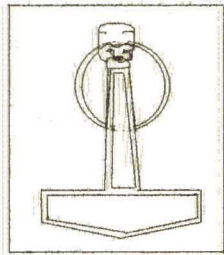


5063

NYCC HER	
SNY	790
ENY	512
CNY	1915
Parish	5063
Rec'd	01/01/99



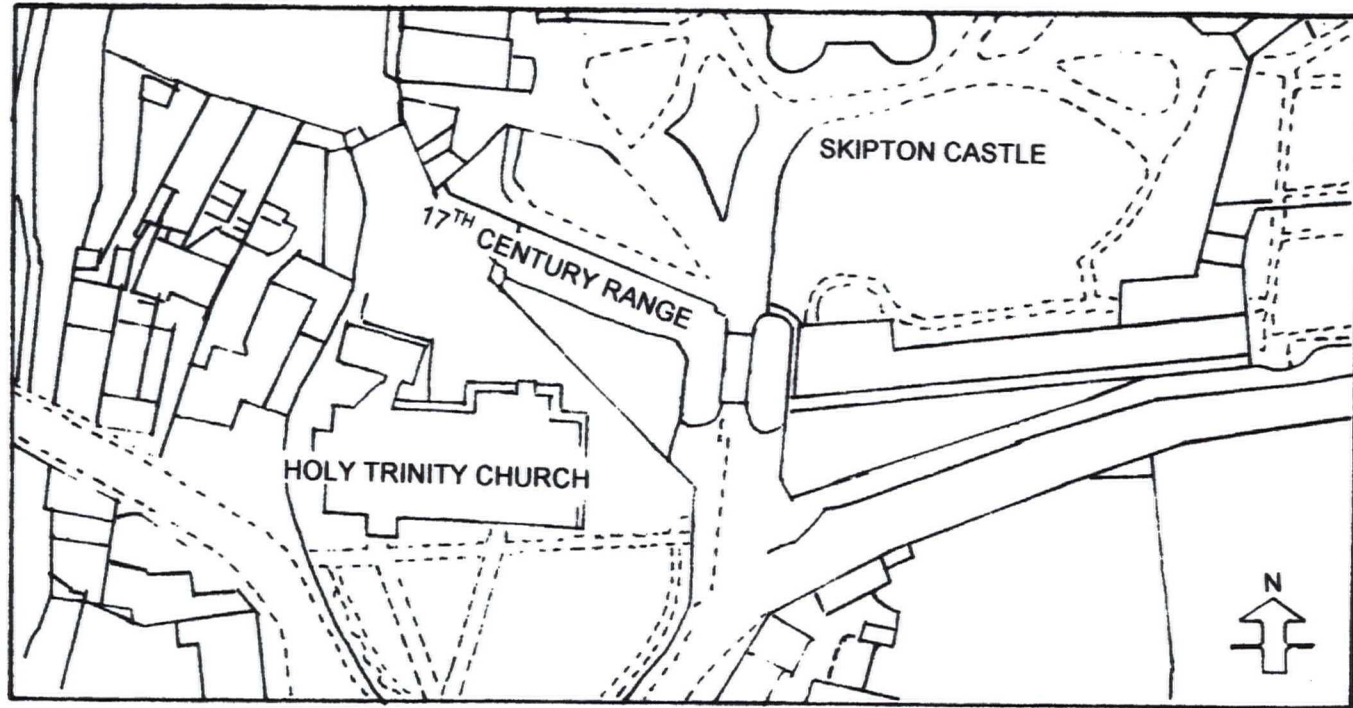
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
SKIPTON CASTLE
RESTAURANT
FOR
WALES, WALES AND RAWSON

ALISON CLARKE

JANUARY 1999



SCALE 1:1250

SKIPTON CASTLE RESTAURANT PLAN 1 LOCATION

SKIPTON CASTLE – ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ON GROUND WORKS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW RESTAURANT

INTRODUCTION

To the west of the Gatehouse at Skipton Castle is a range of seventeenth century buildings, part of which were formerly used as the offices of Wales, Wales and Rawson, Architects. These offices have been transferred to the Gatehouse itself, in order to convert the space to a restaurant adjacent to the existing shop (Plan 1). In association with these alterations, ground to the north of the building had to be lowered by an average of 14cm. to the same level as that in front of the shop to create easy access. The area, approximately 7 metres by 4 metres, was in use as a garden with grass and a shrubbery, and sloped gradually down to the south towards the building, the whole being raised above the ground level to the north and west (Plan 2). Ground levels to the west had been previously lowered in 1993 to form an access to the shop, and a stone-lined well was revealed at that time. Additionally, part of an internal wall was demolished to provide access, and this work was also observed and recorded (Plan 3).

