
9 CONCLUSIONS

The methodology of the watching brief allowed an analysis of a wide range of deposits and structures throughout the town, providing a fairly comprehensive picture. In fact, there were very few areas within the defined core where evidence for medieval activity of some description was not recovered.

However, the limitations of this are immediately apparent in the fact that it is difficult to relate different deposits from separate trenches around the town to create a completely coherent picture.

Of the range of deposits identified, what is most interesting is probably the level of distribution of medieval material, which confirms the previously supposed limits of the medieval core. Up until now, the limits of the medieval town had been based on examination of map morphology and the knowledge that the town only expanded from this in the 19th and 20th centuries. We now have a body of evidence, showing exactly where the medieval deposits are present and where they are not. For example, this confirms previous theories about the level of occupation on Westgate during the medieval period and later, which appears to have been substantially less heavily occupied and used than the High Street. This contrasts with East Road, where extensive deposits appear, possibly from early on in the town's history.

Similarly, it could be suggested that the presence of a relatively continuous and maintained surface along the length of the High Street would make it a more likely candidate for the original focus within the burgh, as compared to Quality Street (previously known as Market Place/Crossgate). Admittedly, there was less opportunity to see the evidence from Quality Street, but where open trenching was present, no such surface or structure was seen.

There are also advantages and disadvantages to the location of the trenches. The street pattern of North Berwick has remained relatively consistent

over the centuries, and the trenches were all located along these routes. This allowed a more uniform comparison of the deposits from different trenches, as they all related to the build-up of material along the streets. The downside of this was that as there were no trenches in the back gardens or houses, or within house plots, nothing relating to strictly domestic activity was identified. The recent excavations at 33 Forth Street indicate that evidence of individual burghage plots and related buildings may survive, but this was simply not seen within the limits of the watching brief.

The other main achievement of the work is the identification of certainly one, and possibly two, sections of wall which may be the elusive 'town wall'. If this is the case then certainly it would imply that North Berwick never embarked on building any properly defensive town walls, as it was instructed to do in the early 16th century.

The implications for future work within both North Berwick and other small burghs which have not been subject to large-scale redevelopment are substantial. In the case of North Berwick, there is now a fairly complete body of evidence with detailed stratigraphic sequences. This can be used along with the two burgh survey works and Hall & Bowler's update from 1997 to inform both planning decisions within the burgh and methodologies for future work. The implication for other towns is that a well planned and executed watching brief, run in close conjunction with the engineering or other appropriate contractors can produce an extensive amount of evidence about towns that would otherwise have little opportunity for development within a medieval (or earlier) core. Even the smallest holes produced evidence and the stratigraphy of deposits seen was often in the corner of a trench excavated through largely disturbed deposits. When this kind of fragmentary evidence is combined what is produced is something more than its constituent parts.