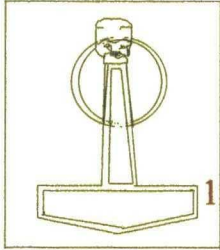


Received 11/99.

NYCC HER

| | |
|--------|------------|
| SNY | 868 |
| ENY | 597 |
| CNY | 1993 |
| Parish | 1092 |
| Rec'd | 01/11/1999 |



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BANK YARD, RICHMOND
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
FOR
HOME HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

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MARCH 1999

BANK YARD, RICHMOND – ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

HISTORY

- 2.1 Richmond is an historic town with its origins in the eleventh century, founded primarily as a defensive strong-point and administrative centre of the Honour of Richmond (fig 1). It developed as a market and trading centre from the twelfth century onwards, with its centre in the Market Place, and acquired walls in the early fourteenth century, probably as a response to raiding by the Scots. The first murage grant for the building of town walls was in 1313 (Page ed., 1968, 17ff), with further grants for repairs in 1337 and 1400. The walls were ruinous by the beginning of the sixteenth century (Page ed., 1958).
- 2.2 There was a decline in the town's market and trading functions in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, possibly due to increased competition from other markets. Industrial activity in Richmond increased in importance at the same time, however, and the town became a centre for hand-knitted woollen goods. Richmond's prosperity continued until the end of the eighteenth century, when factory produced goods from elsewhere caused a rapid decline.
- 2.3 A more detailed account of the history of Richmond can be found in 'Richmond, an Archaeological Study' (enclosed).

STREET PATTERN AND TOWN WALLS

- 3.1 The town was centred on the Market Place, with long narrow 'burgage plots' stretching outwards on all sides. Finkle Street, Frenchgate, Cornforth Hill and Friar's Wynd led out of the Market Place, and several other streets such as Newbiggin, Bargate and Pottergate were all in existence in the medieval period.
- 3.2 The position of the fourteenth century walls can be roughly extrapolated from the known positions of the various gates or bars, which have survived, at least partially, at the Bar on Cornforth Hill and on Friar's Wynd. The gates on Finkle Street and Frenchgate were demolished in 1773, and their approximate position is known. However, apart from short stretches associated with the surviving bars, none of the medieval walls survive.
- 3.3 Assuming the position of the Bar on Finkle Street to have been accurately marked on the Ordnance Survey maps, a possible line for the town wall can be followed southwards from existing property boundaries (see fig 1). This would start between No 5 and No 7 Finkle Street, and follow the boundary between the two southwestwards for approximately 26 metres. Here there is a slight dogleg in the boundary which then continues southwest for a further 15.5 metres. An extension to the rear of the bank at No 23 Market Place breaks the line at this point, but it continues beyond on a similar alignment, now forming the rear boundary of properties on the Market Place and curving round to run southwards. There are breaks due to alterations and access points immediately to the north of Bank Yard, but southwards the line becomes more secure along the eastern side of Waterloo. This line would cross Bank Yard directly in line with the western end of the brick buildings at the rear of the plot.
- 3.4 Unfortunately, the degree of alterations to former ground levels over much of the proposed line of the town wall in this area means that breaks of slope, which are often useful in determining the line of defences, are not helpful here. The ground does drop away steeply to the west from the top of Cornhill to Bargate, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which levels have been raised between the top of Cornhill and the rear of the Market Place plots. It is therefore less than certain that the town wall did follow the route suggested above.

