

The Raven Hotel, Ebchester, County Durham

Archaeological Evaluation

Planning Ref: DM/14/00355/FPA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the results of a programme of evaluation trenching undertaken at The Raven Hotel, Ebchester, County Durham as a requirement of a planning permission (ref: DM/14/00355/FPA). The trenching was undertaken in order to characterise the potential effects of the proposed development on the archaeological resource.

Two trenches of between 15 m and 18 m in length were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision, and any features were further investigated and excavated with hand tools. All recording was undertaken to standards as set out in the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists guidance and in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI).

The evaluation carried out at the site has demonstrated that any potential archaeological remains have, most likely, been heavily truncated or removed altogether by the construction of the modern car park for the former Raven Hotel, and there were no remains of archaeological value noted during the evaluation. The evaluation has shown that the site was levelled with built up deposits (102, 202) to create terraces for the car park (101, 201). This activity would seem to have removed any archaeological potential that the site may have once hosted.

It is considered that the results of the programme of evaluation trenching are sufficient to inform a decision in respect of the requirement for further archaeological works and the likely potential of the proposed development site. No further archaeological work is recommended.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared by Solstice Heritage LLP on behalf of AB Heritage Ltd. to outline the results of an archaeological evaluation. The evaluation was required by Durham County Council as a condition of planning permission (ref. DM/14/00355/FPA) for the redevelopment of the former hotel site. The design of the scheme of evaluation was based upon a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by AB Heritage Ltd. (Kerr-Peterson 2018).

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The proposed development site is situated to the immediate west of the B6309 (Watling Street), centred at grid reference NGR NZ 10726 54510, to the south of the village of Ebchester (Figure 1). The locations of the two evaluation trenches are shown on Figure 2 below.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Archaeological field evaluation is defined as:

“A limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater. If such archaeological remains are present field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate” (ClfA 2014, 2).

The overarching aim of the evaluation was:

- To assess, through a programme of intrusive trenching, the potential direct effect of the proposed development on the archaeological resource.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To determine (where possible) the nature, depth, extent, significance and date of buried archaeological remains that may be located within the proposed development area
- To determine the condition or state of preservation of any archaeological deposits or features encountered
- To determine the likely range, quality and quantity of artefactual and environmental evidence present
- To answer any relevant research questions
- To inform the scope of archaeological mitigation works if required
- To produce a report on the findings at the site.

Figure 1 Site Location



Figure 2 Site plan showing trench layout



2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

The proposed development site sits within the 'Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe' National Character Area (NCA). The area is characterised by a transitional landscape between the North Pennines NCA to the west and the Tyne and Wear Lowlands NCA to the east formed by a series of broad ridges, separated by river valleys, with a strong west–east grain (NE 2013, 3).

The specific underlying geology of the proposed development area comprises sandstone of the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation. Superficial deposits are formed of glacial till (BGS 2018).

Online mapping provided by the UK Soil Observatory (2018) characterises the soils across the development site as 'slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils'.

2.2 PREVIOUS WORK

No previous archaeological work has been undertaken within the proposed development site.

Just beyond the site to the east, beneath the existing road, areas of stone surfaces were recorded during a watching brief on a cable trench in 2012 (ASDU 2013). The areas consisted of sandstone blocks and were interpreted as former road surfaces, thought to be Post-Medieval in date. A short distance to the south of the site, again beneath the existing road, the possible remains of Dere Street/Watling Street were identified during a watching brief at Medomsley Cross Roads in 2004 (Tyne and Wear Museums Archaeology 2004).

2.3 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The site lies just to the west of the probable line of the Roman road known as Watling Street. Any potential evidence relating to the Roman settlement of Ebchester, or the road leading to it, has the potential to be of regional significance although it is likely to be heavily truncated due to the nature of the modern use of the site.

