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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSPECTION

THE SHIP INN

LOW LANE

ALDBOROUGH S.A.M. NO.436

NORTH YORKSHIRE

N.G.R. 440614 466480

COUNTY / PARISH NO. 6064

FOR

MR. AND MRS.D.FINCH

DECEMBER 1997

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**THE SHIP INN  
ALDBOROUGH**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSPECTION  
DECEMBER 1997**

**INTRODUCTION**

A rapid Archaeological Inspection was undertaken on 12th November 1997 **following the commencement** of ground disturbance associated with the construction of a single storey kitchen extension, to the rear of the Ship Inn, Low Lane, Aldborough.

**LOCATION AND STATUS**

The Ship Inn is situated within the northern extent of the village of Aldborough, North Yorkshire. The site is located on the northern side of Low Lane. The study area is located at N.G.R. 440614 466480 to the immediate north east of the Ship Inn.

The Ship Inn Public House and attached grounds are owned by Mr. and Mrs. D. Finch, the appointed Architect is Mr. P. Knowles.

Below ground this site is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (Isurium Brigantum, North Yorkshire, S.A.M.No.436) located within the civil parish of Boroughbridge.

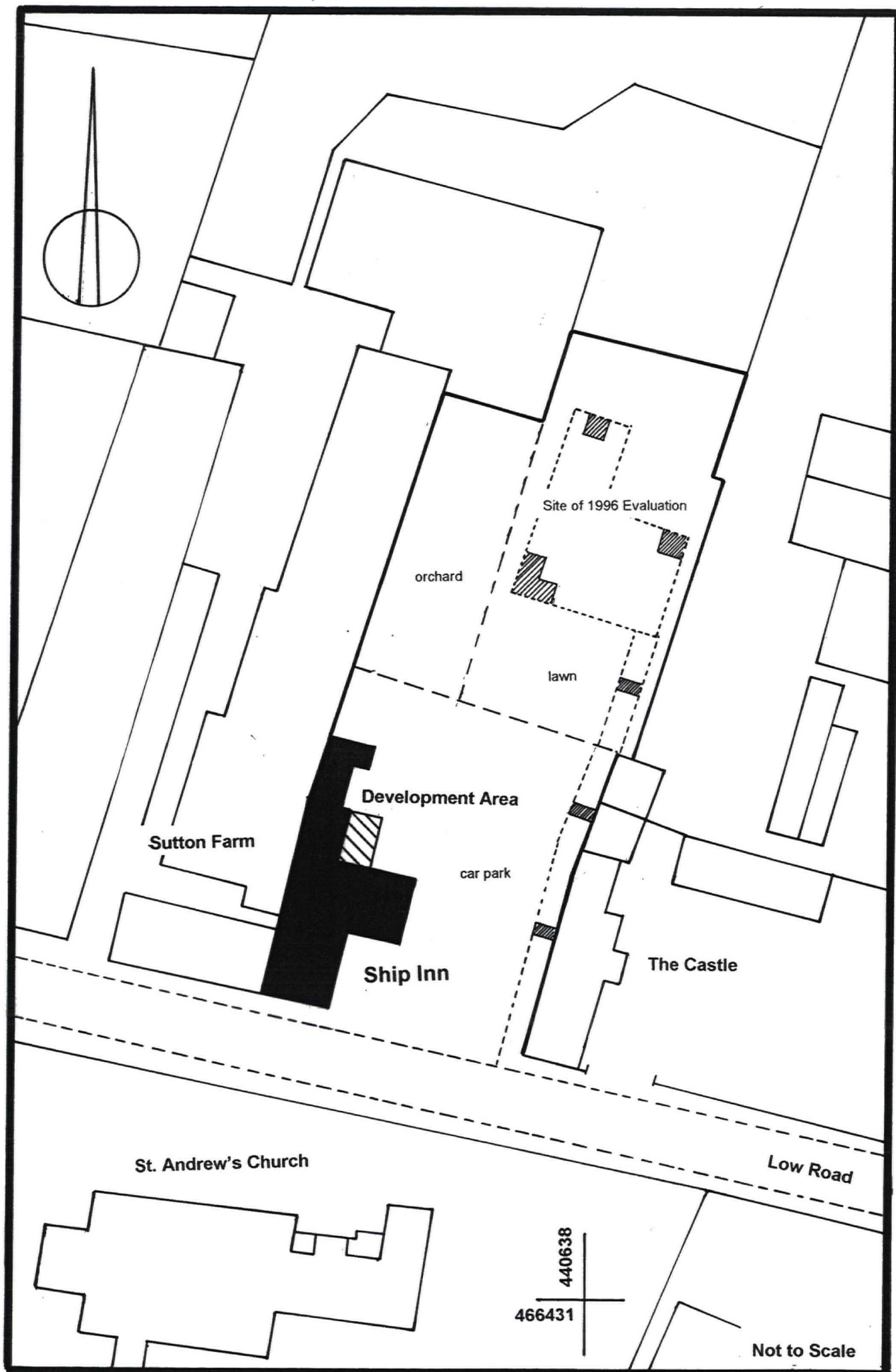
**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**The Village:**

