St Bridget's Old Church, Beckermet, Cumbria

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

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Non-Technical Summary

Following advice from the Historic Environment Service at Cumbria County Council, a request was made by Elaine Blackett-Ord (Blackett Ord Conservation Architects), on behalf of the PCC St Bridget's Old Church, Beckermet (hereafter 'the client'), that a desk-based assessment be carried out prior to the installation of new drains and a soak away at the church. This was to identify any known archaeological remains and assess the potential for as yet unknown archaeological remains to be present within the affected area. The assessment was carried out by Greenlane Archaeology in December 2011.

The site is situated within the churchyard of the Grade II* Listed St Bridget's Old Church, which has at least early medieval origins and contains two cross-shafts thought to be of 9th to 11th century date that are Scheduled Monuments. The main significance of the proposal stems from the proximity of the proposed drains to the church, although the cross-shafts are some distance to the south and should not therefore be affected by the proposal.

There is a high potential for archaeological remains dating from the early medieval period onwards being present within the churchyard, with earlier remains a lesser possibility, although this is uncertain since no previous archaeological work has been carried out at the site. Although the proposed route of the pipe is intended to avoid the graves in the upper burial ground disarticulated and possibly *in situ* human remains in unknown grave sites there are likely to be encountered. The chances of encountering undisturbed archaeological deposits within the graveyard however are diminished since the soil horizons will most probably have been turned over many times during its use, conceivably over several centuries. The proposal will cut across the location of the formerly oval-shaped graveyard boundary, which was extended in the late 19th century, and evidence pertaining to the earlier boundary might be exposed below ground.

It is recommended as a minimum, depending on the extent to which any recent developments such as existing services have already impacted upon the site, that a suitably qualified archaeologist should be present to monitor digging of the drainage trench and soakaway extending beyond *c*0.3m below the present ground level.

Acknowledgements

1.   Introduction

1.1   Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1   Prior to a proposed programme of renovation work, including the addition of new external drains connecting to a soak away, at St Bridget's Old Church, Beckermet, Cumbria (NGR 301503 506071) Greenlane Archaeology was commissioned to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment in order to provide supporting information for an application for grant aid under the English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund scheme. This was intended to establish at an early stage whether it was likely to have any archaeological potential and to act as supporting documentation with the subsequent application.

1.1.2   St Bridget's Old Church is Grade II* listed and famous for the early medieval carved crosses that stand in the church yard (Blackett-Ord 2010, 2), which are Scheduled Monuments (SM No. 23782).

1.2   Location, Geology, and Topography

1.2.1   St Bridget's Old Church, sometimes known as the 'Low Church' (Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 149), is located approximately 0.5 km south of the village of Beckermet. Beckermet is situated in a shallow, curving valley on the West Cumbria coastal plain between Seascale and Egremont (Figure 1), approximately 3km north of the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant, at approximately 30m above sea level (Ordnance Survey 2011; Figure 1). The coast is dominated by shingle beaches and intertidal sand and mudflats with sections of salt marsh, sand dunes and sandy beaches, but further inland the area is a medium-scale pastoral landscape of undulating or gently rolling topography with views of the Irish Sea to the west and framed by the Cumbria High Fells to the east (Countryside Commission 1998, 25 and 27).

1.2.2   The area is geologically predominated by Triassic age Mercia mudstones and Sherwood sandstones to the east (Moseley 1978, plate 1). The solid geology has, in turn, been sculpted by glacial activity and the overlying drift deposits of the West Cumbria Coastal Plain tend to be formed by glacially derived boulder clay (till) with, in places, sand and gravel (Countryside Commission 1998, 27).

303000

505000

Key
— extent of original churchyard according to the HER
— extent of original churchyard according to early maps
— proposed pipe location

