

**ABBNEY ROAD,  
ST BEES,  
CUMBRIA.**



**DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**

**CP. No: 1125**

**09/03/2010**

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### *Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210). This work follows a planning application (Planning Application No. 4/09/2534) for the construction of 11 dwellings on land at Abbey Road. Cumbria County Council has yet to grant planning consent for the development. A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to an archaeological evaluation. The work is required as the site lies close to a Benedictine priory, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The desk-based assessment involved the examination of all pertinent documents and cartographic sources held in the County Records Office in Carlisle and Whitehaven, the local studies section at Carlisle Library, and the consultation of the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Cumbria County Council at Kendal. The HER includes the locations and settings of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens and other, non-designated archaeological remains. In addition, a number of published sources were consulted to provide background information, including the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

The research has shown that the development area is in close proximity to a field presumed to be on the north side of Abbey Road in which 9 flints were recovered during a survey carried out between 1959 and 1981, which was looking for evidence of prehistoric activity in Cumbria.

The development site is situated next to a Benedictine priory which was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and sits on the site of possibly an earlier religious house. Earlier archaeological work was carried out to the south of the church and found that there were remains of a farmstead dated 1804, known as Low Abbey Farm, as well as evidence of medieval activity, which may have included some outbuildings that were related to the priory. When the farmstead was in use, there is evidence that the area was used for pasture. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the church graveyard had been expanded and the surrounding area was developed.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over 4 days between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The Evaluation involved the excavation of 5 trenches, comprising a 5% sample of the development area. Archaeological remains were identified in Trenches 1 and 5, in the form of a ditch, pit and post holes. In Trench 1, the pit and ditch appear to be related to each other, though no dating evidence was found.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. NPA Ltd would also like to thank Jo Mackintosh and Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County, for all their assistance throughout the project. Further thanks are extended to all the staff at the County Record Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven for their help during this project.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to the groundwork staff of High Grange Developments Ltd.

The desk-based assessment and visual survey was undertaken by Fiona Wooler. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Frank Giecco, Ailsa Westgarth, Angus Clark, Kevin Mounsey and Joanne Wilkinson. Metal detection on site was undertaken by Alan James. The report was written and drawings produced by Joanne Wilkinson, Fiona Wooler and Frank Giecco. The project was managed by Frank Giecco Project Manager for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Frank Giecco, Project Manager for NPA Ltd.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In February 2010, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation and desk based assessment at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210 Figure 1), associated with the proposed development of 11 new dwellings. The proposed works area lie within the immediate vicinity of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and St Bega as well as the Benedictine priory. Earlier excavations and surveys have revealed the structural remains of the priory and the cemetery below ground. The developmental area is also closely situated near sites where flints and stone tools have been found. As a result, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service requested that the proposed development site be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008a), and were consistent with the specification provided by the Project Design (Giecco, 2010) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken on-site and the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County Council, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment was previously undertaken and appears in a separate report (Wooler, 2010). The desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Historic Environment Record in Kendal in the first instance. This included the collection of all available information held within the HER database, in order to achieve a full understanding of the nature of the existing resource regarding the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site. Aerial photographs for the area will be examined in order to gain an adequate understanding of the context of the archaeological fieldwork.

2.2.2 Following this the County Records Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven was also consulted in order to study maps and documents relevant to the study area. This will include the collection of historic maps, including Tithe or Enclosure maps and early Ordnance Survey maps. Early cartographic evidence, such as surveys and terriers, were consulted in order to achieve an understanding of the medieval and early post medieval landscape. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping was also consulted. Several secondary sources and journals, such as the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, were also consulted. Collections also consulted for pertinent references included Directories, Business Records, Miscellaneous Records and Diocesan Records.

2.2.3 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IfA 2008b).



## 2.3 THE FIELD EVALUATION

2.3.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of 5 trenches covering a minimum of 200 m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> proposed development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity. All work was conducted according to the recommendations of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008b).

2.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3.3 Turf and topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2003).

2.3.4 All finds encountered were retained, including those from excavated topsoil, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F.Giecco (NPA Ltd Technical Director).

2.3.5 In total, 5 environmental samples were collected from features in 2 of the trenches.

2.3.6 The 5 evaluation trenches were scheduled to be backfilled at the discretion of the client, following excavation and recording.

2.3.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1991).

## 2.4 THE ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum

recommendations (Brown 2007). Copies of the report will be sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Kendal, Cumbria, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA10, ARS-A, CP1125/10.

- 2.4.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Cumbria County Council, support the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

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## 3 BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 St Bees is located along the West Coast of Cumbria and is approximately 6km to the south of the port town Whitehaven and 4km to the north-west of Egremont (Figure 1). The site lies in the Pow Beck Valley which runs through the village towards the sea which is to the south. The land on both sides of the valley is step and rise above c.100m above sea level.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development site is located in the north side of the village, west of St Bees Church on the south side of Abbey road. The development concerns the building of 11 dwellings in the area (Figure 2).
- 3.1.3 The underlying geology of the area is Triassic St Bees Sandstone, red and grey sandstone with partings of red mudstone

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area (For the full Desk Based Assessment, see Wooler 2010).
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* the earliest evidence of activity relevant to this developmental area was found at 6 sites around the developmental area. Stone tools and flints have been found in and around St Bees, the closest being the field to the north of the developmental site. This was evidence for people following a hunting and food gathering tradition. Although there is some evidence of Neolithic occupation, there is more evidence from the Early Bronze Age.
- 3.2.3 *Roman:* Not much is known about the Roman occupation in the area of St Bees. There are claims about a Roman Fort being in the area, this seemingly being backed up by aerial photographs showing an area roughly the shape of a Roman Fort to the south-east of St Bees and Roman worked stone. However, there is no evidence of Roman occupation.
- 3.2.4 *Medieval:* St Bees is alleged to have had Early Medieval origins in that a nunnery was supposed to have been founded by the Irish saint Bega in c.650 and although there are stone sculptures dating from this period still in the church, any other evidence seems to have been lost by the end 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.5 The Medieval period is marked by the building of St Bees Priory for the prior and 6 Benedictine monks by William de Meschines in c.1120 as a cell of St Mary's Abbey in York. Nearly all the buildings of the Priory have gone

although the church remains. As well as the church, there is more evidence of this time present in the cross slabs and crosses. The well preserved body of a man was found in 1981 and he was believed to have died between c.1120-1300. The evidence for industrial workings around St Bees is scarce.

- 3.2.6 *Post-medieval and Modern:* St Bees Priory was made dissolute in 1539. The Grammar School was founded in 1587 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York (1570-1575) and Canterbury (1575-1583), after providing for a free school in his Will. In 1844 the south and east wings of the school were added when it was turned into an independent boarding school. Expansion of the school continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.7 The Theological College was founded in 1816 by Bishop Law, though there appeared to be no student lodgings, with students presumably having to find lodgings in the village or elsewhere.
- 3.2.8 As a consequence of the Second World War, a sandstone pillbox was built to defend the railway station and the Pew Beck Bridge. The exact location was not disclosed. As well as this line of defense, a radar station was built at the lighthouse in 1941 which was manned by the RAF. Large numbers of men were billeted at St Bees and after the War; construction of houses took place at both ends of the village.
- 3.2.9 During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shingle was extracted from the beach for building material, which seems to have allowed the cliffs to erode. This however, was stopped when the land was bought up.

### **3.3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.3.1 Numerous excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate area around the development area in Abbey Road. In 1977 a Resistivity Survey was carried out in the area that was going to be part of the graveyard expansion. The results, although difficult to interpret, seem to show that the area was heavily disturbed. Foundations or walls appear to be indicated which could be the farm buildings related to the Priory.
- 3.3.2 A small archaeological excavation took place in 1979 in the area west of the church prior to the expansion of the graveyard which revealed leveling for a yard, a well and drains possibly related to the farm buildings of the Low Abbey Farm farmstead. Beneath these there were 2 stone walls and a wattle fence which have been interpreted as being related to outbuildings related to the medieval Priory. This excavation noted that there was the potential for a wealth of environmental data to be recovered.
- 3.3.3 Another archaeological excavation took place in 1980 which recovered leather and wooden objects which were well preserved. These included a

wooden bowl, 2 leather shoes and pottery which suggested a later medieval date for the finds. A large amount of animal bone in stratified layers was found which was interpreted as being the remains of a specialized activity occurring in the area, such as slaughterhouses. The medieval floors were deeper than anticipated and the report suggested that any future work covered a large area.

- 3.3.4 In 1981 an archaeological excavation took place in the ruined south chancel aisle of the church with the aim of locating the site of the early church and the settlement. During the excavation, many burials were found and were categorized into 2 groups. The earliest were adults and slightly out of alignment with remaining buildings which may have been part of the monks burial ground between AD 1120-1300. The later group was aligned with the remaining standing buildings and was thought to be contemporary with the use of the aisle. It was in this group that St Bees Man belonged to.
- 3.3.5 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation in 1996 to the south and immediate east of the developmental area which found that there were deposits surviving that may have been material left from animals stabled in the medieval Priory. There was material on top of this layer which suggests that the area was still used for the same purpose when the farmstead was in use.
- 3.3.6 In 2007 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a building survey of a redundant farmstead prior to renovations of the farmhouse for residential use. This survey revealed that there had been a farmstead on site since 1838 which included buildings such as a threshing barn. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were changes that reflected the farms change from arable to dairy farming.
- 3.3.7 An evaluation excavation was carried out along the route of a new utility pipeline. The north end of the pipeline was located to the south of the development area. The excavations revealed the remains of a post-medieval ridge and furrow in several areas and 2 small undated pits of possible archaeological importance.

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## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Five trenches were excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The upper deposits of Trenches 2 – 5 were excavated prior to the project start, with Trench 1 and the lower deposits of each trench excavated to natural under archaeological supervision. Trench 5 was extended by 1.8m to the south for safety reasons (Figure 3).

### 4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 *Trench 1:* Trench 1 was located to the north of site and was aligned north west- southeast, following the slope from Abbey road towards the graveyard wall (Figure 3). The trench was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m revealing light orange sand natural (101). A single pit [104] and ditch [106] were recorded cutting the natural. The archaeological features and natural were overlain by subsoil (103) which comprised orange-brown silty sand. The depth of the subsoil measured c.1.30m in the north west decreasing to c.0.25m in the south east of the trench. To the northwest of the trench subsoil (103) was overlain by an unstable c.1.20m thick layer of modern rubble (102) which was only evident in the northern half of the trench. The rubble layer comprised concrete and large pieces of sandstone. At the very south of the trench a shallow layer of river pebbles were noted overlying the subsoil, alongside a septic tank soakaway. A dark brown silty sand topsoil (100) sealed the trench, measuring c.0.30m (Plate 1).

4.2.2 Pit [104] was located in the middle of the trench and continued into the section to the west (Figure 4, Plate 2). It was subcircular in plan and measured 0.50m wide by 0.48m deep, with near vertical slopes and a rounded base. The single fill (105) comprised mid brown silty sand with frequent medium to large stones and charcoal flecks. The fill was mixed with natural towards the sides and base of the pit. There were no finds within the fill.

4.2.3 Ditch [106] was located 0.18m to the east of pit [104] and was aligned north-south (Figure 4, Plate 2). It measured 1.20m in width and 0.38m depth, with steep slopes to a fairly flat base. The single fill (107) comprised mid brown silty sand with mixed natural to the sides and base. No dating evidence was found within the ditch.



*Plate 1: Trench 1 Post Clean showing Rubble Section (W)*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 Oblique Section of [104] [106]*

4.2.4 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was located to the south west of Trench 1 and was aligned northeast- southwest (Figure 3). Natural geology (101) was recorded 0.77m below the current ground level and comprised a mid red/orange sandy clay. The natural was sealed by a c.0.22m thick layer of redeposited sandstone rubble. Subsoil (103) comprised c.0.65m of grey/brown clayey sand over lying the rubble layer. The subsoil was sealed by a c.0.11m thick layer of river pebbles which were overlain by dark/grey brown sandy clay topsoil (100) (Figure 5, Plate 3).

4.2.5 No archaeological features were noted.





*Plate 3: Trench 2 Post Clean showing sandstone (SE)*

4.2.6 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was located to the north-west of the site parallel to Abbey Road, located above Trench 2 on the higher terrace (Figure 3). The trench was aligned southwest- northeast. Natural geology was found at 1.51m below ground level and comprised light orange/brown clayey sand (**101**), sealed by subsoil (**103**). The subsoil comprised c.1.10m of mid grey brown clayey sand and was overlain by Topsoil (**100**). The topsoil comprised c.0.41m of grey brown sandy clay (Plate 4).

4.2.7 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 4: Trench 3 Post Clean (SE)*

4.2.8 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located to the south-west of Trenches 2 & 3 and was aligned north west-south east (Figure 3). The ground appeared to almost be terraced, with the edge of the first terrace appearing around c.2m from the north-west end of the trench. Natural geology (**101**) was found at 2m below ground level to the north and c.0.40m below ground level at the south. Subsoil (**103**) overlay the natural and comprised c.1.15m to the north and c.0.11m to the south of light orange brown sandy-clay. In the middle section of the trench a layer of c.0.10m river pebbles overlay the subsoil. Topsoil (**100**) sealed the deposits within the trench and comprised between c.0.44m and c.0.10m of dark grey/brown silty clay (Plate 5).

