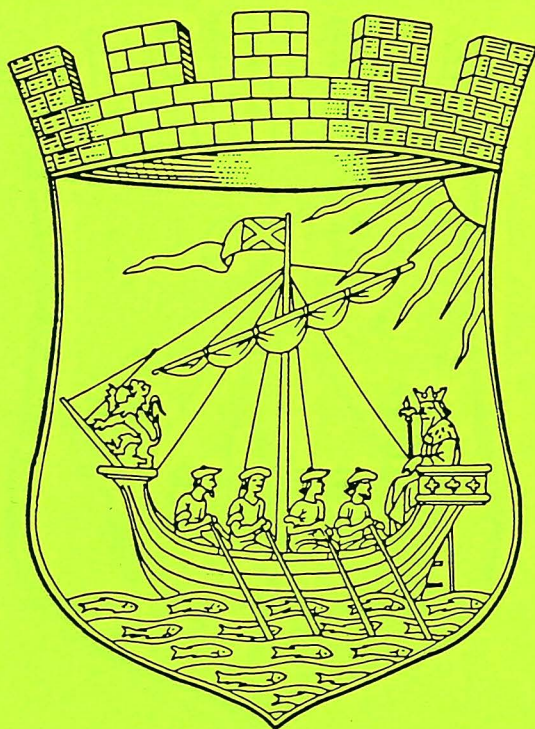


Historic

NORTH BERWICK

the archaeological implications
of development



Anne Turner Simpson
Sylvia Stevenson

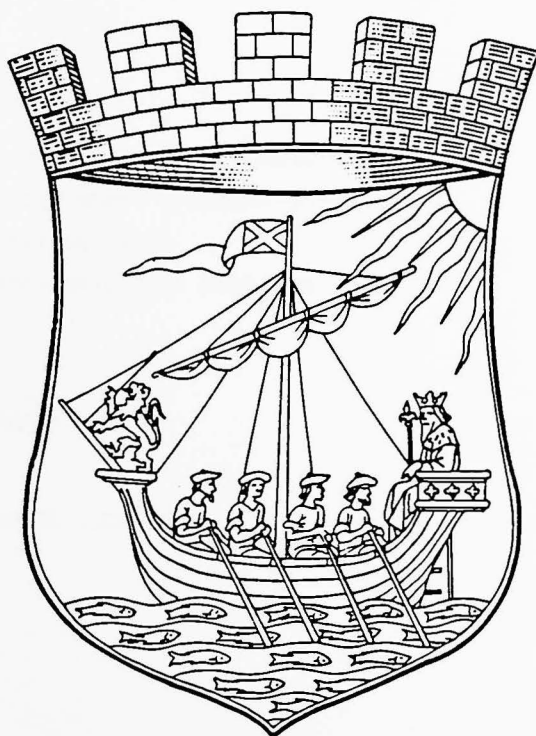
Scottish Burgh Survey
1981

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1981

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PREFACE

This report of the history and archaeology of the former burgh of North Berwick is one of a series of such reports on the historic towns of Scotland. The reports have been commissioned by the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Scottish Development Department with a view to providing the necessary background information upon which to base a policy for urban research in the future. They are also aimed at providing local authority planning departments with the historical and archaeological information necessary to enable them to assess the archaeological implications of any planning applications.

Each report contains an historical report compiled by Anne Turner Simpson with an archaeological report and a series of illustrative plans compiled by Sylvia Stevenson and drawn by Derek Shaw. The reports attempt to identify those areas within the burghs which were developed at various periods of their history up to approximately 1800, and to locate within those areas sites which are of particular historical importance. Areas of 19th century growth and modern suburbs have not been examined.

The survey team would like to acknowledge the help and support of East Lothian Region. Mr. D.G.B. Duncan, Director of Physical Planning for East Lothian District Council and members of his staff, specifically, Mr. J. Smith and Mr. McLean; the staff of the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey, Edinburgh; and the Historic Buildings Branch of the Scottish Development Department; Mr. B. Gall, District Librarian, East Lothian District Council and members of his staff, specifically, Miss C. Johnston. The survey team would also like to thank Professor Leslie Alcock and Mr. Eric Talbot who supervised the project at Glasgow University.

Note:- The views expressed herein are those of the survey team, freely given, and do not necessarily represent official policy.

Cover:- The Coat of Arms of the burgh of North Berwick as depicted in Bute, MacPhail and Lonsdale, 1897, 298.

History

'North Berwick is a small and decayed burgh, with little or nor Trade, situated on the Firth of Forth. It appears to have been long stationary, and there seems no reason to anticipate any alteration of its character in this respect' (Reports Upon the Boundaries: Scotland, 1832).

INTRODUCTION

Site: North Berwick is among a triad of royal burghs in East Lothian. It is a seaport located nearly twelve miles away from Dunbar, eleven miles from Haddington and twice that distance from the capital, Edinburgh. In the neighbourhood there is at least one burn, the Mill Burn, which empties into the sea.

Place-Name: Berwick, according to W.F.H. Nicolaisen is a common place-name but is unusual as the name of a place which became a town. It means 'barley farm' and in the Domesday Book it is used as a common noun to denote small settlements dependent on a large one (Nicolaisen, *et al.*, 1970, 51). 'North' was incorporated to distinguish it from Berwick-upon-Tweed, medieval Scotland's leading seaport.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burgh Status: North Berwick was a baronial burgh latterly belonging to the Douglas family in the fourteenth century. Although it is traditionally believed that it became a royal burgh after a 1391 visit to the town by Robert III, this is not so. The first mention of North Berwick as a royal burgh does not occur until the reign of James I (1406-1437) when its bailies accounted in the Exchequer for its fermes (Pryde, 1965, 23). It had feu-ferme tenure by 1460, attended Parliament from 1479 and appears on the stent rolls in 1535 (Pryde, 1965, 24).

Medieval: The earliest records available relating to North Berwick are in connection with the Earls of Fife who gained the lands and manor of North Berwick in the reign of David I (1124-1153). Duncan I Earl of Fife (1136-1154) is believed to have founded a nunnery there and the settlement associated with the nunnery was also important as the ferry terminal for pilgrims travelling to St. Andrews via the port of Earlsferry in Fife (Cowan and Easson, 1976, 147; McWilliam, 1978, 364). However, it can not now be ascertained whether the town owes its origin to the nunnery, the ferry, or the sea.

