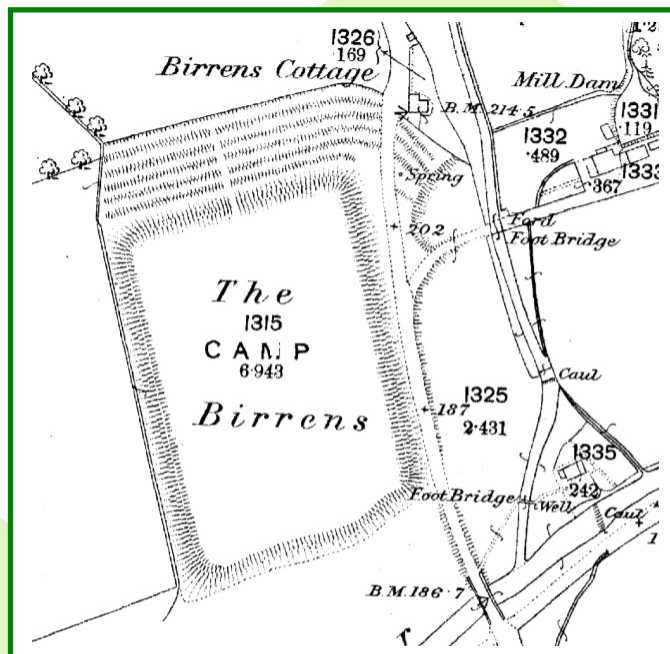




**Rebecca Shaw Archaeological Services**

**Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan,  
Dumfries & Galloway:  
Archaeological Monitoring Works**



**Data Structure Report  
by Rebecca Shaw  
16<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr & Mrs Wilson for their kind hospitality during the on site works - especially the chilli cheese scones made by Monica! and much appreciation also to Paul Morris for his efficient machining works. Thanks also to Dumfries & Galloway Council Archaeology Service for provision of a map of the scheduled area and to staff from HES for making a site visit during the excavation works.

## 1 Introduction

This data structure report presents the findings of a programme of archaeological undertaken in respect of proposed works at Birrens Cottage, located near Ecclefechan in Dumfries & Galloway (NGR: NY 21816 75066) (Figure 1). The proposed works comprised an extension to the existing Birrens Cottage planning application no) (18/0315/FUL) (Figures 2 & 3a-b).

Archaeological works were required as the proposed works were to be undertaken within an area recognised as being of national importance and designated as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) relating to Birrens to Broadlee, Roman forts, camps & henge (SM666; HER ref MDG7432). The monument comprises the upstanding remains of a fort and later enclosures, visible as a series of turf and stone banks and ditches and likely to date to the later prehistoric period (Figure 4).

As the proposed extension had the potential to affect any surviving sub-surface archaeological features or deposits of national significance, archaeological works were required to ensure that any impacts upon the scheduled monument were minimised and that archaeological information is recovered and recorded to a satisfactory standard. As the works will involve disturbance within the scheduled area, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was required from Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

The proposed works comprised the excavation of three foundation trenches (Figures 6b & 8). The monitoring works indicated a fairly sterile silted topsoil above a clean silted clayey or gravelly subsoil. No significant archaeological deposits or finds were noted during the course of the monitoring works.

Rebecca Shaw Archaeological Services was appointed to act with regard to the archaeological condition by Monica Wilson.

## 2 Project Works

The archaeological monitoring works were undertaken at Birrens Cottage on the 22nd May 2019. The works were undertaken as agreed with Historic Environment Scotland through an SMC application and a written scheme of investigation (9th November 2018). A further written scheme of investigation was also agreed with Dumfries & Galloway Council Archaeology Service (Shaw, 18th November 2018).

Although the original works comprised an extension the length of the northern elevation, it was established when on site that the footprint of the proposed development had been reduced in size and now only comprised the eastern half of the northern extension (Figure 8b).

All works complied with the Chartered Institute for Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct, and Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statements.

## 3 Findings

Prior to commencement of on site works the existing structure (utility room) had been removed to floor level (Figure 6a).

Foundation trench A was aligned N / S and measured 5.9m x 0.6m in (approx) and was excavated to a depth of between 350mm (S end) to 600mm (N end) (Figures 7a & 7c). Foundation trench B was aligned E / W and measured 5.3m x 0.6m (approx) and was excavated to depth of between 400mm (W end) and 600mm (E end) (Figures 7b & 7d). In both trenches A & B, below the existing gravel, the topsoil comprised a mid to dark brown gritty silt [102] averaging 300mm in depth - a single sherd of 20th century china was recovered from trench A. The subsoil varied between a bright red silty clay [103] and a reddish brown gravelly silt with frequent stones [104] in trench A and a bright red very compact silted boulder clay [105] in trench B. Trench C was aligned N / S and measured 1m x 0.6m and was excavated to a depth of

400mm (approx) (Figure 8a). Below the gravel the topsoil comprised a mid brown dirty silt containing a moderate to frequent amount of small stones [101] averaging 250mm in depth. The subsoil in trench C comprised a bright red very compact silted boulder clay [105].

## 4 Discussion

Early sound cartographic sources depict remains of banks and ditches relating to Birrens Roman Fort within the southern garden area of Birrens Cottage (Figures 5b & 5c) and although the banks and ditches are probably less prominent today than in the nineteenth century, they are still visible.

The archaeological monitoring works for the proposed extension revealed a fairly sterile topsoil with a single sherd of 20th century china [101] [102] above either a silty clay [103]; gravelly silt with frequent stones [104] or a compact boulder clay [105] (Figures 7a-d & 8a). Trench A did exhibit some disturbance from a services pipe as well as from the foundation trench for the existing cottage (Figure 7a). The depth of topsoil from the south to north end of trench A and from the west to east end of trench B indicated the ground sloped from east to west and the ground had been levelled at some point - probably when the cottage and / or subsequent extensions were built.

This therefore suggests that when the fort was occupied this area was probably sloped ground and therefore an unlikely location for fire pits / ovens or other significant features. However, although there was a chance that unstratified finds (such as pottery; leather; coins etc) could have been recovered only one sherd of 20th century china was observed. This perhaps signifies the ground may have been cleared to the natural previously, possibly when the cottage was built and a topsoil bought in from elsewhere to level the ground.

## 5 Conclusion

A programme of archaeological works was undertaken on the 22nd May 2019 in respect of proposed development works at Birrens Cottage near Ecclefechan in Dumfries & Galloway. The works comprised monitoring of excavation foundation trenches in relation to a small extension to the north of the existing cottage.

In general the monitored excavations revealed a relatively sterile topsoil above an undisturbed fairly compact subsoil. Given the close proximity of the banks & ditches to the cottage there was potential to uncover archaeological features or finds relating to the occupation and use of Birrens Roman fort. However, no archaeological remains that pre dated the 19th century were uncovered during the course of the monitoring works.

