NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND FIELD EVALUATION OF LAND AT NETHERHALL SCHOOL, MARYPORT

CUMBRIA

For

CAPITA INFRASTRUCTURE

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Planning Application No. 2/03/9019

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In February 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological desk-based assessment and field evaluation on land at Netherhall School, Maryport, Cumbria. This was in response to a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service following a planning application by the client, Capita Infrastructure.

The work involved the assessment of historic sources held within the Cumbria County Sites and Monuments Record, Kendal and the County Record Office, Carlisle in order to set the site within its proper archaeological, historical, topographical and geographical context. This was followed by the excavation of three linear trial trenches in order to assess the presence/absence, extent, nature and state of preservation of archaeological deposits within a minimum 5% sample of the proposal area.

A number of irregularly shaped pits and a series of stakeholes were observed cut into the natural subsoil within trench 1, although no material was recovered from any of these features. It is uncertain what function the pits had or when they were dug and filled in. The stakeholes could form part of an ephemeral structure constructed from thin wooden stakes driven into the natural subsoil. No archaeological features were observed within trenches 2 and 3.

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1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

1.1 In February 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Ms Suzanne Keenan of Capita Infrastructure to undertake archaeological works on land at Netherhall School, Maryport, Cumbria (Planning Application Reference No. 2/03/9019). This consisted of a desk-based assessment and field evaluation. This report fulfils a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (Parsons, J. 2004).

1.2 The site lies to the north of the town of Maryport, along the proposed line of a Roman road between the forts and settlements of Maryport (*Alauna*) and Papcastle (*Derventio*). The area is shown in figure 2.

1.4 The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the site in order to define the presence or absence of archaeological remains. The fieldwork was undertaken in a single phase of five days duration. Archaeological deposits were excavated in plan and, where appropriate, in section, and were recorded in order to achieve an understanding of their nature, extent, depth and state of preservation. Any artefactual material was collected to facilitate the interpretation and date of the archaeological features. Bulk samples were taken in accordance to the NPA Ltd standard procedure in order to provide detailed paleo-environmental information.

2 PREVIOUS WORK

2.1 There has been no direct archaeological investigation on the site of the proposed development.

2.2 There has been a great deal of antiquarian interest in Maryport. In 1599 William Camden described the, then extensive, remains of the Roman fort and *vicus* as did William Stukeley in the early 18th century.

2.3 In 1766 the Senhouse family sponsored excavations of the Roman camp, discovering a number of features including the arch of a gate, houses, roofing slate and several finds of glass vessels, mirrors, coins, urns and a Roman bath house (Jackson et al, 1969.) In 1820 Joseph Robinson excavated four fields to the north east of the fort including two temple sites. In the 1920s Bailey found evidence of a Roman wharf structure beneath Motte Hill, Glasson (Bailey, 1923.)

2.4 Further investigation took place in 1976 when Michael Jarrett undertook a series of small planned excavations. These excavations found a broad chronology for the fort, dating from the early years of the Hadrianic period to 400 AD. The excavation also defined the extent of stone robbing during the mid-18th century foundation of Maryport (Jarrett et al 1987).

2.5 In 1994 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU 1994) undertook an excavation of Netherhall Blast Furnace and Coke Ovens, located to the south east of the town, which date to 1752 but were demolished in 1963 (Marshall et al 1977.)

2.6 A geophysical survey of the vicus took place in 2000 (News from Hadrians Wall 2000.) This found the site to be the largest associated with the Hadrianic frontier defence system so far surveyed.

2.7 Carlisle Archaeology Ltd undertook a field evaluation on land at Sycamore Road, Netherton, Maryport in 2000. No archaeological deposits were observed within any of the trenches (CA unpublished).

2.8 In 2001 Carlisle Archaeology Ltd maintained a watching brief of land on South Quay, prior to the development of commercial premises. No archaeological deposits were observed within any of the excavations (Reeves, 2001).

2.9 In December 2002 and January 2003, North Pennines Heritage Trust maintained a watching brief on land adjacent to Irish Street, which found the remains of structures thought to have been associated with the 19th century Wharton's Foundry (Jones, 2003a).

2.10 In May 2003, North Pennines Heritage Trust undertook an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to the A594 Cockermouth to Maryport road at Dearham, approximately 3 miles east of Maryport. No archaeological deposits were observed in any of the evaluation trenches (Jones 2003b).

2.11 In June 2003, North Pennines Heritage Trust maintained a watching brief on land at Fleming Square (Miller 2003). The work identified the possible remains of the former Market House, which occupied the centre of the square. No archaeological structures earlier than the 19th century were observed in any of the trenches.

