

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT HOUSESTEADS  
ROMAN FORT VISITOR FACILITY, BARDON MILL,  
NORTHUMBERLAND**

**JULY 2014**

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**PRE-CONSTRUCT ARCHAEOLOGY**

**DOCUMENT VERIFICATION**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT  
HOUSESTEADS ROMAN FORT VISITOR FACILITY,  
BARDON MILL, NORTHUMBERLAND**

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**Archaeological Investigations at Housesteads Roman Fort Visitor Facility,  
Bardon Mill, Northumberland**

**Central National Grid Reference: NY 7937 6840 and NY 7887 6862**

**Site Code: HVC 12 and HVC 14**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Lists of Figures and Plates</b>		<i>page</i>
<b>1.</b>	<b>NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
2.1	General Background	2
2.2	Site Location and Description	6
2.3	Geology and Topography	6
2.4	Planning Background	6
2.5	Archaeological and Historical Background	7
<b>3.</b>	<b>PROJECT AIMS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</b>	
3.1	Project Aims	10
3.2	Specific Conservation Management Research Aims	10
3.3	Research Objectives	11
<b>4.</b>	<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY</b>	
4.1	Watching Brief at Visitor Facility	13
4.2	Trial Trench at Housesteads Farm Car Park	14
4.2	Post-excavation	14
<b>5.</b>	<b>RESULTS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
6.1	Conclusions	20
6.2	Recommendations	21
<b>7.</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS</b>	<b>23</b>

### Appendices

- Appendix 1 Finds Index
- Appendix 2 Plates

## List of Figures

	<i>page</i>
Figure 1 Site Location	3
Figure 2 Watching Brief Trench Location	4
Figure 3 Evaluation Trench Location	5
Figure 4 Evaluation Trench Plan	18
Figure 5 Sections 1 & 2	19

## List of Plates (Appendix 2)

Plate 1	Working shot showing excavation of evaluation trench, looking north-east
Plate 2	Evaluation trench with masonry and tumble as exposed, looking south
Plate 3	Evaluation trench fully excavated showing south-east facing section and wall [1], looking north
Plate 4	Evaluation trench fully excavated with wall [1] to east, looking north-west

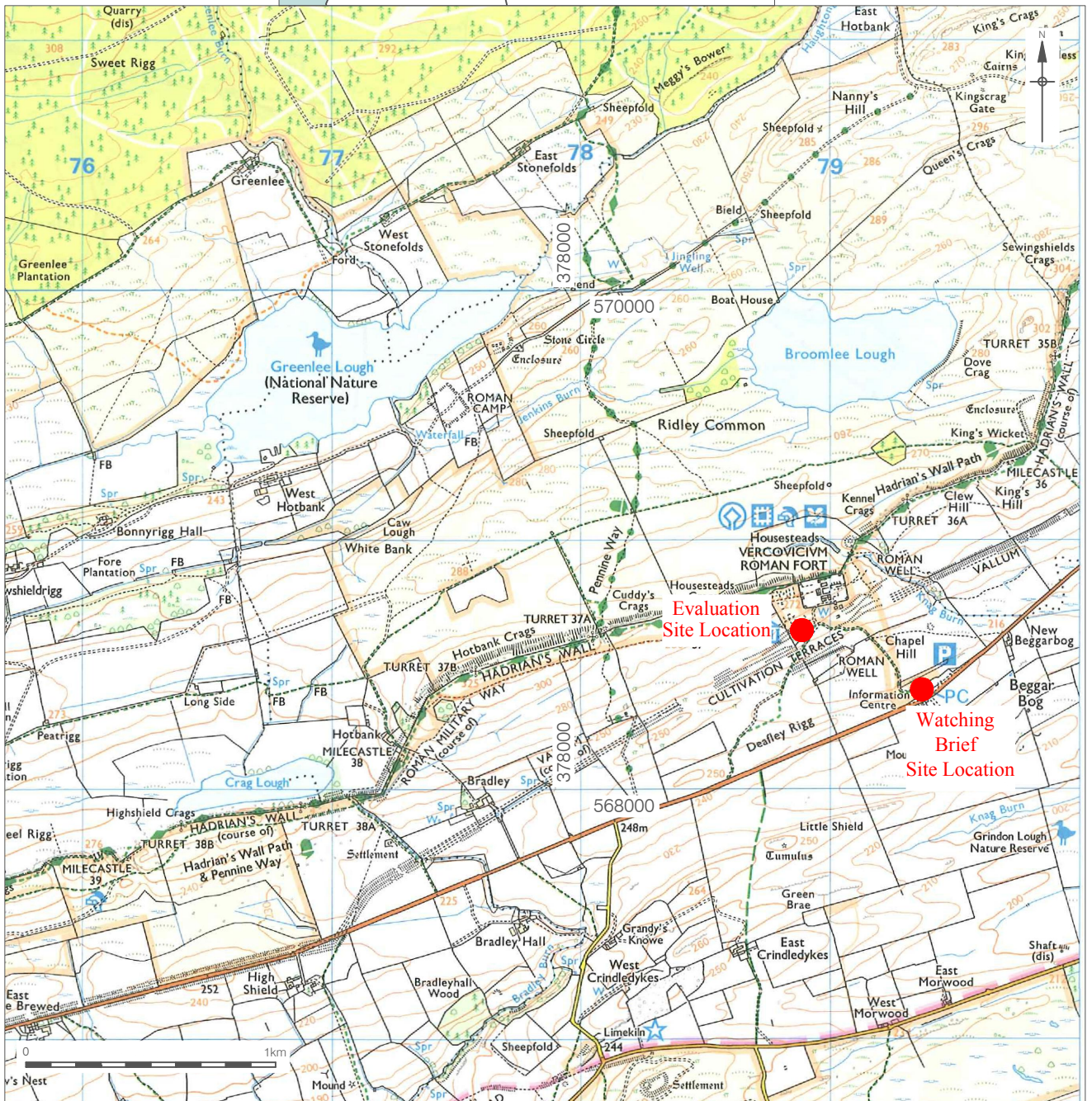
## **1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A programme of archaeological investigation comprising a watching brief and a single evaluation trench was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited ahead of alterations and extensions to the visitor facilities at Housesteads Roman Fort, Bardon Mill, Northumberland. The fieldwork was undertaken intermittently between November 2012 and January 2014 and was commissioned by the National Trust.
- 1.2 The existing visitor reception buildings at Housesteads Roman fort are located below Chapel Hill, on the north side of the B6318, at National Grid Reference NY 7937 6840. Housesteads Farm and the adjacent museum lie on higher ground to the north-west, towards Housesteads Crags, at National Grid Reference NY 7887 6862.
- 1.3 The site lies within a scheduled section of the Hadrian's Wall corridor and within the transnational 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire' World Heritage Site. The work was required as both a planning condition and as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent on the advice of English Heritage. There are two distinct components of the redevelopment scheme. The first involved renovations to the existing Roman fort visitor reception building and external access areas, which lie adjacent to the B6318. The second involved improvements to the nearby museum at Housesteads Farm in the form of additional car parking. The principle aim of the work was to mitigate for any unavoidable impacts on significant Roman period archaeological deposits below current structures. At both locations invasive groundworks were unavoidable and archaeological investigation was therefore required.
- 1.4 The first phase of work was a watching brief undertaken during groundworks at the visitor reception building. This comprised ground reduction across the interior floor surfaces within the reception building and ancillary building which houses the toilet block. A series of small intrusions related to drainage and refurbishment within the toilet block and surrounding courtyard and grounds were also subject to an archaeological watching brief. No deposits of archaeological significance were encountered during this work. The foundations of the existing building were uncovered along with levelling dumps for the interior floor surface.
- 1.5 A single evaluation trench which measured 2.50m by 1.60m was investigated at Housesteads Farm where a new 5m length of retaining wall was to be constructed. This was located adjacent to a modern barn which adjoins Housesteads Farm. A developed soil horizon of unknown date was revealed at a depth of c. 0.75m below present ground level which was truncated by a cut feature, possibly a pit, partially exposed within the limits of the trench. The pit had been truncated by the construction cut for a north-south aligned stone wall with an east-west return in the northern part of the trench. The backfill of the construction cut contained fragments of residual Roman pottery and modern glass. Between the two walls was a flagstone floor surface. An overlying rubble deposit, which is interpreted as representing demolition material from the structure, contained a stamped brick of 20th-century date. These structural remains are interpreted as forming the north-western corner of a barn or farm outbuilding which predates the corrugated iron barn which now stands in this area. The rubble was overlain by a levelling deposit which contained fragments of glazed ceramic drain pipes. This had been truncated by the construction cut for the extant barn.
- 1.6 As no deposits of archaeological significance were encountered within the evaluation trench, construction of the retaining wall was able to proceed as designed in the redevelopment scheme.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 General Background**

