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Interpretation, Design & Display

**Wilson Pit Road, Whitehaven,
Cumbria, Phase 1**

Archaeological Evaluation

Report No. Y136/14

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. WORKING METHODS.....	4
3. RESULTS.....	5
4. CONCLUSION	7
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	8

APPENDICES

1. Trench Summary
2. Context Register
3. Photographic Register

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location and trench layout

Figure 2: Plans and sections

PLATES

Plate 1: Trench 3, east facing shot

Plate 2: Trench 5, Pit 104 west facing section

Plate 3: Trench 6, west facing shot

Plate 4: Trench 6, Ditch 106 south-east facing section

Plate 5: Trench 7, north facing shot

Plate 6: Trench 7, Furrow 110 west facing section

TABLES

Table 3.1: Summary of Results by Trench

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd on land off Wilson Pit Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria during February 2014. Seven trenches were excavated, targeting geophysical anomalies and cropmarks suggesting archaeological remains. No archaeological features were identified with geophysical anomalies proving to be geological features and the result of modern farming.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on behalf of Story Homes between 4th and 5th February 2014. The CFA code and number for the project is WIP13/2148. The proposed development is for a new housing complex of 30 new homes. All work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (CFA 2014).

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site lies within an area of open agricultural land to the south of the town of Whitehaven. It is bounded by farmland to the north and west, the Wilson Pit Road to the south, and by the B5345 to the east (SD 9749 1523, Fig. 1). The site is between 54 and 73m above the Ordnance Datum (AOD), and at the time of the fieldwork the ground cover was a waterlogged grass pastureland with grazing livestock.

The underlying geology is Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation with superficial deposits of Till, Devensian-Diamicton (BGS 2014). The drift geology comprises of clayey-loam to sandy-loam (NERC 2014).

1.3 Previous Archaeological work and Historical Background

A full documentary and HER background of the site area can be seen in a previous desk-based assessment of the site (CFA 2011). Below is a brief overview of the site area.

Documentary research of the site and the surrounding area show that there are no sites of pre-Medieval date recorded in the HER within the 500m buffer of the proposed development area. There was one recorded cultural heritage site within the proposed development area and five within the 500m buffer zone, with these all related to modern industrial activity.

The single site within the proposed development area is the remains of 'Moss Pit' (HER 12927) marked as 'Old Coal Pit' on the 1st-edition Ordnance Survey map. The air shaft for the pit is still evident and is marked on modern Ordnance Survey maps.

Within the 500m buffer there are five other sites, three of which are related to mining; Wilson Pit (HER 11980) and Wilson Pit Head (HER 2751), are to the southwest of the proposed development area, and Greenbank Pit (HER 41765) to the west.

The site of the 'St Bees Road Tilery' is just outside the proposed development area to the west (HER 11979). This area is now covered by trees.

On the other site of Wilson Pit Road is the extensive site of the Marchon / Rhodia Chemical Works (HER 41457). This was opened in 1943 and closed in 2005. There are no upstanding remains of these works and the only evidence on the ground are concrete hardstandings.

No intrusive previous archaeological work has taken place in the site area, although a geophysical survey of the proposed development was undertaken prior to this evaluation (CFA 2012).

1.4 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to determine the ‘location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the proposed development, should they exist on the site’.

The evaluation also aimed to specifically test the possible archaeological remains identified as geophysical anomalies.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 Trial Trenching

All machine excavation was undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Trenches were targeted on geophysical anomalies and crop marks possibly indicating archaeological features, as well as on ‘blank areas’.

Linear features (ditches and gullies) were sample excavated at a minimum of 10% of their length and a minimum of 1m per section at regular intervals. Intersections were investigated to establish relationships between features. Pits and post holes were sampled at a minimum of 50%.

Archaeological remains were recorded by means of photographs, drawings and written records conforming to IfA standards (1994) and CFA’s quality manuals. All features were planned and drawn in section at an appropriate scale.

