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# **NORTH PENNINES HERITAGE TRUST**

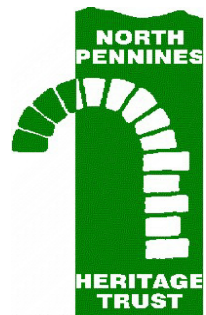
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<b>Project Designs and Client Reports No.CP36/03</b>
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**REPORT ON  
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
WATCHING BRIEF  
AT  
PEAR TREE FARM  
SKIRWITH**

**For  
Mr and MRS N.W. FRAME**

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North Pennines Heritage Trust is a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity.  
Company Registration Number : 2241272, Charity Registration Number: 700701, Vat Registration Number: 621280476

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust was invited to submit a tender for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken on land adjacent to Pear Tree Farm, Skirwith, Cumbria by John Bodger Architect Ltd.
- 1.2 A planning application has been submitted to Eden District Council for the residential development of one dwelling. Planning consent was granted with a negative condition to allow for an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the programme of works.
- 1.3 An archaeological brief was prepared by Helena Smith former Assistant County Archaeologist. The brief required that a archaeological watching brief be maintained during all ground works. The brief did not require a desk-based assessment of the site.

## **2 SITE LOCATION**

- 2.1 The site is located at NGR NY 61710 32682 on the approximately north western edge of the village of Skirwith.
- 2.2 The site occupies a steep slope of land at a height of approximately 148mOAD overlooking the Skirwith Beck to the south of the site.

## **3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.1 No archaeological work has taken place on the site, but Skirwith is recognised as a shrunken medieval village on the Sites and Monuments Record (Ref 6790). The site also contained several prominent earthworks, which may have indicated the presence of medieval occupation.

## **4 AIMS**

### **4.1 The aims of the watching brief were as follows:**

- To supervise all topsoil stripping and excavation for footings and/or service trenches and clean and record any putative archaeological features and produce a stratigraphic record.
- To record archaeological deposits;
- To establish, wherever possible, the depth of archaeological remains;
- To establish, wherever possible, the condition of the remains;

- To recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- To recover paleoenvironmental material where it survives;
- To prepare a report for Mr and MRS N.W. Frame Capita DBS setting out the salient conclusions;

## 5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The work was undertaken under the overall direction of Frank Giecco, BA, Arch., Trust Archaeologist. The watching brief was maintained Frank Giecco between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2003 and spread over five day with the addition of an archaeological assistant for one day. All staff involved were highly experienced archaeologists, with significant Cumbrian experience of urban and rural sites.
- 5.2 The site consisted of one large open area measuring approximately 100m by 100m. The topsoil was removed by a 360° tracked mechanical excavator.
- 5.3 Natural red sandstone bedrock (context 101) was encountered throughout the site at depths varying between 0.20m and 0.40m below the topsoil (100).
- 5.4 No evidence of any medieval occupation was recorded at Pear Tree farm. Two highly abraded sherds of 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century pottery were recovered from the topsoil (context 100).
- 5.5 The foundations of a large agricultural building were recorded on the south-western edge of the site and correspond to a barn like building recorded on the first edition O/S map of 1864. This structure had been demolished by the time of the second edition O/S map of 1900. A section excavated across this wall foundation recorded two rough courses of large undressed cobbles in a shallow u-shaped cut having a maximum depth of 0.20m. Several sherds of cream ware were recovered from the foundation fill giving this structure a probable early 19<sup>th</sup> century construction date.
- 5.6 The only other features of archaeological two were two wheat stacks (see figure 3). The features were used to stack sheaves of wheat after harvesting prior to the mechanised harvesting and processing of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These so called wheat stacks are formed by a rectangle of cobbles edged by a kerb of larger cobbles. The two examples at Skirwith contexts 105 and 110 were rectangular in shape rather than the more usual sub-rounded and measured approximately 3.5m by 2m.
- 5.7 Pottery recovered from these two all dated to from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6 THE FINDS

- 6.1 All finds

- 6.2 All finds will belong to the landowner, but initially they will be transferred to North Pennines Heritage Trust's premises at Nenthead, Alston, Cumbria, for study. Ultimately it is recommended that the curation of both finds and the site archive should be vested in Penrith Museum.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 No evidence of the shrunken medieval village of Skirwith was recorded at Pear Tree farm, suggesting that the medieval village did not extend into this area.
- 7.2 The foundations of a probable 19<sup>th</sup> century barn were recorded in the south-western corner of the site.
- 7.3 Two rectangular platforms of 19<sup>th</sup> century date were recorded to the north of the 19<sup>th</sup> century structure, and are associated with the storage of wheat prior to threshing.
- 7.4 No other features of archaeological note were recorded during the watching brief.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that no further archaeological work take place.
- 8.2 It is recommended that the archive be deposited in the Penrith Museum for long term storage.

## **9 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **8 THE CONTRACTOR**

- 8.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It works in close association with and under the approval of the County Archaeologist. Based in Nenthead, Cumbria, the company has considerable experience extending over more than twelve years of archaeological investigation in Cumbria.
- 8.2 The company has a fully staffed professional field team capable of undertaking work ranging in scale from archaeological evaluations to small desk based projects

