Cowbar Nab, Staithes, North Yorkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

Prepared for:	Mark Newman MA MCIfA FSA Archaeological Consultant The National Trust North Region (East)
Prepared by:	Tiffany Snowden BA (Hons) Solstice Heritage LLP Crabtree Hall Business Centre Little Holtby Northallerton North Yorkshire DL7 9NY
Checked by:	Chris Scott BA (Hons), MA, MCIfA
Project Ref:	SOL1718-30
Report Ref:	DOC1718-35
Dates of Fieldwork:	September 2017
Date of Report:	September 2017

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Solstice Heritage LLP would like to thank Mark Newman of The National Trust for commissioning the works, and for his support through the course of the project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents archaeological evaluation carried out at Cowbar Nab, Staithes in advance of groundworks to install a telecommunications mast. The work included a single 1 m square archaeological trial trench, excavated and recorded by archaeological means.

The test pit has provided information on the archaeological potential of the site at Cowbar Nab. The thin nature of the topsoil and the compact, clayish nature of the subsoil suggest that the ground in this part of the site was previously reduced. This was likely as a result of the creation of terraced allotments, which appear on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map. In terms of wider information, the test pit has not provided any significant additional information regarding the archaeology of the site, due mainly to the previous disturbance of the ground in this area. Positively, this work was carried out without disturbing any important archaeological deposits at the site and, suggests that the potential for the terrace within which the test pit was placed to hold significant archaeological deposits is likely to be low, given the level of previous disturbance.

However, the deposits present within the test pit are unlikely to be representative of deposits across the wider headland, given the clear variety of land-use the site has obviously experienced. As such, any areas to be impacted by works which lie outside of the defined allotment terraces should be considered for further archaeological investigation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OUTLINE

This report documents an archaeological evaluation carried out in advance of groundworks to install a single telecommunications mast at Cowbar Nab, Staithes (Figure 1). The work involved the excavation of a 1 x 1 m square test pit, excavated and recorded by archaeological means (sherds of 19th-century unglazed red earthenware, pearlware and whiteware. Excavation was ceased at the upper surface of this natural deposit. No archaeological features were present within the excavation.

Figure 2).

1.2 SITE LOCATIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Project works were situated on the prominent headland of Cowbar Nab, which forms the northern side of the steep defile containing the village of Staithes, North Yorkshire, at the seaward extent of the Staithes Beck. The site lies on sandstone bedrock of the Staithes Sandstone Formation, which is overlain by diamicton till (BGS 2017). The project area is situated on land owned by the National Trust. The test pit was centred at NZ 78118 18964 and at a height of 35.35 m above OD, established using a Leica Smartrover survey-grade GPS with an accuracy of ±10 mm.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 EVALUATION

Evaluation using archaeological methods and standards was undertaken to investigate the proposed site of the new telecommunications mast.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To attempt to establish the date, character and significance of any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental deposits present, including in relation to other similar features within the area
- To ensure there is a permanent record of the work undertaken deposited with the local Historic Environment Record (HER) and made available online
- To ensure all work was undertaken in compliance with the *Code of Conduct* of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (2014a).
- To ensure compliance with the National Trust brief and required standards of conservation management.

1.4 CHRONOLOGY

Where chronological and archaeological periods are referred to in the text, the relevant date ranges are broadly defined 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
- Early medieval/Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Scandinavian: AD 410 – 1066
- Medieval: AD 1066 – 1540
- Post-medieval: AD 1540 – 1900
    - Tudor: AD 1485 – 1603
    - Stuart: AD 1603 – 1714
    - Georgian: AD 1714 – 1837
- Industrial: 1750 – 1900
    - Victorian: AD 1837 – 1901

- Modern: AD 1900 – Present

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Data and information obtained and consulted in the compilation of this report has been derived from a number of secondary sources. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of secondary information, its accuracy has been assumed in good faith. Any information accessed from external databases (e.g. NLHE, HERs) represents a record of known assets and their discovery and further investigation. Such information is not complete and does not preclude the future discovery of additional assets and the amendment of information about known assets which may affect their significance and/or sensitivity to development effects. 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 the 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.

1.6 COPYRIGHT

Figure 1 Site location

2. RESULTS

The results of the archaeological works are presented below.

2.1 TEST PITTING WORKS TO INVESTIGATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Test pitting works were carried out by Chris Scott and Tiffany Snowden of Solstice Heritage LLP on the 6th September 2017. TP1 was excavated by hand to archaeological methods and standards and fully recorded. The location of the test pit is shown on Figure 2. A plan and section of the test pit is included as Appendix 1.

2.1.1 TEST PIT 1

Test Pit 1 was excavated towards the south side of the headland within a noticeable terraced area, surrounded by an earthwork bank and cut into the southward sloping ground (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The test pit was excavated through a thin layer of dark brown/black topsoil (001) with a depth of *c.* 70 mm. This topsoil (001) contained a small fragment of glass, a corroded nail, and a small proportion of the pottery sherds uncovered.

The topsoil (001) overlay a well-developed, but also disturbed, mid-brown, clayish silt subsoil (002), which was excavated to its full thickness of *c.* 0.22 m, whereupon its was shown to sit above the reddish-orange clay till (003). The subsoil deposit was fairly rooted and disturbed and contained occasional small angular stones, as well as the majority of finds recovered, primarily consisting of sherds of 19th-century unglazed red earthenware, pearlware and whiteware. Excavation was ceased at the upper surface of this natural deposit. No archaeological features were present within the excavation.

