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# **NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD**

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**Client Report No. CP/195/05**

**REPORT ON AN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF  
ON LAND AT  
19 HILL STREET  
CORBRIDGE  
NORTHUMBERLAND**

**NGR: NY 9888 6440**

**FOR  
CRAWFORD HIGGINS ASSOCIATES**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was invited by Crawford Higgins Associates to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of 19 Hill Street, Corbridge, Northumberland. The work was required in a brief prepared by Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team.

The work involved the construction of an extension to the present property, a scheme that was believed to potentially impact upon surviving archaeological remains. The watching brief consisted of monitoring excavations within the footprint of the development, and the recording of features and deposits revealed.

The area under examination lies close to the centre of Corbridge, which is known to have been a focus for settlement since at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century, developing into an important market town in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site is situated within an area of burgage plots set perpendicular to the street close to the church and market square.

No features of archaeological significance were observed during the watching brief.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks are due to the following people and institutions that gave help and assistance during the compilation of this report:

The watching brief was maintained by Patricia Crompton.

The report was written by Phil Jefferson BA MA PIFA, and edited by Juliet Reeves BA. Overall responsibility for the project rested with Frank Giecco BA, Dip Arch, AIFA, NPA Principal Archaeologist and Technical Director.

## **1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION**

- 1.1 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was invited by Crawford Higgins Associates to undertake an archaeological watching brief on land to the rear of 19 Hill Street, Corbridge, Northumberland.
- 1.2 The work involved the construction of an extension to the present property, a scheme that was believed to potentially impact upon surviving archaeological remains. Consequently, a programme of archaeological work was required in a brief prepared by Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team. This work consisted of an archaeological watching brief.
- 1.3 The watching brief consisted of monitoring of any excavation within the footprint of the development and recording of features and deposits revealed.

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 There has been no previous work undertaken on within the footprint of the development, however a number of recent archaeological investigations have been undertaken within Corbridge.
- 2.2 In May 2001 Archaeological Services at the University of Durham undertook a field evaluation at Duke's Cottages in advance of a residential development. The work revealed archaeological features including a shallow gully and also recovered fragments of medieval pottery (ASUD 2001).
- 2.3 In September 2003 Tyne & Wear Museums Archaeology Department maintained a watching brief during the upgrading and extending of existing water services within Corbridge at Well Bank, Town Farm Fields and West Terrace. The work revealed a number of undated surfaces surviving beneath the road surface and concluded that there is a strong possibility of surviving archaeological remains throughout medieval Corbridge (TWM 2003).
- 2.4 In October 2003, The Archaeological Practice (TAP) undertook a field evaluation on land at 2 Princes Street, Corbridge. The work revealed the presence of a shallow linear ditch filled medieval pottery of 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century date with extensive potential for environmental sampling (TAP 2003).
- 2.5 In December 2003 Tyne & Wear Museums Archaeology Department maintained a watching brief on behalf of Integrated Utility Services of groundworks to the north and south of the bridge. The work revealed an undated cobble surface beneath the road surface and modern disturbance (TWM 2003).
- 2.6 In August 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook two archaeological field evaluations on land behind Eastfield House, Corbridge, Northumberland. The work revealed a number of archaeological features within the south of the site. These included a circular stone built structure with a flagged sandstone floor, and a possible robber trench surviving as a shallow linear feature filled with stone fragments. A linear ditch of probable medieval date, several linear features, pits and postholes of probable medieval origin were also recorded. A number of fragments of 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century pottery and glass were also recovered.

- 2.7 In November 2004 North Pennines Archaeology maintained an archaeological watching brief of works at Sunnybrae, Stagshaw Road, Corbridge. A heavily truncated grave was observed, with only a fragment of pelvis and right and left femur exposed, the remainder of the lower skeleton continued beyond the limits of excavation. The grave was aligned east-west and probably belonged to the medieval cemetery, where similar burials have been dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 PROJECT DESIGN**

- 3.1.1 A project design was prepared in response to a written scheme of investigation Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team.. This included a detailed specification of works to be carried out, consisting of the monitoring of the any intrusive groundworks on the development and a programme of post excavation and reporting.

#### **3.2 WATCHING BRIEF**

- 3.2.1 The aims and principal methodology of the watching brief can be summarised as follows:
- to determine the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains;
  - to allow adequate time in order that the archaeologist could examine and record intact archaeological remains uncovered during the project, ensuring they were able to carry out further excavation and recording;
  - to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, 35mm colour print and monochrome formats as applicable, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
  - to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes.
  - to prepare a site archive in accordance with MAP2 standards (English Heritage, 1991).

#### **3.3 PROJECT ARCHIVE**

- 3.3.1 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 1991). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository and a copy of the report given to the County Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA 05 HSC-A.

## 4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

### 4.1 TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY OF THE STUDY AREA

- 4.1.1 The medieval and modern town of Corbridge is situated on the north bank of the River Tyne (figure 1) on stepped alluvial terraces, created by the changing course of the Tyne and the underlying geology (NCCCT 2001).
- 4.1.2 The solid geology of the region comprises Carboniferous limestones and sandstones of the Stainmore Group, overlain by drift deposits of glacial sands, gravel, boulder clay and Head deposits (SSEW 1984, NCCCT 2001). Head deposits are often indistinguishable from till, although these occur in association with concave footslopes as opposed to smooth, convex slopes (SSEW 1984).
- 4.1.3 The settlement lies close to an important bridging point across the River Tyne, a factor important in the development of Corbridge as an important medieval market town (NCCCT 2001).



**Figure 1:** Corbridge and its immediate environs

Figure 1: Site Location. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Get-A-Map Service 1:50,000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright (1997) All rights reserved. Licence Number WL6488



## 4.2 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

- 4.2.1 The study area exists within a modern urban landscape within modern Corbridge. The area has been a focus for settlement since at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century and developed into an important market town in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (NCCCT 2001). The site is situated within an area of burgage plots set perpendicular to the street close to the church and market square (figure 2).

