BITTS PARK, CARLISLE, CUMBRIA



WATCHING BRIEF REPORT CP. No: 1392/11 01/06/2011

NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD NENTHEAD MINES HERITAGE CENTRE, NENTHEAD,

ALSTON, CUMBRIA, CA9 3PD

Tel/Fax: (01434) 382045/043 WWW.NPARCHAEOLOGY.CO.UK



NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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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.

REVISION SCHEDULE				
	01	02	03	
PREPARED BY:	Fiona Wooler and Kevin Mounsey			
Position:	Project Supervisors			
DATE:	16/05/2011			
EDITED BY:	Frank Giecco			
Position:	Technical Director			
DATE:	16/05/2011			
APPROVED BY:	Matt Town			
Position:	Project Manager			
DATE:	20/05/2011			

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SUMMARY

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Carlisle City Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to the creation of a new footpath and associated lighting along the southern edge of Bitts Park in Carlisle, Cumbria (NY 394 567).

The development area is located immediately to the north of Carlisle Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 27657). Although the proposed footpath route does not directly affect the castle itself, it is situated within the scheduled area for the site, outside the castle walls, and as a result the groundworks have required Scheduled Monument Consent. The route also lies close to the projected course of Hadrian's Wall, which is classified as a World Heritage Site.

Scheduled Monument Consent was granted on condition that an archaeological watching brief was maintained during all stages of the groundworks.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over four non-consecutive days between the 2nd March and 11th April 2011. The watching brief monitored the machine-excavation of the proposed footpath route from the south of the present playground, to an access road into Bitts Park at the northern end of Devonshire Walk car park. The hand digging of two small pits for new lighting columns was also monitored.

Due to the shallow nature of the footpath trench, no archaeological features were noted during the excavation. There was, however, a large amount of post-medieval and modern pottery and glass sherds within the excavated material, suggesting that there has been some dumping of rubbish in the area, which may have been spread out over the park. Demolition material was noted to the eastern end of the footpath route, also possibly suggesting that material was dumped in the area around the park at some point. The two lighting column pits contained 19th century ash and demolition material again suggesting the area had been used as a rubbish dump.

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to staff of Cubby Construction, for their help during this project.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Fiona Wooler and Joanne Beaty. The report was written by Fiona Wooler and Kevin Mounsey. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, Technical Director for NPA Ltd.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North Pennines Archaeology Limited were commissioned by Carlisle City Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the creation of a new footpath and associated lighting along the southern edge of Bitts Park in Carlisle, Cumbria (NY 394 567). The proposed works are located immediately north of Carlisle Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 27657), and although they do not affect the castle directly, they are situated within the scheduled area, and as a result have required Scheduled Monument Consent. The site also lies close to the projected course of Hadrian's Wall, which is classified as a World Heritage Site.
- 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by English Heritage, on condition that an archaeological watching brief was maintained during all stages of groundworks.
- 1.3 All groundworks associated with the creation of the new footpath and lighting were excavated under archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008), and were consistent with the specification submitted to English Heritage by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd (Giecco 2011) prior to the commencement of groundworks.
- 1.4 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 Carlisle City Council, for an archaeological watching brief of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by English Heritage, 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 produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, and monochrome formats as applicable, 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 approximately 275m long and 2m wide was stripped of soil (topsoil and subsoil). Archaeological monitoring and supervision of groundworks associated with the footpath and new lighting columns commenced on the 2nd March 2011 and continued until the 11th April 2011 over four non-

consecutive days. 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 Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, with a copy of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Kendal, where viewing will be made available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA11, BPC-A, CP 1392/11.
- 2.3.2 North Pennines Archaeology Limited supports 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 (northpen3-95145).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 Bitts Park is located to the north of the centre of the city of Carlisle, and to the north side of Carlisle Castle. The projected line of Hadrian's Wall runs across the northern edge of the park (Figure 1). Bitts Park is a flat area of land bounded on the south by the castle complex, on the west by the main West Coast Railway line, on the north by the River Eden, and by Castle Way and Eden Bridges to the east (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 The proposed footpath route leads from the south side of the present playground, located to the east side of the park, and heads in a westerly direction along the base of the slope of the castle, towards a concrete access road into Bitts Park at the north end of Devonshire Walk Car Park (Figure 2 and Plate 1). The ground through which the footpath will be constructed is presently maintained park land. The two new lighting columns were to be erected on the northern verge of Dacre Road, continuing the existing line of lights in a western direction (Figure 2).
- 3.1.2 The underlying geology of the proposed development area is Red Sandstone, overlain by glacial deposits of boulder clay (British Geological Survey, 2001). The boulder clay has been deposited by ice and is derived from bedrock traversed by glacial movement and is heterogeneous (SSEW, 1984). Two rivers run close to the study area, the River Eden and the River Caldew. The Eden is the principal river which passes through the modern city towards the Solway Firth and was an important watercourse throughout the historical development of Carlisle.

