ArcHeritage

Archaeological Supervision and Investigation Robin Hood's Cave, Creswell Crags

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Archaeological Supervision and Investigation

Robin Hood's Cave Stairs, Creswell Crags

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report outlines the results of a programme of Archaeological Supervision and Investigation undertaken by ArcHeritage for Creswell Heritage Trust. This was undertake as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent during repairs to wooden steps.

Creswell Crags is a Scheduled Monument (1003770) due to the extensive Palaeolithic archaeological and Pleistocene environmental remains that have been recovered from the caves in the gorge. The steps provide access to Robin Hood's Cave which has provide one of the largest assemblages of Palaeolithic material in the gorge.

The watching brief did not identify any undisturbed archaeological contexts but it did recover a small assemblage of artefacts form the topsoil of the scree slope. The artefacts recovered were mixed, and included material dating from the Middle Palaeolithic through to the modern day. The material recovered suggests the topsoil on the scree slope is disturbed but the recovery of Palaeolithic artefacts confirms that archaeologically significant material is contained within the scree slope. The small number of confirmed Palaeolithic finds does not enable any meaningful analysis to be made of them in isolation, but they confirm the presence of both Middle and Upper Palaeolithic artefacts on the slopes below Robin Hood's Cave.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the results of a programme of Archaeological Supervision and Investigation undertaken by ArcHeritage for Creswell Heritage Trust. The archaeological works were required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent during works to repair and renew parts of the wooden steps that provide access to the caves entrance. Creswell Crags is a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1003770) due to the extensive Palaeolithic archaeological and Pleistocene environmental remains that have been recovered from the caves in the gorge.

2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY

The site of Robin Hood's Cave is located in Creswell Crags, a gorge in the Magnesian Limestone on the Nottinghamshire Derbyshire border (Figure 1). The gorge contains numerous caves, many of which contain archaeologically sensitive deposits. These sensitive deposits include the scree slopes that are located at the base of the cliff faces that form the gorge.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological interest in the site derives from the Palaeolithic remains in the gorge. These are primarily associated with the caves artefacts and faunal remains have also been recovered from the scree slopes in the gorge (Pettitt, pers. comm.). The Palaeolithic remains date to the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic.

The Middle Palaeolithic remains date to the late Middle Palaeolithic, c. 60,000-40,000 BP. There remains are rare; the c.500 artefacts recovered from Robin Hoods cave comprise the largest assemblage from the caves in the gorge. The lithics from the Middle Palaeolithic are primarily produced from quartzite pebbles.

There are two periods of Upper Palaeolithic occupation that have been identified in the gorge, represented by Early Upper Palaeolithic Gravettian artefacts from around c. 26,000 BP and Late upper Palaeolithic Magdalenian/Creswellian remains from c. 15,000 BP. The absence of human activity in the mid Upper Palaeolithic coincides with the Devensian Late Glacial Maximum, the late major Ice age in Britain, when Britain was abandoned by humans due to the extreme conditions. The Upper Palaeolithic artefacts are primarily manufactured from flint that has been imported to the site.

The current works may impact on the scree slopes, which as noted above have the potential to contain significant archaeological remains. These will in part derive from material thrown out of the caves during the early excavations in the caves. Due to the techniques employed in the past, these early excavations will have missed some archaeological finds. In addition to the spoil from earlier excavations the scree slopes may also contain much earlier deposits dating back to the Palaeolithic period that could be archaeologically or palaeoenvironmentally significant.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Aims

The aims of the supervision and investigation were:

- to monitor the contractors works and ensure that they were carried out as permitted by the SMC;
- to record any archaeological remains exposed by the contractors groundworks;
- to recover any archaeological artefacts or ecofacts disturbed by the contractors ground works.

4.2 Contractors' works

The contractors were undertaking repairs to the wooden steps that provide access to the entrance to Robin Hood's cave (Fig 2). The works involved the removal of a number of rotten treads, two support beams and the replacement of four posts that supported the steps and the handrails on ether side of the steps.

