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**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
AND EVALUATION
OF LAND AT ROWGATE
KIRKBY STEPHEN
CUMBRIA**

**Planning Application Ref. No.
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Report Prepared for:

IAN WILKINSON

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AND EVALUATION
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CUMBRIA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 20th November 2002 Mr Ian Wilkinson commissioned North Pennines Heritage Trust to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment and evaluation of land at Rowgate, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria (NY 7709 0779). This report fulfils the requirement of the brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service, dated 15th April 2002 (Ref: 3/01/0111).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 20th November 2002, Mr Ian Wilkinson commissioned North Pennines Heritage Trust to undertake the archaeological pre-determination works required in respect of development proposals for a plot of land at Rowgate, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria. The scheme affects an area of archaeological interest totalling 0.35 hectares (SMR Ref: 6756). This report fulfils the requirement set out in a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (CCCAS) dated 15th April 2002 (Ref: 3/01/0111).
- 1.2 The site lies to the south of the town of Kirkby Stephen (NY 7709 0779), close to the earthwork remains of Croglam Castle.
- 1.3 At present (December 2002) the site consists of an area of 0.35 hectares of pasture, used for the storage of scrap cars. A residential development is proposed for the site.
- 1.4 The purpose of this assessment is to outline the history and archaeology of the site within a local and regional context. This required the consultation of all readily available primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material referenced within the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal, as well as any relevant aerial photographs if available. Sources consulted included the County Sites and Monuments Record, Whitehaven Records Office and Local Studies Library, Carlisle Records Office and Carlisle Local Studies Library in addition to the North Pennines Heritage Trust's own archive at Nenthead.
- 1.5 The purpose of the field evaluation is to identify the presence or absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of any archaeological remains within the development site. The evaluation was undertaken between __ and __ January 2002.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 The Desk Based Assessment

2.1.1 Chris Jones, Assistant Archaeologist, undertook the desk-based assessment from the 16th to the 19th December 2002. This involved the examination of all readily available and relevant primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material together with appropriate aerial photographs.

2.1.2 The author consulted the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal, County Records Office in Carlisle, Carlisle Local Studies Library, Whitehaven Records Office and Local Studies Library and the North Pennines Heritage Trust's own archive in Nenthead.

2.1.3 The main objectives of the desk-based assessment were as follows:

- The formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource.
- The formulation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be devised.
- The formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.

Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, 1)

2.2 The Evaluation

2.2.1 The evaluation was undertaken between __ and __ January 2002 and entailed the excavation of four trial trenches using a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator using a ditching bucket. The trenches were located to take into account any topographic variation owing to a lack of distinct archaeological targets. All trenches were cleaned by hand and recorded according to the North Pennines Heritage Trust's Excavation and Recording Manual (Giecco 2001). Upon completion of the work the trenches were backfilled.

3. TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY

- 3.1 The site consists of low lying, gently undulating ground approximately 188 m AOD. To the west of the site, the ground rises gently approaching Croglam Castle hill top enclosure, which stands at a height of 223 m AOD.
- 3.2 The solid geology of the Kirkby Stephen region comprises
- 3.3 The town of Kirkby Stephen lies at the south end of the Eden Valley, and the town itself is situated on the west bank of the river. The relationship between the site and the hydrology of the region is unclear, although its location close to a source of water (the River Eden and a number of springs) and its proximity to a monument of Iron Age (or potentially earlier) provenance is significant.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Cockermouth has its origins as a medieval planned town during the 12th and 13th centuries. A borough charter dates from 1210 and a market charter from 1227 (Winchester 1986, 109) although the precise date of the town's foundation is not known, the granting of the 1210 charter conferred privileges upon the 'free men' of a settlement already in existence (Ibid.). A map of 1600 shows the town was established in the classic style of a main street (later Main Street, **Market Place**, St Helens Street and Kirkgate) with burgage plots, dominated by Cockermouth Castle (see figure 5). The castle itself is thought to date from c.1072-1106 by Waldeve, son of Gospatric, Earl of Dunbar, who 'created a dwelling by the mouth of the Cocker' on being granted with the manor by King Malcolm (of Scotland) (Ibid.).
- 4.2 The survival of a number of primary sources enables a detailed picture of the growth of medieval Cockermouth to be drawn, although such a detailed picture is beyond the scope of this report. Extents of the borough from 1259 and 1270 combined with a series of manorial accounts for the years between 1267 and 1294 cite three main sources of income for the lords of the manor. The first is the demesne land which included the lands to the north and west of the town (including a substantial deer park behind St Helens Street); Second, the rents of the burgesses and third, 'the income from a variety of trading and industrial activities.' (Winchester 1986, 111). These industrial activities are listed in a survey of c. 1270 and included two water corn mills, a fulling mill, dyeworks, eight corn measures, the market tolls and 3 smithies (Ibid.) The primary documents indicate Cockermouth's decline in prosperity during the 14th century when, as elsewhere in medieval England and Scotland, the town's prosperity was affected by a devastating epidemic of sheep murrains, the effects of which, combined with the effects of plague and pandemic warfare, the town did not begin to recover from until the mid 15th century, when the town became increasingly prosperous reflected in a high demand for burgage plots.
- 4.3 The plan of c.1600 (figure 5) shows a cluster of buildings along Main Street, **Market Place** and St Helens Street. A tumulus, known as Tute Hill, is clearly marked on the map above St Helens Street. No archaeological work has been undertaken in order to understand the nature of this mound, however, it is possible this could signify a much earlier human presence on the site dating back to the prehistoric period, although this is purely speculation. According to Winchester, "the location of the castle, church and market place on the east bank of the Cocker suggests that if an earlier urban core is to be sought, it will be found in this area." (Winchester 1986, 117). It is possible, given the irregular nature of **Market Place** and St Helens Street in comparison to the regular layout of Main Street, that the former was in existence prior to the foundation of the town during the 11th and 12th centuries (Ibid.). The name St Helen and its dedication to a medieval chapel may also signify an Early Christian presence as churches were frequently dedicated to St Helena, mother of Constantine. Furthermore, the place name 'Ureby' is thought to signify a pre-Norman settlement (Bradbury 1995, 66). No archaeological work has been undertaken within this part of the town; however, excavations by Leech (1980)

behind Main Street found no indication that the western part of the town existed prior to its later medieval foundation.

- 4.4 The majority of the houses along **Market Place** date to the 18th century with the growth of industrial activities and the relative ease of access to quarried stone through the amelioration of transport links. These houses comprised a number of small dwellings grouped around a central yard. Large houses, however, were also constructed during this period and can still be seen along **Market Place** and St Helens Street.
- 4.5 The layout of the town changed little until the early 19th century, when John Wood's map of 1832 (figure 6) shows the core settlement of Main Street, **Market Place**, St Helens Street and Kirkgate still the main focus of the town. The Ordnance Survey 1st, 2nd and 3rd editions all show a cluster of buildings within the development site. None of these putative 18th century buildings survive behind the present 39 Market Place.

5. **PREVIOUS WORK**

- 5.1 No previous archaeological investigation has been undertaken within or surrounding the development site. Recent survey work, however, has identified potential Neolithic and later settlement systems located close to Kirkby Stephen.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The town of Cockermouth itself is a medieval foundation, dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. However, conjectural evidence exists to suggest that the area of **Market Place**, St Helens Street and possibly Kirkgate, were part of an earlier, proto-urban core settlement in existence prior to the 11th century and known as Ureby.
- 6.2 During the later medieval period the town continued to grow in prosperity, with the lord of the manor of Cockermouth receiving revenue from both the demesne lands, rents from the burgesses and levies from tolls and a number of industrial activities relating to the agricultural and cloth industries. Despite the disastrous murrains of the 14th century, the town continued its expansion during the 15th century when there was an increased demand for burgage plots.
- 6.3 During the 18th century a number of new houses were constructed, ranging from large town houses to clusters of buildings around a central courtyard. Evidence from the John Wood's 1832 map and the Ordnance Survey 1st edition show the buildings fronting **Market Place** to be generally of the former type. The Ordnance Survey 2nd and 3rd editions show the continued presence of buildings well into the 20th century.
- 6.4 The available evidence suggests that there is a **strong probability** that archaeological remains of 18th-20th century date will be present on the site of the proposed development. There is also a possibility that earlier, medieval remains will be present on the site. Although the area may well have pre-Norman origins, it is likely any evidence of such has been destroyed by later construction. The presence of prehistoric remains close to the site cannot be estimated but the unknown nature of Tute Hill, immediately north of St Helens Street, together with the hydrology of the locality, could indicate prehistoric activity on or near to the development site.

7. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Given the long history of settlement within the development area, there is a **strong probability** that extensive archaeological remains will be present within the development site. It is likely that foundation structures and cellarage survive below ground, given the high density of in filling within and surrounding the development site.
- 7.2 This desk-based assessment recommends that the foundation design for any construction to the rear of **39 Market Place** take into account the likely presence of archaeological structures. This can be achieved with reference to the buildings located on historical maps (see appendix).

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