

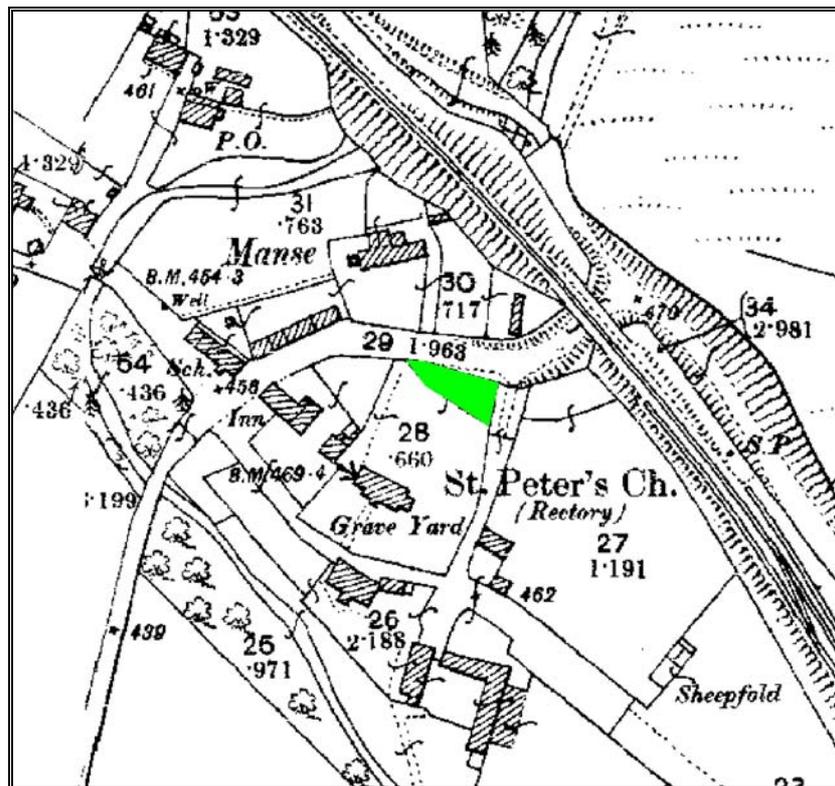
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# THE OLD GARAGE SITE, FALSTONE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

MAY 2007

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By:  
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# THE OLD GARAGE SITE, FALSTONE, NORTHUMBERLAND

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION BY WATCHING BRIEF

*Prepared by*

The Archaeological Practice Ltd.



***Frontispiece:*** Site of the archaeological watching brief at Falstone, April 2007.

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## SUMMARY

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*This report details observations made during an archaeological watching brief carried out on the site of the Old Garage, Falstone, North Northumberland, during the excavation of foundation trenches for a residential development.*

*The remains of a pit associated with the garage, and fragmentary remains of chicken sheds which occupied the site following its disuse as a garage, were observed during the excavations. In addition, a number of bottles of early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century origin were uncovered, particularly at the west end of the site which had been used as a dump. No archaeological features, deposits or finds of any archaeological or historical significance were encountered during the works.*

*No conclusions can be derived from this work with regard to the position and character of the putative medieval and early post-medieval village of Falstone.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and topography

The watching brief was carried out on the west part of the old garage site, NNE of St Peter's church, on the west side of the entrance to a track leading to Falstone farm from the north.

The village of Falstone is situated in the upper reaches of North Tynedale in south-central Northumberland, on the western edge of the Northumberland National Park. Today the main settlement of Falstone is centred around the church of St Peter's, with later houses added by the Forestry Commission to the north. To the west the village is bounded by the River North Tyne, which then loops round to the south of the settlement. To the north and south the settlement is overlooked by hillsides covered in extensive conifer plantations, whilst only 1.5km further up the valley lies the great man-made reservoir of Kielder Water.

### 1.2 Planning background

Following submission of planning proposals for a residential development on the site of the Old Garage at Falstone, the National Park Archaeologist attached a requirement for a watching brief to be carried out in order to examine and record the character of any remains discovered during development works, thereby mitigating by record the impact of the scheme. The watching brief was requested in view of the site's location within a medieval village, the known occurrence of medieval remains locally, and the likely depth of the proposed development works. Primary amongst the objectives for archaeological investigation defined at the outset was the identification of any archaeological remains associated with the medieval and early post-medieval history of Falstone. The site lies adjacent to St Peter's, a medieval church site, and Falstone Farmhouse, an early 17<sup>th</sup> century bastle which was occupied by the senior lineage or 'grayne' of the Robson surname from the early 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been speculated (The Archaeological Practice Ltd. 2004) that the location of St Peter's churchyard on a knoll demarcated by a bend in the Falstone Burn forms a neatly bounded location which might have proved attractive for an early Christian monastic community, for instance. Further, the medieval farmstead or hamlet which can be inferred from documentary evidence was probably centred immediately to the south and south east of the churchyard on or near the site of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century bastle, beside the original main route through the village. It has been further speculated that the bastle site may preserve deposits associated with pre-bastle settlements associated with the origins of reiver society in the late medieval period, and is thus an especially promising location for study.

