

THE FORMER STEAM MUSEUM AND FOUNDRY, CASTLEGATE PENRITH, CUMBRIA



WATCHING BRIEF REPORT
CP415
20/01/2010

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This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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SUMMARY

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd were commissioned by Barry Turner, on behalf of Atkinson Building Contractors, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to the development of nine apartments at the Former Steam Museum and Foundry, Castlegate, Penrith, Cumbria (NGR NY 51335 29975). North Pennines Archaeology undertook a desk-based assessment in 2006 in order to establish the scope of the archaeological work required to fulfil the archaeological conditions of the planning decision. The report identified the potential for historic structures and features to survive within the development site, which were likely to be impacted upon by the proposed development, most notably possible remains of the medieval and early post-medieval town of Penrith. As a result, the Cumbria County Council's Historic Environment Service granted planning consent for the development (Planning App No: 3/02/0610), on the condition that an Archaeological Watching Brief be undertaken during the course of the ground works of the development. The watching brief was required as the site lies within an area considered to have formed part of the medieval and early post-medieval town of Penrith, as well as being located adjacent to the remains of the 14th century castle.

The Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken over three days on the 7th and 8th of October and 13th October 2009. The watching brief monitored the excavation of ground to the west of the site for landscaping as well as the excavation of service trenches. No archaeological remains were noted during excavation.

As this archaeological watching brief was conducted as part of a recommendation to observe groundworks in association with the construction of new apartments, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the high archaeological potential of the area, it is recommended that any future work be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Barry Turner of Atkinson Building Contractors, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to the groundworks contractor, and all staff at the Former Steam Museum and Foundry, for their help during this project.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Jocelyn Strickland and Fiona Wooler. The report was written by Jocelyn Strickland. The project was managed by Martin Railton, Project Manager for NPA Ltd, who also edited the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In July 2006, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by Barry Turner, Atkinson Building Contractors, to maintain an archaeological watching brief at the Former Steam Museum and Foundry, Castlegate, Penrith, Cumbria (NGR NY 51335 29975; Figure 1), during groundworks associated with the erection of nine apartments on the site. The proposed works lie within an area considered to have formed part of the medieval and early post-medieval town of Penrith and is also adjacent to the remains of the 14th century castle. A previous desk-based assessment had also been produced (Sowerby 2006a) which identified the potential for a number of historic structures and features within the development area that were likely to be impacted by the proposed development. As a result, Cumbria County Council's Historic Environment Service requested that all ground reduction be subject to a programme of archaeological observation and investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 All groundworks associated with the erection of nine apartments at the Former Steam Museum and Foundry had to be excavated under full archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008), and were consistent with the specification provided by Matt Town (Town 2006) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the monitoring works undertaken on-site, the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Atkinson Building Contractors, for an archaeological watching brief of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Cumbria County Council's Historic Environment Service, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 The works involved a structured watching brief to observe, record and excavate any archaeological deposits from the development site. A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, on a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IfA 2008).

2.2.2 The aims and principal methodology of the watching brief can be summarised as follows:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
- to carry out further excavation and recording work in adequate time, if intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project;
- to accurately tie the area watched by the archaeologist into the National Grid at an appropriate scale, with any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
- to sample environmental deposits encountered as required, in line with English Heritage (2002a) guidelines;
- to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful of dating purposes;

- to produce a site archive in accordance with MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and MoRPHE standards (English Heritage 2006).

2.2.3 An area of approximately 600 square meters was stripped of soil (topsoil and subsoil). Five foundation trenches were excavated, two in the middle and three in the southern aspect of the site. One trench at the south side of the site was aligned north/south with the remaining four trenches aligned east/west. The foundation trenches were stripped of topsoil and overburden to the required formation levels. Archaeological monitoring and supervision of groundworks associated with the stripping commenced on October 7, 2009. A summary of the findings of the watching brief is included within this report.

2.3 THE ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2007). The archive will be deposited within Penrith Museum, with copies of the report being deposited with the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record (CCCHES) Historic Environment Record, at Kendal, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA09, CP 415/09.

2.3.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Cumbria County Council, support the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 Penrith is located at an important junction, where the main east-west and north-south routes meet. The town lies on the edge of the Eden Valley between the Eamont and Petteril Rivers, at approximately 13m AOD.
- 3.1.2 The geology of the Eden Valley is of New Red Sandstone, mostly comprising of Lower Permian basalt, breccias, sandstones and mudstones, with a narrow band of Upper Permian and Triassic sandstones. Penrith is located close to the western edge of the New Red Sandstones with Carboniferous Limestone of the Dinantian series to the west. The drift geology of Penrith is dominated by glacial deposits in the form of drumlins that were formed from ice moving north-northwest down what is now the Eden Valley (Moseley 1978).
- 3.1.3 The Former Steam Museum and Foundry site is located immediately beyond the southern extent of the historic core of Penrith; c. 120 metres southeast of Penrith railway station, and c. 100 metres to the east of the remains of Penrith Castle. The site is located on Castlegate that runs from the Corn Market in the centre of Penrith to the railway station.

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area.
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric (up to 43 AD):* the earliest evidence of activity within the immediate vicinity of the site boundary was a possible cairn of Bronze Age date, recorded in the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record (HER 1173) as well as a battleaxe findspot (HER 13877). Within a one kilometre radius of the site boundary there was only one single find dating the Iron Age: a Roman gold consular coin of Censorinus (HER 6845) dated to 90 BC.
- 3.2.3 *Roman (73-410 AD):* the Roman occupation of northwest England began in the 70s and 80s AD with the campaigns of Agricola. During the Roman period there was a heavy military presence in Cumbria. Hadrian's Wall was built to defend the northern limit of the Roman empire and a network of military roads, forts and settlements soon sprung up around the focus of Hadrian's Wall (Breeze and Dobson 1976).

- 3.2.4 There are two known Roman forts in close proximity to Penrith. Five miles north of Penrith is the fort and associated *vicus* at Old Penrith, *Voreda*. This fort was occupied from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD (English Heritage 2002b). Also occupied during the same time period was the Roman fort at Brougham (*Brocavum*), to the southeast of Penrith. The function of this fort was to guard the primary fording point on the Eamont River. It is thought that a large civilian community lived in the vicinity of this fort (*ibid*).
- 3.2.5 Marked on Ordnance Survey Maps is the course of the Roman Road, that runs from Brougham Fort, linking Brougham to Old Penrith, through Carleton, heading north (English Heritage 2002b). Despite the proximity of Penrith to two important Roman forts, there is no known evidence of Roman settlement in the town itself.
- 3.2.6 A coin of Faustina, wife of Marcus Aurelius Antonius (HER 13877) was found within a one kilometre search radius around the site boundary.
- 3.2.7 **Early Medieval (410 AD-1066 AD):** once the Roman administration ended in 410 AD, the tribal identities of the native Britons gradually reasserted themselves over their pre-Roman territories. Penrith is situated within the early medieval tribal territory of Rheged. The power of Rheged decreased after the death of Urien in the later 6th century and in the 7th century it was absorbed by the expanding Anglian kingdom of Northumbria. In the late 8th century Cumbria was annexed from Northumbria by the British kingdom of Strathclyde that ruled throughout the 9th and 10th centuries by British kings who were subject to the kings of Strathclyde and Scotland (Clarke and Chapman 2000).
- 3.2.8 The name Penrith itself is thought to be of Britannic origin from *pen* meaning Head, chief, or top, and *riton* meaning stream or ford (Dickens 1942). Older documentary evidence suggests that Penrith is derived for the Celtic word *pen* meaning hill and *rhudd* meaning red (Lee 1998).
- 3.2.9 Evidence of a pre-Norman settlement is found within the grounds of St. Andrew's Church. Two monuments, dating to the 10th century are further confirmation of a pre-Norman settlement at Penrith. Located within St. Andrew's churchyard are the Giant's Thumb High Cross (HER 950) and the Giant's Grave (HER 16838). The Giant's Thumb consists of a single pillar of stone and the Giant's Grave is made up of two large pillars, each of one stone that are set apart from each other. The area between the two stones is partially enclosed by four large semicircular stones. It is thought that these monuments are not in their original location, but were moved to the churchyard when the church was renovated in 1720 (English Heritage 2002b). These monuments are a good example of 10th century art and the fact

that they were found in the area of Penrith suggests that the local area may have been a centre of aristocratic habitation during this period (*ibid*).

