



# A MEDIEVAL POST-BUILT STRUCTURE AND MULTI-PERIOD REMAINS AT VIVIS LANE, PICKERING, NORTH YORKSHIRE

James Brightman and Brian Marshall

*In October 2008 an archaeological excavation was undertaken in advance of construction work at a planned supermarket site off Vivis Lane, Pickering. Originally known to have been the site of a coal depot with post-medieval walling still intact on the site boundary, it was anticipated that archaeological remains would likely reveal information about the use of the site from the 17th century onwards. The footings of several walls were uncovered along with substantial pits and a water channel, probably relating to the industrial uses of the site prior to the construction of the coal depot. The principal archaeological feature of interest, however, was a post-built structure cut into an earlier alluvial deposit. The structure was defined by four postholes with a fifth outlying post-hole and a radiocarbon date of cal. AD 1010-1160 (95.4% confidence) was obtained on charred hazel from one of the postholes, suggesting activity in the west of Pickering around the time of the Norman Conquest and potentially contemporary with the earlier motte and bailey castle 0.5km to the north of the site. A small assemblage of Mesolithic flintwork was also recovered in what is thought to be a residual context.*

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The town of Pickering is bounded to the north by the North York Moors National Park and lies at the northern extent of a low-lying plain; the Vale of Pickering. The site at Vivis Lane is centred at SE 7962 8390 and is bounded by the roads of Vivis Lane to the west and Southgate to the north, with the Pickering Beck to the east (Fig. 1). The excavation took the form of a single trench encompassing the entire proposed footprint of the development.

Pickering derives its name from the Anglo-Saxon *Picingas* which means 'settlement of Picer and his people' (Wright 2005, 49), though the only known remains from this period locally are a fragment of possible cross shaft in Pickering church and a trefoil brooch of around AD 900 found in the town centre. With many street names in Pickering ending in the suffix 'gate', a Scandinavian term for street, the probability is that a sizeable Norse settlement was present in the 10th and 11th centuries and it is this which developed into the later town (ASDU 2008).

Pickering was seized by William the Conqueror during The Harrying of the North in 1069-70, and a motte and bailey castle was built around this time,

before a stone castle was built on the east side of the Pickering Beck in the early 13th century. Due to royal patronage medieval Pickering flourished and the town grew around the later castle and Hungate. There was a decline in the town's fortunes in the 16th and 17th centuries but its local prominence was restored in the late 17th and 18th centuries with the development of the linen industry (ASDU 2008).

Vivis Lane was named after the 18th century Viver's Paper Mill to the south of the development site, and an 1839 Tithing Map shows a ford and footbridge connecting the main town east of the Pickering Beck to the developing industry and settlement around the site to the west. By 1890 the coal depot had been built and this continues in use until 1979 when the railway spur supplying the depot was removed (ASDU 2008).

## Previous Work

Previous evaluation work on the Vivis Lane site had revealed post-medieval remains relating to the previous industrial usages of the site, along with ambiguous cut features which were posited as potential medieval remains (ASDU 2008).

