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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

THE BAILEY

SKIPTON

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Coords **SD 39943 45213**

COUNTY / PARISH NO. 5063

FOR

SKIPTON BUILDING SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2000

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**THE BAILEY
SKIPTON
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
SEPTEMBER 1998 - AUGUST 1999**

INTRODUCTION

In May 1998 the Bowman Riley Partnership acting on behalf of the Skipton Building Society instructed Kevin John Cale, Archaeological Consultant to carry out an archaeological desk top study in advance of the commencement of groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the headquarters building at the Bailey, Skipton, North Yorkshire.

The study was undertaken in order to locate and assess any archaeology that maybe situated within the study area and thereafter establish the likely impact of the proposed works on these remains

The desktop study indicated that the area proposed for development had a low potential to contain archaeological remains.

The documentary, cartographic and photographic evidence consulted would suggest that there is a very slight possibility that archaeological features and deposits survive across the site, these are likely to be agricultural structures associated with the boundaries of the late 18th century field configuration together with a possible agricultural track way. Furthermore with the sites close proximity to the defences of Skipton Castle the possibilities of identifying features and deposits associated with military activities across the site cannot be ruled out. However, because of the high levels of disturbance across the site in the last 50 years the probability of the survival of archaeological evidence, in situ, is unlikely.

Prior to the commencement of groundworks The Deputy Archaeologist, Heritage Unit, North Yorkshire County Council informed the Client that it would be necessary for the groundworks across the site to be monitored as an Archaeological Watching Brief. This condition would help to recover and record any archaeological remains and where at all possible to minimise the impact that these works may have on the archaeology

FIGURE 1

GENERAL SITE LOCATION

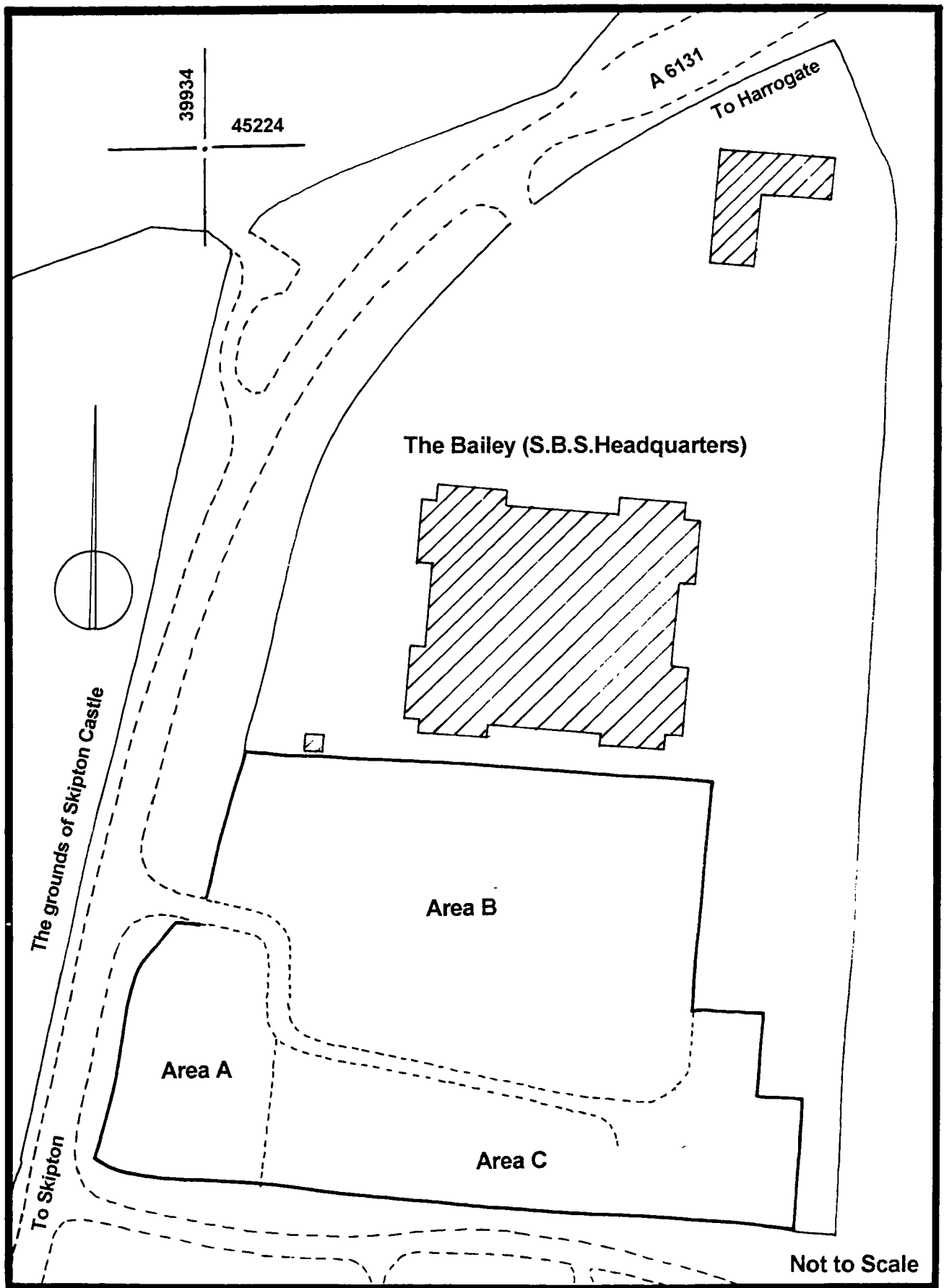


PLATE 1, 2 & 3



LOCATION AND STATUS

The Town of Skipton:

Skipton is situated within the suburban township of Skipton, on the confluence of a number of shallow valleys on the hinterland of the Pennine uplands

The town is situated on the interface between the millstone gnt geology of the uplands and the late glacial lake deposits of the low lying plain to the south east.

Eller Beck a minor tributary of the River Aire bisects the market town. The old town centre is situated on a prominent rise, approximately 114 metres above sea level, benefiting from a commanding aspect overlooking the flood plain of the River Aire. This area of rising ground is contained to the north and west by a steep sided wooded ravine that channels Eller Beck.

The Study Area:

The Skipton Building Society Headquarters are located within the north eastern extent of the market town of Skipton, immediately adjacent to the A6131 road leading to Knaresborough. The general area is referred to as The Bailey due to the close proximity of Skipton Castle. The study area is situated to the immediate south of the existing and recently constructed office buildings at National Grid Reference SD 39943 45214 at 137 m AOD.

The site measures approximately 160m x 100m and falls gradually from the north to the south. The ground levels within the central and northern extent of the study area have been recently landscaped to produce a relatively level lawn and gardens; the remainder of the site is occupied by car parking

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the commencement of works a consultation of the Sites and Monuments Record, NYCC and the County Records Office, Northallerton was made in conjunction with a rapid site inspection. From which the following recent historical development of the site was compiled.

Early 19th Century

The earliest cartographic source of the area is a Plan of Skipton made for the Earl of Thanet in 1830. The site is depicted on the south eastern edge of this map as consisting of three enclosed fields (A, B & C).

Field A - No 362

The largest of the three fields situated in the centre and north of the site. The field is contained to the north and west by the Skipton to Knaresborough road, to the south by the eastern aligned boundary with Field B, the nature of the eastern boundary can not be determined as it projects beyond the area surveyed. The point of access into the field is not depicted. A small number of mature trees are shown as being spaced intermittently along the northern boundary. The field shows no indication of having been developed or as supporting any associated features. It would appear that the line of the Skipton to Knaresborough road has determined the configuration of the field, it is suspected to be the product of the late 18th century enclosure.

Field B - No 363

This narrow strip field is sandwiched between fields A and C and is situated within the centre south of the site. The field is aligned, predominantly east with a slight east north east return towards the east. The north eastern area of the field is obscured by an illustration. The field is enclosed on all sides, to the west by the Skipton Knaresborough road. A single mature tree is situated mid length on its northern boundary. The point of access into the field is not depicted. The field shows no indication of having been developed or as supporting any associated features. It would appear that the configuration of the field has been determined by the line of the Skipton to Knaresborough road to the west and possible track way to the south. It is possible that the planform and characteristics of the field have their origins in the selection strip land allocation of the pre 18th century common fields.

Field C - No.364

This irregular shaped field broadens to the west and east with a central sinuous section. The field is situated to the immediate south of field B, with only the northern extent of the field lying within the study area. The field is contained to the west by the Skipton to Knaresborough road, to the north by the field B to the south by a rectilinear boundary, to the south east the field is open affording direct access into a narrow strip field that is aligned north north west. This unusual configuration of the field would suggest that prior to the late 18th century enclosure this area functioned as a track way affording access to and from the Skipton / Knaresborough road into the open common fields.

