

THE HEMMEL, OLD CASSOP, Co. DURHAM



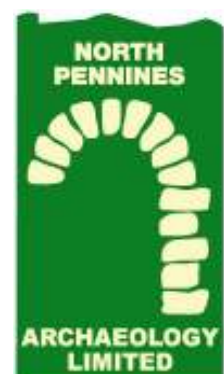
WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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09/11/2010

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Quality Assurance

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 Blakett-Ord Conservation Engineering, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to the installation of new foundations for three masonry piers in the south elevation of The Hemmel at Grange Farm, Old Cassop, Co. Durham (NGR NZ 335 395). This scheme of archaeological works was undertaken at the request of Nick Boldrini, Historic Environment Record Officer, Durham County Council.

The Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken over one day, on the 2nd November 2011. The watching brief monitored the excavation of three holes for the foundations of the reconstructed piers in the south elevation of the building. Holes 1 and 2 revealed no archaeological features or artefacts. Archaeological remains were identified in Hole 3, in the form of a masonry well, with upper courses of brick. This feature appears to relate to the site of a former farmstead, and clearly pre-dated The Hemmel, which is believed to be early 19th century in date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Paul Arkless of Blakett-Ord Conservation Engineering for commissioning the project, and Nick Boldrini, Historic Environment Record Officer, Durham County Council.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to Kevin Dunn and staff of Historic Property Restoration, for their help during the groundworks.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North Pennines Archaeology were commissioned by Blackett-Ord Conservation Engineering to maintain an archaeological watching brief at The Hemmel, Old Cassop, Co. Durham (NGR NZS 335 395; Figure 1), during groundworks associated with the excavation of new foundations for the reconstruction of three piers in the south elevation of the building, as part of the restoration of the structure. The proposed works lie within the immediate vicinity of the site of a former farmstead shown on historical mapping from at least the early 18th century, and potentially within the medieval village of Cassop. As a result, Nick Boldrini, Historic Environment Record Officer, Durham County Council, requested that all ground reduction be subject to a programme of archaeological observation and investigation.
- 1.2 All groundworks associated with the excavation of the new foundations had to be excavated under archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008), and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.3 This report outlines the monitoring works undertaken on-site, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.1.1 The works involved a structured watching brief to observe, record and excavate any archaeological deposits from the 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).

2.1.2 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 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).

2.1.3 Three holes measuring approximately 1.20m by 0.80m and 0.60m deep were excavated for the insertion of new foundations for the reconstruction of the masonry piers in the south elevation of The Hemmel. The excavation of the holes were monitored by an attendant archaeologist.

2.2 THE ARCHIVE

2.2.1 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 an appropriate repository, with copies of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Durham County Council, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA10, CP 1334/10.

2.2.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Durham 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 Old Cassop is a small village located approximately 7km to the south-east of Durham, and 1km to the north-west of Cassop. The village is situated on a hill that rises from Cassop Vale and forms a rough horseshoe shaped bounded by Running Waters at the east and Shadforth in the north (Figure 1). The Hemmel at Grange Farm is located to the east of the small settlement of Old Cassop, detached from the farm, in a field on the north side of the road through the village (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 The Countryside Commission places Durham and its hinterland in a character area referred to as the *Tyne and Wear Lowlands*. This area, centred on the lower valleys of the Tyne and Wear, and bounded on the south and east by the west-facing escarpment of the Magnesian Limestone Plateau and, to the west, by the rising land of the Durham Coalfield Pennine Fringe. The area comprises gently undulating or rolling land, incised by the valleys of the major rivers and their tributaries (Countryside Commission 1998, 65).
- 3.1.3 The undulating land and broad valleys of the Tyne and Wear Lowlands are underlain almost entirely by Coal Measures rocks of Upper Carboniferous age. These rocks consists essentially of a succession of shales and sandstones with numerous coal seams (*ibid*, 66).
- 3.1.4 Presently Old Cassop contains two farms, and houses of varying ages, styles and types. The combination of working farms and houses within a relatively small area gives the village a character that is distinct from many other villages in the area, which have either become largely residential in nature, or have undergone significant expansion in the last century. The Hemmel is located within Old Cassop Conservation Area which encompasses the village together with the fields to the north up to the A181, Durham to Hartlepool road. To the south the Conservation Area boundary is tightly drawn around the back gardens of the village (Durham County Council 2009, 4).

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 In June 2010, NPA Ltd undertook a desk-based assessment, building survey of The Hemmel, and topographical survey of the land around the building, as part of a management plan for the restoration of the traditional farm building (Wooler and Noakes 2010).

