

**31 CASTLE STREET, SPOFFORTH,  
NORTH YORKSHIRE:  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING BRIEF**



**CS Archaeology  
August 2008**

**On behalf of:** Mr & Mrs S Giddings  
31 Castle Street  
Spofforth  
Harrogate  
North Yorkshire  
HG3 1AR

**National Grid Reference (NGR):** SE 3607 5116

**Project Number:** 25

**Reporting by:** Mr C Scurfield

**Pottery Assessment by:** Dr Chris Cumberpatch

**Timing:** Field Work July 2008  
Report August 2008

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*Frontispiece: general view of the ground breaking works*

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1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological recording brief was undertaken during the excavation of an 'L' shaped foundation trench within the Proposed Development Area (PDA). The intervention was a below ground foundation trench for a two storey extension (App. No. 6.122.248.FUL) to the side of 31 Castle Street, Spofforth, Harrogate.
- 1.2 The excavations revealed the underlying sandstone natural just 0.2m below the surface with three rock-cut features:
- two parallel gulleys;
  - a post hole with substantial packing stones.
- 1.3 The post hole has been dated to the Norman Period (late 11<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries). The two gullies contained Post Medieval pottery however appeared to relate to relatively recent historical disturbance.
- 1.4 The post hole probably relates to the early Spofforth Castle. EPDA



## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) lies within the historic core of Spofforth, North Yorkshire and is situated 58m north-east of the extant ruins of Spofforth Castle (**Figure 1**). Spofforth Castle is a Scheduled Monument (No. 1327) and is therefore of National Significance. The PDA abutts the Scheduled Monument's northern perimeter, and lies 58m north-east of the castle's extant keep walls.
- 2.2 The PDA (35m x 9m) is a narrow strip of land that fronts onto Castle Street and extends (**Figure 2**) west. The PDA forms an area of 0.033 hectares, which is centred on the National Grid Reference SE 3607 5116.
- 2.3 The recording brief was undertaken on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2008 and was requested by the owner Mr and Mrs S. Giddings in response to a condition on Planning Application No. 6.122.248.FUL. The application is for a two storey side extension to an early 1920's semi-detached house (**Figure 3**).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The PDA (**Figure 1**) lies within the historic core of Spofforth. The origins of Spofforth can be traced back as far as AD 1086, where the manor, one of 86 lordships, was granted by William the Conqueror to William de Percy. De Percy established his headquarters at Spofforth and it is believed that he built a Manor House, however no remains of this early house have yet been found.
- 3.2 The oldest part of the extant castle dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and major alterations were made in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1309 Henry De Percy bought the Manor of Alnwick in Northumberland. As the family obtained more power and influence in the north-east of England the importance of Spofforth declined.
- 3.3 The castle was finally reduced to a ruin following the Civil War (1642-1646).
- 3.4 No known previous archaeological interventions are known to have taken place within the PDA or within the immediate surrounding area.

### 4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The archaeological recording brief was aimed at gathering sufficient information to establish presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits within the PDA.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The recording brief was designed to observe and record any archaeological remains/deposits encountered within the footprint of the new extension of 31 Castle Street, Spofforth.
- 5.2 The location and excavation of the trenches was carried out with respect to the NYCCs Standard Archaeological Recording Brief.
- 5.3 A number of archaeological contexts were identified but no archaeological samples were taken (Appendix 1). Dating of the features was provided by the pottery which provides terminus post quem.
- 5.4 Forty percent of the trench sections were recorded (Figures 3-4) and written records of the contexts were made on *pro-forma* recording cards summarised in Appendix 1. A photographic record was made of all the deposits and features using a digital camera (5 mega-pixels). Black and White photographs were taken of the post hole [007] using a 35mm single lens reflex camera (Appendix 1).
- 5.5 Datum levels were provided via spot heights on the digital site plan supplied by Ordnance Survey (2008) and were transferred by dumpy level to the PDA.
- 5.6 All the pottery collected during this intervention was sent for expert assessment for results see below.
- 5.7 Ms L Hawkins, Development Control Archaeologist, Heritage and Environment Section, Development and Countryside Service (NYCC) was kept fully informed of the progress and provisional results of the work.
- 5.8 Because of the proximity of Spofforth Castle, a scheduled monument (Appendix 2 National Monument No. 13273) and because of the implications to the management of the monument a copy of this report has been sent to English Heritage.

