

STORAGE SHED AT CHESTERS WALLED GARDEN
Archaeological Evaluation

June 2018



Prepared for Doonan Architects on behalf of Mr David Harrison by:

Alan Williams Archaeology, 216 Wingrove Road
Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne
alanwilliamsarchaeology@gmail.com

Planning Application No: 18/00507/FUL
Oasis Ref: alanwill1 - 320051
Grid Ref: NY 9075 7025
Site Code: CSS (Chesters Storage Shed) 2018
Parish: Humshaugh, Northumberland

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Summary

Archaeological evaluation, to a brief agreed with Northumberland County Council Conservation Section, was carried out by Alan Williams Archaeology in June 2018 for Mr David Harrison, Chesters Estate, Humshaugh, Northumberland to determine the likely archaeological impact of the construction of a proposed storage shed across the projected (but unscheduled) line of the Vallum complex immediately to the west of the walled garden at Chesters House.

Two trenches were located to intercept the North Vallum Mound and Vallum Ditch adjacent to the proposed storage shed. No evidence was found for the North Mound and only conjectural evidence was located for the Vallum Ditch (possibly re-deposited subsoil overlying the putative north edge of the ditch associated with a few small sherds of abraded Roman pottery).

Given lack of strong evidence for either North Mound or Vallum Ditch - along with relatively minor groundworks for the proposed storage shed - it is considered unlikely that the development would impact in any significant way on the Vallum complex.

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

A planning application (18/00507/FUL) has been submitted by Mr David Harrison of Chesters Estate to Northumberland County Council for the construction of a storage shed to the west of the walled garden within the grounds of the estate. The footprint of the proposed structure is within the area of the projected course of the Vallum complex, the southern component of the second century AD Hadrianic frontier. This complex is made up of the Vallum Ditch and flanking north and south mounds. Although these remains are not visible within or adjacent to the proposed development area, a review of available evidence provided in a briefing document requested by Northumberland County Council Conservation Section, supporting information for the planning application (see Appendix 1) suggests that the proposed storage shed would sit immediately to the north of the Vallum Ditch and astride the line of the north mound.

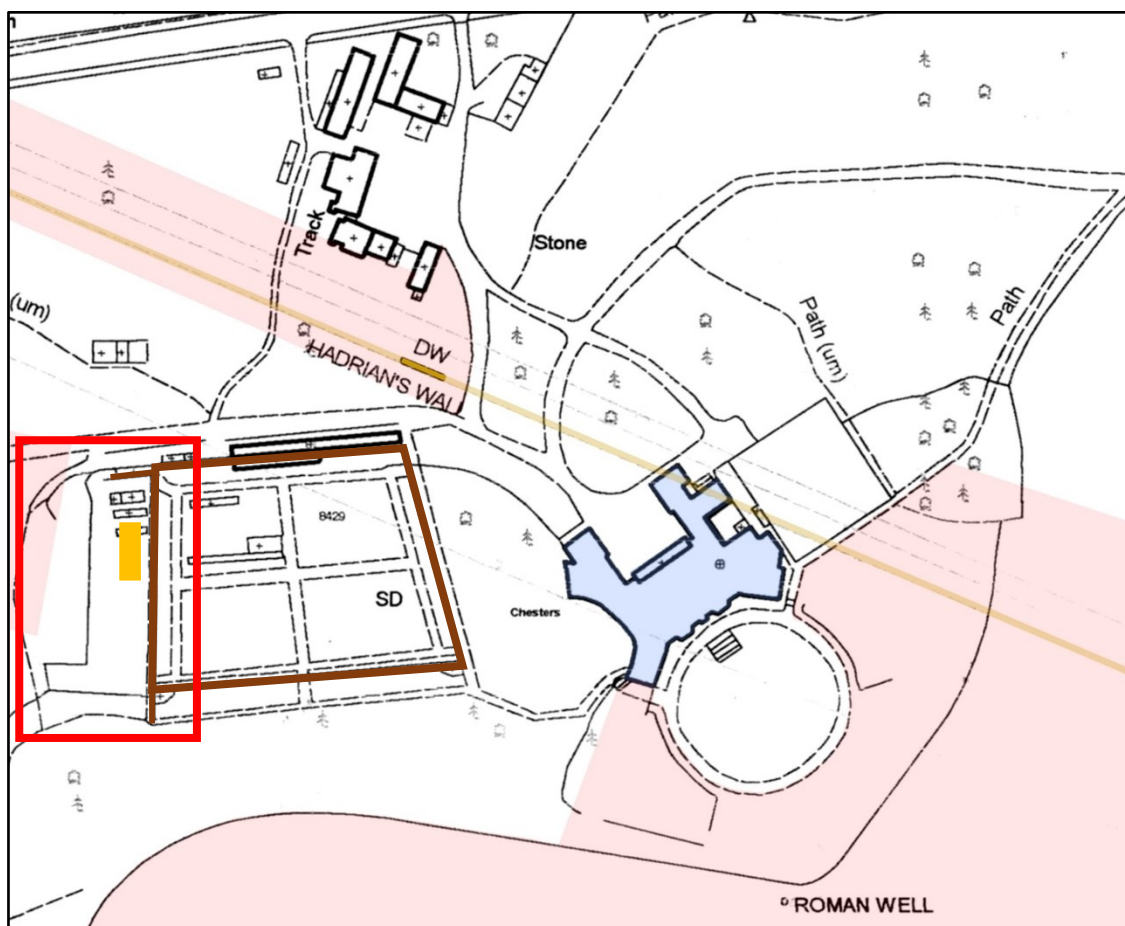


Figure 1: Location of the development area. Chesters House (blue tone) and walled garden to west (brown outline). Scheduled areas are in pink tone. The footprint of the new storage shed is shown in yellow and the outline of figure 2 in red. Hadrian's Wall lies to the north. Not to scale, north to top.

2. REQUIREMENT FOR EVALUATION

Based on the conclusions of the briefing document (Appendix 1), it was requested that two evaluation trenches, each 6m long by 1.5m wide and located as per figure 6 in Appendix 1 should be excavated to confirm the location of the Vallum Ditch adjacent to the proposed shed and the degree of survival, if any, of the north mound. The following report sets out the results of this evaluation trenching.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The Hadrianic Frontier

Chesters House and its surrounding gardens straddle the line of the Roman Hadrianic frontier including Hadrian's Wall, Wall Ditch, Military Way and Vallum. Areas to east and west of the hall, including Chesters Fort, are protected as scheduled monument No. 26052 but Chesters House itself, and its immediate developed surroundings, are excluded from this designation as is the normal case with scheduling. This does not mean that internationally significant archaeological remains are absent from the unscheduled area.

3.2 The Vallum Complex

The proposed storage shed lies along the line of the Vallum complex, the southern component of the Roman frontier. This comprises a substantial flat-bottomed ditch, nominally 6m across and 3m deep, flanked by mounds to either side, also nominally 6m wide, 2m high (frequently revetted with turf) and set 9m from the edge of the ditch. In some areas, a third, 'marginal' mound is present, usually on the south (occasionally on the north) lip of the ditch (Breeze, 2006, 85-88). The dimensions provided above are indicative only: there is considerable variation in the dimensions and juxtaposition of the components of the Vallum (Wilmott 2009, 134, Table 2).

4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT (Doonan Architects Drawings P01 and P02 Revision D)

The proposed development involves the construction of a steel portal-framed building (18m long by 7m wide) and the installation of services to the structure. Set on an existing gentle north-south slope (about 1:20) groundworks for the building would involve limited cutting at the north and filling at the south to produce a level platform with foundation trenches along each wall line a maximum of c.0.9m deep (see figure 4). Short service-trenches for water and electric would be cut 0.6m deep to the north of the storage shed running away from the projected line of the North Mound.