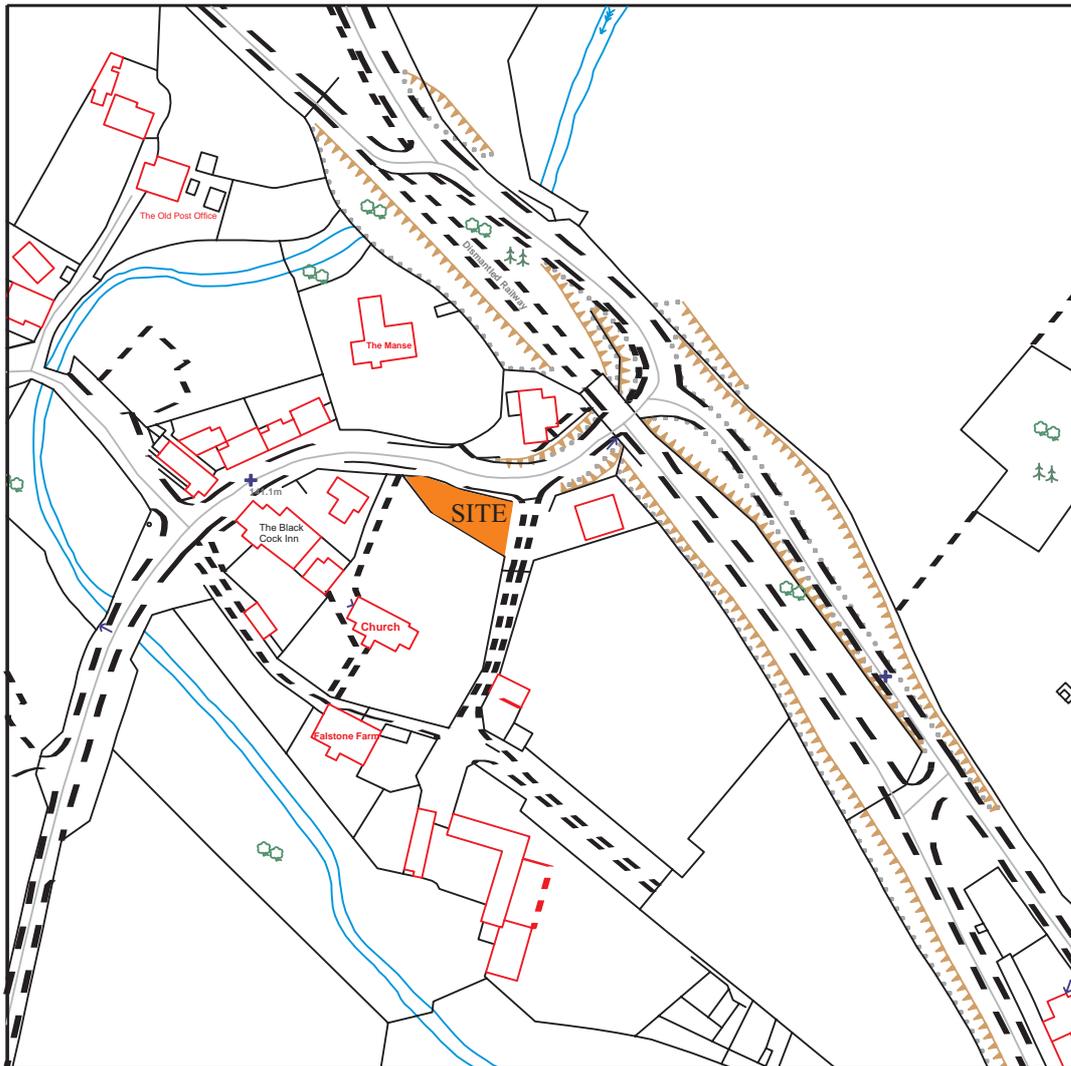
## 2.0 BACKGROUND

Relatively little is known of earlier Prehistoric (Palaeolithic-Bronze Age) settlement towards the upper end of North Tynedale. The presence of substantial Neolithic and Bronze Age burial cairns near the head of the valley implies that communities of some kind (clans or tribes?) were present in the area during the Neolithic and early Bronze Age. For the Bronze Age, a settlement pattern of unenclosed settlements comprising round houses and irregular field systems is suspected, by analogy with other parts of upland Northumberland, but has not so far been identified within or adjacent to the study area.

In contrast the settlement pattern in upper north Tynedale during the Iron Age and Romano-British period is very apparent in the surviving archaeological record. It was

