

BARKER'S YARD, BOROGATE, HELMSLEY, NORTH YORKSHIRE: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



On behalf of
The Duncombe Park Estate

CS Archaeology
May 2011

On behalf of: Mr Ian Siggers FRICS
The Duncombe Park Estate
The Estate Office
Helmsley
North Yorkshire
YO62 5EB

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Fieldwork, Report and illustrations: Mr C Scurfield

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Enquiries to: **CS Archaeology**
Hawnby House
Thornton Le Beans
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 3SW

M: 07963 586767
E: chrisscurfield@yahoo.com

Frontispiece: view across the development area

CONTENTS

0.	SUMMARY	2
1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	3
3.	METHODOLOGY	4
4.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	3
5.	RESULTS.....	5
6.	CONCLUSIONS.....	6
7.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	7
8.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location Map

Figure 2: Location Map of the PDA

Figure 3: The PDA with Trench Locations and Photographic Positions

Figure 4: Archaeological and Topographical Features

Figure 5: Plan of the Stone Alignment

List of Plates

Plate 1: general view of the site

Plate 2: general view of the stone alignment

Plate 3: view of the channel (upper fills) in the southeast facing section (Unit 7, trench H)

Plate 4: view of the edge of the hollow in the southwest section (Unit 6, trench D)

Plate 5: view of the edge of the sand bank the southwest section (Unit 5, trench B)

Plate 6: view of the northwest section (Unit 6, trench A) with the removed section of wall

Plate 7: view of the unstratified medieval pottery recovered during the watching brief characterised by large un-abraded sherds

Appendices

Appendix 1: Archive Index

0 SUMMARY

- 0.1 An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken at Barker's Yard, Helmsley, North Yorkshire and follows on from recommendations carried out in a building record and evaluation report (CS Archaeology 2010).
- 0.2 The watching brief consisted of monitoring a series of trenches at the centre of the redevelopment of Barker's Yard.
- 0.3 Results included further evidence for the water channel revealed during the earlier evaluations and further unstratified medieval pottery which will be appended to the site archive, to be deposited with York Museum.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by the Duncombe Park Estate in order to satisfy an archaeological condition placed on planning consent (App. No. NYM/2009/0104/FL, Condition 5), to redevelop the Old Stables off Borogate, Helmsley to create 6 retail units.
- 1.2 Helmsley lies 17kms east of Thirsk and 41 kms west of Scarborough (**Figure 1**). The Proposed Development Area (PDA) of Barker's Yard lies to the south of the town's market place between Borogate and Castlegate (**Figure 2**) within the town's historic core (SE 61613 83689).

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of this report are to record the presence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits within the PDA, subject to the proposed new buildings.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The methodology for the watching brief follows the methodology used in the project design for the building record and evaluation (CS Archaeology 2010).

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Helmsley lies adjacent to a natural crossing point of the River Rye which was bisected by prehistoric route ways which utilised the high ground of the Howardian Hills and the North Yorkshire Moors. The prehistoric landscape is still evident in the form of burial monuments at Link Foot Lane (1km east of the town centre).
- 4.2 Helmsley has been an important local centre since pre-Conquest times, and lies within a rich archaeological landscape that dates from the prehistoric period right through to the 20th century AD.
- 4.3 During the 11th century Helmsley is recorded as *Elmeslac* meaning *Helm's* woodland. It was a manor which supported four ploughs. A church and a priest are also noted. The manor was taxed at 32 shillings at the time of the conquest but was subsequently devalued to 10 shillings, evidencing a sharp economic and political upheaval. The 12th century saw renewed investment in the form of a defensive rectangular ringwork with outer rampart that would have been crowned by a timber pallisade. The stone castle was constructed after 1186 by Robert de Roos Fursan and featured an array of 'modern' defence features such as sally ports, corner towers and curtain walls. The 14th century saw substantial rebuilding of the castle with improved accommodation. The castle remained with the Roos family until 1478 when it was sold to the Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III). On Richard's death the castle reverted to the Roos family and then passed down to the Manners family until 1632 when it passed to the Duke of Buckingham and in 1688 was sold to Charles Duncombe. The Duncombe family abandoned the castle and constructed a new house and estate, Duncombe Park, 1km east of the castle.