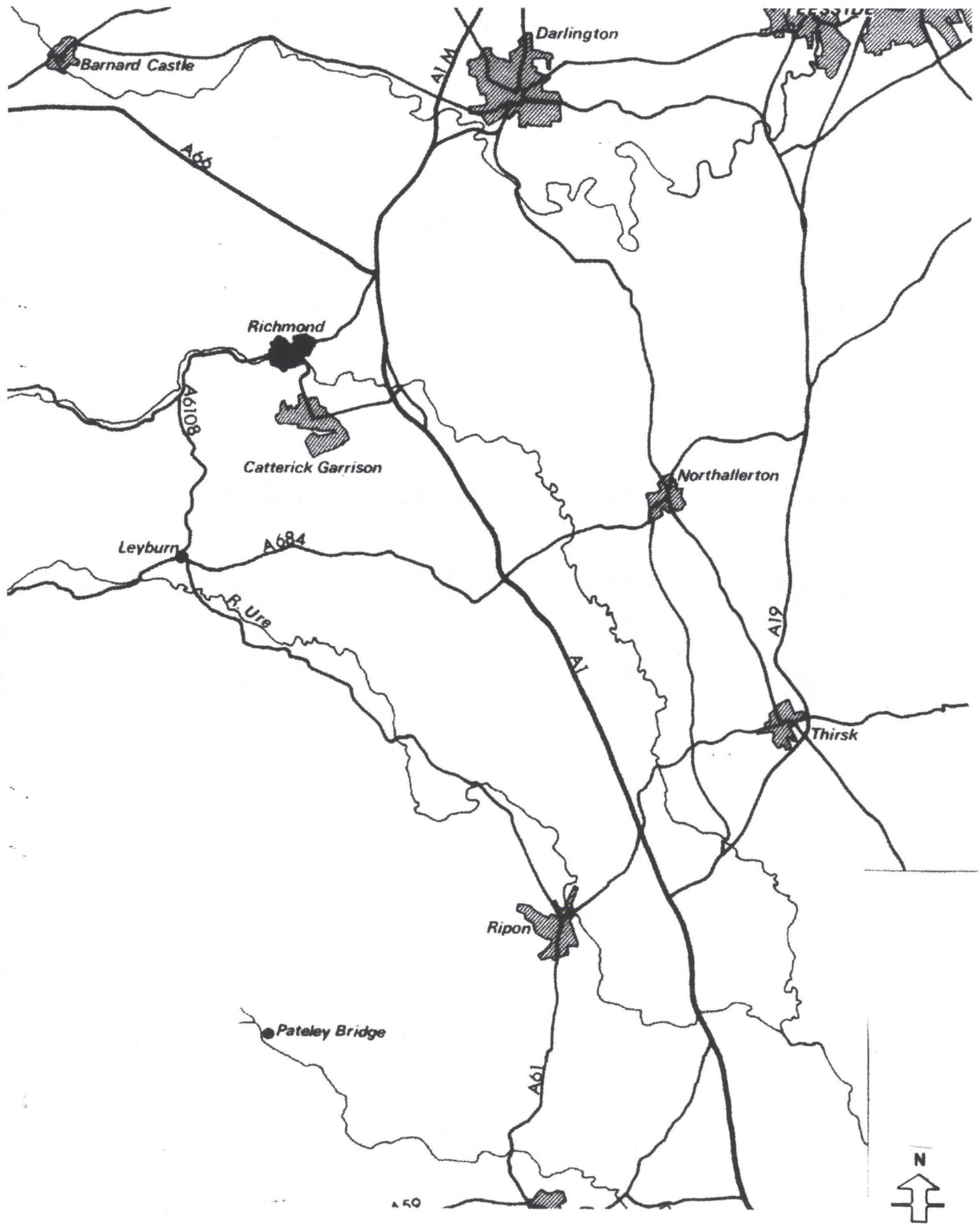


Fig 1 Richmond - Location

Scale 1:250,000

THE SITE

1.1 Bank Yard, Richmond (see fig 2), is situated just off the western side of the semi-circular Market Place of the town. A passage runs back from the street, between two shops, which occupy a single nineteenth century frontage. From the rear it is apparent that this frontage has been superimposed upon two earlier buildings which extend further back on each side of the yard (Plate 1).



