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SUMMARY

The evaluation fieldwork failed to identify the footprint for any past cultural activity apart from an undated stone-filled slot **3** in Trench 3 that probably represented a former dry-stone wall.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Origins

Gerry Martin was commissioned by Gleeson Homes Ltd (the client) to prepare a Specification of Works for a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation relating to the construction of up to 164 dwellings, at land to the south of Egremont, as part of planning application 4/23/2313/OF1. The archaeological evaluation relates to a potentially archaeologically sensitive area.



Figure 1. Site location (OS Copyright, Licence no. 100044205)

The study area NY 00800 10000 (figure 1) located at Egremont, lies to the south of the medieval settlement and exists as open arable land beside the River Ehen. Comprising two fields, the study area possesses a prominent position on a river terrace with a steep fall to the river and bounded by a steep beck to the north. The land commands a prominent, elevated disposition, the highest local point at 67m OD with uninhibited views to the north, east and west and a flat terrain to the south.

Housing development has occurred since the 1990's towards the west and north.

The curtilage was approximately 7.787 hectares and consisted of two fields with road access from Uldale View to the west.

An archaeological evaluation action was requested by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) as potential and significant archaeological remains may be encountered as the study area lies close to an area that may have archaeological potential. This condition was detailed as the following:

No development shall commence within the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This written scheme will include the following components:

a. An archaeological evaluation;

b. An archaeological recording programme, the scope of which will be dependent upon the results of the evaluation;

c. Where significant archaeological remains are revealed by the programme of archaeological work, there shall be carried out within one year of the completion of that programme on site, or within such timescale as otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA: a post-excavation assessment and analysis, and submission of a completed archive report.



Figure 2. Location of the study area

The project had been subject to a desk-based assessment and walkover of the site (GMA Report 430, 2023) that did not highlight any specific archaeological monuments or deposits.

Subsequently, Gerry Martin Associates Ltd advocated to the client a geo-physical survey that would provide evidence regarding any potential archaeological remains. This advice was accepted and in January 2024 the survey was conducted.

Undertaken by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology, this survey suggested that the study area was probably archaeologically sterile (figure 3) but would require archaeological evaluation to confirm this opinion.



Figure 3. Lack of anomalies identified during the geophysical survey

The geophysical survey was accepted by the curatorial authority, refining the proposed archaeological evaluation programme by email on 20th February 2024 as follows:

So, in light of this, I agree with you that some trial trenching is required to see if remains survive. I can't see anything in the topography of the site nor highlighted in the dba (desk-based assessment) to say that any particular area has a higher potential than another. I don't believe it is reasonable to trench the whole site so instead I suggest investigating a sample of the site by targeting a total of **500 square metres of trenching located within a one hectare area of the site**. I don't really have a strong opinion where the one hectare area of evaluation is located, other than it should not be within the two areas where there was no magnetic disturbance in the geophysical survey in the northern field. For instance, the location of the evaluation could be at the highest point in the northern field, or in the southern field at the closest point to HER crop-mark 44978, or it could be at a location convenient to your client.

Upon consideration of the above advice, it was proposed that twelve trenches, twenty-five metres in length should be located on their individual footprints. The remaining trench (13) measured 13m in length.

Gerry Martin Associates Ltd was commissioned by Gleeson Homes, to undertake a Programme of Archaeological Evaluation relating to the ground works pertaining to this development as outlined in a Written Scheme of Investigation approved on July 26^h 2024.

The evaluation sought to construct a model of the archaeological potential of the site from which an informed strategy could be formulated to preserve largely *in situ* any significant archaeological remains. Its aims were to:

- Provide a detailed account of surviving archaeological strata and structures
- Determine the depth of survival of any significant archaeological deposits
- Characterize the extent, date, form and importance of any encountered cultural activity

Regarding this particular project, the fieldwork sought to confirm the presence of prehistoric features and medieval features associated with extra-mural settlement.

All projects are carried out in accordance with NPPF (2023) and the guidelines and recommendations issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) and Historic England (2015).

