

**An Archaeological Watching Brief at
Highburn Caravan Park, Wooler,
Northumberland**



The stripped easement, looking northeast

ARS Ltd Report 2013/15
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2013 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Northumbrian Water Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief in Wooler, Northumberland. The watching brief involved the monitoring of groundworks associated with a water renewal exercise. The watching brief area comprised trenching works leading from Common Road in Wooler, north to Burnhouse Road and continuing north to meet the A697.

A 7.5m wide easement was dug up the eastern side of Field 1 from northeast to southwest and then across to the eastern side of Field 2. From here it ran from northeast to southwest across Field 2. The easement measured approximately 7.5m wide and 0.2m deep. The easement was not dug all the way through the topsoil. A 0.4m wide trench was then dug along this route to a depth of 1.2m.

No archaeological finds, features or buried land surfaces were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and Scope of Work

1.1.1 In January 2013 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Northumbrian Water to undertake an archaeological watching brief in Wooler, Northumberland.

1.1.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of groundworks associated with a water renewal exercise. The watching brief area comprised trenching works leading from Common Road in Wooler, north to Burnhouse Road and continuing north to meet the A697.

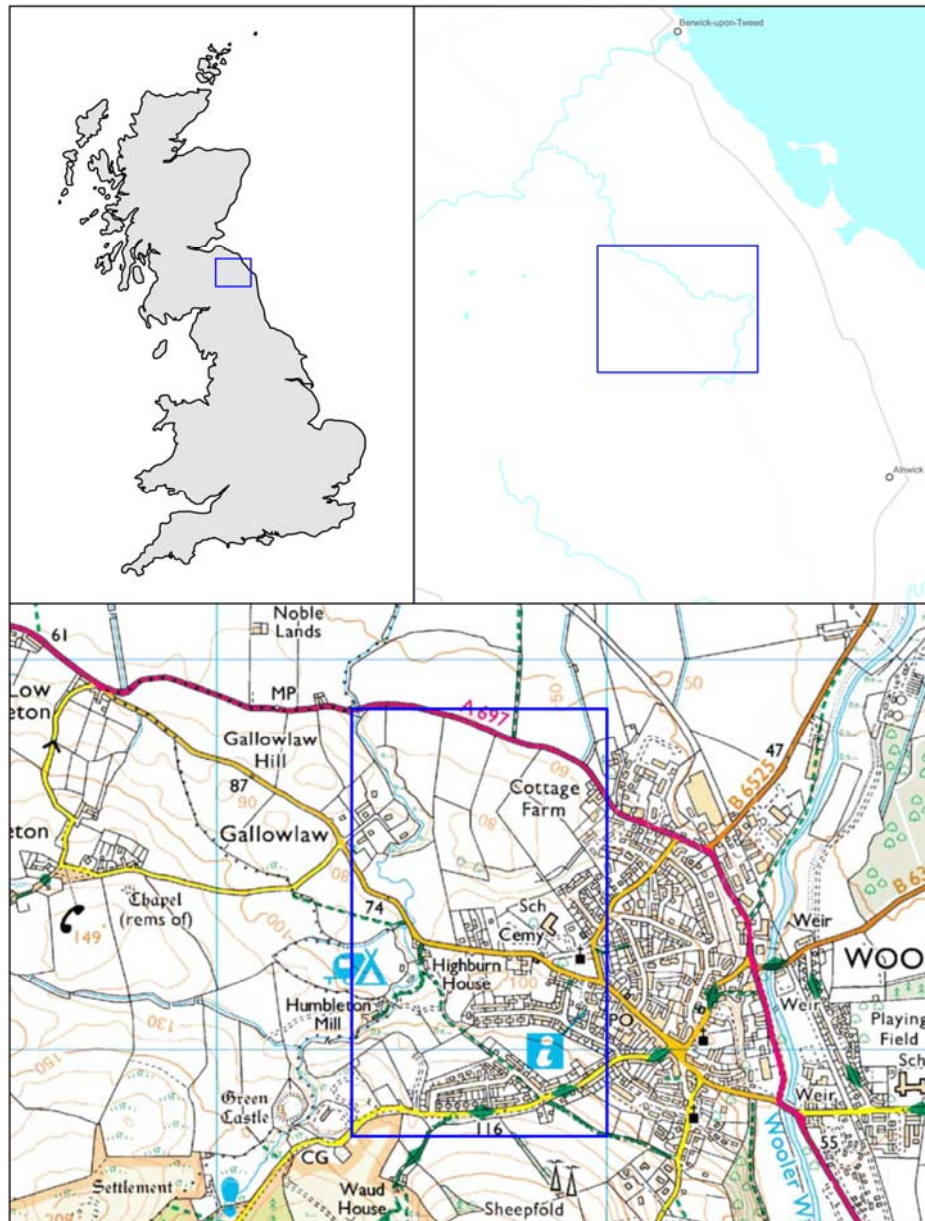


Fig. 1 Location of site.
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1.2. Geology

1.2.1. The site is centred on NT 98563 28279. The solid geology of the area is a combination of Ballagin Formation sandstone, siltstone and dolomitic limestone and Cheviot volcanic formation andesite. The superficial deposits of this area vary between River Terrace deposits of gravel, sand and silt and Devensian Till (British Geological Survey 2013).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during groundworks associated with a water mains renewal exercise. The pipeline route ran from the northern end of Field 1, from northeast to southwest along the eastern side of the field. The route entered Field 2 at the eastern edge and ran from northeast to southwest through the middle of the field (see Figure 2).

2.2. An area running the length of the pipeline and measuring approximately 7.5m wide was stripped to a depth of approximately 0.2m. This did not result in all of the topsoil being stripped. A trench measuring 0.4m wide was then dug along the pipeline route to a depth of 1.2m. All excavation was carried out under archaeological supervision and was dug using a small 360° machine equipped with a back-acting toothless ditching bucket.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. This area of north Northumberland is rich in archaeology. Sites ranging in date from the Mesolithic to Modern periods can be found in abundance in Northumberland and the prehistoric period is particularly well represented.

3.2. Between 2000 and 2002 a Mesolithic hut was excavated near the small village of Howick, which sits on the coast to the southeast of the development site. Lanton Quarry which lies slightly to the north of Wooler, just off the A697, has produced archaeological finds and features from the Neolithic period through to the Medieval period. A stone-built corbelled cist, excavated at Lanton in 2009, was found to contain the remains of a female, who was believed to have been 70 years old when she died. Radiocarbon dating placed the cist in the Iron Age.

3.3. The site of the Battle of Homildon Hill, now known as Humbleton Hill, lies approximately 1.3 miles to the northwest of the study site. The battle was fought in 1402 between the English and the Scots. The Scottish, led by Archibald, Earl of Douglas, had invaded England and carried off a large amount of loot. On their return home, however, they were met by an English force led by the Earl of Northumberland at Milfield. The Scots were heavily defeated. The site of the battle of Flodden, fought in 1513, also lies to the northwest of the development site, further to the north. Traces of the battle, including metal finds and cannonballs, have been found in the field.

3.4. The village of Wooler contains a number of listed buildings including shops, houses and public houses. There are also a large number of World War II pillboxes in the fields surrounding Wooler and the development site.



Figure 2:


A plan of Fields 1 and 2 showing the easement and pipeline trench.

1:2000 at A4

Key:

 Easement

 Pipeline trench

 Field 1

 Field 2

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4. RESULTS

4.1. Field 1 (see Figure 2)

4.1.1. The easement was dug into the topsoil which consisted of brown, coarsely textured clayey silt (001) that had a total depth of 0.2m. The topsoil became increasingly stony towards the southern end of the field. The pipeline trench itself was dug through the remaining topsoil (001) into a layer of pale brown fine/medium textured clayey silt (002). This had a depth of 0.4m and also became stonier towards the south. In some places beneath context (002) was a thin (0.15m) layer of medium textured orange sand (003) that contained no inclusions. This context was not present throughout the pipeline trench but only appeared in some places in Field 1. Beneath contexts (002) and (003) was a layer of pale brown/orange finely textured silty clay that contained no inclusions (004). This had a depth of 0.4m. In The natural sand (005) was encountered beneath context (004) at the base of the trench at a depth of 1.2m. The sand was an orange/grey colour and was stonier towards the south.

4.2. Field 2 (see Figure 2)

4.2.1. The stratigraphy in Field 2 differed slightly from that of Field 1. The easement and pipeline trench were both dug through the same topsoil (001) as in Field 1. Beneath this, however, a very stony clayey silt (006) was encountered. This had a depth of 0.6m. The natural sand (005) was encountered directly beneath context (006).



Figure 3: The stripped easement in Field 1, looking south.



Figure 4: Looking into the pipeline trench once the pipe had been laid.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. The contexts encountered during the watching brief consisted of various layers of alluvial sand and gravel and till created when the landscape was part of the river terrace.

5.2. There were no finds, features or buried land surfaces encountered during the watching brief.

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 Stephanie Bryant of Northumbrian Water and Nick Best of Northumberland County Council.

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