Trade played a major role in the development of the medieval town. McWilliam noted that its status as the mercantile centre of an agricultural area was confirmed when it was made a royal burgh (1978,364). However, Robert II had recognised North Berwick's importance as a commercial centre when he confirmed the right of the first Earl of Douglas to have a port, and erect both a custom-house and tron in the burgh (Williamson, 1908, 4). After the fall of Berwick in 1333, North Berwick was able to share, along with Dunbar, Haddington and Edinburgh in that great burgh's former trade (Nicholson, 1974, 265). Over the year 1400-1401, North Berwick exported £168 total worth of wool, hides and fleece, while Dunbar only shipped £65 worth of goods and Haddington £84. Edinburgh at that period was the leading port in the kingdom with a total export tab of £1,168 (Nicholson, 1974, 612).

Early Modern: The English under Somerset in the 1540's burned the town and the records including royal charters. James VI, it is alleged, 'made this loss good' by issuing a charter of confirmation in 1568 (Phillimore, 1913, 15). Nevertheless, few records do survive, and the picture of the early modern burgh is, at best, a patchy one.

North Berwick participated in the first known national stent for the burghs organised by the Convention of Royal Burghs in 1535, and was in that year taxed at a rate of £11 5s, while Dunbar paid £32 10s and Edinburgh a staggering £833 6s 8d. (RCRB, i, 515, 514). To help meet the cost of the marriage of Mary, Queen of Scots to the Dauphin in 1558, Dunbar paid £67 10s, while North Berwick paid only half that amount (RCRB, i, 526). At the end of the century, the picture was no different with Dunbar stented at a rate of 10s, and North Berwick lagging behind at 4s (RCRB, ii, 10).

The Convention was not the only body which authorised stents for the royal burghs. During the Civil Wars of the 1640s, Parliament began a series of stents to help support their army. In 1645, North Berwick was supposed to supply four soldiers monthly and pay £36 compared with Dunbar's similar stent of twelve men and £108 (APS, VI, 352b). Four years later, North Berwick was protesting to Parliament that her rate of taxation was too high in view of her lowly state. This lowly state was also mirrored in the 1649 stent organised by the Convention in which North Berwick paid 4s in tax, compared with Dunbar at £1 2s (RCRB, iii, 33).

By the end of the seventeenth century the town had fallen on such hard times that it boasted neither market nor fair. However, the burgh did

maintain a common good fund which was used to support such public works as the harbour, tolbooth and streets. Once a leading seaport, in 1692 North Berwick had no ships or boats, except two fishing vessels which 'pay nothing to the town' (RCRB, iv, 652). Efforts to revive the town's market and fairs were made by Parliament in 1695. A notice of a fair - to be held in the town lasting two days duration was posted in November of that year. A horse race was to be run for a saddle worth 40s and an endorsement in the town records notes that George Porteous, burgh officer, proclaimed this event with tuck of drum through the market place of Haddington.

Eighteenth Century: North Berwick's lowly position continued into the eighteenth century. From 1683, the burgh had regularly been stented at a rate of 1s. Despite this, the town council still found it possible to show generosity to distressed merchants and others who had fallen on hard times. In 1721, 6d Scots was paid to a 'distressed woman with five children', while in 1723, 4s Scots was granted to a distressed gentleman with three children. In 1740, 1s went to James and John Hamilton who proved that they had been robbed by Spanish Privateers.

Bishop Pococke, writing of his tour of Scotland in 1760, provides us with one of the first descriptions of North Berwick. It is, however, brief, stating that North Berwick is 'a small, illbuilt town situated on a strand' (Kemp, 1887, 319). The Bishop painted no desolate picture of the trade here, but stated that North Berwick's chief trade was from their distilleries and manufacture of starch. Quantities of grain and malt were also exported (Kemp, 1887, 319).

The exportation of grain appears to have been the only regular trade at the end of the century, a profitable crop grown in its fertile hinterland (Lenman, 1975, 51). A small quantity of kelp was also produced annually (Withrington and Grant, 1975, 526). An observer, writing in 1830, could offer no brighter picture: 'a dull, melancholy looking town with no manufactures' (Richardson, 1907, 10). It is only with the railway and the discovery of North Berwick as a pleasure resort for summer holiday-makers in the mid-nineteenth century, that the burgh rediscovered wealth and prosperity.

BURGH MORPHOLOGY

Street Layout: The principal streets of pre-1800 North Berwick were the High Street which runs parallel to the shore, and Quality Street

running at right angles to its eastern end. At the present day, High Street is noted for its shops, as well as containing that symbol of corporate unity, the town house. A noted local writer observed in 1907, that High Street in some places is 'inconveniently narrow' (Richardson, 1907, 8), while Quality Street on the other hand was conspicuous for its breadth of roadway' (Anon, n.d.,13). Formerly, the street was known as Market Place and Crossgate, but towards the end of the eighteenth-century it took on the appellation Quality Street as 'people of fashion' began to settle there (Williamson, 1908, 2).

An 1830 description of the town notes the presence of several bye-lanes and 'bleak islets only of value as rabbit warrens' (Richardson, 1907, 10). High Street boasted a back lane, now called Forth Street, and Westgate which appears to be a continuation of High Street, was until recent times a separate cluster of houses outwith the burgh boundary (Richardson, 1907, 5). (An enticing reference in the burgh records to a weaver living in the Westgate being made a burgess sadly goes no way in determining the industrial make-up - if any - of the suburb). As early as 1688 the streets of the town had been causeyed, and in 1751, a notice in the town's records relates to the unhappiness of the councillors over the narrowness of the streets and the fact that many were in need of repair.

Market Area: A. Williamson (1908, 2) has identified the intersection of Quality Street and High Street as the main market area of the burgh. The place where the market cross stood is marked by a circle of stones in the roadway at that junction (Richardson, 1907, 9). In 1751, after the streets were repaired, the council voted to have the tron removed as an incumbrance, but the cross survived until at least 1770.

Harbour: Throughout its history, North Berwick's relation to the sea has been of prime importance, but little is known about the history of its harbour. In 1632 North Berwick was allowed to seek voluntary help from other burghs towards the repair of its harbour, and in 1668 the Synod of Lothian made arrangements for the collection of a contribution towards harbour repair from all parishes south of the Forth.

Bishop Pococke left a brief description of the harbour of North Berwick. 'A promontory stretches out,' he wrote 'which seems to have been an island from the north end of which a pier is built that extends to the west with which vessels of 200 tons come at spring tides, but commonly those of 100 tons' (Kemp, 1887, 319). Harbour repair rather dominated the period after Pococke's tour. In December 1784 it was decided to repair part of the quay, which had fallen down, with stone rather than

gravel which had been previously done. Six months later steps were taken to keep the harbour free from sand. Gentlemen farmers of the area who it was said 'are very much benefited by the harbour improvements of this place' were to be approached by a leading citizen of the town to help pay for the repairs'. That citizen was not only charged to report his success from 'time to time', he was also to be allowed a handsome reward 'for his trouble'.

BUILDINGS

Castle: A maze of truths, baked and half-baked, appear to surround the castle of North Berwick. Very few hard facts emerge about the fortress. Local opinion maintains that the site of the castle is marked by a green knoll overlooking the East Links, and that 'this eminence was probably of a wooden palisade type' (Anon, n.d.,34).

Church: Since the founding of the burgh, three parish churches have served North Berwick. Close to the harbour stood the ancient burgh church, dedicated to St.Andrew. In modern times the only part of the church still standing has been the little white-washed south porch, although an excavation conducted by J.S. Richardson revealed the foundation and bases of the old walls (Anon, n.d.,34).

The church at the harbour was in use until the year 1656. Its successor on the south side of High Street was not completed until 1664. That church was apparently rebuilt at the end of the eighteenth century, but now lies in ruins, and its successor in turn was erected in 1882. It serves the burgh today.

Nunnery: About a quarter of a mile to the west of the town stands the ruins of a nunnery dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was formerly endowed with revenue from different sources in Fife, Ayrshire, Berwickshire and the Lothians (Ferrier, 1878, 14). It was founded by Duncan I Earl of Fife (1136-1154), and may have been originally a Benedictine house later claiming to be Cistercian in order to claim the privileges of that order (Cowan, 1947, 147). Ruins of the nunnery survive in the grounds of an old people's home. They consist of a ruined late medieval range running east and west, constructed of rubble with dressing of a yellowish white stone (McWilliam, 1978, 363).

Hospital: Tradition maintains that there was a hospital at North Berwick from the latter half of the twelfth century, but this is not to

be confused with one first mentioned in 1541/2, which passed to the patronage of the Lauders of the Bass at the Reformation (Cowan, 1976, 186; RCAM, 1924, 58).

Town House: There is some debate as to when the town house of North Berwick was constructed, with some local writers maintaining that it was built after the Somerset invasion of 1550 (Phillimore, 1918, 10) and others saying until the seventeenth century (Richardson, 1907, 9). An outside stair leads up to the Council Room and beneath are two shops, the westmost of which was the prison (Richardson, 1907, 9). In 1724, there is record of its being enlarged at its east end and being provided with a bell and belfry (Phillimore, 1918, 24).

Archaeology

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

North Berwick still retains its basic medieval single street plan. The frontages of High Street and Quality Street have, with only a few exceptions, remained unchanged over the last hundred years. Backland repletion has been both more rapid, and more thorough on the north side of High Street and west side of Quality Street, than elsewhere in the town, since the late nineteenth century.

Victorian villa development on the north side of Forth Street, and on the south side of the town, stimulated building on the foot of the High Street back lots to both north and south. In most cases, however, the old property divisions survive. New residential development has been inserted on Forth Street at NT 5531 8532 and NT 5541 8538, and there are proposals for further housing at NT 5532 8536. Development may also take place at some future date at NT 555 852. North Berwick Town Centre Comprehensive Development Area proposals, approved by the Secretary of State in 1974 recommended that Kirk Ports should be widened to by-pass the High Street. This scheme is about to be implemented, and together with the housing development referred to above, constitute the only immediate development affecting the historic centre of North Berwick.

Sites under immediate threat

Demolition is scheduled for 2 to 6 St. Andrews Street (NT 5526 8583) as part of a road widening scheme. This development will also involve cutting through the backland properties attached to 61 and 71 High Street across the corner of the churchyard (NT 553 852), and the demolition of 1 and 3, Quality Street (NT 5544 8527). St. Andrews Church dates only from the mid-seventeenth century, and the majority of marked graves in the affected area appear to date from the nineteenth century. The site is therefore of dubious value archaeologically. However, work at the foot of the backlands may prove useful in determining the presence of an enclosing town wall, and early usage of backland areas.

The backland property previously attached to 50 to 54, High Street, is at present occupied by works buildings. New residential accommodation is planned for this site, facing onto Forth Street (NT 553 853) (see map 2). Although, as has been suggested above, some value can be gained from examining backland deposits, it seems likely that in this case disturbance will have been too great to allow the preservation of early levels.

This particular part of the town has been heavily developed since 1832 (R.B.S. 105). The present works buildings are stepped back from the nineteenth century frontage, and presumably the foundations of these earlier buildings survive beneath pavement level. Little of value seems, therefore, likely to be gained from this site.

Future Investigation

The policies outlined below, are not listed in order of importance, but are intended to provide guide lines for future research as opportunities arise through renovation and re-development (see page 11 for full discussion).

1. To attempt by selective excavation in conjunction with deeper documentary research, to establish the earliest possible date for the initial settlement of the burgh, and to provide evidence of its social and economic development.
2. To determine the presence or absence of town walls and ports through excavation in conjunction with documentary research. To establish, if its existence can be proved, the course of such a wall, the method of construction, and the date of initial building and subsequent abandonment.
3. To determine any variation in street alignment and width prior to the seventeenth century.
4. To establish the physical nature and plan of town buildings, and the commercial and industrial usage of structures other than dwellings prior to the seventeenth century.
5. To identify pre-twelfth century development on the site of the old parish church.
6. To determine the extent and plan of the convent buildings, and establish the sequence of building.
7. In association with thorough documentary research, to establish by excavation the nature and sequence of occupation on the top of the 'motte', the respective dates of initial occupation and subsequent abandonment, and a more detailed survey of the immediate area to establish the presence of any associated earthworks.
8. To confirm the site, plan and chronology of the early hospital.
9. To confirm the site, plan and chronology of the almshouse.
10. To establish a relative chronology for the present harbour works, and to attempt to establish the earliest date of a formal harbour.

Areas of Archaeological Priority

There is a basic lack of material and structural evidence from the historic centre of North Berwick, capable of indicating the areas of the town with the greatest archaeological potential. The sites respectively of the early church, the hospital, the sixteenth-century almshouse, castle and convent, are obvious foci of interest, but little is known of the disposition and nature of buildings earlier than the seventeenth century along the street frontages of High Street and Quality Street. Comprehensive Development area proposals (see page 7 and map 2) are restricted to the High Street backlands, and as already explained do not appear to offer any severe threat to archaeological deposits. Bearing in mind the paucity of evidence, therefore, it is difficult to make judgements on the relative value of one site or area in the town over another. The boundaries marked on the map, were developed by the early nineteenth century (Forrest 1804) before the town became a popular resort, and probably define the area of earliest burgh settlement. Any development in this area is of potential interest in the context of the problems discussed on page 11 ff. and places the site in question, above the surrounding area in terms of immediate priority.

