



RIVER EDEN CANOE ACCESS, SANDS CENTRE, CARLISLE, CUMBRIA

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology North

January 2011

The Environment Agency

Issue No: 2010-11/1129
OA North Job No: L9929
NGR: SD 40035 56635

Document Title: RIVER EDEN CANOE ACCESS, SANDS CENTRE, CARLISLE,
CUMBRIA

Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Client Name: The Environment Agency

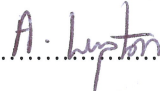
Issue Number: 2010-11/1129
OA North Job Number: L9929
National Grid Reference: SD 40035 56635

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by The Environment Agency to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for a canoe access on the south bank of the River Eden, to the north-east of the Sands Centre, Carlisle, Cumbria (NGR SD 40035 56635; Fig 1). The location of the canoe access is in an area of high archaeological potential; the site of the former Roman fort of Stanwix lies directly across the River Eden, while the Bridgewater Bridge, to the west, is reputed to have a Roman predecessor. The Roman and medieval core of Carlisle lies beneath the current city centre to the south-west.

The monitored groundworks were undertaken in two stages on the 27-8th September 2007. First, an area of topsoil and subsoil was removed from the top of the river bank, with spoil placed within a natural gully that ran down to the river to create a ramp down the bank. The second phase comprised the excavation of a small foundation trench (3.5m x 2.7m x 0.7m) for a small jetty immediately on the river's edge at the base of the ramp. The excavations did not reveal any remains of archaeological interest, with the deposits comprising topsoil, subsoil and river-borne deposits. The excavated material was scanned by metal detector, to identify any significant stray finds that may have been eroded into the river silts. No such finds were produced, perhaps due to the very limited scope of the works, although one small fragment of late post-medieval pottery was recovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to extend thanks to Jo Ratcliffe of the Environment Agency for commissioning this project, and to Jeremy Parsons of Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) for his advice during the project.

The fieldwork was carried out by Phillipa Haworth and Kelly Clapperton, and the report was compiled by Kelly Clapperton and Alastair Vannan. The illustrations were produced by Marie Rowland and the report was edited by Stephen Rowland, who also managed the project.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 The Environment Agency commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of canoe access steps on the south bank of the River Eden, to the north-east of the Sands Centre, Carlisle, Cumbria (NGR SD 40035 56635; Figs 1 and 2). The proximity of the development site to significant Roman and medieval remains indicated that there was high potential for archaeological remains on the site. Consequently, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) issued a verbal brief requesting that a programme of archaeological work should be conducted during any ground disturbing activities associated with the development. OA North responded by issuing a project design (*Appendix 1*), which provided a methodology for an archaeological watching brief. The following document reports the results of the archaeological watching brief, undertaken between the 27th and 28th of September 2007, in accordance with the CCCHES-approved project design.

1.2 LOCATION, TOPOLOGY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 The proposed canoe access is located approximately 75m to the north-east of the Sands Centre, to the east of Bridgewater Road, on the southern bank of the River Eden, and to the north-east of Carlisle city centre. Carlisle lies within the Solway Basin, which is bounded to the north and west by the Solway Firth and the Irish Sea, the Cumbria High Fells to the south, and the Border Hills to the north-east. The landscape is generally pastoral, with large open fields and restricted woodland. The Solway Basin is underlain by mudstones and red sandstones of Permo-Triassic age (Countryside Commission 1998, 20). To the west of the city Liassic mudstones and limestones of Jurassic age overlie the sandstones. These are sealed by substantial deposits of glacial till, in the form of boulder clay, transported from Scotland and the Lake District. This has been moulded into drumlins, while sand and gravel eskers accumulated as the glaciers receded (*ibid*). The drift geology was then overlain by Typical brown-alluvial soils (Ordnance Survey (OS) 1983).

1.3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 **Introduction:** Carlisle is amongst the most intensively investigated settlements in the North West. The following is an outline of the history and archaeology of development site's area, provided to put the results in their historical and archaeological contexts; it is not intended as an exhaustive review.

1.3.2 **Prehistoric Period:** archaeological investigations at the sites of Annetwell Street, Blackfriars Street, Lowther Street and the Northern Lanes have provided some limited evidence of prehistoric activity within Carlisle, in the form of plough marks; however, no structural evidence associated with settlement was identified at these sites (Caruana forthcoming; McCarthy 1990;

Flynn 1995; Zant forthcoming a). To the east of the city; at Scotby Road, a Neolithic and Bronze Age settlement was identified, which was succeeded by two phases of palisaded enclosures that probably date to the Iron Age (McCarthy and Zant 1997). At Botcherby a possible Bronze Age roundhouse was identified, while at Garlands Hospital a Bronze Age cremation cemetery was discovered on the hilltop, and a burnt mound towards the base of the hill (LUAU 1996). No sites dating to the prehistoric period were identified immediately around the proposed canoe access.

1.3.3 **Roman Period:** in AD 72-3 a military fort was constructed on a natural promontory above the confluence of the River Eden and the River Caldew, which later became the site of the extant medieval castle. By the end of the first century AD, the fort was included in the Tyne/Solway isthmus frontier; the Stanegate. During this period it was known as *Lugavallium*, and it is suggested that it was the command centre for the northern frontier (Shotton 1997). During the second century a fort on Hadrian's wall at Stanwix, on the northern side of the River Eden and directly opposite the proposed development site, was built, while the first fort on Annetwell Street was occupied well into the post-Roman period. By the early third century, a civilian *vicus* had grown up around the fort, and it was thought to be one of the largest Roman settlements in the North West. The *vicus* was most likely confined within the area of the later medieval walled city, and concentrated along Botchergate and Rickergate (Newman ed in press). Although the development site is not in the immediate vicinity of any Roman sites, it is situated to the north-east of the main Roman fort at Carlisle, and directly south across the river from the fort at Stanwix. It is also possible that the earliest foundation of a bridge in the vicinity of the Bridgewater Bridge was established during the Roman period (CCC 2007).

1.3.4 **Medieval Period:** there is some confusion over the location and size of the population of Carlisle immediately after the Roman period, although there is some evidence for occupation during the fourth and fifth centuries, and a church dating to the tenth century was established on the site of the current cathedral (McCarthy 1990). It is suspected that earlier churches, from the seventh century, existed on the site, and an Anglian monastery is also identified in documentary sources (Colgrave 1940). The majority of pre-Conquest activity is based on coin evidence. In 1092 the first medieval castle was constructed and Carlisle became a major frontier city of the Scottish/English border until the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. Although the canoe access site lies outwith the city walls, it is within a short distance from the medieval town, which is below the current city centre to the south-west. The Bridgewater Bridge, to the west of the site, had been established by the medieval period (CCC 2007).

1.3.5 **Post-Medieval Period:** there has been very little archaeological work done on post-medieval Carlisle, while documentary evidence suggests a recovery in fortunes and rise in population from the sixteenth century onwards. In the main, as well as helping to secure the border from Scottish incursions, Carlisle was a small market town, with a significant merchant and gentry population.

By the end of the eighteenth century the population had risen to 4000-5000 (McCarthy 1993).

- 1.3.6 By 1848, the census indicated that the population had increased nearly eightfold in the preceding 50 years (OA North 2007), which resulted in a rapid sprawl of the city. The majority of the city walls were demolished in the early part of the century to accommodate the population increase, while backyards were in-filled by housing, workshops and light industry (*ibid*).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 The CCCHES-approved OA North project design (*Appendix 1*) was adhered to in full, and all works were consistent with the guidance and standards of the Institute for Field Archaeologists (IfA) and accepted best practice.

2.2 FIELDWORK

- 2.2.1 **Groundworker's Methodology:** the excavation for the canoe access began with the removal of topsoil and subsoil from along the upper edge of the bank along the River Eden, by a 360° 13 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket. The resultant spoil was moved into an existing, natural gully, and then landscaped into a slope running down to the river's edge. Finally, a foundation trench measuring 3.5m x 2.7m was excavated to a depth of 0.7m along the base of the river bank, using the same machine but fitted with a 1.2m toothed bucket (Fig 2; Plates 1 and 2).
- 2.2.2 **Archaeological Monitoring:** both phases were conducted under the continuous supervision of an archaeologist. All spoil removed during the excavations was placed to one side, and scanned using a metal detector for any possible stray finds. It was not possible to access the foundation trench once it had been excavated due to health and safety considerations relating to the instability of the surrounding deposits and its proximity to the river.
- 2.2.3 All deposits identified were described and recorded on appropriate OA North *pro-forma* sheets. An indexed photographic archive of the site and groundworks was compiled using monochrome print and colour slide, and digital photographs were taken for presentation purposes. The site was located upon plans provided by the client and related to Ordnance Datum.