506100

St Bridget's
Church

Crosses

301500

0   25m

Figure 1: Site location

Client: PCC St Bridget's Old Church, Beckermet

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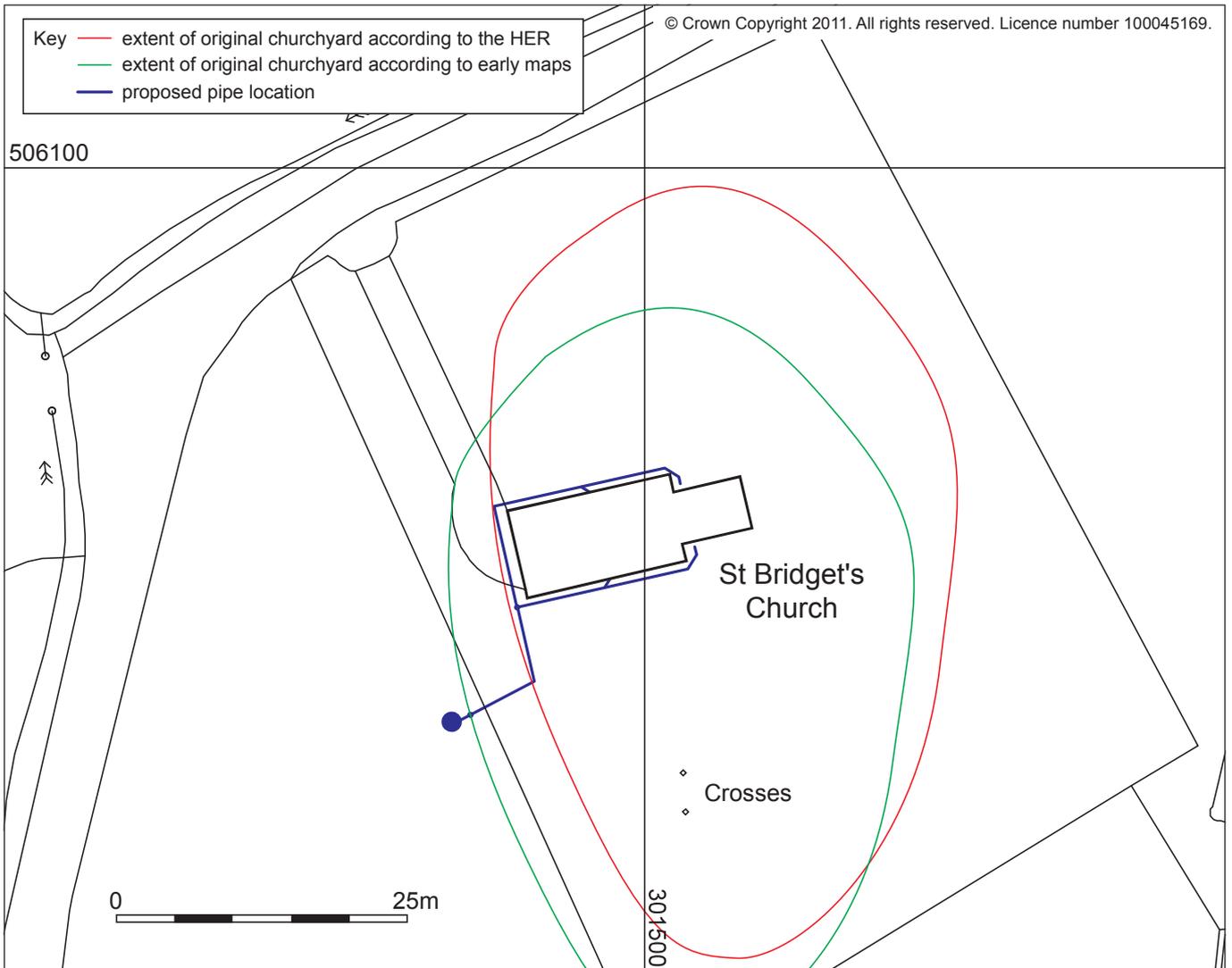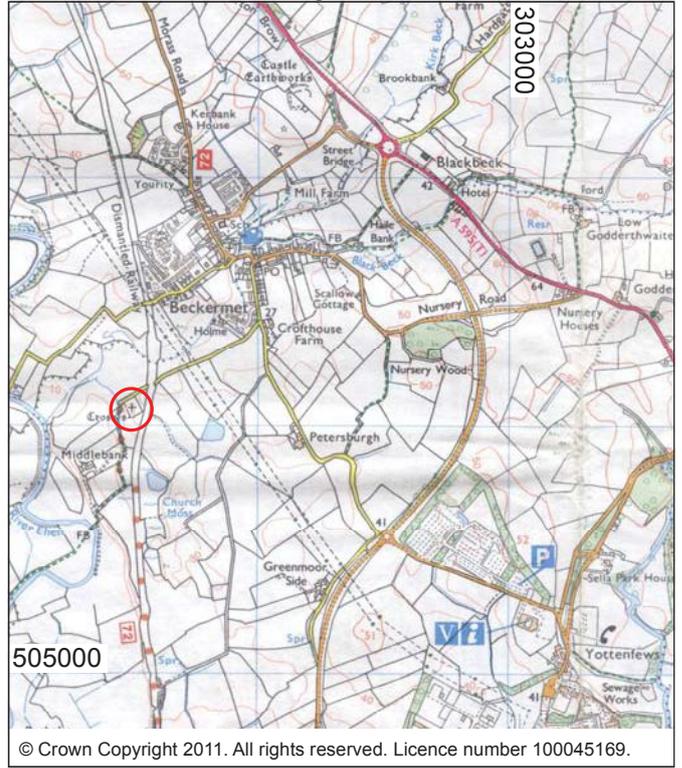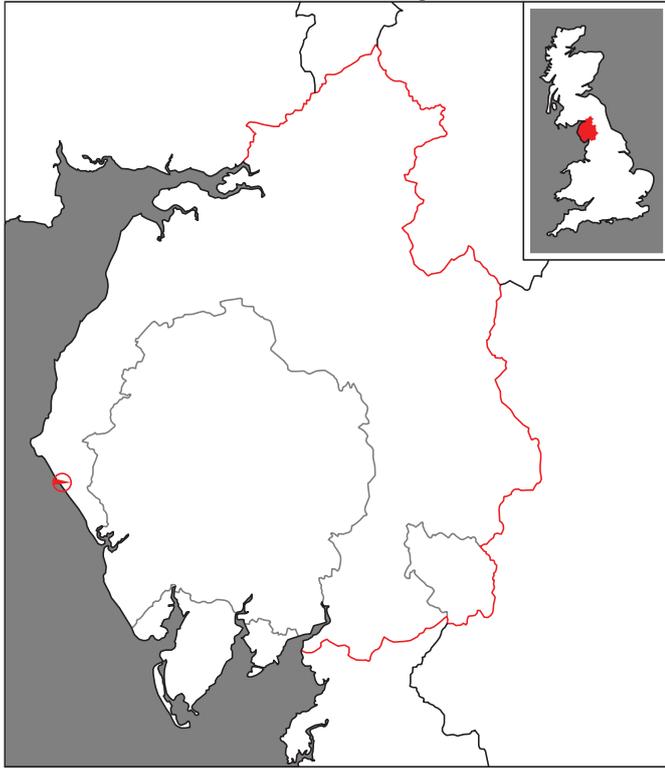
2.   Methodology

2.1   Desk-Based Assessment

2.1.1   The desk-based assessment was carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008). This principally comprised an examination of early maps of the site and published secondary sources. A number of sources of information were used during the desk-based assessment:

- *Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER)*: this is a list of all the known sites of archaeological interest within the county, which is maintained by Cumbria County Council and is the primary source of information for an investigation of this kind. Each identified site comes with a grid reference, description, and source, and any additional information which was referenced was also examined as necessary;

- *Cumbria Record Office, Whitehaven (CRO(W))*: this was visited principally in order to examine early maps and plans of the site, but other documentary sources and published records were also consulted in order to gather information about the historical development and archaeology of the site and its environs;

- *Greenlane Archaeology library*: additional secondary sources were also consulted to provide information for the site background.

2.2   Archive

2.2.1   A comprehensive archive of the project has been produced in accordance with the project design, and current IfA and English Heritage guidelines (Brown 2007; English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive and a copy of this report will be deposited in the Cumbria Record Office in Whitehaven at a suitable time on completion of the project, on agreement with the client. Three copies of this report will be provided for the client, a digital copy for the client's agent, and a copy will be retained by Greenlane Archaeology. In addition, at a suitable time a digital copy will be provided to the Historic Environment Record Officer at Cumbria County Council, and a record of the project will be made on the OASIS scheme, on agreement with the client.

3. Results

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1   The desk-based assessment compiles a general history of the site and the historic landscape that makes up the study area as well as identifying specific sites and areas of archaeological interest that are likely to be affected by the proposal. The significance of each of these sites and the degree to which they are likely to be affected is considered in *Section 4* and this forms the basis for recommendations for further work.

3.1.2   The background history of the site is intended to cover all periods, in part to provide information that can be used to assess the potential of the site (particularly for the presence of remains that are otherwise not recorded in the study area), but more importantly to present the documented details of any sites that are known (see *Section 4*). Evidence for activity from the medieval and post-medieval period is particularly plentiful within the study area, however, in order to place the proposed development site it in its historical and archaeological context information from further afield has been taken into consideration, particularly for the prehistoric period.

3.2 Map and Image Regression

3.2.1   *Donald's map, 1774*: St Bridget's Church is marked on Donald's map of 1774 to the east of the Ehen River, south of Black Beck, but scant detail can be discerned about the structure (Plate 1).
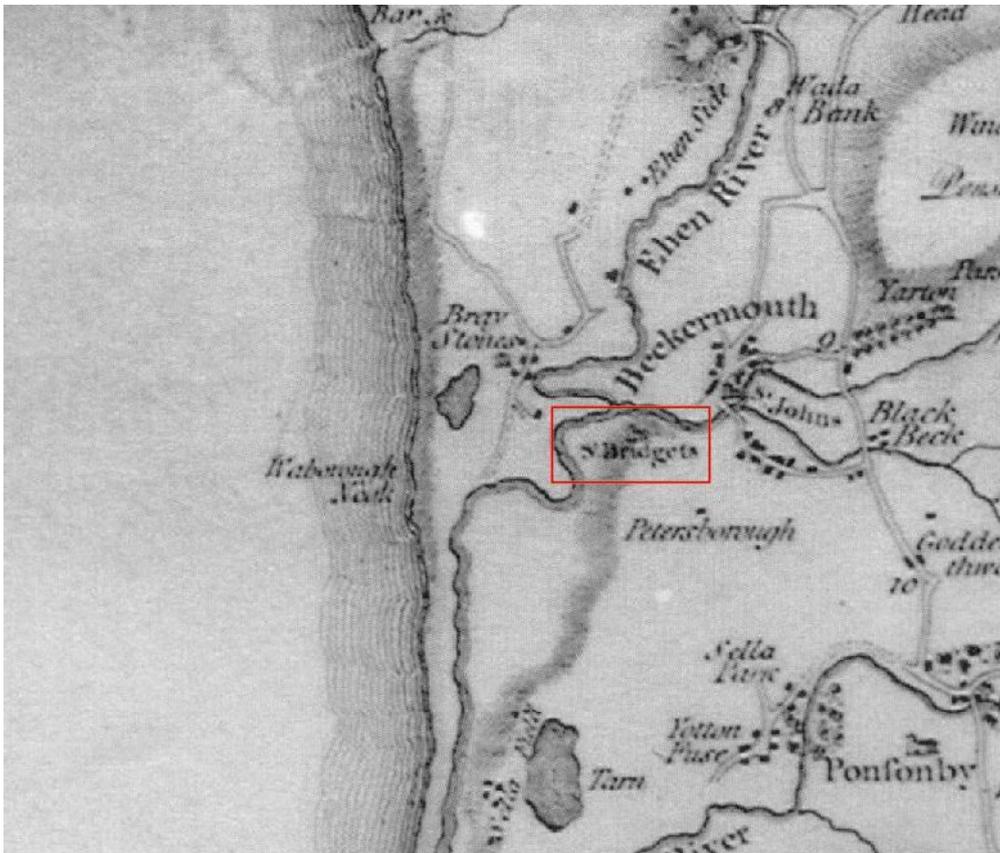
Plate 1: Extract from Donald's map of 1774

3.2.2   *Tithe Map, 1848*: the tithe map (CRO(W) YPR 9/52 1848) shows the north end of the church and churchyard in more detail, which is located on the south-east side of a track to Middlebank that passes by the north and west sides of the church (Plate 2). The church and track are depicted twice on the same map; the second depiction is shown to the right of the other at a reduced size. A second track is shown to pass the south side of the church on a north-east/south-west alignment, but this track is not shown on any of the later maps. Very little land is shown on the tithe map and the area of the church was evidently

not subject to tithes. The details from the accompanying apportionment book (CRO(W) YPR 9/52 1844) for the nearest plots to the church are recorded in Table 1:

Number	Owner	Occupier	Description
8	Thomas Brocklebank	Isaac Cuppage	Hest Croft, part of Estate in Great Beckermet
9	Hannah Jane and Sarah Brocklebank	Clemet Rothery	Church field, part of Estate at Great Beckermet
31	Isaac Lowe	Robert Selkirk	Church field and part of the Estate called Middlebank
38	William Shepherd	William Shepherd	Spolgill, part of Estate in Great Beckermet

Table 1: Summary of the owners and occupiers, recorded in the Tithe Award, 1848

3.2.3   *Ordnance Survey, 1867*: the 1: 10,560 scale Ordnance Survey map shows the location of the church, which is clearly labelled 'St Bridget's Church', and the extent of the graveyard, which is enclosed (Plate 3). The locations of two crosses are also clearly marked to the south and a slightly meandering footpath leads north-east from the west end of the church to the track. A field boundary is also shown to the east side of the graveyard which was not shown on the earlier tithe map.
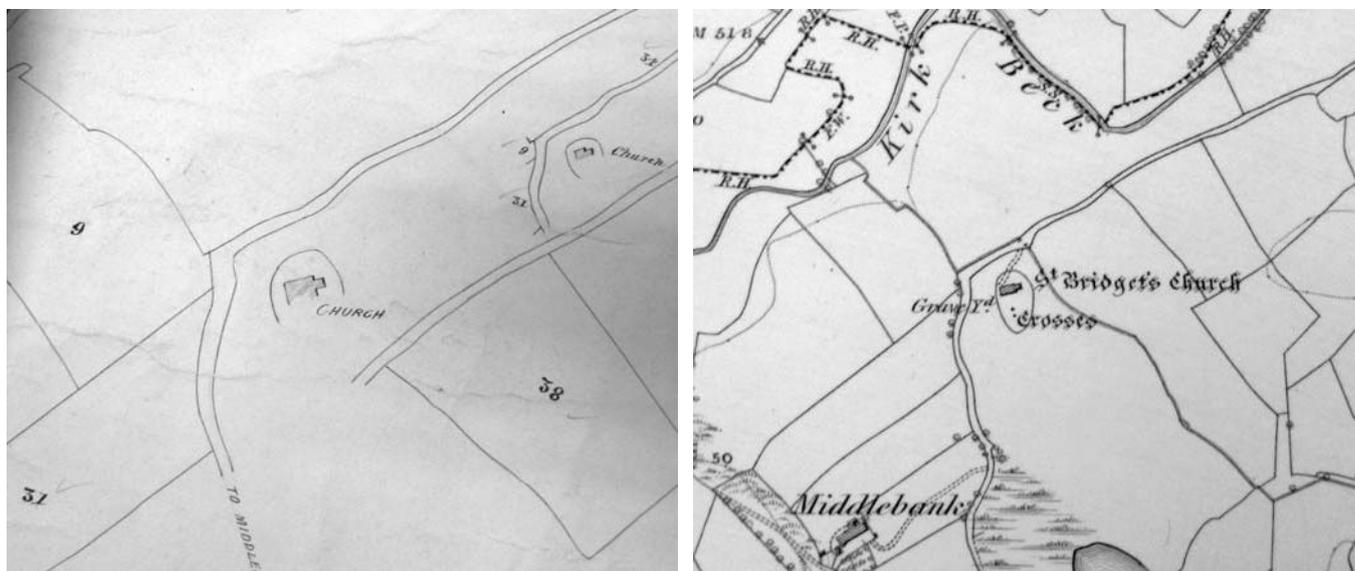
Plate 2 (left): Extract from the Tithe map of 1848

Plate 3 (right): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1867

3.2.4   *Ordnance Survey, c1867*: the 1: 2,500 scale Ordnance Survey map is undated but is probably about the same date as the 1: 10,560 scale map. Both maps show the same detail (Plate 4; cf. Plate 3).

3.2.5   *Ordnance Survey, 1899*: by this time the enclosed area of the graveyard has been extended to form a larger rectangular area, which extends from the track to the south-east, with a rounded edge at the south-west corner (Plate 5). The footpath from the west end of the church now leads north-west in a more direct route to the track to the north of the church. The location of the crosses is unchanged, although a large north/south aligned section of a railway (?) embankment now cuts the boundary to the east side of the church.

Plate 4 (left): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of *c*1867

Plate 5 (right): Extract from the Ordnance Survey map of 1899

3.3   Site History
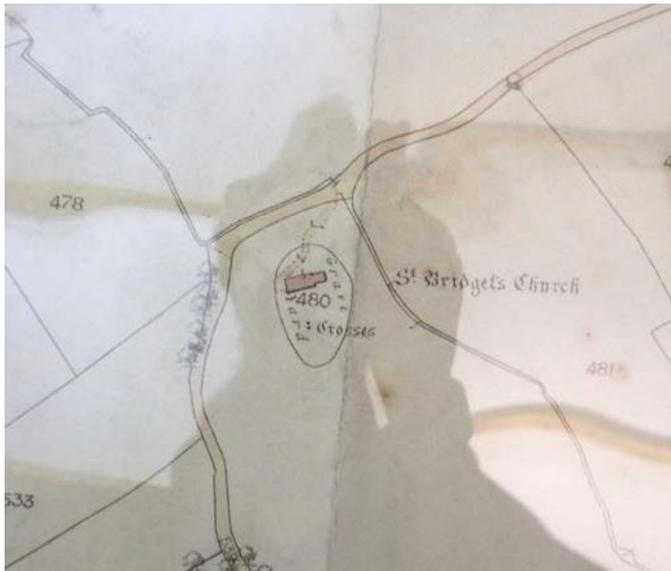
3.3.1   ***Prehistoric Period (c 12,000 BC – 1st century AD)***: while there is some limited evidence for activity in the county in the period immediately following the last Ice Age, this is typically found in the southernmost part on the north side of Morecambe Bay. Excavations of a small number of cave sites have found the remains of animal species common at the time but now extinct in this country and artefacts of Late Upper Palaeolithic type (Young 2002). The county was also clearly inhabited during the following period, the Mesolithic (*c*8,000 – 4,000 BC), as large numbers of artefacts of this date have been discovered during field walking and eroding from sand dunes along the coast, but these are typically concentrated in the west coast area and on the uplands around the Eden Valley (Cherry and Cherry 2002).

3.3.2   In the following period, the Neolithic (*c*4,000 – 2,500 BC), large scale monuments such as burial mounds and stone circles begin to appear in the region (Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 45), the closest example to Beckermet being the stone circle at Grey Croft at Seascale (Fletcher 1957), now a short distance south of the Sellafield nuclear power station. One of the most recognisable tool types of this period, the polished stone axe, is also found in large numbers across the county, having been manufactured at Langdale (Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 45), and there have been finds of this period from the area around Beckermet (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 11). The most significant site of this period from the immediate vicinity of the church is Ehenside Tarn (now called Braystones Tarn), at which, during drainage operations in the late 19th century, well preserved remains including hearths, platforms, and timber objects as well as stone axes and a polishing stone were found (Darbishire 1874). Unfortunately, the site was not recorded in great detail at the time and few if any of the finds were preserved, but the site shows the potential in the general area. During the Bronze Age (*c*2,500 – 600 BC) monuments, particularly those thought to be ceremonial in nature, become more common still, and it is likely that settlement sites thought to belong to the Iron Age have their origins in this period (see below). Stray finds of Bronze Age date are found across the county, although not apparently in great numbers in the vicinity of Beckermet (OA North 2004). Sites that can be specifically dated to the Iron Age (*c* 600 BC – 1st century AD) are typically very rare in the region, and these are not well represented in the area around Beckermet or the west coast of Cumbria in general. A possible hillfort has been recorded in an aerial photograph at Dobcross Hall, some distance to the south (Higham 1986, 129 and 131). There is, however, likely to have been a considerable overlap between the end of the Iron Age and the beginning of the Romano-British period; it is evident that in this part of the country, initially at least, the Roman invasion had a minimal impact on the native population in some areas (Philpott 2006, 73-74). It is interesting to note, however, that excavations carried out in the 1950s at Caernarvon Castle, which

is thought to be medieval in date and is situated a short distance to the north of Beckermet, discovered at least one beehive quern (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 23), a object typically of Iron Age or even Roman date, which would suggest this site had a long period of use.

3.3.3 *Romano-British to Early Medieval Period (1st century AD – 11th century AD)*: there is some evidence for Roman activity in the area around Beckemet, and it has been suggested that it may be the site of a lost Roman fort, but other than findspots of Roman pottery and Roman coins in the area, there is no physical evidence to support this theory (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 11). The possibility has been suggested that Caernarvon Castle is Romano-British (Parker 1903, 218) perhaps an Anglian burgh (Parker 1904, 154-161). Six pairs of granite hand querns and fragments of others had been discovered during ploughing at the site before 1904 (*bid*), which again suggest an early date (see also *Section 3.3.2* above). Caernarvon Castle is situated close to High Street (Parker 1904, 154), which is thought to have been a Roman road, which crossed the Ker Beck at Street Bridge in Beckermet (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 11). WG Collingwood suggested that the name 'Caernarvon' originally applied to the whole of the Beckermet area, with the present name being applied in the Norse period and meaning 'the mote hill of the beck' (Parker 1904, 154). In the cultural-historical tradition of his day, Parker envisioned a 'remote race calling the strong-hold Caernarvon; the newcomers calling it Bekkjar-met; a third race levelling it there [the le Flemings] and styling themselves "of Beckermet"' (Parker 1904, 161). Elsewhere the name Beckermet is said to derive from the 'meeting of the becks' (specifically Kirk Beck and Black Beck) or as 'the stream where the hermit lives' (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 7) or 'Hermit's Beck' (Fair 1951, 94).

3.3.4 The Church itself is situated atop a mound, which might suggest it was a pre-Christian site of some significance (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 11, 25, although it is not clear why this is considered the case), while the oval churchyard suggests the church itself has a British or 'Celtic' origin (see O'Sullivan 1985, 31-32). The dedication also suggests an early date of establishment: '*Saint Bridget, or Saint Bride, was an Irish saint who lived in the sixth century and the foundation* [of the church] *is undoubtedly very ancient*' (Parker 1904, 145). The lower fragments from two stone pillars are located in the churchyard to the south side of the church (see *Appendices 1-3*), where they may originally have served as a marker (suggested by Fair 1951, 91; e.g. Edwards 2009) and they were likely laden with symbolic meaning, each of which is fixed in a large flat stone (Jefferson 1842, 307-308; see Plate 6 to Plate 13). They are first recorded in their present position in 1816 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 54). Jefferson provides an early detailed description of their appearance:

> '*The lower part of each is round, the upper part is square; one of them, five feet eight inches high, is ornamented with the double gilloche… the other with an elegant double scroll, enriched with foliage on the east side: and on the west, are the remains of an inscription, apparently Saxon*' (Jefferson 1842, 308).

