

Consolidation and Conservation of Hadrian's Wall at Great Chesters

Haltwhistle, Northumberland

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING AND RECORDING 2013-2014

April 2016



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Site Name: Great Chesters, Haltwhistle, Northumberland
Grid Reference: NY 694 668 to NY 709 667
Scheduled Monument No: 26065
Oasis ID: alanwill1- 252012



Frontispiece: Stephen Allen (right) and dry-stone walling team west of Great Chesters. Winter 2013.

SUMMARY

Major consolidation and conservation works to safeguard a number of lengths of Hadrian's Wall entered on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register and supported by the SITA Trust, were carried out over 2013-14. Strategy for the project was developed as a partnership between the former Hadrian's Wall Heritage and English Heritage (now Historic England). Areas of work included parts of the Wall between Housesteads and Peel Crag; stretches adjacent to Great Chesters Roman Fort and a length west of Burtholme Beck, north-west of Lanercost Priory.

This report describes work carried out on areas of the Roman Wall east and west of Great Chesters improving protection for the remains of the monument, mostly lying below fragile and tumbled dry-stone field boundaries, by rebuilding them as effective stock-proof barriers. As initially designed, the project areas lay across three stretches of Roman Wall: within Cockmount Hill Plantation; within pasture to the west of Great Chesters Farm; and within pasture to the east of Great Chesters Farm. Because of the closure of Hadrian's Wall Heritage in 2014, works on the stretch of Wall in Cockmount Hill Plantation were not carried out, although a later discrete scheme funded by Historic England appears as Appendix 2 in this report.

West of Great Chesters Farm, remains of the Wall were largely hidden beneath a frequently tumbled and decayed dry-stone field wall. Threats to the monument were continued loss of the protecting wall, and consequent tracking by livestock across low points in the tumbled boundary. East of Great Chesters Farm, the Wall also lay below a dry-stone field boundary. Threats to the monument here included regeneration of shrubs and trees in the Wall face and loss of unbedded Wall stones.

Consolidation works involved the monitored disassembly of the field walls along the line of the Roman Wall and rebuilding as a durable and stock-proof boundary. Inspection of surviving areas of the Wall has provided information about the likely extent of its survival in the area and for Roman construction techniques.

1. THE PROJECT

1.1 Background

A major consolidation and conservation project to safeguard a number of lengths of Hadrian's Wall entered on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register and supported by the SITA Trust was carried out over 2013-14. The strategy for the project was developed in 2012 as a partnership between the former Hadrian's Wall Heritage and English Heritage (now Historic England). Works were managed by Tristan Spicer of Doonan Architects, Hexham, and carried out by Heritage Consolidation Ltd. of Greenhead, assisted by Stephen Allen, a Cumbrian dry-stone waller and his team.

In Northumberland, areas of work included a length of the Wall between Housesteads and Peel Crag and two discrete stretches to east and west of Great Chesters Roman Fort. In Cumbria, works were carried out on remains of the Wall at Burtholme Beck, north-west of Lanercost Priory. This report describes work carried out for the project on areas of the Roman Wall around Great Chesters.

1.2 Great Chesters

The project centred around Great Chesters farm which lies within the civil parish of Haltwhistle and the Central Sector of Hadrian's Wall at NY 700 668. Haltwhistle lies one and a half miles to the south and Haydon Bridge eight miles to the east, both settlements in the broad valley of the River South Tyne.

Dropping down to the west of the dissected ridge of the Whin Sill at Cawfields Quarry, the Wall enters a gentler landscape of improved pasture a little way to the east of Great Chesters Farm, the buildings of which sit on the northern edge of the Roman Wall Fort of *Aesica*.

1.3 Conservation Works

Conservation and rebuilding works to both east and west of the farm (see figures 1 and 2) involved the monitored disassembly of tumbled dry-stone field walls overlying the line of the Roman Wall and including discrete areas of surviving Roman fabric, some *in-situ* facework. Limited deep filling and tamping of Roman work was carried out where necessary to stabilise the fabric; rebuilding of overlying dry-stone wall boundaries following on directly.

2. THE WALL AT GREAT CHESTERS

2.1 Character

Conservation and rebuilding works for the project were carried out along the line of Hadrian's Wall east and west of the farm, the early south-eastern ranges of which overlie the north-eastern perimeter of the Wall Fort of Great Chesters (*Aesica*). To the east of the fort, the remains of the Roman Wall are submerged below a relatively modern dry-stone farm wall on land rising slowly westwards from 195m aOD. Here the project dealt with a 300m length of the Wall between NY 7065 6685 and NY 7095 6680. Works continued 190m west of the fort for a distance of 340m (between NY 6981 6684 and NY 7015 6683), again on land rising continually to the west towards Cockmount Hill Plantation to around 215m aOD. Here, too, the Wall was overlaid by a modern dry-stone field boundary.

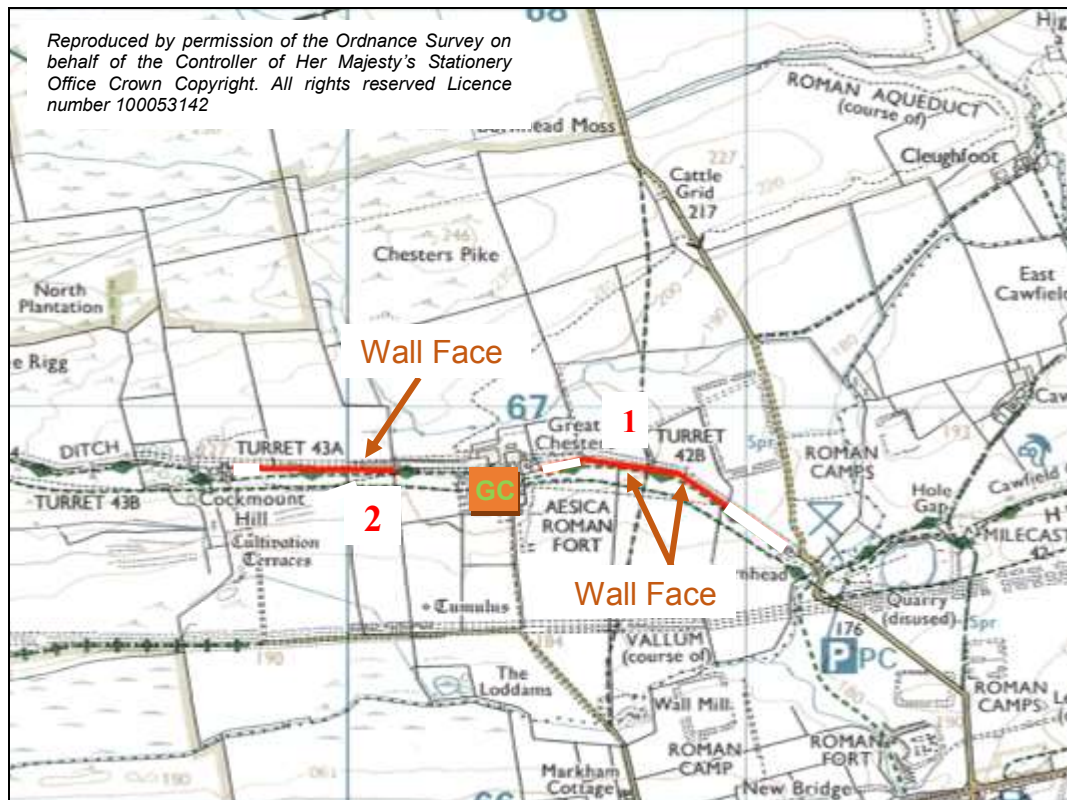


Figure 1: Project Areas (in red) at Great Chesters (Fort in orange and marked GC):
1. East of Great Chesters Farm; 2. Between Cockmount Hill Plantation and Great Chesters Fort. In-situ Roman Wall face is arrowed.

2.2 Geology

Solid geology in the area of Great Chesters is formed of a succession of sedimentary Carboniferous beds including limestone, sandstone, shales and a number of bands

of coal. Whinstone, an igneous dolerite intruded into this sedimentary series as a dyke, runs across the area. Whinstone was extracted from Cawfields Quarry to the east which removed a considerable section of the Wall west of Milecastle 42 (Cawfields). Superficial geology is Boulder clay.

2.3 Status of the Remains

Hadrian's Wall and the associated array of Roman frontier works (within Wall miles 42 and 43) are protected as Scheduled Monument No. 26065 (List entry No. 1010976) between the Caw Burn in the east and the track to Cockmount Hill farm to the west. The area also lies within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall and the Northumberland National Park. Upstanding Roman features within the scheduled area are also listed grade 1.

2.4 Threats to the Roman Wall

Hadrian's Wall between Caw Burn (east) and to Cockmount Hill Farm was entered on the Heritage at Risk Register as priority D: in 'slow decay, solution agreed but not yet implemented' and in need of further consolidation. The greatest threat to Roman Wall fabric east of the Great Chesters Farm came from the generation of woody shrubs and bushes in the face and top of the dry-stone wall encroaching into Roman fabric. In a number of areas, the overlying field wall was also very tumbled, exposing Roman fabric to damage by livestock. To the west of the farm, the greatest threat was the decrepit and tumbled dry-stone wall built on top of the Roman remains which was compromised as a boundary and exposed Roman fabric to damage by livestock.

2.5 Character and Condition of the Wall

2.5.1 The Wall East of Great Chesters Farm

The project area was first inspected in 2013. A fragile, generally slumped and frequently collapsed dry-stone field wall overlay the line of Hadrian's Wall into which, intermittently, self-seeded shrubs and saplings were developing. Turret 42b, identified by Simpson in 1912 (1976, 77) and seen on an aerial photograph taken for the Hadrian's Wall Mapping Project (see bibliography), sat on a gentle slope to the west of Caw Burn, surviving as a distinct but irregular platform. Its outline can also be seen on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1858, probably as a visible feature not just an estimated location (Turret 43a to the west is not shown, for instance). The Wall Ditch to the east of Great Chesters is prominent; in places it is up to 2m deep.

To the north of turret 42b are the remains of a temporary camp covering an area of 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres). The Military Way, south of the Wall, runs up to the east gate



Plate 1: East of Great Chesters. Dry-stone field wall overlying the remains of the Roman Wall in 2013. Looking west.



Plate 2: East of Great Chesters. Dry-stone field wall overlying the remains of the Roman Wall in 2013. Looking east in the area of Turret 42b. Scale is 2m long.

of the fort (the *Porta Praetoria*) as an intermittent and low earthwork. The Vallum is poorly represented in this area, visible only as intermittent ditch and mound.

In-situ Roman facing stones could be traced for 42m along the south side of the wall, intermittently up to 4 courses or a maximum of 1.10m high. On the north face, a discrete length of in-situ facing stones ran for a little over 6m. Clearance of the overlying field wall exposed a well-preserved section of the Wall with Roman core still in bond with facing stones, most impressively within the 42m length along the south face of the boundary.

2.5.2 The Wall West of Great Chesters Farm

For 190m west from Great Chesters fort, the remains of the Narrow Wall survives as an earth and stone mound, up to 4.8m wide and 1.1m high, free of any surmounting field wall. Beyond a field boundary running in from the south - the start of the project area - the Wall mound was masked by a relatively modern field wall which, as to the east of the fort, was in a generally slumped, tumbled and poor condition.



Plate 3: *West of Great Chesters. Dry-stone wall over the remains of the Roman Wall in 2013. Looking east.*

The foundation of the Broad Wall, set out but not built throughout this area, could also be seen intermittently north of the mound of the Narrow Wall as a north-facing scarp up to the location of Turret 43a where the lines converge, separate, and then

slowly converge to meet again at Cockmount Hill Farm. Turret 43a was located in 1912 by Simpson but its exact location has since been lost, but presumably around 150m east of Cockmount Hill Farm (NY 6985 6684) where there is much scattered rubble and tumble.

The Wall Ditch is very well marked immediately west of the fort, becomes intermittent, and is entirely lost around Turret 43a, but the upcast mound (or glacis) to the north of the ditch is visible along most of the section around 0.3m high and 8m wide. To the south, the Vallum ditch and its mounds are substantial and in places prominent. The Military Way, between Wall and Vallum, can be distinguished beyond the first field boundary west of the fort as a low and slightly sinuous embankment, its course negotiating rocky outcrops.

Two areas of original Roman Wall face were identified along the north side of the remains of the Narrow Wall underlying the modern field wall; one 8m stretch and one 5m stretch. No Wall face was evident on the southern flank of the boundary wall.

Between Great Chesters Fort and Turret 43a are the indistinct remains (turf-covered banks up to 0.3m high) of five small enclosures (NMR monument no. 1393065) set against the Wall. They were probably animal pens and related to shieling – summer pasturing of livestock - which was carried out in the area. Four of the enclosures sit against the south face of the Wall - two of these with entrances to the south - one sits against the north face.

2.5.3 Great Chesters Roman Fort (Aesica)

Great Chesters Fort (Breeze 2006, 269-275) lying mostly to the south of farm buildings, is appended to the south face of the Roman Wall. It is orientated on the cardinal points, measuring 128m east-west by 108m north-south. There are numerous earthworks within the fort and a number of exposed structures, notably the west wall and gate towers of the *porta decumana*. In the centre of the fort are the remains of the strong room situated in the headquarters building. To the west of the fort is an impressive series of flanking ditches.

2.5.4 Wall Character Types

Eight broad variations in the morphology of the field boundary running along the line of the Roman Wall were noted within the project area in 2014. These have been represented by profiles **A** to **H** on figures 3 and 5 and are located on figures 2 and 4.

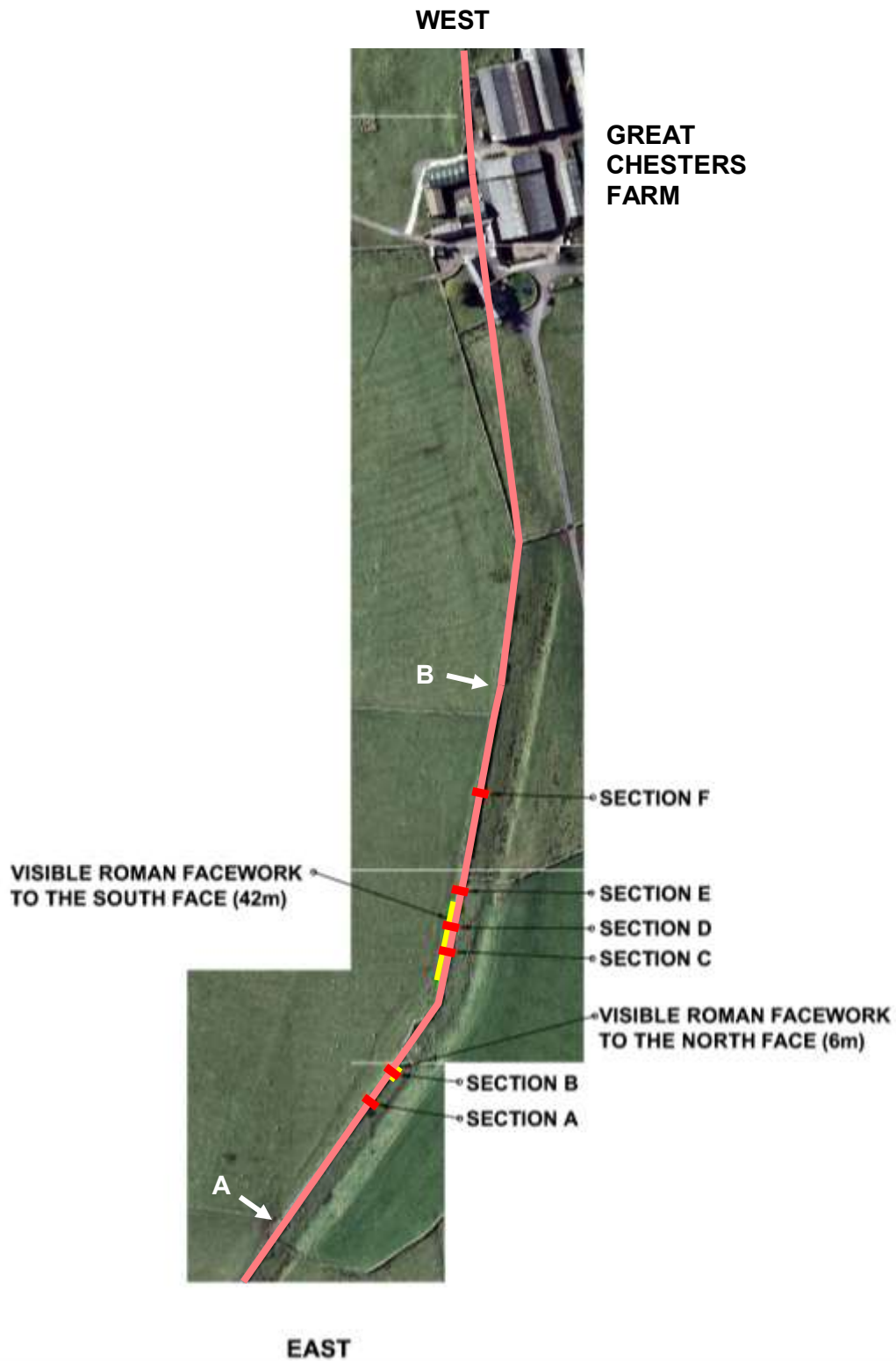


Figure 2: Modern vertical aerial photograph of the project area east of Great Chesters
 Showing extent of works (A to B in white) and location of profiles A to F (figure 3).
 Course of Hadrian's Wall in pink line; visible facework in yellow; profiles in red.
 North to right, not to scale.

East of Great Chesters

- A. Tumbled and fragile dry-stone field wall around 1.2m wide with self-seeded bushes rooted into fabric. Near vertical face to north up to 1.5m high. No evidence of Roman fabric. The south face of the wall is only 0.5m high, set on a gradual slope raised 0.8m above field to north and extending south for 3.5m from south face of wall. Presumably masking tumble/in-situ remains of Roman Wall.
- B. Collapsed and tumbled dry-stone field wall around 1.1m wide and 0.5m high sitting above north face of Roman Wall up to 4 courses – 0.8m – high. Dry-stone wall and Roman face combine to make north face of boundary 1.4m high. To south the wall is set on a gradual slope raised 0.8m above field to north and extending south for 3.5m from south face of wall. Presumably masking tumble/in-situ remains of Roman Wall.

Sections C and D lie within a 42m length of surviving south face of Roman Wall

- C. Intermittently tumbled and fragile dry-stone field wall around 1.2m wide and 0.9m high sitting above south face of Roman Wall 3 courses – 0.6m - high. Dry-stone wall and Roman face combine to make south face of boundary 1.5m high. To north, the ground slopes very gently away from wall with no substantial terracing.
- D. Intermittently collapsed and tumbled dry-stone field wall with self-seeded bushes rooted into fabric. Around 1.2m wide and 0.6m high sitting above south face of Roman Wall 4 courses – 1.10m – high. Dry-stone wall and Roman Wall combine to make south face of boundary 1.7m high. To north, the ground slopes very gently away from wall with no substantial terracing.
- E. Collapsed and fragile dry-stone field wall, around 1.4m wide and 1.10m high. No evidence of Roman Wall.
- F. Fragile but standing dry-stone field wall around 1.10m wide and 1.2m high. No terrace to south but sharp break of slope around 2.5m from wall. Ground slopes away gradually from north face.

West of Great Chesters

- G. Fragile and slumped but standing dry-stone field wall around 1.3m wide and 1m high sitting above north face of Roman Wall 3 courses – 0.6m – high. Dry-stone wall and Roman Wall combine to make north face of boundary 1.6m high. Ground surface to south of wall 0.4m higher than to north and slopes down

gently to a break in slope a little over 2m from face, presumably masking tumble/in-situ remains of Roman Wall.

- H. Collapsed and fragile dry-stone wall, around 1.3m wide and 1.2m high. No evidence of in-situ Roman fabric. Similar level of ground surface to north and south although a break in slope 2.2m from south face, possibly masking tumble/in-situ remains of Roman Wall.

Following consolidation and rebuilding works, the profile survey was repeated to indicate the new condition. These are shown in Appendix 1.



Plate 4: East of Great Chesters. Dry-stone wall over Wall mound cleared away. Removing self-seeded saplings and shrubs. Looking east.

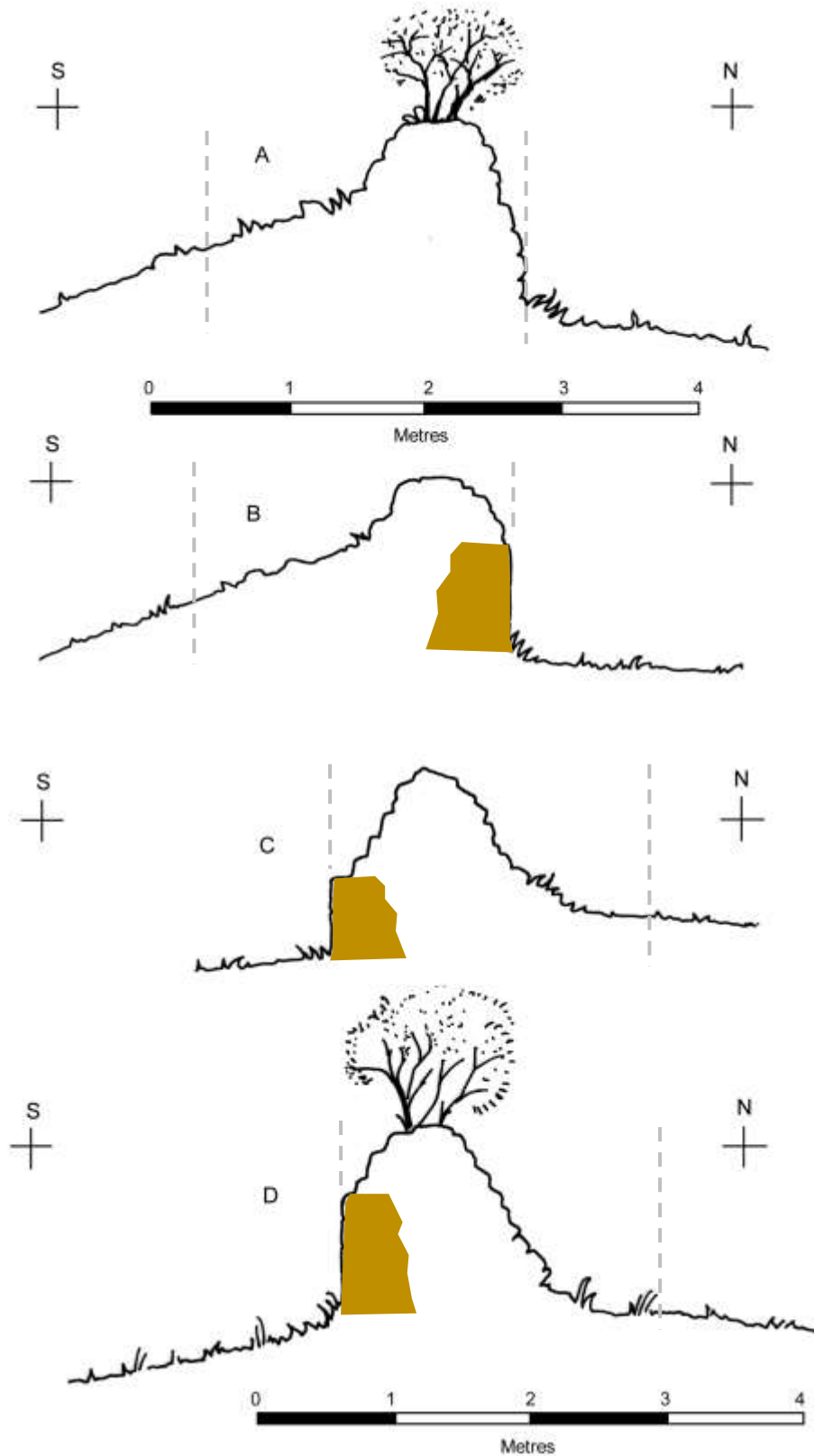


Figure 3: Pre-conservation profiles A to D across the Wall line. Roman facing stones in tone. Grey hatched lines indicate width and probable location of Narrow Wall at A and established location at B, C and D.