5. RESULTS

Evaluation trenches were cut using a machine excavator with a 1.3m wide ditching blade down to any identified deposits. Subsequent deposits were manually excavated and the trenches cleaned and recorded.

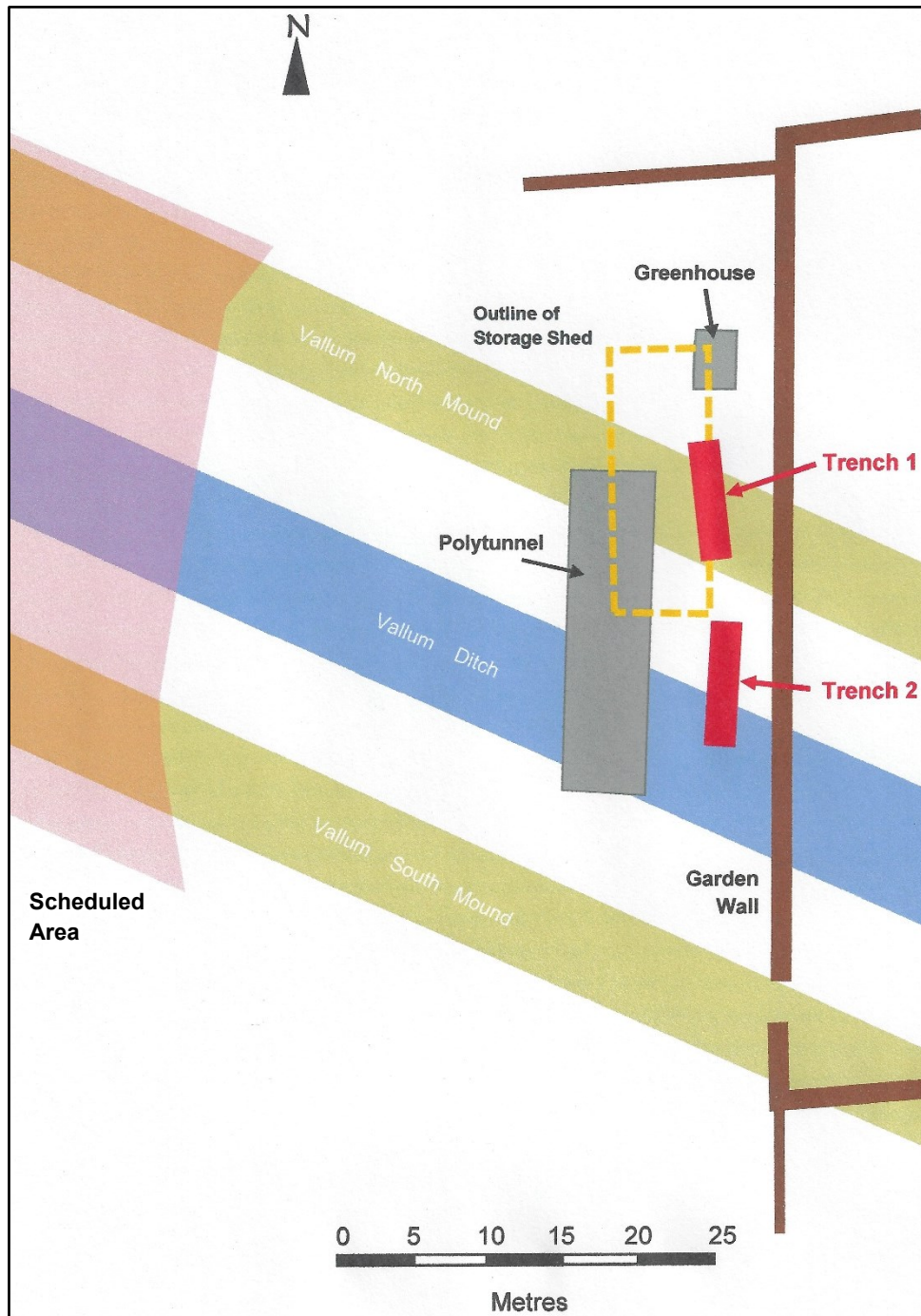


Figure 2: Trenches 1 and 2 (in red) excavated next to the walled garden at Chesters. The existing polytunnel in grey, the footprint of the proposed storage shed in hatched yellow line and The courses of the Vallum Ditch and the north and south mounds of the Vallum in blue and buff respectively

5.1 Trench 1 (7m long (6.6m at base) by 1.5m wide, maximum of 0.6m deep. Subsoil at c. 0.5m deep)

This was located to intercept the projected course of the Vallum North Mound immediately to the north-east of the footprint of the proposed storage shed and avoiding the existing polytunnel.

Buff-brown, stony boulder clay extended across the base of the trench at c. 0.5m aOD. Overlying this subsoil, and without any gradation from one to the other, was a medium-brown sticky clay-loam [2] which contained fairly well dispersed flecks and small fragments of lime and occasional small fragments of burnt clay. This layer was cut by a broad, east-west running slot [5], 0.10m deep with a flat base and 2.4m wide. Against the western section of the trench, the north and south flanks of [5] had been marked by boulders. The depression was filled to a depth of 0.10m with hearth ash [4] which included some fragments of coal. The remainder of the feature was filled with a very similar deposit to [2]. No secure interpretation of this feature can be offered, perhaps a cinder path. A thin modern topsoil [1] lay across the trench.

5.2 Trench 2 (7.3m long (6.8m at base) by 1.5m wide and maximum of 1.3m deep. subsoil at c. 0.9m deep).

This was located to identify the northern edge of the Vallum Ditch, putatively 5m south of the footprint of the proposed storage shed.

Buff-brown boulder clay with a number of substantial boulders to the north and centre of the trench was overlaid by [8] (same as [2] in Trench 1) medium-brown sticky clay loam with dispersed flecks and small fragments of lime and occasional small fragments of burnt clay. Above this were a number of ash-filled pits/gullies [6] and the terminal of a structure [7] formed of three laid bricks which did not protrude into the trench. Only at the south end of the trench was there a distinguishable topsoil [5].

