



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
FINAL REPORT

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GRANGE ROAD
FENHAM
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

prepared for

Bellway Homes (North East) Ltd.

Project No.: 2028

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Illustrations: Damien Ronan

NAA 20/32
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Client Bellway Homes (North East) Ltd.

Location Grange Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9LD

District Fenham

Grid Ref NZ 21569 65062

NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES

New water main

Grange Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne

Report of negative results

Site Name: Grange Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne

Administrative Authority: Tyne and Wear

Development: Domestic water main

Client: Bellway Homes (North East) Ltd

Contractor: Fastflow Pipeline Services Ltd

Monitoring Archaeologist: Eddie Dougherty

Project Manager: Matthew Town

Application Number: N/A

Grid Reference: NZ 21569 65062

Fieldwork Date: 18-03-2020 to 23-03-2020

Report Date: 24-03-2020

NAA Project Number: 2028

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Figure 1: Site location

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Plate 2: Trench cut through footpath showing existing services

Plate 3: Northeast-facing section of trench within development area

Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken during the insertion of a new water main at Grange Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne (Fig. 1). The area of investigation was close to the buried Roman fort of *Condercum* (Benwell Roman Fort) and south of the projected line of Hadrian's Wall, so there was the potential for the work to impact upon previously unrecorded remains of Roman or more recent date. The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a specification provided by the Tyne and Wear Archaeology Service at Newcastle City Council (Grahame 2019).

Location

Fenham is a westerly suburb of Newcastle upon Tyne, with Benwell to the south and Denton Burn to the west (Fig. 1). Grange Road is a minor residential street running northeast from West

Road into the centre of Fenham. The investigation area consisted of a newly excavated section of utility trench (Fig. 2), through the entrance to a new housing development, within the public footway bordering the property at 18 Grange Road, and partly into the street up to an existing water main.

Background

The area of investigation lies within an important historical landscape. The Roman cavalry fort of *Condercum* is situated on a level hilltop overlooking Newcastle upon Tyne to the east and is believed to have been constructed in c.AD124, but became a full cavalry fort only in the later part of the second century. In the second century, a cohort of Vangiones were stationed in the fort, replaced in the 3rd and 4th centuries by 1st Cavalry regiment of Asturians. A well-preserved road extended out of the north gate, and the surrounding landscape, now occupied by the new housing development, comprised a substantial agricultural field system and dwellings dating to the Roman period. The evidence for this was in the form of boundary ditches and fences identified from lines of postholes. The northern extent of the fort was destroyed in the 19th century by the construction of a covered reservoir.

The area of investigation also lies in the vicinity of the buried remains of Hadrian's Wall. The 118km-long wall was built on the orders of the Emperor Hadrian c.AD122 at the then northernmost limits of the Roman province of Britannia. Originally considered to have a purely defensive function, it is now understood to fulfil a more complex role, including controlling commerce and the passage of people. In the vicinity of the scheme of works, it comprised a substantial stone wall up to 10 Roman feet (3m) wide. Much of this is now beneath or to the south of West Road and Westgate Road. Larger defensive works (turrets, milecastles and forts) were spaced along the wall, providing entrances through the wall and stations for military personnel; a section of wall foundation, complete with turret, has been excavated and preserved in an area of grass bordering a housing estate, c.1.73km to the west of the area of investigation.

Results

The new service trench was excavated by the contractors using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under close archaeological supervision. No finds were recovered, or soil samples taken.

The trench measured 41.75m in length and was excavated to a maximum width of 0.6m and a maximum depth of 1m. The following description of the trench is from west to east, with the section through Grange Road first, then the section along the footpath and culminating just within the new housing development.

The section through Grange Road measured 4.1m in length by 0.3m in width and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1m. Throughout the length within the road, the natural substrate was not encountered. The earliest deposit consisted of a firm mid-brown clay with numerous inclusions of laminated sandstone throughout. This was overlain by a continuous thin 0.1m-thick layer of dark-grey silt, identified as bedding used in the road construction. Compressed in the upper surface of this material were roughly tooled rectangular sandstone blocks (maximum depth 0.2m). These blocks were firmly set to one and another with little or no spacing. In the gaps between each stone a deposit similar to the bedding material was observed. Overlying these was the present-day ground level comprising 0.1m of dark-grey tarmac (Plate 1).

