

SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NYCC HER	
SNY	9139
ENY	2547
CNY	3249
Parish	4899
Rec'd	19/8/04

SITE OPERA HOUSE, ST THOMAS STREET,
SCARBOROUGH

NATIONAL GRID REF TA 0420 8875

SITE CODE OH/04

DATE 16 JUNE, 10 JULY, 16 - 17 JULY 2004

MONITORING CARRIED OUT BY Frank Beeley, Sue Galloway, Chris Hall
Frances Hall, Ron Lewis, Sue Ogilvy,
Wendy Skelton

REPORT BY Chris Hall

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report sets out the results of a watching brief carried out by Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society (SAHS) at a development site at the former Royal Opera House. The watching brief was carried out in response to a planning decision for development of the site.

1.2 The site is located on the west side of St Thomas Street (Figure 1) and occupies 1165 square metres.

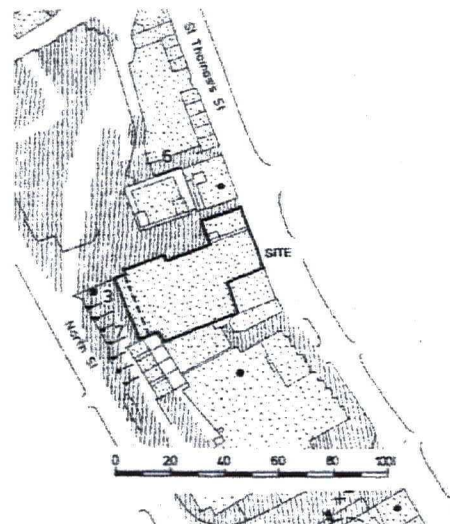


FIGURE 1: EXTRACT FROM 'AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF SCARBOROUGH'
SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE SITE

- 1.3 The development which was the subject of the archaeological monitoring was the erection of a new casino following the earlier demolition of the former Royal Opera House.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological remains affected by the development and to provide an historical understanding of the site before foundation works for the new development commenced.

3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 With the exception of 115 square metres at the extreme western end, the demolition of the former Royal Opera House revealed that the site is occupied by cellars to a substantial depth and that these had destroyed any archaeology which may have existed when the Opera House was built in the late 19th century. The cellars were examined on 16 June 2004 and examination of the stratigraphy in the extreme south-east corner of the site confirmed that these cellars had been cut into natural clay.
- 3.2 The remaining 115 square metres (less than 10% of the site) was covered by a concrete base. Following the removal of this and the underlying hardcore, the lowering of this area down to firm clean ground was monitored. This base formed the foundations of an extension to the Opera House built in 1976 (and not subject to archaeological monitoring at the time). The foundations of this building extended to a substantial depth below the concrete base.
- 3.3 Where relevant all archaeological deposits in were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on SAHS's pro forma context sheets.
- 3.4 Sections – where relevant the section of the excavation was drawn at a scale of 1:20 on drawing film.
- 3.5 Photographic record. The photographic record comprises colour prints to record all archaeological features encountered.
- 3.6 Finds and site archive. All artefacts and the site record will be deposited in the Rotunda Museum in accordance with SAHS practice

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The site lies within Scarborough's medieval town in an area defined by the County Archaeologist for planning purposes as of archaeological importance
- 4.2 It is not proposed to detail the development history of the Royal Opera House since this is fully set out in the supporting document prepared by Woodall Planning & Conservation in connection with the application for

demolition. In brief, the site was developed as a hippodrome in 1878 and substantially redeveloped in 1908 as a theatre. It was further altered in 1931 and 1976 when the extension covered by the concrete slab was erected.

4.3 Prior to the 1878 circus building there was a wooden circus building opened in 1876 which was said to be on the site of some old cottages. The 1852 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2) shows a terrace of cottages running in a north-south direction fronting the current St Thomas Street, known as Owens Yard. The greater part of the site, however, appears to be open land surrounded by walls. A feature crossing the site diagonally is labelled 'old water course called Damgate, formerly Damgeth mill beck'. Wood's map of 1828 shows the site as open ground in the occupation of Jeremiah Hudson with a series of cottages fronting Tanner Street (current St Thomas Street).



FIGURE 2: EXTRACT FROM THE 1852 OS MAP SHOWING THE SITE

4.4 A break of slope to the west of the buildings, recently occupied by a car park, and not the subject of the current monitoring possibly indicates the line of the rampart behind the Newborough town ditch. An excavation in 1980 encountered solid clay at a depth of 500 mm, possibly the town rampart.- numbered 3 on figure 1.

5.0 Results

5.1 Phase 1 comprised the monitoring of the cellars which cover 90% of the development site and showed that any pre-existing archaeology had been destroyed by the various phases of the hippodrome theatre on the site.

- 5.2 At the extreme western end of the site, the removal of the concrete and stone substrate showed that the foundation walls of the 1976 extension (which abuts walls of 1908) had resulted in the deposition of a mixed demolition fill. This was cleaned down to clay which has the appearance of natural clay but in fact was a capping overlying a number of structures (Figure 3). These structures were set into the natural clay and comprised:
- 1) two circular cisterns of single leaf dressed stone construction with stone floors (F110 and F111). The bottom of the cisterns contained a green deposit which was interpreted as decayed copper and indicated an industrial use of the site.
 - 2) a square cistern (F109) of single leaf dressed stone construction with a stone floor. This contained relatively modern demolition fill and filled with clean water on removal of the rubble. Pottery evidence from both cisterns indicates a late 18th century date.