- 3.2.2 The historical research has noted that Old Cassop, formerly Cassop, is believed to be medieval in origin, possibly a manor of around 60 acres in the 12th century, and still of the same size by the time of Bishop Hatfield's survey in 1377. At this date there were six tenants who farmed a total of around 330 acres, in addition to the 60 acres of the manor or original holding. A lease document of 1587 again mentions only six tenants, each holding small areas of land. It has been suggested that the original village of Cassop was a small one that may have followed a pattern of expansion in the 12th and 13th centuries, only to contract in the late 14th century. Some of the surrounding land may still have been reserved for the hunting grounds of the Prince Bishops, hence the small land holdings. The original village had a simple plan, still visible today, of a single street with four lanes characteristic of the medieval period. Ridge and furrow earthworks in the fields to the north of the village and close to Chapman Beck, are also possible evidence for medieval activity (Durham County Council 2009, 5).
- 3.2.3 Documentation dating back to the late 18th century was consulted, which provided evidence for a farmstead within the field in which The Hemmel is located. Mid-19th century mapping showed this farmstead to have consisted of two long ranges, orientated east to west, and roughly parallel with each other. The Hemmel appears to have formed part of the north range, which may have also included a barn (with apsidal horse engine house) orientated north to south at the east end of the range. The southern range has been suggested to have contained the farmhouse. George Reed has been named as the owner of this farm, which in the late 18th century was referred to as 'Cassop Farm'. By the end of the 19th century Old Cassop appears to have contracted, with several of the buildings of the farmstead (of which the hemmel was a part), having been demolished. By 1939 the only buildings to have survived was a small building to the west of the site (now gone), and the hemmel which presumably still served a useful function as an animal shelter (Wooler and Noakes 2010).
- 3.2.4 The building survey has revealed that The Hemmel is an example of an open-fronted shelter for cattle, possibly 18th century in date, constructed in the local style using locally-sourced masonry and pantiles (*ibid*).
- 3.2.5 The topographical survey found the remains of a possible building to exist to the south of the site. This potentially relates to a post-medieval farmhouse historically documented to have existed, and subsequently demolished, on the site. Within the centre of the site two terraced areas (EW8 and EW9), appear to have been associated with the farmstead. When the results of the topographical survey were super-imposed on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map, it is clear that many of the earthworks identified relate to the former farmstead on the site (*ibid*).

3.2.6 In the field to the north of the site, there was evidence of medieval activity in the form of ridges and furrows. To the north, two earthworks were observed to enclose the ridge and furrow and potentially represent former field boundaries. The presence of possible medieval activity to the north (in the form of ridge and furrow) suggests that evidence relating to the medieval period may exist within the site on which The Hemmel is located (*ibid*).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring was undertaken in one day, on the 2nd November 2011. The monitoring was undertaken during the excavation by hand of three holes along the line of the south elevation of The Hemmel, in the location of the former foundations, for three piers which are to be reconstructed as part of the restoration of the building.

4.2 RESULTS OF WATCHING BRIEF

4.2.1 The three holes were excavated by hand in the location of the three former piers, which have been removed as part of the restoration works, prior to reconstruction (Plate 1). Figure 3 shows the locations of the excavated holes, referred to as Hole 1, Hole 2 and Hole 3. Plate 2 shows The Hemmel under restoration in November 2010, and Plate 3 shows the hand excavation of the three foundation holes.

4.2.2 **Hole 1:** was located to the eastern side of the building. This hole measured approximately 1.2m long, 0.80m wide and 0.60m in depth (Plate 4). The excavated material consisted of the topsoil (100) and sub-soil (101), below which was yellow, stony clay, which was interpreted as the natural (102). No features or artefacts of archaeological interest were revealed within this hole apart from a single sherd of 20th century domestic pottery from the topsoil.

4.2.3 **Hole 2:** was located in the centre of the line of the south elevation of The Hemmel, as with Hole 1, this excavated area measured approximately 1.2m long, 0.80m wide and 0.60m deep (Plate 5). The excavated material from this hole also consisted of the topsoil (100), sub-soil (101) and the natural (102). A single sherd of 20th century domestic pottery was retrieved from the topsoil. No archaeological features were noted within this excavated area.

4.2.4 **Hole 3:** was located to the west end of the line of the south elevation of The Hemmel (Figure 3). This hole was approximately 1.80m long, 0.80m wide, and was excavated to a depth of 0.60m. Upon removal of the more recent foundation stones for the western pier, a semi-circular feature, interpreted as a 'well' (103), was revealed consisting of bricks bedded with mortar (Plate 6). Upon removal of two courses of the brickwork, it was revealed that this feature was constructed of masonry. No artefactual evidence was revealed in this hole to provide some information on the date of this well; however it clearly pre-dates The Hemmel, which has been suggested to be early 19th century in date (Wooler and Noakes 2010, 10). Part of the masonry of this

well had to be removed to obtain the required depth for the foundation of the pier in this location, however the majority of the radius of the structure will be undisturbed by the present restoration works, and will survive sub-surface.



Plate 1: South elevation of The Hemmel showing the three piers as they existed in June 2010 prior to restoration work



Plate 2: The Hemmel as seen in November 2010, south elevation



Plate 3: View looking east showing the excavation of the three foundation holes along the line of the south elevation of The Hemmel (November 2010)



Plate 4: View looking east showing Hole 1



Plate 5: View looking east showing Hole 2



Plate 6: View looking east showing the location of Hole 3



Plate 7: Detail of the semi-circular 'well' revealed in Hole 3 (Scale = 1m)



Plate 8: View looking west showing the 'well' following the removal of the upper courses of brick

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The archaeological watching brief was maintained due to the known presence of a farmstead on the site of The Hemmel, and the possibility that the medieval village of 'Cassop' may have included the field in which the building stands.
- 5.2 Holes 1 and 2 revealed no archaeological feature or artefacts, however the excavation of Hole 3 revealed part of the circular plan of a well which had been constructed of masonry but with upper courses of brick. This well clearly pre-dates The Hemmel, although no artefacts were recovered with may have aided dating.

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APPENDIX: FIGURES
