

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on the Site of the  
New Visitor Centre, Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge,  
Kent.**

**NGR 559013 146595**

**Scheduled Monument Consent: HSD 9/2/8934**

**Project No. 3646  
Site Code: TCS 08**

**ASE Report No. 2009019  
OASIS ID: archaeo16-55794**

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**Abstract**

*An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the construction of the new Tonbridge Castle Visitor Centre. A number of site visits were undertaken during January 2009, and excavations for the diversion of services and for the foundations of an extension to existing buildings were monitored. There was minimal disturbance to the underlying deposits, which form part of the outer earthworks of the castle. A small assemblage of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the overburden.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of University College London Centre for Applied Archaeology (UCLCAA) was commissioned by Fry, Drew, Knight, Creamer Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of a new Visitor Centre at Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge, Kent (NGR 559013 146595) (Fig. 1).

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

1.2.1 The site lies within the boundaries of Tonbridge Castle, which is located to the west of the town centre, on the north bank of the River Medway, at a height of c.29mAOD. Although the monitored area lies outside of the curtain wall surrounding the outer bailey, it is located within the adjacent associated earthworks, and is within the scheduled area (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 12868).

1.2.2 At the time of the archaeological monitoring the site consisted of an area of concrete and brick rubble from the recently demolished conservatory, bordered to the north and west by surviving buildings. Immediately to the north there was the tarmac surface of a path, and to the south-east there was an area of rough grass (Fig. 2).

1.2.3 According to the British Geological Survey Sheet 287 (*Sevenoaks & Tonbridge*), the underlying geology at the site is Lower Tunbridge Wells Sand.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in August 2007 for the demolition of an existing conservatory and the erection of a new extension at the site (Scheduled Monument Consent No. HSD 9/2/9481). The terms of the consent included a stipulation that all associated groundworks should be undertaken under the supervision of an archaeologist from Archaeology South-East.

1.3.2 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by Archaeology South-East (2008), which outlined the methodology to be used during the watching brief. The document was submitted to, and duly approved by Judith Roebuck, English Heritage Inspector of Ancient Monuments before the commencement of groundworks at the site.

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The general aim given in the WSI (ASE 2008, 3) was:

*'to monitor the intrusive site investigation (sic) works in order to ensure that any features, artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological interest exposed and affected are recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards'*

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 The current report provides results of the archaeological monitoring of groundworks at the site carried out during January 2009. The work was undertaken by Simon Stevens (Senior Archaeologist). The project was managed by Neil Griffin (Project Manager) and by Jim Stevenson (Post-Excavation Manager).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Full details of the archaeological background of the site are given in a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) carried out in advance of the current building work (ASE 2006). In summary, Tonbridge Castle began as an earthen motte and bailey castle constructed soon after the Conquest and was adapted in response to advances in military technology. The buildings of the earliest castle were in timber, but later changes have left more tangible remains, including the walls and impressive gatehouse.
- 2.2 A number of recorded archaeological projects have been undertaken within the walls of the castle, dating as far back as 1911 (*ibid.* 13-16). There has also been an architectural survey of certain elements of the upstanding masonry (ASE 1997). In recent years, various small-scale projects at the castle have required archaeological monitoring under the terms of various Scheduled Monument Consents, and a number of watching briefs have been carried out by archaeologists from Archaeology South-East and from the Canterbury Archaeological Trust.
- 2.3 As well as the DBA (ASE 2006), an earlier watching brief was also carried out in connection with the current building work. One test-pit was archaeologically excavated and augur surveys and boreholes were monitored within the proposed footprint of the new extension. No significant archaeological features, deposits or finds were identified (ASE 2007).

