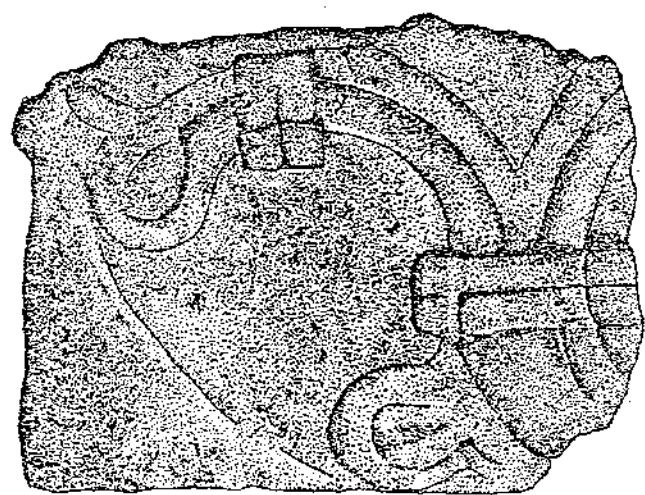


PARADISE Scarborough



A report on archaeological excavations
May-June 1989

by
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(1) INTRODUCTION

Between 27 May and 4 June members of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit and Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society conducted an excavation on the northern part of the Paradise Estate, Scarborough as part of a continuing programme of archaeological work in advance of the estate's redevelopment. The Paradise Estate comprises a large block of open ground on the north-east of Scarborough's "old town" close by the medieval castle and parish church. The excavation programme began in March 1988 with a series of trial trenches which defined areas of archaeological importance. Two such areas were more intensively examined on the south of the estate in December in advance of their destruction by building work. The remains comprised a medieval building adjacent to the existing 18th-century Paradise House and a medieval clay quarry and 18th-century brick kiln some 65 metres to the east. The present excavation was undertaken at the request of the site owners G.E. and W.D. Bowser in advance of building work affecting an area of archaeological importance on the north of the estate.

(2) BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)

The excavation took place on a derelict plot of land to the rear of an outbuilding situated on Paradise Street opposite Paradise House. The outbuilding is mainly an 18th-century structure but probably started life in the late 17th century re-using stones brought from derelict portions of the parish church including part of a medieval grave slab. At this period open ground called Paradise Close stretched from the outbuilding northwards to Castle Road and westwards to Church Lane, but over the years successive portions of the close have been released for building and for the eastward extension of the churchyard. The derelict ground behind the outbuilding is thus the last remaining part of Paradise Close still undeveloped and in the tenure of the estate.

