
NPA NEWCASTLE

Client Report No. CP 351/06

**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
*CHURCH ROAD, SOUTH GOSFORTH, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.***



**COMMISSIONED BY
NEW FOREST CONSTRUCTION LTD**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2006 NPA Newcastle undertook an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to Church Road, South Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, (NGR: NZ 246 681), on behalf of New Forest Construction Ltd. The ground-works at the site involved the excavation of a limited number of interventions associated with the construction of the foundations for three houses, and associated services/landscaping around the structures.

There was potential for significant archaeological remains to be found on the site, as the site is within the bounds of the medieval village of Gosforth, and close to the churchyard of St. Nicolas, in addition there has been a relative lack of development of the land. An archaeological evaluation conducted on the site in 2004 by Tyne & Wear Museums, revealed a possible 17th century cobbled street surface and a sandstone wall aligned north south. A further wall aligned roughly north south represented the west wall of a 9m wide post-medieval outbuilding associated with South Gosforth Farm, depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map and subsequent revisions. This building was a two-storey barn and was demolished within living memory prior to the building of a scout hut, which occupied the site from around 1952 until recent times.

Trench 1 revealed a cobbled/rubble surface faced by larger sandstone kerbstones. The precise alignment of this masonry could be further projected, when landscaping between Trenches 1 and 5 exposed a layer of burnt red shale, which lay just above the masonry and was associated with the surface. This masonry has been interpreted as representing a post-medieval street surface.

Trenches 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 contained the remains of a coarsely grained yellow sandstone culvert. It comprised of large sandstone facing blocks at either side of a drainage channel, capped by very large flat paving slabs. The culvert was aligned roughly north south, and although heavily truncated within Trench 8, it was observed in an excellent state of preservation throughout the remaining foundation trenches. No dating was recovered from the culvert feature.

Trench 7 contained a cluster of roughly hewn sandstone blocks forming part of a suspected demolished wall, aligned roughly northwest southeast. The wall was bonded with a degraded light sandy mortar and sat directly above the culvert feature. Later excavations within Trench 11 revealed better preserved stonework of the same wall. This masonry was observed to be a linear sequence of sandstone foundation stones, immediately north of the cemetery wall corner. The facing stones had a hard, light grey cement based render on their eastern (external) edge. The walls represent the eastern wall of the post-medieval barn building discovered by Tyne & Wear Museums (Telford 2004), described above.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NPA Newcastle would like to thank David Charlton of New Forest Construction Ltd for commissioning the project, and Tony York and the New Forest building team for their assistance and enthusiasm throughout the fieldwork. NPA Newcastle would also like to thank Jennifer Morrison, Tyne and Wear Archaeology Officer, for her advice and support.

The archaeological watching brief was conducted by Marc Johnstone, who also produced the report and figures. The finds were assessed by Jo Beaty. The overall project was managed by Matthew Town, Senior Project Officer, who also edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In August 2006 NPA Newcastle were invited by David Charlton of New Forest Construction Ltd to conduct an archaeological watching brief on works liable to impact on archaeological remains adjacent to Church Road, South Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne (NGR: NZ 246 681).
- 1.1.2 The location of the site, within the bounds of the medieval village of Gosforth, the proximity to the churchyard of St. Nicolas, and the relative lack of development of the land, indicated that there was potential for significant archaeological remains. The ground-works at the site involved the excavation of 12 trenches associated with the construction of the foundations for three houses, and associated services/landscaping around the structures. The development area was roughly 27m x 25m.
- 1.1.3 Planning Permission had been granted for these works, but because of the archaeological sensitivity of the site, all of the ground-works had to be excavated under a full watching brief condition. The watching brief fully conformed to requirements set out by David Heslop, Tyne & Wear County Archaeologist, Newcastle City Council Historic Environment Section, in a recent specification.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 A project design was submitted by NPA Newcastle in response to a request by David Charlton, of New Forest Construction Ltd, for an archaeological watching brief, in accordance with a specification from Newcastle City Council Historic Environment Section. Following acceptance of the project design, NPA Newcastle was commissioned by the client to undertake the work.
- 2.1.2 The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 SITE SPECIFIC AIMS