- 4.4 By 1190 the town had been granted borough status. Burgage plots, long strips of land fronting onto the principal streets, were established on the east side of Bridge Street. To the west of Bridge Street, south of the church the market place was laid out. The present market square is a small remnant of the former marketplace.
- 4.5 It is therefore supposed that Barker's Yard which features on a plan of Helmsley dated 1792, was annexed from the medieval marketplace to form an open stable yard. The yard features traditional stone buildings to three sides with a later (20th century) timber stable, aligned southwest to northeast, effectively bisecting the PDA. The stable can be accurately dated to the 1960s and was built by Mr Anthony Barker who owned the Royal Oak and rented the stables from the Duncombe Park Estate.
- 4.6 Little archaeological work has been undertaken in Helmsley and the development of the town is relatively poorly understood. Barker's Yard represents one of the last relatively underdeveloped areas within the town's historic core.
- 4.7 In 2008 *ArcheType* prepared a Desk-Based Assessment of Barkers Yard and this has provided a basis for the current programme of archaeological work. Detailed environmental work was carried out in the woodlands of Rievaulx and Bilsdale in Helmsley's hinterland (Wheeler 2007) and this work was able to be drawn into the results of the Barker's Yard evaluation (Wheeler in CS Archaeology 2010) which revealed the remains of a medieval water channel.
- 4.8 The evaluation trenches revealed a small part of medieval Helmsley including its topography. Trench 1 (**Figure 4**) was sited over a revetted water channel. The channel was 2.5m wide and >2m deep and truncated earlier deposits. These earlier deposits were able to be differentiated on colour and soil types which were probably introduced to the PDA as levelling or revetment deposits along the east bank of the River Rye. These deposits contained diagnostic ecofacts and artefacts reflecting surrounding activities of the town such as smelting and food preparation. The nature of this water channel and proximity to today's course of the Borough Beck suggests that the water channel represents a man-made water channel which was in use between the 14th and 15th centuries, possibly feeding water to Low or Nether Mill.
- 4.9 The exact function of the water channel is at the moment unknown. The channel could have been constructed as a mill race, but its lifetime appears to have been relatively short. Based on pottery dating this was between the 14th and 15th centuries. The proximity of Low or Nether mill is recorded at the south end of Helmsley in the early 16th century (pers. comm. Mr G Lee) so quite feasibly there may yet prove to be a link between these two sites. Whether or not water diverted from Borough Beck was able to power a mill is debatable, and it may have operated in tandem with other water sources, or as seems more likely, the mill was powered via the River Rye. Although largely unexcavated, brief investigations of the lower channel fills indicate alternating channel silts and sands, which suggest seasonal sedimentation during high and low water flows. This high/low energy water feature is characteristic of natural stream flows, suggesting that the channel served as a diversion of the Borough Beck, possibly in the form of a water race for a hammer forge – smithy or mill wheel.
- 4.10 Subsequent infilling of the medieval water channel, after the 15th century, indicates that no further development took place across the north western half of the PDA. As the 1792 plan of Helmsley confirms, the northern half of the PDA formed the southeast end of a 'coffin' shaped plot of land which was apparently entirely enclosed by a series of building ranges. The development of such a deep and fertile soil together

with an absence of any Post Medieval structures, indicates that allotment gardening has probably taken place for the last 500 years.