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 Mechanical and manual excavations associated with the diversion of local services, as well as for the foundations of the new structure were monitored. All sections were examined for the presence of archaeological features, and all spoil was scanned for the presence of archaeological artefacts.
- 3.2 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were recorded to accepted professional standards using standard Archaeology South-East context record forms. Deposit colours were recorded by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.2 A full photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The site archive is currently held by Archaeology South-East at the offices in Portslade, and will be offered to a suitable local museum in due course. The archive consists of the following material:

Number of Contexts	4
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	-
Bulk Samples	-
Photograph	c.10 digital
Bulk finds	-
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

#### **4.0 RESULTS (Fig. 2)**

- 4.1 Initial archaeological monitoring was undertaken on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Excavations for the diversion of existing services to the south-east of the existing buildings and demolished conservatory were undertaken using a mini-excavator fitted with a 2ft toothless ditching bucket, with additional limited manual excavation. An area measuring 6m by 1m was disturbed to a maximum depth of 750mm.
- 4.2 Only two discernable contexts were disturbed during excavations, which aimed to uncover the alignment of a buried pipe. The uppermost layer was Context [01], a 150mm thick deposit of mid brown humic topsoil, which contained an assortment of material including fragments of paving slabs, crisp packets, plastic, glass and other modern detritus.
- 4.3 The underlying deposit was Context [02], a silty clay varying in colour between orangey brown and yellowish brown, which formed the make-up of the castle's outer earthworks at this point. It was disturbed to a maximum depth of 600mm. No significant archaeological artefacts were recovered from either of the recorded contexts.
- 4.4 Further work at the site was monitored on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Excavations for the uncovering and diversion of services were undertaken to the north of the demolished conservatory. Excavations were again undertaken by a mini-excavator fitted with a 2ft wide ditching bucket, with limited manual excavation. An area measuring 3m by 1.5m was disturbed to a maximum depth of 1.1m.
- 4.5 The surface of the area was covered with a 90mm thick layer of tarmac, Context [03] forming part of a pathway. This overlay Context [04], a deposit of brick rubble and crushed concrete and stone, mixed with garden soil and builders sand. No significant archaeological artefacts were recovered from this deposit. The area was heavily truncated by service trenches and the make-up of the castle earthworks was not reached at the maximum depth of the excavations.
- 4.6 A further visit was made to the site on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the on-site contractors, excavations for the foundations for the extension had been almost completed. Excavations by mini-excavator, with some manual work had been undertaken to a depth of 950mm, with widths varying owing to section collapse, but to a maximum of c.1m. The sequence of encountered deposits was similar to the adjacent monitored work, i.e. tarmac (Context [03]) overlaying a brick rubble made ground layer (Context [04]).
- 4.7 A small assemblage of pottery was recovered by the on-site contractors during the excavation of the foundations (see Section 5.0 below). Scanning of the available soil did not add to this limited group of finds.



## 5.0 THE FINDS

### 5.1 The Pottery by Luke Barber

- 5.1.1 A small assemblage of pottery was recovered during work at the site. In total eight quite fresh sherds are present, weighing 1,044g, and representing six different vessels. All of the material can be dated to the very late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A single ironstone china bowl (73g), with a partial Davenport mark and single red line around the inner rim, is the only tableware present. There is also an ironstone china Dundee marmalade jar with black transfer-printed James Keiller wording. Typically it has the Maling, Newcastle stamp on its base.
- 5.1.2 The remaining four vessels consist of late English stonewares. Although there is a near complete small (92mm high) white stoneware bottle/jar with Bristol glaze, the remaining vessels are ginger beer bottles with salt glaze. One has the potter's stamp '*BOURNE – EASTWOOD*' in a small oval by the base, one is heavily stamped '*Tunbridge Wells*' by the base while the third has a more elaborate owner's stamp belonging to Thomas Putlands of Tunbridge Wells. The latter is known to have been trading between c.1892 and 1913 (Reed 1988). Although the pottery is interesting in demonstrating a range of vessels in use at Tonbridge at the turn of the century the assemblage lacks context, and is far too small to warrant any further analysis.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 The archaeological monitoring of the groundworks associated with the construction of the new Tonbridge Castle Visitor Centre showed that the work did not lead to any serious disturbance of archaeological deposits. Much of the excavation was undertaken through recently deposited made ground, with only localised intrusion into the underlying castle earthwork deposits.
- 6.2 Clearly the area to be occupied by the extension had seen previous building work during the construction of the conservatory, and the surrounding area had been heavily truncated by the laying of services to the buildings at the site. The small assemblage of post-medieval pottery recovered by the groundworkers provides clear evidence of recent activity within the footprint of the new building.
- 6.3 Hence, based on currently available evidence, it appears that the construction of the new visitor centre had a minimal impact on any buried archaeological deposits.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The implementation of an archaeological watching brief at the site was a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent (ref. HSD 9/2/9481), and would have resulted in the identification, recording and publication of any significant archaeological remains, had they been encountered at the site.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**Reed, M.** 1988. *Kent Bottles.* SAWD Books: Sittingbourne.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The co-operation and hospitality of Steve Barnes (Site Manager) and of the other on-site contractors is gratefully acknowledged.

### SMR Summary Form

Site Code	TCS 08					
Identification Name and Address	Tonbridge Castle Visitor Centre					
County, District &/or Borough	Tonbridge & Malling, Kent					
OS Grid Refs.	559013 146595					
Geology	Lower Tonbridge Wells Sand					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3646					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other <i>Scheduled Ancient Monument</i>		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. Jan. 2009	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Fry, Drew, Knight, Creamer Architects					
Project Manager	Giles Dawkes/Neil Griffin/Jim Stevenson					
Project Supervisor	Simon Stevens					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other		
100 Word Summary.						
<p><i>An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the construction of the new Tonbridge Castle Visitor Centre. A number of site visits were undertaken during January 2009, and excavations for the diversion of services and for the foundations of an extension to existing buildings were monitored. There was minimal disturbance to the underlying deposits, which form part of the outer earthworks of the castle. A small assemblage of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the overburden.</i></p>						

## OASIS Form

OASIS ID: archaeol6-55794

### ? Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief on the Site of the New Visitor Centre, Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge, Kent
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was maintained during groundworks associated with the construction of a new visitor centre at Tonbridge Castle. There was little impact on the deposits making up the outer earthworks of the castle as much of the development area had been heavily truncated during Georgian building work at the site.
Project dates	Start: 06-01-2009 End: 19-01-2009
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	3646 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	TCS 08 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	Castle Medieval
Significant Finds	Pottery Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent

**Status** Complete

### ? Project location

Site location	KENT TONBRIDGE AND MALLING TONBRIDGE Tonbridge Castle
Postcode	TN9 1BH
Study area	100 Square metres
Site coordinates	NGR - TQ 559013 146595 LL - 50.909741485 0.217806762735 (decimal) LL - 50 54 35 N 000 13 04 E (degrees) Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m

**Status** Complete

### ? Project creators

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South-East
Project design	English Heritage

originator

Project director/manager Neil Griffin

Project supervisor Simon Stevens

Type of sponsor/funding body Client

Name of sponsor/funding body Fry, Drew, Knight, Creamer Architects

**Status** Complete

**? Project archives**

Physical Archive recipient Local Museum

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Archive recipient Local Museum

Digital Contents 'other'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography', 'Text'

Paper Archive recipient Local Museum

Paper Contents 'other'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Correspondence', 'Notebook - Excavation, Research, General Notes' 'Photograph', 'Report'

**Status** Complete

**? Project bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)\_1

Title An Archaeological Watching Brief on the Site of the New Visitor Centre, Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge, Kent

