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Land off Roper Street, Penrith, Cumbria

Archaeological Evaluation
Report No. Y359/18

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**Land at Roper Street
Penrith
Cumbria**

Archaeological Evaluation

Report No. Y359/18

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. WORKING METHODS.....	5
3. RESULTS.....	7
4. DISCUSSION.....	9
5. CONCLUSION	9
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	11

Appendices

- 1: Context Register
- 2: Inventory of Primary Archive

Tables

- 3.1: Trench Summaries

Figures

- Fig. 1: Site location and trench layout
- Figs. 2.1-2.2: Plans
- Figs. 3.1-3.8: Photographs

SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by CFA Archaeology on land at Roper Street, Penrith, Cumbria during June 2018. Two trenches were excavated across the proposed site of a new development in order to evaluate any potential surviving archaeological remains. The trenches contained evidence for surviving building remains in the form of a cobbled yard surface, and foundations and associated floor surfaces of a former building.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) during June 2018 on land at Roper Street, Penrith, Cumbria (Fig.1, NGR NY 51876 29894). The work was commissioned by Orion Heritage and was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) produced by the same (Orion Heritage 2018) and agreed with the county council archaeological officer for Cumbria. This stage of the work was carried out in advance of the proposed construction of a housing development with associated roads and infrastructure.

1.1 Site Location and Description

The study site is located on Roper Street, near to the junction with Old London Road, Penrith (Fig. 1). The topography of the study site is flat, with a height above Ordnance Datum (aOD) of approximately 130 m.

The soils of the area are variable and are described as ‘freely draining slightly acid loamy soils (Landis 2018). The geology of the area consists of Penrith Sandstone Formation – sandstone with superficial deposits of Till- Devensian (BGS 2018).

1.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

The following is taken from the DBA of the site prepared by Orion Heritage. For a full background refer to this document (Orion Heritage 2017). Sites and monument numbers refer to those in the DBA.

No prehistoric evidence is recorded in the study site; however, some remains of prehistoric date are known in the wider area.

Prehistoric remains are evenly distributed in the area surrounding the core settlement of Penrith, with slightly larger numbers having been recorded to the west (Cumbria County Council 2002, Map C). No remains have yet been identified that are of Palaeolithic or Mesolithic date. However, Neolithic axes have been relatively common finds, and King Arthur's Round Table Henge, which is located to the south-east of Penrith, is a monument of great importance (SAM Number: 23648, SMR Number: 2868). It is believed to date to the end of the Neolithic or early Bronze Age, with the discovery of a bronze axe implying the use of the henge during the Bronze Age.

Many Bronze Age finds such as axes, spearheads and knives, and monuments including standing stones, cairns and cists, are also recorded within the wider landscape (Burl 1979, Cumbria County Council 2002). A single Iron Age and Romano-British

monument, near Sceugh Farm, which is situated to the north-east of Penrith, comprises a complex of enclosures and trackways (SAM Number: 388).

No evidence of Roman activity is recorded within the study site; however, some limited evidence is known in the wider area.

The line of a Roman road between Manchester and Carlisle is located to the east of Penrith, and passes through the Roman fort at Brougham, which is situated to the south-east of Penrith (Shotter 1997). A large cluster of Roman landscape elements, structures and stray finds has been recorded in this area (Cumbria County Council 2002, Map D). The function of the fort was to guard the nearby crossing of the River Eamont and the junction of the Roman road from Manchester to Carlisle, with the road to York across Stainmore Pass.

Two poorly located, Roman coins have been discovered within Penrith, but there is no firm evidence to suggest any significant Roman activity ever took place within the town, and certainly no evidence of settlement (Cumbria County Council 2002).

Based on current evidence, it is considered that the potential for the study site to contain Roman settlement remains is low. Although the proximity of Penrith to the Roman forts at Old Penrith and Brougham, as well as the Roman road that by-passed the town to the east, indicate that the area around Penrith was occupied during the Roman period, the lack of finds dating to this period within the historic core of Penrith suggests that the Romans did not occupy the area of the town.