- 3.2.10 There is a single known find dating to the early medieval period from the one kilometre radius around the Former Steam Museum and Foundry site. This is a Scandinavian style thistle brooch (HER 957).
- 3.2.11 **Medieval (1066 AD-1485 AD):** the earliest reference to Penrith in the documentary record is in the 1167 Pipe Rolls under the pleas of Alan de Nevill of the forest for the fine of ten shillings for 'Penred Regis' thought to be for forest offences. In 1185 Penrith is again mentioned when the Sheriff paid two marks for a '*perambulation of its pastures*' (Jones undated).
- 3.2.12 In 1222, Henry III granted a market charter to Penrith. This gave Penrith the right to hold a market and fair (Jones Undated). The following year an order was made to supply timber to the people who wished to build new burgages, and for the construction of shops and stalls. The issue of these Royal grants implies that Penrith was growing in importance (Winchester 1979).
- 3.2.13 Bishop Strickland is responsible for bringing a fresh supply of water to the town by diverting the Petteril River. Strickland is also generally thought responsible for the construction of the tower-house that formed the core of Penrith Castle, although this has been disputed (Perriam and Robinson 1998).
- 3.2.14 Many historians have seen Penrith Castle as owing its existence to Bishop Strickland is due to Strickland being granted a license in 1397 to 'crenallate' a building in Penrith. This has often been interpreted as referring to Bishop's Tower that stood at the western corner of the castle (Clarke and Chapman 2000). However, a more recent view is that Hutton Hall (HER 5419) is a more likely candidate for this crenallation, and that Penrith Castle was built by Ralph Neville, the first Earl of Westmorland, who was granted the manor of Penrith in 1396 (*ibid*).
- 3.2.15 Penrith Castle, situated on the high ground 70 metres west of the Former Steam Museum and Foundry site, is presently an extensive sandstone ruin dating primarily to the late 14th/early 15th centuries. This ruin is comprised of a curtain wall, 1.52 metres thick that encloses a courtyard 40 metres square. Various buildings, including a garderobe turret, project from the western wall. The castle would originally have comprised a walled enclosure probably with timber buildings around a central courtyard with a tower (the Strickland tower) guarding the northern entrance (Jackson 1990).
- 3.2.16 Penrith Castle was remodeled in the early 15th century. At this time a guard tower on the western wall was added that provided a new entrance. An

outer gatehouse was added to this in 1471 when more buildings were erected. The Strickland Tower collapsed between 1739-78 and only low restored walls survive (*ibid*). By the 16th century Penrith Castle was in a state of ruin and being used as a source of building material. A 1565 survey records the buildings decayed and the outer gateway collapsed. However, the earliest depiction of the castle, by Gregory King (1665), shows the castle standing to its fullest extent (sited in Perriam and Robinson 1998 and Summerson *et al.* 1998). In 1648 the Castle was made headquarters for a month for soldiers during the Civil War, after this date the castle was dismantled (Jackson 1990).

- 3.2.17 In 1840-45 the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway bought the Castle. It was then acquired by Penrith urban Council in 1913 and was presented to the Ministry of Works, now English Heritage, in 1914, who excavated and consolidated the ruins in 1928 (*ibid*).
- 3.2.18 ***Post-medieval and Modern (1485 to present):*** the agricultural engineering firm of Stalker Bros. was founded in 1851 by Jonathan Stalker and occupied 23-35 Castlegate, Penrith (Kelly 1858). The company primarily operated as a master blacksmith, designing and constructing agricultural equipment. The implements produced were used on farms throughout Cumbria.
- 3.2.19 The introduction of the threshing machine irrevocably changed farming. This type of agricultural practice had been introduced to northwest England in the late 1700s. It is thought that Stalker Bros. were building threshing machines by 1881, which is relatively late, however the rural nature of Cumbria could have had some bearing on this (Sowerby 2006a).
- 3.2.20 The two sons of Jonathan Stalker, one of which was also named Jonathan, inherited the business in 1889 and subsequently extended the property, becoming millwrights, boiler and implement makers, and iron and brass founders as well as agricultural engineers. The company had to adapt to the changing needs of agriculture and witnessed the passing of the age of steam. By 1969, the company was owned by George Stalker and later by his son Paul Stalker who sold the business to Tommy Cragg and Don Cuttris of Cragg and Cuttris Haulage, who, in 1974, turned the site into a working museum dedicated to preserving the age of steam (Boyed 1998).
- 3.2.21 Penrith Steam Museum ran as a private museum dedicated to the preservation of steam powered vehicles. A number of rare traction engines formed part of the Penrith Steam Museum collection that included a 1920 Fowler 5NHP Steam Tractor known as 'Earl Douglas.' This engine was originally worked in the Cumbria area and was possibly serviced by Stalker Bros. A Foden HH type steam powered truck, which was only one of two left in the world was also part of the collection. The most important vehicle

owned by the museum was a Marshall 8HP Traction Engine called '*The Brigadier*.' This engine was the last of the production line before the Marshall Works closed (Sowerby 2006a).

- 3.2.22 The museum ran until 1994 when the buildings and contents were sold off at public auction (*ibid*).

3.3 PREVIOUS WORK

- 3.3.1 Numerous works excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate vicinity to the Former Steam Museum and Foundry, including several works at Penrith Castle, adjacent to the site boundary.
- 3.3.2 Penrith Castle was presented to the Ministry of Works, now English Heritage, in 1914. In 1928 the remains of the castle were excavated and consolidated by the then Office of Works. The only reference to the work is in an article by F. Hudleston published in Volume 30 (1930) of the *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, where plans of the castle are reproduced (Sowerby 2006a).
- 3.3.3 A small excavation in the present garden of the friarage by Barbara Harbottle identified a brown soil containing medieval pottery and overlying rubble possibly relating to the destruction of the friary at the time of the dissolution.
- 3.3.4 An unpublished excavation on the former site of the Old Grammar School identified a number of undated graves (English Heritage 2002b).
- 3.3.5 In 1990 an excavation was undertaken by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) at the Butter Market that revealed evidence of both medieval and post-medieval activity (Newman *et al.* 2000).
- 3.3.6 A watching brief by LUAU in 1997 monitored the groundworks for new visitor signs at Penrith Castle. No significant archaeological deposits were observed (Sowerby 2006a).
- 3.3.7 In 2000 an archaeological evaluation was undertaken by LUAU on land adjacent to Penrith Station that identified a ditch possibly associated with the castle moat. A subsequent watching brief located a masonry wall in alignment with the retaining wall on the southern side of the Castle moat, raising the possibility that the moat continues to the northwest. No other significant archaeological features were encountered (*ibid*).
- 3.3.8 An archaeological evaluation by Headland Archaeology in 2001 at 23 Stricklandgate recovered the foundations of tenement buildings that had stood on the site until the 1950s (*ibid*).

- 3.3.9 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the former Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Annex Building in 2006 by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd. In total eight trenches were excavated; however, no archaeological features of interest were noted (*ibid*).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring was undertaken over three nonconsecutive days. The first day was on October 7th, 2006. This was followed by further days on October 8th and 13th, 2006.

4.2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

4.2.1 The watching brief covered the controlled stripping of topsoil and subsoil around the site prior to the main excavation of the foundation trenches.

4.2.2 The topsoil was located beneath former concrete floor of modern buildings. The topsoil (**100**) was stripped by a JCB fitted with a ditching bucket. This comprised of a loose red soil, and was present across the site to a depth of c. 10 centimetres. Beneath the topsoil, a layer of pink clay was encountered (**101**), followed by a deposit of loose black earth (**102**) that contained post-medieval brick. This was followed by the natural drift geology (**103**). No archaeological features were noted.



Plate 1: Topsoil (**100**) in the southern half of the site

4.2.3 The deposit of loose black earth (**102**) was located at a depth of c. 30 centimetres and diminished toward the west side of the site, where the natural drift geology (**103**) was dominant.



Plate 2: Trench at southern end of the site, looking west, south-facing section can be seen

- 4.2.4 An electric cable was noted in one of the trenches in the southern aspect of the site (Plate 3) and a disused cable was revealed in the middle of the site. The disused cable in the middle of the site was surrounded by a layer of rubble infill. No archaeological features were noted.



Plate 3: Cables found in trench at southern end of the site

4.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

- 4.4.1 The only archaeological finds retrieved during the excavation of the site were pieces of post-medieval brick, which were discarded on site.
- 4.4.2 No environmental samples were taken during the duration of the watching brief.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The stripping of topsoil and the excavation of foundation trenches was undertaken under archaeological supervision.
- 5.1.2 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits, despite its close proximity to the 14th century Penrith Castle and its location to the historic core of the town.
- 5.1.3 Given the shallow depth of the natural subsoil, it is possible that archaeological features have been truncated by past activity at the site.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 As this watching brief was conducted as a condition of groundworks associated with the erection of nine apartments on the site of the Former Steam Museum and Foundry, no further archaeological work is deemed necessary. However, given the site's location in relation to the medieval and early post-medieval town of Penrith as well as the 14th century castle it is recommended that any work conducted in the future be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Deposit	Layer of Pink Clay
102	Deposit	Loose Black Earth that contained post-medieval slate and modern rubbish
103	Deposit	Natural

Table 1: List of Contexts issued during Watching Brief

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES
