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**Derwent Swimming Pool,
Church Street,
Norton,
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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(SE 7951 7150)

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MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

July 2004

**Derwent Swimming Pool
Church Street
Norton
North Yorkshire
SE 7951 7150**

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Non-technical Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at Derwent Swimming Pool, Church Street, Norton, North Yorkshire (SE 7951 7150) from March to May 2004. The work involved monitoring groundworks associated with the construction of a new disabled access ramp.

Excavations were undertaken to a maximum depth of 20.20m AOD. Undisturbed natural deposits were not encountered. Finds recovered during the excavation suggested Romano-British occupation on the site, but no definite archaeological features of this date could be identified.

The skeletal remains of thirteen individuals were recorded and excavated in the southern part of the site in the area of the former churchyard. Coffin fittings associated with some of the burials suggested that they were of 18th to 19th century date.

In the northern end of the site the well-preserved remains of walls associated with the demolished 19th century church were uncovered and recorded, along with an earlier structural phase, represented by the footings of the earlier medieval church. Both phases of walling were covered by modern demolition and backfill deposits incorporating a number of re-deposited gravestones.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. at Derwent Swimming Pool Church Street, Norton, North Yorkshire, from the 9th March to the 14th May 2004. The work was carried out on behalf of Ryedale District

Council and involved monitoring groundworks associated with the creation of a new disabled access ramp.

1.2 All work was funded by Ryedale District Council.

1.3 All maps within this report have been produced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright, Licence No. AL 50453A.

2. Site Description

2.1 The site lies in the town of Norton, on the south bank of the river Derwent, at SE 7951 7150 (Figs. 1 and 2). It is bounded to the north by the York to Scarborough railway line, to the south by Church Street and to the east and west by commercial properties. The site consists of a modern swimming pool building, located in a grass-covered former burial ground. The excavation area, situated to the south of the pool building, consisted of a tarmac path and an area of concrete hard-standing.

2.2 The site lies on soils of the Landbeach Association, which consist of permeable calcareous and non-calcareous loamy soils, overlying a solid geology of chalky glaciofluvial and river terrace drift (Mackney, 1984, 194).

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

3.1 The Roman Fort and *vicus* (civilian settlement) at Malton lies to the north of the river Derwent, with further Romano-British settlement situated on the southern bank beneath a substantial area of the modern town of Norton.

3.2 The present Church Street is believed to follow one of the major Roman roads that ran from the fort. In 1862, drainage work on the riverbank in Norton uncovered part of a metalled road surface, associated with finds of Roman date. This was interpreted as a ford on the line of the road running south from the southern gate of the Roman fort. On the north bank of the river, a road was found to gradually ascend from the ford towards the present Church Street (Robinson 1978). The road ran through the Roman settlement at Norton and continued on to York (*ibid.*).

- 3.3 During the rebuilding of Norton Church in 1814 sherds of fourth century pottery were found (Robinson, 1978, p.3). A stone inscribed with a dedication to a goldsmith, the only one of its type found in Britain, was also recovered during the building work (Wenham 1974 p.46)
- 3.4 In 1976 sherds of Romano-British and medieval pottery were recovered from beneath the floor of Norton Post Office during foundation work (Robinson, 1978 p.40). In 2001 MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. recorded and excavated three burials beneath the Post Office during repairs to flood-damaged floors. The burials were of medieval date and truncated deposits containing Romano-British pottery.
- 3.5 The medieval village of Norton began to grow in the 18th century and expanded greatly from the mid-19th century onwards to form a large residential and commercial centre rivalling Malton.
- 3.6 The site occupies the site of the former St Nicholas Church and graveyard. The Church was built in 1814 at a cost of £2,500, replacing an earlier Norman church that had fallen into disrepair. The new church was built in the Romanesque style, the ground plan being shown on the 1853 Ordnance Survey First Edition Town Series map (Fig. 3). The Churchyard was closed for burials in circa 1850, a new town cemetery being opened in July 1852. The new church had a relatively short life and was closed and demolished in March 1901. (Robinson. 1978 p 40). Shortly afterwards the land was acquired by Ryedale District Council. An open-air swimming pool was constructed in the early 1920s and is shown on the 1924 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4). The present pool building dates from the early 1980s.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 The monitored groundworks consisted of three areas (Fig. 5). Area 1 was the existing Y-shaped footpath leading from Church Street to the pool building, covering an area of approximately 60 sq m. Groundworks in Area 1 involved the removal of the existing tarmac path surface and excavation of the underlying deposits to reduce the gradient of the path. Area 2 consisted of a 110 sq m area of concrete, capping the remains of the demolished church and forming a forecourt to the pool building. Work in Area 2 involved

the removal of the concrete capping and partial excavation of the underlying deposits to form a graded access ramp and new forecourt area. Area 3 was not part of the initial development, but was a small hand-excavated grave, dug after the completion of the groundworks to re-inter human remains disturbed in Area 1

- 4.2 With the exception of Area 3, all excavations were undertaken by a mini mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket, operating under close archaeological supervision. Where human remains or sensitive archaeological deposits were identified they were cleaned, recorded and hand-excavated by the Monitoring Archaeologist.
- 4.3 All work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1998).
- 4.4 All archaeological deposits were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on MAP's *pro forma* context sheets, which are compatible with the MoLAS recording system.
- 4.5 All human skeletal remains uncovered during the Watching Brief were recorded using MAP *pro forma* recording sheets (appendix 5). The remains were photographed *in situ* and a plan of all the inhumations, showing the orientation of the skeletons, was prepared. Human remains were then lifted by MAP staff and stored in a secure on-site facility prior to reburial on completion of the groundworks.
- 4.6 The full extent of archaeological deposits and features were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:50 on drawing film. Sections of features and individual layers were drawn at a scale of 1:20.
- 4.7 A photographic record was prepared of all the archaeological features encountered during the Watching Brief, comprising 35mm colour print film (Appendix 4).
- 4.8 All artefacts were retained for specialist analysis. Finds were processed in accordance with English Heritage Guidelines (EH 1995). All finds were cleaned, identified, assessed, dated

(where possible), marked (where appropriate), and properly packed and stored according to national guidelines.

5. Results

5.1 Area 1 (Fig. 6)

- 5.1.1 Area 1 was situated at the southern side of the swimming pool building and consisted of an existing tarmac path, Y-shaped in plan. The eastern, longer arm measured 22m x 2m, whilst the north-western branch measured 10m x 2m. Excavations were conducted to a maximum depth of 20.20m AOD (Pl. 1).
- 5.1.2 Excavation of the north-western branch revealed a modern hardcore deposit (context 1002, Fig. 7 a-b), underlying a 0.05m deep tarmac surface (context 1000). No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in this part of the excavation area (Pl. 2).
- 5.1.3 The earliest deposit identified in the eastern part of the path was a deposit of silty soil (context 1047, Fig. 7 c-d), extending over the excavation area. Deposit 1047 was a mixed, truncated subsoil that had clearly been heavily disturbed by both grave-digging and the action of tree roots.
- 5.1.4 The skeletal remains of five adult individuals were recovered from the matrix of Deposit 1047 (contexts 1043, 1044, 1046, 1048 and 1049, Appendix 5). All the skeletons were articulated and were aligned east to west. Whilst the bodies had clearly been laid in individual graves truncating Deposit 1047, no trace of the original grave cuts could be identified.
- 5.1.5 Skeleton 1043 was unusual in that the skull was found resting on the thorax (Pl. 3). However, it was unclear whether decapitation had occurred prior to burial or whether the skeleton had been disturbed or damaged by later burials. An iron coffin fitting and approximately 50 copper alloy tacks, probably used to pin a fabric coffin lining in place, were found in association with Skeleton 1043 (Pl. 4, Appendix 2).
- 5.1.6 Skeleton 1044 was fragmentary and consisted only of a skull with the mandible missing. It probably represented the remains of a burial disturbed by later internments.