The works involved:

- removal of the wooden structure;
- cleaning out the slots of the former beams to enable replacements to be located in the beam slots;
- excavation of three new post holes to enable new support posts to be erected;
- cleaning out of a forth post hole for reuse;
- driving two small wooden posts into the ground to provide stability to the new support beams.

All ground works undertaken by the contractor were subject to the programme of archaeological supervision and investigation.

4.3 Methodology

The archaeological works comprised a **continuous/comprehensive** programme of monitoring and investigation of the contractor's ground works. This was done to minimise disturbance, record any archaeological deposits exposed and recover any artefacts or ecofacts that were disturbed.

Due to the potential for small artefacts or fragments of artefacts all spoil removed during the excavation of the new post holes was sieved through a 7mm sieve.

No undisturbed archaeological deposits were identified so no palaeoenvironmental samples were collected for processing

5 RESULTS

A list of the contexts recorded during the monitoring is given in Appendix 3. In addition to the context numbers allocated to deposits and structures, post hole numbers were given to all of the new post holes excavated. These enabled the finds from each post hole to be recorded separately even though they were all recovered from the same topsoil layer.

5.1 Monitoring of contractors' works

The removal of the rotten steps and beams enabled the construction of the original wooden steps [100], and their impact on the scree slope, to be determined. The steps were supported from below by two large wooden beams. These beams were partially within a cut [104] that had been excavated into the surface of the topsoil [103]. The gap between the beams was filled with a fine limestone gravel [101] (Plate 1). This gravel appeared to have been placed between the beams suggesting that the cut, in which the beams were located, was the full width of the steps. It was not possible to confirm this as the gravel was not removed during the works as this was not necessary. In the base of the beam slots occasional flat limestone blocks [102] were identified. These blocks were surrounded by a matrix of the natural topsoil and it appears likely that theses were natural pieces in the scree slope that had been exposed by the construction of the original steps, and possibly disturbed during their exposure. No finds were recovered from the gravel [101], the only deposit associated with the original construction of the steps.

The new post holes were excavated into uppermost deposit of the scree slope. The post holes were all approximately 0.4m deep and between 0.2 and 0.3m across at the top with a slight taper down to the base.

5.2 Stratigraphic sequence

Only one deposit that predated the construction of the steps was identified; the natural loamy topsoil [103] that capped the scree slope. The depth of this deposit was not determined as none of the new post holes extended below the topsoil but it must have been at least 0.4m deep. Occasional limestone blocks were found within the topsoil; these were similar to those [102] identified in the base of the beam slots. From the post holes it would appear that these blocks were part of the natural soil sequence. They would have originated either from the stone rock face above the scree slope or were from spoil thrown out of the cave during previous excavations. The depth of topsoil observed is related to the development of the scree slope. The upper, topsoil, deposit on the slope will be an active environment with material being constantly added, removed and reworked. This environment would therefore be expected to incorporate material and finds from a number of sources. Finds could have been dropped on the slope, come down from higher up the slope or been incorporated from the mixing of material from within the scree slope.

5.3 Archaeological finds

The sieving of the excavated spoil recovered a number of artefacts from the topsoil [103]. The artefacts recovered are listed in Appendix 4 the Finds Catalogue. These finds were from a number of periods and confirm the mixed nature of the deposit.

The most significant finds recovered during the works were a small number of lithic artefacts. The lithic artefacts recovered were mate on two different stones, flint and quartzite pebbles. Neither are natural to the geology of the gorge.

Three pieces of quartzite were recovered, two from post hole 1 and one from post hole 2. One piece from post hole 1 appears to a cordal flake, the product of Middle Palaeolithic discoidal core technology in keeping with the Middle Paleolithic at Creswell (Pettitt pers. comm.). The two other pieces of quartzite are small chips that could not be confirmed as being worked although their presence on the scree slope is not natural.

One flint was recovered from post hole 3. The flint appears to be from the usual Upper Palaeolithic source and looks like debitage from blade/bladelet technology, thus this artefact is fully consistent with the Final Magdalenian/Creswellian of Creswell (Pettitt pers. comm.).

Three other stones were collected from the sieving. These were all from post hole 3 and did not appear worked but were collected due to their non local origin. They included two small pieces of what appeared to be a reddish sandstone and one small piece of a fine grained grey rock.

One small fragment of possible speleotherm (stalagmite or stalactite) recovered from post hole 1 is interesting. If this is speleotherm this can only have originated in a cave environment and its presence would confirm that the scree slope below the cave contains material derived from the cave. This material was probably thrown down the scree slope as spoil during some of the early excavations undertaken on Robin Hood's Cave.

Fragments of glass were recovered from post holes 1 and 2. The glass was all clear and included both window and bottle glass. All of the fragments were small and none of the bottle or vessel types could be determined from the fragments recovered. The material is all modern and of no archaeological significance.

Two small fragments of thin ferrous metal sheet were recovered from post holes 1 and 2. These were corroded and in poor condition. As these are fragments of thin sheets, found in a corroded state in the topsoil they are probably modern and of no archaeological significance.

One small fragment of ceramic was recovered from post hole 3. This was a small sherd of white pottery, the complex form of which suggested it may be from a figurine rather than a vessel. This piece is of modern date and is of no archaeological significance.

A total of four small fragments of animal bones were recovered, two each from post holes 1 and 2. These bone surfaces were all in good condition although the fragments were small. None could be identified to species but their condition and appearance did not suggest they were of any age and these are most likely modern in date.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The watching brief did not identify any undisturbed archaeological contexts but it did recover a small assemblage of artefacts form the topsoil of the scree slope. The artefacts recovered were mixed, and included material dating from the Middle Palaeolithic through to the modern day. The material recovered suggests the topsoil on the scree slope is disturbed but the recovery of Palaeolithic artefacts confirms that archaeologically significant material is contained within the scree slope. In addition there is the potential for undisturbed prehistoric material deeper down in the stratigraphic sequence of the scree slopes.

The number of confirmed Palaeolithic finds is too small to enable any meaningful analysis to be made of them in isolation, but they confirm the presence of both Middle and Upper Palaeolithic artefacts on the slopes below Robin Hood's Cave.

No further analysis is recommended of the lithic artefacts but they should be retained and deposited in the collections at the Creswell Crags Visitor Centre.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Roger Shelley Director of Creswell Heritage Trust for his assistance in undertaking the supervision and investigation.