## 6. RESULTS

- 6.1 A single 'L' shaped trench (5.5m x 1.8m) was hand excavated across the PDA (Figure 2, Plate 1) abutting 31 Castle Street's south-east facing gable wall. The underlying natural bed rock consisted of a weathered reddish brown sandstone and this lay just 0.2m below the concrete driveway.
- 6.2 Though relatively small (5.5m x 1.8m x <0.7m in width) the trench revealed three rock cut features each with dateable finds (pottery). The overburden consisted of a varying thickness of concrete [001] (up to 0.15m) which lay above a thicker layer of sandy brick rubble [002] containing modern pottery and regular machine moulded bricks. These brick fragments were compared to the adjacent extant house bricks and were sufficiently different dimensionally and materially that they appeared to post date the construction of the main house and are consistent with a mid 20<sup>th</sup> century date. Below the rubble extended a thin layer of sandy clay loam with frequent soil [003] representing a buried soil which probably was covered during the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create the driveway (31 Castle Street).
- 6.3 As the rubble overburden [003] was removed the natural bedrock was reached and upon cleaning three parallel lines probably representing two 'gulleys' [005 and 006] were revealed (Plate 2: Figure 4). The first cut line [006] bisected the trench towards its south-western end. This cut [006] was characterised by worn straight sides, no tool marks were apparent but 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery was recovered from the fill. The cut [006] gave way to a sharp break of slope hewn from the bedrock suggesting modern disturbance. This modern disturbance probably related to the construction of the present house in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century or even the recent kitchen extension c. 2002. The result was a missing eastern side of cut [006]. Dating from the partially extant gully [006] led to an initial decision that the feature was relatively modern and not significant.
- 6.4 However parallel to and 1.2m west of cut [006] was a further complete U-shaped cut [005] for a similar but complete 'gully'. This measured c.0.22m in width and was up to 0.23m deep (Plate 3). This narrow 'gully' was also characterised by worn regular rock cut sides and a rounded base and was similar in nature to [006]. Again the fill [004] consisted of stony sand with a Post Medieval clay pipe stem providing a late date.
- 6.5 Fill [004] was relatively loose and this led the excavator to conclude that the feature had been recut in recent historical times and the fill [004] was redeposited. As the pottery assessment has demonstrated that this deposit [004] contained both Medieval and Post Medieval artefacts, and has confirmed that it represents a disturbed deposit. There was a marked similarity in the nature (surface weathering and absence of modern tool marks) of all three rock cut features (the post hole [007] and two gullies [005 and 006]) which leads the excavator to conclude that all three features were probably contemporary.
- 6.6 During the initial trench reduction, set into the corner of the L shape foundation trench was a large stone, its void can still be seen in the south-west section (Plate 4). This stone was removed and the area cleaned back to revealed two further stones [112 and 113] below. Further examination indicated that these stones had

been inserted into it's their own rock cut recesses, in the bedrock, resulting in a lobate plan. The packing stones were deliberately arranged to flank/pack the corner of a substantial post hole, and still retain a slope of c. 70°. The bottom of the post hole was never reached but extended at least 0.75m below the top of the packing stones [112 & 113]. Subsequent examination of the packing stone [113] (Plate 6) showed that it had been carefully worked a faint herring bone tooling was discernible.

#### 6.7 Pottery Assessment (Dr C. Cumberpatch)

6.7.1 The pottery assemblage consisted of fifteen sherds of pottery weighing 283 grams and represented a maximum of twelve vessels. This data is summarised in Table 1 (Appendix 1).

6.7.2 Although small in size, the pottery assemblage was of interest in that it included sherds of medieval Hillam type ware from a discrete context, unmixed with later material; (the post pipe [011] contained within the rock cut post hole [007]). A second context, [004] produced a sherd of medieval Gritty ware although in this case it appeared to be associated with a piece of a clay tobacco pipe, most probably of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

6.7.3 Hillam type wares are common in Yorkshire and are characteristic of the period between the mid to late 11<sup>th</sup> century and the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The typical vessel form is a squat, broad based pot with a wide mouth and a heavy square rim. Sooting on the base and lower walls is extremely common suggesting that the uses of these vessels included cooking. In this regard the sherds from Castle Street are typical of the type. A fuller account of Hillam type and related wares and the issues surrounding their dating and definition has been published elsewhere (Cumberpatch 2002) as has a discussion of the place of Gritty wares in general (Cumberpatch 1997).

6.7.4 The sherd of Gritty ware from context [004] was not of the Hillam type but was probably of a similar date, based on its general characteristics. The great diversity in the Gritty ware class and the lack of detailed research into their manufacture and circulation means that it is often difficult to assign individual sherds to specific sub-types.

6.7.5 The remaining pottery from the site was of 17<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century date, with an 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date range for the Yellow Glazed Coarsewares from context [003]. None of this later material was in any way unusual. Transfer printed wares, initially Pearlware and later Whiteware, are ubiquitous on sites of later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century date while Sponge Printed wares are common on sites from about 1840 onwards. These were amongst the cheapest decorated wares and are found widely in 19<sup>th</sup> century towns and cities, even in poorer areas. Without maker's marks it is impossible to be certain of the origin of these wares but the evidence from Sheffield suggests that local and regional manufacturers were the primary source of tablewares throughout the mid to later 18<sup>th</sup> and most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Staffordshire wares only achieving dominance in the latter quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- 6.7.6 Although small in size, the pottery assemblage from Castle Street is not without interest in that it includes medieval pottery from what can be argued to be at least one medieval context. Hiliam type wares are found on medieval sites of all types from farmsteads (Cumberpatch 2008) to castles (Cumberpatch 2002) so it is hardly possible to make any suggestion as to the character of the site on the basis of the presence of the Hiliam type wares and the assemblage is too small for the absence of other classes of ware to be judged of any particular significance. Only further work on the site could make the position clearer.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The limited size of the excavation, has managed to reveal significant, archaeological deposits that appear to directly relate to Spofforth Castle.
- 8.2 The two 'gulleys' set 1.2m apart could represent a former cart track. Despite Medieval pottery being identified from the fill [004] of gulley [005] this may be residual, further work is required to provide more conclusive dating of this possible trackway represented by the gullies [005 and 006].
- 8.3 The post hole [007] represents a significant feature with sealed archaeological deposits [011] that date to the Norman period (before the 11<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries). The scale of the feature, its inclined sides and packing stones demonstrates considerable investment in time and labour. The skills necessary to excavate and furnish this feature were considerable, leading the excavator to conclude that the feature related more to a substantial gate post than a fence post. The gate post [007] probably relates to a Norman entrance into Spofforth Castle's bailey (defended enclosure).

