
10 YORK ROAD,
WHITLEY BAY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

MARCH 2004



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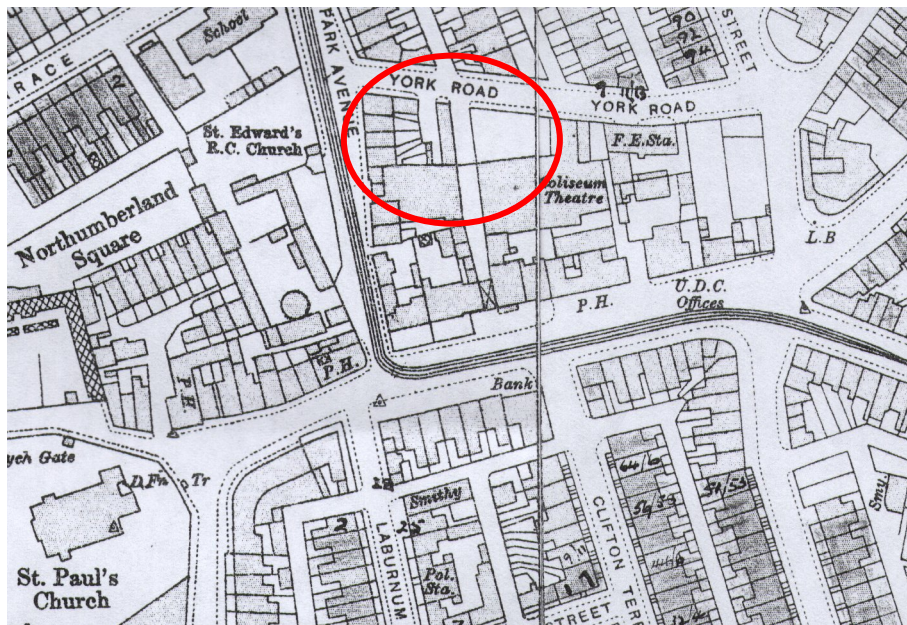
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YORK ROAD, WHITLEY BAY

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Frontispiece: *2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan (1898) showing location of the Watching Brief site at 10 York Road, Whitley Bay*

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SUMMARY

The present document reports on a watching brief carried out on a development site at 10 York Road, Whitley Bay in Tyne and Wear in advance of the construction of a two storey building. The requirement for a watching brief was imposed by the planning authority following an archaeological assessment undertaken by The Archaeological Practice Ltd as part of the overall environmental impact assessment for the site. This indicated that, while there was no evidence for specific settlement or other activities within the site prior to the first half of the nineteenth century, its proximity to suggested medieval and known post-medieval sites suggests that archaeological deposits related to these periods may exist.

The watching brief was carried out during machine stripping of the site and excavation of foundation trenches. Three features were noted, all probably associated with the recently destroyed building on the site. The first was a wall foundation running east-west across the northern edge of the site; the second was a wall running east-west across the middle of the site; the third was a coal bunker that had been built into the north end of the eastern edge of the recently demolished building at foundation level. A basic photographic record was made of these features, but none of them merited additional recording measures.

It is concluded that no features of cultural heritage significance were disturbed by the development works. However, the possibility that remains of significance survive below ground in adjacent plots should not be discounted.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the watching brief

The requirement for an archaeological watching brief at 10 York Road was made a planning condition prior to the commencement of development works. Accordingly, this report, prepared by the Archaeological Practice, Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, has been commissioned for the developer's architects Ian Bensham Associates. Its purpose is to establish the historic context of the site and inform the planning process regarding the likely impact of development works there, and represents the first stage in a programme of archaeological work which may subsequently include evaluation and mitigation works.

1.2 Location and Extent of the Assessment

The assessment focuses on the site of a standing building on the south side of York Road, Whitley Bay (*NRG NZ 355 721*). The area extends from the frontage of the building on York Road in the north to the rear of Whitley Road in the south. To the east of the site an alleyway runs north-south joining the two roads, and the land to the west of the property is occupied by a yard area. Only the south wall of the structure adjoins another building.

1.3 Nature of Developments

The current works have involved the demolition of an existing building of early twentieth century origin, latterly occupied by a furniture and upholstery business, and will lead to the construction of a new two-storey building to be used as an amusement arcade and offices to be built in place of the existing structure.