Recommendations

Some building replacement has taken place in the historic centre of North Berwick. Some semi-derelict areas remaining within the conservation area have been scheduled for redevelopment, the importance of these is discussed on page 7. The High Street and Quality Street frontages appear to be in a good state of repair, and opportunities to examine underlying deposits are likely to be limited to the future need to repair and replace existing structures and services. The following recommendations are made in the hope that they will enable the maximum amount of information to be extracted from the minimum amount of disturbance.

- a. Any proposed renovation project of street fronting buildings in the historic core, specifically High Street and Quality Street, could be usefully monitored, particularly where structural alteration is involved at ground level. The possibility of the structural remains of earlier buildings existing behind an eighteenth or nineteenth century facade, should also be borne in mind during alterations.
- b. Any proposed road improvements, repairs to and extension of existing

services such as gas, electricity and water which involve soil disturbance, could be profitably monitored.

- c. Lack of knowledge about the early settlement and development of the burgh, suggests that a policy of selective trial trenching could be usefully employed in the face of any future proposed re-development in the archaeologically sensitive area described above.
- d. A thorough geophysical survey of the site of the motte and its immediate environs for unidentified outworks and associated structures, could be usefully employed against any future change in land use.
- e. A geophysical survey of the site of the Cistercian Convent may provide some immediate information as to the disposition of the conventual buildings to be held against any future development of the site.

PREVIOUS WORK

In the ancient heart of the burgh, excavation has been carried out on the site of the twelfth century church to define the plan and to provide dating evidence for the structural remains of the building (O.S. Record Card NT 58 NE 3). Outwith the pre-nineteenth century limit of the town in the vicinity of the Cistercian convent, a tile kiln was excavated in 1928 at NT 5465 8504, and confirmed the local manufacture of floor tiles recovered from the ruins of the convent early this century. The kiln was dated to the thirteenth century, and the lack of material evidence from elsewhere suggests that it was erected solely for the benefit of the convent (Richardson, 1928-29, 284).

Some chance finds have been made in the burgh, most are unprovenanced, and though the find spot of some can be pinpointed, none are from a satisfactory stratigraphical archaeological context (see map 3).

1. A small bronze coin of Caligula minted at Berytus in Phoenicia found during the screening of sand from the shore, east of the old kirk. Area centred at NT 553 856 (Robertson, 1960-61, 141).
2. A large mound containing 'Anglo-Saxon' (?) relics was levelled in 1847 whilst building the gas works at NT 5478 8529. Present whereabouts of grave goods unknown (Wilson, 1851, 58).
3. Portion of a double-sided stone mould for casting pilgrim's signacula and early medieval ring brooches, found in the old churchyard of St. Andrew's Church (NT 554 855) and now in the collection of the

National Museum, Edinburgh (Richardson, 1906-07, 431).

4. A hoard of sixty-three early fourteenth century silver coins of Alexander III of Scotland, and Edwards I, II, and III of England. Found by workmen excavating just off the High Street in 1882 (NT 5532 8533). More Edwardian coins were found at NT 5487 8512 (Metcalfe, 1977, 28; Dolley, 1968, 240, 271; Sim, 1881-82, 465, 466).
5. An iron sword, bearing the words [IN SOLINGEN J.G.L.] on the blade, was found in a grave near St.Andrews Church (NT 554 855). The sword is probably late medieval in date, and is now in the National Museum in Edinburgh (O.S. Record Card NT 58 NE 10).
6. The burgh museum holds in its collection a number of articles found on the site of St.Andrew's Church (NT 554 855). These include a twelfth century pendant cross, a candle extinguisher of pre-Reformation date, a bone dice and a bronze button.
7. The site of the Cistercian convent has produced in addition to a number of fine thirteenth century glazed floor tiles, now in the burgh museum and the National Museum, Edinburgh (Anon, 1939-40, 147; Richardson, 1928-29, 297; Stevenson, 1951-54, 85); a cross, inscribed stone (NT 546 849) (Richardson, 1906-07, 432); fragments of thirteenth and fourteenth century pottery, including late thirteenth century Scarborough ware; a fourteenth century bronze annular brooch inscribed [JESU NAZARENUS ANANIZ - PTA] and a number of fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century coins, (not a hoard) of James III, Francis and Mary, James VI, Charles I and II, and William and Mary. All the above material is held in the burgh museum, North Berwick.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Early Settlement

The burgh of North Berwick is built on the Limestones and Basaltic Tuff of the Carboniferous period, overlain by boulder clay, raised beach deposits and associated post-glacial marine alluvium. The old town occupies the raised beach, with a pronounced cliff line to the rear (G.S.S. 1971). The environment produced by these geological conditions has encouraged human activity in the immediate vicinity of the town from the earliest times. The aeolian deposits upon which the golf links have been built to the east and west of the burgh, have produced occupation deposits, interments and artifacts ranging from the Neolithic to the sixth century.

These discoveries apart, material evidence relating directly to the early burgh is rare. The foundation of the twelfth century church, hospital and convent provide the earliest documentary evidence for settlement, though other stimuli must have existed before this date. Pilgrimages were made to St. Andrews from the eighth century (see page 14), and it is possible that to avoid the hazards of a long journey overland, North Berwick was established as a ferry port for the short crossing to Earle's Ferry in Fife as early as the eighth century. The question of the date of earliest settlement cannot however be resolved without further documentary and archaeological research into the sites of known antiquity such as the first church of St. Andrews and the castle.

The Town Walls and Ports

There is at present little evidence for an enclosing town wall and ports at North Berwick. The Act of Parliament of 1503, which required all east coast harbours to construct a wall of stone and lime to afford protection from the ravages of the English, may have stimulated some building work as Bleau's map of 1654 suggests that North Berwick was a fortified town. However, there is no trace of such a fortification today, and neither is there any information as to the site and location of Town Ports. Any redevelopment proposed for the foot of the burgage plots on Forth Street and St. Andrews Street, could usefully be monitored in the hope of identifying evidence indicating the presence of town defences.

