
The Vicar's Pele, Corbridge, Northumberland, NE45 5AW

NGR: NY98849 64407

Report on the excavation of an Archaeological Test Pit

On behalf of Spence & Dower LLP

For Mr. and Mrs. Cutler

OASIS no.northern2 -0181275



The Vicar's Pele from the north-west

Northern Counties Archaeological Services, July 2014

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Summary

This report describes the excavation of an archaeological Test Pit in the vaulted basement of the Vicar's Pele, on the north side of the Market Place, Corbridge (located on Figure 1). The Pele is a significant standing medieval building, as shown by its Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade I listed building status, and lies within a conservation area and also an area of high archaeological potential.

The Test Pit was required for two purposes. One was to establish the depth of foundations of the south wall of the Pele in the south-west corner of the basement where it was proposed to introduce water and waste services into the building, preferably below the level of the medieval fabric. The second and related purpose of the Test Pit was to establish if any earlier floor levels or other significant archaeological deposits or features survived in this area which might be adversely impacted upon by the development.

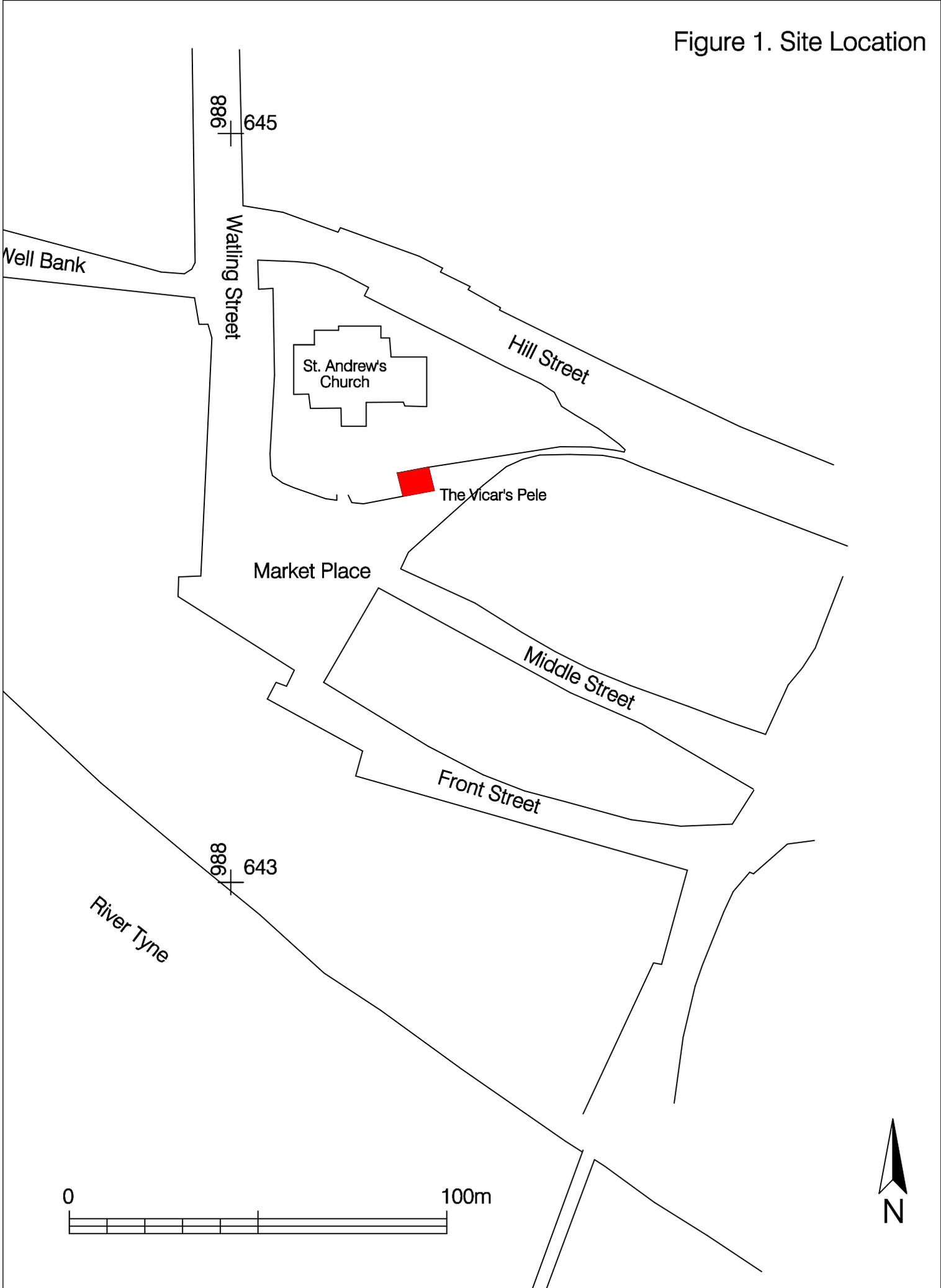
The Test Pit demonstrated that there had been significant post-medieval disturbance within the Pele at this point, and that apart from the very vestigial remains of a construction cut for the south wall, no in situ medieval deposits or features survived within the area that was investigated. This does not exclude the possibility that the medieval construction cut, or other archaeological features, could survive at a deeper level below the thickness of the walls. This could not be tested without undermining the structure.

A small quantity of medieval pottery was recovered, all of which was residual in post-medieval contexts. Much of this dates from the mid-late 13th century, and the pottery probably derived from post-medieval disturbance to medieval deposits or features pre-dating construction of the Pele, which is suggested on the basis of other evidence to have occurred in the first half of the 14th century. No dateable material was recovered which could be associated with the construction phase of the building.

Most of the deposits making up levels below the present paved floor, thought to have been laid when the Pele was restored by the Duke of Northumberland in 1910, consisted of building rubble. This included a large quantity of broken sandstone roof flags and many sheep metapoidials which had been used to hang the flags. A complete sandstone 'wrestler' ridge tile was also recovered. It is suggested that this material was brought into the basement when it was apparently cleared out and refitted as a 'lock-up' c.1825.

Provided the proposed development is confined to the area investigated in the Test Pit it is considered that no further archaeological work within the Pele is necessary. It is however recommended that an archaeological Watching Brief should be held during external excavations for the service connections, particularly adjacent to the Pele, and when the service runs of are introduced under (or through) the south wall.

Figure 1. Site Location



The Vicar's Pele, Corbridge, Northumberland, NE45 5AW
(SM ND 77, HA 1006604)
NY98849 64407

Report on the excavation of an Archaeological test pit

1 Project background.

- 1.1 The Vicar's Pele is a three-storied tower house, probably dating to the first half of the 14th century, standing against the south-east side of St. Andrew's church-yard and on the north side of Corbridge market-place. The building has recently been sold by Northumberland Estates. The purchasers, through their conservation architects Spence & Dower LLP, are appraising the implications of re-use before submitting a planning application. The archaeological test pit described in this report is part of this pre-application investigation work.
- 1.2 As part of proposals for re-use of the tower, it is intended to install a toilet cubicle in the south-west angle of the vaulted ground floor chamber. The intention is to achieve this through minimal intervention, by drilling a 200mm diameter waste pipe and water pipe connection *below* the south wall of the tower, at an estimated maximum depth of c. 1.10m below internal paving level, to meet a new external service connection.
- 1.3 As the tower is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, in order to inform decision-making English Heritage required an archaeological investigation to establish the actual depth of the building's foundations to establish if this minimal intervention strategy is feasible, and determine the impact of the proposed development on the below-ground archaeology and tower structure. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was granted by the Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to Spence and Dower LLP on behalf of their client on the 1st May 2014, conditional upon a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for archaeological works being submitted, approved, and carried out (Appendices 2 and 3)
- 1.4 Northern Counties Archaeological Services (hereafter NCAS) were invited by the client's architects (Spence & Dower LLP) to submit a quotation and WSI for undertaking this project. NCAS were subsequently commissioned to carry out the work. The excavation took place between the 13th and 16th May 2014, and the test pit was backfilled on the 22nd May 2014.
- 1.5 There was no requirement for detailed documentary research into the history of the Pele or its immediate environs. Consequently the brief historical background given in this report is based on readily accessible published sources only.

2 Statutory designations.

- 2.1 The Vicar's Pele is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM ND 77, HA 1006604) and Grade 1 listed building (21/173 15.4.69), and lies within a conservation area covering the historic core of the town of Corbridge.

- 2.2 In addition to the Grade I listed St. Andrew's Church [HER 8996] there are three Grade II listed buildings within 20m of the Pele – the Lych Gate to St. Andrew's churchyard [HER 9092], the old Market Cross [HER 8990], and the Primitive Methodist Chapel [HER 9066].

3 Archaeological background and brief description of the Pele.

- 3.1 There have been no recorded archaeological interventions within or immediately adjacent to the Vicar's Pele. The nearest archaeological event appears to be a Watching Brief held in 1994 at the Methodist Chapel which noted a burned area associated with 14th-15th century pottery [HER Event 1063080].
- 3.2 The first known structural survey and description of the building was by the architect and antiquarian W.H. Knowles in 1896 [Knowles, 1898]. Knowles' work formed the basis of the account of the Pele in the County History of 1914.
- 3.3 The most recent studies have been a catalogue of the re-used medieval grave covers incorporated into the building's fabric, and a reconsideration of its dating [Ryder, 1994-5]. The historic and archaeological significance of the Pele is identified in the Extensive Urban Survey of Corbridge [Finlayson and Hardie, 2008].
- 3.4 The Pele is rectangular in plan and comprises a vaulted basement (the site of the test pit) with two floors above, and a parapet walk and four projecting corner turrets at roof level. The fabric shows evidence for a number of building phases, either of construction or repair. Much of the masonry is re-used Roman stone from Corstopitum [Pevsner, 237], but there are also sixteen medieval cross-slab grave covers, ranging in date from the 12th to late 13th centuries, mostly used as lintels. The lower quoins of the external south-east angle are reminiscent of Saxon 'long and short' work.
- 3.5 The only entrance is at ground level, in the east wall. The doorway has a draw bar tunnel and there are the remains of an external iron grille gate. Inside the east doorway a narrow stair to the south leads up to the 1st and 2nd floor levels. Directly ahead an inner doorway leads into the vaulted basement chamber (Plate 1). The walls and vault are painted white and the floor is paved. There is a loophole in south wall, now at floor level, and another in the west. In the north wall are traces of a fireplace, apparently serving a partitioned-off east end of the chamber, described by Knowles in 1898 as a '*recent introduction*'.

