

An Archaeological Excavation at The Newcastle Packet,

Sandside, Scarborough

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by Trevor Pearson



Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society Interim Report 32: 2000

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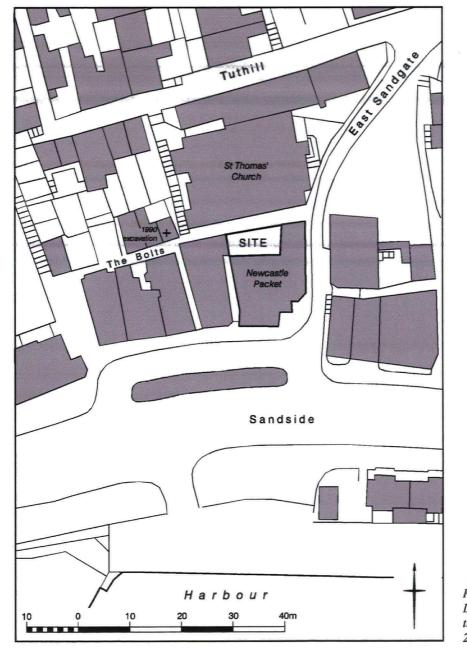
Illustration of medieval carved timber post at the Newcastle Packet, Sandside (Chapman 1899, plate 22)

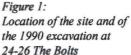
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INTRODUCTION

Over the weekend of 8-9 January 2000 the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society undertook an excavation in a small enclosed yard on the north side of the Newcastle Packet public house at 13 Sandside, Scarborough in advance of the construction of a rear extension across part of the yard (National Grid Reference 504820 488820; Figure 1). The excavation was at the request of Scottish and Newcastle Pub Enterprises and took place to comply with planning advice provided by the archaeology section of the County Council who had previously highlighted the possible archaeological importance of the site. The excavation allowed an assessment of the archaeological significance of the site to be made following which the Society maintained a watching brief during the initial stages of the building work in the last two weeks of January. A second small excavation took place on 23 January to investigate features revealed during the watching brief. The Society's code for the site is NP00 and the excavation archive and finds are held by Scarborough Museum with the accession code of 2000.632.





HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is on the south side of the historic town (Figure 2) less than 60m from the harbour. Claims have been made that the foreshore area was settled in the Roman and Viking periods (Farmer 1988) and earlier still, possible prehistoric exploitation of the shoreline is attested by the occasional discovery of artefacts (Pearson 1987, 8). The establishment of a planned town at Scarborough during the reign of Henry II in the middle of the twelfth century was the main impetus for the development of the harbour and throughout most of the following centuries this was the most densly settled part of the town. Indeed, the evidence suggests that such was the demand for building land around the foreshore in the medieval period that ground was reclaimed from the sea by dumping soil and household refuse into the harbour. The waterfront consequently moved further and further out into the waters of the South Bay in response

to the reclamation process (Pearson 1995, 179-181). Current understanding of how the harbour developed in the middle ages suggests the site is part of an area that was not brought into development until after the middle of the 13th century. This is because the site is immediately to the south (and therefore on the seawards side) of the narrow alleyway called The Bolts, which evidence suggests was the watefront up until the middle of the 13th century. A hundred years later the waterfront was probably around 20m further out into the South Bay on the line of modern Sandside, the ground between it and The Bolts, which includes the present site, having been consolidated and built upon sometime between 1250 and 1350. The remains of a medieval building which was built on this reclaimed ground is preserved on the outside of the west wall of the Newcastle Packet. A two storey timber frame which includes a carved

