine to a depth of 0.71m and was 1m in width. The following sequence of deposits was revealed:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 0.00 ⇒ 0.02 | Tarmac |
| 0.02 ⇒ 0.12 | Concrete |
| 0.12 ⇒ 0.20 | Concrete and pebble mix |
| 0.20 ⇒ 0.62 | Brick fragments and rubble in a clay matrix |
| 0.62 ⇒ 0.71 | Concrete |

5. Conclusions

The ground-works carried out on site had no impact on any features or deposits of archaeological significance. Given the presence of the old harbour wall beneath the Plough public house, it would seem highly probable that archaeological material is extant on the site. If this is the case, however, it is preserved at a greater depth than that to which the groundworks penetrated. Although there was no direct evidence, it is possible that the sandstone blocks encountered in trench 8 were re-used stones from the earlier harbour wall.

6. Bibliography

Edwards, W. 1924. *The early history of the North Riding*.

Victoria County Histories. 1968. *North Yorkshire Riding*. Volume II

Sythes, D.G. 1996. *Significant Dates in Whitby's History*. Privately published pamphlet

Daysh, G.H.J (ed.). 1958. *A Survey of Whitby and the surrounding area*. Windsor: The Shakespear Head Press.

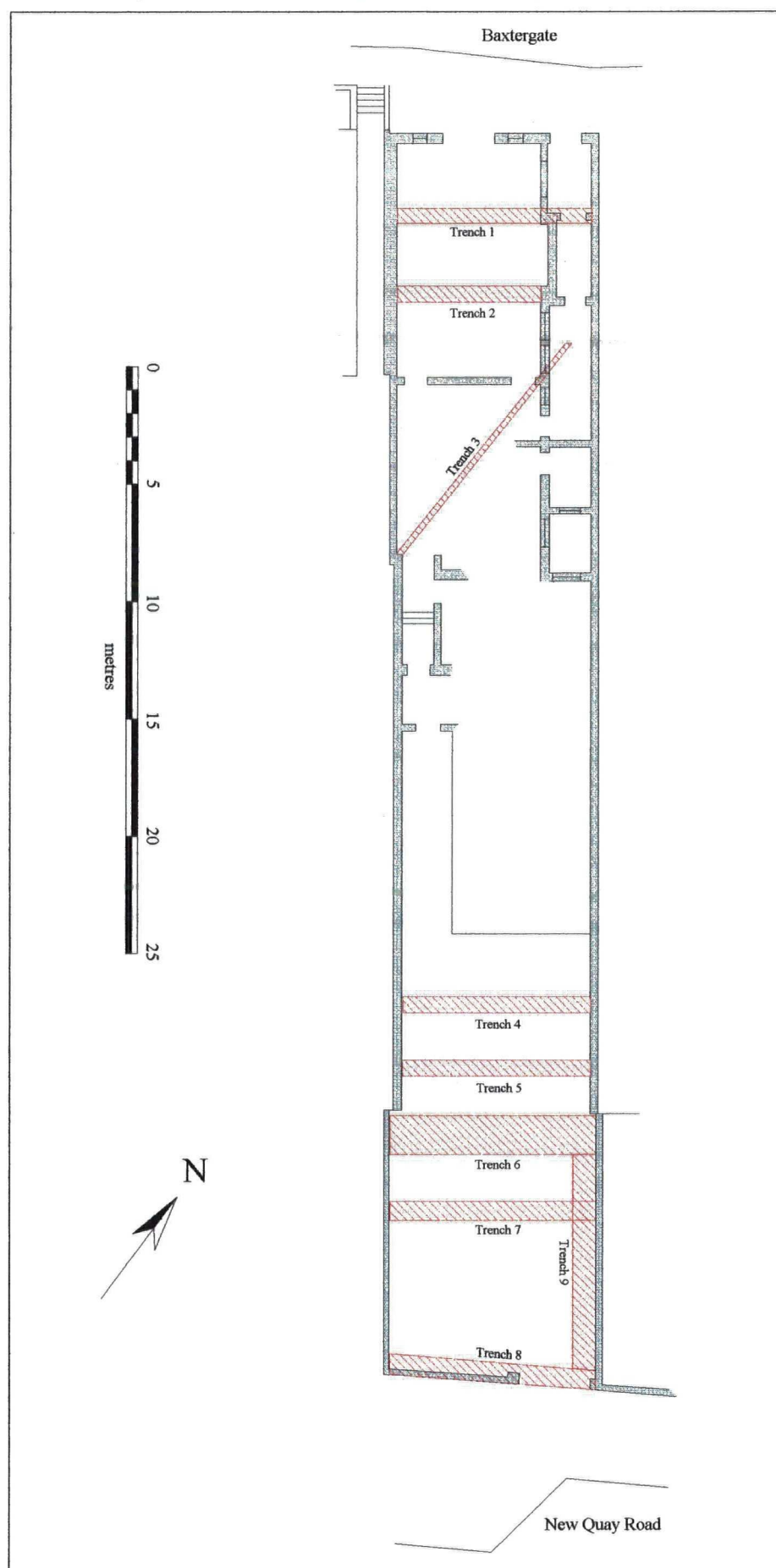


Figure 2. Location of areas monitored during watching brief.