4 Geology and topography.

- 4.1 The Vicar's Pele lies on gently south-west sloping ground forming part of a series of stepped alluvial terraces above the River Tyne, and at a height of some 41.5mAOD. The terraces consist of limestones, and sandstones with thin seams of coal, belonging to the Stainmore Group. The overlying soft geology comprises glacial sands, gravel, and boulder clays [Finlayson and Hardie, 2008].

5 Historical background.

- 5.1 The church of St. Andrew was built between AD675 and 1200. It was heightened and re-planned in the 11th century, and considerably reconstructed and enlarged between 1200 and 1296. In 1205 the manor of Corbridge was granted to Robert, son of Roger, lord of Warkworth, at a rent of £40 per annum and by 1296 had fifty-nine taxable inhabitants [Fraser, 49]. There is no mention of a tower belonging to the vicar at this date. By the early 14th century the manor was in the possession of Henry, 1st lord Percy.
- 5.2 Various dates for construction of the tower have been given, ranging from 1300 [Craster], 1318 [Forster], mid-14th century [HER], and c.1400 [Listing description]. The assumption is that it was built as a fortified parsonage, such as those at Croplin, Upper Denton, Elsdon, and Ford [Ramm et.al, 79]: it was certainly owned by the vicar – John Bryg - in 1415 [Knowles, 173n.3] and Camden (c.1599) referred to it as having been built by the vicars and inhabited by them [Craster]. There is a tradition that the vaulted basement was used for safe-keeping the vicar's cow.
- 5.3 However, according to a survey of 1663 the Pele was '*said to have been antiently y^e lord's goale, but now is y^e place lord's court is usually kept, but y^e roof is in much decay.*' [ibid.]. No explicit references to its use as either a jail or a manorial court have been found in the secondary sources used for this report (but see paragraph 5.6).
- 5.4 A map of Corbridge by John Fryer, made 1776-7, shows cottages adjoining the west wall of the Pele, and both the Pele and the cottages standing outside the churchyard. Mackenzie's History of Northumberland, published in 1825, states that the sites of these 'old houses' had been bought by the parishioners and added to the churchyard. This latter arrangement is shown on an unattributed and unreferenced illustration reproduced by Dixon (Figure 2), who dates the view to 1819, and also appears on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map and an illustration of c.1882 (Figure 3).



Figure 2. St. Andrew's Church and the Vicar's Pele from the west, after demolition of the cottages adjoining the west wall of the Pele, and extension of the churchyard. This view apparently dates to 1819 (Dixon).

- 5.5 Mackenzie also states that because the 'dungeon' (the vaulted basement) was 'filled with filth' the Duke of Northumberland (presumably the 6th Duke, 1867-99), caused it 'to be cleaned out, and a new door to be hung, in order that it might be appropriated to its original purpose' [Mackenzie, 327]. The 'original purpose' here presumably meant as a gaol rather than a parsonage. The height of the vault is given in this source as 8'8" (2.64m), considerably lower than at present.
- 5.6 The County History, published in 1914, states that 'The tower has been very thoroughly repaired and covered with a stone roof by the present (7th) Duke' [Craster, 215 n.2]. Elsewhere the date of this restoration is given as 1910 [Pevsner 1999, 237].
- 5.7 Latterly the tower has been used as an Information Centre and a craft shop/studio, until its sale by Northumberland Estates to the present owners and clients for this archaeological investigation. At the time of the excavation the basement was being used as a store for antique furniture.



Figure 3. The Pele and market place looking north-east by W.J.Palmer, published in 'The Tyne and its Tributaries' (1882).

6 Test Pit methodology.

- 6.1 The test pit was excavated in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation submitted to, and approved by, English Heritage and the County Archaeological Team (Appendix 3). The site code was VPC 14, which appears on all site records pertaining to the project.
- 6.2 All excavation was carried out using hand tools. Deposits were recorded on pro-forma context recording sheets in a running number sequence.
- 6.3 A photographic record was maintained using a Sony Alpha digital SLR camera and, for the exposed masonry, 35mm monochrome film. A photo board giving the site code, north point, and context number, and a clearly visible metric scale was included in all shots. A selection of the photographic record is included in this report.

- 6.4 Plans, elevations, and a section were drawn on permatrace at scales of 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate. These have been digitised and the most informative are included in this report as Figures 2 – 5.
- 6.5 Finds were collected context by context and retained. Where material occurred in bulk such as the post-medieval demolition rubble used to raise floor levels, a representative sample was retained. The finds were washed, marked with the site code and context number, identified and catalogued.
- 6.6 No soil samples were taken as all deposits encountered were either disturbed or re-deposited. Animal bones used as slate-pegs, and a partial animal carcass, have been identified (see Faunal Remains in *The Finds*).
- 6.7 The Test Pit was opened at paving level as a 2m x 2m box, but the presence of unstable infill material below meant that this had to halved in order to reach the estimated 1.10m depth of the proposed service connection. The trench was accordingly stepped in on the north side, and carried to the required depth (1.10m) against the south wall (see Figures 11-14).

7 Test Pit excavation. (Plates 2-8, Figures 11-13). Context numbers are given in <> brackets.

- 7.1 Natural was represented by firm, clean, yellow-brown clayey sandy silt <10> which occurred in the excavation area at 40.702m – 40.775m OD. The considerable amount of later truncation and intervention (described below) means this is unlikely to represent the original surface height.
- 7.2 The earliest identifiable activity, cutting <10>, was the construction of the south-west angle of the walls of the Pele <12> (south) and <13> (west) (Figure 13 and Plates 7 – 8). These appeared to have been laid in a cut <11> little wider than the walls themselves. This had almost entirely been removed by a later cut (<9>) against the angle of the walls, surviving only in one place against the south wall as a narrow sharply-tapering slot with a fill of dark brown-black clayey soil containing granules of coal.
- 7.3 There was no internal offset or foundation raft. Some thin slabs of sandstone were visible immediately below the base course of ashlar at between 40.45m to 40.66m AOD, lying at an angle presumably dictated by the dished base of the foundation cut. In the south wall, the exposed base course comprised two large sandstone ashlars 0.7m – 0.8m in length, the easternmost laid at a higher level than the other. On the west wall the exposed base course comprised two smaller, squared blocks at the angle, and an irregular stone to the north: at this point there was some suggestion of a vertical joint in the masonry above (see Figure 14 and Plate 8).
- 7.4 Also cutting the natural <10> was a shallow (0.17m deep), probably linear, feature <15> apparently running at a slight north-west to south-east alignment. At its west end this appeared to be cut by a larger, post-medieval feature <9>, though the two features could have been contemporary. The latter was defined

- by a curving edge to the south-east, and edges cut almost flush with the faces of the south and west walls of the tower.
- 7.5 Feature <9> was cut into the natural yellow-brown sandy clay silt <10> and against the inner faces of the south and east walls of the tower <12 and 13> its edge was almost sheer and followed the angle of the walls (Plates 5 – 6). The eastern side appeared to be curving westward away from the south wall in a shallow semi-circle. As it was not possible within the confines of the test pit to fully excavate feature <9> its full extent and function remain unknown.
- 7.6 Features <9> and <15> were filled with amid-yellow-brown sandy silt <8> similar in colour to <10> but softer and with sandstone inclusions. It probably represents disturbed and re-deposited natural. In <9> this overlay <14>, also a yellow-brown sandy silt but with occasional pockets of soil and pieces of flat sandstone, which in turn overlay <16>, a mixed grey-yellow-brown soil with flat fragments of sandstone, pieces of hand-moulded brick, clay tobacco pipe.
- 7.7 Overlying features <9> and <15>, and the highest surviving natural <10>, was a deposit of dark brown-black friable soil <7> mixed with frequent rounded river cobbles, flat sandstone fragments (possibly roof-flags) and sandstone rubble. This butted the south and west walls of the tower and extended beyond the test pit to the north and east (Plate 4) This possibly represents a very disturbed 'floor' surface. Finds included green bottle glass and animal bone, including a partially articulated horse carcass (see The Finds: Faunal remains).
- 7.8 Context <7> was sealed by a looser, more friable, grey-black sandy soil, speckled with flecks of white lime mortar or plaster <6>, overlain in turn by <5>, a grey-brown gritty soil with frequent lumps of white lime plaster and fragments of sandstone roof flags and rubble, and 'Welsh' roof slate. Numerous sheep *metapodial* bones also occurred, used as pegs to hang the stone roof flags. This deposit also produced a slightly worn half-penny of George III dated 1775, and a 'wrestler' slate (see The Finds: Stone). The deposit had the appearance of demolition rubble.
- 7.9 Above <5> was a moderately firm brown silty soil containing occasional pieces of white lime mortar and plaster <4> at 41.44m AOD. On the surface of this deposit were some patches of grey-brown soil with fine rootlets <3>. Both were overlain by dark brown fine dry sand <2> forming the bedding for the present floor of thin (30mm-40mm thick) sandstone paving slabs <1> at an average level of 41.54m AOD (Figure 13 and Plates 2 – 3).

8 Discussion.

- 8.1 The tower was founded on natural clean sandy clay silt. Apart from the very vestigial remains of a foundation cut <11> for the south wall, no obviously medieval deposits or features were encountered. However the pottery, broadly dating between the mid- 13th and early 14th century, recovered from post-medieval contexts mostly had clean breaks suggesting the sherds had not been moved significantly from their original point of deposition.

