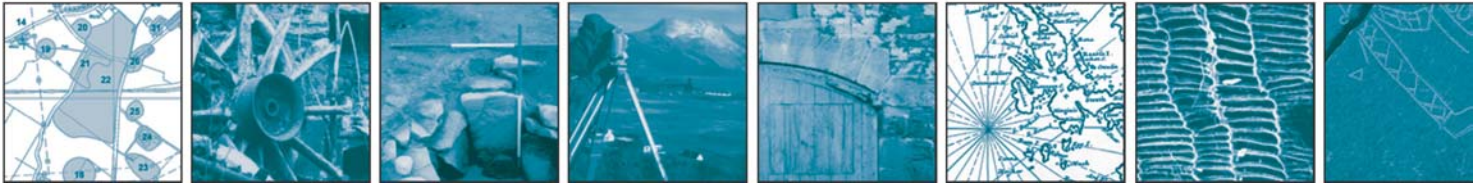


Date: July 2005
Client: Mrs Amanda Gilholm
Project Code: SHN05



**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief on
land to the rear of 147, 149 and 149A Main Street,
North Sunderland, Northumberland**

Richard Conolly



HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (SHN05)

Client	Mrs Amanda Gilholm
Planning Reference	04/B/0555
NCCCT Reference	B33/1: 3802
OASIS Reference	Headland1-9210
National Grid Reference	NU 2128 3150
Project Manager	Chris Lowe
Project Supervisor	Richard Conolly
Text	Richard Conolly
Illustrations	Thomas Small
Excavation Team	Richard Conolly
Schedule	
Fieldwork	12 July 2005
Report	July 2005

Abstract

Headland Archaeology maintained an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a dwelling house to the rear of 147-149A Main Street, North Sunderland, Northumberland.

Four walls running perpendicular to the street frontage were recorded. Late medieval/post-medieval pottery was found in association with two of the walls. They are interpreted as being plot boundary walls of post-medieval date.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Headland Archeology Ltd was commissioned by Mrs A Gilholm to maintain an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a dwelling house on a plot of land to the rear of 147, 149 and 149A Main Street, North Sunderland, Northumberland. The work was undertaken in order to fulfil a planning condition imposed upon the development by the local planning authority, following the recommendation of its archaeological advisor, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team (NCCCT).
- 1.2 The watching brief was undertaken on 12 July 2005.

2. SITE LOCATION, DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND (FIGURE 1)

- 2.1 The development site, henceforth the 'house plot', is located to the rear of 147-149A Main St, North Sunderland, Northumberland (NGR NU 2128 3150) and lies at approximately 19.5 m OD. It occupies approximately 700 m². At the time of the watching brief the ground was under grass. The area immediately to the north of the house plot has been terraced, and the ground surface here lies 1 – 1.3 m lower than the house plot. This terracing presumably occurred at the time of the construction of the row of cottages that front onto Main Street, and buildings to their rear. The latter are depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map but had undergone alteration by the time of the Second Edition (1890s) and had been demolished by the 1960s, as had plot boundaries to the rear.
- 2.3 North Sunderland lies in an area with extensive recorded prehistoric activity. A Bronze Age cist burial was discovered some 200 m to the west of the present site, and another Bronze Age burial and a Neolithic cup and ring marked stone have been found at Seahouses. A circular enclosure to the east of Seahouses may be indicative of an Iron Age settlement. The earliest documentary reference to a settlement at North Sunderland dates to 1296. There was a possibility, highlighted by NCCCT, that the rearward row of buildings depicted on the Ordnance Survey First Edition followed an earlier line of Main St, with the front row marking a relatively late change of alignment. If this was the case, the development could reasonably be expected to disturb remnants of the medieval street frontage. No archaeological work has been undertaken in the village previously.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

- 3.1 The watching brief was intended to insure that important archaeological remains were not destroyed without an adequate record first being made. To this end, the machine excavation of trenches for the foundations of the house and garage and services was carried out under archaeological supervision. A written, drawn and photographic record was made of exposed archaeological features, and spoil heaps were examined for finds