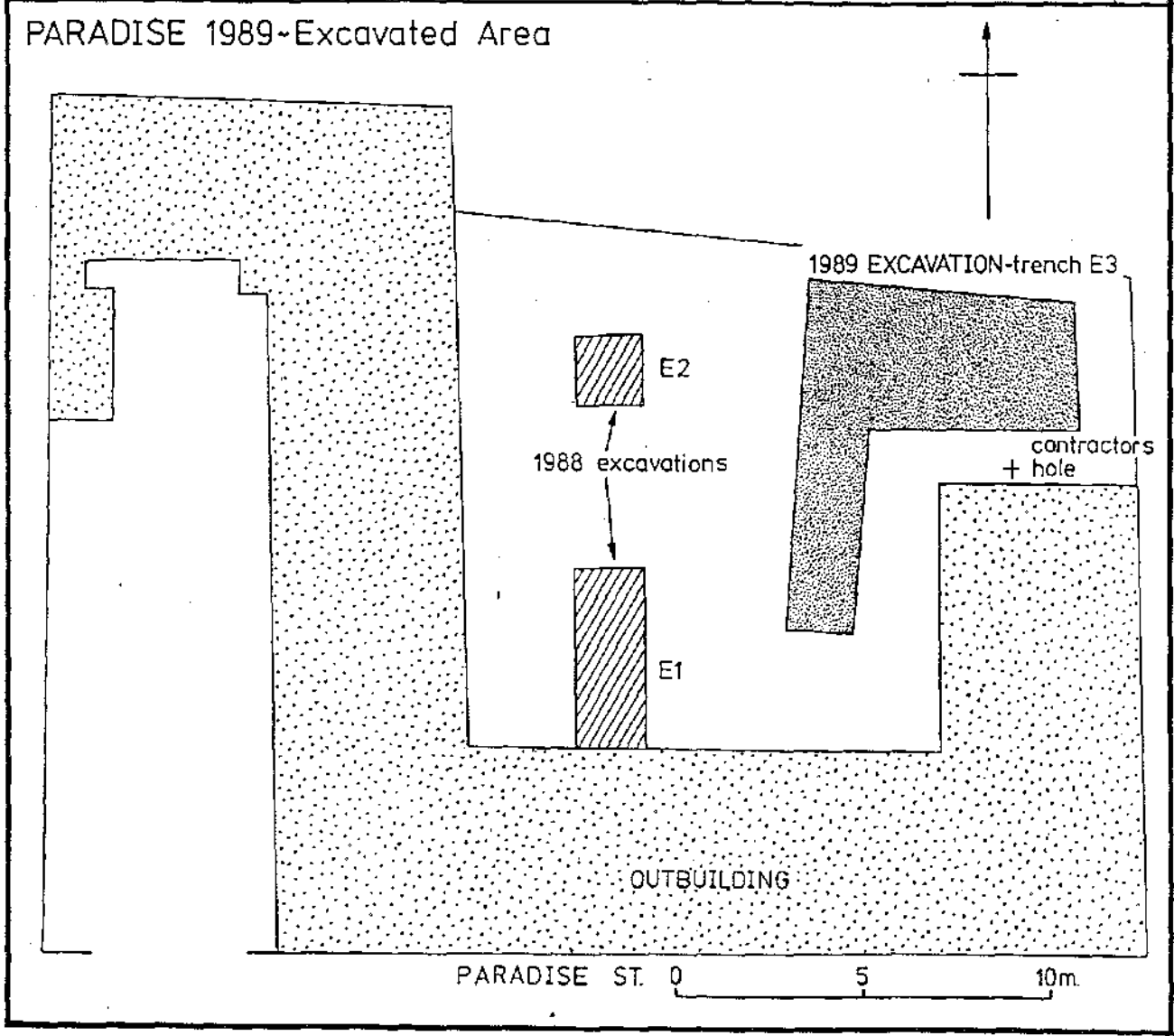
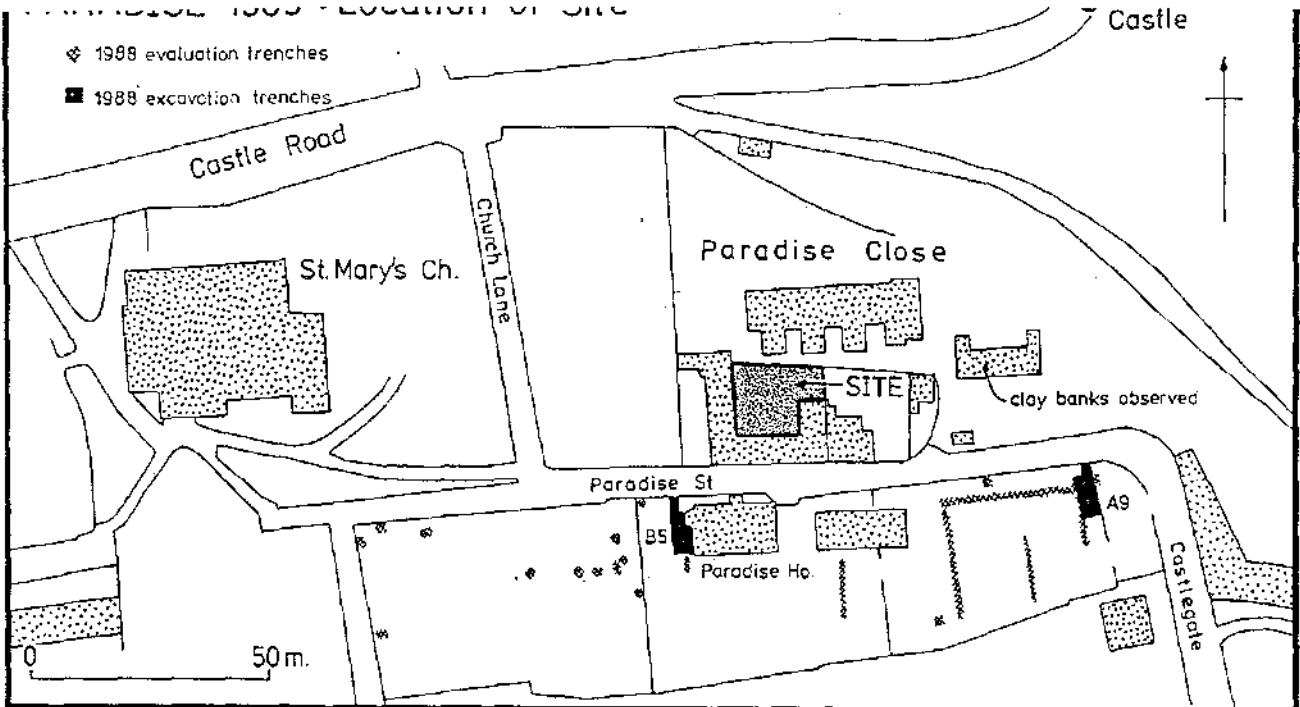