3.3.5 Collingwood states that their form, '*being cylindrical below and square in section above*', is similar to the Pillar of Eliseg near Valle Crucis Abbey in Denbighshire, Wales, and is of a type chiefly found in Cheshire and Staffordshire but also in Ireland and Scotland (Collingwood 1899, 26). The similarity of form of the Pillar at Eliseg and the cross-shafts at Beckermet has been restated elsewhere (e.g., Edwards 2009, 155). Bailey and Cramp name the crosses Beckermet St Bridget 1 and Beckermet St Bridget 2 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 54-57). Beckermet St Bridget 1 is the older and shorter of the two, and stylistically dates to the second quarter of the ninth century; Beckermet St Bridget 2 is located further to the north and dates from the late 10th to early 11th century (*ibid*). The Scheduled Monuments information records that the two high cross shafts survive reasonably well and display good and unusual examples of Late Anglian (between about 700 and 870 AD (Collingwood 1915, 129)) and Anglo-Scandinavian (10th to 11th century) art styles, suggesting that the church was a pre-Conquest centre of ecclesiastical importance (see *Appendix 1*), possibly with links to south-west Scotland as well as further south in England and conceivably further afield via coastal trade (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 11). The plaits exhibited by 10th century or Viking Age ornaments are simpler than the intricacies of the interlacing knots characteristic of earlier Anglian crosses (Collingwood 1915, 129). Bailey and Cramp (1988) go into considerable detail about the 'Beckermet St Bridget' crosses (see *Appendix 3*); the plain and slightly tapering base of the Beckermet crosses is the most common pre-Conquest type (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 13); the round-shaft derivative of Beckermet Saint Bridget 1 is an influential type in the Viking

period (Bailey and Cramp 1988, *op. cit.*); the bush scroll motif is typical of Anglian-period ornament (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 15), and the contoured interlace moulding of the Beckermet school is of the Viking period (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 36, 38). To an extent, the ornamental vocabulary of the Beckermet school then betrays 'either direct Scandinavian influence [as the ultimate source], or more likely, an indirect impact via Manx carvings' (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 40). Indeed, it has been suggested that the relative crudeness of the school of West Cumberland crosses stretching down the coast from Aspatria to Beckermet may indicate '*a school of native carvers…taking inspiration from the work of more highly trained sculptors, but doing their work according to their own ideas and interpretation*' (Fair 1951, 91; see also Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 20). Like other such carvings in the north of England, they would have been produced in the immediate locality and their position to the south side of the church is also fairly typical (Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 18), although the cross-shaft of Beckermet St Bridget 1 does not belong with the socket in which it leans (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 55) and may represent another cross (Fair 1951, 94). The location of a third carving (Beckermet St Bridget 3) of an unknown date is recorded in 1926 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 172). Unfortunately, no illustration survives for this cross-head fragment, which is located under the plaster in the east wall of the chancel (*ibid*).

Plate 6 (left): Beckermet St Bridget 1 in the foreground and Beckermet St Bridget 2 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 41)

Plate 7 (centre left): Broad east face of Beckermet St Bridget 1 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 42)

Plate 8 (centre right): North and east face of Beckermet St Bridget 1 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 43)

Plate 9 (right): Narrow south face of Beckermet St Bridget 1 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 44)

Plate 10 (left): Broad west face of Beckermet St Bridget 1 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 45)

Plate 11 (centre left): Detail of the west face Beckermet St Bridget 1a (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 46)

Plate 12 (centre right): Transcription of the carving on the west face (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 55, figure 10)

Plate 13 (right): North and west faces of Beckermet St Bridget 2 (Bailey and Cramp 1988, pl. 51)

3.3.6   Collingwood produced a tracing of the inscription, which was published in 1915 (Plate 14). He and Rogers suggest the inscription is probably Gaelic (presumably of an Irish, Scottish or Manx derivation, perhaps most likely the latter), taking it to mean:

'(This cross was)

Made for

John mac Cair-

bre gone to

rest in the keeping

of Christ. Be gracious

to him, O Christ !' (Collingwood 1899, 31).

However, various other translations in several different languages (suggested as Latin, Runic, Pictish or 'Keltic') have been offered for the inscribed text, which is in a form of lettering not found anywhere else in Cumbria and considered illegible, although there may be similarities with inscriptions from Whitby and Dewsbury, Yorkshire, and from Falstone, Northumberland (summarised in Bailey and Cramp 1988, 55). The various elements present at the site - the form of the graveyard, the dedication, and the presence of the early crosses, have led to the suggestion that it was originally established as a monastic site, perhaps as early as the 7th century AD (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 23). The presence of further early cross fragments at the nearby St John's chuch, Beckermet, has even prompted speculation that they represent a double foundation, similar to that at Whitby, one site a monastery the other a nunnery (*ibid*, citing Knowles 1880, 143).

Plate 14: Tracing of the inscribed panel on the cross-shaft (Collingwood 1915, plate facing page 130)

3.3.7   *Medieval Period (late 11th – 16th century)*: Caernarvon Castle was part of the manor held by Michael le Fleming as the fee of the Barony of Egremont, and it is thought to have been the site of a Norman castle (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 12-13). When the le Flemings moved to Coniston, they are thought to have pulled down the house and sold the materials (*ibid*). The church of St Bridget certainly has at least medieval origins; it is recorded from at least 1160, when it was appropriated by Calder Abbey (Parker 1904, 145), until the Dissolution (Jefferson 1842, 306-307). The Church is thought to have been rebuilt in the 13th century (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 23; Parker 1904, 145). After the Dissolution the Parish was left nearly destitute as the revenues of the Church were granted instead to the Flemings of Rydal (Parker 1904, 145).

3.3.8   The Historic Environment Record lists a nearby deserted medieval settlement (HER no. 1293), which is reported by the Medieval Village Research Group (RCHME 1994). The village is not mentioned in the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1334/36 but is apparently mentioned in a 13th century source which, unfortunately, is not cited in the HER. There were apparently no traces of the village visible by 1980 and its previous extent is unknown (*ibid*).

3.3.9   *Post-Medieval (16th century – present)*: the early industrial development of the region was stimulated by the mining of coal and iron ore and the iron and steelmaking industries (Countryside Commission 1998, 29). This development was facilitated by the construction of the railways in the 18th and 19th centuries, but industrial decline and the depletion of the coal resource caused the once thriving villages to decline (*ibid*). More recently the region has become a hub of chemical industry, power generation and nuclear reprocessing; the nuclear power station at Calder Hall was constructed in the early 1950s, and the nuclear waste reprocessing plants at Windscale, later to be renamed Sellafield, were established in subsequent decades and visually dominate the landscape of the coast in the southern half of the area (Countryside Commission 1998, 25, 29).