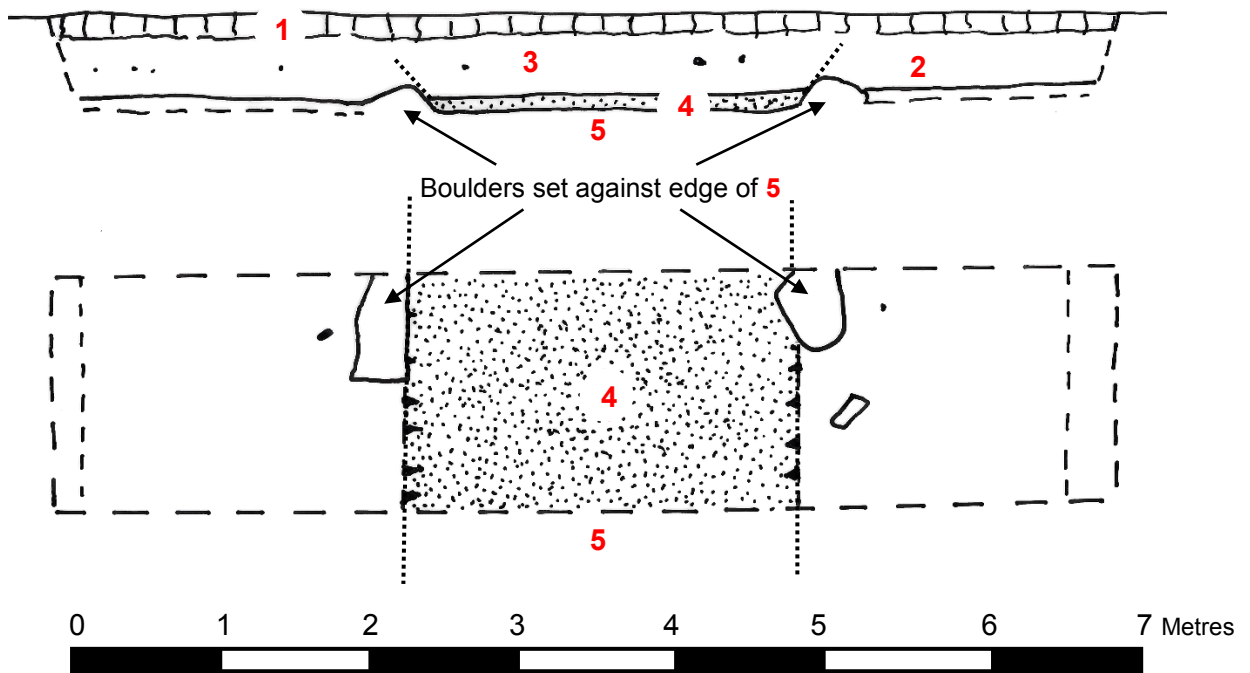
5.3 Roman Pottery from Trench 2

Recovered from the base of layer [8] and the upper area of what appeared to be clay subsoil – and exclusively from the southern half of Trench 2- was a number of very small and abraded sherds of Roman pottery (see figure 5 for key) including: **1.** Three fragments of Samian (one a piece of foot ring from a cup or small bowl); **2.** Four body-sherd fragments of an equally small coarse-ware cup or flask in an oxidised sandy fabric; **3.** One fragment of reduced ware; **4.** A small fragment of an oxidised coarse-ware fabric.

TRENCH 1

S + 80.20m aOD

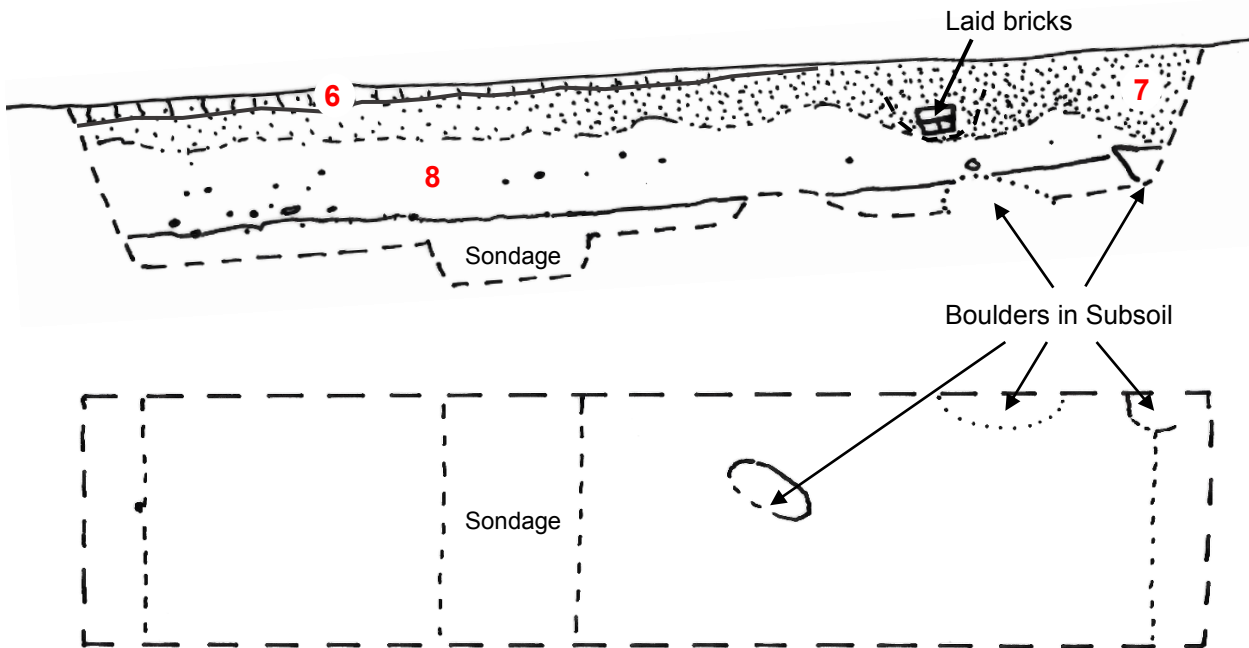
+ N



TRENCH 2

S + 78.80m aOD

+ N



Roman pottery from this area of Trench

Figure 3: Plans and sections (both east-facing) of Trenches 1 and 2 (1:50)

6. SITE INTERPRETATION

6.1 Overall Stratigraphy

Boulder clay was seen across the base of both trenches (Seen at a depth of 0.5m in Trench 1 and at 0.9m deep in Trench 2). This was overlaid by a thick layer of medium-brown sticky clay-loam ([2] in Trench 1; [8] in Trench 2), increasing in depth to the south. The matrix of this deposit was interspersed with small fragments of lime and occasional small fragments of burnt clay. It is conceivable that it may represent a heavily disturbed soil, re-worked when the walled garden was constructed to the east: The lime fragments and flecking and fragments of burnt clay may associate it with construction of the brick and lime-mortar laid walls of the garden; The lack of gradation between it and subsoil does not indicate a slowly developed soil profile.

In Trench 1, layer [2] was cut through to subsoil by a flat-bottomed, east-west running slot [5], its base filled with hearth ash and cinder [4]. Eventually, its upper area was filled with a deposit [3] very similar to (probably re-deposited) [2]. The function of this feature is uncertain, possibly a cinder path; conceivably an ash dump, the ash presumably derived from the furnace for the heated garden walls. In Trench 2, ash-filled gullies and/or pits including a drain or similar sunken structure formed of modern brick [7] overlaid [8] and faded out to the south. Both trenches were topped with thin, modern topsoil ([1] and [6]).

6.2 North Vallum Mound and Vallum Ditch

Prior to investigations, there was no earthwork evidence for either of the Vallum Mounds or the Vallum Ditch in the area of Chesters Walled Garden. Neither trench has provided any substantial sub-surface evidence for these features. There are a number of alternatives for their absence.

A. Removal and Masking of Features

Chesters Walled Garden lies immediately to the east of the site of the proposed storage shed and the evaluation trenches. When the garden was constructed in the 18th century, there will have been substantial accompanying groundworks (layer [2], [8] would suggest this). It is likely that any adjacent remains of the Vallum, both positive and negative, would have been erased during its construction. The easiest solution for this erasure would have been to backfill the Vallum Ditch with its accompanying mounds. This would account for the absence of the North Mound, but not for the apparent sub-surface absence of the Vallum Ditch. However, given that the raw material of the North Mound would have been clay subsoil derived from the ditch, identification of the edge of the backfilled feature in the

evaluation trench would be problematic. The only indications that apparent subsoil deposits at the south end of Trench 2 (the putative location of the north edge of the ditch) may have been re-deposited were the presence of a number of very small abraded sherds of Roman pottery found in the interface between layer [8] and subsoil, and the lack of large boulders in the subsoil compared to the north part of the trench.

B. Mislocation of the Projected Course of the Vallum

As mentioned, the North Vallum Mound and Vallum Ditch in the evaluation area were located by projection from its known location to the west. It is possible that this projection is marginally out, or that the Vallum changed course between Walwick (its first clear location to the west) and Chesters Fort to the east, where its course to the south of the fort has not as yet been securely established (but would push the line of the Vallum further to the south, away from the development). Either eventuality could place the evaluation trenches beyond the target features. Based on the evidence currently available, this is unlikely.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 North Vallum Mound

Given the lack of any earthwork or subsurface evidence for the feature in Trench 1, it would seem likely that within the vicinity of the Storage Shed, the North Vallum Mound has been completely erased.

