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**BERRY'S AVENUE,  
KNARESBOROUGH  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DESK-TOP STUDY**

**1998 FIELD REPORT  
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**BERRY'S AVENUE, KNARESBOROUGH  
NORTH YORKSHIRE****ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-TOP STUDY****CONTENTS**

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## **1. Introduction**

In August 1998 an archaeological desk-top study was undertaken by York Archaeological Trust on behalf of Adrian Jackson Associates Architectural Services, for C K Batchelor Ltd., on land adjacent to Berry's Avenue, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 3509 5715). The study was undertaken as part of a scheme of archaeological works required as a condition of planning consent by North Yorkshire County Council for the demolition of derelict buildings and the erection of residential properties on the site. The historical and archaeological significance of the study area was assessed using a variety of sources including the sites and monuments record, cartographic evidence and previous archaeological and historical publications.

## **2. Methodology**

The cartographic material held at the County Records Office in Northallerton was initially analysed. The Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR), also in Northallerton, was consulted for additional information as well as York Central Library for archaeological and historical publications. Mary Kershaw, District Archaeologist for the Harrogate District was also contacted for her local expertise. Finally the site was visited and a brief walk-over survey undertaken to assess the current state of the development area.

Site Research notes are currently stored with York Archaeological Trust under the Harrogate Museum accession code HARGM : 9324