All finds of pre-modern date were retained for analysis; modern finds were recorded and then discarded. All finds were treated in accordance with relevant guidance (UKIC 2001 and IFA 2001).

A summary of the results of archaeological works will be submitted for inclusion in OASIS and the OASIS reference will appear in the final report.

2.2 Standards and Guidance

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation (RO) with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All work was be conducted in accordance with relevant IfA

Standards and Guidance documents (IfA 1994), English Heritage Guidance (EH 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008a and 2008b), and CFA's standard methodology.

2.3 Archiving

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, finds, plans and reports, will be deposited at a suitable repository and will conform to current guidelines in MoRPHE guidelines (Brown 2011) ensuring the proper transfer of ownership. The project report shall include an index to the site archive.

2.4 Monitoring

The trial trenching was monitored by Jeremy Parsons of the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) who was informed in advance of the works taking place and was updated on results after the projects commencement.

3. RESULTS

Seven trenches were excavated. A summary of the results of the trenching is presented below in Table 3.1, with a full summary found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 consists of a summary of contexts. Figure 1 shows the locations of trenches and Figure 2 shows plans and sections. A selection of photographs is presented as Plates 1 to 6.

Topsoil (100) was dark brown silty clay, which was between 0.2m and 0.4m in depth. Large amounts of 19th-20th century pottery and glass were present within the topsoil. The topsoil sealed a layer of mid-light brown silty clay subsoil (101) in most trenches. The natural geology consisted of a mix of grey boulder clay and orange-yellow clay (102).

Trench	Length	Target	Results
1	25m	Blank Area/discrete geophysical anomaly	Blank
2	25m	Blank Area/discrete geophysical anomaly	Blank, Field Drain
3	27m	Geophysical anomalies (pit/ discrete)	Modern Pit, Geological Features
4	26m	Blank Area/discrete geophysical anomaly	Blank
5	26m	Geophysical anomalies (pits)	Modern Pit (104)
6	27m	Geophysical anomaly (pits)	Pit/Linear (106)
7	28m	Blank Area/discrete geophysical anomaly	Plough Furrows (108) and (110)

Table 3.1: Summary of Results by Trench

3.1 Trench 1

The natural geology in Trench 1 was recorded at a depth of 72.16m AOD at the northern end and at 73.13m AOD at the southern end. No archaeological features were revealed.

3.2 Trench 2

Natural geology in Trench 2 was recorded at a depth of 72.31m AOD at the western end and at 71.72m AOD at the eastern end. One north-east to south-west aligned field drain was revealed at the western end, but no archaeological features were revealed.

3.3 Trench 3

Natural geology (Plate 1) was recorded at a depth of 68.82m AOD at the western end and at 65.57m AOD at the eastern end. A modern sub-circular pit filled with brick and concrete, which had been identified as an anomaly by geophysical survey, was discovered towards the western end of the trench. To the eastern end of the trench, a large deposit of geological shale was revealed, which appears to have been the cause of the second geophysical anomaly targeted by this trench. No features of archaeological origins were revealed.

3.4 Trench 4

Natural geology was recorded at a depth of 68.63m AOD at the western end and at 65.76m AOD at the eastern end. No archaeological features were revealed.

3.5 Trench 5

Natural geology was recorded at a depth of 59.89m AOD at the northern end and at 59.98m AOD at the southern end. A large pit (104, Plate 2), filled by dark brown silty clay with fragments of brick and plastic, was discovered near the northern end of the trench. No other archaeological features were recorded within the trench.

3.6 Trench 6

Natural geology (Plate 3) was recorded at a depth of 60.23m AOD at the western end and at 57.36m AOD at the eastern end. A shallow north-west to south-east orientated broad linear feature (106, Plate 4), which had been identified as a geophysical anomaly of irregular morphology, was discovered near the centre of the trench. It seems probable that the full extent of this broad, shallow feature matches with the anomaly detected by geophysical survey and it is considered unlikely to be of any antiquity. No finds were recovered from this feature.

