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PLA No.

A Watching Brief at 82-88 Castlegate, Malton, North Yorkshire

The site was visited on a number of occasions in June 1990, with the full co-operation of the contractors, G.H. Lambert.

The piling operations revealed nothing of archaeological importance. However, the digging of the massive trench for the surface drains, 3m wide and 3m deep, on a N-S alignment at the eastern edge of the site was potentially more interesting.

The drainage trench showed that the upper levels were disturbed, with layers of modern brick and limestone hardcore, along with a concrete floor, extending to a depth of c.1m from the present ground surface. The brick foundations of a 19th century flour mill were observed, extending 2m below ground level. The riverside wall, running E-W across the southern edge of the site, was sectioned by the trench, and showed three builds plus a foundation course. The foundation course was c.2.5m thick and of massive rough limestone. On top of this was a 2m wide mortar-bonded more regular wall, followed by a much narrower mortared limestone wall, 0.5m wide, topped by a brick wall of similar width.

No medieval structures were observed; other, less tangible features -small pits or postholes- would have been more difficult to recognise, given the ground conditions. It is possible that the later industrial activity had destroyed earlier stratigraphy. Dating of the riverside wall was not possible; it was certainly of massive enough construction for a town defence, but the question of whether or not Malton was open to the river in Medieval times must remain unanswered.

Dickinson's 'Map of the Burrow of New Malton' shows 82-88 Castlegate devoid of any buildings, even along the street frontage. The area is shown as being occupied by strip-like garths, presumably burgage plots, running from Low Street (as this stretch of Castlegate was then known) to the Derwent. However, Settrington's painting of Malton (1728), clearly shows an almost continuous series of buildings along the Low Street/Castlegate frontage, and this implies that the area was developed in Medieval times. What is known is that towards the end of the 18th century industries were located along the southern side of Castlegate/Low Street, based on the transport opportunities of the improved Derwent Navigation. 82-88 Castlegate was affected by this process, culminating in the establishment on site of a flour mill and Wrangham's Crystal Brewery.

M.R. Stephens, Nov. 1990.

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