Gerry Martin has achieved the accreditation level of MCIfA (Member) with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Project Design

In response to a request by Cumbria County Council's Historic Environment Service (CCCHES), Gerry Martin Associates Ltd submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the archaeological evaluation. The WSI document outlined the contractors' professional competence as well as general project objectives, including the methodology and the resources needed for the successful expedition of this work.

Gerry Martin Associates Ltd was commissioned to undertake the archaeological fieldwork following approval of the project design by the curatorial body on 26th July 2024.

The ensuing report has been assembled to the relevant standards and protocols of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation, 2001, 2008 and 2014), combined with accepted best practice and in accordance with the advice prepared by the curatorial authority.

The archaeological evaluation took place on August 5th to August 7th 2024 and was conducted by Gerry Martin, Kurt Rice and Emma Fortune.

2.2 Development proposals

The current proposal anticipates the construction of 164 dwellings that form a small enclosed housing estate. The development will be served by two arterial drives from Uldale View, funnelling onto a series of closes (figure 4).

Roads and other infrastructure will be required and it is likely that the development of the site will not have the option of preservation in situ of any nascent archaeological remains.



The present field division is to be maintained.

Figure 4. Development proposal

2.3 Archive

The archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design and the guidelines set out by Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991), Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015) and the Chartered Institute for Field Archaeologists protocols for an archaeological evaluation (2014).

The archive will be deposited with an appropriate repository, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle and a copy of the report donated to the County Sites and Monuments Record, as requested by the curatorial authority.

The archaeological report will be deposited with the online archaeological resource *Oasis*.

A note will be forwarded to the Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological Transactions for publication should the results be positive.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Location, topography and geology

Historically a market and then later an industrial town, the town's layout was set out at the time of Richard de Lucy around 1200 with its wide Main Street fanning out into the market place established by Charter in 1267 under Henry III. The remains of the Norman castle, built in the 12th century, are situated at the southern end of Main Street near the market place.

The underlying geology comprised of Permo-Triassic rocks, mainly composed of the Steeton Bees Sandstone, with occurrences of limestones and shales.

The superficial drift geology consists of clay, silt, sand and gravel. Sedimentary superficial deposits were formed between 118,000 years ago and the present during the Quaternary period.

The local landscape has been categorised as follows:

47. West Cumberland Plain

The West Cumberland Plain is a coastal area, stretching from the Solway Coast AONB in the north, to Egremont in the south. It forms part of both Allerdale and Copeland Districts. It is generally low-lying and coastal in nature, with generally low, eroding cliffs forming the seaward edge. Its dominant character is urban and industrial. It includes a number of large, urban nucleations, such as Maryport, Workington, Whitehaven, Cleator Moor and Egremont. Though industrial towns, there are significant elements within them relating to their origins and early growth.

Both Workington and Egremont are medieval settlements, with Egremont being a still-definable planned borough. Although the area has a long industrial and maritime history, 71% of the settlement post-dates 1900. These developments have largely obscured the planned, medieval, nucleated settlement character that predominated until the 19th century. The industrial nature of the area is not confined to the urban settlements; the coastal strip between Workington and Maryport is dominated particularly by current and past industries.

The field pattern has been much disrupted by modern developments. These include land restorations, for which the modern field pattern bears very little relationship to the historic pattern. Where the historic field pattern can be discerned, within Allerdale District it is a mix of former common arable fields and 19th century planned enclosures.

Designed landscapes are a feature of the area, both within the towns and as part of former country estates. One of the most noticeable is Curwen Park, Workington, which originated as a deer park.

Overall, the area has relatively little woodland.

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

4.1 Historical background and map regression

Little archaeological reconnaissance has been undertaken in the vicinity of the study area. There are no immediate excavated sites within close proximity. The town was subject to an Extensive Urban Survey that collated all known archaeological records in 2000. This document was light on archaeological sites despite excavation of the Castle in 1983 by Richard Newman.

