

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Hood Square, Winlaton, Gateshead.



Mini-digger removing topsoil from the north section.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2008 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mr George Robson to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hood Square, Winlaton, Gateshead. The work was carried out during the groundworks for building construction. The topsoil was removed down to the natural sand level using a mini-digger. No archaeological remains were encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Location and scope of work

1.1.1. In February 2008 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mr George Robson to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Hood Square, Winlaton, Gateshead (Fig. 1). The work was carried out during ground works for a proposed bungalow construction, on land previously used as an allotment. (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1 Site location Ordnance Survey data copyright OS, reproduced by permission, Licence no. 100045420

1.1.2. The site is centred at NZ 174 621 GB, approximately 0.2 miles west from Winlaton town centre and 1 mile south of Blaydon. Winlaton sits on a high bank of sandstone approximately 2 miles south of the River Tyne and 2.5 miles west of the River Derwent. It is known that Winlaton housed a number of iron works and factories built by Sir Ambrose Crowley in 1691, but physical evidence of these buildings has proved elusive. Due to the study area being in the heart of Winlaton it has been advised that all ground works associated with the development were monitored by an archaeologist in order to ensure that no damage was caused to any surviving archaeological remains.

Fig 2

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. The ground works were monitored by an archaeologist from Archaeological Research Services Ltd in order to identify any features of archaeological importance that may have been revealed during the process and to prevent the development impacting or damaging any remains. A mini-digger was used to strip the topsoil from the site, beginning with the eastern end and working gradually in sections towards the western end. At the south-west end of the site a small section of brick wall was removed in order to create an access route for vehicles onto the site (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 North view of the study area showing site access.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The earliest reference to Winlaton is in Boldon Buke (published in 1183) where it was coupled with Barlow. When Hatfield performed his survey in the late 14th century Winlaton was held by Lord Nevill, and the family continuing to hold it until 1569 when it was sold to a group of Newcastle merchants, the interest then, as with earlier owners, being that of the coal-mining prospects (HER 632).
- 3.1.1. In 1691 Sir Ambrose Crowley acquired by lease a disused corn mill and four acres of land in Winlaton village not to be confused with his later works at Winlaton Mill (HER 1006). Surtees described the works undertaken at Winlaton as ‘The making and grinding of edge tools, manufacturing files, and slitting bars of iron into nail-rods’. Even after Crowley's factories moved to Swalwell and Winlaton Mill after 1816, iron working continued within Winlaton, with several small forges specialising in the production of individual products. Evidence of Crowley's Winlaton village works has so far proved elusive, a nail forge survives in Hood Square (HER 1820) and a former joinery works survives off Front Street (HER 1809). Archaeological excavations in Winlaton have thus far failed to find any industrial remains.

- 3.1.2. The nail forge is a single storey, sandstone rubble building with a pantiled roof and stone slates at the eaves. The forge is the only surviving example of the many workshops that once existed in Winlaton and is now Grade II listed.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1. The rich dark brown topsoil was shallower at the south end of the site having a depth of just 0.30m as opposed to the northern end of the site where it had a depth of 0.70m. The topsoil was removed from the site to reveal a layer of natural sand with sandstone inclusions (Fig. 4). No evidence of archaeological features or material culture was found on the site.



Fig. 4 excavation of topsoil down to natural sand.

5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1. The work reported here indicates that no archaeological remains survived in the area where the topsoil strip was undertaken. The natural sand did not appear to be disturbed. Past activity in the area, *i.e.* landscaping during the construction of neighbouring houses, may have removed any archaeological features.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved in this project, in particular Jennifer Morrison of Newcastle City Council, and special mention to Mr George Robson

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