The work was started on 3rd December 1998 and continued the following day. The last part was undertaken on the 14th and 15th December 1998.

WATCHING BRIEF

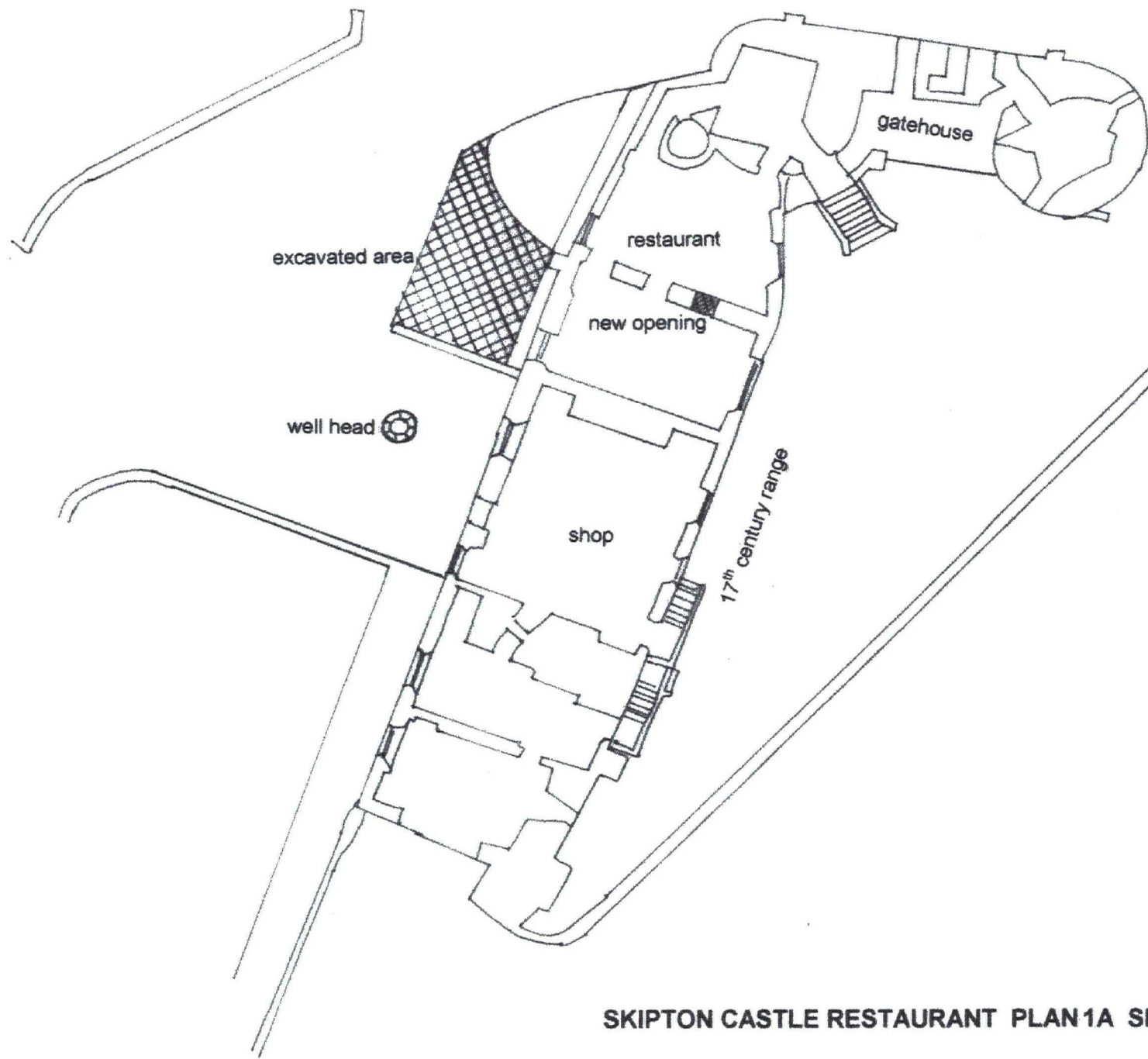
The turf was removed revealing a very dark brown loam topsoil over the entire area. This was a maximum of 12 cm thick, shallower to the north and south. Beneath it was compacted very dark brown clayey loam with angular limestone fragments of varying size, some large and apparently roughly dressed. To the south, near to the building, there was some mixing with greyish brown loamy clay where a drain had been inserted parallel to the building.

