

**Archaeological Watching Brief at
Green Lane, Chare End & Fenkle
Street, Holy Island, Northumberland**



Holy Island castle

ARS Ltd Report 2009/12
February 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief during telecommunication ducting works on Holy Island, Northumberland. The work involved the excavation of ducting trenches on both grass verges and tarmac road surfaces. The ground works involved excavation of ducting and service box trenches on Green Lane, Chare End & Fenkle Street. The majority of the areas excavated were on ground which had been disturbed previously, through earlier ducting or road works, as was evident by the underlying made ground. In other areas the depth of excavation failed to penetrate beyond the topsoil.

There were no surviving in-situ archaeological remains in the areas of the watching brief. The lack of archaeological remains in an otherwise archaeologically rich area can probably be attributed to the disturbance caused by the construction of the modern roads and the laying of services and other cables prior to this one.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

1.1.1 In January 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief during telecommunication ducting works on Holy Island, Northumberland (Fig. 1). The site is centred at NU 126 419, approximately 1km to the west of Lindisfarne castle and approximately 100m north of Lindisfarne priory.

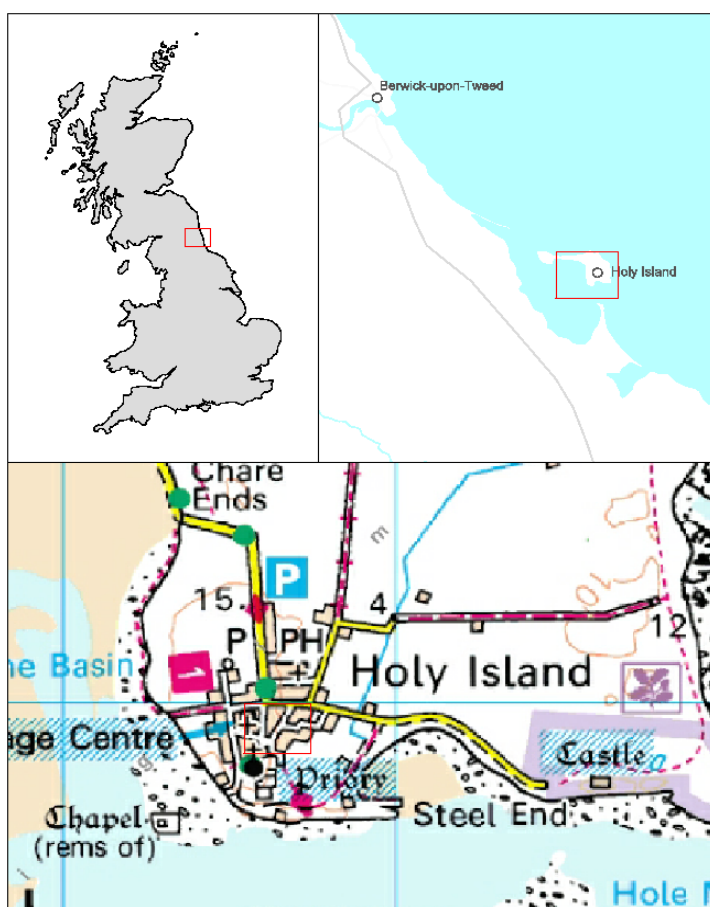


Fig. 1 Site location

1.2. Geology and soils

1.2.1. The solid geology of the area consists of Carboniferous, Namurian, Millstone Grit Series and the drift geology consists of glacial till (British Geological Survey 2007).

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to establish whether any archaeological features were affected by the ground works and to assess the depth and condition of any features present. The ground work involved the lifting of the current road surface and excavation down to the level of the telecommunications duct.
- 2.2. The ground works involved excavating trenches in three areas, Green Lane, Chare Ends & Fenkle Street (Figs. 2 & 3). A long trench measuring approximately 45 meters in length was excavated on the northern side of Green Lane (running east – west, Fig. 2). The width of the trench was a consistent 0.30m. A service box trench was excavated measuring 1m in length by 0.5m in width this box served as a junction for two connecting ducts. To the east, the trench turned north – east and connects with the church.
- 2.3. Another duct ran off to the south crossing the road for 5m until another service box trench was placed. This box trench measured 0.5m in length by 0.25m in width. Two further ducting trenches led off from this service box. One trench ran to the south – west for 5.6m, until connecting with the House named ‘Memnon’. The second trench ran south – east for 3.2m until it connected with the house named ‘Greystones’.
- 2.4. A service box trench was placed on Chare End (on the east side of the road). This box trench measured 0.5m in length by 0.25m in width. Two ducting trenches were excavated from the service box trench. One ran to the west for 8.6m until connecting with the cottage abutting the road. The second trench ran south for 10m until connecting with the café.
- 2.5. A ducting trench was placed on Fenkle Street. Running north - east from an existing service box, the trench then turns east and is connected to No. 6 Fenkle Street.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Prehistory

- 3.1.1. The earliest known activity close to the study area dates from the Mesolithic period where a flint blade was discovered at Castle Rock (Buckley 1935). A Neolithic axe head and Bronze Age spear were also discovered on the island.