- 5.1.7 A probable iron coffin hinge, found in association with Skeleton 1049 (Appendix 2), suggested that the burials were of post-medieval date.
- 5.1.8 Deposit 1047 was sealed by a deposit of mixed silty subsoil (context 1014). Deposit 1014 was in essence identical to Deposit 1047 and represented a contractors' excavation spit rather than a discrete archaeological horizon. Sherds of Romano-British greyware and a 4th century bronze coin of Constantius II were recovered from Deposit 1014 (Appendix 2), but these finds are likely to have been re-deposited from underlying archaeological strata by the action of repeated grave-digging.
- 5.1.9 Several skeletons were recovered from Deposit 1014 (contexts 1045, 1041, 1042, 1011, 1012, Appendix 5). Again, whilst it was clear that the bodies had been laid in graves truncating Deposit 1014, the actual grave cuts themselves could not be identified owing to the mixed nature of the deposit. Skeleton 1045 had been truncated by the later burial of Skeleton 1041, whilst Skeleton 1042 had been disturbed by the later burials of Skeletons 1011 and 1012 (Pls. 5 and 6). All the burials were aligned east to west. A single iron coffin handle was found in association with Skeleton 1045 (Appendix 2).
- 5.1.10 Deposit 1014 was sealed by a 0.32m deep deposit of mixed silty soil (context 1007). Deposit 1007 was very similar to Deposits 1047 and 1014 and represented an excavation spit, rather than a discrete archaeological context. Sherds of Romano-British greyware and calcite-gritted pottery were recovered from the deposit, along with a probable bronze radiate copy coin of the late 3rd century (Small Find 1, Appendix 2). However, sherds of 12th to 15th century medieval pottery (Appendix 2) were also recovered, indicating that the earlier finds had probably been disturbed from underlying deposits by grave-digging.
- 5.1.11 The remains of one individual were recovered from Deposit 1007. Skeleton 1004 was aligned east to west and was probably laid in a grave truncating Deposit 1007. However, the grave cut could not be positively identified.
- 5.1.12 Deposit 1007 had been truncated by two burials in which a grave cut could be positively identified (contexts 1013 and 1009) Grave Cut 1013 was of sub-rectangular plan, was

aligned east to west and measured 1.50m x 0.80m x 0.30m deep. It was of a vertical-sided flat-bottomed profile and had been cut through Deposit 1007, disturbing Skeleton 1044. The grave was occupied by Skeleton 1010 (Appendix 5) and backfilled by a deposit of mixed silt (context 1050).

5.1.13 Deposits 1007 and 1050 had been truncated by a later burial (context 1009). Grave Cut 1009 was of sub-rectangular plan and was aligned east to west. It was of a vertical-sided flat-bottomed profile and measured 0.90m x 1.40m x 0.30m deep. The grave was occupied by Skeleton 1005 (Pls. 7 and 8, Appendix 5) and was backfilled by a deposit of mixed silty soil (context 1008).

5.1.14 Also truncating Deposit 1007 to the south was a structure consisting of a deposit of brick and rectangular dressed building stone within a shallow cut (context 1006). Structure 1006 measured 1.60m x 1.0m x 0.12m in height and was interpreted as the remains of a 19th century flight of steps, situated at the foot of the church path. The feature had probably been constructed as part of the 1814 rebuilding of the church and had then been demolished when the existing path had been graded and surfaced.

5.1.15 At the northern end of Area 1 Deposit 1007 was truncated by a poorly-constructed stone wall (context 1027). Wall 1027 consisted of two courses of roughly dressed limestone blocks, bonded by a grey friable silty mortar. Wall 1027 was interpreted as a fragment of the original medieval church wall. Immediately to the north of Wall 1027 Deposit 1007 was truncated by a second stone structure (context 1029, see Area 2 results) interpreted as a fragment of the 19th century church wall. A deposit of stone building rubble (context 1028) had built up against the southern face of Wall 1029 and probably represented demolition rubble associated with the destruction of the later church.

5.1.16 Wall 1027 and Deposits 1007, 1008 and 1050 were sealed by a deposit of silty subsoil (context 1003). To the south, Deposit 1003 was truncated by a vertical cut (context 1051) that was filled by a concrete foundation deposit (context 1001) for a modern brick wall edging the path (context 1052). Further to the north, Deposit 1003 was partially sealed by a deposit of modern hardcore (context 1002).