No Saxon/Early Medieval evidence is recorded within the study site. Although there is no documentary evidence for settlement in Penrith prior to the 12th century, it has been suggested that the street plan indicates pre-Norman settlement, with St Andrew's Church at its centre (Cumbria County Council 2002). A cross-shaft fragment, dated to the late 8th to early 9th century, was discovered built into the walls of Tynefield House in Penrith (Richardson 1998). This is of considerable importance since it is the only artefact that pre-dates the Viking domination of Penrith during the early 10th century (ibid 1998).

There are significant 10th century monuments within St Andrew's churchyard; and these have been scheduled (SAM Number: 23662) - although they are not thought to be in their original locations. The monuments include the Giant's Thumb High Cross and Giant's Grave, the latter comprising two crosses and four hogback stones (Cumbria County Council 2002).

There are no recorded archaeological assets of medieval date within the study site. During the 12th to 14th centuries, Cumbria was disputed over by the English and the Scots, which resulted in continual raids from the Scots. Because of these raids, Penrith received a grant of murage in 1346 to build a stone wall encircling the town (Winchester 1979).

However, there is some doubt as to whether the wall was ever constructed (Wooler 2008); and outbreaks of the Plague in the 14th century, beginning with the Black Death in 1348/9, may have accounted for the failure to build the town wall.

Approximately 500 m to the north of the study site lies the site of Penrith Friary, a friary founded by the Austin Friars between 1291-1300 (983 on Figure 2). The friary is thought to have been a poor house which belonged to the piety of the Scottish Kings; it was first documented in 1299 when Edward I bestowed alms on it.

There are no recorded archaeological assets of Post-Medieval date within the study site.

1.3 Previous Archaeological Work

The site has been subject to an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA), carried out in 2017 (Orion Heritage 2017).

This report concluded that the available evidence did not suggest that remains would be present that would preclude the development of the site. It did note, however, that there was a moderate potential for the discovery of archaeological assets from the Post-Medieval period within the north-western and western parts of the study site; particularly those below ground remains associated with the outbuildings to the early 19th century Bark House Lane Tannery and late 19th century Byron Court Brewery.

It also noted that any archaeological evidence is likely to have been either truncated or possibly destroyed by the construction of the modern garage and its associated outbuildings in the 1960s. However, it concluded that it was possible that some remains may survive in the northern part of the study site, where truncation may have been less severe.

The DBA found that there was a low potential for remains from other periods to be present within the development site.

1.4 Project Aims

In accordance with the written scheme of investigation the aims of the of the evaluation were as follows;

- To establish the presence/absence, extent and character of any archaeological features on the site and to consider the archaeological interest of these in the context of the regional archaeological framework;
- To establish whether remains of the 19th century tannery and brewery survive within the northern part of the study site;
- To examine any available evidence for economic activity and environmental conditions;
- To generate an archive which will allow future research of the evidence to be undertaken if appropriate;
- To disseminate the results of the work in a format and manner proportionate to the significance of the findings.

2. WORKING METHODS

CFA Archaeology is a registered organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (Cifa). Work was conducted with regard to the Institute's Standards documents (Cifa 2014a-c), relevant Historic England guidance documents (EH 2006,

2008 and 2011), and this WSI. Recording of all elements was done following established CFA procedures.

A visual inspection of the site was undertaken during which a note of any surface features of potential archaeological interest, areas of potentially significant disturbance, and hazards and constraints to undertaking further archaeological work on site (including the siting of live services, tree preservation orders and public footpaths) was taken.

An evaluation totalling 50m² was investigated by 1 x 15m trench and 1 x 10m trench. Trenches were positioned to best sample the site area and are laid out according to Figure 1.

The trenches were excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision to remove modern overlying layers to the natural substrate or the first significant archaeological horizon, whichever was reached first. Any further excavation required to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation was carried out by hand. Breaking of concrete floor surfaces by a breaker was required at the highest levels of the site.

Samples of all features of archaeological interest were excavated in order to establish their likely date, nature, extent and condition. All such sample excavation was conducted by hand. The samples were limited to remove only such deposits as necessary to achieve the evaluation objectives.