Author(s)/Editor(s) Stevens, S

Other bibliographic details Report No. 2009019

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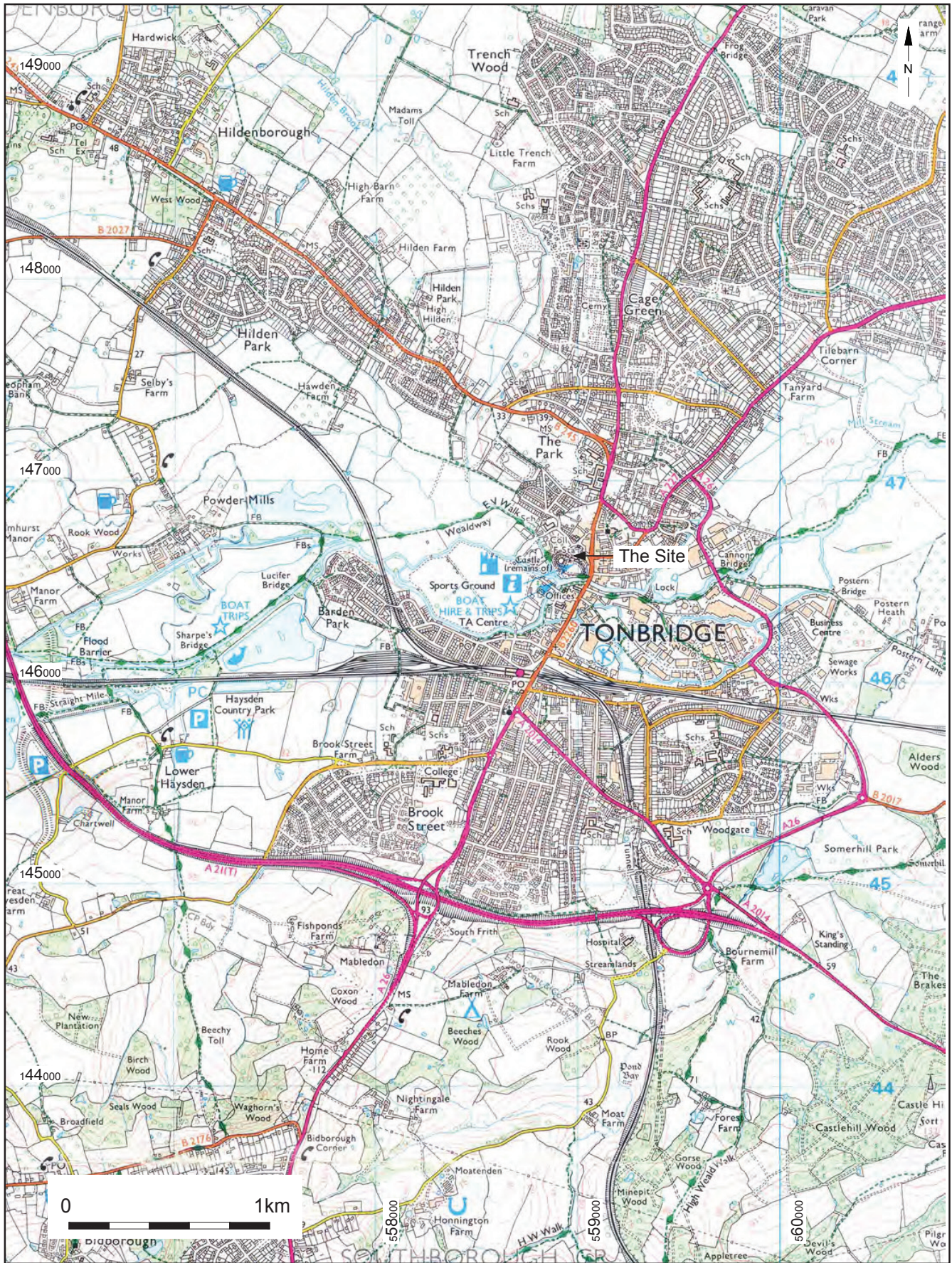
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**Status** Complete





© Archaeology South-East		Tonbridge Castle Visitor Centre		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 3646	March 2009	Site Location Plan		
Report Ref: 2009019	Drawn by: JLR			

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