On a Plan of Skipton made for the Earl of Thanet by John Wood dated 1832, the site is depicted within the north eastern corner of the map. Upon which the site is occupied by two fields, the configuration of which slightly differ from that described above, namely by the amalgamation of field B into field A.

Field A is named New Close ----- (the third component of the name is illegible) the field supports ridge and furrow cultivation which is aligned east. It is of note that the cultivation continues on a similar alignment into that the triangular shaped field to the west of the Skipton / Knaresborough road suggesting that a single, large cultivated field had been bisected by the construction of the thoroughfare

Field C is similar in form and character to that depicted in 1830, with the exception that it does not open out into the field to the south east. The field is not shown as supporting ridge and furrow, but the field to the south does indicate that an area of ridge and furrow aligned north may have originally continued into field C.

Mid 19th Century

The two maps are available for this period, both were surveyed by the Ordnance Survey at 6" to the mile and date to 1853 and 1854. The study area is depicted as being contained within the curtilage of a single large field, this field is the amalgamation of field A and B as depicted on the 1830 map. This field is devoid of development, but is traversed by a track way that would appear to afford access from the Knaresborough road to an isolated un-named property to the immediate east of the study area. This track way is aligned east and forks at its eastern extent, with at least one mature tree along its length. The location and alignment of the track appears to match the line of the northern boundary of field B, 1830.

It is of note that field C that, has previously, contained the study area to the south has changed in form and use. The northern boundary of this field has shifted south onto the boundary of the study area, furthermore the eastern extent of the field has been developed with an isolated dwelling, named as Overdale surrounded by woodland.

Early 20th Century

On the Ordnance Survey 25" to the mile map of 1938 the study area is contained within the boundaries of a single field, the size and form of which respect that as depicted on the 1854 map. A narrow, curvilinear strip of land, running parallel with the western boundary is marked and shaded. The track way affording access to the isolated property to the east of the site is marked as before as is the configuration of the southern boundary of the study area. Further development of the Overdale site, together with development of the "green fields" to the south east of the study area

Mid 20th Century

During the post war years the site was taken over and run by the local Agricultural College, this resulted in the construction of temporary classrooms and implement

storage units within the southern extent of the study area. The remainder of the study area, it is understood, was utilised for ploughing practice. From the OS 1:25,000 map it would appear that the college buildings were situated to the south of that track way as depicted on the 1938 map, the track being utilised for site access. During the post war years housing development had encroached to the east of the site with the construction of the Spring Gardens / Regent Road Estate, together with further infill of the Overdale site. Running adjacent to the southern boundary of the site a public right of way was established forming pedestrian access between the Knaresborough Road (A6131) and Regent Road.

Recent Years

During recent years, the study area has been acquired by the Skipton Building Society who during the late 1980's and early 1990's developed the central and northern extent of the site. These works resulted in the construction of the Main Office Building, The Bailey, and associated ancillary buildings, service roads and car parking facilities. The southern half the study area was cleared of the temporary classrooms, their hard standings were utilised as overspill car parking. Elsewhere the rough waste ground that had been used for ploughing practice was de-turfed, topsoiled and then backfilled and graded for the existing lawned area.

This programme of construction works and landscaping revealed that limestone bedrock was within 0.20 m of the former ground levels within the centre north of the site.

THE NATURE OF THE WORKS

Metal Detector Prospecting

Prior to the commencement of any site works it was kindly agreed by the Skipton Building Society that metal detecting prospecting could take place across the site.

Mr. Kevin Woods was invited onto site on three occasions throughout the works, namely;

- . To initially prospect the grassed covered areas prior to the commencement of any ground disturbance.
- . And twice subsequently following the removal of turf, topsoil and overburden from across the site.

It was agreed that this work would be undertaken in a controlled manor and under direct archaeological supervision Any archaeological finds that were identified during the detecting would be individually bagged, labelled and catalogued, the location of each artefact was accurately plotted on site plan

The Archaeological Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is required during: -

- The removal of turf and topsoil from across the central and northern extent of the site
- The removal of any overburden, buried top soils and the upper level of sub soil from all areas of the site subject to such excavations by tracked excavator.
- The excavation of service and drainage trench's within the southern extent of the development area

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Prior to the commencement of groundworks, it was considered that there was a low potential for the preservation of buried archaeological remains across the site

It was anticipated that should archaeology survive it would most likely comprise of a medieval / post medieval plough soil associated with the common fields surrounding Skipton, and or a sequence of deposits / remains of previously un-recorded structures associated with the Medieval and Post Medieval settlement Furthermore given the sites close proximity to Skipton Castle it was likely that artefacts associated with Medieval and Post Medieval hostilities round the perimeter defences could be identified.

