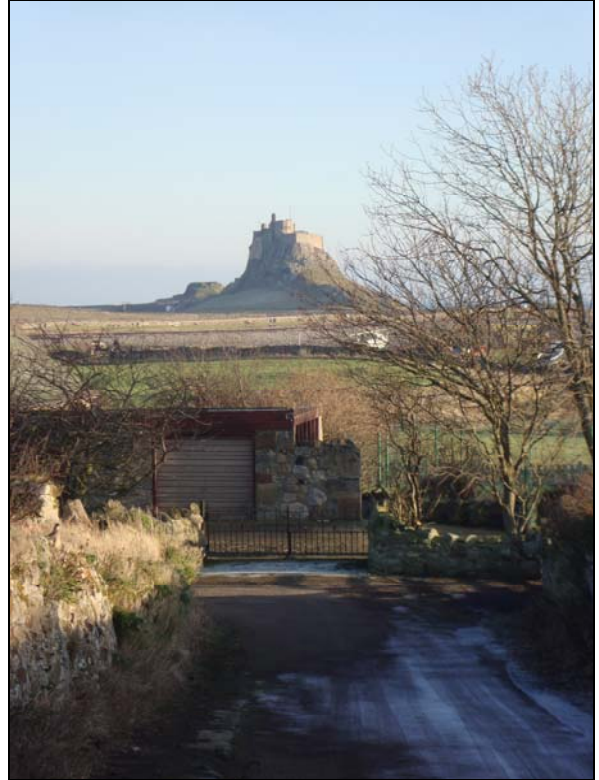


An Archaeological Watching Brief at Marygate and St. Cuthbert's Square, Holy Island, Northumberland



View from St, Cuthbert's Square to Lindisfarne Castle

ARS Ltd Report 2012/02
January 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2012 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Marygate and St. Cuthbert's Square, Holy Island in Northumberland. The watching brief involved the monitoring of groundworks associated with the installation of ducting for two new telephone connections.

During the 2012 watching brief there were no archaeological finds, features or buried land surfaces discovered on the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and Scope of Work

1.1.1 In January 2012 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Marygate and St. Cuthbert's Square, Holy Island Northumberland.

1.1.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of groundworks during the installation of ducting for two new telephone connections. The objective of the watching brief was to ensure that any archaeological features encountered during the course of the groundworks were recorded and interpreted.