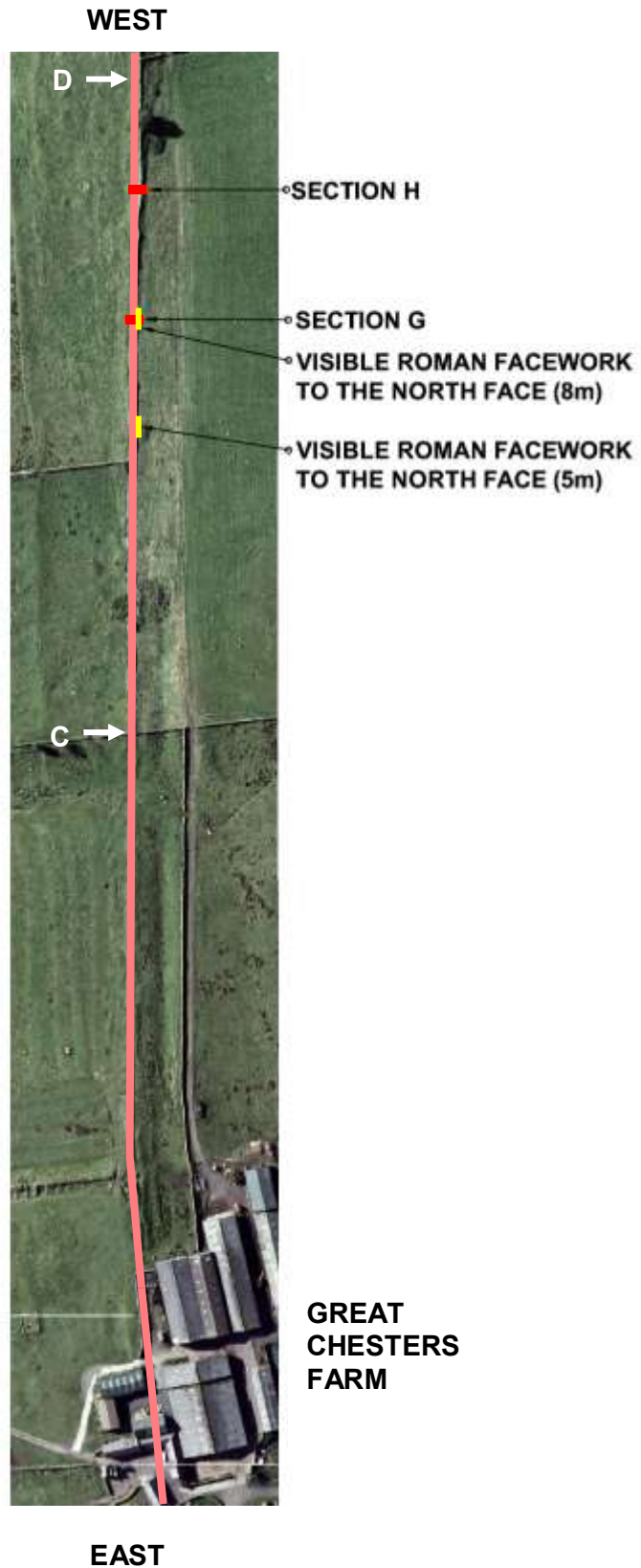


Figure 4: Modern vertical aerial photograph of the project area east of Great Chesters showing extent of works (C to D in white) and location of profiles G and H (figure 5). Course of Hadrian's Wall in pink line; visible facework in yellow; profiles in red. North to right, not to scale.

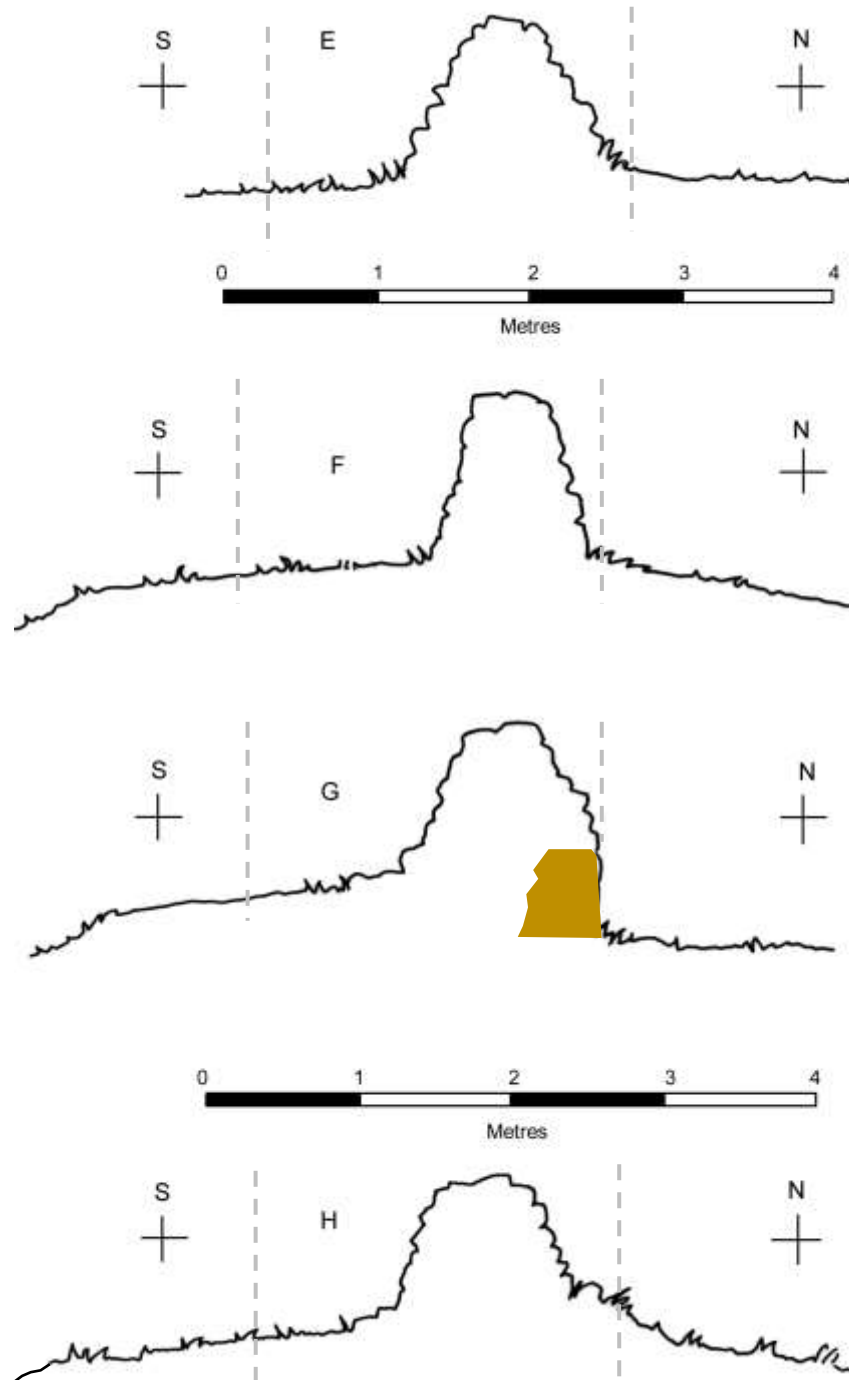


Figure 5: Pre conservation profiles E to H across the Wall line. Roman facing stones in tone. Grey hatched lines indicate width and probable location of Narrow Wall at E, F and H and established location at G.



Plate 5: Watercolour by J Irwin Coates of the 'Wall Between Caw Burn & Aesica 1891' (from Whitworth 2012, 61).



Plate 6: The same length of in-situ Roman Wall below tumbled field wall east of Great Chesters Farm in 2012. 2m scale.



Plate 7: The stretch of Roman Wall seen in plates 5 and 6 with rebuilt field wall.

3. CONSOLIDATION WORKS

These were fairly consistent across all areas east and west of Great Chesters; little variation in approach was required. Works included monitored disassembly by conservation masons of dry-stone boundary walls overlying remains of the Roman Wall. An agreed line for disassembly, indicating Roman work, was marked on the wall with chalk by the monitoring archaeologist.

East of Great Chesters, woody shrubs had self-seeded in the overlying wall but only very marginally into Roman work. It was possible to remove all these shrubs without impacting on the early fabric. Once cleared of later material, areas of underlying Roman fabric were stabilised. This involved as little intervention as possible. On occasion, for stability, existing joints were filled or tamped undertaken or, if more appropriate, any unstable facework was eased back to the line from which it had slumped. No areas of original work needed to be taken down and rebuilt. Overlying boundary walls were then rebuilt by Stephen Allen and his team of dry-stone wallers.



Plate 8: Rebuilding the dry-stone wall west of Great Chesters.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INPUT

4.1 Archaeological Background

An overall strategy for research into the Roman frontier works between the Tyne and the Solway is provided in the Hadrian's Wall research framework *Frontiers of*

*Knowledge.*¹ Little fieldwork has been undertaken in this area. Simpson located Turret 42b and suggested the location of 43a in 1912; excavations in 1925 established the relationship between the narrow and broad walls to the west of Great Chesters fort (noted but not ascribed in the scheduling document); and parts of Great Chesters fort were excavated by Richmond and Simpson in 1939. As such, the potential of the proposed works to provide new information on elements such as the construction of the wall was considered high.

4.2 Monitoring and Recording

Areas of potential in-situ Roman fabric within the boundary walls along the line of the Roman Wall east and west of Great Chesters were identified by the monitoring archaeologist. Prior to disassembly of the overlying wall, each area of Roman face (c.60m) was recorded using rectified photography. Photographs were taken using a Canon 350D (8MP 3456x2304px) digital camera using a Canon EFS 18-55mm lens and utilising RAW digital format and were rectified using MonolImage software, and montaged to remove join-lines between photographs in either Adobe Photoshop CS2 or Serif PhotoPlus X6. Rectified images have been presented in AutoCAD 2007 format at 1:50 scale. The digital record is in dxf/dwg format, utilising Modelspace.

All subsequent disassembly and consolidation works were monitored archaeologically. Areas of Roman facing stones were outlined with chalk and overlying dry-stone walling carefully stripped away down to in-situ Roman core. National Trust volunteers helped with the disassembly and rebuilding of the easternmost stretch of the field wall running towards Burnstead. No Roman fabric was seen or disturbed during this input.

General photographs were taken during the rebuilding and consolidation process. Once works were completed, a final rectified photographic record was made of the boundary.

¹ Matthew F A Symonds & David J P Mason (eds), 2009.



Plate 9: Well-preserved Roman Wall – core and facework - exposed below the disassembled field wall east of Great Chesters. Looking east.



Plate 10: Roman facing stones and core east of Great Chesters. Original friable sandy-brown mortar still bonds the facing stones and core. 2m scale.