Plate 1 – Bank Yard looking east

1.2 Other buildings on the site are further west and consist of stone-built public conveniences, now closed, and a brick built former bakery (Plate 2)



Plate 2 – Bank Yard looking west



Plate 3 – West end of Bank Yard

1.3 The ground levels over the site are variable. There is a gentle slope down from the street frontage as far as the western end of the public conveniences, and then a slight rise to the rear of the brick buildings. West of these buildings the ground is raised in a fairly level platform, retained by a stone wall (Plate 3), above the steeply falling levels to west and south. The overall ground levels fall quite steeply from north to south, but extensive terracing within each plot has obscured the natural slope (Plate 4).

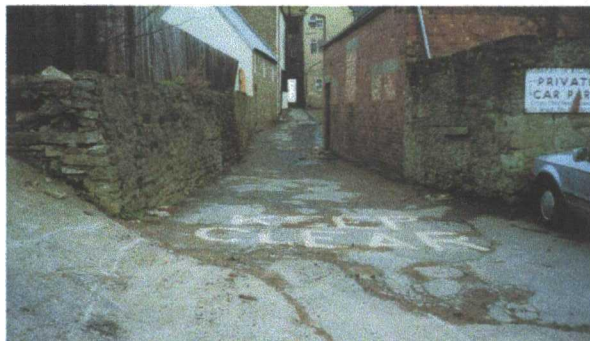


Plate 4 - Bank Yard looking east from rear



Fig 2 Bank Yard, Richmond

Scale 1:500

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 4.1 A number of small excavations and watching briefs have been carried out in the central area of the Market Place and in plots on the north-western side of the Market Place. These can give an insight into the nature and extent of the archaeology to be expected in Bank Yard.
- 4.2 In 1993 a trench 27 metres long and 4.7 metres wide was excavated in the northern part of the Market Place prior to resurfacing work (N.A.A. 94/14, 1994). This produced medieval deposits immediately below the existing road foundations. Features included part of a wooden structure or boundary, four refuse pits, midden deposits and one or more stone-lined drains. All of these were probably late fourteenth or fifteenth century. The level of environmental preservation was good, and included leather, straw, bracken and a range of cereals and fruit as well as animal bone and pottery. The area was identified as one used for the disposal of domestic rubbish. The finds provided important information on the activities taking place in this part of the Market Place, on the trading links of the market and on the lifestyle of the inhabitants.
- 4.3 In the following year another trench crossing the Market Place from west of Holy Trinity Church to the western side of the Market Place was cut for the insertion of an electricity cable (Clarke, 1994). This also produced evidence of a series of pits and midden dumps of medieval date immediately below the road foundations. The majority of the finds were late fourteenth and fifteenth century, and included leather, pottery, animal bone, coal, straw and a range of cereals and fruits preserved in the anaerobic conditions. Some shoemaking or repairing had taken place in the vicinity, and the bones contained evidence of butchery.
- 4.4 Two small scale excavations and watching briefs took place at 1 Finkle Street and the rear of 22 Market Place in 1993 and 1995 (N.A.A. 93/12, 93/13 1993, 96/4 1996). These were adjacent to each other and can be considered together. Excavations at the rear of 22 Market Place revealed several lengths of sandstone walling, largely on the same lines as the existing property boundaries. From associated pottery, these were dated to the fourteenth century, as was a stone cistern close to one of the walls. These medieval features were cut directly into the natural subsoil, and were covered by eighteenth/nineteenth century garden soil. Wall foundations were also uncovered at 1 Finkle Street, within the existing building, but these were probably post-medieval. Of two pits, one was dated to the medieval period and the other was of uncertain date.
- 4.5 On the other side of Finkle Street, excavation took place on parts of the Chantry Wynd site (formerly 2-4 Finkle Street) (E.R.A.R.C. 1989). A number of features was identified, including walls with several phases and a build-up of material probably associated with a garden area. The majority of the walls, some of which may have formed buildings, were of thirteenth to fifteenth century date, and the garden area contained pottery from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. The whole site seems to have been remodelled in the eighteenth century, possibly at the same time as the Finkle Street Bar was removed. The remains seem to be associated with the College of Chantry Priests supposed to have been on the site until the eighteenth century. The buildings, described by Clarkson (Clarkson 1814, 224) were composed of a large building in the form of a quadrangle around a small courtyard, which fits well with the remains that were found.
- 4.6 On the northwest side of the Market Place, at No 15-16, a small excavation and watching brief revealed several medieval features (M.A.P. 1991). Within the extant building there was evidence of an early medieval building with associated floor levels, and further back was a sequence of sandstone and limestone floors and two, probably late medieval, walls. A well was also uncovered which may have dated to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries and was out of use by the sixteenth, and late medieval drains overlay earlier walls. Some of the deposits were waterlogged, and there was evidence of clay dumping, possibly to overcome high water levels.