4.2.9 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 5: Trench 4 Post Clean looking up the Terracing (NW)*

4.2.10 **Trench 5:** Trench 5 was located to the south west of Trench 4 and was on a north east-south west alignment (Figure 3). It was machine excavated to a depth of c.1.50m. Due to the depth of modern overburden, the width of the trench was doubled to c.3.6m to allow safe recording. Natural geology comprised mid red-brown clay-sand (101). A recut posthole [113] [117] cut the natural. Subsoil (103) overlay the natural geology and features and comprised c.0.21m of mid grey brown sandy-clay. A c.0.25m thick layer of buried topsoil overlay the subsoil and comprised dark grey sandy clay. A c.1.03m thick layer of rubble, redeposited natural and gravels sealed the subsoil and was overlain by c.0.15m of dark grey brown sandy clay topsoil (100).

4.2.11 Post holes [113] and [117] were located near the middle of the trench (Figure 6). Post hole [117] was sub circular in plan with a 5 degree incline to the north west,

straight sides and a flattish base. It measured c.0.29m wide by c.0.35m in length by c.0.36m in depth. The single fill (118) comprised a moderately compact light grey silty-sand with medium sized stones, occasional flecks of charcoal and no finds. There were also three large stones in the base suggestive of packing stones.

4.2.12 During excavation traces of a possible post pipe were recorded (116). The post pipe measured c.0.34m in diameter and c.0.29m in depth. The single fill (116) comprised moderately compact mid black/grey silty-sand. It contained a large stone, occasional small pebbles, moderate charcoal flecks and no finds.

4.2.13 Post hole [113] truncated [117] at the north east edge. It measured c.0.11m wide by c.0.22m in length by c.0.24m in depth with near vertical sides and a curved base. The single fill (114) comprised dark grey/black silty sand with charcoal flecks, medium sized stones and no finds (Figure 7), (Plate 7). The lack of any datable finds or associated features makes the dating and function of these features problematic.



*Plate 6: Trench 5 Post Clean (NE)*



*Plate 7: Trench 5 Section Postholes r-l [117] [113] (NW)*

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## 5 FINDS

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### 5.1 FINDS ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 A total of 37 finds were recovered during the evaluation. These included an unstratified medieval pot handle sherd from Trench 2, 22 sherds of unstratified post-medieval pottery, 13 metal objects that were found within the spoil and a single piece of burnt bone (possibly a head of a joint) from subsoil (103) in Trench 1.

5.1.2 The finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F. Giocco (NPA Ltd Technical Director). The metalwork was placed in a stable environment and was monitored for corrosion.

### 5.2 MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.2.1 Only 1 piece of medieval pottery was found in subsoil (103) and was a piece of jug handle. It is a partially reduced green glazed type of pottery that dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century and was common in Cumbria.

### 5.3 POST MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.3.1 A total of 22 pieces of post-medieval pottery was recovered that were a mixture of body sherds, rims and bases. They were all unstratified and all but 1 piece was found around Trench 5, the other being found around Trench 2. The assemblage is very mixed, containing pieces of Black Ware that dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and pieces of domestic Earthen Ware dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is also a fragment of transfer printed porcelain present.

### 5.4 METAL OBJECTS

5.4.1 All the metal objects on site were found by metal detection so are unstratified. A total of 9 Fe objects and nails were recovered from the site at Abbey Road. The 4 nails were all covered in corrosion, making them difficult to identify, but they appeared to have been handmade. They ranged in length from 50mm to 25mm and the 5 objects ranged in length from 74mm to 39mm.

5.4.2 There were 4 small Pb fragments found that were also unstratified. They were also undiagnostic and found at various trenches around the site.

5.4.3 The piece of medieval pottery from context (103) was kept. The rest of the assemblage was discarded as it could not provide further aid in dating.

	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
103	1	Bone	1	0.031	
U/S	2	Pottery	1	0.077	12thC-13thC
U/S	5	Iron Objects	5	0.174	
U/S	5	Pottery	21	0.477	Post-Med
U/S	U/S	Iron Objects	4	0.035	
U/S	U/S	Lead	4	0.015	
U/S	U/S	Pottery	1	0.006	Post-Med

*Table 1: Finds Table of Artefacts Recovered from the Evaluation.*

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## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, 5 trenches were excavated over three separate areas, covering 200m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to provide a representative sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural substrate.
- 6.1.2 Every trench showed evidence of large scale dumping of building rubble and excavated subsoil brought in from other areas. These deposits created two terraces, it is unclear as to whether this was intentional. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were devoid of any archaeological features or deposits. The layer of redeposited sandstone may suggest the demolition of a building somewhere close by or may be material brought in from other areas of the village. The sandstone within Trench 2 does not appear to indicate any structural activity, appearing more like a slumping of the overlying sandstone layer into a shallow natural hollow. The underlying geology shows that this area of land was very steeply sloped prior to the recent deposition of material.
- 6.1.3 Only Trenches 1 and 5 retained any evidence of archaeological activity. The archaeological features observed within Trench 1 comprised an oval pit and a possibly related ditch. There was no dating evidence in either the pit or ditch. This ditch may represent boundary or earlier drainage on the site. The recut post hole in Trench 1 was not related to any other features recorded within the trench.
- 6.1.4 The medieval and post-medieval pottery found during the excavation are not necessarily indicative of activity within the site as the stratigraphic deposits suggest a prolonged dumping of material excavated elsewhere on the site. The steep nature of the site could also indicate that the area would have been of little use as anything other than pasture land, with the ditch and post holes possibly relating to agricultural boundaries. The dumping of material may have been attempt to create more useful land however it is also possible that the material was deposited and mounded into terraces unintentionally.
- 6.1.5 The results obtained during the present evaluation, and from previous archaeological investigations suggest that the study area has been intensively in use as agricultural land and a more recent dump for excavated material. No evidence of any significant medieval activity was recorded on the site



## **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development as specified by a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future developments outside the evaluation area be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Geology	Natural
102	Deposit	Rubble
103	Deposit	Subsoil
104	Cut	Pit
105	Fill	Fill Of [104]
106	Cut	Ditch
107	Fill	Fill of [106]
108	Layer	Re-deposited Rubble & Natural
109	Layer	Buried Topsoil
110	Layer	Subsoil
111	Cut	Cut of post hole (Void) replaced by [113] [117]
112	Fill	Fill of posthole (Void) replaced by (114) (116) (118)
113	Cut	Cut of SW Post Hole
114	Fill	Fill [113]
115	Cut	Cut of Central Post Hole (Void)
116	Fill	Fill [115] (Fill of post pipe)
117	Cut	Cut of NE Post Hole
118	Fill	Fill [117]

*Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Evaluation*

## APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

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**ABBNEY ROAD,  
ST BEES,  
CUMBRIA.**



**DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**

**CP. No: 1125**

**09/03/2010**

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# NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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**DOCUMENT TITLE:** Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria  
**DOCUMENT TYPE:** Desk-Based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation Brief Report  
**CLIENT:** High Grange Developments Ltd  
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### *Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210). This work follows a planning application (Planning Application No. 4/09/2534) for the construction of 11 dwellings on land at Abbey Road. Cumbria County Council has yet to grant planning consent for the development. A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to an archaeological evaluation. The work is required as the site lies close to a Benedictine priory, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The desk-based assessment involved the examination of all pertinent documents and cartographic sources held in the County Records Office in Carlisle and Whitehaven, the local studies section at Carlisle Library, and the consultation of the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Cumbria County Council at Kendal. The HER includes the locations and settings of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens and other, non-designated archaeological remains. In addition, a number of published sources were consulted to provide background information, including the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

The research has shown that the development area is in close proximity to a field presumed to be on the north side of Abbey Road in which 9 flints were recovered during a survey carried out between 1959 and 1981, which was looking for evidence of prehistoric activity in Cumbria.

The development site is situated next to a Benedictine priory which was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and sits on the site of possibly an earlier religious house. Earlier archaeological work was carried out to the south of the church and found that there were remains of a farmstead dated 1804, known as Low Abbey Farm, as well as evidence of medieval activity, which may have included some outbuildings that were related to the priory. When the farmstead was in use, there is evidence that the area was used for pasture. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the church graveyard had been expanded and the surrounding area was developed.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over 4 days between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The Evaluation involved the excavation of 5 trenches, comprising a 5% sample of the development area. Archaeological remains were identified in Trenches 1 and 5, in the form of a ditch, pit and post holes. In Trench 1, the pit and ditch appear to be related to each other, though no dating evidence was found.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. NPA Ltd would also like to thank Jo Mackintosh and Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County, for all their assistance throughout the project. Further thanks are extended to all the staff at the County Record Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven for their help during this project.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to the groundwork staff of High Grange Developments Ltd.

The desk-based assessment and visual survey was undertaken by Fiona Wooler. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Frank Giecco, Ailsa Westgarth, Angus Clark, Kevin Mounsey and Joanne Wilkinson. Metal detection on site was undertaken by Alan James. The report was written and drawings produced by Joanne Wilkinson, Fiona Wooler and Frank Giecco. The project was managed by Frank Giecco Project Manager for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Frank Giecco, Project Manager for NPA Ltd.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In February 2010, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation and desk based assessment at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210 Figure 1), associated with the proposed development of 11 new dwellings. The proposed works area lie within the immediate vicinity of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and St Bega as well as the Benedictine priory. Earlier excavations and surveys have revealed the structural remains of the priory and the cemetery below ground. The developmental area is also closely situated near sites where flints and stone tools have been found. As a result, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service requested that the proposed development site be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008a), and were consistent with the specification provided by the Project Design (Giecco, 2010) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken on-site and the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis.

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## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County Council, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment was previously undertaken and appears in a separate report (Wooler, 2010). The desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Historic Environment Record in Kendal in the first instance. This included the collection of all available information held within the HER database, in order to achieve a full understanding of the nature of the existing resource regarding the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site. Aerial photographs for the area will be examined in order to gain an adequate understanding of the context of the archaeological fieldwork.

2.2.2 Following this the County Records Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven was also consulted in order to study maps and documents relevant to the study area. This will include the collection of historic maps, including Tithe or Enclosure maps and early Ordnance Survey maps. Early cartographic evidence, such as surveys and terriers, were consulted in order to achieve an understanding of the medieval and early post medieval landscape. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping was also consulted. Several secondary sources and journals, such as the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, were also consulted. Collections also consulted for pertinent references included Directories, Business Records, Miscellaneous Records and Diocesan Records.

2.2.3 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IfA 2008b).

## 2.3 THE FIELD EVALUATION

2.3.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of 5 trenches covering a minimum of 200 m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> proposed development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity. All work was conducted according to the recommendations of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008b).

2.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3.3 Turf and topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2003).

2.3.4 All finds encountered were retained, including those from excavated topsoil, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F.Giecco (NPA Ltd Technical Director).

2.3.5 In total, 5 environmental samples were collected from features in 2 of the trenches.

2.3.6 The 5 evaluation trenches were scheduled to be backfilled at the discretion of the client, following excavation and recording.

2.3.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1991).

## 2.4 THE ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum

recommendations (Brown 2007). Copies of the report will be sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Kendal, Cumbria, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA10, ARS-A, CP1125/10.

- 2.4.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Cumbria County Council, support the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

## 3 BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 St Bees is located along the West Coast of Cumbria and is approximately 6km to the south of the port town Whitehaven and 4km to the north-west of Egremont (Figure 1). The site lies in the Pow Beck Valley which runs through the village towards the sea which is to the south. The land on both sides of the valley is step and rise above c.100m above sea level.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development site is located in the north side of the village, west of St Bees Church on the south side of Abbey road. The development concerns the building of 11 dwellings in the area (Figure 2).
- 3.1.3 The underlying geology of the area is Triassic St Bees Sandstone, red and grey sandstone with partings of red mudstone

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area (For the full Desk Based Assessment, see Wooler 2010).
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* the earliest evidence of activity relevant to this developmental area was found at 6 sites around the developmental area. Stone tools and flints have been found in and around St Bees, the closest being the field to the north of the developmental site. This was evidence for people following a hunting and food gathering tradition. Although there is some evidence of Neolithic occupation, there is more evidence from the Early Bronze Age.
- 3.2.3 *Roman:* Not much is known about the Roman occupation in the area of St Bees. There are claims about a Roman Fort being in the area, this seemingly being backed up by aerial photographs showing an area roughly the shape of a Roman Fort to the south-east of St Bees and Roman worked stone. However, there is no evidence of Roman occupation.
- 3.2.4 *Medieval:* St Bees is alleged to have had Early Medieval origins in that a nunnery was supposed to have been founded by the Irish saint Bega in c.650 and although there are stone sculptures dating from this period still in the church, any other evidence seems to have been lost by the end 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.5 The Medieval period is marked by the building of St Bees Priory for the prior and 6 Benedictine monks by William de Meschines in c.1120 as a cell of St Mary's Abbey in York. Nearly all the buildings of the Priory have gone

although the church remains. As well as the church, there is more evidence of this time present in the cross slabs and crosses. The well preserved body of a man was found in 1981 and he was believed to have died between c.1120-1300. The evidence for industrial workings around St Bees is scarce.