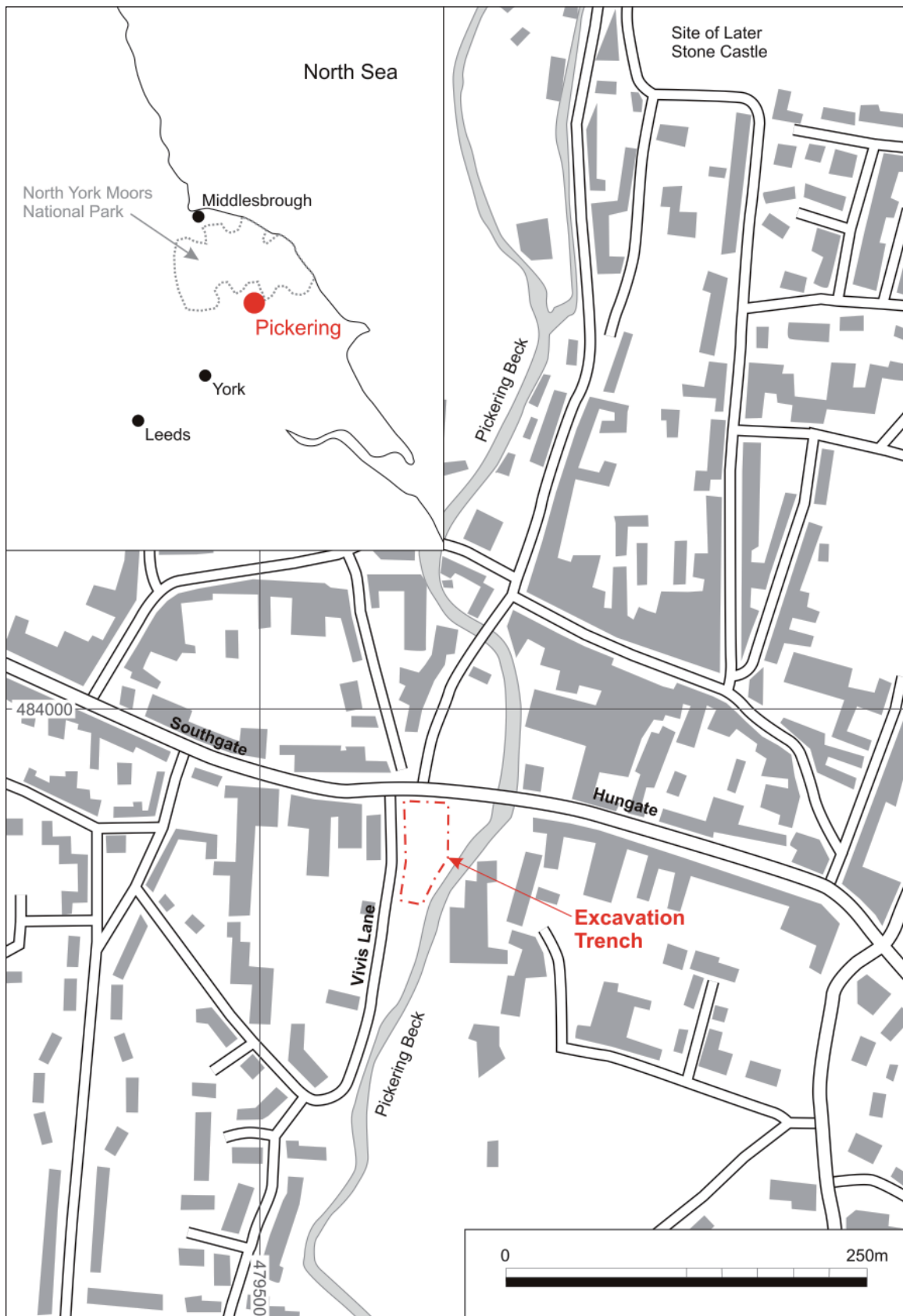


Figure 1 Location of Pickering and excavation trench.

### STRATIGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION (FIG. 3)

The stratigraphy of the trench comprised modern foundation layers of stone levelling material and hardcore with an upper layer of tarmac, which in turn overlay a deposit of mixed demolition rubble. The base of this deposit was a graded black silty-clay containing a noticeable quantity of disarticulated animal bone, though only material from secure contexts was retained for assessment. These upper deposits post-dated the early 20th century use of the site, and removal of these revealed several stone walls.

Where no later structures were present, the underlying natural substrata were exposed. The lowest natural substratum, present across the whole trench, was a natural clay till, but in the north-east of the trench this was overlain by two distinct alluvial deposits. The upper alluvial deposit (002) contained residual prehistoric lithics, medieval and post-medieval ceramics and 18th-19th century clay pipe providing a relatively late *terminus post quem* for this deposit. Cut into this horizon were two postholes, a substantial east-west linear feature and a small pit, discussed below. The lower alluvial deposit was also exposed and revealed five postholes from which a radiocarbon date was obtained (see below).

### Features Cut into Lower Alluvial Deposit

The lower alluvial deposit (048), located in the northeast corner of the trench, had five post holes

cut into it forming some kind of structure measuring c. 2m by 2.5m, the purpose of which can only be speculated upon (Fig. 2). Postholes (038) (040) (042) (044) and (046) were positioned in close proximity to each other, forming what appears to be a small rectilinear structure, with (038) detached a short distance away at the north-east corner of the structure, though this feature may be slightly later in date. Charred material was collected from (042) and a fragment of hazel returned a radiocarbon date of cal. AD 1010-1160 at 95.4% confidence, and the outlying posthole (038) contained a small fragment of 13th-14th century Sandy Ware pottery.