Beneath the clayey loam over the northern half of the area was a spread of cobbles set in pale orangey brown loamy clay with pea-grit (Plan 2, Plates 1-4). The cobbles were variable in nature, some parts being closely and regularly spaced, and other areas less even with a variety of sizes. There were two areas where the cobbles were largely absent (Plates 2, 3). These were two strips of brown clayey loam running southwest to northeast across the centre of the cobbled area, each approximately 50cm wide. They were irregular in shape, and it was impossible to determine without further excavation whether they were later features cut through the cobbles, part of the original layout or merely where the cobbles have been subsequently removed through wear or disturbance.

To the northeast of the area, the cobbles butted up to a line of very large, water-worn stones of roughly rectangular shape, aligned east-northeast (Plate 1). North of this line the stones were more scattered and had the appearance of tumble rather than laid cobbles. The large stones may represent cobble wall foundations and the scattered stones tumble from such a wall.

To the west, the cobbles appeared to cease just before the retaining wall separating this area from that lowered previously (Plate 4). This may reflect the disturbance caused by the building of the wall, but as cobbles were not encountered immediately to the west of the wall, it seems that the gap is real. Cobbles were revealed immediately around and to the east of the well head uncovered in 1995.

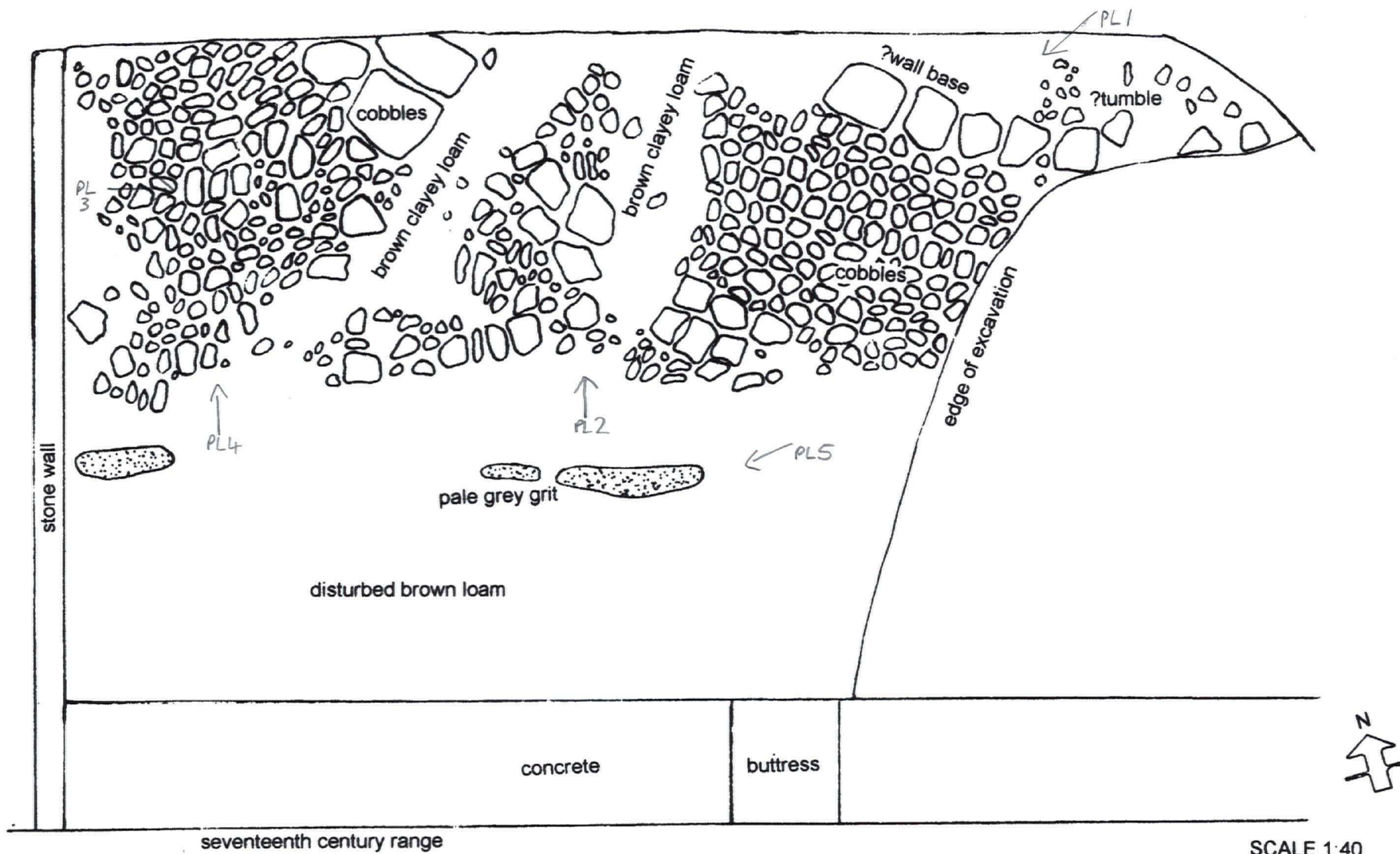
To the south of the cobbled area the ground was disturbed and the cobbles were replaced by brown loam. The surface of the cobbles was sloping down to the south towards the building, and it is possible that they continued below the level required in the current works, but it seems more likely that they did in fact come to an end. Approximately 60cm south of the southern edge of the cobbles was an intermittent layer, up to 20cm wide, of pale grey grit emerging through the brown loam (Plates 3, 5), possibly representing the top of a feature running east-west below the level of the current excavations.



