

*AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT THE CASTLE HOTEL, QUEEN STREET,
SCARBOROUGH*

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BY

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SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERIM REPORT 27: 1997

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The Castle Hotel, Queen Street, photographed in
January 1997

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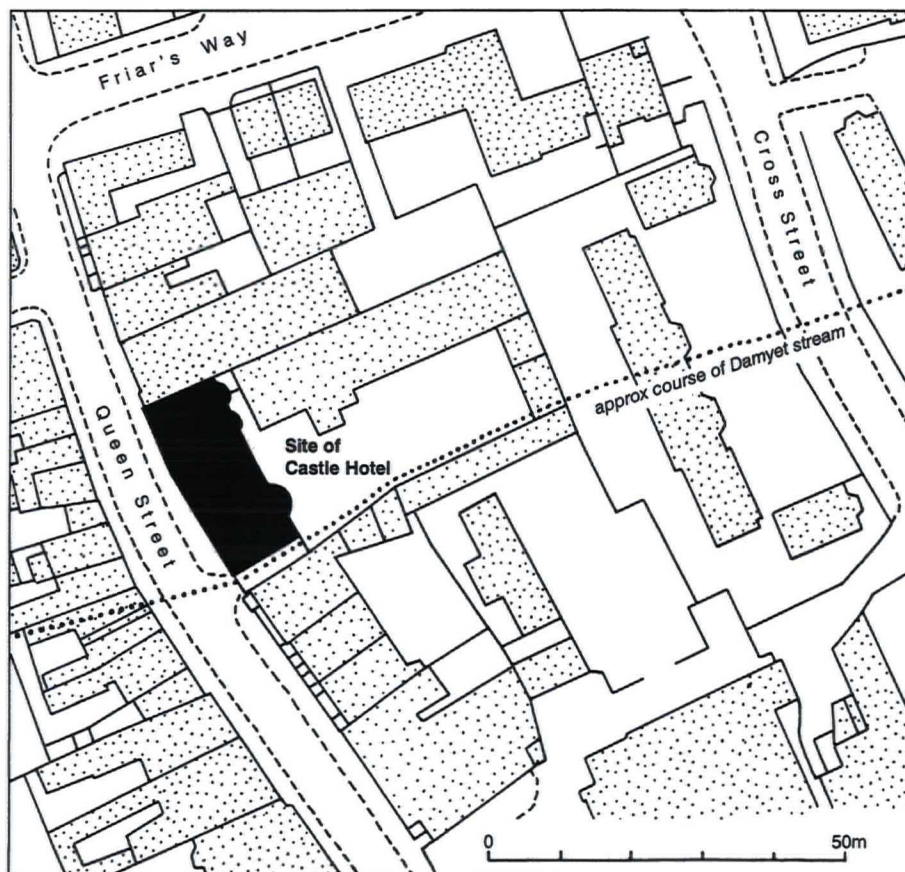
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT THE CASTLE HOTEL, SCARBOROUGH

INTRODUCTION (fig 1)

During April and May 1997 an archaeological watching brief was kept during the demolition of the former Castle Hotel in Queen Street, Scarborough and during the digging of foundations for a new building on the site (NGR TA 0433 8881; Site Code CH97). The work was undertaken by Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society on behalf of Harrison Construction Ltd in response to a planning condition placed on the development by the County Council Heritage Unit. The site lies within the area of the medieval town and the planning condition recommended that the development of the site was monitored so that nothing of archaeological importance was destroyed without being recorded.

Queen Street dates back to the second half of the 12th century when a town was planted at Scarborough on the command of King Henry II. The first part of the settlement to be established lay to the east of the present site, towards the Castle Hill, and was known in the middle ages as the Oldborough. Later in the reign of King Henry II the town expanded with the establishment of the Newborough to the west of the Oldborough and Queen Street was among the streets added to the town at this time.

The Castle Hotel occupies the site of the medieval Dominican Friary established on land between Queen Street and Cross Street in 1252. The layout of the friary is largely unknown, though the present site lies close to the point where a natural watercourse, called the Damyet, flowed across the friary grounds in a west to east direction. The passage on the south side of the hotel building may mark the line of the stream.



