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Summary

The installation of a finger post at Banks did not compromise the scheduled monument, its footprint being within backfill of a dry-stone wall.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project origins

Gerry Martin was commissioned by Mr Andrew Nicholson (the client, Carlisle City Council) to prepare a Specification of Works for a Programme of Archaeological Watching Brief Action relating to the insertion of a finger post. The watching brief action has been requested by English Heritage as potential and significant archaeological remains may be encountered.

Because of the archaeological significance of this location, the curatorial authority (English Heritage) stated that Scheduled Monument Consent Application was subject to the “developer” securing the implementation of a formal programme of archaeological observation and investigation during the forthcoming groundworks.

The condition (S00021534) concerns Scheduled Monument No. 26076 and 26078; Hadrian’s Wall and vallum between Banks Green Cottage and the road to Lanercost at Banks and the road to Garthside in Wall Miles 52, 53 and 54, the Vallum between the roads to Garthside and the track east of Castlesteads in Wall Miles 54, 55 and 56, Cumbria.

Should significant archaeological deposits or features had been encountered, the archaeological contractor would advise the client (Carlisle City Council) and possessed the authority by proxy to re-locate the finger post to an area that did not impact upon or compromise any extant remains.

The written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by the archaeological contractor and detailed the methods and procedures to be employed during the watching brief action. It was approved by the curatorial authority (English Heritage) for their approval prior to any fieldwork being undertaken.

1.2 Project outline

As part of the infrastructure scheme required for Hadrian’s Wall long distance path, a signpost for a bridleway required erection.

The bridleway leads to a possible quarry that in antiquity probably yielded under common law the right to gather stone for the benefit of local residents (A.Nicholson *pers comm.*).

Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by English Heritage and the fieldwork took place on Monday 21st November 2011.

1.3 Archive

The archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design and the guidelines set out by Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994 and 2007).

The archive will be deposited with an appropriate repository and a copy of the report donated to the County Sites and Monuments Record, as requested by the curatorial authority.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Location, topography and geology

The solid geology comprises Carboniferous Dinantian rocks in the form of a succession of mudstone, siltstone sandstone and limestone.

The bedrock has been draped by a series of drift geology deposits comprising Boulder Clay, sand and gravel lain during the last phase of glacial activity and creating the current drainage patterns, illustrating water-borne erosion and alluvial deposition culminating in the Irthing valley below Banks.

The study area lies on the northern side of the road that passes through the hamlet. Bounded to the north by a dry-stone wall, the road rises to the east leading to the principal core of the settlement.

The Wall at this location is probably beneath the current road, although the Wall ditch is clearly visible north of the road

