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# **NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD**

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**Client Report No. 310/06**

**REPORT ON  
A TARGETED  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
FIELD EVALUATION  
AT HIGH HOUSE QUARRY,  
WESTNEWTON,  
WIGTON,  
CUMBRIA**

**For  
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On behalf of  
HARRISON LTD  
NGR NY 132 479**

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

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In March 2006, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a targeted archaeological field evaluation on land at High House Quarry, Westnewton, Wigton, a site approximately 9.75ha in extent. This work was requested by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service in advance of a planning application for a proposed scheme of aggregates extraction which would affect an area considered to have a very high archaeological potential, as identified by a previous desk-based assessment (Davies, 2006).

The results of the desk-based assessment indicated that the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains dating to the prehistoric period was extremely high. Existing evidence within the proposed extraction area includes a single findspot of Neolithic/Bronze Age worked flint recovered during the North West Wetland Survey (Hodgkinson *et al*, 2000), and the existence of numerous cropmark features throughout the proposed extraction area. These undated cropmarks were first identified in 1975 (Higham and Jones 1975) and seem to represent the multi-phase remains of fields, settlement foci and possibly ritual sites dating to the prehistoric period.

The field evaluation consisted of the excavation of a single linear trial trench, measuring 64m x 2m, and positioned to adequately sample the site of a square enclosure identified by aerial photography (Higham and Jones 1975) and deemed to be a feature of ‘particular archaeological interest’ (Parsons 2006). The square enclosure was located at approximately NY 1312 4797. The main aim was to provide a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing their *character*, *condition*, and *significance*, which would enable the High House quarry extension planning application to proceed in a highly informed way.

The targeted evaluation trench at High House Quarry successfully located four archaeological features. East west aligned cuts [106], [108], [110] are all probably modern features, and cut [108] may in fact represent the sub-surface remains of a recently removed field boundary (Mr. D. Harrison, *pers comm.*). The only feature of any possible antiquity identified was an undated pit, cut [103]. Pit cut [103] was, however, observed within a highly plough disturbed area of the evaluation trench, and at this stage must be interpreted with caution. If this feature does indeed represent the prehistoric sub-surface archaeological horizon, then it might be extrapolated that any archaeological features in the southern half of the proposed extraction area will have been severely damaged by plough truncation (with a better chance for the survival of archaeological deposits towards the low-lying north of the site). This would vastly reduce their potential for providing secure stratigraphic, artefactual and environmental data.

The targeted evaluation failed to relocate the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark originally identified in 1975 (Higham and Jones, 1975), despite using the evaluation contingency as requested by CCCHES (Parsons 2006). There are three reasons why the targeted evaluation might have failed to locate the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark: either it has originally been poorly located, has been completely truncated away by ploughing, or has been wrongly identified as an archaeological feature.

A potentially similar set of preservation conditions exists 2km to the west of High House at New Cowper Quarry. It is worth noting that at New Cowper Quarry, the excavation of severely plough truncated sub-surface archaeological features has produced some excellent results (Davies, forthcoming), and it is with a consideration of this potential that future planning decisions should proceed.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to offer thanks to Peter Stephenson of Stephenson Halliday for commissioning the project. Thanks are also extended to Davey Harrison (Harrison Ltd.) for providing access to his land, for his machine operation, and for his kind assistance throughout the fieldwork.

North Pennines Archaeology would also like to extend their thanks to Jo Mackintosh of the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER) and Jeremy Parsons, Assistant Archaeologist, Cumbria County Council, for their help during this project.

The targeted evaluation was directed by Gareth Davies. The fieldwork was carried out by Gareth Davies, Mark Dodd, Kevin Mounsey and Jennifer Kinsman. Additional fieldwork and metal detecting was kindly undertaken by Alan James. Appendix 1 was compiled by Nicola Gaskell. Initial digitisation of the trench plan was undertaken by Mark Dodd. Artefact processing was undertaken by Kevin Mounsey. Environmental processing and analysis and quantification of the artefact assemblage was undertaken by Patricia Crompton. The report was written by Gareth Davies. The project was overseen by Frank Giecco, Technical Director for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Matthew Town.