3.3.10 The post-medieval history of St Bridget's Old Church was initially not promising; its isolated position and poor state of repair meant that the notion of demolishing it and rebuilding it on a new site was raised by at least 1794 (CRO(W) DBT/13/105/2 1794). The suggestion was met with some objections from the parishioners and a legal opinion was taken on whether demolition was acceptable (*ibid*) but this plan was evidently never carried out. It would be almost another half century before the

new St Bridget's church by Edmund Sharpe was erected at Calder Bridge in *c*1840-42 (Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 217) as the 'Old Church', as it would become known, was not convenient for the parishioners (Jefferson 1842, 309). The 'new church' however did not completely replace the Old Church, which continued to be extended and have rates collected throughout the 1860s and 70s (CRO(W) YPR 9/14 1864-1887) and still has a small congregation (Blackett-Ord 2010, 2).

3.3.11 Jefferson records in 1842 that the 'Old Church' consisted of a nave and chancel and had a bell-turret, carrying two bells, above the entrance at the west end (Jefferson 1842, 307-308). The south porch had been removed by this date and there was formerly a door in the south side of the chancel but this had been blocked, as had the windows of the two round-headed lights, each under square dripstones (*ibid*).

3.3.12 The graveyard enclosure was extended to provide additional burial spaces in 1864/5 (Beckermet Local History Group 2009, 25) and there exist a number of miscellaneous papers relating to the churchyard at the Old Church, held at the County Record Office in Whitehaven, including an account of fees to Messrs Mounsey, dated 1865, for the '*additional burial ground required to be purchased and consecrated at Beckermet Church … following instruction for deed of conveyance of the ground. The Bishop having fixed the 14th [September] for the consecration of the ground*' (CRO(W) YPR9/40 1865-1974). The land for this enlargement had evidently been acquired by 14th May 1864; the church rate book describes it as 'the low church yard' and lists the people paying the rates towards it and a list of bills paid includes those for taking down the 'old fence' and forming new walls, digging foundations, materials and so forth (CRO(W) YPR 9/14 1864-1887). In 1866 funds were acquired by subscription for re-reroofing the church, it being '*in a most dilapidated condition*', and further rates were gathered in 1868 for repairs and again in 1870 (*ibid*). Furthermore, in 1877 specifications were drawn up between Reverend Arthur Loftlie and Joseph Geldart, a joiner of Calder Bridge, for reflooring and reseating the Old Church as follows:

> '*I. The soil to be excavated to a depth of one foot*
>
> *II. Need to be best pitch pine, no less than 5" by 6' 6" long*
>
> *III. Boarding "one inch" "white flooring"*
>
> *IV. The old pews to be used as far as they go*
>
> *V. 30 new seat ends to be painted with one coat*
>
> *VI. The joists to rest upon stones at both ends*
>
> *VII. Drystone walls to be built to support the soil underneath the flags of the arch*
>
> *VIII. Six metal ventilators to be placed in the floor*' (CRO(W) YPR 9/21 1877).

3.3.13 Other repairs include the renewal of a window, probably carried out in *c*1879 (CRO(W) YPR 9/23 *c*1879), but the records are otherwise confused by the presence of two churches dedicated to St Bridget! By 1904 the Church is said to have had '*a rather melancholy appearance, as if aware of its deserted condition [and] almost disused save for funerals*' (Parker 1904, 145). Parker goes further to describe the interior as 'depressing' (*ibid*).

3.3.14 Correspondence held at the County Record Office dated to 1952 details the enquiries made about scheduling the Crosses in accordance with the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Act 1931 (CRO(W) YPR9/40 1865-1974). The monuments were included in the Schedule on 30th December 1952 and the Scheduled area was revised in June 1995 and is maintained under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended. The church is now Listed Grade II*.

3.4   The Known Archaeological Resource

3.4.1   Information about the known archaeological resource within the study area has been compiled from the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER). There are only three sites listed: the church, church yard and crosses are all HER no. 1259, there is a deserted medieval village recorded nearby (HER no. 1293; RCHME 1994), and the railway to the east is HER no. 12215 – the Cleator and

Egremont Branch of the Furness and Whitehaven Railway. The two crosses are also Scheduled Monuments (SM No. 23782).

3.4.2   No archaeological work has been carried out at the site previously.

3.5   Conclusion

3.5.1   The church has at least early medieval origins and may have been established as a monastery or nunnery. Earlier activity at the site is suggested by the presence of the Late Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian cross-shafts in the churchyard dating from the ninth and late 10th to early 11th century. The oval churchyard may also suggest a possibly Celtic origin for the Church, which may have been a pre-Conquest centre of ecclesiastical importance. It was appropriated by Calder Abbey in the 12th or 13th century until the Dissolution and is thought to have been rebuilt in the 13th century. A medieval village is reputedly located nearby but no traces of this remain.

3.5.2   That the church be demolished and relocated because it was inconvenient for parishioners was suggested as early as the 18th century but it continues to have a small congregation despite having '*a rather melancholy appearance*' and reputedly being '*almost disused save for funerals*' by the beginning of the 20th century (Parker 1904, 145).

3.5.3   From the available cartographic evidence it is clear that the shape of the church itself has remained largely unchanged from at least the early 19th century and the associated graveyard was not extended to form the current large rectangular area until between 1867 and 1899, before which time it was an oval-shaped enclosure, with the church itself located slightly north of centre. The railway, which passed the east side of the site, was constructed at this time but has since been dismantled.

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Discussion of the results of the desk-based assessment is intended to determine the archaeological significance and potential of any known remains (above or below ground) and the potential for any as yet unidentified remains being present. The system used to judge the significance of the remains identified within the development area, or those thought to have the potential to be present within the development area, is based on the criteria used to define Scheduled Monuments (DoE 1990, Annex 4; *Appendix 3*).

4.1.2 The site is within the churchyard of the Grade II* Listed Old Church. The church has at least early medieval origins and is identified as being of historical and archaeological interest on the Cumbria HER (HER no. 1259). The 9th to 11th century cross-shafts to the south of the church, which form part of the same HER entry, are also Scheduled Monuments (SM No. 23782). Furthermore a *c*13th century medieval village is thought to be situated nearby (HER no. 1293) although its exact location is unknown. The implications of this are discussed in more detail below.

4.2 Significance

4.2.1 The level of significance of any sites within the proposed development area is categorised, according to each criterion, as high, medium, or low, and an average of this has been used to produce an overall level of significance for each site (see Table 2 below: H=high, M=medium, L=low). The site lies within the area of the churchyard, which forms part of HER site no. 1259. Table 2 (below) therefore assesses the significance of this:

Period	H
Rarity	H
Documentation	H
Group value	H
Survival/condition	M
Fragility/Vulnerability	H
Diversity	M
Potential	H
Significance	**M/H**

Table 2: Significance of the site (as part of HER site no. 1259)

4.2.2 The site is also significant on account of the Grade II* church and the two standing crosses, which are Scheduled Monuments, although none of the elements are likely to be affected by the current proposal.