- 2.1.1 This report describes the methodology and results of archaeological investigations undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) intermittently between November 2012 and January 2014 at Housesteads Roman Fort, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 6NN. The work was commissioned by the National Trust.
- 2.1.2 A phased programme of archaeological investigations was carried out prior to the proposed redevelopment of both the visitor reception facility and the Housesteads Farm museum car park (Figure 1). The redevelopment work comprises two elements: the first involved renovations to the existing Roman fort visitor reception building and external access areas, which lie adjacent to the B6318 (Figure 2); the second involved improvements to the nearby museum at Housesteads Farm, located to the south-west of the Roman fort, in the form of additional car parking (Figure 3).
- 2.1.3 Both areas lie within the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Housesteads fort, section of Wall and vallum between the field boundary west of milecastle 36 and the field boundary west of turret 37a in wall miles 36 and 37 (SAM 1018585).
- 2.1.4 The National Trust was advised by the Northumberland Nation Park Authority (NNPA) and English Heritage (EH) that an historic environment desk-based assessment (DBA) should be compiled in order to inform an archaeological evaluation as part of the pre-application stage for the proposed redevelopment at Housesteads Roman fort. Both the DBA and the initial evaluation were conducted by ARS in June and July 2012, respectively (Cockburn and Scott 2012). This initial phase of work demonstrated that the ground around the existing visitor reception building had suffered considerable disturbance during the construction of the buildings. Whilst redevelopment plans had been designed with minimal impact in order to preserve any potential archaeological deposits to the maximum possible degree, a series of relatively minor interventions were unavoidable.
- 2.1.5 Interventions at the visitor reception building adjacent to the B6318 were to be subject to a watching brief and one evaluation trench was to be investigated at Housesteads Farm near to the museum. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was compiled for each scheme by the National Trust (NT 2012a and 2012b). A Project Design detailing the work to be carried out was compiled by PCA and approved by English Heritage (PCA 2012).
- 2.1.6 The completed Site Archive is currently held at the Northern Office of PCA and the retained element, comprising the written, drawn and photographic records, as well as a small assemblage of artefactual material, will be deposited at the Great North Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne under the site code HVC 12 and HVC 14.
- 2.1.7 The Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) reference number for the project is: preconst1-183120.

