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Northumberland

Archaeological
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MORPETH CASTLE GATEHOUSE

Morpeth, Northumberland

NGR 420012 585521

Archaeological Monitoring

Project 246-18-HS | May 2019

for Stewart Architects Ltd
on behalf of the Landmark Trust

VINDOMORA SOLUTIONS LTD
Archaeological Practice

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Archaeological Monitoring

Morpeth Castle Gatehouse

Morpeth Castle, Morpeth
Northumberland

May 2019



VINDOMORA SOLUTIONS LTD
Archaeological Practice

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SUMMARY

Name of location:	Morpeth Castle gatehouse
Address of location:	Morpeth Castle, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1NS
National Grid Reference:	NGR 420012 585521
Client:	Stewart Architects Ltd on behalf of the Landmark Trust
Project Type:	Archaeological Monitoring (Watching Brief)
Local Authority Conservation Team:	Northumberland Conservation
Historic England Inspector:	Lee McFarlane
Scheduled Monument Reference:	SM ND 653, HA 1006394
Scheduled Monument Consent:	S00203034
Project Site Code:	MCN-19
Vindomora Solutions Reference:	246-18-HS
Report Author:	Tony Liddell
Report Version/Date:	V1 / 07 May 2019
This document datestamp:	04 December 2019
OASIS Identifier:	vindomor1-376144
Ordnance Survey Licence Reference:	100053142
Google Earth Pro Licence:	Licensed 2015-19

CONCISE SUMMARY OF REPORT

On the 15th January 2019 Vindomora Solutions Ltd were commissioned by Stewart Architects on behalf of their client, the Landmark Trust, to undertake a scheme of archaeological monitoring at Morpeth Castle gatehouse, Northumberland. The Landmark Trust were undertaking a scheme of works to install new external handrails at the gatehouse.

The Castle holds Scheduled Ancient Monument status (SM ND 653, HA 1006394) and as such Scheduled Monument Consent was required for the project. The consent document (reference S00203034) marked the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to cover the installation of the handrail.

On the 26th February 2019, the monitoring took place on the excavation of twelve hand-dug post-holes and five bore-holes to allow for the installation of new handrails, in line with the Scheduled Monument Consent.

The depth of these post-holes did not exceed 0.32m, and were found at the maximum depth to still be within the reconsolidation layers undertaken by the Landmark Trust when they purchased the gatehouse in 1988.

No archaeological structures, deposits or artefacts were observed during the monitoring scheme.