7.2 Vallum Ditch

The apparent absence of the Vallum Ditch may only be a reflection of its masking by re-deposited subsoil when it was backfilled with material from the North and South Mounds. Alternatively, it may lie further to the south.

7.3 Roman Surfaces

No evidence was located for a Roman ground surface

7.4 Likely Development Impacts

It would seem unlikely that the construction of the storage shed (as per the footprint shown on Doonan Architects Plan Revision D) would impact on surviving Roman deposits or features. Roman artefactual material recovered during the evaluation was from the south end of Trench 2 and beyond the area of development.

7.5 Monitoring

Given the above, it would seem unlikely that archaeological monitoring during the relatively limited groundworks for construction of the storage shed would provide significant new insight into the Vallum complex.

8. PLATES



Plate 1: The evaluation trenches from the south. Polytunnel to left walled garden to the right



Plate 2: Evaluation Trench 1 from the south. Boulders flank feature [5].



Plate 3: Evaluation Trench 1, looking north-west. 2m scale. Ash-filled feature [5] to centre



Plate 4: Evaluation Trench 2, looking south-east. 2m scale.



Plate 5: Evaluation Trench 2, looking north-east. 2m scale.



Plate 6: Evaluation Trench 2, looking west. 2m scale. Ash-filled features and brick structure [7] overlying [8] with boulder clay below.

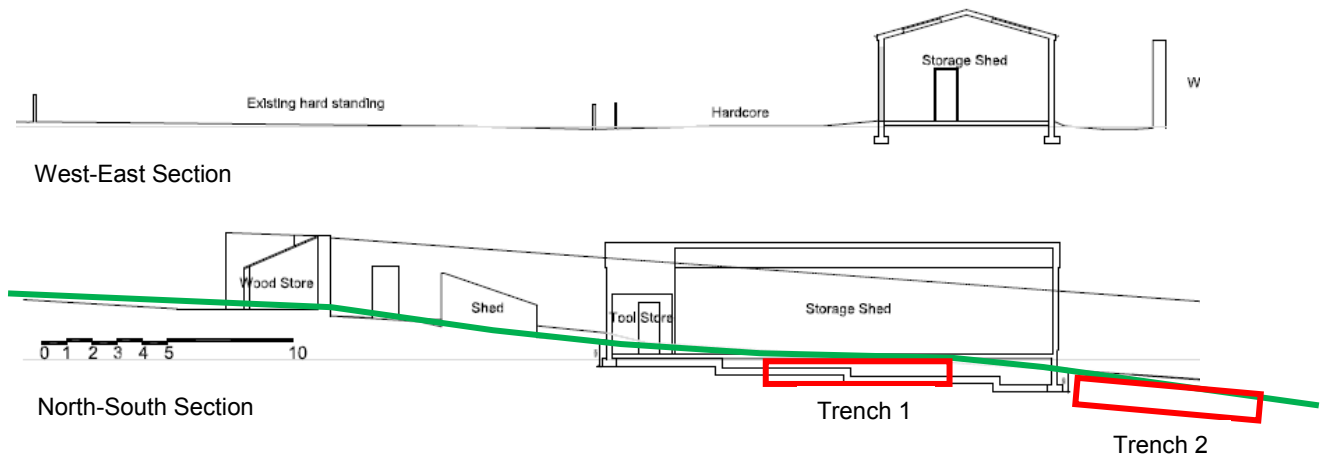


Figure 4: West-East (top) and North-South sections showing the proposed Storage Shed (as per Revision D: Doonan Architects drawing No. P01) with the current ground surface on the N-S section in green line and the evaluation trenches in red outline.

9. SOURCES

Breeze, D. J (2006) *Handbook to the Roman Wall*

Wilmott, T (ed.) (2009) *Hadrian's Wall: Archaeological Research by English Heritage 1976-2006* (English Heritage)

Northumberland HER information for an area around Chesters House and as far west as Walwick Farmhouse, including event data, was accessed for the preparation of this report.

Historic Map evidence from Northumberland County Archives, Woodhorn



10 Centimetres

Figure 5: Assemblage of small and abraded sherds of Roman pottery from base of [8] and top of subsoil in Trench 2. Numbers keyed to text description (section 5.3).

APPENDIX 1

A Note on Likely Archaeological Implications of Planning Application 18/00507/FUL for Proposed Development of a Storage Shed at Chesters Walled Garden Prepared by Alan Williams April 2018

Summary

A planning application has been submitted to Northumberland County Council for the construction of a storage shed to the west of the walled garden at Chesters House, Humshaugh, Northumberland. This lies within the area of the projected course of the Vallum complex, the southern component of the second century AD Hadrianic Roman frontier, made up of the Vallum Ditch and flanking north and south mounds. Although these remains are not visible within or adjacent to the proposed development area, a review of available evidence provided in this report (modern aerial photographs, Lidar survey and map evidence, both historic and modern) suggest that the storage shed would sit immediately to the north of the Vallum Ditch and astride the line of the north mound.

In order to fully establish the likely archaeological impact of the proposed development on internationally significant archaeological remains (the area lies beyond the scheduled area of the Roman frontierworks but within the UNESCO designated Roman Frontiers World Heritage Site) and inform the planning process, it is recommended that two evaluation trenches should be excavated to secure the location of the Vallum Ditch adjacent to the proposed shed and determine the degree of survival, if any, of the north mound.

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Figure 1: Chesters House and walled garden to west

Figure 2: Drawings by Doonan Architects showing the existing site to the west of the walled garden at Chesters and to the right the proposed storage shed

Figure 3: HER extract map for the area around the proposed development

Figure 4: Google Earth aerial photograph of Chesters House and field to the west

Figure 5: Two images from Lidar survey showing the area around Chesters House

Figure 6: Proposed location of evaluation trenches T1 and T2

Figures 7, 8 and 9: Historic Ordnance Survey maps

1. Proposed Development

A planning application was submitted to Northumberland County Council on 9th February 2018 by Mr David Harrison for the demolition of an existing horticultural polytunnel and greenhouse immediately to the west of the walled garden at Chesters House, Humshaugh, Northumberland and for construction, in the same area, of a steel portal-framed building (17m long by 7m wide) and the installation of services to the structure. Set on an existing gentle north-south slope (plates 1 and 2), groundworks for the building would involve cutting at the north and filling at the south to produce a level platform with foundation trenches along each wall line a maximum of c.0.9m deep. Service trenches for water and electric would be cut 0.6m deep along the routes shown on figure 2.