- 3.2.6 *Post-medieval and Modern:* St Bees Priory was made dissolute in 1539. The Grammar School was founded in 1587 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York (1570-1575) and Canterbury (1575-1583), after providing for a free school in his Will. In 1844 the south and east wings of the school were added when it was turned into an independent boarding school. Expansion of the school continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.7 The Theological College was founded in 1816 by Bishop Law, though there appeared to be no student lodgings, with students presumably having to find lodgings in the village or elsewhere.
- 3.2.8 As a consequence of the Second World War, a sandstone pillbox was built to defend the railway station and the Pew Beck Bridge. The exact location was not disclosed. As well as this line of defense, a radar station was built at the lighthouse in 1941 which was manned by the RAF. Large numbers of men were billeted at St Bees and after the War; construction of houses took place at both ends of the village.
- 3.2.9 During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shingle was extracted from the beach for building material, which seems to have allowed the cliffs to erode. This however, was stopped when the land was bought up.

### **3.3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.3.1 Numerous excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate area around the development area in Abbey Road. In 1977 a Resistivity Survey was carried out in the area that was going to be part of the graveyard expansion. The results, although difficult to interpret, seem to show that the area was heavily disturbed. Foundations or walls appear to be indicated which could be the farm buildings related to the Priory.
- 3.3.2 A small archaeological excavation took place in 1979 in the area west of the church prior to the expansion of the graveyard which revealed leveling for a yard, a well and drains possibly related to the farm buildings of the Low Abbey Farm farmstead. Beneath these there were 2 stone walls and a wattle fence which have been interpreted as being related to outbuildings related to the medieval Priory. This excavation noted that there was the potential for a wealth of environmental data to be recovered.
- 3.3.3 Another archaeological excavation took place in 1980 which recovered leather and wooden objects which were well preserved. These included a



wooden bowl, 2 leather shoes and pottery which suggested a later medieval date for the finds. A large amount of animal bone in stratified layers was found which was interpreted as being the remains of a specialized activity occurring in the area, such as slaughterhouses. The medieval floors were deeper than anticipated and the report suggested that any future work covered a large area.

- 3.3.4 In 1981 an archaeological excavation took place in the ruined south chancel aisle of the church with the aim of locating the site of the early church and the settlement. During the excavation, many burials were found and were categorized into 2 groups. The earliest were adults and slightly out of alignment with remaining buildings which may have been part of the monks burial ground between AD 1120-1300. The later group was aligned with the remaining standing buildings and was thought to be contemporary with the use of the aisle. It was in this group that St Bees Man belonged to.
- 3.3.5 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation in 1996 to the south and immediate east of the developmental area which found that there were deposits surviving that may have been material left from animals stabled in the medieval Priory. There was material on top of this layer which suggests that the area was still used for the same purpose when the farmstead was in use.
- 3.3.6 In 2007 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a building survey of a redundant farmstead prior to renovations of the farmhouse for residential use. This survey revealed that there had been a farmstead on site since 1838 which included buildings such as a threshing barn. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were changes that reflected the farms change from arable to dairy farming.
- 3.3.7 An evaluation excavation was carried out along the route of a new utility pipeline. The north end of the pipeline was located to the south of the development area. The excavations revealed the remains of a post-medieval ridge and furrow in several areas and 2 small undated pits of possible archaeological importance.

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## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Five trenches were excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The upper deposits of Trenches 2 – 5 were excavated prior to the project start, with Trench 1 and the lower deposits of each trench excavated to natural under archaeological supervision. Trench 5 was extended by 1.8m to the south for safety reasons (Figure 3).

### 4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 *Trench 1:* Trench 1 was located to the north of site and was aligned north west- southeast, following the slope from Abbey road towards the graveyard wall (Figure 3). The trench was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m revealing light orange sand natural (101). A single pit [104] and ditch [106] were recorded cutting the natural. The archaeological features and natural were overlain by subsoil (103) which comprised orange-brown silty sand. The depth of the subsoil measured c.1.30m in the north west decreasing to c.0.25m in the south east of the trench. To the northwest of the trench subsoil (103) was overlain by an unstable c.1.20m thick layer of modern rubble (102) which was only evident in the northern half of the trench. The rubble layer comprised concrete and large pieces of sandstone. At the very south of the trench a shallow layer of river pebbles were noted overlying the subsoil, alongside a septic tank soakaway. A dark brown silty sand topsoil (100) sealed the trench, measuring c.0.30m (Plate 1).

4.2.2 Pit [104] was located in the middle of the trench and continued into the section to the west (Figure 4, Plate 2). It was subcircular in plan and measured 0.50m wide by 0.48m deep, with near vertical slopes and a rounded base. The single fill (105) comprised mid brown silty sand with frequent medium to large stones and charcoal flecks. The fill was mixed with natural towards the sides and base of the pit. There were no finds within the fill.

4.2.3 Ditch [106] was located 0.18m to the east of pit [104] and was aligned north-south (Figure 4, Plate 2). It measured 1.20m in width and 0.38m depth, with steep slopes to a fairly flat base. The single fill (107) comprised mid brown silty sand with mixed natural to the sides and base. No dating evidence was found within the ditch.



*Plate 1: Trench 1 Post Clean showing Rubble Section (W)*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 Oblique Section of [104] [106]*

4.2.4 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was located to the south west of Trench 1 and was aligned northeast- southwest (Figure 3). Natural geology (**101**) was recorded 0.77m below the current ground level and comprised a mid red/orange sandy clay. The natural was sealed by a c.0.22m thick layer of redeposited sandstone rubble. Subsoil (**103**) comprised c.0.65m of grey/brown clayey sand over lying the rubble layer. The subsoil was sealed by a c.0.11m thick layer of river pebbles which were overlain by dark/grey brown sandy clay topsoil (**100**) (Figure 5, Plate 3).

4.2.5 No archaeological features were noted.



*Plate 3: Trench 2 Post Clean showing sandstone (SE)*

4.2.6 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was located to the north-west of the site parallel to Abbey Road, located above Trench 2 on the higher terrace (Figure 3). The trench was aligned southwest- northeast. Natural geology was found at 1.51m below ground level and comprised light orange/brown clayey sand (**101**), sealed by subsoil (**103**). The subsoil comprised c.1.10m of mid grey brown clayey sand and was overlain by Topsoil (**100**). The topsoil comprised c.0.41m of grey brown sandy clay (Plate 4).

4.2.7 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 4: Trench 3 Post Clean (SE)*

4.2.8 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located to the south-west of Trenches 2 & 3 and was aligned north west-south east (Figure 3). The ground appeared to almost be terraced, with the edge of the first terrace appearing around c.2m from the north-west end of the trench. Natural geology (**101**) was found at 2m below ground level to the north and c.0.40m below ground level at the south. Subsoil (**103**) overlay the natural and comprised c.1.15m to the north and c.0.11m to the south of light orange brown sandy-clay. In the middle section of the trench a layer of c.0.10m river pebbles overlay the subsoil. Topsoil (**100**) sealed the deposits within the trench and comprised between c.0.44m and c.0.10m of dark grey/brown silty clay (Plate 5).

4.2.9 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 5: Trench 4 Post Clean looking up the Terracing (NW)*

4.2.10 **Trench 5:** Trench 5 was located to the south west of Trench 4 and was on a north east-south west alignment (Figure 3). It was machine excavated to a depth of c.1.50m. Due to the depth of modern overburden, the width of the trench was doubled to c.3.6m to allow safe recording. Natural geology comprised mid red-brown clay-sand (101). A recut posthole [113] [117] cut the natural. Subsoil (103) overlay the natural geology and features and comprised c.0.21m of mid grey brown sandy-clay. A c.0.25m thick layer of buried topsoil overlay the subsoil and comprised dark grey sandy clay. A c.1.03m thick layer of rubble, redeposited natural and gravels sealed the subsoil and was overlain by c.0.15m of dark grey brown sandy clay topsoil (100).

4.2.11 Post holes [113] and [117] were located near the middle of the trench (Figure 6). Post hole [117] was sub circular in plan with a 5 degree incline to the north west,

straight sides and a flattish base. It measured c.0.29m wide by c.0.35m in length by c.0.36m in depth. The single fill (118) comprised a moderately compact light grey silty-sand with medium sized stones, occasional flecks of charcoal and no finds. There were also three large stones in the base suggestive of packing stones.

4.2.12 During excavation traces of a possible post pipe were recorded (116). The post pipe measured c.0.34m in diameter and c.0.29m in depth. The single fill (116) comprised moderately compact mid black/grey silty-sand. It contained a large stone, occasional small pebbles, moderate charcoal flecks and no finds.

4.2.13 Post hole [113] truncated [117] at the north east edge. It measured c.0.11m wide by c.0.22m in length by c.0.24m in depth with near vertical sides and a curved base. The single fill (114) comprised dark grey/black silty sand with charcoal flecks, medium sized stones and no finds (Figure 7), (Plate 7). The lack of any datable finds or associated features makes the dating and function of these features problematic.





*Plate 6: Trench 5 Post Clean (NE)*



*Plate 7: Trench 5 Section Postholes r-l [117] [113] (NW)*

---

## 5 FINDS

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### 5.1 FINDS ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.1 A total of 37 finds were recovered during the evaluation. These included an unstratified medieval pot handle sherd from Trench 2, 22 sherds of unstratified post-medieval pottery, 13 metal objects that were found within the spoil and a single piece of burnt bone (possibly a head of a joint) from subsoil (103) in Trench 1.
- 5.1.2 The finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F. Giocco (NPA Ltd Technical Director). The metalwork was placed in a stable environment and was monitored for corrosion.

### 5.2 MEDIEVAL POTTERY

- 5.2.1 Only 1 piece of medieval pottery was found in subsoil (103) and was a piece of jug handle. It is a partially reduced green glazed type of pottery that dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century and was common in Cumbria.

### 5.3 POST MEDIEVAL POTTERY

- 5.3.1 A total of 22 pieces of post-medieval pottery was recovered that were a mixture of body sherds, rims and bases. They were all unstratified and all but 1 piece was found around Trench 5, the other being found around Trench 2. The assemblage is very mixed, containing pieces of Black Ware that dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and pieces of domestic Earthen Ware dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is also a fragment of transfer printed porcelain present.

### 5.4 METAL OBJECTS

- 5.4.1 All the metal objects on site were found by metal detection so are unstratified. A total of 9 Fe objects and nails were recovered from the site at Abbey Road. The 4 nails were all covered in corrosion, making them difficult to identify, but they appeared to have been handmade. They ranged in length from 50mm to 25mm and the 5 objects ranged in length from 74mm to 39mm.
- 5.4.2 There were 4 small Pb fragments found that were also unstratified. They were also undiagnostic and found at various trenches around the site.

5.4.3 The piece of medieval pottery from context (103) was kept. The rest of the assemblage was discarded as it could not provide further aid in dating.

	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
103	1	Bone	1	0.031	
U/S	2	Pottery	1	0.077	12thC-13thC
U/S	5	Iron Objects	5	0.174	
U/S	5	Pottery	21	0.477	Post-Med
U/S	U/S	Iron Objects	4	0.035	
U/S	U/S	Lead	4	0.015	
U/S	U/S	Pottery	1	0.006	Post-Med

*Table 1: Finds Table of Artefacts Recovered from the Evaluation.*

---

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, 5 trenches were excavated over three separate areas, covering 200m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to provide a representative sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural substrate.
- 6.1.2 Every trench showed evidence of large scale dumping of building rubble and excavated subsoil brought in from other areas. These deposits created two terraces, it is unclear as to whether this was intentional. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were devoid of any archaeological features or deposits. The layer of redeposited sandstone may suggest the demolition of a building somewhere close by or may be material brought in from other areas of the village. The sandstone within Trench 2 does not appear to indicate any structural activity, appearing more like a slumping of the overlying sandstone layer into a shallow natural hollow. The underlying geology shows that this area of land was very steeply sloped prior to the recent deposition of material.
- 6.1.3 Only Trenches 1 and 5 retained any evidence of archaeological activity. The archaeological features observed within Trench 1 comprised an oval pit and a possibly related ditch. There was no dating evidence in either the pit or ditch. This ditch may represent boundary or earlier drainage on the site. The recut post hole in Trench 1 was not related to any other features recorded within the trench.
- 6.1.4 The medieval and post-medieval pottery found during the excavation are not necessarily indicative of activity within the site as the stratigraphic deposits suggest a prolonged dumping of material excavated elsewhere on the site. The steep nature of the site could also indicate that the area would have been of little use as anything other than pasture land, with the ditch and post holes possibly relating to agricultural boundaries. The dumping of material may have been attempt to create more useful land however it is also possible that the material was deposited and mounded into terraces unintentionally.
- 6.1.5 The results obtained during the present evaluation, and from previous archaeological investigations suggest that the study area has been intensively in use as agricultural land and a more recent dump for excavated material. No evidence of any significant medieval activity was recorded on the site

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development as specified by a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future developments outside the evaluation area be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Geology	Natural
102	Deposit	Rubble
103	Deposit	Subsoil
104	Cut	Pit
105	Fill	Fill Of [104]
106	Cut	Ditch
107	Fill	Fill of [106]
108	Layer	Re-deposited Rubble & Natural
109	Layer	Buried Topsoil
110	Layer	Subsoil
111	Cut	Cut of post hole (Void) replaced by [113] [117]
112	Fill	Fill of posthole (Void) replaced by (114) (116) (118)
113	Cut	Cut of SW Post Hole
114	Fill	Fill [113]
115	Cut	Cut of Central Post Hole (Void)
116	Fill	Fill [115] (Fill of post pipe)
117	Cut	Cut of NE Post Hole
118	Fill	Fill [117]

*Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Evaluation*

## APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

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**ABBNEY ROAD,  
ST BEES,  
CUMBRIA.**



**DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**

**CP. No: 1125**

**09/03/2010**

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# NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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**DOCUMENT TYPE:** Desk-Based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation Brief Report  
**CLIENT:** High Grange Developments Ltd  
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*Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210). This work follows a planning application (Planning Application No. 4/09/2534) for the construction of 11 dwellings on land at Abbey Road. Cumbria County Council has yet to grant planning consent for the development. A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to an archaeological evaluation. The work is required as the site lies close to a Benedictine priory, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The desk-based assessment involved the examination of all pertinent documents and cartographic sources held in the County Records Office in Carlisle and Whitehaven, the local studies section at Carlisle Library, and the consultation of the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Cumbria County Council at Kendal. The HER includes the locations and settings of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens and other, non-designated archaeological remains. In addition, a number of published sources were consulted to provide background information, including the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

The research has shown that the development area is in close proximity to a field presumed to be on the north side of Abbey Road in which 9 flints were recovered during a survey carried out between 1959 and 1981, which was looking for evidence of prehistoric activity in Cumbria.

The development site is situated next to a Benedictine priory which was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and sits on the site of possibly an earlier religious house. Earlier archaeological work was carried out to the south of the church and found that there were remains of a farmstead dated 1804, known as Low Abbey Farm, as well as evidence of medieval activity, which may have included some outbuildings that were related to the priory. When the farmstead was in use, there is evidence that the area was used for pasture. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the church graveyard had been expanded and the surrounding area was developed.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over 4 days between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The Evaluation involved the excavation of 5 trenches, comprising a 5% sample of the development area. Archaeological remains were identified in Trenches 1 and 5, in the form of a ditch, pit and post holes. In Trench 1, the pit and ditch appear to be related to each other, though no dating evidence was found.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. NPA Ltd would also like to thank Jo Mackintosh and Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County, for all their assistance throughout the project. Further thanks are extended to all the staff at the County Record Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven for their help during this project.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to the groundwork staff of High Grange Developments Ltd.

The desk-based assessment and visual survey was undertaken by Fiona Wooler. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Frank Giecco, Ailsa Westgarth, Angus Clark, Kevin Mounsey and Joanne Wilkinson. Metal detection on site was undertaken by Alan James. The report was written and drawings produced by Joanne Wilkinson, Fiona Wooler and Frank Giecco. The project was managed by Frank Giecco Project Manager for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Frank Giecco, Project Manager for NPA Ltd.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In February 2010, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation and desk based assessment at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210 Figure 1), associated with the proposed development of 11 new dwellings. The proposed works area lie within the immediate vicinity of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and St Bega as well as the Benedictine priory. Earlier excavations and surveys have revealed the structural remains of the priory and the cemetery below ground. The developmental area is also closely situated near sites where flints and stone tools have been found. As a result, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service requested that the proposed development site be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008a), and were consistent with the specification provided by the Project Design (Giecco, 2010) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken on-site and the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County Council, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment was previously undertaken and appears in a separate report (Wooler, 2010). The desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Historic Environment Record in Kendal in the first instance. This included the collection of all available information held within the HER database, in order to achieve a full understanding of the nature of the existing resource regarding the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site. Aerial photographs for the area will be examined in order to gain an adequate understanding of the context of the archaeological fieldwork.

2.2.2 Following this the County Records Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven was also consulted in order to study maps and documents relevant to the study area. This will include the collection of historic maps, including Tithe or Enclosure maps and early Ordnance Survey maps. Early cartographic evidence, such as surveys and terriers, were consulted in order to achieve an understanding of the medieval and early post medieval landscape. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping was also consulted. Several secondary sources and journals, such as the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, were also consulted. Collections also consulted for pertinent references included Directories, Business Records, Miscellaneous Records and Diocesan Records.

2.2.3 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IfA 2008b).



## 2.3 THE FIELD EVALUATION

2.3.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of 5 trenches covering a minimum of 200 m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> proposed development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity. All work was conducted according to the recommendations of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008b).

2.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3.3 Turf and topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2003).

2.3.4 All finds encountered were retained, including those from excavated topsoil, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F.Giecco (NPA Ltd Technical Director).

2.3.5 In total, 5 environmental samples were collected from features in 2 of the trenches.

2.3.6 The 5 evaluation trenches were scheduled to be backfilled at the discretion of the client, following excavation and recording.

2.3.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1991).

## 2.4 THE ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum

recommendations (Brown 2007). Copies of the report will be sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Kendal, Cumbria, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA10, ARS-A, CP1125/10.

- 2.4.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Cumbria County Council, support the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

## 3 BACKGROUND

---

### 3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 St Bees is located along the West Coast of Cumbria and is approximately 6km to the south of the port town Whitehaven and 4km to the north-west of Egremont (Figure 1). The site lies in the Pow Beck Valley which runs through the village towards the sea which is to the south. The land on both sides of the valley is step and rise above c.100m above sea level.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development site is located in the north side of the village, west of St Bees Church on the south side of Abbey road. The development concerns the building of 11 dwellings in the area (Figure 2).
- 3.1.3 The underlying geology of the area is Triassic St Bees Sandstone, red and grey sandstone with partings of red mudstone

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area (For the full Desk Based Assessment, see Wooler 2010).
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* the earliest evidence of activity relevant to this developmental area was found at 6 sites around the developmental area. Stone tools and flints have been found in and around St Bees, the closest being the field to the north of the developmental site. This was evidence for people following a hunting and food gathering tradition. Although there is some evidence of Neolithic occupation, there is more evidence from the Early Bronze Age.
- 3.2.3 *Roman:* Not much is known about the Roman occupation in the area of St Bees. There are claims about a Roman Fort being in the area, this seemingly being backed up by aerial photographs showing an area roughly the shape of a Roman Fort to the south-east of St Bees and Roman worked stone. However, there is no evidence of Roman occupation.
- 3.2.4 *Medieval:* St Bees is alleged to have had Early Medieval origins in that a nunnery was supposed to have been founded by the Irish saint Bega in c.650 and although there are stone sculptures dating from this period still in the church, any other evidence seems to have been lost by the end 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.5 The Medieval period is marked by the building of St Bees Priory for the prior and 6 Benedictine monks by William de Meschines in c.1120 as a cell of St Mary's Abbey in York. Nearly all the buildings of the Priory have gone

although the church remains. As well as the church, there is more evidence of this time present in the cross slabs and crosses. The well preserved body of a man was found in 1981 and he was believed to have died between c.1120-1300. The evidence for industrial workings around St Bees is scarce.

- 3.2.6 *Post-medieval and Modern:* St Bees Priory was made dissolute in 1539. The Grammar School was founded in 1587 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York (1570-1575) and Canterbury (1575-1583), after providing for a free school in his Will. In 1844 the south and east wings of the school were added when it was turned into an independent boarding school. Expansion of the school continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.7 The Theological College was founded in 1816 by Bishop Law, though there appeared to be no student lodgings, with students presumably having to find lodgings in the village or elsewhere.
- 3.2.8 As a consequence of the Second World War, a sandstone pillbox was built to defend the railway station and the Pew Beck Bridge. The exact location was not disclosed. As well as this line of defense, a radar station was built at the lighthouse in 1941 which was manned by the RAF. Large numbers of men were billeted at St Bees and after the War; construction of houses took place at both ends of the village.
- 3.2.9 During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shingle was extracted from the beach for building material, which seems to have allowed the cliffs to erode. This however, was stopped when the land was bought up.

### **3.3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.3.1 Numerous excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate area around the development area in Abbey Road. In 1977 a Resistivity Survey was carried out in the area that was going to be part of the graveyard expansion. The results, although difficult to interpret, seem to show that the area was heavily disturbed. Foundations or walls appear to be indicated which could be the farm buildings related to the Priory.
- 3.3.2 A small archaeological excavation took place in 1979 in the area west of the church prior to the expansion of the graveyard which revealed leveling for a yard, a well and drains possibly related to the farm buildings of the Low Abbey Farm farmstead. Beneath these there were 2 stone walls and a wattle fence which have been interpreted as being related to outbuildings related to the medieval Priory. This excavation noted that there was the potential for a wealth of environmental data to be recovered.
- 3.3.3 Another archaeological excavation took place in 1980 which recovered leather and wooden objects which were well preserved. These included a

wooden bowl, 2 leather shoes and pottery which suggested a later medieval date for the finds. A large amount of animal bone in stratified layers was found which was interpreted as being the remains of a specialized activity occurring in the area, such as slaughterhouses. The medieval floors were deeper than anticipated and the report suggested that any future work covered a large area.

- 3.3.4 In 1981 an archaeological excavation took place in the ruined south chancel aisle of the church with the aim of locating the site of the early church and the settlement. During the excavation, many burials were found and were categorized into 2 groups. The earliest were adults and slightly out of alignment with remaining buildings which may have been part of the monks burial ground between AD 1120-1300. The later group was aligned with the remaining standing buildings and was thought to be contemporary with the use of the aisle. It was in this group that St Bees Man belonged to.
- 3.3.5 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation in 1996 to the south and immediate east of the developmental area which found that there were deposits surviving that may have been material left from animals stabled in the medieval Priory. There was material on top of this layer which suggests that the area was still used for the same purpose when the farmstead was in use.
- 3.3.6 In 2007 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a building survey of a redundant farmstead prior to renovations of the farmhouse for residential use. This survey revealed that there had been a farmstead on site since 1838 which included buildings such as a threshing barn. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were changes that reflected the farms change from arable to dairy farming.
- 3.3.7 An evaluation excavation was carried out along the route of a new utility pipeline. The north end of the pipeline was located to the south of the development area. The excavations revealed the remains of a post-medieval ridge and furrow in several areas and 2 small undated pits of possible archaeological importance.

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## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Five trenches were excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The upper deposits of Trenches 2 – 5 were excavated prior to the project start, with Trench 1 and the lower deposits of each trench excavated to natural under archaeological supervision. Trench 5 was extended by 1.8m to the south for safety reasons (Figure 3).

### 4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 *Trench 1:* Trench 1 was located to the north of site and was aligned north west- southeast, following the slope from Abbey road towards the graveyard wall (Figure 3). The trench was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m revealing light orange sand natural (101). A single pit [104] and ditch [106] were recorded cutting the natural. The archaeological features and natural were overlain by subsoil (103) which comprised orange-brown silty sand. The depth of the subsoil measured c.1.30m in the north west decreasing to c.0.25m in the south east of the trench. To the northwest of the trench subsoil (103) was overlain by an unstable c.1.20m thick layer of modern rubble (102) which was only evident in the northern half of the trench. The rubble layer comprised concrete and large pieces of sandstone. At the very south of the trench a shallow layer of river pebbles were noted overlying the subsoil, alongside a septic tank soakaway. A dark brown silty sand topsoil (100) sealed the trench, measuring c.0.30m (Plate 1).

4.2.2 Pit [104] was located in the middle of the trench and continued into the section to the west (Figure 4, Plate 2). It was subcircular in plan and measured 0.50m wide by 0.48m deep, with near vertical slopes and a rounded base. The single fill (105) comprised mid brown silty sand with frequent medium to large stones and charcoal flecks. The fill was mixed with natural towards the sides and base of the pit. There were no finds within the fill.

4.2.3 Ditch [106] was located 0.18m to the east of pit [104] and was aligned north-south (Figure 4, Plate 2). It measured 1.20m in width and 0.38m depth, with steep slopes to a fairly flat base. The single fill (107) comprised mid brown silty sand with mixed natural to the sides and base. No dating evidence was found within the ditch.



*Plate 1: Trench 1 Post Clean showing Rubble Section (W)*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 Oblique Section of [104] [106]*

4.2.4 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was located to the south west of Trench 1 and was aligned northeast- southwest (Figure 3). Natural geology (**101**) was recorded 0.77m below the current ground level and comprised a mid red/orange sandy clay. The natural was sealed by a c.0.22m thick layer of redeposited sandstone rubble. Subsoil (**103**) comprised c.0.65m of grey/brown clayey sand over lying the rubble layer. The subsoil was sealed by a c.0.11m thick layer of river pebbles which were overlain by dark/grey brown sandy clay topsoil (**100**) (Figure 5, Plate 3).