- 8.2 These sherds may thus derive from post-medieval disturbance of medieval layers or features within the footprint of the Pele, and the predominantly mid-late 13th century date of this material suggests such hypothetical deposits or features could pre-date its construction. It is even possible that cut <15> represents one of these, truncated or robbed in the post-medieval period. Unfortunately no datable material was recovered which could be associated with construction of the south and west walls.
- 8.3 The fabric of the Pele incorporates a number of medieval cross slab grave covers, the latest dated to the late 13th century, and presumably deriving from St. Andrew's church or churchyard [Ryder, 2000]. This, together with the residual medieval pottery found in the test pit, is suggestive of a construction date in the early 14th century. No *in situ* or disarticulated human remains were found, suggesting the Pele was built outside the boundary of the medieval churchyard.
- 8.4 The cut feature <9> appeared to be a large pit dug within the south-west angle of the basement and infilled possibly in the 19th century. Filling the cut, contexts <8>, <14> and <16> consisted of moist dark brown soil with frequent inclusions of sandstone rubble, including broken pieces of roof flags, some hand-made brick, a piece of clay tobacco pipe stem and pottery ranging in date from medieval to the first half of the 19th century. The cut itself may represent the robbing of stone or brick-lined feature – such as a cess pit, or even a well. A cess pit may have been provided when the basement was apparently restored for use as 'lock-up' prior to 1825 [Mackenzie, 327].
- 8.5 Context <7> may represent a very disturbed floor surface, as suggested by the frequent rounded river cobbles and worn cup-marked sandstone (see Finds) . The animal bone and partial articulated spine associated with this could reflect use of the basement as a local rubbish tip, perhaps attracting butchery waste from stalls in the market area immediately to the south. This would support Mackenzie's 1825 description of the basement as having been '*filled with filth*' before being cleaned out.
- 8.6 The deposits of demolition material <5> and <6>, which included stone roof slates, a 'wrestler' slate, sheep *metapodial* slate pegs, and a coin of 1775 were presumably imported to raise floor levels, either to counter damp (cemetery ground levels to the north are some 0.7m higher than the present floor), or to seal a refuse-strewn surface. The demolition material may have come from elsewhere in the town – perhaps the cottages adjoining the west end of the Pele, or even from clearing the upper floors of the tower. The latter is possible as the bulk of the material comprised roofing debris, with little ceramic building material and no wall stone.
- 8.7 Refined glazed white earthenware sherds and other datable material within these deposits suggest that raising floor levels was part of the clearing and refurbishment described by Mackenzie as having taken place some time before 1825. This is supported by Knowles' cross-section of the building, drawn in 1896, which shows a basement floor level very close to that now existing. The 1910 restoration may have only involved laying of the present floor surface of thin paving slabs bedded on sand, and addition of the present roof.

9 Conclusions.

- 9.1 The Test Pit demonstrated that apart from vestiges of a construction cut for the south wall, no *in-situ* medieval deposits or features survive within the very south-west corner of the Pele. It is however possible that the construction cut itself may be deeper *below* the thickness of the walls.
- 9.2 The visible base course of the ashlar face of the south wall is not level, masonry varying between 40.57m and 40.68m OD in depth (approximately 0.88m to 1.00m below internal paving surface). The wall was founded in a cut in the natural sandy clay, the original depth and width of which could not be determined.
- 9.3 There is a possible vertical joint in the inner face of the west wall suggesting the tower is of more than one phase of construction, and this is also apparent on the external elevations. This might be elucidated by further archaeological investigation.
- 9.4 There is some evidence for burning on the south wall face, but due to post-medieval disturbance within the Test Pit area there were no associated datable deposits or *in-situ* artefacts which might link this with known 14th century Scottish incursions.
- 9.5 No evidence was found to contradict the suggested early-mid 14th century date for construction of the tower. The small quantity of medieval pottery from the Test Pit, although residual, would be broadly consistent with this dating.
- 9.6 Within the test pit area and extending beyond it to the north and east there is some 0.52m of possibly imported demolition debris. It is not known if this deposit extends across the entire floor area. This deposit is of some interest for the roofing material it contains.
- 9.7 No further archaeological excavation is required within the basement of the tower provided the proposed new service connections can be made within the area exposed and recorded by the test pit.
- 9.8 Although the small size of the Test Pit and the absence of undisturbed medieval deposits limits its contribution to the archaeological research agendas for Corbridge, the mid-late 13th century pottery (though residual) may reflect market-place activity pre-dating the Pele, and there is some evidence suggesting the building is of more than one phase of construction.

10 Recommendations.

- 10.1 It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during excavation below, or boring through, the south wall of the tower. This is to ensure an appropriate record is made of the scale and location of the intervention, and to recover any datable artefacts which might be disturbed.
- 10.2 It is also recommended that as a minimum an archaeological Watching Brief

should be held during excavation of new external service connections, both to ensure an appropriate record is made of the external tower wall and foundations which are exposed, and to record any archaeological features or stratigraphy which may survive and be exposed within the market place between the mains connection and the south of the tower.

- 10.3 Any further intervention below the present flagged floor of the basement should be dug archaeologically, or as a minimum be closely archaeologically monitored, since
- there is potential for the demolition deposits to yield more recoverable datable material,
 - there is a possibility that undisturbed medieval deposits pre-and post-dating the Pele may survive elsewhere within the footprint of the building, or even steps down to an original floor level from the inner east doorway.
 - exposed wall faces have the potential for identifying re-used Roman or Saxon masonry and structural phasing.

11 Reporting and finds deposition.

- 11.1 Hard copies and digital (pdf) copies of this report have been prepared for the Client, Spence & Dower LLP, English Heritage, and Northumberland County Council (as the local planning authority and for inclusion in the County Historic Environment Record (HER)).
- 11.2 An OASIS on-line report form has been initiated (I.D. *northern2-0181275*), and on completion this report will be uploaded.
- 11.3 A short report will be prepared for *Archaeology In Northumberland*, an annual review of archaeological projects undertaken in the county, produced by Northumberland County Council's Conservation Team.
- 11.4 The finds are currently curated by NCAS, pending a decision from the Client on whether to retain them for future display within the Pele, or to deposit them with the Great North Museum.

J. Nolan, July 2014.

The Finds.

Pottery.

Medieval.

Twenty-seven sherds were recovered, all from post-medieval contexts <7>, <8>, <14> and <16>. Contexts <14> and <16> each produced twelve sherds. Most were early glazed ware body sherds of the mid-late 13th century. There was also a buff sandy strap handle (context <8> (Figure 4) and a reduced greenware rod handle rod-handle (context <7>) both from jugs, which could be as late as the early 14th century. Although all the medieval pottery occurred residually in post-medieval contexts, the quantity and cleanly broken edges suggest this material derived from disturbance to medieval deposits within the basement. This suggestion is supported by the complete absence of medieval pottery from the obviously imported demolition deposits above the possibly disturbed floor level <7>. The date range of the pottery suggests that the deposits or features containing the pottery may pre-date construction of the Pele.

Post-medieval.

Glazed red earthenwares were the most common. Twenty-two sherds of yellow slip glazed pottery from at least three bowls came from context <6>, and ten sherds of brown, black and clear glazed wares from contexts <4>, <6>, <7> and <8>. These were all probably local wares, their dates spanning the 18th – early 19th centuries. There was one sherd of possibly 18th century slip-trailed ware from <14>. A possible 18th century Staffordshire mug base came from context <7>, and three pieces of impressed decorated Nottinghamshire stoneware came from contexts <5> and <6>.

Twenty fragments of refined glazed white earthenware were recovered. Four fragments came from contexts <2>, <3> and <4>. Another four sherds, one part of a teapot spout, came from context <5>, and eleven (four with blue



Figure 4. Top left: 13th14th century strap handle and (below) possibly early 14th century rod handle. Centre top: brown glazed red earthenware base and (below) possible Staffordshire mug base, both probably 18th century. Top right: slipware mug rim, possible 18th century; centre right: teapot spout, first half of the 19th century; Below right: refined glazed white earthenware with painted decoration, possibly late 18th century.

transfer print decoration), came from context <6>. These could date from the first half of the 19th century. A small fragment with possible painted blue

decoration, which could even be late 18th century, came from context <7>.

Metalwork

Copper alloy.

Half-penny of George III dated 1775. Moderately worn. *Wt.* 7g. *Dia.* 27mm.

Context <5>.

Iron.

Thirty-one nails were found, all hand-made, and ranging in length from 45mm to 155mm (context <2>). The bulk (26) came from the demolition deposits contexts <5> and <6>. A right-angle strip of iron, either a corner brace of part of a staple, and half a horse-shoe (or an ox-shoe) came from context <7>.

None of the ironwork is intrinsically datable, but by association with other finds from these contexts are probably 18th-mid 19th century.

Glass.

Fragments of dark green bottle glass were the most numerous, with ten fragments coming from context <6> and eight from context <7>. These all appeared to be from blown, not moulded, bottles, suggesting a late 18th – early 19th century date. Three fragments of window glass of between 1.5mm and 2mm thickness from contexts <6> and <7> could be of the same date.

Leather.

Three pieces of shoe sole, all apparently from the same sole, came from contexts <5>, <6> and <8>. The leather was dessicated, but the sole appeared to be of a small size, and studded with small nails.

Plaster.

Presumed demolition deposits <5> and <6> produced a quantity of pieces of white lime mortar or plaster bearing impressions of timber laths. This could be either ceiling or wall plaster. A sample was retained.

Ceramic Building materials.

Nine fragments of hand-made brick of broadly late 18th – mid 19th century were found, from contexts <3>, <6>, <7>, <8> and <16>. Contexts <6> and <7> also produced seven pieces of pantile.

Stone.

A prehistoric cup-marked stone came from context <7>. Fine-grained, pale red sandstone, roughly triangular with a rounded base (145mm by 175mm). On the flatter, upper, surface is a damaged 'cup' originally c.80mm diameter and c.30mm deep, with shallow tapering sides showing clear pecks and grooves. The rounded base suggests re-use, inverted, in a cobbled surface. This is an example of 'portable' rock art, broadly datable to the late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age (Peter Topping *pers. comm.*). It is possible this formed part of a floor surface within the basement of the Pele, and arrived on the site with other stone robbed from the Roman site at Corstopitum, where a cup-marked stone is incorporated into the part of the foundations of the 4th century workshops [HER 9043].



Figure 5. Cup-marked stone from context <7>, showing damaged cup with tooling marks. Scale 20cm

A 'wrestler' roof-ridge flag, in fine-grained grey sandstone (L260mm, W175mm, T30mm), came from context <6>. The notches allowed the flags to interlock when laid on alternating sides of the ridge, forming a secure ridge-line with a 'cock's comb' appearance (see Figure 7). Wrestlers or Jack-necks are known from late 16th century and 17th century contexts in Newcastle, and have been recorded on standing buildings in the south of Northumberland and north Co. Durham [Harbottle and Ellison, 173-4].

Numerous fragments of grey-brown sandstone roof flags (tiles) ranging in thickness from 18mm-25mm were found in demolition contexts <5> and <6>, associated with sheep *metapodials* used as pegs to hang the slates on the rafters (see Faunal remains). These are not uniquely datable, but as true 'slate' (Welsh, Cumbrian, Scottish, and West Country) only became common for roofing in the 19th century, the stone flags could be of similar date to the wrestler. Samples of flag fragments with either peg holes or measurable dimensions were retained.



Figure 6. Stone roof flag (broken) with sheep metapodial 'peg' and peg hole, from context <6>.

Many fragments of thin purple/blue 'Welsh' roofing slate came from <3>, <4>

and <6>. A sample with nail holes was retained.



Figure 7. Left: a 'wrestler' tile from context <6> showing the notches where the tiles interlocked. Above: 'wrestlers' *in situ* forming a roof-ridge, with stone flags of graduated sizes.