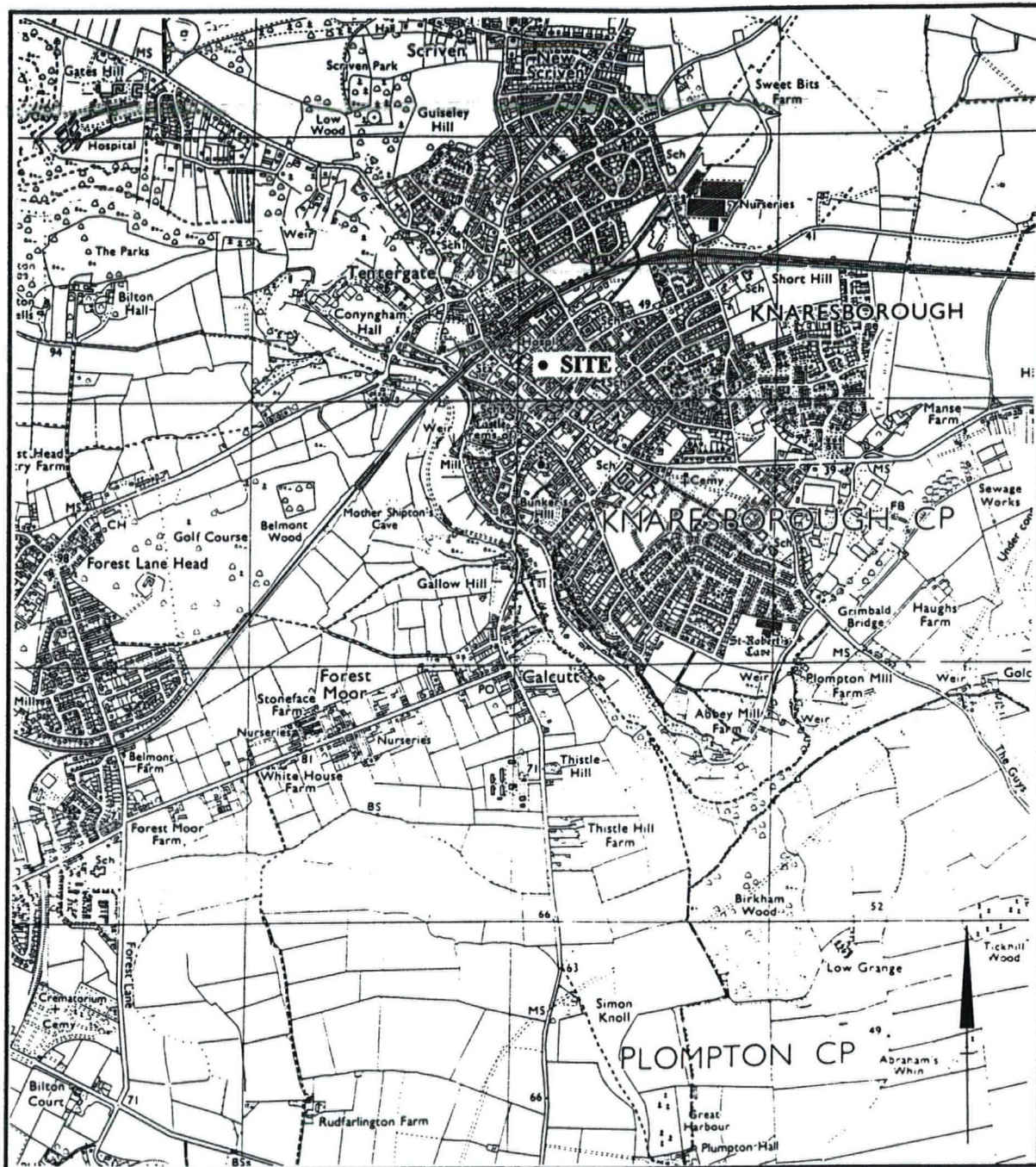
## **3. Geology and Topography**

The development site lies on a ridge of Permian magnesian limestone (Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales) Sheet 62 1967) which is situated on the north-eastern side of Knaresborough. The drift geology of the area is glacial boulder clay laid down during the last ice age. Topographically the development area is interesting as it lies at the top of a steep slope on the eastern side of the core of the medieval town. To the south-west, the land climbs up a long low bank from the High Street (75.8m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)) to the south-western side of the development area, the slope then falls away rapidly to the north-east to Stockwell Road situated at 65.5m (AOD). Potentially, this area therefore could hold information about the medieval town as it is situated right on its western edge. Immediately surrounding the development site are areas of housing and light industry, within a heavily built up area of the town.

## **4. Historical and Archaeological Background**

A number of historical accounts of Knaresborough have been written to various levels of detail although little appears to be known about the origins and early history of the town which is thought to have been closely associated with the castle and situated on the level ground to the north-east of it (Kellet, 1991).

