

Rec 14/7/4

NYE 2190

NYS 8678

1080

**Back Street/Castle Hill
Middleham
North Yorkshire
SE 1265 8755**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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SNY	8678
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**MAP
June 2004**

**Back Street/Castle Hill
Middleham
North Yorkshire
SE 1265 8755**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Plate List	2
Summary	3
1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	3
3. Results	4
4. Conclusions	4
Appendices	
1. Context Listing	6
2. Photographic Listing	6

Figure List

1. Site Location. Scale 1: 50000
2. Location of Cable Trench. Scale 1:500

Plate List

1. Castle Hill/Back Street prior to excavation. Facing west
2. Castle Hill/Back Street prior to excavation. Facing east
3. Excavated cable trench. Facing east
4. South facing section of excavated trench. Facing north

**Back Street/Castle Hill
Middleham
North Yorkshire
SE 1265 8755**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief was carried out on the 1st and 2nd of June, 2004 during the excavation of a 0.25m wide cable trench situated on the southern side of Castle Hill/Back Street, to the north of Castle Cottage and to the south of the Smithy. Archaeological deposits were encountered but the narrowness of the excavated trench made understanding of their nature limited. No finds were recovered to aid dating.

1. Introduction

An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken on the 1st and 2nd of June 2004 during the mechanical excavation of a cable trench along Castle Hill/Back Street, Middleham (SE 1265 8755: Figs. 1 & 2). The trench was excavated to accommodate a new low voltage underground cable to provide a supply to buildings adjacent to the Smithy (Fig. 2).

The Watching Brief was carried out on behalf of NEDL (Northern Electric Distribution Ltd). The excavation was undertaken by their appointed contractor (Enterprise), using a back-acting mechanical excavator fitted with a 0.25m wide toothless bucket.

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2. Methodology

Initially, the cable trench was to have been hand-excavated. However, the removal of a cobble and concrete road surface proved difficult and so the

trench was re-located to run along the southern edge of the road. A mechanical excavator was used in order to deal with the difficult overburden.

The cable trench was excavated on a south-west to north-east alignment for a distance of approximately 15m to meet with a previously excavated service trench aligned north to south (Fig. 2). Excavations were undertaken to a maximum depth of 0.65m.

3. Results

The earliest deposit encountered consisted of a stiff clay with no inclusions (1008). This deposit, which probably represented a natural subsoil, was only seen in the base of the trench for a length of approximately 2.0m. Deposit 1008 was sealed by a deposit of solid clay which contained limestone fragments (context 1009). Deposit 1009 became thinner towards the east and merged into context 1011. Deposit 1011, a firm clay contained no inclusions nor associated finds.

Deposits 1009 and 1011 were sealed by a clay deposit (context 1006) to the west and a deposit of limestone hardcore to the east (context 1004). Further mixed deposits (contexts 1005 and 1007) were observed immediately above Deposit 1006.

Further evidence for an earlier road surface was confirmed by the presence of a cobble layer (context 1010), situated immediately above Deposit 1005. A silty sand with small limestone inclusions (context 1003) sealed Surface 1010. Deposit 1003 was in turn sealed by a layer of modern concrete (context 1002) and the existing tarmac road surface (context 1001).

No finds were observed in any of the excavated contexts.

4. Conclusions

There is no doubt that that cable trench cut through stratified archaeological deposits. However, apart from being able to discern previous road surfaces and the presence of build-up deposits, it was impossible due to the narrowness

of the trench to attach a more detailed archaeological interpretation to the sequence of deposits. The lack of finds from any of the observed contexts also hampered interpretation and dating.

In conclusion, it may therefore be said that further, more extensive groundworks in the vicinity of Back Street/Castle Hill may offer the opportunity for the nature of the archaeological deposits identified during the current Watching Brief to be clarified.