Faunal Remains (by L.Gidney)

A small assemblage of one box of animal bones was recovered from contexts <5>, <6> and <7>. All the finds are of later post-medieval or early modern origin.

The majority of the faunal remains from contexts <5> and <6> are sheep metapodial bones, which had been used as pegs to hold stone roof slabs in place. Several examples were found still *in situ* in roof slabs. Only the proximal ends of the bones had been used for this purpose, the distal ends had been routinely chopped off. The exposure to the elements and the acidic nature of the sandstone roof slabs has initiated decay in these bone pegs with surface degradation and crushing of the shafts from the weight of the slabs, with associated splitting and splintering of the shafts.

Metatarsal bones from the hindleg, with 55 examples, are far more numerous than metacarpal bones from the foreleg, with only 8 examples. The broader metacarpal bones appear to have required more modification to fit through the holes as six had been split longitudinally. One proximal metatarsal showed clear rat nibbling marks but no dog gnawing marks were observed.

The proximal metapodials do not have a separate epiphysis for estimates of age from fusion and all the distal ends have been removed, so there is no ageing information for this slaughter population. Measurements of the proximal ends can be difficult to interpret as both the sex ratio and age range of the animals represented are unknown. However, since this is all the information available for comparison, Figure 8, below, shows the size range of the proximal metatarsals.

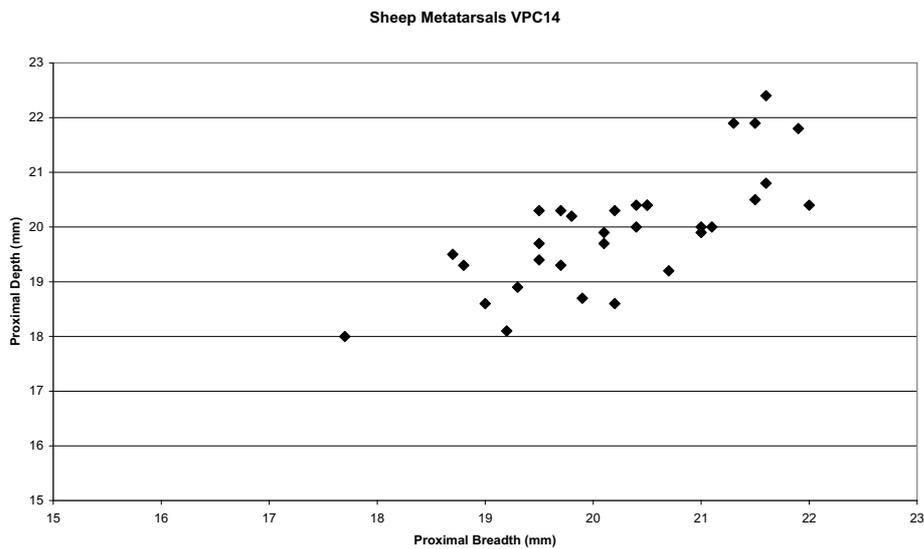


Figure 8. Size range of sheep proximal metatarsals used as pegs for roof flags.

Simplistic interpretations of such graphs as depicting sex ratios has been shown to be flawed [Sykes & Symmons 2007, Gidney 2013]. However, such graphs can show the size range of the bones selected for this specific purpose, compared to a broader population.

Figure 9, below, compares the VCP14 finds with examples from the Black Friars at Newcastle, of later 17th to early 18th century date [Rackham 1987]. The reason for the deposition of this large group of sheep metapodials is unclear but one possible explanation is that they were the dumped surplus of bones acquired for roof pegs. Only the complete bones with the distal end fused were measured. It can be seen that the VCP14 distribution overlaps the lower end of the Black Friars range but lacks the large examples seen at Black Friars. Given that the broader metacarpal bones at VCP had to be modified to fit the holes in the stone slabs, it is possible that the larger bones seen at Black Friars would have been unsuitable for roof pegs at Corbridge, although both assemblages may represent the same local sheep population.

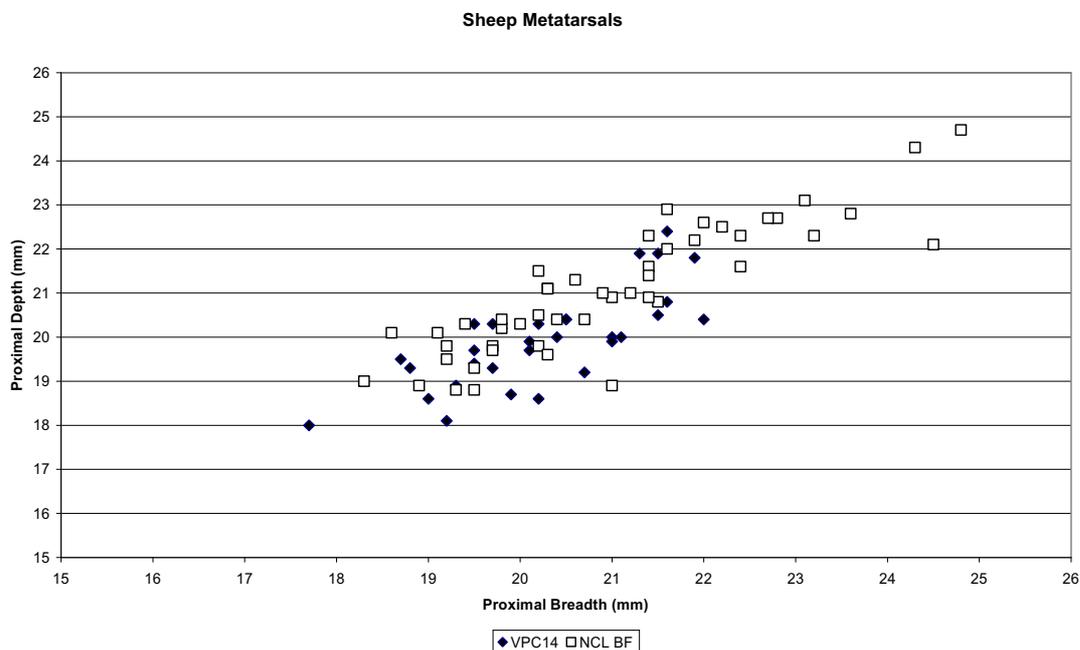


Figure 9. Comparison of sheep metatarsal sizes from the Vicar's Pele (VPC) and Black Friars, Newcastle.

Unpublished samples of bone pegs from stone roof slabs have been recovered

from Hamsteels Hall, near Durham, built about 1700, and an 18th century outbuilding at Richmond Castle. Like the VCP examples, these were principally metatarsals suggesting this bone was widely considered most suitable for this function.

Figure 10, below, compares the Hamsteels Hall and Richmond data with VCP and Black Friars. It can be seen that bone pegs with much larger proximal ends than the VCP examples were used at both Hamsteels Hall and Richmond. This raises intriguing questions about the availability of sheep metapodials to make these roofing pegs, and the size of the animals compared to the size of the holes in the roof slabs. While this site has produced a further useful sample of metrical data for these bone pegs, it is now becoming apparent that similar data on the size of the holes in the roof slabs is necessary to put such data in context.

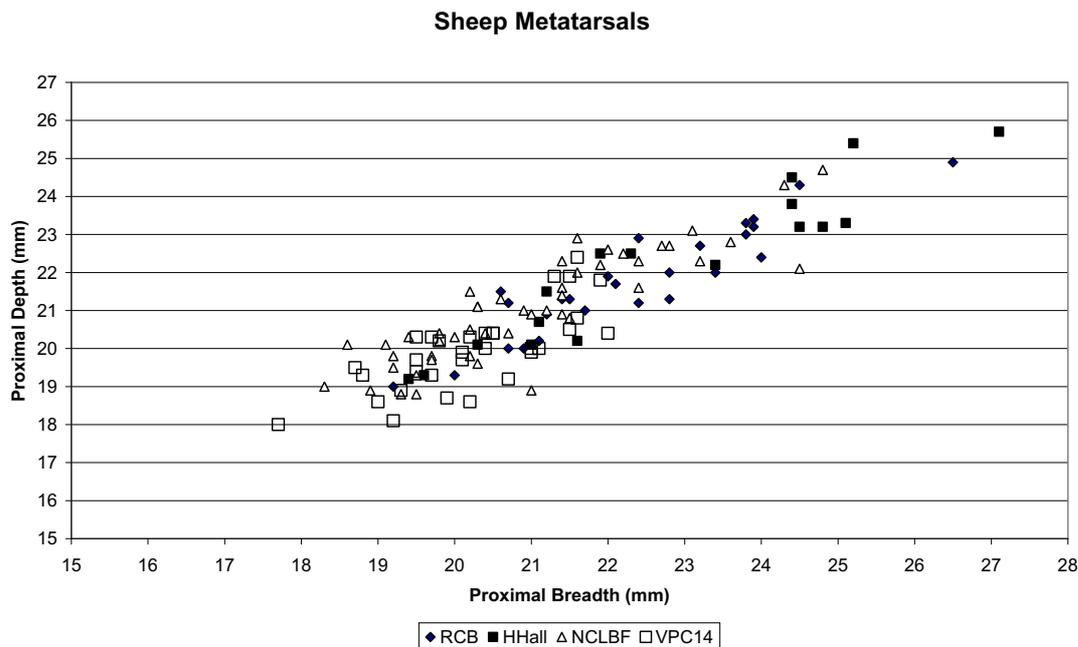


Figure 10. Comparison of sheep metatarsal sizes from Hamsteels and Richmond with those from the Vicar's Pele and Black Friars, Newcastle.

The only other find from context <6> was a cattle scapula in very poor condition. This appears to have been food debris as there is a clear butchery chop mark, and dog gnawing marks suggest the end use of the bone. Though not measurable, the size and robustness of the bone indicates a large, improved type of cattle.

Context <7> produced a set of articulated horse vertebrae, in a poor state of preservation. There are two cervical, twelve thoracic and two lumbar vertebrae. All epiphyses are fused, indicating an adult animal aged over five years. Four of the thoracic vertebrae form two articulating pairs, with each pair fused at the neural arch but only osteophytosis "lipping" at the centra. Such lipping is present on one further thoracic vertebra centrum. Although linking work in life with the aetiology of this condition is speculative, both a riding saddle and a cart saddle can put stress on the thoracic vertebrae. Only three proximal ribs were recovered. Although the vertebrae may have deposited as an articulated unit, this may not represent a complete carcass. Two hind limbs are represented. One right side acetabulum had clearly been chopped through the pubic symphysis and the ilium appears to have been chopped off. The pubis indicates this was a female.