3. RESULTS

3.1 GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

The two trenches were cut into a terraced car park, on the north-facing slope of Ebchester Hill. These trenches were excavated through the modern dark-grey tarmac surface (101, 201), with the tarmac surface in Trench 1 (101) having a thickness of 0.20 m and that in Trench 2 (201) having a thickness of 0.13 m. This tarmac had been laid across a modern levelling deposit of modern crushed yellow stone (102, 202). (102) had a thickness of 0.13 m while (202) had a thickness of 0.60 m. Trench 1 had more modern disturbance noted, however both (105) and (204) had the same light reddish brown, silted sandstone bedrock deposit, which was identified as the natural geology.

3.2 TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was located on the northern, lower terrace of the car park, furthest away from the demolished Raven Hotel, on an east-west alignment. The planned size of the trench was shortened due to the presence of demolition rubble material on the site, to allow room for excavation. Trench 1 measured 15m by 2m (Figure 3). The trench was excavated through the modern tarmac surface (101), which had an even thickness of 0.20 m. Below (101) was a modern levelling deposit of yellow crushed stone (102), which demonstrated an even thickness of 0.13m across the trench.

Beneath (102) Trench 1 contained two further disturbed modern layers. (103), directly below (102), was a dark, firm blueish-black mixed deposit, which contained broken brick. This layer probably represents a buried clayish imported soil and had an even thickness of 0.15 m across the trench. Beneath (103), deposit (104) was a mixed mid-brown clay with very frequent silt and broken brick inclusions. This deposit has a soft, friable composition with an even thickness of 0.12 m across the length of the trench (Figure 4). This layer overlay (105), the natural sandstone bedrock (

Figure 5), and is potentially a very disturbed natural clay till, reworked during the creation of the existing car park.



Figure 3 Trench 1, facing west. Scale 1x2 m, 1x1 m



Figure 4 South-Facing Section of Trench 1, looking north. Scale 1x0.4 m

Figure 5 Plan and Section of Trench 1



3.3 TRENCH 2

Trench 2 was excavated through the modern tarmac (201), on the upper terrace of the car park, directly west from the site entrance, and was also aligned east-west (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The trench was also shortened to allow for excavation access and measured 18 m by 2 m in plan. The tarmac surface (201) had an even thickness across the trench of 0.13 m and overlay a modern levelling deposit of broken yellow sandstone (202) with a thickness of 0.60 m across the trench. Deposit (203) lay beneath (202) and was composed of a dark, greyish-brown clayish silt deposit, which had an even thickness of 0.15 m across the trench. (203) presumably represented a buried subsoil below the modern levelling deposit (202), suggesting that it represented the approximate ground level before the car park was built. Deposit (204) underlay buried soil (203) and was formed of the natural weathered sandstone bedrock (Figure 7,

Figure 8).



Figure 6 Trench 2, facing east. Scale 2x1 m



Figure 7 South facing section of trench 2. Looking north. Scale 2x1m

Figure 8 Plan and Section of Trench 2



4. DISCUSSION

4.1 GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

The archaeological evaluation has characterised the underlying natural geology within the proposed development as being uniform across both trenches. (105) and (204) were a yellow friable sandstone bedrock, which was partly overlain by a mid-brown clay till (104).

4.2 POST-MEDIEVAL

The evaluation carried out at the site was excavated through a modern tarmac carpark, which had been deeply terraced into the steep north-facing hillside. The evaluation has demonstrated that the trenches contain little evidence of archaeological value, due to the modern truncation of the site in the construction of the car park. There was no archaeological evidence of any activity before the modern construction of the car park, and while the buried subsoil layers of (103) and (203) may indicate the original soil layers of the area of development, prior to the car park construction, the action of building the car park has disturbed and re-worked these layers so completely that it is almost certain to have removed all the former archaeological potential that the site may have held.



5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 CONFIDENCE, CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

Trench 1 and 2 were both shortened, due to the size constraints of the proposed area of development. Trench 3 was not excavated, as the trench location would have compromised the site entrance. These constraints are not considered to have diminished the probable accuracy of the results of the evaluation, due to the consistent evidence of modern disturbance uncovered across both trenches, all of which was clearly related to the construction of the existing car park.

