

**MOAT HOUSE, CROSS KEYS YARD  
BREWERTON STREET, KNARESBOROUGH  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

*Summary*

*As the site lay adjacent to the Scheduled Monument area for Knaresborough Castle, an Archaeological Watching Brief was required by the Harrogate Planning Services on the various ground works for the construction of the new extension to Moat House in Cross Keys Yard, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire (SE 34984 56869) planning reference 10/02916/FUL.*

*The watching brief was carried out on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2013.*

*The watching brief recorded a series of ground raising layers prior to and for the construction of Moat House along with the remains of the brick floor of a late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century outbuilding and associated cobbled surface.*

*No other archaeological finds or features were recorded during the ground works.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief on the ground works for the construction of an extension to Moat House, Cross Keys Yard, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire (SE 34984 56869) (Figure 1). The watching brief was a requirement of the Planning Consent (reference 10/02916/FUL) as the site lay adjacent to the Scheduled Monument area for Knaresborough Castle.
- 1.2 The watching brief was conducted by JB Archaeological Services (JBAS) on behalf of Mr T Clifton, and was carried out on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### Historic Background

- 2.1 Much has been written about Knaresborough and its origins and it is not intended to repeat this here. The first reference to the castle dates from 1129 and is in relation to its upkeep by Eustice Fitz-John. The castle has been associated with many significant names in British history including, in 1170, Hugh de Morville who fled here after taking part in the murder of Thomas Beckett in Canterbury. It was Edward II and his son Edward III between 1307 and 1350 who were responsible for the majority of construction of the castle. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the ownership of King John further improvements were made, many of which are still intact today. Like many castles it was besieged during the Civil War for six months in 1644 by royalist troops before they ultimately surrendered after part of the curtain wall was destroyed. Much of the castle was slighted in 1648 to prevent it from being used in any further conflicts and to keep it from being defensible again (for further information see [www.knaresborough.co.uk/castle/](http://www.knaresborough.co.uk/castle/)).
- 2.2 The place name for the settlement of Knaresborough is first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Chenaresburg*. The name derives from an Old English personal name and *burh* meaning ‘stronghold of a man called Cenheard’ (Mills, 1998, 209).

### Geology and Soils

- 2.3 The underlying geology of Knaresborough and the surrounding area is Magnesian Limestone (British Geological Survey, 2001). Overlying this, the quaternary geology is predominantly one of glacial sands and gravels (British Geological Survey, 1977). As the site lies within the town and over the partially in-filled moat, the soils have not been classified by the Soil Association Survey of Great Britain (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

### Topography and Land-use

- 2.4 Moat House is situated on the eastern side of the castle precinct at a height of c.74mOD in Cross Keys Yard in an area of housing (Figure 2).

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1 The objective of the watching brief was to identify and record any features of archaeological interest revealed or damaged during the ground works for the new extension. The specific aims were to:

- archaeologically record (graphically and photographically) any archaeological features revealed by the ground works
- recover any archaeological artefacts and environmental material exposed by the ground works

3.2 All archaeological works were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct for an Archaeological Watching Brief (1999).

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

4.1 The ground works were undertaken using a combination of tracked mechanical mini-digger with a toothless bucket and hand digging, both of which were under direct archaeological supervision. After the removal of the former concrete floor the mini-digger gradually reduced the ground level in 0.1-.3m spits down to the formation level for the new extension at 1.1m below current ground level (*c.*72.9mOD). During the ground works the exposed ground surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and the resulting topsoil stockpiles were monitored for archaeological artefacts.

### **5.0 RESULTS**

5.1 The excavation of the two foundation trenches recorded a limited amount of archaeological evidence. The archaeological sequences for these excavations are described in more detail below. In the text the context numbers for each archaeological deposit or feature are given in [] brackets.