5 Results

- 5.1 The watching brief has confirmed that the water channel does continue to the north and probably southeast of the evaluation Trench 1 (Figure 4). To the north it was traced via an alignment of large limestone boulders. This alignment was approximately 0.6m wide by >6m in length (Plate 2: Figure 5). The western corner of the Unit 7, trench G revealed a concentration boulders of at least a double width was noted. In the southeast facing section of Unit 7 the stone revetment and water channel were found to continue with what appears to be a more northerly direction (Plate 3). Southwest of the stone concentration the boulders were buttressed by two boulders set at right angles to the main alignment (Plate 2). The exact purpose of the buttressing and the boulder concentration is unknown, but it could represent the remains of an abutment, possibly associated with a bridge.
- 5.2 Further large rounded limestone boulders were excavated from natural sands and gravels which leads the author to believe that the material from the stone alignment was excavated and positioned during the excavation of the water channel.
- 5.3 As noted in the evaluation trenches the pronounced undulations in the underlying topography were able to be noted during the watching brief. Apart from the general southwest slope of the underlying sands and gravels the edge of a hollow was revealed at the north corner of the unit 6 foundation trench, which corresponds to the marked scope at the southeast end of evaluation trench 2 (*CS Archaeology 2010: Figure 11*). An apparent sand bank was noted in the southwest unit 5 trench (Plate 5) and a possible continuation of the channel was also noted in the southeast trench of unit 6, trench A. This consisted of at least two courses of rounded limestone boulders which were marked by a void in the section (Plate 6).
- 5.4 Through the course of the watching brief pottery was recovered and was notable both in its medieval date and in the large un-abraded sherds (Plate 7). A number of sherds were decorated and one appeared to feature a bug hole from a medieval pitcher.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief has enhanced our knowledge of the archaeology of Barker's Yard. The stone alignment has provided further evidence of the alignment of the medieval water course, which was re-discovered during the evaluation (CS Archaeology 2010). Although the stone alignment was removed, during the redevelopment, the channel fills have remained in situ.
- 6.2 The recovery of a number of unstratified sherds of medieval pottery represents an unusual survival both in terms of the variation in fabrics and decorative styles. The medieval water channel and pottery recovered from Barker's Yard both during the evaluation (CS Archaeology 2010) and the watching brief have provided a notable reference collection of material, which has and will contribute to our understanding of the archaeology of Helmsley.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

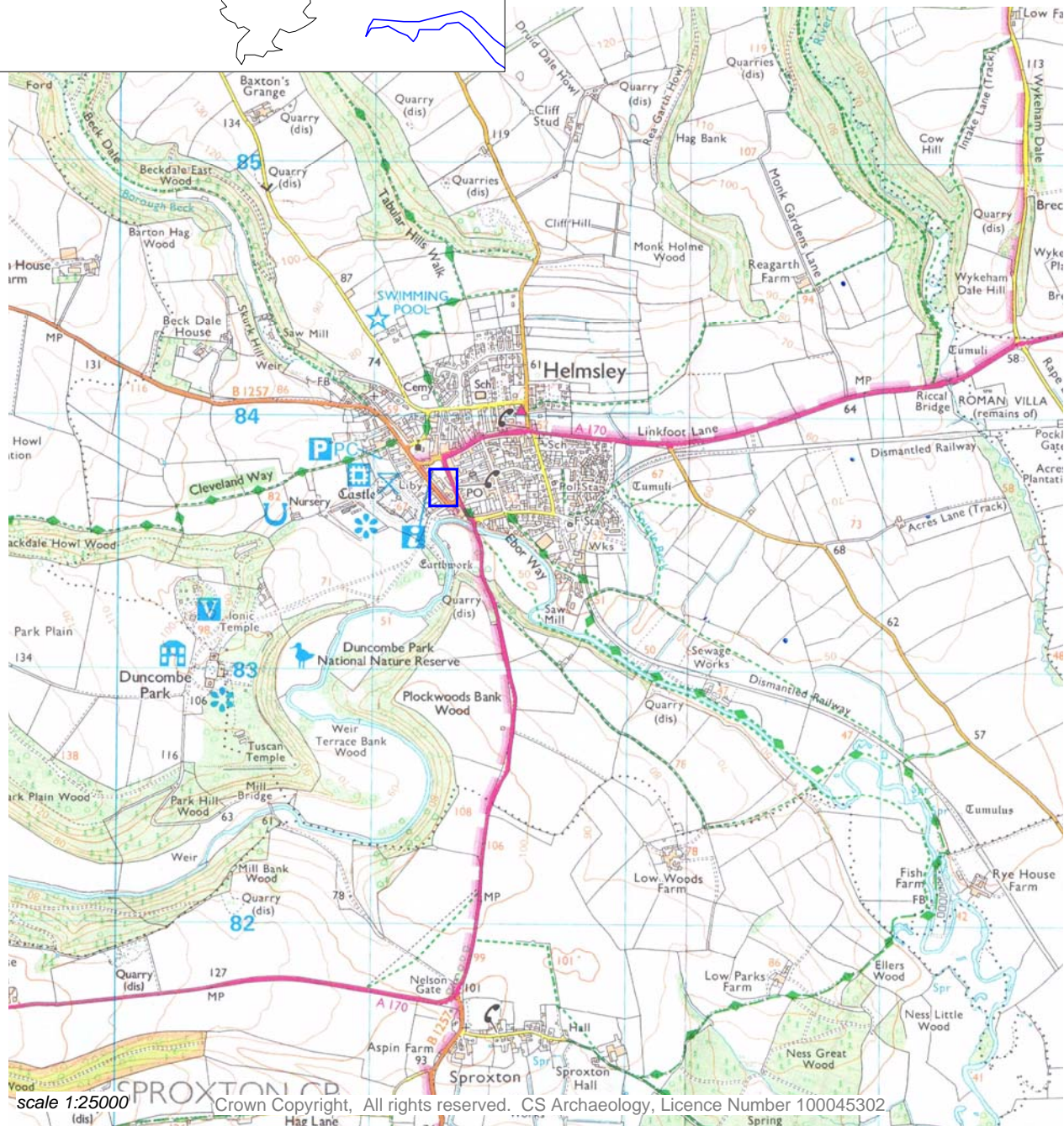
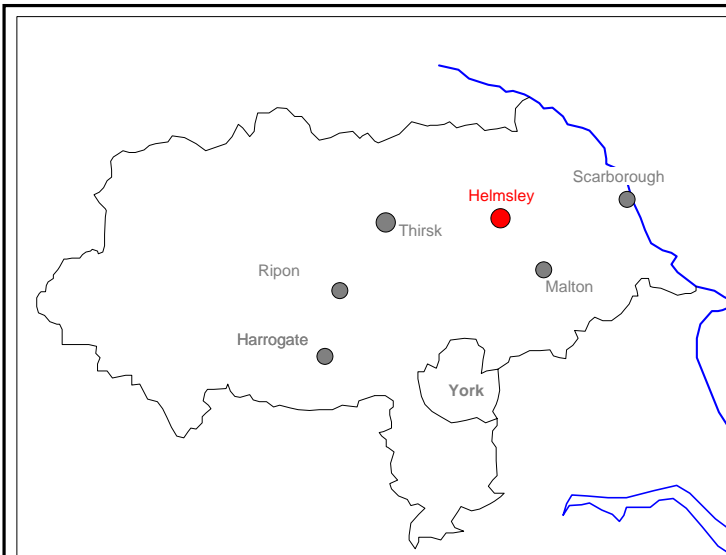
CS Archaeology 2010, The Old Stables, Barker's Yard, Borogate, Helmsley, North Yorkshire: An Archaeological Building Record and Evaluation, unpublished client report