The aims of the archaeological investigation were as follows

- a to record any finds, features or structures of archaeological interest and obtain information on the presence, extent, character, date and depth of these remains,
- b to assess the importance of any remains found and interpret them in terms of their historical context

It was agreed that the principal archaeologist would be present, on site, during the machine excavation and removal of any turf / overburden, top soil and upper levels of the sub soil.

In the event that archaeology is exposed during, the above works it is agreed that adequate time is allowed for the archaeologist to record same

SUMMARY

The archaeological supervision of groundworks at the above concluded on Tuesday 24th November 1998. The watching brief was largely negative, however, there follows a brief summary on the works.

As discussed and agreed it was possible to prospect the site with a metal detector. This was undertaken by Mr Kevin Woods an experienced, non vocational detectorist under the supervision of an Archaeologist.

Metal Detector Prospecting

The surveying of all suitable areas, i.e. those responsive to prospecting such as grass and soil covered areas was undertaken, these factors produced a bias towards the northern half of the study area. Three visits to site generated a small assemblage of artefacts.

These were predominantly modern, associated with recent landscaping activities across the site but also included lead musket and pistol shot, together with occasional amorphous fragments of lead a number of which may be associated with ballistics

It is of note that the lead shot varied in type, form and age and was concentrated within the north west corner of the development area. Some of the shot is clearly 17th century in origin and can be attributed to the Civil War, others are late 18th century in date and may be attributed to game, or more likely, target practice

The concentration of spent 17th century ballistics within the north west corner of the site could indicate a line of fire of either outgoing or incoming fire during the siege of Skipton Castle; alternatively, the high levels of disturbance across the remainder of the site associated with recent landscaping may have distorted their distribution pattern.

The prospecting also produced a small assemblage of modern, early 20th century and 19th century coins, the majority of which were heavily abraded, having deteriorated within the prevailing ground conditions.

It is likely that the coin distribution which was widespread reflects casual loss, particularly that attributed to the use of the site as an agricultural college