2.12 In December 2003, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a field evaluation of land between Strand Street and North Quay, on the site of Wood's Harbour. The evaluation identified the remains of a late 19th century Smithy and the remains of a small cellared building also dated to the 19th and 20th centuries (Jones 2003c).

3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The work undertaken consisted of a desk-based assessment, visual site inspection and field evaluation.

3.2 Project Design

3.2.1 A project design was prepared in response to a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service. This included a detailed specification of works to be carried out, which consisted of a desk-based assessment prior to field evaluation.

3.3 Desk-Based Assessment

3.3.1 The desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal and County Record Office, Carlisle in the first instance. This involved the assessment of all readily available primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material and all available aerial photographs. Consultation of this material allowed a comprehensive understanding of the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site.

3.3.2 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1994).

3.4 Visual Site Inspection

3.4.1 A visual site inspection was undertaken in order to note any surface features of potential archaeological interest and to identify any potential hazards to health and safety, such as the presence of live services or constraints to undertaking archaeological fieldwork, such as Tree Preservation Orders and public footpaths.

3.4.2 No constraints or hazards could be identified from a visual site inspection. A survey of the site using a CAT scanner was undertaken in order to establish the locations of live services prior to the excavation of trial trenches.

3.5 Field Evaluation

3.5.1 This consisted of the excavation of 3 linear trial trenches in order to produce a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals.

3.5.2 In summary, the main objectives of the evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these were they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover paleoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

3.6 Each trench was mechanically excavated by a JCB 3CX excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to the top of archaeological deposits, or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Each trench was then manually cleaned and all features investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Excavation Manual. Photography was undertaken using a Canon EOS 100 Single Lens Reflex (SLR) manual camera. A photographic record was made using 400 ISO colour print film.

3.7 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IFA 1994).

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Place Name Evidence

4.1.1 The *nether* element in the place name Netherhall derives from the Old Norse *neoarr*, meaning lower farmstead and hall from the house which occupied the site of the present school, visible on the Ordnance Survey 1st, 2nd and 3rd Editions (Lee 1998).

4.2 Prehistoric

4.2.1 There is no known prehistoric settlement within Maryport itself. However, there are a number of significant finds within the area of core settlement. These include a Neolithic stone axe, Bronze Age cup and ring marked stone and finds of Romano British (i.e. native, during the Roman occupation) carved stones.

4.2.2 There are a number of significant prehistoric monuments within the broader region surrounding Maryport. These include Rise How Neolithic site (SMR Pin 840), Rise How Tower Iron Age burial monument (4239), two Bronze Age cremation cemeteries (3092 and 13691) and a Romano-British settlement and trackway (791) at Ewanrigg (Pevsner 1967)

4.3 Roman

4.3.1 Roman Maryport was an important part of the Hadrianic frontier defence system. The evidence for Maryport's Roman past includes a second century fort and vicus, or civilian settlement to the north of the fort. The extensive remains of fort and vicus were substantial up until the early eighteenth century and have attracted antiquarian interest. In 1599 William Camden described the remains as having " many expresse footings … are evidently to be seen. The ancient vaults stand open, and many altars, stones with inscriptions and statues are here gotton out of the ground." (Camden 1599, Cumbria EUS 2000, 3). William Stukeley described the vicus, indicating "the streets were paved in flagstones, 'visibly worn with use' (from Wilson 1997, 29). A Geophysical survey in 2000 discovered the extent of the vicus, the largest of the second century frontier defence system so far surveyed.

4.3.2 Excavations of the camp by the Senhouse family in 1766 found the arch of a gate, houses which had been 'burned to the ground and rebuilt', roofing slates, glass vessels, mirrors, coins, urns (Jackson et al 1969) and a Roman bath (Collingwood 1936). In 1870 17 altars were found in pits to the north west of the vicus. In 1880 Joseph Robinson excavated four fields to the north east of the fort, finding road surfaces, strip houses and other buildings, two of which believed to be temples (Robinson 1880, Wilson 1997, 29).

4.3.3 In the 1920s Bailey excavated evidence of a wharf structure in the form of a massive retaining wall at Ellenborough Place, Glasson. Bailey concluded Maryport was the chief naval station at the time Hadrian's Wall was constructed. However, the large expanses of stone recorded by Bailey have been refuted as part of the natural bedrock (Turnbull 1996; Bidwell 1999).

4.3.4 Further excavation in 1976 (Jarrett et al 1987) discovered that the fort was constructed during the early Hadrianic period and continued in use until circa. 400 AD. The fort was built for the *cohors I Hispanorum equitata milliaria* in the early 120s, a unit which left the province in the 130s and occupied in the Antonine period by the *cohors I Delmatarum* (Caruana 1999). The later history of the fort is obscure but in the fourth century the presence of late Roman military belt fittings suggests that the soldiers were of a higher grade than the frontier units in most of the Wall forts.

