

Knock Rushen Scarlett Isle of Man



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

May 2008

CgMs Consulting Ltd

Issue No: 820

OAN Job No: L10011

NGR: SC 2601 6732

Document Title: KNOCK RUSHEN, SCARLETT, ISLE OF MAN

Document Type: Archaeological Watching Brief

Client Name: CgMs Consulting Ltd

Issue Number: 820
OA Job Number: L10011

National Grid Reference: SC 2601 6732

Prepared by: Nick Johnson
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 17 April 2008

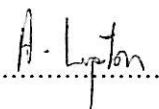
Checked by: Nick Johnson
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 13 May 2008

Signed



Approved by: Alan Lupton
Position: Operations Manager
Date: 13 May 2008

Signed.....



Oxford Archaeology North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1GF
t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk

© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd (2008)

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0EA
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	1
SUMMARY	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Circumstances of Project.....	4
2. METHODOLOGY	5
2.1 Project Design	5
2.2 Watching Brief	5
3. BACKGROUND	6
3.1 Location, Topography and Geology	6
3.2 Archaeological Background.....	6
4. RESULTS.....	7
4.1 Introduction	7
4.2 Results	7
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY	9
5.1 Primary Sources	9
APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN.....	10

SUMMARY

Following a proposal by Hartford Homes for a housing development in the vicinity of the archaeological site known as Knock Rushen (centred on SC 2601 6732), Manx National Heritage (MNH) recommended that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during works to protect the monument. The watching brief was undertaken in July 2007 and April 2008.

The two phases of the archaeological watching brief covered the excavation of topsoil from a small area to the south-east of the monument to allow an ecological translocation exercise, and the mechanical cutting of the footings for a wall to surround the monument on the south and east.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to thank Hartford Homes, *via* CgMs Consulting Ltd, for commissioning the project. Thanks are also due to Andrew Johnson of Manx National Heritage for his support throughout the project; and to Eugene Huxley-Wright, Site Manager, for his co-operation and assistance.

Nick Johnson undertook the watching brief, and compiled the report. Nick Johnson managed the project, and Alan Lupton edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Following a proposal by Hartford Homes for a housing development in the vicinity of the archaeological ancient monument known as Knock Rushen, at Scarlett in the parish of Malew, a recommendation for an archaeological watching brief was made by Manx National Heritage (MNH). Nick Johnson, formerly of the University of Liverpool Centre for Manx Studies (CMS), and now of Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) undertook the work. The first phase, in July 2007, was carried out by CMS; the second, in April 2008, by OA North.
- 1.1.2 This document presents the results of both phases of the watching brief and includes background archaeological information relevant to an understanding of the site.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 CMS submitted a Project Design (*Appendix 1*) in response to a brief supplied by CgMs Consulting Ltd (CgMs). The Project Design was adhered to in full, with one adaptation to address the prevailing soil conditions, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 The programme of field observation comprised the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the collection, recording and assessment of artefacts.
- 2.2.2 A set of digital photographs was taken to provide a record of the prevailing ground conditions and stratigraphy.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 Limestone dominates the solid geology of the area. It is overlain by fluvio-glacial outwash. A generally thin (50mm – 150mm) layer of soil completes the stratigraphy; deeper accumulations are apparent where drainage has been impeded by *eg* field boundaries.
- 3.1.2 The ancient monument lies on the summit of a low mound which is itself prominent on the limestone plateau. To the north-west of the monument lies the Farrant's Park estate, on the south-eastern outskirts of Castletown, while to the west are the playing fields of Castle Rushen High School. The site is surrounded by open fields to the south and south-west.

3.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 The ancient monument lies within the *Knock Rushen* quarterland, itself part of the treen of *Scarlette*, a land division dating to the Middle Ages, in Malew parish.
- 3.2.2 The monument is recorded in the *National Monuments Record* (NMR) maintained by MNH, Prime Record Number 0079.00.
- 3.2.3 The entry in the NMR describes the site as a burial mound of uncertain date. There is no record of any excavation.

4. RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was maintained during all of the sub-surface groundworks. These works comprised the removal of topsoil from an area 5 m x 5 m for the translocation of Mouse Ear, as part of the ecological management of the site; and the excavation of a trench 800 mm wide and approximately 300 mm deep to carry the foundations for a 1.8 m high wall to surround the ancient monument on the west, south and east sides.

4.2 RESULTS

4.2.1 **17th July 2007 Ecological Translocation.** An area 5 m x 5 m was cleared of turf in preparation for the translocation exercise. A small excavation by spade was undertaken to assess the depth of the topsoil beneath the turf and the character of the subsoil.

4.2.2 It was apparent that the topsoil was no more than 100 mm deep and gave on to a compacted layer of small sub-rounded pebbles generally no greater than 20 mm on the long axis. This is likely to be a ploughsoil, left untouched by the plough since the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the area in arable production on the Isle of Man declined. The underlying pebble layer represents a fluvio-glacial outwash surface which accumulated during the ice-melt at the conclusion of the last period of glaciation.

4.2.3 The Project Design and the Ecological Method Statement had suggested that this soil was to be removed down to bare rock. Given that this held the potential to create a substantial hollow in the ground profile the method was modified by the ecologist such that no further soil was removed.

4.2.4 This modification meant that the ecological translocation required no further below-ground intervention of possible archaeological import: the watching brief for this phase was therefore concluded.

4.2.5 No archaeological features or artefacts were encountered by this phase of the watching brief.

4.2.6 **7th April 2008 Wall Foundation Trench.** A trench 800 mm wide and approximately 300 mm deep was excavated by 360° tracked excavator to provide footings for a wall surrounding the ancient monument.