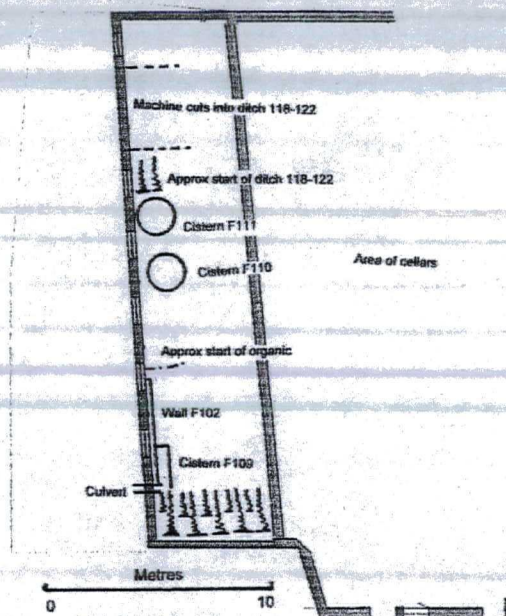


FIGURE 3: SHOWING LOCATION FEATURES AT THE WESTERN END OF THE SITE

- 5.3 The western wall of the 1976 extension was built off what appears to be a substantially built coursed stone wall (F102). However, this wall ran over the top of cistern F109, and on its partial removal was found to contain relatively modern pottery. It appears that the stone has been re-used.
- 5.4 To the south of the stone wall and cistern was a brick arched culvert. This is on the line of the 'old watercourse' shown on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map. This may reflect a rather late culverting of the Damgeth stream or simply a field drain.
- 5.5 At the western end of the site it was decided to investigate a black organic deposit in order to provide the structural engineer with ground condition

details. To this end the clay overcapping was penetrated by machine using a toothless ditching bucket. This revealed a ditch or moat shaped feature overlying the natural clay (Figure 4). The fill of this ditch was a thick consistent black organic deposit which turned mid brown on exposure to the atmosphere. This contained fragments of plant deposits but little in the way of pottery or other artefacts. This feature was interpreted as either an alignment of the Damgeth stream, or a pond associated with the industrial process of the cisterns. A sample of the material was taken and will be examined by Palaeoecology Research Services Ltd.

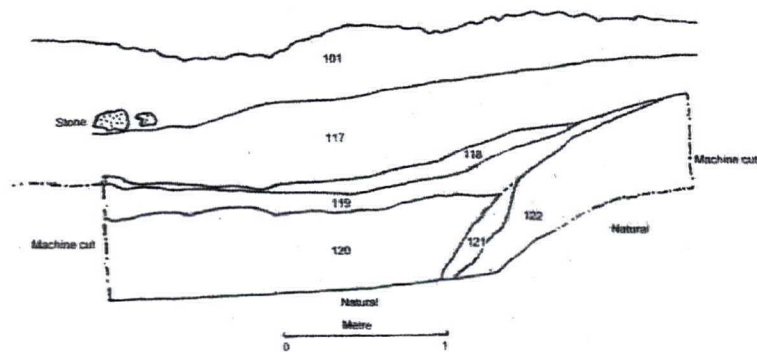


FIGURE 4: EAST FACING SECTION OF DITCH FEATURE

6.0 Interpretation

- 6.1 The greater part of the site was devoid of archaeology either due to the presence of cellars (90% of the site) or because it consisted of clay, some of which was penetrated by later features .
- 6.2 The features were interpreted as late 18th/early 19th century industrial features possibly linked with tanning (modern St Thomas Street was known as Tanner Row until the mid 19th century) topped by later walls which are consistent with the cartographic evidence of enclosed gardens. The ditch-like feature may be an earlier alignment of the Damgeth or, more likely due to the consistency of the organic deposit, a pond associated with industrial activity.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Foundations will be formed by means of piles on the perimeter of the site not affecting the interior and the works will not adversely impact upon important archaeological deposits
- 7.2 However, In view of the proximity of the town rampart it is imperative that investigative work is carried out on the site of the car park.

8.0 References

Pearson, T An Archaeological Survey of Scarborough 1987

**Woodall Planning & Conservation Statement supporting demolition of Royal
Opera House, Scarborough, September 2003**

Documents\Archaeology\Fieldwork\Sites\OH04-report.doc

SITE CODE OH/04		SITE NAME Opera House		
FILM NUMBER 3		FILM TYPE Print (also on CD)		
DATE	FRAME NO	DIRECTION OF VIEW	DESCRIPTION	CONTEXT
16-Jul-04	1A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	2A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	3A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	4A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	5A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	6A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	7A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	8A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	9A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	10A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	11A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	12A	West	Series of views of wall F102 following cleaning running South-North	F102
16-Jul-04	13A	South west	View down into cistern F111	F111
16-Jul-04	14A	West	View down into cistern F110	F110
16-Jul-04	15A	West	View down into cistern F110	F110
16-Jul-04	16A	West	Detailed view of wall F102 following cleaning	F102
16-Jul-04	17A	West	Detailed view of wall F102 following cleaning	F102
16-Jul-04	18A	West	Cistern F109 - removal of some fill	F109
16-Jul-04	19A	West	Cistern F109 - removal of some fill	F109
16-Jul-04	20A	West	Cistern F109 - removal of some fill	F109
16-Jul-04	21A	West	Cistern F109 - removal of some fill	F109
17-Jul-04	22A	South	general view of site	
17-Jul-04	23A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	24A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	25A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	26A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	27A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	28A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	29A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	30A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	31A	West	Section of ditch or moat	117 to 122
17-Jul-04	32A	West	View down into cistern F110	F110
17-Jul-04	33A		Recording 117 to 122 in progress	

Film 3

17-Jul-04	35A	West	Cistern F109 -after complete removal of fill	F109
17-Jul-04	36A	West	Cistern F109 -after complete removal of fill	