## 9. REFERENCES

Cumberpatch, C.G. 1997 *Towards a phenomenological approach to the study of medieval pottery*. In: C.G. Cumberpatch and P.W. Blinkhorn **Not so much a pot, more a way of life**. Oxbow Monograph 83. Oxbow Books.

Cumberpatch, C.G. 2002 *The pottery* In: I. Roberts **Pontefract Castle Archaeological Excavations 1982 – 86**. Yorkshire Archaeology 8. West Yorkshire Archaeology Service / English Heritage; 169-226.

Cumberpatch, C.G. 2008 *Pottery* In: M. Lightfoot, B. McClusky and C. Cumberpatch **Archaeological excavations at Scholes Lodge Farm, Scholes, West Yorkshire** Archaeological Services WYAS Publications 9.

Ordnance Survey. 2008. dxf map tile (centred on NGR SE 3607 5116)

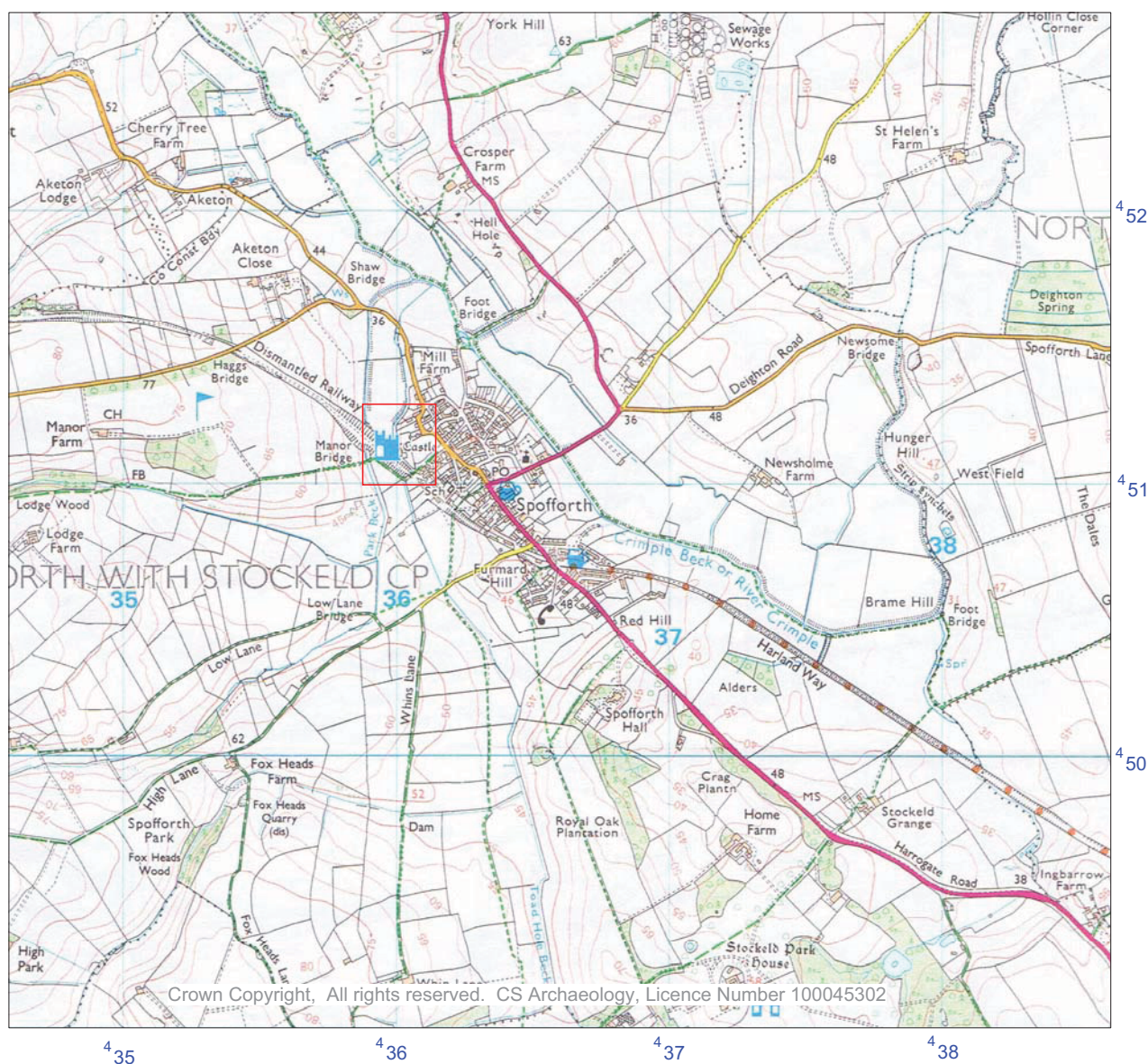
Ordnance Survey. 2005. 1:25000, Explorer Map, sheet 299

## 10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Mr and Mrs S. Giddings for commissioning the archaeological work and to Mr S. Priestley and Mr D. Priestley for their careful excavation work and to Dr C. Cumberpatch for the comprehensive assessment of the pottery.