5.2 The first foundation trench was aligned east-west and was 4.6m long and *c.*0.5m wide and 1.1m deep. Once beneath the concrete [01] of the former garage floor, this trench recorded a very simple stratigraphic sequence. Immediately below the 0.1m of concrete there was a 0.6m thick layer of mid brown silty clay [02] which had been laid in an even layer across the whole of the site. This in turn directly overlay a 0.2m thick layer of dumped building debris [03] which contained large amounts of broken brick, pantile and lumps of lime mortar and would be consistent with the dumping of the waste material from when Moat House was originally built. Both of these layers were lying up against the foundations of Moat House to the west. Below the layer of dumped building debris was a 0.1m thick topsoil type deposit [04] which in turn overlay a deposit of mixed soil and small fragments of ceramic building material, ash and lime mortar [05]. This layer [05] could be seen to extend below the base of the foundation trench at 1.1m below ground level (*c.*72.9mOD) Plate 1.

- 5.3 The second trench was excavated at approximately right angles to the eastern end of the first trench. In this case the trench was only excavated to a depth of 0.7m below ground level (*c.* 73.03mOD) where it encountered the remains of a late 19<sup>th</sup> /early 20<sup>th</sup> century outbuilding with an associated cobble floor [06] (Plate 2). The remains consisted of a brick floor of with a stone sill at its northern end which was adjoined by an area of cobbling – presumably a yard of some form. The outbuilding had been constructed on top of the layer of dumped building debris [03] and in turn had been sealed by the dumped layer of clay [02]. The area of cobbling was to the north of the remains of the outbuilding and had could be seen to have been cutaway at the time when the clay layer [02] had been deposited.
- 5.4 No other archaeological finds or features were encountered during the excavation of the foundations for the new extension.

## **6.0 FINDS**

- 6.1 Apart from large amounts of fragmented late 19<sup>th</sup> /early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic building material (CBM) in context [03], very few finds were encountered. These were almost entirely along the interface of contexts [02] and [03] and were all sherds of early 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Small amounts of very small fragments of CBM were recorded in [05].

## **7.0 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 With the location of Moat House over the eastern side of the substantial moat it was expected that the east-west foundation trench would have encountered part of the slope of the east side of the moat as it rose to the modern ground level. However, it was recorded that the various contexts seen in the trench had in fact all been deposited horizontally. This is easily understandable for the levelling layers against the foundations for Moat House (contexts [02] to [03]) but the two lowest contexts would not seem to be part of the construction of Moat House.
- 7.2 From the topsoil [04] overlying the deposit of mixed soil and small fragments of CBM, ash and lime mortar [05] it would appear that this was a result of earlier dumping of material into the eastern side of the moat. This was probably in order to increase the amount of level land available for building in the area. The topsoil would have then started to develop on this dumped material [05] prior to the construction of Moat House. The lack of finds from context [05] makes dating this layer problematic but the large amounts of fragmented CBM and lime mortar would seem to indicate a probably early post-medieval date for its origin.

## References

- Mills AD (1998) *Dictionary of English Place-Names*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- 1977 Geological Survey Ten Mile Map South Sheet Quaternary. British Geological Survey
- 1983 Soils of England and Wales. Sheet 1 Northern England. Soil Survey of England and Wales. Lawes Agricultural Trust, Harpenden
- 2001 Geological Survey 1:625,000 Map South Sheet Solid Geology. British Geological Survey
- <http://great-castles.com/knaresborough.php>

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr T Clifton for inviting me to undertake the project.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