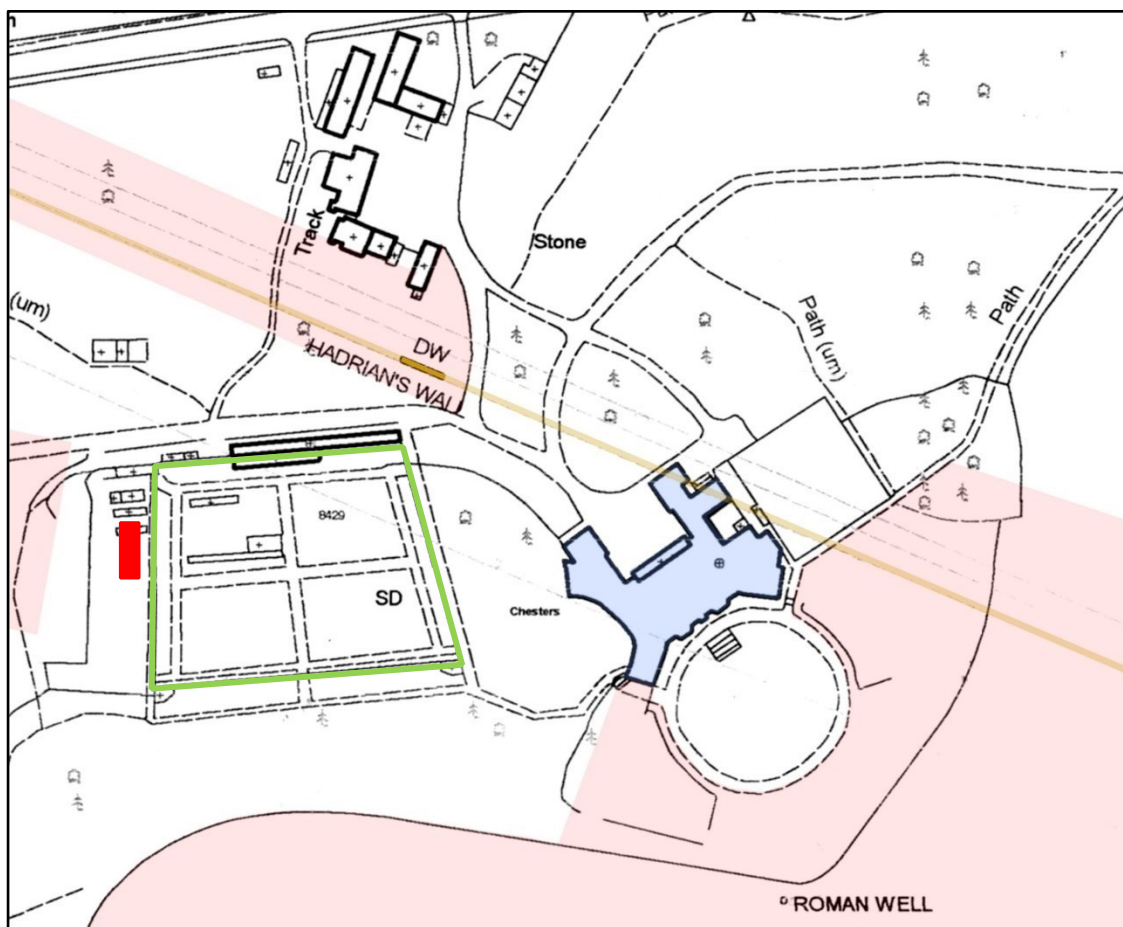


Figure 1: Chesters House (blue tone) and walled garden to west (green outline). Scheduled areas are in pink tone. The approximate location of the new storage shed is shown in red. Hadrian's Wall lies to the north. Not to scale, north to top.

1. Archaeological Background

1.1 The Hadrianic Frontier

Chesters House and its surrounding gardens straddle the line of the Roman Hadrianic frontierworks including Hadrian's Wall, Wall Ditch, Military Way and Vallum. Areas to east

and west of the hall, including Chesters Fort to the east, are protected as scheduled monument No. 26052 but Chesters House itself, and its immediate surroundings, are excluded from this designation as is the normal case with scheduling. This does not mean that internationally significant archaeological remains are absent from the unscheduled area.

1.1 The Vallum Complex

The proposed storage shed lies along the line of the Vallum complex, the southern component of the Roman frontierworks. This is comprised of a substantial flat-bottomed ditch, nominally 6m across and 3m deep, flanked by mounds to either side, also nominally 6m wide, 2m high (frequently revetted with turf) and set 9m from the edge of the ditch. In some areas, a third, 'marginal' mound is present, usually on the south (occasionally on the north) lip of the ditch (Breeze, 2006, 85-88).

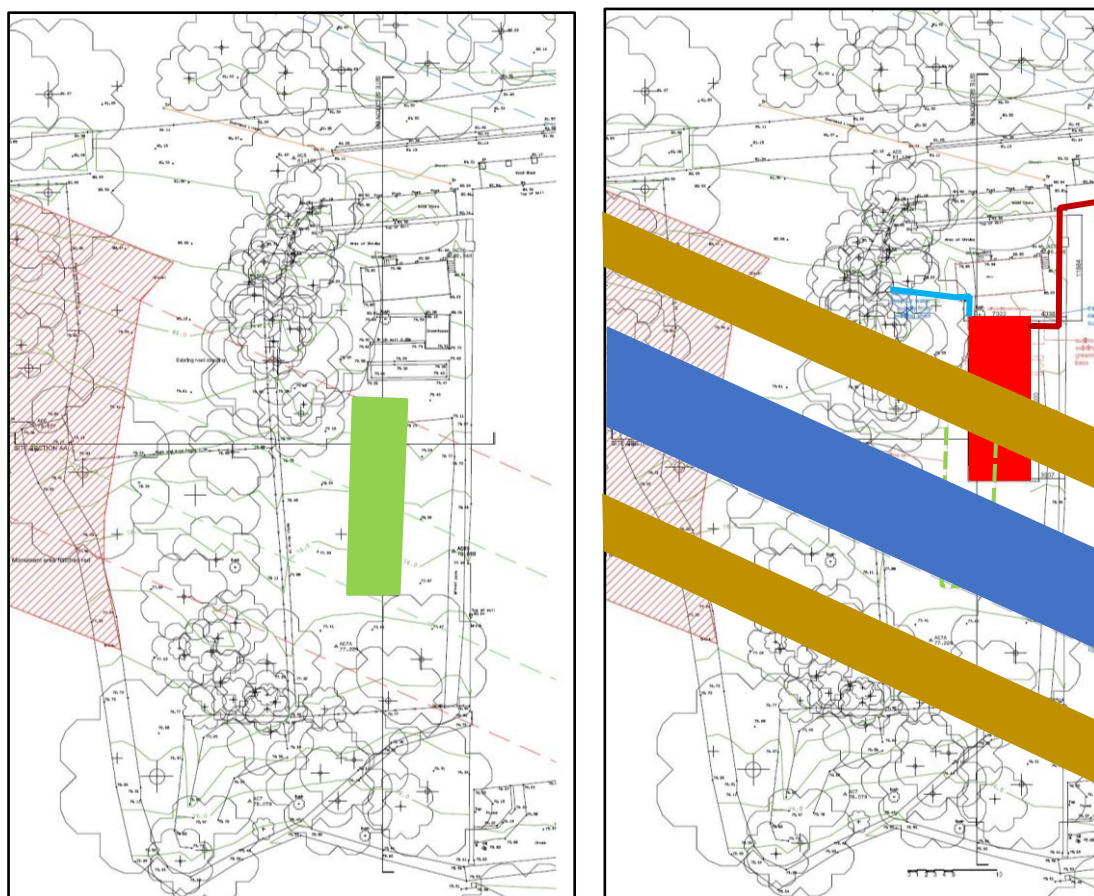


Figure 2: Drawings EO1 (Revision D) and PO1 (Revision D) by Doonan Architects showing (left) the existing site with polytunnel in green immediately to the west of the walled garden at Chesters, and (to the right) the proposed storage shed in red with the outline of the polytunnel in dashed green. Trench for electricity cable in brown; Trench for water in blue. Projected course of Vallum Ditch in green tone and north and south mounds in brown tone. Scheduled area to west hatched in red.

The Vallum Ditch and its flanking north and south mounds are not visible in the area of the proposed development and are projected as an alignment on maps. Nor has the Vallum been located at Chesters Fort to the east: contradictory historic aerial-photographic evidence

suggests it could have either run into the fort's south ditch, or swung to the south beyond the fort (Breeze 2006, 197). To the west, across the minor road running south from the Military Road (the B6319), amorphous, heavily plough-damaged earthworks forming the complex can be seen in the pasture field running up to Walwick Farm (plate 4). West of this, the Vallum and its south mound are fairly clear, the north mound lying underneath the Military Road. There is no evidence for the marginal mound in the area. Evidence from the National Mapping Programme (figure 3) Lidar survey (figure 4) modern aerial photographic evidence (figure 5) and historic Ordnance Survey mapping (figures 7, 8 and 9), have been used to plot the most likely course of the Vallum and mounds across the proposed development area. The result of the collated evidence is shown on figure 2.