Later reconnaissance has been identified by watching briefs and archaeological evaluations ahead of capital and housing schemes that has revealed a paucity of heritage assets.

In 1993 fieldwork (YDSO 39/7/1) was conducted at nearby Gulley Flats by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit that included:

- An archaeological assessment was conducted on a proposed housing development area, and included topographic and geophysical surveys and trial trenching. A documentary survey established that the castle was founded by *circa* 1125.
- The topographic survey found field boundaries ditches, platforms and land drains.
- The geophysical survey recovered several anomalies.
- Six trial trenches excavated a ditch, a substantial early land drain, evidence for a former hedge and a substantial platform containing three medieval pot sherds, a gully and a smaller platform. The gully was the only feature which could be securely stated to pre-date the post medieval period, although the platforms identified may also have served as medieval outbuildings.

In 1994, an assessment (YDSO 39/9/1) was made in response to plans for housing development by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit at nearby Queens Drive, Egremont. A desk-based search recovered evidence from the Mesolithic, Roman, Norse and Medieval periods onwards. However, the trial trenches recovered no significant archaeological features or finds, despite the site's clear potential.



Figure 5. Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1860

The First edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1860 (figure 5) provides a detailed disposition of agricultural fields in the vicinity. Settlement was centred north of the River Ehen, congregating beside the Castle. Just to the east of the study area was a paper mill utilising the river and mentioned on Donald's 1774 map, whilst a road entered the town from the south.

Immediate land use remained static and the disposition of the land as agricultural remained to the present.

4.2 Historic Environment Record

Twelve entries were recorded in the Historic Environment Record and are of a non-designated heritage status within a 500m radius of the study area (figure 6).



Figure 6. Location of entries in the Historic Environment Record. (OS Copyright, Licence no. 100044205)

Prehistoric settlement was suggested by a stone circle and cairn-field found on Egremont Common (2) and crop-marks and earthworks (5) and (6) found in Egremont Park. A quern stone (1) may also have a prehistoric origin.

Egremont Castle (11) is nearby but unlikely to have any significant influence on the study area as was a medieval key (10) probably used for a door or cupboard found in 1983 when repairs were undertaken to a cable near Egremont Castle.

Industrial trades were undertaken to the east along the River Ehen as a bleach-works (8), a flax mill (9) whilst flax, woollen, paper and textiles (7) were conducted at Ennerdale Mill. The bleach-works (8) was established in 1750 by Isaac Adamson and owned by a farmer called McClellon in 1847.

The deer park citation (4) was based only on documentary evidence as are two dwellings (3) and (12).

In summary, none of the historic environment entries would be considered to be substantive in characterising the study area, although there was some circumstantial evidence for prehistoric activity.

| No. | Her No. | Location | Description | Site type | Period | Status |
|-----|---------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 1 | 4615 | Catgill Hall | Quern | Findspot | Unknown | None |
| 2 | 5341 | Egremont Common | Stone circle, cairnfield, cairn | Site | Prehistoric | None |
| 3 | 43393 | Low House/Ashley Grove | Farmstead | Documentary | 18 th Century | None |
| 4 | 43697 | Egremont Park | Deer park | Documentary | Medieval | None |
| 5 | 44978 | Egremont Park | Linear feature/enclosure | Cropmark | Unknown | None |
| 6 | 5724 | Egremont Park | Earthworks, bank, ridge & furrow | Earthworks | Unknown | None |
| 7 | 12177 | Ennerdale Mill | Woollen, Flax, Paper and Textile mill | Documentary, roofed building | Post-Medieval | None |
| 8 | 12875 | Bleach Green | Bleach Works, Watermill | Documentary | Post-Medieval | None |
| 9 | 12340 | Greendyke | Flax mill | Documentary | Post-Medieval | None |
| 10 | 19535 | Egremont | Key escutcheon | Findspot | Medieval | None |
| 11 | 3051 | Egremont Castle | Castle, motte & bailey, park | Castle | Medieval | SAM, LB |
| 12 | 43392 | Haggettend Hall | House | Documentary | Medieval, Post-Medieval | None |

Table A. Heritage assets held in the Historic Environment Record

4.3 Walkover

A brief walkover of the site failed to identify any conspicuous archaeological features. It was apparent the subject field was used for arable farming, the study field having recently been sown for a crop of clover.