The present village of Aldborough overlies the Roman town of Isurium Brigantum and remains relatively well contained within the ancient town's perimeter defences. The defences contain an almost rectangular area of approximately 74 acres.

The Roman settlement was a civilian administrative centre, or civitas capital for the territory of the Brigantes which covered much of the north of England. There is no substantial evidence of military occupation at Isurium.

FIGURE 1 SITE LOCATION PLAN



### The Study Area:

The study area was almost certainly developed at some time during the Roman occupation.

The site is located within the central area of the Roman Town, situated within the north eastern quadrant of the cross-roads and within close proximity to the Forum which occupied the site of St. Andrew's Church, it is likely that the study area was also supported main administrative and public buildings.

The eastern boundary of the site runs on the line of the main northern thoroughfare leading out of town.

The size and form of the property parcels situated to the rear of those properties fronting Low Road have the appearance of Medieval tenement plots. These units would have been utilised during the Medieval period for a variety of different uses that would have included animal husbandry, small scale manufacturing industry, gardens, orchards and open yard areas. It is highly probable that the study area was utilised for a number of such purposes during the medieval and post medieval period.

It is understood that parts of the Ship Inn dates as far back as the 14th Century and it believed that there has been continuity in the use of this property, as an Ale House since this time.

The available map sources would indicate that the street frontage that is presently a car park situated between the "The Ship" and "The Castle" was previously occupied by terrace housing and to their immediate north associated outbuildings and yard areas. These buildings are depicted on the earliest consulted cartographic source the 1809 Enclosure Award Map. The terrace was demolished sometime prior to 1951 (OS 6" to the mile map), however, was upstanding in 1910 (OS 6" to the mile map). The associated outbuildings were converted during the 1930's into toilet facilities to serve the Ship Inn and were later incorporated into the main footprint of the Inn complex.

The proposed development site was previously occupied by a yard, garden and an area of orchard, the boundaries of which appear to have been somewhat flexible. The desk top study would suggest that the study area has not been developed in the 19th or 20th century.

### The Transport Network

The size and alignment of the existing road network within the northern extent of the village is depicted as early as the Ordnance Survey 6", 1898 edition.

A similar road network is depicted on the Ordnance Survey 6", 1855 edition, however, from this source it would appear that the junction of Back Lane with Low Lane differed from the 1898 Edition. The existing triangular area of lawn and gardens that denotes the configuration of the present junction is a late 19th century feature. These gardens were created following the re-routing of the eastern extent of Low Lane and formed part of a major programme of landscaping works within the grounds of Aldborough Hall.

Prior to the creation of this triangular green Low Lane proceeded out of the village on a more direct east south east alignment following the line of the main Roman eastern thoroughfare.

On a 1809 Enclosure Award map of the village and the surrounding area the basic road network is depicted as on the Ordnance Survey 1855 map.

The eastern boundary of the study area is unchanged since at least 1809, in 1855 a trackway is depicted as running adjacent and to the immediate east of this boundary. There are a number of reasons to suggest that this boundary marks the line of the main road leading from the administrative centre of the Roman settlement to the north. The alignment of the boundary would correspond with the north north eastern axis of the Roman defences.

The boundary is also centrally situated within the Roman settlement, bisecting that area enclosed by the perimeter defences, the line of this same road survives today as the main road exiting the village to the south.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

Archaeological records suggest that during 1966 groundwork's were undertaken to the rear of the Ship Inn, the exact location of these works has not been established but it is understood that the remains of a number of buildings were exposed one of which may have included a butchers shop, it is possible that these may be associated with the Medieval / Post Medieval tenements. Unfortunately no further details relating to these works are available and therefore no information can be provided regarding the state of Archaeological preservation or the depth at which Archaeological remains were likely to be encountered.

During 1990 York Archaeological Trust undertook an archaeological investigation at Sutton Farm for Mr. Craggs in advance of drainage works and the construction of a silage clamp and slurry lagoon. The site is situated to the immediate north of the Ship Inn property parcel at N.G.R. 440640 466550.

Structural remains were encountered during these works and these included the remains of a building constructed out of red sandstone, these features were encountered within 0.60 metres of the present ground levels, unfortunately no exact date for this building could be established.

The most recent archaeological investigation on the site was conducted by Mr. K.J. Cale on behalf of Mr. & Mrs.D. Finch during 1996.

The naturally deposited sub-soil was **not** identified during these works, the maximum depth of excavation was reached at 19.455 metres AOD that is 1.04 metres below the existing ground level, this would suggest that any sub soils lie buried beneath this depth or alternatively have been truncated and removed from the site by previous ground disturbance.

Substantial evidence of a Roman road surface was identified within the eastern extent of the study area and it was confirmed that this surface, the *agger*, consisted of a series of cobble and pebble laminations that were extremely well compacted and bedded on a sandy sub base. The upper surface of the *agger* appeared to be relatively level and was identified at 19.880 metres AOD with a well pronounced camber of 31 degrees towards it's eastern extent, the camber was supported and retained by a clay verge/kerb. The eastern extent of the road surface was identified and from which it is possible to confirm that the road was aligned north north east, and runs parallel and to the west of the eastern boundary wall of the study area. The road surface measured up to 0.38 metres deep, Unfortunately the width of the surface was not established from these excavations but it is anticipated that this will also lie within the study area.

The surface would appear to survive relatively well intact and in a good state of preservation, however, towards the centre and north of the study area the road had been cut by an electricity service trench, this damage would appear to be resulted in the displacement of a narrow track, 0.37 metres wide, of the road surface.

A small quantity of Late Roman pottery was found imbedded within the upper surface of the road, this evidence together with the stratigraphic evidence would strongly support a 4th century date for the most recent resurfacing of the road, this of course does not preclude that the earlier laminations date as far back as the 1st century.

The location and alignment of this road conforms with the north north eastern axis of the settlement defences and with the line of the existing High Street that bisects and exits the village to the south.

The ground levels adjacent to the eastern extent of the Roman road surface consisted of a sandy loam, this deposit was found to be rich in Late Roman Pottery and exceeded 0.30 metres deep. It would appear that this deposit post dates the working life of the Roman road surface and may well be medieval in origin, this would suggest that the ground levels adjacent to the road, if not developed, were considerably reduced during the Roman period.

No indication of an Anglo-Scandinavian occupation of the site was found, the paucity of this evidence is not untypical for little evidence for this period has been found within the village and at this moment in time it's absence can not be satisfactorily explained.

It is of interest to note that following the construction / repairs to the most recent of the Roman road surfaces there appears to have been little accumulation of deposits prior to the 12/13th century.

The Late Roman Road was sealed by a less well constructed cobble and pebble surface that was imbedded with 12/13th century pottery, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.118 metres AOD. This feature was mirrored the footprint of it's Roman predecessor and as such it is suspected that it also functioned as road but serviced the medieval settlement. It is possible that the absence of any intermediary deposits between the two road surfaces is the result of medieval site clearance. A small quantity of medieval pottery sherds were recovered from heavily disturbed deposits, these were predominantly 13th and 14th century in origin, but no further evidence of medieval activity on the site was identified.

The medieval road surface had fallen into disuse by the mid 17th century by this time a sandy clay deposit had accumulated on the cobbles, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.375 metres AOD. No further indication of Post Medieval activity was identified across the site.

It would appear that it was during the 18th century that the terrace cottages were constructed on the street frontage within the southern extent of the study area, only slight evidence of the yard areas to the rear of these properties was revealed. This consisted of sand sub base for a former paved floor area, the upper surface of which was identified at 20.380 metres AOD.

During the Late 19th century / Early 20th century a large scale programme of landscaping was undertaken within the northern extent of the study area this resulted in the importing and levelling of large quantities of topsoil, burying an existing topsoil and raising the ground levels by up to 0.38 metres, the surface of the pre landscaped garden was identified at 20.155 metres AOD.

This imported material contained the occasional fragment of construction / demolition rubble including Welsh roof slate, this material is not commonly used throughout the village but has been used on the neighbouring property The Castle, it is therefore possible that the earth was transported only a short distance from it's original source.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The development area is situated to the south and east of that area formerly subjected to a detailed archaeological investigation ( K.J.Cale 1996). The site is contained to the west by the existing kitchens and to the south by the toilet block annexe of the Ship Inn. The area had until very recently formed part of the car park servicing the public house. This relatively level tarmac surface is situated at 20.800 m AOD.

## **AIMS OF THE INSPECTION**

The archaeological inspection was undertaken so as to enable a rapid overview of the stratigraphy exposed within the pre excavated trench sections, prior to the obliteration of same by the impending concreting and construction of the blockwork foundations.

A brief inspection was also made of the excavated spoil on the adjacent heaps, in order to recover any artefacts that may have been discarded during the excavation.

Any archaeological information gleaned from this inspection could then be added to the growing archaeological record base for this area of Aldborough.

## **SUMMARY**

On arrival at site an L shaped strip foundation trench had been excavated to the immediate east of the Ship Inn, at a site centred on N.G.R. 440614 466480. The spoil generated from these works had been transported a short distance to the north east and deposited in Mr.Finch's private garden.

It was confirmed that two trenches had been excavated (Trench's A & B) and that the ground level within the internal area of the building had been slightly reduced. The trench's had been excavated by both machine and hand. The combined total length of the excavations measured 10.750 m, the trench was 0.650 m wide and up to 0.900 m deep.

Inspection of the trench sections confirmed that there had been a high level of disturbance across the site associated with the installation, over the last 100 years, of ceramic drains. These drains varied in diameter size from 4" to 8", the majority of which were redundant and appeared to be associated with waste disposal from the Inn and adjacent outbuildings.

The stratigraphy was not consistent with that recorded during the previous archaeological investigation, as might have been expected, this is a point of interest given that the site is located, only, 14 metres distant from an area excavated during 1996, Trial Trench No.3.

The absence of buried structural features such as road surfaces or building foundations above 19.900 m AOD would indicate that the site has been subjected to a major programme of landscaping that may have resulted in the removal of any Late Roman, Anglo-Scandinavian or Medieval remains that may have otherwise survived above this level. It is suggested that these groundwork's were undertaken during the 18/19th century.

A rapid inspection was made of the spoil heaps, this generated a small quantity of artefacts. These finds were unstratified, however, it was possible to determine that the artefacts were only recovered from the layer of sandy clayey loam and sandy loam and these layers contained finds of mixed date.

The finds assemblage included butchered animal bone, 19/20th century pottery and bottle glass, Roman pottery - Samian and Course Gritty Ware and a Pennanular Bronze Wrist Bangle (See Appendix B and Figure 2).

## CONCLUSION

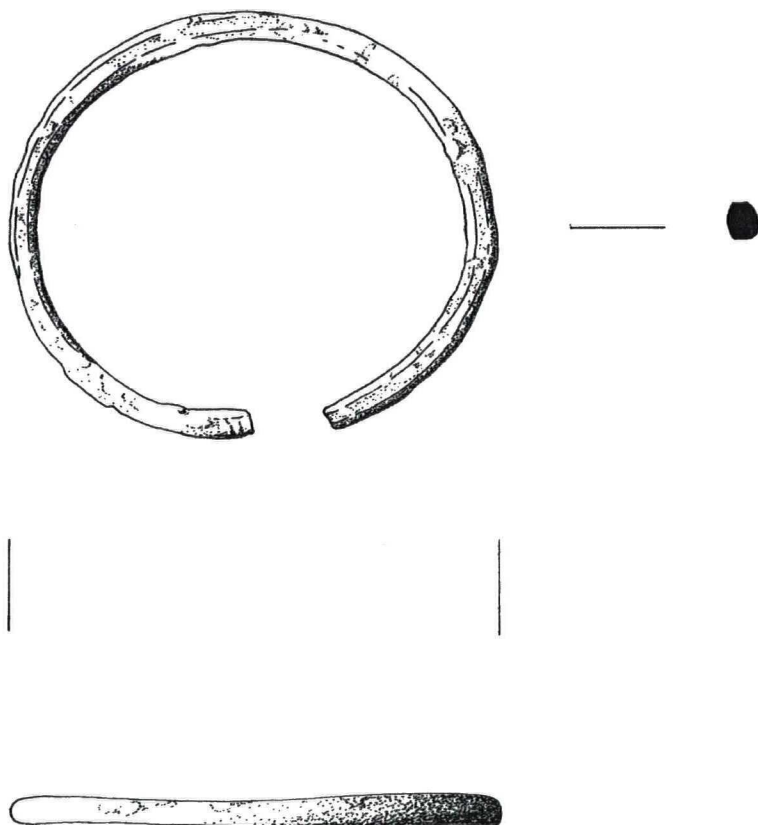
The recent archaeological inspection conducted by Mr.K.J.Cale on behalf of Mr.&Mrs.Finch at the Ship Inn, Aldborough has provided a useful although relatively negative picture of the development of this site.

The stratigraphy exposed during the excavations is indicative of three main phases of activity across the site, namely:-

### Phase 1

The Natural sub-soil was not satisfactorily identified within these excavations, however, towards the base of the trench a layer of silty sand was identified that was characteristic of the indigenous sub-soil. The layer contained a low to moderate quantity of inclusions, water worn pebbles and sand blotching, no finds were identified within this layer.

Copper Alloy Bangle



Scale 1:1

This layer was identified within the southern extent of the site at 20.120 m AOD ( a level comparable to that of the medieval road surface identified to the east, see K.J.Cale 1996), the surface of which sloped gently downwards to the north, into the base of the excavation at 19.900 m AOD.

Without further investigation there was no means of establishing the date and nature of this deposit, should this be the surface of the subsoil it's presence within 0.68 m of the existing ground levels does seem **unlikely** given the comparatively shallow depths at which Late Roman road surfaces were encountered to the east (19.880 m AOD, see K.J.Cale 1996).

But should this be the remains of an earlier ground level the context would suggest that is sloped downwards to the north. This may account for the absence of pre 19th century deposits, within the upper 0.500m, within the gardens to the north (see Ship Inn Archaeological Report 1996) i.e the garden area was substantially raised to compensate for the falling ground levels.

## Phase 2

The second phase of activity across the site is marked by the deposition or accumulation of a layer of sandy clayey loam. This moist and well compacted layer has a plastic, malleable matrix. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions, these were well mixed throughout the layer, with only one noticeable concentration of red sandstone. The red sandstone concentration was noted within the southern extent of the development area at N.G.R. 440616 466479. The sandstone appeared to be suspended within the above matrix and was not characteristic of a structural component. The layer increased in depth towards the northern extent site, to a maximum of 0.620m. This layer had been cut and disturbed during the excavation for numerous drains but otherwise showed little sign of recent disturbance.