3.7 Trench 7

Natural geology (Plate 5) was recorded at a depth of 55.08m AOD at the northern end and at 54.87m AOD at the southern end. The shallow remnants of a number of south-west to north-east orientated plough furrows were revealed, which matched the anomalies recorded by geophysical survey. Two furrows were excavated (108 and 110, Plate 6), and were revealed to be 0.04m to 0.08m in depth. No finds were recovered from the furrows. No other archaeological features were recorded within the trench.

4. CONCLUSION

The geophysical survey anomalies that were tested by the evaluation were revealed to be negative features with fills that contained either modern fills (pits in Trenches 3 and 5) or to be find-free (broad linear feature in Trench 6; probable modern plough furrows in Trench 7). Anomalies of uncertain origin in Trenches 1, 2, and 4 were not identified during excavation, and are considered most likely either to be data-processing artefacts or the result of variations in natural at a level below the interface with topsoil.

The features revealed by the evaluation all related to anomalies recorded by geophysical survey, and it is considered, therefore, that the geophysical survey has been successful in characterising and quantifying the anthropogenic features that are present within the evaluation area. The features revealed were all likely to be of modern origins, based upon their morphology and the finds in their fills. Based on the results of the geophysical survey and evaluation, it is concluded that there is little potential for features of archaeological importance to be present elsewhere within the study area shown on Fig. 1

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Appendix 1: Trench Summary

Trench No.	Trench Size (m)	Depth of Topsoil (m)	Description
1	25 x 1.6	0.25	Natural substrate was yellow-orange clay. Trench sloped from south-north. No archaeological features.
2	25 x 1.6	0.23	Natural substrate as per Trench 1. Trench was fairly level. One modern field drain on a north-east to south-west orientation towards the western end of the trench. No archaeological features.
3	27 x 1.6	0.20	Natural substrate was orange-yellow clay with occasional bands of white clay. Trench sloped from west-east. Geophysical anomalies in this trench were tested and proved to be a pit that contained brick and concrete, and a geological deposit of shale. No archaeological features.
4	26 x 1.5	0.33	Natural substrate was yellow clay with grey boulder clay in places. Trench sloped from west to east. Trench alignment altered at eastern end due to presence of previously dug test pit. No archaeological features.
5	26 x 1.5	0.25	Natural substrate was yellow clay with grey boulder clay in places. Trench sloped from north-south. Geophysical anomaly proved to be a pit that contained fragments of brick and plastic (104). No archaeological features.
6	27 x 1.5	0.28	Natural substrate was yellow clay with grey boulder clay in places. Trench sloped from west-east. Geophysical anomaly proved to be a linear feature (possible ditch) on a north-west to south-east alignment (106).
7	28 x 1.5	0.20	Natural substrate was orange-yellow clay. Trench was fairly flat, with evidence of shallow former plough furrows on a north-east to south-west orientation (108) and (110) recorded towards the northern end of the trench.