### Features Cut into Upper Alluvial Deposit

Three postholes (015) (012) and (010) were located in the eastern half of the trench. They were well dispersed and had no apparent association with each other. A residual fragment of Mesolithic flint was collected from (012) along with a sherd of late 13th-14th century pottery.

A substantial linear feature (019) (Fig. 4) was revealed aligned east to west running for 13.4m before exiting the trench, and cutting into both the upper alluvium and the till substrate towards the centre of the trench. The feature took the form of a central pit connected to a shallow channel extending east. The pit was lined with clay which had become gleyed through exposure to waterlogged conditions. The principal fill of the pit contained fragments



Figure 2 Arrangement of postholes cut into the earlier alluvial deposit forming some kind of structure.

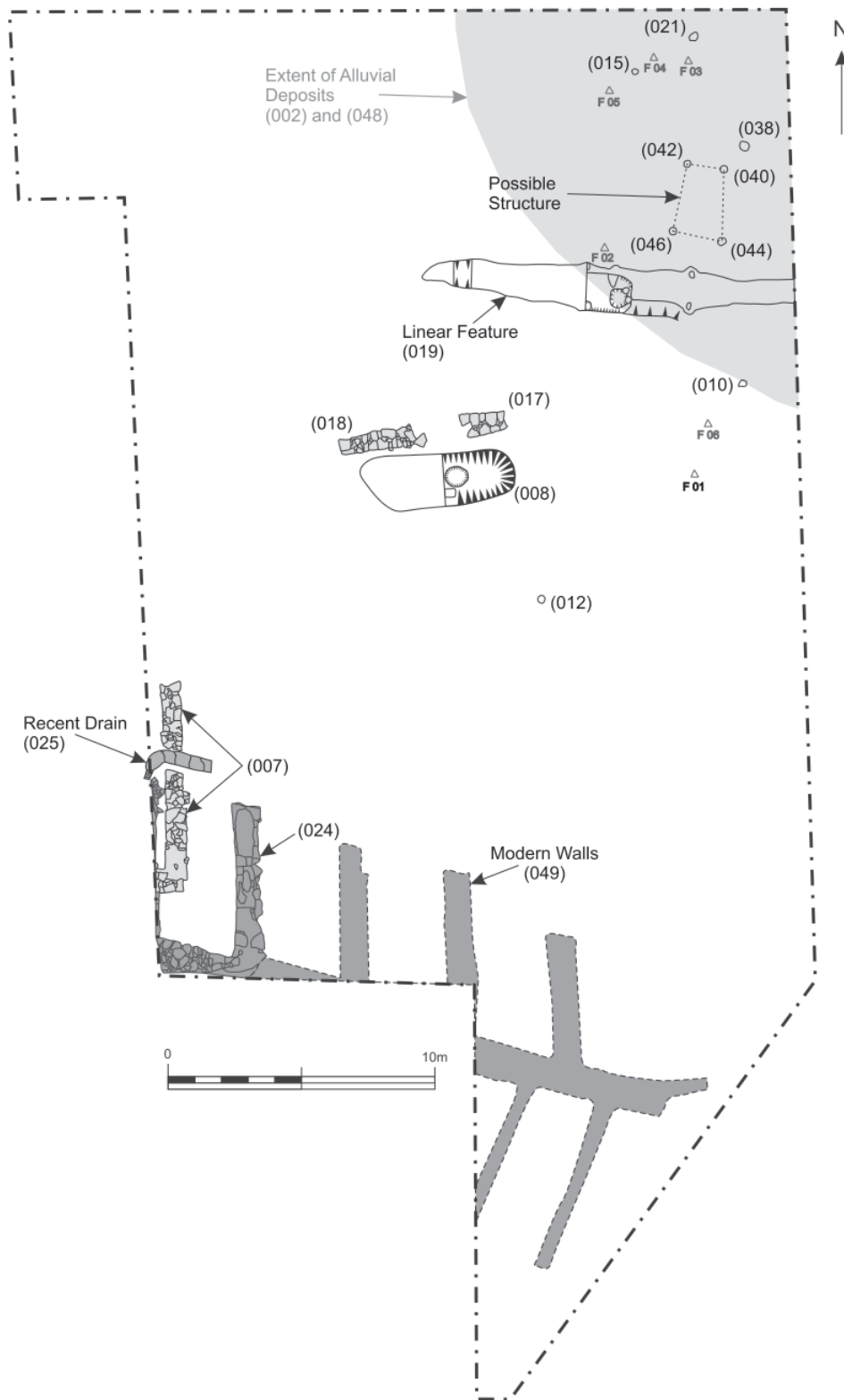


Figure 2 Plan of trench showing all features



Figure 4 Linear feature which cut across the upper alluvial deposit and potentially related to water management as part of an industrial process on the site (scales = 0.5m graduations).

of pottery and clay pipe dating to between the late 17th and late 19th century. Two possible opposing postholes were cut into the base of the pit, with a shallow channel running east to a second pair of opposing postholes, beyond which the channel graded into the underlying alluvium. The arrangement of the postholes was suggestive of a form of sluice or other water-control device, although no material culture was recovered to confirm this.

The small pit (021) was also cut into the upper alluvial deposit, although upon excavation the fill contained loosely-compacted rubble and non-water-logged wood in good condition, indicating a modern origin for the feature.

### Later Features Overlying or Cut into Glacial Till

A large oval pit (008) was uncovered with a steep-sided form, a 'u'-shaped base and a secondary cut in the centre of the base. The fill of the pit contained the base of a large wooden post and it is possible the post may have been originally located within the secondary cut. Fragments of pottery within the pit fill ranged in date from the 14th to the 19th century,