Following the disappearance of the medieval friary, the ground probably remained undeveloped until the 18th century when Queen Street became one of the most fashionable streets in the town with the construction of many new buildings. A guide book of 1787 commented that the street's buildings would not have discredited a metropolis. The Castle Hotel belongs to this period, constructed during the late 18th or early 19th century. It was badly damaged by fire ten years ago and has lain semi-derelict ever since.

Figure 1: Location of the site

THE WATCHING BRIEF (figs 2 and 3)

The site was first visited on Monday 14th April, but excavation work did not commence until Thursday 24th April 1997.

The standing remains consisted of the cellar walls of the hotel, rising to the present street level on three sides, whilst the north wall beside the adjoining building had already been almost totally removed. The extant walls were thickly plastered but where this had been damaged during demolition they were seen to have been constructed mostly of dark red brickwork of early nineteenth century type, but incorporated some possibly re-used stone. Several blocks of sandstone were noticed protruding from the wall fronting Queen Street which could have been the start of a side wall a little to the north of the existing wall near the covered passage to the rear courtyard. Further investigation of the front wall indicated that the wall consisted of a foundation of three courses of stonework resting directly upon the natural red clay, above which lay three or four courses of brick. On the latter lay a further single course of stone, and on top of this began the main brick structure of the building. Several window splays, or delivery chutes, reduced the thickness of the front wall in places and the string course of stone passed through these, but they stopped short of the stone foundations. The string course and other stonework, except the foundation courses, seem to have been purpose made for the building as they also occur in the visible parts of the rear wall including the bow window bases. The construction on the stone foundation appeared to continue the whole length of the front wall, which is somewhat at odds