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. The stratification was recorded even if no deposits of archaeological significance were discovered. The trenches were backfilled on completion of excavation. The location of the trenches was recorded using industry standard surveying equipment and tied to the National Grid. Vertical survey control was tied to the Ordnance Survey Datum.

Sections were recorded by means of a measured drawing at an appropriate scale. Sections were drawn at 1:10. The height of a datum on the drawing was calculated and recorded. The locations of sections were recorded on the site plans, relative to the site grid. Cut features were recorded in profile, planned at an appropriate scale and their location accurately identified on the appropriate trench plan.

Photographs include an appropriate scale and where necessary a north arrow. All photographs were recorded on a photographic register detailing subject, location and direction of shot.

All artefacts, including faunal remains, were retained for analysis. Modern finds were recorded but not retained. Collection and post-excavation work on artefacts will follow current Historic England (EH 2008) and CIfA guidance (2014b).

A summary of the results of archaeological works will be submitted for inclusion in OASIS. The OASIS reference is cfaarcha1-320041.

2.1 Trial Trenching

Two trial trenches, one measuring 15m and one measuring 10m in length were excavated within the site boundary (Fig.1). Deposits were removed in even, shallow spits by a JCB 3CX excavator equipped with a 1.80m wide smooth-bladed ditching bucket. All mechanical excavation work was carried out under constant archaeological supervision. Any further excavation required to fulfil the objectives of the evaluation was carried out by hand.

3. RESULTS

A summary of all contexts from the evaluation forms Appendix 1 whilst the site archive is listed in Appendix 2. The following results should be read in conjunction with figures 1-3.

Descriptions of the 2 trenches appear in the table below (Table 3.1). Full results of those trenches containing archaeological features follow. Finds recovered during the evaluation were all of 19th-20th century date and were recovered from later deposits of made ground and modern disturbance. These were noted and then discarded. No finds of any earlier periods were recovered.

A layer of tarmac (100) covered the entirety of the site area and measured between 0.05-0.10m in depth and overlay a layer of crushed white stone hardcore (101) material that formed the base for the tarmac surface. Underlying the stone hardcore material were layers of industrial and demolition materials as described in Table 3.1 below. The natural substrate for the area consisted of yellow gravels (107) and was identified within three sondages dug within the two trenches.

No.	Description
1	<p>The trench was orientated north-east to south-west and was generally flat across the trench. The natural substrate (107) was identified within two sondages dug within the trench. The first of these was located at the north-eastern end of the trench and encountered the natural substrate, yellow silt and gravels, at 123.84m aOD (Fig. 3.3). The second sondage was dug towards the centre of the trench and encountered the natural substrate at a depth of 123.80m aOD (Fig. 3.4).</p> <p>Overlying the natural substrate across the trench was a layer of grey-green silty clay (106) that measured 0.60-0.85m in depth. Overlying this was a layer of black silty clay with brick rubble/stone inclusions throughout (105) that measured 0.40-0.60m in depth.</p> <p>Cut into layer 106 at the south-western end of the trench were the remains of two walls with an associated floor surface (109, 110 and 111) and a large sandstone wall foundation (112). Towards the north-eastern end of the trench, and cut into layer 105, was a small sandstone wall (113).</p> <p>Overlying layer 105 and the remains of the walls/floors within the trench was a layer of crushed brick demolition materials (102) that measured 0.10-0.20m in thickness. This was sealed by the made ground and modern layers making up the car park surface.</p>
2	<p>The trench was orientated north-west to south-east and had a slight slope downwards from north-west to south-east across the trench (Fig. 3.1 and 3.2).</p> <p>The natural substrate was identified within a sondage dug towards the centre of the trench at a depth of 123.75m aOD (Fig. 3.5). Overlying the natural was a layer of green-grey silty clay (106) that contained large rounded stone and measured c.1.05m in depth. Cut through this layer at the north-western end of the trench was a large ceramic sewage pipe.</p>

No.	Description
	Sealing layer 106 was a layer of black silt (105) 0.20m in depth which was overlain by a thin band of red sand (104) 0.05m in thickness. Overlying this at the north-western end of the trench was a thin concrete floor surface (103), while at the south-eastern end of the trench a crude cobbled surface (108) was recorded. Overlying these features was a layer of crushed brick and stone demolition materials (102) measuring 0.15-0.20m in depth and which was overlain by the modern made ground for the current car park surface.