1.4 Archaeological Background

1.4.1 Prehistoric and Roman periods

The nature and density of landholding within this lowland area during the prehistoric and Roman periods is unknown and no direct evidence can be presented for human activity within the bounds of the assessment area from these periods. Although no evidence has been recovered for prehistoric settlement or land-use in the immediate vicinity, it is likely that it would have been exploited as sheltered, resource-rich coastal environment. This view is supported by discoveries of archaeological remains in similar contexts in the wider region. The evidence for a Roman military and civilian presence the lower Tyne valley is well known and includes Hadrian's Wall, Roman forts, a bridge and *vicii* (civilian settlements). However, such remains are unattested within the present area of investigation.

1.4.2 Medieval Period

The name Whitley derives from the Anglian for white lea or pasture, and may suggest Anglian origins - variations of the name include Wheteley, HwYTELEG and Whitlag (Tomlinson 1893, 31). The township of Whitley is first recorded in the early 12th century when, together with Monkseaton, it formed part of a "Grafford's" Lordship, the seat of which was Seghill.

Historical documents continue to mention the settlement thereafter, and in 1291 a trial conducted by the Prior of Tynemouth attracted the attention of Edward I, resulted in judicial privileges that priors had enjoyed for almost a century being removed for almost eight years (Tomlinson 1893, 33).

There is reference to a manor house at Whitley by the 14th century when documents show the owner, Gilbert de Whitley, was given a licence to crenellate by Edward III on the 9th of April 1345 (op. cit. 35).

The 16th century saw the township divided into five tenements with 200 acres under arable cultivation. Little is known of land use in this period, however, the written histories of Whitley being concerned mainly with the activities of the de Whitley family during this period rather than the farming practices and social organisation of the peasantry.

Something is known, and more can be inferred, about the industrial practices of the locality in the medieval period. Coal was worked in Tynemouth during the latter part of the 13th century, and there is mention of coalmines in the ownership of the priory at Marden in 1316 (Craster 1907, 17). The coal beds in this southeast corner of the Northumberland coalfield occur at shallow depths and in some places outcrop on the surface, making them easily accessible from an early period. It is likely that much of the coal mined at this time was for local domestic use and to service the salt pans at Shields and Cullercoats, and documentary evidence records the introduction of salt pans at Cullercoats in the 1660's fired by coal from Whitley (Frazer & Emsley 1973, 34). Coal mining in the area continued throughout the medieval period, though the exact location of pits is often obscure, although coal and iron stone mines existed on the links, where extraction occurred at a later period.

1.4.3 Post Medieval Period

The dawn of the modern period is marked first by the enclosure, then by increasing industrialisation of the rural landscape. The Enclosures Act led to the emergence of a pattern of larger field units which were generally easier to manage and rather more profitable than the preceding strip fields. While small-scale fishing continued along the coast, industrial enterprises such as coalmines and waggonways encroached upon the farmland to a significant extent, and encouraged the expansion of rural settlement.

In the latter part of the 17th century the collieries in the district of Whitley were expanded, exploiting the Low Main seam at a shallow depth near the sea. These were connected to the coast, particularly at Cullercoats where a new harbour was built in the same period, by wooden wagon ways, or 'Newcastle roads', which came into general use around 1670. In the 18th century, the temporary decline in coal mining was to some extent offset by the exploitation of ironstone on Whitley Links during the 18th century.

In the early 19th century, the revived colliery at Whitley was worked in conjunction with the limestone quarry at Marden, south of Whitley, together feeding lime kilns adjacent to the quarry. The colliery and quarry in this period were connected by wagonway to the Low Lights at South Shields. Housing developments for local colliers and workers in related industries led at this time to the expansion of established settlements such as Whitley Bay and Cullercoats. The wealth derived from industrial concerns such as the quarries and mines enabled the construction of grand residences such as Whitley Hall (built between 1757 and 1769), and Whitley House with its 'picturesque iron porch' (erected in 1803 on ground formally owned by John Dove). St Paul's Church (built 1864), was constructed a short distance from the grand houses in the centre of the village. Premises standing on the former site

of Whitley House now occupy the area adjacent to the south of the proposed development site, on which John Dove had constructed a malt-kiln during the 1670's, part of which survived as ruins until the late 19th century (Tomlinson 1893, 125).

The First detailed map of the area is the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1860, which shows the development site occupied by gardens possibly associated with the building known as Whitley House (although it is not called that on this map). The gardens seem to have an arranged lay out, and are surrounded by paths or possible walls. The alleyway that still exists (running from York Road to Whitley Road) is shown, as are out buildings, which are possibly the remains of 17th century malt-kilns/granaries described in Tomlinson's description of the area. There is also a long narrow structure evident to the west of the development site (possibly associated with the gardens), that seems to lie on the line on the present York Road.

The Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1919 reflects the increasing urbanisation of the village, showing the spread of built structures into areas previously occupied by gardens and fields. By this time York Road has been constructed, and the building recently demolished on the development site (No. 10) is clearly visible on the map. Although the precise date of the building is not known, the construction of properties on this street are recorded in the Building Plans Register in 1901, 1909 and 1910.

1.5 The Potential for Survival of Archaeological Remains

Medieval deposits survive well, potentially up to a considerable depth, in areas that have not been subject to extensive modern development. However, in areas subject to modern development, the likelihood of survival of archaeological deposits is much reduced. The area currently under examination lies within the presumed medieval village and has been subject to intensive settlement subsequently. The likelihood of survival of archaeological remains, therefore, is reduced by the level of modern development upon the site. However, the apparent absence of cellaring within the building formerly occupying the site means that the lower courses of any pre-existing structures may survive there.

2. EVALUATION PROGRAMME

2.1 Aims

The aim of the archaeological watching brief was to observe and record archaeological deposits revealed during the excavation of the site at 10, York Road in advance of construction work. This involved.

Any deposits encountered were to be examined and recorded (through photography, with plans drawn where appropriate) to determine the character of any such remains and determine, as far as possible, their date, function and state of preservation. Excavation of features was to be limited to only those deposits at risk of destruction due to the works.

2.2 Methods

The excavation of the site was carried out by mechanical excavator. Where deposits of possible interest were encountered, excavation was halted, and potentially sensitive features were examined, cleaned and recorded by hand. The watching brief was carried out by a professional archaeologist who liaised with the developer regarding the works timetable and site access.

3. RESULTS OF THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief was carried out during machine stripping of the site and excavation of foundation trenches up to c.0.7m below the level of the pre-existing ground surface.

Machine stripping of the overburden (mainly concrete surfaces) revealed a very thin top-soil layer which quickly gave way to an orange boulder clay (*Plate 3*). Three features were noted within the site, all probably associated with the recently destroyed building (lately a furniture and upholstery business).

- The first feature was a wall foundation running east-west across the northern edge of the site (*Plate 1*). This was comprised of irregular masonry blocks and appears to have been a foundation layer for the recently demolished building, although alternative interpretations are possible (e.g. field wall/roadside wall). No artefacts were found in association with this feature and no date can be ascribed to it, although its context, as discussed, suggests it is late 19th century or early 20th century in origin.
- The second feature noted on the site was a wall running east-west across the middle of the site (*Plate 4*). Only the upper most part of the surviving part of this wall was exposed, but since it did not appear in section to the east or west, it may be assumed that the exposed course was the lower foundation layer. The wall appeared to be on the line of a former partition between shop front and office/workshop in the recently demolished building. No alternative interpretation of this evidence is warranted.
- The third was a coal bunker that had been built into the north end of the eastern edge of the recently demolished building at foundation level. This appeared as a spread of coal finings/dust in the foundation trench floor and sections, and as the remains of a brick-built structure in the west-facing section (*Plate 2*).

A basic photographic record was made of these features, but none of them merited additional recording measures.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that no features of great cultural heritage significance were disturbed by the development works. However, the possibility that remains of significance survive below ground in adjacent plots should not be discounted.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no recommendations to be made with respect to the current scheme.

Any further developments in the vicinity, particularly between York road and Front Street, should be judged on merit using the evidence provided by this and previous archaeological interventions, notably the assessment of the adjacent Coliseum site (AP 2004).

