

Newark Castle, Walking Trail Signage Installation: Archaeological Watching Brief

Report On An Archaeological Watching Brief



North-west facing photograph of installed sign towards south-east limit of castle grounds

For Newark & Sherwood District Council

Prepared by P. Flintoft

Report Number: 029/2015

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SUMMARY

- An Archaeological Watching Brief at Newark Castle was undertaken to monitor the installation of an information sign. The sign, which was erected as part of the English Civil War walking trail, required two hand excavated reception pits to establish a secure setting.
- Excavation ceased when the first archaeological horizon was identified. The horizon contained stonework which appeared to be consistent with the building materials used to construct the castle. This layer, which was present at depths of 0.59m (Pit 1) and 0.49m (Pit 2) may represent *in-situ* demolition materials or may be the result of later re-working of deposits.
- The limited space in which to characterise the deposits resulted in a cautious working methodology which utilised wider, shallow reception pits rather than the deeper, more intrusive installations which may have disturbed deeper sensitive archaeological remains.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On account of the archaeologically sensitive context, the installation of an information sign within the grounds of Newark castle required an Archaeological Watching Brief to monitor all associated ground works. The sign, which was erected as part of the English Civil War walking trail, required two reception pits which dug to an intended depth of 0.8m below the modern ground-surface.
- 1.2 All the intrusive works were undertaken by hand digging which ceased at the first archaeological horizon identified in Pit 1 and Pit 2 at 0.59m and 0.49m respectively. This horizon contained silty clay mixed with large pieces of masonry which appeared to be consistent with the building materials used to construct the castle. No foundation trenches were identified in association with the stonework, which is not therefore thought to represent *in-situ* structural remains. The stone and associated layer may therefore be a result of the presence of demolition debris or could represent subsequent re-working of deposits.
- 1.3 Newark Castle (SK 7954SE) was listed as a heritage asset of national significance and a Scheduled Monument in 1950 (English Heritage list entry number 1196278).



Figure 1: Plan of Newark Castle. North is aligned with page (Ordnance Survey map reproduced with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright Licence No. AL 100020618).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Location and geology

- 2.1 The sign was located on flat ground towards the southeastern limit of the castle grounds close to Castle Gate (Figure 2).
- 2.2 The superficial geology on which the castle is built is the Balderton Sand and Gravel Member, deposits of mixed alluvial clay, silt and gravel which was deposited in the

quaternary period 2 million years ago. This material overlies the Edwalton Member Mudstone, Sedimentary Bedrock which formed approximately 217-229 million years ago (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

Archaeological and historical background

- 2.3 Previous archaeological excavations within the confines of the castle discovered some of the earliest evidence for use of the area, including 53 Christian graves and several boundary ditches dating to the late Saxon period. These discoveries indicate that an earlier structure of some size and status such as a manorial complex and perhaps even a church may have existed on the site prior to the castle (Marshall and Samuels 1997).
- 2.4 During the early 12th century Newark was extensively developed by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln. In the 1130s Henry I granted permission for the construction of a timber castle (Kinsley 1989). The castle was rebuilt in stone and is reported to have been structurally robust, having successfully defended itself in the siege of 1218 against the supporters of King Henry III (Kinsley 1989).
- 2.5 The castle continued to develop after the revolt of the rebel barons, improvements including the addition of a stone curtain wall, a water gate, an undercroft and towers, which were built in 1300 presumably on top of pre-existing timber structures (Kinsley 1991). Documentary evidence suggests that the north-west tower and the curtain wall were largely re-modelled between 1320 and 1340. Excavation of the undercroft in the 1950s demonstrated that it was originally built in the 12th century and largely remodelled in the 13th century (Barley and Waters 1956).
- 2.6 A structure comprising two halls was built on top of the undercroft, with the newly constructed stone curtain wall forming its western and northern extent. In addition to the *Great Hall* and the *Bishop's Hall*, service rooms and the *Great Chambers* were also contained within the building. The remnants of these individual rooms can be seen today in the elevation of the inner curtain wall (Marshall and Samuels 1997).
- 2.7 A major scheme of fortification building was undertaken in 1536 as a response to the Catholic rebellion against Henry the VIII. The castle was taken under Royal control in 1547 and remained so until the Civil War in 1642 (Kinsley 1991). After the civil war the castle was partially demolished to prevent it from being used in any future military campaigns.
- 2.8 Interest in the castle during the Victorian period by antiquarians and architects resulted in renovation and restoration. An example of re-facing is clearly visible on the north-west tower.

3. OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The objective of the Archaeological Watching Brief was to identify the presence of any archaeological remains likely to be affected by intrusive aspects of the development and to achieve an appropriate level of *preservation by record*. Where practical (within the constraints of the Watching Brief and development), this work included an assessment of the overall extent, date and state of preservation of archaeological remains.
- 3.2 ***The archaeological work:***
- 3.2.1 Continuous archaeological monitoring of intrusive ground works was undertaken, with the prior agreement of the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for the Region (Tim Allen, English Heritage), as these groundworks had the potential to impact on features and layers of archaeological significance.

- 3.2.2 The groundworks involved the excavation of two small pits in order to secure the feet of a sign which will carry interpretative material relating to the Civil War walking-trail around Newark.
- 3.2.3 All intrusive ground works were undertaken by the contractor and were carried out under an archaeological watching brief. Where present, archaeological features and materials were recorded by the attending archaeologist.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The archaeological contractor (Trent & Peak Archaeology) implemented the following procedure:
- 4.2 TPA provided archaeological monitoring of excavations for installation of an interpretative board.
- Exposed trenches*
- 4.3 Within Health & Safety constraints, the contractor ensured access to service and/or foundation trenches to permit examination/cleaning and where necessary recording of sections. Time was allowed for such work, before any form of backfilling occurred.
- 4.4 All archaeological deposits and remains were, where possible, cleaned by hand, examined and recorded
- 4.5 Recording, as a minimum, included the location and extent of the monitored areas of excavation, their depth, and the deposits exposed, both by scale drawing (section and/or plan where applicable) and photograph (monochrome prints/digital).
- Project staff*
- 4.7 The watching brief was managed by Paul Johnson the attending archaeologist was: Paul Flintoft (Project Officer).

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 Two hand dug reception pits were required for the insertion of supporting metal posts. The intention was for the pits to be narrow (not exceeding 0.3m in width) and excavated by hand to a depth of 0.8m. Archaeological remains were however identified within both of the pits. As a consequence, both pits were widened and excavated to a much shallower depth. The increased lateral space meant that the pits could accommodate more concrete which could adequately support the sign.
- Pit 1*
- 5.2 The easternmost reception pit, Pit 1, revealed damaged stone at 0.59m, which appeared to be broadly consistent with stone used to build the castle. As the desired formation depth could not be achieved, an alternative strategy which involved the widening of the reception pit to a 0.6m square was devised. The widening of the pit revealed further stone which was mixed with a light pink sandy clay (0003). A construction cut for a foundation trench in association with the masonry could not be identified and the stonework was not considered to occur in the regular organisation expected of a wall or structure. The remains identified at 0.59m are therefore regarded as representing building demolition material or re-worked deposits which could be associated with many of the destructive events of Newark Castle's turbulent history.
- 5.3 Sealing context (0003) was (0002), a brownish grey clayey silt with moderate inclusions of small fragmented brick remains. Context (0002) was stratigraphically preceded by, (0001), a 0.11m thick topsoil horizon which was recorded as a light brown clayey silt.

Pit 2

- 5.4 Pit 2 was located 0.4m to the west of Pit 1. A narrow pit was hand dug to establish that the sequence of deposits was consistent with its counterpart. The observations in Pit 2 were indeed commensurate with Pit 1. The only noticeable difference was the depth of 0.49m at which archaeological material (0003) was identified.
- 5.5 Context (0003) was sealed by (0002) which measured 0.39m in thickness and was sealed by topsoil (0001) which was recorded as being 0.1m thick.
- 5.6 As a measure to protect the archaeological remains from the concrete which was added to set the sign, 50mm of sharp sand was added to the base of each of the reception pits.
- 5.7 In order to erect the sign at an appropriate level given the reduction in the depth of the reception pits, 0.25m was cut off the supporting posts prior to its erection.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The watching brief identified stone work which was not regarded as been oriented or arranged in a fashion indicative of structural remains. The lack of a construction cut and the disparate organisation of the stone work within the larger soil matrix suggest that (0003) may relate to demolished building remains.
- 6.2 Observations within each of the pits demonstrated that the suspected demolition horizon appears uneven although the sub-surface undulation is not reflected on the relatively flat surface. Context (0002) may therefore have been used as a levelling deposit.
- 6.3 No diagnostic finds were recovered from any of the layers which were observed as part of the watching brief. As a consequence of the dearth of finds, no dates can be attributed to either the deposition of (0003) or the layers which seal it.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Three layers were identified as part of the Watching Brief, all of which remain undated. The hand excavation ceased at approximately 0.6m upon the discovery of a stone rich layer. None of the stone appeared to be structural and it is therefore concluded that the layer could represent possible *in-situ* demolition material or deposits which have been reworked in subsequent years.
- 7.2 In lieu of further detail which could validate the suggestion that layer (0003) may have archaeological significance, a cautious methodology was employed which utilised wider, shallow reception pits rather than the planned, deeper, more intrusive installations which may have disturbed sensitive archaeological remains. This strategy proved to be appropriate for the fixing of the sign and also as a method to protect the potentially sensitive remains.

Acknowledgments

Trent & Peak Archaeology would like to thank Tim Allen at English Heritage and Deborah Johnson at Newark and Sherwood District Council for their assistance and guidance with the project.

8. Bibliography

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Barley, M. W and Waters, F. 1956. Newark Castle-Excavations 1953-6 *In* Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire. Derby and Sons Ltd, Nottingham: 20-33.

British Geological Survey. Geology of Britain Viewer.
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Appendix 1 Context Register

Table 1: Context register

Context	Above	Below	Cuts	Cut by	Thickness	Description
(0001)	(0002)	+	N/A	N/A	0.10-0.11m	Organically active topsoil
(0002)	(0003)	(0001)	N/A	N/A	0.29-0.38m	Levelling material
(0003)	-	(0002)	N/A	N/A	Unknown	Demolition material

Appendix 2 Archive Statement

An OASIS form has been filled out for this site and can be reference as follows:
Trentpea1-206152. An archive index is provided below:

Table 2: Archive index

<i>Field Records</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Context Sheet	Record of each intervention	3
Registers	Registers	2
A3 Drafting Film	Scale plans and Sections	1
Photographs	All views	34 x Colour (digi)
<i>Documents</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Written scheme of investigation	Statement of the aims, objectives and methodology for the project.	1
Health & Safety	Safe working statement & risk assessment	1
Report to client	Report of findings.	1

The archive is temporarily stored at the TPA office at Unit 1, Holly Lane, Chilwell, Nottingham, NG9 4AB. The report will be deposited with English Heritage and at Nottinghamshire HER, additionally a copy of the report will be uploaded to OASIS.

Appendix 3 OASIS Record

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM:

England

[List of Projects](#) | [Manage Projects](#) | [Search Projects](#) | [New project](#) | [Change your details](#) | [HER coverage](#) | [Change country](#) | [Log out](#)

[Printable version](#)

OASIS ID: trentpea1-206152

Project details

Project name Newark Castle Civil War Walking Trail Sign

Short description of the project An Archaeological Watching Brief at Newark Castle was undertaken to monitor the installation of an information sign. The sign, which was erected as part of the English Civil War walking trail, required two hand excavated reception pits to establish a secure setting. Excavation ceased when the first archaeological horizon was identified. The layer contained stonework which appeared to be consistent with the building materials used to construct the castle. The layer may represent in-situ demolition materials or may be the result of later re-working of deposits. The limited space in which to characterise the deposits resulted in a cautious working methodology which utilised wider, shallow reception pits rather than the deeper, more intrusive installations which may have disturbed deeper sensitive archaeological remains.