2.3 FINDS

- 2.3.1 All finds were exposed, lifted, cleaned and bagged in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and were retained for assessment.

2.4 ARCHIVE

- 2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*), and in accordance with current IfA and English Heritage guidelines (IfA 2001; English Heritage 1991). The archive will be deposited in the County Record Office (CRO) in Carlisle, and a copy of the report will be sent to the Historic Environment Record (HER), in Kendal, on completion of the project.

3 RESULTS

3.1 FIELDWORK

- 3.1.1 Three separate geological deposits were identified during the archaeological watching brief. They comprised topsoil and subsoil along the top of the bank, and river-borne deposits within the foundation trench at the base of the bank (Plates 1-3).
- 3.1.2 The topsoil was approximately 0.2m thick and comprised dark greyish-brown, soft clay silt with >5% small to medium sub-rounded pebbles. The subsoil, approximately 0.3m thick, was a mid-greyish-brown firm silty clay with >20% medium to large sub-rounded cobbles.
- 3.1.4 The river-borne deposits could be divided into three layers (Plate 3). The upper layer consisted of approximately 90% greyish-brown, small to medium-sized gravel, and approximately 10% coarse sand; the middle deposit was a mid- to dark orange/brown loose gravel, comprising small to large pebbles. This sealed the lowest observed deposit, which was a mid-yellow/orange coarse sand with <25% small to medium gravel inclusions. This was observed at approximately 0.6m below the base level of the bank.
- 3.1.5 A fragment of industrial-period pottery was recovered from the river-borne deposits. However, due to the manner of excavation, it was impossible to discern the precise level it came from. No further finds or remains of archaeological significance were identified from the other deposits.

3.2 FINDS

- 3.2.1 The only find encountered during the watching brief comprised a single unstratified sherd of industrial-period pottery.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 The location of the canoe access is within an area of high archaeological potential relating to the Roman period, and successive activity. The Bridgewater Bridge, which lies directly to the west of the site, dated to the medieval period, and probably had a Roman foundation (CCC 2007). To the north, across the River Eden, lay the Roman fort of Stanwix, and situated to the south-west was the Roman and medieval core of Carlisle, on the site of the current city centre. The immediate vicinity of the site would, therefore, have represented a major crossing point of the River Eden.
- 4.1.2 One small fragment of pottery dating to the industrial period was recovered from river-borne, geological deposits (Plate 3). The pottery was likely to have resulted from the erosion of material into the river from further up stream, but its presence certainly suggests that the deposits from which it was recovered were deposited fairly recently. The reworking of river deposits is a continual process, meaning that artefacts of various dates might become incorporated within quite late deposits. However, it seems possible that stratified, *in-situ* Roman and medieval deposits may lie sealed at a depth greater than was investigated as part of the present programme of works.

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5.3 WEBSITES

Cumbria County Council (CCC), 2007 HER website accessed on the 09/10/2007: <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/countryside/historic-environment/online.asp>

6 ILLUSTRATIONS

6.1 FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Site Location Plan

6.2 PLATES

Plate 1: Working shot looking south-west

Plate 2: General shot of the river bank and foundation trench, looking north-east

Plate 3: Close-up of the south-west-facing section through the foundation trench

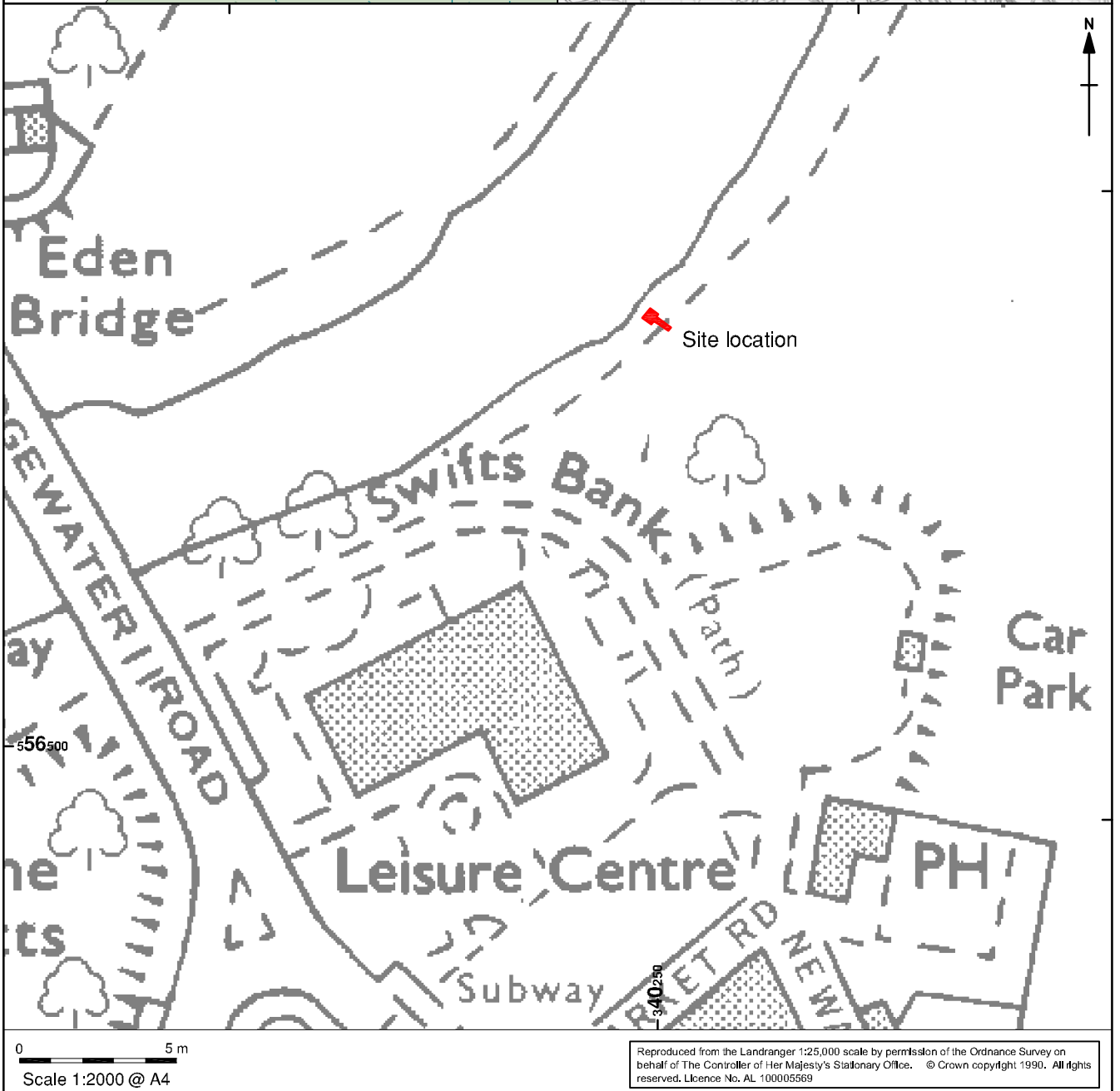
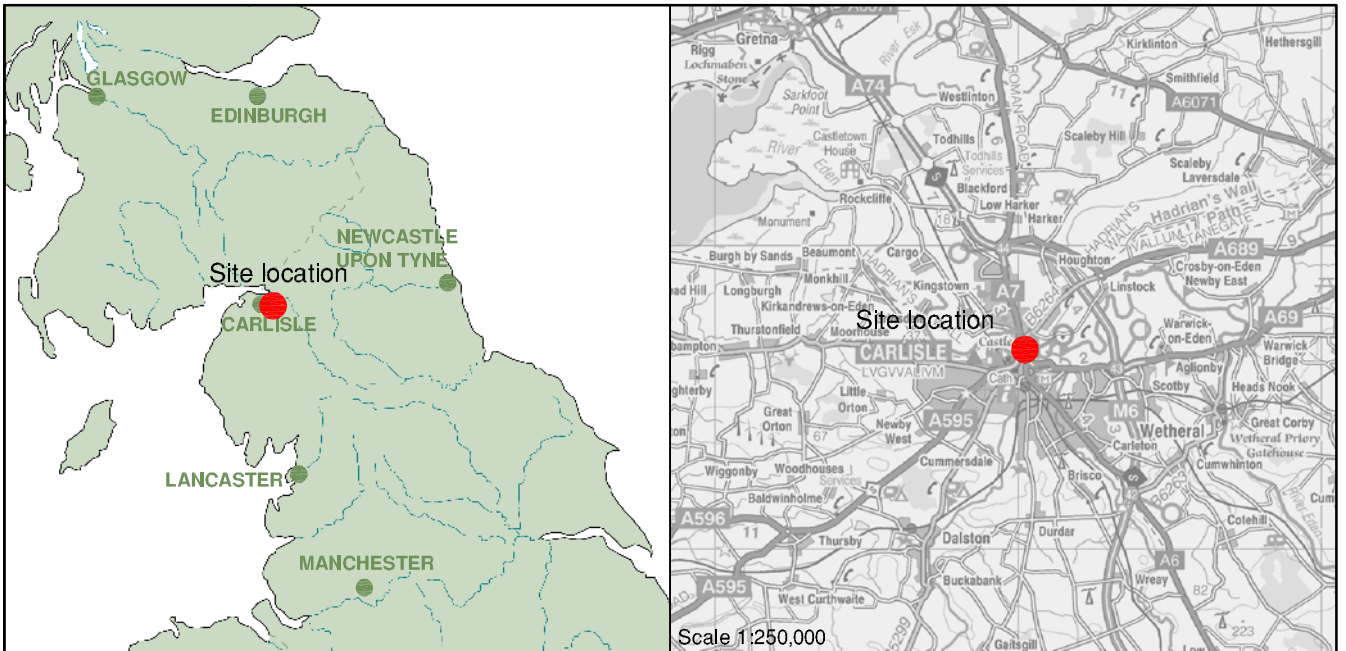


Figure 1: Site Location

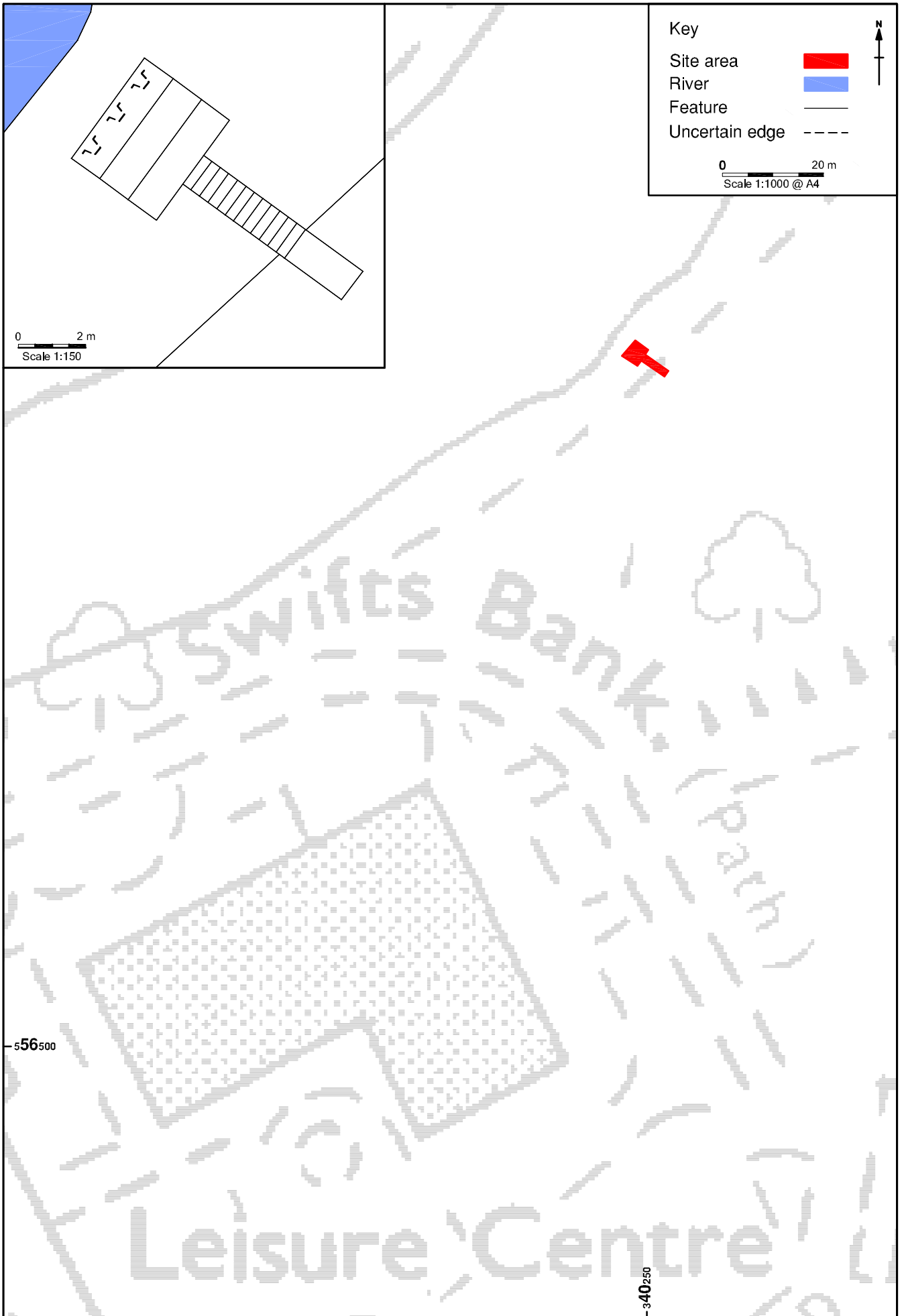


Figure 2: Site location plan



Plate 1: Working shot looking south-west



Plate 2: General shot of the river bank and foundation trench, looking north-east



Plate 3: Close-up of the south-west-facing section through the foundation trench

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Environment Agency (hereafter ‘the Client’), has requested that Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals for a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of some access steps on the south bank of the River Eden, close to the Sands Centre, Carlisle, Cumbria (NGR SD 40035 56635). The development site is located within an area of archaeological potential and, consequently, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) issued a verbal brief requesting that a watching brief be conducted during any ground disturbing activities associated with the development, including topsoil stripping, landscaping, installation of services, etc. The following document represents a project design to carry out the above programme of work and has been prepared in accordance with communication from CCCHES.

1.2 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 The proposed development site lies just to the east of the Eden Bridge that carries the A7 from Carlisle city centre to the suburb of Stanwix on the north bank of the Eden. The position of the meandering Eden in this locality has changed over time. Carlisle castle lies to the west of the site, and the site of the Roman fort just to the south, whilst the route of Hadrian’s Wall is thought to have crossed the Eden in the near vicinity; there is thus potential for remains of both Roman and medieval date.

1.3 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

- 1.3.1 OA North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 25 years. Evaluations, desk-based assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables. OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an **Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The following programme has been designed to identify and record any archaeological deposits affected by the proposed development of the site, in order that they can be preserved by record. To this end, the following programme has been designed, in accordance with normal CCCHES standards, to provide a watching brief. The required stages to achieve these ends are as follows:
- 2.2 *Archaeological Watching Brief*
- 2.3 To undertake a programme of observation and recording during any ground disturbance to determine the presence, quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site.

2.4 **Report and Archive**

- 2.5 A report will be produced for the Client within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (1991) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).

3. **METHOD STATEMENT**

3.1 **WATCHING BRIEF**

- 3.1.1 **Methodology:** a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the whole area of the proposed ground disturbance. This work will comprise observation during all ground reduction and excavations for the proposed development, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation. A metal detector will be used to scan spoil heaps and archaeological features/horizons in order to maximise the recovery of metal artefacts.
- 3.1.2 The watching brief will cover the whole of the area to be disturbed by the development including, topsoil and subsoil stripping, the removal of any peat deposits and any other groundworks which would expose the natural drift geology.
- 3.1.3 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified during the observation of groundworks, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions and, where appropriate, sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie. selected pits and postholes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).
- 3.1.4 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan provided by the Client. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.
- 3.1.5 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.
- 3.1.6 **Treatment of finds:** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines.
- 3.1.7 **Treasure:** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.1.8 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the recipient museum's archive curator.
- 3.1.9 **Human Remains:** any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial. CCCHES and the local Coroner will be informed immediately. If removal is essential, the exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. The removal of human remains will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations.

3.1.10 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Planning Archaeologist or his representative, as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design. In the event of environmental/organic deposits being present on site, it would be necessary to discuss and agree a programme of palaeoenvironmental sampling and or dating with the Planning Archaeologist.