Table 3.1: Trench Summaries

3.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 contained the remains of walls and floor surfaces likely related to former buildings on the site (Fig. 2.1). The majority of these were found at the south-western end of the trench where the remains of a large sandstone wall foundation were recorded (112). Wall 112 featured 4 visible courses of large sandstone blocks bonded by a lime mortar. The sandstone blocks varied in size from 0.3-0.5m in width and up to 0.25m in depth in places. The wall foundations survived to a height of 0.70m and were identified immediately below the modern layers making up the car park surface (figs. 3.6 and 3.7).

To the immediate south-west of Wall 112, and butting its south-western edge, were two walls and an associated floor surface (walls 109 and 111 and floor surface 110). Walls 109 and 111 were on a north-west to south-east alignment and were present across the trench and appeared to continue beyond the limits of the trench to both the north-west and south-east. The walls were constructed of roughly shaped sandstone blocks of varying sizes and featured some traces of a lime mortar. Wall 109 was largely obscured by the baulk of the trench and depth was undetermined here, however, Wall 111 survived to a height of just a single course (0.10m) and measured 0.18m in width.

Floor surface 110 featured sub-rectangular sandstone flagstones and was sited between the two walls 109 and 111. The surface appeared to have been truncated by later activity towards the north-western edge of the trench but continued beyond the trench limits to the south-east. No obvious bonding material was noted within the structure of the floor.

Towards the north-eastern end of the trench were the remains of a small, crude sandstone wall (113) that lay above a layer of black silt and brick/stone rubble (Fig. 3.8). The wall was bonded by a crude lime mortar and appeared to represent a boundary of some description with the wall seeming too small and fragile to be a foundation of any substance. The wall survived to a height of three courses and measured 0.18-0.24m in width and had a height of 0.35m.

3.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 contained one archaeological feature of note in the form of a crude cobbled surface (108) that was located at the south-eastern end of the trench at a depth of 124.98m aOD (approximately 0.40m below the modern car park surface, Fig. 2.2). The surface appeared to be the remains of a former yard with the cobbles making up the surface varying in size from between 0.05-0.12m. The surface extended approximately 2.75m into the trench from the south-eastern end where it no longer remained in situ. The cobbles appeared to extend beyond the trench limits to the south-east. A modern ceramic sewage pipe had been cut through the trench at its north-western end.

4. DISCUSSION

The large sandstone wall foundation recorded in Trench 1 was only partially within the trench and appeared to continue beyond the trench limits to the north-west. It survived almost immediately below the modern made ground laid down for the current tarmac car park surface. Cross-referencing with historic ordnance survey maps seems to suggest that the earliest structures in this area of the site are seen on the OS Six Inch 1888-1913 map. Here there are a number of buildings with the one which closely matches the location of the sandstone wall being a large rectangular structure which backs on to Old London Road to the north-east. The smaller sandstone walls with the internal flagged stone area are also likely to be part of this complex of structures although the former function of this feature is largely unknown.

The cobbled surface recorded within the south-eastern end of Trench 2 survived at approximately 0.40m below the present ground surface and extended 2.75m into the trench where it had been truncated by later activity. The surface appeared to be a former yard area, most likely associated with the former garage building that once stood on the site before the construction of the newer modern building that now exists. There is no evidence of a cobbled surface on any of the historic ordnance survey maps although the area behind the garage building is shown as an area of open space.

There was no conclusive evidence that the recorded structural remains related to the former tanning yard or brewery located in the area of the proposed site, although the cobbled yard surface may relate to the ancillary buildings of the main brewery complex which is located to the south-east. Finds from the site were all of 20th century date onwards and were largely confined to the made ground levels that made up the base layers for the modern car-park surface. These finds consisted of domestic ceramics and fragments of modern clay drainage pipe/service drain.

There was no evidence for any finds that may have indicated the earlier presence of the tanning yard such as the remnants of any leather or material artefacts and no evidence of any remains for any of the industrial processes that may have been associated with the production of such artefacts such as pits/ditches identified in the evaluation. In the areas where the natural substrate was revealed this was a clean gravel surface and showed no signs of disturbance from any later industrial activities.