1. Evidence for the Course of the Vallum

1.1 Hadrian's Wall National Mapping Programme ([Monument number 1447635](#))

Information on the Vallum complex to the west of the proposed development area, along with other HER information, was accessed for this report. It notes:

A fragmentary section of Roman Vallum is visible as an earthwork on air photographs centred at NY9042 7038. A 470m length of the Vallum runs between NY 9021 7047 and NY 9064 7028 and is very mutilated by ridge and furrow ploughing. The north mound and ditch are, in parts, defined by a scarp and elsewhere by an ill-defined bank or ditch. The south mound is intermittently visible.

The Vallum earthworks are shown on the HER extract map for the area (figure 3, below), referenced as features **1447635** (red outline: north and south mounds; green outline: Vallum ditch).

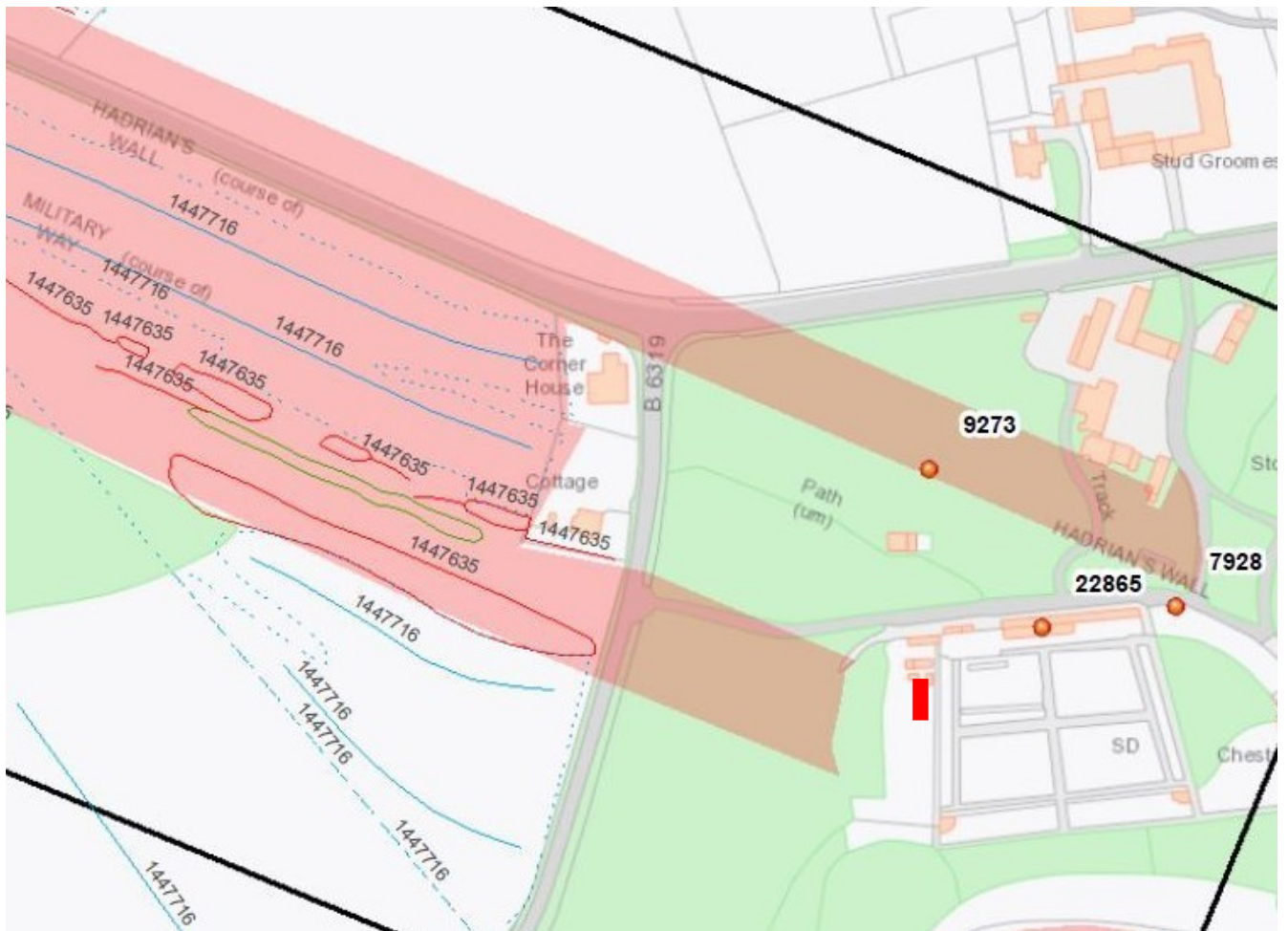


Figure 3: HER extract map for the area around the proposed development. Pink tone shows scheduled monument 26052. Hadrian's Wall National Mapping Programme features 1447635 to the west of the development area include north and south mounds of the Vallum in red outline and the Vallum Ditch, itself, in green outline. The proposed storage shed is shown in red. Features 9273, 22865 and 7928 are, respectively, Turret 27b, the walled garden at Chesters and Hadrian's Wall and Vallum.

1.2 Modern Aerial Photographic Evidence (Google Earth)

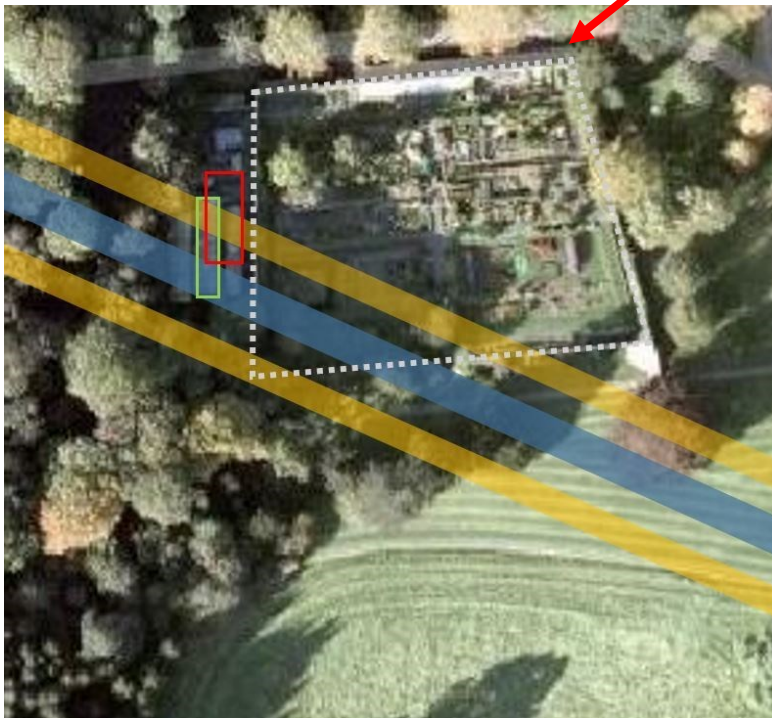


Figure 4 : Google Earth aerial photograph of Chesters House and field to the west (above) in which the eroded earthworks of the Vallum complex can be seen within the field. The enlargement of the area of the walled garden (right) shows the projected course of the Vallum Ditch (blue tone) and north and south mounds (brown tone). The existing polytunnel is shown in green outline and the proposed shed in red outline.