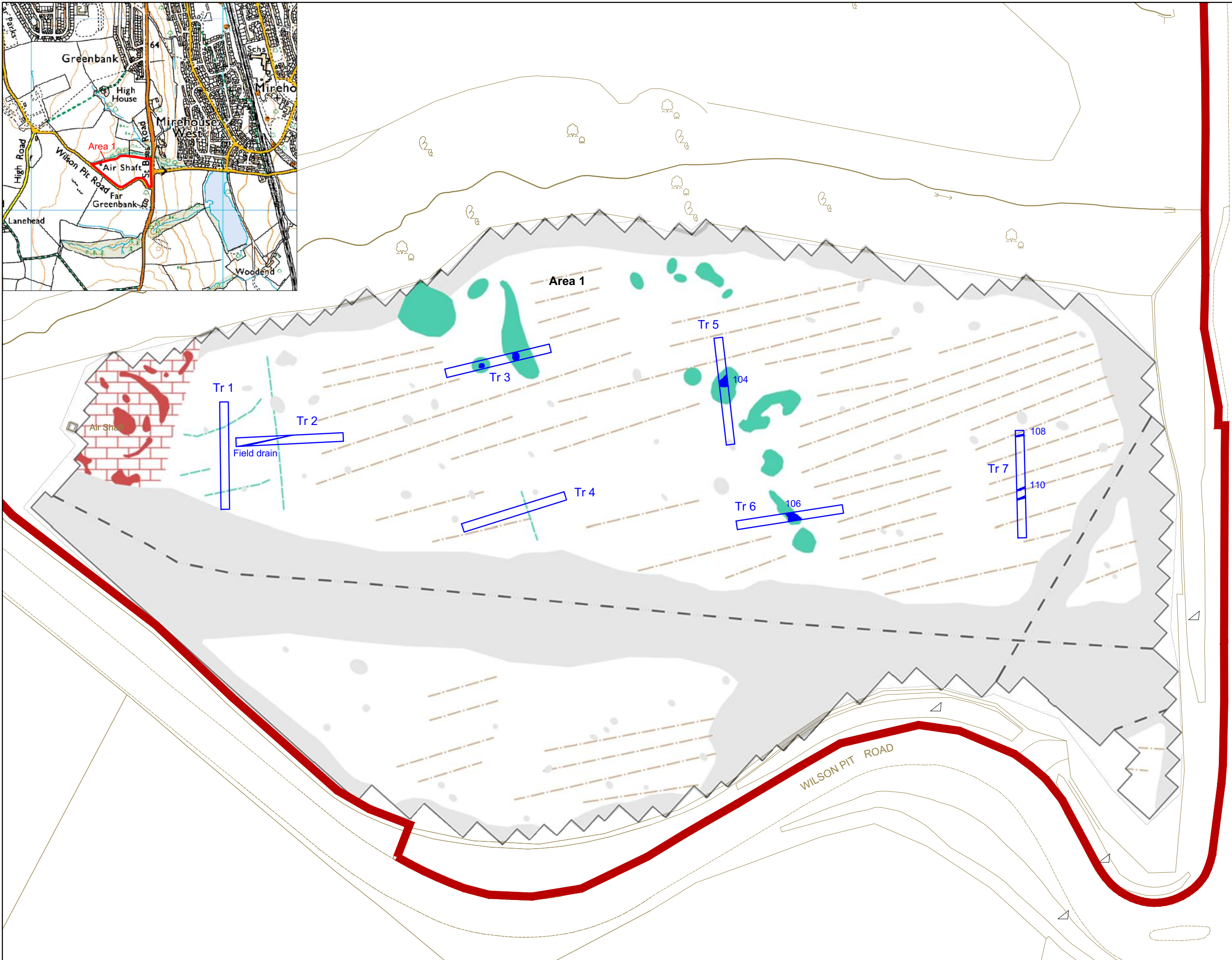
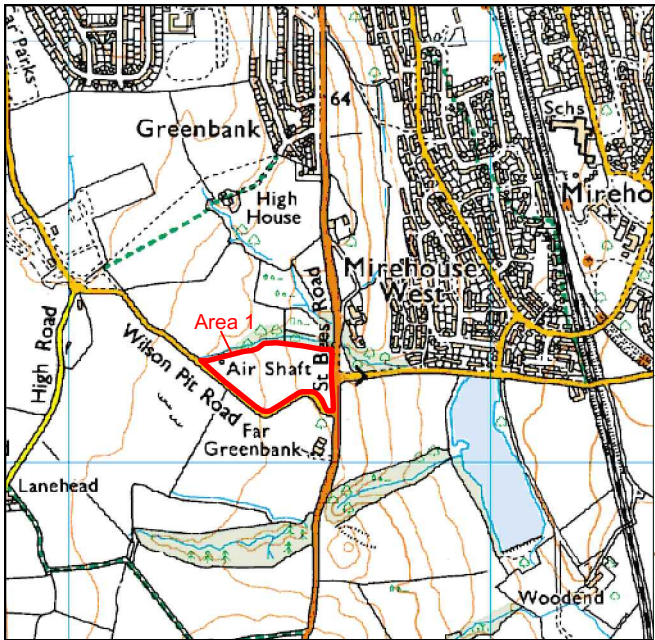
Appendix 2: Context Register

