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**THE CROWN HOTEL, KNARESBOROUGH.**

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**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF.  
OSA REPORT No: OSA02WB02.**

**FEBRUARY 2002.**



**OSA**

**ON SITE ARCHÆOLOGY**

25A Milton Street • York • North Yorkshire • YO10 3EP  
 telephone • 01904 411673 • fax • 01904 414522 • mobile • 07767 385766  
 e-mail • mail@onsitearchaeology.co.uk

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**Report Summary.**

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**REPORT NO:** OSA02WB02. N4E 713.  
NYS 8496

**SITE NAME:** Crown Hotel, High Street, Knaresborough.

**COUNTY:** North Yorkshire.

**PARISH:** Knaresborough.

**NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE:** SE 3490 5716.

**ON BEHALF OF:** Cliff Walsingham & Co  
Brandon House  
King Street  
Knutsford  
Cheshire

**telephone** 01565 757500

**FIELDWORK:** Graham Bruce.

**TIMING:** Fieldwork  
9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2002  
Post excavation & report preparation  
February 2002

**ENQUIRIES TO:** Nick Pearson  
On Site Archaeology  
25A Milton Street  
York  
YO10 3EP

*tel* (01904) 411673  
*fax* (01904) 414522  
*mobile* (07767) 385766  
*e-mail* mail@onsitearchaeology.co.uk

**PERIODS REPRESENTED:** Medieval

**MUSEUM ACCESSION NO:** HARGM: 11080

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## 1.0 Abstract

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*An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken, by On-Site Archaeology on behalf of Cliff Walsingham & Co, during the excavation of narrow foundation and service trenches required for the construction of an extension to the rear of The Crown Hotel, High Street, Knaresborough. This was to fulfil a condition attached to planning permission for the development. Although parts of the site had suffered significant truncation by modern services, the trenches encountered a series of medieval features, directly below modern make-up for an existing concrete surface, cut into natural.*

*The earliest features were apparently structural, consisting of postholes, a post trench and a beam slot. A single sherd of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was retrieved from the post trench. A number of pits, containing a larger assemblage of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery, had then been cut into this earliest phase of activity. No medieval stratigraphy was present, suggesting that the site had been cleared to the surface of the natural during the construction of the most recent yard surfaces. This clearance may have also removed any traces of later medieval activity. Medieval features were seen to continue beyond the edges of the excavated trenches, indicating that further archaeological remains lay preserved in-situ within the undisturbed parts of the site.*



Figure 1. Site Location (NGR SE 3490 5716)  
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## 2.0 Site Location, Geology, Topography and Land Use.

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The site considered by this report lies to the rear of The Crown Hotel Public House, located at the junction of High Street and Finkle Street, Knaresborough, centred at National Grid Reference SE 3490 5716 (Figure 1). The area of the new extension has most recently consisted of part of a yard, opening onto Finkle Street, and a brick garage in the western corner of the property. Both are surfaced with concrete.

The town of Knaresborough lies in a loop of the River Nidd, on its east and north banks, with the High Street running through the town aligned approximately southeast to northwest. The town and site lie upon Lower Magnesian Limestone, (Cooper, 1993, 34).

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## 3.0 Archaeological Background.

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This is drawn principally from Jennings, (1970).

### 3.1 *Prehistoric.*

Occasional flint and stone artefacts have been recovered in the town of Knaresborough and the surrounding area, although these have tended to be scattered finds rather than significant concentrations indicative of permanent occupation and settlement.

### 3.2 *Romano-British.*

Within the town finds of this date have also been fairly limited, but include a 2<sup>nd</sup> century vase, found to the northwest of the current site, at Tentergate Drive.

### 3.3 *Anglo-Saxon to Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1540).*

This is clearly the main period of activity likely to be represented on the site. Knaresborough was recorded as Chenarsburgh in the Domesday Book; the first part of the place name is presumably a personal name, whilst the second element, "burh" generally refers to a fortification or earthwork. Whilst no physical evidence for an Anglo-Saxon defended area has been found, the naturally defensible site of the later castle may suggest that such occupation existed in this area. The Manor of Knaresborough had been held by King Edward the Confessor prior to the Norman Conquest, and following the invasion, northern rebellion of 1069 and subsequent devastation had passed into the hands of King William by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. This continuation of royal interest provides a foretaste of the later significance of the town.