Adjacent to the northern side of pit (008) were two small sections of stone wall (017) and (018). The use of more irregular shaped stone and lack of mortar in the construction of the walls, as opposed to the larger stone-mortared walls discussed below suggests a possible earlier construction date within the medieval or post-medieval period. Within the loose fill and stone comprising the upper courses of wall (018) there was clay pipe and pottery which ranged in date from the late 15th-18th century. The disturbed nature of the context from which these finds were recovered mean they cannot securely date the wall to the earlier post-medieval period, but they are indicative of use within the post-medieval and early industrial period.

In the south of the trench a large well-constructed stone wall ran across the trench from east to west. This wall (049) divided the present site into two plots as shown on early mapping. The northern plot is identified as a coal depot founded in the late 19th century and two smaller wall stubs with accompanying parallel 'ghosts' of wall lines extending south at right angles were identified tied into wall (049). These walls are in an area where mapping indicates buildings associated with the coal depot up to 1969.

A second phase of building (probably early 20th century) added a series of stone constructed piers extending north which divide the area into bays.

At the south-west edge of the trench, two walls (005) (007) were identified with (007) underlying the later walls of the coal depot and also cut by a later drain pipe (025). Wall (007), which cannot be identified on earlier maps, was constructed using irregular-shaped stone and no mortar, though it only survived as a single course foundation layer with no associated material culture other than residual material from above the wall layer in a mixed fill. Although impossible to ascribe a definite date to wall (007) it pre-dates the late 19th century use of the site, and it is possible that it is contemporary with walls (017) and (018) described above.

SPECIALIST ANALYSES

Radiocarbon Dating

Gordon Cook and James Brightman

A radiocarbon determination was obtained on a single entity charred sample of hazel (a short-lived specie) excavated from posthole (042) cut into the lower alluvial deposit in the north-east corner of the trench. The sample returned a date of cal. AD 1010-1160 at 95.4% confidence (970 ± 30 bp, SUERC 22391) (See Fig. 5 and Table 1).