1.3 Lidar Survey

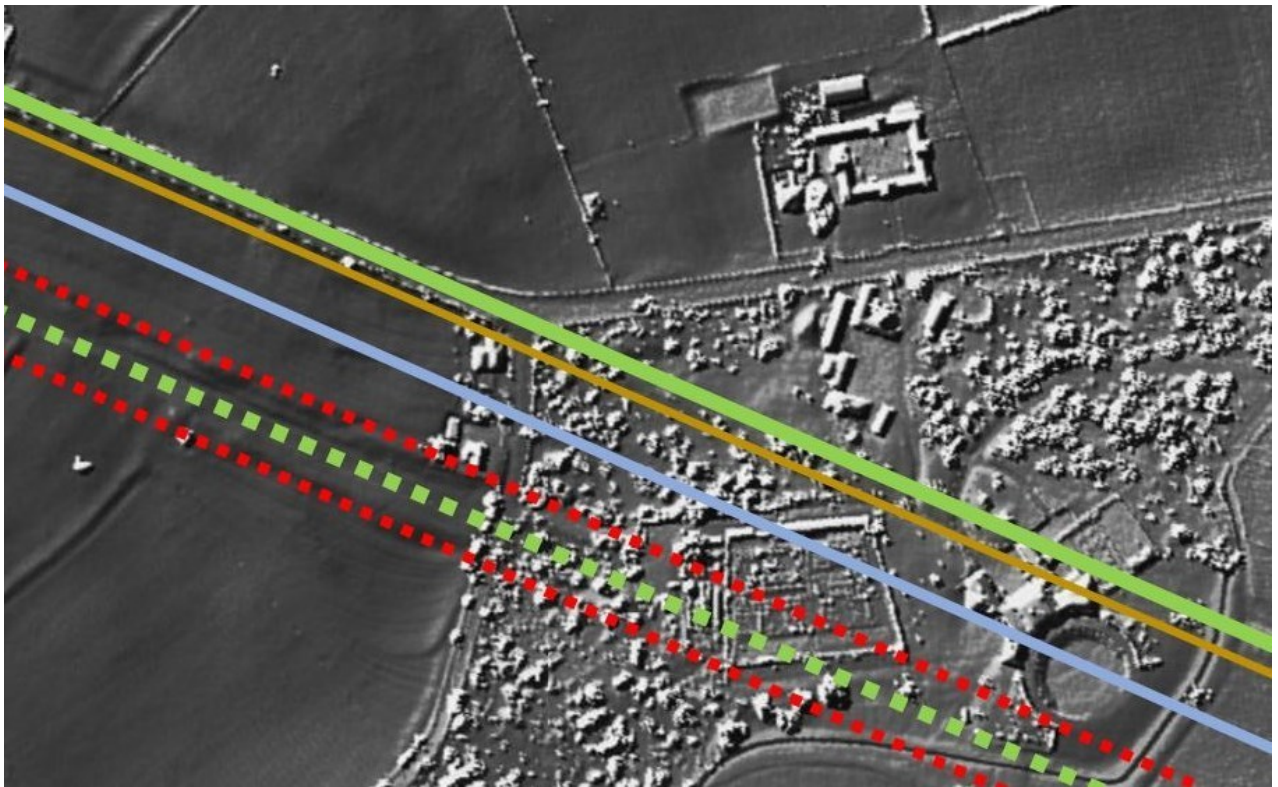
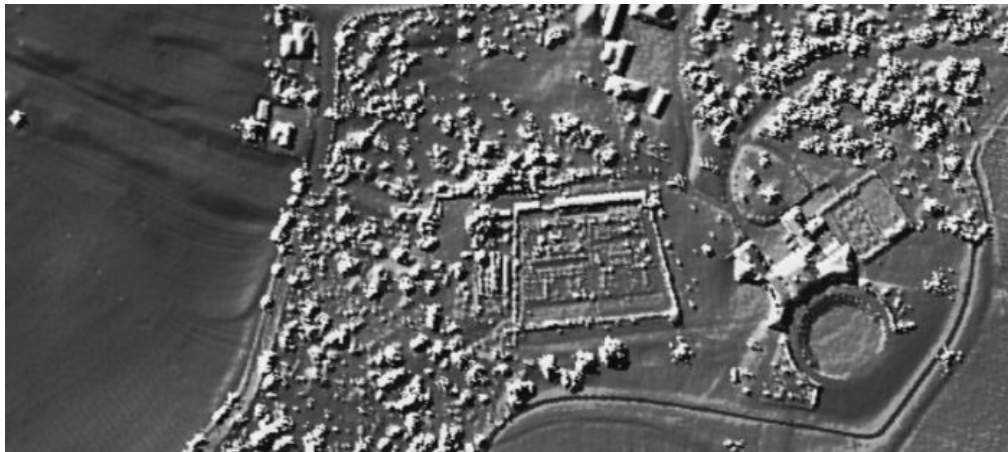


Figure 5: Two images from Lidar survey showing the area around Chesters House. The top image shows the house and its walled garden with earthworks of the Vallum complex to the west. The bottom image includes projected lines of the Vallum complex (dotted green line for the Vallum Ditch and dotted red lines for the north and south mounds) as well as the course of the Military Way (blue line); the Wall Ditch (green line) and the Wall itself (brown line) of which a short stretch survives within the gardens at Chesters House.

2. Possible Archaeological Impact of the Development

4.1 From the best estimate of the projected course of the Vallum Ditch and north mound, the proposed storage shed would lie immediately to the north of the ditch and straddle the line of

the mound (figure 2). No visible earthworks, negative or positive, mark the presence of either feature in the vicinity of the shed.

4.2 It is not considered that service trenching for water and electricity supply to the storage shed would impact on archaeological remains.

3. Recommendations

In order to fully establish the likely archaeological impact of the proposed development on significant archaeological remains (the area lies beyond the scheduled area of the Roman frontierworks but within the UNESCO designated Roman Frontiers World Heritage Site) and inform the planning procedure, it is recommended that two evaluation trenches (figure 6) each 6m long by 1.5m wide, should be excavated to secure the location of the Vallum Ditch (Trench 1) adjacent to the proposed shed and determine the degree of survival, if any, of the north mound (Trench 2).

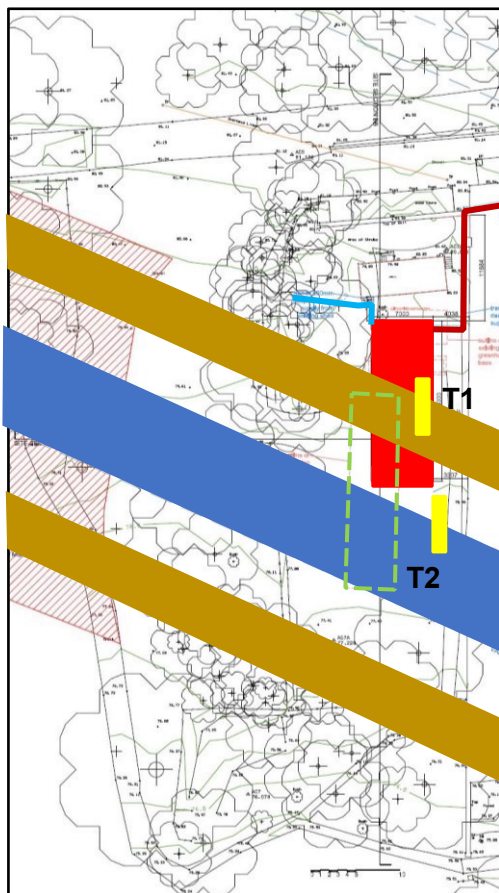


Figure 6: Proposed location of evaluation trenches T1 and T2 in yellow. Footprint of proposed shed in red; existing polytunnel in green broken line; Projected line of Vallum Ditch in blue tone and projected courses of north and south mounds in brown tone. Service trenches in red and blue line.

4. Historic Ordnance Survey Maps

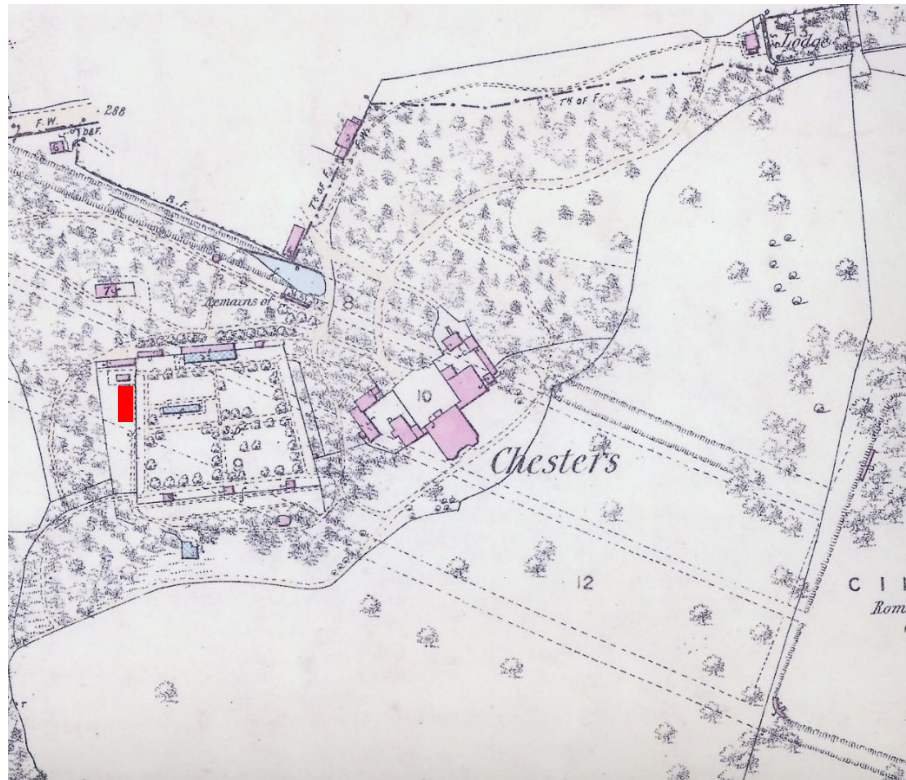


Figure 7: First Edition 25 Inches to One Mile 1860. Approximate footprint of proposed storage shed in red.

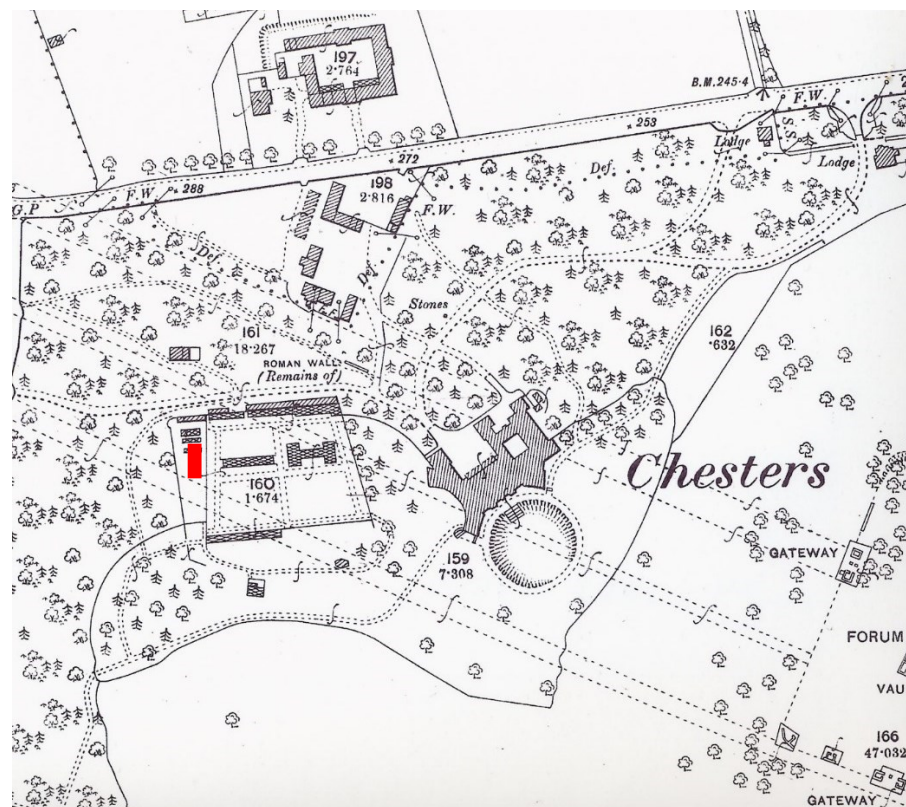


Figure 8: Second Edition 25 Inches to One Mile 1856. Approximate footprint of proposed storage shed in red.

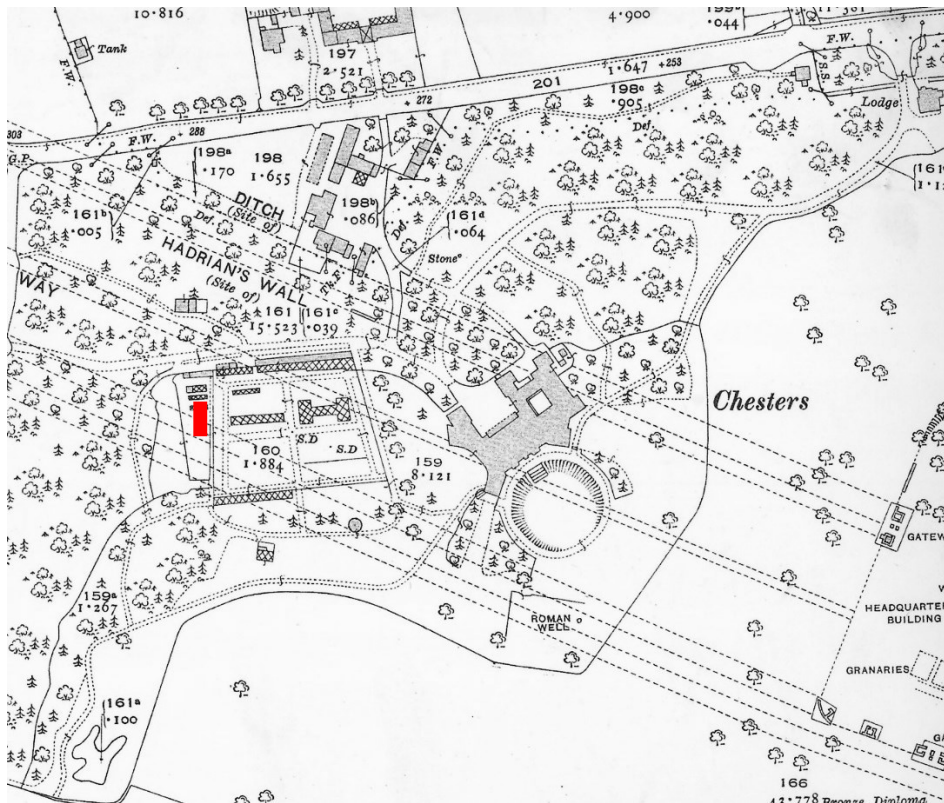


Figure 9: Third Edition 25 Inches to One Mile 1912. Approximate footprint of proposed storage shed in red.

5. Photographs of the Development Area



Plate 1: The polytunnel. Looking north. West wall of the walled garden to the right.



Plate 2: The polytunnel. Looking south. West wall of the walled garden to the left.



Plate 3: The greenhouse, looking north. The north end of the storage shed would run across the greenhouse.



Plate 4: *Looking north-west across the reduced earthworks of Vallum Ditch and south mound in the field to the west of Chesters.*

6. Sources

Breeze, D. J (2006) *Handbook to the Roman Wall*

Northumberland HER information for an area around Chesters House and as far west as

Walwick Farmhouse, including event data, was accessed for the preparation of this report.