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# **NORTH PENNINES HERITAGE TRUST**

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**Project Designs and Client Reports No 11/02**

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**REPORT ON  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF AT  
FIRESTONE BRIDGE,  
NENTHEAD CUMBRIA**

**For UNITED UTILITIES**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION**

- 1.1 The North Pennines Heritage Trust was invited to submit a tender for an archaeological watching brief on an electrical supply to BT Airway site No 007533 NY 7843 at Firestone Bridge Nenthead Cumbria.
- 1.2 United Utilities proposed to lay approximately 15m of underground cable between the mast site and an existing underground cable.
- 1.3 As this site lay within the scheduled monument of the Nenthead Mining complex SM No 28906, the proposed works required a SMC provision. A condition of this SMC being granted was the provision of an archaeological watching brief during all ground works.
- 1.4 The site at Firestone Bridge forms part of the extensive remains of the former lead mining industry centred on the village of Nenthead. Large areas of the Nenthead site receive statutory protection as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cumbria 28906) under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- 1.5 Lead mining is thought to have taken place on Alston Moor since Roman times and throughout the medieval period. Following the Jacobite Revolution in 1715 the Alston Moor estates were forfeited to the crown who in turn passed them on to the Royal Greenwich Hospital for Seamen. Early leases for mineral extraction and smelting were taken up by Colonel George Liddle who built the first smelting mill at Nenthead in 1737.
- 1.6 It was the London Lead Company who, after purchasing the early smelting mill in 1746, were to develop the site as one of the most extensive in northern England. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was in a serious decline with the lead industry all but finished by the 1930s. This long period of interest on the Nenthead site has left extensive and nationally important standing and buried remains of what is considered to be one of the most complete North Pennine smelting mills in existence.

## **2 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 2.1 The North Pennines Heritage Trust carried out small scale watching brief for both Cellnet and Vodafone in 1999 and 2000. No features of any archaeological note were recorded during the two watching briefs.

## **3 AIMS**

- 3.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation, as laid out in the project design were as follows:

- to ascertain the presence of archaeological remains;
- to shed light on the nature and antiquity of the surface features in the field;
- to shed light on the condition of any archaeological remains;
- to recover dating remains from any archaeological features;
- to provide a client report setting out the salient conclusions and making recommendations about future progress.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The work will be undertaken under the overall direction of Frank Giecco, BA, Project Archaeologist, with day to day work carried out by an experienced site assistant. All staff are highly experienced archaeologists with significant experience of both urban and rural sites in Cumbria.
- 4.3 The archaeological work will involve the supervision of all intrusive ground works in the locations specified in the brief. If deposits of archaeological significance are encountered they will be dealt with in accordance to guidelines set out in the North Pennines Heritage Trust *Excavation Manual*; all deposits will be cleaned by hand and detailed records made accordingly.
- 4.4 All finds will belong to the landowner, but initially will be taken to the Trust's premises at Nenthead, for study. The finds will be managed by F Giecco, who will provide first aid conservation, if further stabilisation is required there will be consultation with specialists from Durham University.
- 4.5 The fieldwork programme will be followed by an assessment of the data, the process to be adopted being set out by English Heritage in *The Management of Archaeological Projects* (1991). This process will conclude with the production of a client report in which the data will be summarised, and any recommendations for any further post-excavation analysis set out.

## **5 RESULTS**

- 5.1 Two small trenches were excavated rather than one 15m trench as an existing section of ducting was utilised. For locations of trenches 1 and 2 see figure 2.

### **5.2 Trench 1**

- 5.2.1 Trench 1 measured 3m by 1.5m, and was machined to a depth of 0.80m. The trench was cut into the line of an existing service trench. No features of archaeological note were observed during the recording of this trench. The section of the pipe trench cut only revealed limestone mining waste (deads)

which appear to relate to a mineshaft visible as a large depression approximately 15m to the south of trench 1

### **5.3 Trench 2**

- 5.3.1 Trench 2 measured 1.2m by 1.5 was excavated adjacent to the electric kiosk at the mast site in an area that had been disturbed by the laying of previous services. The confines of this trench lay solely within the limits of these service trenches and therefore revealed nothing but modern backfill in each side of the trench section. No features of archaeological note were observed during the recording of this trench.

## **6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 6.1 No features of any archaeological note were observed.  
6.2 No further work is recommended.

## **7 Bibliography**

Association of County Archaeological Officers (ACAO) 1993 *Model briefs and specifications for Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations*, Bedford

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