
6 CONCLUSION

Previous excavations in Edinburgh further upslope and closer to the High Street frontage have revealed that a number of sites between the High Street and the Cowgate had been scarped by later building works (eg Fishmarket Close, [Stronach 2000](#); St Mary's Street, [Holmes 1980](#)), and often produce only 17th-century and later finds. Preservation of organic materials is also relatively rare in Edinburgh. This has led to the assumption that the potential for the survival of medieval deposits is poorer in Edinburgh than in other towns. However, more recent excavations at Blackfriars Street ([Will & Radley 2005](#)), 144–166 Cowgate ([Dalland 2004](#); [forthcoming](#)) and the present excavations have concentrated on areas further downslope and uncovered extensive middens similar to those recorded in other Scottish burghs such as Perth, St Andrews and Aberdeen.

No evidence for a stream was found at the base of the slope and clay deposits, initially taken to be natural in origin, had washed downslope from the High Street. These contained environmental evidence for the development of the medieval town. Similar apparently archaeologically sterile

clay deposits have been observed on other excavations along the slope from the High Street to the Cowgate. Given the glacial origins of these slopes, such deposits are unlikely to represent undisturbed natural deposits (Stephen Lancaster, pers comm). The results of the St Patrick's Church excavations should encourage closer examination of such deposits. Here flooding is likely to have removed prehistoric surfaces but elsewhere, as recently seen in the Grassmarket, these have survived along with cut features (Simon Stronach, pers comm).

The use of extensive environmental and finds sampling techniques has produced a broad picture of occupation in this part of Edinburgh during the later medieval period. Although there were no surviving structures, the finds from the ditch show how a collection of finds and ecofacts can produce a rich portrait when taken as a whole. The lack of medieval deposits on the top of the High Street ridge may have previously caused Edinburgh to be written off in terms of medieval research. However, the potential of the Cowgate and deposits at the base of the slope are just beginning to be tapped.