3.2 REPORT AND ARCHIVE

3.2.1 **Report:** one bound and one unbound copy of a written synthetic report will be submitted to the Client, and a further three copies submitted to the Cumbria HER within eight weeks of completion. Copies of the desk-based assessment, and interim statements on the results of the watching brief can be issued within three weeks of the completion of these elements. The report will include:

- a front cover to include the planning application number and the NGR
- a site location plan, related to the national grid
- the dates on which the fieldwork was undertaken
- a concise, non-technical summary of the results
- a description of the methodology employed, work undertaken and results obtained
- plans and sections at an appropriate scale, showing the location of features
- other illustrations and photographic plates showing, as appropriate, features of interest or to demonstrate the absence of archaeological features.
- a description of any environmental, finds, or other specialist work undertaken, and the results obtained
- the report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.
- a copy of this project design in the appendices, and indications of any agreed departure from that design

3.2.2 This report will be in the same basic format as this project design; a copy of the report can be provided on CD, if required.

3.2.3 **Archive:** the results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (Management of Archaeological Projects, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. It will include summary processing and analysis of all features, finds, or palaeoenvironmental data recovered during fieldwork, which will be catalogued by context. All artefacts will be processed to MAP2 standards and will be assessed by our in-house finds specialists.

3.2.4 The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct. OA North conforms to best practice in the preparation of project archives for long-term storage. This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the Cumbria HER (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects with the County Record Office, Kendal. The material archive (artefacts and ecofacts) will be deposited with an appropriate museum following agreement with the client.

3.2.5 **Collation of data:** the data generated will be collated and analysed in order to provide an assessment of the nature and significance of the known surface and subsurface remains within the designated area. It will also serve as a guide to the archaeological potential of the area to be investigated, and the basis for the formulation of any detailed field programme and associated sampling strategy, should these be required in the future.

- 3.2.6 The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) online database project Online Access to index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) will be completed as part of the archiving phase of the project.
- 3.2.7 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project brief and project design, or for any other explicit purpose, can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works and copies will be made available on request to all interested parties.

5. WORK TIMETABLE

- 5.1 **Archaeological Watching Brief:** the duration of this element is dependant upon the duration of any ground disturbing activities on the site.
- 5.2 **Report and Archive:** an evaluation report will be submitted within eight weeks of the completion of the fieldwork. However, should an interim statement be required this can be issued within two weeks but instruction must be received from the client prior to completion of the fieldwork.
- 5.3 **Written Instruction:** OA North can execute projects at very short notice once written confirmation of commission has been received from the Client. One weeks notice would be sufficient to allow the necessary arrangements to be made to commence the task and inform CCCHES.

6 PROJECT MONITORING

- 6.1 **Access:** liaison for site access during the evaluation will be arranged with the client unless otherwise instructed prior to commencement of the archaeological investigation.
- 6.2 Whilst the work is undertaken for the client, the County Archaeologist will be kept fully informed of the work and its results, and will be notified a week in advance of the commencement of the fieldwork. Any proposed changes to the project design will be agreed with CCCHES in consultation with the Client.

7 STAFFING PROPOSALS

- 7.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Stephen Rowland** (OA North project manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.
- 7.2 All elements of the archaeological investigation will be supervised by either an OA North project officer or supervisor experienced in this type of project. Due to scheduling

requirements it is not possible to provide these details at the present time. All OA North project officers and supervisors are experienced field archaeologists capable of carrying out projects of all sizes.

- 7.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Christine Howard-Davis BA MIFA** (OA North project officer). Christine has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England. However, she has specialist knowledge regarding glass, metalwork, and leather, the recording and management of waterlogged wood, and most aspects of wetland and environmental archaeology.
- 7.4 Assessment of any palaeoenvironmental samples which may be taken will be undertaken by **Elizabeth Huckerby MSc** (OA North project officer). Elizabeth has extensive knowledge of the palaeoecology of the North West through her work on the English Heritage-funded North West Wetlands Survey. Assessment of any faunal material will be undertaken by **Andrew Bates MSc** (OA North Supervisor).

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

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	Introduction Project Design		1
A	Report Final Report		1
B	Primary Fieldwork Records Daily Records		1
C	Primary Drawings Annotated Plans Drawing Indices Plans/Sections	N/A	1
D	Finds Box and Bag Lists		1
E	Environmental Records	N/A	
F	Photographic Record Photographic Indices Monochrome Colour Slides Digital		1
G	Electronic Media		1