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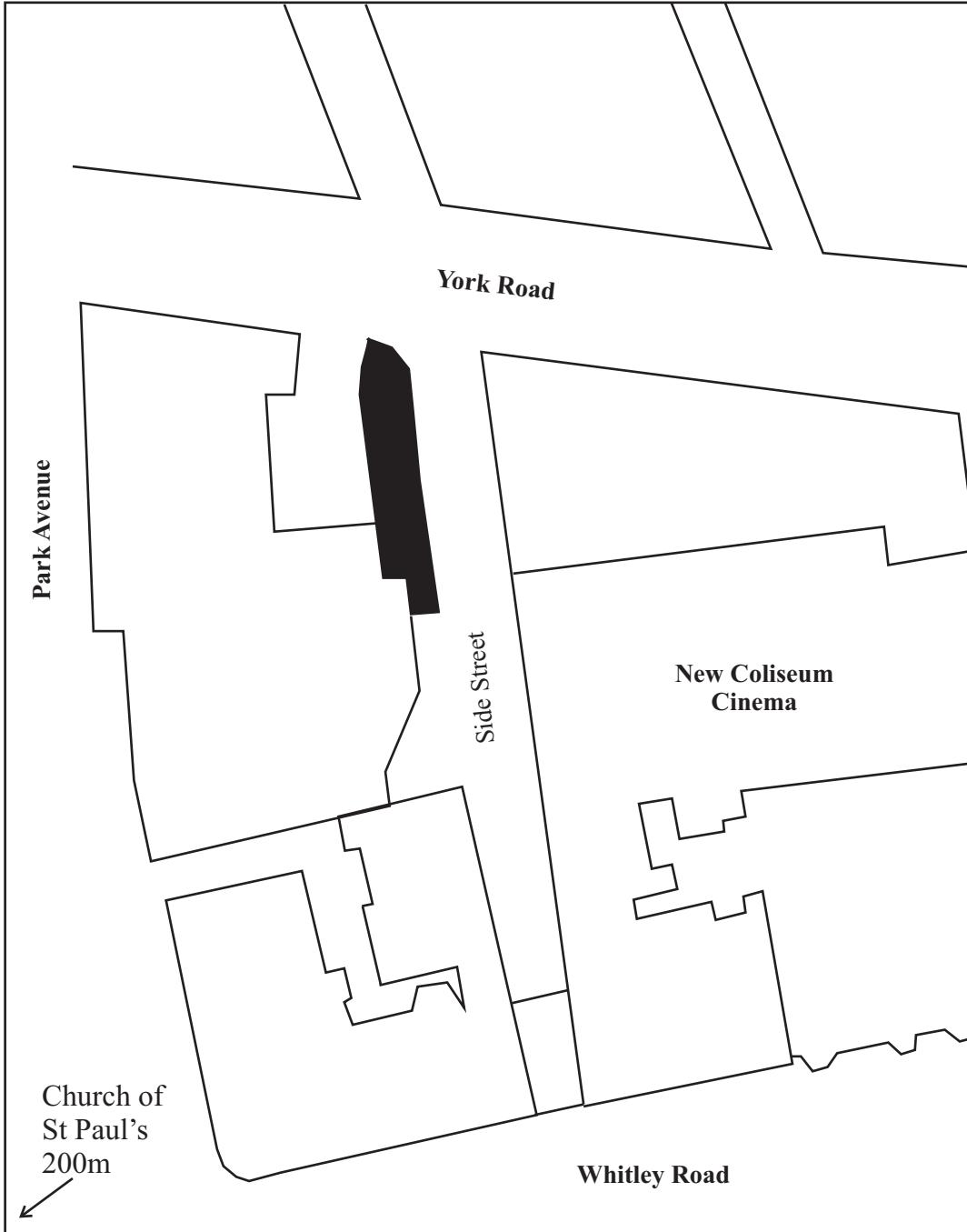


Figure 1: Map showing the location of assessment site (marked in black) in relation to the current street layout.



Figure 2: First Edition Ordnance Survey map of Whitley 1859



Plate 1: North-West corner of site, viewed from the east - note remains of wall (in section) on roadside.



Plate 2: View from South towards the North-East corner of the site, showing coal dust from former coal bunker



Plate 3: View towards North-West corner of site, viewed from the South-East, showing boulder clay sub-soil (disturbed in upper levels) at a shallow depth across the site



Plate 4: Remains of a wall running east-west across the middle of the site - probably the foundations of an internal partition wall within the recently demolished building