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 None of the archaeological work recorded here was large scale, but put together it reveals a good deal of information, and raises further questions about the history of the town.
- 5.2 There is widespread survival of stone wall features in the rear areas of the plots on both Market Place and Finkle Street, showing that these areas were being utilised and built upon as early as the thirteenth century. Cut features such as pits have also been found, containing dating evidence and in some cases high quality environmental survival. The best preserved deposits seem to have come from the Market Place itself, where later ground surfaces have sealed deposits in anaerobic conditions, but the possibility of environmental evidence within the rear of burgage plots cannot be discounted.
- 5.3 There is some evidence to support the fact that there was a period of decay in the market in the later medieval period, from the use of at least part of the Market Place for the deposition of domestic rubbish. However, the utilisation of the full length of the burgage plots appears to have continued to develop throughout the medieval period, possibly reflecting the continued success of various industries in the town. There seems however to have been a period of stagnation or lessened use of the rear of properties in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ebb and flow of use of the burgage plots in the centre of the town needs further investigation, and valuable evidence of the life of the town could be gained from more archaeological work.
- 5.4 The line of the town walls is by no means certain. The probable route north of Finkle Street should have shown in the 1989 excavations in Chantry Wynd. It is possible that the northernmost east-west wall discovered there was on the line of the town wall, which would accord with the likely positioning of the College, but its position does not tie in with the recorded position of the Bar, or with the proposed route of the wall to the south. There seems to have been no obvious contender for the town wall in these excavations, and it seems unlikely that the College would have straddled the wall. This would then suggest that the wall was further northwest. While this could still be reconciled with the line along Waterloo, it does show that further work is needed to ascertain the true line of the town's defences.
- 5.5 There is no evidence, archaeological or documentary, for defences earlier than the fourteenth century at Richmond, although Clarkson (Clarkson, 1814) refers to wooden walls preceding the stone ones. However, it is clear from other evidence (e.g. documentary reference to street names) that settlement had already spread beyond the area enclosed by the walls by the fourteenth century. It is therefore possible that the line of the fourteenth century walls was determined by earlier defences. The area of the Market Place and its burgage plots was known as the Bailey (Clay 1935), and if it was in fact the outer bailey of the castle in which the town was first established, the existence of defences prior to the fourteenth century seems very likely. Physical evidence of pre-fourteenth century defences would be extremely important to uncover.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The site at Bank Yard is potentially of importance archaeologically. The chance to explore, on a fairly large scale, the rear of a burgage plot in the centre of Richmond is rare. It could produce evidence of the physical layout of the town in the medieval period and later, the pattern of use of the rear of plots over time, the possibility of various industrial uses in the medieval period, and the trading links and possibly the diet of the inhabitants.
- 6.2 The Bank Yard site has additional significance as it crosses the probable line of the medieval town walls. Physical evidence of these defences is extremely thin, and the opportunity to discover both the precise route of the wall and the nature of the defences is of great importance.

6.3 The sinking of bore holes, due prior to development of the site, may provide some information about the nature and extent of the archaeology. This could help to determine the level of archaeological response when the site is developed.