Figure 2 Location of test pit

Figure 3 Test Pit 1, looking north. Scale 2x1 m

Figure 4 Test Pit 1, looking north. Scale 1x1 m

3. SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT

Jim Brightman

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A small mixed assemblage of finds was assessed and catalogued by the author on 7th September 2017. The assemblage comprised 12 sherds of pottery, 1 piece of glass and 1 piece of corroded metal. The pottery assemblage weighed a total of 75.9 grams; the weights for the other pieces are given in the relevant section below.

3.2 METHOD

All individual artefacts were cleaned (depending on condition and suitability to various cleaning methods), bagged and assigned individual small find numbers. The bags were marked with site code, small find number, context number, trench number and general artefact type. Each artefact was examined on a clean working surface in natural light by both eye and using a x5 and x10 magnification lens. Metrical data relevant to the artefact type in question were captured using digital calipers with plastic tines, accurate to 1/10 mm. Weight was measured with a digital balance accurate to 0.1g. Each artefact was logged into a spreadsheet as it was examined.

3.3 RESULTS

The pottery assemblage could be divided into three sub-types: six sherds of unglazed red earthenware, five sherds of pearlware and one small sherd of whiteware.

All except one sherd of the unglazed earthenware were small and fragmentary; the exception is a rim sherd showing a slightly out-turned profile. All could be from the same vessel and are likely to be a horticultural ware.

Of the pearlware sherds, three appear to come from the same vessel: a dinner or side plate with light blue underglaze painted decoration comprising foliage patterning to the centre and rim typical of styles copying imported porcelain decoration. Although potentially earlier than transfer-printed decoration, there is considerable overlap in the dates. A single sherd is identifiable as from a small bowl or cup with a fragment of oriental-pattern underglaze print in a strong and clear blue-turquoise. The final sherd is a cup or small bowl rim in whiteware with a thinner fabric than the remainder of the assemblage but features no decoration. The sherds are characteristic of the mass-produced tableware manufactured *c.* 1780-1840, with the whiteware sherd potentially dating to slightly later in the 19th century (see Godden 1974, 141, 228-229).

A tiny fragment (2.5 g) of glass was recovered. It has a medium thick profile (5.8 mm) and is more likely to represent clear vessel glass than window glass due to a slight curvature to one end. Its size prevents any definite conclusions from being drawn. The final piece assessed is a heavily corroded ferrous nail head and partial shaft (22.9 g). It measures 70.7 mm in surviving length, with a shaft diameter of 9.3 mm. The head appears square in form.

3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

No further analysis or retention of the assemblage is recommended.

4. DISCUSSION

The test pit has provided information on the archaeological potential of the site at Cowbar Nab. The thin nature of the topsoil and the compact, clayish nature of the subsoil suggest that the ground in this part of the site was previously reduced to form a flat terrace for the creation of small allotments, which appear on the First Edition OS Map. The pottery finds from the site would support its use for this purpose during the mid-to-late 19th century. In terms of wider information, the test pit has not provided any further information regarding the wider archaeological potential of the site, due mainly to the previous disturbance of the ground in this immediate area. Positively, the work suggests that earlier, or more significant, archaeological deposits are unlikely to be present on this terraced area. As such, it seems likely that the installation of the telecommunications mast on this terrace may be carried out without disturbing significant archaeological deposits. However, the deposits present within the test pit are unlikely to be representative of deposits across the wider headland, given the clearly varying land-use the site has obviously experienced. As such, any areas to be impacted by works which lie outside of the defined allotment terraces should be considered for further archaeological investigation.

5. SOURCES

5.1 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014a. *Code of Conduct.* Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). 2014b. *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation.* Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014c. *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials.* Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014d. *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives.* Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). 2012. *National Planning Policy Framework.* London, The Stationery Office.

Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). 2014. *National Planning Practice Guidance.* London, The Stationery Office.

English Heritage (EH). 2008. *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance.* London, English Heritage.

English Heritage (EH). 2011. *Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (Second edition).* London, English Heritage.

Godden, G. 1974. *British Pottery: An Illustrated Guide.* London, Barrie and Jenkins Ltd.

5.2 WEBSITES

British Geological Survey. 2017. *Geology of Britain Viewer.* Accessible from: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>. [23rd August 2017].

APPENDIX 1 – PLANS AND SECTIONS OF TEST PITS

APPENDIX 2 – METHODOLOGY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Where required, works were monitored by a suitably qualified archaeologist and excavation was undertaken by machine under archaeological supervision. Where archaeological or palaeoenvironmental features or deposits were encountered, groundworks were halted and suitable time was afforded to the archaeologist to investigate, sample and record such remains. Equally, the archaeologist aimed to minimise disruption to the programme of groundworks through good working practice.

Where standing structures were encountered, their full extent within the area of monitoring was, if necessary, exposed and recorded. Where cut features were exposed, they were cleaned and delimited as much as practicable within the area of monitoring and investigated. No cut features were encountered where it was deemed necessary to excavate them.

RECORDING METHODOLOGY

All archaeological features were recorded on *pro forma* sheets, creating a primary written record that was accompanied by drawn and photographic records.

A drawn record was compiled of all features, including plan and section/profile illustrations at a suitable scale (usually 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50) depending on the complexity and significance of the remains.

The photographic record of the monitoring was undertaken in high-resolution digital format. Photographs were taken of all archaeological and palaeoenvironmental features in addition to general site photography locating the individual features in their wider context.

The total area of groundworks was located and tied to the National Grid at a scale of 1:2500 or 1:1250 as practical. All features were located accurately within this area and their height also accurately recorded above Ordnance Datum.

AIM OF THE SAMPLING STRATEGY

Given the uncertainty of the presence or level of archaeological remains likely to be encountered as part of the monitoring, the general aim of the scientific and palaeoenvironmental sampling strategy was:

- To provide information on the nature of human activity and the past environment in the immediate area, in relation to the archaeological deposits uncovered during the project.