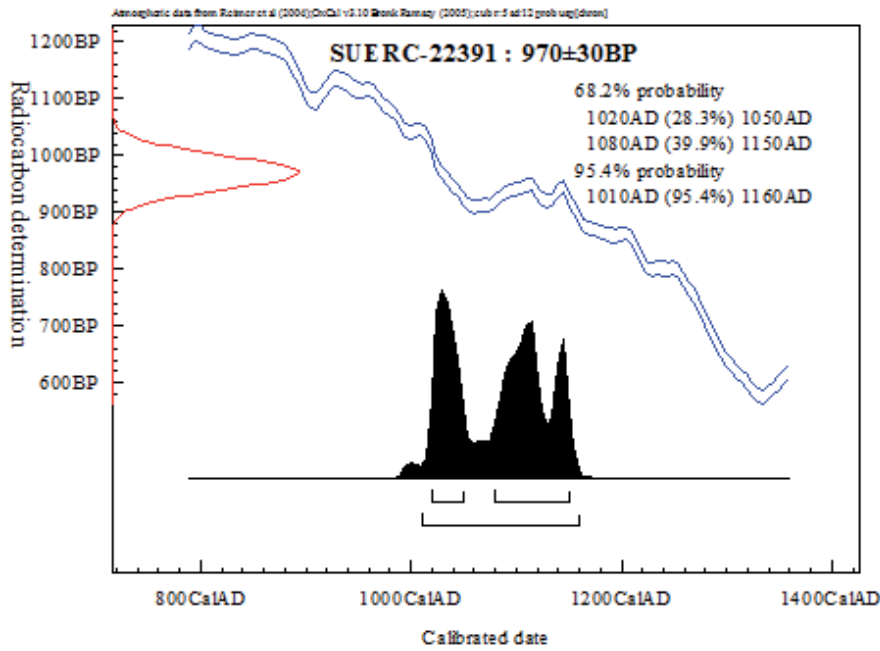


Fig. 5 Radiocarbon calibration graph.

Sample	Material	Context	Conventional Radiocarbon Age	13C/2C Ratio	Calibrated Age at 2σ 95.4% probability
SUERC 22391	Charred Hazel	042 Posthole fill	970 ± 30 bp	-24.3 ‰	AD 1010-1160

Table 1 Radiocarbon dating result.

## Lithics

### Clive Waddington

A total of eight chipped flints were submitted for analysis. The lithics came from a range of contexts including the upper alluvial layer (002), an isolated posthole fill cut into the upper alluvium (012) and from a modern layer that overlay wall (007). The assemblage comprises six blades or blade segments, a re-chipped scraper and a possible microlith.

The assemblage is characterised by blade forms which, with the exception of two finds, are all narrow and suggest a later Mesolithic context. The reworked flint bladelet (14) is lightly trimmed at its proximal end along its long edge allowing this piece to be classified as a possible microlith, although perhaps an opportunistic creation. The end scraper (20) has steep retouch at its distal end, although it has been subsequently re-chipped at the distal end and the new edge lightly edge-trimmed. A further section has subsequently been chipped or broken off.

The scraper and blades, as well as the rather irregular microlith, sit comfortably within a 'narrow blade' attribution. Based on the most recent dating narrow blade assemblages can date from as early as c.8400 cal BC through to c.4000 cal. BC (Waddington 2007).

The lithics from the modern layer above wall (007) are likely to be introduced to the site and as such should be considered as residual material of unknown provenance. The flints from within the alluvial deposit (1, 5, 6, 31) must have been washed in with the alluvial sediments as the alluvial sediments overlay in-situ medieval remains. The source catchment for this material is probably not far away and the very fresh condition of these flints suggests that they were eroded from a sediment unit not far away upstream before being deposited within the alluvium on the site. The small broken blade segment (32) found in an isolated posthole (012) is probably a residual artefact that has been incorporated into a more recent feature.

All the material recovered is flint. No primary or 'nodular' flint is present indicating that all the material is from secondary geological sources. The flint includes a wide variety of colours including light and medium grey – some of which is speckled, brown and a speckled ginger piece (31).

The assemblage displays evidence for the use of both hard and soft hammer working of the flints, with the small amount of retouch present being unifacial. The manufacturing tradition relies on the production of parallel-sided blades and bladelets.

Little if any of the material can be considered to have come from in-situ activity. However, the fresh material found within the alluvium suggests that this evidence for Mesolithic activity has not travelled far and in this sense lends support to the view that later Mesolithic activity took place in a not too distant locale upstream from the site.

## Medieval and Post-medieval Ceramics

### C.G. Cumberpatch

The pottery assemblage consisted of twenty-two sherds of pottery weighing 1227 grams and represented a maximum of twenty-one vessels. The assemblage consisted of two quite distinct components. The earliest of these was of later medieval date (later 13th to 15th century) while the later consisted of early modern and recent wares.

