

NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES LTD
SHITTLEHOPE BURN FARM
Negative Watching Brief Report

Site name: Shittlehope Burn Farm **Grid reference:** NZ 0025 3845
Parish: Stanhope **County:** County Durham
Administrative authority: Durham County Council **Development:** Housing
Client: Gibson Building Contractors **Contractor:** Gibson Building Contractors
Planning application reference: DM/17/02436/FPA
Site supervisor: Holly Cooper **Project manager:** Matthew Town
Fieldwork Date(s): 12th-13th December 2017
NAA project number: 1407 **Site code:** SHB17
NAA report number: 18/03 **Report date:** 8/1/2017

Reasons for watching brief

A watching brief was requested by Durham County Council in response to a planning application for the construction of three detached houses on land to the south of Shittlehope Burn Farm. The plot lies adjacent to the site of a WW1 Prisoner of War camp and previous archaeological work in this area has identified ephemeral remains of structures, features and surfaces relating to the usage of the site at this time (ASDU 2015). The 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area shows the layout of the WW1 camp, structures at its eastern extent appearing to extend into the development area (Fig. 2)

Results

The area of the proposed development had been previously occupied by a builders' yard and council depot, surfaced with tarmac and enclosed by chain link fencing. Excavation was carried out by a back-acting mechanical excavator, removing 4m wide strips running south to north, starting in the south-western corner. Owing to the limited space available on-site, archaeological remains and deposits were recorded within each 4m strip and the spoil reinstated before the next strip was opened.

The natural alluvial silt **(01)** was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.9m, at the south-western corner of the development area, rising to a minimum depth of 0.3m in the north-east corner. There was no evidence of any archaeological features cut into this horizon.

Above the natural silt **(01)** was a site-wide black refuse deposit **(02)** which consisted of ashy material and clinker. This was thickest (0.6m) at the south-west corner, thinning to a minimum of 0.1m at the north-east, following the natural upward slope of the land. Within this deposit were frequent fragments of brick, sandstone and concrete rubble, which could have originated from structures within the WW1 PoW camp; however, all *in situ* structural evidence pre-dating deposit **02** had been removed. In addition to rubble, deposit **02** also contained large quantities of domestic refuse, primarily pottery and glass, many of which were branded and could therefore be dated to the late 19th/early 20th century (Plate 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Two drains **(09)** were revealed running north-west to south-east along the line of machining, 0.6m in width and located approximately 4m apart, they were cut through clinker horizon **02**. No ceramic pipes were present and the cuts had been infilled with limestone chippings to aid drainage. A third drain was recorded running east to west, this one contained a ceramic pipe and was interrupted along its length by a concrete and brick inspection chamber (also listed under **09**). Within the fills of the drain cuts and the inspection chamber were fragments of plastic packaging, which attributed a modern date to all three of these features and they therefore post-date any remains of the early 20th century Prisoner of War camp (Fig. 2, Fig.3, Plate 2).

Also cut through clinker horizon **02**, approximately 5m from the western edge of excavation, was a circular brick structure, apparently a well/borehole, **(06)** (Fig. 2, Fig. 3). The overall diameter of the structure was 1.1m, the bricks laid in header bond, which formed a central, circular, aperture 0.6m in diameter, capped with a circular sandstone slab. A square aperture (0.3m by 0.3m) with a concrete lintel had been built into the structure, facing north-east. This had been infilled at a later date with three bricks laid stretcher. Stamped "F & L" for Ferens and Love, these bricks were made locally at Cornsay Colliery and differed from those used in the main structure, which were frogged but unstamped. Well/borehole structure **06** was situated within a vertical sided cut 1.5m in diameter, infilled with a mixed deposit of rubble, medium natural cobbles and clinker, **(07)**. This cut was excavated to a depth of 1.5m below ground level, the full depth of cut **07** and structure **06** is unknown (Plate 3, Plate 4).

Overlying the well/borehole **(06)** and the modern drains **(09)** was a widespread rough surface of cobble setts and chipped stone bonded with bitumen **(03)**. The uneven and coarse nature of

this deposit indicates that it was more likely a bedding layer for the upper tarmac yard (04) than a surface in its own right (Plate 1).

Conclusion

No *in situ* archaeological evidence relating to the WW1 Prisoner of War camp or earlier periods was found during the watching brief. The 3rd Edition Ordnance survey map shows two structures and the eastern boundary fence as being located within the development area (Fig.2); however all evidence of these features has been removed.

It is likely that the structural remains were demolished and the site levelled prior to usage as a council depot and builders yard, erasing all trace of the early remains. It is possible that the fragments of brick and concrete rubble as well as the numerous early 20th century bottles and jars originated from the camp, however their location within widespread refuse layer (02), apparently used to build up the ground level, does not provide a securely datable context.

The field drains and well/borehole structure (06) were deemed to be modern as they post-dated refuse and levelling layer 02 and were therefore constructed after the demolition of any remains relating to the Prisoner of War camp.

Representative examples of early 20th century glass and ceramics were collected and photographed but were not retained.

No *in situ* archaeology was recorded that could be impacted by groundworks and therefore no further archaeological work is recommended in relation to the proposed development.

Archive deposition: Internal at NAA

References

ASDU (2014) *Shittlehope Burn Farm, Stanhope, County Durham: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Report Number 3600.

ASDU (2015) *Archaeological Evaluation, Shittlehope Burn Farm, Stanhope*. Report Number 3920

Websites

www.finds.org Find Number NCL-51BD27, Northumberland

<https://handforthPoWcamp.com/home/handforth-and-beyond/subcamps/>

<https://sha.org/bottle/>

<http://www.britishbottleforum.co.uk/webpage/>

Plates



*Plate 1: Representative section showing the natural alluvial stony silt **01**, thick refuse deposit **02**, stone setts **03** and tarmac surface **04**.*



Plate 2: Modern brick and concrete inspection chamber and ceramic drains (09).



Plate 3: North-east facing elevation of brick well/borehole structure 06, showing square aperture blocked with later bricks and cut 05 infilled with cobbles and rubble (07).



Plate 4: Overview of well/borehole structure 06 showing central aperture with sandstone cap.



Plate 5: Assemblage of small glass bottles and inkwells from deposit 02.



Plate 6: Assemblage of early 20th century medicine and poison bottles from deposit 02.



Plate 7: Assemblage of early 20th century condiment bottles from deposit 02.



Plate 8: Assemblage of late 19th/early 20th century ceramics from deposit 02, including a fragment of an “Adaptable Hot Water Bottle & Bed Warmer” produced by The Old Fulham Pottery from 1904 onwards.



Plate 9: Fragments of late 19th/early 20th century decorative clay pipe bowls and stem from deposit 02, attributed to the factory of Tennant and Son, Tweedmouth.