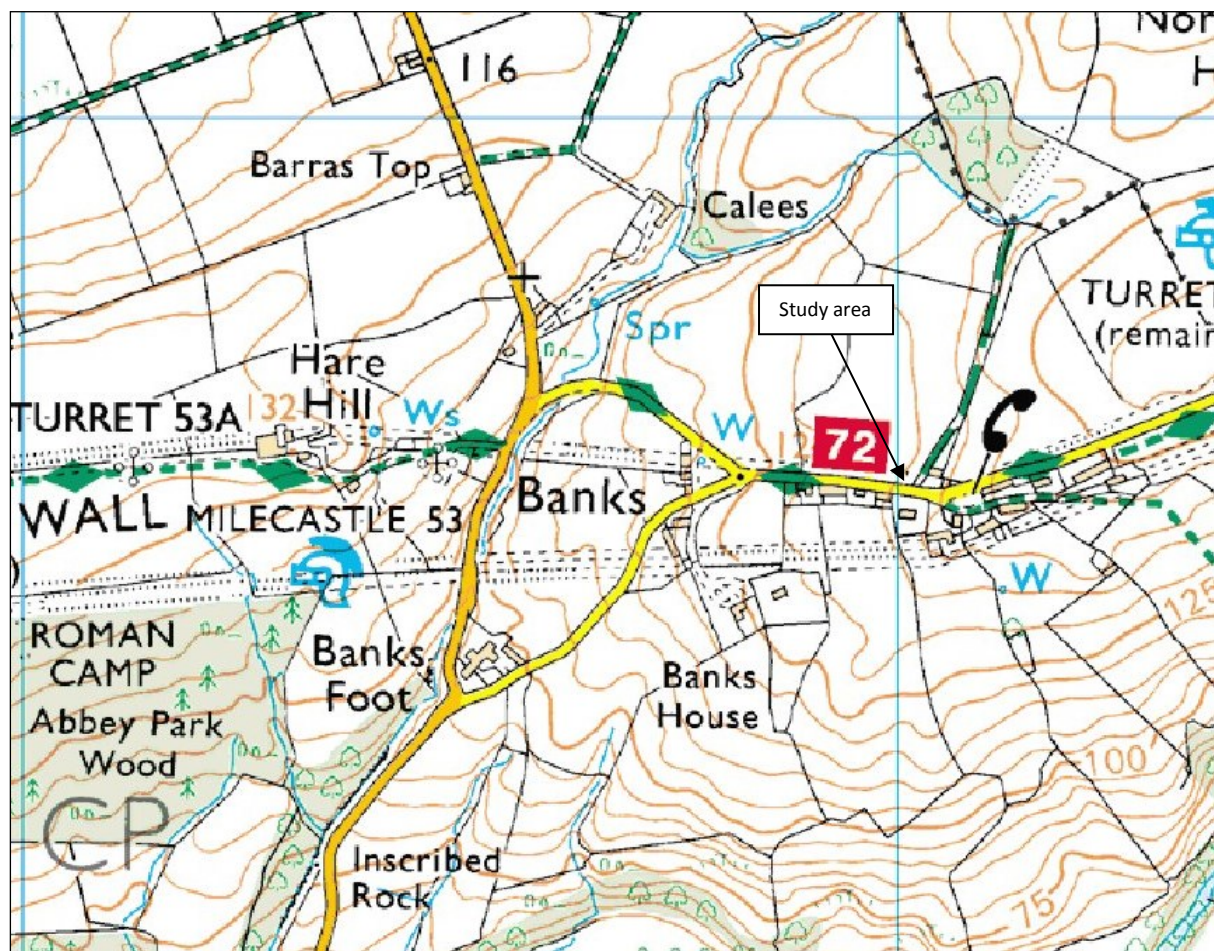


Figure 1. Location of the study area

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Historical background

The study area lies to the west of Turret 52A that was in turn west of Milecastle 52, the largest such fortification on the Wall with an internal area of 644m square and rebuilt in the late third or early fourth centuries (Symonds 2009, 45-47). Originally, the Milecastles probably maintained the bulk of the Wall garrison but with the advent of the Wall forts, this relationship was fundamentally altered (ibid 45).

The Vallum diverges from the course near the study area. Classically, it comprises a steep-sided ditch usually 6m in width and 3m in depth with a flat base flanked by two mounds north and south, set back approximately 9m from the ditch edge and probably constructed to deny multiple crossings up to the Wall or to delimit a prohibited zone close to the Wall.

Within this stretch of the Wall and Vallum, there have been few archaeological interventions although a watching brief was conducted in 2000 by the former Lancaster Archaeological Unit and in 2005 a stony surface was encountered that may have represented an undated *ad hoc* adjunct to the Wall within the property of Allergarth (Martin 2005, Report 8).

Investigations of the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) reveal a 19th Century lime kiln (10017), part of the Vallum ditch (13651) and a Roman bead and seven Roman pot sherds (19221).