4.2.5 No archaeological features were noted.





*Plate 3: Trench 2 Post Clean showing sandstone (SE)*

4.2.6 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was located to the north-west of the site parallel to Abbey Road, located above Trench 2 on the higher terrace (Figure 3). The trench was aligned southwest- northeast. Natural geology was found at 1.51m below ground level and comprised light orange/brown clayey sand (**101**), sealed by subsoil (**103**). The subsoil comprised c.1.10m of mid grey brown clayey sand and was overlain by Topsoil (**100**). The topsoil comprised c.0.41m of grey brown sandy clay (Plate 4).

4.2.7 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 4: Trench 3 Post Clean (SE)*

4.2.8 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located to the south-west of Trenches 2 & 3 and was aligned north west-south east (Figure 3). The ground appeared to almost be terraced, with the edge of the first terrace appearing around c.2m from the north-west end of the trench. Natural geology (**101**) was found at 2m below ground level to the north and c.0.40m below ground level at the south. Subsoil (**103**) overlay the natural and comprised c.1.15m to the north and c.0.11m to the south of light orange brown sandy-clay. In the middle section of the trench a layer of c.0.10m river pebbles overlay the subsoil. Topsoil (**100**) sealed the deposits within the trench and comprised between c.0.44m and c.0.10m of dark grey/brown silty clay (Plate 5).

4.2.9 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 5: Trench 4 Post Clean looking up the Terracing (NW)*

4.2.10 **Trench 5:** Trench 5 was located to the south west of Trench 4 and was on a north east-south west alignment (Figure 3). It was machine excavated to a depth of c.1.50m. Due to the depth of modern overburden, the width of the trench was doubled to c.3.6m to allow safe recording. Natural geology comprised mid red-brown clay-sand (101). A recut posthole [113] [117] cut the natural. Subsoil (103) overlay the natural geology and features and comprised c.0.21m of mid grey brown sandy-clay. A c.0.25m thick layer of buried topsoil overlay the subsoil and comprised dark grey sandy clay. A c.1.03m thick layer of rubble, redeposited natural and gravels sealed the subsoil and was overlain by c.0.15m of dark grey brown sandy clay topsoil (100).

4.2.11 Post holes [113] and [117] were located near the middle of the trench (Figure 6). Post hole [117] was sub circular in plan with a 5 degree incline to the north west,

straight sides and a flattish base. It measured c.0.29m wide by c.0.35m in length by c.0.36m in depth. The single fill (118) comprised a moderately compact light grey silty-sand with medium sized stones, occasional flecks of charcoal and no finds. There were also three large stones in the base suggestive of packing stones.

4.2.12 During excavation traces of a possible post pipe were recorded (116). The post pipe measured c.0.34m in diameter and c.0.29m in depth. The single fill (116) comprised moderately compact mid black/grey silty-sand. It contained a large stone, occasional small pebbles, moderate charcoal flecks and no finds.

4.2.13 Post hole [113] truncated [117] at the north east edge. It measured c.0.11m wide by c.0.22m in length by c.0.24m in depth with near vertical sides and a curved base. The single fill (114) comprised dark grey/black silty sand with charcoal flecks, medium sized stones and no finds (Figure 7), (Plate 7). The lack of any datable finds or associated features makes the dating and function of these features problematic.



*Plate 6: Trench 5 Post Clean (NE)*



*Plate 7: Trench 5 Section Postholes r-l [117] [113] (NW)*

---

## 5 FINDS

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### 5.1 FINDS ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 A total of 37 finds were recovered during the evaluation. These included an unstratified medieval pot handle sherd from Trench 2, 22 sherds of unstratified post-medieval pottery, 13 metal objects that were found within the spoil and a single piece of burnt bone (possibly a head of a joint) from subsoil (103) in Trench 1.

5.1.2 The finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F. Giocco (NPA Ltd Technical Director). The metalwork was placed in a stable environment and was monitored for corrosion.

### 5.2 MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.2.1 Only 1 piece of medieval pottery was found in subsoil (103) and was a piece of jug handle. It is a partially reduced green glazed type of pottery that dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century and was common in Cumbria.

### 5.3 POST MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.3.1 A total of 22 pieces of post-medieval pottery was recovered that were a mixture of body sherds, rims and bases. They were all unstratified and all but 1 piece was found around Trench 5, the other being found around Trench 2. The assemblage is very mixed, containing pieces of Black Ware that dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and pieces of domestic Earthen Ware dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is also a fragment of transfer printed porcelain present.

### 5.4 METAL OBJECTS

5.4.1 All the metal objects on site were found by metal detection so are unstratified. A total of 9 Fe objects and nails were recovered from the site at Abbey Road. The 4 nails were all covered in corrosion, making them difficult to identify, but they appeared to have been handmade. They ranged in length from 50mm to 25mm and the 5 objects ranged in length from 74mm to 39mm.

5.4.2 There were 4 small Pb fragments found that were also unstratified. They were also undiagnostic and found at various trenches around the site.

5.4.3 The piece of medieval pottery from context (103) was kept. The rest of the assemblage was discarded as it could not provide further aid in dating.

	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
103	1	Bone	1	0.031	
U/S	2	Pottery	1	0.077	12thC-13thC
U/S	5	Iron Objects	5	0.174	
U/S	5	Pottery	21	0.477	Post-Med
U/S	U/S	Iron Objects	4	0.035	
U/S	U/S	Lead	4	0.015	
U/S	U/S	Pottery	1	0.006	Post-Med

*Table 1: Finds Table of Artefacts Recovered from the Evaluation.*

---

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, 5 trenches were excavated over three separate areas, covering 200m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to provide a representative sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural substrate.
- 6.1.2 Every trench showed evidence of large scale dumping of building rubble and excavated subsoil brought in from other areas. These deposits created two terraces, it is unclear as to whether this was intentional. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were devoid of any archaeological features or deposits. The layer of redeposited sandstone may suggest the demolition of a building somewhere close by or may be material brought in from other areas of the village. The sandstone within Trench 2 does not appear to indicate any structural activity, appearing more like a slumping of the overlying sandstone layer into a shallow natural hollow. The underlying geology shows that this area of land was very steeply sloped prior to the recent deposition of material.
- 6.1.3 Only Trenches 1 and 5 retained any evidence of archaeological activity. The archaeological features observed within Trench 1 comprised an oval pit and a possibly related ditch. There was no dating evidence in either the pit or ditch. This ditch may represent boundary or earlier drainage on the site. The recut post hole in Trench 1 was not related to any other features recorded within the trench.
- 6.1.4 The medieval and post-medieval pottery found during the excavation are not necessarily indicative of activity within the site as the stratigraphic deposits suggest a prolonged dumping of material excavated elsewhere on the site. The steep nature of the site could also indicate that the area would have been of little use as anything other than pasture land, with the ditch and post holes possibly relating to agricultural boundaries. The dumping of material may have been attempt to create more useful land however it is also possible that the material was deposited and mounded into terraces unintentionally.
- 6.1.5 The results obtained during the present evaluation, and from previous archaeological investigations suggest that the study area has been intensively in use as agricultural land and a more recent dump for excavated material. No evidence of any significant medieval activity was recorded on the site



## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development as specified by a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future developments outside the evaluation area be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Geology	Natural
102	Deposit	Rubble
103	Deposit	Subsoil
104	Cut	Pit
105	Fill	Fill Of [104]
106	Cut	Ditch
107	Fill	Fill of [106]
108	Layer	Re-deposited Rubble & Natural
109	Layer	Buried Topsoil
110	Layer	Subsoil
111	Cut	Cut of post hole (Void) replaced by [113] [117]
112	Fill	Fill of posthole (Void) replaced by (114) (116) (118)
113	Cut	Cut of SW Post Hole
114	Fill	Fill [113]
115	Cut	Cut of Central Post Hole (Void)
116	Fill	Fill [115] (Fill of post pipe)
117	Cut	Cut of NE Post Hole
118	Fill	Fill [117]

*Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Evaluation*

## APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

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**ABBNEY ROAD,  
ST BEES,  
CUMBRIA.**



**DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT  
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EVALUATION REPORT**

**CP. No: 1125**

**09/03/2010**

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# NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

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**DOCUMENT TYPE:** Desk-Based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation Brief Report  
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### *Quality Assurance*

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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## SUMMARY

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210). This work follows a planning application (Planning Application No. 4/09/2534) for the construction of 11 dwellings on land at Abbey Road. Cumbria County Council has yet to grant planning consent for the development. A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to an archaeological evaluation. The work is required as the site lies close to a Benedictine priory, which identified the site to be of archaeological interest.

The desk-based assessment involved the examination of all pertinent documents and cartographic sources held in the County Records Office in Carlisle and Whitehaven, the local studies section at Carlisle Library, and the consultation of the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Cumbria County Council at Kendal. The HER includes the locations and settings of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens and other, non-designated archaeological remains. In addition, a number of published sources were consulted to provide background information, including the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

The research has shown that the development area is in close proximity to a field presumed to be on the north side of Abbey Road in which 9 flints were recovered during a survey carried out between 1959 and 1981, which was looking for evidence of prehistoric activity in Cumbria.

The development site is situated next to a Benedictine priory which was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and sits on the site of possibly an earlier religious house. Earlier archaeological work was carried out to the south of the church and found that there were remains of a farmstead dated 1804, known as Low Abbey Farm, as well as evidence of medieval activity, which may have included some outbuildings that were related to the priory. When the farmstead was in use, there is evidence that the area was used for pasture. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the church graveyard had been expanded and the surrounding area was developed.

The archaeological evaluation was undertaken over 4 days between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The Evaluation involved the excavation of 5 trenches, comprising a 5% sample of the development area. Archaeological remains were identified in Trenches 1 and 5, in the form of a ditch, pit and post holes. In Trench 1, the pit and ditch appear to be related to each other, though no dating evidence was found.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mr G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work. NPA Ltd would also like to thank Jo Mackintosh and Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County, for all their assistance throughout the project. Further thanks are extended to all the staff at the County Record Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven for their help during this project.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to the groundwork staff of High Grange Developments Ltd.

The desk-based assessment and visual survey was undertaken by Fiona Wooler. The archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Frank Giecco, Ailsa Westgarth, Angus Clark, Kevin Mounsey and Joanne Wilkinson. Metal detection on site was undertaken by Alan James. The report was written and drawings produced by Joanne Wilkinson, Fiona Wooler and Frank Giecco. The project was managed by Frank Giecco Project Manager for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Frank Giecco, Project Manager for NPA Ltd.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

---

### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In February 2010, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation and desk based assessment at Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria (NGR NX 9675 1210 Figure 1), associated with the proposed development of 11 new dwellings. The proposed works area lie within the immediate vicinity of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary and St Bega as well as the Benedictine priory. Earlier excavations and surveys have revealed the structural remains of the priory and the cemetery below ground. The developmental area is also closely situated near sites where flints and stone tools have been found. As a result, Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service requested that the proposed development site be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 The evaluation was undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008a), and were consistent with the specification provided by the Project Design (Giecco, 2010) and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the results of the archaeological evaluation undertaken on-site and the subsequent programme of post-fieldwork analysis.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

---

### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Mr. G Reed of High Grange Developments Ltd, for an archaeological evaluation of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County Council, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

2.2.1 A desk-based assessment was previously undertaken and appears in a separate report (Wooler, 2010). The desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Historic Environment Record in Kendal in the first instance. This included the collection of all available information held within the HER database, in order to achieve a full understanding of the nature of the existing resource regarding the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site. Aerial photographs for the area will be examined in order to gain an adequate understanding of the context of the archaeological fieldwork.

2.2.2 Following this the County Records Offices in Carlisle and Whitehaven was also consulted in order to study maps and documents relevant to the study area. This will include the collection of historic maps, including Tithe or Enclosure maps and early Ordnance Survey maps. Early cartographic evidence, such as surveys and terriers, were consulted in order to achieve an understanding of the medieval and early post medieval landscape. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping was also consulted. Several secondary sources and journals, such as the Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, were also consulted. Collections also consulted for pertinent references included Directories, Business Records, Miscellaneous Records and Diocesan Records.

2.2.3 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IfA 2008b).

## 2.3 THE FIELD EVALUATION

2.3.1 The evaluation consisted of the excavation of 5 trenches covering a minimum of 200 m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> proposed development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity. All work was conducted according to the recommendations of the Institute for Archaeologists (2008b).

2.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the field evaluation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they were observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover palaeoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

2.3.3 Turf and topsoil was removed by mechanical excavator. The trial trenches were subsequently cleaned by hand and all features were investigated and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (Giecco 2003).

2.3.4 All finds encountered were retained, including those from excavated topsoil, and were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F.Giecco (NPA Ltd Technical Director).

2.3.5 In total, 5 environmental samples were collected from features in 2 of the trenches.

2.3.6 The 5 evaluation trenches were scheduled to be backfilled at the discretion of the client, following excavation and recording.

2.3.7 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1991).

## 2.4 THE ARCHIVE

2.4.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum

recommendations (Brown 2007). Copies of the report will be sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Kendal, Cumbria, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA10, ARS-A, CP1125/10.