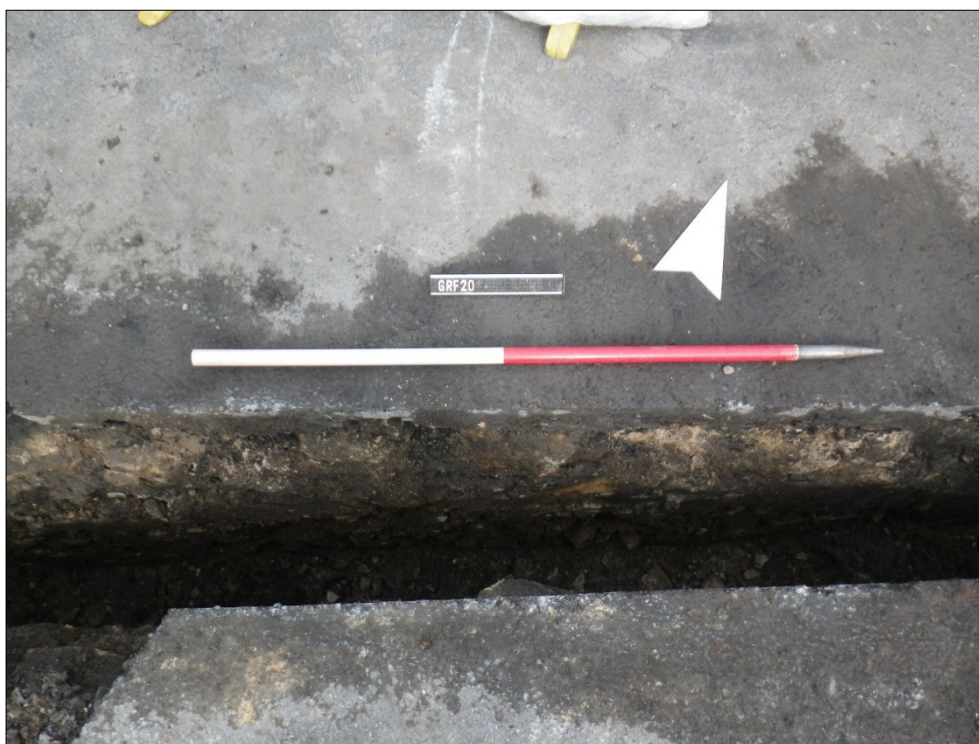


Plate 1: West-facing section through Grange Road showing its construction

The section of trench within the footpath measured 33.55m in length, 0.5m in width and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9m. Unlike the section through the road, natural clay and bedrock were encountered at ever-decreasing depths eastwards to a minimum depth of 0.15m

below present ground levels. Overlying the natural substrate predominantly in the western section was a fine compacted coaly deposit, excavated to a depth of only 0.1m. This was overlain by material with characteristics very similar to those found under the bedding material belonging to the road. This deposit was mainly brown clay with numerous inclusions of laminated stone to a maximum depth of 0.65m.

Cutting these deposits and surviving at various depths below ground level were six services: one within green plastic ducting; an electric cable for street lighting; a water pipe; a plastic yellow gas pipe; plus, a badly rusted pipe of unknown service. Each utility was within its own trench, and all backfilled with grey silty clay that contained fragments of sub-angular yellow sandstone. These service trenches all followed the same south-east/north-west alignment, parallel with Grange Road, except for the gas supply which intersected these at right-angles. In turn these utilities trenches were overlain by a 0.05m layer of coarse reddish-brown sand, the bedding material for the present-day public footpath. The public footpath comprised rectangular flagstone and areas of concrete where flagstone had been removed (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Trench cut through footpath showing existing services

The last section of trench was situated at the entrance to the new housing development. This section measured 4.4m in length to a maximum depth of 0.9m. The natural substrate was again observed at various depths, which increased as the route moved eastwards. As with a majority