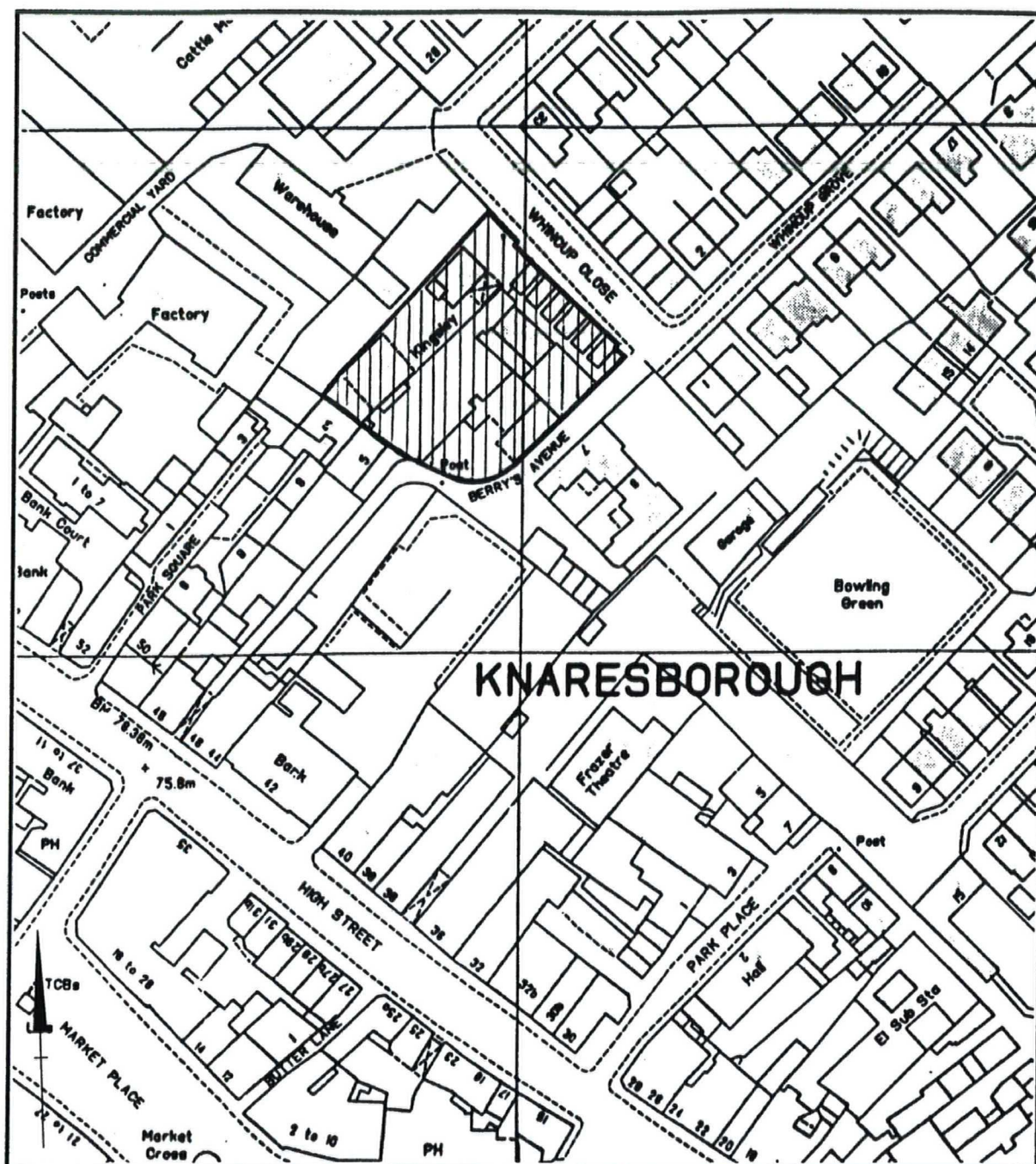




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Figure 1. Site location plan, scale 1:25,000





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Figure 2. Site location, scale 1:1250



Although prehistoric and Roman stray finds have been recovered from Knaresborough no certain evidence has yet been found for pre-Norman settlement despite its pre-Norman name. *Chenaresburgh* is mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 and derives from the Old English personal name *Cenheard*, with the suffix *burh*, meaning a fortified place (Smith 1961). It has therefore been suggested (Tyler, unpub) that Knaresborough was a fortified settlement prior to the Norman conquest. The Domesday book records that it was also a royal estate in pre-Norman times and appears to have remained so after the conquest. Between 1086 and 1115 the royal estates of Knaresborough and Aldborough were completely reorganised and the Honour (or Lordship) of Knaresborough was formed (Jennings, 1970). This included the Forest and Liberty of Knaresborough. The first historical evidence for buildings within the town is a reference in 1114 to the Parish church, which was given to Nostell Priory by Henry I. Castle building is not mentioned until 1130 when Eustace Fitzjohn, the Lord of the Honour, was undertaking considerable construction work. The Honour was rented to a succession of Lords until 1205 when the succeeding Lord, Nicholas Stuteville, was unable to pay the large succession fine and the Honour reverted to the crown. King John then made Brian de l'Isle custodian and constable of the castle, which was substantially repaired and strengthened (Tyler, unpub) and it was one of the King John's favoured abodes. Throughout the 13th century the Lordship was rented further, including to the Earl of Cornwall, but passed back to the crown in 1300. The Castle was completely rebuilt between 1307 and 1312.