figure one

The archaeological significance of the area behind the outbuilding was established by trial trenches E1 and E2 excavated in March 1988 and the recent observation of a contractor's hole. The excavation established that about one metre of undisturbed medieval deposits lay on top of the natural clay sealing possible 12th-century structural remains cut into the natural surface. Approximately one metre of post-medieval and modern overburden lay on top of the medieval deposits in trenches E1 and E2 though in the contractor's hole to the east the overburden was much thinner and the natural surface was less than 70 cms from the modern ground level. Proposals to demolish the outbuilding and construct four cottages on broadly the same plan with a car park to the rear threatened remains buried on the eastern half of the area. Consequently an L-shaped trench (E3) was excavated in advance of the redevelopment as near to the east wing of the outbuilding as safety considerations would allow. This report briefly describes the discoveries made during the excavation.

(3) THE EXCAVATION

(A) NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY

It is evident the natural clay surface must slope quite markedly from west to east when its height in the present excavation is compared with that recorded in the trial trenches E1 and E2. The natural surface exposed in the latter two trenches was about two metres lower than the level of the clay revealed ten metres to the east in the present excavation pointing to the existence of a ridge or spur of boulder clay underneath the eastern third of the site. Subsequent infilling of the lower area to the west by natural agencies and human activity has all but obliterated any evidence for the ridge as a surface feature today.

(B) MEDIEVAL FEATURES (Fig. 2)

The excavation of medieval features was confined to the northern arm of the trench and a small sondage in the western arm dug to establish the depth of

PARADISE TRENCH E3 *Medieval Features*

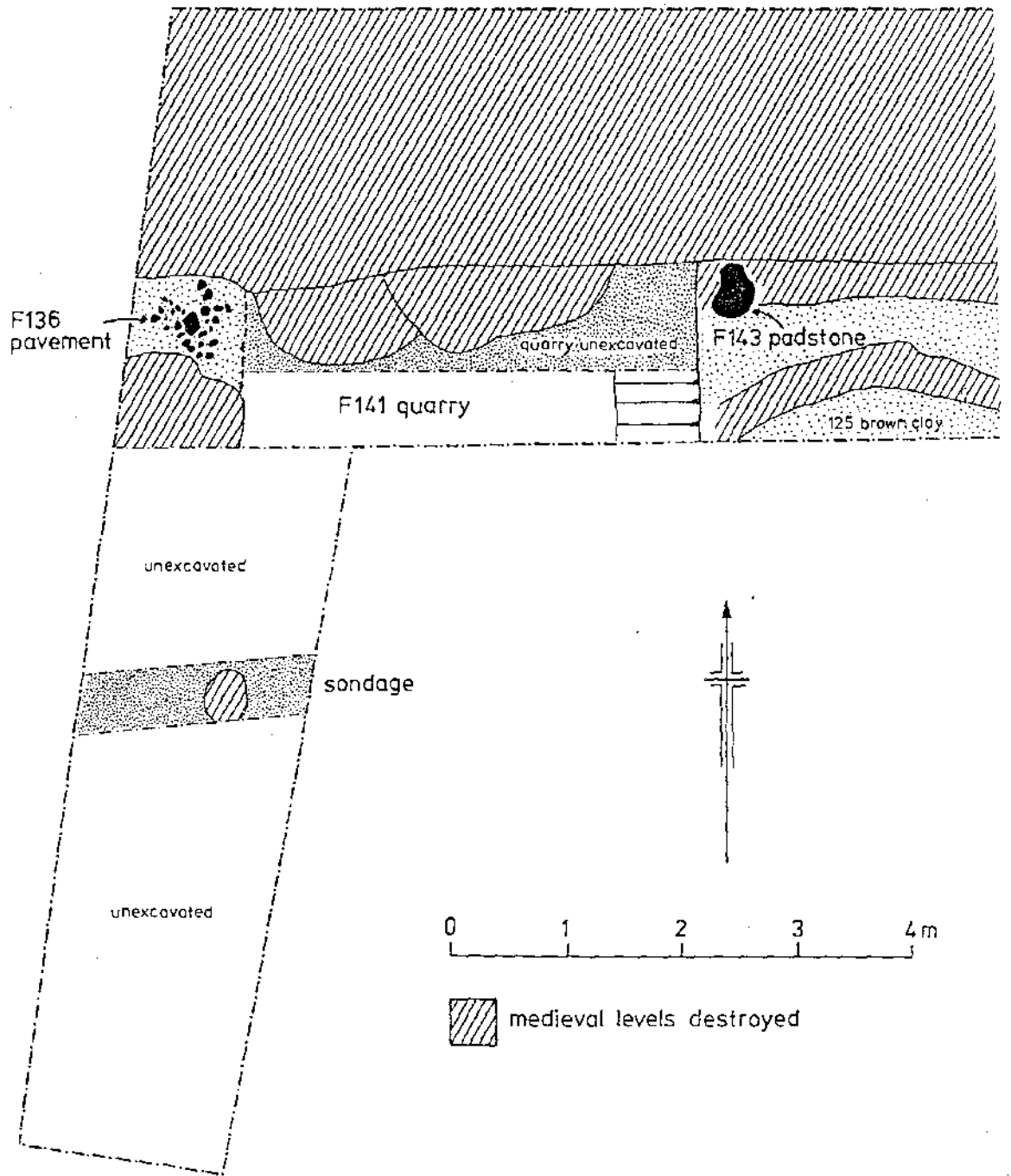



figure two.



the natural surface. Remaining medieval layers in the western arm were left unexcavated since their depth from the surface will safeguard them from destruction in the development.

Pit digging and quarrying in the northern arm of the trench had damaged or destroyed most of the medieval stratigraphy consequently little was discovered about the development of the area in the middle-ages. The earliest phase of activity was represented by ephemeral structural remains, principally a small patch of flat stones F136 set in a dark brown clay and resting on the natural surface. That this feature was originally more extensive was suggested by the occurrence of similar sized stones to the east in the base of an adjoining medieval feature F141 which consequently may have cut through more of the stone spread. It is therefore possible that F136 was part of a pavement or floor which originally extended further eastwards. In this direction a large flat stone slab was uncovered set into the natural clay (F143) though no evidence as to its date or function was forthcoming, one might conjecture it was the padstone for a timber upright forming part of a building contemporary with the stone pavement. Subsequently F141 was cut to a depth of 50 cms into the natural clay. In profile this feature possessed a steep eastern edge and a broad base. Around the redeposited stones in the bottom was a fine grey silt suggesting the feature remained open for some time before it was filled with clayey soil layers. These layers were devoid of any great quantities of artefacts or animal bone suggesting the purpose of the feature was not rubbish disposal. In the absence of any other evidence one might conjecture it was a clay quarry similar to that previously excavated at Paradise in December 1988 in trench A9. A cursory examination of the pottery recovered from F141 suggests this feature, like the quarry in trench A9, dates from the 12th century.