The medieval pottery was of diverse character and included a range of types typical of north-east Yorkshire. As far as could be determined, the majority of the medieval sherds post-dated the mid to later 13th century although one sherd from the upper alluvial deposit (002) remains undated, while the date range of a sherd of Reduced Sandy ware from a disturbed modern context above (007) is somewhat speculative and could lie in the earlier 13th century or even the later 12th. The short lug-like handle from a sherd within (002), listed as being of 'Scarborough Ware type' is worthy of note. The fabric and glaze, while not typical of either phase of Scarborough Ware production, seem to be similar to the 'Scarborough Gritty (fine)' type identified amongst the assemblage from the South Manor area at Wharram Percy (Slowikowski 2000, 74-6). The Scarborough Gritty Ware type has been suggested as a precursor of Scarborough Ware and to date to the later 11th or 12th century and the date range of the fine variant is presumably similar. In addition it should be noted that the relationship between the Scarborough Wares and the Tees Valley Wares remains uncertain and while this sherd does not appear to be a typical Tees Valley B Ware, the relative lack of research into these wares and the fact that no production sites are yet known, means that the precise range of fabrics remains undocumented even though the degree of variability within the broad fabric groups (Tees Valley Ware A, B and C) is high (Wrathmell 1987; 1990).

The remaining wares are typical of the area and would seem to indicate later medieval domestic activity on or close to the site. The presence of one highly abraded sherd (Reduced Sandy Ware) in the alluvial deposit (002) suggests that at least part of

Context	Type	No	Wt	ENV	Part	Form	Decoration	Date range
002	Coarse Sandy ware	1	20	1	Base	Hollow ware	Spots of splashed glaze on underside	LC13th - C14th
002	Humberware	2	25	1	BS	Hollow ware	Streak of green glaze ext	C13th - C15th
002	Humberware	1	11	1	BS	Hollow ware	Sparse green glaze ext	C13th - C15th
002	Reduced Sandy ware	1	23	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	Medieval
002	Scarborough type ware	1	22	1	Lug handle	Dripping pan/pipkin	Bright green glaze on handle with shallow groove on top	C13th - C14th
002	Staxton-Potter Brompton	1	25	1	Rim	Pipkin / ?jug	U/Dec; square sectioned rim with small spout section	LC13th - C14th
008	CBM	1	335	1	Fragment	Brick	N/A	Undated
008	CBM	1	292	1	Fragment	Roof tile	N/A	Undated
008	Hambledon type ware	1	75	1	BS	Hollow ware	Green glaze int; ext surface badly flaked	LC14th - C15th
008	Yellow Glazed Coarseware	1	36	1	Rim	Pancheon/bowl	White slip int under clear glaze on red body	C18th - C19th
012	Scarborough I ware type	1	2	1	BS	Hollow ware	Green glaze ext	LC13th - C14th
018	CBM	1	7	1	Fragment	?Tile	U/Dec	Undated
018	Late Medieval Sandy ware	1	19	1	BS	Hollow ware	Clear mottled glaze ext, green glaze int	LC15th - C17th
018	Tin Glazed Earthenware	1	14	1	Handle	Hollow ware	White glaze all over	C17th - C18th
019	Edged ware	1	98	1	Profile	Plate	Low relief moulded 'Grass' pattern edge with blue paint	c.1810 - c.1830
019	Late Humberware	1	158	1	BS	Hollow ware	Mottled green and brown glaze int & ext	C15th - C16th
019	TP Whiteware	1	39	1	Profile	Saucer	Blue printed dendritic 'Sea Grass' or 'Fibre' design	M - LC19th
038	Coarse Sandy ware	1	2	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	LC13th - C14th
Above 007	Brown Salt Glazed Stoneware	1	5	1	BS	Hollow ware	Shallow grooves ext	LC18th - C19th
Above 007	Late Medieval Sandy ware	1	14	1	Rim	Dish/bowl	Dark green glaze int only; shallow groove around rim	C15th - C16th
Above 007	Reduced Sandy ware	1	5	1	BS	Hollow ware	Traces of soft, friable flakey green glaze ext	C13th - C14th
	Total	22	1227	21				

Table 2 Medieval and modern ceramics assessment catalogue



this deposit consisted of material that had been in an active watercourse for some period of time, but this is not reflected in the other sherds from the same context, suggesting that the sherds arrived in the deposit by different means and from different sources. It is even possible that if the alluvial area had remained wet for a period of time it could have been used for rubbish disposal either formally or informally. The upper alluvium was the only context to produce an assemblage consisting of more than one sherd which did not also include later material. Other contexts which produced only medieval material were (012) and (038), although each produced only a single sherd. In the case of (038), a posthole forming part of the radiocarbon dated rectilinear structure, it should be noted that the sherd was freshly broken and showed no signs of abrasion.