FIGURES

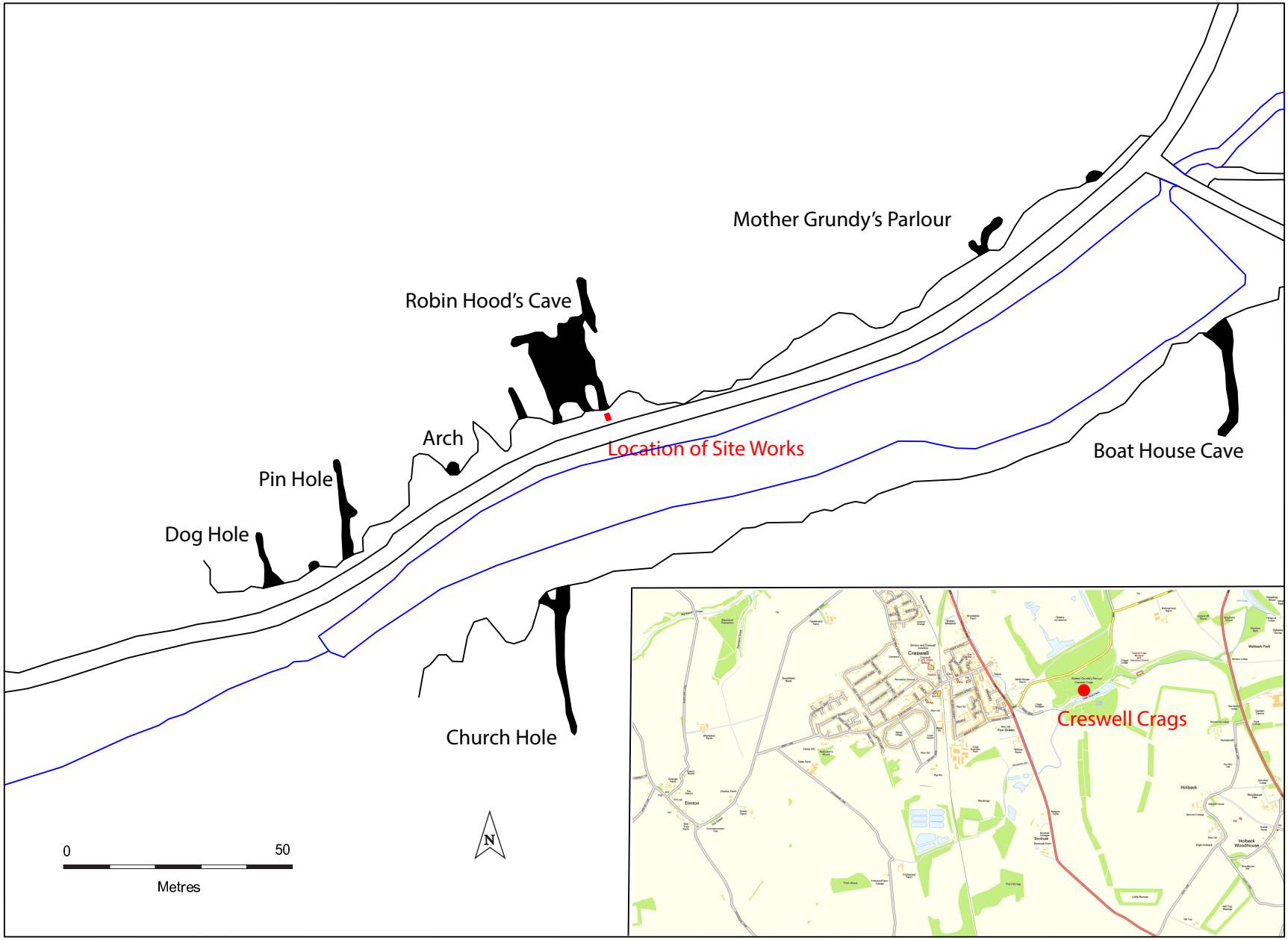

Figure 1: Site Location

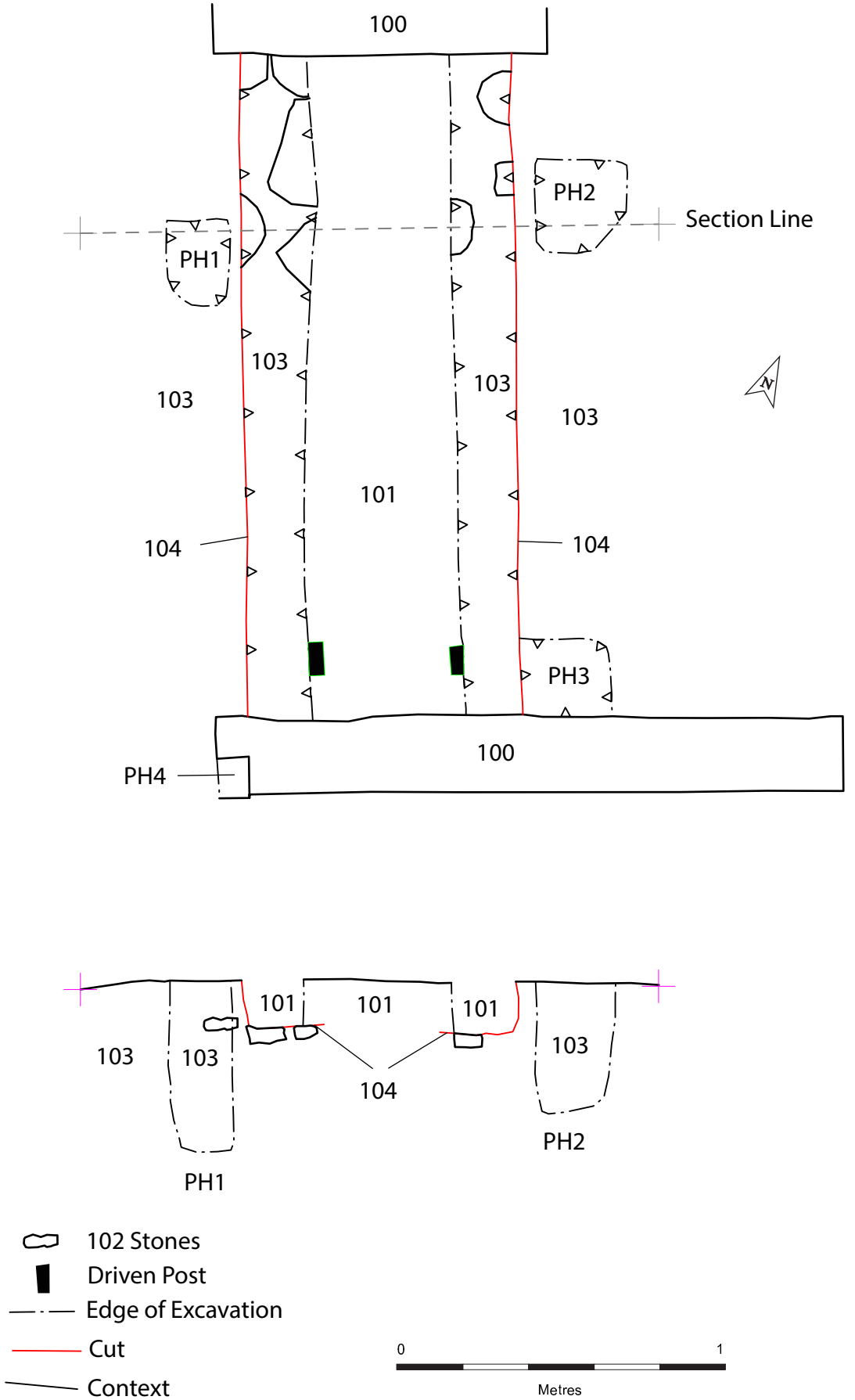

Figure 2: Plan and section

PLATES

Plate 1: View of site following removal of rotten steps and beams, facing north (scale 0.4m)

Plate 2: Replacement beams in place, facing north

Plate 3: Post hole 1, facing north (scale 0.4m)

Plate 4: Post hole 2, facing north (scale 0.4m)

Plate 5: Post hole 3, facing south (scale 0.4m)

Plate 6: Worked quartzite pebble from post hole 1 Middle Palaeolithic

Plate 7 Worked Flint from post hole 3, possibly Upper Palaeolithic

APPENDIX 1: INDEX TO ARCHIVE

Item	Number of items
Context register	1
Context sheets	10
Photographic register	1
Drawing register	1
Original drawings	2
Digital photographs	16
Finds register	1
Written Scheme of Investigation	1
Report	1

Table 1: List of archive contents

APPENDIX 2: WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAELOGICAL SUPERVISION AND RECORDING

Site Location: Robin Hood's Cave, Creswell Crags

Proposal: Repair of wooden steps up to the cave. This will involve the removal of four posts and their replacement. If possible, the replacement posts will be inserted into the holes of the former posts.

Prepared for: Creswell Crags Visitor Centre by ArcHeritage, 23rd October 2015

Status of WSI: Draft, for approval

1 SUMMARY

1.1 Robin Hood's cave is located in Creswell Crags, a small gorge in the Magnesian Limestone on the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire border. The gorge is noted for its extensive remains of Palaeolithic archaeology and is a Scheduled Monument.

1.2 The current works are required to repair wooden steps that provide public access to Robin Hood's Cave. Due to the site's status, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required to undertake works on the site but, due to the nature of the works, they do not require planning consent. Roger Shelley of Creswell Heritage Trust has applied for, and received, SMC for the works.

1.2 Within the SMC there is a requirement for archaeological supervision and recording to be undertaken on the groundworks associated with the construction. This is required to monitor the contractor's works, to record any archaeological deposits exposed and to recover any artefacts or ecofacts disturbed.

1.3 This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been prepared in response to the requirements of the SMC.

2 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site of Robin Hood's Cave is located in Creswell Crags, a gorge in the Magnesian Limestone on the Nottinghamshire Derbyshire border. The gorge contains numerous caves, many of which contain archaeologically sensitive deposits. These sensitive deposits include the scree slopes that are located at the base of the cliff faces that form the gorge.

3 DESIGNATIONS & CONSTRAINTS

3.1 Creswell Crags is a Scheduled Monument, due to the extensive Palaeolithic archaeological and Pleistocene environmental remains that have been recovered from the caves in the gorge. The status of the gorge as a Scheduled Monument means that SMC is required on all construction activities in the gorge.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

4.1 The archaeological interest in the site derives from the Palaeolithic remains in the gorge. These are primarily associated with the caves artefacts and faunal remains have also been recovered from the scree slopes in the gorge (Pettitt, pers. comm.).

4.2 The current works have the potential to impact on the scree slopes and the watching brief is required to minimise disturbance and record any archaeological deposits exposed and recover any artefacts or ecofacts that are disturbed.

5. GROUNDWORKS TO BE MONITORED

5.1 This work will comprise a **continuous/comprehensive** watching brief, on the excavation of all foundations, for the staircase repairs and any subsequent groundworks involving excavation.

6 DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

6.1 All excavations undertaken by the contractors will be done at an appropriate speed to allow the archaeologist to recognise, record and retrieve any archaeological deposits and material.

6.2 It is not intended that the archaeological monitoring should unduly delay site works. However, the archaeologist on site should be given the opportunity to observe, clean, assess and, where appropriate, hand excavate, sample and record any exposed deposits or finds of archaeological interest. In order to fulfil the requirements of this WSI, it may be necessary to halt the excavations to enable the archaeology to be recorded properly.

6.3 Excavation shall not be undertaken in the immediate vicinity of archaeological remains until the remains have been recorded and the archaeologist on site has given permission for operations to recommence at that location.

7 RECORDING METHODOLOGY

7.1 A base plan will be produced to record the location and depth of all areas subject to groundworks.

7.2 Unique context numbers will be assigned to all deposits disturbed by the contractor's groundworks. Each context will be described in full on a *pro forma* context record sheet, in accordance with the accepted context record conventions.

7.3 Archaeological deposits will be planned at a basic scale of 1:20, with individual features requiring greater detail being planned at a scale of 1:10. Larger scales will be utilised as appropriate. Cross-sections of excavations and features will be drawn to a basic scale of 1:10 or 1:20, depending on the size of the section. All drawings will be related to Ordnance Datum. All drawings will be drawn on inert materials. All drawings will adhere to accepted drawing conventions

7.4 Photographs of archaeological deposits and features will be taken. This will include general views of excavated areas and of details such as sections, as considered necessary. The photographic register will comprise 35mm format black and white prints and digital photography. All site photography will adhere to accepted photographic record guidelines.

7.5 Areas which are inaccessible (e.g. for health and safety reasons) will be recorded as thoroughly as possible within the site constraints. In these instances, recording may be entirely photographic, with sketch drawings only.