Wheeler J. (2007) The implications of iron-working on the woodlands of Rievaulx and Bilsdale, North Yorkshire, UK: Historical, palaeoecological and palaeoenvironmental perspectives c. 1068-2000. Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Bradford.

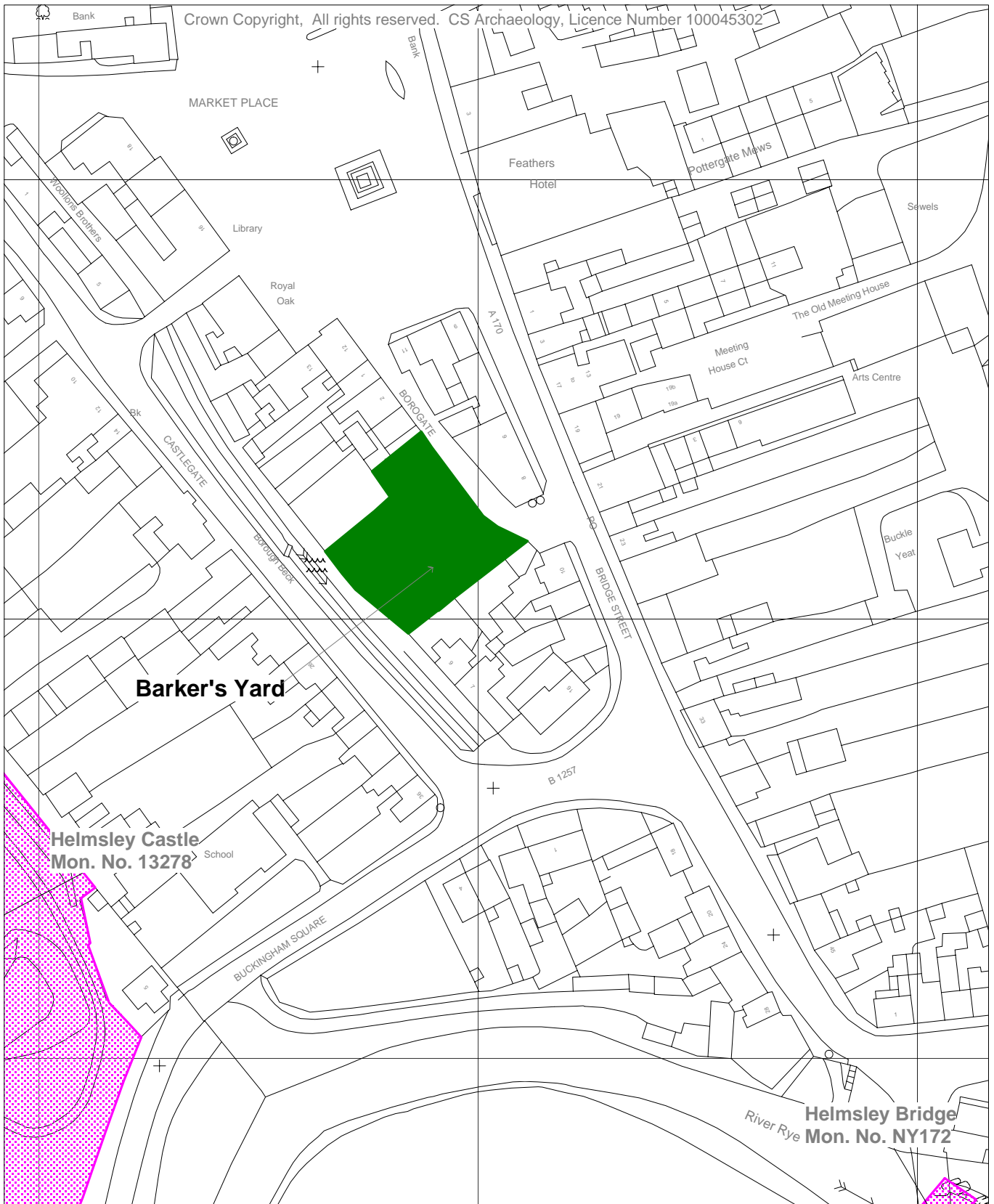
8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Mr I Saggars on behalf of the Duncombe Park Estate for commissioning this report and to Mr Graham Lee of the North York Moors National Park his initial recommendation.