Project dates Start: 09-03-2015 End: 13-03-2015

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 14 - Recreational usage

Monument type CASTLE Medieval

Project location

Country England

Site location NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NEWARK AND SHERWOOD NEWARK Newark Castle

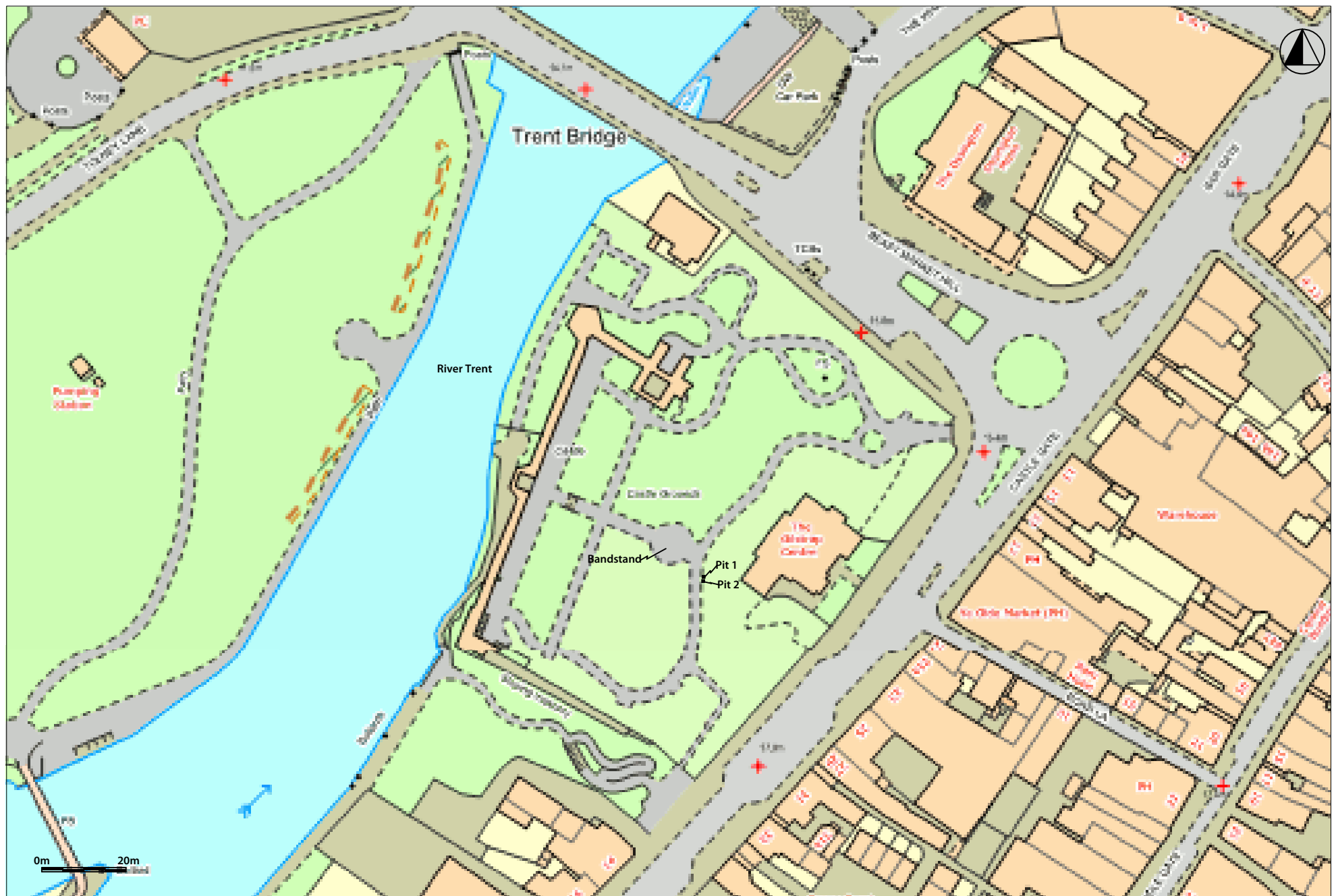
Postcode NG24 1BG

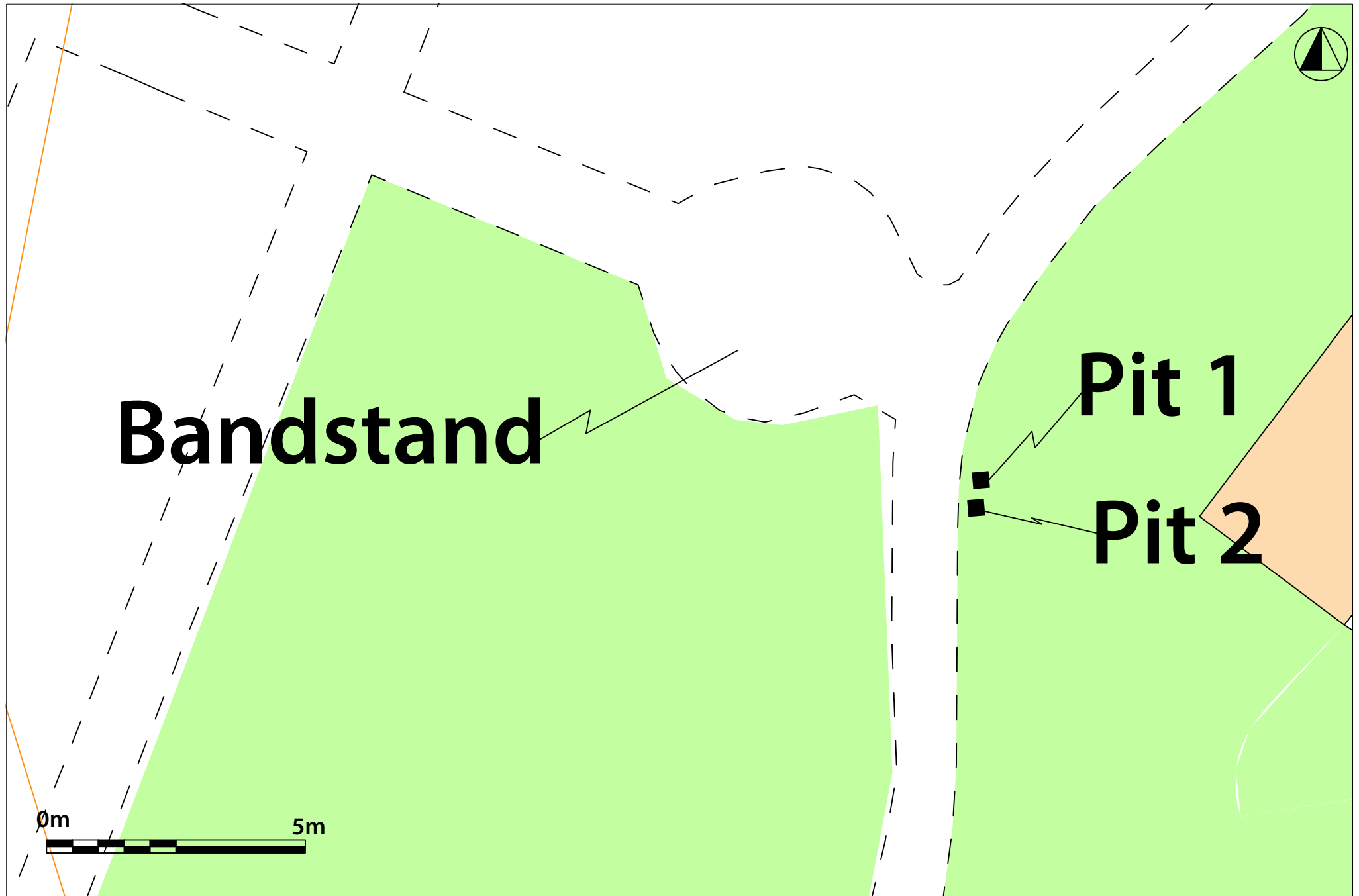
Study area 1.20 Square metres

Entered by Paul Flintoft (Pflintoft@yorkat.co.uk)

Entered on 13 March 2015

Appendix 4 Figures





Appendix 5 Excavation Plates



Plate 1. North-west looking photograph of reception pits with bandstand and castle in the background



Plate 2. Pits 1 (located to the left) and Pit 2 (located to the right).



Plate 3. Reception Pit 1



Plate 4. Reception Pit 2



Plate 5. Installation of sign