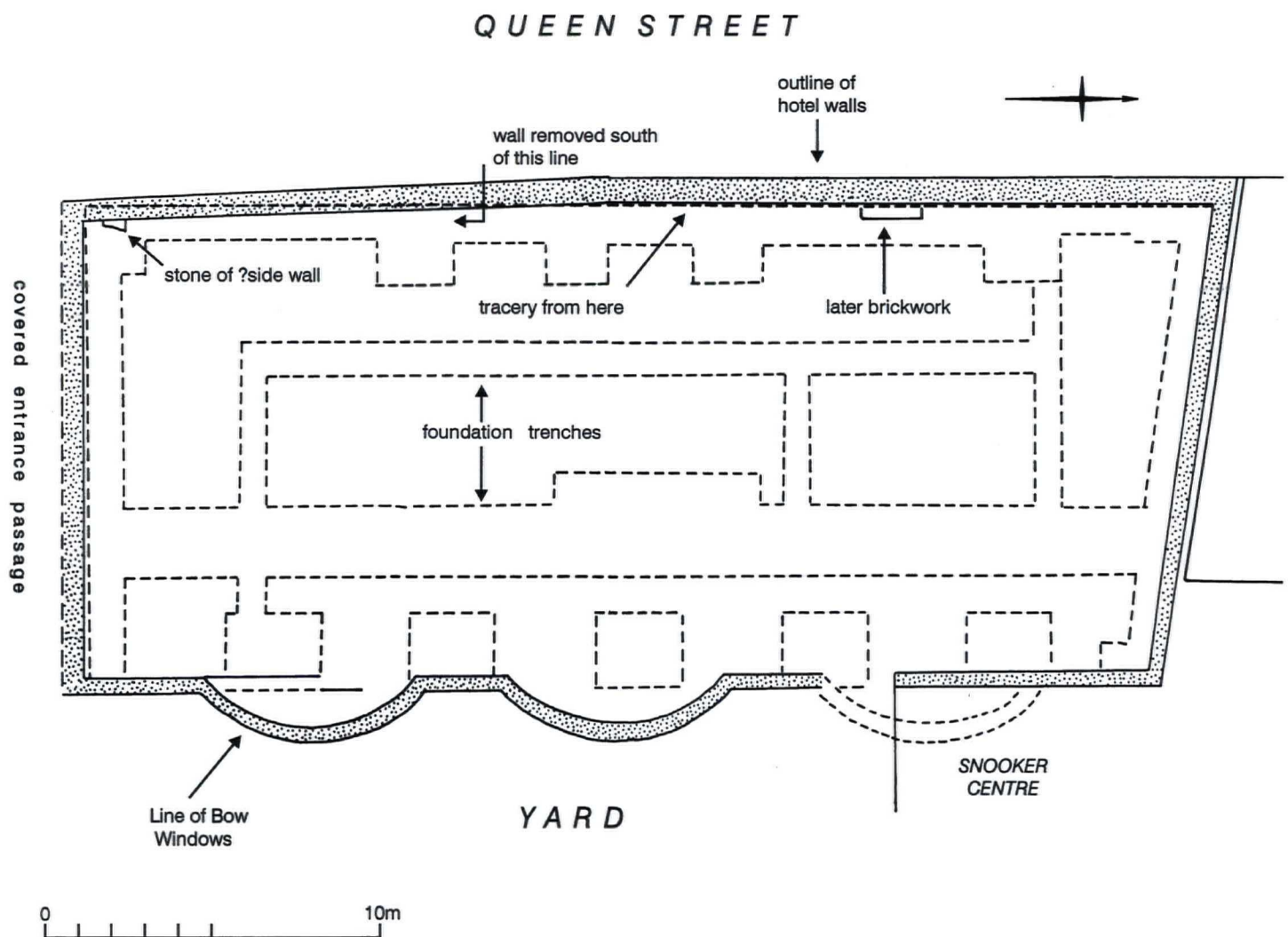


Figure 2: Plan of new foundation in relation to hotel cellars

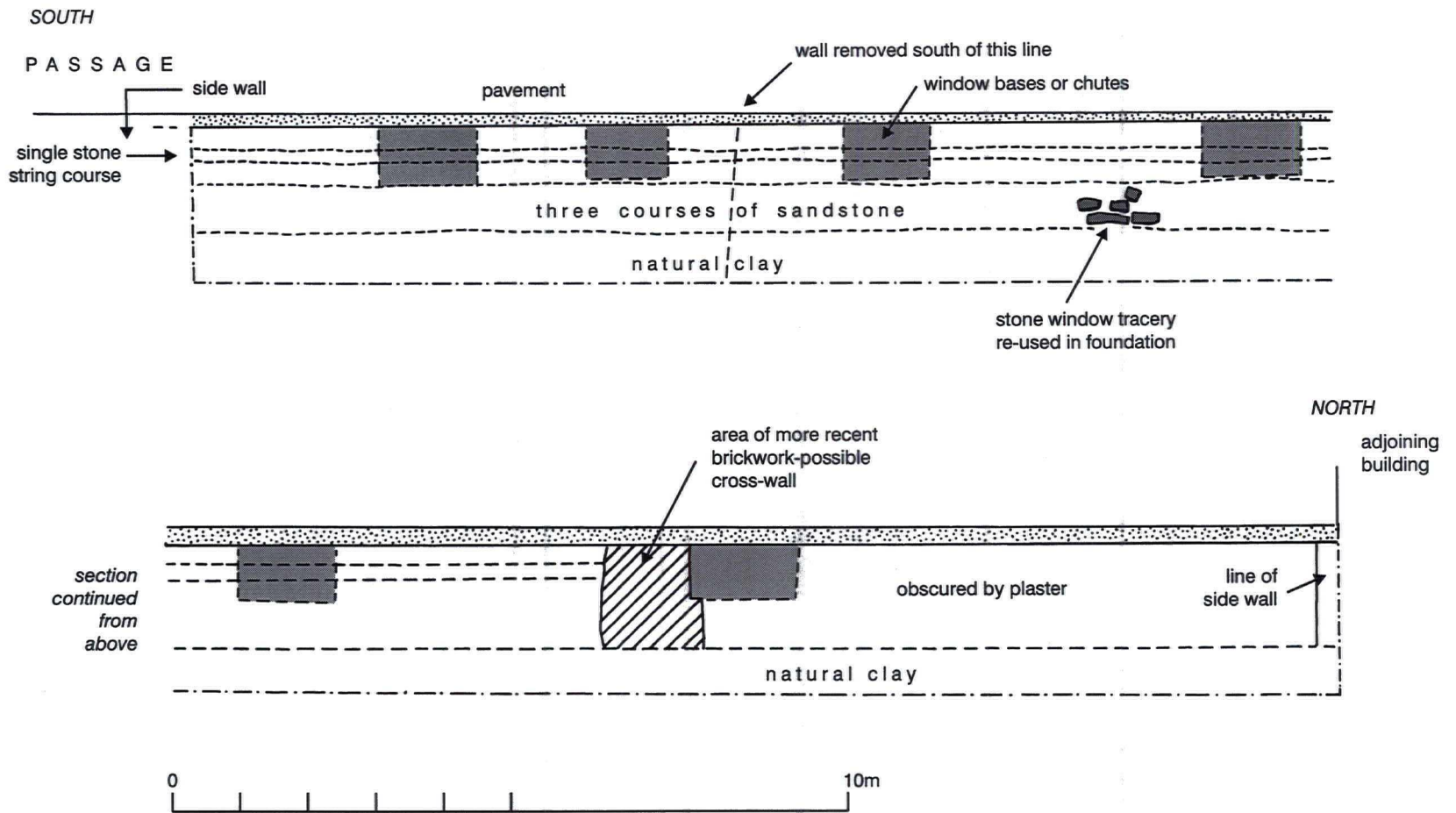


Figure 3: Sketch section of the Queen Street frontage of the hotel cellars

with documentary evidence that the hotel was a multi-period structure. Much of the wall is obscured by its covering of plaster, and some, seemingly much later, brick additions. No old dividing walls were observed, except for that noted above close to the southern end of the building. An expected north end wall to the original hotel building was not encountered, though a large, but very late, brick buttress may have masked its site. A piece of stone in the lowest course of the foundations of the front wall and about a third of the wall along from the south end, at first looked as if it might have been misplaced from a nearby chute or window sill, as it was chamfered. Upon closer inspection it was found to have a slot on the inner face and to continue back into the foundation, so was a clear case of re-use. On removal it proved to be a fragment of medieval window tracery, possibly from a church (fig 4). This raises the possibility that some, perhaps much, of the stone in the foundations of the Castle Hotel had been re-used, and probably came from derelict friary buildings. No further pieces of stonework of identifiable form were noted, although several displayed tool marks. Re-used stones of the same sort were observed in the lower part of the wall of the adjoining building to the north of the site, which seems to be of a similar early 19th-century date as the demolished hotel.

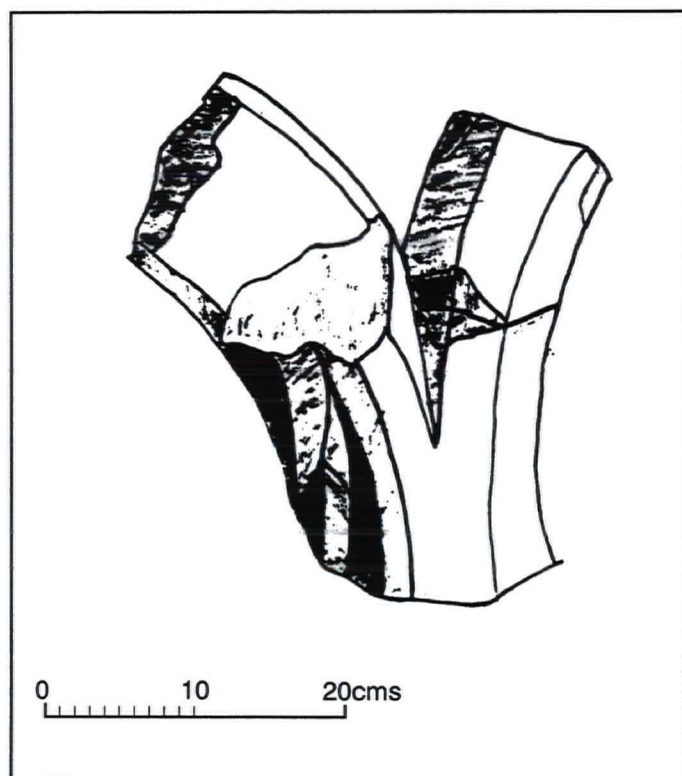


Figure 4: Drawing of window tracery

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the watching brief that no damage to archaeological deposits resulted from the present works, as the area was levelled down to the natural clay at the time of the construction of the hotel, or possibly before. However, the re-use of stones, including a fragment of window tracery from an ecclesiastical building, provides circumstantial evidence that buildings belonging to the medieval Dominican friary stood in the vicinity of the site. More substantial remains of friary buildings could well survive beyond the levelled area of the hotel site.