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

- 1.1 In March 2006, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd, commissioned by Stephenson Halliday, on behalf of Harrison Ltd, undertook a targeted archaeological field evaluation on land at High House Quarry, Westnewton, Wigton, a site approximately 9.75ha in area.
- 1.2 The site is located at NY 132 479 (Figure 1). The site at High House is the subject of a proposed planning application for mineral extraction. An archaeological desk-based assessment (Davies, 2006) has shown that the proposed scheme affects an area considered to have a very high archaeological potential. Because of the site's archaeological potential, Jeremy Parsons, the Assistant Archaeologist at Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES), advised that the applicant provide additional information concerning the character, condition, and significance of an area considered to have the highest archaeological potential on the proposed site, based on the aerial photographic evidence (see Fig. 1 and Fig.2).
- 1.3 The proposed extraction area is situated within the modern civil parish of Holm St Cuthbert, east of Silloth. This area falls within the North Cumbrian Plain; a relatively low lying area (below c. 200m AOD) located to the north and west of the Lake District Massif.
- 1.4 The evaluation area is within a landscape zone known as the Abbeytown Ridge. The Abbeytown Ridge is a relatively narrow tract of land stretching from Salta Moss at the western extent of the north-west Cumbrian coastal plain, to Wedholme Flow, some 20km to the north-east. The Abbeytown Ridge reaches heights of c.40m AOD and forms a significant topographic feature, defining the southern boundary of the Solway Plain (Hodgkinson *et al* 2000).
- 1.5 The proposed extraction area is an undulating area of low ridges, and is currently used as predominantly pasture, with some arable. The land immediately south of the evaluation area is dominated by pasture. This is typical of the Abbeytown Ridge, where the land-use is dominated by pasture but includes significant elements of arable. The land-use has not changed significantly since 1997 when much of the area was surveyed as part of the English Heritage funded North West Wetlands Survey (Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 85).
- 1.6 The solid geology underlying the evaluation area consists of Triassic Sherwood Sandstone, with Triassic Mudstone present to the north (Dunham 1969). The solid geology is masked by a drift geology of Devensian tills of the Clifton and Brickfield Associations. The predominating Clifton soil type is seasonally waterlogged (Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 85).
- 1.7 This targeted evaluation report provides the additional information required by CCCHES concerning the *character*, *condition*, and *significance* of the archaeological remains at High House Quarry.

## 2 Aims And Methodology

### 2.1 Project Design

2.1.1 A project design was prepared in response to a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service for an archaeological field evaluation. This included a detailed specification of works to be carried out, which consisted of the excavation of a trial trench and a programme of post excavation and reporting. The post excavation reporting was required to include specific recommendations on the potential for the further study of the environmental data (including pollen, plant macrofossils and mollusca remains), faunal remains and soil micromorphology from the site. These recommendations form Section 5 of this report.

### 2.2 Desk-Based Assessment

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment was not required as part of this targeted archaeological evaluation. It is recommended that this targeted evaluation report should be read in conjunction with North Pennines Archaeology client report CP/215/05A (Davies, G 2006, Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Walkover and Geophysical Survey for a Proposed Quarry Extension at High-House Quarry, Westnewton). For convenience, a brief summary of this desk-based assessment is provided as Section 3 of this report.

### 2.3 Visual Site Inspection

2.3.1 A visual site inspection was undertaken prior to the commencement of fieldwork which found neither hazards to health or safety nor any constraints to undertaking fieldwork. The landowner, Mr. D. Harrison, was present during the machine excavation of the evaluation trench.

2.3.2 The walkover survey undertaken as part of the above mentioned desk-based assessment identified the evaluation field as a mixture of arable crop (southern half) and pasture (northern half) (Davies 2006). This cropping regime had not changed at the time of the targeted evaluation. The field slopes steeply from south to north.

### 2.4 Field Evaluation

2.4.1 The field evaluation consisted of the excavation of a single linear trial trench, measuring 64m x 1.7m, and positioned to adequately sample the site of a square enclosure identified by aerial photography, and interpreted in 1975 (Higham and Jones 1975). The aerial photograph interpretations located the square enclosure at approximately NY 1312 4797. Deposits and features of archaeological interest identified within the trench were investigated and recorded in order to provide a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing their *character, condition, and significance*.

2.4.2 In summary, the main objectives of the excavation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;

- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover paleoenvironmental material where it survived in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.4.3 The trench was mechanically excavated by a JCB 3CX excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, to the natural substrate. The trench was then manually cleaned and any putative archaeological features were investigated. Archaeological features were recorded using NPA standard *pro-forma* recording sheets utilising guidelines set out in the NPA Excavation Manual (Giecco 2001).

2.4.4 Photography was undertaken using Canon EOS 100 and EOS 300V Single Lens Reflex (SLR) cameras. A photographic record was made using digital photography, 200 ISO Colour Print and Colour Slide film.

2.4.5 The trench was located and surveyed-in using a Trimble 3605 Total Station instrument, and tied in to the Ordnance Survey National grid.

2.4.6 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations (IFA 1994).

## 2.5 *Project Archive*

2.5.1 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 eventually 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 06 HHQ-A.



### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In April 2005, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Stephenson Halliday to undertake an archaeological desk study, walkover survey and pilot geophysical survey in advance of proposed mineral extraction at High House (Davies 2006).
- 3.2 This study involved the examination of all pertinent documents and cartographic sources held in the County Records Office in Carlisle, and the consultation of the Historic Environment Record (HER) of Cumbria County Council based in Kendal. In addition, a number of published sources were consulted to provide background information, including the Cumbria North West Wetland Survey (Hodgkinson *et al* 2000) and several relevant excavation reports.
- 3.3 The desk-based assessment located 25 sites from the HER and 15 NWWS findspots within the assessment area (defined as a 4km rectangle centred on the proposed extraction sites). Within the proposed extraction area at High House, 1 NWWS find was located. The HER also listed 3 aerial photograph ‘sites’ that, although not focussing on the proposed extraction area, do include it in their coverage. The relevant sites are listed below:

HER 3243	Tarns Field System, Settlement, Holm Abbey	Cropmark	Unknown	E312600, N547600
HER 3244	Hards Quarry Field System, Holm Abbey	Cropmark	Unknown	E312700, N547400
HER 3245	Hards Quarry Field System	Cropmark	Unknown	E312900, N547200
NWWS CU5	Single piece of worked flint	Neolithic/Bronze Age		NY 1330, 4802

**Table 1: HER and NWWS sites from High House Quarry**

- 3.4 As Table 1 above shows, a number of cropmark features are located in the proposed extraction area. These features, of probable prehistoric date, were originally identified by aerial photography in the 1970’s (Higham and Jones 1975, see Figs 1 and 2). The morphology of some of these field systems and enclosures is similar to prehistoric enclosures identified by Bewley (1994) and attributed to the later prehistoric period. However, excavations in 1998 by the Carlisle Archaeological Unit at Scotby Road, Durranshill, Carlisle (McCarthy, unpublished), and 2005 by North Pennines Archaeology at New Cowper Farm (Davies, forthcoming) have suggested that this type of enclosure could actually date to the Bronze Age or Neolithic periods.

- 3.5 A walkover survey carried out as part of the desk-based assessment, mostly over fields presently in use as pasture, identified no archaeological features (Davies 2006).
- 3.6 A pilot geophysical survey in the south of High House Quarry experimented with a range of mapping techniques, but had limited success. An area of active magnetic response was located corresponding to areas where cropmarks had previously been identified in the adjacent Overby Quarry (Bartlett, in Davies 2006, 30-33).
- 3.7 The results of the desk-based assessment (Davies 2006) indicated that the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains dating to the Roman, early medieval and medieval periods to be located within the proposed extraction area was low, although some prehistoric activity may have continued into the Romano-British period.
- 3.8 The results of the desk-based assessment (Davies 2006) indicated that the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains dating to the prehistoric period was extremely high. As detailed above, existing evidence within the proposed extraction area includes a single piece of Neolithic/Bronze Age worked flint recovered during the North West Wetland Survey, and numerous cropmark features throughout the proposed extraction area. These undated cropmarks seem to represent the multi-phase remains of fields, settlement foci and possibly ritual sites dating to the prehistoric period. Furthermore, the morphology of recently excavated features at New Cowper Farm, two kilometres to the west of High House quarry, suggests that some of the cropmark features may be as early as Neolithic or Bronze Age in date (Davies, forthcoming). Suitable photographs for further reinterpretation of the cropmark features were absent from the High House extraction area.

## 4 RESULTS

- 4.1 The evaluation trench was 1.7m wide and 64m long, and was orientated north-south (Fig 2). The trench was positioned over a marked topographic feature. The southern 25m of the trench was situated on a flattened plateau that formed a 'table-like' - almost terraced feature (c. 70m east-west by 70m north-south) - at the centre-north of the evaluated field. This feature was lower lying (c.45m AoD) than the southern extent of the evaluated field. The northern 39m of the trench was situated on a steep slope that drops from north to south towards lower lying land beyond the northern extent of the evaluation field.
- 4.2 The northern extent of the evaluation trench was located in correspondence with the trench location as agreed in the project design (Davies 2006b). The southern extent of the evaluation trench was extended 33m southwards utilising the evaluation contingency (as recommended in the CCCHES brief, Parsons 2006) to better sample the 'table-like' plateau feature. This was because it was felt that this area would be the most likely site of the 'square enclosure' identified by aerial photography, and interpreted in 1975 (Higham and Jones 1975).
- 4.3 The trench was opened by a mechanical excavator to a maximum depth of 0.55m (northern extent of the trench), and a minimum depth of 0.4m (southern extent of the trench), exposing the natural substrate. The natural geology [102], was a mixture of a light grey-yellow to mid-light brown-orange sand, with occasional protrusions of underlying gravel. The natural sand was coarse-grained towards the southern extent of the evaluation trench (particularly at the brow of the hill, c.25m north of the southern extent of the trench, where erosion of deposits had most fully exposed the underlying gravel), and graded to a very fine sand towards the northern (downhill) extent of the trench (see Plates 1 and 2).
- 4.4 Following machine excavation, the trench was fully hand-cleaned and a number of potential archaeological features were observed cutting into the natural geology, [102] (Fig. 3). The features were then investigated and recorded. They are now described from south to north.
- 4.5 A number of plough scars were observed truncating into the natural substrate and cutting across the contour of the field in a north-east to south-west direction. The plough scars were most prominent towards the southern extent of the evaluation trench where ploughsoil coverage was shallow (min. 0.4m deep), (see Plate 1 and Fig 3). Where the plough scars were most prominent (c.9m north of the southern extent of the evaluation trench), they were investigated, and found to be on average 0.2m wide, with V-shaped profiles that truncated into the natural geology by up to 0.05m. The fills of the plough scars were of an identical soil matrix to the topsoil [100], a friable mid-dark brown sandy silt containing rounded and sub-rounded stones (<0.04m in diameter). No plough marks were observed extending further north than 34m north of the southern extent of the evaluation trench, as the ploughsoil coverage was much deeper north of this point (see Plates 2 and 6).
- 4.6 Immediately north of the main area of plough scarring [112], half of a presumably circular soil feature was observed extending into and beyond the western extent of the evaluation trench (Plate 3). Upon excavation this feature was found to have an observed width (north-south) of 1.3m, a depth of 0.3m, moderately sloping sides and a U-shaped

base (see Fig 3). The circular feature contained two distinct fills, [104] and [105] (see Plate 4). The primary fill [104], a friable mid-light orange-brown silty sand, 0.15m deep, was highly demineralised and contained very occasional sub-rounded stones (<0.01m in diameter). Fill [104] is best interpreted as a naturally silted deposit accumulating soon after the creation of the circular cut feature. No charcoal or environmental remains were obviously apparent within fill [104], but the deposit was environmentally sampled (see Section 5 below). Overlying fill [104] was a secondary fill, [105]. Fill [105], also 0.15m deep, was a friable mid-dark grey-brown silty sand, containing very occasional sub-rounded stones (<0.01m in diameter). Fill [105] is best interpreted as a naturally silted fill derived from the contemporary topsoil.

- 4.7 Cut [103] is best interpreted as a pit of unknown function. The date of the pit is also unknown, as no dateable artefacts were retrieved from either fill [104] or [105]. Despite this, the demineralised nature of fill [104] may indicate an early, perhaps even prehistoric, date for the infilling of the feature.
- 4.8 Due to the presence of heavy plough scarring [112] to the south and north of pit [103], the feature was evidently heavily disturbed, and the potential for the survival of any securely stratified material within any of its fill must be considered to be very low. Because of the presence of the plough scars [112], there is also a small possibility that cut [103] is actually not a pit cut, but a remnant of plough truncation; with repeated ploughing perhaps having dragged a silty soil over a hollow in the natural substrate [102]. This latter interpretation, however, is regarded as less likely.
- 4.9 Three and a half metres north of pit cut [103], three east-west aligned linear soil features were observed running across the evaluation trench and beyond its eastern and western limits (Plate 2). Upon excavation these features were found to be the heavily plough truncated remains of three east-west aligned cut features representing either plough scars or ditches (see Plate 5 and Fig 3).
- 4.10 The southernmost of the three east-west aligned cuts, [106] was 0.45m wide and 0.1m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a U-shaped base. Cut [106] contained a single fill, [107]. Fill [107], 0.1m in depth, was a friable mid-dark grey brown sandy silt, containing occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (<0.03m in diameter). Fill [107] is best interpreted as a naturally accumulated deposit and was very similar in character to the modern topsoil, [100]. Cut [106] is best interpreted as either a ditched field boundary feature or, less likely, a remnant of plough related activity of unknown, but probably modern, date. Fill [107] produced no dateable artefacts.
- 4.11 Immediately north of cut [106] was east-west aligned cut, [108]. Cut [108] was 0.45m wide and 0.2m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a steep U-shaped base. Cut [108] contained a single fill, [109]. Fill [109], 0.2m in depth, was a friable mid-dark grey brown sandy silt, containing occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (<0.03m in diameter). Fill [109] is best interpreted as a naturally accumulated deposit and was very similar in character to the modern topsoil, [100]. Cut [108] is best interpreted as shallow ditched field boundary feature. Fill [109] produced no dateable artefacts, but the recovery of black plastic agricultural packaging from the upper portion of the fill strongly suggests a modern date for this feature.

- 4.12 Immediately north of cut [108] was east-west aligned cut, [110]. Cut [110] was 0.2m wide and 0.18m deep, with steeply sloping sides and an irregular steep U-shaped base. Cut [110] contained a single fill, [111]. Fill [111], 0.18m in depth, was a friable mid-dark grey brown sandy silt, containing occasional rounded and sub-rounded stones (<0.03m in diameter). Fill [111] is best interpreted as a naturally accumulated deposit and was very similar in character to the modern topsoil, [100]. Cut [110] is best interpreted as a remnant of plough related activity of unknown, but probably modern, date. Fill [110] produced no dateable artefacts.
- 4.13 As Plate 2 demonstrates, east-west aligned cuts [106], [108] and [110] were situated on the crest of a hill, forming a headland at the northern extent of the flattish area of the evaluated field. North of this point the field drops steeply to the north. Cuts [106] and [110] are therefore perhaps most obviously interpretable as the sub-surface remains left by the turning circle of heavy agricultural equipment such as a combine harvester. Cut [108], however, had a profile that was more indicative of ditched field boundary feature. It is interesting to note that the landowner recalls the existence of an east-west aligned gorse hedge/dyke, now removed, that once subdivided the evaluation field at a location corresponding to cut [108] (Mr. D. Harrison, *pers. comm.*). Cut [108] is therefore perhaps best interpreted as the sub-surface remains of this field boundary feature. Finally, due to their close spatial association, it remains a possibility that all three cuts ([106], [108] and [110]) represent the cutting and re-cutting of this field boundary feature.
- 4.14 North of east-west aligned cut [110] no further archaeological features were observed. Two heavily disturbed areas of natural geology were identified (see Fig.3), but upon investigation were found to represent a natural (possibly modern) solution channel (see Plate 6), and an area of bioturbation (possibly an area of animal burrowing).
- 4.15 At the northern extent of the evaluation trench, the natural substrate was overlain by a friable mid-dark red-brown silty-sand colluvial subsoil deposit [113]/[101] (see Fig. 3). Colluvial subsoil [113]/[101] was a maximum of 0.2m in depth and was observed over a north-south extent of c.4m.
- 4.16 Colluvial subsoil [113]/[101] was overlain by the topsoil/ploughsoil, [100]. Topsoil/ploughsoil [100], a friable mid-dark grey brown sandy-silt was a maximum of 0.4m in depth, and covered the entire extent of the evaluation trench. Using a metal detector, a small number of probably modern iron objects were recovered from topsoil/ploughsoil [100] (see Section 5 below).