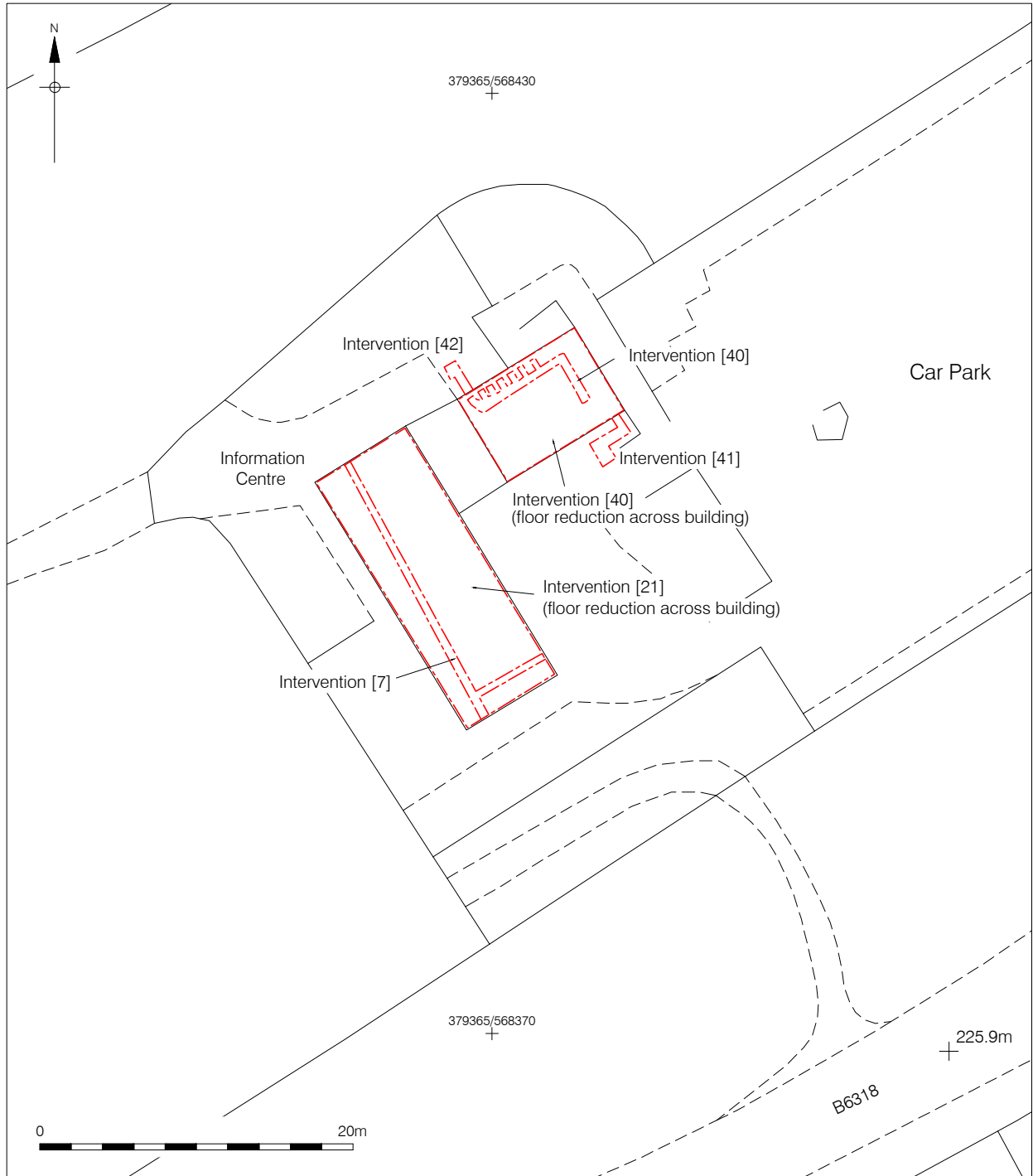


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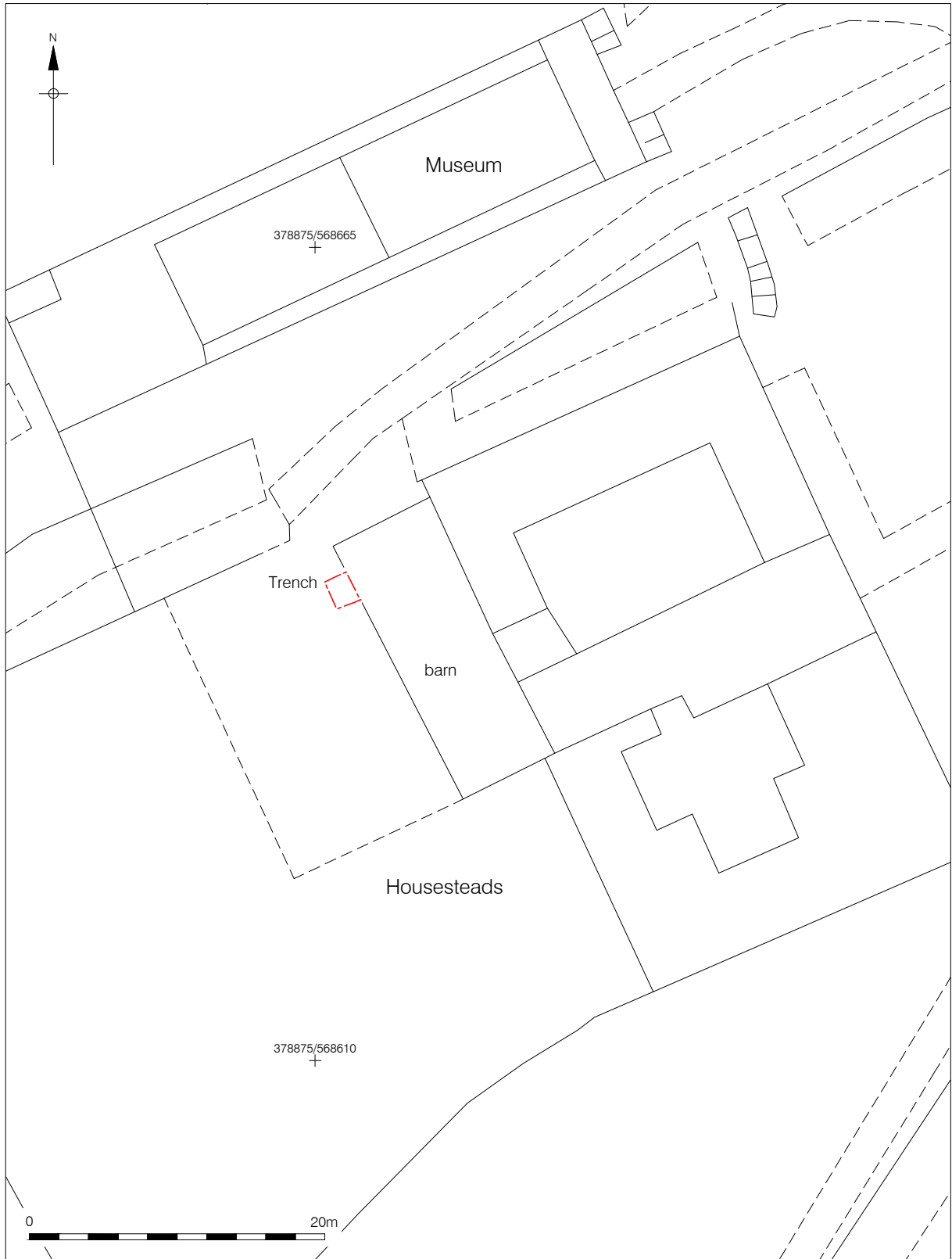
Figure 1  
Site Location  
1:2,000,000 & 25,000 at A4





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Figure 2  
 Watching Brief Trench Location  
 1:400 at A4



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Figure 3  
Evaluation Trench Location  
1:400 at A4

## **2.2 Site Location and Description**

- 2.2.1 Housesteads Roman fort lies c. 4km NNE of Bardon Mill, Northumberland approximately 500m north of the B6318 road. In this area Hadrian's Wall was constructed along the top of the Whin Sill escarpment with the fort constructed to the south of The Wall. The Vallum ditch and bank system runs c. 200m to the south of the Wall in this area, with the Military Way Roman road positioned between the Vallum and the Wall.
- 2.2.2 The site today lies within National Trust property and comprises the fort itself, a visitor reception building and Housesteads Farm and adjacent buildings.
- 2.2.3 The existing visitor reception building at Housesteads Roman fort is located below Chapel Hill, on the north side of the B6318, at National Grid Reference NY 7937 6840 (Figure 1). Housesteads Farm and the adjacent museum lie on higher ground to the north-west, towards Housesteads Crags, at National Grid Reference NY 7887 6862.

## **2.3 Geology and Topography**

- 2.3.1 Housesteads fort stands on the edge of the Whin Sill escarpment which is an igneous intrusion of dense dolerite. The land slopes steeply down from the Whin Sill and bands of limestone and sandstone extending down the slope where the strata have been tipped steeply southwards and have been subject to differential erosion to form a landscape characterised by a series of rocky crests and troughs (*British Geological Survey website; Welfare 2009, 235*). The Whin Sill forms the most prominent crest as it is much more resistant to erosion than the surrounding strata, and provided ideal natural defences for the Roman frontier. This rock is impervious and only poor, thin soils (not suitable for arable cultivation) have formed over it. Below the Whin Sill, to the south of the fort, is the Upper Bath-house Wood Limestone (*British Geological Survey website*) on which Housesteads Farm and the evaluation trench are located. This limestone also forms Chapel Hill and the ridge leading to the west. To the south of the limestone are alternating bands of Alston Formation limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone, Alston Formation sandstone and Eelwell Limestone Member limestone. The visitor reception building adjacent to the road stands on Alston Formation sandstone. Apart from affording natural defences for Hadrian's Wall and for Housesteads fort, this geological variety provided sandstone for the face of the curtain wall, dolerite rubble for the core, and lime for the mortar (*Welfare 2009, 135*).
- 2.3.2 Good fertile soils developed over these lower slopes of the hill below the fort and it was therefore suitable for farming; cultivation terraces of former arable agricultural land which date from the Roman period through to the post-medieval period are visible as earthworks on these slopes (*ibid.*).
- 2.3.3 The top of the Whin Sill escarpment on which the fort was constructed lies at over 270m OD and the land slopes steeply southwards from here; the elevation around the visitor reception building is c. 225m OD. A stream known as Maggie's Dene Burn runs south-eastwards down the slope between the western side of the fort and Housesteads Farm and the Knag Burn runs down the slope to the east of the fort.

## **2.4 Planning Background**

- 2.4.1 The Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and English Heritage (EH) were initially consulted by the National Trust (NT) at a pre-application stage concerning the planning and archaeological issues of the proposed re-development scheme. The proposals involved a significant

degree of intervention to the fabric of the existing visitor reception building, which was erected in the late 1970s and early 1980s. With the regard to the extent of below ground disturbance, EH and the NT Architectural Panel advised that that element of the scheme design should be informed by an initial, pre-determination, archaeological evaluation, itself informed by a Desk-Based Assessment (DBA).

- 2.4.2 The input of EH was required because the site is scheduled and thus has statutory protection under *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*. Therefore, any intrusive groundworks in the scheduled area require SMC from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) prior to their undertaking. In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport consults with English Heritage before deciding whether or not to grant SMC.
- 2.4.3 Subsequently, NT (and NNPA in partnership) commissioned a DBA (ARS June 2012) and then an initial archaeological evaluation (ARS July 2012), informed by the findings of the DBA.
- 2.4.4 The integrated findings of the DBA and initial archaeological evaluation informed the planning application (reference 11NP0063) for the redevelopment scheme '*Alterations and extensions to existing visitor centre, including addition of glazed external porch and canopy and raising roof line to accommodate internal mezzanine floor at Housesteads Visitor Centre, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland NE47 6NN*', as well as the application for SMC. The initial evaluation demonstrated that the ground around the existing visitor reception building suffered considerable disturbance when the building was constructed. This notwithstanding, the redevelopment plans were designed to cause minimal below ground impact in order to preserve any archaeological remains present to the maximum possible degree. However, a series of relatively minor interventions was required.
- 2.4.5 Both planning permission and SMC for the redevelopment scheme required that no groundworks should take place until the applicant had confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work before and/or during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI). NT compiled separate WSIs for the proposed archaeological work during renovations of the visitor reception building and during replacement and renovation of access to Housesteads Farm (NT October 2012a and 2012b). Both WSIs required the production of a Project Design (PD) by the appointed archaeological contractor, with this to be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State, advised by EH, NNPA and NT. The programme of investigations detailed in this report are those proposed in the Project Design (PCA 2012) to mitigate the small number of relatively minor interventions which remained unavoidable within the design process for the scheme.

## **2.5 Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 2.5.1 Housesteads Roman fort and *vicus* – the associated civilian settlement - is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and part of a WHS. The Hadrian's Wall Military Zone was designated a WHS by UNESCO in 1987. A management plan, produced by English Heritage in 1996, identified three distinct areas: the 'archaeological core' of the Wall and Vallum (the World Heritage Site), the surrounding 'buffer zone' and the outer 'visual envelope'. In 2005 UNESCO amalgamated the Hadrian's Wall and the German Limes WHSs into the transnational WHS 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire'.
- 2.5.2 A recent publication details the extensive excavations carried out at Housesteads between 1874 and 1981 by Newcastle University and excavations between 1959 and 1961 by Durham University (Rushworth 2009). This publication also details the survey of the landscape around the fort which was undertaken by the RCHME in the 1980s and small excavations in the neighbourhood of the fort in the 1970s and 1980s.

- 2.5.3 The scheduled area at Housesteads and its environs contain extensive archaeological evidence for Roman and post-Roman activity. Identified sites include a lime kiln, a Mithraeum, a temple dedicated to the god Mars, cultivation terraces and quarries, and there have been numerous finds of Roman pottery, statues and inscribed tombstones.
- 2.5.4 Housesteads is thought to have had three cemeteries, although their precise extents remain uncertain. One was situated to the west of the fort, while another is thought to be situated on either side of Chapel Hill where human remains and a number of tombstones have been discovered. These discoveries would indicate that the cemetery potentially extended as far south as the visitor reception building.
- 2.5.5 Housesteads *vicus* may have extended for c. 200m south of the fort, probably covering at least an area the same size as the fort itself. More than 20 *vicus* buildings have been excavated (mainly in the 1930s) although only six now remain visible at the surface. Excavations have dated this settlement to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD.
- 2.5.6 Understanding of the post-Roman development of the landscape in the environs of the site continues to evolve. Post-medieval occupation is attested at both the fort and *vicus*; it is known that the remains of the fort underwent long periods of abandonment and reuse in the post-Roman period. In the late medieval/early post-medieval period, the south gate was occupied as a domestic building, this succeeded by an 18th-century farm on part of the site of the *vicus*.
- 2.5.7 Across the wider area it is clear that agricultural activity has taken place for many centuries. The site itself may have been farmed from steadings to the south of the present B6318 in medieval and early post-medieval times. Construction of the road (in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745/6) and the adoption of dry-stone field walls in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries undoubtedly resulted in considerable landscape reorganisation around the farm operating from Housesteads. Housesteads Farm was constructed in the mid-19th century, after the acquisition of the site by John Clayton, who demolished an earlier farm and built the present complex constructed in its place.
- 2.5.8 The DBA identified the known heritage assets in the proposed development area and within the wider vicinity. In terms of designated heritage assets, the site is located within the boundaries of the WHS and lies at the edge of the boundary of Hadrian's Wall and the scheduled area of Housesteads Roman fort. The present visitor centre building is specifically excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath it does not appear to be excluded. A further 17 designated heritage assets were identified within the wider vicinity of the site, within the scheduled area. Of these, 11 date to the Roman period and include the *vicus*, a Mithraeum, and various sites associated with agriculture and industry. To the south of the site is a bowl barrow which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The present track rising up to the fort from the B6318 is generally thought to follow the route of a Roman road, crossing the Vallum and linking the fort to that at Vindolanda.
- 2.5.9 In terms of non-designated heritage assets, there are none in the proposed re-development area. Outside the scheduled area and the WHS, but within the wider study area examined by the DBA, eight non-designated heritage assets were identified. These include a post-medieval circular structure, chapel and milestone, as well as prehistoric cord rig and an earth mound of unknown date.
- 2.5.10 Ahead of the 2012 archaeological evaluation, very little controlled archaeological work had been previously undertaken in the proposed redevelopment area. Construction of the existing visitor reception building in 1980 evidently recorded no *in situ* archaeological remains of note, although a

Roman gravestone was recovered from spoil during the work, possibly indicating that a cemetery area extended as far south as the visitor reception building. The 1980 work itself resulted in substantial disturbance of the area immediately surrounding the building and, in addition, ground level was also lowered to the south-west of the building. Therefore, it is evident that previous landscaping activity has resulted in a substantial overburden being removed in places across the site, which, as highlighted in the WSI for the work at the visitor reception building, creates the potential for any archaeological remains surviving in these areas to be impacted upon by future groundworks.

- 2.5.11 The WSI for the work proposed for the replacement and renovation of access to Housesteads Farm acknowledged the potential for significant archaeological remains to be encountered at very shallow depth below existing ground level along the fort/museum access routes, for example Frisian pottery has been unearthed simply from vehicle disturbance to the east of Housesteads Farm. The WSI also discussed the potential Roman origin of the track route to the fort, although it was acknowledged that the possibility of Roman structural material of the road surviving is probably low, given that: a) the route was used as access to the post-medieval farm and its Victorian successor and thus Roman surfacing material is likely to have been replaced over the centuries as a result of wear and tear; and b) the tendency along the Wall corridor for well made Roman structural material (*e.g.* road surfacing, if it existed here) to be plundered for re-use in the centuries following the Roman period. In sum, it was concluded that the proposed access route works should generally be able to avoid damaging or exposing significant deposits, with the specific exception of a new retaining wall at Housesteads Farm car park, adjacent to the museum, where construction of a foundation for the wall would result in greater below ground impact.

### **3. PROJECT AIMS AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Project Aims**

- 3.1.1 The project was threat-led with potential to disturb or destroy important sub-surface archaeological remains of the Roman period in particular. The broad aim of the project was to recover, record and understand the archaeological resource, including its presence (or absence), character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality, in order to mitigate for any unavoidable impacts extending below the current finished structures. Such development-related interventions have been consciously designed to a minimum from the outset of the project.
- 3.1.2 For the visitor reception building, it had not been possible to establish definitively the impact of the existing building on the archaeological resource underlying the building footprint. Desk-based research and the 2012 field evaluation (conducted external to the building) indicated disturbance to a depth of at least 700mm below external present ground level. The proposed redevelopment of the building did therefore have some potential to impact on significant archaeological remains. The depth and extent of the archaeological works detailed herein were strictly limited to that required for the purposes of the current redevelopment and no further. The work sought to maximise information about any recovered deposits so that such data, firstly, can inform any future intervention and, secondly, offers some mitigation for any physical loss to the archaeological resource.
- 3.1.3 One unavoidable intervention with particular potential to impact on archaeological deposits of note is the excavation necessary for the foundation of a new car park retaining wall to the west of Housesteads Farm. Archaeological work here was carried out to first determine whether archaeological significant deposits remain *in situ*, and then inform whether the re-development work could be completed or redesigned.
- 3.1.4 Additional aims of the project were:
- to compile a Site Archive consisting of all site and project documentary and photographic records, as well as all artefactual and palaeoenvironmental material recovered;
  - to compile a report that contains an assessment of the nature and significance of all data categories, stratigraphic, artefactual, *etc.*

#### **3.2 Specific Conservation Management Research Aims**

- 3.2.1 As set out in the WSIs, these were:
- To recover the optimum amount of significant archaeological information about deposits removed in the course of work, to inform understanding of the development and history of the development site (including enhanced understanding of the precise limits of development during the 1970s and 1980s).
  - To record the precise location and apparent character of any archaeological deposits exposed (but remaining *in situ*) by the present re-development works.
  - If suitable deposits are encountered, to establish whether significant artefactual/ecofactual assemblages survived the 1970s/1980s development work to become incorporated in disturbed deposits of that date. In particular the survival (or otherwise) of bone fragments is a matter of interest.

### 3.3 Research Objectives

3.3.1 The programme of archaeological work herein described took place within the WHS, therefore there is a requirement for the work to be conducted with full recognition and reference to existing archaeological research frameworks. Of relevance are, firstly, the two-volume *Frontiers of Knowledge. A Research Framework for Hadrian's Wall* (Symonds and Mason (eds.) 2010) and, secondly, *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (NERRF) (Petts and Gerrard 2006).

3.3.2 The Research Strategy, in Volume I of *Frontiers of Knowledge*, was compiled to respond to gaps in knowledge pertaining to the archaeology of the Wall, as highlighted in its Research Agenda (also in Volume I), which sets out a prioritised set of objectives within eight key themes (A2-A9). The WSI acknowledges that the scale of the proposed interventions precludes any obvious direct relationship between the archaeological works and the goals of, particularly, *Frontiers of Knowledge*, per se. Nevertheless, the findings of the project have the potential to contribute to a number of the key themes of the Research Agenda, including:

#### *Research Agenda Theme A2: The Pre-Roman Archaeology of the Tyne-Solway Isthmus*

- Pre-Roman use of the landscape. Given the proximity of the site to an extant barrow of uncertain date, it would make particular sense to consider aspects such as religion and burial (Agenda 2.8), and the promotion of the potential of pre-Roman archaeology in the Wall corridor (Strategy 2.4)

#### *Research Agenda Theme A5: The Forts and Extramural Settlement*

- Understanding the infrastructure of the forts and civilian settlements. There remain vital unanswered questions about the chronology of civilian settlements (Agenda 5.6); their extents, structure and layout (Agenda 5.7); their inhabitants (Agenda 5.8) and the economy of both fort and surrounding settlement (Agenda 5.9). These are also all key priorities in the Wall Research Strategy (5.2)

#### *Research Agenda Theme A8: Life and Society*

- Life and society, especially as reflected by burial. This site has potential for better understanding the location of the archaeological resource (Agenda 8.1), as well as the potential to contribute to studies of interaction between army and other populations (Agenda 8.4, Strategy 8.2), definition of population types and more general investigation of cemeteries (Agenda 8.3, Strategy 8.4) including the range of activities taking place in extra-mural areas, including the potential for study of religious landscapes (Agenda 8.5, Strategy 8.6)

#### *Research Agenda Theme A9: The post-Roman Archaeology of Hadrian's Wall AD 400-1000*

- Post-Roman use of the site. Of particular interest here is the potential contribution that this site could make to interpreting the chronology, form and detail of the 'end' of Roman occupation (Agenda 9.2-4; Strategy 9.1)

3.3.3 The NERRF identifies the following key priority within the Research Agenda for the Roman period which is of direct relevance to the project:

- Riii – The Roman military presence



- 3.3.4 Although the scale of intervention planned during the programme of work clearly limits the research contribution that these could make, the Frontiers of Knowledge and NERRF research priorities set out above were to be kept in mind throughout the field and post-excavation work herein outlined.
- 3.3.5 The archaeological work also sought to pay particular attention to the relatively unusual alkaline geology at Housesteads (raising the value and interest of even otherwise poorer quality bone assemblages) and the underexplored large- and small-scale potential for waterlogged deposits at Housesteads. The former would have particular bearing on any burial remains encountered.

## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Watching Brief at Visitor Facility

4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken intermittently between November 2012 and February 2013. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the standard and guidance document for archaeological watching briefs prepared by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA, 2008a). PCA is an IfA-Registered Organisation. The WSI prepared by The National Trust (The National Trust 2012a), and supplementary project design prepared by PCA (PCA 2012), should be consulted for full details of the methodologies that were to be employed regarding archaeological recording, *etc.*

4.1.2 Groundworks involved machine excavation of the interior floor surfaces within the visitors centre and associated ancillary building along with a series of small intrusions related to associated drainage and refurbishment within the surrounding courtyard and grounds (Figure 2). The WSI required that all invasive groundworks associated with the development were to be monitored until their completion. A list of the interventions to be monitored was produced within the WSI. However as the development evolved, some of these interventions were no longer required and others were modified. The following interventions were subject to archaeological monitoring (see Figure 2):

- **Intervention 7:** New drainage from kiosk, along length of building to outflow. 18m long with 4m return at southern end of building, 0.50m wide and c. 0.45m maximum depth.
- **Intervention 21:** Reduction of existing concrete floor inside building. Work carried out under watching brief conditions down to a depth of c. 0.30m.
- **Intervention 40:** Installation of a new drainage run on a NE-SW alignment with spurs and return on a NW-SE alignment through the ancillary building, to service new toilet facilities. The trench measured 6.50m NE-SW with a 3m NW-SE return and was a maximum width of c. 0.60m and maximum depth of 0.65m below the original ground level. Ground reduction also took place across the extent of this building to a lesser depth than the drainage trench.
- **Intervention 41:** Connection of new electricity supply to an existing cable within the courtyard to the south-east of the ancillary building. The connection pit for this cable was excavated by hand and monitored under watching brief conditions, only modern deposits were disturbed. The pit itself measured c. 1.3m wide and c. 1.9m long with a further cable run c. 0.6m wide extending to the north-east, the excavations reached a maximum depth of 0.80m below current ground level.
- **Intervention 42:** Connection of new drainage run within ancillary building to existing manhole to the north of the building. Trench measured 2m by 0.50m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.65m.

4.1.3 All mechanical excavation within the interiors of the visitor centre was undertaken using a tracked 'mini-digger' employing a toothless ditching bucket. Where concrete formations were to be removed this was primarily broken using a pecker before excavation. In the instance of Intervention 7 the concrete raft exposed at the limit of excavation for Intervention 21 was cut using a diamond blade to ensure that only the area needed for the new drainage was disturbed.

4.1.4 Exposed deposits were recorded on *pro forma* 'Context Recording Sheets'. A photographic record of the work was compiled. The area of investigation was located by hand with a series of taped

measurements from standing structures to ensure its accurate location relative to the Ordnance Survey National grid.

## **4.2 Trial Trench at Housesteads Farm Car Park**

4.2.1 The evaluation fieldwork was undertaken 31 January-1 February 2014. The fieldwork was undertaken in accordance with the standard and guidance document for archaeological evaluations prepared by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2009). PCA is an IfA-Registered Organisation. The WSI prepared by The National Trust (The National Trust 2012b), and supplementary project design prepared by PCA (PCA 2012), should be consulted for full details of the methodologies that were to be employed regarding archaeological recording, etc.

4.2.2 A single 2.50m x 1.60m trench was located in the north-east corner of the car park to the south of Housesteads Farm museum adjacent to the west wall of a barn. All ground reduction was undertaken by hand and the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m. Investigations within the trenches followed the normal principles of stratigraphic excavation and were conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in Fieldwork Induction Manual. Operations Manual I (PCA 2009) and Archaeological Site Manual, Third Edition (Museum of London 1994).

4.2.3 Trench plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at 1:10 and the trench location was surveyed using hand tapes. A Temporary Bench Mark was established to the north of the trench on the steps leading up to the museum building from the car park. The level of this was calculated using a Leica Viva Smart Rover Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS).

4.2.4 All significant features and deposits were photographed, and a general photographic record of the site and working conditions was compiled in 35mm film for black and white negatives/prints for archiving and on digital SLR for archiving. A selection of plates is included in Appendix 2.

## **4.3 Post-excavation**

4.3.1 The stratigraphic data for the watching brief comprises written, drawn and photographic records. A total of thirty-four archaeological contexts were defined during the investigation, all of modern origin and associated with the current building. No artefactual or organic material was recovered during the watching brief phase of fieldwork and no suitable archaeological deposits were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk samples for palaeoenvironmental material

4.3.2 The stratigraphic data for the trial trench comprises written, drawn and photographic records. A total of fourteen archaeological contexts were defined. Post-excavation work involved checking and collating site records, grouping contexts and phasing the stratigraphic data. A written summary of the archaeological sequence was then compiled, as described below in Section 5.

4.3.3 The artefactual material from the evaluation comprised small assemblages of pottery, ceramic building material and glass. The material was washed, dried, marked and packaged as appropriate and according to relevant guidelines (Watkinson and Neal, 1998; UKIC, 1983). Specialist assessment of the material was undertaken (Appendix 1). No other categories of inorganic artefactual material were represented. No suitable archaeological deposits were encountered to warrant the recovery of bulk samples for palaeoenvironmental material.

4.3.4 The complete Site Archive, including all material generated electronically during post-excavation, and the artefactual material will be packaged for long term curation. In preparing the Site Archive for deposition, all relevant standards and guidelines documents referenced in the Archaeological Archives

Forum guidelines document (Brown 2007) will be adhered to, in particular a well-established United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) document (Walker, UKIC 1990) and an IfA publication (IfA 2008). The depositional requirements of the body to which the Site Archive will be ultimately transferred will be met in full.

## **5. RESULTS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE**

*During both the watching brief and the evaluation, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual 'context' numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [18]. The archaeological sequence has been assigned to broad phases of activity.*

### **5.1 Phase 1: Undated Developed Soil**

5.1.1 The basal deposit recorded in the north-western corner of the trial trench comprised a light to mid brown sandy, clayey, silty deposit, [14], encountered at a depth of c. 0.70m below the current ground surface (Figure 4 and Section 2, Figure 5). The deposit contained inclusions of large sub-angular fragments of rock derived from the Whin Sill escarpment and occasional flecks and fragments of yellow limestone. No datable material was recovered from this deposit, which may represent a developed soil associated with agricultural activity in this area or a colluvial deposit which had accumulated in this area downslope of the higher edge of the escarpment to the north. The maximum recorded height on this deposit was 251.28m OD.

### **5.2 Phase 2: Undated Pit**

5.2.1 Deposit [14] was truncated by a cut feature, [13], which was partially exposed in the south-eastern corner of the trench for a distance of 0.90m NW-SE x 0.35m NE-SW, continuing to the south and west beyond the limits of the trench (Figure 4 and Section 2, Figure 5). Its upper fill, which was not excavated, comprised mid grey brown sand, [12], which lay c. 0.60m below the current ground surface. With such a small area exposed, and this remaining unexcavated at the base of the trench, interpretation of this feature is not certain, but it may represent the corner of a pit. No datable material was recovered in the area exposed.

### **5.3 Phase 3: Post-medieval Structural Remains**

5.3.1 Deposit [14] and feature [13] were both truncated to the east by the construction cut, [11], for a 0.35m wide stone wall, [1] (Figure 4 and Sections 1 and 2, Figure 5). This was recorded for a distance of c. 0.90m NNW-SSE, continuing to the north beyond the limits of the trench, and was exposed for a maximum height of 0.40m with just two courses exposed. The wall was encountered at a depth of 0.30m below present ground level at a maximum height of 252.62m OD. It was constructed with sandstone blocks ranging from 750mm x 230mm to 200mm x 150mm bonded with hard, light grey mortar with frequent grit and occasional chalk inclusions. At the northern end of the wall was a right-angled return, [2], of identical construction. This was recorded for a maximum length of 0.70m, continuing to the east and north beyond the limits of the trench. The construction cut backfill, [10], comprised soft mid grey clayey silt with occasional fragments of limestone. Six fragments of residual Roman pottery were recovered from this deposit along with a fragment from a modern green glass bottle. The Roman material comprised a single sherd of Baetican amphorae (AD 43–300) and five sherds of greyware which are not closely datable (AD 43–400).

5.3.2 A stone floor surface, [3], was located between walls [1] and [12], extending across the eastern side of the trench. This was constructed with sandstone fragments of irregular size and shape and had been constructed on a bedding deposit of clayey silt, [7], which was visible in the gaps between the stones in the unexcavated floor surface. It was exposed for a maximum distance of 1.80m by 1m, continuing to the south and east beyond the limits of the trench. The maximum height at which this was recorded was 251.35m OD.

- 5.3.3 Walls [1] and [12] and the stone floor surface [3] are interpreted as representing the north-western corner of a structure of late post-medieval date, presumably an outbuilding associated with Housesteads Farm which was built in the mid-19th century to the east of the evaluation trench.
- 5.3.4 A rubble deposit, [4], situated to the west of wall [1] is interpreted as representing material which had collapsed from the wall. This comprised sandstone fragments and included a complete stamped brick of 20th-century date (see Appendix 1). The deposit was fully excavated within the limits of the trench to expose the underlying deposits as shown on Figure 4.

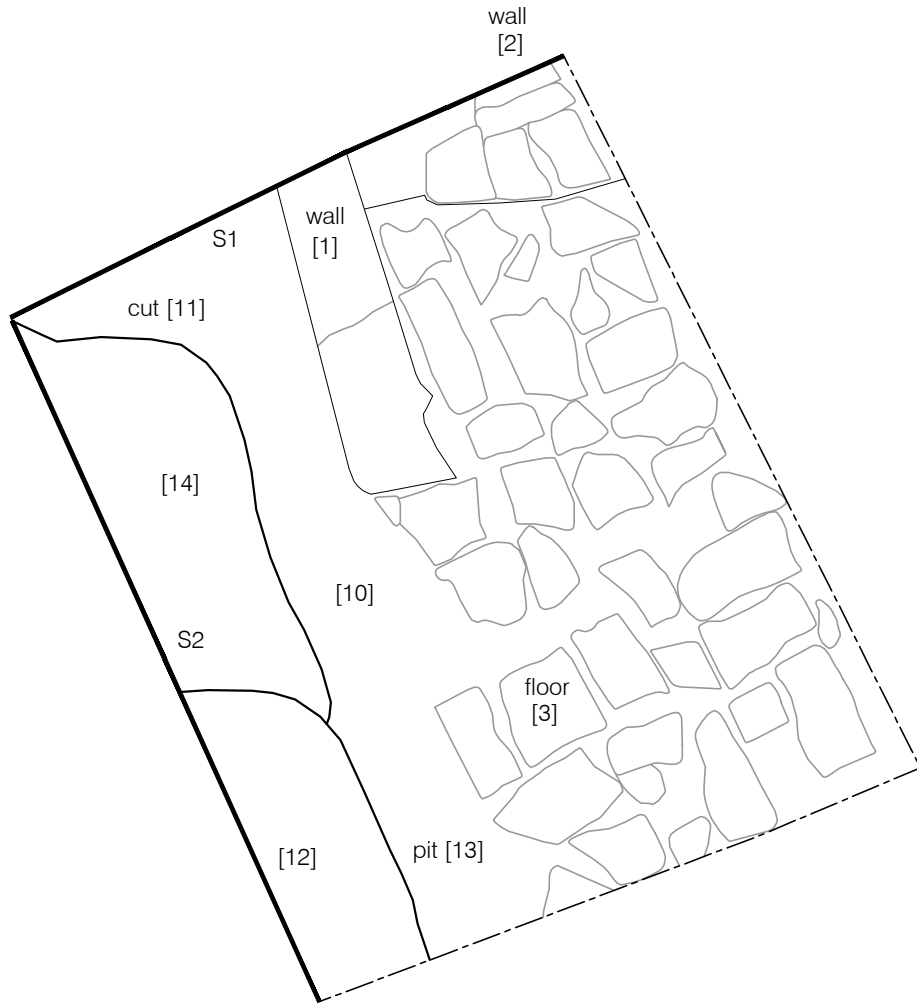
### **5.3 Phase 3: Modern**

#### *Evaluation trench*

- 5.3.1 The rubble deposit [4] and wall [1] were overlain by a 0.60m thick clayey silt deposit, [5], which contained frequent stones and large fragments of glazed ceramic drainpipes. This extended across the western part of the trench and is interpreted as a levelling deposit dumped over the structural remains prior to the construction of the car park in this area. This was overlain by a 0.20m thick deposit of dolomite chippings, [6], which formed the present ground surface in this area. The level on top of this sloped down from a height of 252.08m in the north-west to 251.88m OD in the south-east, reflecting the southward sloping natural topography (Section 5, Figure 5).
- 5.3.2 In the eastern part of the trench levelling deposit [5] was truncated by a construction cut, [8], for the modern corrugated iron barn against which the trench was located.

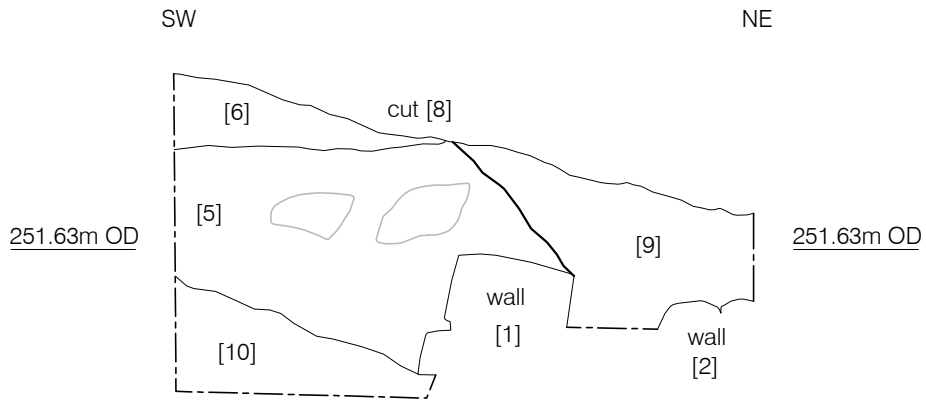
#### *Watching brief*

- 5.3.3 Within the main visitor reception building, the earliest deposit recorded comprised a layer of firm, dark greyish brown sandy silt, [12], exposed in two small areas at the base of Intervention 7 in the southern end of the building (see Figure 2). This was recorded at a height of c. 223.18m OD, at a depth of 0.60m below original floor level. This deposit remained largely obscured by the overlying hardcore deposit, [11], which comprised crushed stone and sand and formed a foundation for the floor of the building. This was up to 0.43m thick and was exposed along the length of Intervention 7 and also across the width of the building at its southern end. Across the remaining area of the building, a concrete raft, [7], was revealed following the removal of the existing floor surface.
- 5.3.4 Within the ancillary building a deposit of sandstone rubble, [18], was observed at the base of excavations for Intervention 40 in the central part of the trench. It was observed at a level of c. 223.09m OD, at a depth of 0.60m below the original floor level. This layer remained largely obscured by the overlying crushed stone and sand foundation deposit, [17], which was up to 0.50m thick.
- 5.3.5 Intervention 41, within the courtyard to the south-east of the ancillary building, revealed a small area of firm, mid orange brown sandy silt, [30], at a depth of 0.80m below the current courtyard surface. This deposit was again left in situ and the limited area exposed meant that it was not possible to determine the date or nature of this material.