5.1.17 Deposits 1002 and 1028 were sealed by a layer of modern hardcore (context 1053), used as a bedding layer for the tarmac path surface (context 1000)

5.2 Area 2 (Fig. 6)

5.2.1 Area 2 measured 11m x 9m and consisted of a concrete-covered forecourt situated immediately to the south of the swimming pool building. The area was excavated to a depth of 21.50m AOD (Pl. 9). All the deposits encountered were man-made and undisturbed natural deposits were not reached.

5.2.2 The earliest feature identified in Area 2 was a fragment of stone wall running on a north to south alignment (context 1036). Wall 1036 measured 6.20m in length x 0.50m wide and was situated at a maximum elevation of 21.68m AOD. The wall was constructed of roughly-dressed limestone blocks, bonded by a grey friable silty mortar. Whilst a height of approximately 0.50m was upstanding above ground level, the base and foundations of Wall 1036 were not identified due to the contractor's finished excavation level being reached.

5.2.3 At the northern end of Wall 1036, an apparent return to the east was visible in the form of Wall 1038. Wall 1038 was aligned east to west and measured 2.0m x 0.50m, with a maximum height of 0.10m (21.69m AOD). It was of identical build to Wall 1036, and although later truncation had obscured the stratigraphic relationship between the walls, it seems likely that the two features were of contemporary date, forming the north-western corner of a large stone building. Wall 1027, located in Area 1, was on a parallel alignment to Wall 1038 and also formed part of this building, the earlier of the two churches known to have occupied the site.

5.2.4 Two fragments of wall were identified within the building footprint formed by Walls 1036 and 1038 (contexts 1037 and 1039). Wall 1039 was 1.70m long, 0.38m wide, with an elevation of approximately 0.20m upstanding above the contractors' finished excavation level. The wall was situated 1.0m to the south of Wall 1038 and was on a parallel alignment. Wall 1037 was 2.10m in length, 0.40m wide and stood to a maximum height of 0.40m. It was on a parallel alignment to Wall 1039 and was situated approximately 2.10m to the south. Both Walls 1039 and 1037 were constructed of roughly-dressed stone blocks and bricks, bonded with a sandy mortar, and appeared to butt against Wall 1036. The

likelihood is that these walls represented internal sub-floor features of the later church building, such as supports for a flagstone floor.

- 5.2.5 Wall 1036 was truncated by a later stone wall that formed three sides of a large rectangular building (context 1029, Fig. 7 e-f) Wall 1029 ran from east to west for approximately 10.50m before turning to the north (Fig. 7 g-h). After running in a northerly direction (Fig. 7 i-j) for 7.40m the wall again turned, this time running towards the east for a distance of 6.40m (Fig. 7 k-l, m-n, Pl. 10). Wall 1029 stood to a maximum height of 1.0m (22.39m AOD) and was 0.70m wide. The construction was of roughly-dressed stone, bonded with a grey sandy mortar. Wall 1029 represented the remains of the 19th century church. That the new structure probably re-used stone salvaged from the earlier building was indicated by a medieval *graffito* on one of the stones (Fig. 7 k-l, Pl. 11).
- 5.2.6 It was clear that the later building (Wall 1029) was of similar plan and alignment to the earlier church (Walls 1027, 1036 and 1038), but had been off-set approximately 1m to the north-west, presumably to avoid building directly onto the remains of the earlier structure.
- 5.2.7 The void between Walls 1036 and 1029, was backfilled by a deposit of loose demolition rubble (context 1034=1035). A similar deposit (context 1032) had been used to backfill the footprint of the earlier building. Deposits 1034/5 and 1032 had both been truncated by a vertical-sided, flat-bottomed cut that had also been driven through Wall 1036 (context 1033, Fig. 7 o-p). Cut 1033 measured 1.10m x 0.60m x 0.40m in depth at the point where it truncated Wall 1036. The cut was filled by a brick-built flue or drain that led in a north-easterly direction from a hole in the face of Wall 1029 (Fig. 7 i-j) for 4.0m before widening out into a rectangular brick-built structure measuring 1.50m x 1.0m (context 1031, Pl. 12). The flue or drain continued to the north-east of this structure, where a 2.0m length was exposed by the groundworks (Fig. 7 q-r). Structure 1031 is thought to represent the remains of a 19th century under-floor heating system associated with the later church.
- 5.2.8 Structure 1031 and backfill Deposits 1034/5 and 1032 were sealed by a 0.30m deep deposit of modern concrete (context 1030). Deposit 1030 was situated at a height of 22.25m AOD and had probably been laid following the demolition of the later church. It was sealed by a 0.10m deep hardcore layer (context 1026) that, in turn, was sealed by a

