

## **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> February 2003 North Pennines Heritage Trust undertook an archaeological watching brief of works on land behind 39 Market Place, Cockermouth, Cumbria, NGR NY 1226 3072. This report fulfils the requirement of a brief set by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2003. (Ref: 2/02/0821).

**No evidence of surviving archaeological structures or deposits were observed within the foundation trenches behind 39 Market Place.**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

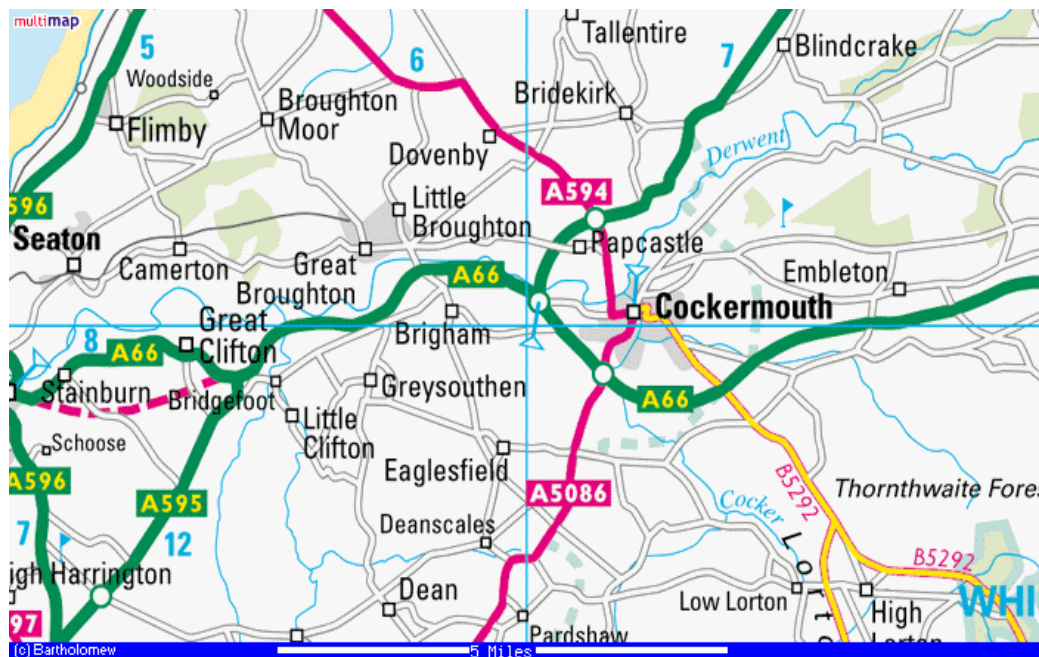
Thanks are due to the following people and institutions for their assistance in the preparation of this report: The staff at Carlisle Records Office and Local Studies Library, the staff at Whitehaven Records Office and Local Studies Library, Mr Jeremy Parsons of Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service, Mr Glen Beattie of Alpha Design Architectural Services.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION**

- 1.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust were commissioned by Mr Glen Beattie of Alpha Design Architectural Services, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during works on land behind 39 Market Place, Cockermouth, Cumbria. The scheme affected an area of archaeological interest totalling 78m<sup>2</sup> (SMR no. 5553).
- 1.2 This report fulfils the requirement set out in a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (CCCAS) dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2003. This work follows a desk-based assessment prepared by North Pennines Heritage Trust (Jones 2002) outlining the potential archaeological survival of building foundations and/or cellarge within the development area.
- 1.3 The site lies on the south side of Market Place, within the centre of present-day Cockermouth within the core medieval settlement (NY 1226 3072).