At the centre of Field 1, (the area subsequently evaluated, NY 00751 10064) was a knoll at a height of 67m OD that represented the highest position in the study area. No crop-mark or finds scatter were found within proximity to the knoll but it was conceivable that this high point may have been utilised in the past and it was felt that this area was as good as any to centre the thirteen evaluation trenches.

The western curtilage was formed from an overgrown stone wall approximately 0.70m in height that probably was constructed upon the 1828 Inclosure Award.

The eastern curtilage overlooked the River Ehen formed from stone boulders forming a face to an earthen bank, the stone bank continued to NY 00927 09947 and then turned at right-angles to NY 00920 09904.

5.1 Methodology

The objective of the archaeological evaluation was to carry out a formal programme of archaeological observations and investigations that sought to construct a model of the archaeological potential of the site from which an informed strategy can be formulated to preserve if necessary *in situ* any significant archaeological remains. Its aims are to:

- Provide a detailed account of surviving archaeological strata and structures
- Determine the depth of survival of any significant archaeological deposits
- Characterize the extent, date, form and importance of any encountered cultural activity

In order to achieve these objectives, a record of all archaeological informative deposits encountered during archaeological fieldwork were made, consisting of detailed context records on individual proforma sheets and field drawings and according to the protocols set out in the GMA manual.

5.2 Evaluation

A one hectare box was marked out and the trenches located within that 100m x 100m square (figure 8). The four corners of the square were located as follows:

- Northwest peg, NY 00691 10091
- South-west peg, NY 00735 10005
- South-east peg, NY 00824 10048
- North-east peg, NY 00780 10136



Figure 7. Disposition of the evaluation trenches

East-west aligned trenches 1 to 3 were set five metres from the northern boundary and five metres apart.

A second row of north-south aligned trenches 4 to 6 were set five metres southward midway away from trenches 1 to 3.

A third row of east-west aligned trenches 7 to 9 were set ten metres southwards from trenches 4 to 6 and five metres apart from each other.

A fourth row of north-south aligned trenches 10 to 12 were set ten metres southward midpoint away from trenches 7 to 9.

A small thirteen metre length trench (13) was located midway on the southern boundary

Trench 1

Aligned east-west between NY 00698 10090 and NY 00720 10098, Trench 1 (figure 8) yielded a topsoil of grey-brown silty sand measuring 0.40m in thickness above a disturbed pinkish-brown sand measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above stony pink Boulder Clay, forming natural drift geology (figure 9) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 8. Trench 1 looking east

Figure 9. Section of Trench 1

<u>Trench 2</u>

Aligned east-west between NY 00726 10100 and NY 00747 10109, Trench 2 (figure 10) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed light brown sand measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above mixed light brown sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 11) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.

Trench 3

Aligned east-west between NY 00752 10113 and NY 00775 10123, Trench 3 (figure 12) yielded a topsoil of greyish-brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed light brown sandy clay measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above interleaving outcrops of pinkish brown clay with yellow sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 13) The trench identified one past cultural feature, a possible wall foundation (figure 14).



Figure 10. Trench 2 looking south

Figure 11. Section of Trench 2



Figure 12. Trench 3 looking east



Figure 13. Section of Trench 3



Figure 14. Plan of cut **3** pre-excavation



Figure 15. Section of cut 3



Figure 16. Detail of cut **3** in section



Figure 17. Plan of cut **3** post-excavation

<u>Trench 4</u>

Aligned north-south between NY 00723 10063 and NY 00713 10087, Trench 4 (figure 18) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed light brown silty clay measuring 0.15m in thickness that rested above pink clay with gravel outcrops, forming natural drift geology (figure 19) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 18. Trench 4 looking north