FIGURES



 for inset see Figure 2



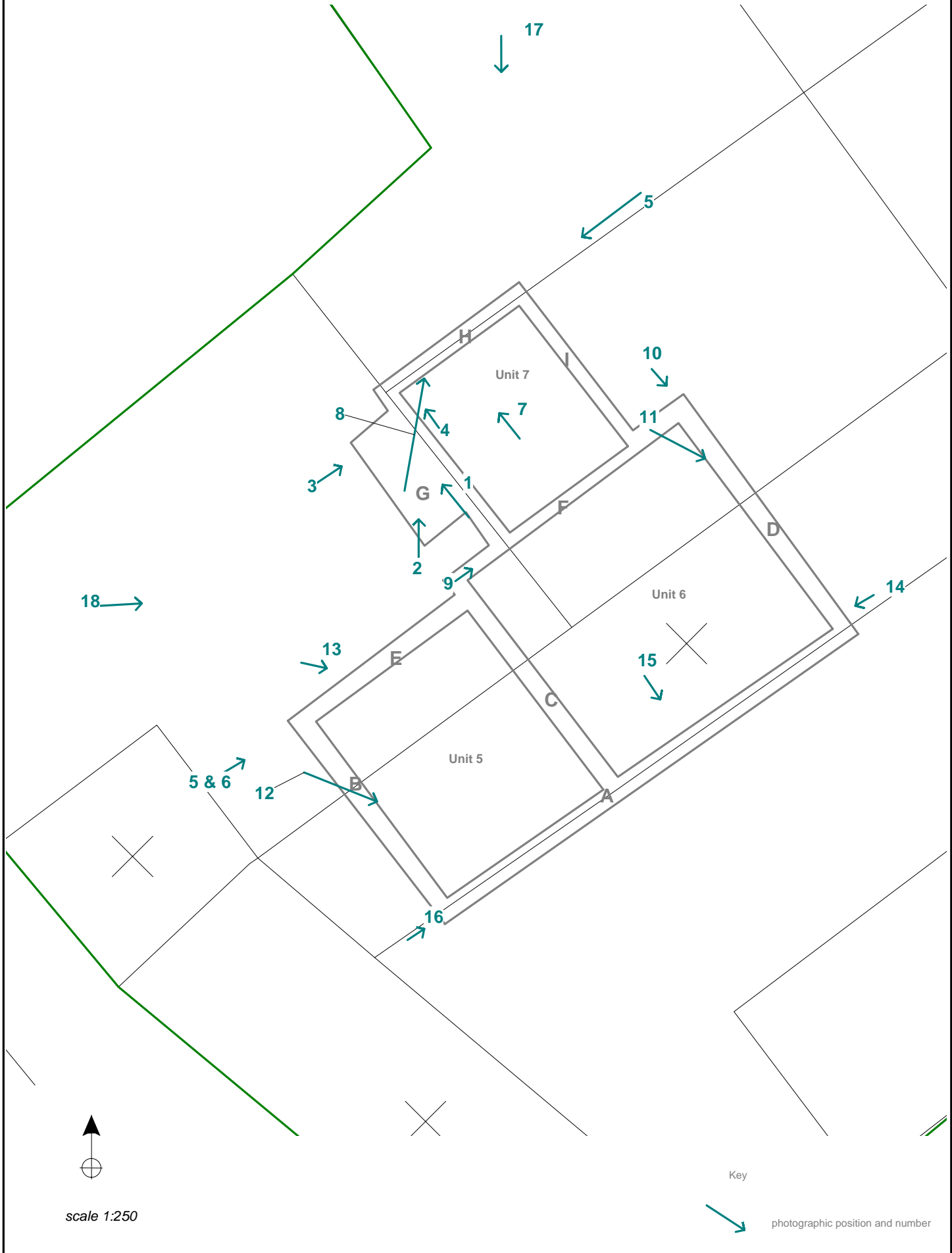

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