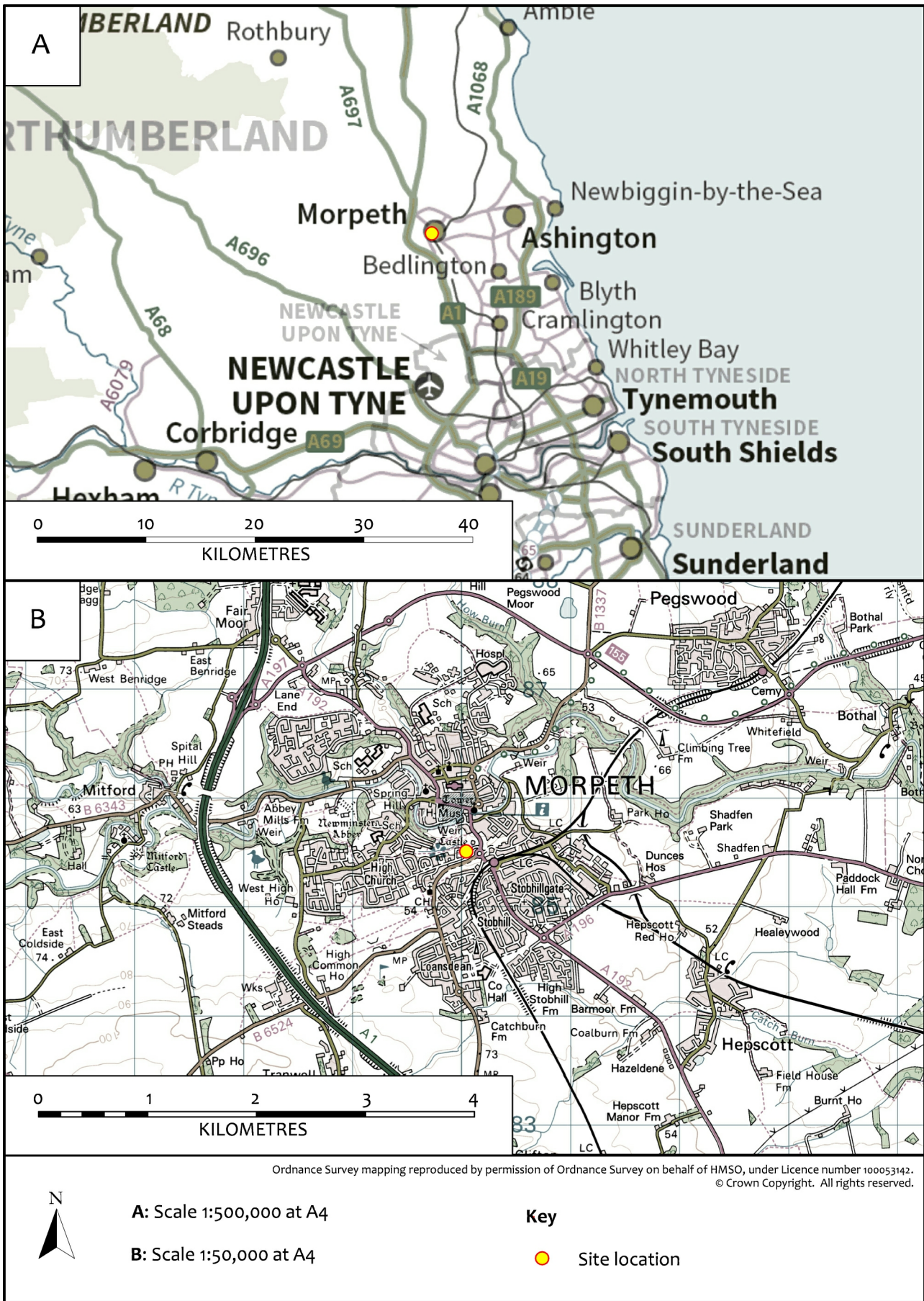


Figure 1. Location of the site, regionally.

1. SCOPE OF PROJECT



Plate 1. Aerial view of the site courtesy of Google Earth (dataset © 2017 Google).

1.1 Project location

- 1.1.1 The monitoring area was located on the west and south sides of Morpeth Castle gatehouse, Morpeth, Northumberland (centred at NGR 420012 585521). The site is accessed via Castle Walk which lies north of the A167. *Figure 1* shows the location of the site regionally, and *Figure 2* shows the location locally.
- 1.1.2 **Geology:** The development area lies over the Yoredale Group, consisting of successive limestones, sandstones, siltstones and mudstone. Over this lies glacial alluvium mainly composed of clay, silt, sand and gravel (British Geological Survey, 2019).
- 1.1.3 The site lies at an average of 56m OD (Ordnance Datum, above sea level).

1.2 Circumstances of the Project

- 1.2.1 On the 15th January 2019 Vindomora Solutions Ltd were commissioned by Stewart Architects on behalf of their client, the Landmark Trust, to undertake a scheme of archaeological monitoring at Morpeth Castle gatehouse, Northumberland. The Landmark Trust were undertaking a scheme of works to install new external handrails at the gatehouse. The Castle holds Scheduled Ancient Monument status (SM ND 653, HA 1006394) and as such Scheduled Monument Consent was required for the project. The consent document (reference S00203034) marked the requirement for an archaeological watching brief to cover the installation of the handrail.

1.2.2 Archaeological and historical research objectives are built into developer funded archaeological schemes of work. This is the result of a number of English Heritage national policy frameworks: *Exploring our Past* (1991), *Frameworks for our Past* (1996), *Research Agenda* (1997) and *Policy Statement on Implementation* (1999). The research priorities proposed initially to have potential direct relevance to this project are set out in *Shared Visions: North East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment* (2006), in particular:

Later Medieval: MDiv. Castles and defensive structures;
 MDvii. Medieval ceramics and other artefacts.

1.3 Written Scheme of Investigation

1.3.1 The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for this project was produced by Tony Liddell, Principal Archaeologist for Vindomora Solutions Ltd and approved by Lee McFarlane, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Historic England (Version 2, dated 21st February 2019).

1.4 Timetable of works

1.4.1 The fieldwork was undertaken on the 26th February 2019.

1.4.2 The results of the monitoring were compiled into this report during the week commencing the 6th May 2019, with the report finalised on the 7th May 2019.

1.5 Professional standards

1.5.1 The work undertaken was in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (2014) and their *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014) as well as the British Archaeologists' and Developers' Liaison Group's *Code of Practice* (1988).

1.6 Health and safety

1.6.1 Standard PPE was utilised for health and safety purposes throughout the fieldwork. All issues of on-site health and safety were undertaken in accordance with the Vindomora Solutions Limited *Health and Safety Manual* (updated 2018).