## FIGURES



 for inset see Figure 2

scale: 1:25000

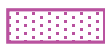
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Figure 1: Location Map



The PDA



Scheduled Monument No 13273,  
Spofforth Castle

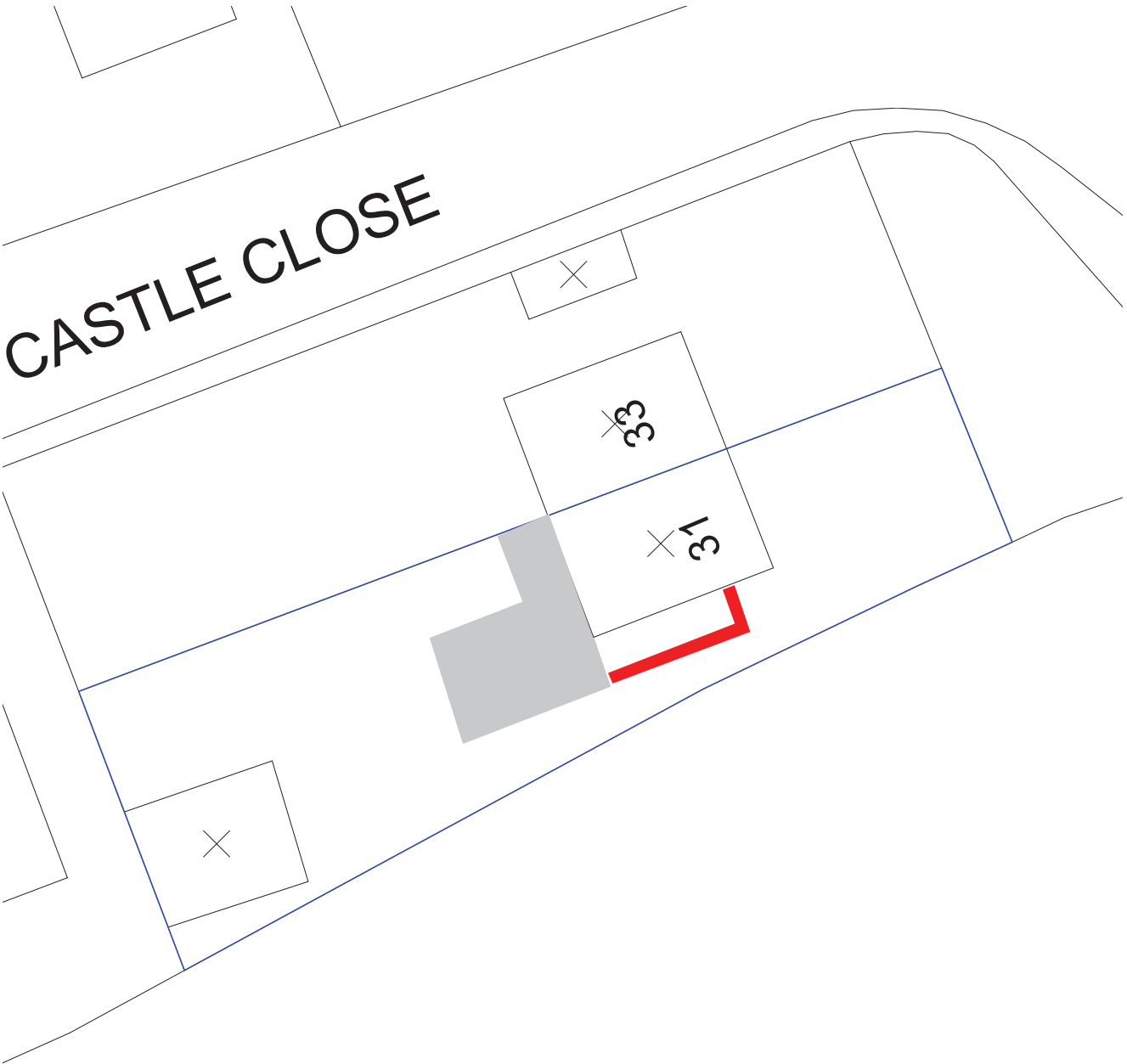





scale: 1:1250

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Figure 2: Location Map  
of the PDA