For the subsequent development of the area in the middle ages one must turn to documentary evidence and the results of the earlier trial trenches E1 and E2 which together point to the existence of gardens here in the 13th and 14th centuries.¹

PARADISE TRENCH E3 *Post Medieval Features*

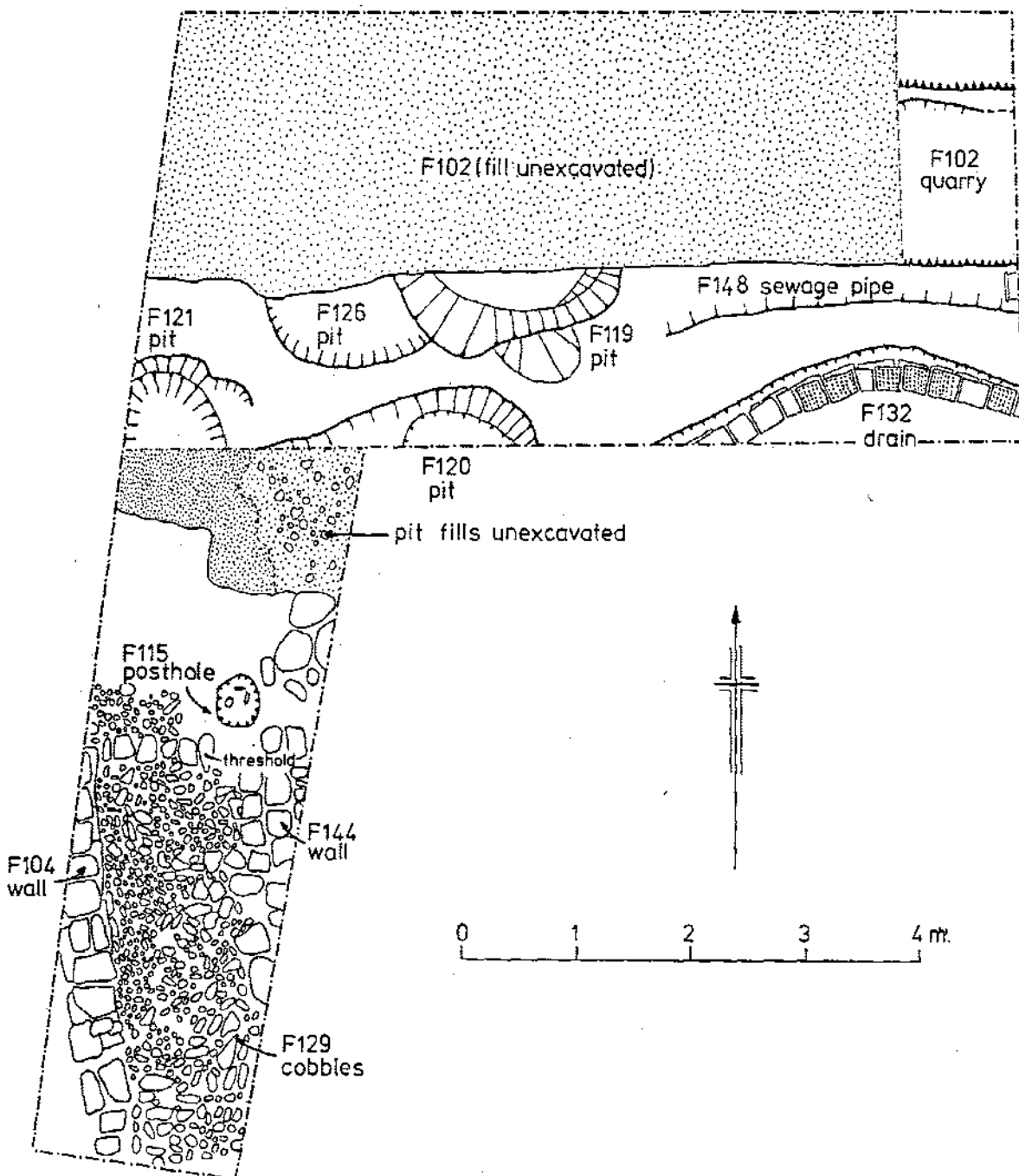


figure three

(C) POST MEDIEVAL (16th Century) (Fig. 3)

The area was probably still gardens when the cobble pavement F129 was constructed, aligned north-south roughly at right angles to Paradise Street. Although the entire width was exposed in the trench, in length it continued beyond the southern edge of the excavation and pit digging and quarrying had obliterated its line to the north. A small sondage excavated across the pavement established that it lay on top of medieval soil layers and could therefore date to the 16th or early 17th centuries before the present outbuilding was constructed. It is difficult to be more precise about the date until pottery from layers overlying the cobbles is examined to establish the period of its disuse. Bordering the sides of the pavement were the remains of two drystone walls, (F104 and F144) that to the west being the better preserved at three courses high. The two walls could indicate that the pavement was an internal feature in a house or barn, especially since a line of larger stones across the pavement may mark a threshold. The alternative explanation is that it was a track between two garden plots providing access from Paradise Street into Paradise Close. Since there is no trace of an entrance to accommodate the pavement visible on the exterior wall of the present outbuilding, one must assume the pavement was no longer in use when this structure was built in the late 17th century. By this date the pavement may already have disappeared under accumulations of soil otherwise one might speculate the wall stones would have been removed for re-use in the outbuilding.

Roughly contemporary with the pavement were the series of pits excavated in the northern arm of the trench which had cut into the fill of the earlier medieval feature F141. To the south of the pits was an isolated posthole F115. These pits were most likely dug for rubbish disposal as was clearly the function of F121 which contained many small fish bones as well as pottery and large bone debris. Since neighbouring pit F120 contained a number of cobble-size stones in its fill this feature may be later than the pavement having disturbed some of its stones. The pottery recovered from the pits, which included a few sherds of stoneware, indicates they probably date from the 16th or 17th centuries.

(D) POST MEDIEVAL (18th-century)

Documentary sources speak of Paradise Close in the 18th century as open pasture ground. It also contained several limekilns levelled in 1780 when the graveyard was extended eastwards and a well house is referred to several times in Paradise Close in the 18th century.² In addition the outbuilding housed a malkiln for much of the 18th and early 19th centuries.³ The excavation discovered Paradise Close had also been a clay quarry for the manufacture of bricks, presumably part of the extensive quarrying operations previously brought to light on the south of the estate. An east-west aligned quarry trench (F102) with a vertical southern edge occupied about two-thirds of the northern arm of the excavation and was cut into the clay to two different levels. To the south the clay had been quarried to a depth of 90 cms whilst further north the quarry went still deeper giving the feature a stepped profile. Amongst the loose soil backfill were numerous overfired bricks indicating the kiln was in close proximity. It was probably a simple clamp kiln like that previously excavated on the south of the estate in trench A9. The quarry probably encompassed much of the Paradise Close and might be an explanation of the clay banks observed by P. Farmer when the nearby cottages were constructed in the 1960s.⁴

Following the disuse and backfilling of the quarry, the area became something of a rubbish dump for brick rubble and domestic refuse. The most recent features discovered were a defunct sewage pipe (F148) and a brick drain (F132) capped with distinctive pierced tiles reused from the malkiln floor.

(4) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Permission and funding for the excavation was generously given by the site owners G.E. and W.D. Bowser which was arranged in consultation with Mr. G. Lee of North Yorkshire County Council Archaeology Office. The work was undertaken by Alex Jones, Peter Leach and Trevor Pearson of Birmingham

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(5) REFERENCES

1. Talbot, C. 1960 Citeaux and Scarborough in Studia Monastica Vol.2 Fascicule 1, 112
2. Information from J.H. Rushton
3. A malkiln is first referred to in the will of James Cockerill in 1719. Outbuilding identified as a malkiln by R.C.H.M. May 1989.
4. Pearson, T. 1987 An Archaeological Survey of Scarborough, 66.

Cover illustration: Fragment of a 13th-century grave slab incorporated in the outbuilding adjacent to the site.