There is a poorly preserved left side femur shaft, which may also have been chopped. Since horses have not been routinely eaten in England, disposal of fallen stock can represent a logistical problem. The hide is of value, horse bones can be used as the raw material for the manufacture of artefacts and the meat can be fed to dogs. This set of articulating vertebrae may represent burial of a defleshed carcass part that could not be otherwise usefully disposed of.

In addition to the horse bones in context <7> there is one cervical vertebra which appears morphologically more similar to cattle than horse and a complete cattle metacarpal. This is unfortunately not well preserved at the distal end so cannot be measured accurately. In appearance it is of the large, robust improved post-medieval type and the proximal breadth (61.4mm) falls within the range seen for improved post-medieval cattle from Masham [Stokes & Huntley 1998].

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Acknowledgements.

Northern Counties Archaeological Services would like to thank Shaun and Jane Cutler, owners of the Vicar's Pele, for their interest in the excavation (and for moving antique furniture stored in the basement), Chris Baglee of Spence & Dower LLP for facilitating the project, and Gerry Twomey for carrying out the bulk of the excavation.

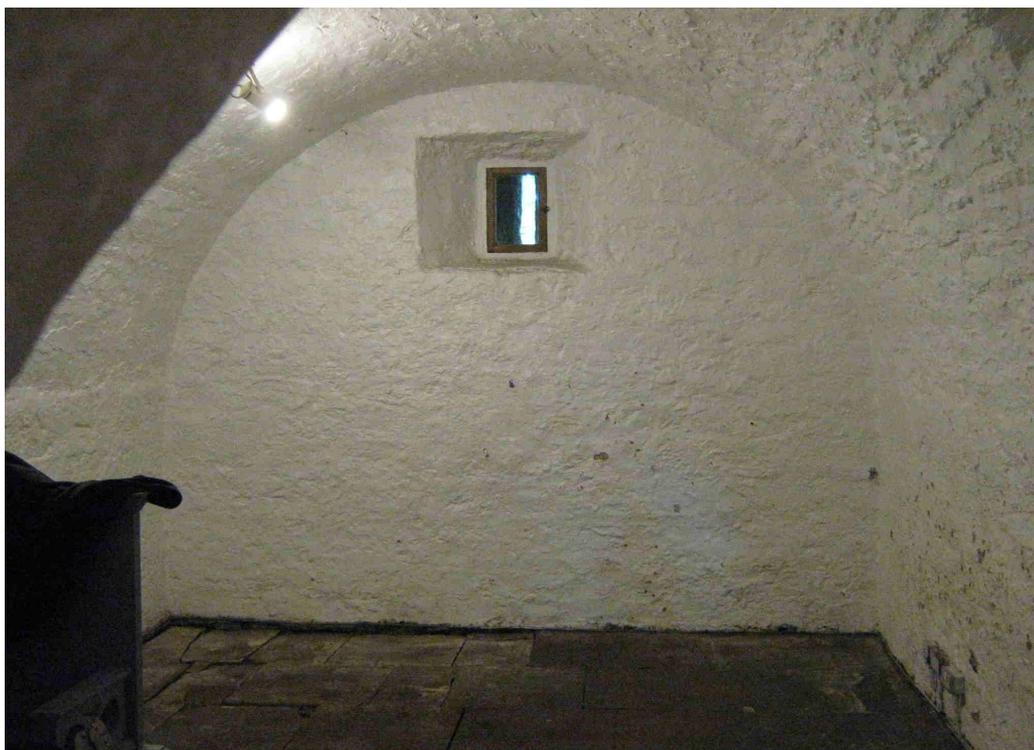


Plate 1. Interior of the vaulted basement of the Pele looking west, showing a loop-hole. The Test Pit was excavated in the left-hand (south-west) corner.



Plate 2. Paving <1> over the test pit area, looking south (see Figure 11). Embrasure of the southern loop-hole is partly visible (top left). Scales 2m and 1m.



Plate 3. After removal of paving <1> and sand bedding <2>, showing mortar patches <3>, possibly from a floor pre-dating the 1910 restoration, and context <4>. Scales 2m and 1m.

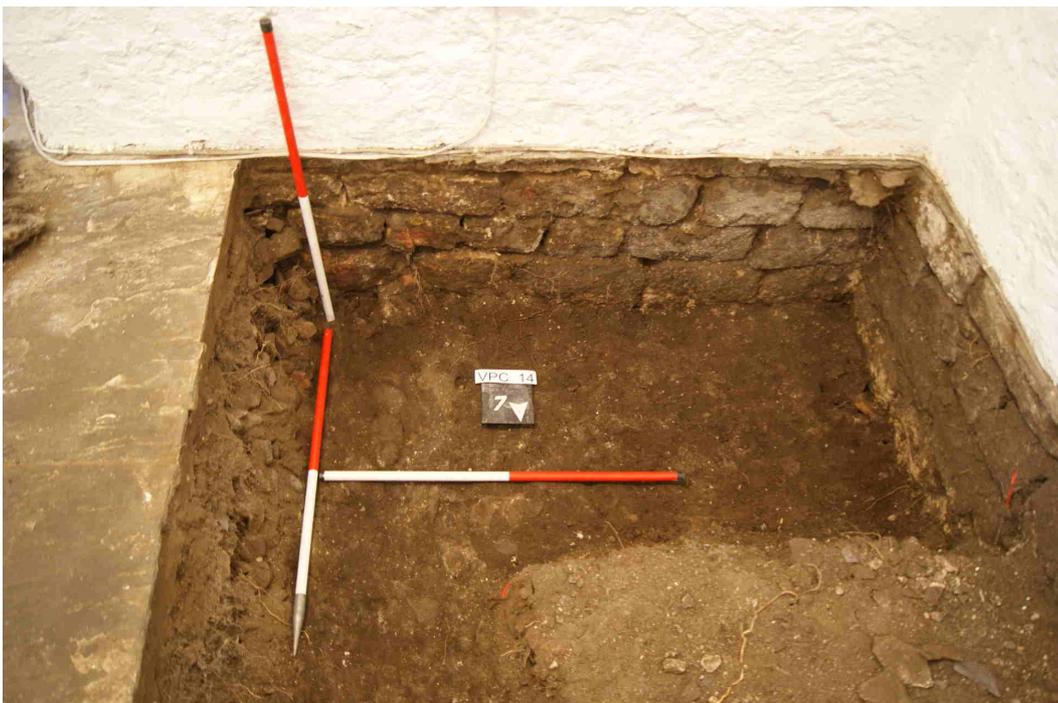


Plate 4. Possible disturbed floor surface <7>, looking south (see Figure 12). Scales 1m.



Plate 5. After removal of possibly disturbed floor level <7>, showing context <8> and cut <14> beginning to emerge in the south-west corner. Scales 1m.



Plate 6. Context <16> in cut <9>. Truncated natural alluvial sand <10> is visible top left (see Figure 13). Scales 1m.



Plate 7. Inner face of the south wall of the Pele, showing base course and small underlying stones in truncated construction cut. Scales 1m.



Plate 8. Inner face of west wall of the Pele <13> and junction with south wall <12>, showing base course resting on natural alluvial sandy clay and possible construction joint (see Figure 14). Scales 1m.

Figure 11

Vicar's Pele
Corbridge

Ground floor
Paving <1> over Test
Pit area

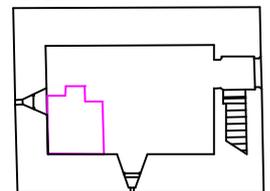
Key

<19> context numbers

41.545
↕ levels related to
Ordnance Survey
datum

 Test Pit area

Location



Based on Spence & Dower LLP drawing M524/10

Surveyed: GT

Digitised: JN



Scale 1:20@A4

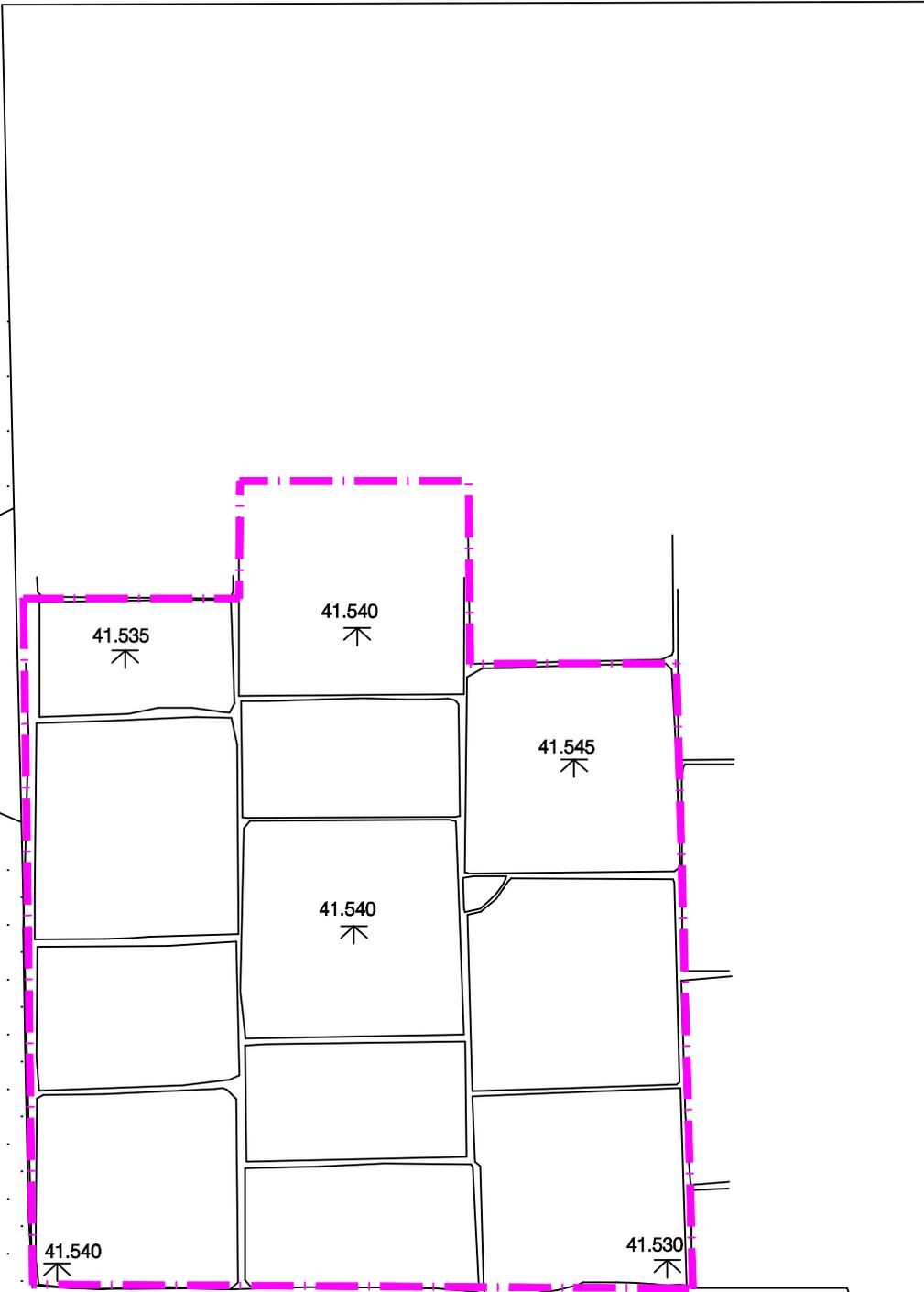


Figure 12

Vicar's Pele
Corbridge

Ground floor
Context <7>

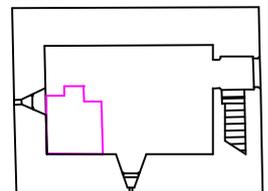
Key

<19> context numbers

41.545
↑ levels related to
Ordnance Survey
datum

 Test Pit area

Location



Based on Spence & Dower LLP drawing M624/10

Surveyed: GT

Digitised: JN



Scale 1:20@A4

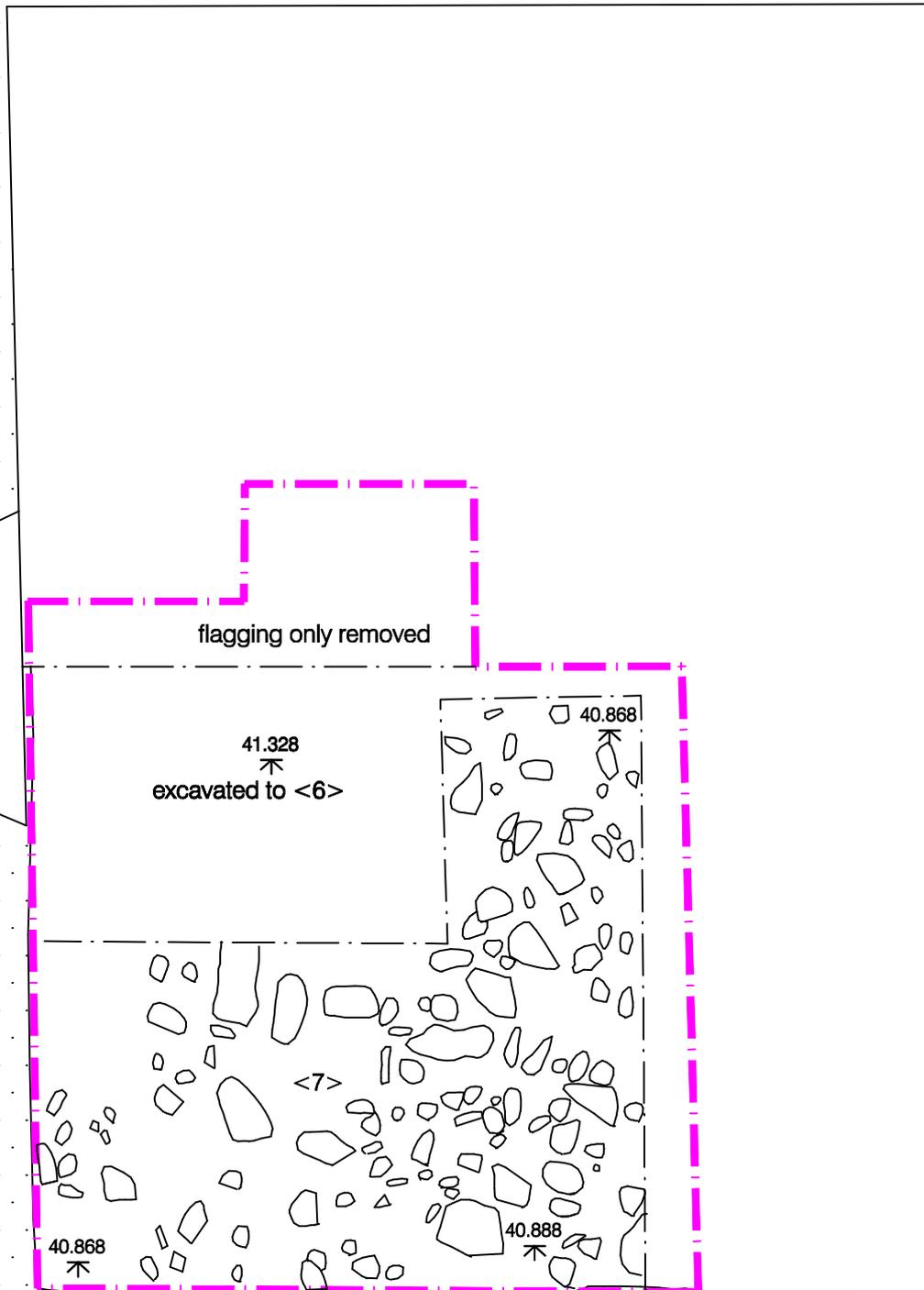


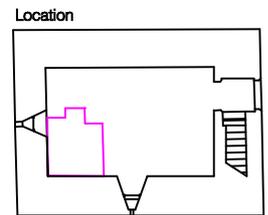
Figure 13

Vicar's Pele
Corbridge

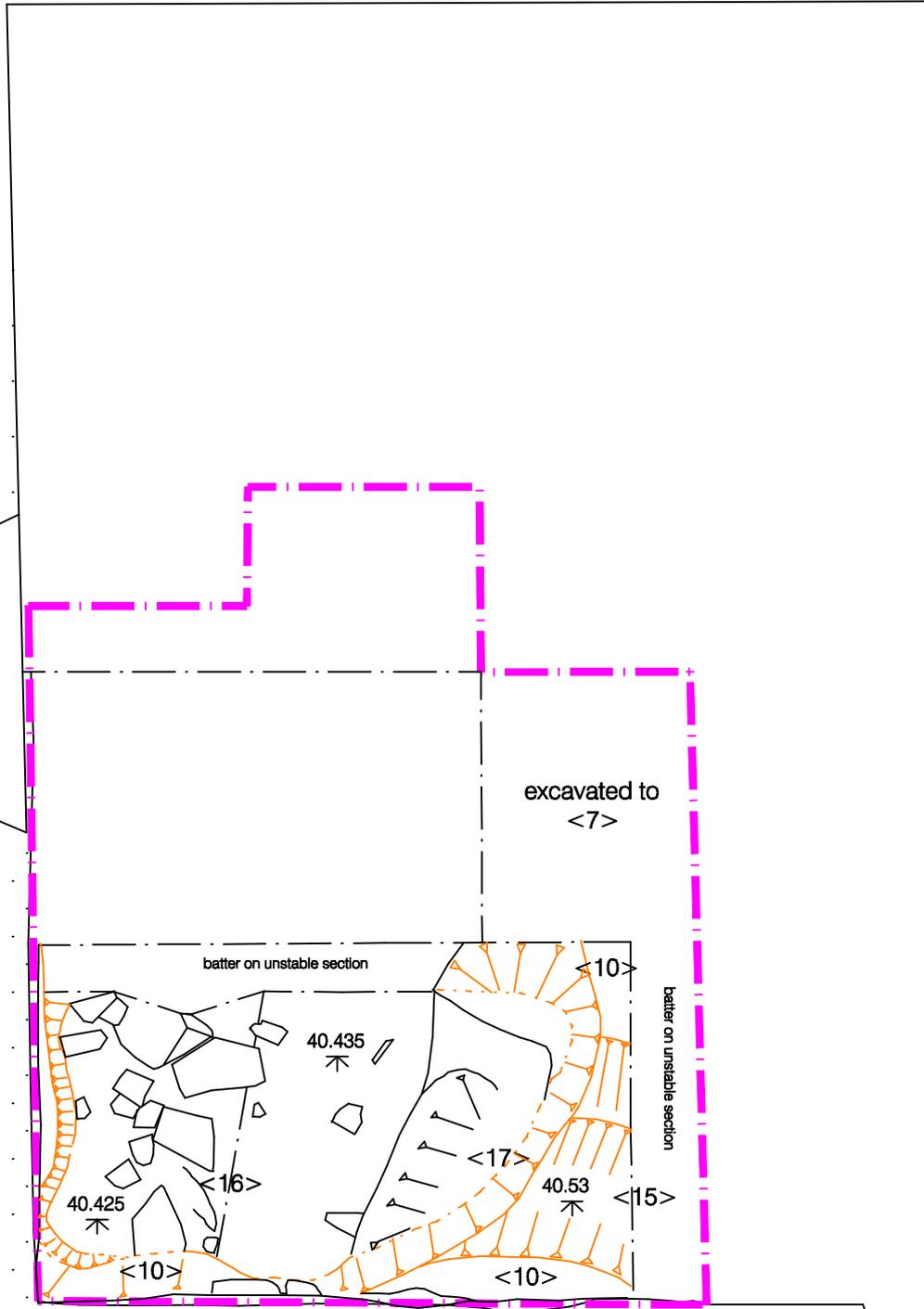
Ground floor
Limit of excavation:
Contexts <10>
and <16>

Key

- <19> context numbers
- 41.545 levels related to Ordnance Survey datum
- Test Pit area
- Natural <10>