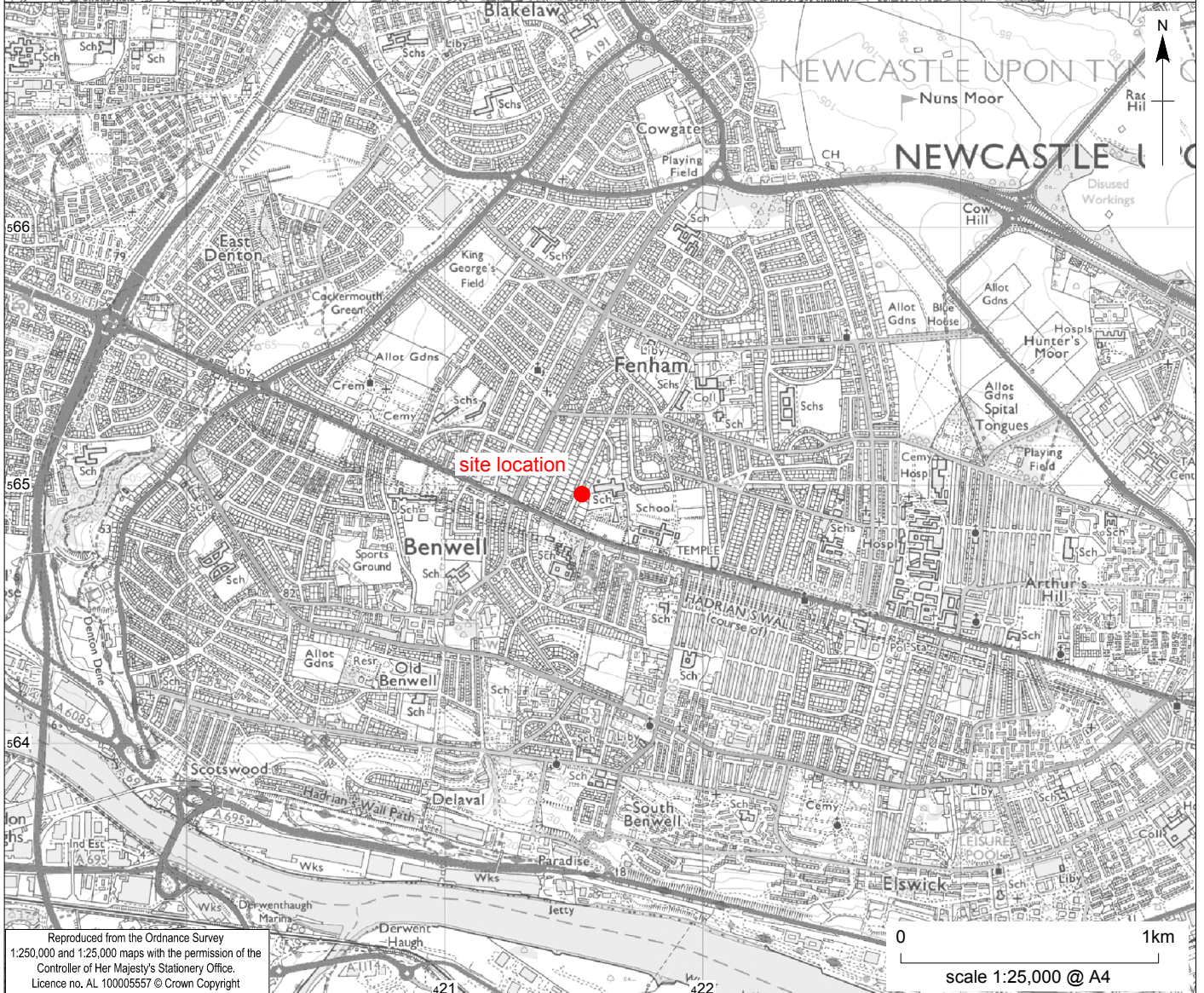
of the trench it was again overlain by a 0.4m layer of firm compact brown clay and stone. Sealing this was a continuous thin layer of fine dark-grey silt and sub-angular stone. This material was overlain by a compact regular thick layer of building debris comprising crushed red brick. Cutting these deposits on an oblique easterly alignment was a modern service trench, excavated to a maximum depth of 0.35m, and filled by yellow dolomite chippings. Contained within the back fill was a single stone glazed drainage pipe. Overlying these deposits was the present ground surface comprising tarmac and sub-base to a combined thickness of 0.2m (Plate 3).