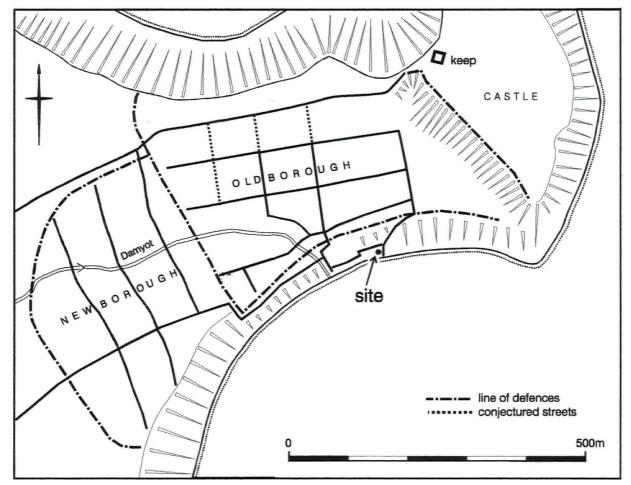


Figure 2: Medieval Scarborough showing the location of the site

post (see frontispiece) is all that survives of an impressive medieval building which was demolished in 1899 to make way for the present public house (Hall, forthcoming). It is possible that the building was the Hall of Pleas which is referred to in this vicinity in the 14th century (Jeayes 1914, 26c).

The only documented excavation which has taken place in proximity to the present site was in 1990, 20m to the west on the opposite side of The Bolts at Nos. 24-26 (Pearson 1990). This dig found household refuse had been dumped on the natural shoreline in the medieval period in an effort to raise and consolidate the ground for building. The original beach level was found at a height of 4.0m above Ordnance datum and comprised a deposit of clayey sand. The medieval deposits at 24-26 The Bolts were waterlogged and organic remains such as wood and leather were consequently well-preserved. It was anticipated that similar waterlogged conditions might be encountered on the present site.

The first published map of Scarborough (Cossins 1725) shows a building over the area of the yard, as do subsequent maps including the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan of 1910. The opening up of the yard has therefore occurred during the last ninety years.

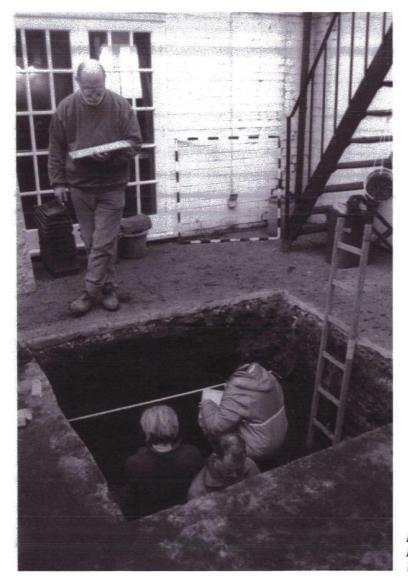


Figure 3 Excavation in progress in Trench One. View looking east

THE EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF (Figures 4-9)

The rear yard of the Newcastle Packet measured 10m x 4m and was bordered by the rear wall of the Newcastle Packet on the south and by a wing projecting from the back of the Newcastle Packet on the east. The exterior brick wall of 12 Sandside formed the west side of the yard whilst a high free-standing brick wall on the north ran along the boundary with the Bolts (Figure 4). A gate set into the wall gave access to the yard from The Bolts, the level of the yard being some 0.8m below that of the alley.

A small boiler house stood in the south-west corner of the yard and adjacent to it a short flight of steps led down to a private rear entrance to the public house. Further along the north wall of the Newcastle Packet, an external staircase gave access to a flat roof at first floor level. The intital excavation trench (Trench One) measured 1.8m x 1.8m was positioned towards the south-east corner of the yard. The second trench (Trench Two) measuring 4m x 1.4m was excavated along the west side of the yard. The results of these two excavations and the watching brief are considered together in the following chronological discussion of the discoveries.