1.7 Archive

1.7.1 A full archive has been compiled in line with the specification and current UKIC and English Heritage Guidelines. The project code is **MCN-19** (**Morpeth Castle Northumberland 2019**). Vindomora Solutions support the **Online Access** to the **Index of Archaeological InvestigationS** project (OASIS). As a result, this report will be made available to the project under the unique identifier **vindomor1-376144**.

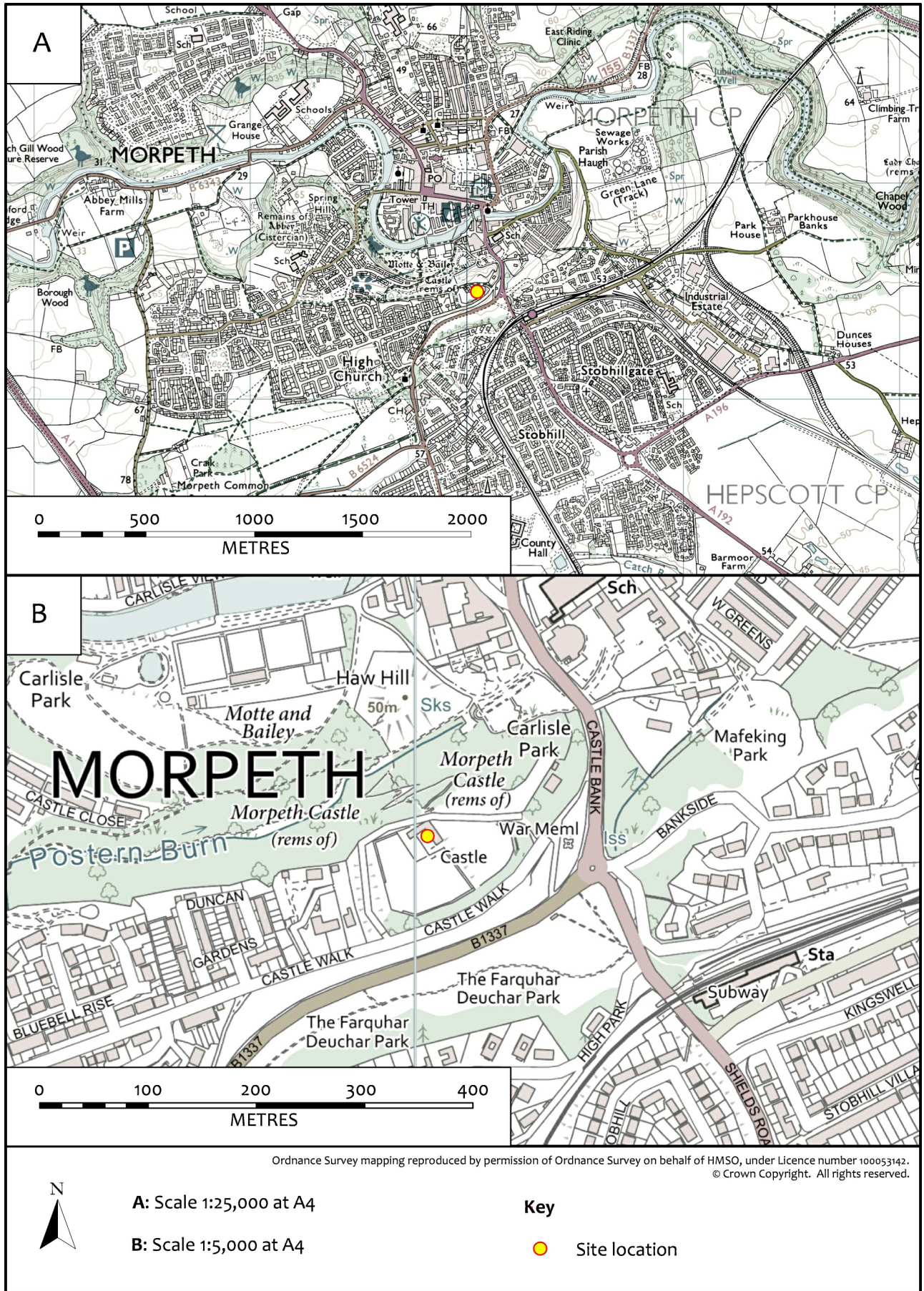


Figure 2. Location of the site, locally.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary

- 2.1.1 Morpeth Castle was built in the 13th century for the de Merlay family. In AD 1271 it passed from the de Merlays to the Greystokes who used it as an administration and command centre to manage their other estates. The gatehouse to which the monitoring scheme relates dates to circa 1300, built by the Greystokes with more aesthetics in mind than defence . By the end of the 17th century the castle was described as "mightily decayed" - a decay that resulted in the ruination of most of the structure.
- 2.1.2 The gatehouse was taken on by The Landmark Trust in 1988 and now serves as a holiday-let. At that time the monitoring area was excavated and re-laid into the form we see today.
- 2.1.3 While the excavation works were minimal, there was the potential to impact 12th-17th century structural or artefactual remains within the project.