## 5 THE FINDS

### 5.1 Environmental Analysis by Patricia Crompton

5.1.1 A single environmental sample was taken from fill [104]. The whole earth sample was selected for processing in order to assess its environmental potential. This will help provide further information as to the depositional processes involved in its formation.

5.1.2 *Methodology*: once the sample had been removed from the ground, the whole earth sample was broken down and split into its various different components. This was achieved by a combination of water washing and flotation. Flotation separates the organic, floating fraction of the sample from the heavier sand, silt and, produces a ‘flot’ and a ‘residue’ for examination. The residue may contain artefacts, whilst the flot will contain organic material such as plant matter, fine bones, cloth, leather and insect remains. A rapid scan at this stage will allow further recommendations to be made by entomologists or palaeobotanists as to the potential for further study.

5.1.3 *Results*: the recovered remains were then assessed for content. The make-up of the processed sample is give below :

SAMPLE NUMBER	CONTEXT NUMBER	SAMPLE SIZE (litres)	FLOT SIZE (cm <sup>3</sup> )	RETENT SIZE (cm <sup>3</sup> )
1	104	8	50	500

#### *Contents of flot and retent residues from samples.*

Context	Context type	Sample number	RETENT FRACTION											LIGHT FRACTION										
			Root material	Charred wood	Waterlogged wood	Burnt bone	Bone	Gravel	Stones	Insects	Charred wood	Root material	Charred wheat	Charred oats	Charred barley	Pale persicaria	Chenopodium	Raspberry	Ranunculus	Docks	Stellaria media	Spergula arvensis	Woody plant parts	
104	Fill	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	

**Key to tables:** Fill = pit fill. Contents assessed by scale of richness 0 to 3. 0 = not present, 1 = present, 2 = common, 3 = abundant.

5.1.4 *Sample 1 (Context 104)*: This sample was from the fill of a pit. The matrix was a loosely compacted mid to dark orangey brown silty sand. The retent was made up of gritty gravel with occasional stones with no organic matter present. The flot contained no charred grain and only minimal seeds such as *Chenopodium* and dock, both common weeds. There was a lot of root material present.

5.1.5 *Discussion, Conclusion and recommendations*: No charred grain was recovered from the sample, neither were there any seeds recovered that could be used to usefully reconstruct the past environment. There is no potential for further information being gained from the examination of this material and so it is recommended that no further work be done.

5.1.6 *Vertebrate Remains:* No bone remains were recovered from the site, indicating that either conditions were poor for its preservation or that none was deposited. No burnt bone was recovered. .

5.1.7 *Mollusc Remains:* No mollusc remains were recovered from the site.

5.2 *Metal Detected Finds.*

5.2.1 During the targeted evaluation, all spoil and archaeological horizons were fully metal detected. Nine Iron items, all thought to represent modern agricultural related items, were recovered, weighing a total of 0.304kg. The artefacts have been archived.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The targeted evaluation trench at High House Quarry was positioned to adequately sample the site of a square enclosure identified by aerial photography (Higham and Jones 1975) and deemed to be a feature of ‘particular archaeological interest’ (Parsons 2006).
- 6.2 The targeted evaluation trench at High House Quarry successfully located four archaeological features. East west aligned cuts [106], [108], [110] are all probably modern features, and cut [108] may in fact represent the sub-surface remains of a recently removed field boundary (Mr. D. Harrison, pers comm.). The only feature of any possible antiquity to be identified was an undated pit, cut [103]. Pit cut [103] was, however, observed within a highly plough disturbed area of the evaluation trench, and at this stage must be interpreted with caution.
- 6.3 The targeted evaluation failed to relocate the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark originally identified in 1975 (Higham and Jones, 1975), despite using the evaluation contingency as requested by CCCHES (Parsons 2006). The area of the evaluation trench in which cuts [106], [108], [110] were located was felt to be topographically the most suitable area for the location of the northern side of the ‘square enclosure’, yet no evidence for the existence of an east-west aligned ditched boundary feature of prehistoric date was located at this point. There remains a small possibility that the modern ditch digging and ploughing represented by cuts [106], [108], [110] had fully truncated any prehistoric cut features, but this seems unlikely.
- 6.4 There are three reasons why the targeted evaluation might have failed to locate the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark originally identified in 1975 (Higham and Jones, 1975).
- 6.5 Firstly, the cropmark features may have originally been poorly transcribed, and may have subsequently been plotted too far to the north (see Fig. 2). This seems plausible given the mapping scale that Higham and Jones (1975) were working at (see Fig. 1).
- 6.6 Secondly, the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark may have been completely truncated away by ploughing between 1975 and the present day. Although recent plough truncation was evident in the southern half of the targeted evaluation trench, this seems unlikely for a number of reasons. The cropmark feature plotted in 1975 had an estimated width of c.5m suggesting a significant sub-surface feature, and it is improbable that plough truncation would have dispersed all of the fill of a feature this size. In addition, no items of material culture, such as pottery or flint artefacts, that might represent a plough-dispersed fill, were located in the topsoil or subsoil during the course of this targeted evaluation. This suggested that no significant sub-surface archaeological feature had recently been truncated away within the vicinity of the evaluation trench.
- 6.7 Thirdly, and perhaps most controversially, it is possible that the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark originally identified in 1975 has been wrongly identified as an archaeological feature. On the evidence of this targeted evaluation, this explanation seems plausible. However, whatever this feature is, it *is* clearly visible as a cropmark feature in the 1975 aerial photographs (Davies 2006) and must be explained in some way. An initial consideration does not easily match this ‘square’ shape to observed changes in the natural geology.



- 6.8 In conclusion, on the evidence of this targeted evaluation, the ‘square enclosure’ cropmark originally identified in 1975 has either not been successfully located, has been completely truncated away by ploughing, or has been wrongly identified as an archaeological feature. Thus, although the Abbeytown Ridge (including the proposed extraction area at High House Quarry) is undoubtedly the site of a prehistoric landscape of regional or national significance (Davies 2006), a seemingly significant element of this landscape was not easily located during this targeted work.
- 6.9 Of the small number of sub-surface archaeological remains identified at the High House Quarry proposed extraction area, only a single pit (**I103**) was of potential prehistoric date. If this feature does indeed represent the prehistoric sub-surface archaeological horizon, then it might be extrapolated that any archaeological features in the southern half of the proposed extraction area will have been severely damaged by plough truncation (with a better chance for the survival of archaeological deposits towards the low-lying north of the site). This would vastly reduce their potential for providing secure stratigraphic, artefactual and environmental data. However, only a very small sample of the potential archaeological evidence has been considered during this targeted evaluation. A potentially similar set of preservation conditions exists 2km to the west of High House at New Cowper Quarry and it is worth noting that at New Cowper Quarry, the excavation of severely plough truncated sub-surface archaeological features has produced some excellent results (Davies, forthcoming). It is with a consideration of this potential that future planning decisions at High House quarry should proceed.

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**8 APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF CONTEXTS**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
100	Layer	Topsoil
101	Layer	Subsoil
102	Layer	Natural
103	Cut	Pit
104	Fill	Fill of [103]
105	Fill	Fill of [103]
106	Cut	East-West aligned Linear
107	Fill	Fill of [106]
108	Cut	East-West aligned Linear
109	Fill	Fill of [108]
110	Cut	East-West aligned Linear
111	Fill	Fill of [110]
112	Deposit	Plough Scars
113	Deposit	Colluvium at north extent of trench

*Table 2: Index of Contexts*

## **9 APPENDIX 2 – FIGURES AND PLATES**