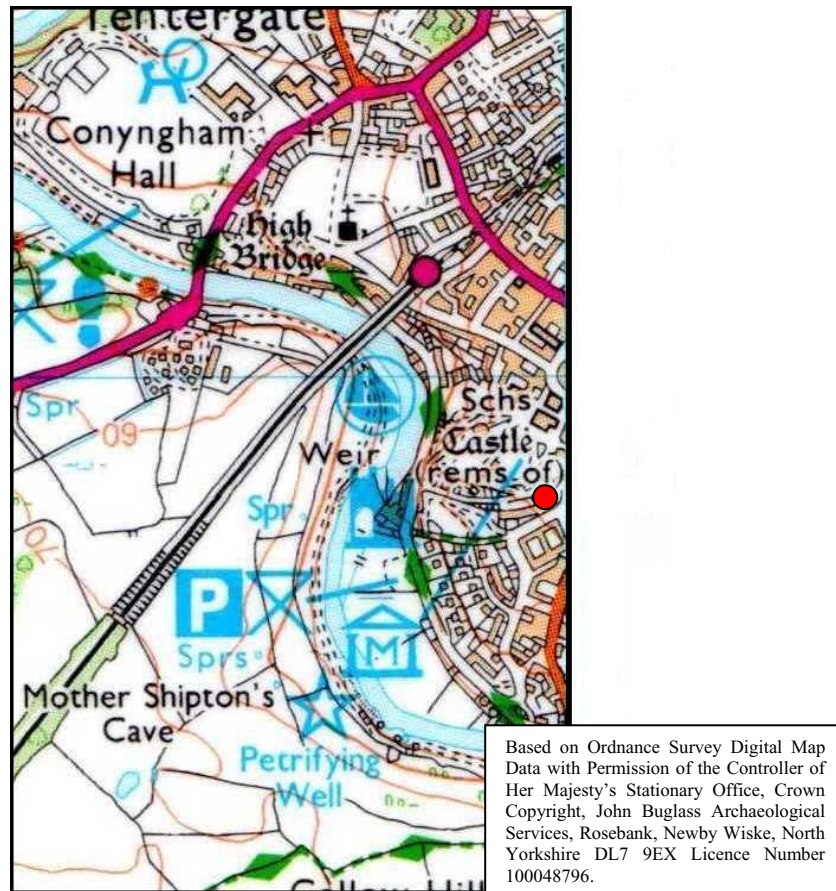


Figure 1. Site Location.