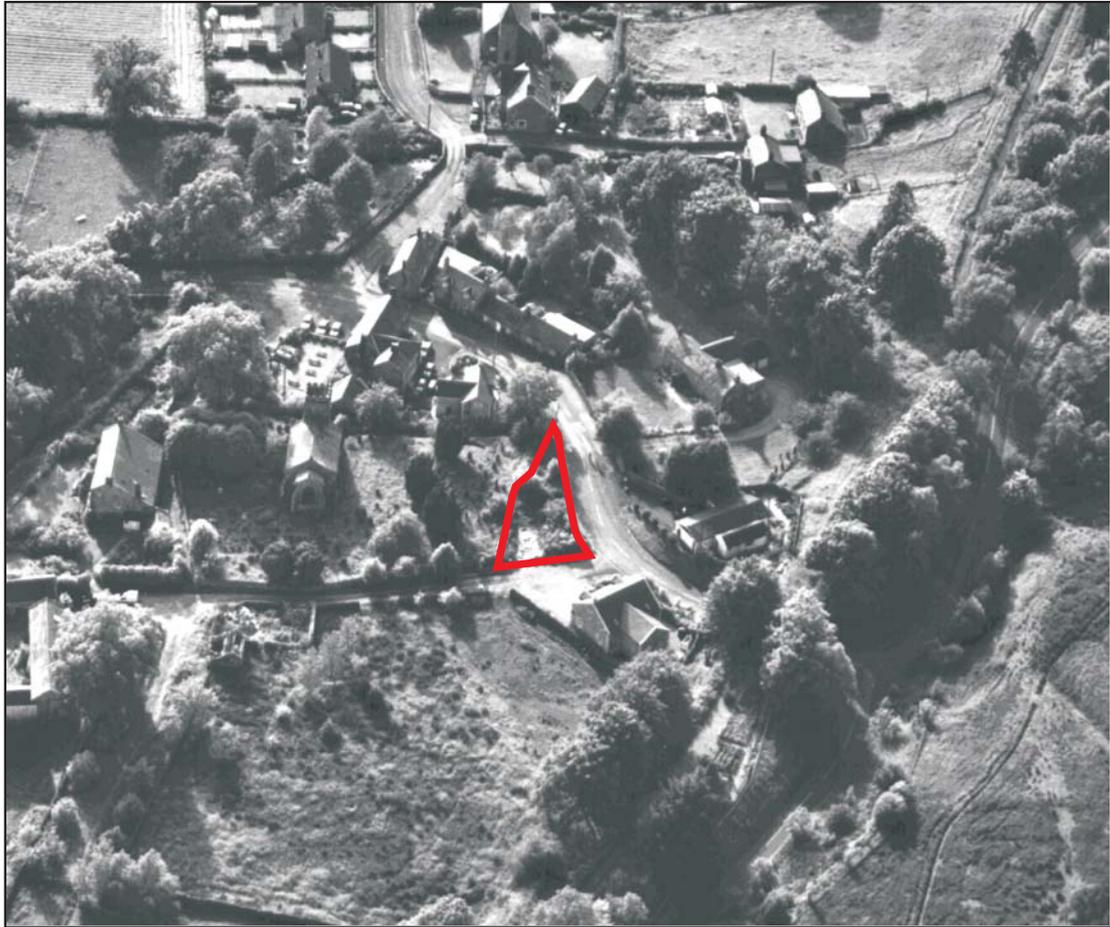


*Illus. 01: Location of Falstone, County of Northumberland*

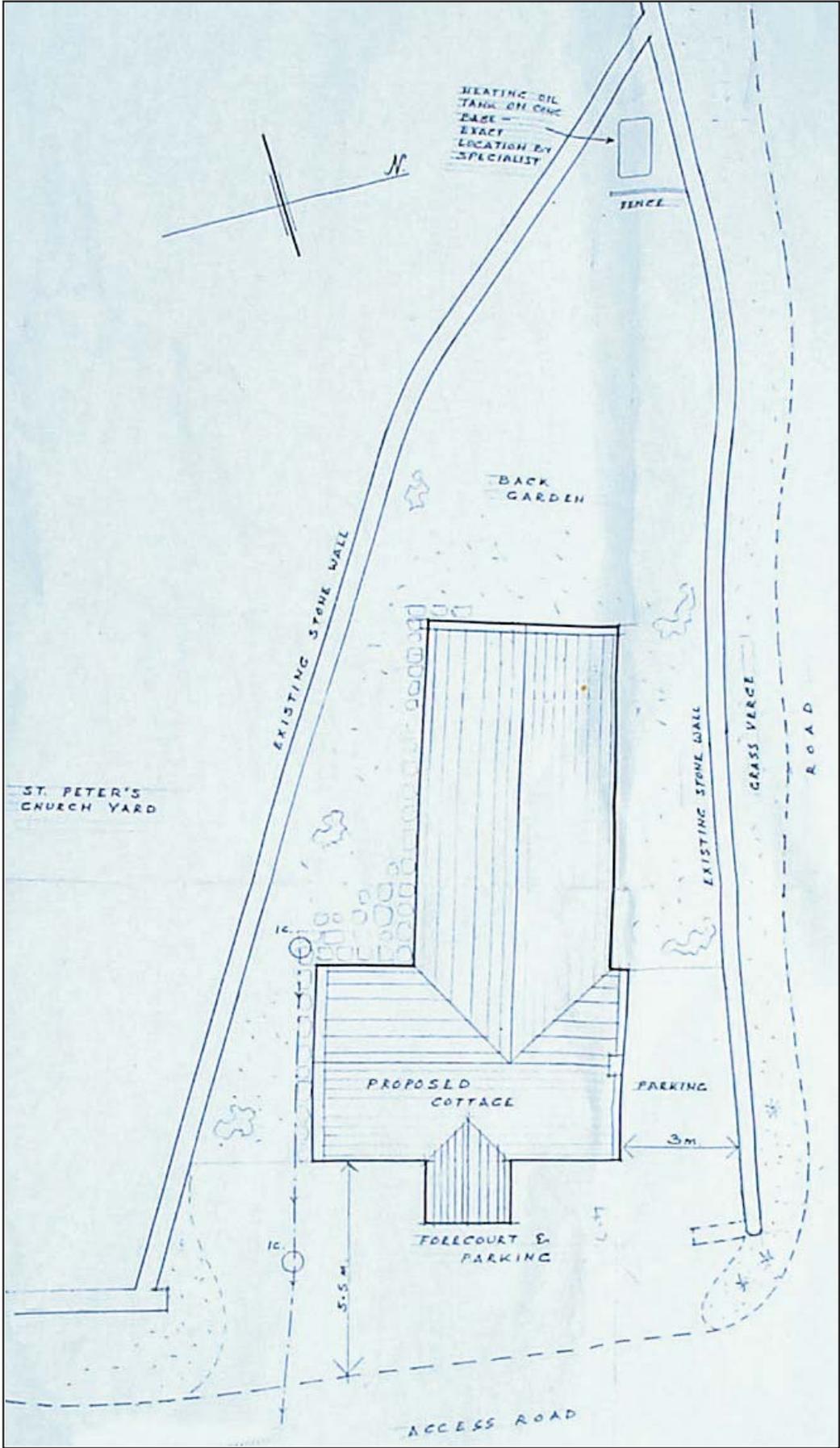


*Illus. 02: Location of the development site in Falstone.*

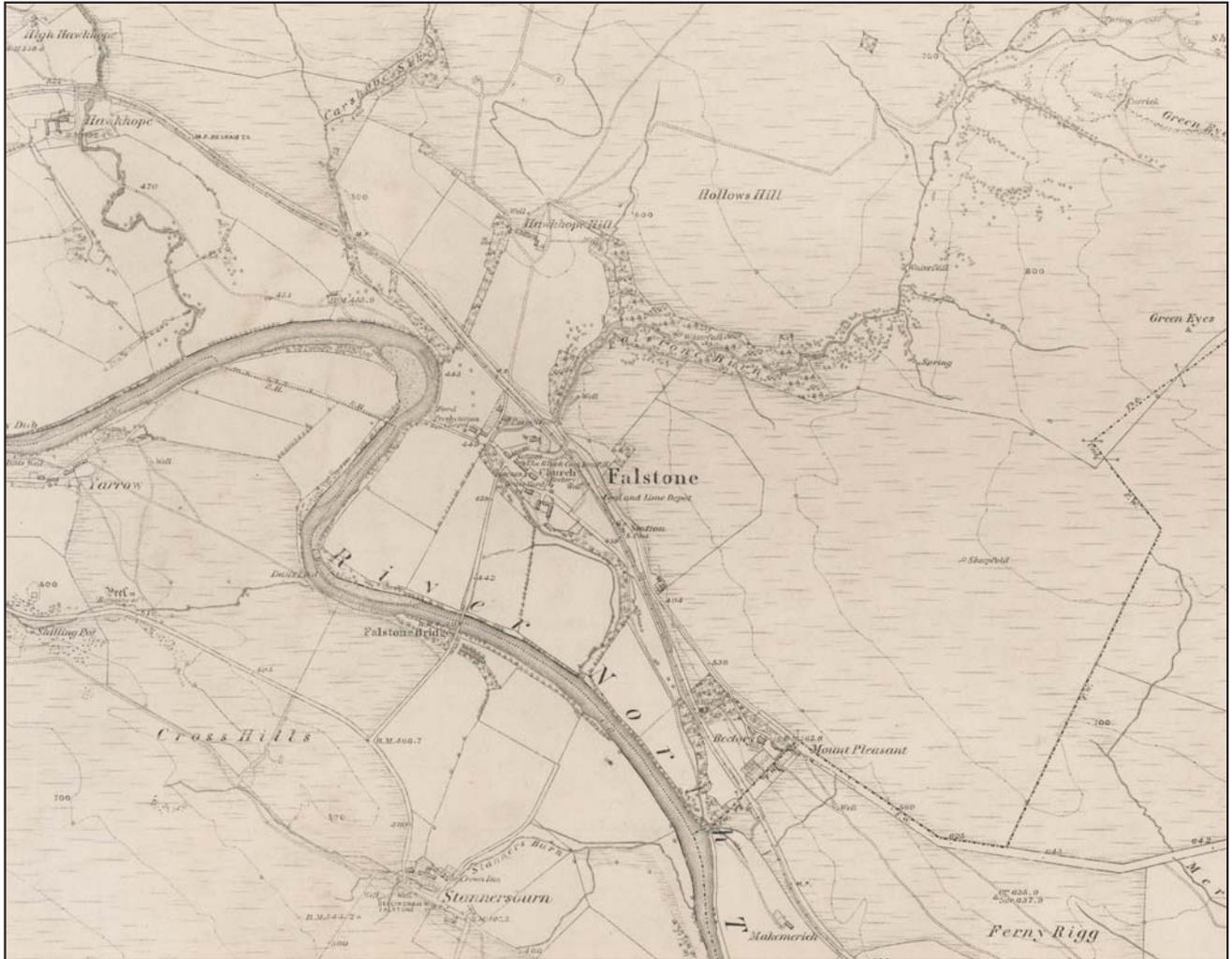




***Illus. 03:*** Aerial photograph of Falstone showing the location of the watching brief.

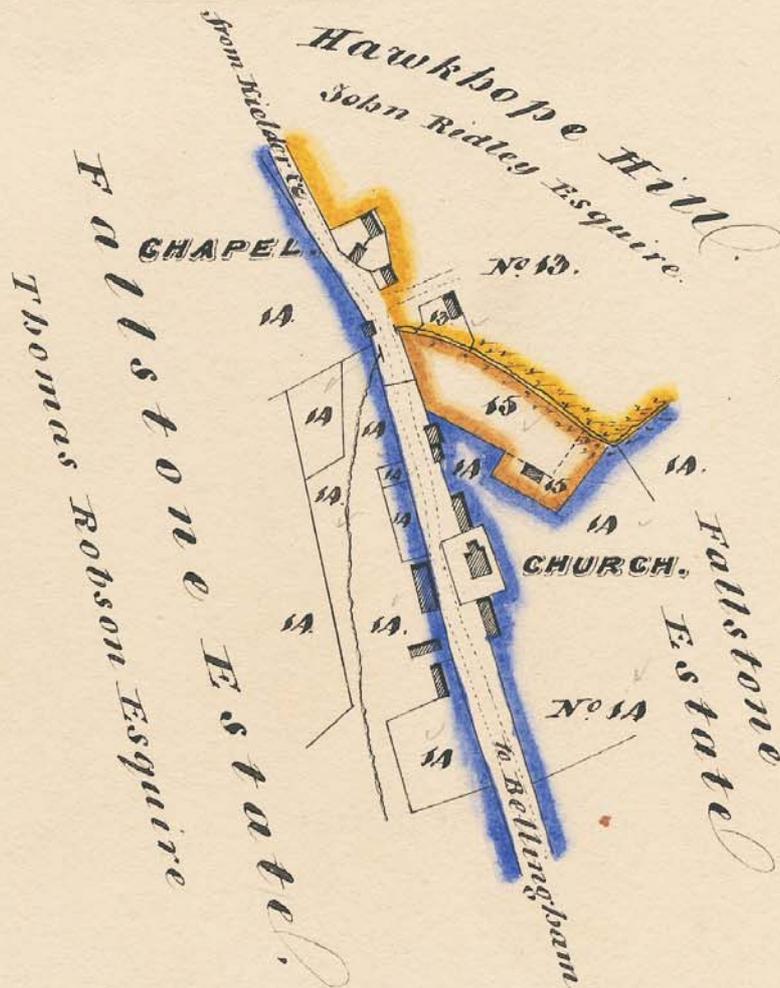


**Illus. 04:** Architect's Plan of the development.



**Illus. 07:** First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan, 1860 (Sheet 59).

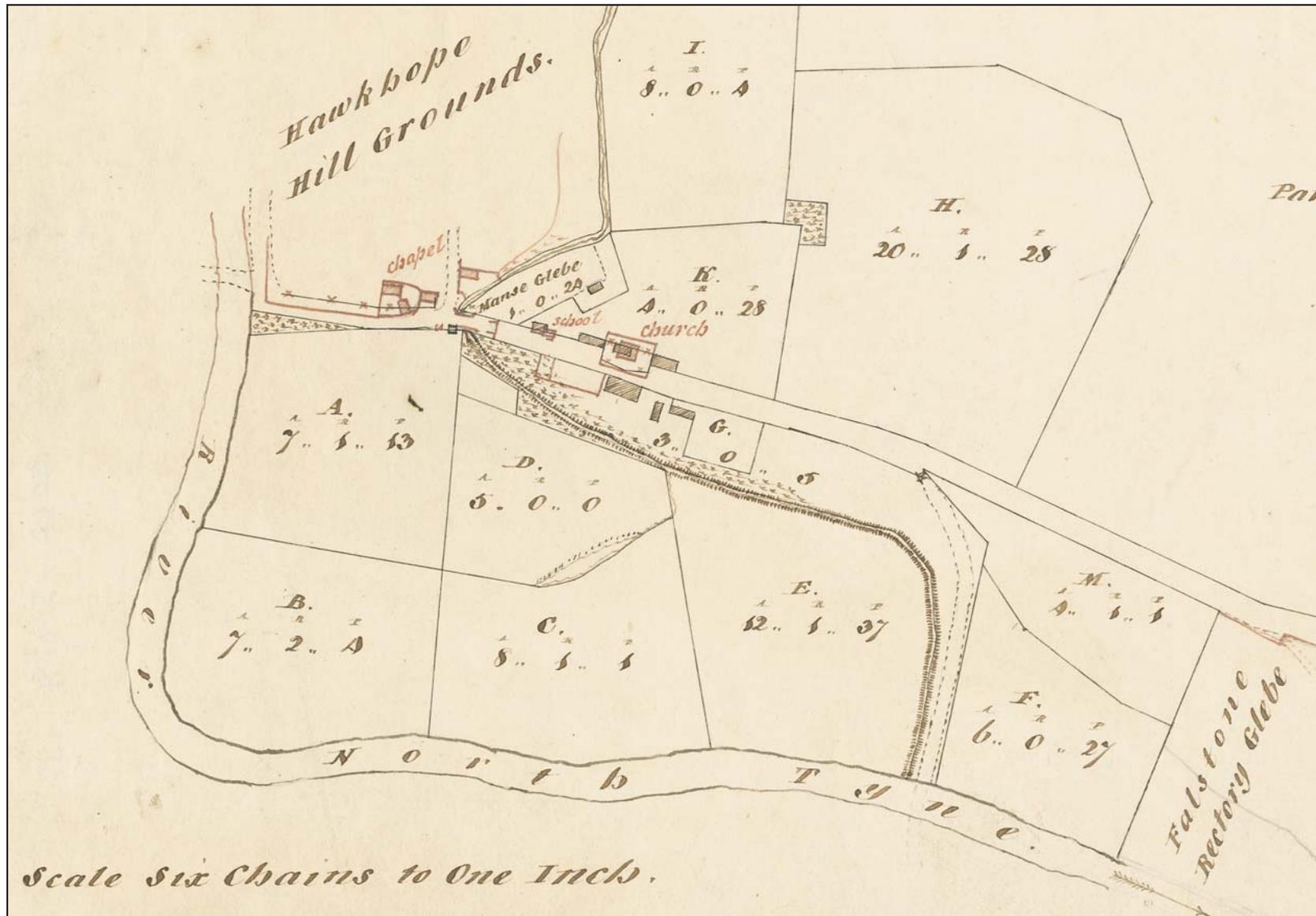
**N O R T H .**



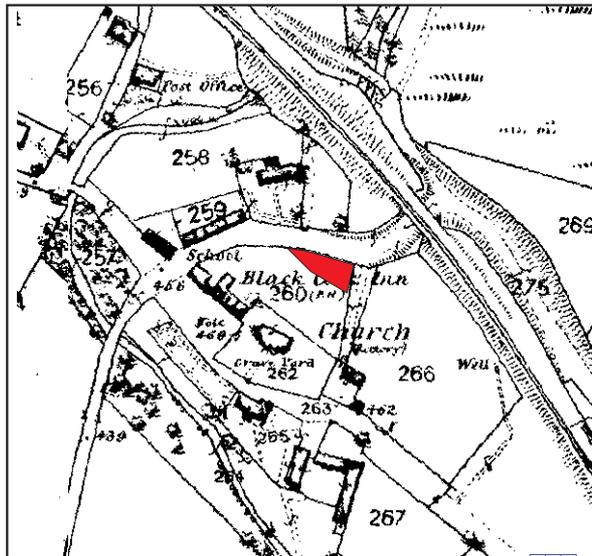
**ENLARGED PLAN OF  
FALLSTONE VILLAGE.**

*scale,*  
*Six Chains to One Inch.*

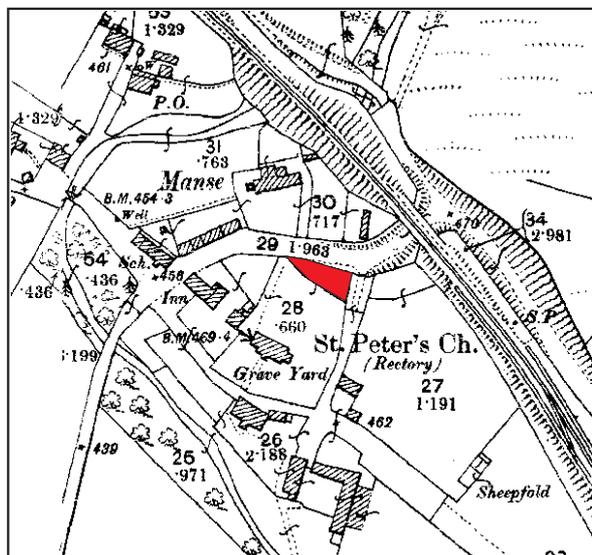
Illus. 06: Plashetts and Tynehead Tith Plan: detail of Falstone village (FAL\_M&D 004)