4.3.5 Field survey work by the RCHME on the site of the fort and an assessment of the aerial photographic evidence of the landscape surrounding the fort has produced a detailed plan of the earthworks and a plan of the vicus to the north and the road network (Wilson, 1997), see figure 1.

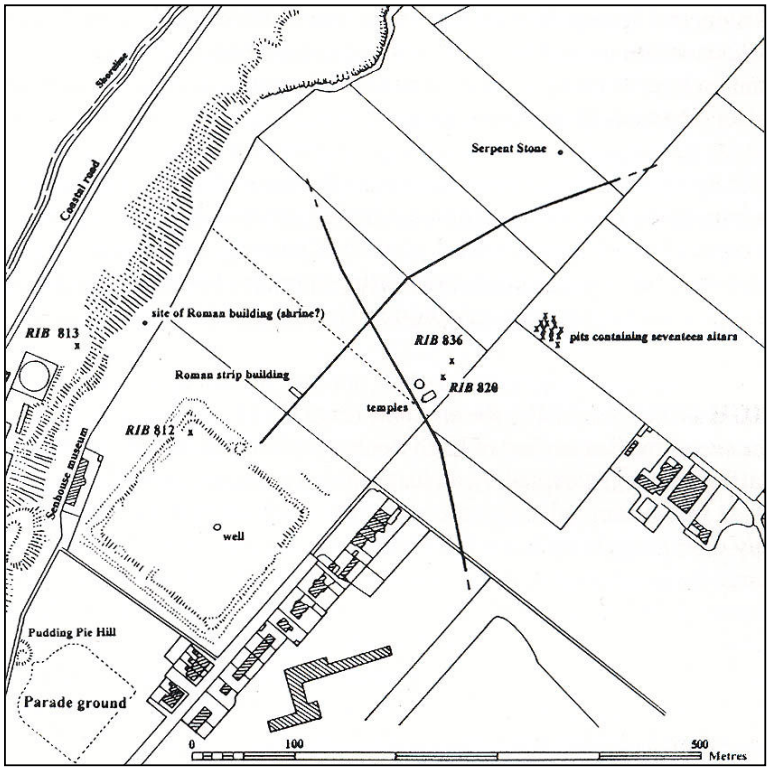

Figure 1. The fort at Maryport in its setting. Netherhall School is located just off the map at the bottom centre-right, on the line of the north-south road. (From Bidwell, 1999; 187)

4.4 Medieval

4.4.1 The presence of a substantial motte or Castle mound, 'a damaged earthwork of 12th century date' (EUS 2000, 7) indicates the town's importance during the later middle ages. Situated at the end of a steep sided spur to the south of the town, in a loop of the River Ellen, it commands a strong defensive position over the harbour to the west and over the town to the south and east.

4.4.2 The De Scheftling family owned the medieval Manor of Ellenborough until the Eaglesfields bought it during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). The Senhouse family acquired the Manor in 1528 through the marriage of John Senhouse with Elizabeth Eaglesfield. It is likely that the town continued to be an important port and administrative centre throughout the medieval period.

4.4.3 Other structures of medieval date occur within the broader region, such as Netherhall tower house, a probable fifteenth century building built from Roman dressed stone and the traces of a deserted medieval village once existed in the area immediately north of the Roman fort and vicus.

4.5 Post Medieval

4.5.1 In 1748 an Act of Parliament was passed giving Humphrey Senhouse the authority to create a planned town following the opening of Ellenborough colliery in 1740. (Jackson et al 1969). Nicolson and Burn wrote "In 1747 the number of families in this parish was certified as 64 …. But an harbour having been since made at Elnefoot and a town there built named Maryport, the number of families is greatly increased … it is computed there are about 340 families in that town only." (Nicolson and Burn 1777 from Hughes (1964, 306).

4.5.2 In 1752 an iron-smelting furnace was built at Netherhall. In 1755 a wagonway opened from Broughton Moor to the harbour where coal was loaded onto vessels at the mouth of the Ellen.

4.5.3 A second Act of Parliament was passed in 1756, which saw further expansion of the town. In 1765 a shipbuilding yard opened on Strand Street by North Quay. The Extensive Urban Survey makes reference to 'a former patent slip buried under the shingle facing the north harbour' (EUS 2000). The shells of some associated buildings adjoin Strand Street and the former Ritsons Yard opposite Castle Hill has a patent slip with masonry still visible on the Glasson side of the river.