Plate 11: *Dismantling the dry-stone wall over the Wall mound. West of Great Chesters, looking east.*



Plate 12: *Roman fabric exposed west of Great Chesters the dry-stone wall advancing. Looking east.*



Plate 13: *Roman fabric embedded at the base of the north face of the rebuilt dry-stone field wall. West of Great Chesters. 2m scale.*

5. PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

Only limited archaeological fieldwork has previously been undertaken in this area. Simpson located Turrets 42b and 43a in 1912 (Simpson 1976, 77); excavations in 1925 (Breeze 2006, 270) established the relationship between the built Narrow Wall and the foundation of the Broad Wall west of Great Chesters Fort. From the fort, the Narrow Wall runs to the south of the Broad Wall foundation. From the (assumed) position of Turret 43a, about 150m east of Cockmount Hill farm, the Narrow Wall and the Broad Wall foundations converge, from which point they again split and run separately to Cockmount Hill Plantation. Most extensively, parts of Great Chesters Fort were excavated in 1925 and in 1939 (Breeze 2006, 270). In 2009, conservation works and rebuilding of the modern dry-stone boundary overlying the Roman Wall was carried out between Cockmount Hill Plantation and Allolees as part of a Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) project.

6. MAP EVIDENCE



Figure 6: First Edition twenty five inches to one mile Ordnance Survey of 1858 (Sheet LXXXII: 16) showing the eastern part of the project area. Hadrian's Wall is highlighted in pink. Turret 42b is indicated in broken line on the map and annotated 'Castle (Remains of)'. The Military Way is highlighted in green. 'Fosse' was the name used at the time for the Wall Ditch.

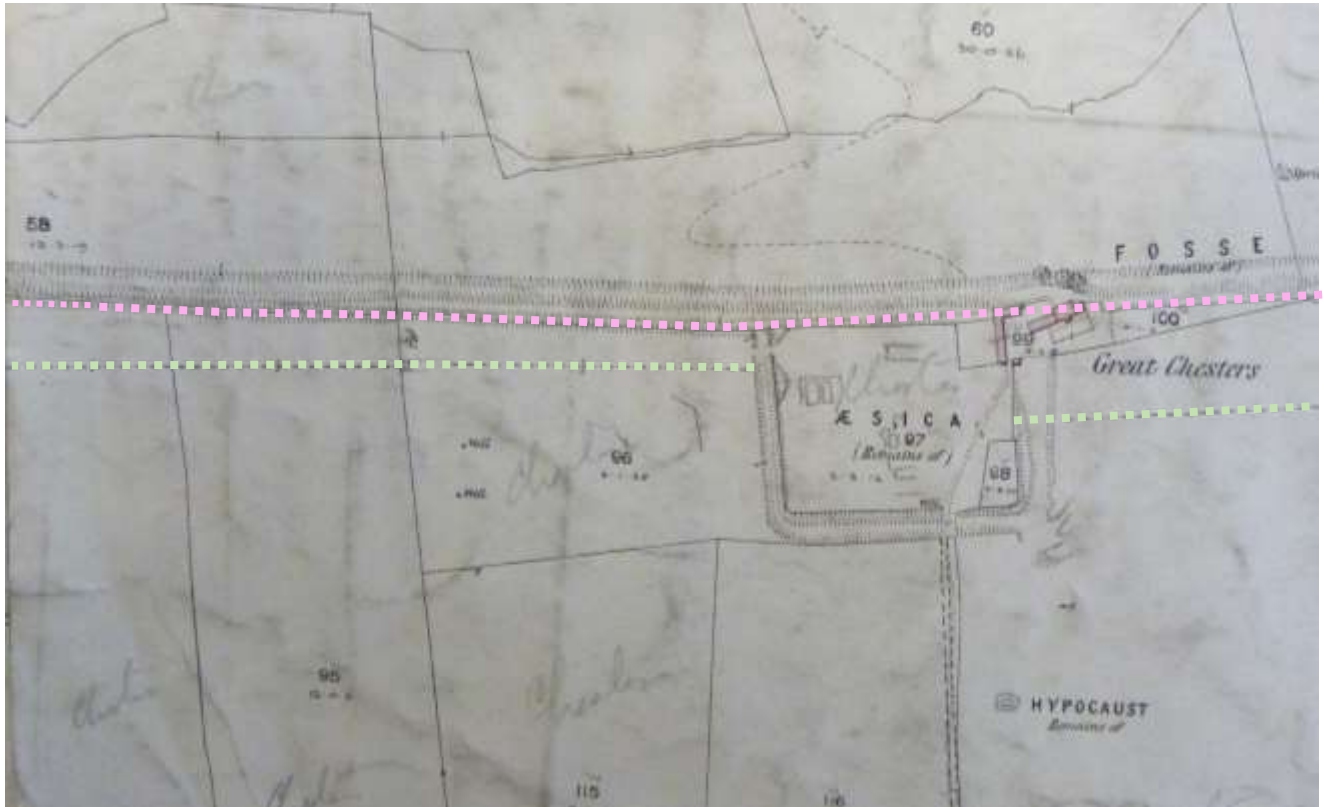


Figure 7: First Edition twenty five inches to one mile Ordnance Survey of 1858 (Sheet LXXXII: 16) showing the central and most of the western part of the project area. Hadrian's Wall is highlighted in pink, the Military Way in green.



Figure 8: First Edition twenty five inches to one mile Ordnance Survey of 1858 (Sheet LXXXII: 13) showing the western part of the project area. Hadrian's Wall is highlighted in pink, the Military Way in green.

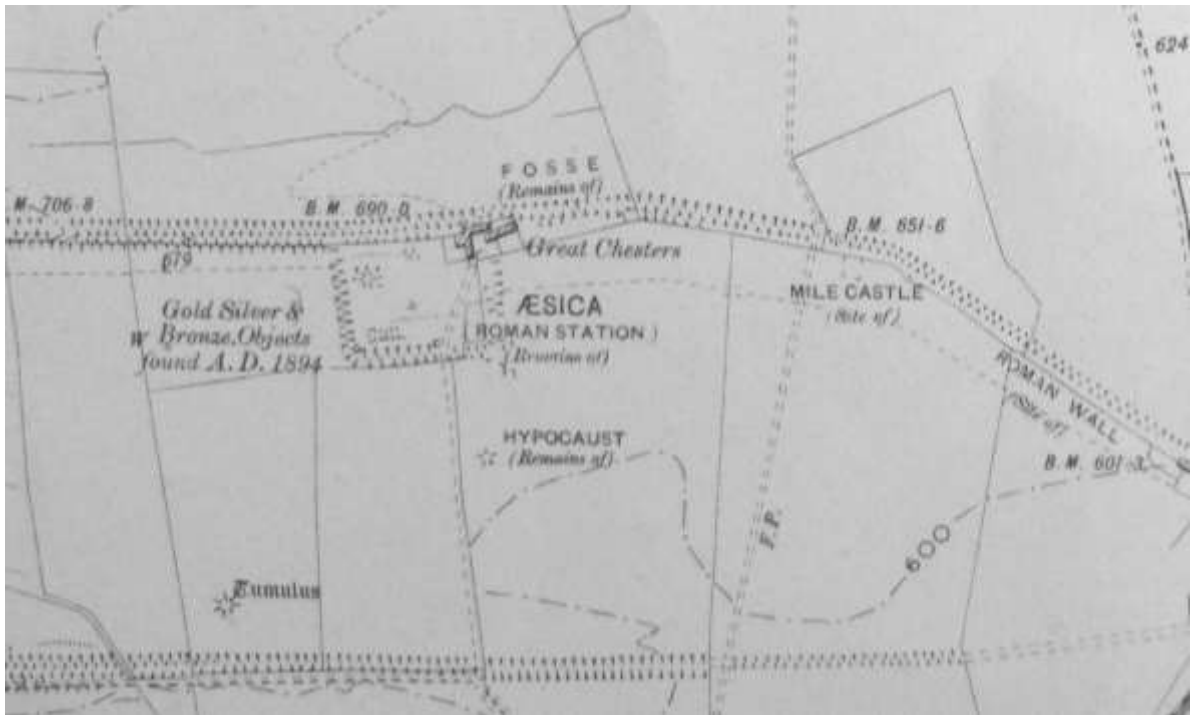


Figure 9: Third Edition six inches to one mile Ordnance Survey of 1912 showing the eastern part of the project area.

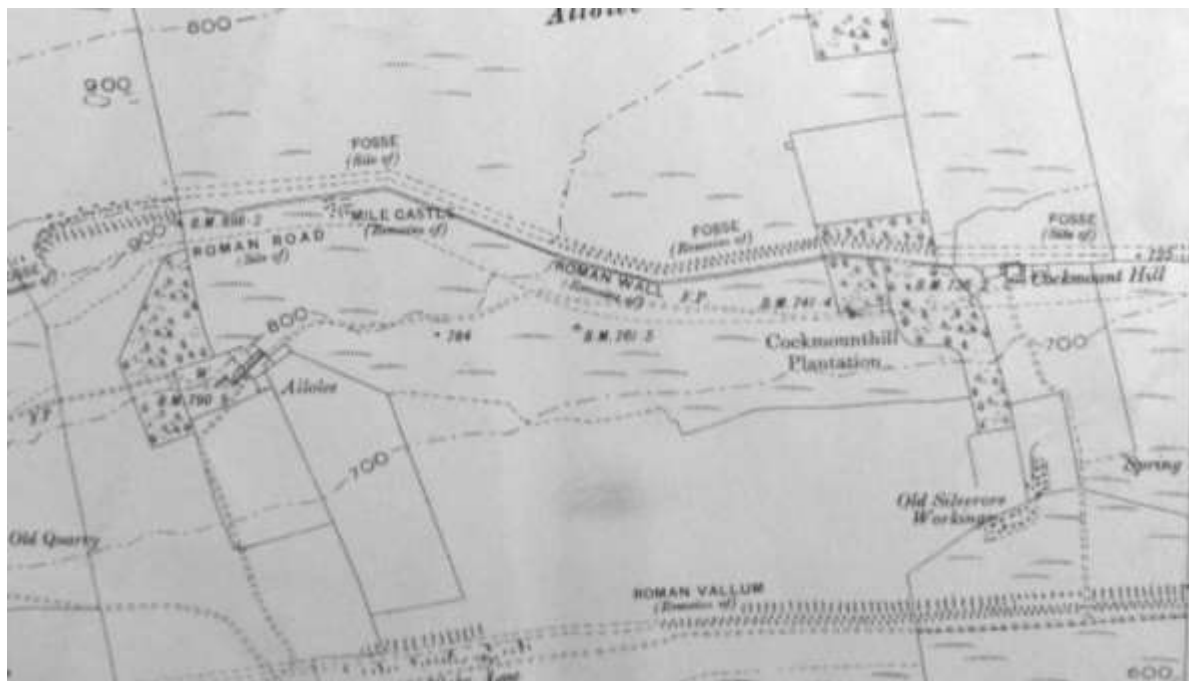


Figure 10: Third Edition six inches to one mile Ordnance Survey of 1912 showing the western part of the project area and beyond.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The Roman Wall at Great Chesters in 2013

When inspected at the start of the project in 2013, the Roman Wall in the area of Great Chesters survived as an irregular grass-grown stony mound between 3m and 4.8m wide and up to 1m high. Immediately west of Great Chesters fort, this mound was free of an overlying field boundary. However, generally it was topped with a dry-stone wall, frequently in a very poor state of repair. At points, coursed facing stones characteristic of the Roman Wall and in bond could be seen below the dry stone wall: One length (on the south face of the mound and east of Great Chesters) continued for over 40m. Facing stones could also be seen on the north flank of the mound west of Great Chesters, but these were less clearly *in-situ*.

7.2 The Roman Wall seen during Conservation Work

During the project, removal of tumbled and slumped dry-stone wall over the line of the Roman Wall exposed stretches of *in-situ* Roman fabric as noted above. The best-preserved area was a 42m length of the south face of the Wall up to four courses high backed with substantial core. Here, both core and facing stones were bonded with an undifferentiated sandy buff-brown mortar. At no point was any hard, white mortar seen, characteristic of later Roman work. The core was generally large irregular pieces of whin or occasional substantial cobble. Facing stones were buff sandstone. Shorter stretches of facing stones were also exposed along the north face of the Wall although not contiguous with the above or associated with obvious core.

To the west of the fort, discrete lengths of Roman facing stones, all along the north flank of the mound, survived up to three courses high. But this was less securely original Roman fabric: stones were set in soil, not bonded with mortar or attached to any identifiable core, nor was any mortar seen in this area.

Where exposed to the east of Great Chesters, fabric of the core was bedded per facing course. Presumably, one course of facing stone was mortared in place flanking an equivalent depth of mortared core. Core stones were occasionally set in a herringbone fashion where stone was small and slabby (plates 25 and 26 in this report).

In the western part of the project area, a number of former enclosures, their walls now reduced almost to ground level, their stones earthfast, had been appended against the faces of the Wall; three to the south, one to the north. They were probably stock enclosures used, perhaps, during the summering of sheep and cattle in the uplands over the medieval or early post-medieval periods. They indicate the continued use of the Wall as a substantial feature in the landscape long after its time as a military frontier had passed. The enclosures were not impacted by the conservation works.

At some point, the long stretch of surviving Wall face east of Great Chesters had been cleared; it would certainly have been formerly covered with tumbled rubble. The context and period of this clearance is not known but presumably in the 19th century. The face was clear of rubble when drawn by J Irwin Coates in 1891 (plate 5 in this report).

Generally, where Roman facework survived, the dry-stone wall sat directly above the face, and at no point over the project was the full width of the Wall exposed during clearance of the overlying dry-stone wall. Where seen at a field gate (plate 5 in this report) and as established by earlier fieldwork, the Wall was 'Narrow', around 2.3m wide. As previously described, this gauge superseded the original intention of the builders who set out foundations for the much wider Broad Wall.

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9. PLATES



Plate 14: Slumped Dry-stone wall east of Great Chesters looking east towards Burnhead in 2013.



Plate 15: Slumped dry-stone wall east of Great Chesters. Looking east. 2013.

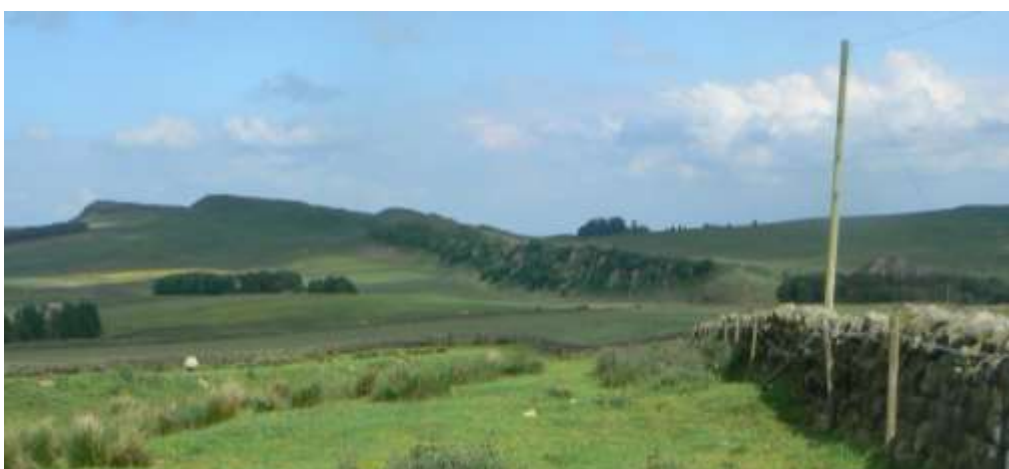


Plate 16: North face of dry-stone wall east of Great Chesters. Looking east 2013.



Plate 17: West of Great Chesters. Looking north-west across dry valley towards project area.



Plate 18: Slumped dry-stone wall west of Great Chesters. Looking east.



Plate 19: *Slumped dry-stone wall over remains of Hadrian's Wall. East of Great Chesters in 2013. Looking north-west.*



Plate 20: *The same view as plate 19 following rebuilding of the dry-stone wall.*



Plate 21: Disengaging dry-stone wall from Roman fabric. East of Great Chesters in 2013. Looking east.



Plate 22: Removing the dry-stone wall east of Great Chesters south face of Hadrian's Wall exposed in the gateway. Looking east.



Plate 23: Rebuilding dry-stone wall over the Wall mound. East of Great Chesters, looking west.



Plate 24: East of Great Chesters. South face of the Wall and core exposed following removal of dry-stone wall and cleaning. Looking east. 2m scale.



Plate 25: East of Great Chesters. South face of the Wall with core in distinct courses.



Plate 26: Same area as plate 25, looking west. Facing stones and core bonded with a sandy brown mortar. 2m scale.



Plate 27: East of Great Chesters. Looking west along the Wall prior to conservation work. Much of the structure is in-situ Roman with a badly decayed overlying dry-stone wall .



Plate 28: Similar view to plate 27 following removal of overlying dry-stone wall. The exposed fabric is all in-situ Roman. 2m scale.



Plate 29: West of Great Chesters, looking west. Unmortared Roman facing stones exposed following removal of modern dry-stone wall. 2m scale.



Plate 30: West of Great Chesters, looking south-east. The same Roman facing stones as seen in plate 29. 2m scale.



Plate 31: West of Great Chesters, looking south-east. Another block of unmortared Roman facing stones. 2m scale.



Plate 32: West of Great Chesters looking west. Base of new dry-stone wall.



Plate 33: West of Great Chesters looking east. Exposed Roman facing stones (same block as seen in plates 29 and 30) with new dry-stone wall advancing in the background.



Plate 34: East of Great Chesters. The north face of the rebuilt dry-stone wall with Roman fabric at the base. 2m scale.



Plate 35: East of Great Chesters. Roman fabric at base of north face of rebuilt dry-stone wall. 2m scale.



Plate 36: East of Great Chesters. Roman fabric at base of south face of rebuilt dry-stone wall. 2m scale.

10. RECTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHS

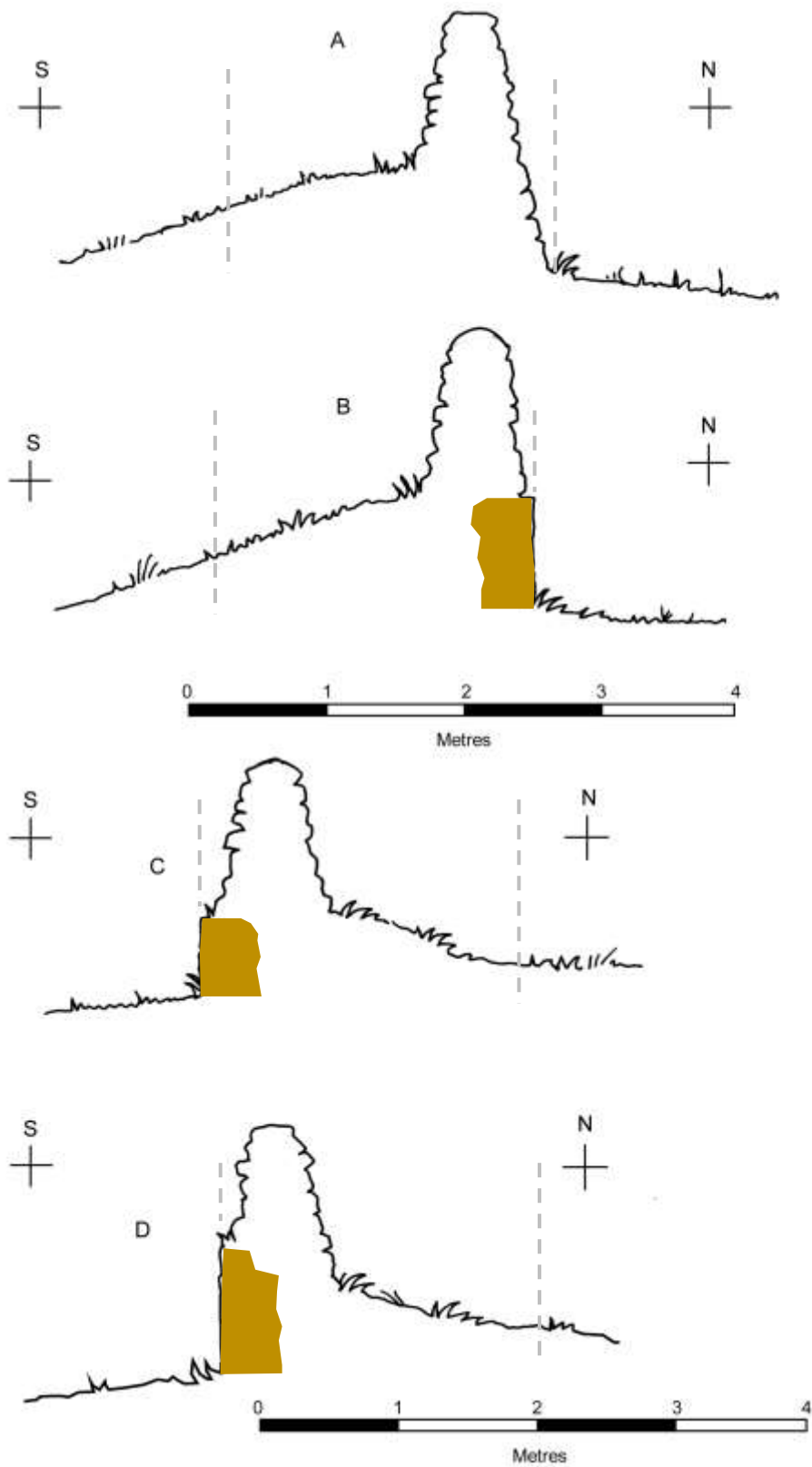
Appendix 1: Profiles across the Consolidated and Rebuilt Boundary Wall

Figure 00: Post rebuilding profiles A to D across the Wall line. Roman facing stones in tone. Grey hatched lines indicate width and probable location of Narrow Wall at A and established location at B-D.

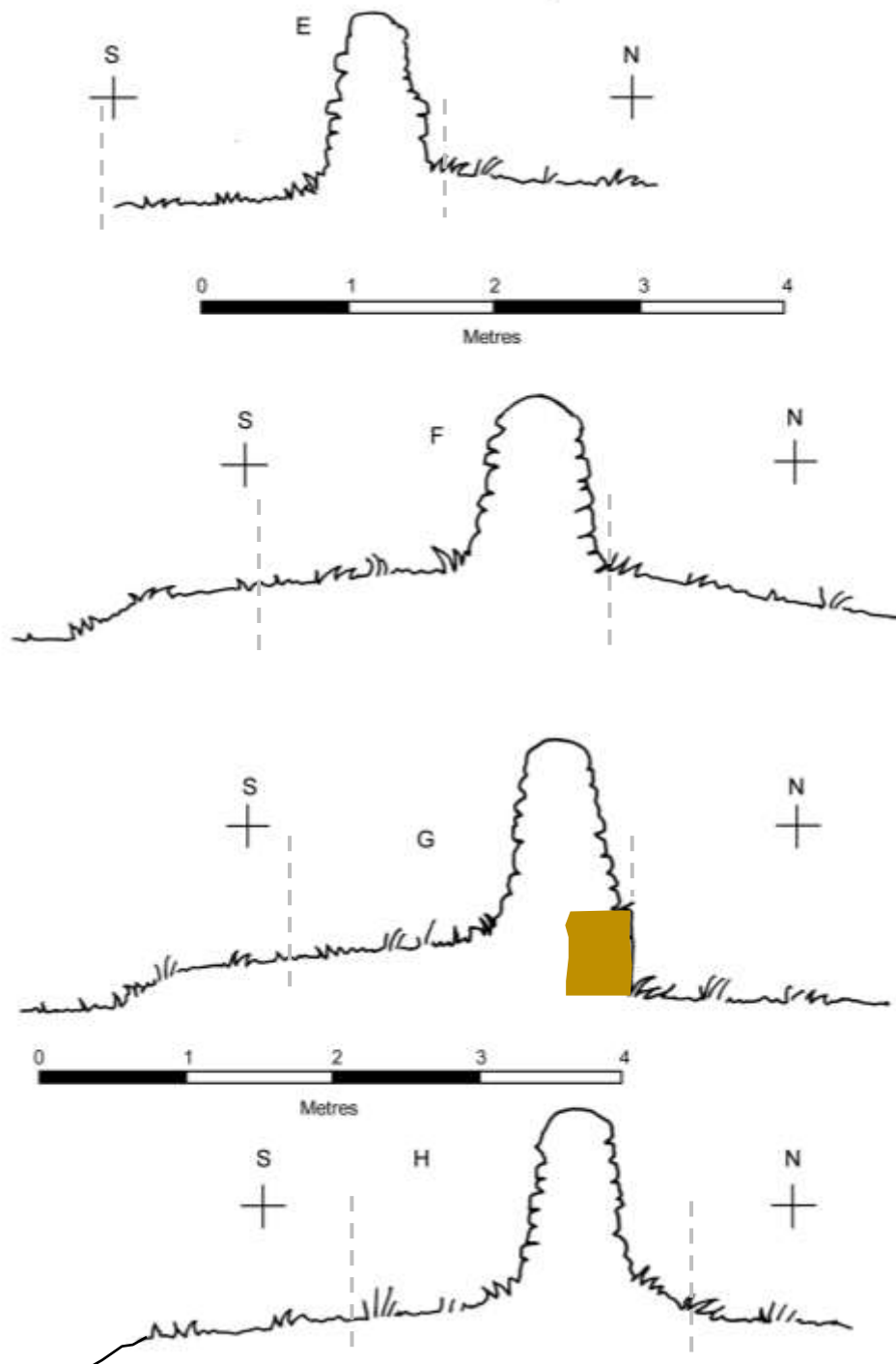


Figure 00: Post rebuilding profiles E to H across the Wall line. Roman facing stones in tone. Grey hatched lines indicate width and probable location of Narrow wall at E, F and H and established location at G.

Appendix 2: Report by AWA for EH on Cockmount Hill Plantation 2015

**HADRIAN'S WALL AT
COCKMOUNT HILL PLANTATION**

Great Chesters, Northumberland

Character of the Wall

March 2015



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3. CLEARANCE WORKS AND SITE INVESTIGATION
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Plate 15: Looking west from the eastern end of the plantation over Areas 8 and 7.
Plate 16: The Wall in Area 6 before clearance of trees and saplings

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Plans for conservation works along Hadrian's Wall at Great Chesters Farm, drawn up by the former Hadrian's Wall Trust and supported by English Heritage and the Sita Trust in 2012 aimed to address problems in two areas of the Wall entered on the English Heritage 'Heritage at Risk' Register. The first section included areas between Caw Burn in the east to the track to Cockmount Hill in the west, the second section within Cockmount Hill Plantation itself. Sita funded works to the east of Cockmount Hill were carried out in 2013 and 2014. For a number of reasons, works within Cockmount Hill Plantation were not carried out.

English Heritage grant-funded works were carried out in March 2015 to begin to address the conservation issues for the Wall and adjacent remains at Cockmount Hill Plantation which were identified in the earlier scheme including:

- The risk of wind throw from the surrounding trees, particularly conifers planted close to the north flank of the Wall;
- Potential root damage to the Wall caused by the adjacent conifers as well as damage to archaeological remains on the berm between the Wall and Wall Ditch and to the Wall Ditch itself;
- The continued growth of vegetation including bracken, brambles and self-seeded trees along the Wall.

A report under separate cover addressing the above issues and providing conservation recommendations has been prepared as part of this project by Tristan Spicer of Kevin Doonan Architect.

The following report provides a description of the character of the remains of Hadrian's Wall within the area of the plantation.

2. THE WALL AT COCKMOUNT HILL PLANTATION

Hadrian's Wall at Cockmount Hill (NY 696 669) lies within Scheduled Monument No. 1017535 and Wall Mile 44. The project area runs for a distance of just over 130m within a discrete area of plantation woodland formed of deciduous trees to the south of the Wall and conifers to the north. The plantation is bounded to both east and west by dry-stone farm walls. No attempt was made during the planting of the wood to avoid the Wall Ditch to the north, although a corridor was left unplanted along the south flank of the Wall. Neither conifers nor deciduous trees are of any great age. Topographically, the area within the plantation slopes up gently to the east along the course of the Wall

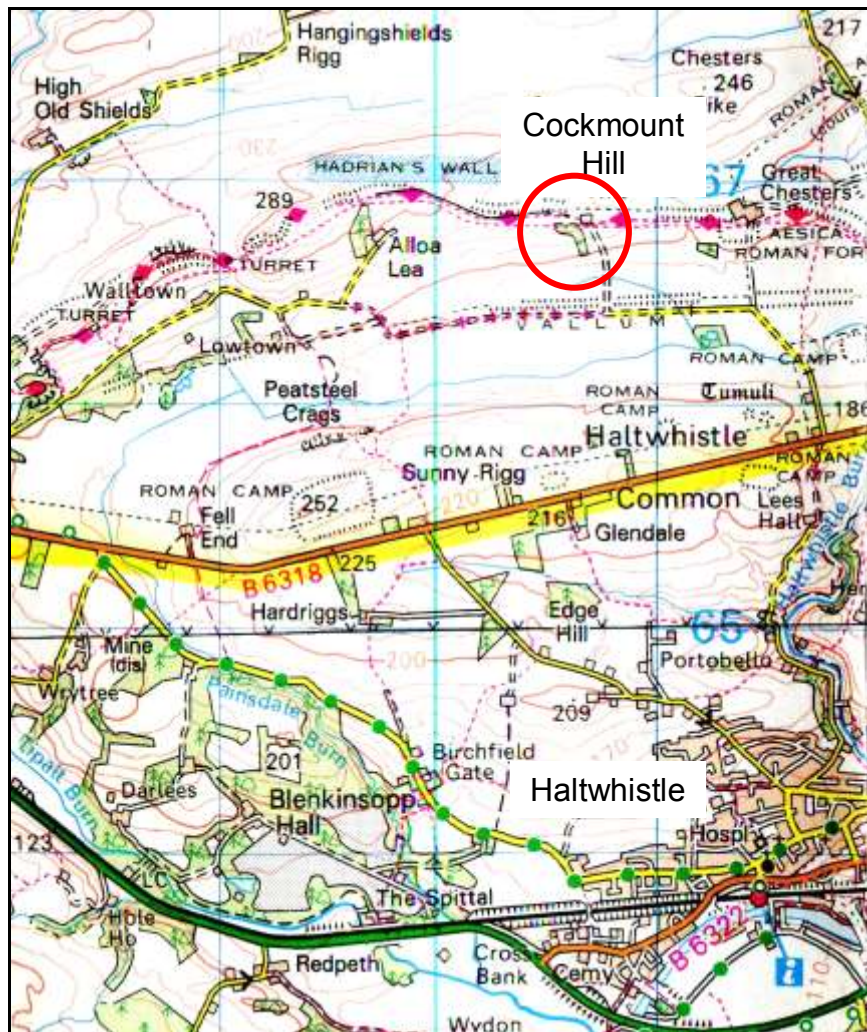


Figure 1: Location of the Site west of Great Chesters.

and drops away to both north and south. The dense conifers to the north masking the fall. A path runs along the south side of the Wall within the plantation.

The Wall, and the Wall Ditch, re-align at two points within the project area. No structures attached to the Wall lie within the plantation; Turret 43A lies to the east, Turret 43B to the west, nor is there any solid evidence for later structures set against or adjacent to the Wall. The Narrow Wall and Broad Foundation run parallel into the plantation and begin to converge within the plantation. Breeze says both are visible though overgrown (2006, 277).

The character of the Wall within the plantation is distinct from that to east and west. Beyond the plantation on both orientations it lies under more recent dry-stone farm walls. Only for a short distance at the west end of the plantation is there evidence for a surmounting dry-stone wall. Within the plantation there are also striking differences

in the character of lengths of the Wall, presumably the result of a discrete campaign or successive interventions by antiquarians or possibly more recently.

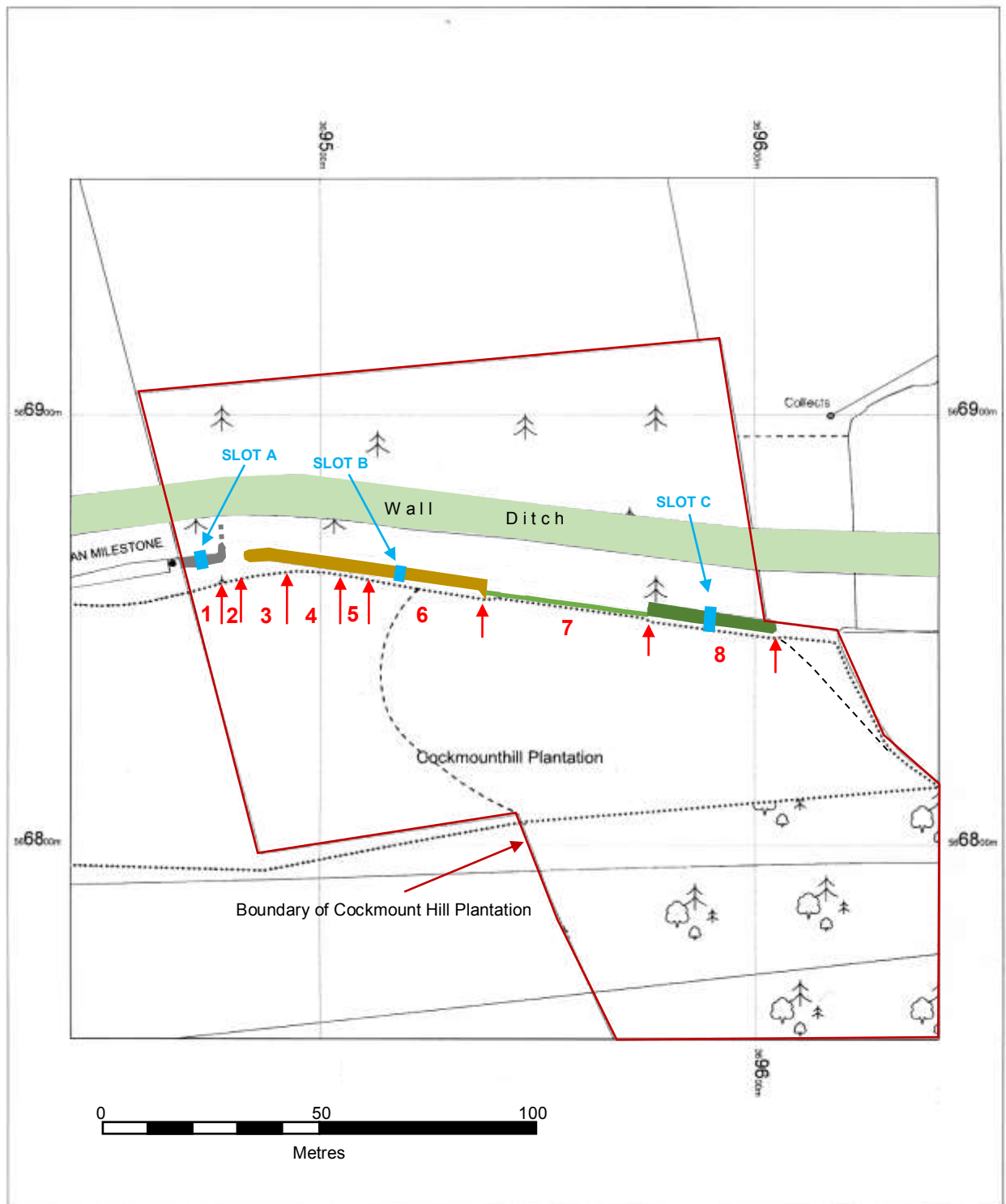


Figure 2: Hadrian's Wall at Cockmounthill Plantation. Numbers in red refer to descriptions of Areas of the Wall in Section 4, below, the red arrows marking the extent of each area. Slots 1, 2 and 3 in blue are shown in section 5.

3. CLEARANCE WORKS AND SITE INVESTIGATION

Investigation of the Wall and vegetation clearance was carried out by Heritage Consolidation Ltd with Alan Williams Archaeology on the 20th and 23rd of February 2015.

3.1 Clearance Works

The Wall within the plantation was overgrown. This was largely of moss and grass but there were also stands of bracken and brambles which had died back and some self-seeded deciduous trees along the monument. Clearance included the cutting back of bracken and brambles and self-seeded trees on and along the line of the Wall and of any deciduous saplings between the Wall and the Wall path other than a stand at the east end where the path angles to the south. Once cut back, tree stumps and roots in the fabric of the Wall were left *in-situ* and poisoned to avoid disturbance. Further poisoning of brambles and bracken will be continued at a later date.

3.2 Investigation of the Wall

The Wall within the project area was divided into eight discrete lengths according to the morphology of the feature or on occasion its absence. Five profiles across the Wall or Wall mound were drawn to characterise these divisions. These are shown along with descriptions of each of the sections below in Section 4 as figures 3 to 7. In addition, three 1m wide slots over the line of the Wall (A to C) were cleared of overlying soil and vegetation in order to assess the structure and formation of the underlying remains. The results of this input is provided as figures 8 to 10.

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE WALL

(Measurements From Western Boundary Wall of Plantation. See Figure 2)

Area 1. 0m to 10m: Vegetated, broad, low Wall mound with no visible traces of Wall structure. Wall mound interrupted to east at location of former gate or passage way across. In this area the mound is topped by the remnants of a dry-stone farm boundary wall which at termination of Wall mound turns north. Possible discrete late feature at this point on north side of boundary wall. **Profile 1 (figure 3) and Slot A (figure 8)**

Plates 1, 2, 3 and 9

Area 2. 10m to 12.5m: Gap in Wall mound for gateway or passage way across. **Plate 9**

Area 3. 12.5m to 20m: Resumption of Wall mound which is now prominent and discrete c.1.2m to 1.4m high with a rounded top and around 3m to 3.5m wide with sloping sides.

Heavily vegetated with occasional exposure of rubble beneath. No exposure of facing stones which have either gone or are obscured by rubble tumble. **Profile 2 (figure 4)**

Plate 10

Area 4. 20m to 36m: Continuation of discrete and prominent Wall mound of similar height to Area 3 but now with north and south flanks cleared exposing facing stones. Rounded, heavily vegetated top with this growth also obscuring Wall faces. Where exposed in Slot B, the facing stones were reasonably stable although some movement had occurred to the top course of four on the north face. Almost certainly laid dry-stone but some mortar fragments recovered from rear of an exposed joint. 'Core' exposed in Slot B was of large stones placed irregularly in a soil matrix and piled over original Roman core. A number of core stones extend over the upper surfaces of the facing stones. The wall in this slot was 2.5m wide (c. 8 feet 2 ½ inches) **Profile 3 (figure 7) and Slot B (figure 9)**

Plates 4, 5, 11 and 16

Area 5. 36m to 43m: Reversion to character of Area 3; mound prominent with round top and sloping sides, north and south faces obscured with rubble. **Profile 2 (figure 6)**

Area 6. 43m to 71m: Reversion largely to character of Area 4; mound prominent with north and south faces cleared although a few stretches obscured with tumble as per Area 3. A narrow bank running south for 3m at 71m along probably represents remnants of a dry-stone wall. **Profiles 2 and 3 (figures 4 and 5) Plate 11**

Area 7. 71m to 105m: The Wall in this area has been entirely removed as a visible feature. A low and quite narrow mound runs along the line of the south face of the projected line of the Wall. Possible slight hollow along line of Wall but vegetation obscures the profile. How this might relate to the Broad Wall Foundation is not certain **Profile 4 (figure 6) Plate 13**

Area 8: 105m to 130m: A fairly prominent mound resumes along projected line of Wall but of a different character to Areas 3 and 4. The bank here is broad, around 1m high and assymetric in profile with a long and fairly gentle south face and a more abrupt and shorter north face. This character is fairly constant throughout the area. Clearance of Slot C showed that a central area of the bank, conforming roughly to the width of the Wall, was formed of fairly small stone in a matrix of sandy yellow brown soil, possibly the remnants of decayed mortar and representing the remains of the core of the Wall. Flanking this were areas of larger rubble in a matrix of dark loamy soil which to both north and south

ends of the slot sat over grey and friable sandy soil. This rubble has the character of tumble or of intentional re-ordering/tidying of tumbled core. **Profile 5 (figure 7) Slot C (figure 10) Plate 14**

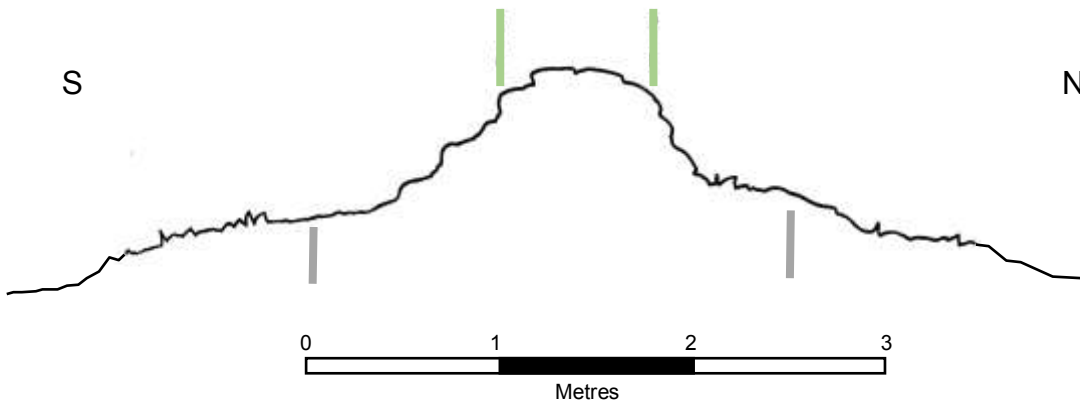


Figure 3: Profile 1 as per Area 1 (see figure 2). Green vertical lines show location of remains of dry-stone farm wall. Grey lines (in this and subsequent profiles) indicate width and likely position of the Roman Wall.

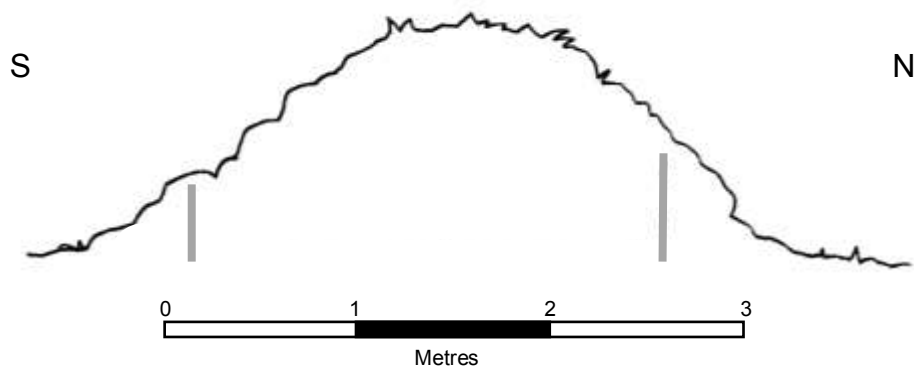


Figure 4: Profile 2 as per Areas 3 and 5 (see figure 2).

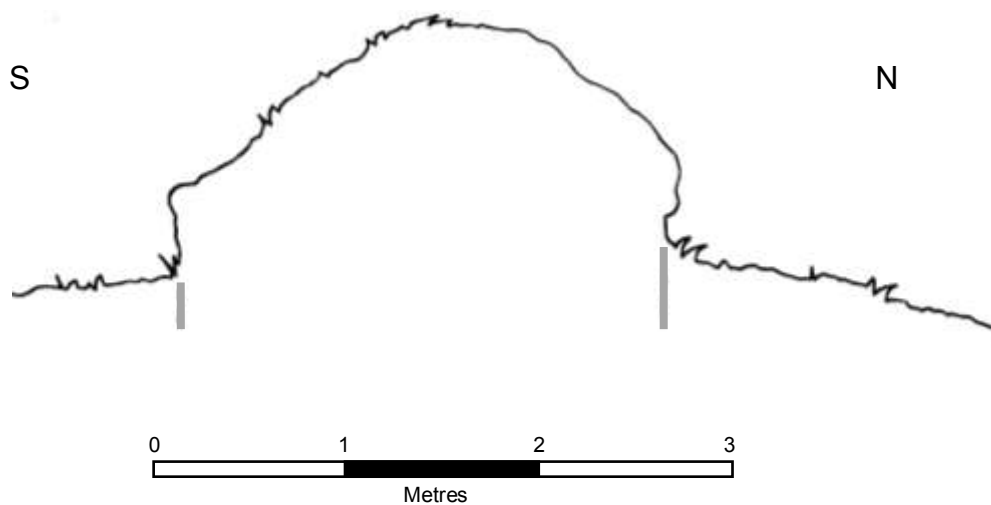


Figure 5: Profile 3 as per Areas 4 and (most of) 6 (see figure 2).

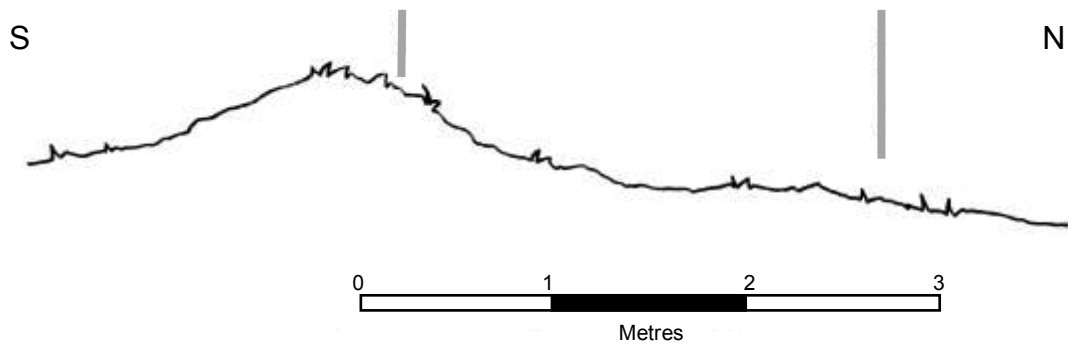


Figure 6: Profile 4 as per Area 7 (see figure 2).

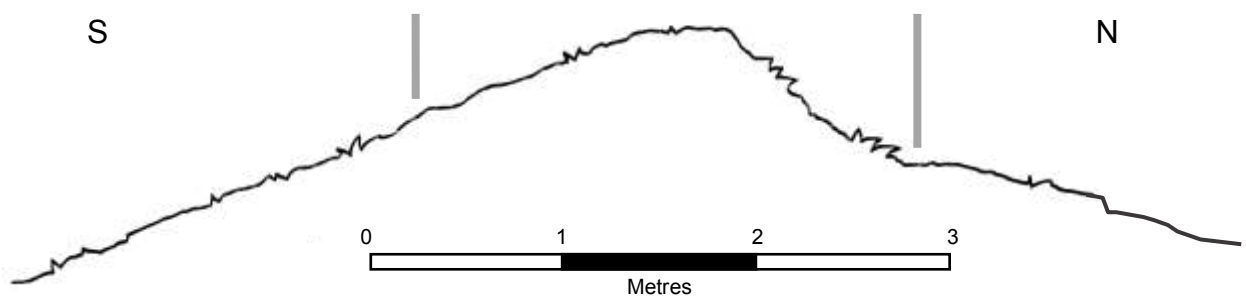


Figure 7: Profile 5 as per Area 8 (see figure 2).

SLOT A

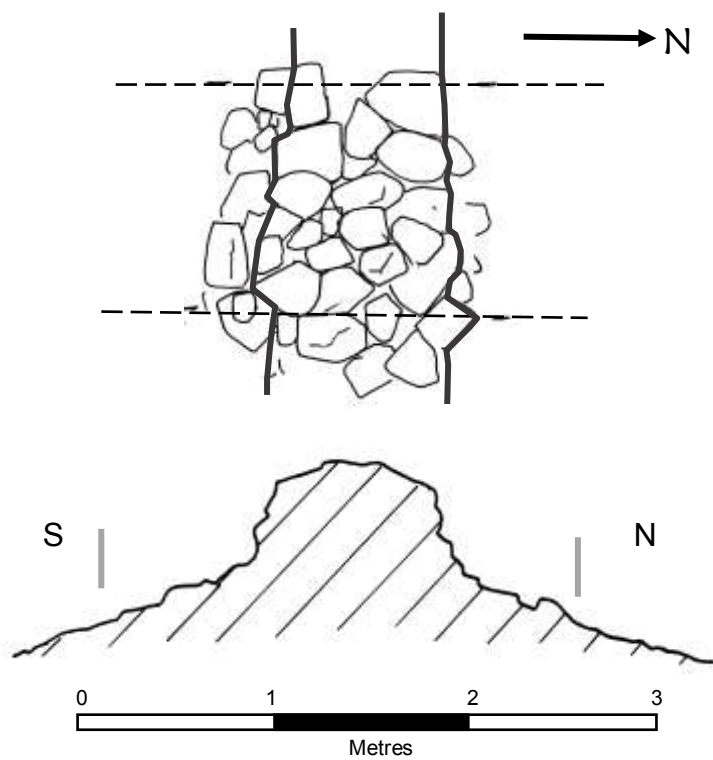


Figure 8: Slot A in Area 1 (6m from west boundary wall). Plan above with outline around remaining dry-stone wall and profile below.

SLOT B

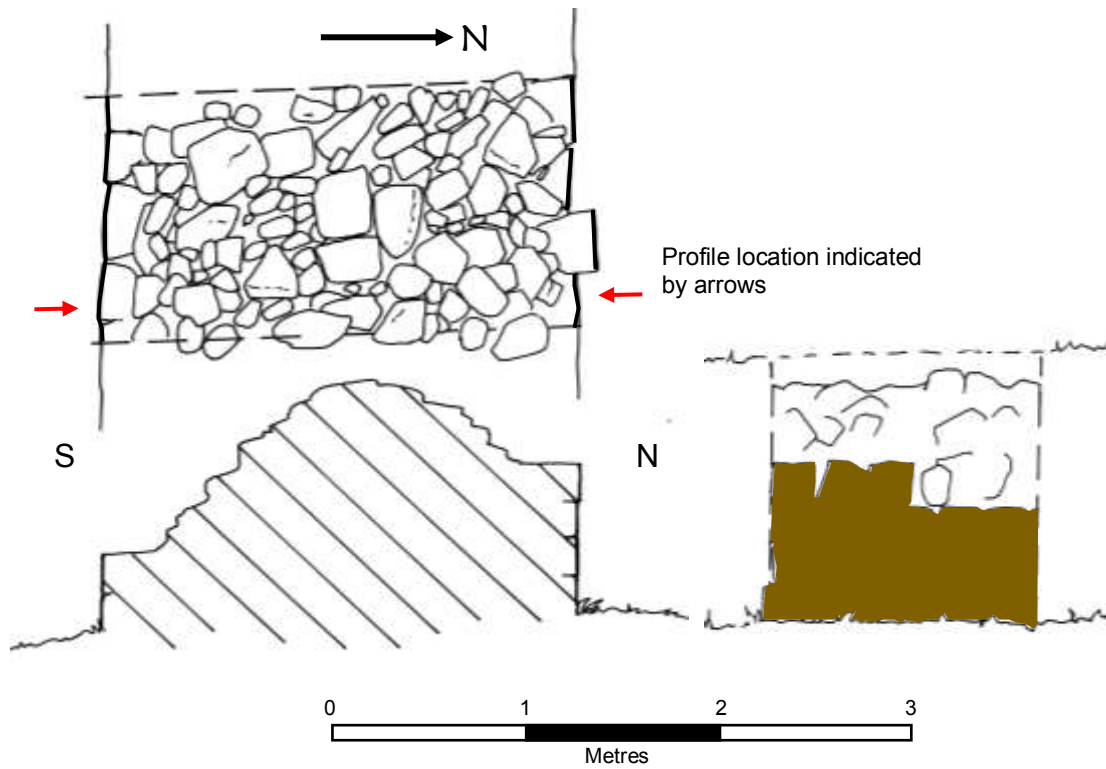


Figure 9: Slot B in Area 6 (52m from west boundary wall). Plan above and profile and elevation of north face (facing stones in tone).

SLOT C

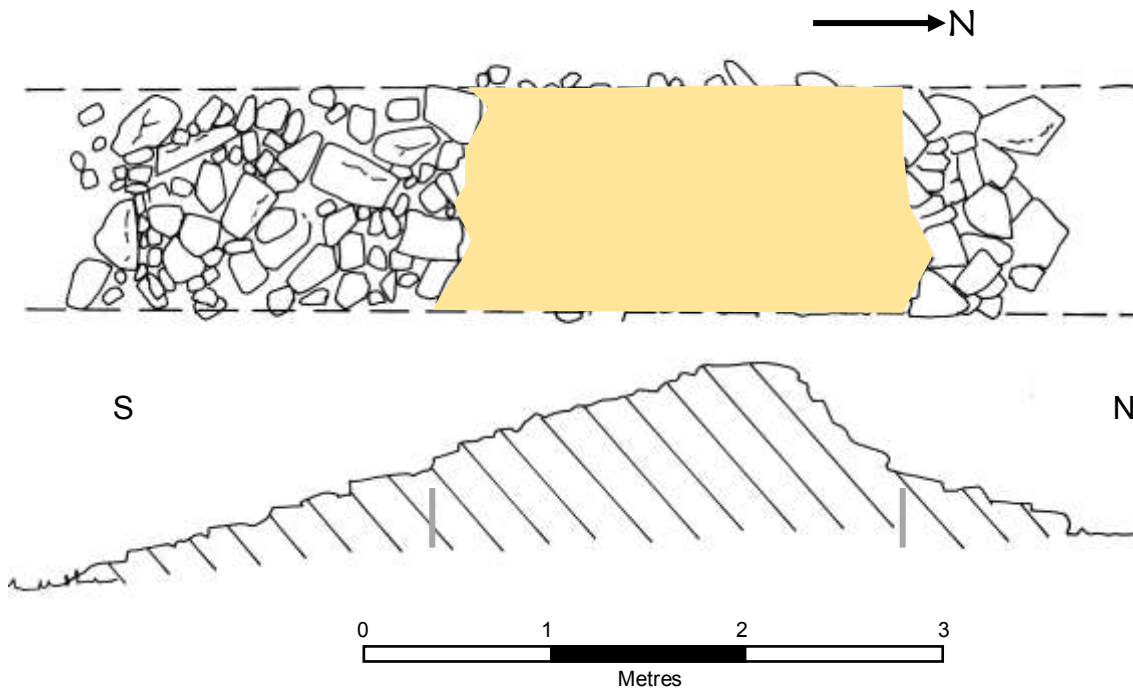


Figure 10: Slot C in Area 8 (118m from west boundary wall). Plan above and profile. Tone on plan indicates approximate extent of sandy soil, possibly decayed mortar.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The 130m length of Hadrian's Wall within the boundary of Cockmount Hill Plantation has, over time, become very heterogeneous. Eight character types have been identified along the stretch as shown on profiles 1 to 5: 10m of the Wall is a low, broad bank topped with a now tumbled dry-stone farm wall; 34m has been removed to at least ground level; 25m forms a broad, asymmetric bank with no evidence for the survival of facing stones; 25m forms a prominent bank with flanks obscured by rubble, although probably retaining some facing stones; 36m forms a prominent bank with facing stones exposed to both north and south.

The picture is no doubt complicated by the presence of Broad and Narrow foundations along the stretch as noted by Breeze (2006, 276, 277):

The Narrow Wall leaving Great Chesters runs behind the Broad Foundation up to T43a (Cockmount Hill) which relates to the latter. Broad Foundation and Narrow Wall then run parallel as far as Cockmount Hill Wood [the plantation], where both are visible, though overgrown. Before leaving the wood the two start to converge, the Narrow Wall gradually running up on to the Broad Foundation.

However, just how the stretch of Wall arrived at its diverse state remains uncertain. In 1851, Collingwood-Bruce noted that 'at Cockmount-hill, about a quarter of a mile forward, the Murus is four or five feet high' (1851, 263) but makes no other comment. No other historic evidence has been found to clarify things: It is possible that the stretch was worked on by the local landowner Gustavus Hamilton Coulson, who cleared and restored areas of the Wall to the west towards Allolees and others around Great Chesters in the second half of the 19th century. Collingwood-Bruce praises him for this in 1867 (1867, 240).

All that has been established at the moment is that considerable work has taken place in the area of the plantation involving the clearance of parts of the barrier and the restoration of a faced wall to north and south as well as the wholesale removal of a discrete stretch of the Wall.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Recommendations for conservation of the Wall within Cockmount Hill Plantation are provided under separate cover as part of this project by Tristan Spicer of Kevin Doonan Architect. Other than the longer term issue of the clearance of the conifer plantation to the north of the Wall, there are no obviously imperative requirements within the area. All parts have reached at least limited stability. Where the Wall face has been exposed, some consolidation may be required following a detailed inspection of the faces.

6.2 It would be of archaeological interest to establish the survival of the Wall within areas 7 and 8 and conceivably to identify the processes which led to their current morphology and how they relate to the Broad Wall and Narrow Foundation across the area. It would also be of interest to establish the survival of the Roman core within areas 3, 4 5 and 6 and to confirm whether the facing stones in areas 4 and 6 have been re-laid which is considered to be the case in this report.

6.3 Limited 'desk-based' investigation into previous works carried out on the stretch of Wall within Cockmount Hill Plantation would inform future conservation works.

6.4 Detailed metric survey of the area to include any visible information relating to Broad and narrow Walls and how they relate to the earthworks and structures would also benefit future conservation works.

7. PLATES

SLOT A



Plate 1: Slot A in Area 1, looking north-west. The tumbled dry-stone wall remains a prominent feature. There is little evidence for the Roman Wall. 1m scale.



Plates 2 and 3: South (left) and north faces of the tumbled dry-stone wall in Slot A.

SLOT B



Plate 4: Slot B. The south face of the Wall.



Plate 5: Slot B. The north face of the Wall.

SLOT C



Plates 6 and 7: South (left) and north faces of Slot C.



Plate 8: Slot C. Looking east along the crest of the Wall mound.

AREAS OF THE WALL



Plate 9: Looking east over Area 1 from the western edge of the plantation at Cockmount Hill. Slot A in the middle ground.



Plate 10: Looking west towards the western edge of the plantation across Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4.



Plate 11: Looking east along Area 6, Slot B towards the left. The area is mixed with some facestones of the Wall exposed and others obscured with tumbled core.



Plate 12: Looking west along area 6 with bank turning to the south in front of the ranging rod



Plate 13: Looking west along Area 7. Here, the Wall has been removed leaving only a slight mound along the south edge of its projected course



Plate 14: Looking east along Area 8 where there is a substantial but asymmetric bank along the projected line of the Wall.



Plate 15: Looking west from the eastern end of the plantation over Areas 8 and 7.



Plate 16: The Wall in Area 6 before clearance of trees and saplings. The Wall face is exposed but obscured by vegetation.

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