Figure 1. Site Location

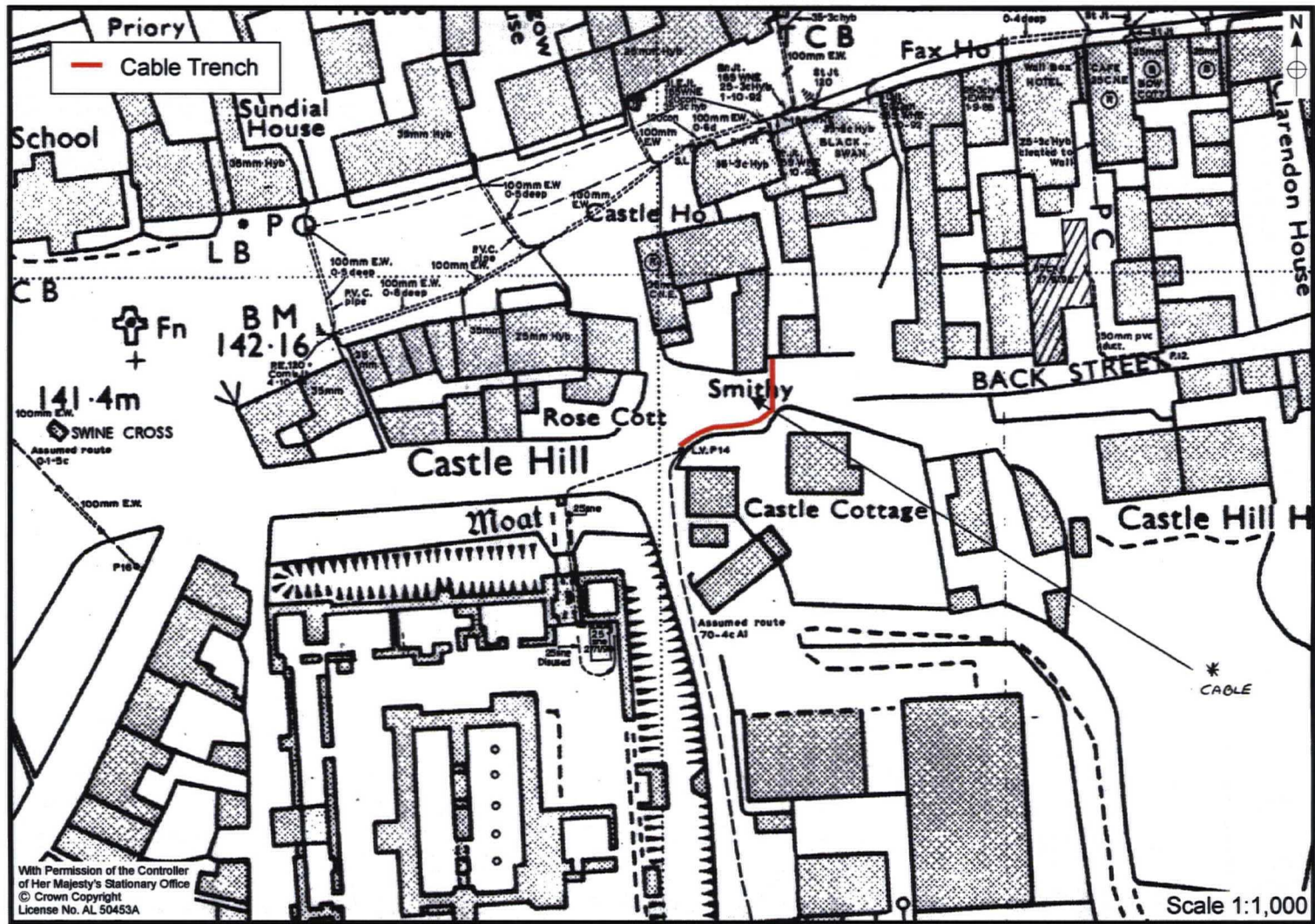


Figure 2. Location of Cable Trench



Plate 1. Castle Hill/Back Street prior to excavation. Facing west.



Plate 2. Castle Hill/Back Street prior to excavation. Facing east.



Plate 3. Excavated cable trench. Facing east.



Plate 4. North facing section of excavated trench. Facing south.

APPENDIX 1

Context Listing

Context No.	Description
1000	Cable Trench
1001	Tarmac
1002	Concrete
1003	10YR 3/2 silty sand with small limestone inclusions
1004	10YR 6/4 degraded limestone
1005	10YR 3/3 ashy silt with roofing slab fragments
1006	10YR 3/2 silty clay
1007	10YR 2/1 silt
1008	10YR 4/4 clay
1009	10YR 5/4 clay
1010	Cobbles
1011	10YR 7/6 clay

APPENDIX 2

Photographic Record

Digital

Film 1	Description	Direction
1	Castle Hill/Back Street. Prior to excavation	East
2	Castle Hill/Back Street. Prior to excavation	East
3	Castle Hill/Back Street. Prior to excavation	West
4	Castle Hill/Back Street. Prior to excavation	West
5	Cable trench in private garden to east of the Smithy	North
6	Cable Trench after excavation	West
7	Cable Trench after excavation	West
8	Cable Trench after excavation	East
9	Cable Trench after excavation	East
10	North Facing Section of Trench	South
11	North Facing Section of Trench	South
12	North Facing Section of Trench	South
13	North Facing Section of Trench	South
14	North Facing Section of Trench	South