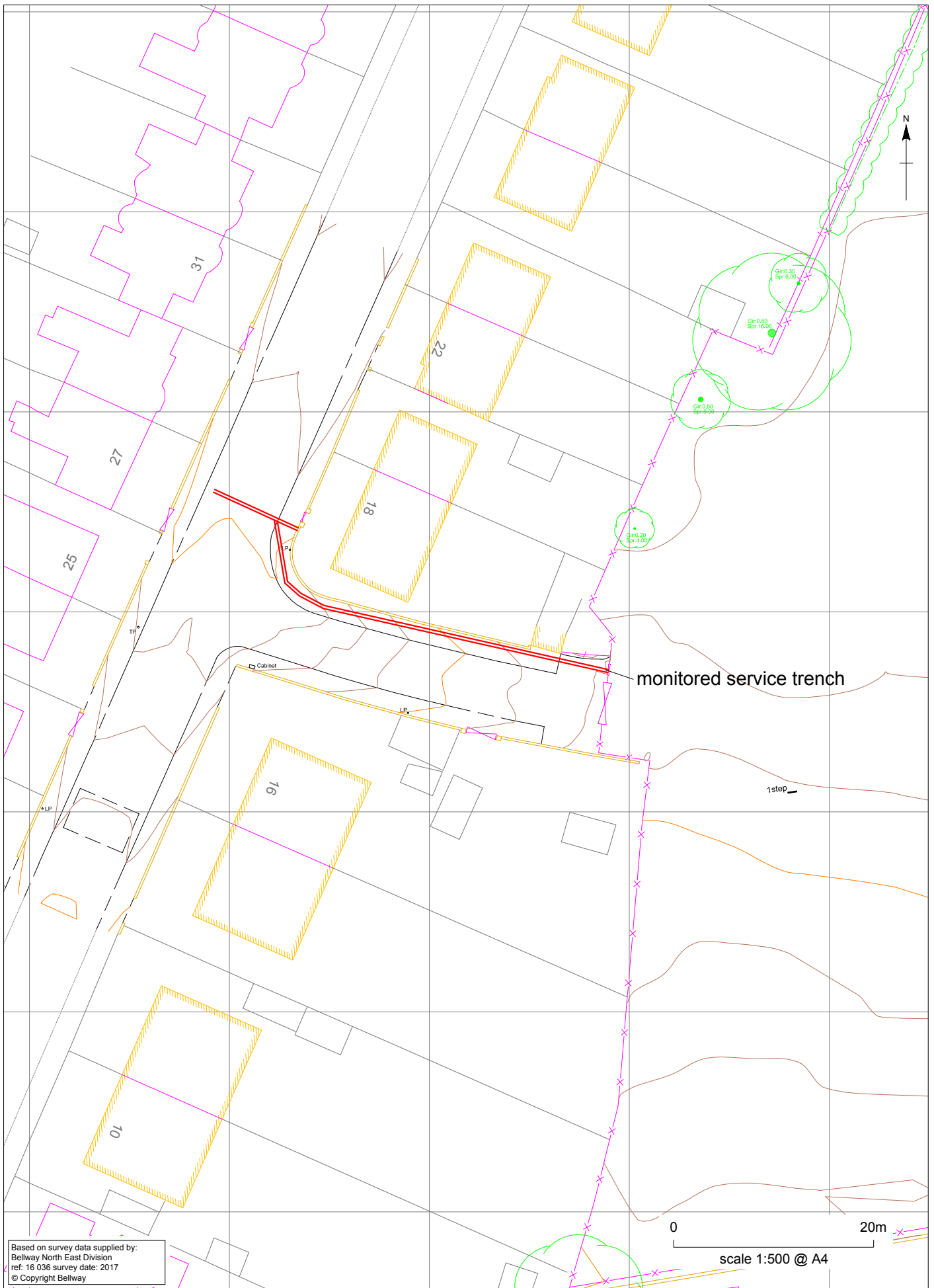
Plate 3: Northeast-facing section of trench within development area

References

Grahame R (2019) Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief at Grange Road, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear Archaeology Service unpublished document.



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Grange Road, Fenham: location of monitored service trench

Figure 2