- 2.4.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and Cumbria County Council, support the **Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

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## 3 BACKGROUND

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### 3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 St Bees is located along the West Coast of Cumbria and is approximately 6km to the south of the port town Whitehaven and 4km to the north-west of Egremont (Figure 1). The site lies in the Pow Beck Valley which runs through the village towards the sea which is to the south. The land on both sides of the valley is step and rise above c.100m above sea level.
- 3.1.2 The proposed development site is located in the north side of the village, west of St Bees Church on the south side of Abbey road. The development concerns the building of 11 dwellings in the area (Figure 2).
- 3.1.3 The underlying geology of the area is Triassic St Bees Sandstone, red and grey sandstone with partings of red mudstone

### 3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area (For the full Desk Based Assessment, see Wooler 2010).
- 3.2.2 *Prehistoric:* the earliest evidence of activity relevant to this developmental area was found at 6 sites around the developmental area. Stone tools and flints have been found in and around St Bees, the closest being the field to the north of the developmental site. This was evidence for people following a hunting and food gathering tradition. Although there is some evidence of Neolithic occupation, there is more evidence from the Early Bronze Age.
- 3.2.3 *Roman:* Not much is known about the Roman occupation in the area of St Bees. There are claims about a Roman Fort being in the area, this seemingly being backed up by aerial photographs showing an area roughly the shape of a Roman Fort to the south-east of St Bees and Roman worked stone. However, there is no evidence of Roman occupation.
- 3.2.4 *Medieval:* St Bees is alleged to have had Early Medieval origins in that a nunnery was supposed to have been founded by the Irish saint Bega in c.650 and although there are stone sculptures dating from this period still in the church, any other evidence seems to have been lost by the end 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.5 The Medieval period is marked by the building of St Bees Priory for the prior and 6 Benedictine monks by William de Meschines in c.1120 as a cell of St Mary's Abbey in York. Nearly all the buildings of the Priory have gone

although the church remains. As well as the church, there is more evidence of this time present in the cross slabs and crosses. The well preserved body of a man was found in 1981 and he was believed to have died between c.1120-1300. The evidence for industrial workings around St Bees is scarce.

- 3.2.6 *Post-medieval and Modern:* St Bees Priory was made dissolute in 1539. The Grammar School was founded in 1587 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of York (1570-1575) and Canterbury (1575-1583), after providing for a free school in his Will. In 1844 the south and east wings of the school were added when it was turned into an independent boarding school. Expansion of the school continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3.2.7 The Theological College was founded in 1816 by Bishop Law, though there appeared to be no student lodgings, with students presumably having to find lodgings in the village or elsewhere.
- 3.2.8 As a consequence of the Second World War, a sandstone pillbox was built to defend the railway station and the Pew Beck Bridge. The exact location was not disclosed. As well as this line of defense, a radar station was built at the lighthouse in 1941 which was manned by the RAF. Large numbers of men were billeted at St Bees and after the War; construction of houses took place at both ends of the village.
- 3.2.9 During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shingle was extracted from the beach for building material, which seems to have allowed the cliffs to erode. This however, was stopped when the land was bought up.

### **3.3 PREVIOUS WORK**

- 3.3.1 Numerous excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate area around the development area in Abbey Road. In 1977 a Resistivity Survey was carried out in the area that was going to be part of the graveyard expansion. The results, although difficult to interpret, seem to show that the area was heavily disturbed. Foundations or walls appear to be indicated which could be the farm buildings related to the Priory.
- 3.3.2 A small archaeological excavation took place in 1979 in the area west of the church prior to the expansion of the graveyard which revealed leveling for a yard, a well and drains possibly related to the farm buildings of the Low Abbey Farm farmstead. Beneath these there were 2 stone walls and a wattle fence which have been interpreted as being related to outbuildings related to the medieval Priory. This excavation noted that there was the potential for a wealth of environmental data to be recovered.
- 3.3.3 Another archaeological excavation took place in 1980 which recovered leather and wooden objects which were well preserved. These included a



wooden bowl, 2 leather shoes and pottery which suggested a later medieval date for the finds. A large amount of animal bone in stratified layers was found which was interpreted as being the remains of a specialized activity occurring in the area, such as slaughterhouses. The medieval floors were deeper than anticipated and the report suggested that any future work covered a large area.

- 3.3.4 In 1981 an archaeological excavation took place in the ruined south chancel aisle of the church with the aim of locating the site of the early church and the settlement. During the excavation, many burials were found and were categorized into 2 groups. The earliest were adults and slightly out of alignment with remaining buildings which may have been part of the monks burial ground between AD 1120-1300. The later group was aligned with the remaining standing buildings and was thought to be contemporary with the use of the aisle. It was in this group that St Bees Man belonged to.
- 3.3.5 Lancaster University Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation in 1996 to the south and immediate east of the developmental area which found that there were deposits surviving that may have been material left from animals stabled in the medieval Priory. There was material on top of this layer which suggests that the area was still used for the same purpose when the farmstead was in use.
- 3.3.6 In 2007 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a building survey of a redundant farmstead prior to renovations of the farmhouse for residential use. This survey revealed that there had been a farmstead on site since 1838 which included buildings such as a threshing barn. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were changes that reflected the farms change from arable to dairy farming.
- 3.3.7 An evaluation excavation was carried out along the route of a new utility pipeline. The north end of the pipeline was located to the south of the development area. The excavations revealed the remains of a post-medieval ridge and furrow in several areas and 2 small undated pits of possible archaeological importance.

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## 4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Five trenches were excavated between 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The upper deposits of Trenches 2 – 5 were excavated prior to the project start, with Trench 1 and the lower deposits of each trench excavated to natural under archaeological supervision. Trench 5 was extended by 1.8m to the south for safety reasons (Figure 3).

### 4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 *Trench 1:* Trench 1 was located to the north of site and was aligned north west- southeast, following the slope from Abbey road towards the graveyard wall (Figure 3). The trench was machine excavated to a maximum depth of 2.5m revealing light orange sand natural (101). A single pit [104] and ditch [106] were recorded cutting the natural. The archaeological features and natural were overlain by subsoil (103) which comprised orange-brown silty sand. The depth of the subsoil measured c.1.30m in the north west decreasing to c.0.25m in the south east of the trench. To the northwest of the trench subsoil (103) was overlain by an unstable c.1.20m thick layer of modern rubble (102) which was only evident in the northern half of the trench. The rubble layer comprised concrete and large pieces of sandstone. At the very south of the trench a shallow layer of river pebbles were noted overlying the subsoil, alongside a septic tank soakaway. A dark brown silty sand topsoil (100) sealed the trench, measuring c.0.30m (Plate 1).

4.2.2 Pit [104] was located in the middle of the trench and continued into the section to the west (Figure 4, Plate 2). It was subcircular in plan and measured 0.50m wide by 0.48m deep, with near vertical slopes and a rounded base. The single fill (105) comprised mid brown silty sand with frequent medium to large stones and charcoal flecks. The fill was mixed with natural towards the sides and base of the pit. There were no finds within the fill.

4.2.3 Ditch [106] was located 0.18m to the east of pit [104] and was aligned north-south (Figure 4, Plate 2). It measured 1.20m in width and 0.38m depth, with steep slopes to a fairly flat base. The single fill (107) comprised mid brown silty sand with mixed natural to the sides and base. No dating evidence was found within the ditch.



*Plate 1: Trench 1 Post Clean showing Rubble Section (W)*



*Plate 2: Trench 1 Oblique Section of [104] [106]*

4.2.4 **Trench 2:** Trench 2 was located to the south west of Trench 1 and was aligned northeast- southwest (Figure 3). Natural geology (**101**) was recorded 0.77m below the current ground level and comprised a mid red/orange sandy clay. The natural was sealed by a c.0.22m thick layer of redeposited sandstone rubble. Subsoil (**103**) comprised c.0.65m of grey/brown clayey sand over lying the rubble layer. The subsoil was sealed by a c.0.11m thick layer of river pebbles which were overlain by dark/grey brown sandy clay topsoil (**100**) (Figure 5, Plate 3).

4.2.5 No archaeological features were noted.



*Plate 3: Trench 2 Post Clean showing sandstone (SE)*

4.2.6 **Trench 3:** Trench 3 was located to the north-west of the site parallel to Abbey Road, located above Trench 2 on the higher terrace (Figure 3). The trench was aligned southwest- northeast. Natural geology was found at 1.51m below ground level and comprised light orange/brown clayey sand (**101**), sealed by subsoil (**103**). The subsoil comprised c.1.10m of mid grey brown clayey sand and was overlain by Topsoil (**100**). The topsoil comprised c.0.41m of grey brown sandy clay (Plate 4).

4.2.7 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 4: Trench 3 Post Clean (SE)*

4.2.8 **Trench 4:** Trench 4 was located to the south-west of Trenches 2 & 3 and was aligned north west-south east (Figure 3). The ground appeared to almost be terraced, with the edge of the first terrace appearing around c.2m from the north-west end of the trench. Natural geology (**101**) was found at 2m below ground level to the north and c.0.40m below ground level at the south. Subsoil (**103**) overlay the natural and comprised c.1.15m to the north and c.0.11m to the south of light orange brown sandy-clay. In the middle section of the trench a layer of c.0.10m river pebbles overlay the subsoil. Topsoil (**100**) sealed the deposits within the trench and comprised between c.0.44m and c.0.10m of dark grey/brown silty clay (Plate 5).

4.2.9 No archaeological features were noted in this trench.



*Plate 5: Trench 4 Post Clean looking up the Terracing (NW)*

4.2.10 **Trench 5:** Trench 5 was located to the south west of Trench 4 and was on a north east-south west alignment (Figure 3). It was machine excavated to a depth of c.1.50m. Due to the depth of modern overburden, the width of the trench was doubled to c.3.6m to allow safe recording. Natural geology comprised mid red-brown clay-sand (101). A recut posthole [113] [117] cut the natural. Subsoil (103) overlay the natural geology and features and comprised c.0.21m of mid grey brown sandy-clay. A c.0.25m thick layer of buried topsoil overlay the subsoil and comprised dark grey sandy clay. A c.1.03m thick layer of rubble, redeposited natural and gravels sealed the subsoil and was overlain by c.0.15m of dark grey brown sandy clay topsoil (100).

4.2.11 Post holes [113] and [117] were located near the middle of the trench (Figure 6). Post hole [117] was sub circular in plan with a 5 degree incline to the north west,

straight sides and a flattish base. It measured c.0.29m wide by c.0.35m in length by c.0.36m in depth. The single fill (118) comprised a moderately compact light grey silty-sand with medium sized stones, occasional flecks of charcoal and no finds. There were also three large stones in the base suggestive of packing stones.

4.2.12 During excavation traces of a possible post pipe were recorded (116). The post pipe measured c.0.34m in diameter and c.0.29m in depth. The single fill (116) comprised moderately compact mid black/grey silty-sand. It contained a large stone, occasional small pebbles, moderate charcoal flecks and no finds.

4.2.13 Post hole [113] truncated [117] at the north east edge. It measured c.0.11m wide by c.0.22m in length by c.0.24m in depth with near vertical sides and a curved base. The single fill (114) comprised dark grey/black silty sand with charcoal flecks, medium sized stones and no finds (Figure 7), (Plate 7). The lack of any datable finds or associated features makes the dating and function of these features problematic.





*Plate 6: Trench 5 Post Clean (NE)*



*Plate 7: Trench 5 Section Postholes r-l [117] [113] (NW)*

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## 5 FINDS

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### 5.1 FINDS ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 A total of 37 finds were recovered during the evaluation. These included an unstratified medieval pot handle sherd from Trench 2, 22 sherds of unstratified post-medieval pottery, 13 metal objects that were found within the spoil and a single piece of burnt bone (possibly a head of a joint) from subsoil (103) in Trench 1.

5.1.2 The finds were cleaned and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of F. Giocco (NPA Ltd Technical Director). The metalwork was placed in a stable environment and was monitored for corrosion.

### 5.2 MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.2.1 Only 1 piece of medieval pottery was found in subsoil (103) and was a piece of jug handle. It is a partially reduced green glazed type of pottery that dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century and was common in Cumbria.

### 5.3 POST MEDIEVAL POTTERY

5.3.1 A total of 22 pieces of post-medieval pottery was recovered that were a mixture of body sherds, rims and bases. They were all unstratified and all but 1 piece was found around Trench 5, the other being found around Trench 2. The assemblage is very mixed, containing pieces of Black Ware that dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and pieces of domestic Earthen Ware dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is also a fragment of transfer printed porcelain present.

### 5.4 METAL OBJECTS

5.4.1 All the metal objects on site were found by metal detection so are unstratified. A total of 9 Fe objects and nails were recovered from the site at Abbey Road. The 4 nails were all covered in corrosion, making them difficult to identify, but they appeared to have been handmade. They ranged in length from 50mm to 25mm and the 5 objects ranged in length from 74mm to 39mm.

5.4.2 There were 4 small Pb fragments found that were also unstratified. They were also undiagnostic and found at various trenches around the site.

5.4.3 The piece of medieval pottery from context (103) was kept. The rest of the assemblage was discarded as it could not provide further aid in dating.