## **2. TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY**

- 2.1 Market Place is situated approximately 45.72m AOD on low-lying ground on the east bank of the River Cocker. Terraced housing, the plan of which closely resembles that of medieval burgrave plots, surrounds the site on all sides.
- 2.2 The solid geology of Cockermouth predominantly comprises Cockermouth lavas within the basement beds. The town is also situated at the northern and western periphery of the Skiddaw Slate zone.
- 2.3 The town of Cockermouth developed across the banks of the River Cocker, where the mouth of the river joins the River Derwent. To the east of the town runs the Bitter Beck, a tributary of the Cocker. This tributary flows from the east, where sluices have adopted the beck as a source of water for St Helen's Tannery, flowing through the town visible as a channel to the south of St Helen's Street before it disappears into an underground conduit and joins the River Cocker.



Site Location

Project:

39 Market Place  
Cockermouth  
Cumbria

Archaeological Watching Brief

Title:

Cockermouth  
Location of the Study Area

Figure 1

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### 3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The proposed work consisted of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during all groundworks, the aim of which was to preserve *by record* the deposits threatened by the development. The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IFA 1994).
- 3.2 A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be 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 1994, 2).
- 3.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with the brief provided by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service.
- 3.4 The project was managed by Frank Giecco, BA, Dip. Arch. AIFA, Principal Archaeologist. Day to day management, on-site logistics, fieldwork and post excavation work was undertaken by Chris Jones, BA, MA, Assistant Archaeologist.

### 4. PREVIOUS WORK

- 5.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust undertook a desk-based assessment of the existing resource in December 2002 (Jones 2002). Prior to this no work had been undertaken within the development site. However, a number of excavations and watching briefs have been undertaken in Cockermouth.

#### 5.1.1 Excavations at 75-85 Main Street

In 1980 R.H.Leech undertook excavations behind 75-85 Main Street (Cumberland and Lancashire Archaeological Unit and the Department for the Environment). The results of these excavations found that by 1300 AD there were buildings fronting the street with cross-wings to the rear. These buildings had foundations of river boulders supporting earthen or 'cob' walls. By the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the houses were constructed from mortared stone walls and had semi circular stair turrets to the rear. By 1900 up to 16 cottages stood on the plot, 'such dense infilling was typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century Cockermouth'. (Medieval Archaeology 1980)

#### 5.2 Bridge Street

In 2000 a watching brief was undertaken by Carlisle Archaeology prior to a development on Bridge Street. However, much subsequent building and demolition work had destroyed any potential medieval deposits. (Carlisle Archaeology 2000).

#### 5.3 Rubby Banks Road

A watching brief was undertaken prior to the construction of flood defences. No archaeological deposits were found (Northern Archaeological Associates 2000).

**5.4 Mitre Court**

In February 2002, North Pennines Heritage Trust undertook an excavation prior to a residential development on the site of buildings relating to the former Crown and Mitre Hotel. This excavation found remains of a former cobbled yard surface and sub surface drains. No other archaeological features were found (Jones 2002).

**5.5 Cockermouth Castle**

In February 2002, North Pennines Heritage Trust undertook a watching brief of works close to Butlers Pantry, Cockermouth Castle. No archaeological deposits were found (Giecco 2002).



## 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The development site consisted of one open area approximately 78m<sup>2</sup>. The site stratigraphy was sealed by tarmac (100) which was removed by a JCB mini-excavator prior to the excavation of the foundation trenches.
- 5.2 Foundation trenches were excavated through a layer of mixed rubble with black gravelly silt (101) to a depth of approximately 0.95 m. The natural sandy gravel substrate was not encountered at any point within the foundation trenches.
- 5.3 No artefactual material was recovered from within the foundation trenches.

**Table 1: Context Summary**

Context	Type	Description	Above	Below	Initials
100	Layer	Tarmac	101	+	CJ
101	Layer	Mixed rubble with black gravelly silt	-	100	CJ

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1 The Significance of the Results

**No significant structural remains were present within the development area.**

## 7. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the conclusions of this report, North Pennines Heritage Trust recommends that **no further archaeological work is undertaken.**

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