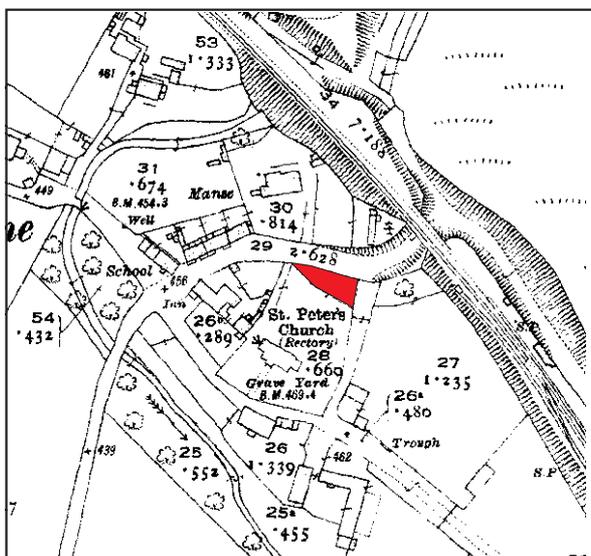
Illus. 05: Sketch plan of the boundary of Falstone Estate belonging to Thos. Robson Esq., Early 19th century (FAL\_M&D 019)



*Illus. 08: Extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey Plan of Falstone (surveyed c.1855)*



*Illus. 09: Extract from the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey Plan of Falstone (c.1898)*



*Illus. 10: Extract from the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey Plan of Falstone (c.1920)*

characterised by dispersed enclosed farmsteads, initially built of timber and later largely of stone, the remains of which survive in considerable numbers. The enclosures were predominantly rectilinear in plan and contained a number of round houses.

The distribution and form of early medieval settlement in upper North Tynedale is unclear. No historical or documentary sources explicitly refer to the valley before the 12<sup>th</sup> century and diagnostic settlement forms associated with this period have as yet proved archaeologically elusive. Falstone, with its finds of an early-medieval cross shaft fragments from St Peter's churchyard and Hroethberht's memorial stone (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century) uncovered just north west of the village, is clearly a crucial site from which to begin to resolve these interpretive problems, as a known point in a sea of uncertainty.

Falstone is first recorded in the form 'Foustan' (1317/18), 'Faustane' (1371) and 'the Fawestone' (1541). This is thought to signify the 'multicoloured' or 'speckled stone' and it has even been suggested that this may refer to a natural feature - a distinctive rock outcrop perhaps - which acquired a religious significance. A possible toponymic parallel for such a derivation is Holystone ('Halistane'), which occupies a comparable position in the upper reaches of its respective valley, Coquetdale, although no early medieval carved stonework has been found at that settlement unlike Falstone itself.

The documentary references to Falstone during the medieval period are extremely sparse and suggest Falstone was a religious focus for the surrounding district, but not necessarily an economic or administrative one. There is no reference to a medieval township or *vill* of Falstone,<sup>1</sup> nor to a manorial centre, in effect no indication that the settlement was any larger at this time than the other little hamlets and farmsteads which, then as now, dotted the valley above Bellingham. Falstone's real emergence as 'a proper village' came in more recent centuries.