4.3 Archaeological Potential

4.3.1 The pipe trench will almost certainly cut across the location of the earlier oval graveyard boundary (despite the exact location of this being uncertain; see Figure 1) which was extended in the 19th century. What remains of this earlier boundary and what form it took are not known and as such there is potential for evidence pertaining to this boundary to be exposed below ground. The church is medieval and the cross-shafts are early medieval so there is a high potential for medieval and, as the map evidence shows, post-medieval remains being present within the area of the proposed development. The extent of likely disturbance across the site, not least due to it having been used as a graveyard, however, will have had a considerable impact on any remains of archaeological interest. This is discussed in *Section 4.4* below.

4.3.2 The potential for as yet unidentified archaeological remains to be present within the proposed development area is based on the known occurrence of such remains within the proposed development area (see *Section 3*). Where there are no remains known within the immediate vicinity the potential is based on the known occurrence within the wider local area, as discussed in *Section 3*. The degree of

potential is examined by period and in each case the level of potential is expressed as low, medium, or high. The results are presented in Table 3 below:

Period	Present in study area?	Potential
Late Upper Palaeolithic	No	Low
Mesolithic	No	Low
Neolithic	No	Low
Bronze Age	No	Low
Iron Age	No	Low
Roman	No	Low
Early Medieval	Yes	High
Medieval	Yes	High
Post-medieval	Yes	High

Table 3: Degree of potential for unknown archaeological remains by period

4.3.3   Clearly there is high potential for remains to be discovered dating from the early medieval period onwards, with a lower possibility for earlier remains being present (see Table 3). The extent that these might take is uncertain, however, since there has been no previous archaeological work carried out at the site.

4.4   Disturbance

4.4.1   Although no archaeological work has been carried out at the site and it has seen little development (see *Section 3*) the area has been used as a graveyard and the likelihood is that the soil will have been turned over many times during its use, conceivably over several centuries (see discussion in Greenlane Archaeology 2010, 20). By implication, the chances of encountering undisturbed archaeological deposits within the graveyard are diminished, but the potential remains for the site to contain artefacts from mixed deposits covering a variety of periods, chiefly from the early medieval period onwards.

4.5   Impact

4.5.1   It is very likely that any below-ground deposits of archaeological interest would be impacted upon by the proposed development scheme, however, this is mitigated by the narrow width and limited size of the trench likely to be required to accommodate the new pipe. Although the proposed route is intended to avoid the graves in the upper burial ground (that closest to the church) there are likely to be disarticulated and possibly *in situ* human remains in unknown grave sites within the route of the proposed drainage channel and water butt. The cross-shafts and church building are very unlikely to be affected by the development.

4.6   Recommendations

4.6.1   It is clear from the preceding sections that there is potential for archaeological remains to be present within the whole site, particularly from the early medieval period onwards, but these are likely to have been disturbed by the use of the site as a graveyard. It is therefore recommended that as a minimum an archaeological watching brief be carried out on all ground works, depending on the extent to which the proposed development will disturb below ground remains (less than perhaps 0.3m below ground level being unlikely to cause significant damage). It is also important to assess on site the impact of any recent development as the drawings provided by the client show rainwater pipes along the north and south sides of the church which suggests that existing services may also run along these sides of the building.

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Appendix 1: Summary of the Scheduled Monument Information

Monument: Two high cross shafts in St Bridget's Churchyard

Parish: St Bridget Beckermet   **County**: Cumbria

District: Copeland

National Monument No.: 23782

NGR: NY 0150 0604

Description of the Monument:

The monument includes part of a ninth century Anglian cross shaft and part of a late 10th / early 11th century Anglo-Scandinavian cross shaft located side by side in the churchyard to the south of St Bridget's Church, Beckermet. The earlier fragment of cross shaft [Beckermet St Bridget 1] is constructed of pale yellow sandstone and has a cross section which is squarish with rounded angles. It measures 1.32m high, has a maximum circumference of 1.75m at the base, and fits into a sandstone socle or base which has a rectangular socket and is thus not the original of this shaft. A triple collar carving encircles the shaft and divides it into approximately two equal halves. Below this collar the shaft is undecorated, above the collar there is decoration on all sides. The broad west face is covered by a very worn inscription. Five lines are marked out by incised frames and there may have been some letters in the scalloped space at the base. It reads:

H[I]N[-]LE[D-E]

IUDI[I-D.H]

*[-N]IET

*O[-..]E

[.]X][E]

At present this text has not been deciphered, nor has the language in which it was written been determined. The broad east face of the shaft depicts a bush scroll with berry bunches and a pair of leaves, the narrow north face shows part of a tree scroll with three or four symmetrical spirals containing berry bunches and a number of isolated berries in the scroll, and the south face depicts part of a split-stemmed plant trail carving. The cross shaft is dated to the second quarter of the ninth century.

The later fragment of cross shaft is constructed of red sandstone and in cross section it has a rounded base with a rectangular upper part. It measures 1.72 m high, has a maximum circumference of 1.2 m, and fits into a sandstone socle or base. A triple collar carving encircles the lower part of the shaft. Below this collar the shaft is undecorated, above it is decorated on all sides with single panels bordered by roll moulding at the sides and swag moulding at the bottom. Within each of these panels vertical rows of interlace carving is depicted. The cross shaft is dated to the 10th or 11th century.

All graves and headstones within the area of the scheduling are excluded from the scheduling but the ground beneath them is included.

High crosses, frequently heavily decorated, were erected in a variety of locations in the eighth, ninth and 10th centuries AD. They are found throughout northern England with a few examples further south. Surviving examples are of carved stone but it is known that decorated timber crosses were also used for similar purposes and some stone crosses display evidence of carpentry techniques in their creation and adornment, attesting to this tradition. High crosses have shafts supporting carved heads which may be either free-armed or infilled with a 'wheel' or disc. They may be set within dressed or rough stone bases called socles. The cross heads were frequently small, the broad cross shaft being the main feature of the cross. High crosses served a variety of functions, some being associated with established churches and monasteries and playing a role in religious services, some acting as cenotaphs or marking burial places, and others marking routes or boundaries and acting as meeting places for local communities. Decoration of high crosses divides into four main types: plant scrolls, plaiting and interlace, birds and animals and

lastly, figural representation which is the rarest category and often takes the form of religious iconography. The carved ornamentation was often painted in a variety of colours though traces of these pigments now survive only rarely. The earliest high crosses were created and erected by the native population, probably under the direction of the Church, but later examples were often commissioned by secular patrons and reflect the art styles and mythology of Viking settlers.

Several distinct regional groupings and types of high cross have been identified, some being the product of single schools of craftsmen. There are fewer than 50 high crosses surviving in England and this is likely to represent only a small proportion of those originally erected. Some were defaced or destroyed during bouts of iconoclasm during the 16th and 17th centuries. Others fell out of use and were taken down and reused in new building works. They provide important insights into art traditions and changing art styles during the early medieval period, into religious beliefs during the same era and into the impact of the Scandinavian settlement of the north of England. All well-preserved examples are identified as nationally important.

Although incomplete and partly weathered, the two high cross shafts in St Bridget's churchyard, Beckermet, survive reasonably well and display good and unusual examples of Late Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian art styles. In particular the use of three encircling mouldings or collars around the shafts is the only known example of such decoration in Cumbria. Likewise the inscription of the older of the cross shafts is in a form of lettering unique in Cumbria. Together these cross shafts attest to the importance of both the church and its environs as a pre-Conquest centre of ecclesiastical importance.

Appendix 2: Summary of the HER Entry for Two High Cross Shafts in St Bridget's Churchyard

HER No.: 1259

NGR: NY 01500 06040

Site Type: Church and two high cross shafts

Period: Medieval Norman [the Church]; Early Medieval Saxon/Anglian and early Medieval Scandinavian [the crosses]

Description:

Located side by side in the churchyard south of St Bridget's Church are the remains of cross shaft fragments. The earlier fragment (to the south) is of white freestone and dates to the late 10th century; the one to the north, of red freestone, has Gaelic-Norse inscriptions dating to approximately 1000 AD. According to Pevsner, the Saxon cross (to the north) is similar to the Gosforth cross, round below and square above with semi-circles like those of block capitals mediating between the two parts. The other cross (to the south) is similar but has a Runic inscription. Only parts of the shaft remain in each case. Both are of a type with shaft of circular section in the lower part and rectangular section in the upper part, with moulding separating the two parts on the north cross, with the upper sides and face decorated with interlace. The south cross is shorter with a thicker section, with triple moulding below the rectangular part of the shaft, and is also decorated with interlace.

The church has sufficient traces left to show its fabric was of Norman origin, and altered in the 13th century. It is a listed building, Grade II*.

Appendix 3: Extract from the description of the Beckermet Crosses from Bailey and Cramp (1988, 54-57)

Beckermet St Bridget 1. Lower part of cross-shaft and –base

Stone type: '*Medium grained pale yellow sandstone (Carboniferous?)*' (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 54)

Present condition: '*Worn and lichen covered*' (*ibid*)

Description:

'*The shaft, which is a round-shaft derivative is plain below swags and a heavy triple collar which is punch-outlined and marked with fine grooves in the upper and lower edges. The shape at the base is not truly round but is squarish with rounded angles. The socket is angular and the base is plain. Traces of a large rectangular tenon at the bottom of the shaft are visible in the socket.*

… The whole of the surviving face [of the west broad side (Plate 10 to Plate 12)] *is covered by a very worn inscription. Five lines are marked out by incised frames and there may have been some letters in the scalloped space at the base…*

… Only a small portion of the lower part of [the narrow south] *face survives* [(Plate 9)]. *Part of a split-stemmed plant trail seems to be present, but the carving is so shallow and the lichen cover so dense that it is almost impossible to see anything.*

… Part of a bush scroll with four paired asymmetrical volutes [is visible on the broad east side (Plate 7)]. *The strands are fine and the berry bunches are small. It is difficult to identify other details but there appears to be a pair of leaves and a berry bunch on the right and left below the uppermost volute.*

… Part of a tree scroll with three or four symmetrical volutes which contain small berry bunches [is visible on the narrow, north side (Plate 8)]. *It is possible that the uppermost volutes sprout petal-shaped side tendrils, and there are isolated pellets or berries in the scroll*' (op. cit.)

Discussion:

'*In form it is more oval than round at the base and it has been refitted into a rectangular socket (unlike no. 2 where the shaft fits snugly into its round socket). If it is an experimental piece reflecting fashions from further south and east, as has been suggested …, then its rather squat and heavy appearance may be explained.*

The long inscription… is in the form of lettering not found anywhere else in Cumbria' (*ibid*)

Date: '*Second quarter of the ninth century*' (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 56)

Beckermet St Bridget 2. Lower part of cross-shaft and –base

Stone type: '*Fine-grained red sandstone*' (*ibid*)

Present condition: Broken on the north and east sides and worn on the west face (*ibid*)

Description:

'*Round-shaft derivative … with collar… The single panels on all four faces of the rectangular part of the cross are bordered laterally by a roll moulding and each panel has a swag moulding at the bottom. The collar appears to be formed by three encircling mouldings, in which the outer ones are cabled. The socket is round and the base is plain.*

… [On the broad west side (Plate 13) there are traces] *of two parallel vertical rows of stopped-plait.*

… [On the narrow south side (Plate 6) there are two] *parallel vertical rows of three-strand plain stopped-plait with pellets.*

… [On the broad east side (Plate 6) there are two] *parallel vertical rows of irregular plain stopped-plait, possibly with single-branch spiral-scroll between the rows.*

… [On the narrow north side (Plate 13) there are traces] *of two vertical rows of (probably plain) stopped-plait*' (*ibid*)

Discussion:

This cross-shaft is of the '*spiral-scroll school*' and the '*use of three encircling mouldings around the cylinder is rare... the only other Northumbrian example is provided by the inscribed shaft (no .1) standing alongside this monument in St Bridget's churchyard; in shape this is probably a direct copy of its elaborate Anglian companion, with the sculptor even attempting to imitate the cabled mouldings of his model. The arrangement of ornament in parallel vertical strips is a distinctive north-western feature in the Viking period and is particularly prominent in work of the spiral-scroll school*' (*ibid*)

Date: 10th to 11th century (*ibid*)

Appendix 4: Significance Criteria

After DoE 1990, Annex 4: '*Secretary of State's Criteria for Scheduling Ancient Monuments*'

i)   *Period*: all types of monuments that characterise a category or period should be considered for preservation;

ii)   *Rarity*: there are some monument categories which in certain periods are so scarce that all surviving examples which retain some archaeological potential should be preserved. In general, however, a selection must be made which portrays the typical and commonplace as well as the rare. This process should take account of all aspects of the distribution of a particular class of monument, both in a national and regional context;

iii)   *Documentation*: the significance of a monument may be enhanced by the existence of record of previous investigation or, in the case of more recent monuments, by the supporting evidence of contemporary written records;

iv)   *Group Value*: the value of a single monument (such as a field system) may be greatly enhanced by its association with related contemporary monuments (such as a settlement and cemetery) or with monuments of different periods. In some cases, it is preferable to protect the complete group of monuments, including associated and adjacent land, rather than to protect isolated monuments within the group;

v)   *Survival/Condition*: the survival of a monument's archaeological potential both above and below ground is a particularly important consideration and should be assessed in relation to its present condition and surviving features;

vi)   *Fragility/Vulnerability*: highly important archaeological evidence from some field monuments can be destroyed by a single ploughing or unsympathetic treatment; vulnerable monuments of this nature would particularly benefit from the statutory protection which scheduling confers. There are also existing standing structures of particular form or complexity whose value can again be severely reduced by neglect or careless treatment and which are similarly well suited by scheduled monument protection, even if these structures are already listed historic buildings;

vii)   *Diversity*: some monuments may be selected for scheduling because they possess a combination of high quality features, others because of a single important attribute;

viii)   *Potential*: on occasion, the nature of the evidence cannot be specified precisely but it may still be possible to document reasons anticipating its existence and importance and so to demonstrate the justification for scheduling. This is usually confined to sites rather than upstanding monuments.