Based on Spence & Dower LLP drawing M524/10



Surveyed: GT

Digitised: JN



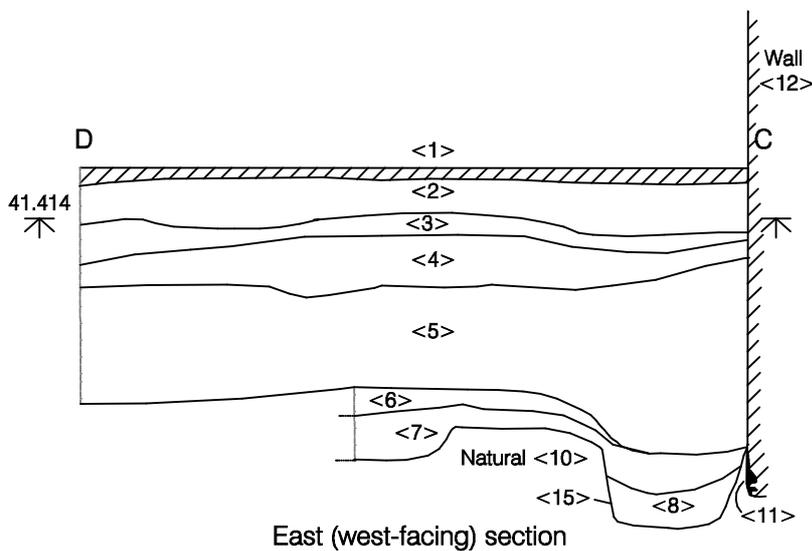
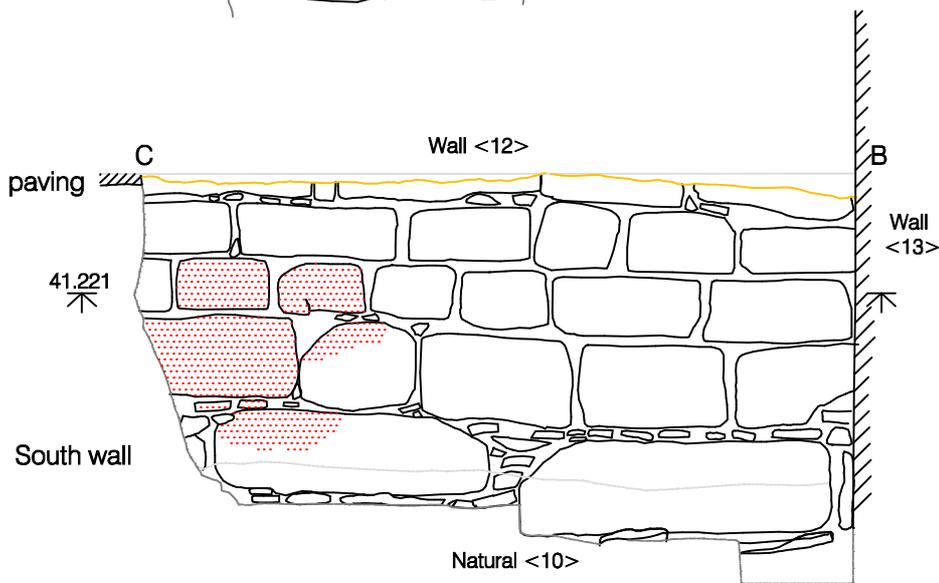
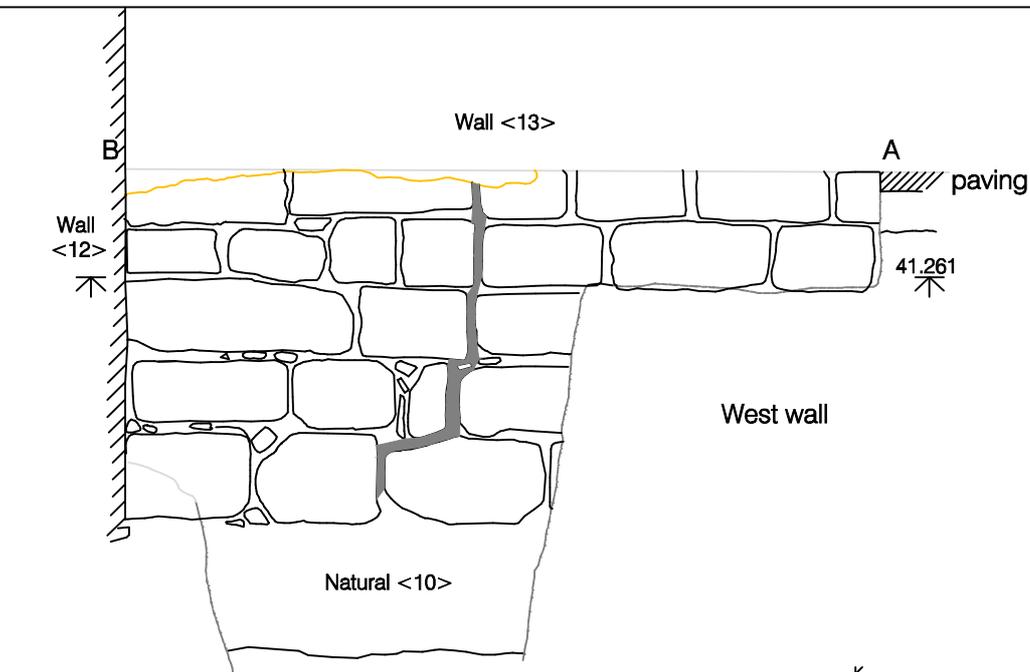
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Figure 14

Vicar's Pele
Corbridge

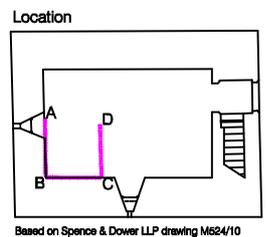
Test pit

Ground floor
Internal elevations
and east section



Key

- <19> context numbers
- 41.261 levels related to Ordnance Survey datum
- possible burning
- mortar
- possible building joint



Surveyed: GT and JN

Digitised: JN

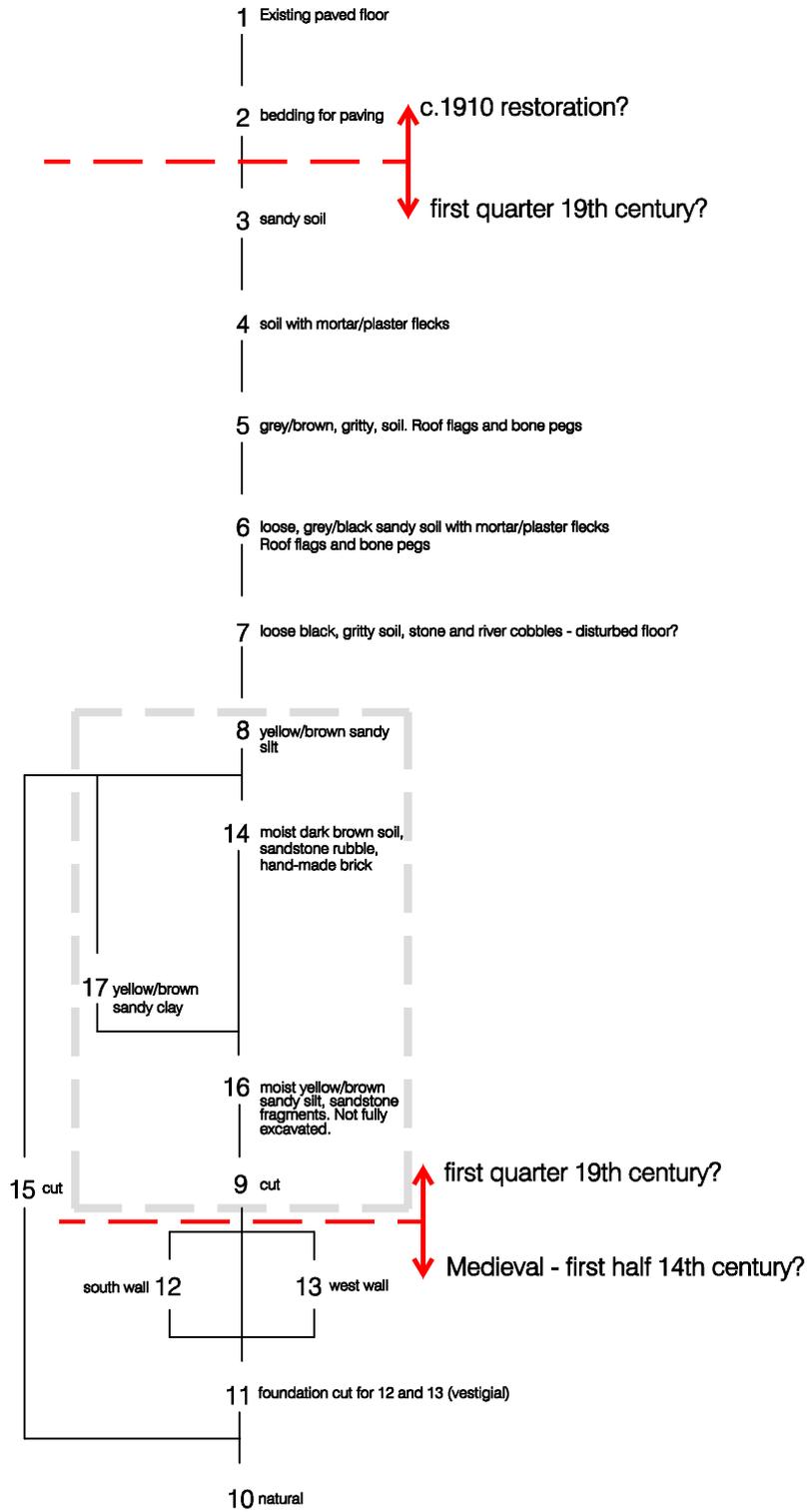
Scale 1:20@A4

APPENDIX 1

VPC14 Context list with brief descriptions

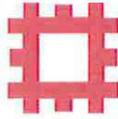
- 1 Grey-brown sandstone paving flags, thin (30-40mm) and squared.
- 2 Friable grey-brown, dry, fine, sand. Bedding for flags.
- 3 Moderately firm patches of pale grey-brown sandy soil with frequent small rootlets.
- 4 Firm brown soil with frequent white mortar/plaster flecks.
- 5 Moderately firm grey-brown gritty soil.
- 6 Loose grey-black sandy soil with frequent flecks of white mortar/plaster.
- 7 Moderately firm black gritty soil over/part of possible cobbled surface.
- 8 Mid yellow-brown sandy silt.
- 9 Cut, filled with <8> and <14> and against the south-west angle of the Pele walls. Cuts through <11> and into natural <10>.
- 10 Firm dark yellow-brown clean sandy clay silt. Natural.
- 11 Cut, vestiges of construction cut for walls <12> and <13>, almost all removed by <9>.
- 12 Masonry – inner face of south wall of the Pele. Roughly squared sandstone, some yellow mortar. Traces of burning on faces toward the east.
- 13 Masonry – inner face of west wall of the Pele. Roughly squared sandstone, some yellow mortar. Possible construction phase joint.
- 14 Moderately firm, dark brown, moist soil with frequent fragments of sandstone rubble and hand-made brick. Clay tobacco pipe stem.
- 15 Cut – appears to be a roughly east-west linear feature cut into <10>. Relationship with <9> uncertain; may even predate <9> and <12>.
- 16 Moderately firm, moist, mid-yellow-brown sandy silt with sandstone fragments and pieces of coal. Not fully excavated due to restricted trench area.
- 17 Soft, yellow-brown sandy clay silt with some pieces of sandstone rubble. Slippage of the natural from the south-east side of <9>.