NATURAL

Natural reddish yellow sand was encountered in Trench Two at a depth of 2.3m below the surface of the yard at a height of 3.36m above Ordnance datum. The sand was excavated to a depth of 0.5m revealing a layer of rock fragments and pebbles at which point excavation ceased. No artefacts was recovered from either the layer of rock fragments or the overlying sand and it was concluded they represent the natural shoreline.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The medieval deposits encountered in Trenches One and Two were broadly the same, consisting of a

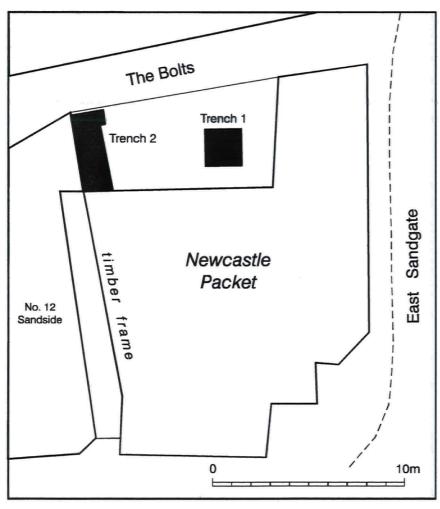


Figure 4: Newcastle Packet showing the location of Trenches One and Two

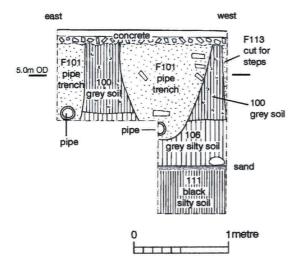
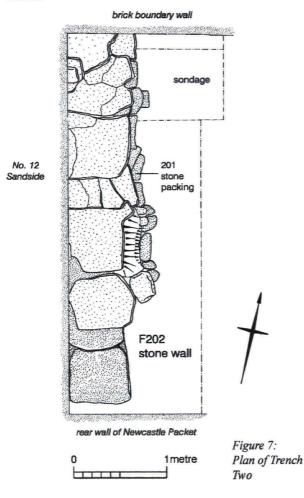


Figure 5: Trench One, north facing section

featureless and mostly dry silty soil with various lenses of sand, charcoal and darker organic material. In Trench One modern service pipes restricted the area available for excavation and consequently medieval deposits were mostly excavated in two small sondages against the east and west sections of the trench.



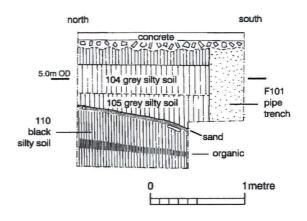


Figure 6: Trench One, west facing section

The deepest medieval deposit in Trench One was in the sondage against the west section where a layer of waterlogged grey silty soil (layer 112) containing small stones and charcoal fragments came to light at a depth of 1.9m (3.58m. above Ordnance datum). This layer, which was not excavated, was overlain by a loose grey/black silty soil (layer 111) containing lenses of reddy-yellow sand and a dump of small rocks and beach pebbles dipping gently from north to south. The same grey/black silty soil came to light in the sondage against the east section of Trench One (layer 110) and it contained lenses of black organic material and reddish brown sand also dipping gently from north to south but the dump of rocks within layer 111 did not continue this far across the trench. The black silty soil in Trench One (layers 110 and 111) was overlain by a more grey coloured silty soil excavated in two spits in the west sondage (layers 103 and 106) and two in the east sondage (layers 104 and 105).

In Trench Two the medieval deposits consisted of the same grey-black silty soil within which was a black organic deposit (layer 205) which noticeably thickened from north to south. The grey-black silty soil below the organic deposit (layer 206) rested on the natural sand at a height of 3.36m above Ordnance datum, whilst the silty soil above the organic layer had been truncated during the course of the construction work (layer 204).

The same construction work also revealed a stone wall immediately below the west boundary of the site. The wall (F202) ran the length of the west boundary and projected some 0.9m into the yard. Up

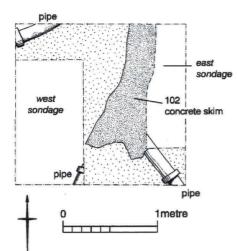


Figure 8: Plan of Trench One

to three courses of flat laid slabs were observed but there was no sign of any bonding material. Small stones in grey-black silty soil packed against the outside edge of the wall (layer 201) were all that remained of the backfill of the foundation trench for the wall, the rest having been removed by the contractors when the yard level was lowered. However, the shallow-sided foundation trench (F203) was observed in section in the stratigraphy exposed by the contractors below the north boundary wall of the yard. The contractors preserved the wall from further damage although several slabs at the south end were removed to facilitate the construction of a new drain run.

