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Geophysical Survey

**St Nicholas Gate Retail Park,
London Road, Carlisle**

Archaeological Watching Brief

Report No. 2041

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on 03 April 2012 during the excavation of a foundation trench at St Nicholas Gate Retail Park, Carlisle, Cumbria (NGR: 340801 555046 Centred) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Rowney Sharman Project Consultants.

All work was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by CFA (CFA 2012) based upon consultation with the Cumbria County Council Historical Environment Service (CCCHES).

1.2 Site Location and Description

The site is located on the current St Nicholas Gate Retail Park which was constructed in the late 20th century. The retail park is bounded by London Road to the east, a railway overpass to the west, St Nicholas Bridges, and the railway line itself to the south. The development area consists of industrial and commercial units along with associated road networks and car parking areas. The area was covered in tarmac and landscaped.

The groundworks were carried out to the immediate east of the junction between St. Nicholas Street and Woodrouffe Terrace. The trench was located at the western end of the retail park, adjacent to the last retail unit (Fig. 1).

1.3 Previous Archaeological work

An archaeological desk based assessment was produced by CFA in 2011 (Kirby 2011). The DBA concluded that the archaeological potential of the site had been directly affected by previous building activity. This included the St Nicholas Engineering Works, which were constructed in the mid 19th century on the same plot as the current retail park. These buildings were in use until 1987. The DBA concluded that extensive construction on the site, from the 19th century onwards, including the excavations for foundations and underground services may have removed or significantly disturbed any buried archaeological remains within the site. However, it did acknowledge that ‘there is a low potential for isolated pockets of earlier remains to survive’ (Kirby 2011). Aside from the DBA, no intrusive archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place within the proposed development area.

1.4 Objectives

The general objectives of the project were to:

- determine the form and function of any archaeological features encountered;
- determine the spatial arrangement of any archaeological features encountered;
- as far as practicable, recover dating evidence from the archaeological features, and;
- establish the sequence of any archaeological remains present on the site.

2. WORKING METHODS

2.1 General

The excavation of the trench was carried out using a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-bladed bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Prior to the removal of topsoil and the underlying deposits, the area was cleared of any vegetation. All further excavation required to fulfil the terms of the brief were carried out by hand.

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, by photography and by completing standard CFA record forms.

2.2 Standards and Guidance

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation (RO) with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). All work was conducted in accordance with relevant IfA Standards and Guidance documents (IfA 1994, 2001), English Heritage guidance (EH, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2008b 2008c and 2011), and CFA's standard methodology.

2.3 Archiving

A report will be deposited with the Council Historic Environment Record within two months of the completion of the fieldwork. Should further work result from the initial works, further reporting will be undertaken to the satisfaction of CCCHES. The work will be ordered according to current guidelines and to nationally recognised standards (UKIC 1990, 2001, MGC 1994, SMA 1995, Ferguson and Murray 1997 and Brown 2007).

3. RESULTS

The excavated trench was 3.3m in length and 0.6m wide by c.1.4m in depth. Excavation removed 0.2m of topsoil (001). Beneath the topsoil, a deposit of modern concrete (002) was uncovered which overlay a layer of made ground (003) consisting of reddish sand and gravel, which in turn overlay a further deposit of concrete (004) (Fig. 2).

Underlying deposits 003 and 004 was a layer of soft, dark-brown, sandy-silt, c. 0.14m thick (005). This overlay a 0.7m thick deposit of demolition material which consisted of mid-brown, sandy silt (006) (Fig. 3). Both deposits 005 and 006 contained modern detritus such as plastic refuse, modern brick as well as other ceramic building materials.

The natural substrate (007) was reached at a depth of approximately 1.4m below ground level. It comprised mid-red, coarse sand and gravel.

Deposits 001-004 are interpreted as levelling deposits for the construction of the current ground surface for the retail park. Deposits 005 and 006 are interpreted as the remnants of the demolition and levelling of post-industrial buildings on the site prior to the building of the retail park.

4. CONCLUSIONS

No deposits of archaeological significance were encountered during the monitoring of the groundworks at St Nicholas Gate Retail Park.

During the excavation of the trench a number of deposits were identified, all of which were interpreted as made ground from relatively modern activity on the site. Deposit 006 is probably from the demolition and levelling of former buildings located on this site prior to the construction of the present retail park.

Further archaeological watching briefs will take place during groundbreaking works during the course of the re-development of the site, to identify whether archaeological remains have survived in the development area.

The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports will be deposited with Tullie House, Cumbria.

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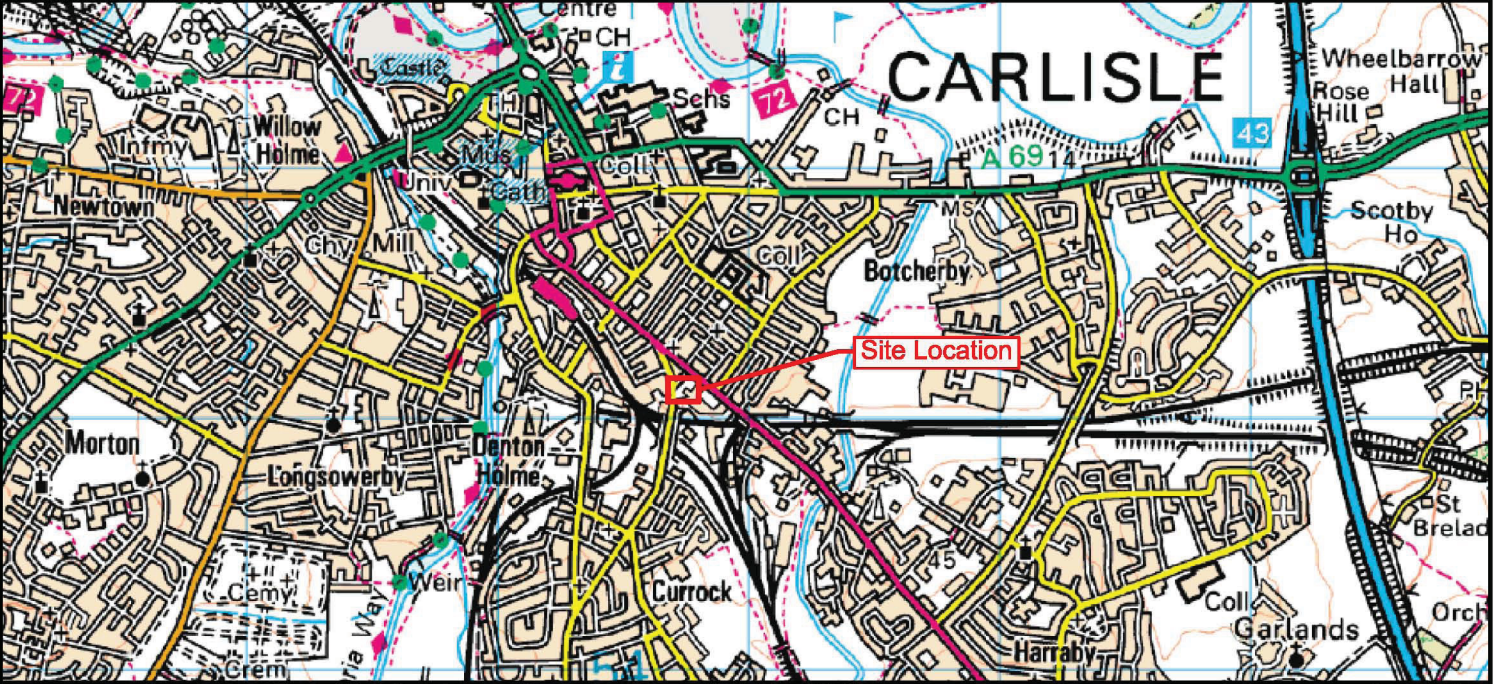
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context no.	Description
001	Topsoil; mid-brown sandy silt c. 0.18m.
002	Hard standing foundation deposit; limestone chippings and concrete forming the foundation for the adjacent pavement to the east c.0.3m.
003	Hardcore deposit; Light red, sand and gravel hardcore 0.28m.
004	Hard-standing foundation deposit; limestone chippings and concrete forming the foundation for the adjacent access road to the west c.0.3m.
005	Deposit of made ground; dark-brown, sandy silt including modern detritus 0.14m
006	Demolition rubble/deposit; mid-brown, sandy silt, including modern detritus 0.7m.
007	Natural substrate; comprising reddy-orange, coarse sand and gravel, with rounded pebble inclusions.

Appendix 2: Digital Photographic Register

Shot No.	Description	Facing	Conditions
1	Pre-excavation shot of the trench.	North-West	Overcast
2	Working shot of site showing proximity of nearby buildings.	South-West	Overcast
3-4	Working shot of trench during excavation.	North-West	Overcast
5-6	Working shot of north-east facing section.	West	Overcast
7-8	Shot of part of north-east facing section.	South-West	Overcast
9	Working shot of trench excavated down to natural substrate.	South-West	Overcast
10	Shot of north-east facing section.	South-West	Overcast
11-12	Oblique shot of north-east facing section of excavated trench.	West	Overcast



Key:

Trench Location

Scale at A4: 1:500

Fig No: 1	Revision: 0	Client: Rowney Sharman Project Consultant
Title: Site location plan and trench position		
Project: St. Nicholas Gate Retail Park, Carlisle		

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Fig 2 - Shot of north-east-facing section



Fig 3 - Oblique shot of north-east-facing section of excavated trench

Key:	Fig. No:	2-3	Revision:	A	Client:	Rowney Sharnan Project Consultant
	Title:					
	Project:	St. Nicholas Gate Retail Park, Carlisle				
Scale:						

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