



NEGATIVE WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Drainage Improvement (Phase 2), Military Road (B6318), Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland

NGR NZ 12218 67307

Contractor: Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Durham Office)

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Client: Northumberland County Council

Historic England Reference: S00214277

PCA Report Number: RN 13621

PCA Site Code: MRR19

Oasis ID: preconst1-346802

LOCATION

Planning Authority: Northumberland County Council

District: Castle Morpeth

County: Northumberland

Site address: Military Road, B6318, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland

DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:

An appropriately specified programme of archaeological work was required in association with the improvement of a drainage system along a section of the Military Road (B6318) carriageway and its northern roadside verge (Figures 1 & 2). The work was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited (PCA) and involved the archaeological monitoring and recording (watching brief) during all invasive groundworks at the location of the new drainage route.

The new drainage route lies within Scheduled Monument of Hadrian's Wall and Vallum in wall mile 13 (Historic England Ref. 1017533: Rudchester Roman fort, associated civil settlement and a section of Hadrian's Wall and vallum from the A69 to the March Burn in wall mile 13). This area also lies within the World Heritage Site core area: Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) (Ref. 1000098).

This section of the wall corridor and Vallum runs up the west side of the valley of the Rudchester Burn to the slight rise occupied by the fort before descending the slight depression to the March Burn. Throughout this section there are limited views to the north where the ground slopes gently away, wide views to the south over the Tyne Valley with restricted views to the east and west. Hadrian's Wall at this location survives as a buried feature beneath the B6318. The wall ditch survives as a buried feature for most of this section except for a slight scarp on the east bank of March Burn.

The archaeological work comprised the monitoring and recording of a WNW-ESE aligned drainage trench excavated along the northern roadside verge of Military Road (B6318) (Trench 1). The trench was monitored for a maximum distance of c. 31m and was generally 0.30m wide with the exception of the trenches western extent where it was c. 1.40m wide (Figure 2).

REASON FOR WATCHING BRIEF:

The work is of archaeological interest because it lies within the World Heritage Site (Ref. 1000098) and the Scheduled Monument of Hadrian's Wall (Ref. 1017533).

Because the site has Scheduled Monument status, and thus has statutory protection under *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, any intrusive groundworks for the installation required SMC from DCMS prior to their undertaking. In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport consulted with Historic England before deciding whether or not to grant SMC after an application for the work was submitted by Northumberland County Council 22nd February 2018. Historic England considered '*...the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be works which would not significantly diminish the visual amenity of the monument but could cause significant damage to the monument's archaeological deposits or evidence, which can be acceptably mitigated by conditions or safeguards already specified in the application to ensure archaeological supervision and recording.*'

Accordingly, SMC was granted for the archaeological evaluation by the Secretary of State, advised by Historic England, subject to a series of conditions set out in a letter dated 8th March 2019 to Mr Michael Banks (Northumberland County Council). Condition b) of SMC states '*No works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England. This work will consist of an archaeological watching brief on the excavations required*'. Condition e) of SMC requires '*A report on the archaeological recording shall be sent to the County Historic Environment Record and to Mike Collins at Historic England within 3 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed)*'.

As part of a Scheduled Monument, any archaeological remains affected by this scheme fall within the category of 'designated heritage assets' as defined within current guidance on the historic environment set out within Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012 (revised 2018)).

The groundworks associated with the installation of the drainage system was undertaken within the area of the Scheduled Monument. Accordingly, the archaeological monitoring and recording of all groundworks were undertaken as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC ref. S00214277), on the advice of Historic England to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the work was prepared by PCA and approved by Mike Collins (Historic England) prior to the commencement of any work.

DATES WORK UNDERTAKEN:

Archaeological work was undertaken at the site on the following dates:

- Monday 18/03/2019

RESULTS:

During the watching-brief, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual 'context' numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [123].

The archaeological work involved the monitoring and recording of groundworks associated with drainage improvement work (Trench 1). The trench was excavated by Northumberland County Council's team using a 9.5 tonne 360° back-acting JCB utilising a toothless ditching bucket under continuous archaeological supervision. The trench was excavated along the northern roadside verge of Military Road (B6318) for a distance of c. 31m WNW-ESE and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.80m. Its width was generally 0.30m with the exception its western extent where it was up to 1.40m wide. A total of five contexts were identified during the works. The table below summaries the contexts encountered within the trench:

Context	Type	Summary description	Thickness
[100]	Layer	Loose dark brownish grey topsoil.	0.30-0.50m
[103]	Fill	Compact mid orange brown clay [103] backfilling modern service trench [104]	0.30m
[104]	Cut	Modern services backfilled by [103]	0.30m
[101]	Layer	Friable light to mid greyish brown clayey silt made ground	0.30-0.40m
[102]	Layer	Firm light greyish yellow clay natural	

Summary of encountered strata descriptions

Superficial geological deposit [102] was exposed at the base of the Trench and was encountered at maximum and minimum depths below present ground level of 0.80m and 0.70m, respectively. A made ground deposit [101] up to 0.40m thick overlay the geological deposit [102] and is interpreted as a ground raising dump for the modern road (B6318). Modern services, [103] and [104], comprising two pipes and a BT cable were recorded at the base of the trench. Topsoil [100] extended across the northern roadside verge and was up to 0.50m thick.

