

Henshaw & Associates

WRITTEN
SCHEME OF
INVESTIGATION:
Watching Brief
Alton Castle,
Alton,
Staffordshire

April 2021 Report
No.AC21

WSI: Watching Brief

Alton Castle

Alton

Staffordshire

ST10 4AJ

Produced for:

BHB Architects

on behalf of:

Kenelm Youth Trust

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Written Scheme of Investigation for Alton Castle, Staffs

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This document has been prepared by Clare Henshaw on behalf of Kenelm Youth Trust in order to detail the methodology for an archaeological watching brief on land at Alton Castle, Alton Staffordshire ST10 4AJ. The proposed development includes the construction of a low-level aerial challenge course located to the south of the remains of the Castle.

2.0 Reasons for the project

2.1 An archaeological watching brief will be maintained while works associated with ground levelling and post support insertion are completed. This is to protect any potential archaeological remains that may exist within the site.

3.0 Aims of the Project

3.1 The programme of archaeological work will observe and record any archaeological deposits or features affected by the new development. This is to be achieved through a program of archaeological monitoring during ground works and limited excavation of any archaeological features. This document details the methodology to be employed to secure this information, both in the field and during post-excavation processing/reporting.

4.0 Method

4.1 This document has been prepared in accordance with prevailing best practice and CIFA's (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists') *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (revised December 2014); *National Planning Policy Framework (Revised February 2019)* and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment and the MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide (2015)* issued by Historic England. The archaeologist will work in accordance with the By-laws of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, and will not attempt tasks outside his/her area of competence.

5.0 On-site Methodology:

5.1 Soil and overburden stripping will be carried out under archaeological

supervision using a toothless bucket on a back actor leaving a smooth and flat surface. The top of any archaeological horizon will be cleaned by hand and examined for features. Features/deposits will be recorded in plan, and sectioned and sampled to determine their date and function, to be undertaken as follows: discrete features will be half-sectioned in the first instance.

- linear features over 10m long will be sampled to a minimum of 20% along their length, with each section to be no less than 1.0m long.
- if the linear feature is less than 10m long, a minimum 1.0m sample will be taken along its length.
- deposits at junctions, or interruptions in linear features, will be excavated sufficiently to establish the relationship between their components

5.2 An appropriate level of recording by means of scaled plans (at a minimum of 1:50), sections (1:10 or 1:20), and written records in the form of site notes and pro forma context sheets will be produced. Photography will be undertaken and will form part of the site archive. All shots will be logged on a photographic register, with feature, context number and direction of each shot also recorded. The black and white images will be developed as index prints for inclusion within the project archive.

5.3 A general site plan will show the positions of the trenches. Wherever possible, drawings will be related to Ordnance Datum and their relation to the National Survey Grid made clear. The stratigraphy of trenches will be recorded even where no deposits of archaeological significance are identified.

5.4 Any small finds recovered will be recorded and their locations noted on the site plan. Spoil-heaps will be scanned with a metal detector to recover any small finds.

5.5 For brick/stone structures, the record (context sheet) will include brick dimensions and type (handmade/machine-made, plain/frogged), mortar (colour, composition, hardness) and the extent of structures (number of courses, thickness in skins). Brick samples will be taken for structures likely to pre-date the mid-19th century.

5.6 Any sealed features encountered will be sampled for palaeoenvironmental remains if deemed appropriate. The archaeologist will take bulk samples of fills containing organic components or residues in line

with current Historic England guidance, in multiples of 10l, to represent a percentage of the total deposit depending on its size and/or sensitivity. Any column sampling or other specialist sampling will be undertaken by a suitably qualified specialist. Sample containers will be cleaned before use using a non-detergent based cleaning agent, and checked for the ability to form an air-tight seal. The precise details of the methodology will be agreed with the Planning Archaeologist as the on-site situation demands.

5.7 Where there is evidence for industrial activity, samples will be taken for analysis by suitably qualified specialists in order to identify macroscopic technological residues in accordance with *Archaeometallurgy* (Historic England 2015) and *Science for Historic Industries* (Historic England 2018). All finds and palaeo-environmental samples will be treated in accordance with the Historic England guidance document *A strategy for the care and investigation of finds* (1995) and the UKIC's document *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage*.

5.8 It is not expected that any human remains will be encountered during the course of the project, but any that are will be left in situ. The HEO and Coroner will be informed of such discoveries immediately and a decision taken with regard to the treatment of the remains. Excavation will only take place under appropriate Ministry of Justice and environmental health regulations. A separate project design will be produced if sampling or full exhumation of any human remains is required.

5.9 Any material recovered which would be regarded as Treasure under the terms of the Treasure Act will be reported to the coroner. If it is not possible to fully excavate these finds on the same day as discovery suitable security will be taken to prevent theft of the finds

6.0 Monitoring

6.1 Procedure for signalling significant/complex discoveries. The project archaeologist will immediately inform the PA, site manager and the Client if a discovery of unexpected significance or complexity is made. A decision will then be made by the above parties as to the most appropriate course of action in relation to the discovery, including all matters related to publicity

6.2 Any changes to the agreed WSI will be discussed with, and agreed with, the PA before implementation.

7.0 Post – Excavation

7.1 Excavation will be followed by a period of processing and analysis of finds.

All artefacts and ecofacts will be cleaned, conserved and packaged in accordance with the guidance in the Historic England publication (1995) *A strategy for the care and investigation of finds*

7.2 All site records including photographs, finds and samples including will be prepared for deposition in the archive according to the requirements of the Staffordshire archive

7.3 Environmental samples will be processed by a specialist and all soil or biological samples will be assessed for site formation information and the resulting specialist report included as an appendix to the main report.

7.4 Finds recovered from identified features will be quantified by date, class and type.

7.5 All metal finds will be assessed by the relevant specialist, all pre-20th century ferrous items will be x-rayed and the appropriate strategy for conservation employed. The strategy for the processing of non-ferrous items will be advised by the relevant specialist and approved by the Planning Archaeologist.

7.6 All osteological assemblages will be assessed by a suitable qualified specialist and the resultant report included as an appendix in the main report

7.7 The project archives will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Staffordshire archives. Ownership of objects rests with the landowner, except where other law overrides this (e.g. Treasure Act 1997, Burials Act 1857). Arrangements will be made with the landowner for the donation and deposition of objects, etc. to the recipient museum.

7.8 All analytical and assessment work will be carried out by suitably qualified and experienced specialists. All staff will be fully aware of the project specification and fully understand the work required of them.

Written Record

8.0 The site archive will be prepared immediately upon completion of the fieldwork, and will include all written, drawn and photographic records

8.1 The project findings will be placed into their historical and geographical context through use of cartographic and documentary research.

8.2 A report on the results obtained will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within 12 weeks of the completion of on-site work. The report will include:

- non-technical summary.
- Introductory statement.
- The aims and methods of the project.
- A summary of the historical and archaeological background of the site.
- The nature, location, extent, date, significance and quality of any archaeological and environmental material uncovered.
- Appropriate illustrative material including maps, plans, sections, and drawings at an appropriate scale, and photographs. All drawings will include levels tied to the Ordnance Datum. Drawings will follow the conventions developed in the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (1994).
- A summary of the results.
- A conclusion.
- A description of the archive and the location for its long- term deposition.
- References.

8.3 Copies of the report will be sent to the Planning Archaeologist on behalf of the Planning Authority and both a bound paper copy and pdf on disc will be sent to the Staffordshire HER.

8.4 If significant remains are recorded during the project it may be necessary to undertake a full programme of analysis and publication, in which case a timetable and programme of work will be submitted to the local planning authority for agreement. If such a programme is not warranted, a summary of the project, with selected drawings, illustrations, and photographs, will be submitted within two years of the completion of the project for publication.

9.0 Archive

9.1 The project archive will consist of all original records and documentation relating to the watching brief, and will be compiled in accordance with the

guidelines contained in ClfA's *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*.

9.2 The archive will be lodged with the appropriate Museums Service. The records will be fully ordered, indexed and prepared to the requisite conditions.

9.3 The Planning Archaeologist and museum curator will be notified in writing on completion of fieldwork, with a proposed timetable for deposition of the archive. This will be confirmed in the project report.

9.4 The Planning Archaeologist will be informed in writing on final deposition of the site archive.

9.5 An OASIS online record form will be completed for submission to the HER, and will include an uploaded pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

9.6 All necessary personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE) must be used on site. PPE will include hard hats, hi-visibility vests and boots with steel toe caps and mid-soles. A First-Aid kit and Accident Book will be kept on site at all times with the project Health & Safety Record.

9.7 Trenches which exceed 1.2m in depth will either be shored or stepped out to ensure safe working.

10.0 Contingency

10.1 The provision of extra time on-site may be required under specific circumstances and after discussion with the Planning Archaeologist in order to establish the best course of action.

10.2 Provision of extra funding may be required to support suitably qualified specialists should additional specialist on-site guidance or post-excavation finds analysis be required to answer the research questions of the project. This may include: analysis of palaeo-environmental or industrial samples, scientific dating of samples, X-radiography of metal finds, and the specialist conservation of finds

11.0 Bibliography

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