Occasional documentary references (1318, 1541) suggest Falstone remained the site of a chapel throughout the medieval period. There is documentary evidence for the existence of an adjacent settlement by the later 14<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier but there is nothing to indicate that this was ever more than a hamlet, perhaps only one or two farmsteads, which formed part of the vast upland manor of Tarset.

In the later medieval period feudal overlordship in the valley weakened as the liberty of Tynedale passed through the hands of a rapid succession of absentee lords and we see the emergence of kinship-based social groups in the valley, the North Tynedale 'surnames'. These provided some measure of self protection in the disordered conditions which followed the onset of prolonged conflict between England and Scotland. Documentary evidence shows the Robsons, later the predominant surname in this part of the valley, were already established at Falstone the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover historical sources suggest the Robsons of Falstone were the senior 'grayne' or lineage of that surname, perhaps from the 14<sup>th</sup> century right through to the final dissolution of the kinship structure in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, making the settlement the seat of the heidsman as well as the religious focus of the upper valley.

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<sup>1</sup> Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (but no earlier) Falstone fell within the extensive township of 'Plashetts and Tynehead', which extended along the north side of the North Tyne, from Falstone right up to the head of the valley and the border with Scotland.

Falstone's importance as a religious centre for the upper end of North Tynedale was strongly reinforced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, following the rise of non-conformist worship, when it became a stronghold of Presbyterianism. The Presbyterian chapel enjoyed a greater following than any other denomination by some measure during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the efforts of the Church of England to counter the growth of non-conformism in the valley was also to lead to a modest revival in the Anglican worship and the infrastructure to accommodate it during the same period.

The townships documented in the Northumberland County History (e.g. 'Plashetts and Tynehead') were relatively late creations, established in 1729 to improve the administration of poor relief. Their introduction clearly constituted a significant territorial reorganisation. No medieval administrative villas, or townships, are documented above Thorneyburn, Tarsset and Chirdon, but permanent medieval settlements were present and must have organised territorial space and regulated access to communal resources such as common grazing. The names of the commons which were enclosed and divided up at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may provide the best clue to pattern of the pre-1729 township structure.

### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Groundworks for foundations and service provisions were based on plans supplied by the developer. The work was carried out on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007.

The works carried out on the Old Garage site involved the machine excavation of foundation trenches for the planned residential development. This work was observed by the archaeologist appointed to the project. A photographic record was made as the excavations progressed, and features of potential interest were examined more closely.

#### 3.1 Results of Investigation

The site was covered by a shallow and fragmentary deposit of disturbed topsoil, below which was a sub-soil of gravelly till. The remains of a pit associated with the garage, cut into the underlying sub-soil and infilled with darker fill, and fragmentary remains of chicken sheds which occupied the site following its disuse as a garage, were observed during the excavations, as well as a number of bottles of early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century origin, particularly at the west end of the site which had been used as a dump. However none of these features and finds amounted to remains of any cultural heritage significance.

### 4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No structures, features or deposits of any archaeological significance were revealed during the excavation of foundation trenches for a residential development at the Old Garage site in Falstone, North Tynedale.

Various modern structural remains associated with early 20<sup>th</sup> century waste disposal, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century garage and later chicken sheds were encountered during the excavation of the foundation trenches.

No recommendations are made with respect to the present development site, where construction work is to be completed in Summer 2007.



**Illus. 11:** View eastwards along the south foundation trench.



**Illus. 12:** View southwards of the east foundation trench under excavation.



**Illus. 13:** The remains of an inspection pit

## 5.0 REFERENCES

The Archaeological Practice, 2002, *Old Garage Site, Falstone: archaeological watching brief*. Unpublished document.

The Archaeological Practice Ltd., 2004, Falstone, Northumberland: an archaeological and historical study of a border village. Unpublished report for NNPA in the Village Atlas series.

## **6.0 OLD GARAGE SITE, FALSTONE: PROJECT DESIGN FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

The Archaeological Practice has been instructed to carry out an archaeological watching brief at the Old Garage Site in Falstone, Northumberland (NGR NY 724 874).

The aim of the watching brief is to record any significant archaeological remains before their removal or destruction during the course of development works.

Falstone probably has pre-conquest origins, but nothing is known about the precise nature or location of this putative early settlement (fragments of a ninth century cross found in the churchyard may derive from an early church there, but could have been imported). Similarly, no evidence for prehistoric or Roman occupation has been recorded, although the context of the village and finds in the wider vicinity indicate a high potential for remains of human activity from these periods on the site.

### **6.1 EXECUTION OF THE SCHEME**

**6.1.1.** The Developer will appoint a professionally competent Archaeological Contractor, on terms to be agreed between the Developer and the Archaeological Contractor, to execute the scheme of archaeological work as set out in this document.

**6.1.2.** All work will be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and should follow the IFA Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations, Excavations or Watching Briefs as appropriate.

**6.1.3.** All archaeological staff will be suitably qualified and experienced for their project roles and will familiarise themselves with the results of any previous assessment of the site prior to the start of work on site. All staff must be aware of the work required under the specification and they will understand the aims and methodologies of the project

**6.1.4.** The Developer will allow all the appointed Archaeological Contractors full access to the site in order to fulfill their commissions, subject only to safety requirements.

**6.1.5.** The Developer will allow the National Park Archaeologist all reasonable access to the site for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological scheme, subject only to safety requirements.

**6.1.6.** The archaeological consultant appointed to manage the execution of the scheme shall ensure that:

*i.* the appropriate parties are informed of the objectives, timetable and progress of the archaeological work

*ii.* the progress of the work is adequately and effectively monitored and the results of this are communicated to the appropriate parties.

*iii.* significant problems in the execution of the scheme are communicated at the earliest opportunity to the appropriate parties in order to effect a resolution of the problems.

**6.2.7.** The archaeological consultant appointed to manage the execution of the scheme will carry, and will ensure that other archaeological contractors involved in the scheme carry, appropriate levels of insurance cover in respect of Employers Liability, Public and Third Party Liability, Professional Indemnity.

**6.2.8.** The archaeological consultant appointed to manage the execution of the scheme will liaise with the appointed CDM Planning Supervisor and prepare or arrange for the preparation of a Safety Plan for the archaeological work.

**6.2.9.** The archaeological consultant appointed to manage the execution of the scheme will prepare an estimate of the cost of executing the scheme in consultation with the Developer and appropriate specialist advisors. Maximum contingency sums will be identified for certain parts of the post-excitation work. These estimates will be used as a baseline from which to assess the tenders received to execute the scheme.

## **6.2 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY**

### **6.2.1 Watching Brief**

*All sections and deposits exposed during trenching will be systematically examined to locate, excavate, sample and record previously unidentified archaeological features which may survive within the site and are at threat from development works.*

*Should any archaeological features be identified, sufficient time will be allowed to sample, fully excavate or record these features within practicable operational parameters.*

*Should additional staff members be deemed necessary by the archaeological contractor to excavate and record revealed archaeological features, this would be in agreement with the developer and the planning authority.*

*Drawings, photography and written records of discrete features, where deemed necessary, will be sufficient to allow interpretation of the material and the preparation of a report on the site. The location of all photographs must appear on a plan base.*

### **6.2.2 Recording**

A full and proper record (written, graphic and photographic, as appropriate) will be made for all work, using pro-forma record sheets and text descriptions appropriate to the work. Written descriptions should comprise both factual data and interpretative elements. Accurate scale plans and section drawings will be drawn at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 scales as appropriate. Sections should normally be accurately related to Ordnance Datum.

The stratigraphy of trenches will be recorded even when no archaeological deposits have been identified.

Where stratified deposits are encountered, a 'Harris' matrix will be compiled.

The site grid will be accurately tied into the National Grid and located on a 1:1250 or 1:500 map of the area.

A photographic record of all contexts will be taken in colour transparency and black and white print and will include a clearly visible, graduated metric scale. A register of all photographs will be kept.

### **6.2.3 Finds Processing**

All processing, storage and conservation of finds will be carried out in compliance with the relevant IFA and UKIC (United Kingdom Institute of Conservation) guidelines.

Artefact collection and discard policies must be fit for the defined purpose.

Finds will be scanned to assess the date range of the assemblage with particular reference to pottery. Artefacts will be used to establish the potential for all categories of finds, should further archaeological work be necessary.

All bulk finds which are not discarded must be washed and, with the exception of animal bone, marked. Marking and labelling must be indelible and irremovable by abrasion. Bulk finds must be appropriately bagged and boxed and recorded. This process must be carried out no later than two months after the end of the excavation.

All small finds must be recorded as individual items. All small finds must be appropriately packaged. Vulnerable objects must be specially packaged, and textiles, painted glass and coins stored in appropriate specialist systems. This process must be carried out within two days of the small find being excavated.

Assessment and analysis of artefacts and environmental samples must be carried out by an approved, named specialist.

The deposition and disposal of artefacts must be agreed with the legal owner and recipient museum prior to the work taking place. Where the landowner decides to retain artefacts, adequate provision must be made for recording them.

During and after the excavation and watching brief, all objects must be stored in the appropriate materials and storage conditions to ensure minimal deterioration and loss of information (this should include controlled storage, correct packaging, regular monitoring of conditions, immediate selection for conservation of vulnerable material). All storage must have appropriate security provision.

### **6.2.4 Production of Site Archive**

The site archive will be prepared to the standard specified in MAP 2 and in accordance with the UKIC guidelines. This should include the indexing, ordering, quantification and checking for consistency of all original context records, object records, bulk finds records, sample records, skeleton records (if recovered), photographic records, drawing records, photographs, drawings, level books, site note-books, spot dating records, and conservation records. Ensuring that all artefacts and ecofacts recovered and retained from the site are packed and stored in the appropriate materials and conditions and that all their associated records are complete. This will be completed by the end of the field work. A summary account of the context record will be included and written by the supervising archaeologist.

The archive will be submitted to the County SMR within 6 months of the end of the fieldwork. The location of artefacts must be stated in the archive.

### **6.2.5 Production of Final Report**

The report will be bound, with each page and paragraph numbered. It should include as a minimum the following:

A summary statement of methodologies used.

A location plan of the site. A general location plan of all trenches, fieldwalking grids etc.

Plans and sections of all features excavated.

A summary statement of results.

A table summarising the deposits, features, classes and numbers of artefacts encountered and spot dating of significant finds.

Conclusions

Recommendations

Copies of the report will be provided within two months of the completion of fieldwork to the developer, the NNPA archaeologist, the SMR officer at Northumberland County Council (Conservation Team). An additional report will be lodged with Morpeth Library.

### **6.2.6 Publication of Results of Archaeological Works**

The contractor will, at the request of the NNPA archaeologist, prepare a summary of the results of the investigation for publication in an agreed journal.