4.5.4 In 1752 a Glass Works and Pot Mill were established on either side of Irish Street. The Glass Works (SMR pin 3577) was in fact a small glass bottle works, 'a rare example of this class of monument' and provides a unique example for the study of such works at a time of experimentation with furnace and crucible design (from the SMR entry notes). Shown on a 1745 map, the works is a scheduled monument.

4.5.5 In 1756 a Paper Mill was built on Paper Mill Green, beneath Motte Hill across the river Ellen from Irish Street and a brewery (the Old Brewery) was built at the corner of High Street and Wood Street.

4.5.6 In 1766 William Blennerhasset, Lord of the Manor of Flimby, took a grant of land to export coal mined a Flimby from the port. Door lintels survive either side of the entrance to Crown Inn Yard marked with the initials 'WB'.

4.5.7 The prosperity of the town continued to grow, and by 1770 the ground rents amounted to £87 11s per annum and anchorage dues of £21 (Hughes 1964, 10). However, this prosperity was short lived as Maryport suffered for the Continental Blockade during the Napoleonic Wars and the Wars of American Independence robbed the town of important trade. Maryport further declined with the loss of secondary industries with the closing of the Glass Works towards the end of the 18th century. Bread riots in 1817 emphasise the continuing struggle following the war with France and consequent unemployment and poverty. In 1838 the port became officially subordinate to Whitehaven.

4.5.8 However, the coal industry continued to flourish and from 1819 ships were launched from the yards and by 1854 more coal was shipped from Maryport than from the rest of the Cumbrian ports. This saw a dramatic increase in industrial activity within the harbour area between 1850 and 1900.

4.5.9 A timber yard and sawmill were in existence on Irish Street from the 1850s, visible on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (figure 2) and as was a railway upgraded from the original wagonway providing transport links between the collieries and the port. Between 1850 and 1900 an Iron and Brass Foundry (J. Wharton's Phoenix Foundry) can be seen between Irish Street and Elizabeth Dock as the Saw Mill and Timber Yard have been relocated further south in order to accommodate the foundry buildings. A further development is the creation of a second major dock (Senhouse Dock) in the bay west of Elizabeth Dock. By 1925 the industrial complex behind Irish Street has further increased in complexity and a number of buildings are visible on the Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition map. Maryport suffered a further slump in prosperity when the Prince of Wales Dock at Workington was constructed in 1927.

4.6 Modern

4.6.1 By 1969 the railway is no longer present beside Elizabeth and Senhouse Docks and each Basin largely silted up. However, the foundry buildings are still visible on the Ordnance Survey map for that year. Aerial photographic evidence shows the development area as waste ground. Irish Street is flanked to the north by later buildings and to the south by a car park and reclaimed land.

5 RESULTS

5.1 The evaluation was undertaken by a team of professional field archaeologists directed in the field by Chris Jones, BA, MA, PIFA, NPA Archaeologist. He was assisted by Joanne Beaty BA and Kevin Mountsey, BA.

5.2 A total of two trial trenches were excavated, trenches 1 was cross shaped and measured 20m x 1.6m, trench 3 measured 20m x 1.6m, providing a 5% sample of an area 1082m^2.

5.3 All references to cardinal directions refer to site grid north.

5.4 Trench 1

5.4.1 Trench 1 was located at the northern part of the site, adjacent to the swimming pool. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.50m and consisted of alluvial sand (103). This was sealed by a thin silty sand deposit (101), which was in turn sealed by a loamy topsoil and turf layer (100).

5.4.2 Three small, irregularly shaped pits were observed within this trench (104, 106, 108). Each of these pits exhibited the same characteristics, irregular in shape and were each filled by a single homogenous deposit (105, 107, 109), neither of which contained any anthropogenic material.

5.4.3 A group of stakeholes (110) was also observed and excavated within this trench. Each measured approximately 0.05m in diameter and were 0.05m deep and were filled by a single homogenous deposit of silty sand, none of which contained any anthropogenic material. No evidence of structure could be identified from these stakeholes.

5.5 Trench 2

5.5.1 Trench 3 was located at the southern part of the site within the playing field area and was oriented southeast – northwest. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of between 0.50m and 0.75m and consisted of river gravel with occasional sandstone outcropping (102). No archaeological features were observed within this trench.

6 THE FINDS

6.1 There were no finds from any sealed stratigraphic or unstratified deposits.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The evaluation has identified a number of small, irregular shaped pits of uncertain date and a number of stakeholes, also of unknown date, from trench 1. These stakeholes could form part of a structure, although no such structure could be identified during the evaluation. It cannot be said how significant these features are, as it is possible they were formed as a result of tree and small shrub root activity. However, it is likely that these pits and stakeholes within or located close to trench 1 would be destroyed by the proposed development.

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Line of stake holes in Trench 1, photograph looking north-east (Photo: Chris Jones).