
EXTENSIONS TO THE CO-OPERATIVE STORE,
LANGBOURNE ROAD, WHITBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE.

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
OF A DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

OSA REPORT No: OSA10DT04

February 2010.

OSA

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Report Summary.

REPORT NO: OSA10DT04

SITE NAME: Extension to Co-operative store, Langbourne Road,
Whitby

COUNTY: North Yorkshire

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE: NZ 899 108

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1.0 Abstract.

This archaeological appraisal was carried out for Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners by On-Site Archaeology Ltd in February 2010. It is proposed to construct two extensions to the existing Co-operative store, Langbourne Road, Whitby. The site lies above the remains of 18th and early 19th century shipyards. These remains were sealed in the later 19th century by deposits laid down for the expansion of the adjacent railway. Although historic maps show the presence of features associated with the shipyard these features cannot be located with certainty. As the development proposes to utilise piled foundations it will be necessary to undertake archaeological evaluation to enable accurate location of the archaeological features. The piles can then be positioned to avoid damage to any sensitive features that may be present.

2.0 Introduction.

On-Site Archaeology carried out an appraisal of archaeological potential and development impact for Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in February 2010 to support a planning application for the construction of extensions to the existing Co-operative store, Langbourne Road, Whitby. The site is located on the west side of Langbourne Road, centred at National Grid Reference NZ 899 108.

A planning application was submitted to Scarborough Borough Council in December 2009, for the construction of two extensions to the existing Co-operative store (Application Reference 09/02557/FL). As the site lies within an area of archaeological interest North Yorkshire County Council Historic Environment Team have advised the Borough Council Planning Services Department that an assessment of the archaeological potential of the site should be undertaken prior to a decision being made on the application.

Prior to the construction of a previous extension a desktop assessment of the archaeological implications of development was carried out (Colin Briden, June 2001). A geotechnical investigation was carried out on the site prior to the original construction of the Co-operative store. This current appraisal is intended to assess the potential for archaeological remains to be present beneath the proposed new extensions, and the potential impact of the development upon them. It does not comprise a full Archaeological Desk-based Assessment.

3.0 Archaeological Potential.

The town of Whitby has a long history. It was the site of a settlement at least in the Anglian period, then known as “Streoneshalh”, when in accordance with the intentions of King Oswy of Northumbria, St. Hilda founded the Abbey. Archaeological evidence, and a passage from Bede, however, suggests that the Abbey may have been constructed on the site of a late Roman signal station (Daysh, 1958). The Abbey was destroyed by the Danes in AD 867, who also renamed the town (Edwards, 1924). Through later development and a number of

landslides, however, little evidence remains of the Danish town layout. The abbey was re-founded following the Norman Conquest, in 1078.

The medieval settlement associated with the abbey contained a market place at the junction of Baxtergate and Flowergate, and a bridge, which was first mentioned in 1351. Port facilities are referred to as early as the start of the 14th century, and numerous grants of quayage were made during the 14th and 15th centuries. Shipbuilding is referred to in 1301 when the town was called upon to furnish a vessel against the Scots (VCH, 1923). Evidence for the medieval quayside has been archaeologically revealed during sewer trenching on Church Street on the east side of the River Esk in the late 1990's.

Shipbuilding continued to be a significant local industry into the early modern period. This was added to by the transportation of alum, from the 17th century, coal shipping and whaling, during the 18th century.

The archaeological potential of the site considered by this appraisal is specifically linked to the ship building industry. Although no previous archaeological investigations have been carried out on the site, by the late 18th century the character of the area is known from cartographic sources. A plan of the town and harbour of Whitby prepared by L. Charlton in 1778 shows that the west side of the River Esk, to the south of the town, was occupied by a tidal island, called Bell Island, with several inlets beyond. A quay is marked, as is a Dry Dock, towards the northern part of this area. Several buildings are also shown in the vicinity. Shipyards, docks and associated buildings are shown in more detail on the 1828 Plan of Whitby by J. Wood.

