

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
AT THE NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY  
BRACKENHURST CAMPUS,  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, 2012**



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# AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT BRACKENHURST CAMPUS NEAR SOUTHWELL, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, 2012

## **Introduction**

Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Nottingham Trent University (through GK Heritage Ltd) in 2012 to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the site for a new library at the University's Brackenhurst college campus near Southwell, Nottinghamshire (Figure 1). The site of the new building is immediately east of Pippin Cottage (a building of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date), situated in the north-west corner of the campus (Figure 2). The site had been the subject of a previous assessment by GK Heritage (*Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Assessment. Nottingham Trent University Brackenhurst Campus Library*. November 2011), which was followed by a detailed written scheme of investigation for a watching brief. The latter was a condition of Newark & Sherwood District Council's Notice of Decision in relation to planning application 11/01681/fulm for the site.

## **Watching brief**

The initial watching brief on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup> August followed on from the demolition of two temporary teaching structures and a pair of semi-detached houses dating from the 1950s (Plate 1). This was followed by site clearance of paving, trees and other vegetation.

The demarcated and fenced-off area was about 40m x 50m in size. Demolition and subsequent clearance had removed most of the upper topsoil from the site, although areas of it remained at the north and south ends of the site, varying at depths of 150-300mm. The subsoil was found to be relatively shallow and across much of the site the underlying natural was exposed. This is Gunthorpe Member mudstone, consisting mainly of orange-red clays. The site was intensively walked and spoil tips where topsoil and subsoil had been deposited were checked for finds. Uprooted trees were still in place and their boles were also checked for archaeological finds. The site was photographed from all angles.

With the exception of several modern drainage channels, no cut features of archaeological interest were spotted. There was a quantity of modern detritus (brick and tile fragments and modern pottery sherds) across the site and during inspection of the spoil tips two pot sherds of likely medieval date were recovered; these were later checked by pottery specialist Paul Blinkhorn – his assessment is given below. Stray finds of medieval date can be expected on land farmed during that period and do not necessarily signify nearby occupation.

The site was again visited on 18<sup>th</sup> October, by which stage the construction stage had commenced and a series of foundation trenches had been excavated across the south half of the library's footprint. These varied in width from 0.6m– 1.5m and in depth from 1m-3m. The central part of the site had been further reduced to a level within the natural and no features were visible in the still open trench sections or had been seen by the site manager in those trenches already opened and infilled with concrete. In conclusion, the site proved to be of no particular archaeological interest.

### **Pottery from Brackenhurst College, Southwell, Notts**

*Paul Blinkhorn*

Two sherds of pottery were found, with a total weight of 30g. The larger of these (24g) is a slightly underfired sherd of Midland Purple Ware, probably of 15<sup>th</sup> century date (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 427), whilst the other, smaller sherd (6g) is somewhat abraded with a grey sandy fabric. It is probably of medieval date.

### **Bibliography**

McCarthy, M.R. and Brooks, C.M., 1988. *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900-1600*. Leicester University Press.



Figure 1: Location of the Nottingham Trent University Brackenhurst College in relation to Southwell, Nottinghamshire and the River Trent (bottom right). Scale 1:10,000. Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown Copyright and database right 2012.





Plate 1: View of the site prior to the demolition showing the semi-detached houses and one of the two teaching blocks.



Plate 2: View looking north showing initial topsoil clearance.





Plate 3: A later stage in the machine clearance of the library site.

Plate 5: Section of newly dug foundation trench.



Plate 4: One of several modern-era drains crossing the site.



Plate 6: Infilled foundation trenches crossing the site.