The early modern and recent material was represented by a relatively well-preserved strap handle in Tin Glazed Earthenware from pit (018) together with a possibly contemporary sherd of a utilitarian sandy ware and somewhat later material from (008), (019) and a mixed context above wall (007). These sherds were accompanied by residual medieval wares except in the case of context (019) which was of mixed character.

While the small size of the assemblage makes it hazardous to draw definite conclusions, it is notable that post-medieval pottery (c.1450/1500 – c.1700) was rare with expected wares notable by their absence (Cistercian Ware, Blackware, Purple Glazed Wares). Whether this is a result of chance factors or represents a hiatus of activity on the site is unclear. The evidence of the pottery points to later medieval, early modern and recent activity, most probably domestic, on or close to the site. Could the 14th century hiatus be associated with the effects of the Black Death and settlement contraction at this time?

## Faunal Remains

Kim Vickers

The faunal remains analysed in this report derive from five contexts, including pits(008), linear (019), a posthole within the lower alluvial layer forming part of the structure and the upper fills above wall (007). The assemblage is very small, and provides little clear overall information about the site due to its size. Sheep/goat is the most commonly represented species and cattle are also present, with the majority of the identifiable fragments derived from metapodials.

Preservation was generally very good, with rodent gnawing recorded on two sheep metapodials and

the cattle metatarsal from (008) exhibiting traces of ferrous concretions. All of the fragments exhibiting articular ends were fully fused suggesting that the majority of the bone derived from adult animals.

Evidence for butchery is present on three specimens: a sheep metacarpal from (019) has a chop mark on the proximal end while a sheep pelvis from the same context had its ilium sawn off. Both marks are associated with dismemberment (Lyman 1987). In addition a sheep metacarpal from (008) exhibited horizontal cut marks on the mid-anterior shaft.

This small assemblage is made up of domesticated animals, namely sheep/goat and cattle. As a whole the assemblage is too small to provide firm conclusions about the economy of the site. In a larger assemblage the predominance of metapodials may lead to the suggestion that the assemblage derives from a primary meat processing site or an industrial activity.

## Clay Pipe

Susie D. White

The excavation produced a total of six clay tobacco pipe fragments, consisting of two bowls and four stem fragments from four different pipe-bearing contexts. There were no mouthpieces amongst the excavated finds. The pipe fragments have been individually examined and are presented in Table 3 below. Although clay tobacco pipes provide one of the most common and accurate means of dating post-medieval deposits, the context groups recovered here are mostly too small to provide reliable dating evidence by themselves. The largest group (019) only included three fragments.

The pipes themselves are all rather small but do appear to be reasonably fresh-looking fragments which suggested that they have not been disturbed since deposition. Plain stems are extremely difficult to date accurately, however the general appearance of the stem fragment and the size of the bore can give an indication of the likely century in which it was produced. Stem dates should always be used with caution since they are much more general and less reliable than the dates that can be determined from the more diagnostic fragments such as the bowls or marked fragments. The overall size of two of these fragments (10 and 42) and the size of their stem bores would suggest a date at the end of the 17th or early 18th century, whilst the remaining two (11 and 19) are almost certainly 19th century types.

The site produced fragments of just two bowls. The earliest (2) was recovered from the upper alluvial de-

posit (002) and appears to be a plain bowl of c.1670-1710. It is made from quite a coarse gritty fabric that may well have been obtained locally. Although only fragmentary it would appear to have had a large round heel, which would be in keeping with the suggested date for this piece.

The other bowl fragment, from the linear feature (019). It is slightly later and may well date from c.1810-1850. Again this is only a small fragment, but enough survives to be able to see that the original pipe would have been decorated with narrow flutes with leaf decoration on the seams. On either side of the surviving spur is a moulded ring and dot motif, a moulded symbol mark that was relatively common in the early part of the nineteenth century.