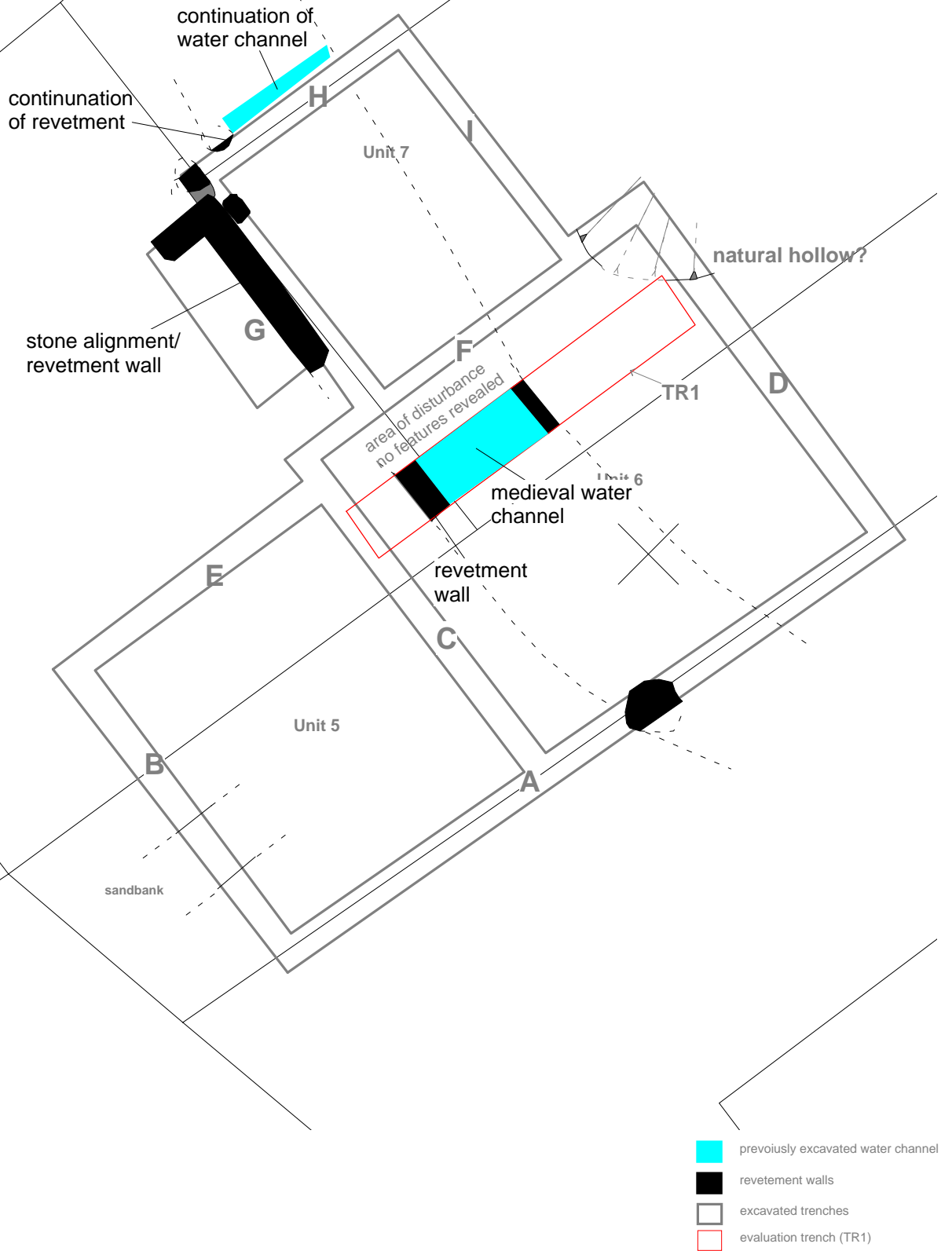
 Scheduled Monument
 proposed development area (PDA) boundary

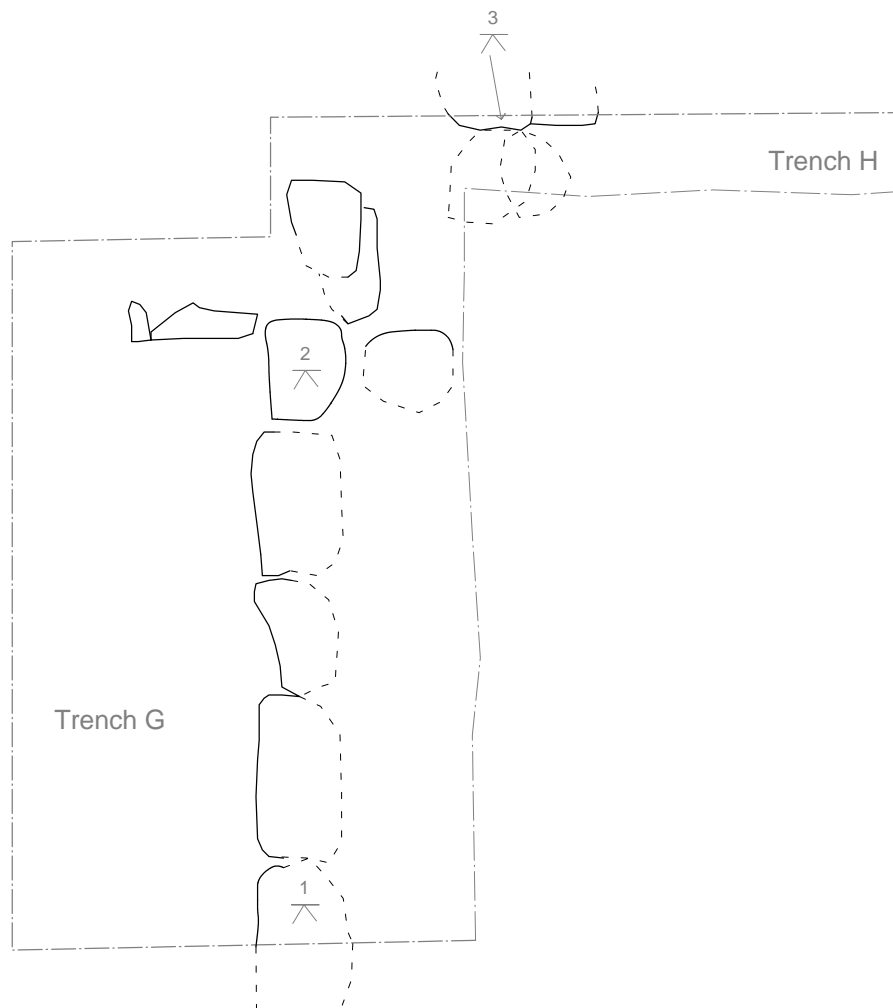
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 An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 2: Location Map
 of the PDA

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Key

- · — · — limit of excavation
- - - interpreted/removed stone

Levels (metres)