Although the date of the foundation of the town is uncertain, it probably developed with the construction of the castle and land reorganisation at the beginning of the 12th century since this placed Knaresborough at the administrative heart of a royal estate. The medieval borough of Knaresborough was first mentioned in 1169 in a reference to burgesses (Jennings, 1970) and by the 13th century it is thought to have developed into a considerable royal stronghold (Kellet, 1991), with a flourishing iron-working industry based on ironstone mined in the Forest (Tyler, unpub). In 1304-5 eighty-six burgesses are noted within the town and though designated a borough in 1310 it was never incorporated and remained under the control of the Honour Court (Stockwell, 1993). The 1310 charter granted a weekly market and a yearly fair, though a fair was first recorded at Knaresborough in 1304, and a market as far back as 1206 (Tyler, unpub). In 1318 the town was attacked by Scottish raiders and 140 out of 160 houses were burned down but the town soon recovered and the houses were rebuilt. By the end of the 14th century the iron industry was in decline due to deforestation (the bloomery process used large quantities of charcoal) and lead mining within the Forest by the monks of Fountains Abbey was also causing considerable damage. Various accounts of the 14th century describe Knaresborough as a prosperous market town with butchers, drapers, carpenters, cobblers, brewers, tanners, blacksmiths, lorimers (bit and spur makers), weavers and blomers (iron smelters). From the 14th to the 16th centuries, as the metal smelting industries declined, it became the focus of the woollen industry eventually containing two Fulling Mills (Tyler, unpub).

During the English Civil War Knaresborough supported the Royalist cause and the castle was held for the King by Sir Richard Hutton. After the Royalist defeat at Marston Moor in 1644 Lord Fairfax, leading the Parliamentary forces, laid siege to the town which fell rapidly. In 1647 the castle was slighted and ceased to play an important role in the town.



In the 17th century the woollen industry was gradually superseded by the linen industry for which Knaresborough became the local focus.

It has been suggested that the town's medieval burgage plots, which can be traced in the modern town plan, occupied most of the north-east side of the High Street (adjacent to the development area) on both sides of Finkle Street, the north and west sides of the Market Place and along Cheapside (Jennings, 1970). These would all have been situated within the town defences which were composed of an earth rampart and a ditch. Tyler has suggested that parts of these defences could be traced in the line of property boundaries and from old accounts (Hargrove recorded them in 1809). On the north-east side the bank and ditch ran from Raw Gap to Pinfold Hill, probably behind the medieval burgage plots that front onto the High Street, the dog leg in Berry's Avenue suggests that the defences were crossed at this point. Gracious Street, first mentioned in 1624, means 'the street in the ditch' and marks the position of the ditch on the south-east side of the town. A borough survey of 1611 appears to show the defences running north-westwards to the south-west of Cheapside to join the castle ditch (Tyler, unpub). To the north of the castle the line probably crossed Kirkgate and ran north-east to cross the High Street south of Hilton Lane. Historical sources suggest that the defences were being encroached upon by buildings by the middle of the 14th century and that by the early 17th century they had already been partially built over.

Little archaeological research, in the form of detailed excavation, has been carried out on the town centre particularly with the aim of verifying the position of the burgage plots and investigating their subsequent development during the medieval period or the location of the town ditch.

Archaeological watching briefs behind 14 High Street by York Archaeological Trust, in Jockey Lane by Mary Kershaw of Harrogate Museum and in Brewton Street by Northern Archaeological Associates have all failed to produce any evidence within the town centre of activity prior to the 17th century. The rise in ground level from the High Street to the back of the medieval burgage plots to the north-east was also seen to have been of natural derivation rather than part of a man-made rampart (Stockwell, 1993). A 14th century timber lined well, located behind a property that fronts onto the Market Place has been the only evidence of medieval occupation, outside the castle, to be found to date. Indeed it has been suggested that the town may have been levelled during the English Civil War (Kershaw, pers comm) or that on regular occasions, possibly prior to construction work, the plots were systematically cleared to bedrock and waste and refuse was deposited over the cliff edge (Campling, pers comm). Such clearance would certainly explain the absence of medieval archaeological deposits within the town to date. Further archaeological work is required to clarify whether or not truncation has actually taken place and if so, what form it took.