Data Structure Report - Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan

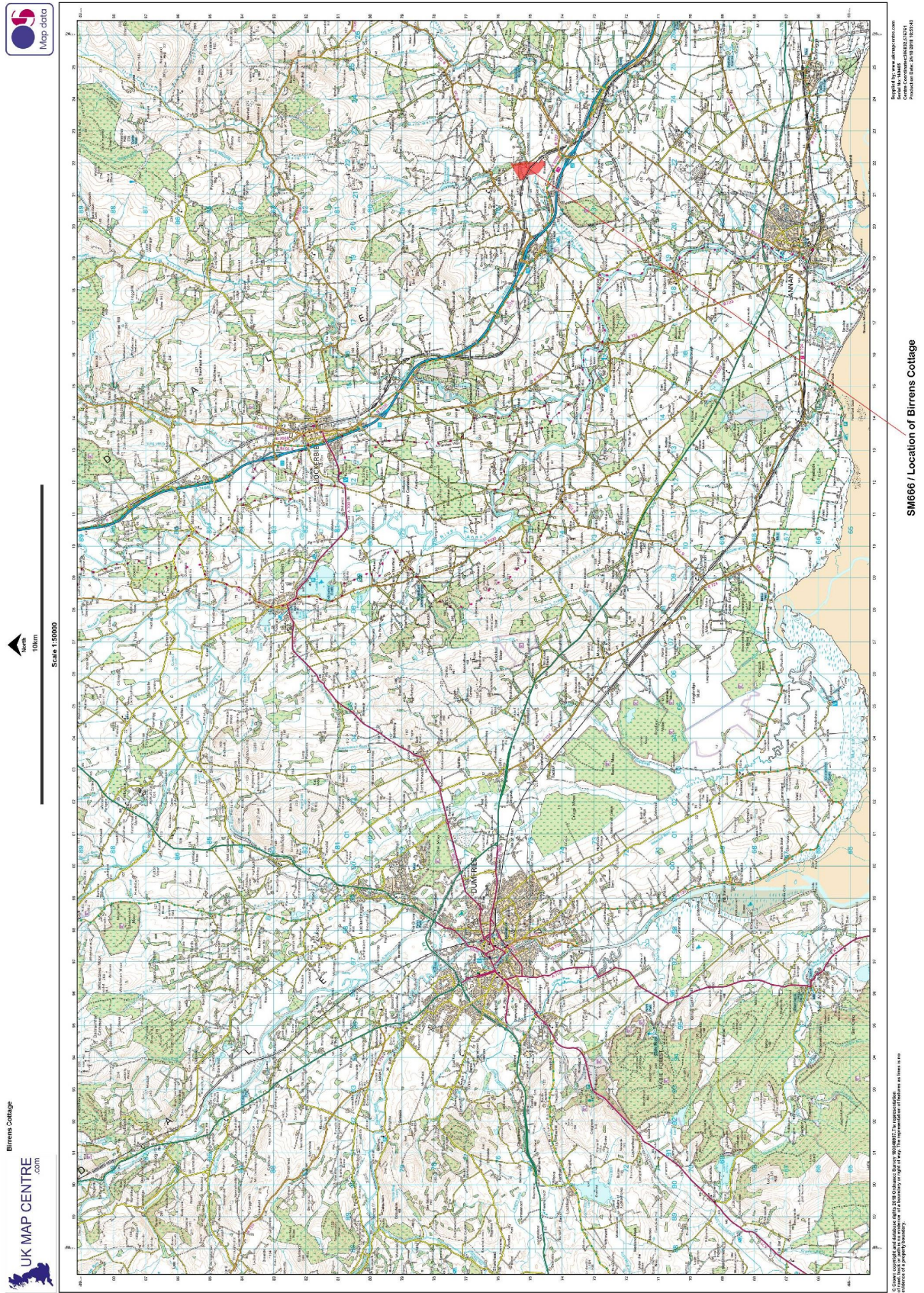
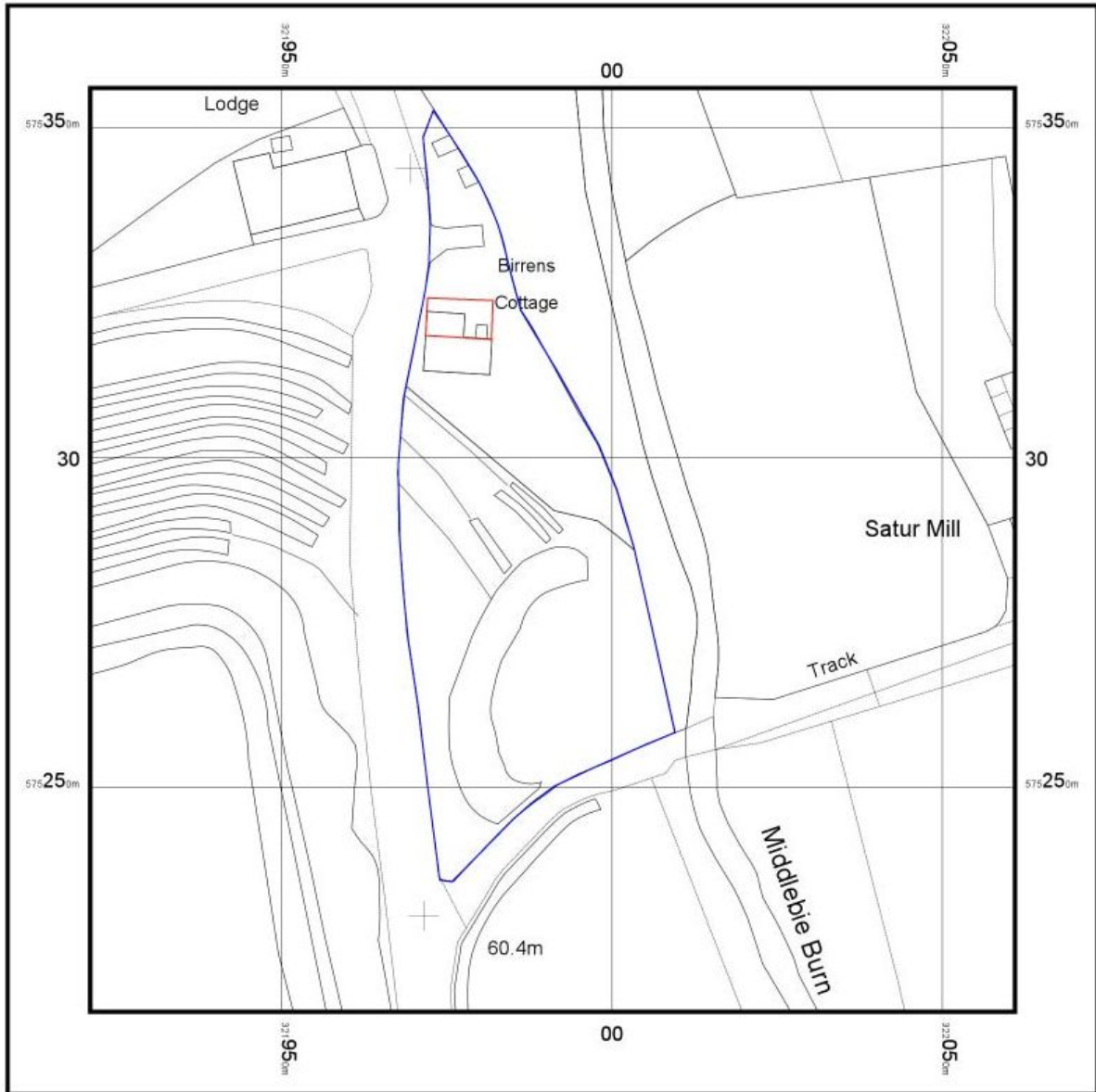



Figure 1 – location map



© Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100048957. Therepresentation of road, track or path is no evidence of a boundary or right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.

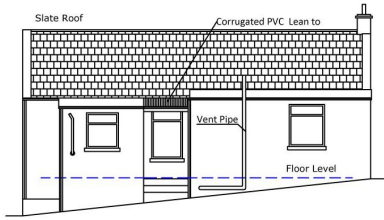
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Serial No: 149407  
Centre Coordinates: 321991, 575286  
Production Date: 24/10/2018 11:15:39

-  LAND OWNED BY MR & MRS WILSON
-  PROPOSED EXTENSION AREA

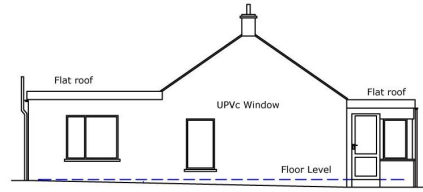
**25m**  
  
**Scale 1:1250**

Figure 2 – map showing the area within which archaeological monitoring and excavations will be undertaken (outlined in red)

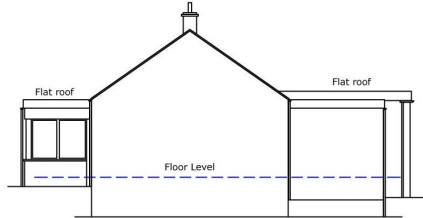
Data Structure Report - Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan



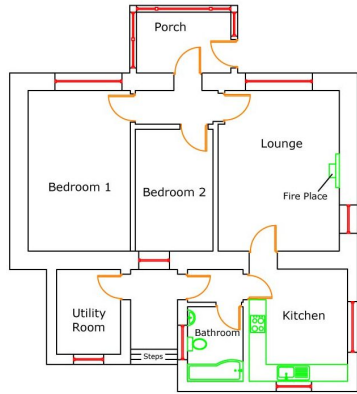
North Elevation



West Elevation



East Elevation



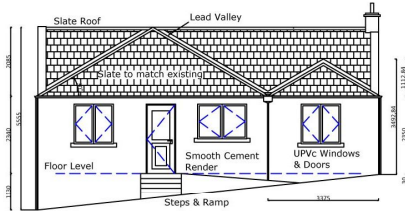
Floor Plan

Existing Plan and Elevations  
Scale 1:100

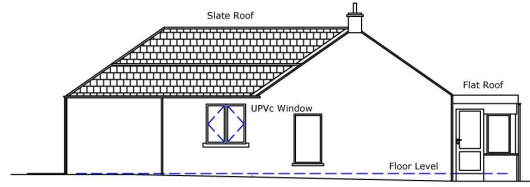
**Plan B** Building Architectural Consultant  
14 High Street Lockerbie Phone 07719347736

Drawing by Leigh Chambers  
Proposed: Extension and Alterations  
Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan, DG11 3LH  
For: Mr & Mrs A Wilson  
Drawing 1P 02/03/2018

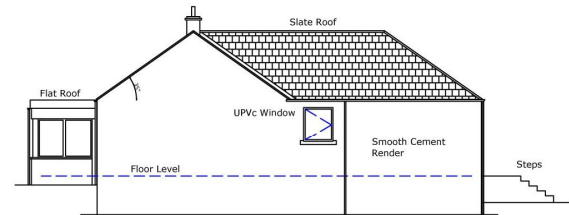
Figure 3a – existing plan & elevations (kindly provided by Monica Wilson)