SCALE 1:250

SKIPTON CASTLE RESTAURANT PLAN 1A SITE

399072 451949
520005
COORDS



SKIPTON CASTLE RESTAURANT PLAN 2 SITE

Inside the building which was being converted from offices to a cafeteria, an internal north-south wall, which already had two openings in it, had a third opening made through it, south of the existing ones (Plan 3). A blocked up fireplace stood between the new opening and the southernmost of the existing openings. The wall, 73cm thick, was plastered and papered, with a dado rail at a height of 71-76cm above the floor (Plate 6). Beneath the plaster was a rough masonry wall consisting of a mixture of stones, mainly sandstone, with occasional brick and timber fragments. The stones were of very variable size but were generally larger on the outer faces with smaller pieces in the core. Some of the stones were dressed, and where this was so the dressed faces generally fronted the wall, but not all the fronting stones were shaped. The form of several stones showed that they were re-used from other contexts, and outstanding among these were part of a stone mullion from a substantial window (Plates 7, 8), and part of a date stone with the numbers 1 and 6 in a panel on it (Plates 6, 9, 10). The backing timber of the dado rail, which was within the wall structure (Plate 6), was also re-used, having formerly been a window frame or similar.

INTERPRETATION

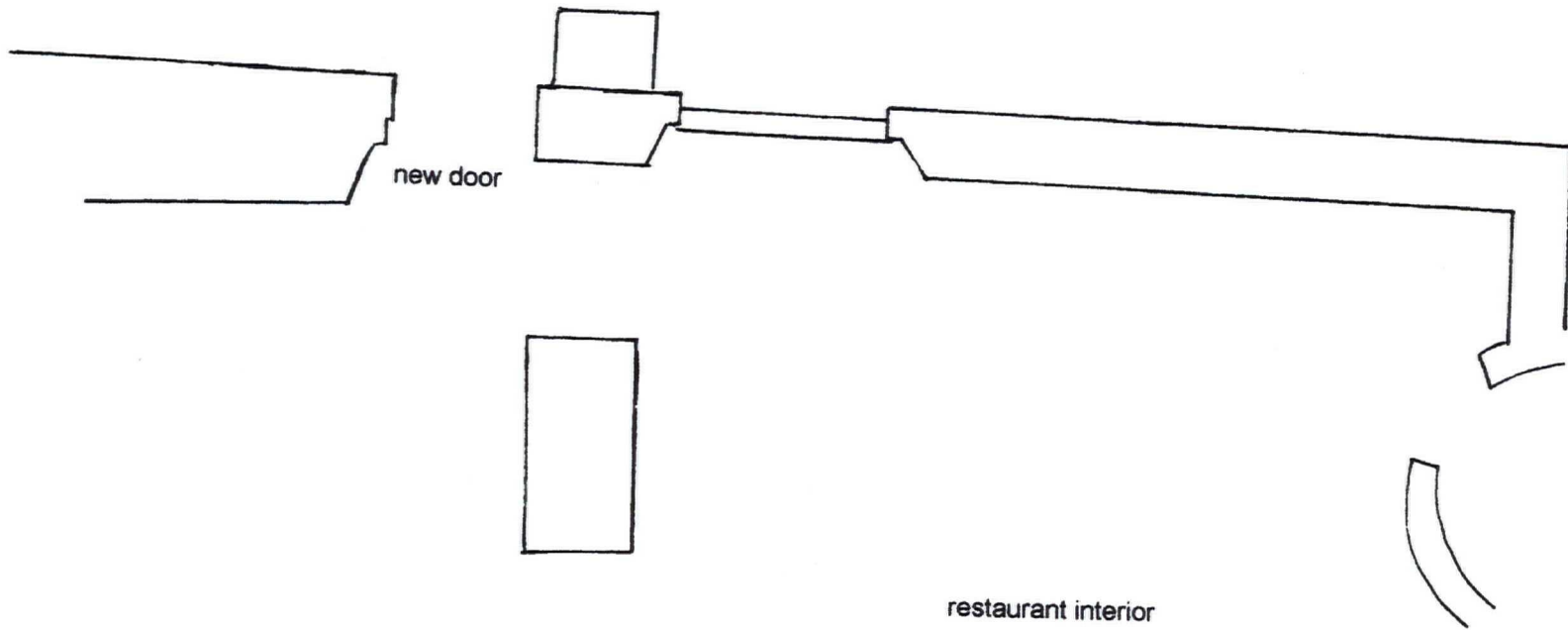
The cobbled area to the north of the seventeenth century range could well be contemporary with the buildings. The few pottery sherds were all post medieval, consisting of slip ware and other post medieval and modern types from seventeenth to nineteenth century. The thick topsoil was probably imported and spread over the area to form a garden in a single operation, and may well have been laid directly onto the cobbles. The absence of any earlier pottery even from within the cracks between the cobbles suggests that they may not be medieval, although this cannot be ruled out without further excavation. Similarly, the gaps in the cobbles cannot be firmly interpreted without excavation, though removal from wear or disturbance seems the most likely explanation. The suggestion of a feature to the south of the cobbles could be interpreted as a wall line, parallel with the outer wall of the castle. This could have been from an earlier building against the outer wall, predating the seventeenth century structure.

The cobbles to the west around the well head may form part of the same feature as those encountered in 1998. This would indicate a large cobbled area which must then have been subject to extensive disturbance. Alternatively, the patches of cobbles may never have been contiguous and may represent a more informal response to ground conditions.

The internal wall within the range could be original. Its composition, of roughly shaped, re-used and unshaped stones, is rougher than that of the external walls, but this could be explained by the fact that it was probably always meant to be plastered. The date stone is tantalising. It was first assumed to be the first part of the date, and the style of the lettering is consistent with the seventeenth century. However, when it was removed from the wall, a piece of moulding to the left of the date panel was visible (Plate 10). This is similar to what would be expected at the top of the right hand side of the door jamb, which would make the numbers in the panel relate to the second part of the year recorded. 1616 or 1716 could then be equally likely. It is also impossible to trace the original use of the stone, which may not have come from the castle at all.

The stone window mullion piece (Plates 7, 8) could conceivably have originated from the chapel which was not in use as a religious building in the seventeenth century, and whose east window was certainly removed at some point. It is not certain however, as the stone, like the date stone, could have come from elsewhere.

The dado rail is probably later than seventeenth century, and if it was an original part of the wall, would indicate that the wall itself is later. The construction is equivocal. It appears to be part of the original construction of the wall, but this is in itself so irregular that it could have been inserted later. The probability remains that it is part of the original wall, which would imply that this wall is later than the external walls are supposed to be. The seventeenth century date of the range is on stylistic grounds and is not precise. The range is supposed to have been barracks, but whether these were erected as a response to the threat of the Civil War, or as part of the subsequent restoration of the castle, is not known.



restaurant interior

position of new opening



SCALE 1:50

SKIPTON CASTLE RESTAURANT PLAN 3 INTERNAL

CONCLUSIONS

Both the internal and the external works at Skipton Castle in 1998 have produced material of archaeological and historic interest, but have also raised more questions than have been answered. This is perhaps inevitable given the small and limited scale of the interventions which may nevertheless gradually increase the levels of information about the history and development of the castle. It is clear that much remains to be learnt about the archaeology of the castle layout and development, and that archaeological evidence survives below the surface as well as within the standing structures.

Alison Clarke
January 1999

PLATE 1
COBBLE SPREAD
WITH WALL
FOUNDATIONS
IN FOREGROUND



PLATE 2 COBBLE SPREAD



PLATE 3 COBBLE SPREAD WITH GREY GRIT TO RIGHT



PLATE 4 COBBLE SPREAD, NORTH-WEST CORNER



PLATE 5 GREY GRIT TO SOUTH OF COBBLE SPREAD



PLATE 6 NEW OPENING FROM EAST WITH DADO RAIL AND DATE STONE

PLATE 7
PART OF
STONE MULLION



PLATE 8
PART OF
STONE MULLION



PLATE 9 DATE STONE SET INTO WALL



PLATE 10 DATE STONE WITH MOULDING TO LEFT