The 1841 Plan of Whitby by F. Pickernell shows the area in more detail, and includes a caption: "Mr Hobkirks Ship Yard". A large oval dry dock and a wet dock of similar size are both shown, accessing the River Esk via a broad creek. To the south of the creek are several divisions, probably representing walls defining yards and a single large building. Further buildings are shown to the north and east of the wet and dry docks. The edges of the creek would have been managed, almost certainly including timber revetments, and the docks would have been lined, again either in timber, or possibly with brick (suggested in 2001 to Colin Briden by a Whitby resident, who had witnessed the construction of the current store in the late 1980's).

The character of the area in the immediate vicinity of the site began to undergo changes from the mid 19th century, with the coming of the railway. The railway station was constructed to the northwest of the site in 1847 (Pevsner, 1966). The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1853 shows the new station, together with the docks, creek and buildings shown on the Pickernell map. In the 1860's the area underwent significant changes, with the expansion of the railway across the site itself. A new goods shed was built to the south, with several tracks being constructed through the site itself. The expansion of the railway across the site required the backfilling of the earlier docks and creek and lifting of the ground level above the adjacent water level. The geotechnical investigation carried out in 1988 recorded made ground, which varied in depth from 1.5m to 3.2m. Although it is difficult to locate the boreholes and trial pits upon the 1841 map with any certainty it is likely that the deepest

made-ground represents backfilling of the docks or channel, and that shallower material overlies the areas of dry land between these. Partially decomposed timbers were found at a depth of between 2.2m and 3m, which are likely to have been within one of the docks or the creek. Colliery waste and slag were noted, especially within the top 1m of the made-ground. This material is likely to represent material laid down during the expansion of the railway.

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during sewer replacement scheme in 1998 (NAA, 2001). Whilst much of this work was located on the east side of the river, along Church Street, monitoring did take place along the northern part of Langbourne Road. This revealed thick layers of dolomite beneath the existing road. This make-up was generally between 0.80m and 1m thick and overlay surfaces and wall footings interpreted as parts of the former railway and dockyard. The surfaces and structures were built over further layers of make-up, containing well preserved timbers.

4.0. Impact of Development.

The proposed development is to comprise the construction of two extensions to the southern end of the existing Co-operative store. Examination of historic maps, from the late 18th to mid 19th centuries, show that the site lies within an area that contained ship yards during this period. Given the known association of the town of Whitby with ship building back to at least the early 14th century, it is possible that the area contained ship yards before the earliest map (of 1778) was produced.

An attempt has been made to overlay the footprint of the proposed development upon two of the historic maps (see Figures 1 and 2). There are significant difficulties in preparing such overlays. Attempting such overlays requires the original map to have been drawn to an accurate scale, and for sufficient points of detail to be included that are still fixed on the ground and present on modern maps. Due to the massive alterations to the local topography in the mid 19th century, with the expansion of the railway and improvements to the harbour, there are very few unchanged points in the vicinity of the site. The overlay of the proposed development upon the Pickernell map (Figure 1) should, therefore, be viewed with a degree of caution. This should be treated as an indication of the likely locations of features shown on the historic maps, rather than a definitive location of such features.

Bearing the above proviso in mind it is possible to suggest what archaeological features may lie below the footprints of the proposed extensions. The retail sales extension is likely to lie predominantly above the creek, which linked the dry dock to the River Esk. The northern corner of the extension may also lie close to the southwest side of the wet dock, where it joined the creek. The creek is likely to have been managed, with the centre being regularly dredged and the sides retained with timber revetting. The wet dock would also have been lined, either with timber, brick or stone.

The footprint of the warehouse extension to the southwest appears to lie outside the docks or creek associated with Hobkirks shipyard. The south end may however, overlie another inlet or dock, which although unlabelled on the Pickernell map, may reflect Thomas Brodericks

Ship Yard indicated on the Wood map of 1828. The northern part of the proposed warehouse extension almost certainly overlies an area that would have been dry land between the creeks and docks shown on the historic maps. At least one substantial building is shown in this area on the Pickernell map, together with several other yard walls.

Although no previous archaeological investigations have been carried out on the site it is possible to combine the information provided by the sewer scheme along Langbourne Road with that recorded by the geotechnical investigation to suggest a likely sequence of deposits under the proposed extensions. Whilst there are deep water features within the footprints, which contain 19th century backfill, up to 3m deep, other areas of the site are likely to contain 18th and 19th century surfaces and structures, which may be covered by only 1m to 1.5m of more recent made ground.