3.2 Romano-British

- 3.2.1. The only finds on the island of Roman origin are two pieces of Roman pot found within a midden situated near ‘Jenny Bell’s Well’. The midden mostly comprised of medieval deposits.

3.3 Medieval

- 3.3.1 Lindisfarne priory exists on the site of a former Anglo Saxon monastery of which no physical evidence has been yet found (Thompson 1949). Knowledge of the priory comes from 7th/8th century historic records which state that the monastery was founded in 634 by Aidan, a bishop from Iona. Its most famous bishop was St Cuthbert who ruled here from 685 to 687. Vikings invaded the island in 793 and as a result of the continuing attacks on the island the monks were forced to leave and settled in Durham in 995. The monks returned and re-founded the priory in 1081.
- 3.3.2 Lindisfarne castle was constructed during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-47) and replaced a look-out tower which had occupied the site previously

3.4 Post-Medieval

- 3.4.1 The Post-Medieval period saw the development of the village and houses on Holy Island with the land being used for farming and the coast utilized for fishing.

4. RESULTS

- 4.1. The site was made up from various stratigraphic layers. These were as follows:
- 4.1.1. *Tarmac* (001)
A layer of modern tarmac which existed on all road crossings.
- 4.1.3. *Hardcore* (002)
A layer of blue/ green hardcore underlay the tarmac (001)
- 4.1.4. *Made ground* (003)
Underlying the hardcore layer (002) was a layer of modern made ground which contained brick and plastic debris.
- 4.1.5. *Topsoil* (004)
Dark brown, silty topsoil with stone inclusions
- 4.1.6. *Made ground* (005)
Underlying the topsoil (004) was a layer of made ground consisting of soil, stones and rubble
- 4.2. The 45m long trench of Green Lane (Fig. 4) was excavated 0.40m deep and its stratigraphy consisted of dark brown silty topsoil (004). Beneath the topsoil was a layer of made ground (005) which had a depth beyond that of the excavation. The connected service box trench (Fig. 5) was excavated to a depth of 0.50m and consisted only of the same dark brown topsoil (004) which had a depth beyond that of the excavation. The road crossing (Fig. 6) to the south of this box trench was excavated to a depth of 0.50m and consisted of a tarmac layer (001) which

had an underlying hardcore layer (002). Below the hardcore (002) was a layer of made ground (003) which had a depth beyond that of the excavation.

- 4.3. The two trenches leading off from the service box trench were excavated to a depth of 0.40m and the stratigraphy of both consisted of a dark brown silty topsoil (004) which had a depth beyond that of excavation (Fig. 7).
- 4.4. The service box trench on Chare End was excavated to a depth of 0.50m. The stratigraphy of this box trench consisted of a layer of tarmac (001). Directly underlying the tarmac (001) was a layer of hardcore (002) below which was a layer of made ground (003) also containing service ducts lain previously (Fig. 8). The two ducting trenches which ran off from the service box trench were excavated to a depth of 0.40m. Their stratigraphy comprised of a layer of tarmac (001). Directly underlying the tarmac was a layer of hardcore (002) which continued beyond the depth of excavation.
- 4.5. The ducting trench placed on Fenkle Street (Fig. 9) was excavated to a depth of 0.40m. The stratigraphy consisted of a layer of tarmac (001). Directly underlying the tarmac was a layer of hardcore (002). Beneath the hardcore layer (002) was a layer of made ground (003) which had a depth beyond that of the excavation.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. There were no surviving *in-situ* archaeological remains in the areas of the watching brief. The lack of archaeological remains in an otherwise archaeologically rich area can probably be attributed to the disturbance caused by the construction of the modern roads and the laying of previous services.

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 Paul Moran of Enterprise.