A comparable layer was not identified during the previous archaeological excavations across the site and is all together uncharacteristic of the buried soils within Aldborough. From it's height above sea level this layer occurs on a comparable level with the medieval and post medieval deposits identified during the 1996 excavations.

Unfortunately no stratified finds were identified within this layer and subsequently the dating of this deposit is problematical. However, from my inspection of the artefacts recovered from the spoil heaps a 18th/19 century date of deposition would seem likely.

### Phase 3

The third and most recent phase of activity across the site was marked by a heavily disturbed layer of sandy loam. The layer contained a high quantity of inclusions, these were well mixed throughout the layer and consisted of brick, roof tile (clay and blue slate), water worn cobbles, ash, cinder, charcoal flecks, sand blotching. The layer was characteristic of a 19th / Early 20th century yard surface, heavily disturbed and mixed with a layer of made up ground that contained building materials as used on the neighbouring property *The Castle*. This layer appeared to be similar to context 5006 identified during the excavation of Trial Hole No.3 at N.G.R.440634 466482 (see Ship Inn Archaeological Report 1996).

Kevin John Cale

December 1997

## APPENDIX A

### Foundation Trench Excavations

#### Trench A

Type: Foundation : strip : hand + machine  
N.G.R: 440617 466489

Length: 3.750 m  
Width: 0.650 m  
Depth: 0.900 m

Planform: Liner  
Aligned: East south east  
Area: 2.437 square metres

Context No's: 7000 - 7003  
Plate No: -  
Fig. No: -

The trench was excavated to contain the concrete foundations for the north elevation of the proposed kitchen extension and was situated within the northern extent of the site. The existing ground levels were relatively level.

The tarmac (context 7000) surface of the existing car park was identified at 20.800 metres AOD. The tarmac was bedded on a sub base of gravel (context 7001).

Within the western extent of the trench the brick foundations of the two storey extension to the rear of the Ship Inn were exposed.

The sub base was excavated to reveal an overall layer of made up ground (context 7002). This layer of dark brown (10YR 3/1) Sandy Loam was heavily disturbed, moist and well compacted with a high quantity of inclusions. The inclusions were well mixed throughout the layer and consisted of 19th century and modern building materials, including brick, roof tile (clay and blue slate), water worn cobbles, ash, cinder, charcoal flecks and sand blotching. The layer had the characteristics of a heavily disturbed layer of made up ground that contains 19th / Early 20th century building material and domestic refuse.

The made up ground was excavated down on to an overall layer of Sandy Clayey Loam (context 7003). The surface of this medium brown (7.5YR 3/2) layer was identified at 20.520 m AOD and was relatively level. This layer was moist and well compacted with a plastic, malleable quality, the overall consistency of this matrix resulted in smooth elevations to the trench sections. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions water worn pebbles, red sandstone fragments < 0.10 m in size. The inclusions were well mixed throughout the layer and none of which were indicative of building materials or the residue of demolition. This deposit was altogether uncharacteristic of the buried soils across the site and within Aldborough. Unfortunately no, in situ, dating evidence was recovered from this layer and therefore the date of its deposition is speculative. The recovery of unstratified artefacts from the adjacent spoil heaps would suggest a 18th/19th date. The layer had been cut and disturbed during the installation of a number of ceramic drains.

The required excavation depth for the foundations was achieved within this layer.

## Trench B

Type:	Foundation : strip : hand + machine
N.G.R:	440618 466480
Length:	7.000 m
Width:	0.650 m
Depth:	0.760 m
Planform:	Linear
Aligned:	North north east
Area:	4.550 square metres
Context No's:	8000 - 8005
Plate No:	-
Fig. No:	-

The trench was excavated to contain the concrete foundations for the east elevation of the proposed kitchen extension and was situated within the eastern extent of the site. The existing ground levels were relatively level.