### Soil Sample

Jennifer Jones

A soil sample was taken from the large rectangular pit with possible timbers (008), which was initially interpreted on site as a potential tanning pit. The pit deposits were damp but not waterlogged, and the aim of sampling was to detect any inclusions of industrial residue which might assist in identifying the function of the feature.

Inclusions comprised small fragments of non-mineralised vegetative material and wood, a non-mineralised twig without bark, flecks of charcoal, and a few soft, pale cream-coloured amorphous fragments, which were probably small pieces of decayed bone.

Cxt	SF	B	S	M	Total	Decorat-ion, etc	Date Range	Deposition	Comments
002	2	1	20	1	Base	Hollow ware	Spots of splashed glaze on underside	LC13th - C14th	
	1			1		1670-1710	1670-1710	Part of a plain bowl fragment. The thickness of the bowl walls and the size of the bore suggest a late C17th or early C18th date for this fragment.	
007	19		1		1		1800-1900	1800-1900	Plain stem of C19th type.
018	42		1		1		1650-1750	1650-1750	Plain stem with a large bore suggesting a late C17th or early C18th date.
019	10, 11, 12	1	2		3	Flutes bowl with ring and dot moulded spur mark	1650-1900	1810-1850	Two plain stems one of which (SF. 10) is likely to be late C17th or early C18th, the other is of C19th type. The bowl fragment has traces of moulded decoration and is most likely to have been a series of thin flutes over part or all, of the bowl. This fragment also has a moulded ring and dot motif on either side of the spur. This particular fragment is most likely to date to the early to mid C19th.
		2	4	0	6				

Table 3 Post-medieval clay pipe assessment catalogue

The soil also contained very small (<2mm) inclusions of an amorphous blue/grey-purple material, which was identified as vivianite (iron phosphate).

No industrial residues were detected which might assist with an identification of use for the feature, although the presence of vivianite, an unusually stable iron corrosion product, indicates that phosphate levels in the deposit were high. Such phosphates may have derived from bone, as fragments of highly decayed bone were detected in the sample, but it can also have other sources (disposal of animal and human waste), and its presence is not necessarily indicative of industrial processes.

## DISCUSSION

Although archaeological remains and artefacts were sparse on the Vivis Lane site, there is nevertheless a significant time-depth to the observed features and an interesting sequence to the use of the site. The earliest recorded activity comes in the form of scattered Mesolithic flint tools occurring as residual finds in later contexts, and perhaps more importantly, within the alluvial deposits adjacent to the Pickering Beck, suggesting a focus of Mesolithic activity further upstream.

The demonstrably earliest archaeological feature excavated was the arrangement of postholes cut into the earlier alluvial deposit. Whilst there was no floor surface associated with the structure, a single radiocarbon date from the fill of posthole (042) of AD 1010-1160 indicates Anglo-Norman period occupation on the site potentially co-eval with the motte and bailey castle. A fragment of 13th-14th century pottery was also recovered from the fill of posthole (038), which was an outlier to the potential rectangular structure formed by the remaining postholes. It is known from Domesday Book that there was an existing Anglo-Saxon, possibly Anglo-Scandinavian settlement at Pickering at the time of the Norman Conquest and, in the case of the Vivis Lane site, the archaeological evidence appears to support this, providing a record of probable domestic activity which may be contemporary with the earliest motte and bailey 0.5km to the north.

Of the later features encountered, the large pit in the centre of the site, the associated sections of wall (017) and (018), the rough wall footing (007) and the possible water control linear feature (019) do not appear on historical maps and most probably relate to the industrial uses of the site during the post-medieval period. The linear feature (019) is demonstrably

of later post-medieval or early Industrial origin as it cut through the later alluvial spread (002) which contained an array of small finds including post-medieval pottery. Unfortunately the later truncation of these levels by the erection of the coal depot, and the paucity of small finds, means that there can be little posited about the function and use of these buildings. Perhaps the clearest suggestion comes from the volume of metapodials within the faunal remains which could be indicative of an abattoir or butchery.

The walls in the southern portion of the trench can be dated, and their development traced, through Ordnance Survey mapping, as part of the coal depot which stood on the site up until its demolition in 1979.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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