2.2 Designations

- 2.2.1 The monitoring area lies within Scheduled Ancient Monument SM ND 653, HA 1006394.

3. THE MONITORING



Figure 3. The location of the post-holes.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The scheme of works consisted of the excavation of twelve post-holes by hand along the edge of the verge in the main southwestern yard, and the excavation of a further five bore-holes in the stone steps and cobbled area to the southeast of the main building. Figure 3 (above) shows the location.

3.1.2 These post-holes would hold the main posts for the new proposed handrails.

3.2 The boreholes

3.2.1 Five boreholes were drilled in the area southeast of the main building. Two were located to the west of the main steps into the building, two to the east of the border wall and a further within the steps leading down to the yard.



Plate 2. The boreholes to the west of the main steps.

Plate 3. Example borehole depth.



3.2.2 The boreholes had a diameter of 0.1m and were excavated to a depth of 0.28m. Plate 2 shows the boreholes in-situ by the main entrance, with Plate 3 showing an example depth.

3.2.3 The cores removed to allow the posts to be placed were of solid concrete in all five cases, presumably a result of the 1988 consolidation scheme.

3.3 The post-holes

3.3.1 Twelve post-holes were excavated by hand by the drain verge along the eastern edge of the yard.

3.3.2 The holes were excavated by first removing a single slab/cobble and then excavating beneath it by hand.

3.3.3 As such, the post-holes varied in size and width depending on the stone size removed, but averaged 0.18m square.

3.3.4 Each post-hole was excavated to a depth of approximately 0.3m. Beneath the slabs was a base layer of sand, with dark grey-brown sandy soil beneath, which included modern late 20th century debris.

3.3.5 Plate 5 shows an example of one of the hand-dug post-hole depths.



Plate 4 (above). The hand-dug post-holes along the verge, looking north.

Plate 5 (below). One of the post-holes showing excavated depth.



4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 On the 26th February 2019, a monitoring scheme took place on the excavation of twelve hand-dug post-holes and five bore-holes at Morpeth Castle gatehouse to allow for the installation of new handrails, in line with Scheduled Monument Consent (ref S00203034).
- 4.1.2 The depth of these post-holes did not exceed 0.32m, and were found at the maximum depth to still be within the 1988 reconsolidation layers undertaken by the Landmark Trust when they purchased the gatehouse.
- 4.1.3 No archaeological structures, deposits or artefacts were observed during the monitoring scheme.

5. REPOSITORIES AND SOURCES

5.1 Repositories

Beamish Museum People's Collection. Online at <http://collections.beamish.org.uk/>

Britain from Above Project. Online at <http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>

British Library. Online at <http://www.bl.uk/>

British Geological Survey. Online at <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html>

Durham Record Office. County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL

Google Earth Pro 2019

Historic England Archive. Online at <http://archive.historicengland.org.uk>

Keys to the Past. Online at <http://www.keystothepast.info>

Newcastle City Library. Local studies section, Princess Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1DX

PastScape Project. Online at <http://www.pastscape.org.uk/default.aspx>

Portable Antiquities Scheme. Online at <https://finds.org.uk/>

Tyne and Wear Archives. Blandford House, Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA

ViewFinder Project. Online at <http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/>

Vindomora Solutions Ltd Archive. Prospect House, Prospect Business Park, Leadgate, Consett, County Durham DH8 7PW

5.2 Sources

CIfA (2014) Code of Conduct. *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists*

CIfA (2014) *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs.* Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

CIfA (2014) *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials.* Institute for Archaeologists

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English Heritage (2008) *Conservation Principles - Policies and Guidance*

English Heritage (1991) *Managing Archaeological Projects.* Second edition

Historic England (2015) *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment - The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide*

Liddell, T. (2019) *Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological monitoring: Morpeth Castle, Northumberland.* WSI 246-18-HS.

Ordnance Survey mapping: 1857, 1895, 1915, 1919, 1939, 1978 and 2019 editions

Petts, D. & Gerrard, C. (2006) *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment.* Durham