4. RESULTS (FIGURE 1)

- 4.1 The site was covered by some 0.2 m of topsoil, which contained building debris. This sealed a mid yellowish brown silty clay (2), up to 0.5 m deep with moderately frequent coal fragments (some burnt), rare sandstone fragments and occasional pieces of transfer ware (discarded).
- 4.2 This deposit overlay Walls 3, 6, 8 and 10. With the exception of Wall 3, which was exposed within the service trench, these were only exposed in the house foundation trenches, which they crossed at right angles. The walls were, as far as can be ascertained within narrow trenches, parallel and orientated north/south, perpendicular to the street frontage. They survived to up to two courses and were constructed in sandstone rubble, using blocks up to 0.6 m across. No bonding was evident. The tops of the walls lay between 18.8 and 19.15 m OD, with the walls to the west higher than those to the east. It was not possible to define foundation cuts for the walls but these are presumed to have existed as the walls rested on clean natural subsoil.
- 4.3 Two sherds of reduced greenware pottery from green-glazed jugs were recovered from Deposit 2. Sherd 1 was found pressed against the face of Wall 3 and dates to the 14-16th century. Sherd 2 was found next to Wall 6 and dates to the 16-17th century. The latter piece was relatively unabraded.
- 4.4 The walls were located at intervals of approximately 3.5 m. The exception being Walls 8 and 10, where there was a gap of 7 m. An existing service trench ran north/south through the house plot and it is possible that this had destroyed a wall or disturbed it sufficiently that it was not recognisable within the narrow confines of the foundation trench.
- 4.5 The putative foundation trenches for the walls (4, 7, 9 and 11) cut into mid yellowish brown silty clay (5), very similar in character to the deposit sealing the walls. This overlay natural clay subsoil.

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The watching brief did not encounter any remains that might be indicative of a street frontage.
- 5.2 The walls exposed are consistent with plot boundary walls. Dating is problematic as the deposits exposed in the course of the watching brief had been subject to extensive reworking in the course of cultivation. This had removed finds from their original context and meant that the level from which the walls' foundation trenches had been cut could not be identified.
- 5.3 It is posited that the plots were laid out relatively late. It is suggested that the sherd of pottery found with Wall 3 was in the wall's foundation trench. Assuming the walls were built in one phase, the sherd found with Wall 3 gives a late medieval *terminus post quem*. Furthermore, the virtual absence of pottery of medieval date is perhaps indicative of the land having seen little use in the medieval period. The morphology of the plots is also distinctive. They appear unusually narrow for medieval plots and are appreciably shorter than plots in the village to the west of St Paul's Church. The latter may suggest that they were laid out in a separate phase from those to the west. The locations of the walls tally with those shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey,

though it would appear that one (Wall 8) had been demolished by the mid-19th century when the area was surveyed.

5.4 No further work is recommended.

APPENDIX: REGISTERS

Context Register

Context No.	Description	Dimensions	Level (top)
1	Topsoil	Depth: 0.2 m	19.5 m OD
2	Cultivation layer. Mid yellowish brown silty clay with moderate coal fragments, some burnt.	Depth: >0.5 m	19.2 m OD
3	Wall. Aligned N/S. Two courses of sandstone rubble <0.4 m. No bonding material present.	Length: >4.2 m Width: 0.5 m	18.8 m OD
4	Foundation trench for Wall 3.	Length: >4.2 m Width: >0.5 m	18.8 m OD
5	Cultivation layer. Mid yellowish brown silty clay with moderate coal fragments, some burnt.	Depth: >0.2 m	18.8 m OD
6	Wall. Aligned N/S. Two courses of sandstone rubble <0.7 m. No bonding material present.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	19.15 m OD
7	Foundation trench for Wall 6.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	19.15 m OD
8	Wall. Aligned N/S. Two courses of sandstone rubble <0.7 m. No bonding material present.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	19.01 m OD
9	Foundation trench for Wall 8.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	19.01 m OD
10	Wall. Aligned N/S. Two courses of sandstone rubble <0.7 m. No bonding material present.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	18.93 m OD
11	Foundation trench for Wall 10.	Length: >7 m Width: 0.5 m	18.93 m OD
12	Natural Subsoil. Light orangey brown clay	-	18.15-18.48 m OD

Photographic Registers

Film 1: Colour Slide and Black & White

Shot no.	Direction Facing	Description
1	-	ID shot
2	SE	General pre-ex view
3	SW	General pre-ex view

4	NE	General shot service trench
5	N	General shot service trench
6	NE	Wall 3
7	E	West-facing elevation Wall 3
8	N	Post-ex shot garage area
9	E	Post-ex topsoil strip house area
10	N	Representative section of northern foundation trench, showing Wall 8.
11	E	General shot southern foundation trench