- 2.2.1 The archaeological watching brief monitored works involving the excavation of 12 typical foundation trenches and associated landscaping covering a distance of roughly 25m x 27m immediately to the north and northwest of St. Nicolas' Churchyard in South Gosforth (see Figure 1). All of the trenches ranged from 0.6m to 0.8m in width. Trenches 1-6 were affected by tree root activity and were therefore excavated to a depth of roughly 2m, whereas Trenches 7-12 were not affected and therefore only excavated to roughly 1m depth. Site-specific aims of the watching brief were defined as follows:
- 2.2.2 To identify the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them.
- 2.2.3 If intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project, adequate time will be given to carry out further excavation and recording work within the area that will be disturbed.
- 2.2.4 The area watched by the archaeologist should be accurately tied into the national grid using a total station at an appropriate scale, and any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
- 2.2.5 All archaeological deposits will be sampled and assessed for their environmental potential. The recommended sample sizes for dry deposits being 30-60 litres and for wet deposits the sample sizes should be approximately 5 litres. Appropriate proposals for any necessary further analysis are included in this report.
- 2.2.6 To create a photographic record of all contexts, in colour transparency and black and white print, including a graduated metric scale.

- 2.2.7 Appropriate procedures under the relevant legislation will always be followed in the event of the discovery of artefacts covered by the provisions of the Treasure Trove Act 1996.
- 2.2.8 If in situ burials are encountered during the watching brief it is proposed that they will be left in situ, until further mitigation is agreed and the Company will procure and comply with all statutory consents and licences under the Burial Act 1857.
- 2.2.9 To recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating, the use of a metal detector may be employed to aid artefact retrieval from excavated spoil.
- 2.2.10 To prepare a report for the Client setting out the salient conclusions and recommendations for further analysis if applicable.
- 2.2.11 Depending upon the results of the work, to prepare a report for publication in a relevant journal such as *Archaeologia Aeliana* (AA).

2.3 WATCHING BRIEF METHODOLOGY

- 2.3.1 Excavation was undertaken by the client's contractor, using a mechanical excavator equipped with various buckets, including a toothless ditching bucket. The entire area of excavation for the housing foundations and landscaping was closely monitored, and all archaeological features discovered were investigated and recorded according to the NPA standard procedure as set out in the company Excavation Manual (Giecco, 2003).
- 2.3.2 A Photographic record of all aspects of the archaeological watching brief was made using Pentax K1000 and Pentax P30 Single Lens Reflex (SLR) manual cameras. A photographic record of all contexts was taken in colour transparency and black and white print and included a graduated metric scale. Digital photographs were also taken where applicable.
- 2.3.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IFA 1994).
- 2.3.4 All references to cardinal directions refer to site grid north, aligned approximately with Ordnance Survey (OS) grid north.

2.4 ARCHIVE

- 2.4.1 The full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with the current English Heritage guidelines set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 2nd Ed. 1991). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository and a copy of the report given to the County Historic Environment

Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA 06, SGF-A.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The watching brief area was bounded to the southwest by Church Road, to the northeast southeast by the churchyard of St. Nicolas' Church, and to the northwest by modern housing. The present development site is roughly 25m x 27m, and comprises an area formerly occupied by a brick scout hut. The central National Grid Reference to the site is NZ 251 682.
- 3.1.2 The solid geology consists of Middle Coal Measures of the Carboniferous. Early in this stage, advancing ice from southwest Scotland and the Lake District eroded channels into the rockhead. The modern drainage system, for the most part, follow these channels. The Carboniferous rocks are generally masked by Quarternary deposits of varying thickness and character. Exposure of bedrock is generally not good and the sections are discontinuous. Drift-free areas are usually restricted to higher ground, steeper slopes, stream sections and quarries. (BGS1998).
- 3.1.3 The district was subjected to several periods of glaciation during the last Pleistocene, but the glacial deposits preserved all belong to the last (Late Devension) glaciation. Sediments of earlier glaciations and interglacial periods have been removed or recycled. Generally the Quarternary deposits range up to 10m in thickness, but values well in excess of 30m-90m have been recorded in the buried valleys, particularly those associated with the River Tyne. Boulder clay is the most widespread of these Quarternary deposits and covers around half the area of the district. It lies directly on the underlying Carboniferous rocks and in many places is the only drift deposit present. In general it comprises tough, over-consolidated silty and locally sandy clay. (BGS1998).

