

Historic Scotland
Properties in Care
Minor Archaeological Works 2007

Antonine Wall: Bantaskin

Archaeological evaluation, April 2007

HS PIC Index number: 8828
Project code: HSCO-8828-2007-01



30 August 2007
Kirkdale Archaeology

<u>Site</u>	Antonine Wall: Bantaskin
<u>N.G.R</u>	NS 874 799
<u>Project Description</u>	Archaeological evaluation
<u>Project code</u>	HSCO-8828-2007-01

Contents

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Description	3
3.0 Interpretation and observations	5
4.0 Conclusions and recommendations	6
A1.0 Appendix 1: List of contexts	7
A2.0 Appendix 2: List of drawings	7
A3.0 Appendix 3: List of photographs	7
A4. 0 Appendix 4: Archival references	8

SUMMARY: Trial trenching and the investigation of the hole left by an uprooted tree were undertaken on the Antonine Wall at Bantaskin, Falkirk, The aim was to find the depths of the upper deposits ahead of scarification works being conducted as part of a wider restorative landscaping initiative designed to make this previously overgrown stretch of the wall accessible to the public. As the scarification would affect a maximum of 100 mm depth, the trial trenches were cut to this depth.

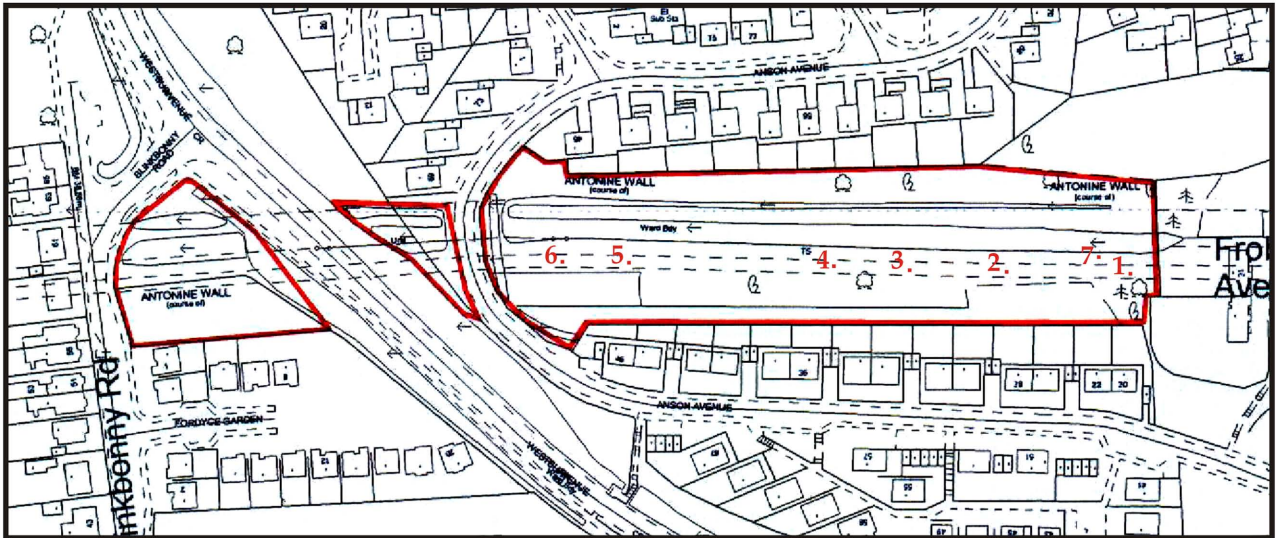
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its PIC call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Bantaskin, Falkirk to determine the viability of scarification works ahead of the reseeded of the top of the upcast mound of the Antonine Wall. The scarification was intended to remove all roots and tree matter to a maximum depth of 100 mm. Confirmation was therefore required that this work would not affect the sealed archaeological horizon below. Six test pits were dug from E to W along a line 3 m S of the upper edge of the mound. The E and N facing sections of the tree bole midway up the slope at the E end of the site were cleaned up to record the deposits within and were also recorded photographically.

The site is bordered to the S by a screen of holly bushes while the ditch, slope and banks of the wall are planted with mature trees, several of which have been felled. The area also had a thick covering of bushes and thick vegetation that have now been cleared. Scarification is therefore considered necessary in order to remove the profusion of roots in preparation for seeding.

All trenches were excavated by hand. Separate running context numbers were used for each of the trenches. As such, context numbers include a prefix referring to the trench number. For example, **F1001** is context **001** from Trench 1.

The work was carried out on 13 April 2007.



 limit of Scheduled Area

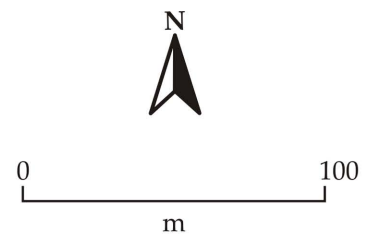


Fig. 1 : Plan showing location of Trenches 1-7

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Trench 1

Centred 7.90 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 290 mm E-W x 120 mm deep

Trench 1 consisted of **F1001**, an upper layer 120 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-20 mm thick. Below this, an orangey-brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F1002** was exposed but its depth was not established.

2.2 Trench 2

Centred 49.15 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 330 mm E-W x 100 mm deep

Trench 2 consisted of **F2001**, an upper layer 65 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-10 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F2002** was exposed to a depth of 40 mm.

2.3 Trench 3

Centred 81.30 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 330 mm E-W x 100 mm deep

Trench 3 consisted of **F3001**, an upper layer 75 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-15 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F3002** with occasional sub-rounded stone inclusions < 60 mm was exposed to a depth of 25 mm. Occasional charcoal flecks within.

2.4 Trench 4

Centred 106.50 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 330 mm E-W x 100 mm deep

Trench 4 consisted of **F4001**, an upper layer 70 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-20 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F4002** with occasional sub-rounded stone inclusions < 10 mm was exposed to a depth of 30 mm. Occasional charcoal flecks within.

2.5 **Trench 5**

Centred 174.50 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 330 mm E-W x 100 mm deep

Trench 5 consisted of **F5001**, an upper layer 75 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-rounded and sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-20 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F5002** with moderate, sub-angular/sub-rounded stone inclusions < 30 mm was exposed to a depth of 25 mm. Occasional charcoal flecks within.

2.6 **Trench 6**

Centred 196.00 m W of fence.

330 mm N-S x 330 mm E-W x 120 mm deep

Trench 6 consisted of **F6001**, an upper layer 120 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with moderate, sub-angular stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-20 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F6002** with moderate sub-angular/sub-rounded stone inclusions was exposed. Occasional charcoal flecks within.

2.7 **Trench 7**

Centred 19.50 m W of fence (6.0 m N of Trenches 1-6). Located halfway down slope between the top of the bank and the top of the ditch fill. This hole was created when a tree was uprooted - the stump lies at the E end of the trench.

Irregular cut 900 mm N-S x 1.90 m E-W x up to 600 mm deep. A section 500 mm E-W x 800 mm N-S was cleaned at the W end.

Trench 7 consisted of **F7001**, an upper layer 150-250 mm thick of loosely compacted, dark greyish-brown topsoil of fine silt containing 10% clay with occasional sub-angular and sub-rounded stone inclusions <40 mm, heavily cut through by roots and rootlets 2-20 mm thick. Below this, an orangey brown, moderately compact, silty clay surface **F7002** with occasional sub-angular sandstone inclusions (10%) was exposed to a depth of 450 mm.

3.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS

It seems likely that the orangey brown, silty clay surface found below the topsoil in every trench represents the remains of the degraded upcast bank of the Roman wall. This bank is thought to have been surmounted by a timber breastwork bedded within postholes, which may survive within this horizon. The inevitable slumping of the structure post-abandonment suggests that archaeological material could also survive within the matrix of the slumped bank. The sharp contrast between the dark topsoil and the compacted light surface below means that any features cut into the lower horizon would be easy to detect, although none were visible within the test trenches only a small percentage of the site was trial trenched. The section of the tree bole showed that while this may not be the face proper of the wall, there is an accumulated layer of slumped material at least 600 mm thick over it.

Although several sycamores were noted, it would appear that there might be a deliberate planting regime in place here. This almost certainly originates in the 19th century when the forestry of the estate around Bantaskin House underwent a change from the formal linear arrangement shown on the 1817 map by John Grassom (NLS EMS.s.623) to a stepped tree arrangement of three-forward three-back as shown on the 1860 Ordnance Survey Plan (25" to the mile, Stirlingshire sheet XXX – 3, Falkirk parish, 1st Edition). Remnants of this planting now can be seen interspersed with later invaders. This planting and the later unhindered overgrowing vegetation has probably caused considerable damage to the fabric of the structure.

4.0

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation has shown that the archaeological horizon of the top of the upcast bank sits at a general depth of *c* 65-75 mm below the current ground surface, although in places was encountered as deep as 120 mm. It would therefore seem prudent to set the depth of scarification at a maximum of 65 mm to avoid damaging any archaeological features that may exist immediately below the topsoil. If this were not practical then it would be necessary to have an archaeologist present to monitor the scarification work to identify and record any significant archaeological finds or features.

A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS

#	Description
F1001	Dark brown topsoil
F1002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F2001	Dark brown topsoil
F2002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F3001	Dark brown topsoil
F3002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F4001	Dark brown topsoil
F4002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F5001	Dark brown topsoil
F5002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F6001	Dark brown topsoil
F6002	Orangey brown silty clay surface
F7001	Dark brown topsoil
F7002	Orangey brown silty clay surface

A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS

#	Type	Scale	Description	Date
1	Plan	1:1000	Location plan	13/4/07

A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

HSCO-8828-2007-01-CD1

#	Description	From	Date
1	Trench 6 W Section	E	13/4/07
2	Trench 5 W Section	E	13/4/07
3	Trench 4 W Section	E	13/4/07
4	Trench 3 W Section	E	13/4/07
5	Trench 2 W Section	E	13/4/07
6	Trench 1 W Section	E	13/4/07
7-8	Trench 7 W Section	E	13/4/07
9-15	General views of site		13/4/07

A4.0**APPENDIX 4: ARCHIVAL REFERENCES**

Site	Antonine Wall: Bantaskin
HS PIC Index no	8828
Kirkdale Project no	HSCO-8828-2007-01
Date(s) of site work	13 April 2007

Report files submitted on CD:

Report in MS Word	HSCO-8828-2007-01-Report.doc
TIFFs	HSCO-8828-2007-01-Report Fig 1.tif
PDF	HSCO-8828-2007-01-Report.pdf

Other files submitted on CD:

Photo scans	HSCO-8828-2007-01-CD1- 1-15.jpg(s)
--------------------	------------------------------------