Figure 19. Section of Trench 4

Trench 5

Aligned north-south between NY 00751 10073 and NY 00741 10095, Trench 5 (figure 20) yielded a topsoil of grey-brown sandy silt measuring 0.28m in thickness above a disturbed light brown clay

measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above brown clay developing into yellow sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 21) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 20. Trench 5 looking south



Figure 21. Section of Trench 5

Trench 6

Aligned north-south between NY 00777 10086 and NY 00770 10109, Trench 6 (figure 22) yielded a topsoil of grey-brown silty sand measuring 0.25m in thickness above pale yellow-brown sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 23). The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 22. Trench 6 looking south



Figure 23. Section of Trench 6



Figure 24. Trench 7 looking west

Figure 25. Section of Trench 7

<u>Trench 7</u>

Aligned east-west between NY 00720 10048 and NY 00744 10055, Trench 7 (figure 24) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed light brown clayey sand measuring 0.25m in thickness that rested above yellow clayey sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 25) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.

<u>Trench 8</u>

Aligned east-west between NY 00749 10057 and NY 00772 10063, Trench 8 (figure 26) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.25m in thickness above a disturbed pinkish brown clayey sand measuring 0.09m in thickness that rested above pink sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 27) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 26. Trench 8 looking east



Figure 27. Section of Trench 8



Figure 28. Trench 9 looking east

Figure 29. Section of Trench 9

<u>Trench 9</u>

Aligned east-west between NY 00775 10066 and NY 00802 10069, Trench 9 (figure 28) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.25m in thickness above a disturbed brown mixed sand measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above yellow-brown sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 29) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 30. Trench 10 looking north

Figure 31. Section of Trench 10

Trench 10

Aligned north-south between NY 00747 10021 and NY 00738 10044, Trench 10 (figure 30) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed brown sand measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above brown sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 31) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.





Figure 32. Trench 11 looking north



Figure 33. Section of Trench 10

Trench 11

Aligned north-south between NY 00771 10052 and NY 00771 10027, Trench 11 (figure 32) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.25m in thickness above a disturbed reddish-pink sandy clay measuring 0.05m in thickness that rested above reddish-pink clay, forming natural drift geology (figure 33) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.

Trench 12

Aligned north-south between NY 00793 10058 and NY 00800 10034, Trench 12 (figure 34) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed beige clayey sand measuring 0.15m in thickness that rested above reddish-pink clay, forming natural drift geology (figure 35) The trench identified one deep drain that produced 19th century pottery. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.

Trench 12 identified a possible undated archaeological feature slot **12** (figure 34). This comprised of brown silty sand **10** within a north-south aligned cut **12** bearing a concave profile 0.11m in depth and 0.76m in width (figure 35).



Figure 34. Trench 12 looking south



Figure 35. Section of Trench 12

Trench 13

Aligned east-west between NY 00769 10021 and NY 00781 10025, Trench 13 (figure 36) yielded a topsoil of brown silty sand measuring 0.30m in thickness above a disturbed pink sandy clay measuring 0.10m in thickness that rested above pink clayey sand, forming natural drift geology (figure 37) The trench identified no archaeological features. The trench was deemed as archaeologically sterile.



Figure 36. Trench 13 looking north

Figure 37. Section of Trench 13

5.3 Finds and environmental samples

No finds were recovered and no environmental samples merited collection.

5.4 Discussion

All the trenches were hand-cleaned and recorded according to the GMA protocols.

The evaluation exercise failed to identify the footprint of any past cultural activity apart from an undated cut **3** probably representing a robbed dry-stone wall in Trench 3. The wall was not apparent on the first edition Ordnance Survey map.

The disposition of the terrain was largely unfavourable for settlement. The ground was at the time of the evaluation well-drained with the high sand content probably assisted in agricultural productivity. Only one probable land drain over 0.80m in depth was identified.

The archaeological evaluation verified the conclusions of the previous heritage assessment, confirming that the land had been used for agriculture in the past.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Emma Fortune and Kurt Rice assisted with the fieldwork.

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