Context No.	Trench/Area	Fill of	Description
100	All		Topsoil - dark brown silty clay. Filled with modern 19th-20th Century pottery.
101	All		Subsoil - mid-light brown, silty clay.
102	All		Natural - a mixture of orange-yellow clay and grey boulder clay.
103	5	104	Mid-light brown clay, with brick, stones and modern plastic inclusions throughout. Shale/charcoal flacks throughout. W x 2.64m, H x 0.36m
104	5		Cut of linear feature. Possible ditch. Modern plastic found in base fill. Disturbed by burrow on south side. W 2.64m, H x 0.36m
105	6	106	Fill of shallow linear. Mid-light brown silty clay. W x 1.85m, H x 0.18m
106	6		Cut of shallow linear. W x 1.85m, H x 0.18m
107	7	108	Fill of plough scar. Light grey, silty clay with shale/charcoal flacks throughout.
108	7		Cut of Plough Scar. Very shallow with a flat base. W x 0.5m, H x 0.04m
109	7	110	Fill of Plough Scar. Dark grey, loose gravel base fill. W x 0.50m, H x 0.08m
110	7		Cut of Plough Scar. 'U'-shaped base, steep sides. W x 0.5m, H x 0.08m.

Appendix 3: Photographic Register

Number	Contexts/description	Taken from	Conditions
1	Trench 1 - general shot	N	Sunny
2	Trench 1 - general shot	S	Sunny
3	Trench 2 - general shot	E	Sunny
4	Trench 2 - general shot	W	Sunny
5	Treebole in Trench 2	N	Sunny
6	Trench 3 - general shot	W	Overcast
7	Trench 3 - general shot	E	Overcast
8	Brick and concrete filled modern pit within Trench 3	N	Overcast
9	Shale deposit, Trench 3	N	Overcast
10	Trench 4 - general shot	W	Bright
11	Trench 4 - general shot	E	Bright
12	Geological shale deposit - Trench 3	NE	Bright
13	Geological shale deposit - Trench 3	N	Bright
14	Pre-excavation shot of ditch in Trench 6	NW	Sunny
15	Trench 5 - general shot	S	Bright
16	Trench 5 - general shot	N	Bright
17	Modern ditch in Trench 5 [104]	E	Overcast
18	Modern ditch in Trench 5 [104]	S	Overcast
19	Trench 6 - general shot	W	Overcast
20	Trench 6 - general shot	E	Overcast
21	Pre excavation shot of ditch in Trench 6	NW	Overcast
22	Ditch [106] - Trench 6 south-east facing section	NW	Overcast
23	Ditch [106] - plan shot	NE	Overcast
24	Trench 7 - general shot	N	Overcast
25	Trench 7 - general shot	S	Overcast
26	Pre excavation shot of linear in Trench 7	S	Overcast
27	Trench 7, [110], west facing section	E	Overcast
28	Trench 7, [108], west facing section	E	Overcast
29	Trench 7, [110], west facing section	E	Overcast
30	General shots of backfilled trenches	E	Overcast
31	General shots of backfilled trenches	E	Overcast
32	General shots of backfilled trenches	NE	Overcast
33	General shots of backfilled trenches	S	Overcast
34	General shots of backfilled trenches	S	Overcast
35	General shots of backfilled trenches	SW	Overcast
36	General shots of backfilled trenches	S	Overcast
37	Site entrance post-excavation shot	SE	Overcast
38	Shot of JCB tracks up to gate, post excavation shot	SE	Overcast
39	General shots of backfilled trenches	NW	Overcast

FIGURES 1 – 2



Key:
 Trench Locations and features

Geophysics:

- ?Industrial (discrete anomaly / zone)
- ?Archaeology (discrete anomaly / zone)
- Ridge & Furrow
- ?Natural
- Uncertain Origin (discrete anomaly / trend)
- Pipe
- Ferrous (discrete anomaly / zone)