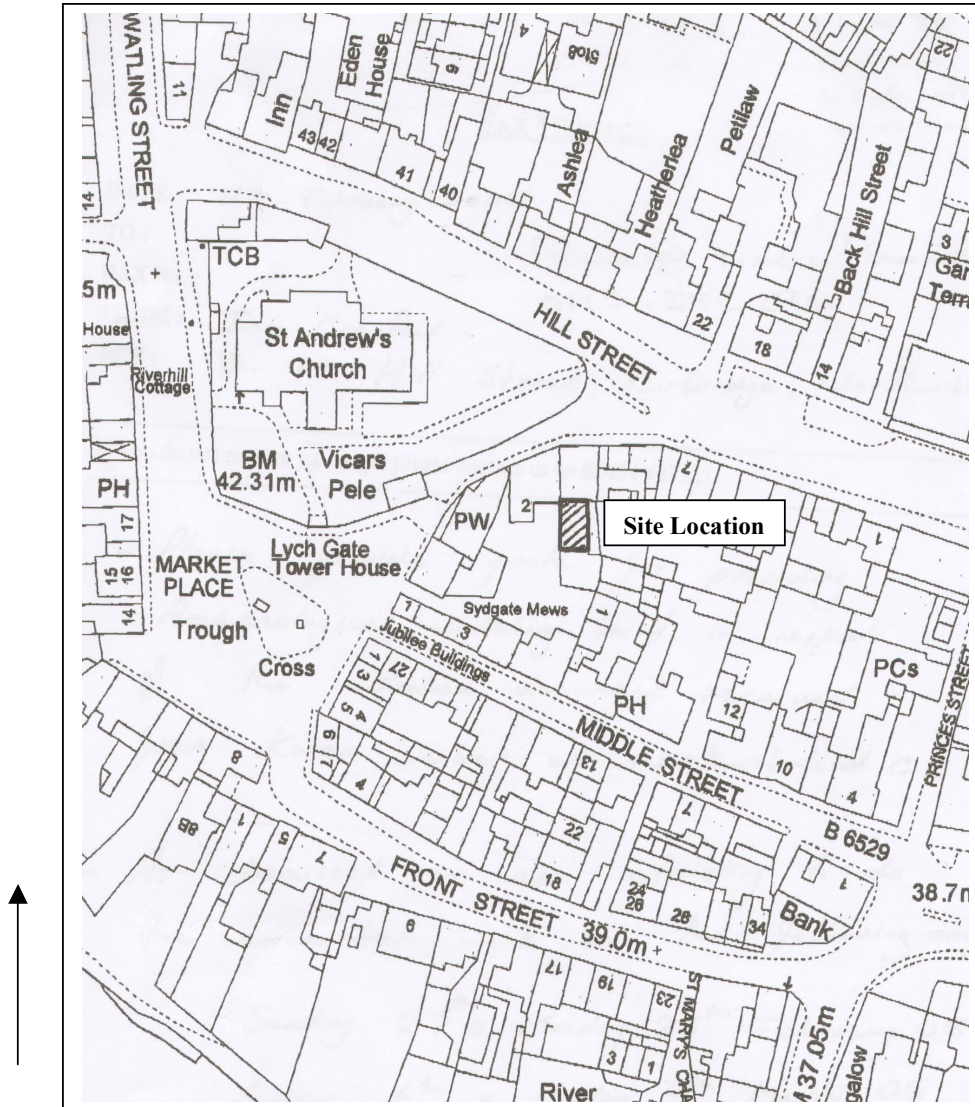


Figure 2: Location of Site within centre of Corbridge

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The watching brief was undertaken on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2005. During this time all intrusive groundwork involved with the development was observed. During this time no archaeological features were observed.
- 5.2 On the western edge of the area examined an existing boundary wall was being re-used in the construction of the extension. This wall (context 100) was 2.2 metres in height topped with flat capstones. The main structure of the wall was irregular coursed stones of various sizes. One of the stones used in the construction appears to have the remains of a bench mark carved into it (plate 1), with the stone itself inverted.
- 5.3 Abutting the wall was a very dark brown-black silty loam deposit containing occasional medium sized stone inclusions (plate 2). This deposit covered the entire area examined, and measured in excess of 0.50m in depth; its full depth remaining unknown due to depth of the development footprint. No other earlier deposits were observed, as the area was not excavated further in any areas as a concrete raft was being constructed at this defined level to support the new building.
- 5.4 Overlying deposit 102 was a layer of concrete (context 101) ranging from 0.08 to 0.1 metres in depth. This deposit formed a modern levelled yard area or hardstanding at the back of the existing building.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits within the footprint of the area being developed. The concrete yard surface is of relatively modern date. The dark soil that underlay this concrete would appear to be a former topsoil or garden soil within the plot of land behind the existing building.
- 6.2 The date of this deposit is not known, however it has built up over time and abuts the existing boundary wall, therefore it must be of later date than this. The wall itself appears to have been built in one phase in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century from at least some re-used material including a bench mark.

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## 8 APPENDICES

### 8.1 APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT RECORDS

Context No.	Description
100	Extant stone wall along edge of site investigated. Irregular coursing, contains one stone with an apparent inverted bench mark on.
101	Concrete hardstanding/levelling layer across site
102	Very dark brown-black silty loam deposit containing occasional medium sized stone inclusions. Underlies concrete layer 101.

### 8.2 APPENDIX 2: PLATES



**Plate 1:** View of wall 100 showing possible inverted benchmark



**Plate 2:** View of deposit 102 after removal of concrete hardstanding