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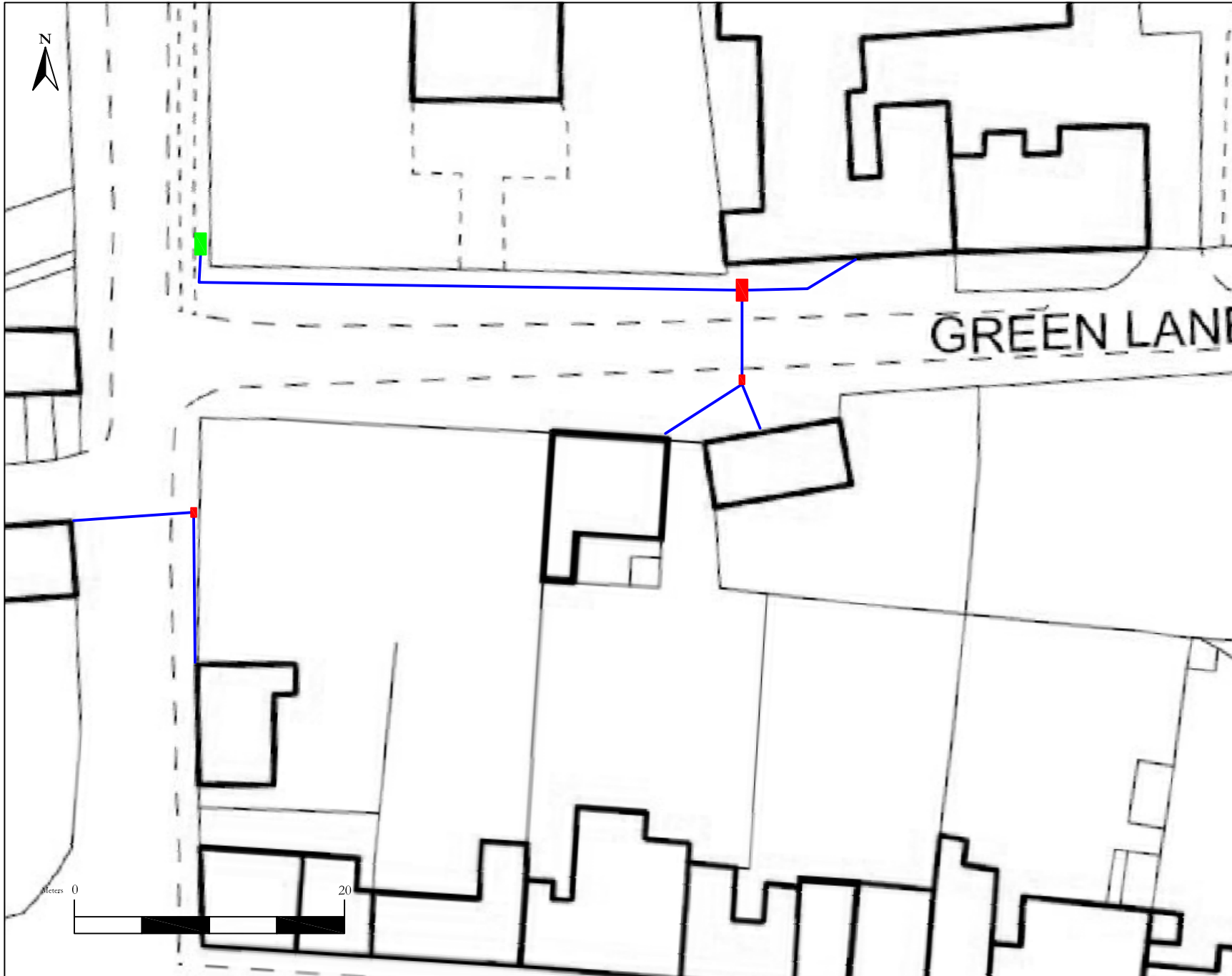
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Northumberland Communities <http://communities.northumberland.gov.uk>

Keys to the Past <http://www.keystothepast.info/>



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Site Code: HOLY09
 Drawing Ref: Report Fig. 2
 Date: 10 February 2009
 Drawn: DA
 Scale: 1:250 at A4

Title:
 Figure 2: Trench locations on Green Lane & Chare Ends

Key:

- Trenches
- New service box
- Existing service box

Notes:

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Site Code: HOLY09
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Title:
 Figure 3: Plan of trench on Fenkle Street

Key:

- Trenches
- Existing service box

Notes:

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Fig. 4 South facing section of Green Lane duct trench



Fig. 5 Service box trench on Green Lane



Fig. 6 Road crossing on Green Lane



Fig. 7 Duct trench connection to 'Memnon' house on Green Lane



Fig. 8 Service box and ducting trench on Chare End



Fig. 9 Fenkle Street road crossing

Appendix II: Context register

Context No.	Trench	Description
001	-	Tarmac
002	-	Hardcore
003	-	Made Ground
004	-	Topsoil
005	-	Made Ground