5.2 RESEARCH POTENTIAL

The archaeological evaluation has not produced any findings which have the potential to contribute to the research objectives of the North East Regional Research Framework.

5.3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE

The results of the evaluation indicate that the potential direct effect of the proposed development on the archaeological resource is likely to be negligible.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is considered that the results of the programme of evaluation trenching are sufficient to inform a decision in respect of the requirement for further archaeological works and the likely potential of the proposed development site. No further archaeological work is recommended.

5.5 PROJECT ARCHIVE

The physical and digital archive for this project is currently held by Solstice Heritage LLP pending a decision on the requirement for any future work on the site. Once all phases of work have been completed, the archives will be prepared and deposited in line with the agreed WSI and ClfA Standards and Guidance.

6. SOURCES

6.1 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Tyne and Wear Museums Archaeology. 2004. *Watching brief at Medomsley Cross Roads*. Unpublished Archaeological Report by Tyne and Wear Museums Archaeology.

6.2 WEBSITES

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APPENDIX 1 - CONTEXT REGISTER

Context Number	Type	Description	Probable Date
101, 201,	Deposit	Tarmac car park surface	Later 20 th century
102, 202,	Deposit	Yellow stone levelling layer	Later 20 th century
103, 203,	Deposit	Dark greyish brown disturbed buried subsoil layer, below levelling deposits.	Post-Medieval
104	Deposit	Re-deposited natural clay, disturbed by modern activity	Glacial
204	Deposit	Natural sandstone bedrock	Carboniferous
105	Deposit	Natural sandstone bedrock	Carboniferous

Table 1 Context Register

APPENDIX 2 - POLICY AND GUIDANCE FRAMEWORK

LEGISLATION

National legislation that applies to the consideration of cultural heritage within development and the wider planning process is set out in Table 1 below.

Title	Key Points
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (amended by the National Heritage Act 1983 and 2002)	Scheduled Monuments, as defined under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), are sites that have been selected by a set of non-statutory criteria to be of national significance. Where scheduled sites are affected by development proposals there is a presumption in favour of their physical preservation. Any works, other than activities receiving class consent under The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1981, as amended by The Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1984, which would have the effect of demolishing, destroying, damaging, removing, repairing, altering, adding to, flooding or covering-up a Scheduled Monument require consent from the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Buildings of national, regional or local historical and architectural importance are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Buildings designated as 'Listed' are afforded protection from physical alteration or effects on their historical setting.
Hedgerows Regulations 1997	The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) include criteria by which hedgerows can be regarded as historically important (Schedule 1 Part III).

Table 2 Legislation relating to cultural heritage in planning

POLICY

NATIONAL

The principal instrument of national planning policy within England is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (CLG 2012) which outlines the following in relation to cultural heritage within planning and development:

Paragraph	Key Points
7	Contributing to protecting and enhancing the historic environment is specifically noted as being a part of what constitutes 'sustainable development' – the "golden thread" which, when met, can trigger presumption in favour.
17	A core planning principle is to "conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for the contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations".
128	During the determination of applications "local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting". This information should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and only enough to "understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance".
129	Paragraph 129 identifies that Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.
132	It is noted that significance – the principal measure of inherent overall heritage worth – can be harmed or lost through development within its setting. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and any adverse effects require "clear and convincing justification" relative to the significance of the asset in question.

135	At paragraph 135 it states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
139	At paragraph 139 it states that non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.
141	In paragraph 141 amongst other matters it states that planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

Table 3 Key passages of NPPF in reference to cultural heritage (archaeology)

LOCAL

Under planning law, the determination of an application must be made, in the first instance, with reference to the policies of the local development plan. For the proposed development, this comprises the *Derwentside Local Plan*, adopted in 1997 (Derwentside District Council 1997), which outlines the following in relation to cultural heritage within planning and development:

Core Policy	Key Points
EN19	'...Where a proposed development is likely to affect a site of archaeological interest or its setting, the council may request an archaeological assessment, prior to determining an application...'