Drawing register

Drawing No.	Description	Scale
1	Plan of Wall 3.	1:20
2	Representative section of service trench	1:10
3	Plan showing location of trenches and Walls 3, 6, 8 & 10	1:100

Finds

Julie Franklin

Sherd No.	Context No.	Description	Spot Date
1	2	Body sherd; reduced greenware from green glaze jug.	14-16 th century
2	2	Strap handle; reduced greenware from green glaze jug.	16-17 th century

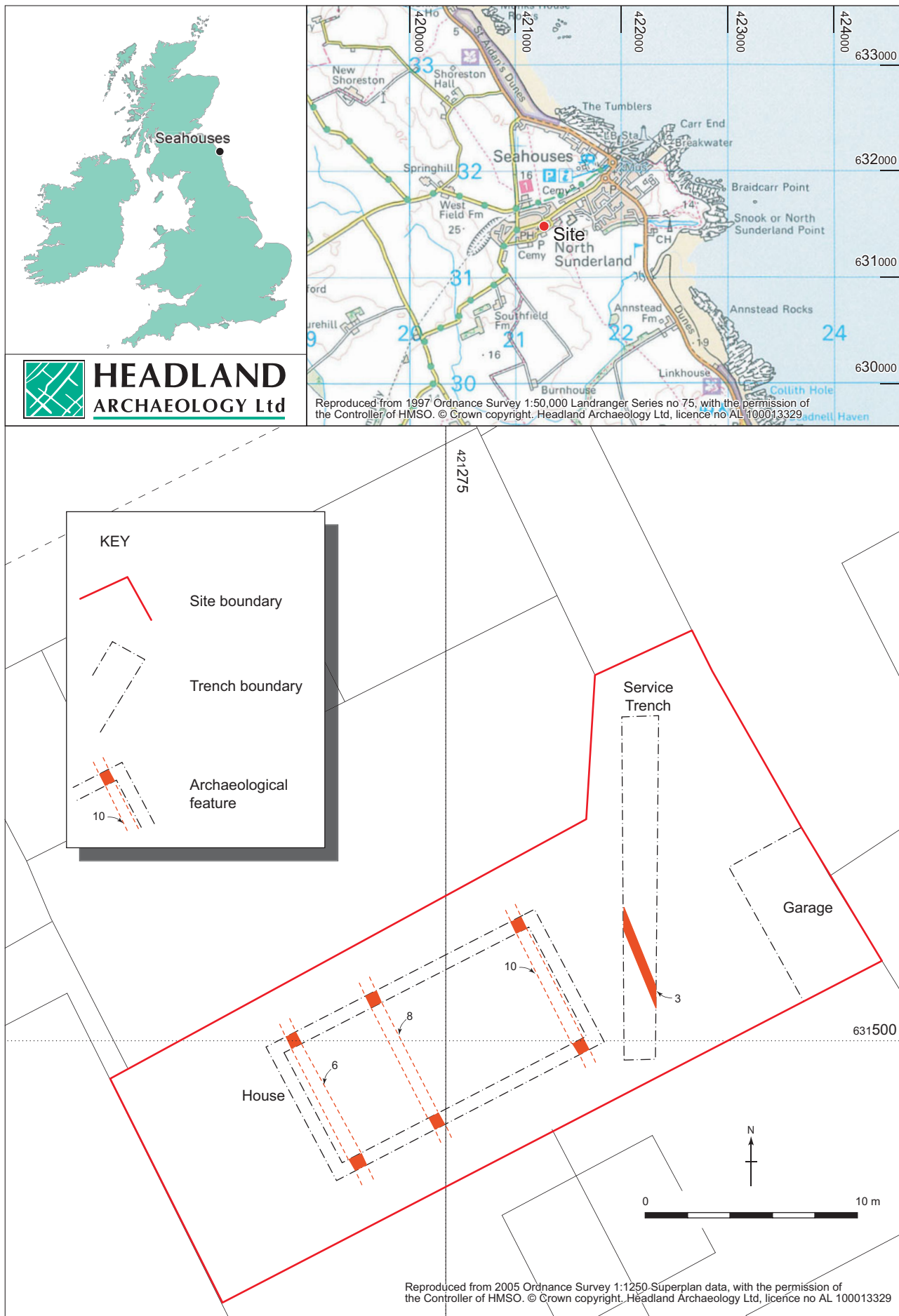


Figure 1 - Location map of 147-149a Main Street, North Sunderland, showing excavated trenches and walls with numbers.