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Prehistoric Period (pre c. AD 43):* there is extensive evidence for prehistoric activity within and around Carlisle, including the remains of prehistoric ploughing at Blackfriars Street and Lowther Street. Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery was found at Scotby Road, including Grooved Ware and Beaker pottery, and a collared urn and burnt mound were excavated at Garlands Hospital (Perriam 1992, 3). Flints of Neolithic and Bronze Age date have also been found, and two socketed Late Bronze Age axes were found at Kings Meadow, Stanwix (HER No. 525).
- 3.2.2 *Romano-British Period:* Roman occupation of Carlisle is first indicated by the presence of a turf and timber fort. This fort, dating to the early seventies AD, was possibly centred on the present Castle Green south of the proposed

utility works. This fort predates the later much larger Roman town of *Luguvalium*, and was post-dated by another fort across the Eden in the Stanwix area. At that time the Romans established a fort at the northern end of the present city centre, and this quickly expanded to become a substantial civilian settlement over 40 acres in area. The withdrawal by the Romans from Scotland in the AD 80's, and the building of Hadrian's Wall from AD 122, probably had a substantial impact on the settlement.



Plate 1: View looking east showing the proposed footpath route defined by the orange fencing. The north wall of Carlisle Castle is visible to the right of photograph

3.2.3 The Wall was a composite military barrier, which in its final form comprised several separate elements; a stone wall fronted by a V-shaped ditch, and a number of purpose-built stone garrison fortifications such as forts, milecastles and turrets. To the south, a large earthwork and ditch, known as the Vallum was built parallel to Wall, as well as a metalled supply road linking the garrison forts, known as the 'Roman Military Way'. The Wall began in the east, at Wallsend in Tyneside and continued to the west terminating at Bowness-on-Solway in Cumbria, a distance of 80 Roman miles (73.5 English miles or 117 kilometres). The Wall, conceived by Hadrian was to be 10 feet wide and *c*.15 feet high. The front face of the wall most likely sported a crenulated parapet, behind which the soldiers patrolled along a paved rampart-walk (Bedoyere 1998).

- 3.2.4 By *c*. AD 200 Carlisle, known as Luguvalium, seems to have been granted special status, and it continued to flourish, with a large number of houses, shops, administrative and other public buildings, until the end of the Roman occupation around AD 400.
- 3.2.5 The Roman roads which have been located through archaeological investigation may not form the total extent of the traffic system as seen by the discovery of the street found at Tullie House which failed to fit into any grid system yet devised. This suggests the Roman civil town had a different alignment to the earlier fort. Evidence for the existence of a post 2nd century ditch may relate to urban defences of the Roman civil town. The uncovering of the Roman cemeteries outside the civil town boundaries indicates that Roman Carlisle was similar in size to its medieval counterpart (Ferguson 1890, 365-374).
- 3.2.6 *Medieval and Post-Medieval Periods:* following the withdrawal of the Legions in the early part of the 5th century, Carlisle probably continued to be occupied, and it housed an important monastic community from the 7th century. The arrival of the Normans in 1092 heralded a period of major change, during which the city was enclosed by walls. Throughout the Middle Ages and up to the Jacobite rebellion in 1745, Carlisle was a major frontier city on the borders of England and Scotland. Throughout this period the Sheepmount has always been outside the limits of settlement, with no evidence of any use, apart from as pasture land until its use as one of the city tips in the late 19th century (Jones 2005).

3.3 Previous Work

- 3.3.1 In 1997 Carlisle Archaeology Ltd carried out a limited trial excavation on the football pitches in Bitts Park, immediately to the north of the footpath development. Aerial photographs of the pitches seemed to show two possible playing card shaped crop marks. However, the subsequent excavations failed to record any evidence of Roman activity (Giecco *pers comm*).
- 3.3.2 There have been a number of archaeological investigations within the area defined as the City of Carlisle Hazard Area (HER No. 3560) to the south of the site. These include major excavations at The Lanes (McCarthy 2000; McCarthy, Padley and Henig 1982); Botchergate (Zant 1997; Giecco, 2001, Lancaster University Archaeology Unit 2000); and the millennium excavations on Castle Green conducted during 1998-2001 (Zant 2004).

- 3.3.3 The position of Hadrian's Wall crossing of the Eden was located in 1951 when a number of bridge stone's were dredged up. A ground penetrating radar survey was carried out in 1997 south of the confluence of the rivers Eden and Caldew by Carlisle Archaeology Ltd, and recorded strong geophysical anomalies on the projected line of the wall at a depth of between 2 and 3m below the current ground surface (Giecco *pers comm*).
- 3.3.4 In 2005 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd conducted an archaeological evaluation on the east bank of the River Caldew, immediately east of the current proposed works. The evaluation failed to locate any Roman archaeology, the earliest recorded deposit being a 19th century rubbish tip (Jones 2005).
- 3.3.5 In 2008 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd maintained an archaeological watching brief at the Sheepmount Sports Centre, Carlisle during the excavation of an electricity cable trench. Again deposits relating to 19th century rubbish tipping were recorded. No Roman frontier related archaeology was observed. (Jackson 2008).

