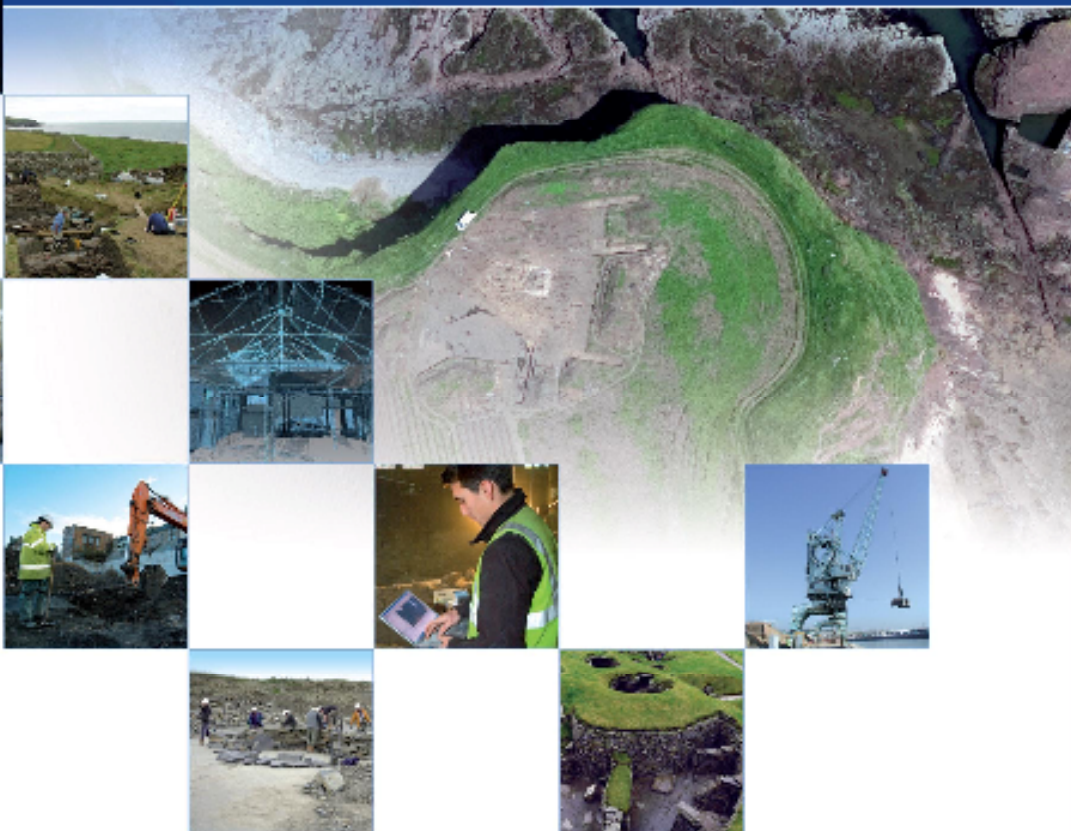
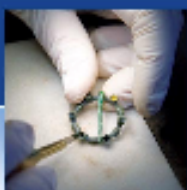


# Stable Cottage, Rudchester, Heddon on the Wall, Northumberland: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

AOC 55015

18<sup>th</sup> June 2010



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

## Stable Cottage, Rudchester, Northumberland: Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**National Grid Reference (NGR):** NZ 11230 67373 (site centred)

**Planning reference:** CM/20080474

**AOC Project No:** 55015

**Prepared and illustrated by:** Stephen Potten

**Date of Fieldwork:** 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Date of Report:** 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010

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**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010

**Draft/Final Report Stage:** Draft

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010

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## Non-Technical Summary

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AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Lancaster Associates Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Stable Cottage, Rudchester, Heddon on the Wall, Northumberland, during redevelopment works (site centred NGR: **NZ 11230 67373**). The property lies to the south of the Roman fort of *Vindobala* and within the bounds of its civilian settlement (*vicus*). Both the fort and *vicus* are scheduled (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 26039). Further, Stable Cottage is part of a complex of buildings associated with Rudchester Manor, a Grade II\* Listed Building incorporating a 13<sup>th</sup> century tower house. The manor house formed part of a small medieval settlement. Any groundworks at the site therefore had the potential to disturb significant archaeological remains and a watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent.