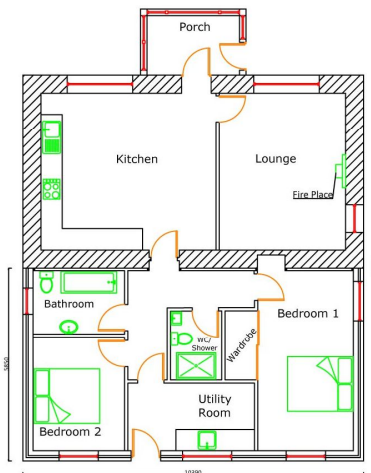
North Elevation



West Elevation



East Elevation



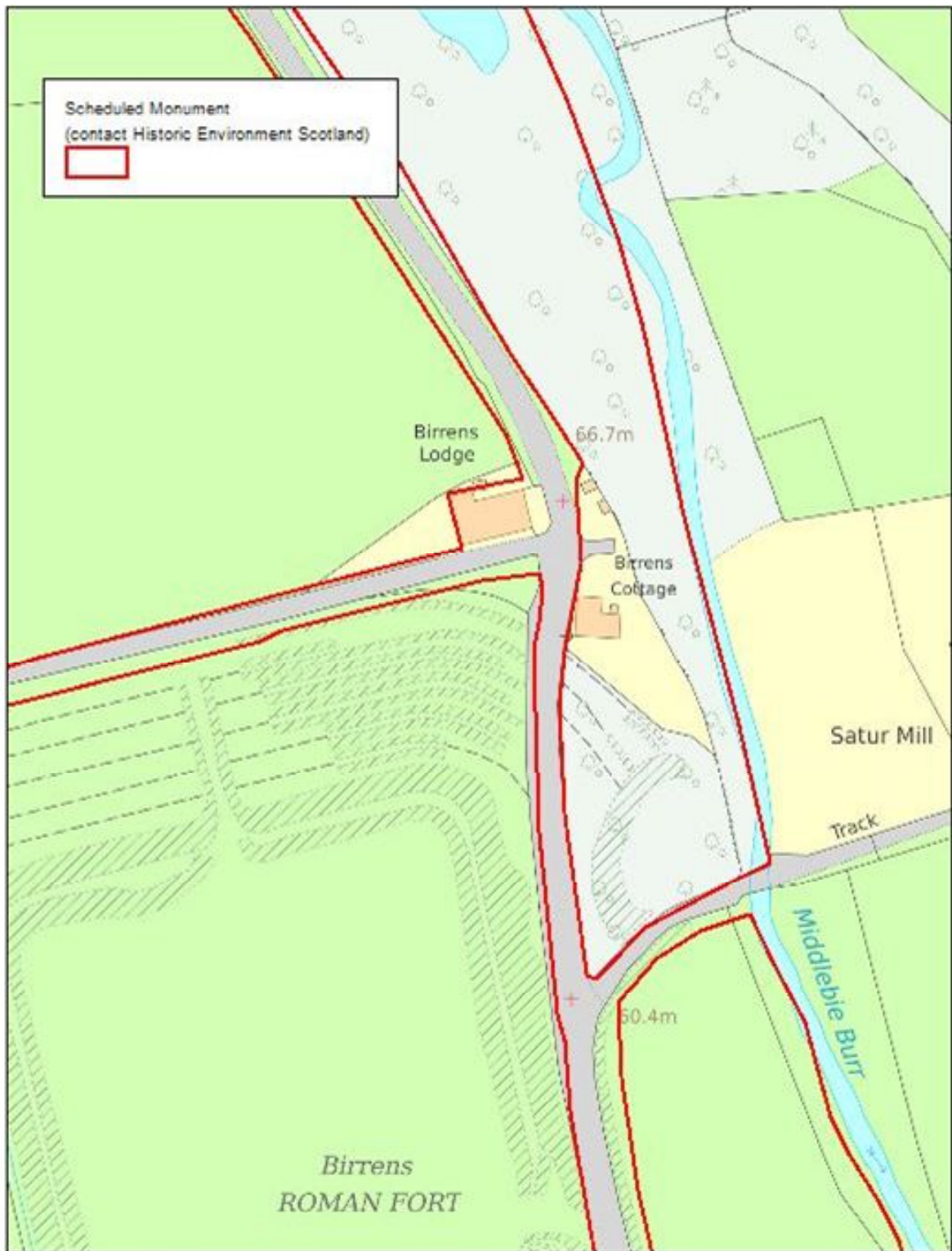
Floor Plan

Proposed Plan and Elevations  
Scale 1:100

**Plan B** Building Architectural Consultant  
14 High Street Lockerbie Phone 07719347736

Drawing by Leigh Chambers  
Proposed: Extension and Alterations  
Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan, DG11 3LH  
For: Mr & Mrs A Wilson  
Drawing 4p (Prop) 19/03/2018

Figure 3b – proposed plan & elevations (kindly provided by Monica Wilson)



**Birrens Cottage: Indicative extent of scheduled area**

Figure 4 – map showing extent of scheduled area in regard to Birrens Cottage (kindly provided by Dumfries & Galloway Council Archaeologist)





Figure 5a - Roys Military Survey Map of Scotland (1747-55)