	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Weight (kg)</b>	<b>Period</b>
103	1	Bone	1	0.031	
U/S	2	Pottery	1	0.077	12thC-13thC
U/S	5	Iron Objects	5	0.174	
U/S	5	Pottery	21	0.477	Post-Med
U/S	U/S	Iron Objects	4	0.035	
U/S	U/S	Lead	4	0.015	
U/S	U/S	Pottery	1	0.006	Post-Med

*Table 1: Finds Table of Artefacts Recovered from the Evaluation.*

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## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, 5 trenches were excavated over three separate areas, covering 200m<sup>2</sup> of the proposed 3738m<sup>2</sup> development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to provide a representative sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated down to the top of the natural substrate.
- 6.1.2 Every trench showed evidence of large scale dumping of building rubble and excavated subsoil brought in from other areas. These deposits created two terraces, it is unclear as to whether this was intentional. Trenches 2, 3 and 4 were devoid of any archaeological features or deposits. The layer of redeposited sandstone may suggest the demolition of a building somewhere close by or may be material brought in from other areas of the village. The sandstone within Trench 2 does not appear to indicate any structural activity, appearing more like a slumping of the overlying sandstone layer into a shallow natural hollow. The underlying geology shows that this area of land was very steeply sloped prior to the recent deposition of material.
- 6.1.3 Only Trenches 1 and 5 retained any evidence of archaeological activity. The archaeological features observed within Trench 1 comprised an oval pit and a possibly related ditch. There was no dating evidence in either the pit or ditch. This ditch may represent boundary or earlier drainage on the site. The recut post hole in Trench 1 was not related to any other features recorded within the trench.
- 6.1.4 The medieval and post-medieval pottery found during the excavation are not necessarily indicative of activity within the site as the stratigraphic deposits suggest a prolonged dumping of material excavated elsewhere on the site. The steep nature of the site could also indicate that the area would have been of little use as anything other than pasture land, with the ditch and post holes possibly relating to agricultural boundaries. The dumping of material may have been attempt to create more useful land however it is also possible that the material was deposited and mounded into terraces unintentionally.
- 6.1.5 The results obtained during the present evaluation, and from previous archaeological investigations suggest that the study area has been intensively in use as agricultural land and a more recent dump for excavated material. No evidence of any significant medieval activity was recorded on the site

## **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development as specified by a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future developments outside the evaluation area be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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## APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Geology	Natural
102	Deposit	Rubble
103	Deposit	Subsoil
104	Cut	Pit
105	Fill	Fill Of [104]
106	Cut	Ditch
107	Fill	Fill of [106]
108	Layer	Re-deposited Rubble & Natural
109	Layer	Buried Topsoil
110	Layer	Subsoil
111	Cut	Cut of post hole (Void) replaced by [113] [117]
112	Fill	Fill of posthole (Void) replaced by (114) (116) (118)
113	Cut	Cut of SW Post Hole
114	Fill	Fill [113]
115	Cut	Cut of Central Post Hole (Void)
116	Fill	Fill [115] (Fill of post pipe)
117	Cut	Cut of NE Post Hole
118	Fill	Fill [117]

*Table 4: List of Contexts issued during Evaluation*

## APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

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North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road,  
St Bees, Cumbria


CLIENT:  
Mr G. Reed

SCALE: 1:50 000 at A4

DRAWN BY: FW

DATE: January 2010

KEY:

 Site Location

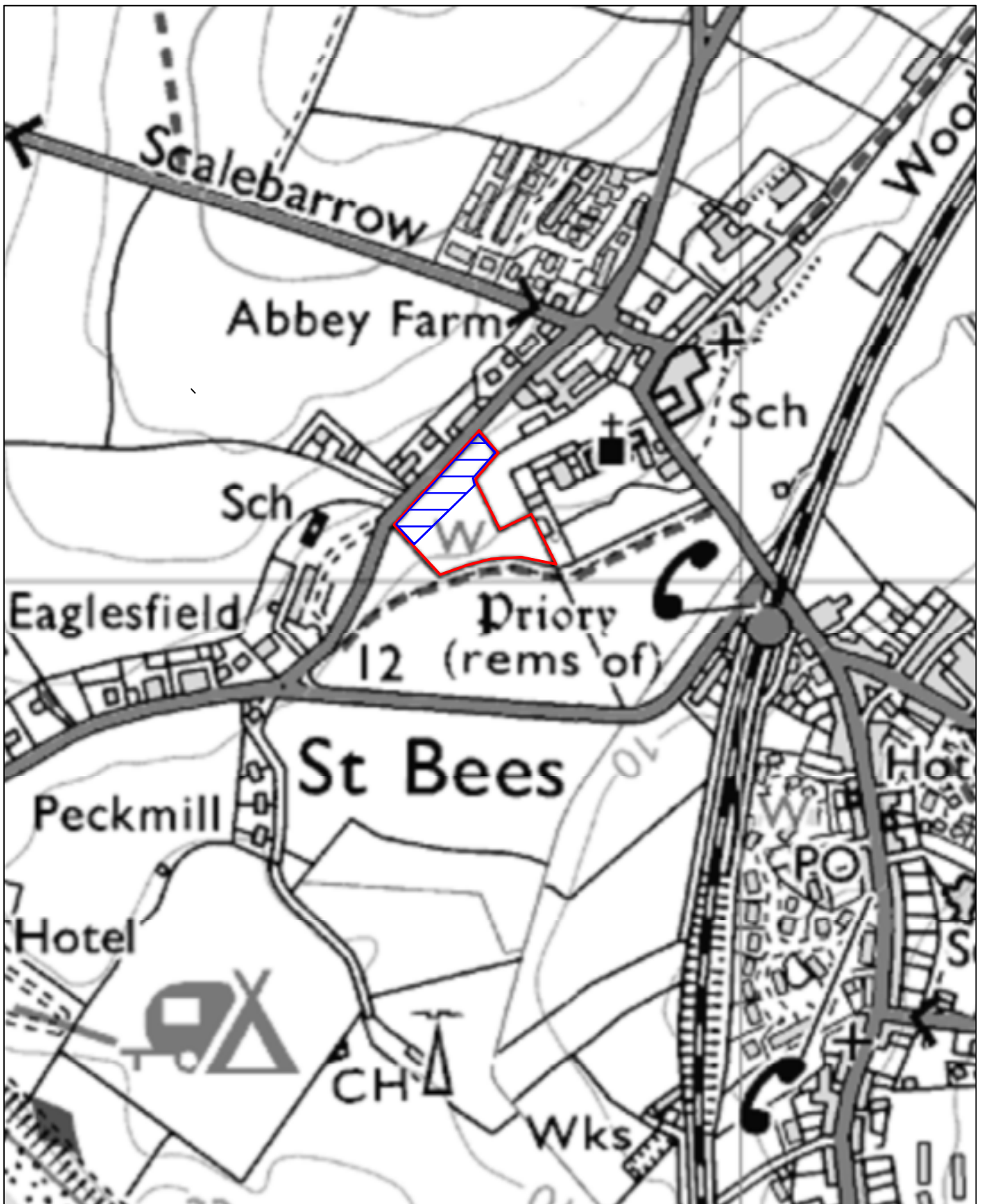


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REPORT No:  
CP71125

FIGURE:  
1

Figure 1 : Site Location



North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010

PROJECT: Abbey Road,  
St Bees, Cumbria  
SCALE: 1:5000 at A4  
REPORT No: CP1125  
CLIENT Mr G. Reed  
DRAWN BY: FW  
DATE: January 2010  
FIGURE: 2

KEY:

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Development Area



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Figure 2 : Location of Proposed Development Area

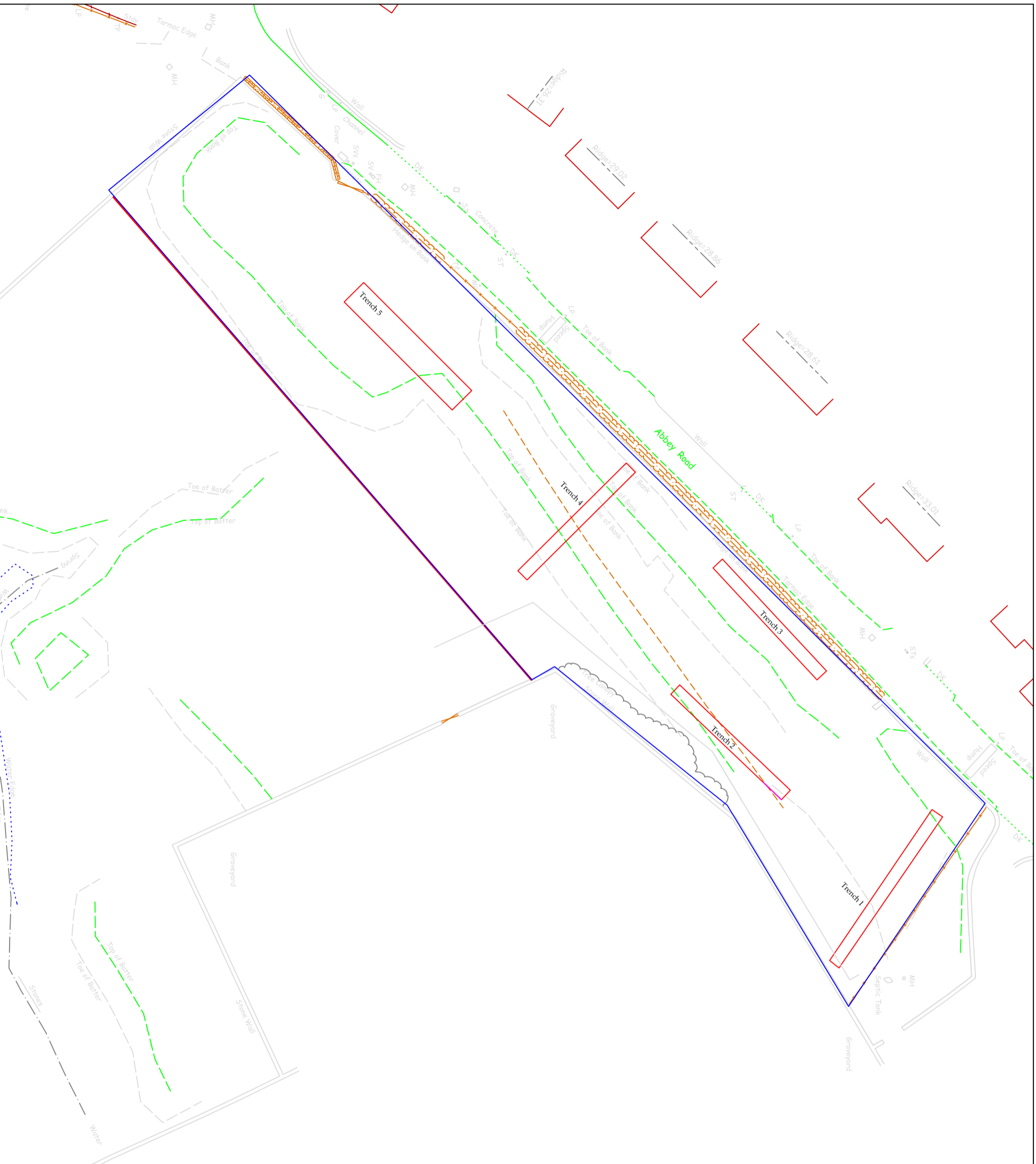


Figure 3 : Trench Location Plan



North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road, St Bees.

CLIENT:  
Mr. G. Reed

SCALE:  
1:500 at A3

DRAWN BY:  
fg

DATE:  
15/02/10

KEY:

 Evaluation Trench

 Outline of Excavation Area



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REPORT No:  
CP1125

FIGURE:  
Figure No 3







North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria

CLIENT:  
Mr. G. Reed

SCALE:  
1:40 at A3

DRAWN BY: JW  
DATE: 03/03/10

KEY:

-  Trench Limit
-  Concrete
-  Soak Away
-  Section location



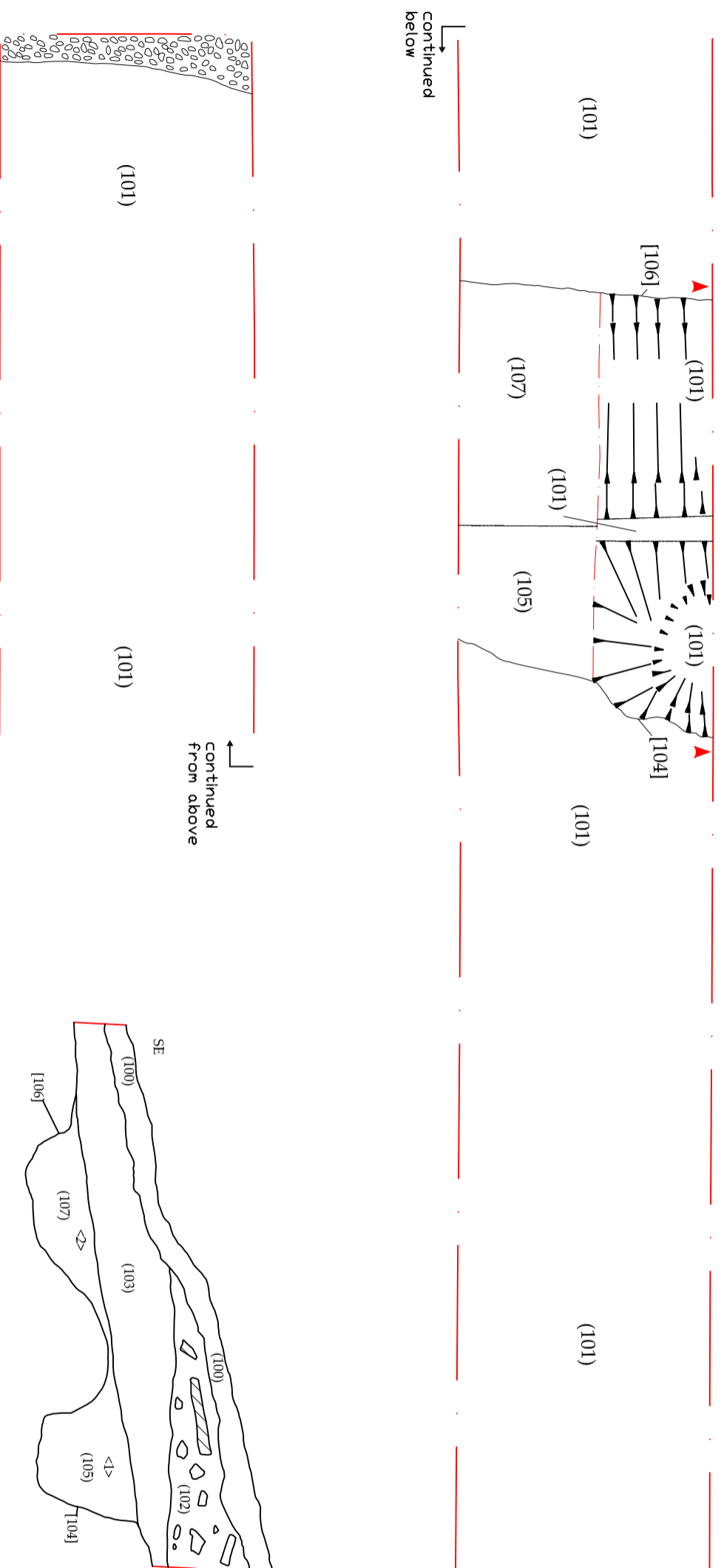
REPORT No:

CP1125

FIGURE:

Figure No 4

### Plan Trench 1



### Section [104] [106]

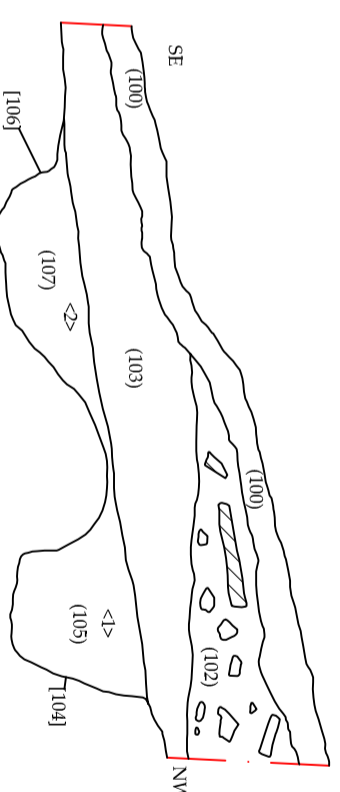
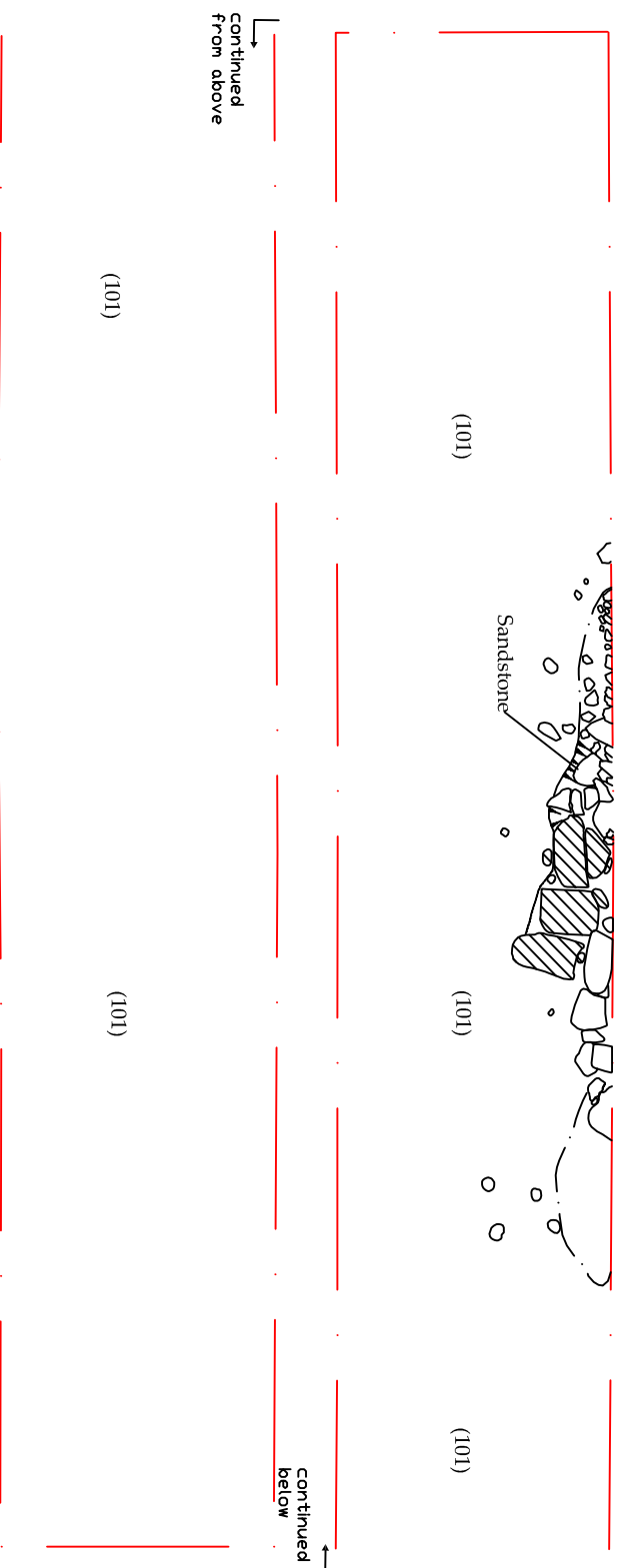


Figure 4 : Plan of Trench 1 and Section [104] [106]

## Plan of Trench 2



North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria

CLIENT:  
Mr G Reed

SCALE: 1:50at A4

DRAWN BY: JW

DATE: 03/03/2010

KEY:

- Trench Edge
- Natural Edge
- Removed Stones

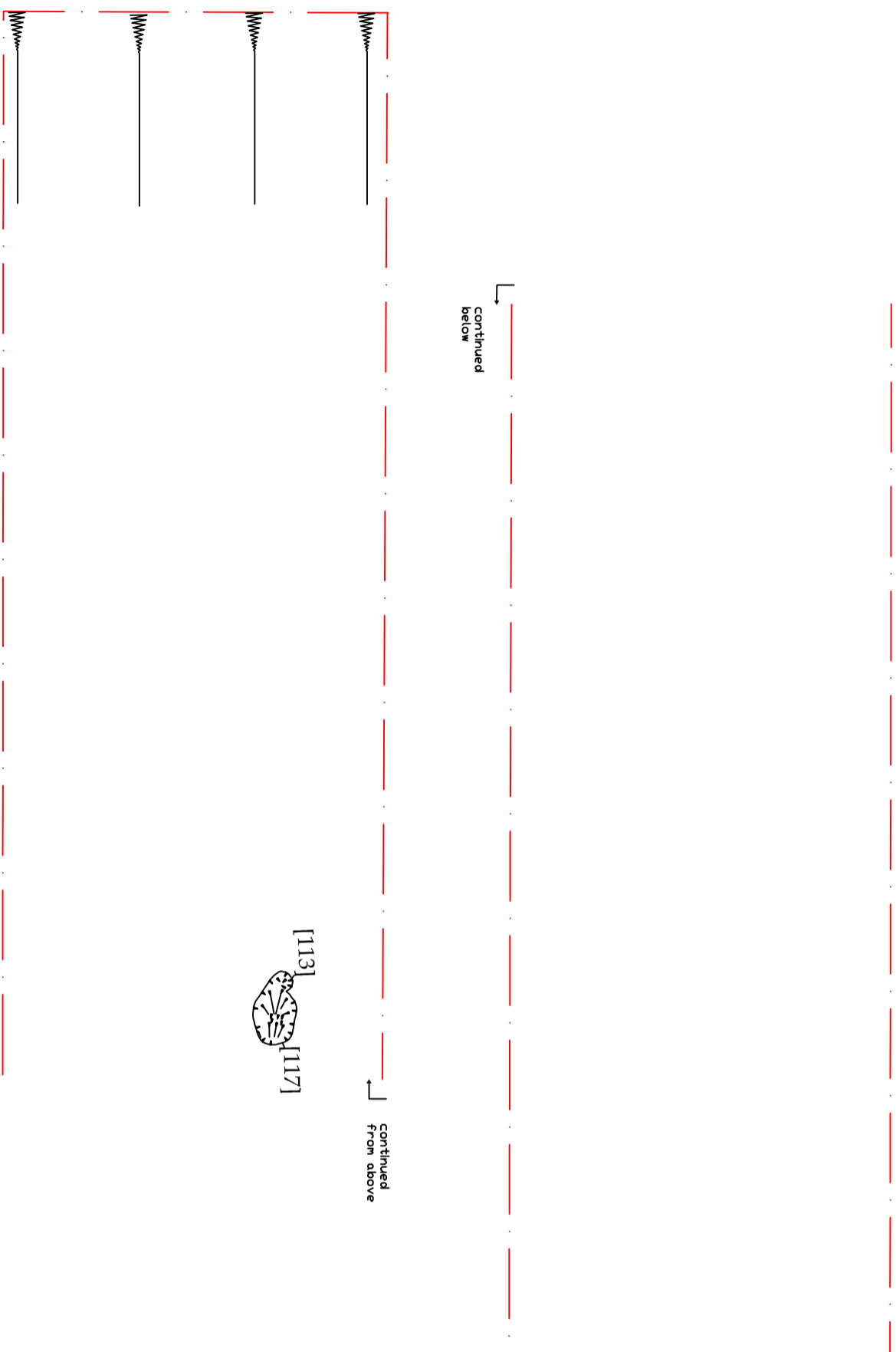


REPORT No:  
CP1125

FIGURE:  
5

Figure 5: Plan of Trench 2 Showing the Sandstone.

Plan of Trench 5



North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria

CLIENT:

Mr. G. Reed

SCALE:

1:55 at A3


DRAWN BY:

JW

DATE:

08/03/2010

KEY:

 Trench Edge



REPORT No:

CP1125

FIGURE:

6

Figure 6 : Plan of Trench 5






North Pennines Archaeology Ltd  
2010  
Abbey Road, St Bees, Cumbria

CLIENT:  
Mr. G. Reed

SCALE: 1:10at A4

DRAWN BY: JW  
DATE: 01/03/10

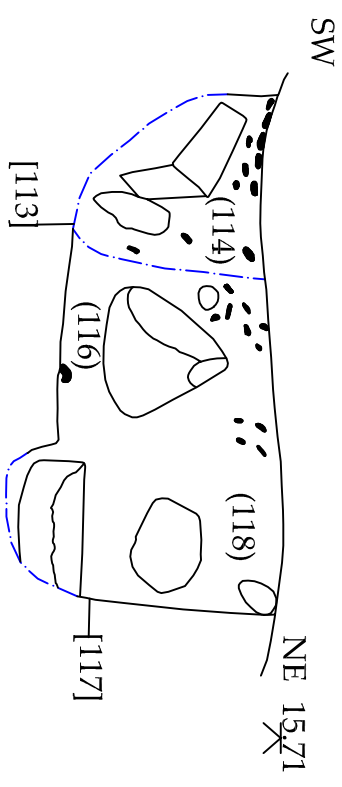
- KEY:
-  Section Drawn
  -  Charcoal
  -  Presumed Cut of Post Holes



REPORT No:  
CP1125

FIGURE:  
7

Section of Features [133] and [117]



Plan of Features [113] and [117]

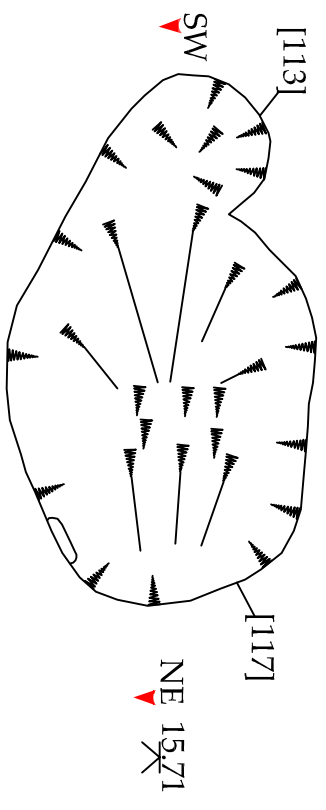


Figure 7 :Plan and Section of [113] [117]