Although residual Roman pottery was recovered during the groundworks, no Roman archaeological features were encountered. Evidence for medieval occupation was also absent. However, post-medieval ground-raising was identified. This probably dates from the building campaigns at the site during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Reasons for the project

1.1.1 AOC Archaeology Group was commissioned by Mr Charles Collins of Lancaster Associates Architects (the agent) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Stable Cottage, Rudchester, Heddon on the Wall, Northumberland, during redevelopment works (site centred NGR: **NZ 11230 67373**). Mr Collins was acting on behalf of his client, Mr Oliver Ojikutu, who owns the property. The development works comprised the erection of a new conservatory to the rear (west) of the property. Stable Cottage lies immediately to the south of *Vindobala* Roman fort, one of a network of fortifications associated with Hadrian's Wall; both the fort and the wall are Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 26039 and SAM 26040). The property lies within the bounds of the fort's civilian settlement (*vicus*), which is included in the scheduling (SAM 26039). Further, Stable Cottage is part of a complex of buildings closely associated with Rudchester manor house, a Grade II\* Listed Building which incorporates a late 13<sup>th</sup> century tower house in its south-eastern corner. The manor house formed part of a small medieval settlement. Clearly, any groundworks at the site had the potential to disturb significant archaeological remains and Scheduled Monument Consent was required in order to undertake the development. The archaeological watching brief was a condition of the Scheduled Monument Consent and the Grant of Planning Permission (SMC: **HSD 9/2/10613**; Planning ref: **CM/20080474**). The local planning authority, Castle Morpeth Borough Council, was advised on archaeological matters by Northumberland County Council's Archaeology and Conservation Team.

### 1.2 Location and topography

1.2.1 Stable Cottage is located in the township of Rudchester within the parish of Heddon on the Wall. It forms part of a small hamlet located to the south of the B6318 (the 'Military Way'), approximately 12 km west of central Newcastle upon Tyne (Figure 1). The cottage lies to the west of Rudchester manor house, on the western side of a small grassed courtyard (Figures 1 and 2). The topography of the development site is relatively even, with a gentle slope discernable running from north to south. The solid geology of the area comprises sandstones of the Namurian Millstone Grit Group. The local soils consist of slowly permeable, seasonally wet, loamy and clay-rich soils ('Soilscape' data).

### 1.3 Project parameters

1.3.1 The project conforms to the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 1994, rev. 2008). It also conforms to a detailed project specification produced by AOC Archaeology (AOC Archaeology 2008) and to the conditions outlined in the Scheduled Monument Consent and the Grant of Planning Permission (HSD 9/2/10613; CM/20080474).

## 2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 The aims of the archaeological watching brief were to observe all groundworks associated with the development in order to identify archaeological features and deposits and, if present, to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type. It further aimed to retrieve artefacts revealed during the groundworks which might elucidate the date and nature of activities undertaken at the site. This approach would allow any archaeological remains disturbed by the development to be 'preserved by record'. It would also allow the identification of significant features which might be worthy of preservation *in situ*, should such material be under threat from the development works.

2.2 The project also had the following specific aims:

- To ascertain whether remains associated with the fort's *vicus* (a civilian settlement) survive in the development area.
- To gather further data on the medieval occupation of Rudchester.

2.3 The project also had limited potential to address the following research agenda, identified in the North East Regional Research Framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) and in the Hadrian's Wall Research Framework (HWRF)

([www.dur.ac.uk/archaeological.services/research\\_training/hadrianswall\\_research\\_framework/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeological.services/research_training/hadrianswall_research_framework/)).

*Romano-British archaeology*

- To gather data on pre-Roman phases of occupation at or in the vicinity of forts, civilian settlements and other wall sites (HWRF, RS 2.2).
- To gather datable material that might help to establish or refine chronologies (such as the dates of construction, occupation and abandonment of forts and *vici*) (HWRF, RS 2.5, 5.2).
- To broaden our understanding of civilian settlements at fort sites by, *inter alia*, identifying their plan forms, delineating activity zones, investigating the nature of temples and religious practice at such sites and by gathering more archaeobotanical evidence (HWRF, RS 5.2).
- To gather data that might elucidate trade, exchange and interdependence between forts, *vici* and surrounding settlements (HWRF, RS 6.7, 8.1).
- To understand more fully the nature of indigenous 'Romano-British' settlement (HWRF, RS 8.1).
- To identify and understand evidence for the early post-Roman occupation of wall sites (HWRF, RS 9.2).