POST MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The medieval deposits in Trench One were cut by two drain pipe trenches (F101 and F107) and by the footings of the steps leading down to the rear entrance of the Newcastle Packet (F113). No other post-medieval activity was recorded on the site.

The drain pipe trench F101 had disturbed the upper levels of Trench One quite widely. It was up to 1.2m deep, widening considerably from south to north to accommodate the fact that the pipe run split in two directions. The trench was backfilled with loose grey/black soil containing fragments of brick, tile mortar chacroal and shells (layer 100) and the two pipes were protected by a thin skim of concrete (layer 102). It was noted in the south section of Trench One that both sections of the split pipe run were in separate steep-sided trenches cut into layer 100 and were backfilled with deposits containing slightly more brick and tile fragments than layer 100. These two cuts were not recognised as separate features during the excavation of F101 but their existence points to there being two phases of pipe trench construction; the wide cut F101 with its backfill layer 100 being the primary phase and the two steep-sided cuts secondary. One side of another pipe trench was noted in the north-west corner of Trench One (F107). It was backfilled with a loose grey/black soil containing brick and mortar fragments and cut into the footings trench (F113) for the steps down to the rear entrance of the Newcastle Packet. The footings trench was backfilled with a loose red/brown sandy soil (layer 114). The latest feature on the site was the concrete yard surface which rested on a bed of brick rubble.



Figure 9: Trench One viewed from above showing concrete skim (layer 102) protecting pipe trench F101 (north at top of photograph)

DISCUSSION

The main result of the archaeological investigation at the rear of the Newcastle Packet was that it established that extensive medieval deposits survived on the site and that they in turn rest on a natural beach level. The character of the medieval deposits, particularly the fact that they appear to dip gently from north to south, suggests they entirely comprise material deliberately dumped onto the beach from a northerly direction. This supports the idea that the site is on reclaimed land, the purpose of the dumps being to raise and consolidate the ground in preparation for the erection of a building. The pottery dating evidence is in keeping with a mid-13th to mid-14th century date for the reclamation which was presumably connected with the establishment of a waterfront further south, perhaps on the line of modern Sandside. The analysis of a soil sample from Trench Two (layer 206) suggests material dumped onto the site originated as household refuse containing food waste and litter (see Appendix One).

The only remains of a building found on the site was the stone wall F202 running along the west boundary of the yard. Its use of large stone slabs without any bonding suggests it is likely to be medieval in date. However, though on roughly the same alignment as the medieval timber frame outside the west wall of the Newcastle Packet, there is no evidence that the two were ever part of the same building.

The excavation left questions unanswered about the details of the reclamation process. The soil sample analysis suggests the site may have been invaded by seawater on at least one occasion but it is not clear if the site was above or below high water mark before the reclamation process began. No evidence was found for a stone and timber watefront along the line of The Bolts. Indeed, the excavation evidence suggests there is more likely just a gently sloping beach below The Bolts since the sand horizon recorded in Trench Two at 3.36m above Ordnance datum is only 0.6m below that found in the 1990 excavation on the opposite side of the alley at 24-26 The Bolts. The medieval deposits on the site were not waterlogged to the same extent as those found in the 1990 excavation. This may be because the profusion of drains on the site has caused the stratigraphy to gradually dry out. Also, compared to the 1990 site, the yard is slightly further from the base of the slope representing the original cliff line around the margins of the South Bay and it may be subsurface drainage ponding at the bottom of this slope which caused the medieval layers at 24-26 The Bolts to be waterlogged.