3.4 HADRIAN'S WALL WORLD HERITAGE SITE

- 3.4.1 Hadrian's Wall was designated as a World Heritage Site in 1987 and forms the most complex and best preserved of the frontiers of the Roman Empire. (English Heritage 2002). The World Heritage Site (WHS) comprises a visual envelope between 1km and 6km from the site in order to serve as a buffer zone to protect the site and its immediate landscape from development detrimental to the visual amenity of the site (*ibid*).
- 3.4.2 The WHS is centred on the military installations constructed from AD 122 on the orders of the Emperor Hadrian. The WHS also includes other Roman sites and structures which predate Hadrian's Wall, such as the arrangement of forts along the Cumbrian Coast between Bowness-on-Solway and Ravenglass, and incorporates a wealth of pre-Roman and post-Roman sites and landscapes (*op.cit.*). Hadrian's Wall was constructed in the early 2nd century on a line connecting the Tyne and the Solway and represented at various times the northern frontier of Roman Britain.
- 3.4.3 The more detailed history of Hadrian's Wall is well documented and is summarised in numerous publications (Breeze and Dobson 2000; Daniels 1978 and Birley 1961).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The groundworks monitoring was undertaken over four non-consecutive days in March and April 2011. The excavation of the footpath course consisted of the removal of the topsoil by a machine with a 1.5m wide toothless bucket, and the removal of the underlying subsoil to a maximum depth of *c*.0.20m. Two small pits for lighting columns were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.30m.

4.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 4.2.1 Excavation commenced at the eastern end of the footpath route, starting at a point where an existing footpath lead into a playground (Plate 2). The trench measured approximately 2.0m in width, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.20m along the entire length.
- 4.2.2 The trench was excavated down onto pink gravelly clay (102). Above this was 0.15m of loose brown subsoil (101) which was sealed by 0.05m of dark topsoil (100) (Plate 3). The total length of the shallow trench for the new footpath was approximately 275m (Plate 4).
- 4.2.3 No features apart from modern drains were noted along the length of the excavated area. The only finds retrieved during the watching brief were glass and pottery sherds all seemingly dating to the 19th and 20th centuries. The presence of such an assemblage may indicate that the area around Bitts Park was used for dumping refuse during these periods, and this material may have been gradually been distributed over the site.
- 4.2.4 A further phase of excavation was undertaken on the 7th March 2011, at the eastern end of the footpath route. Here, the line of the existing footpath was widened by machine with a toothed bucket and by hand excavation to a depth of 0.20m, to create a 2m wide stretch for the continuation of the footpath towards the car park (Plate 5). Fragments of sandstone, mortar and 19th century brick were noted within the excavated material (103) at this section of the footpath route, suggesting either a building once stood in this area, or that demolition material has been dumped in this area at some point.
- 4.2.5 Associated with the new footpath development was the installation of two new lighting columns. Two pits were excavated for these in the western sector of Dacre Road on the northern verge (Figure 3). The pits were c.1.00m in length and c.0.50m in width and excavated to a maximum depth of

c.1.30m. Trench 1 contained Victorian ash (104) sealed by the subsoil (101) which in turn was covered by the topsoil (100). In Trench 2 a deposit of demolition material (105) was sealed by the subsoil (101) which in turn was covered by the topsoil (100). The lower contexts of both pits again both indicate the ground in the area having been substantially made up by 19th century rubbish disposal.



Plate 2: Eastern end of the footpath route showing the width and depth of the trench



Plate 3: View looking west showing the eastern end of the excavated trench (Scale = 2m)



Plate 4: View looking west showing the excavated trench (Scale = 2m)



Plate 5: View looking east showing the eastern end of the footpath route

4.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

4.3.1 The archaeological finds consisted of sherds of 19th and 20th century pottery and glass. The assemblage was not retained as little could be gained from further analysis. No environmental samples were taken during monitoring of the groundworks.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a shallow footpath trench and two small lighting column pits along the south side of Bitts Park in Carlisle. The site lies within the scheduled area of Carlisle Castle.
- 5.1.2 Due to the shallow nature of the footpath, no archaeological features were noted during the excavation. There was, however, a large amount of post-medieval and modern pottery and glass sherds within the excavated material, suggesting that there has been some dumping of rubbish in the area, which may have been spread out over the park. Demolition material was noted to the eastern end of the footpath route, also possibly suggesting that material was dumped in the area around the park at some point. Excavated to a greater depth the lighting column pits contained ash and demolition rubble, substantiating the idea that the area had been used as a post-medieval dumping ground.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 As this watching brief was conducted as a condition of groundworks associated with the construction of a new pathway and associated lighting on the southern side of Bitts Park, Carlisle, no further archaeological work is deemed necessary. However, given the site's location in relation to the scheduled area of Carlisle Castle (SM 27657) and the close proximity of Hadrian's Wall, a World Heritage Site, 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	Subsoil
102	Deposit	Pink, Gravelly, Clay
103	Deposit	Demolition Material
104	Deposit	19th Century Ash
105	Deposit	Demolition Material

List of Contexts issued during Watching Brief

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES