



Archaeological Services  
University of Durham

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## **Land to the rear of St Cuthbert's College, South Bailey, Durham**

### **archaeological watching brief**

*on behalf of*

**Estates and Buildings, University of Durham**

**ASUD Report 1230**  
March 2005

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*Hollow Drift, Green Lane, Durham*

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## **1. Summary**

### ***The project***

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted in advance of a proposed development at St Cuthbert's College, South Bailey, Durham. The excavation of an area of top-soil and made ground within the grounds at the rear of St Cuthbert's College was necessary for enabling works in advance of the construction of a new patio and an extension to the existing beer pen. This had the potential to expose archaeological features relating to medieval and post-medieval city wall.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Estates and Buildings, University of Durham, and conducted by Archaeological Services University of Durham.

### ***Results***

- 1.3 No archaeological features or remains were identified during the watching brief.

### ***Recommendations***

- 1.4 No further monitoring of the site is required in relation to the development. No archaeological features or artefacts were identified within the area of the topsoil stripping.

## **2. Project background**

### ***Location (Figure 1)***

- 2.1 The site lies within the grounds to the rear of St Cuthbert's College. It is centred on grid reference NZ 2703 4108

### ***Development Proposal***

- 2.2 The proposal is to build a new patio to the rear of St Cuthbert's College.

### ***Objective***

- 2.3 The objective of the archaeological watching brief was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any surviving archaeological features within the proposed development area, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature, and scope of, any further scheme of archaeological works that may be required in advance of development.

### ***Dates***

- 2.4 Fieldwork was undertaken between the 8th and 11th March 2005. This report was prepared on the 11th of March 2005.

### ***Personnel***

- 2.5 Fieldwork was conducted by Alan A Rae. This report was prepared by Alan A Rae, with illustrations by Linda Bosveld. The Project Manager was Richard Annis.

### ***Archive and OASIS***

- 2.6 The site code is SCC 05, for St Cuthbert's College 2005. The site archive is currently held by Archaeological Services and will be transferred to the Durham County SMR in due course. The OASIS project number is archaeol3.7777.

## **3. Landuse, topography and geology**

- 3.1 At the time of the watching brief the proposed development area comprised a garden surrounded by a concrete path. The area is entirely enclosed by the College buildings and the Castle wall; an area of level lawned garden lies immediately to the south. The present buildings are all of post-medieval date.
- 3.2 The site rises gently towards the south, where an artificial mound forms a garden feature inside the old Castle wall. The work area lies at a mean elevation of *c.* 50m. The solid geology of the area is Carboniferous limestone overlain by Tertiary boulder clays and glacial sands.
- 3.3 The development proposal was for the replacement of an existing area of concrete slabs with a larger patio. This is to extend along the south face of the bar building; the work involved ground disturbance to the uppermost soil layers.

#### **4. Historical and archaeological background**

##### ***The prehistoric and Roman periods (up to 5th century AD)***

- 4.1 Prehistoric settlement in the neighbourhood of Durham is known from Maiden Castle, to the south of the city; evidence of Roman occupation was revealed when a villa site was found during quarrying at Old Durham Farm in the 1940s. Although a small number of artefacts have been found on the peninsula, there is no evidence for settlement in the area of the site during the prehistoric and Roman periods.

##### ***The medieval period (5th century AD to 1540 AD)***

- 4.2 A monastic settlement was established in Durham during the 10th century AD, and with the subsequent building of the Cathedral and Castle developed into a major medieval city. The Castle walls, surrounding the entire peninsula, reinforced the natural defences of the city; they run along the top of the steeply-sloping river banks and incorporate some buildings of the Cathedral and the College. St Cuthbert's College lies within the wall at the south end of the enclosed area.

##### ***The post-medieval and modern periods***

- 4.3 During the post-medieval period defensive considerations became less important, and the area outside the Castle wall was taken over by formal gardens serving the houses occupying the peninsula. Lacking a defensive role, the walls were reduced in size in many places, but numerous sections of the medieval fabric remain; the wall is still a significant feature in the landscape of the peninsula.

##### ***Previous archaeological works***

- 4.4 No previous archaeological works have been undertaken in the area of the proposed development.

#### **5. The watching brief**

- 5.1 The watching brief covered of the excavation of an area of garden measuring approximately 76 square metres. Concrete paving slabs and turf were removed to expose a grey-brown silty sand topsoil, containing much mixed material that suggest that this is all made ground. Inclusions of broken stone and modern brick fragments were noted. The maximum depth of the excavation was 0.27m. The surface exposed at the bottom of the trench was composed of the same mixed soil that has been described; no natural subsoil was seen. The paving slabs had been laid on a thin layer, up to 40mm thick, of yellow sharp sand. No archaeological features were found, and no finds were recovered during the course of the excavation.