4.2.7 The depth of the topsoil encountered within this trench was highly variable. At the western end where downslope wash had clearly accumulated against a sod hedge, depths in excess of 300 mm were encountered; further east this reduced to 150 mm or less. In the west, the topsoil gave on to a compacted gravelly subsoil. From a point immediately to the south of the monument and further east around the circumference, the trench cut encountered severely frost-shattered limestone, *ie in situ* bedrock.

- 4.2.8 No archaeological features were encountered during the excavation of the footings.
- 4.2.9 The topsoil was entirely free of post-medieval pottery, a circumstance rarely encountered on the Isle of Man. The only artefact recovered from this phase of the watching brief was a small calcified flint blade, re-touched to form a scraper, and probably of Neolithic date. This was within the topsoil, which is likely to have been ploughed during the nineteenth century: the artefact has therefore been divorced from its original context.
- 4.2.10 Following completion of the excavation of the trench for the wall footings, and in the absence of archaeological features or significant archaeological finds, the watching brief was concluded.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

5.1 PRIMARY SOURCES

1868 - 70 Ordnance Survey, First Edition 1:2500

British Geological Survey, 2001 *Isle of Man Solid and Drift Geology 1:50 000*

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

The following represents a scheme of works and licence application for an archaeological watching brief at Knock Rushen, Malew, in accordance with planning conditions attached to the approval for application no. 04/02083/B, made by *Hartford Homes*. The site and the approved works appear on drawing ref. L374/00/11C prepared by *Barry Chinn Associates*. The watching brief is to be undertaken by the *Centre for Manx Studies* ('the archaeological contractor').

In accordance with the Manx Museum and National Trust Acts 1959-1986 a licence to excavate at this site on the basis of the methodology described below is hereby requested by the archaeological contractor.

Context

The archaeological potential of the area has been highlighted by *Manx National Heritage*.

This document has been prepared in pursuance of best practice, and describes the works necessary to monitor and mitigate possible impact on the ancient monument during the course of site preparatory works in advance of development of the surrounding land.

Methodology

The archaeological works will be undertaken by staff of the *Centre for Manx Studies*. The site will be demarcated by high-visibility fencing during the course of the works.

The following is the sequence of activity:

1. An area of turf 5m x 5m within the Listed Monument will be stripped of turf, followed by excavation by hand of the top/subsoil to expose the limestone surface. Soil will be mounded outside the fencing for possible re-use when the site is re-turfed. This will be supervised by an archaeologist.
2. Replacement, more ecologically appropriate, turves will be stripped from an area to be identified. This will be archaeologically supervised.
3. Immediately prior to the commencement of on-site building works, a perimeter wall will be constructed around the monument. This will require the excavation of a construction trench, which will be monitored by an archaeologist. A report on all three of these watching brief elements will be brought up-to-date and will be available for inspection.

4. Once the bird-nesting season is over, the gorse on the mound will be trimmed, under archaeological supervision.
5. A measured survey, with archaeological input, will be undertaken by *Hartford Homes'* surveyor. The resulting drawing will be incorporated into the watching brief report, which will then be submitted to the client, with a copy to *Manx National Heritage*.

Artefact Conservation and Curation

Any artefacts recovered from the excavations will be collected and catalogued. In the long term the curation of these artefacts can most efficiently be carried out by *Manx National Heritage*. It would be advisable to transfer ownership of the artefacts to this body for this purpose. Ownership otherwise rests with *Hartford Homes* who have legal title to the land.

In the event that the archaeological works recover an artefact requiring substantial conservation before archiving, it will be necessary to apply for separate funding to permit this to be carried out. The likelihood of this is, however, minimal.

Reporting

There is a legal requirement for all artefact discoveries to be reported to *Manx National Heritage* within 14 days of the completion of an excavation. The archaeological contractor will ensure that this requirement is met in respect of both the topsoil removal and the construction trench excavation.

Verbal reports of the interpretation of the results of the watching brief will be available at any time during the works, upon application to the *Centre for Manx Studies*.

A full written report on the excavations and the results and conclusions of the work will be made available following completion of on-site works.

Proposed Timetable

It is proposed to start the de-turfing on 11 June 2007, subject to all necessary permissions, and the availability of fencing.

Staffing

The archaeological watching brief will be overseen and partially undertaken by Nick Johnson, AIFA, of the *Centre for Manx Studies*. Other staff of the *Centre for Manx Studies* may be involved on occasion. Additional monitoring will be undertaken by officers of *Manx National Heritage*, in accordance with its statutory obligation.

In addition the works will be overseen and monitored by *CgMs Consulting* on behalf of *Hartford Homes*.

Artefact processing and archiving will be undertaken by Claire Corkill of the *Centre for Manx Studies*.

Caveats

Access to the site will be subject to the protocols and health and safety regulations of the *Hartford Homes*, as owners of the site. All fieldwork is also subject to the health and safety regulations and insurance requirements of the *University of Liverpool* as sponsors of the *Centre for Manx Studies*. The Centre will complete a *pro forma* risk assessment in accordance with the protocol established by the University for such undertakings. No work will commence without prior agreement.

N C Johnson
Douglas
30 May 2007



Oxford Archaeology North

Mill 3

Moor Lane Mills

Moor Lane

Lancaster

LA1 1GF

t: (01524) 541000

f: (01524) 848606

e: mail@oxfordarch.co.uk

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Director and Chief Executive:
David Jennings BA MIFA FSA

Private Limited Company Number: 1618597

Registered Charity Number: 285627

Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Unit Ltd.
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES