

ART. IV – *An excavation on Hadrian's Wall at Hare Hill, wall mile 53, Cumbria*
BY N. HODGSON AND J. MCKELVEY with contributions by J. Todd and
A. Sage

IN 2003 English Heritage decided to consolidate and display a 12 m stretch of Hadrian's Wall which had recently been included within the Guardianship Area at Hare Hill, Cumbria (NGR NY 564646, Wall mile 53; Fig. 1 for location). The additional stretch lies immediately east of the well-known fragment that so captivated Hutton (1802, 264) – “I viewed this relick with admiration; I saw no part higher; it was within two feet of the battlements”. The line of the Wall in the adjoining area was marked only by a mound of rubble, riddled with tree roots, and surmounted by some recent drystone construction (Plate 1). No Roman masonry was visible. English Heritage therefore commissioned Tyne and Wear Museums to excavate an evaluation trench across its line, to find and examine surviving Roman work, and to establish the Roman ground level. This was to be followed by a clearance and recording of the remainder of the 12 m length in preparation for consolidation. This work was carried out in March 2004. The initial trench across the line of the Wall (Figs 1; 2) was 7 m in length and 2 m wide. Because of the unexpected depth below ground level of the surviving remains of Hadrian's Wall, only the eastern half of the trench could be taken down to these earliest levels. The section at the east side of the trench (Fig. 3) records the complete sequence of Roman and post-Roman activity.

The excavation

The Hadrianic Turf Wall and Stone Wall

In the eastern half of the trench the flagged footing (1011) of the Hadrianic stone Wall was found 1.20 m below the existing ground level. The footing slabs themselves were 100 mm thick and averaged 400 mm by 400 mm in area. The whole foundation had a width of 2.88 m = 9 ft 5 ins. Beneath the foundation slabs on the south side was a further layer of smaller sandstone fragments set in grey clay (1025), only 100 mm thick, perhaps used to level up the foundation because of unevenness in the surface (in fact the levelled Turf Wall) encountered by the builders (Plate 2).

The facing stones had been completely robbed, but fissures in the footing slabs on both north and south sides – caused by the weight of the inset superstructure above breaking the foundation slabs in half – allowed the width of the Wall above the footing to be determined at 2.32 m = 7 ft 7 ins. On the north side of the Wall the clay and rubble core behind the face survived to a height of 0.40 m, with a light adhesion of pink mortar where the backs of the facers had been (Plate 3).

On the north side the stone Wall footing sat on a dark, organic soil horizon (1020), up to 150 mm deep, immediately above the white natural sandy clay (1021). On the south side the organic material beneath the slabs was deeper (up to 300

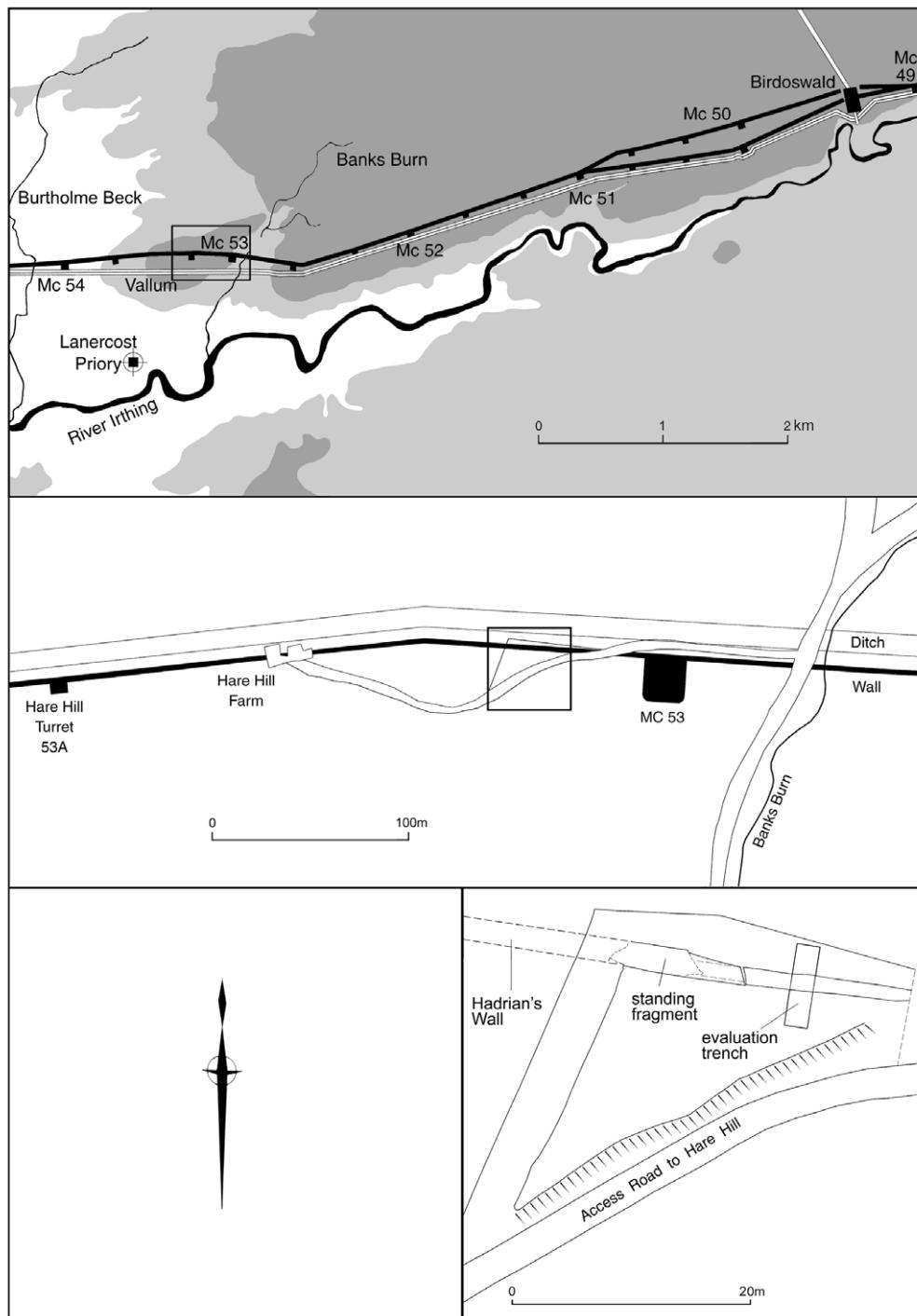


FIG. 1. Location Map.

mm), and resolved into two layers. The upper (1023), 150-200 mm thick, contained some black and grey lamination. This represented the base of the Hadrianic Turf Wall, largely removed at the time of the stone Wall construction, while beneath it lay the same soil horizon (1020) as on the north side of the Wall, representing the pre-Turf Wall vegetation. Unfortunately the width of the Turf Wall could not be ascertained or the back of the Turf Wall located, as the trench did not run sufficiently far south. Sondages were excavated through to the natural clay subsoil, confirming that the Turf Wall simply sat on the pre-existing ground surface and did not possess a cobbled foundation.

The construction sequence of the stone Wall was as follows (See Section, Fig. 3): following the levelling of the Turf Wall (1023), the footings were laid, either directly on Turf Wall material or on the pre-Roman soil horizon stripped of the Turf Wall. The footing slabs were abutted and slightly overlain by a mixed dump of blue-grey clay containing sandstone fragments (1019 = 1013). This filled a cut (1024) into the remains of the Turf Wall, 0.70 m wide and 0.14 m deep, which ran parallel to and 1.50 m from the south face of the flag footing. Over the blue clay, on the south side only, was a spread of orange sand and sandstone fragments (1008), tapering back from the footings for a distance of 1.16 m – debris from the construction of the Wall? Above this was a stony brown clay (1012), 240 mm deep, truncated at a distance of 1 m from the footings by the medieval robbing of the Wall superstructure. This must have been a soil horizon contemporary with the standing Wall. On the north side this layer was not seen. There, only material associated with the medieval robbing of the Wall lay above the blue-grey clay (1019).

The robbing of the Roman Wall

On the southern side of the Wall a wide and shallow robber trench (1018) had removed the Wall face down to the level of the foundation slabs, and was filled with sandstone rubble, clay and loam (1017) (Figs 2 and 3, in west side of trench). It had been cut from the soil horizon (1012) contemporary with the stone Wall. Although no robbing cut was apparent on the northern side of the Wall a 0.35 m depth of sandstone rubble, loam and clay (1015) extended north from the *in situ* Wall core (1016) to the limit of excavation, representing debris from the robbing out of the Wall. The robbing of the centre of Hadrian's Wall was not seen, because a later boundary wall (described below) was not removed in the excavation. As the robbing trench fill and overlying layers ran under the south side of the boundary wall, it can be deduced that the core of the Roman Wall was dismantled to this level at the same time as the faces were robbed out.

The later boundary wall

Rather than covering the extant core of Hadrian's Wall, the surface mound and rubble encountered at the start of the excavation in fact concealed a narrow, clay-bonded stone wall, 1 m-1.50 m wide, which was later than the robbing of the Roman Wall. The north face of the narrow wall was deeper – two more courses – than the south face, and built on the surviving core of Hadrian's Wall (Plate 3). On the south side, on the other hand, a layer of gravelly soil and rubble (1006), 0.20 m deep, had accumulated over the backfill of the robber trench before the construction



PLATE 1. State of remains before excavation.

of the narrow wall, showing that the latter had not been constructed immediately following the robbing. This accumulation contained a sherd of later-medieval pottery, providing a *terminus post quem* for the wall (1004) constructed on top of Hadrian's Wall.

Within the limits of the evaluation trench the wall survived to a height of four courses (on the north side). It was constructed of roughly faced brown sandstones averaging 0.38 m by 0.26 m by 0.15 m in size, with a core of brown silty clay. The wall varied considerably in the quality of its construction, being more neatly laid and tightly jointed on the northern side with a rougher appearance to the south. The upper parts of the remaining 12 m length of this wall were exposed during the clearance that followed the evaluation (Fig. 2). The wall varied in width between 1 m-1.50 m and was much disturbed by tree root activity.

On its southern side the wall was abutted by a brown clayey loam (1005), and on its northern a rough surface of cobbles and sandstone fragments in a mixture of dark loam and clay (1010), the latter shown in plan in the western half of the trench in Fig. 2. Both of these layers were overlain by the modern topsoil and turf.

Consolidation and display

As the evaluation trench had established that the highest surviving traces of the Roman Wall were over 1 m lower than the alignment of rubble and drystone walling

visible at the outset of the excavation, it was obvious that no Roman work would be revealed at this high level. Display of Hadrian's Wall, given the degree of robbing and depth of the remains, is not practicable at this point. The cleared remains of the boundary wall will be consolidated and displayed at ground level. The best that can be done to display the Roman Wall is to mark the alignments of its faces in modern materials.

Finds

Other than modern finds in the topsoil, only a single find was made, a sherd of medieval pottery, found in the soil accumulation 1006 intervening between the robbing of the Roman Wall and the building of the later boundary wall.

Andrew Sage writes: Weight: 13 g. Fabric Type: Later Reduced Greenware type. Our knowledge of rural pottery types in the north-west continues to be limited. However, this sherd fits into the broad category of late-medieval reduced greenware, and therefore may date from the mid-late 14th century up to the late 16th. In Scotland this type continues into the 17th century and this may also be the case in areas of the upland north of England.

Environmental samples

The following samples were taken:

1. Bulk sample (10 litres) of organic material (1020) on north side of stone Wall.
2. Bulk sample (30 litres) of Turf Wall material (1023) on south side of stone Wall.
3. Column through layers 1020, 1021 and 1022 on north side of stone Wall (pre-Roman organic layer and natural).

The samples were assessed by Jacqui Huntley, English Heritage NE Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science. Dr Huntley has indicated that although the samples contained pollen, this was in a poor state of preservation and did not justify further analysis.

Discussion

Turf Wall of Hadrian

Although it was not possible to establish the width of the Turf Wall, it was noted above that its structure was only observed on the south side of the stone Wall footings. At first sight this might suggest that the stone Wall was built on the very front edge of the demolished wall of turf. This relationship between the two walls would be highly unusual: wherever observed, the replacement stone Wall is usually set back at least 0.45 m from the front of the turf barrier (Table 1). Only at Turret 52A and Milecastle 79 does the replacement Wall come close to being flush with the front of the Turf Wall.

One would therefore expect some of the Turf Wall to be seen on the north side of the Wall at Hare Hill. The stone Wall was certainly not placed on the front edge of the Turf Wall at the next turret westwards, 53A, Hare Hill. It is more difficult to understand what was observed by Simpson and Richmond (1933, 267-70) at

TABLE 1: Measured distances between front of Stone Wall and front of Turf Wall.

Place	Distance between front of stone Wall and front of Turf Wall	References
T51A	0.45 m	Visible on ground; Charlesworth, 1973, 68
T51B	“nearly 2 feet”	Visible on ground; Simpson, 1928, 383
T52A	Stone Wall falls in with north face of turret	Simpson and Richmond, 1934, 149
T53A	Stone Wall set back about 2 feet from front of turret	Simpson and Richmond, 1933, 264-5
MC 54	About 1 m suggested by relationship of Turf Wall milecastle to stone milecastle	Simpson, Richmond and McIntyre, 1935, 236-44
MC72	Stone Wall set back 0.36 m from north edge of Turf Wall cobble base	Austen, 1994
Wall mile 72	1.12 -0.80 m	Austen, 1994
T72B	1.20 m	Simpson and Richmond, 1952, 15
MC79	Stone Wall sits very close to front of Turf Wall, at varying distance up to 0.60 m	Simpson and Richmond, 1952, 17

Milecastle 53, Banks Burn, only 50 m to the east. They recorded both a cobble foundation extending for 7 feet from the inside face of the stone milecastle north wall, and, over it, turf work, taken to be the Turf Wall, extending 20 feet south of the wall face, and 7 more feet of turf debris beyond that. At first sight this suggests that the north wall of the stone milecastle had been placed wholly north of the 20-foot width of the Turf Wall. But this would fail to account for the cobble foundation. If this was under the Turf Wall, it would only have lain under the northern third of the structure. Richmond and Simpson were writing before the nature of the Turf Wall milecastles was known, and given the small scale of their trench, it is possible that they misunderstood what they saw, interpreting remains of a Turf Wall milecastle as the Turf Wall itself. A simple, and possible, interpretation, would be that the cobbles represented a foundation for the Turf Wall, while the Turf work seen was in fact the back of the Turf Wall with a turf milecastle side wall (without stone foundation) abutting it. If this is correct, the fact that the cobble foundation of the Turf Wall extended for 7 feet south of the footings of the great Wall (*c.9* feet wide) means that 3-4 feet worth of Turf Wall should also have lain north of the stone Wall, to make up the standard 19-20 foot width. In short, the evidence from Milecastle 53, although difficult to understand, may also suggest that the stone replacement wall should have lain some distance back from the front of the Turf Wall.

Why, then, was the Turf Wall not seen north of the stone Wall in the present excavation? The explanation may lie in the sloping ground on which the successive walls were built. As the section at Fig. 3 illustrates, the natural profile of the ground slopes steeply to from north to south. For the builders of the Turf Wall, it was no inconvenience to place the front of the rampart at a higher level than the back. But

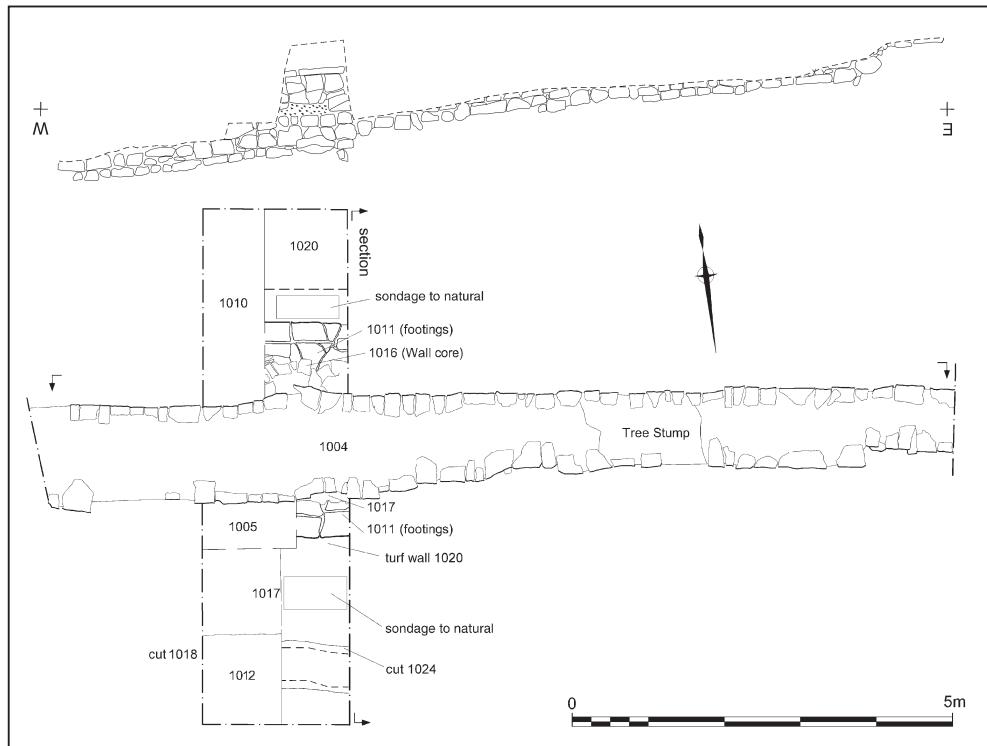


FIG. 2. Plan of evaluation trench and cleared remains of boundary wall and north elevation of boundary wall and exposed Roman Wall. Scale: 1:100.

the builders of the stone Wall, requiring a level surface on which to place the footing slabs, may well have created a terrace. A concern with levels is illustrated by the layer of stones (1025) placed beneath the footings on the south side. The whole operation will have had the effect of removing the north side of the Turf Wall completely, while leaving progressively greater depth of it *in situ* towards the south, as illustrated in the diagram at Fig. 4. It is possible to find a parallel for near wholesale removal of the Turf Wall by the stone Wall builders: at Turret 52A "there was little trace of the Turf Wall itself, beyond disturbed turf material to east and west . . ." (Simpson and Richmond, 1934, 151). No explanation can be offered for the feature found at Hare Hill cut into the levelled Turf Wall about 1.50 m south of the stone Wall.

The cobbled foundation beneath the Turf Wall at Milecastle 53, if not a localised occurrence associated with the Turf Wall milecastle, is suggestive of a possible change in the construction of the Turf Wall between that point and the present excavation. At Hare Hill there was certainly no cobbled foundation.

Stone Wall of Hadrian

At 2.32 m the width of the stone Wall is precisely what is known all the way from this site to the river Irthing, four miles to the east. In this sector the faces of the Wall

were carried straight up from the slab footing without offsets. The dimensions recovered in the excavation match the standing fragment at Hare Hill exactly and confirm the accuracy of its restoration (the northern facing stones were supplied between 1885 and 1895). The Wall at Hare Hill therefore belongs to the late-Hadrianic Narrow gauge replacement of the Turf Wall which started at the Irthing but whose exact westward extent remains unknown.

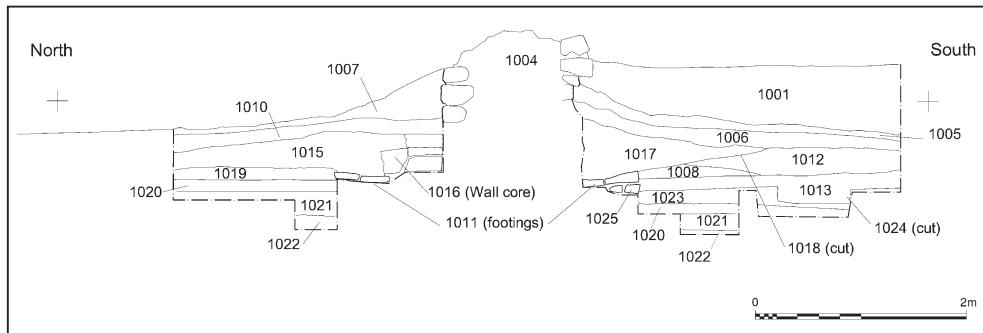


FIG. 3. West facing section, east side of trench. For position of section see Fig. 2.

It is worth commenting on the width of the offset ($0.28\text{ m} = 11\text{ ft}$) between the edge of the footings (2.88 m, 9 ft 5 ins wide) and the presumed face of the 7 ft 7 ins wall they carried. The footings are indeed wider here by 5 ins than reported at Milecastle 53 immediately east (Simpson and Richmond, 1933, 268) although the Wall above seems to have been the same width. Footings of very similar width appear to the west in the presumed area of the so-called Intermediate Wall (Cambeck Turret, 56B: 9 ft 4 ins to 9 ft 6 ins; Beck Turret, 57A: 9 ft 6 ins; Simpson *et al.*, 1934). This casts doubt on the statement of Simpson and Richmond (1933, 133) that "from Banks Burn milecastle, 53, to Beck turret, 57A, there is an increase in the width [of the flag footing] from six to twelve inches". Here we have such an increase occurring in the 75 m between Milecastle 53 and Hare Hill, but we know that the Wall on top was Narrow in both cases. The width of the flag footing alone can no longer be taken as evidence for where the change to Intermediate Wall occurred. Clearly the Narrow Wall did not end at the Banks Burn, and if a natural feature is sought, it is more likely to have been the Burtholme Beck, just east of Turret 54A, Garthside, where Richmond reported the Intermediate Wall (Simpson and Richmond, 1933, 141; this presumably the basis for the *Handbook to the Roman Wall* statement that the change occurred around Turret 54A: Daniels, 1978, 19).

The Wall throughout this sector was eventually rebuilt with a mortared core, as evidenced at Garthside Turret and by surviving fragments just east of Banks Burn, at Garthside, and at Hare Hill itself, in the standing fragment. Yet the core of the Wall reported here was clay and rubble. This suggests that when the mortar rebuild took place it was not from ground level but on top of some 1 m height of surviving Hadrianic core and facing.

The evaluation trench extended only a small way onto the berm between Hadrian's Wall and its ditch (only some 0.75 m beyond the postulated north face of the Turf Wall), and so it was not possible to search for natural-cut emplacements for

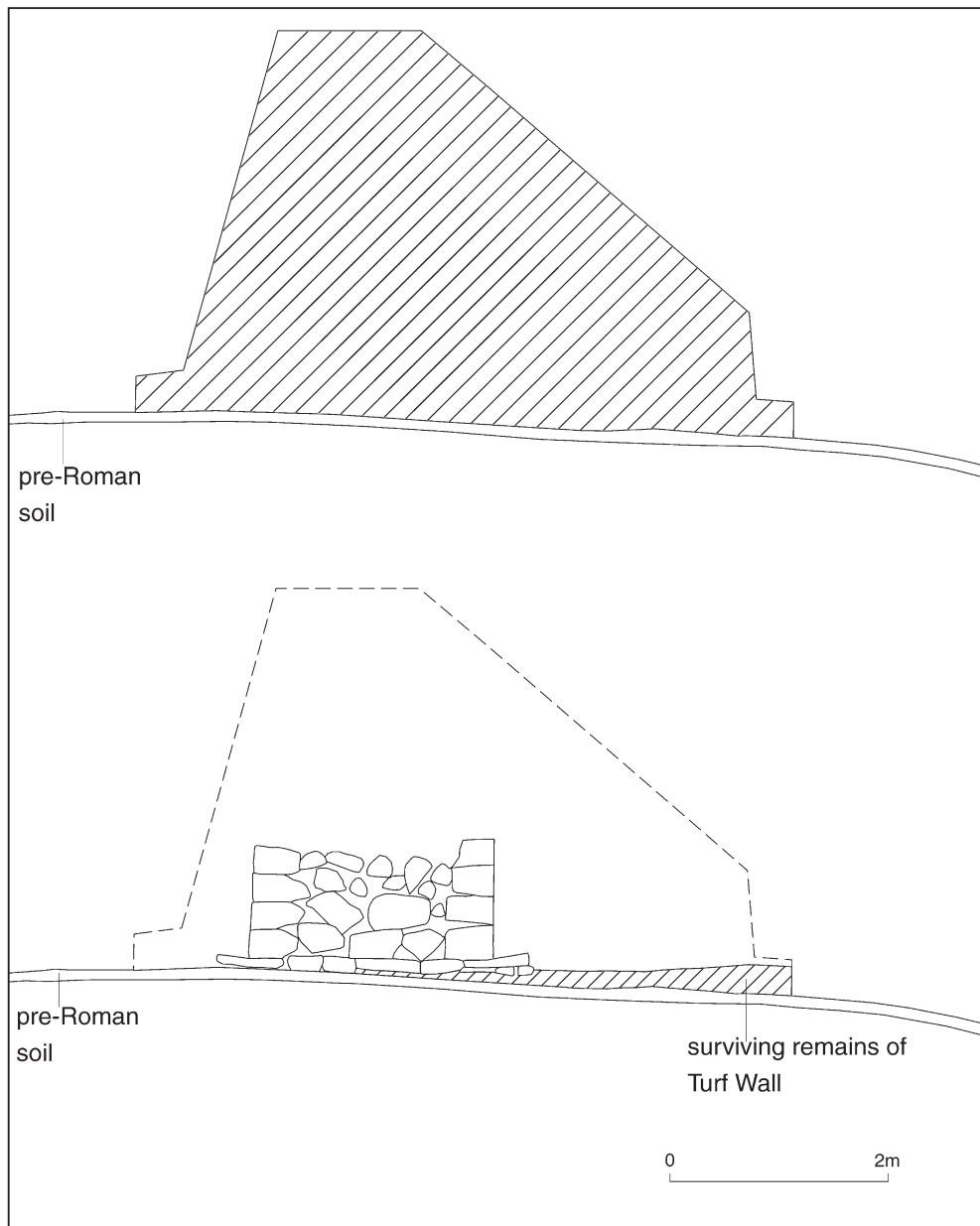


FIG. 4. Diagram illustrating removal of Turf Wall to create level platform for Stone Wall.

a defensive entanglement on the berm, of the sort that have recently been found towards the eastern end of the Wall (Frain *et al.*, 2005; McKelvey and Bidwell, 2005; Bidwell, 2005). The opportunity was taken to record the profile of the ground over a distance of 22 m from the face of the stone Wall (Fig. 5). The ditch is not clearly visible on the ground at Hare Hill, but there is a clear depression that probably marks its line. This suggests a berm width of some 6 m, the previously unexplained “wide berm” that may have been designed to accommodate obstacles. The berm was also found to be wide (over 10 m) at Milecastle 53, 50 m to the east (Simpson and Richmond, 1933, 270).

Medieval robbing and boundary wall construction

This sequence exactly resembles that recorded by Simpson and Richmond (1933, 266) at Hare Hill Turret (53A) in 1932. They found that the Roman Wall had been systematically dismantled down to its foundations and replaced by an unmortared wall 3 ft 6 ins wide, and noted that a layer of gravelly soil lay between the remains of Hadrian’s Wall and the later wall. They plausibly associated the robbing of the Roman Wall with the need for stone to build Lanercost Priory, and suggested that the narrow medieval wall represented the provision of a boundary wall to the Priory estate after an interval of some time (as evidenced by the intervening layer of soil). Over the whole length of wall-mile 53, including the stretch reported on here, Hadrian’s Wall marked the northern boundary of the Lanercost Priory lands (see Appendix).

As well as being seen here and at Hare Hill Turret, the boundary wall can still be traced on the ground at many points along the levelled line of Hadrian’s Wall running westwards to Burtholme Beck, which was certainly the western boundary of the Priory lands. Immediately west of Burtholme Beck there still stand three impressive, if overgrown, fragments of the Roman Wall. The eastern end of the estate parcel was probably, though not certainly, at Banks Burn, and beyond here also the Roman Wall was not dismantled in the same way: a huge fallen fragment, still possessing a few facing stones on the southern side, lies in the field immediately east of the burn. The particularly thorough dismantling of the Wall exemplified at Hare Hill is thus firmly linked to the Lanercost estate. The association with the building of the Priory remains plausible. A study by Peter Hill has concluded that a very large amount of the Priory fabric may indeed have come from the Wall, and that clearly unmodified Roman Wall stone was used, for example, in the thirteenth-century west range (Summerson and Harrison, 2000, 191-2).

Although the boundary wall cannot be dated beyond the ceramic proof that it is high-medieval or later, its existence suggests the irony that, having demolished the Roman Wall to obtain building material the canons of Lanercost were confronted with the need to redefine the boundary of their estate, perhaps some time after the onset of border warfare and general disorder at the beginning of the fourteenth century (Summerson and Harrison, 2000, 31-5). It is notable that the boundary wall was more impressively constructed on its northern side, confirming that rather than being a simple demarcation it was outward looking and intended to deter entry into the Lanercost lands. A date in the fourteenth century, but perhaps before the impoverishment of Lanercost in the fifteenth century would seem most likely for the construction of the wall. Any date after the Dissolution would sit uncomfortably

with the apparent fact that Hare Hill Turret was still standing and in some way usable when the boundary wall was built up to it. The turret must have long disappeared by the time that Horsley described the Wall here. It seems most probable that visitors such as Horsley and Hutton mistook the medieval for the Roman wall, in which case it must have been thoroughly decayed. There were later pieces of wall constructed along the same line: Hutton (1802, 264-5) described part of the Wall at or near Hare Hill: "Three tier of facing stones, ten yards long, and four feet high, with a new wall added by a gentleman to the old, which will preserve it". It is possible that Hutton was describing a recent augmentation of the decayed medieval or post-Dissolution wall, and it will be recalled that there was some drystone wall construction above the boundary wall in the excavated section. The size of the tree stump that had to be removed from the excavated portion also denoted a considerable age.

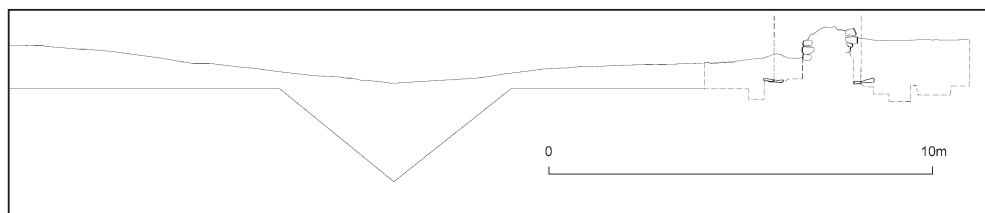


FIG. 5. Profile of berm, north of Stone Wall, with position of ditch reconstructed. Scale: 1:200.

The recognition of the later boundary wall in the Banks Burn to Burtholme Burn sector also solves a riddle posed by early excavations on this part of the Roman Wall. Haverfield (1895, 455; 466) had run a trench from the Vallum to the Wall at Cragglehill, not far west of Hare Hill. "Close to the Wall", he wrote, "was a flagstone pavement, as it seemed, 28 inches wide". This he interpreted as "either a footpath or an extra foundation course". What he describes is exactly the appearance of the footing slabs at Hare Hill, if the face of the medieval wall was taken to be Roman. Finding the boundary Wall at Hare Hill Turret, Simpson and Richmond realised the significance of what Haverfield saw: the "pavement" was really the slab footing of Hadrian's Wall, its masonry robbed. "Had his trenches crossed the Wall, Haverfield would have found that the south face he saw was that of the medieval boundary wall" (Simpson and Richmond, 1933, 267). Haverfield recorded a similar phenomenon at two other points. One was at Gilsland Vicarage, where it is clear now that it is the Broad Wall foundation with Narrow Wall on top that is being described (Haverfield, 1895, 467). The third observation (*ibid.*, 459), at Brunstock, three miles east of Carlisle, is less easily dismissed. Here, "Nine feet south from its [the Wall's] front we found . . . a rough platform nearly three feet wide. This reappeared in a section 250 yards to the west . . .". Only future excavation may explain this feature, but we can now ignore Haverfield's claim that it reappeared "in the sections near Lanercost [i.e. Cragglehill] and Gilsland".

Early settlement at Hare Hill

Adjoining the present excavation to the west is, of course, the famous fragment of Hadrian's Wall that is the highest surviving fragment anywhere. It remains to ask



PLATE 2. Footings on south side of Hadrian's Wall, sitting on Turf wall material. Above, stony soil accumulation and medieval boundary wall sits above backfill of robber trench of Roman Wall.
Scale with 0.50 m divisions.

why this escaped the thorough stone-robbing of the canons. Turret 53A, a short distance away, was also left intact, abutted to either side by the later boundary wall, perhaps, as Simpson and Richmond suggested, because it continued to serve as a border watchtower or beacon. Between the two, on the summit of Hare Hill (where the modern farm lies), a further piece of the Roman Wall may have escaped the medieval robbing. This, rather than the now surviving fragment at Hare Hill, has been suggested (Snape, 1996, 11-17) as being the remnant that Horsley (1732, 153) described (and estimated as 12 feet in height):



PLATE 3. Footings and core on north side of Hadrian's Wall, with medieval boundary wall sitting over Roman core. Scale with 0.50 m divisions.

A little west of the brook called *Banks-burn*, at a house called *Hare-hill*, is the highest part of the wall that is anywhere now to be met with . . . Here has been a *castellum*, the prospect from hence being very good. The foundations of the *castellum* may be discerned, tho' there has been a house within it, the end of which has stood against the wall, and probably been the occasion of its being preserved at such a height.

Hutton (1802, 265) describes two upstanding pieces of Wall at Hare Hill, one of which sounds like the presently surviving fragment, the other now reduced to five feet but associated with "the foundation of a castle twenty yards square", and perhaps identifiable with the fragment in Horsley. It does sound as if in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century something that could be interpreted as a

milecastle was visible at the summit of Hare Hill, with a standing fragment of Wall associated with it. By Hodgson's time (1840, 297) it had completely disappeared, but by then the modern farm had developed at the top of the hill (Snape, 1996, 16). If the "castellum" was on the hill-top, it cannot have been a Roman milecastle, as that lay at Banks Burn (Milecastle 53). It has been suggested (Snape, 1996, 13) that it may have been a medieval or post-medieval enclosure or defence belonging to a house on the hilltop.

We are left with two pieces of Roman work – Turret 53A, and the surviving Hare Hill fragment – which definitely escaped robbing, and, if the accounts of Horsley and Hutton are not hopelessly misleading, a third possible case, on the hilltop at the present Hare Hill farm. The proximity of these three pieces is interesting, and their preservation as a group contrasts with the otherwise total destruction of the Wall on the north boundary of the Priory lands. The Roman structures must have survived either because they could still be used, or because they had houses or other structures built against them, in the way that Horsley described. The importance of this is that it indicates a settlement or cluster of buildings at Hare Hill, predating the main destruction of the Roman Wall, that is perhaps as early as the twelfth or thirteenth century. There is no specific historical reference to a settlement at Hare Hill before 1603, when a map in the Howard of Naworth collection at Durham (C713/3) indicates that a settlement there was occupied by Humfry Bell. On the other hand, there is no reason why there should not have been an early settlement here. There was twelfth century church building at Triermain and Walton, and a mill established on Priory lands before 1181 implies established cereal cultivation (J. Todd, *in litt.*). The pattern of settlement was dispersed, and a hamlet at nearby Hare Hill would not be surprising. But the failure of the monastic stone robbers to dismantle certain parts of the Wall at Hare Hill provides the strongest indication of a twelfth- or thirteenth-century settlement there.

APPENDIX

The boundary of the lands of Lanercost Priory at Hare Hill

By John Todd

When Robert de Vaux, lord of Gilsland, first endowed Lanercost Priory, he gave to the canons (*inter alia*)

... eandem landam de Lanrecost per has divisas, scilicet inter murum antiquum et Irthinam et inter Burth et Poltros. (. . . the said laund of Lanercost, with these boundaries, namely between the ancient wall and the Irthing and between Burth and Poltros.)¹

The charter was granted between 1165 and 1174. *Landa*, here translated by the near-obsolete but conveniently-neutral "laund", starts off with the meaning "wood, glade or clearing", but comes to mean "meadow or pasture". Its Early English equivalent is *leah*.²

Can we plot the laund's boundaries? Since the laund is the first parcel of land to be mentioned in the cartulary, it is likely to have included the site of the priory buildings. The cartulary scribe evidently recognised only one wall as "the ancient wall": Hadrian's.³ The Wall and the river Irthing run roughly parallel to each other from east to west. The other boundaries mentioned can therefore be expected to run approximately north-south. To the west of the priory lies Burtholme Beck, likely to

be the “Burth” of the charter. “Poltros” is a little more difficult. The modern stream named Poltross lies seven kilometres away on the Northumberland boundary, and runs into the Irthing from the south: it does not fit the boundaries of the land under discussion. The “Poltros” of the charter is more probably the previous name of either Banks Burn or Mill Burn, both of which cross the Wall on their southward course to join the Irthing.⁴

The charter therefore shows that Hadrian’s Wall at Hare Hill, which lies between Burtholme Beck and Banks Beck, formed part of the northern boundary of the first land to be given to Lanercost priory.

¹ *The Lanercost Cartulary (Cumbria County Record Office MS DZ/1)* (Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Record Series vol. XI, Surtees Society vol. CCII, 1997) no. 1, 52.

² Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (London, 1984), 198-9.

³ *Lanercost Cartulary*, nos. 43, 58, 97-8, 140, 144, 201, 206, 225, 256-7.

⁴ The cartulary has other instances of Cumbric stream-names that later acquired English forms: *Polterkened* (Peglands Beck), *Polternan* (Castle Beck), *Polkedith* (Carling Gill) (*Lanercost Cartulary* nos. 1, 24).

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to David Sherlock of English Heritage, who commissioned this work and did his utmost to facilitate it. He was also generous with his knowledge and offered much fruitful discussion of the problems surrounding the Wall at Hare Hill and its subsequent history. The landowner, Mrs Steinbugler, the occupier of the house next to the excavation, Mr Willey, and the farmer at Hare Hill, Mr Gamble, were welcoming and helpful at all times. Elaine Watson at Birdoswald Roman Fort kindly arranged for her Site Warden, Vigo Nicholson, to help with removal of tree roots, which he cheerfully did in wintry conditions. Staff of Tyne and Wear Museums, Graeme Stobbs, Eddie Dougherty and Mick Coates are thanked for their work on site. Paul Bidwell placed his knowledge of Hadrian’s Wall west of the Irthing at our disposal and read and commented on this report. We are grateful to John Todd for discussing the medieval history of the area and providing the appendix on the boundaries of the Lanercost Priory Lands, to Andrew Sage for his report on the medieval pottery, and to Jacqui Huntley for advising on environmental sampling. This article is published with the aid of a grant from English Heritage.

Archive deposition

There is no separate archive report, as this publication contains the complete context record. The original excavation records and archive will be deposited with Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

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