The first documentary reference to the castle comes from 1129-30, with expenditure on "the kings works". The related settlement, serving the castle, had achieved borough status by 1169, and it is within this area that the current development site lies. By the early 14<sup>th</sup> century 86 burgesses are known, occupying the area concentrated around the Market Place, and running along the High Street to the northeast. Both sides of Finkle Street are also known to have been occupied. The general form of medieval urban development expected on the site, would comprise buildings on the street frontages with either open yards, or smaller scale out buildings

buildings to the rear. The basic urban topography of this part of the medieval town has been maintained up to the present day.

The location of the site, at the corner of two known medieval streets, is therefore very likely to have been intensively occupied during much of the medieval and later periods. Any archaeological remains on the site would be expected to reflect this intensity of activity.

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#### 4.0 Methodology.

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Following breaking of the concrete surface along the lines of the required trenches (Figure 2) the overburden was removed by a JCB down to the level of the first visible archaeological horizon. The exposed surfaces were then cleaned by hand in order to detect any archaeological features revealed through textural or colour changes in the deposits. Once this had been completed, archaeological features were either totally excavated within the confines of the trench, or were sectioned, where their complete removal was not required for foundations or services.

Standard *On-Site Archaeology* techniques were followed throughout the excavation. This involved the completion of a context sheet for each deposit or cut encountered, along with plans and/or sections drawn to scale. Depths were recorded relative to the existing ground surface, which was approximately level with the pavement height at the point that the yard joined Finkle Street. A photographic record of the deposits and features was also maintained.

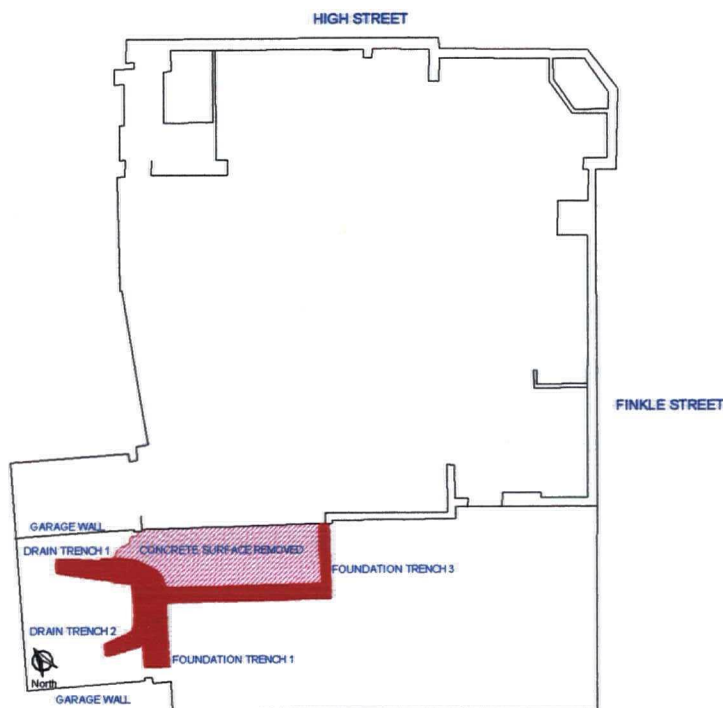


Figure 2. Layout of site showing trenches. Not to scale.

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## 5.0 Results

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All areas investigated were sealed by approximately 0.10m to 0.15m thick concrete, laid over 0.15m to 0.25m of loose, rubble make-up. Archaeological features and modern services were cut directly into the firm, yellow magnesium limestone bedrock.

The majority of non-modern archaeological features were located towards the northwest end of the site, within the area most recently occupied by a single storey brick building. This was the only area in which intercutting archaeological features were present. On this basis and the character of the features, they have been broadly divided into two groups.