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken by Tyne and Wear Museums (Peters 2004). The results of the assessment are summarised below.
- 3.2.2 South Gosforth is known to have been an important medieval village. It is probable that the site itself is within the extremes of the villages' original boundaries. The village had an important location in terms of the salt trade, and its proximity to other important medieval sites of Haddrick's Mill and Salter's Bridge, as well as documentary evidence suggesting that in Saxon times the whole town of Newcastle may have been included within the parish of Gosforth.

- 3.2.3 A scout hut previously occupied the site and was constructed around 1952 after the initial application in 1951 was approved on what was by then 'unclaimed land'. Prior to this the land had been part of the South Gosforth Farming Estate and does not appear to have been extensively developed previously.
- 3.2.4 The site is adjacent to St. Nicolas' Church and the boundaries of the churchyard. It is known that by the Third Edition OS mapping of the area the burial ground had extended to the north, very near to the present work site.

3.3 RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

- 3.3.1 Tyne and Wear Museums conducted an archaeological evaluation of the Church Road site in 2004 (Telford 2004). The earliest activity recorded on the site was represented by two boundary or drainage gullies and a possible pit cut into the natural subsoil in Trenches 3, 4 and 5. No dateable artefacts were recovered from the fills of any of the features, and thus their archaeological significance was difficult to assess.
- 3.3.2 The earliest structural remains encountered during the evaluation consisted of a cobbled area recorded in Trench 2. The surface was dateable to the 17th century. The surface was interpreted as part of a street or yard surface.
- 3.3.3 Evidence for two buildings was recorded during the fieldwork. A wall foundation and associated flagged/brick floor recorded in Trench 4 was identified with a small out-building depicted on the first edition Ordnance survey mapping of the area. In Trenches 2 and 3 the western wall of a building first depicted on a tithe map of 1841 was recorded. The construction of this building can only be broadly dated to the post-medieval period, most likely to the late 18th/early 19th century.
- 3.3.4 Substantial ploughsoil horizons, up to 0.6m thick, recorded in all trenches, indicate that the land was in agricultural use for considerable periods.
- 3.3.5 Locations of the Tyne and Wear Museums trenches relevant to the present development (T&W Trenches 1-3) have been included on Plan 1 of this report.