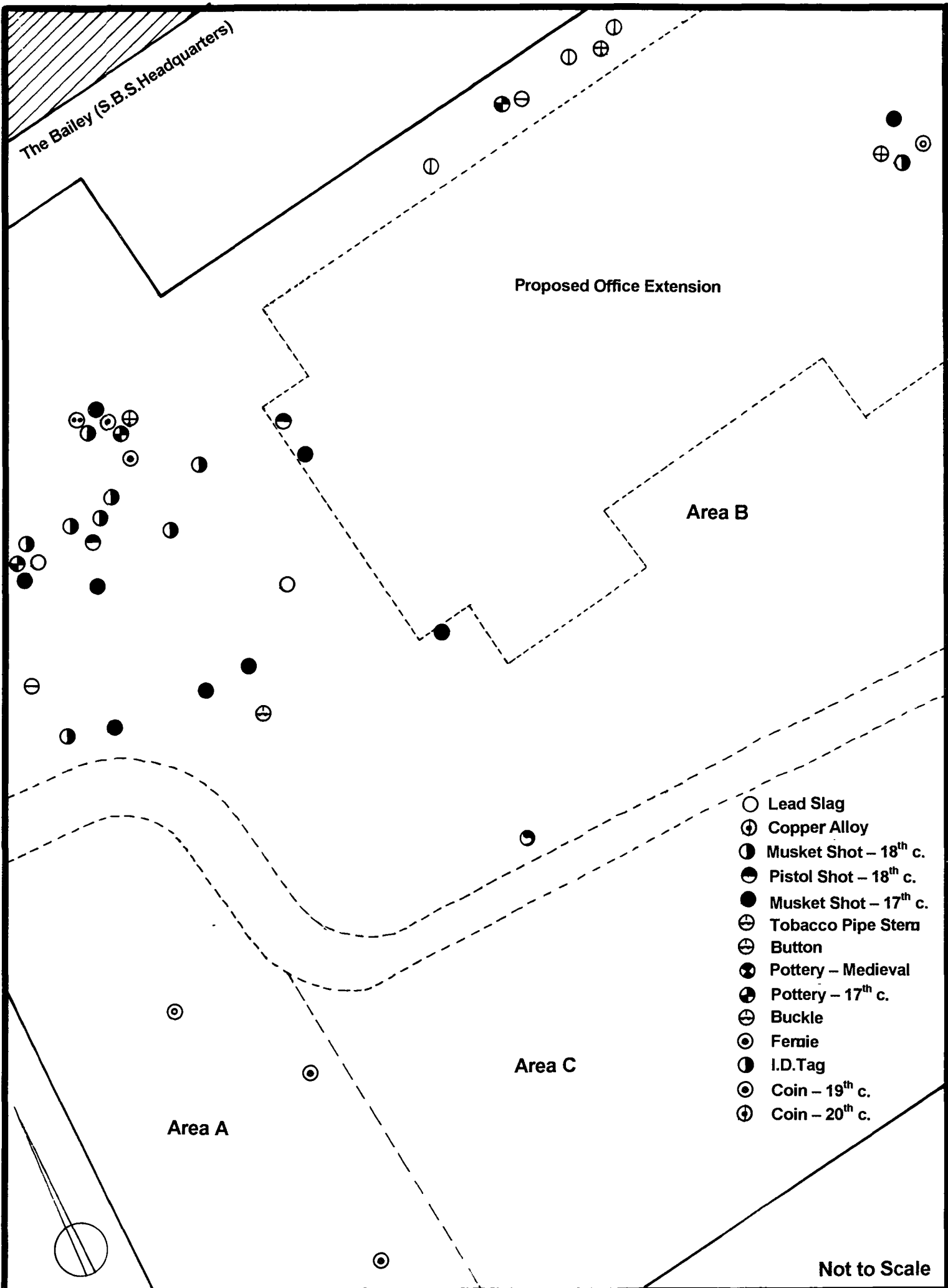
In addition to those artefacts noted above a strip of silver was recovered from the north western area of the site. This small strip had been engraved on one side with a floral motif the artefact was damaged and not complete but has the appearance of a ferrule for a walking stick and as such is thought to be late 18th / early 19th century in date.

In summary the following artefacts were recovered.

Type	Quantity	Date
Lead Slag	5	Unknown
Copper Alloy unclassified	3	Unknown
Musket Shot	8	18 th Century
Pistol Shot	2	18 th Century
Musket Shot	10	17 th Century
Tobacco Pipe Stem	8	Unknown
Button	3	Unknown
Pottery	2	Medieval
Pottery	2	17 th Century
Buckle	1	Unknown
Ferule	1	19 th Century
I.D.Tag	1	20 th Century
Coin	3	19 th Century
Coin	5	20 th Century

FIGURE 2

ARTEFACT DISTRIBUTION



The Watching Brief

A watching brief was maintained throughout all those major aspects of excavation associated with the disturbance of the upper levels of stratigraphy, deep excavations within the sub soils and surface geology were excluded

These groundworks were undertaken during the late autumn / early winter months during which time the weather conditions were particularly inclement, this together with the use of large earthmoving plant made any detailed ground inspection less than ideal.

Archaeological supervision was undertaken during the following -

- The removal of turf and topsoil from across the central and northern extent of the site by bulldozer.
- The removal of any overburden, buried top soils and the upper level of sub soil from all areas of the site subject to such excavations by large 360⁰ tracked excavator.
- The excavation of service and drainage trench's within the southern extent of the development area by large 360⁰ tracked excavator.

The watching brief was largely negative with no significant archaeological features or deposits being identified

It would appear that the paucity of archaeology across the study area reflects the high level of ground disturbance inflicted on the site during recent years associated with the activities of the former Agricultural College, namely ploughing, land drainage and the construction of ancillary buildings together with the recent landscaping works across the centre and northern areas of the site.

This disturbance meant that the potentially archaeologically rich deposits had been contaminated with overburden. Small pockets of less heavily disturbed areas were identified across the development area; here a layer of buried topsoil was identified. However, upon detailed inspection the deposit proved negative

Prior to works commencing it had been anticipated that there was a possibility that linear features such as ditches / trench's may have been cut into this layer, no such evidence was found confirming that the site was devoid of any substantial defences or siege works associated with the castle. It is possible that any such structures that may have occupied the site have since been truncated and destroyed leaving no trace of their form or location