The stratigraphically earlier group comprised apparently structural features, from which very little dating evidence was retrieved. The most northwesterly feature [004], encountered within Drainage Trench 1, was a steep sided, post trench, with a straight northwest side and curved southeast side (this curved edge is visible on Plate 3). This was a maximum of 0.55m wide, at its northeast end, narrowing to 0.35m at the southwest. The base was generally flat, at a depth of 0.45m, but at the southwest end, adjacent to the edge of the trench, was a circular hollow, 0.30m in diameter and a maximum of 0.08m deep. This hollow appears to have formed a rock cut setting for a post. There was no clear post-pipe or packing within the fill (003), a mid reddish brown sandy silt, containing moderate small fragments of limestone, together with occasional pebbles and flecks of charcoal. A single sherd of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was also recovered. The northeast side of this trench had been cut by a later pit (see [002] below and Figure 4).

To the southeast of this post trench was a narrower, linear, feature, which shared a similar alignment. This was found within both Drainage Trench 1, as [008] and [011] in Drainage Trench 2 (Plate 1), and therefore ran for a total length of 3.50m. This was a maximum width of 0.25m, with steep, straight, sides onto a flat base at a maximum depth of 0.20m. The fill (007 and 010) was mid reddish brown, slightly sandy, clay silt, containing moderate small fragments of limestone and occasional flecks of charcoal, but unfortunately no datable artefacts. The regular sides and flat base suggest that this feature originally held a timber beam, which has been carefully removed. In Drainage Trench 1 much of this feature had been cut away by a later pit (see [006] below and Plate 3).

Further structural features in the form of two post holes, apparently belonging to this earlier phase of activity, were encountered within Foundation Trench 1, to the southeast of the beam slot (Plate 2). The larger of these [013] was rectangular, 0.38m x 0.26m, with moderately sloping sides to a flat base at a depth of 0.10m. In the west corner was a circular hollow, 0.15m in diameter and a maximum of 0.15m deep. This hollow appears to have formed a rock cut setting for a post. The single fill (012) of mid reddish brown clay silt, with moderate pebbles and small fragments of limestone, again contained no datable finds. The larger rectangular part of the feature may have originally been deeper and held packing material, but has been truncated by modern reduction of the ground levels. The second post hole [015] was located immediately to the northeast of the first. This was a smaller oval, 0.20m in diameter



and 0.20m deep, again with a mid reddish brown, clay silt fill (014) containing pebbles and small fragments of limestone but no finds.

The second group of features were, where any stratigraphic relationships existed, later than those already described, and, rather than being of structural nature, all appeared to be pits. As has already been noted, the post trench [004], excavated in Drainage Trench 1, was cut by a later pit [002] (Figures 3 & 4). Only one edge, the southwestern, lay within the excavated area. This edge was straight, possibly indicating an originally rectangular shape in plan, with a moderately sloped side down to a flat base at a depth of 0.30m. The single fill (001) was a mid reddish brown, sandy silt, containing moderate pebbles and fragments of limestone, together with occasional cobbles and flecks of charcoal. A small number of sherds of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery were also retrieved.

To the southeast of this, cutting through beam slot [008], was a second pit [006] (Figure 4, Plate 3). This was oval in shape, 1.70m long and a maximum of 0.70m wide. The sides were vertical, but the base was not reached as excavation was stopped at a total depth of 1.20m below the modern ground surface. The base of the pit and its earliest fills were therefore preserved *in situ* below the newly constructed drain. Approximately 0.80m depth of the fill was excavated, this was a mid reddish brown clay silt (005) containing moderately occurring cobbles and pebbles, occasional fragments of limestone and charcoal flecks, together with sherds of pottery dating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Occasional fragments of oyster shell and animal bone were observed, but these were in a very poor state of preservation and were not collected.

To the southeast of [006] an apparently similar pit [017] was encountered in Foundation Trench 2 (Plate 4). This also had vertical sides, cutting into the natural limestone, and was a maximum of 1.40m in length. The southwest side continued beyond the edge of the trench, while the construction of a modern manhole had removed the northeast side, leaving a minimum original width of 0.60m. Once again this pit continued beyond the basal limit of excavation, but it was seen to be at least 1.10m deep. The fill (016) was again a mid reddish brown, clay silt, containing moderate pebbles, charcoal flecks and fragments of limestone, occasional cobbles and fragmentary animal bone and an assemblage of late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. A fragmentary copper alloy object was also apparently retrieved from this fill. This is in an extremely stable condition and appears to be a furniture drawer handle, probably of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century date. It is therefore likely to have been included by accident through contamination from the adjacent modern manhole. To the northeast of the man hole a small area of similar mid reddish brown clay silt (009), containing late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was observed, this was initially thought to represent the remains of another heavily truncated pit. However, this deposit proved to be part of the backfill for the construction of a modern drain, related to the manhole. It is possible that this backfill was originally part of pit fill (016), which was dug out for the construction of the manhole and redeposited within the contemporary drain trench.