series of gravestones that had been removed from the graveyard and re-deposited to form a surface (contexts 1016-1023, 1040 Pl. 13). The careful positioning of the stones suggests that it may have originally been intended for them to have been open to view; in any case the gravestone surface, situated at a height of 22.40m AOD, had subsequently been sealed by a second layer of concrete (context 1015). Deposit 1015 was sealed by modern path Surfaces 1053 and 1000.

5.3 Area 3: Re-burial Grave

- 5.3.1 The skeletal remains of the thirteen individuals recovered during the Watching Brief in Area 1 were re-buried on site during June 2004. The excavation of the new grave was conducted under archaeological supervision due to the obvious archaeological significance of the site
- 5.3.2 The re-burial grave consisted of a single rectangular cut that measured 0.90m x 1.10m x 1.30m deep. It was situated to the south-east of the site, close to the southern site boundary (Fig. 8). Excavations were undertaken by hand under the supervision of the monitoring archaeologist. It was not possible to record in detail archaeological deposits or human remains during the excavation, as such an approach was not deemed feasible given the small size of the grave cut and the sheer number of bodies that were encountered. However, every effort was made to recover human bones and artefacts disturbed during the excavation and after the completion of the work the archaeologist was given the opportunity to record and study the archaeological strata revealed in the grave section. All disturbed human remains were immediately re-interred on the completion of the excavation, whilst the finds recovered during the work were retained.
- 5.3.3 Excavations were conducted to a maximum depth of 1.30m below existing ground level (21.32m AOD). It was abundantly clear that the grave cut had truncated a series of burials. In the south, west and east-facing sections of the trench, fragments of human bone were noted at depths ranging from approximately 0.10m below surface level (22.44m AOD) to the base of the trench. However, extensive disturbance of the subsoil (context 1003), caused by repeated grave-digging, made it impossible to discern any individual grave cuts.

- 5.3.4 A clear stratigraphic sequence was preserved in the north-facing section of the trench, where the lower 0.60m depth of deposits had not been truncated by deep burials (Fig. 9). This section showed the earliest archaeological feature to be a deposit of roughly dressed sub-rectangular limestone blocks (context 2000). Approximately two to three courses of material were visible in section, with the individual blocks measuring up to 0.10m x 0.15m x 0.50m in size. No bonding material was observed. Deposit 2000 was situated at a depth of 21.49m AOD and probably represented either the remains of a wall or a demolition deposit.
- 5.3.5 Deposit 2000 was sealed by a 0.40m deep deposit of sandy mortar that contained fragments of stone (context 1001). Deposit 2001 was situated at a depth of 21.82m AOD and probably represented a demolition deposit.
- 5.3.6 Deposit 2001 was sealed by a 0.05m thick deposit of blue/grey sandy clay (context 2002). The deposit had the appearance of a packed clay floor which had been laid onto the earlier demolition rubble.
- 5.3.7 Deposit 2002 was sealed by a 0.86m deep deposit of heavily mixed and disturbed graveyard soil (context 2003). This deposit was identical to the disturbed subsoil seen in the other trench sections.
- 5.3.8 The excavation disturbed the skeletal remains of between four and seven individuals. This was deduced from the bone assemblage collected during the excavation, which included four complete mandibles, fragments of up to three skulls (not necessarily related to the mandibles), ribs, vertebrae and long-bones. In addition to the excavated remains, the articulated remains of two individuals were apparent in the base of the trench. These were left undisturbed. One of these had been buried in a deep grave that had truncated Deposits 2000, 2001 and 2002 to the north.
- 5.3.9 Casual examination of the bone assemblage revealed some interesting pathology; one individual had lost all but one of their lower teeth (the empty sockets having completely healed over), a second had a deformed jaw (with the teeth on one side erupting horizontally), whilst the vertebrae of a third showed evidence of osteo-arthritis. However,

whilst these traits could be easily identified, the monitoring archaeologist could not determine the sex of any of the individuals.

5.3.10 The finds recovered during the excavation ranged from sherds of Romano-British greyware pottery to fragments of 19th century moulded glass bottles (Appendix 2). All the finds were attributed to Deposit 3003. Of particular interest was a tin foil coffin-handle plate, depicting a winged angel surrounded by wreaths. The design had been machine-stamped into the metal, indicating a probable 19th century date. It is therefore likely that the disturbed burials dated to the 19th century, with the Romano-British material being re-deposited from earlier deposits by repeated grave-digging.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The Watching Brief at Derwent Pool recovered substantial archaeological evidence for the former use of the site, dating from the Romano-British period until the mid 19th century. A number of conclusions can be drawn from the archaeological evidence that have important implications in terms of the future development of the site.

6.2 The recovery of Romano-British pottery and coins from Deposits 1014 and 1007 indicated that discrete archaeological deposits of that date probably survive on the site at depths greater than those reached during the current monitored groundworks. This was confirmed by results from Area 3, where evidence was noted for the partial survival of probable structural remains that pre-dated the burial sequence. This is highly significant given the amount of Romano-British material recovered from the site and the fact that the only known Romano-British inscription referring to a goldsmith's shop was reputedly found at this location. It is highly likely that further isolated "islands" of stratified archaeological deposits may survive in areas not truncated by the very deep (ie 1.20m +) 19th century graves. These deposits will almost certainly contain material of Romano-British date and may be of regional or national significance.

6.3 The skeletal remains of 13 individuals were recovered during the Area 1 Watching Brief, all from the same area of the church path. The path as it was prior to the commencement of the monitored groundworks had an irregular gradient along its length, with a pronounced

“bump” in the area where the bodies were subsequently discovered. In the opinion of the monitoring archaeologist, at least some of the skeletons had been uncovered during the construction of the path and localised changes of gradient incorporated into the design to avoid disturbing the burials. This work presumably took place in the 1980s during the construction of the existing swimming pool building.

- 6.4 The results of the Watching Brief in Area 1 proved conclusively that no concerted effort had previously been made to clear the path area of burials. The results from the Area 3 re-burial grave also demonstrated without doubt that the former graveyard has not been cleared and that a deep sequence of burials exists on the site. It is therefore likely that future groundworks in other areas of the site will encounter a stratified sequence of burials dating from the medieval period to the 19th century.
- 6.5 Excavations in Area 2 uncovered remains of both the original medieval church and the early 19th century re-build. Whilst this was expected, the high degree of preservation of the remains, with some walls standing up to a metre high, had not previously been realised. Whilst sub-floor features associated with the later church were recognised (contexts 1039, 1037, 1031), the floor level of the original church was not reached. It follows that floor surfaces and sub-floor features, such as crypts, may survive within the footprint of the original church at depths greater than those reached in the monitored groundworks. It therefore also follows that any future groundworks in the area of the churches, such as an extension of the existing pool building to the south, have the potential to encounter substantial stone structures of undoubted archaeological importance.
- 6.6 In conclusion, it may be said that the Watching Brief has highlighted the archaeological potential of the site and the likely survival of a stratified sequence of deposits, including human burials, dating from the Romano-British period the 19th century. Any plans for the large-scale re-development of the site should therefore anticipate the need to deal with this sensitive and significant archaeological resource through the formulation of a suitable mitigation strategy.

7. **Bibliography**

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