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<b>Project:</b>	Church Street, Whitby, Flood Wall		
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<b>Subject:</b>	Summary of existing archaeological information: Church Street, Whitby, Flood Wall		

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## 1 Introduction

This technical note has been prepared to provide a summary of the existing archaeological information available in relation to the proposed construction of a new flood wall at Church Street, Whitby. The flood wall will be aligned on the west side of Church Street, for the site location see drawing 362876-MMD-00-XX-DR-C-1002. The location of the new flood wall will hereafter be referred to as the proposed development area. Information has been gathered from a search of the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record and the results of an archaeological watching brief of geotechnical investigations undertaken in preparation for the construction of the proposed works.

## 2 Archaeological and historical baseline

The proposed development area is located within the historic port town of the Whitby. Whitby rose to prominence in the early medieval period as the site of a monastery which was founded in AD657. The present abbey dates to 1078. The core of the existing street pattern was established during the medieval period. Church Street became a key axis of the town with further development and expansion eastwards curtailed by the steeply rising East Cliff, which was prone to landslides.

Evidence of medieval reclamation has been identified on the east and west side of the River Esk and excavations within the Church Street Car Park, immediately north of the development area, show evidence for a series of waterfronts dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The raised and levelled section of land, on which the development area is wholly located, was created as a result of artificial medieval/post-medieval land reclamation.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century improvements were made to the piers at Whitby, significantly improving the level of protection afforded to vessels in the harbour. This resulted in the rapid growth of the port. In 1734 a pair of conjoined dry docks were constructed approximately 50m south of the proposed development area, these were shortly followed by another single dry dock in 1740. By c.1755 another dry dock had been constructed within the site of the current Church Street Car Park, immediately south of the current slipway, although this was quickly abandoned because the area was too wet. This dry dock was identified during archaeological excavations of the car park in 1998. The dry docks at Whitby are of particular interest due to their early date,

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as they were constructed only slightly later than the earliest known stone dry docks built at Portsmouth in the late-17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

Boulby Slipway, opposite Boulby Bank and towards the centre of the proposed development area, adjoined a block and mast yard established, by 1787. And the remainder of the buildings on the west side of Church Street are known to have consisted of sail lofts and cloth manufactories, warehouses, timber yards, wharves, and domestic residences. Abraham's Bosom occupied the southernmost 80m stretch of the proposed development area. This was an area used to clean the bottom of ships: it was equipped with a narrow staith but was otherwise free from buildings. It is on this stretch of mud that the Penny Hedge is now planted, an ancient local tradition which takes place annually.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Church Street was widened. All buildings save for the Fleece Public House and the Seamen's Hospital Garden Summerhouses, both of which are of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century construction, were demolished. A new pavement was created and railings installed.

### 3 Archaeological potential

The proposed development area is located on reclaimed land to the west of the original natural shoreline of the harbour. The land on which it is located was formed by a combination of naturally deposited sand, cliff slides and more recently artificial medieval/post-medieval reclamation.<sup>2</sup>

The location of the proposed development area within reclaimed land, which has previously undergone significant post medieval development, makes the presence of archaeological remains within this area which predate the medieval period unlikely. In addition, the widening of Church Street in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, which resulted in the demolition of all but two of the buildings previously located within the proposed development area and the construction of a new harbour frontage and pavement, is likely to have truncated medieval and post medieval remains areas of the development area south of Seamen's Hospital Gardens where the pavement borders directly onto the harbour wall.

Excavations within Church Street Car Park, immediately north of the proposed development area, were carried out in advance of a sewage scheme. These investigations identified evidence of 14<sup>th</sup> century waterfronts and two 18<sup>th</sup> century dry docks. There is the potential for similar remains to be located within the proposed development area, however the investigations were carried out in an area that would not have been affected by the widening of Church Street and the depth at which the remains were encountered is currently unknown.

Archaeological monitoring of geotechnical investigations in advance of the proposed development indicate truncation of archaeological deposits within the proposed development area due to modern services located within the Church Street western pavement.<sup>3</sup> However, evidence of a 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century brick structure, within a test pit located opposite no.44 Church Street, at a depth of approximately 0.6m bgl (below ground level) suggests that post medieval deposits may survive at similar depths across the proposed development area.

Archaeological remains within the proposed development area would likely be of post-medieval date and relate to the slipways, staithes, sail lofts and cloth manufactories, warehouses, timber yards, wharves, and domestic residences which historic mapping indicates occupied the development area in this period. These

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<sup>1</sup> Buglass and Brigham (2013) 'Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, Historical Audit, Whitby Harbour, Whitby, North Yorkshire, Phase 3', 419, Humber Field Archaeology (unpublished report).

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<sup>3</sup> On-Site Archaeology (2016) 'Church Street, Whitby, North Yorkshire: Report on an archaeological watching brief', OSA16WB33 (unpublished report).

remains have the potential to enhance the understanding of Whitby in the medieval and post-medieval periods and early harbour front development and activities. The significance of any such remains is further enhanced by their association with the voyages of Captain Cook in the 18th century and the overarching narrative of British naval discovery. Evidence of earlier phases of medieval activity and land reclamation is also considered to be possible, however these remains are likely to be deeply buried. These remains have the potential to be of local or regional significance.

## **4 Potential impact on archaeological remains**

The maximum depth of ground disturbance for the proposed works is approximately 1.5m bgl, within the Seaman's Hospital Garden this will be reduced to approximately 1m bgl. The results of archaeological of geotechnical investigations indicate the potential for post-medieval deposits at a depth of 0.6m bgl. Geotechnical investigations were limited in their scope and therefore it is not possible to make more detailed conclusions regarding the survival and depth of archaeological remains across the proposed development area.

It is therefore considered that the proposed works have the potential to truncate post-medieval remains related to previous harbour front structures. Any such remains will, likely have been truncated by the widening of Church Street in the 1960s and the installation of modern services. Medieval remains are unlikely to be impacted by the proposed works as they are not expected to be present within the depth of excavations required.

## **5 Conclusions and recommendations**

In conclusion, there is considered to be a moderate potential for post-medieval remains to be encountered during the proposed works. In addition, there is a low potential to encounter remains dating to the medieval period. These remains are considered to have the potential to be of local/regional significance.

It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is undertaken during excavations for the proposed works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, the scope of which should be agreed with the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Team Archaeologist.