*Medieval archaeology*

- To gather more environmental evidence from rural sites to allow a better understanding of subsistence, consumption, animal husbandry, agricultural practices and the local environment (Petts & Gerrard 2006, 169).
- To gather data that might elucidate the patterns of, and processes behind, rural development (Petts & Gerrard 2006, 169-170).
- To determine the individual chronologies of rural settlements and their agricultural regimes (Petts & Gerrard 2006, 170).

- To characterise the nature of the medieval to post-medieval transition in the region (Petts & Gerrard 2006, 175).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Documentary Research**

3.1.1 A brief assessment of the archaeology and history of the development site was undertaken using publicly available sources. This included searches of the following resources:

- Northumberland County Archives
- Hexham Local Studies Library
- Archaeology Data Service (ADS) (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>)
- Archaeological Investigations Project (AIP): (<http://csweb.bournemouth.ac.uk/aip/aipintro.htm>)
- National Monuments Record archives

#### **3.2 Fieldwork methodology**

3.2.1 Fieldwork for the project was undertaken on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The construction works comprised ground reduction across the footprint of the new conservatory, an area of approximately 57.5 m<sup>2</sup> located immediately to the west of Stable Cottage (Figure 2; Plates 1 and 2). The contractors used a small mechanical excavator for the groundworks. None of the excavations exceeded 350 mm in depth (below the current ground level), as specified in the Scheduled Monument Consent. The project archaeologist examined exposed surfaces and trench sections both during and after excavation. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned by hand and investigated to determine their nature and to retrieve artefactual and environmental samples where appropriate. Field recording was undertaken according to AOC Archaeology Group's standard operating procedures (AOC Archaeology 2003, 1.1-9.1, Appendix 1, Appendix 2: 21.1-21.3).

#### **3.3 Artefact recovery and methodology**

3.3.1 The artefact recovery policy conformed to AOC Archaeology Group's standard operating procedures (AOC Archaeology 2003, 6.1-6.2.6.2, 8.4, Appendix 2: 7.26-7.29, 21.1-21.3). Any artefacts that were not of 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century date were quantified and assessed (see Appendix 2).

#### **3.4 Environmental methodology**

3.4.1 The environmental sampling methodology conformed to AOC Archaeology Group's standard operating procedures (AOC Archaeology 2003, 7.1-7.5.4, 8.5, Appendix 2: 7.11, 21.1-21.3). In the event, no deposits were encountered that were suitable for environmental analysis.

#### **3.5 Structural analysis**

3.5.1 All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Stratigraphic relationships were also checked once fieldwork was complete. Structural, artefactual and ecofactual evidence was considered in combination with the results of documentary research. This analysis provides the basis of the narrative presented in Sections 5 and 6.