Table 4 Key local planning policies with reference to cultural heritage

GUIDANCE

NATIONAL

During the evaluation and preparation of this document, the following guidance documents have been referred to, where relevant:

Document	Key Points
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (CLG 2014)	The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) released the guidance to NPPF in March 2014 in a 'live' online format which, it is intended can be amended and responsive to comment, particular as case law develops in relation to the implementation of NPPF. In relation to cultural heritage the NPPG follows previous guidance in wording and 'keys in' with, in particular, extant English Heritage guidance documents. The NPPG references many similar terms to the previous PPS5 Practice Guidance.
Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (HE 2008)	This sets out the guiding principles of conservation as seen by Historic England and also provides a terminology for assessment of significance upon which much that has followed is based.
Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation (CifA 2014)	This document represents non-statutory industry best practice as set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The evaluation work has been undertaken to these standards, as subscribed to by Solstice Heritage LLP.

Table 5 National guidance documentation consulted

APPENDIX 3 - METHODOLOGY

FIELDWORK

The three trenches were laid out in the locations agreed in the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (Kerr-Peterson 2018) and excavations were undertaken and completed between the 14th and the 15th May 2018. The work was undertaken by Chris Scott and Amy Talbot of Solstice Heritage LLP. Two trenches were altered, with both trenches being shortened and moved slightly from their planned locations. One planned trench was not excavated as doing so would have blocked the only entrance into the site. Despite the alterations both trenches were able to sample the area of proposed development.

All mechanical excavation (through overburden and non-anthropogenic levelling layers) was undertaken with a back-acting, toothless ditching bucket under constant supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. The trenches consisted of 1 no. 15 m x 2 m trench and 1 no. 18 m x 2 m trench.

Where archaeological features and deposits were encountered, these were recorded to the standards outlined in the agreed WSI and the relevant ClfA Standard and Guidance. All features and deposits were recorded on *pro forma* record sheets, drawn in plan and section at a suitable scale, and photographed. In addition to any specific features or deposits, a general record of the trench stratigraphy was made on *pro forma* record sheets, a plan and section of each trench was made at a suitable scale and photography was completed. A detailed methodology was outlined in the agreed WSI, and this has been included as Appendix 4 below.

POST-FIELDWORK

The primary site archive comprises site records and digital photography on CD. This has been used to compile this report, all of which will be deposited with a local repository museum in digital and paper format as the principal record of the evaluation work. The physical archive comprises primary field records and advice will be sought on the detailed requirements for retention and deposition. An OASIS record has been completed for this work, including a digital version of this report, the reference for which is **solstice1- 317277**. Deposition of the physical archive has been delayed until a determination is made on the need for, and scope of, any further work. In this instance then a single comprehensive archive will be compiled and deposited.

CHRONOLOGY

Where chronological and archaeological periods are referred to in the text, the relevant date ranges are broadly defined in calendar years as follows:

- Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age): 1 million – 12,000 BP (Before present)
- Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age): 10000 – 4000 BC
- Neolithic (New Stone Age): 4000 – 2400 BC
- Chalcolithic/Beaker Period: 2400 – 2000 BC
- Bronze Age: 2000 – 700 BC
- Iron Age: 700 BC – AD 43
- Roman/Romano-British: AD 43 – 410
- Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Scandinavian: AD 410 – 1066
- Medieval: AD 1066 – 1530
- Post-medieval: AD 1530 – 1750



- Industrial: AD 1750 – 1900
- Modern: AD 1900 – Present

6.3 **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Solstice Heritage LLP commits all fieldwork and post-fieldwork assessment, analysis, reporting and dissemination to be undertaken to the standards stipulated by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) as is outlined in Appendix 2 below. The project has been managed by Chris Scott, who is a fully accredited member of CIfA (MCIfA level).

6.4 **ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

Data and information obtained and consulted in the compilation of this report has been derived from several secondary sources. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of secondary information, its accuracy has been assumed in good faith. All statements and opinions arising from the works undertaken are provided in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of this report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

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APPENDIX 4 – WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION

