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**UNIT 1, CASTLE PRECINCT, KNARESBOROUGH,
NORTH YORKSHIRE:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**



On behalf of Martinhal LLP

CS Archaeology
December 2009

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Project Number 46

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Frontispiece view of the percussion rig (Churchill Brothers Limited)

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1 SUMMARY

- 1 1 An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken at Unit 1 Castle Precinct, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. This work forms a continuing requirement to meet a condition placed on Scheduled Monument Consent by English Heritage. The archaeological watching brief consisted of preparing a Written Scheme of Investigation and monitoring the drilling of eight boreholes. The boreholes were designed to inform future engineering strategies necessary to stabilise the building.
- 1 2 Examination of the borehole cores has enabled a characterisation of the archaeological deposits beneath the former school building (Unit 1). The location and depth of Knaresborough Castle's Moat has, been revealed.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2 1 The Proposed Development Area (PDA) consists of a roughly rectangular plot of land (0.055 hectare). This plot is contained within the building footprint of a former National School (a grade II Listed Building). The school is centred on NGR SE 3497 5693 and lies within the Scheduled Monument area of Knaresborough Castle (Mon No 34841).
- 2 2 In October 2008 two test pits (TP1 & 4(2)) were excavated. These reached a depth of over 2 metres but no evidence of natural geology was encountered. In November 2009, a further eight boreholes (BH 1-8) were excavated all of which encountered solid geology.
- 2 3 The PDA lies within the parish of Knaresborough, 5 kms north-east of Harrogate (Figure 1). The PDA is situated at the north-eastern side of the Scheduled Monument of Knaresborough Castle (SM No 34841, Figure 2) and lies within the town's Conservation Area.
- 2 4 The watching brief was undertaken on the 26 and 27 November 2009 in response to a condition on Scheduled Monument Consent to convert the former school, which had recently served as a solicitor's office, into commercial premises.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3 1 The earliest documentary reference to Knaresborough is recorded in the Domesday Book of AD 1086. The place name suggests a defended settlement prior to the Norman Conquest. Anglo-Saxon Burghs usually had a defensible bank or ditch but there are no surviving records for the construction of a bank or ditch around Knaresborough. Knaresborough Castle dates to the early 12th century (CS Archaeology 2008).
- 3 2 The first record of a market to be held at Knaresborough was in 1206. During the 13th century there was a strong ironstone industry in the town's hinterland and the town also developed in importance as a woollen centre (*ibid*).
- 3 3 The castle is typical of the medieval period with an impressive tower and walled enclosures or wards with an external moat. Access to the castle was via two gateways which were defended by fortified gatehouses which spanned the moat. Remains of these bridges have been found below present ground level. The castle features two sally ports, which were access tunnels large enough to allow a rider on horse back to pass through. The western side of the Castle features a dry moat up to 30m wide. Excavations during the 1930s, of the southern section, revealed that it was at least 3.5m deep. The northern arm of the moat was landscaped in the 19th century as part of the creation of a pleasure garden and the eastern arm of the moat was filled in after the castle's partial demolition after the civil war. It is considered that significant remains within the moat will survive (*ibid*).
- 3 4 The PDA represents the former National School which has an elaborate scrolled date stone "National School 1814". The building is constructed of coarse sandy limestone under a hipped slate roof with two gabled extensions to the south-east elevation which extended the accommodation. The building still retains its original large window opening though the window frames are not original and have been replaced with modern timber casements with lower hinged openers.
- 3 5 In October 2008, CS Archaeology undertook the archaeological watching brief of two test pits abutting the south west wall of Unit 1. This confirmed the presence of late 15th/early 16th century pottery at about 2m (76.05m AOD) below the present floor level.