Cartographic sources were also examined to add information on the recent historical development of the area. The first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map, printed in 1891, shows the majority of the development area as open land. Directly north-east of 5 Berry's Avenue the area was laid out as a garden associated with this house with paths and trees; further to the north-east the area was part of the grounds of the Stockwell House estate on



Stockwell Road and to the north of the planned garden the area comprised part of a large field probably used for agricultural purposes. The land use appears not to have changed significantly by the 1909 OS Map, although the planned garden immediately north-east of 5 Berry's Avenue is not shown, simply bearing the name Park View. By 1932, however, the Stockwell House estate had been sold off, Whincup Avenue had been constructed and garages had been erected along the north-east edge of the development area. The area to the north, however, still appears to have been open agricultural land. In recent years the northern part of the development area was developed for housing and the former garden associated with 5 Berry's Avenue was partitioned being utilised for further garages and a builder's yard.

## **5. Walkover Survey**

The study area was the subject of a rapid walkover survey to examine the current state of the site and to identify any areas of extant earthworks or other archaeological remains. The development site appeared overgrown with all of the existing houses (Park Villas, 5 Berry's Avenue and Kingsley) all being boarded up. The part of the development area comprising the garages and former builder's yard were heavily overgrown and contained various brick and timber buildings, garages, sheds and animal cages in various states of decay. Concrete forms the most common surface on the site, covering almost all of the northern, north-eastern and south-western parts of the development area. Only the central and the south-eastern sides appear to have areas devoid of this type of hardstanding and these areas were therefore very overgrown. A certain amount of terracing has taken place on the site, especially at the south-western end, at the top of the slope. This may have truncated archaeological deposits within these areas. No earth-works or other features or buildings of archaeological or historical interest were noted within the development area. The dog-leg part of Berry's Avenue still contains areas of cobbling and a central drain made from shaped stone blocks. The rear walls of the medieval burgrave plots that front onto the High Street all appeared to have been constructed in the 19th or 20th century and it was difficult to tell, whether they followed the line of the original plot boundaries or if the burgrave plots had been extended in the post-medieval period.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusions**

The evidence set out above suggests that the study area lies on the line of the town defences which may have a medieval or earlier origin. They have been suggested to run parallel with and immediately north-east of the medieval burgrave plots that front onto the High Street at the south-west end of the development site and to incorporate an earthen bank and a ditch. Neither of these features has been identified by archaeological excavation to date and indeed the bank may simply have been a natural rise in the underlying geology (Stockwell, 1993). The dog-leg in Berry's Avenue has been suggested to be of medieval date being caused by the crossing of the town ditch by this back-alley perhaps to gain access to fields to the north-east of the medieval town. The south-west end of the



development site appears to have suffered however from a limited amount of terracing to create level platforms for buildings and gardens and concrete yard surfaces. The level of disturbance and truncation of archaeological deposits, if they exist within this area, is at present unquantifiable. Development of this part of Knaresborough appears to have occurred fairly late, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the area being used for a builders yard, gardens, garages and housing which appears to have caused only a limited amount of disturbance to archaeological deposits over the majority of the site.

## **7. Archaeological Implications**

This archaeological desk-top study has produced evidence to suggest that there is a distinct possibility that the study area contains preserved archaeological features and deposits to the north and north-west of Berry's Avenue. It is advised that a programme of evaluatory archaeological field work, as suggested by NYCC, should be carried out within the area prior to development. This should take the form of targeted excavation trenches to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of archaeological deposits and features that are preserved within the development site. The trenches should be opened by machine and cleaned by hand in positions selected to locate the presence, or otherwise, of the town defences and the intra and extramural settlement associated with them. The most likely part of the site to provide the answer to these questions is the south-eastern corner in which two trenches 10m x 2m could be placed at right-angles to the presumed line of the defences. This should allow the full archaeological impact of the development to be determined and enable an effective mitigation strategy to be devised.



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## 9. List of Contributors

Research and Report

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