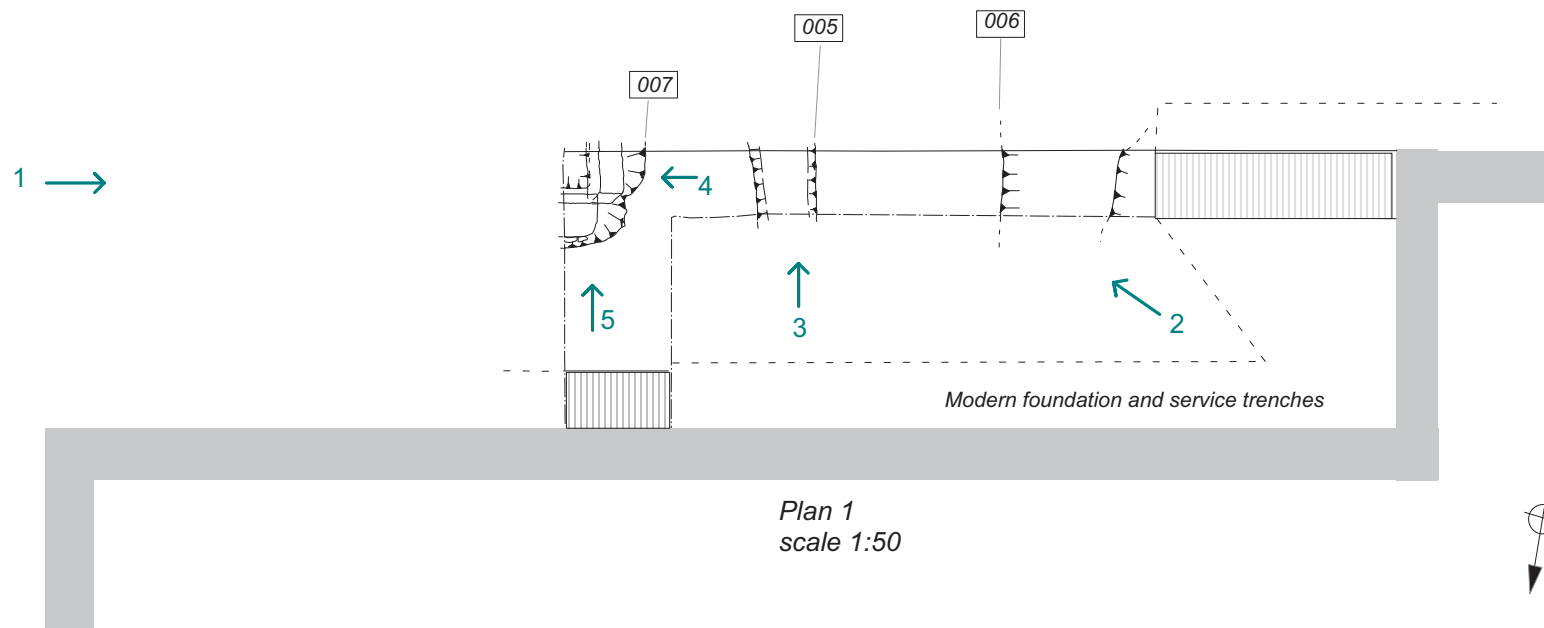


-  extension c. 2002
-  the PDA
-  foundation trench see Figure 4



scale: 1:2500

# 31 Castle Street, Spofforth: An Archaeological Recording Brief



- existing extant house walls
- areas of modern disturbance
- photographic direction and Plate No.

005 - narrow rock cut ditch with C19th (clay pipe) fill

006 - probable ditch with the eastern side affected by modern truncation fill contained C19th pottery

007 - Norman rock cut post hole with packing stones

Section 1, NW Facing  
section, scale 1:50

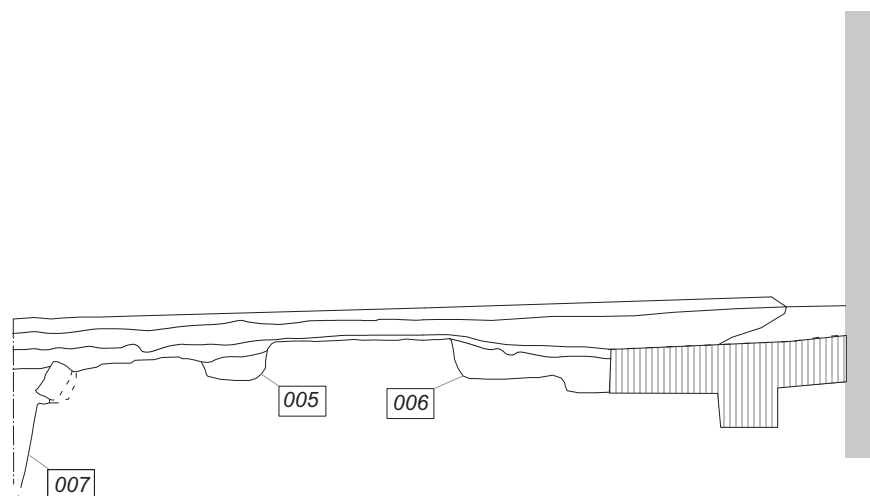
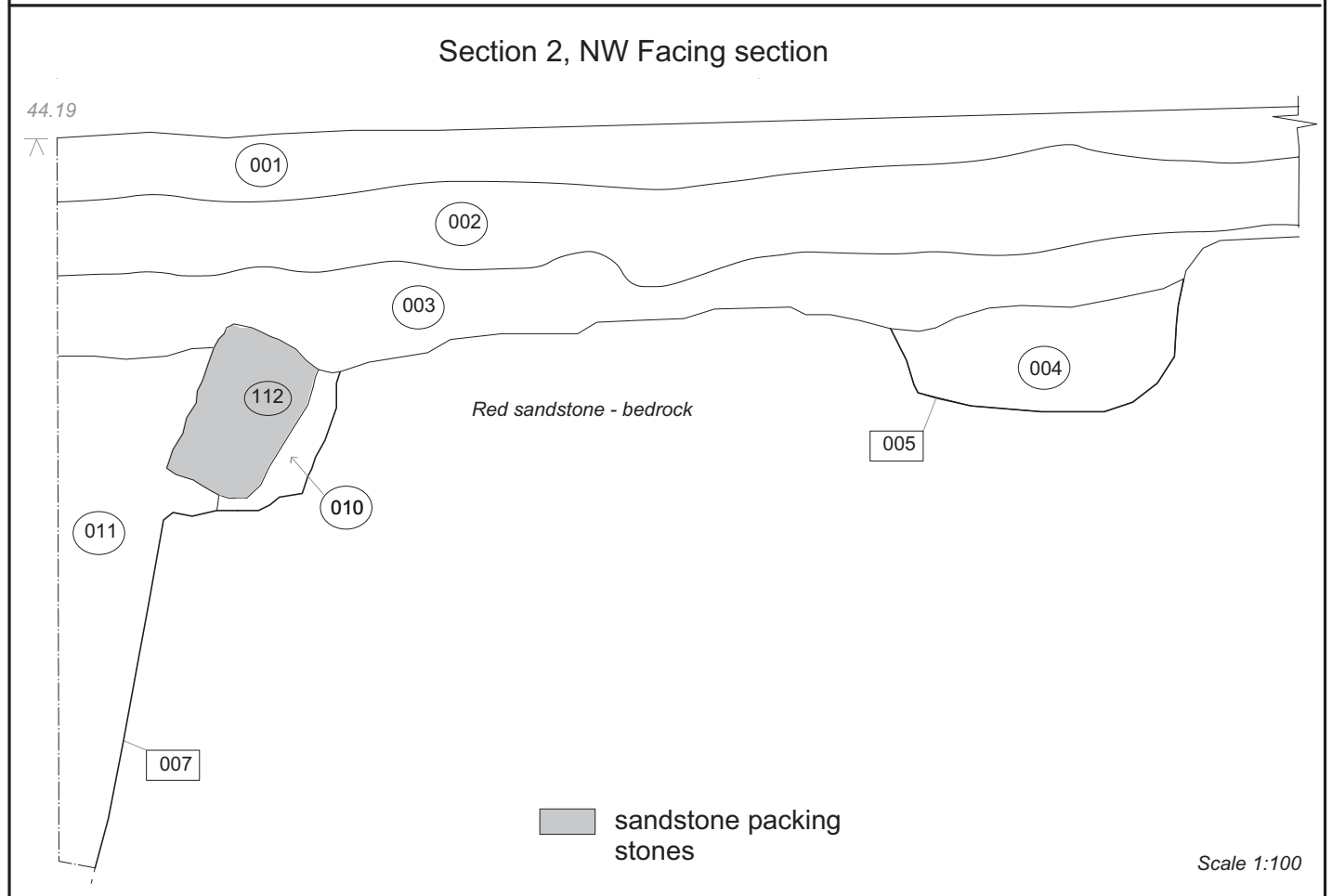
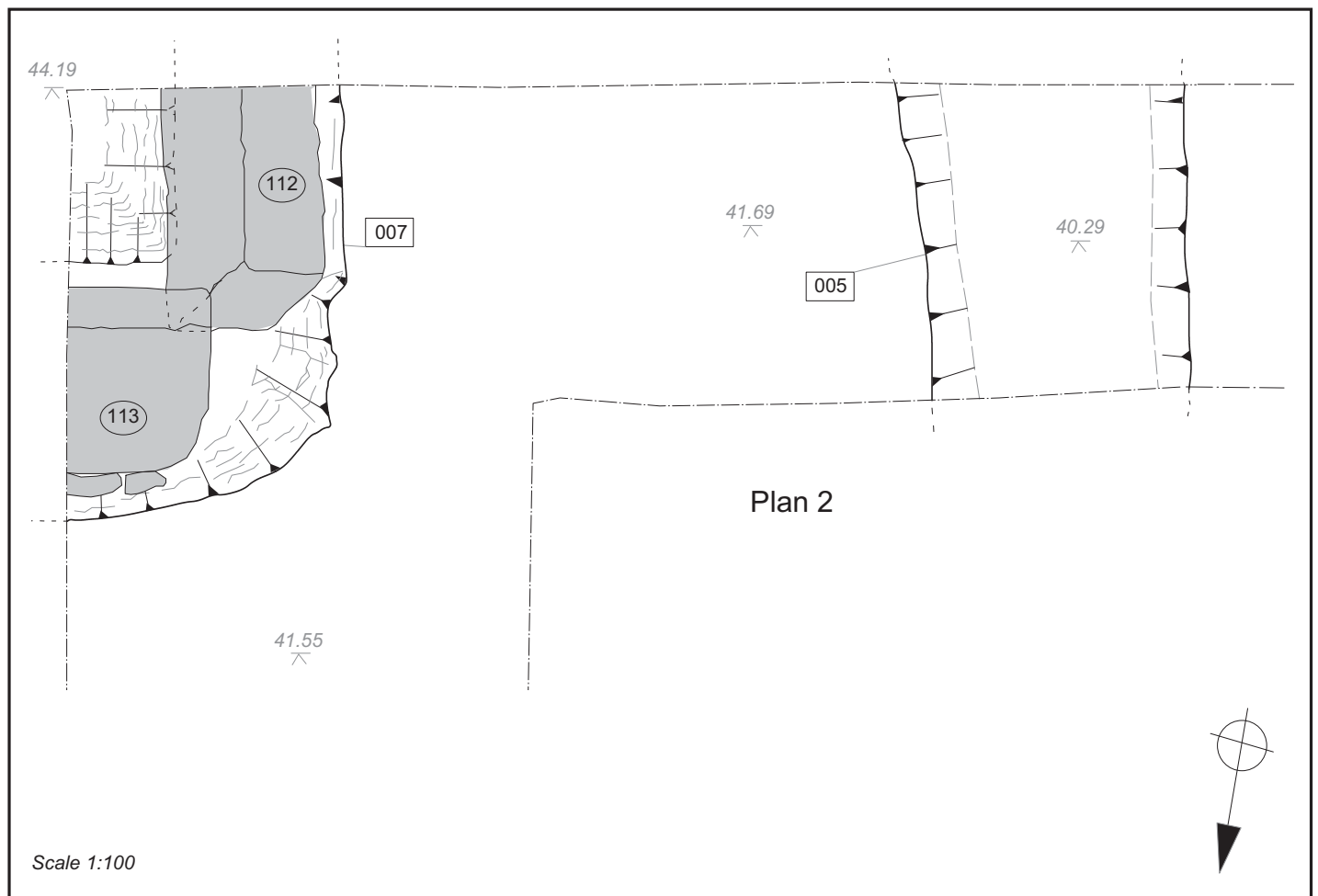


Figure 4: Plan and Section  
of 'L' shaped foundation  
trench

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## PLATES





**Plate 1:** general view of the L shaped foundation trench during breaking out, looking west south-west



**Plate 2:** general view trench with two rock cut gulleys, looking south-east





**Plate 3:** detailed view of the eastern rock cut gulley [005], looking south south-east



**Plate 4:** view of the stone packed post hole [007], looking east north-east





**Plate 5:** view of the post hole with post pipe fill [011] removed, looking south south-east



**Plate 6:** view of the underside of the removed packing stone [113]

## APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVE INVENTORY

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER  
*Digital 5 mega-pixel*

Film/ frame No.	Plate	Description	from
1		pre-excavation view	ENE
2	1	general view of the L shaped foundation trench during breaking out	ENE
3		general view of the L shaped foundation trench during breaking out	SE
4	2	general view trench with two rock cut 'gulleys' [005 & 006]	NW
5	3	detailed view of the eastern rock cut gulley [005],	NNW
6		general view trench with two rock cut 'gulleys' [005 & 006]	NE
7		general view trench with two rock cut 'gulleys' [005 & 006]	ENE
8		detail view of 'gulley' [006] (north-west facing section)	NNW
9		general view of the trench	NNW
10		general view of the trench	SSE
11	4	view of the stone packed post hole [007]	WSW
12	5	view of the post hole with post pipe fill [011] removed	NNW
13		view of the post hole with packing stone [113] removed	WSW
14	6	view of the underside of the removed packing stone [113]	-

PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER  
*35mm Black and White Film (Ilford HP5)*

Film/ frame No.	Plate	Description	from
1/35-4	4	view of the stone packed post hole [007]	WSW
1/33	5	view of the post hole [007] with post pipe fill [011] removed	NNE
1/32-1		view of the stone packed post hole [007] with stone [113] removed	WSW
1/30-29		Vertical view of post hole [007] looking down into the removed post pipe	-
1/28-7	6	view of the underside of the removed packing stone [113]	-

## CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No.	Description
001	<i>Deposit:</i> modern concrete up to 0.1m in depth and extended throughout the L shaped trench. Overlies [002].
002	<i>Deposit:</i> rapidly deposited (made ground) comprising of brick tile and slate rubble. Overlies [003], underlies [001].
003	<i>Deposit:</i> mixed red silty sand and sandy loam with angular stone. Overlies [011, 112,
004	<i>Deposit:</i> red silty sand with up to 20% angular sandstone (bedrock fragments). Overlies [005], underlies [003].
005	<i>Cut:</i> narrow rock cut U shaped 'gully'. Overlies [009], underlies [004].
006	<i>Cut:</i> narrow rock cut U shaped 'gully' partially extant suffering truncated along the western edge. Overlies [009], underlies [008].
007	<i>Cut:</i> Steepley inclined (70°) rock cut post hole with a stepped profile. Undefined dimensions but extends 1.05m below the surface [101] and at least 0.75m below the surrounding bedrock. Lobate in plan to facilitate 'recessed' packing stones [112 and 113] to be positioned around the post pipe [011].
008	<i>Deposit:</i> mixed red silty sand and sandy loam with up to 20% angular sandstone (bedrock fragments).
009	<i>Natural:</i> coarse red sandstone the with the top 0.5m subject to prlonged weathering causing lamination. Underlies [007, 005, 006 and 003].
010	<i>Deposit:</i> red silty sandwhich has been packed around the packing stones [112 and 113]
011	<i>Deposit:</i> pale yellow sandy silt with occasional lumps of charcoal (up to 0.02m diam.) suggesting in situ burning of a wooden post.
112	<i>Structure:</i> red sandstone packing stone with a cross section (0.24m x 1.9m). Underlies [003 and 001], overlies [007]
113	<i>Structure:</i> red sandstone packing stone with a cross section (0.201m x 1.75m).

## DRAWING REGISTER

Dwg. No.	Figures	Description	Scale Drawn	Reproduced
1 & 3	4 & 5	Plan of Foundation Trench	1:20	1:50 & 1:100
2 & 4	4 & 5	NW facing section of foundation trench	1:10	1:50 & 1:100

POTTERY ASSESSMENT Data Table

Deposit	Cut	Type	No.	Wt	ENV	Part	Form	Decoration	Date range	Notes
003		Sponge Printed ware	2	9	1	Rim	Hollow ware	Blue and green sponge printed curvilinear design ext	c.1840+	
003		TP Whiteware	2	14	1	Rim	Plate	Willow border	M - LC19th	
003		TP Whiteware	2	4	1	Footring base	Plate	Chinese landscape	M - LC19th	
003		TP Whiteware	1	7	1	Footring base	Plate	Willow border	M - LC19th	
003		Whiteware	1	7	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	M - LC19th	Flaked internally
003		Yellow Glazed Coarseware	1	15	1	BS	Pancheon	White slip under clear glaze internally	C18th - C19th	
003		Yellow Glazed Coarseware	1	76	1	Rim	Pancheon	White slip int under clear glaze int with red band inside rim	C18th - C19th	
004	005	Clay tobacco pipe	1	4	1	Stem	Pipe	U/Dec	Undated	
004		Gritty ware	1	13	1	BS	Hollow ware	Rilled profile	LC11th - C13th	Trench 1 Pit; A hard, dense, reduced gritty ware containing quartz grit in a red-brown to dark grey body
008	006	Coarse Blackware	1	131	1	Rim	Jar	Black glaze int & ext	C17th	Large jar with everted rim
011	007	Hillam type ware	1	2	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	LC11th - EC13th	Sooted externally
011	007	Hillam type ware	1	1	1	BS	Hollow ware	U/Dec	LC11th - EC13th	Sooted externally
		<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>12</b>					

## APPENDIX 2: STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

### EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

#### MONUMENT: Spofforth Castle magnates' residence

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: **13273**

PARISH: SPOFFORTH WITH STOCKELD

DISTRICT: HARROGATE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 13273

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE36075112

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

Spofforth Castle is located on a low hill to the west of Spofforth village. The monument includes the ruins of the west range of the 13th century manor house and the buried remains of other buildings, including those of an earlier 11th century residence. The extant west range is of two storeys, the oldest part being the undercroft which is early 13th century. Above this is the great hall and the private rooms of the lord and his family, built and modified in the 14th and 15th centuries after licence to crenellate was granted to Henry Percy in 1309. The plan of the west range is a parallelogram with an extension at the north-east corner and a polygonal stair turret and spire at the north-west. The back of the building is set against rock so that the rear entrance leads directly into the upper floor containing the hall and private rooms. The undercroft consists of three rooms, later subdivided into four, with the kitchen occupying the north-west corner room and containing two large fireplaces. Fragments of other buildings indicate that the standing remains formed one side of a quadrangle stretching to the east. Earthworks in the field to the east, and cropmarks showing up on aerial photographs, show the location of its foundations. Underlying the deposits of the later medieval house are those of the Norman foundation. The first house on the site was built some time after 1067 by William de Percy, a favourite of William the Conqueror. The Percys were an important and influential family, and William's gift to the family numbered eighty-six lordships in Yorkshire, of which Spofforth was one. It remained the principal seat of the Percys until the 14th century, when Henry Percy bought the manor of Alnwick. As his family increased in power and influence in the north-east, so the residence at Spofforth lost favour and fell into disrepair. During the Wars of the Roses, after the Battle of Towton in 1462, it was fired by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, and remained neglected until restored in 1559. Records suggest that it was last inhabited in 1604 and it was slighted some years later during the Civil War. The monument is now in State care and is a Grade II\* Listed Building. On the south-east side the monument extends to the inside of the field fence/wall and hence the recently constructed Manor Garth road and adjacent housing are not included in the scheduling. Excluded from the scheduling are all English Heritage fittings such as railings, ticket office, grilles and notices, all fencing and modern walls around the site and the surface of the path leading from the east. The ground beneath these features is, however, included.

#### ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Magnates' residences are high-status domestic residences dating from the Norman Conquest and throughout the Middle Ages, in some cases with Saxon antecedents. They were the palaces of royalty, bishops and the highest nobility, and generally comprise a great hall, private chambers, service rooms, kitchens and accommodation for retainers arranged round a single or double courtyard. Usually they were built of stone and served as both luxury homes and impressive venues in which to meet and entertain visiting dignitaries. They frequently had little or nothing in the way of defences and no military function. Since they belonged to only the top echelons, magnates' residences are relatively rare monuments with less than 250 throughout the country for the whole of the medieval period. As such, and as important architectural monuments in their own right, they are particularly important for the study of medieval society and all sites exhibiting good survival will be identified as nationally important. Spofforth Castle's importance lies in the good survival of standing remains and extensive archaeological deposits, and in its connections with one of the most important noble families in medieval England, the Percys.