VPC14 matrix



APPENDIX 2

Grant of Scheduled Monument Consent



ENGLISH HERITAGE
NORTH EAST OFFICE

Mr Chris Baglee
Spence & Dower LLP
Column Yard
Cambo
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 4AY

Direct Dial: 0191-2691239
Direct Fax: 0191-2691130

RECEIVED
06 MAY 2013

1 May 2014

Dear Mr Baglee

**Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); Section 2
control of works
Application for Scheduled Monument Consent**

**VICAR'S PELE TOWER, CORBRIDGE, NORTHUMBERLAND
Scheduled Monument No: SM ND 77, HA 1006604
Our ref: S00084174
Application on behalf of Shaun Cutler**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport to advise you of the decision regarding your application for Scheduled Monument Consent dated 28 April 2014 in respect of proposed works at the above scheduled monument concerning archaeological investigation to inform the proposed installation of mains drainage into the SW corner of the ground floor. . The works were described in the following documentation submitted by you:

- Location Plan
- M524.03 Site Layout
- M524.10 Proposed Ground Floor Drain
- M524.30 Proposed Services Entry Section

2. In accordance with paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 1 to the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State is obliged to afford you, and any other person to whom it appears to the Secretary of State expedient to afford it, an opportunity of appearing before and being heard by a person appointed for that purpose. This opportunity was offered to you by English Heritage and you have declined it.

3. The Secretary of State is also required by the Act to consult with the Historic

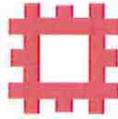


BESSIE SURTEES HOUSE 41-44 SANDHILL NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE1 3JF

Telephone 0191 269 1200 Facsimile 0191 261 1130
www.english-heritage.org.uk

English Heritage is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). All information held by the organisation will be accessible in response to an information request, unless one of the exemptions in the FOIA or EIR applies.

English Heritage will use the information provided by you to evaluate your application for Scheduled Monument Consent. Information contained in this application and any information obtained from other sources will be retained in all cases in hard copy form and/or on computer for administration purposes and future consideration where applicable.



ENGLISH HERITAGE
NORTH EAST OFFICE

Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage) before deciding whether or not to grant Scheduled Monument Consent. English Heritage considers the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be archaeological evaluation necessary to assess the extent, depth and nature of archaeological deposits in order to provide information to underpin decisions on the management of the monument, changes in its land use, or development proposals.

I can confirm that the Secretary of State is agreeable for the works to proceed providing the conditions set out below are adhered to, and that accordingly Scheduled Monument Consent is hereby granted under section 2 of the 1979 Act for the works described in paragraph 1 above, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The works to which this consent relates shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State, who will be advised by English Heritage. At least 4 weeks' notice (or such shorter period as may be mutually agreed) in writing of the commencement of work shall be given to Dr Rob Young, English Heritage NE, Bessie Surtees House 41 - 44 Sandhill, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3 JF, tel: 01912691239, e-mail: rob.young@english-heritage.org.uk in order that an English Heritage representative can inspect and advise on the works and their effect in compliance with this consent.
- (b) The specification of work for which consent is granted shall be executed in full.
- (c) No ground works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by English Heritage.
- (d) All those involved in the implementation of the works granted by this consent must be informed by the owner, occupier and/or developer that the land is designated as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); the extent of the scheduled monument as set out in both the scheduled monument description and map; and that the implications of this designation include the requirement to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent for any works to a scheduled monument from the Secretary of State prior to them being undertaken.
- (e) Equipment and machinery shall not be used or operated in the scheduled area

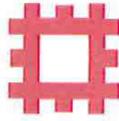


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Telephone 0191 269 1200 Facsimile 0191 261 1130
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NORTH EAST OFFICE

in conditions or in a manner likely to result in damage to the monument/ ground disturbance other than that which is expressly authorised in this consent.

- (f) A report on the archaeological recording shall be sent to the County Historic Environment Record and to Dr Rob Young at English Heritage within 3 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).
- (g) The contractor shall complete and submit an entry on OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>) prior to project completion, and shall deposit any digital project report with the Archaeology Data Service, via the OASIS form, upon completion.

4. By virtue of section 4 of the 1979 Act, if no works to which this consent relates are executed or started within the period of five years beginning with the date on which this consent was granted (being the date of this letter), this consent shall cease to have effect at the end of that period (unless a shorter time period is set by a specific condition above).

5. This letter does not convey any approval or consent required under any enactment, bye law, order or regulation other than section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

6. Your attention is drawn to the provisions of section 55 of the 1979 Act under which any person who is aggrieved by the decision given in this letter may challenge its validity by an application made to the High Court within six weeks from the date when the decision is given. The grounds upon which an application may be made to the Court are (1) that the decision is not within the powers of the Act (that is, the Secretary of State has exceeded the relevant powers) or (2) that any of the relevant requirements have not been complied with and the applicant's interests have been substantially prejudiced by the failure to comply. The "relevant requirements" are defined in section 55 of the 1979 Act: they are the requirements of that Act and the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 and the requirements of any regulations or rules made under those Acts.

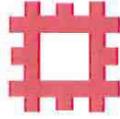


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Telephone 0191 269 1200 Facsimile 0191 261 1130
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English Heritage will use the information provided by you to evaluate your application for Scheduled Monument Consent. Information contained in this application and any information obtained from other sources will be retained in all cases in hard copy form and/or on computer for administration purposes and future consideration where applicable.



ENGLISH HERITAGE
NORTH EAST OFFICE

Yours sincerely

Rob Young

Inspector of Ancient Monuments

E-mail: rob.young@english-heritage.org.uk

For and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

cc Karen Dereham, Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland CC, County Hall,
Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF.



BESSIE SURTEES HOUSE 41-44 SANDHILL NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE1 3JF

Telephone 0191 269 1200 Facsimile 0191 261 1130
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APPENDIX 3

The Vicar's Pele, St. Andrew's Church, Corbridge. NY98849 64407

Archaeological test pit

Written scheme of Investigation

by

Northern Counties Archaeological Services

for

Spence & Dower LLP, English Heritage and Northumberland County Archaeologist

1. Background to project.

- 1.1 The Vicar's Pele is a tower house, possibly of mid-14th century date, in the south of St. Andrew's churchyard, Corbridge. The tower is largely built of re-used Roman stone from Corstopitum, and was restored in 1910 [Pevsner 1999, 237]. A number of other 'Vicar's Peles' survive in the county.
- 1.2 As part of proposals for re-use of the tower, it is intended to install a toilet cubicle in the south-west angle of the vaulted ground floor chamber. This will necessitate drilling a 200mm diameter waste pipe and water pipe connection below ground level and ideally below tower foundation level, to meet a new exterior service connection.
- 1.3 As the tower is a scheduled ancient monument English Heritage require an archaeological investigation to determine the impact of the proposed development on the below-ground archaeology and tower structure.

2. Site status

- 2.1 The Vicar's Pele is a scheduled ancient monument in a conservation area, and a Grade 1 listed building.

3. Extent of excavation

- 3.1 The proposed excavation area is in the south-west corner of the ground floor of the tower, and against the inner face of tower wall. The investigation measures c.2m x 2m, and must be carried to a minimum depth of 1.1m deep in order to connect to a new supply by Northumbria Water.

4. Excavation methodology

- 4.1 The work will be undertaken by professional field archaeologists, in accordance with codes of practice of the IFA and with due regard for current Health and Safety legislation.

- 4.2 The proposed site code will be VPC 14. This will appear on all site records pertaining to the project.
- 4.3 The existing surface is understood to be a flagstone floor. Flags covering the excavation area will be numbered, photographed and planned before manual lifting and storage on site.
- 4.4 All soft deposits will be excavated using hand tools. Deposits will be contextualised and recorded in accordance with the IFA's standard archaeological practice.
- 4.5 A photographic record will be maintained using a Sony Alpha digital SLR camera. Photographs will include a photo board giving the site code, north point, and context number, and a clearly visible metric scale.
- 4.6 All contexts will be recorded in plan, on permatrace, at a scale of 1:20 and in section at a scale of 1:10.
- 4.7 All contexts will also be fully described on pro-forma context recording sheets in a running number sequence. The sheets will include Harris matrix boxes to clearly show stratigraphic relationships.
- 4.8 All finds (artefacts and ecofacts), whether contexted or unstratified, will be bagged (clearly numbered to site and context) and retained. In the case of bulk finds, particularly post-medieval brick/roof-tile, material will be quantified on site, a representative sample retained, and the remainder discarded.
- 4.9 Samples (eg. for environmental analysis and 14C dating) will be taken of deposits assessed on site as having significance for understanding the history of the tower in terms of date or deposition, and which are uncontaminated. Samples will be identified by site code and context number. Sample volume will vary depending on the amount of recoverable material exposed within the excavation area.
- 4.10 Spoil will be retained within the ground floor room, on heavy duty polythene sheeting. On completion of the excavation, the pit will be backfilled with the spoil but not formally compacted.

5. Post-excavation strategy

- 5.1 All retained finds will be identified to period/material/type and catalogued. This will be used to inform the stratigraphic site narrative of the written report.
- 5.2 Samples will be assessed for potential and processed where appropriate.
- 5.3 Site plans and sections will be digitised and photographs downloaded.
- 5.4 A Harris matrix will be constructed and a written report describing the stratigraphic sequences and results of the project compiled.

6. Reporting and archiving

- 6.1 Within three months of the completion of fieldwork (or such other period as may be mutually agreed) a written report will be compiled describing the excavation and its results. Copies of the report will be produced for the English Heritage Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments, the Client/Project Architect, and the local planning authority archaeologist/conservation officer for inclusion in the Northumberland County Historic Environment Record.
- 6.2 The report will include a location plan, plan(s) of the principal excavated deposits and/or features, at least one section, a selection of photographs illustrating the excavation, a Harris matrix, a context list, and copies of this written scheme of investigation and grant of Scheduled Monument Consent.
- 6.3 An OASIS report form will be completed, and the final grey literature report uploaded. Depending on the results a short article will be prepared for *Archaeology in Northumberland*, or if considered as being of sufficient academic interest a short report will be submitted to a recognised archaeological journal such as *Archaeologia Aeliana*.
- 6.4 The project archive will be prepared in accordance with MAP2 and IFA guidelines, and deposited with the Great North Museum.

J.Nolan
NCAS
8th May 2014