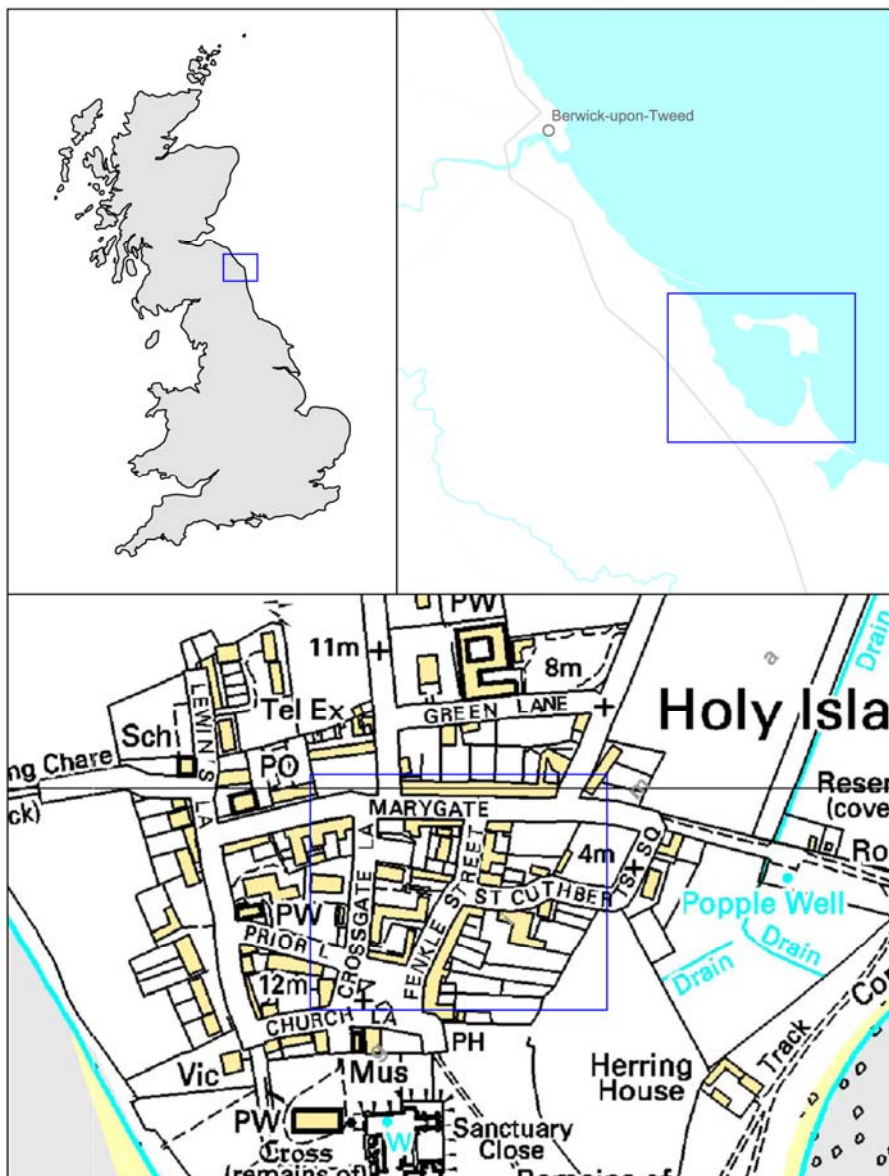


Fig. 1 Location of site.

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1.2. Geology

1.2.1. The site is centred at NGR NU 12633 41995 (Marygate) and NGR NU 12700 41935 (St. Cuthbert's Square). The solid geology of the area is Yoredale Group limestone, sandstone and argillaceous rocks. The superficial deposits of this area consist of till (British Geological Survey 2012).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for the installation of ducting for two telephone connections, one at Marygate and the other at St. Cuthbert's Square. The road surface was trenched to a maximum width of 300mm using a 360° machine equipped with a toothless bucket.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Holy Island, or Lindisfarne, is a tidal island, which lies approximately one mile off the coast of Northumberland and some 12 miles south east of Berwick. Evidence of prehistoric activity has been found during archaeological field survey and excavation and the island, with a natural harbour and plentiful food supply from the sea, would have been an attractive site for early settlement. The first documentary reference to the island, then called Lindisfarne, is found in the eighth century writing of Bede, who describes how St Aidan arrived from Iona in about AD635 and was invested by King Oswald to found a see and a monastery. Little is known about the buildings and layout of the early monastic complex but some timber structural remains have been uncovered behind the Winery which may relate to this early monastic site, in addition the vallum (defensive ditch) may have followed the line of Marygate (Northern Archaeological Associates, 2001, see Fig 1). Excavations at the Castle Hotel (Fig. 1) and elsewhere have also recovered cut features of a possible early medieval/prehistoric date sealed by subsoil/midden layers. Dating evidence for these features (such as pre-medieval ceramics) are sparse, but a feature excavated in 1996 at Castle View gave a radiocarbon date of 3365-3385BC (The Archaeological Practice, 1996, 2).

3.2 Holy Island was subjected to Viking raid from AD793 and the monastery abandoned in the mid- or late ninth century. However, this is not to say the island was unoccupied in the ninth century (Holy Island, EUS, 2008, 7). The Bishop of Durham re-founded the site as a cell of the Benedictine monastery of Durham in 1083.

3.3 The was extensive medieval occupation on Holy Island and in the 16th and 17th centuries, Holy Island played a role in the defence of the North East coast when the Crown built a small. During the Tudor period additional defences were built in recognition of the strategic importance of the island in controlling Scottish neighbours. These consisted of a possible remodelling of the settlement, the conversion of a medieval house to a military supply base and the possible construction of bulwarks around the harbour (Holy Island EUS 2008, 7). The Scheduled Monument of The Palace Medieval house and Tudor supply base is located immediately east of the proposed St Cuthbert's Square intervention (SAM 24601).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Ground Surface

4.1.1 The tarmac road surface (001) covered both sites to an average depth of approximately 0.1m.

4.2 Substrata

4.2.1 Directly below the tarmac (001) modern road make-up (002) and disturbed ground (003) was observed to the maximum depth of both excavations, which was 300mm below ground level for St. Cuthbert's Square, and 450mm below ground level for Marygate. No finds were recovered from the deposits.

4.2.2 There were no archaeological features or deposits observed.

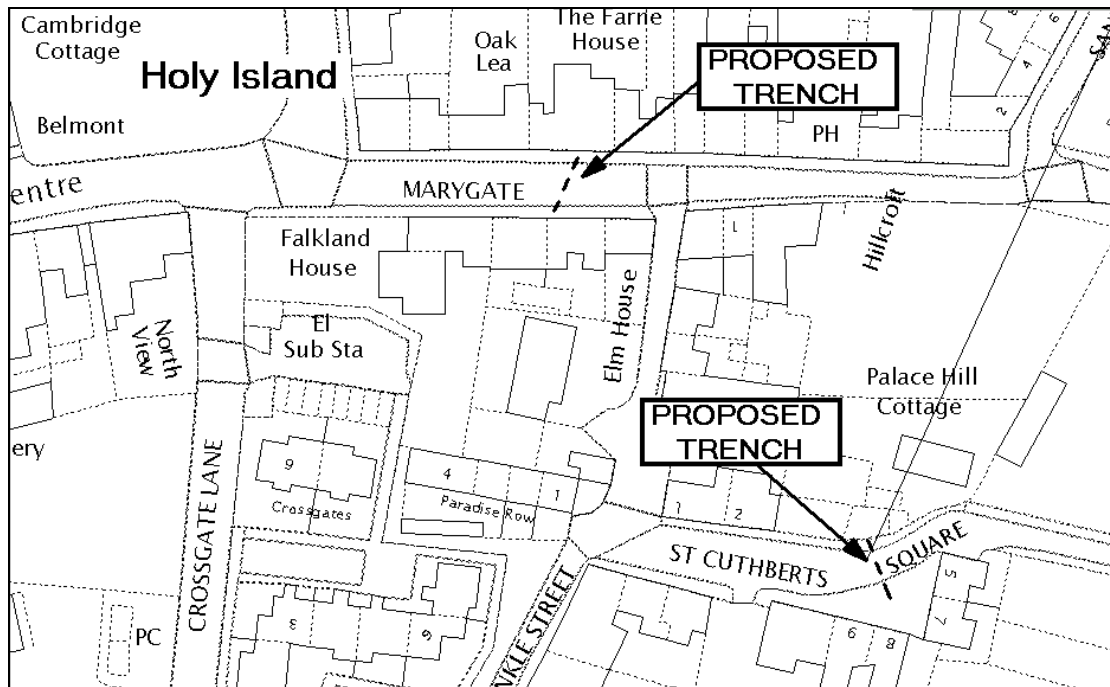


Figure 2: The location of the BT cable trenches.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 No finds, features or buried land surfaces were recovered from the area of either excavation.

6. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

6.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.

6.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

7. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY

7.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered 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.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved in this project, in particular David Brown of BT Openreach and Nick Best of Northumberland County Council.

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Websites

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Figure 3: Section photograph of Marygate excavation, showing road make up and disturbed ground.



Figure 4: Section photograph of St. Cuthbert's Square excavation, showing road make up and disturbed ground.