No evidence of any early surviving archaeology was recorded within the sondages dug to natural within the two trenches, with the substrate here being a clean yellow silt with gravel throughout. Overlying this was a layer of green-grey clay which appeared to be a secure context that had not been disturbed by, or the result of, demolition or construction of later buildings, although a sewage pipe had been cut through this layer at the north-western end of Trench 2.

5. CONCLUSION

The trenching at Roper Street, Penrith evaluated the proposed site of a new building. The trenches revealed evidence for the remains of former structures within the area, with a cobbled surface and sandstone wall foundations exposed across the two trenches. The structures appear to relate to former buildings that stood on the site depicted in ordnance survey maps of the late 19th century although there was no conclusive

evidence that the remains recorded related to the former tanning factory or brewery that once stood in this area. No early surviving archaeology was noted within any of the sondages that were excavated down to the natural substrate within the two trenches.

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Online Resources

- BGS, 2018, <http://www.bgs.uk> British Geological Survey (Accessed 11/06/2018)
- Landis, 2018, <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes> (Accessed 11/06/2018)

APPENDICES 1-2

Appendix 1: Context Summary

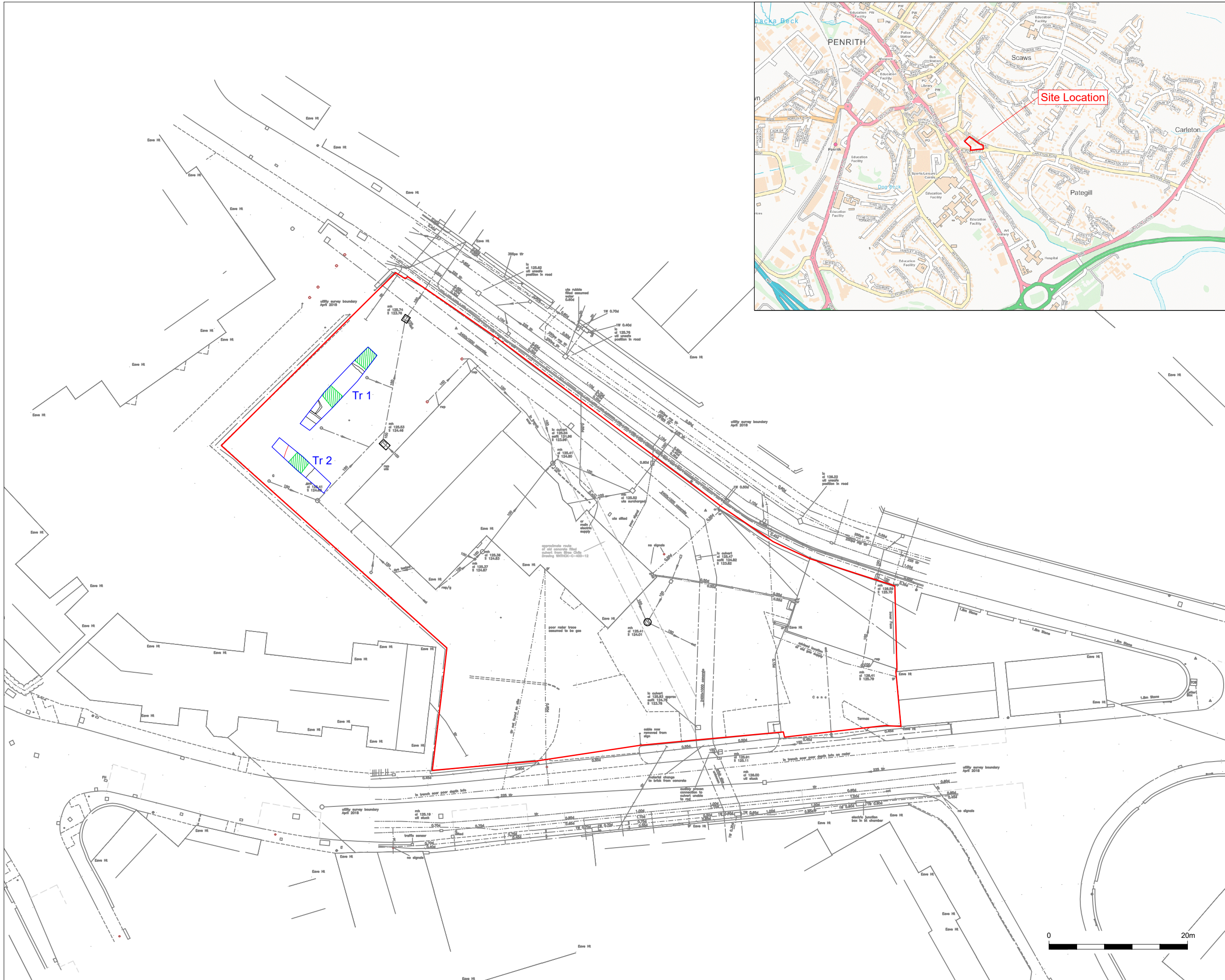
Context no.	Trench	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Max Depth (m)	Description
100	All	Layer			0.05	Tarmac layer forming the modern car park surface across the site. Black tarmac.
101	All	Layer			0.10	Layer of pink-white stones forming a hardcore base layer for tarmac surface above. Modern made ground.