The present works consisted of the cutting of foundation trenches for a new building on the site of the demolished Castle Hotel, mostly within the 'footprint' of the old foundations, but extending a little into the former rear yard area, and also across the old covered passage at the south end of the structure. The cellar floors had been partly of concrete, but also had contained areas of stone flagging and of brick. These rested directly upon a compact red clay containing inclusions of grey silty clay, which proved to be a natural deposit of glacial origin. Therefore it appears that the whole area had been levelled into this clay, probably at the time of the construction of the Hotel or possibly before, and that this had removed any existing archaeological features. It may have been the levelling which revealed the stones that were incorporated in the hotel structure. Nothing of an earlier date than the hotel was noted, except for the re-used stones themselves.

APPENDIX 1

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD- TRANSPARENCIES

FILM 9 4/97C

- 01 General view across site from rear, to S and Queen Street.
- 02 General view across site from rear, to S and passage.
- 03 General view across site from rear, to S standing buildings.
- 04 General view across site from rear, to N standing buildings.
- 06 Detail of front wall in SW corner by passage, stonework.
- 08 Detail of front wall, stonework and plaster rendering.
- 09 Front wall from rear of building, to W and Queen Street.
- 10 Rear wall, N to S, detail of brick/stone in base of bow windows.
- 12 Front wall, SW corner by passage.
- 26 Front wall, SW corner by passage, from rear, E-W, removal.
- 27 General view over site, SW to NE.
- 28 First cut in SW corner, through rubble, into natural clay.
- 30 Same cut in SW corner, from above in passage.
- 31 Same cut in SW corner, from S to N.
- 36 Front wall from rear, with Datum line at 31.575 m.
- 37 Trench by S passage, with Datum line on wall at 30.200 m.

FILM 11 4/97H

- 02 Trench by S wall, old waste pipe, W-E.
- 04 Trench by S wall, old waste pipe, E-W.
- 05 Rear wall, SE corner, old drains and waste pipes.
- 06 Rear wall, detail of base of bow window, to SE.
- 08 Trench by S wall, E-W.
- 09 SW corner, cut with front wall removed, N-S.
- 10 SW corner, cut with JCB working, N-S.
- 11 SW corner, detail of front wall section, N-S.
- 12 SW corner, detail, waste pipe/sewer, wall removed.
- 13 Front wall section, N-S.

- 14 Front wall section, JCB working, S-N.
- 16 Front wall trench, Datum line at 31.575.
- 17 Front wall, detail of courses stone etc.
- 18 Rear wall, detail of S bow, coursed stone.
- 19 Trench by S wall, E-W.
- 21 Front wall, removal of brick buttress, NE-SW.
- 31 Front wall trench, N-S.
- 32 E-W trenches W-NE.
- 33 Front wall trench, S-N.
- 34 N trench, detail, adjoining building, re-used stones in wall.
- 36 Front wall trench, S-N.
- 37 Detail of trenches, cut into natural clay, W-E.

FILM 6 5/97H

- 01 Front (west) wall. Window tracery in footings.
- 02 Same detail of tracery in situ.
- 04 ditto
- 05 Detail of tracery on removal.
- 06 ditto
- 07 ditto
- 08 ditto
- 10 NE corner of site by snooker centre.
- 12 Side passage from rear to west.
- 14 NW corner of site by Queen Street.
- 16 NE area of site to NE.
- 17 Site overall from N to S.
- 18 Site builders plans of new flats.
- 21 Site builders plans of new foundations.
- 22 Brick flooring in SE corner by passage.
- 24 Window tracery cleaned.
- 26 ditto