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REPORT ON BOREHOLES AT BANK YARD RICHMOND, NORTH YORKSHIRE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In advance of the proposed development at bank Yard, Richmond, site investigations were made by Moorehead Sutton and Laing. These consisted of two bore holes drilled on the site (see fig 1). One was located in the cobbles outside the former public conveniences (BH1), and the other was in the built-up area at the rear of the plot (BH2). The work was carried out on 19th April 1999 and was observed for any deposits of archaeological interest.

2 BORE HOLE 1

- 2.1 The cobbles, which were set into dry concrete, were removed by hand and the borehole was started by hand digging. The settings for the cobbles reached to c.150mm below the surface. Beneath was a brownish grey dry gritty sand, containing some brick. From a depth of c.500mm the sand became darker; very dark grey to black; and contained small stones, fragments of cut wood and fragments of plastic. From about this depth a drilling machine was used to extract the soil from a core of between 100 and 150 mm in diameter.
- 2.2 At approximately 1 metre below the surface a piece of timber larger than the diameter of the hole was encountered. Below this the soil was a black damp but friable gritty silty sand containing small stones, wood fragments and a fragment of possible leather, to a depth of c.1.3 metres.
- 2.3 A piece of sandstone, possibly part of a larger piece, marked the interface between the dark sand and variable mid brown gritty silty clay, which continued to a depth of c.3.5 metres where solid limestone or sandstone bedrock was encountered. The total depth of the borehole was approximately 4.5 metres.

3 BORE HOLE 2

- 3.1 The second bore hole was excavated in the same way as the first. An abortive start was made in the centre of the built-up area before establishing a position near to the southeastern edge of the area.
- 3.2 The surface was made up of gravel over loose stony silty sand containing brick, angular sandstone chips, glass and bone fragments. This continued to a depth of a little over 1 metre. Below was a darker brown silty sand with stones, bone and charcoal extending to approximately 2.5 metres.
- 3.3 By 2.65 metres the soil turned to soft, slightly dirty brown clay with some small stones. At the base of the bore hole at 4.5 metres sandstone bedrock was encountered.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The first bore hole showed recently disturbed deposits to a depth of approximately one metre, probably due to its proximity to the former public conveniences. It is likely that deposits are disturbed to this depth over much of Bank Yard, and probably to a greater depth around some areas of the public conveniences. Below this however there seems to be a good likelihood of archaeological deposits of interest, possibly reflecting the use of the rear of the burgage plot from the twelfth century onwards. The gritty clay appeared to be natural but also appeared not to be undisturbed. It may represent dumping of material at some point in order to level or raise the ground.
- 4.2 The second bore hole contained at least a metre of loosely compacted rubble, apparently from a former building on the site which was demolished and levelled. Below this was more made-up ground, of unknown date but containing evidence of human occupation, to a depth of around 2.5 metres, which could represent a build up of debris outside the town wall. The disturbed clay below may, like that in the first bore hole, have been deliberately dumped to adjust ground levels around the town wall, possibly upcast from a foundation trench.
- 4.3 Both bore holes contained deposits showing evidence of human occupation on the site. Those in Bore Hole 1 were fairly limited in depth and contained a greater proportion of recent disturbances, but those in Bore Hole 2 showed some potential for revealing a succession of usage in this area of the site.

Fig 1 Bank Yard, Richmond

Scale 1:200



Bank Yard ● BH1

● BH2

W



Additional note in response to enquiry

Bank Yard, Richmond

Thank you for your letter of 17 June. In answer to your query, I did not specifically address the issue of the possible historic importance of the wall in question in my desk-top study.

However, my report on the boreholes shows that the top metre of the ground contained by the wall is of recent (20th Century) origin, and that a further one and a half metres are the result of human occupation of unknown date. Whatever the date of the wall itself (which may be difficult to ascertain with any certainty), its line is of some antiquity as it is shown on a map of 1773. A 1724 pictorial map does not show it, but many details are distorted on the map, so its absence may not be significant. The line is therefore of at least 18th Century date, possibly earlier, and is of historic significance though it is unlikely to have been in existence at the same time as the town walls.

Alison Clarke