102	2	Layer			0.15	Layer of crushed brick material, red in colour and likely a modern base layer for formation of tarmac car park surface above.
103	2	Floor	trench		0.05	Thin layer of concrete forming a crude surface noted at north-west end of Trench 2. Modern and likely the remains of the former surface before tarmac car park constructed.
104	2	Layer			0.05	Thin layer of red sand made ground, likely a layer for levelling area before installation of concrete surface that lay above.
105	All	Layer			0.20	Layer of black compacted silty clay that contained fragments of brick rubble and charcoal throughout. Likely layer of made ground noted towards centre of Trench 2 and towards the north-east end of Trench 1.
106	All	Layer			0.80-1.05	Layer of grey silty clay with large rounded stones in places. Underlies layers of industrial made ground and appeared to be fairly sterile on inspection. Cut by a modern sewage pipe at the north-western end of Trench 2.
107	All	Layer			n/a	Natural substrate for the site area. Consisted of yellow sand and gravels. Noted within sondages dug in both of the trenches and identified at between 1.6-1.8m below the current modern car park surface.
108	2	Floor	trench	2.75	0.20	Layer of cobble forming a crude surface identified at the south-eastern end of Trench 2 at approximately 0.40m below the modern car park surface. Cobbles were sub-rounded and varied in size from 0.05-0.12m in size. Likely a former yard surface.
109	1	Wall	0.18	0.40	0.18	Wall on a north-west to south-east orientation located at the south-western end of Trench 1. Largely obscured by overlying material at the end of the trench although feature clearly formed one side of a stone lined channel (surface being

Context no.	Trench	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Max Depth (m)	Description
						110) with Wall 111.
110	1	Floor	0.50	trench	n/a	Sandstone flagged floor surface butted by wall 110 and 111 to wither side. Possibly a channel for washing away water although no obvious drop in height across the visible portion of the feature. No obvious bonding material between the stone flags noted.
111	1	Wall	0.18	trench	0.18	Brick wall on a north-west to south-east alignment butting floor surface 110. One half of a structure forming a channel along with Wall 109 to the south-west. Constructed within grey clay layer 106, although no obvious cut within the trench noted.
112	1	Wall	0.50	0.60	0.70	Large sandstone constructed wall foundation recorded at the south-western end of Trench 1. Featured large red sandstone blocks of varying sizes bonded by a lime mortar. Continued beyond the trench limits to the north. Butted the stone lined channel which was located to the immediate south-west. 4 visible courses within the trench.
113	1	Wall	0.18	trench	0.35	Crude sandstone wall noted towards the north-eastern end of Trench 1. Survived to a height of 3 courses and was identified much higher in the trench than the other features recorded. The wall was sitting on made ground material and appeared to be a more recent feature than the others in the trench. No obvious bonding materials noted.

Appendix 2: Inventory of Primary Archive

Phase	File/Box No.	Description	Quantity
Evaluation	File no. 1	Context register sheets	1
		Context sheets	12
		Trench record sheets	2
		Digital photographic register sheets	1

FIGURES 1-3



Key:

- Site Boundary
- Trench Outline
- Sondage

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Title:
Site Location and Trench Layout

Project:
Land off Roper Street, Penrith, Cumbria

Client:
Orion Heritage

Scale at A3:
1:500

Drawn by: MP	Checked: SW	Date: 15/06/2018
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Report No: Y359/18	Fig. No: 1
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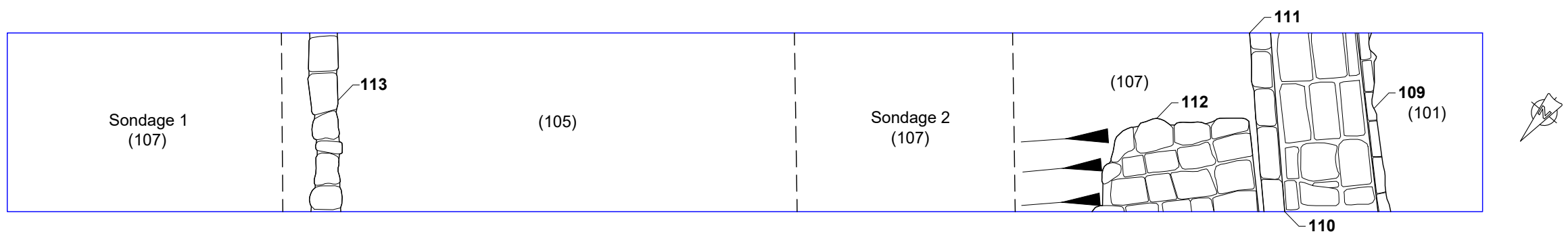


Fig. 2.1 - Plan of Trench 1

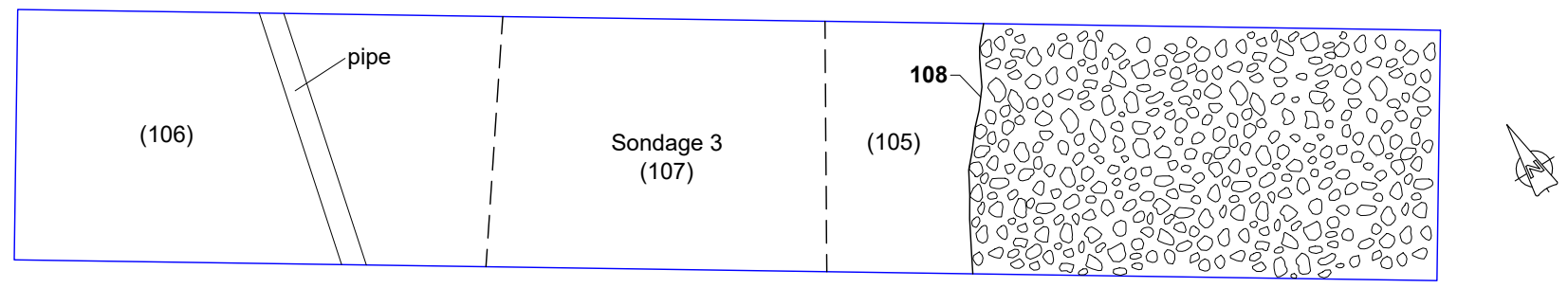


Fig. 2.2 - Plan of Trench 2



Key:

Trench Outline

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Plans

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Client:
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Scale at A3:
1:50

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Fig. 3.1 - Trench 2, facing north-west



Fig. 3.2 - Trench 2, facing south-east

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Fig. 3.3 - Sondage 1, Trench 1 facing south-east. Wall 113 in foreground



Fig. 3.4 - Sondage 2, Trench 1 facing south-east

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Fig. 3.5 - Sondage facing south-west, Trench 2



Fig. 3.6 - Walls 109, 111 and 112 and stone floor surface 110, Trench 1 south-western end

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Fig. 3.7 - Wall 112 shot, Trench 1, facing north-west



Fig. 3.8 - Wall 113, Trench 1, facing north-east

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