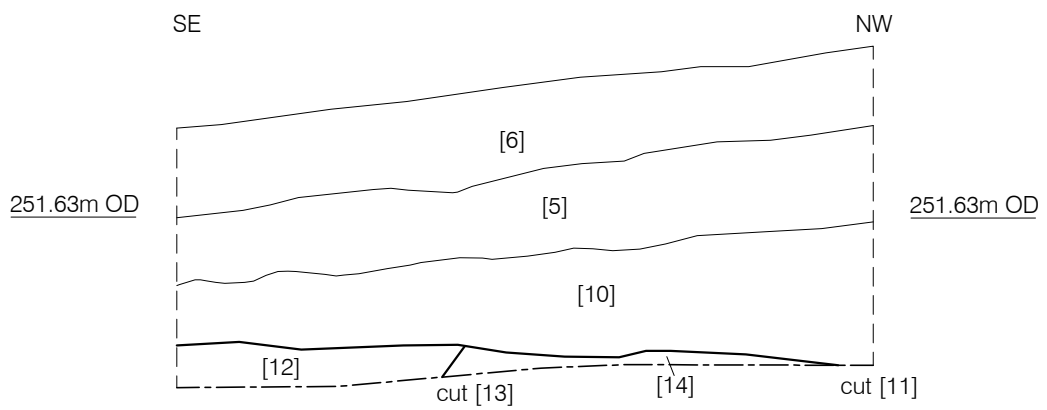


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17/06/14 JS

Figure 4  
Evaluation Trench Plan  
1:20 at A4



Section 1  
Trench 1  
Southeast Facing



Section 2  
Trench 1  
Northeast Facing





## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

- 6.1.1 The earliest deposit exposed within the evaluation trench may represent a developed agricultural soil horizon. This deposit remained unexcavated as it lay below the level required for the foundation trench for the new wall and therefore no datable material was recovered. The construction cut for the late post-medieval wall, which truncated this deposit, did however produce six sherds of Roman pottery and this artefactual material indicates the presence of Roman activity in the very near vicinity of the trench. It is possible that these sherds originated from the developed soil which was disturbed during the construction of the stone building.
- 6.1.2 The evaluation trench was located within a cultivation terrace defined by terrace walls situated to the south of the museum and to the south of Housesteads Farm, in the approximate position of the south-west corner of the barn. Previous investigations have taken place in the area around Housesteads Farm, including five trenches excavated between the museum building and the farm, a short distance to the north of the evaluation trench (Crow 2009). This work has demonstrated that the cultivation terrace is of Roman origin and that the terrace walls were constructed c. AD 200 (Crow 2009, 255). The quantity of pottery recovered from two of the trenches during this earlier work suggested to the excavator that there were dwellings in close proximity, or that the pottery derived from manuring of small fields which were indicated by the presence of palisade enclosures below the terrace walls (Crow 2009, 256). It is possible that the residual Roman pottery found during the current evaluation may be from a similar origin and was dumped onto the cultivation terrace during manuring of the land.
- 6.1.3 The pit which truncated the developed soil also remained unexcavated and this, along with the fact that only a small area was exposed within the limits of the trench, makes interpretation and dating of the feature impossible.
- 6.1.4 Structural remains exposed within the evaluation trench comprised the north-west corner of a structure with sandstone walls and an internal stone floor surface. This was positioned a short distance from the north-west corner of the current barn. A fragment of bottle glass recovered from the backfill of the construction trench of the wall and a stamped brick found in the rubble which appears to represent tumble from the wall indicate a 20th-century date from this structure. The present Housesteads Farm was constructed c. 1860 to replace the 18th-century farmhouse which was situated immediately outside the fort a short distance to the west of the south gate (Rushworth 2009, 336–337). Although it is presumed that remains within the trench represent part of an outbuilding associated with the farm, no buildings are shown on this location on historic Ordnance survey maps.
- 6.1.5 Only deposits of modern origin associated with the visitor reception and ancillary building were revealed during the watching brief.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

- 6.2.1 The evaluation trench demonstrated that the foundation trench required for the construction of the new wall would not impact on any remains of archaeological significance and therefore construction could proceed as designed.
- 6.2.2 No further work is required on the information recorded during the watching brief and evaluation, with the Site Archive, including this report, forming the permanent record of the strata encountered.

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**English Heritage** website: [www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications)

**Keys to the Past** website (the online Northumberland Historic Environment Record):  
[www.keystothepast.info/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.keystothepast.info/Pages/Home.aspx)

**MAGIC** website: [www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/](http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/).

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

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### **PCA Credits**

*Project Manager:* Robin Taylor-Wilson

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*Fieldwork:* Aidan Pratt, Amy Roberts, Robin Taylor-Wilson and Scott Vance

*Report:* Aidan Pratt, Jennifer Proctor and Amy Roberts

*CAD:* Jennifer Simonson

### **Other Credits**

*Roman Pottery:* James Gerrard

**APPENDIX 1  
FINDS INDEX**

## **FINDS INDEX**

### **Context [4]**

1 complete brick (3.8kg) mid brownish yellow fabric stamped 'APC'. From Axwell Park Colliery brickworks in Swalwell (Tyne and Wear HER 8540). Most of the bricks made at this brickworks by Priestmans Collieries were common bricks and were marked APC. 1901-1957 (Davison 1986, 133, 138).

### **Context [5]**

6 fragments of glazed ceramic drain pipe (total weight 706g) 19th to 20th century

### **Context [10]**

1 sherd of Baetican amphorae (17g) dated AD 43–300

5 sherds of Roman greyware (total weight 27g) dated AD 43–400

1 fragment of green glass bottle (7g) 19th to 20th century

**APPENDIX 2  
PLATES**



Plate 1. Working shot showing excavation of evaluation trench, looking north-east



Plate 2. Evaluation trench with masonry and tumble as exposed, looking south (scale 1m)





Plate 3. Evaluation trench fully excavated showing south-east facing section and wall [1], looking north (*scale 0.50m*)



Plate 4. Evaluation trench fully excavated with wall [1] to east, looking north-west (*scale 0.50m*)