

**KNARESBOROUGH CASTLE GROUNDS  
INSTALLATION OF INTERPRETATION BOARDS**

**KNARESBOROUGH**

**NORTH YORKSHIRE**

**SE 34870 56920**

**S.A.M.NO. 34841**

**WSI - ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**FOR**

**HARROGATE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**JUNE 2010**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In May 2010, Harrogate Borough Council instructed Kevin John Cale, Archaeological Consultant, to carry out an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to installation of interpretive signage in the grounds at Knaresborough Castle.

Before the commencement of groundworks representatives from Harrogate Borough Council liaised with K.Emerick, English Heritage regarding obtaining the necessary consent for the excavations within Scheduled Ancient Monument No.34841.

The works are to be undertaken as part of a long term and on going project to improve interpretation of the Castle grounds. The proposed works can be classified accordingly;

Signage - The installation of 11 interpretation boards.

**LOCATION AND STATUS**

The study area encompasses the entire area of Knaresborough Castle Grounds that is contained by the line of the former curtain wall.

Below ground in this area the site is Scheduled as an Ancient Monument (SAM North Yorkshire 34841) centred at SE: 456900 434800 at 75.9m AOD, within the parish of Knaresborough.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Knaresborough

The market town of Knaresborough is situated on an outcrop of Magnesian Limestone that forms an area of relatively high ground on the 76 metre contour on the western side of the Vale of York. The town is situated approximately four miles to the north east of Harrogate and eighteen miles west of York. The settlement is located on the eastern side of Knaresborough gorge a natural fissure cut by the River Nidd.

Castle Grounds

The Castle Grounds are located within the centre of Knaresborough, enjoying a cliff top aspect overlooking Knaresborough Gorge and the River Nidd.

The 2 ½ acre grounds lie within the perimeter defences of Knaresborough Castle. The curtilage of this historic monument is today defined by intermittent sections of curtain wall and two sections of a moat. The internal area contains the extant remains of the Keep, Porch and Courthouse Building, together with two subterranean Sallyports.

### The Site

The recent groundworks have been undertaken throughout the Castle Grounds with a noticeable concentration of activity within the eastern half of the complex. The existing ground levels slope gently down to the south west from 78m - 74m AOD.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### Knaresborough

The origins of the settlement of Knaresborough are relatively obscure. The first reference to the town is in 1086 in the Domesday Book, where it is recorded as Chearesburg, this place name evidence would suggest that the site may have been fortified and may date back to Anglo Saxon period, 'burg' meaning defended enclosure. There is however no physical evidence of the pre-Norman settlement at Knaresborough, and from references within the Domesday book it would appear that the 11th century settlement if not deserted was greatly reduced.

It seems likely that the settlement began to develop during the first half of the 12th century, when it is known that both the Castle and the parish church were in existence, both structures continued to develop well into the late medieval period.

By the 13th century, Knaresborough was acting as the centre of an iron-working industry, processing the ironstone mined from the Forest of Knaresborough.

During the 14th century the settlement continued to develop and expand, largely because of it being ideally situated as a catchment foci for the trade and exchange of goods between the Pennine economy to the west and that of the Vale of York to the east. The documentary evidence confirms that by 1307, Knaresborough had been granted a weekly market and an annual fair and the inhabitants of the town were made free burgesses. Trade and industry during the later medieval period would appear to have centred on the woollen industry, but also included a wide variety of other trades such as cobblers, brewers, butchers, tanners, metalworkers and blacksmiths.

The post medieval period witnessed a transition from the woollen to the linen industry. This industry continued to grow during the 18th and early 19th centuries and the town benefited from this boom. However, during the second half of the 19th century, this industry contracted and Knaresborough was eclipsed by the growth of the new, regional administrative centre at Harrogate.

### The Castle Grounds

## Medieval References:

It has been established from surviving historical records that the site has supported a defensive structure from as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The extent and form of this early fortification is not known although it is likely that it was a combination of concentric defensive earthworks and timber pallsading surrounding a compound containing timber buildings.

Early accounts indicate that in 1130 the sum of £11:00 was spent on the King's works at the castle, however it would appear that it was not until the 13<sup>th</sup> century that extensive improvements were made to strengthen the defence's, this included the excavation or enlargement of the dry moat, and it is suspected that it was during this period that magnesian limestone was first incorporated in the fabric of the structure.