The Town Plan

Very little redevelopment has taken place within the historic core and the basic single street plan remains fundamentally unchanged. The High Street remains the main thoroughfare and commercial centre. The limit of the medieval town westwards is uncertain, though plans of 1804 (Forrest) and 1832 (R.B.S.) show a thinning of development from the Church Road/High Street junction (NT 5513 8587) westwards, particularly on the exposed north side of the street. The narrowness of the High Street noted by earlier authors (Richardson, 1907, 8) has to some extent been remedied by later twentieth century development. The Police Station, built in 1933, stands back from the original building line (NT 5533 8531) reflected in earlier buildings on the north side of the street, and similarly the garage at NT 5539 8532 and the church at NT 5524 8527, have been stepped back from the original frontage.

The junction with Quality Street has been improved by the demolition of a property on the North corner (NT 5543 8533) to improve sight lines for

traffic, and Forth Street has been widened to improve traffic flow. The Quality Street frontages have remained consistent over the last two centuries, though the East Road junction (NT 5546 8528) has been widened, and there are proposals for widening the Kirk Ports/Quality Street junction (NT 5544 8527). Victoria Road at the north end of Quality Street has been built up mainly in the last 150 years. Between 1832 and 1894 the angle between the road and the south west pier of the harbour (NT 553 855) previously below the high water mark, was infilled and developed with warehousing and domestic housing along the south-west side of Victoria Road (NT 553 855).

In the early nineteenth century, North Berwick became a popular seaside resort, and development continued throughout the century outside the old centre (McWilliam, 1975, 172). Access to the High Street from the new villa developments to the east, south and west of the town, was facilitated by the building of new roads such as Beach Road, Bank Street, St. Andrews Street, Melbourne Road and the Quadrant.

The presence of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century properties on the frontages of both Quality Street and High Street suggests that the building line has not substantially changed over the last 300 years.

Early Buildings and Materials

There is little evidence as to the plan and physical nature of town buildings in North Berwick before the seventeenth century. It is only through excavation on the street frontages of the historic centre, as and when sites become available through building renovation or replacement, that these questions may be answered. Even so, traces of early timber buildings may not survive due to the disturbance caused by substantial eighteenth and nineteenth century building foundations, and cellarage. Undeveloped backland areas may prove a more informative source of information regarding early town development, though again the foot of many High Street back lots were developed in the nineteenth century in response to residential development along new streets to the north and south of the High Street.

Before the development of the tourist industry, largely in response to the building of the railway in the 1840s, fishing was one of the economic supports of the town, though in the eighteenth century, trade was also carried out in spirits, grain, starch and malt (see page 3). There were however, few industries carried out which were capable of detection in the archaeological record. This further emphasises the need to examine

remaining undeveloped backland areas in advance of redevelopment in the hope of identifying early industrial usage.

The Early Church (NT 5540 8556)

It is claimed by some authorities that the ecclesiastical history of North Berwick, dates from the sixth century when a church was founded by St. Baldred (Ferrier, 1870, 16). There is no evidence to support this claim. However, an early sixth century settlement in the immediate environs of the town is suggested by the recovery of a zoomorphic penannular brooch at circa NT 5772 8572, which dates from the late fifth early sixth century, and was probably washed from the cliff at Leckmoran Ness (O.S. Record Card NT 58 NE 20). A similar discovery, a hand pin, was recovered from an occupation deposit in a rock-shelter at NT 5753 8556, and dates from the fourth century (Richardson, 1906-07, 428-429). Although there is no direct evidence for a sixth century church, pilgrimages are known to have been made to St. Andrews from 736, when that settlement was founded by Acca of Hexam (Phillimore, 1920, 11), until the twelfth century, North Berwick was important during these centuries as a ferry port to Fife, and some provision must have been made for worship before the present remains were constructed in the twelfth century. A church is first mentioned in a charter of 1177 (RCAHMS, 1924, 57), the text of which implies that it was already in existence by this date. Cowan (1960, 67) claims that the church, was granted to the nunnery of North Berwick at its foundation, probably in 1150, which would indicate that the building was constructed in the first half of that century.

This early church, much repaired and rebuilt over the centuries, was in a very poor state of repair by 1658, and had been replaced by a new place of worship on the south side of the town (NT 5533 8522) in 1659. The church, as illustrated by Grose in 1789, appeared to consist of a small one storeyed rubble built vaulted structure. Architectural fragments from the church have been identified in repair work to the harbour wall, and it is highly probable that dressed stone from the building has been incorporated in the nineteenth century development along Victoria Road. Today, the foundations and some surviving walls allow the plan to be reconstructed. The sixteenth century south aisle, the base of the fifteenth century tower and the foundations of the north aisle and St. Ninian's aisle, which date from the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, are clearly visible, as is the twelfth century font platform. Part of the south and St. Ninian's aisles have been lost through coastal erosion, as has a

substantial portion of the graveyard. The small porch is the only complete standing part of the church, and is probably contemporary with the south aisle.

The site has been secured from sea erosion by the building of a retaining wall on the east side of the promontory, and is not threatened by modern development. Some excavation took place in the early years of this century, but no published record appears to exist (O.S. Record Card NT 58 NE 3). Future work on the site should be directed towards the possibilities of pre-twelfth century development. A location so close to the early ferry point must surely have included a chapel at least as early as the eighth century.

The Cistercian Convent

This convent was almost certainly founded between 1147 and 1153 by Duncan the first Earl of Fife. Cowan and Easson (1976, 148) assign the foundation, on the basis of documentary evidence, to circa 1150. The house seems to have taken some years to build and construction work probably continued into the thirteenth century. The tile kiln discovered early this century at NT 5465 8504, seems to have been used solely for the flooring of the conventual buildings in the thirteenth century and had a short life span (Richardson, 1928-29, 284). Flat roofing tiles of light red or buff colour, occasionally spotted with glaze were in use in Scotland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and examples have been recovered from the site of the convent suggesting if not continuing construction of the convent complex, repair to earlier buildings. The stone used in the thirteenth century building operations appears to have come from a quarry near Gullane, and to have also been supplied to Dirleton Castle (Douglas Simpson, 1934-38, 95).

The enclosing stone wall does not appear to have been built until the latter part of the fourteenth century as a result of a petition by the nuns that they were being 'much molested by the neighbourhood and visits of nobles and other secular persons' (Swan, 1926-27, 60). The wall is mentioned in a mandate of twelfth August, 1375 to the Bishop of St. Andrews referring to a petition for perpetual enclosure, the Pope ordered an enclosing wall to be built at the expense of the convent, and commanded the Prioress and nuns to live strictly within the said enclosure.