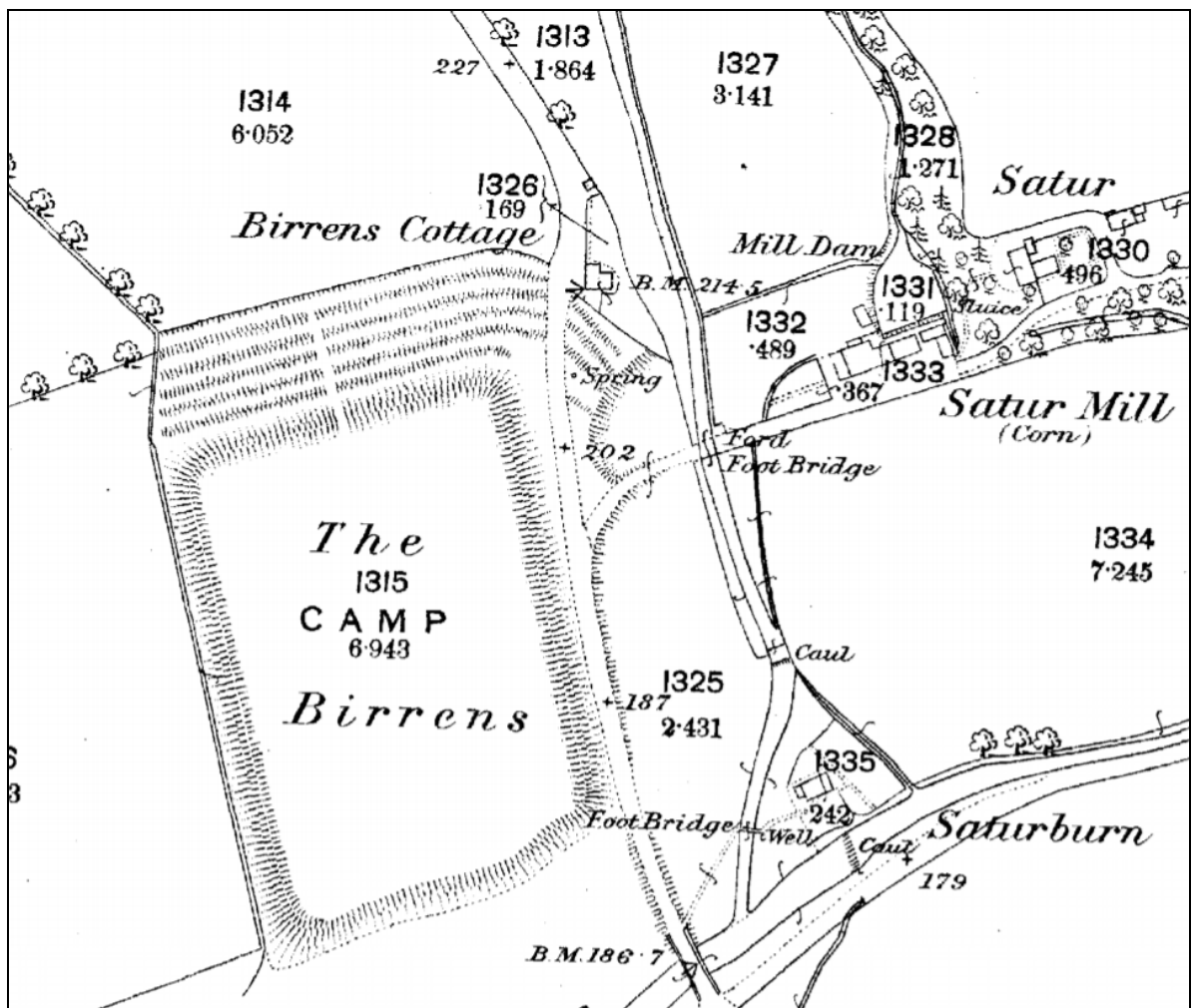


Figure 5b – 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500 (1858) © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group – not to be reproduced without permission (912739984)

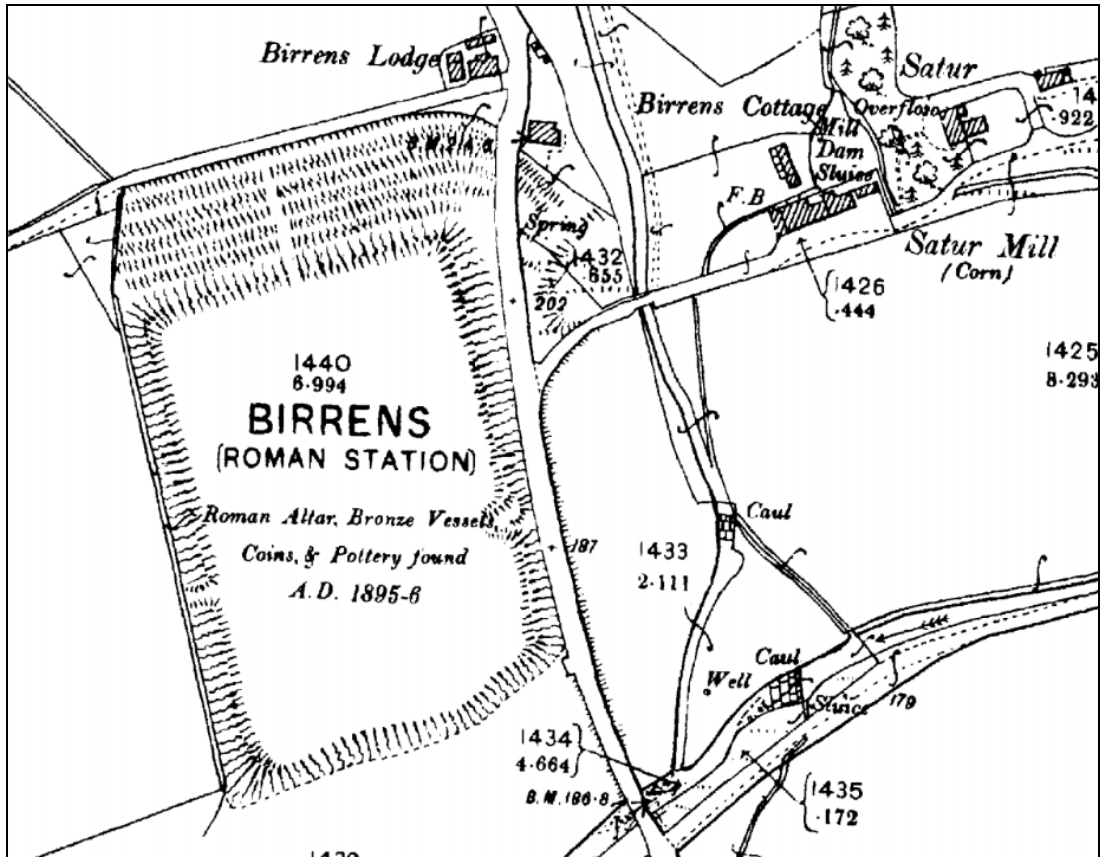


Figure 5c – 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500 (1899) © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group – not to be reproduced without permission (12739984)

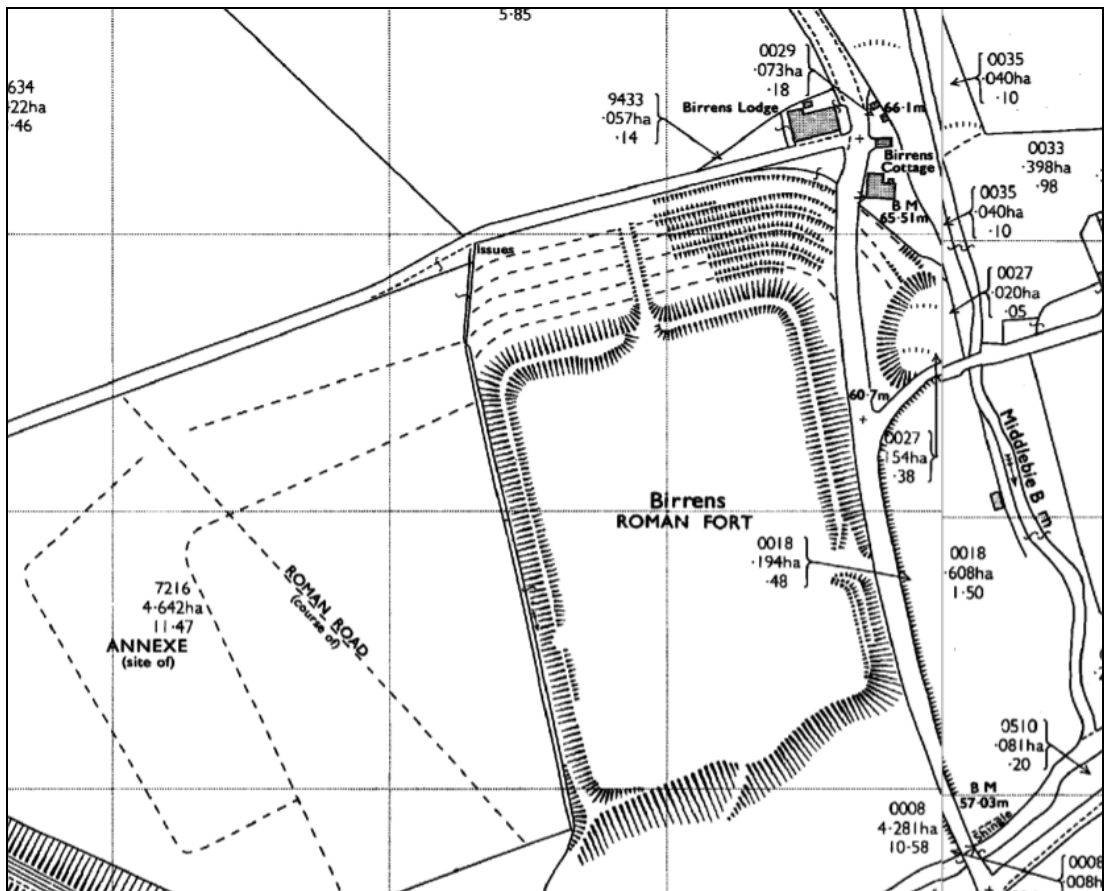


Figure 5d - Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500 (1971) © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group – not to be reproduced without permission (12739984)



Figure 6a – general pre-ex of proposed extension area after partial ground reduction (from N)



Figure 6b – general pre-ex of proposed extension area after partial ground reduction (from N)



Figure 7a - post-ex of foundation trench A (from N)



Figure 7b - post-ex of foundation trench B (From E)



Figure 7c - northeast corner of foundation trenches (from N)



Figure 7d - northeast corner of foundation trenches (From E)



Figure 8a - post-ex of foundation trench C (from N)

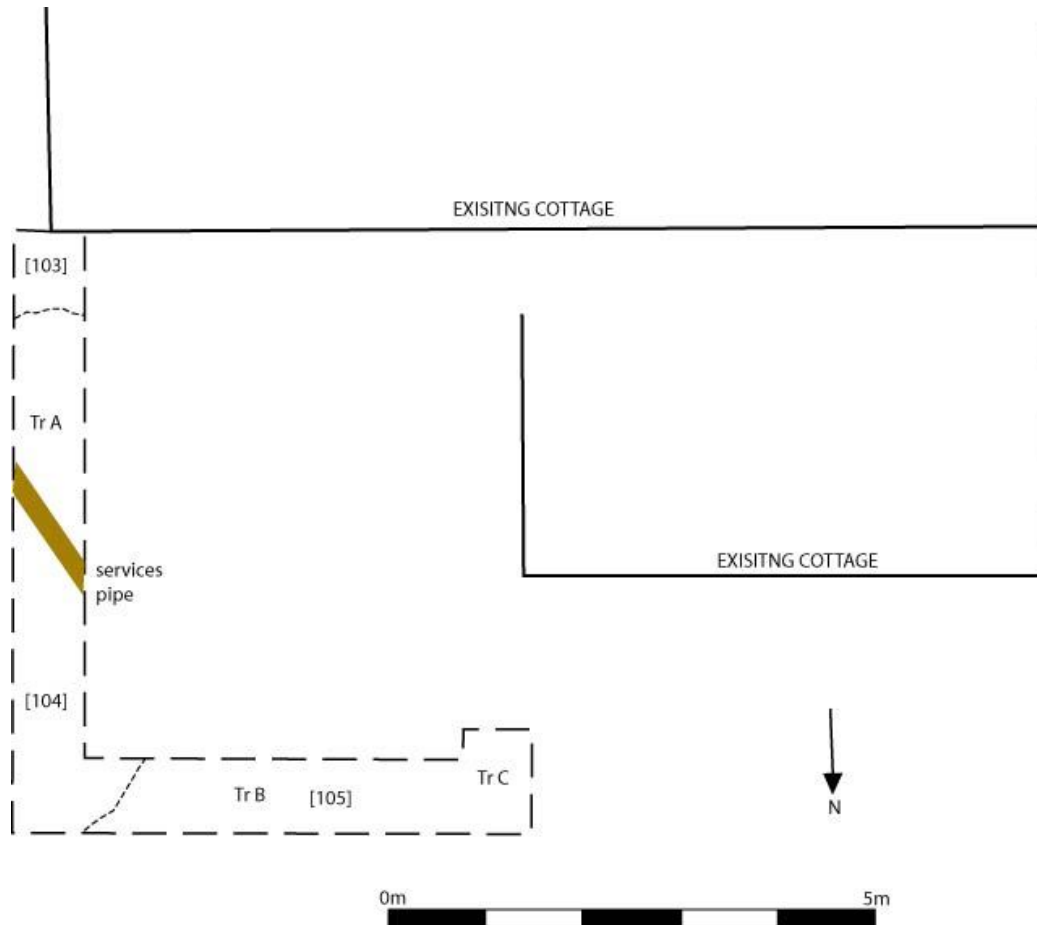


Figure 8b – post-ex plan showing excavated foundation trenches

## References

### *Documentary* SOEn

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 2010 | Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). <i>Archaeology</i> , Scottish Office Environmental Department. |
| 2011 | <i>PAN 2/2011</i> , Planning & Archaeology Scottish Office Environmental Department.           |
| 2016 | Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016                                       |

### *Cartographic* Roy

- |         |                                       |
|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 1747-55 | Military Survey Map of Scotland       |
| 1858    | 1st Ed OS Map, Dumfriesshire (1:2500) |
| 1899    | 2nd Ed OS Map, Dumfriesshire (1:2500) |
| 1971    | OS Map, Dumfriesshire (1:2500)        |
| 2018    | Ordnance Survey (1:250)               |

## Appendix 1: Record Summaries

*Context Summaries*

No.	Interpretation	Description
101	Topsoil	Mid brown dirty silt containing a moderate to frequent amount of small stones, depth of 250mm
102	Topsoil	Mid to dark brown gritty silt, averages 300mm in depth
103	Subsoil	Bright red silty clay
104	Subsoil	Reddish brown gravelly silt with frequent stones
105	Subsoil	Bright red very compact silted boulder clay

*Photographic Record*

N o.	Disc No.	Print No.	Description	From	Date
1	1	1	General pre-ex of proposed extension area	N	22/05/19
2	1	2	Post-ex of trench A	N	22/05/19
3	1	3	Post-ex of trench B	E	22/05/19
4	1	4	Post-ex of trench C	N	22/05/19
5	1	5	General post-ex of proposed extension area	N	22/05/19
6	1	6	Post-ex of northeast corner	N	22/05/19
7	1	7	Post-ex of northeast corner	E	22/05/19

## Appendix 2: Discovery &amp; Excavation in Scotland

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Dumfries & Galloway Council
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Birrens Cottage
<b>PARISH:</b>	Middlebie
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Rebecca Shaw
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Rebecca Shaw Archaeological Services
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Archaeological monitoring works
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	None
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	None
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 10 figures)</b>	NY 21816 75066
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	22nd May 2019
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	22nd May 2019
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	None
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None

Data Structure Report - Birrens Cottage, Ecclefechan

<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>	<p>A programme of archaeological works was undertaken on the 22nd May 2019 in respect of proposed development works at Birrens Cottage near Ecclefechan in Dumfries &amp; Galloway. The works comprised monitoring of excavation foundation trenches in relation to a small extension to the north of the existing cottage.</p> <p>In general the monitored excavations revealed a relatively sterile topsoil above an undisturbed fairly compact subsoil. Given the close proximity of the banks &amp; ditches to the cottage there was potential to uncover archaeological features or finds relating to the occupation and use of Birrens Roman fort. However, no archaeological remains that pre dated the 19th century were uncovered during the course of the monitoring works.</p>
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	018012
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Monica Wilson
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	9 Earl Place, Ranfurly, Bridge of Weir, PA11 3HA
<b>E MAIL:</b>	rebeccashaw@archaeologist.com
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended)	Report to Dumfries & Galloway Council Sites and Monuments Record and archive to Historic Environment Scotland Archives.



## Contact Details

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