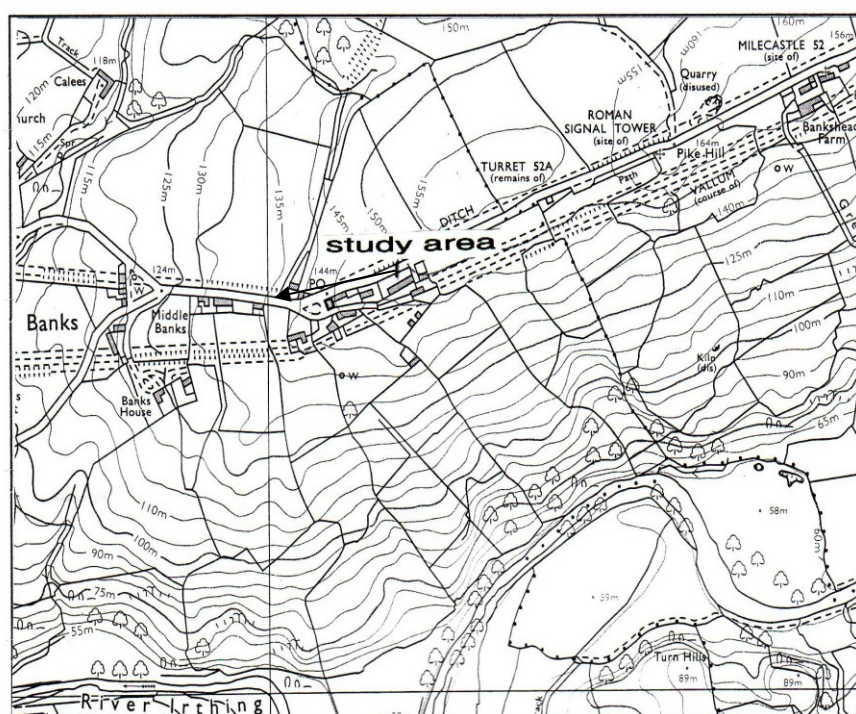


Figure 2. Study area showing location of signpost and its association with other cultural assets

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3.2 Walk-over study

Prior to the hole being dug, the site was rapidly assessed regarding to its location to the Wall. The Wall ditch was clearly visible to the north approximately 15m from the road whilst the Wall itself was likely to be below the current road make-up.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Project design

A Working Scheme of Investigation was presented by the archaeological contractor for approval by the curatorial authority English Heritage to monitor the excavation work. The WSI was approved by English Heritage prior to the fieldwork commencing.

The objective of the watching brief investigation is to carry out a formal programme of archaeological observations and investigations during any operations on site that may disturb or destroy archaeological or architecturally informative deposits or remains. The specific aims of the work are to:

- Provide a record of those works associated with the removal of the topsoil
- Provide a record of any significant archaeological or architectural features encountered by intrusive activities

In order to achieve these objectives, a record of all archaeological informative deposits encountered during the ground operations were made consisting of detailed context records on individual proforma sheets and field drawings, according to the protocols set out in the GMA manual.

The ground-works were undertaken by hand under archaeological supervision. This action consisted of observation of the spoil removal and monitoring the displaced soil. Revealed sections were checked for any past cultural activity and if necessary recorded according to the protocols of the GMA manual.

The development involved the installation of a signpost within a small reception pit approximately 0.30m x 0.30m in dimensions and up to 1.00m in depth at NY 57016 64578.

The reception pit for the finger post is approximately 10m north of the course of Hadrian's Wall within the area between the outer wall ditch and the Wall itself.

Therefore, the footprint for the finger post is believed to be within an archaeologically sterile area.

5 RESULTS

5.1 Reception pit

A small pit 0.30m x 0.30m was dug by hand to a depth of 0.97m located 0.80m west of the corner of the dry-stone wall that respected the bridleway and the road. The intervention was set 0.30m off the dry-stone wall within the 1.60m wide grass verge (figure 3).

The reception pit unearthed 0.60m of light brown clayey silt topsoil containing occasional broken stone overlying at least 0.37m of pink clayey sand bearing no stone and representing drift geology.

A large stone seen on the north side of the pit would appear to be part of the dry-stone wall fabric or its backfill (figure 4).



Figure 3. Location of the intervention



Figure 4. Reception pit for finger post

5.2 Finds and ecofacts

No finds were uncovered and no environmental samples warranted recovery.

5.3 Discussion

The reception pit did not compromise or damage the monument of Hadrian's Wall as it was located in an archaeologically sterile position within the backfill of a dry-stone.

6. ARCHIVE

The archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design and the guidelines set out by English Heritage (1991, 2006) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (1994, 2008).

The archive will be deposited with an appropriate repository, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle and a copy of the report donated to the County Sites and Monuments Record, as requested by the curatorial authority.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the staff of Carlisle Library with my research into the local history of the area and David Bowcock and his staff at Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle with the map regression and documentary material.

Finally, I am very grateful for the help and knowledge of the client Mr Andrew Nicholson who provided the background and recent history regarding this project.

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