The house is said to have suffered frequent devastation as a result of English raids, in the fourteenth century, and, though repairs must have been carried out, by 1586 'the place quhair the Abbey Kirk and Closter of Northberuik Stuid before', was ruinous, and the site and property of

the convent were granted to Alexander Hume. Finally, in 1597 the foundation was suppressed by Act of Parliament.

The present extant buildings described on page 5, were probably renovated for secular occupation in the late sixteenth century by the Hume family, and thus survived seventeenth and eighteenth century inroads on to the remaining fabric. The conventual buildings, were quite substantial when illustrated by Grose in the late eighteenth century. By 1870, however, serious destruction had taken place upon the main structure, with the entire removal of the vaults which served as store rooms and 'offices' for the convent (Ferrier, 1870, 13). Much of this stone was incorporated in local buildings. Swan for example (1926-27, 68) records that when Abbey Farm altered in the early years of this century, a number of re-used stones were found.

McWilliam (1978, 363) suggests that the cloister garth is represented by the present garden of the old people's home, with the church to the south, indeed, the foundations of the church were reputedly discovered by the previous owner of the site while laying out a tennis court to the east of the present house. The actual disposition of the convent buildings is still, however, unclear although the extent of the enclosure can be gauged from the surviving fragments of the enclosing wall. The site is not currently under threat, but a geophysical survey might usefully be carried out against future change in land use.

The Castle (NT 5606 8516)

There is no firm evidence as to the foundation and history of an early motte at North Berwick. The site identified by the Royal Commission (RCAHMS, 1924, 74) is an artificially modified natural mound circa 40' (12.1m) high, a promontory extending northwards from the old cliff line at the rear of the raised beach. The summit is flat and roughly pear-shaped, measuring 108' (32.9m) by 90' (27.4m) in diameter. A ditch 13' (3.0m) to 26' (7.0m) wide and between 3'6" (1.0m) and 5' (1.5m) deep cuts across the narrow neck of land immediately to the south of the site, and spreads east and west down the slope to the raised beach below. The Ordnance Survey investigators identified the remains of an earth and stone bank enclosing the top of the site (O.S. Record Card NY 58 NE 1). Although the interior surface is very uneven, it was impossible in recent fieldwork to identify any particular features, owing to the overgrown nature of the site (June 1981). A print in the North Berwick Burgh Museum, dating probably from the early nineteenth century, shows a small round

building with a pointed roof on the north-west corner of the mound, which suggests that some later disturbance has taken place. There is, however, no current threat to the site. There is no trace of any associated outworks, the area immediately to the rear is a derelict villa site with sheds and some coppicing, and the raised beach below has been developed as a golf course. There is at present no known documentary evidence for this site. It seems likely that it was of very early date and short occupation. Should the threat of development present future opportunities, it would be important in association with deeper documentary research, to establish by excavation the nature and sequence of occupation on the top of the motte, and the respective dates of initial occupation and subsequent abandonment. A more detailed survey of the immediate area may also reveal the presence of any associated outworks not at present apparent (see page 16).

The Hospital (NT 5538 8559)

The hospital at North Berwick built for the benefit of pilgrims and the indigent sick, was founded circa 1154 by Duncan, first Earl of Fife, and confirmed in the possession of the Cistercian Convent of North Berwick in 1199 and again in 1213 after which date, no mention is made of the foundation in documentary sources (Cowan and Easson, 1976, 186). There is no structural or artifactual evidence and no certainty as to the exact site of this house, though Swan (1926-27, 57) on the rather tenuous grounds of the relative positions of the harbour and the old church of St. Andrew, places it at NT 5538 8559, a site occupied by eighteenth century granaries on the east side of Victoria Road. In the event of building renovation or replacement on this site, it would be useful to examine the underlying deposits in the hope of confirming this site and establishing the plan and life span of the hospital.

Almshouse (NT 5545 8534)

The Almshouse dedicated to St. Mary is first mentioned in 1541, and is described in 1542 as a house 'newly founded for Almsmen'. References dwindle in the late sixteenth century, and although in 1573 an annual pension to the almshouse received confirmation, it seems likely that it fell victim to the Reformation. Swan (1926-27) claims that the building stood in Quality Street on the site at present occupied by the Dalrymple Arms (NT 5548 8534). This hotel, basically an eighteenth century building, was re-constructed early this century on the old street

frontage, No cellars are immediately visible, and there is a possibility that early deposits survive beneath the present building. The main archaeological problems therefore, lie in confirming the site of this early building, its plan, and the date of its final abandonment and/or demolition.

The Harbour

As early as the eighth century, North Berwick served as a place of embarkation for pilgrims en route to St. Andrews (see page 14). A small tidal island off the south coast of the Forth provided a sheltered anchorage on an otherwise exposed coastline, conveniently close to the shore of Fife. However, it is doubtful if any formal harbour works existed at this early date. Ports, at each end of the Pilgrim's Ferry to Fife, (one of which was North Berwick) are mentioned in a charter of 1177 (Graham, 1968-69, 257), though again this does not necessarily mean that wharfage was then in existence. In 1632, the burgh of North Berwick was licenced by an act of the convention of Royal Burghs, to seek a voluntary contribution from other burghs towards the repair of the harbour which would suggest the institution of some formal works at least by the early seventeenth century. However, Graham (1968-69, 258) has isolated only two areas of the present harbour which may pre-date the eighteenth century. The masonry of the breakwater is crude in comparison with the remainder of the works. Storm damage has at some time reduced the length of this north-west facing wall by 50' (15.2m) from the harbour mouth (subsequently rebuilt), but the north-east portion is composed of boulders and large rough blocks, a sinuous alignment, uneven and with the outer drystone face secured with wooden wedges. This development bears close similarity with the late sixteenth century harbour works at Dunbar.

The accounts of the Burgh Treasurer for 1726 indicate an early eighteenth century date for the pier closing the north-east end of the harbour. Reference is made in the accounts to a sluice or sluices designed to remove silt from the harbour, and their position in this pier is vouched for in 1811. Later alterations, and specifically the construction of the swimming pool in the late nineteenth century, have obliterated all traces of early stonework at this point.

The south-east quay may be the new quay mentioned in the burgh records for 1788. Whether it was an improvement on an existing work or a completely new structure is not known. In basic design, it does not seem as though the harbour has changed in appearance since the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The later repairs, especially those of the

nineteenth century, are well documented in the accounts of a local contractor (Graham, 1968-69, 258).