4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 4.1.1 Summary results of the watching brief are presented below. The context list is reproduced in Appendix 1, with Figure 1 showing the locations of the watching brief and associated archaeological features, and Figure 2 an archaeological section drawing of culvert feature [105].
- 4.1.2 The development area had been mechanically stripped of overburden prior to arrival with no visible indications above ground of archaeological remains or of the scout hut foundations that had recently been destroyed. Archaeological monitoring for the works commenced on 26th July and finished on 3rd August 2006. The building team started by excavating foundation trenches for housing in the southwest portion of the site immediately in front of the cemetery wall. Topsoil throughout the site ranged from 0.3m – 0.5m depth and the natural comprised of a dark brown clay with very few inclusions, observed at a depth of 1m – 1.2m below ground level.
- 4.1.3 **Trench 1** (see Figure 1) revealed a cobbled/rubble surface faced by larger sandstone kerbstones [102] (400mm x 500mm max) aligned northwest southeast and lying at a depth of 350mm below ground level (see Plate 1). The precise alignment of this masonry could be further projected, when landscaping between trenches 1 and 5 exposed a layer of burnt red shale [103] at a depth of 220mm, which lay just above masonry [102] and was associated within the same archaeological context (see Plate 2).
- 4.1.4 **Trench 2, 3 and 4** contained no archaeological remains.
- 4.1.5 **Trench 5** (see Figure 1) contained the remains of a coarsely grained yellow sandstone culvert feature [105] observed at a depth of 600mm below ground level (see Plate 3 and Figure 2). It comprised of large sandstone facing blocks at either side of a drainage channel, capped by very large flat paving slabs of the same sandstone (760mm length, x 560mm width, x 120mm depth, max) (see Plate 4). The culvert was aligned roughly north south and was observed in an excellent state of preservation throughout this foundation trench. Although no datable remains were associated with the culvert feature, an environmental sample was taken from inside the channel of the culvert, deposit (106).
- 4.1.6 **Trench 6** (see Figure 1) contained the same culvert feature [105] as in Trench 5, which was aligned north south and was generally in a good state of repair (see Plate 5). The trench reached a depth of roughly 2m.
- 4.1.7 **Trench 7** (see Figure 1) contained a cluster of roughly hewn sandstone blocks (400mm x 300mm max) forming part of a suspected demolished wall [107], aligned roughly northwest southeast and observed at a depth of 100mm below ground level (see Plate 6). The wall was bonded with a degraded light brownish yellow sandy mortar and sat

directly above culvert feature [105]. Very similar portions of wall were also discovered in Trench 11 on the same alignment as wall [107] and probably belong to the same archaeological context.

- 4.1.8 **Trench 8** (see Figure 1) contained remains of the same culvert feature [105] as in Trench 5, which was aligned north south, but was heavily truncated and mixed with modern concrete debris and ceramic piping.
- 4.1.9 **Trench 9** contained no archaeological remains.
- 4.1.10 **Trench 10** (see Figure 1) contained the same culvert feature [105] as in Trench 5, which was aligned north south and was generally in a good state of repair.
- 4.1.11 **Trench 11** (see Figure 1) revealed well preserved stonework [108] of the same type and on the same alignment as [107] within Trench 7, and probably belongs to the same archaeological context. This masonry was observed to be a linear sequence of sandstone foundation stones, 300mm below ground level and immediately north of the cemetery wall corner (see Plate 7). The facing stones had a hard, light grey cement based render on their eastern (external) edge. Finds recovered from the topsoil directly above wall [108] included ceramic material (including a broken stone-ware stout bottle), broken glass and a small amount of animal bone.
- 4.1.12 **Trench 12** contained no archaeological remains.

5 FINDS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.1.1 The pottery finds and other material have been washed, marked and packaged in accordance with the standard guidelines and under the supervision of Frank Giocco.

5.2 Post-medieval pottery

5.2.1 A total of 10 sherds of post-medieval pottery from the 19th/20th century were recovered from context (100) in Trench 11. All the sherds recovered were for domestic use, including one salt-glazed stoneware bottle depicting 'Father Tyne' and the writing 'Wallsend' and 'family stout'.

5.3 Glass

5.3.1 2 sherds of post-medieval bottle glass dating to the 19th/20th century were recovered from context (100) in Trench 11. Both sherds were from different bottles, but were both of clear glass.

5.4 Bone

5.4.1 1 fragment of animal bone was recovered from context (100) in Trench 11. The bone was in poor condition, but was identifiable as an astragalus from cattle (cow or horse).

Table 1. Finds Report.

| Context | Trench | Material | Quantity | Weight (kg) | Period |
|---------|--------|--------------|----------|-------------|---------------|
| 100 | 11 | pottery | 10 | 0.509 | Post-medieval |
| 100 | 11 | bottle glass | 2 | 0.121 | Post-medieval |
| 100 | 11 | animal bone | 1 | 0.037 | Post-medieval |

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 CONCLUSION

- 6.1.1 The masonry discovered in Trench 1 [102], has been interpreted as identical to that seen in 2004 by Tyne & Wear Museums (Telford 2004). Due to a lack of datable remains, the same conclusions must be held as for the earlier record: that the masonry represents a post-medieval street surface.
- 6.1.2 The sandstone culvert [105] was observed for a stretch of 25 metres across the entire length of the site (see Figure 1) and most likely continues underground in a southern direction towards (and probably ending at) the present property boundary. The culvert is also likely to continue northwards beyond Trench 8 for an unknown distance, although it seems to be heavily truncated beyond this point. The lack of dateable material associated with culvert [105] makes it difficult to assess a time period for its construction, though it is most likely associated with the South Gosforth Farm and therefore of a post-medieval origin and of 18th-19th century date. An environmental sample taken from within the channel deposit of the culvert [106] is housed at the North Pennines Archaeology head office at Nenthead, Cumbria and could be examined in the future upon request.
- 6.1.3 Walls [107] and [108] observed in Trenches 7 and 11, represent the eastern wall of a post-medieval barn building first discovered by Tyne & Wear Museums in 2004. Tyne and Wear Museums found remains of the western wall of this post-medieval outbuilding associated with South Gosforth Farm. The building was depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area and subsequent revisions. This two-storey barn was demolished within living memory prior to the building of a brick scout hut, which occupied the site from around 1952 until recent times. The construction of this building can only be broadly dated to the post-medieval period, most likely to the late 18th/early 19th century.

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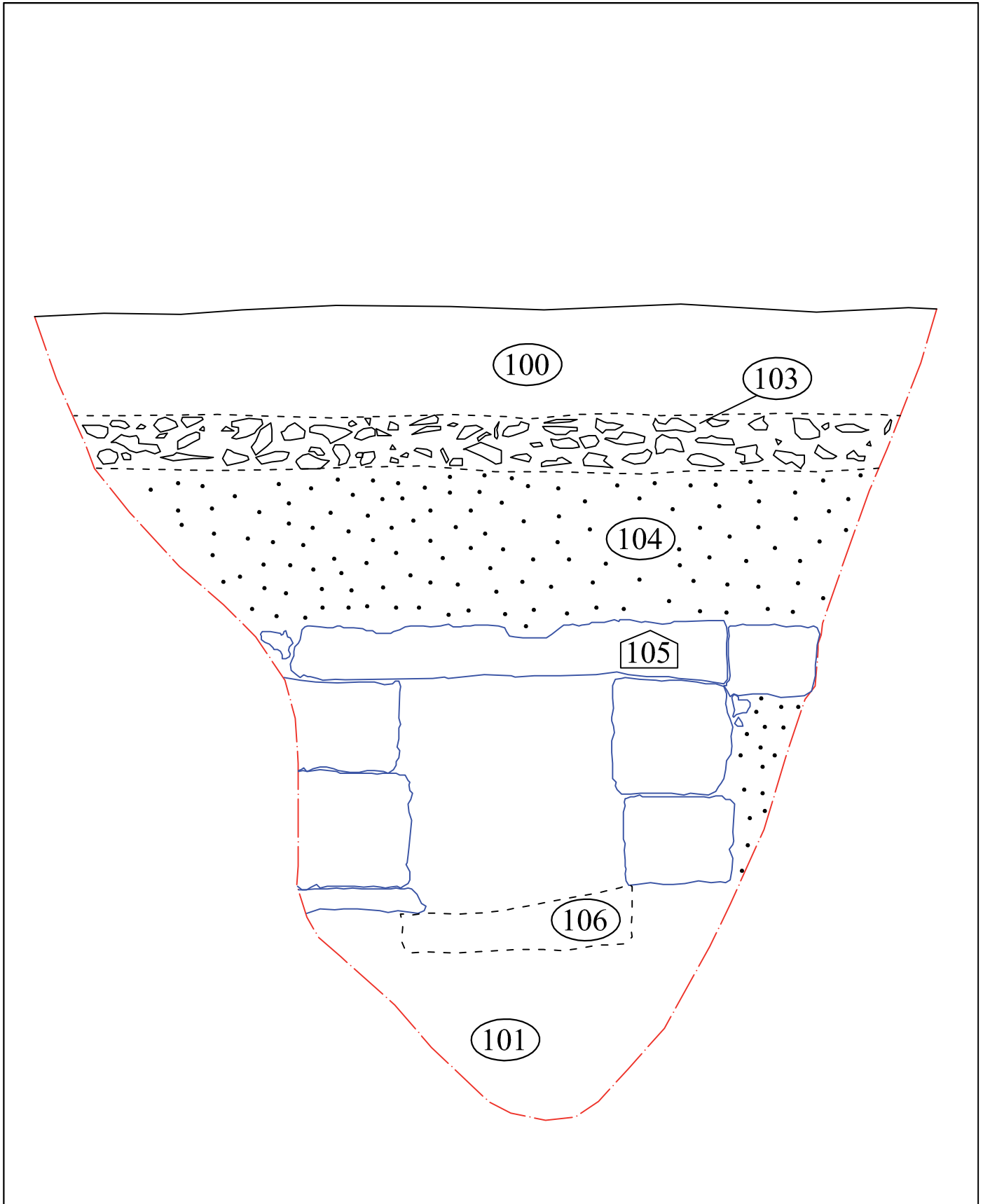
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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

| Context Number | Category | Interpretation |
|----------------|----------|---|
| 100 | Layer | Topsoil, 0.5m (max) depth from ground level |
| 101 | Natural | Dark brown firm clay |
| 102 | Masonry | Cobbled/rubble surface with sandstone facing kerbstones found in Trench 1 |
| 103 | Deposit | Burnt red shale found below (100) in Trench 1, 0.22m below ground level and reaching a depth of 0.30m below ground level |
| 104 | Deposit | Pale yellow lime and finely crushed sandstone deposit found below (103) in Trench 1, reaching a depth of 0.52m below ground level |
| 105 | Masonry | Coarsely grained yellow sandstone culvert |
| 106 | Deposit | Mid greyish brown silty clay with lenses of orange clay (5%). Fairly firm with few inclusions. Deposit from within channel of [105] |
| 107 | Masonry | Cluster of roughly hewn sandstone blocks, probably belonging to the same context as [108] |
| 108 | Masonry | Linear sequence of sandstone foundation stones with a hard, light grey cement based render on their eastern (external) edge. |

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES AND PLATES




| | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|---|
|  <p>North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre Nenthead, Alston Cumbria CA9 3PD Tel: (01434) 382045 Fax: (01434) 382294 Email: info@nparchaeology.co.uk</p> | <p>PROJECT: Church Road, Gosforth, Newcastle DRAWING No: 2 SCALE: 1:10 TITLE: SW facing section of culvert [105] CLIENT: New Forest Construction Ltd DRAWN BY: MJ DATE: August 2006</p> | <p>LOCATION: Trench 5</p> | <p>KEY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - - - - Limit of Excavation — Archaeological Features - - - - Stratigraphic Layer |
|---|---|---------------------------|---|



Plate 1: Wall Feature [102] in Trench 1, Facing South.



Plate 2: Red Shale Deposit (103) between Trenches 1 and 5, Facing Southeast.



Plate 3: Sandstone Culvert Feature [105] in Trench 5, Facing Southwest, (Section View).



Plate 4: Sandstone Culvert Feature [105] in Trench 5, Facing Southwest, (Plan View).



Plate 5: Broken Sandstone Capstones of Culvert Feature [105] in Trench 6, Facing East.



Plate 6: Wall Feature [107] in Trench 7, Facing East.



Plate 7: Wall Feature [108] in Trench 11, Facing Northwest.