
5 DISTRIBUTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

This section summarises the general archaeological landscape within historic Musselburgh, and Fisherrow (*illus 5*). The results have been tabulated in order to give an indication for each area of the nature and date of the archaeological deposits located during the watching brief.

There were three main types of archaeological deposit located in the course of the watching brief along the main streets of the burgh. The first is termed here ‘occupation deposit’ and generally consisted of relatively thin dark brown, sandy sediment containing small fragments of shell, coal, charcoal and pottery, usually in low concentrations. This type of deposit was mainly confined to the main thoroughfares of the burgh and probably formed during continuous use of these streets. It probably reflects an almost open-ended list of activities that may have contributed to its makeup. Work elsewhere has suggested that sediment deposition within medieval burghs is likely to derive partially from the decay and mixing of midden deposits and imported building materials such as timber and turf. Where these deposits exist in depth their presence probably reflects intensive activity within the areas in which they are found (*Carter 2001*). Many of the occupation deposits located in the streets of Musselburgh are not deep, suggesting that the intensive use of timber and turf constructions was focused away from the street frontage, with the added possibility that the ‘occupation deposits’ within the current roadways have been truncated.

The term ‘midden-type’ is used here to refer to the second type of deposit, which was very rich in shells, many complete, and which also contained pottery. This material often filled shallow cuts or appeared in discrete hollows or lenses. The sediment appeared largely unmixed and may represent deliberately deposited material.

In the back-street areas of the core settlement (Mansfield Avenue, Kilwinning Place) very dark soils containing occasional pottery fragments were frequently encountered and have been termed ‘cultivation soils’. The depth of these deposits was approximately half a metre, and appeared to show a single soil horizon overlying natural sediments. These deposits are likely to have formed at the interface between the backlands of the burgh and the surrounding agricultural fields.

Other cut features filled with homogenous sediments may have been boundaries or drainage features, and are summarised in the relevant section below.

Further out from the burgh core, along the fringes of Musselburgh, Fisherrow and in Inveresk, the only archaeological remains located were occasional

stone-built box culverts. Deep plough-soils were the only deposits encountered along Carberry Road to the south of Inveresk.

5.1 *Musselburgh: High Street, Millhill, Kerr’s Wynd, Mansfield Avenue, Kilwinning Place, Newbigging*

Open-cut trenching was monitored on the High Street between the mercat cross and East Port, and house-to-main services were recorded along the length of the street. As mentioned above, archaeological monitoring of the project did not commence until substantial sections of open-cut trench on the High Street had already been dug and backfilled.

The results of monitoring in this area are presented in *Table 1* below. The only evidence for medieval activity was located on the High Street. In this area the early archaeological horizons were generally sealed beneath redeposited beach gravels, possibly road surfaces, containing 18th- and 19th-century finds. Cut features were identified in several trenches along the High Street (*illus 5*: T003/018, T010/027, T128/008). Although their original function is unknown, one of these features (T010/027) was 0.5m deep and contained midden-type material and medieval pottery. These features seem unusual for a roadway, and may reflect earlier activity in these areas or changes in the street layout. Similarly, a north–south-aligned mortar-bonded wall footing located in one trench on the High Street (*illus 5*: T128/006) does not correspond to any known mapped boundary and could reflect alterations to the street frontage.

A series of five east–west-aligned cuts 2m wide and approximately 1m deep crossed Mansfield Avenue between its north and south ends and produced post-medieval pottery. These features were filled with the same cultivation soil horizon that was prevalent throughout this area. The east–west-aligned mortar-bonded wall footing located on Mansfield Avenue (*illus 5*: T272/004) appears to correspond to the rear boundary of one of the burgage plots shown on the OS first edition (*illus 3*).

5.2 *Fisherrow: North High Street, Market Street, Bridge Street*

Open-cut trenching in this area exposed post-medieval occupation horizons on North High Street, Bridge Street, Eskside West and Market Street (*Table 2*). In general, the archaeological deposits consisted

Table 1 Distribution of archaeological deposits: Musselburgh

	Midden-type			Occupation deposits	Cut features		Cultivation soil	Wall footings	Culverts
High Street	M	PM	ND	PM	M	ND		ND	
Millhill	ND								ND
Kerr's Wynd				ND					ND
Mansfield Av					PM		PM	PM	
Kilwinning Place							PM		
Newbigging				ND	ND				

M Medieval **PM** Post-medieval **ND** No date

Table 2 Distribution of archaeological deposits: Fisherrow

	Midden-type			Occupation deposits	Cut features		Cultivation soil	Wall footings	Culverts	
North High St				PM	PM			ND	PM	ND
Downie Place							ND			
Beach Lane								ND		
Market Street				ND						
Bridge Street	PM						PM			ND
Eskside West	PM									

M Medieval **PM** Post-medieval **ND** No date

of a single horizon stratified between the natural sands and gravels and modern road material, and included intermittent occupation deposits, patches of midden-type material and cut features crossing the trench. The cut features on North High Street were filled with deposits similar to the homogenous deposits that underlay the modern road surface and their bases were rarely reached within the service trenches. The presence of these features along a roadway is unusual. These may be later features backfilled with redeposited occupation deposits, or may represent activity pre-dating organised settlement on the west side of the Esk.

On Bridge Street, which cuts across the former backlands of North High Street, in situ midden

deposits and cultivation soils were more common than re-worked occupation deposits. This appears to fit well with this area's status as backlands prior to the 19th century.

Small trenches dug over the existing water main on Market Street indicated the presence of undated occupation deposits in areas where settlement is depicted on the 17th-century maps. Neither the north-south-aligned mortar-bonded wall footing located on North High Street (*illus 5*: T848/001) nor one located on Beach Lane could be related to mapped structures or boundaries.

In contrast to the High Street in Musselburgh, dated evidence for settlement in Fisherrow seems to be exclusively post-medieval and later.