The fact that medieval deposits were encountered immediately below the surface of the yard and that almost entirely medieval pottery was recovered from the excavation and watching brief strongly suggest that levels dating to the post-medieval period have been destroyed, perhaps when the present Newcastle Packet was built. The fact that the yard is 0.8m below the level of The Bolts strongly suggests the ground level has been lowered resulting in the unrecorded destruction of post-medieval deposits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was arranged in consultation with Mr S Hague of Scottish and Newcastle Pub Enterprises, Mr D Millard of Andrew Bramley Architects and Ms G Falkingham from the Heritage Unit of North Yorkshire County Council. The excavation was undertaken by the following members of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society:- Martin Bland, Alex Charles, Rachel Cubitt, Chris Evans, Rowena Haley, Chris Hall and Jim and Sue Mortimer. The watching brief was undertaken by Chris Evans and Chris Hall.

The contractors. Edgedale Developments Limited are thanked for arranging the removal of the concrete yard surface across the site of Trench One and for their co-operation during the watching brief. Mrs K Duffy and her staff at the Newcastle Packet are thanked for assisting with access to the site and John Hobson for help with moving tools.

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APPENDIX ONE:

Evaluation of biological remains from excavations at Newcastle Packet, 13 Sandside, Scarborough (site code: NP00)

by Allan Hall, Harry Kenward, Stephen Rowland, Deborah Jaques and John Carrott

Summary

One sediment sample from deposits revealed by excavations at Newcastle Packet, 13 Sandside, Scarborough, was submitted for an evaluation of its bioarchaeological potential.

The biological remains recovered were typical of a medieval urban assemblage formed in a dump or midden with food waste and litter (perhaps flooded by seawater on at least one occasion).

Further investigation (of a larger subsample) should clarify the nature of the dumped material, and perhaps indicate the length of time for which it was exposed after dumping.

KEYWORDS: NEWCASTLE PACKET; 13 SANDSIDE; SCARBOROUGH; NORTH YORK-SHIRE; EVALUATION; PLANT REMAINS; CHARRED PLANT REMAINS; INSECTS; VER-TEBRATE REMAINS Authors' address: Palaeoecology Research Services Environmental Archaeology Unit Department of Biology P. O. Box 373 University of York York YO10 5YW

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Introduction

An archaeological excavation was carried out by Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society at Newcastle Packet, 13 Sandside, Scarborough, in January 2000. One sediment sample ('GBA'/'BS' sensu Dobney et al. 1992) was recovered from the deposits and submitted to the EAU for evaluation of its bioarchaeological potential.

Methods

The submitted sediment sample was inspected in the laboratory and its lithology recorded using a standard pro forma. The sample was processed, following the procedures of Kenward et al. (1980; 1986), for recovery of plant and invertebrate macrofossils.

Plant macrofossils were examined from the residue and flot resulting from processing. The flot was also examined for invertebrate remains, especially insects, and the residue was examined for other biological and artefactual remains.

Results

The results are presented in context number order (a sample number has been derived from the context number for internal record keeping purposes). Archaeological information, provided by the excavator, is presented in square brackets.

Context 206 [The dump deposit containing the organic layer 206 rested upon a sand horizon interpreted as the natural beach level. The deposit may have been deliberately dumped in an effort to consolidate and raise the ground level prior to building on the foreshore]

Sample 20601 (1 kg processed to 300 microns with paraffin flotation)

Just moist, mid grey to mid grey-brown, crumbly, sandy silt with fine and coarse herbaceous detritus. Stones (6 to 30 mm), coal and charcoal were present in the sample.

The moderate-sized residue of about 250 cm3 produced a washover of about 50-75 cm3 which comprised woody detritus and charcoal, the former mostly bark fragments (to 15 mm) and hazel (Corylus avellana L.) nutshell. The remainder was largely sand and gravel with traces of cinders, coal and mortar, and some small fragments of decayed leather (to 30 mm). Thirteen bone fragments were also recovered. All were identified as fish and included a chopped and burnt gadid vertebra, a herring vertebra

and a thorn back ray (Raja clavata L.) dermal denticle fragment. Preservation was good, although the edges of the fragments were quite rounded, which may suggest that the material was redeposited.

Amongst the identifiable plant remains there was a range of taxa representing heathland (mainly various vegetative fragments of heather, Calluna vulgaris (L.) Hull), with weeds of waste ground and cereals fields, and a variety of other habitats. There were vegetative fragments of bracken (Pteridium aquilinum (L.) Kuhn), too. Foodplants were moderately well represented, the list including (in addition to hazel nutshell) bran of oats (Avena) and wheat/rye (Triticum/Secale), seeds of fig (Ficus carica L.) and endocarp ('core') of apple (Malus sylvestris Miller), though all were present in very small amounts. The flot contained mostly 'grassy' plant debris.

Preservation of insect remains was rather good, though numbers of fossils were not large. Four components were evident: grain pests (Sitophilus granarius and Oryzaephilus ?surinamensis); 'house fauna' (e.g. Tipnus unicolor, Xylodromus concinnus, Cryptophagus spp., Lathridius minutus group and Anobium punctatum); foul decomposers (e.g. Platystethus arenarius, Anotylus nitidulus and Aphodius sp.); and salt-impregnated decaying matter (Cercyon littoralis or depressus). A single Monotoma ?picipes offered the weakest of hints that stable manure was present.

Discussion and statement of potential

Overall, the remains gave the impression of a typical medieval urban assemblage formed in a dump or midden with food waste and litter (perhaps flooded by seawater on at least one occasion). It is somewhat similar to material observed at 24-6 The Bolts in 1990 (Hall and Kenward 1990), though there the plant remains were presumably very much less strongly decayed so that the deposit consisted largely of plant detritus. In the present case the combination of plant and insect remains offers a hint of the presence of stable manure in addition to other waste.

A larger subsample of, say, 5 kg would provide sufficient insect remains for full analysis, which together with the plant data should clarify the nature of the dumped material, and perhaps indicate the length of time for which it was exposed after dumping.

Recommendations

Ideally a full analysis should be made, and the results related to those from the Bolts.

Retention and disposal

The remaining sediment from this deposit should be retained for the present.

Archive

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Trevor Pearson of Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society for providing the material and the archaeological information, and to English Heritage for allowing AH and HK to contribute to this report.

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APPENDIX TWO: FINDS CATALOGUE

Pottery sorted by context showing weight in grams (Wt) and number (No) of sherds per fabric type.

TRENCH ONE

CONTEXT	WEIGHT	т	le		arb. are	Sta	cton	Stone	eware		dent. ed	Post	-med
		Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No
100	760	40	1	150	3	170	4			340	16	60	5
103	160			30	2					130	9		
104	240			10	4	110	6			120	10		
105	170	25	1			45	4			100	3		
106	250			35	3	100	4			115	11		
109	150			20	2	30	1			100	9		
110	110			110	8								
111	1610	100	2	770	23	440	18			320	15		

TRENCH TWO

CONTEXT	WEIGHT	П	le		arb. are	Sta	xton	Stone	eware		dent. ed	Post	-med
		Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No
200	710	270	3	140	4					295	15		
201	115	95	1	20	1								3
204	125			5	30	10	2			85	11		
205	620			100	10	20	4			500	21		
206	850	280	4	40	10					530	46		

MACHINING

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CONTEXT WEIGHT		Tile		Scarb. Ware		Staxton		Stoneware		Unident. Med		Post-med	
		Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No
machining	820			180	2	40	1			500	11		

Bone sorted by context showing number and weight (in grams) of bones present in Trench One (left) and Trench Two (right)

CONTEXT	NUMBER	WEIGHT
100	36	450
103	26	200
104	38	200
105	23	330
106	22	300
108	1	20
109	2	20
110	35	390
111	47	780

CONTEXT	NUMBER	WEIGHT
200	9	197
201	3	5
204	46	170
205	33	245
206	67	780

context	material	no of items	identification
104	iron	10	slag?
104	copper alloy	1	strap end
105	iron	1	slag
110	lead	1	sheet
111	leather	10	offcut
111	flint	3	nodule
204	bone	1	stylus
205	flint	5	fragment
206	iron	2	lumps
machining	stone	1	roof slate
machining	iron	1	spike
machining	iron	1	nail

Small finds sorted by context showing material, number of items and identification

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