- 1. 51.02
- 2. 51.15
- 3. 51.25



PLATES



Plate 1: General view of the site, from the north



Plate 2: General view of the stone alignment, from the southwest



Plate 3: view of the channel (upper fills) in the southeast facing section (Unit 7, trench H), from the south



Plate 4: view of the edge of the hollow in the southwest section (Unit 6, trench D), from the northwest



Plate 5: view of the edge of the sand bank the southwest section (Unit 5, trench B), from the northwest



Plate 6: view of the northwest section (Unit 6, trench A) with the removed section of wall, from the northwest



Plate 7: view of the unstratified medieval pottery recovered during the watching brief characterised by large un-abraded sherds

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Archive Index

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER A: 35mm Black and White Film (Ilford Delta 400) Professional).
Duplicate digital photographs have also been archived by photographic position number.

Photo. Position	Film/Frame No.	Plate	Location	Description	From
1	1/19		Unit 7, trench G	View of the stone alignment	SE
2	1/18		Unit 7, trench G	View of the stone alignment	S
3	1/17		Unit 7, trench G	View of the stone alignment	SW
4	1/16		Unit 7, trench H	View of the stone alignment continuation into the SW section of trench H	SE
5	1/15		Unit 7, trench H	Post excavation view	NE
6	1/14		Unit 5, trench E	General excavation view	SW
7	1/13-12		Unit 7, trench H	Post excavation view	SE
8	1/11		Unit 7, trench H	Oblique post excavation view of SE facing section	S
9	1/10		Unit 6, trench F	Post excavation view	SW
10	1/9		Unit 6, trench D	Post excavation view	NW
11	1/8		Unit 6, trench D	Post excavation view	WNW
12	1/7		Unit 5, trench D	Post excavation view	NW
13	1/6		Unit 5, trench E	Post excavation view	W
14	1/5		Unit 5-6, trench A	Post excavation view	NE
15	1/4		Unit 6, trench A	Post excavation view with voids left by removed boulders which probably represents the continuation of the stone alignment	NW
16	1/3		Unit 5-6, trench A	Post excavation view	SW
17	1/2		Barker's Yard	General view of the site	N
18	1/1		Barker's Yard	General view	W

GENERAL FINDS REGISTER B (continues from the evaluation register D)

*Pottery Abbreviations: BS – Body sherd, R- rim, B- base, H- Handle*Museum Accession Number: **YORYM: 2010. 661**

No.	Context No.	Type	Description
136	Unstrat.	BS	Grey fabric with green interior and exterior glazes
137	Unstrat.	BS	Grey fabric with green interior and exterior glazes and base handle thumb impression of
138	Unstrat.	BS	Grey/cream fabric with external green glaze and incised wave decoration
139	Unstrat	BS	Grey/cream fabric with external green glaze and incised wave decoration (similar to 138)
140	Unstrat.	B	Internal green glaze: light grey/grey and reddish fabric
141	Unstrat.	BS	Light grey and grey fabric extern green glaze and a 0.25 cm bung hole
142	Unstrat.	H/R	Top of a handle with crimped decoration, and a green glaze over a cream fabric
143	Unstrat.	H	Section of a handle with crimped decoration, and a green glaze over a cream fabric (joins with 142)
144	Unstrat.	BS	Grey fabric with evidence for green external glaze
145	Unstrat.	H	Top of a handle with striated ridge decoration and a green glaze over a cream fabric
146	Unstrat.	BS	Grey fabric and external glaze (worn)
147	Unstrat.	R	Rim with an external green glaze over a grey fabric
148	Unstrat.	BS	External green glaze over a grey fabric
149	Unstrat.	BS	External green glaze over a grey fabric
150	Unstrat.	B	Large diameter base internal and external green glazes over a cream fabric
151	Unstrat.	BS	External green glazes over a cream fabric
152	Unstrat.	BS	External worn bluish glaze over a grey fabric
153	Unstrat.	BS	External green glaze over a reddish fabric
154	Unstrat.	R	Internal green glaze with a handle
155	Unstrat.	BS	External green glazes over a cream fabric
156	Unstrat.	BS	External green glazes over a cream fabric
157	Unstrat.	B	External green glazes over a grey fabric
158	Unstrat.	B	External green glazes over a cream fabric, foot missing
159	Unstrat.	BS	Red fabric brown glaze and thin bands of cream coloured external decoration