Fig. No: 1 Revision: A

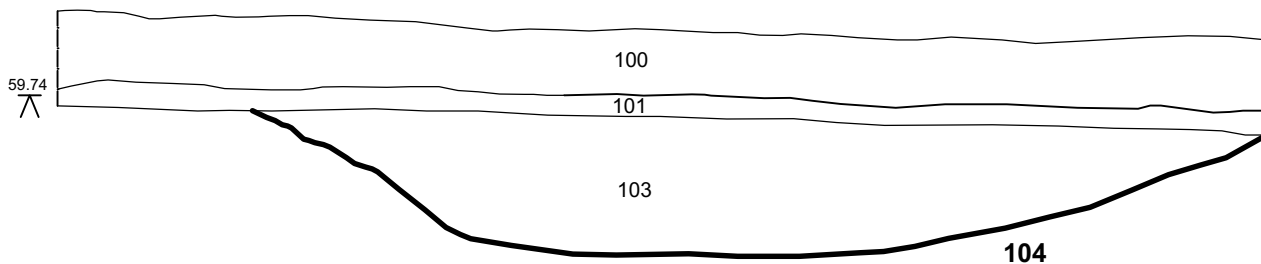
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Site Location and Trench Layout

Project:
Land at Wilson Pit Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria

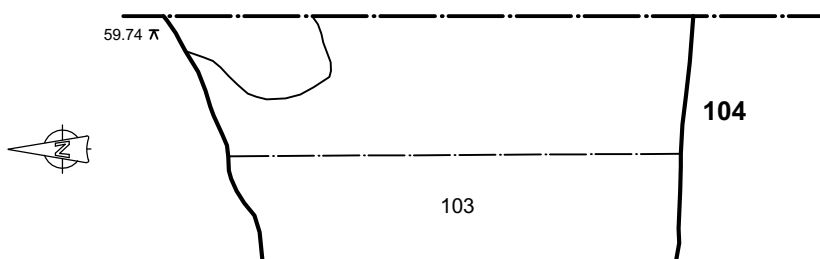
Client:
Story Homes

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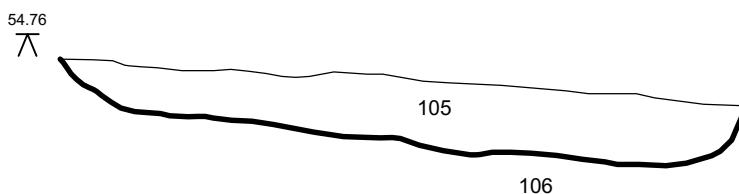




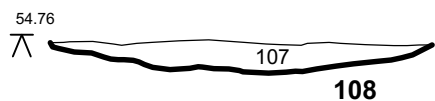
West-facing section in Trench 5



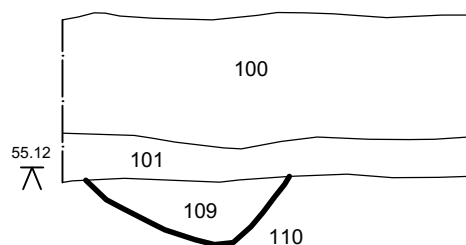
Feature 104 in Trench 5



Southeast-facing section in Trench 6



East-facing section in Trench 7



West-facing section in Trench 7

Key:

Fig No: 2 Revision: A Client: Story Homes

Title:
Plan and sections

Project:
Land at Wilson Pit Road,
Whitehaven, Cumbria

Scale at A4: Sections 1:20
Plan 1:50

PLATES 1-6



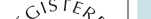

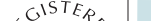

Plate No: 1-2		Revision: A	Project: Wilsons Pit Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria				CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD Unit 22 Moorland's Business Centre Balme Road, Cleckheaton West Yorkshire, BD19 4EZ T: 01274 864245 F: 01274 878494 yorkshire@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
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