The tarmac (context 8000) surface of the existing car park was identified at 20.800 metres AOD. The tarmac was bedded on a sub base of gravel (context 8001).

Within the southern extent of the trench the brick foundations of the two storey annexe to the side of the Ship Inn were exposed.

The sub base was excavated to reveal an overall layer of made up ground (context 8002), the same as that identified within Trench A. This layer of dark brown (10YR 3/1) Sandy Loam was heavily disturbed, moist and well compacted with a high quantity of inclusions. The inclusions were well mixed throughout the layer and consisted of 19th century and modern building materials, including brick, roof tile (clay and blue slate), water worn cobbles, ash, cinder, charcoal flecks and sand blotching.

Towards the base of the layer a concentration of water worn cobbles were noted (context 8003) within the west facing section of the trench. The single layer of cobbles were bedded level at 20.580 m AOD into the a layer of Sandy Loam (context 8804) that formed a sub base to the surface, this layer was similar in every respect to context 8002. The feature had the characteristics of a 19th / Early 20th century yard surface that had subsequently buried beneath the layer of sandy loam.

The sub base beneath the cobble surface was found to seal an overall layer of Sandy Clayey Loam (context 8005). The surface of this medium brown (7.5YR 3/2) layer was identified at 20.540 m AOD and was relatively level. This layer was moist and well compacted with a plastic, malleable quality, the overall consistency of this matrix resulted in smooth elevations to the trench sections. The layer contained a low quantity of inclusions water worn pebbles, red sandstone fragments < 0.20 m in size. The inclusions were well mixed throughout the layer with the exception of the red sandstone fragments, these were concentrated within the southern extent of the trench. Whilst the presence of this material may indicate a structural component the fact that it was suspended within the above matrix suggest otherwise. Unfortunately no dating evidence was recovered from this layer, in situ, and therefore establishing a date for it's deposition is difficult, although the recovery of unstratified artefacts from the adjacent spoil heaps would suggest a 18th/19th date. The layer had been cut and disturbed during the installation of a number of ceramic drains.

A Silty Sand (context 8006) was identified within the southern extent of the trench, towards the base of the excavation. This moist and well compacted layer contained a low to moderate quantity of inclusions, namely:- water worn pebbles and sand blotching. The layer had the characteristics of sub soil but this was unproven. The surface of this layer sloped gently down from 20.120 m AOD in the south to the base of the excavation in the central area of the trench. No evidence was found to satisfactorily date this deposit, although a pre 17th century date would seem likely.

The required excavation depth for the foundations was achieved within this layer and within the Sandy Clayey Loam.

## APPENDIX B

### Small Find

Type: artefact: complete  
Class: Jewellery: Bangle : Pennanular  
Material: copper alloy  
Period: Romano - British

N.G.R: 440614 466480

Planform: elliptical  
Profile: rounded

Length: 62 mm  
Width: 56 mm  
Depth: 4.5 mm

Context No: Unstratified

A wrist bangle made from copper alloy in a Pennanualr form.

The artefact heavily patinated with verdigris and to a lesser degree with a ferric residue but is otherwise in good condition.

The artefact is aqua green in colour.

The outer surface of the bangle is semi-rounded with three poorly defined facets. The outer surface is smooth and is largely free from decoration. Three oblique "slash " type grooves can be identified on the outer surface and within close proximity to the aperture. These marks are of a comparable length, width and depth, ( 3.5mm x 0.08mm x 0.05mm) the uniformity of which suggest a decorative function.

The inner surface is smooth and slightly rounded in profile.

The opposing ends are presently a distance of 10mm apart and have been slightly rounded, this may have resulted from wear.

The sectional dimensions of the bangle remains relatively constant at 4.7mm, tapering slightly at each of the two ends to 3.9mm.

The Artefact has been returned into the care of Mr.& Mrs.D.Finch.