Between 1300 and 1312 the greater part of the fortification was rebuilt, the fragmentary remains of which survive today within the Castle Grounds, the works included the Great Hall, Great Chamber, Great Chapel, Chapel of St.Thomas, the White Tower and the Great Gate, and it was during the same phase of works that the Great Keep was constructed. These structures were all contained by the Curtain Wall and were situated within a two and a half acre site that was divided into two main precincts known as the Inner and Outer Wards. It is suspected that it was during this phase of works that the two subterranean passages known as the Salleyports were excavated, these rock-hewn tunnels ran from the outer ward into the base of the dry moat in an easterly and northerly direction. It would appear that this programme of works was the last major alterations to the Castle.

## Late Medieval References:

During the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century a detailed survey was undertaken of the fortification by Henry Cumberland and from which it is clear that many of the timber and stone built ancillary buildings within the Outer Ward of the Castle were in a ruinous state as were a number other structures within the Inner Ward, that is with the exception of the Keep which together with the Curtain Wall was found to be in a good state of repair.

The survey refers to the two main gateways into the Castle; these were situated within the eastern and northern aspects of the Curtain Wall. The following notes were made about the eastern gate and adjacent structures:

"The Gatehouse roof was rotten and threatened the lodgings beneath, there was need to repair the two timber portcullises."

"The bridge across the moat from this gateway we are informed was covered and thatched with single board."

It would appear that there were two buildings butting to the eastern gatehouse namely:

4.

"A receivers lodging abutting the eastern gatehouse, this timber structure was roofed in slate and had two chimneys, with glazed fenestration. The building was measured as 60` x 15`."

"a timber stable that was roofed in slate, the structure could accommodate 23 horses and contained two chambers for the horse boys."

It is evident from this documentation that the Eastern Gateway was part of a complex of structures situated within the northern eastern corner of the Outer Ward. It has since been speculated (E.Hargrove, The History of the Castle, Town and Forest of Knb. 1832) that a complex of fortified structures were situated on the counter scarp of the dry moat immediately adjacent to the eastern gate, this would have been known as the barbican or ante mural an offensive / defensive fortification constructed with principal role of strengthening the defences of the gateway.

#### Post-Medieval References:

The Castle led an active roll within the Civil War and was placed under siege by the Parliamentarians in 1644, the damage inflicted on the structure and the following slighting of the fortification in 1647 resulted in the demolition of much of the complex and the removal of the salvageable stone for building works within the town.

As points of weakness within the curtain wall both the eastern and northern gateways into the castle grounds were the focus of 17th century artillery bombardments, this almost certainly resulted in the complete destruction of the northern gatehouse and the near complete destruction of the east gate with only the twin semi-circular turrets of the former gatehouse complex surviving the siege and subsequent salvage works.

It was during this period that the dry moat, which had originally separated the fortification from the town, was partially backfilled; this landfill formed what is now known as Castle Yard.

During the 18th century, the ruins of the Keep were utilised as a prison in conjunction with the Courthouse.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### Knarborough

Knarborough is a historic town of interest and importance, and as there has been only a limited amount of modern development within the town centre, there is a high potential for the survival of historical standing structures and there is a high potential for the preservation of buried archaeological deposits.

Within the town centre, over the last number of years, a series of watching briefs have been maintained on local authority trench excavations and private developments in an attempt to locate and examine the nature and form of the town defence's.

5.

Unfortunately, these works have failed to identify any evidence of these defensive structures.

Other entries in the archaeological record are from the declared chance finds, information of which has been noted since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The finds range from a Bronze Age perforated stone axe that was found at Blind Lane Farm, to a Roman urn or cooking pot of Antonine date that was recovered from south of Tentergate Avenue. The greater majority of these finds are isolated coins dating from the Roman period onwards.

### The Castle Grounds and The Castle Yard

A number of small scale archaeological excavations have been undertaken within the castle grounds, these have taken place, intermittently, over the last sixty years, unfortunately the records for these works are incomplete and sketchy.

Recently a three year programme of ground investigation has concluded, these excavations, located immediately adjacent to the north and east elevations of the keep were conducted by Harrogate Museums and Art Galleries. These works were undertaken in support of a ten phase building repair programme to the historical fabric of the fortification. The excavations, which were conducted to the immediate west of the Keep, revealed evidence of the earthwork defence's of the 12<sup>th</sup> century fortification as well as confirming the site and nature of the 14<sup>th</sup> century northern gatehouse. The excavations to the immediate south of the Keep exposed a series of floor surfaces associated with the post medieval and more recent activity around the Keep, together with evidence of the 14<sup>th</sup> and pre 14<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

During 1995, K.J.Cale conducted an archaeological watching brief on a programme of improvement works within the Castle Yard.

These works provided an opportunity to make a detailed inspection of the fabric and nature of the Eastern Gate and the north and north eastern sections of the curtain wall.

It was confirmed that the present ground levels across the southern extent of Castle Yard had been largely formed by the deposition of recently imported sandy clays and hard cores, it is suspected that the majority of which were deposited during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. These deposits have largely obscured the sequence of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century fills which have been deposited within the dry moat. Unfortunately, the limited depth of excavation across the site prevented any detailed inspection of the sequence and nature of the fills within the moat.

The watching brief identified a sequence of works that have been conducted within the area of the eastern gate since the late medieval period, the threshold from this period was identified in situ, but unfortunately no contemporary road surfaces were identified, these having been removed and replaced during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when a major programme of landscaping was undertaken that involved the construction of footways leading to and from the Castle Grounds.

6.

Furthermore it was confirmed that the removal of stone from the curtain wall from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards had been thorough, and had involved not only the demolition of the greater part of the extant wall but also the removal of the wall foundations. No further evidence of the curtain wall was identified, the watching brief revealed that any

evidence of this structure had been obscured by the landscaping of the northern extent of the Castle Grounds during the late 19th century with the similar hard cores and sandy clay deposits that are found within the Castle Yard.

During July 00 K.J.Cale conducted an archaeological evaluation within the eastern extent of the Castle Grounds, in advance of the proposed planting of a hedge.

The trial holes were excavated down to 0.700m and 0.750m below existing grounds levels. At which depth a layer, consistent with the attributes of demolition rubble was identified. In both instances, the surface of this layer sloped on a gentle slope to the east. The layer was not excavated as it was agreed that there was adequate overburden to sustain a hedge. No dating evidence was identified on the surface of this layer, however, a mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century date is likely, although it cannot be ruled out that the surface of the deposit was truncated and graded prior landscaping.

The demolition rubble was sealed by up to three deposits that all contained 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century artefacts. Each of these layers had been bedded level, indicating that, during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a concerted attempt was being made to landscape the Castle Grounds. From this investigation and other recent works within the grounds, it has been established that the 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping works were widespread and largely achieved by importing large volumes of topsoil. Within the northern extent of the grounds, it would appear that the topsoil was supplemented with builder's rubble. The builder's rubble contains a wide variety of inclusions, such as brick, pan tile, clay, sand and sandstone. These materials are not indigenous to the construction of the Castle but are consistent with building materials within the town.

The nature of these 19<sup>th</sup> century deposits together with the close proximity of these excavations to a sandstone wall, which presently defines the north eastern boundary of the Castle Grounds, would suggest that this miniature wall was constructed as a retaining wall to contain the imported soils.

More recently K.J.Cale has conducted archaeological watching briefs on the installation of cable trenches, new overhead pole and bench placements within the Castle Grounds. Once again it was confirmed that the upper levels of stratigraphy were dominated by modern surfaces and topsoils overlying rubbles attributed to 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> century landscaping.

## **AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

Prior to the commencement of groundworks, due to the shallow depth of the proposed excavations it was considered that there was a **low** potential for archaeology to be present across the site.

7.

In the event that archaeology was encountered it was anticipated that this would most likely comprise of Post Medieval demolition levels and late 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaping / made up ground.

## The Aims

The aims of this archaeological investigation are as follows:

- a. To liaise with Harrogate Borough Council and English Heritage regarding recommendations to the proposed works to ensure the minimum damage to archaeological remains which have been identified at or above the maximum depth of excavation; and
- b. To record any finds, features or structures of archaeological interest and obtain information on the presence, extent, character, date and depth of these remains. The archaeology will be recorded using professionally approved techniques, standard forms and conventions. All areas of excavation and any archaeological features will be recorded by plans and photographs and sections where possible.
- c. To assess the importance of any remains found and interpret them in terms of their historical context and their relationship with the extant fabric of the building complex.

## Nature of Works

It was agreed that the principal archaeologist would be present, on site, during the hand excavations of any turf / top soil and overburden. It was anticipated that the depth of excavation would not exceed 600 mm in depth.

In the event that archaeology is exposed during, the above works it is agreed that adequate time is allowed for the archaeologist to record same.

## **PROJECT DESIGN**

### **1. THE WATCHING BRIEF**

An archaeological watching brief is required during the hand excavation of post holes for signage. The exact location of which have been specified by Harrogate Borough Council and submitted to English Heritage and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport as part of the application for scheduled ancient monument consent.

In order to satisfy the archaeological condition placed on these excavations, it will be necessary for the archaeologist: -

to be present, on site, during these excavations down to the required depth or to the surface of any archaeology that maybe encountered.

8.

### **2. THE REPORTING**

Summary Statement:

On the completion of all on site work, a brief summary statement shall be produced. This document will outline the findings of the archaeological works and in light of these results may make recommendations as to determine the level of any further archaeological input that maybe appropriate for the execution of the final works. Should this be necessary, then an archaeological scheme of works will be compiled pertaining to this and circulated to the relevant bodies for consideration and approval. The summary statement shall be compiled and delivered to the Harrogate Borough Council, English Heritage and HER NYCC representatives.

#### The Final Report:

On the conclusion of all archaeological site works, the final report shall be compiled and forwarded to the client and the relevant bodies on the completion of all field and post excavation work.

The written report will describe the work undertaken and will include the following: -

- a. an introduction with an outline of the project plan and research objectives
- b. a topographical description of the site and its immediate environs
- c. a brief summary of the historical background to the site with reference to any previous archaeological work on the site
- d. a summary statement that outlines the results of the investigation
- e. written and graphic descriptions of the areas that have received archaeological attention.
- f. a concluding statement that will include an assessment of the importance of the findings in relation to the other remains on the site, together with any recommendations for any future works
- g. an inventory of finds
- h. plans and sections of excavated areas, including elevations of any structures revealed
- i. photographs of the site, before, during and after intervention

One copy of the report shall be sent to each of the following:

Harrogate Borough Council, English Heritage, HER NYCC, National Monument Record and one copy to be deposited with the relevant registered storage facility, Harrogate Museums & Arts, along with the site archive.

9.

Upon completion of the work, the Archaeologist should make their work accessible to the wider research community by submitting digital data and copies of reports online to OASIS <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis>. Under the Environmental Information Regulations 2005 (EIR) information submitted to the Heritage

environment Record, NYCC becomes publicly accessible, except where disclosure might lead to environmental damage, and reports cannot be embargoed as 'confidential' or 'commercially sensitive'.

### **3. SITE ARCHIVE**

On completion of on site works, a full site archive shall be prepared which shall include:

a catalogue of all primary written records, photographs, plans and sections, matrix, and an inventory of finds and samples.

The site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with Management of Archaeological Projects (E.H.1991) and the guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage by UKIC Archaeology Section (1990)

It is recommended that the site archive including any finds should be deposited with Harrogate Museums and Arts Service, Harrogate Borough Council, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

#### APPENDIX A

##### **THE FINDS:**

In the eventuality that the proposed archaeological works generate any finds, it is recommended that all these should be retained, catalogued and suitably stored until an opportunity arises to clean and if necessary conserve these objects. It is only at this stage that discussions will be held between the relevant bodies to determine any discard policies.

Specialists of metalwork and coinage should be consulted if the need arises.

It is recommended that any significant objects should be photographed and professionally illustrated.

It is recommended that the finds assemblage should be deposited along with the site archive at Harrogate Museums and Arts Service, Harrogate Borough Council, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

#### APPENDIX B

##### **SOIL SAMPLES:**

Environmental samples of a sufficient volume shall only be taken from significant deposits or from those soils that show an archaeological or ecological potential, namely soils that: -

- i. are believed not to be contaminated
- ii. are believed not to be mixed
- iii. may contain well preserved biological remains
- iv. are interpretatively important in the understanding of the site

It is intended that the samples will be forwarded to The Calvin Wells Laboratory, Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford for paleo-environmental analysis.

The results from which will be incorporated within the final report.

The environmental report should include the following points: -

- i. a description of the methodology used.
- ii. a sample-by-sample description and interpretation
- iii. include recommendations for any future work either on or within the immediate environs of the site.

**Kevin John Cale**

**June 2010**

11.  
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