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# ArcheType

**Kingsley House**

**Middleham**

**Archaeological Watching Brief  
Phase 2 – the garages**

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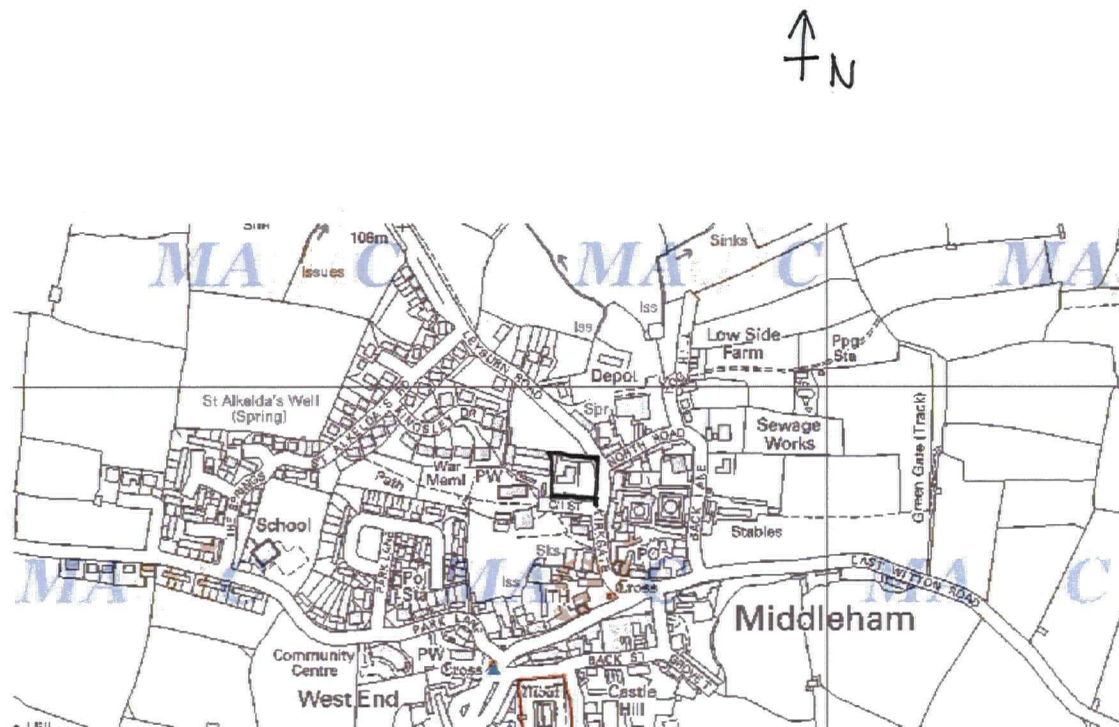
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**Archaeological watching brief at Kingsley House, Middleham  
Phase 2 – the garages.**



**Fig 1. Kingsley House, Middleham. Location**



Fig 2. Kingsley House, Middleham. Site and situation



## Introduction

In March 2008 ArcheType was asked to undertake an archaeological watching brief on behalf of Mr Mark Johnston at Kingsley House, Middleham. The first phase, the construction of an extension, took place in 2008 and was reported on in 2009. The second phase, site clearance and preparation for the construction of 2 garages, took place in August 2009. The report was completed in 2010.

Kingsley House is located on the west side of Kirkgate, the main approach road into the medieval town from the north (figs 1 and 2). The house is of medieval origin, and a Listed Building (Grade 2). The central range is probably of late medieval origin. The west range is probably 17<sup>th</sup> century. The east range is supposed to date from 1752 but may be older, and has 19<sup>th</sup> century additions. The house is believed to have been the medieval rectory, which became the deanery of the collegiate church of Middleham (created in 1477 by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later Richard III). The college lapsed, but was re-established as a chapter in 1814. One of the canons was the writer Charles Kingsley, hence the present name of the house. (Information from the Images of England website © English Heritage 2007 – for reference see below.)

Kingsley House is a complex multiperiod building; construction work close to the house might be expected to reveal information about its origins and development, and for this reason Richmondshire District Council and North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section asked that an archaeological watching brief should be undertaken during any demolition work, and during the excavation for the foundations of the new additions to the buildings. This should be to the standards and design laid out by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section in their standard 'Watching Brief' specification, a copy of which can be obtained from the Heritage Section at County Hall, Northallerton.

The watching brief was undertaken in August 2009. It included monitoring the removal of a shrub garden, site clearance and site preparation at the east side of the building, and the excavation of the footings for new garages, all by mechanical excavator.

### Observations

During the first phase watching brief at the west side of the building it was noted that the natural subsoil in this area was clays, sands and gravels, probably glacially derived. These were noted also at the east side of the building, overlying the limestone bedrock and brash derived from it. The older parts of the house, to the west, were constructed directly on top of this material. The 18<sup>th</sup> century part of the structure is cellared, and it appeared from the present work that at least part of the site had been reduced in height by as much as 2.5m, to the top of the bedrock, to allow for the construction of the cellars, before the loose clearance material was piled up against the wall for stability. Removal of this material by machine made it unstable, and potentially dangerous to work close in to. For this reason it was not always possible to place scales for the photography, and some measurements are not as precise as the author would have liked.

### The house fig 3

The east front of Kingsley House is impressive, with a central door flanked by two 16-pane sash windows at ground level and 3 smaller windows at the first floor. The door- and window-dressings are of finely worked sandstone, and there are some well-worked quoins, but otherwise the stonework is of well-constructed but randomly-coursed rubble blocks. This side was intended to be rendered, as the north side still is.

Below the ground floor, at cellar or basement level, the stonework appears to be even more random. This impression may be genuine, or may be suggested by the fact that the wall below ground level has not been re-pointed and is in a worse state of repair than the wall above it.

### The excavations

During the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the central doorway opened on to a terrace on the east side of the house, which was flanked by a shrub garden which sloped away to a cleared level approximately 2.5m below the threshold of the door. The shrub garden was planted into imported dark topsoil (001) approximately 0.5 to 1.5m in depth.

The shrub garden soil was removed to reveal a lighter, more sandy-coloured soil matrix (002), probably derived from the soils natural to this area, which contained quantities of gravel, angular cobbles and larger stone blocks. A width of approximately 2 to 3m was left in place against the house; beyond this the area was cleared to bedrock (fig 5). Small quantities of brick and some animal bone were present in this material. Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered; one unglazed cooking pot or cistern sherd in a pale oxidised fabric; one lower neck sherd of a green-glazed jug in an oxidised fabric; and one brown-glazed



body sherd of a jug in a grey fabric, possibly over-fired. These could not be closely dated, but were probably 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century in date.

Material 002 did not appear to have any stratification, and was certainly not *in situ*. Approximately 1m of the material situated against the house was wetter and therefore darker than the material further out, but there did not appear to be any differentiation in the composition of the material and it has been considered as one context. The simplest explanation for its origin is that it was scraped up from the immediate area and piled against the house for stability and to support a terrace, probably immediately after Kingsley House was built. However, there is no proof of its origin and date of deposition; it could have come from anywhere in the vicinity and been deposited at any time before, say, 1950.

A trench between 1.50m and 2m wide was excavated through this material up to the house wall (fig 6), as space for a passageway from the garages and new steps to the terrace once the construction was complete. This met the house wall at a point against the wine cellar, which was to have a doorway inserted to give access to the garages from inside the house. At a point approximately 550mm below the level of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century terrace, a window 650mm high and 500mm wide was located. It had a slab sill and re-used medieval jambs and lintel. In its final use this was below ground level, and had been converted into a coal chute with a hatch in the surface of the terrace above it. The wine cellar had been used for storing coal.

Approximately 800mm below this window, slightly off-set to the north, was a slab-lined drain 250mm high by 150mm wide. This ran through the wall from the cellar, but there was no trace of it continuing outside the building; presumably it ran into the accumulated soil and rubble, which acted as a soak-away. Fragments of a number of glass beer and wine bottles were recovered from it, including a full profile of a dimple-based bottle of early to mid-nineteenth century date.

### Conclusions

The development area, lying immediately to the west of Kingsley House, had been much disturbed by the construction of Kingsley House and subsequent levelling and landscaping of the adjacent area. No stratified archaeological material was recovered from this area.

Medieval activity in the wider area of Kingsley House was indicated by the pottery sherds recovered from the site clearance, and by the re-used medieval stonework in the window of the cellar.

A brief inspection of the interior of the cellar confirmed its previous use as a wine cellar, with some stone racking and shelving still in place. It seems likely that the

cellars beneath Kingsley House were originally more extensive than at present, with parts now blocked off by stone walls.

A mid-nineteenth century date for the last use of the drain from the cellar is suggested by the broken wine/beer bottles in its final fill.

The final landscaping of the terrace area and the planting of the shrub garden took place in the latter half of the twentieth century (R A Wheeler, *pers.comm*).

No evidence to add to the understanding of the complex of buildings at Kingsley House was recovered from this archaeological watching brief.

Reference: [www.imagesofengland.org.uk/Details?Default.aspx?id=321666&mode=quick](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/Details?Default.aspx?id=321666&mode=quick)





Fig 3. Kingsley House from the east.



Fig 4. Kingsley House – the development area.





Fig 5 Removal of the shrub garden soil and early stony soil 002.



Fig 6. The wine cellar window and drain opening.