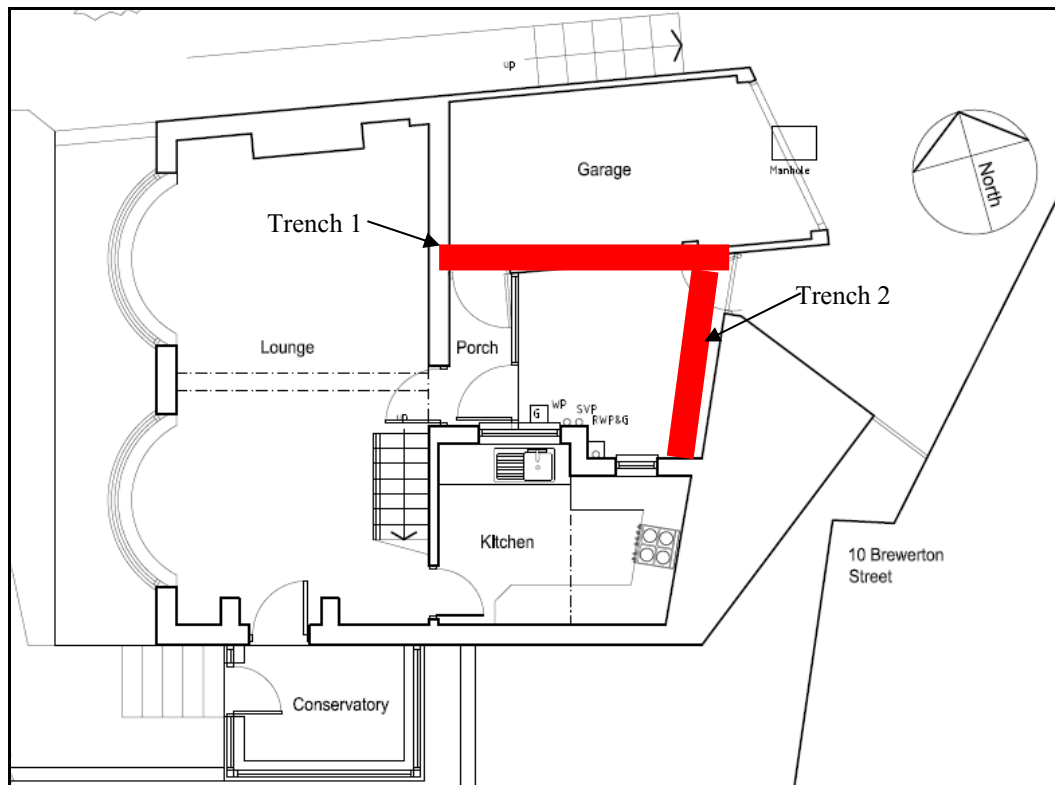


Figure 2. Location of foundation trenches.

Plan supplied by Stephen Wood



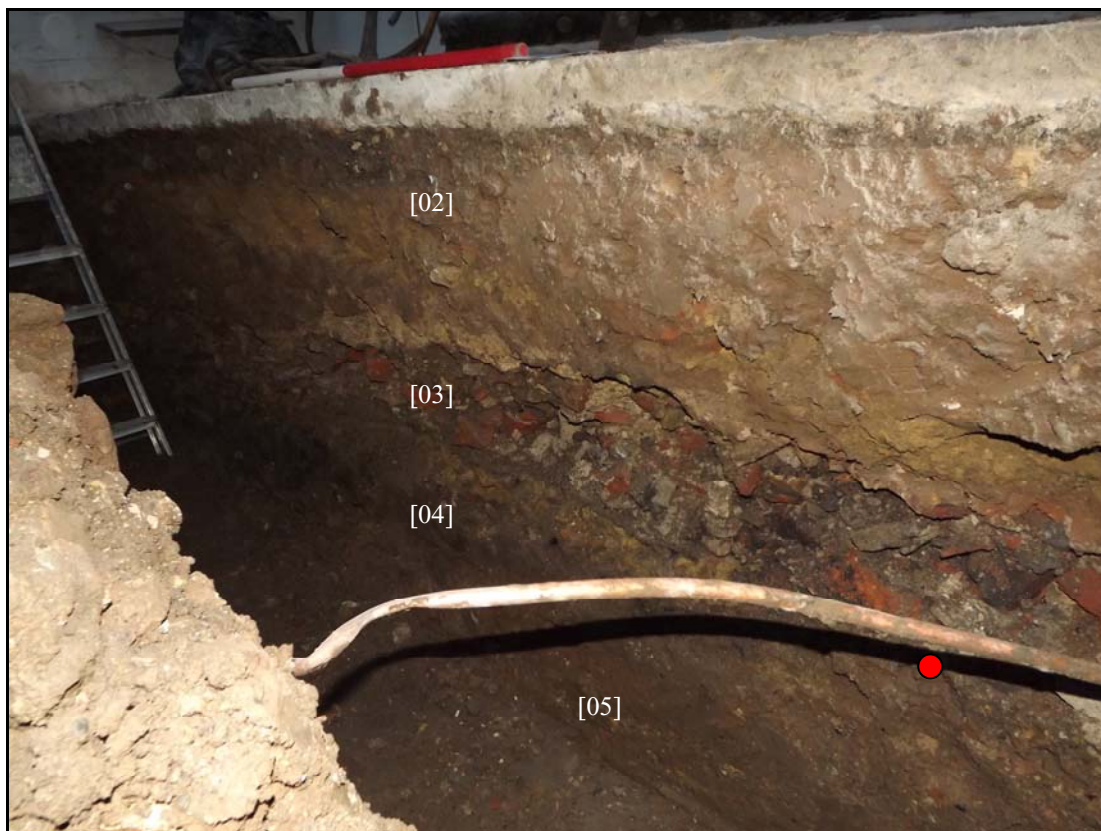


Plate 1. East-west foundation trench, looking north-west, scale 1m.



Plate 2. North-south foundation, with outhouse floor & cobbles. View NE, Scale 1m.