7.6 All finds will be collected and handled following the guidance set out in the IfA guidance for archaeological materials. All archaeological finds will be recovered and recorded to the context it was recovered from. Finds of particular interest (worked lithics faunal remains) will be retrieved as Small Finds and located on plans. Other finds, eg. finds within the topsoil and dense/discrete deposits of finds, will be collected as Bulk Finds, from discrete contexts and bagged by material type. Any dense/discrete deposits will have their limits defined on the appropriate plan. All spoil from the cave / cave mouth will be sieved to approx.. 5mm, if pristine deposits rather than old excavation dumps are encountered then we will recover all material for off-site processing to a method to be agreed with HE.

7.7 All artefacts and ecofacts will be appropriately packaged and stored under optimum conditions, as detailed in the RESCUE/UKIC publication *First Aid for Finds,* and recording systems must be compatible with the recipient museum. All finds that fall within the purview of the Treasure Act (1996) will be reported to HM Coroner, according to the procedures outlined in the Act, after discussion with the client and the local authority.

7.8 An environmental sampling programme will be undertaken for the recovery and identification of charred and waterlogged remains, where suitable deposits are identified. The collection and processing of environmental samples will be undertaken in accordance with Historic England guidelines (2011).

> **Bulk-sieved Sample** (BS). Sample size will depend upon the context/feature size, but should be up to 40-60 litres in size (if the context size allows). They are taken for the recovery of charcoal, burnt seeds, bone and artefacts. The samples will be processed (flotation) on site, where possible, with 1mm and 500micron sieves on a rack to collect the carbonised washover. The retents and flots will then be dried, sorted and assessed to advise the potential for further analysis.

7.9 Other samples will be taken, as appropriate, in consultation with ArcHeritage specialists and the Historic England Regional Science Advisor, as appropriate (e.g. C14). Material removed from site will be stored in appropriate controlled environments.

7.10 In the event of human remains being discovered during the evaluation, these will be left *in-situ*, covered and protected, in the first instance. The removal of human remains will only take place in compliance with environmental health regulations and following discussions with, and with the approval of, the Secretary of State and Historic England.

7.11 Where a licence is issued, all human skeletal remains must be properly removed in accordance with the terms of that licence. Where a licence is not issued, the treatment of human remains will be in accordance with the requirements of Civil Law, IfA Technical Paper 13 (1993) and Historic England guidance.

8 REPORT & ARCHIVE PREPARATION

8.1 Upon completion of the groundworks, a report will be prepared to include the following:

a) A non-technical summary of the results of the work.

b) An introduction, which will include the planning reference number, grid reference and dates when the fieldwork took place.

c) An account of the methodology and results of the operation, describing structural data, associated finds and environmental data.

d) A selection of photographs and drawings, including an overall plan of the site accurately identifying the areas monitored.

e) Specialist artefact and environmental reports as necessary.

f) Details of archive location and destination (with accession number, where known), together with a catalogue of what is contained in that archive.

g) A copy of the key OASIS form details

h) Copies of the Brief and WSI

i) Additional photographic images may be supplied on a CDROM appended to the report

8.2 Copies of the report will be submitted to the commissioning body and Derbyshire HER (also in PDF format).

8.3 The requirements for archive preparation and deposition will be addressed and undertaken in a manner agreed with the recipient museum. In this instance, Creswell Crags Visitor Centre is recommended.

8.4 Provision for the publication of results, if appropriate, will be made.

8.5 The owner of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the information and documentation arising from the work would grant a licence to the County Council and the museum accepting the archive to use such documentation for their statutory functions and provide copies to third parties as an incidental to such functions. Under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR), such documentation is required to be made available to enquirers if it meets the test of public interest. Any information disclosure issues would be resolved between the client and the archaeological contractor before completion of the work. EIR requirements do not affect IPR.

9 HEALTH AND SAFETY

9.1 Health and Safety issues will take priority over archaeological matters and all archaeologists will comply with relevant Health and Safety legislation.

