

# Wentworth Castle

*Barnsley*

*South Yorkshire*

## *Archaeological Watching Brief*

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### *Summary*

*An archaeological watching brief in the grounds of Wentworth Castle was conducted within the area of a football pitch during landscaping operations to recreate the original topography of the grounds. There were no archaeological remains identified within the area of investigation and the only artefacts that were present on the site were post-medieval pottery sherds within the topsoil.*

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by Purcell Miller Tritton to conduct an archaeological watching brief during the removal of topsoil from a disused football pitch prior to the re-landscaping of the area to follow the original contours of the landscape garden.
- 1.2 The site is located within the extensive Grade 1 listed gardens of Wentworth Castle, known as Stainborough Park, approximately 3.8km to the southwest of Barnsley (Fig. 1). The football pitch is located at NGR SE 322 032, to the east of the main house (Fig. 2), on a terrace cut into an east facing slope (Plate 1).
- 1.3 The area of the watching brief measures approximately 90m by 60m and is surrounded by parkland consisting of grass and planted trees.
- 1.4 The watching brief took place from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

## **2. Archaeological Background**

- 2.1 The grounds of Wentworth Castle, known as Stainborough Park, are of historic significance and is a Grade 1 Listed (GD1381) in English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The grounds were extensively shaped by Thomas Wentworth (1672-1739) who followed the fashion of the time by installing formal gardens and avenues. His son William Wentworth (1722-1791) continued the works in the grounds completing some of his fathers work but also removing some of the more formal gardens to follow the then more fashionable natural landscape garden design.
- 2.2 The area of the house and gardens is thought to have been occupied since the Iron Age with evidence for activity during the Norman and later medieval periods (see for example Roberts 2004).
- 2.3 The location of the football pitch, although in front of the main house, seems to fall outside the known areas of the formal gardens. Plans of the grounds, however, show that one of the many tree lined avenues may have extended through this area. It is possible that evidence for earlier occupation within the grounds may also exist within the area of the football pitch.
- 2.4 Geologically the site comprises shales and sandstones of the Coal Measures overlying Millstone Grit (Institute of Geological Sciences 1979), with soils being of the clayey loams of the Dale Association, interspersed with the better drained loams of the Rivington 1 Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983).

## **3. Method**

- 3.1 The archaeological watching brief encompassed the area of the football pitch and the line of a temporary track leading to the pitch from the rear of Home Farm (Plates 2 and 3). The monitored area was stripped by a tracked 360° excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket that removed material in level spits until the desired depth was reached.

- 3.2 The stripping was observed by a qualified archaeologist who also inspected the resultant surface for archaeological remains and finds. The spoil was also searched, where practicable, for finds. The results were recorded according to ASWYAS standard method (2006).
- 3.3 The site archive contains all the information gathered during the investigations and is indexed in Appendix I.

#### **4. Results**

- 4.1 The resultant surface observed on completion of the topsoil strip was not completely onto clean natural. Due to the maximum depth of around 0.2m being removed (Plate 4), areas of topsoil were left masking the natural.
- 4.2 A large deposit of clinker material (003) was situated at the northern end of the pitch (Plate 5) which was exposed for a length of 52m and a width of 20m (Fig. 3). This material may have been laid to aid in the drainage of that part of the site. A series of land drains were also identified within the stripped area (Fig. 3) which were also believed to be associated with the drainage of the pitch. The drains, which formed a grid pattern under the pitch, were formed from clay pipes within a narrow trench measuring approximately 0.3m in width and backfilled with clinker material.
- 4.3 The majority of the site was cut into the slope of the land to create a terrace except for the south-eastern corner of the pitch that was seen to be built up from the original ground level (Fig. 3). The material (004) used to build up this corner consisted of a mixed mid brown and yellow silty clay with angular sandstone fragments (Plate 6) and it is presumed that this was derived from the excavation of the football pitch.
- 4.4 There was no evidence to suggest the presence of archaeological remains, either from the early occupation of the area or in the form of any garden features, within the monitored area.

#### **5. Artefact Record**

- 5.1 The only artefacts recovered during the watching brief were three unstratified sherds of post-medieval (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) pottery from the topsoil. These sherds have limited potential for enhancing our archaeological understanding of the site and were probably introduced during former arable usage or during landscaping.

#### **6. Discussion and Conclusions**

- 6.1 The areas monitored within the watching brief had been subject to quite extensive landscaping during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to form a relatively level area for a football pitch. The majority of the area had been excavated from the natural slope of the land to form a terrace with a small area of fill in the south-east corner to level up from the pre-existing ground.

- 6.2 The land drains, and the deposit of clinker material, were thought to be associated with the creation of the pitch, as the original slope of the land would negate the need for artificial drainage. Also their level below the ground was consistent with the level of the pitch surface rather than the varying levels of the natural ground.
- 6.3 The area of the watching brief has been extensively disturbed by the creation of the football pitch with much of the area being reduced in height so removing any possible archaeological remains. In areas where the ground disturbance was less extensive there was no evidence to suggest the location of archaeological remains.

## ***Bibliography***

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Institute of Geological Sciences, 1979, *Geological Map of the United Kingdom: South*

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## ***Acknowledgements***

### **Project management**

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### **Report**

Marina Rose BSc

### **Graphics/illustrations**

Marina Rose

### **Fieldwork**

Marina Rose

## ***Appendix I***

### ***Inventory of primary archive***

<b>File no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quantity</b>
1	Watching brief monitoring form	4
1	Trench record sheet	2
1	Context register	1
1	Context Cards (001-005)	5
1	Photograph record sheet (Film no 7558)	1
1	Black and white contact sheet (Film no 7558)	1
1	Black and white negatives (Film no 7558)	1
1	Digital photograph record sheet	1
1	CD of digital photographs	1
1	Annotated site plan	2
	Pottery sherds	3