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were encountered during the investigation.

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION:

Figure 1 - Site Location

Figure 2 – Detailed Site Location

ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:

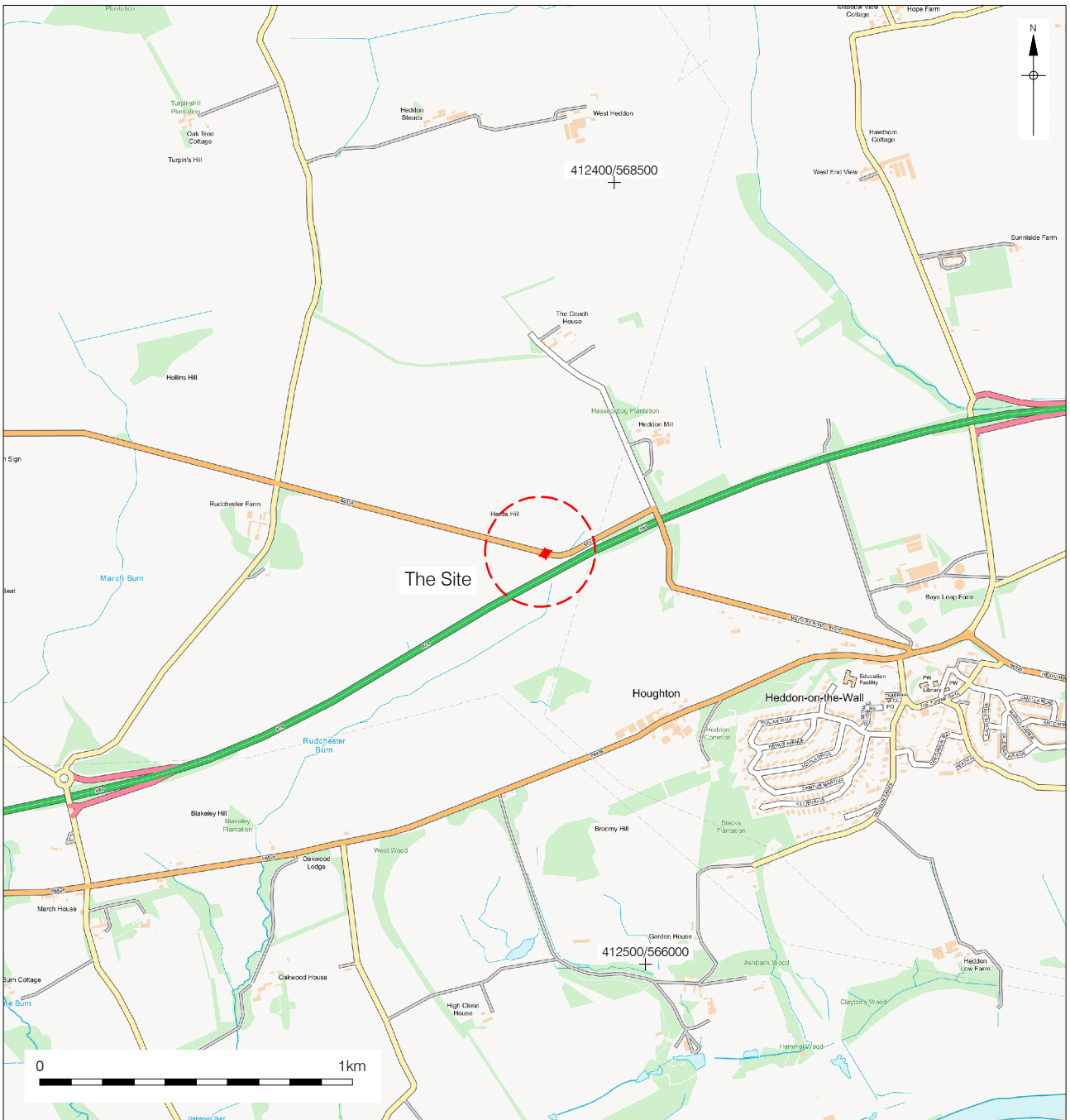
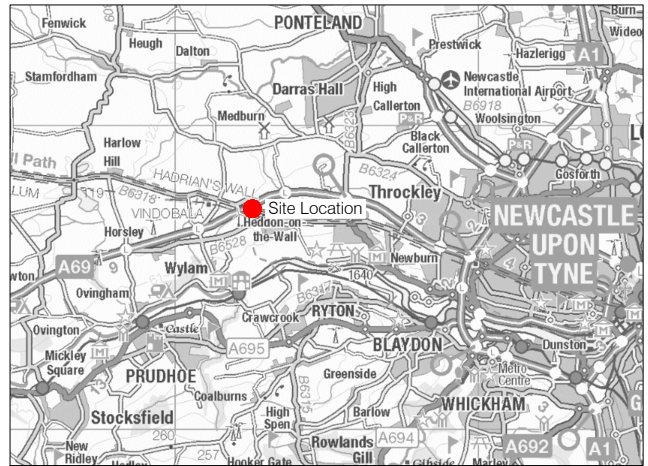
All documentation resulting from this project will be archived internally by PCA

Author: Danni-louise Floyd

Checked: Aaron Goode

Authorised: Aaron Goode

Date: 26/03/19



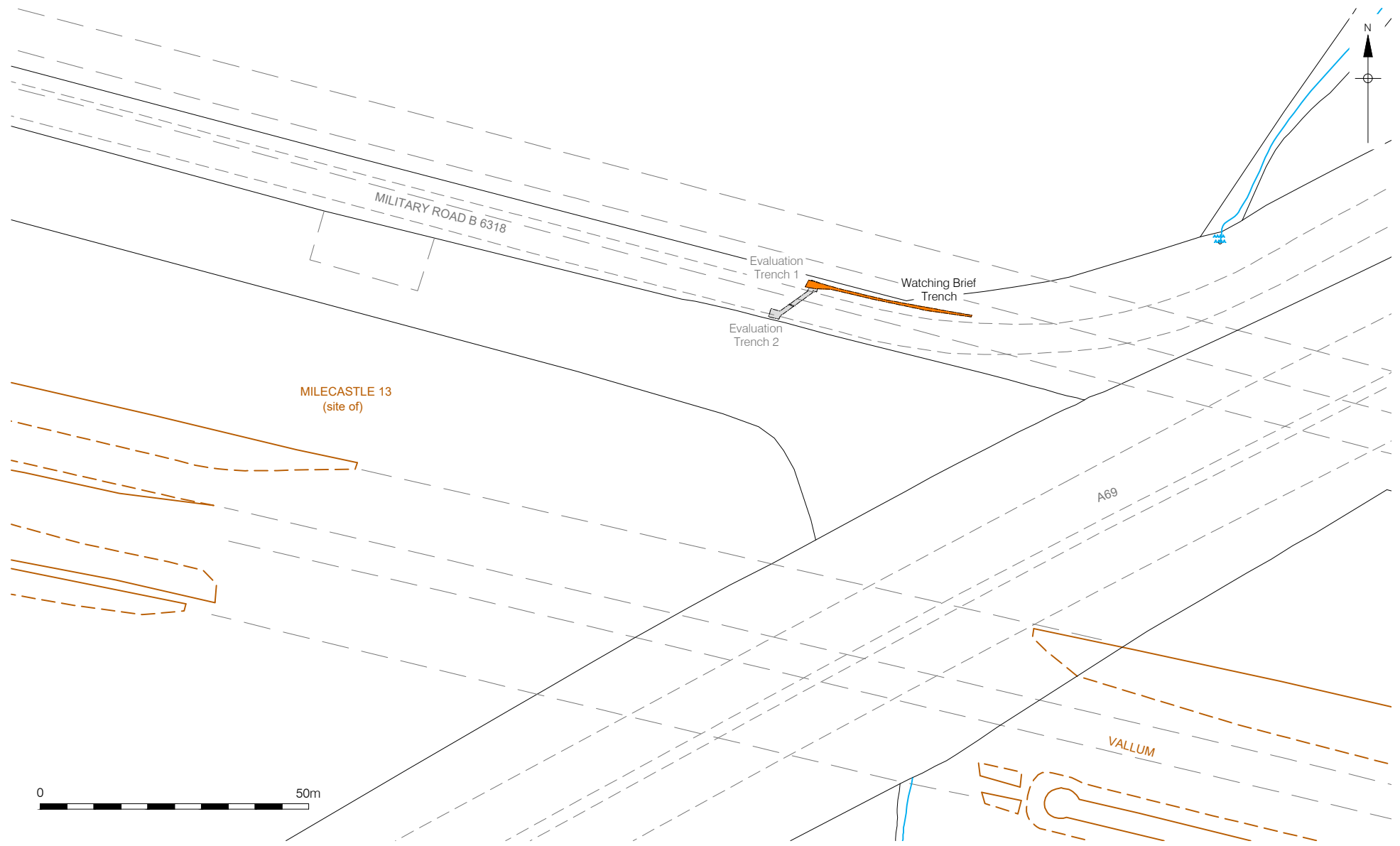


Figure 2
 Detailed Site Location
 1:1,000 at A4

PCA

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