#### **6. Conclusion and recommendation**

- 6.1 No evidence for early activity has been found in the shallow working required by this development. Finds of domestic or garden features, of medieval or later date, might be expected in such a situation; the absence of any such material in

the upper layers of the present garden should not be considered as evidence of an absence of archaeological resources in this site.

- 6.2 No further archaeological works is recommended in connection with this project.



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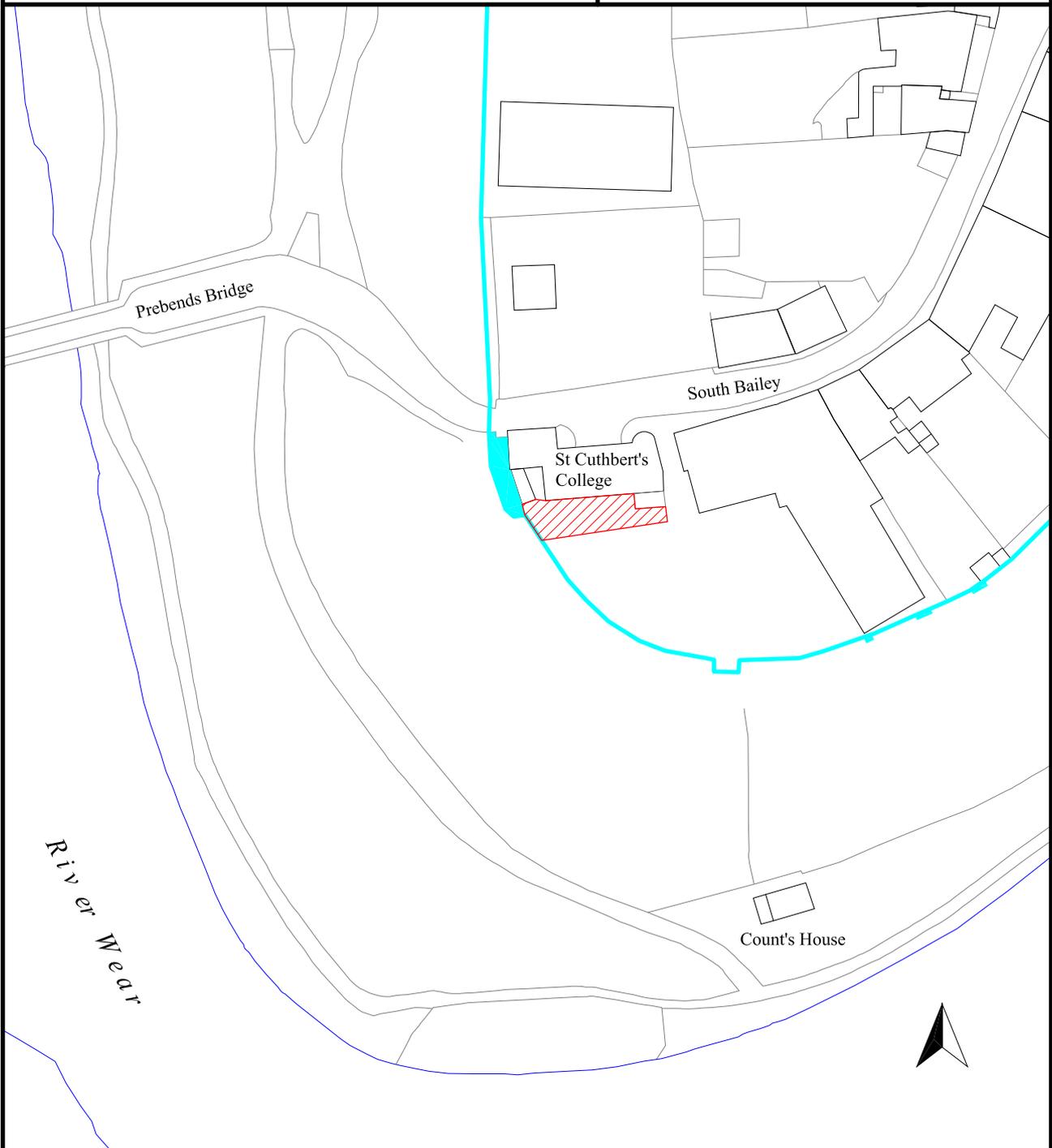
Figure 1

*Location plan*

on behalf of  
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scale 1:1000 - for A4 plot



area of archaeological monitoring



Castle wall