Other documented improvements dating mainly from the nineteenth century which have affected the appearance of the harbour area, involved cutting away a mass of rock for the construction of a yard, probably for boat repair. This was situated immediately south-east of the swimming pool, and approached by a slipway in the east corner of the harbour basin. This appeared on a contractor's plan in 1861, but is no longer visible (Graham, 1968-69, 259).

There is, therefore, little evidence for the development of the harbour, and future archaeological investigation can only attempt to establish a relative chronology as necessary repairs and improvements are carried out to the existing fabric.

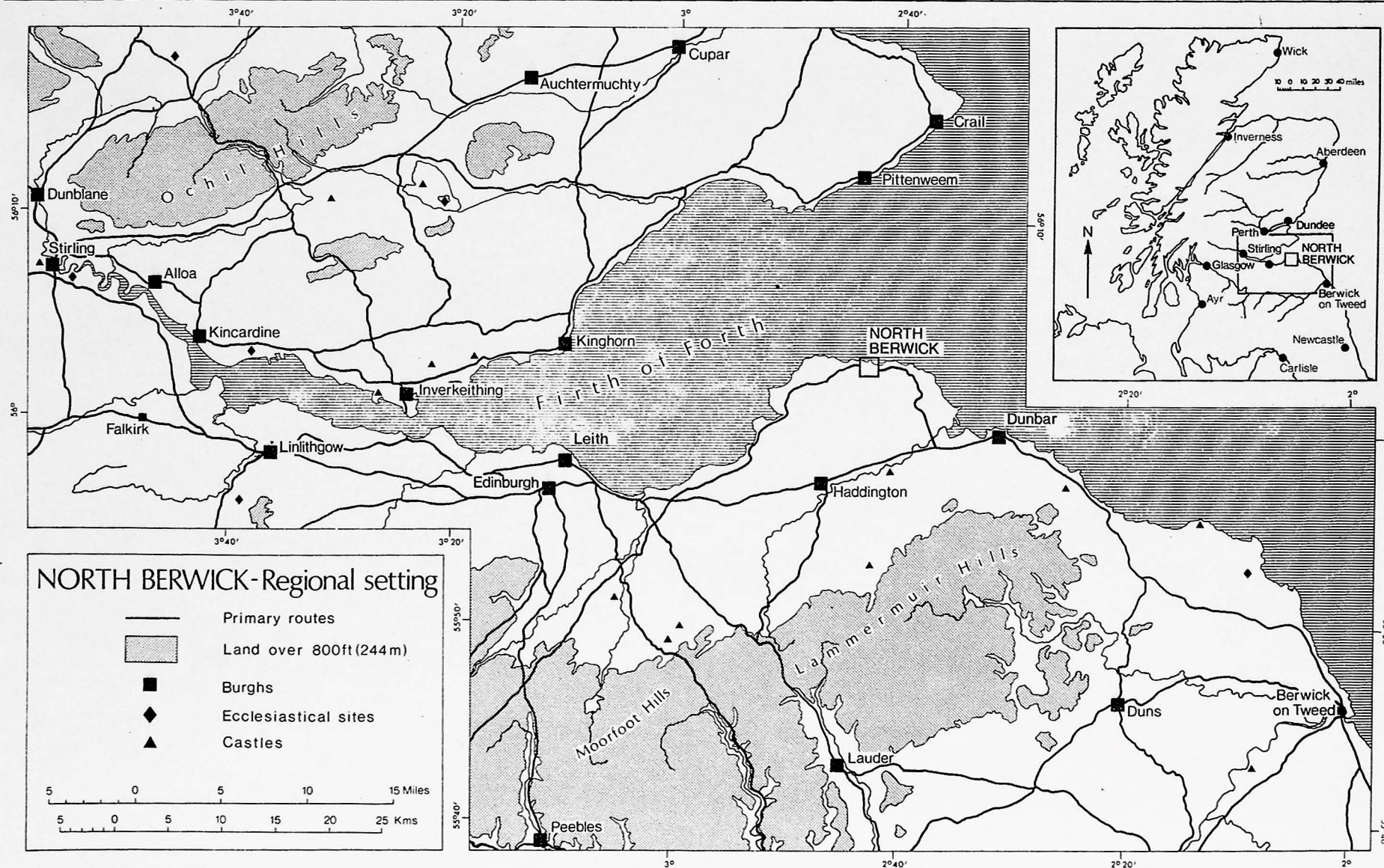
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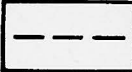
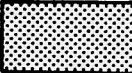
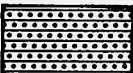
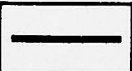
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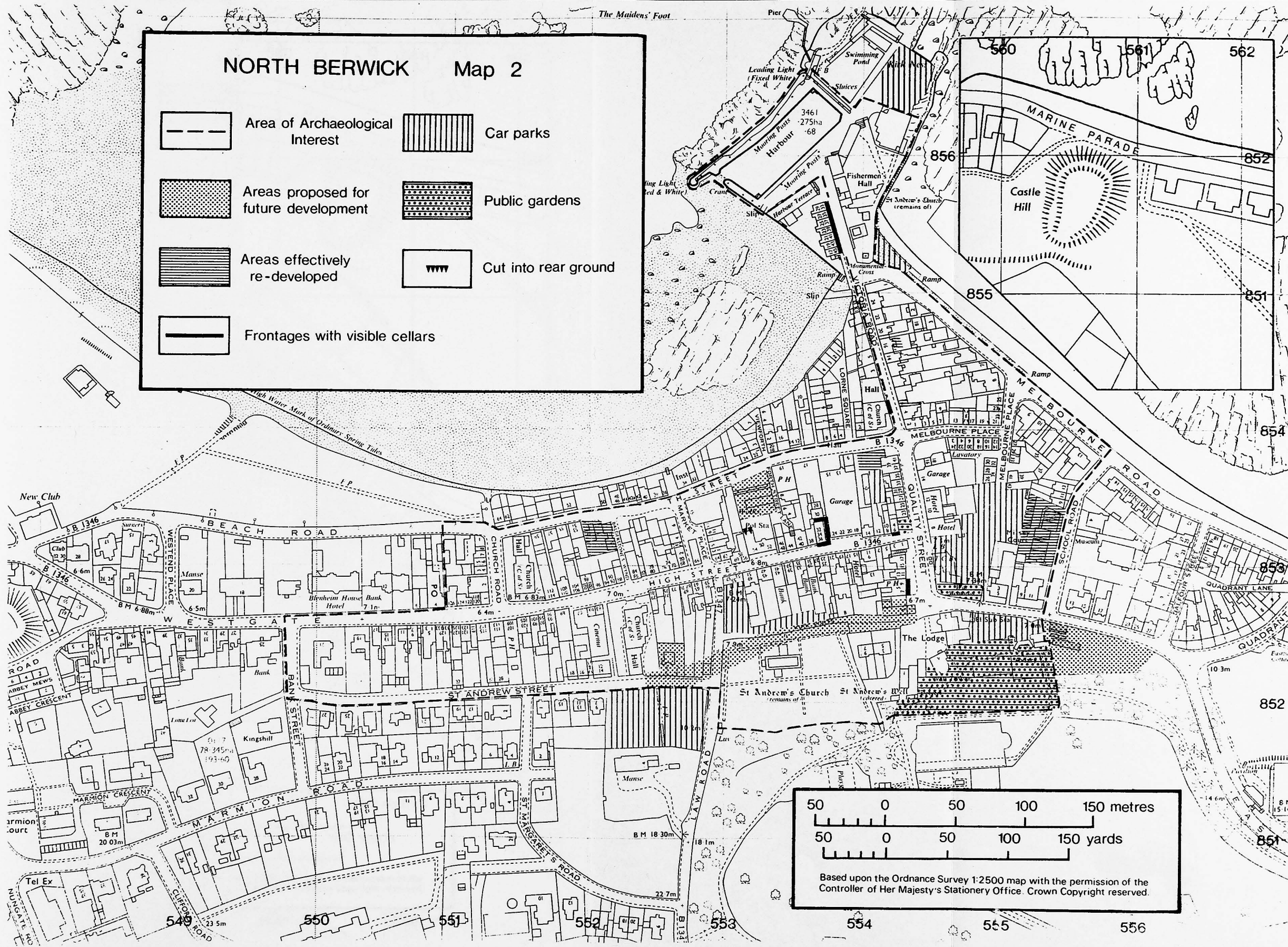
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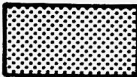
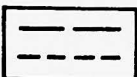


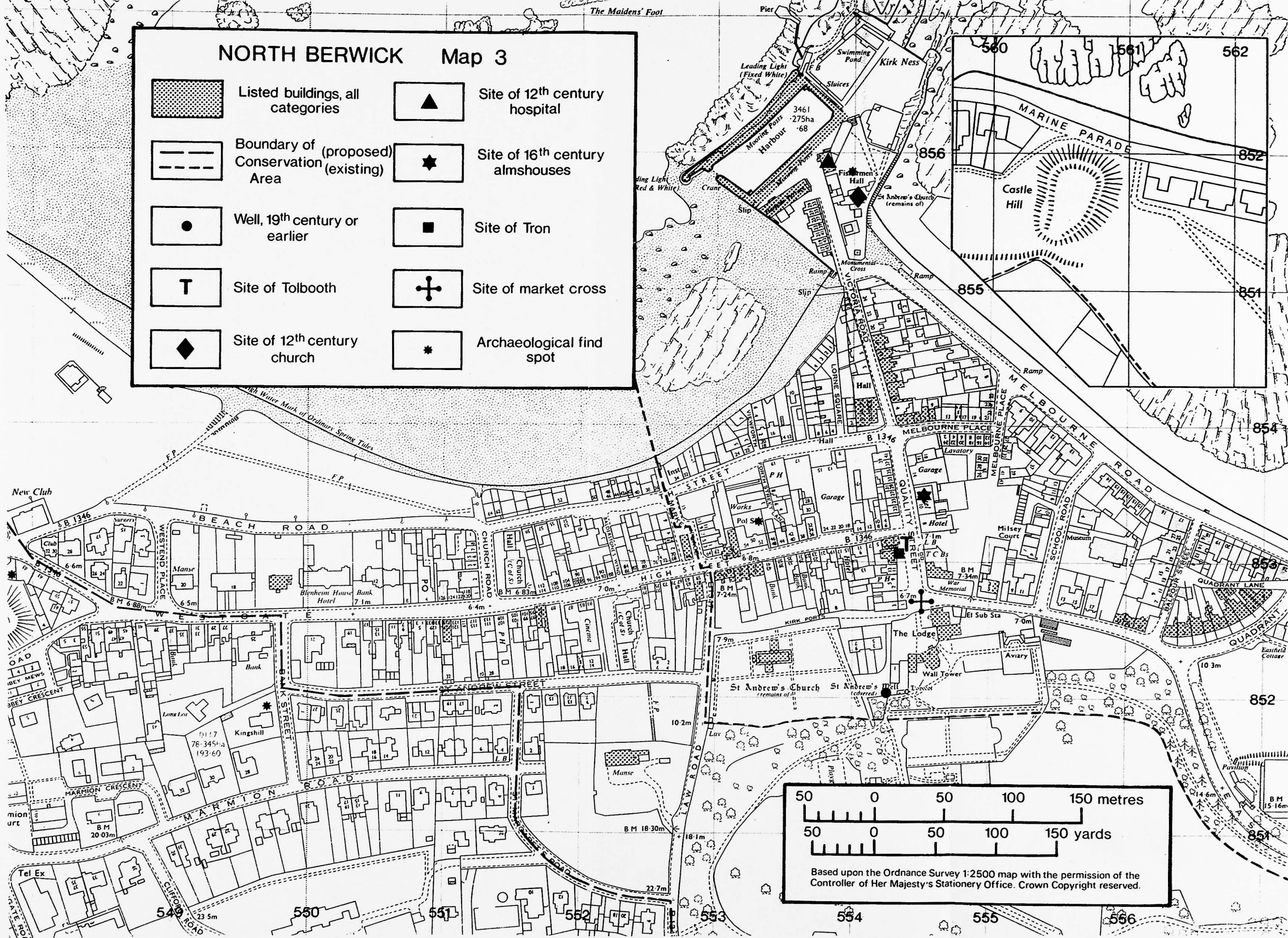
NORTH BERWICK Map 2

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | Area of Archaeological Interest |  | Car parks |
|  | Areas proposed for future development |  | Public gardens |
|  | Areas effectively re-developed |  | Cut into rear ground |
|  | Frontages with visible cellars | | |



NORTH BERWICK Map 3

	Listed buildings, all categories		Site of 12th century hospital
	Boundary of Conservation Area (proposed) (existing)		Site of 16th century almshouses
	Well, 19th century or earlier		Site of Tron
	Site of Tolbooth		Site of market cross
	Site of 12th century church		Archaeological find spot



50 0 50 100 150 metres
 50 0 50 100 150 yards

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