The final, non-modern, archaeological feature recorded on the site, was encountered in the northwest side of Foundation Trench 3. This was only visible in the section and was clearly

heavily disturbed by modern services, but appears to be the fill (018) of another pit, which was seen to be a maximum of 0.60m deep. The deposit was once again a mid reddish brown, clay silt, with limestone, pebbles, charcoal and animal bone inclusions, but unfortunately no datable material was present in the exposed section.

All remaining features were of recent date, being services relating to the standing pub building.

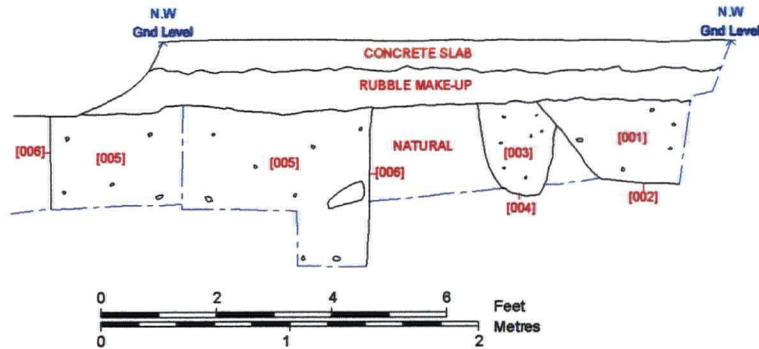


Figure 3. North-east facing section of drain trench 1. Scale 1:40.

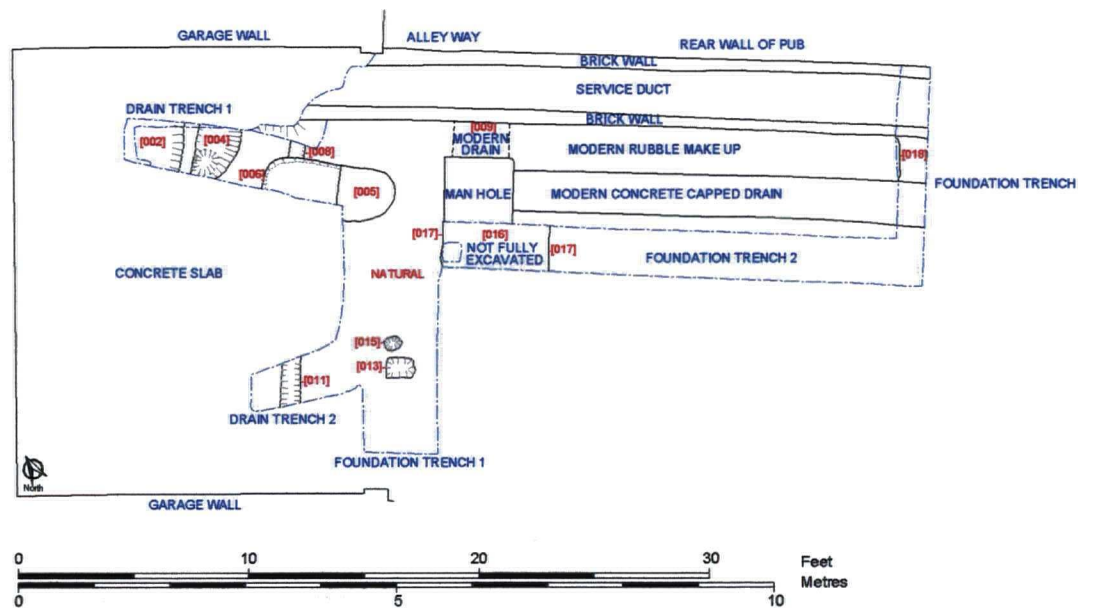


Figure 4. Post excavation plan. Scale 1:100.