9.2 A Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the start of site works.

10 TIMETABLE & STAFFING

10.1 The project fieldwork will start on Tuesday, 27th October and will take one to two days.

10.2 The project will be managed for ArcHeritage by Dr. Glyn Davies, ArcHeritage Operations Manager, and will be undertaken in the field by Glyn Davies and/or Laura Strafford.

11 MONITORING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK

11.1 Tim Allen (Historic England) will be informed of the date of the fieldwork and will be afforded the opportunity to visit the site during, and prior to completion of, the on-site works. He will be informed of any significant discoveries during the fieldwork, so that a site visits can be made to view such findings, as necessary. Any changes to this agreed WSI will only be made in consultation with Historic England.

12 Copyright

12.1 ArcHeritage retain the copyright on this document. It has been prepared expressly for the named client and may not be passed to third parties for use or for the purpose of gathering quotations.

13 KEY REFERENCES

ADS and Digital Antiquity. 2013. Caring for Digital Data in Archaeology: A Guide to Good Practice.

Brown, D.H. 2007. Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation. CIfA/AAA.

Museum and Galleries Commission. 1992. Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections.

RCHMS. 1999. 'Recording Archaeological Field Monuments – a descriptive specification.'

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Neal, V., and Watkinson, D. (eds). 1998. *First Aid for Finds: practical guide for archaeologists.* United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, Archaeology Section; 3rd Revised Edition.

See the website of the CIfA for all Guidance and Standards documentation. http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa

See the Historic England website for a full list of guidance documents.
http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/advice-and-guidance

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF CONTEXTS

Context No.	Description	Date
100	Old wooden staircase structure	Modern
101	Limestone Gravel	Modern
102	Limestone blocks in loamy matrix	
103	Brown loam topsoil	
104	cut for wooden beams of first staircase	Modern
	Cut for new handrail post hole 1	2015
	Cut for new handrail post hole 2	2015
	Cut for new handrail post hole 3	2015
	Cut for new handrail post hole 4	2015
	New driven posts	2015

Table 2: Context list

APPENDIX 4: FINDS CATALOGUE

Post hole	Context No.	Material	Description
1	103	Quartzite	A quartzite piece the product of Middle Palaeolithic discoidal core technology (essentially a cordal flake), in keeping with the Middle Palaeolithic at Creswell in general
1	103	Quartzite	A small chip from a quartzite pebble not obvious working
2	103	Quartzite	A small flake of quartzite from a quartzite pebble,
3	103	Flint	The appearance of the flint suggests it is from the same source as much of the Upper Palaeolithic flint at Creswell. The piece appears to be debitage from blade/bladelet technology that would be fully consistent with the Final Magdalenian/Creswellian of Creswell
3	103	?	A small irregular piece of fine grained grey green possibly igneous rock
3	103	Sandstone	Two small irregular lumps of reddish sandstone

Table 3: Catalogue of lithics

Post hole	Context No.	Material	Description	Date
1	103	Speleotherm?	A small tube like piece of calcium carbonate/calcite , possibly a fragment of stalactite or stalagmite that originated in the cave and has been thrown out on to the talus slope during previous excavations	
1	103	Iron	Fragment of a small flat iron plate with a hole through it	
1	103	Glass	4 fragments of clear window glass 3 fragments of clear vessel glass	modern
1	103	Bone	1 vertebrae, unfused body fragment, unidentified to species appears about sheep sized 1 small fragment of bone unidentified to bone element or species	
2	103	Iron	fragment of a small flat iron plate	
2	103	Glass	4 fragments of clear vessel glass	modern
2	103	Bone	1 small fragment of long bone shaft 1 small fragment of a mandible, all teeth missing (cat/fox size)	
3	103	Ceramic	1 small fragment of a while ceramic, this has a complex form and may be from a figurine rather than a vessels	modern

Table 4: Catalogue of other finds

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