4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4 1 The objective of this watching brief is to gather sufficient information to establish presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits resulting from the borehole investigations.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5 1 This has been carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by English Heritage (Mr K Emerick) All deposits were drilled and removed under constant archaeological supervision
- 5 2 The bore holes were achieved via a mobile tracked percussion rig (2.5m high) and this produced a 0.1m diameter bore hole The concrete floor was first broken out by pneumatic hammer The rig was then positioned above the target As the excavated material from each bore hole was removed it was examined and stratigraphic relationships recorded Because these were percussive boreholes the core samples were compressed up to 50% Therefore measurements used in Appendix 2 were extrapolated but can only represent approximate measurements
- 5 3 Boreholes 1 and 6 were so deep the lower deposits ended up being 'probed' in order to ascertain the depth of the bedrock Borehole 5 was entirely probed preventing any of the deposits from being recorded Probing was carried out with a narrow spike and the resistance (depth multiplied by number of hammer strikes) calculated until probe refusals were reached Refusals are the point at which the probe can go no further
- 5 4 The previous watching brief (CS Archaeology 2008) recorded the upper moat fills onto which the former school had been constructed in 1814 It revealed the nature of introduced levelling deposits during the construction period Written records of the contexts were made on survey recording sheets and have been summarised in Appendix 2
- 5 5 A photographic record was made of all deposits with black and white silver based film using a 35mm single lens reflex camera and this forms part of the site archive Digital photographs were also taken to illustrate the report and supplement the archive
- 5 6 Datum levels were provided via spot heights from the OS digital site plans, and were transferred to the floors adjacent to the test pits by a recently calibrated dumpy level
- 5 7 Because of the limited volume of contexts environmental sampling has not been carried out
- 5 8 Dr K Emerick of English Heritage and Ms L Hawkins were kept fully informed during the archaeological works

6 RESULTS

- 6 1 The results have been collated into a plan (Figure 3) and cross section (Figure 4), which is believed to represent the extent of the moat. There is a pronounced fall-off in depths that suggests the side of the moat is represented by a steep 65° slope. The southwest side of the moat, in Figure 3 has been projected based on the present extant perimeter wall of the castle. NB for fuller stratigraphic notes please see Appendix 2
- 6 2 Borehole 1 (probe refusal at 18.51m) was driven down to 12 m after which it was probed. It was located immediately adjacent to Test Pit 1 (CS Archaeology 2008). The deposits (Plate 1) were initially represented by brown sandy clays, at 4.4m a dark brown clay with frequent charcoal, c 0.15m deep, was revealed. At 5.5m a further organic deposit consisting of a dark brown silty clay was revealed and below this was a series of sandy clays, gravels and unconsolidated sandstone to 12m. The unconsolidated sandstone was interpreted either as in situ spoil heaps created during the quarrying of the moat or as primary fill from the unstable moat sides.
- 6 3 Borehole 2 (probe refusal at 2.35m) provided a sharp contrast in depth (Plate 1). Down to 1.9m there was a brown sandy clay that lay above unconsolidated sandstone (>1.9m).
- 6 4 Borehole 3 (borehole to 11.5m) was characterised by upper deposits of rubble and then brown sandy clays. Below 5.1m the deposits were of unconsolidated sandstone with silt sand lenses (Plate 2).
- 6 5 Borehole 4 (drill refusal at 2.75m) was again characterised by upper deposits of brick rubble beneath the concrete floor, followed by brown sandy clays with frequent sandstone inclusions (Plate 3).
- 6 6 Borehole 5 (probe refusal at 12.8m)
- 6 7 Borehole 6 (probe refusal at 16.5m)
- 6 8 Borehole 7 (drill refusal at 3.15m) appears to be located just below the moat's break of slope. The deposits consisted of a modern concrete floor to 0.35m then a mixed brick rubble and brown sandy clay with unconsolidated sandstone at and below 2.5m.
- 6 9 Borehole 8 (drill refusal at 2.4m) consisted of brick rubble and concrete to 0.5m then red and brown sandy clays. At 5.4m to 6.5m an organic sandy clay with frequent fragments of sandstone was noted and overlay unconsolidated sandstone from 7.2m to 13.5m, after which a pale yellow clayey silt represented a probable primary fill.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This watching brief has revealed the depth of consolidated bedrock across the PDA. These depths varied considerably from 75.7m AOD (BH3) to 59.55m AOD (BH1) a variation of 16.22m. Such a marked variation has confirmed the presence and extent of the castle moat. A curve along the north-eastern edge of the moat is also suggested by the borehole depths (Figure 3).
- 7.2 Deposits with of archaeological and in particular palaeo-environmental potential were limited to the upper 7m (Figure 4).
- 7.3 No pottery was recovered from the cores, which has prevented further dating of the deposits.

8 REFERENCES

8 1 Bibliography

CS Archaeology, 2008, *Units 1 and 2 Castle Precinct, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief*, unpublished report

8 2 Cartographic References

1854 1st Edition 6" Ordnance Survey map

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FIGURES