Due to the nature of deposits on the site it is proposed to construct the new extensions on piled foundations to be embedded in the underlying glacial till. The piles should be located to avoid the edges of the creek and dock, as these are the most sensitive structural archaeological remains.

5.0 Mitigation.

The site has the potential to contain the remains of shipyards associated with the ship building industry during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Although historic maps indicate the presence of elements of the shipyards within the footprints of the proposed extensions it is not possible to locate these with any certainty. The only way to locate the shipyard features with certainty would be to undertake an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. The remains of the shipyard are likely to be sealed by approximately 1m to 1.5m of made ground associated with the expansion of the railway and construction of the current car park. The evaluation trenching should therefore only need to go to this depth to be able to establish the location of the edges of docks and the creek, without extending to the full depth of the backfill encountered during the previous geotechnical investigation. Once the locations of the major archaeological features have been confirmed then the detailed layout of the foundation piles can be adapted to avoid damaging them. If additional geotechnical investigations are to be carried out then these should be subject to archaeological monitoring to provide additional information.

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Figure 1. Pickernell's map of 1841, overlain with the current store (blue) and proposed extensions (red).

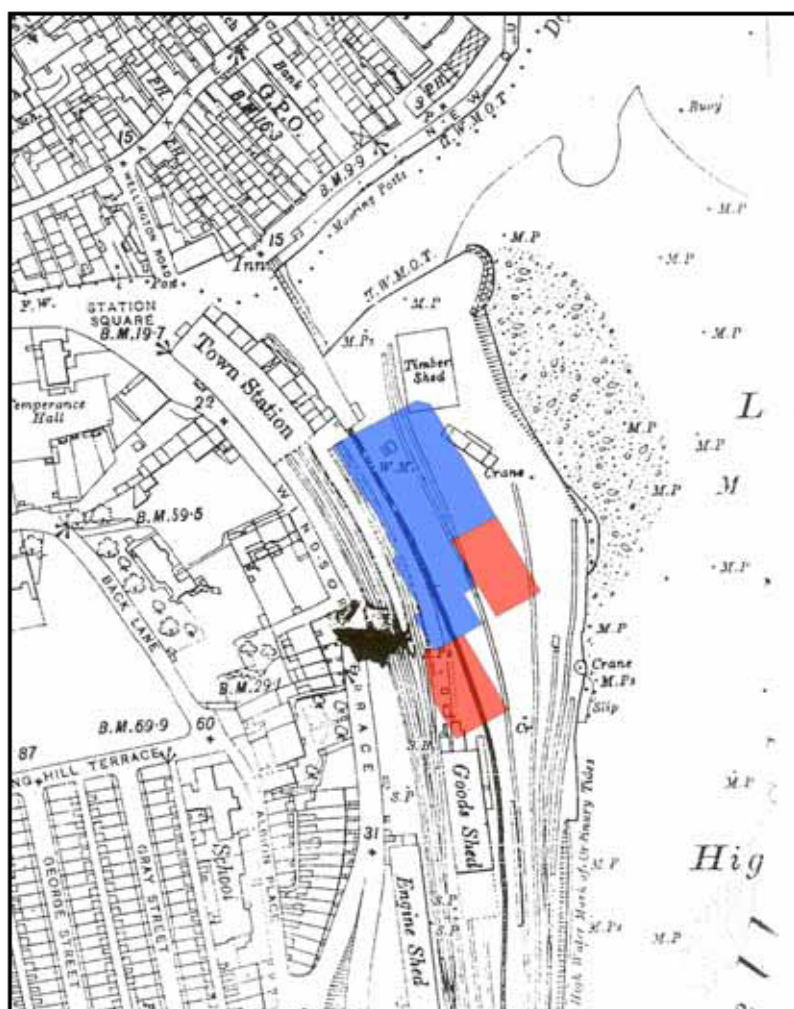


Figure 2. 1913 OS map, overlain with the current store (blue) and proposed extensions (red)