## 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 4.1 The sources consulted suggest that there is no evidence for prehistoric occupation at the development site and very little within 500 m of Stable Cottage. Indeed, the only indication derives from an excavation undertaken in 1972 which recorded possible pre-Roman plough marks whilst investigating Roman occupation at the fort (NMR No.: 646335). The earliest unequivocal occupation evidence dates from the foundation of the Roman fort of *Vindobala* during the Hadrianic period (the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). The fort straddles Hadrian's Wall and formed part of the network of military sites designed to protect the northern frontier of Roman Britain. It was sited to defend the valley of the March Burn to the west and probably originally housed a cohort of 500 men (some mounted). Excavations in 1972 revealed a Hadrianic barrack block which had been destroyed by fire and then rebuilt during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (it appears to have fallen out of use by the last quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century). A further period of occupation is indicated in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century by the presence of timber-framed buildings and a stone sill-beam. Excavation has also identified the Commanding Officer's accommodation, the Headquarters Building, a granary, the fort's gates and a possible robbed-out corner tower. A large statue of Hercules was also found within the fort, perhaps indicating the site of a temple (NMR No.: NZ16 NW 22 (22838)). The fort survived well until the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was robbed of much of its stone; it is visible now only as earthworks covering an area of approximately 1.8 ha. The monument has also suffered sub-surface damage by ploughing during both the medieval and post-medieval periods. It lies approximately 100 m north of Stable Cottage.
- 4.2 Hadrian's Wall itself survives as a buried feature in the vicinity of Rudchester (it is thought to lie below the modern B6318 road) and excavation has shown that its defensive ditch, which was located to the north of the wall, has completely silted up (SAM 26039; NMR Nos.: LINEAR 177 (909625) and LINEAR 176 (909624)). The frontier also included minor military stations such as milecastles and turrets. Milecastle 13, located approximately 635 m north-west of the development site, survives as an earthwork whilst Turret 13a (east of the fort) and Turret 13b (west of the fort) both survive as buried features below the B6318 (SAM 26039; NMR Nos.: NZ 16 NW 7 (22789) and NZ 16 NW 8 (22792)). The vallum (a broad ditch flanked by two earthen banks which lay to the south of Hadrian's Wall) survives particularly well as upstanding earthworks to the east of Rudchester; it is less well preserved to the west, although it is known to survive as a buried feature in this area (SAM 26039; NMR No.: LINEAR 178 (909627)). The course of the Roman road known as the Military Way, which ran between the wall and the vallum, has not been clearly established in the vicinity of Rudchester (the B6318 has adopted the name, however; NMR No.: LINEAR 179 (911986)).
- 4.3 The fort of *Vindobala* had an associated civilian settlement (a *vicus*). This appears to have been located to the south and west of the fort, although the material evidence is fragmentary. Approximately 55 m north-west of Stable Cottage lie the remains of a large, rock-cut cistern, known as the 'Giant's Grave' which is thought to have been part of the settlement. Slightly further west, a series of earthwork terraces may also relate to the *vicus*, but the dating of these features is uncertain (NMR Nos.: NZ 16 NW 92 (1012722) and NZ 16 NW 93 (1012723)). On two occasions, undated walls have also been located in the gardens of the manor house and farm; these might also represent Roman civilian structures (NMR Nos.: NZ 16 NW 92 (1012722) and (627284)). However, the only substantial structure that has been located is a Mithraeum dating from the early third century AD (but constructed over an earlier building of probable Antonine date). It is located approximately 185 m north-west of Stable Cottage. The site was excavated in 1953 and, in addition to the structural remains, two centurial stones and four altars were recovered (five other altars had been found in the

vicinity during 1844; NMR Nos.: NZ 16 NW 94 (1012724) and NZ 16 NW 38 (580733)). In addition to the above, a Roman coin hoard was found in 1706 near the site of Giant's Grave; it may be civilian or military in origin (NMR No.: NZ 16 NW 37 (22885)).

- 4.4 The sources consulted suggest that there is no definitive evidence for early medieval activity at Rudchester. There is, however, a late 12<sup>th</sup> century documentary reference to the settlement and the Lay Subsidy of 1296 records seven tax-payers, indicating a small hamlet (AOC Archaeology 2009, 5; ADS: NSMR03-10878). Documentary evidence also indicates that Simon of Rudchester gave proof of age for constructing a hall in 1285 (AOC Archaeology 2009, 5). This appears to be the medieval tower house that is incorporated in the south-eastern corner of the present manor house, although it has been suggested that the tower may be slightly later than this as it retains an apparently original 14<sup>th</sup>-century ogee-headed window (*Keys to the past* entry: Rudchester Hall). Other original features include a length of corbel table, presumably once supporting the medieval parapet, and a stone water spout. The house also incorporates re-used Roman masonry; it is believed that fragments of a Roman gravestone and a centurial stone were once part of the building (NMR No. NZ 16 NW 21 (22835)). The descent of the property can be traced intermittently upto the present day (AOC Archaeology 2009, 5-8).
- 4.5 Given the length of medieval occupation at the site, it is surprising that relatively little medieval material evidence has been recorded at Rudchester. The agricultural basis of the manor is, however, indicated by medieval ridge and furrow earthworks which overlie the Roman fort. Further, an archaeological evaluation in 2000 suggested that parts of the vallum had been reused as a hollow way during the medieval period (the evaluation was located immediately to the north of the grassed courtyard at Rudchester; NMR No.:1341138).
- 4.6 Post-medieval activity at the site is seen most clearly in the development of the manor house itself. Its northern wing appears to be of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and its western wing may be an early 19<sup>th</sup> century addition (AOC Archaeology 2009). It is likely that Stable Cottage also dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. Access to the site had been greatly improved prior to these building programmes when, in 1752, the turnpike road to the north was constructed (now the B6318). The site of a toll-house has also been identified immediately to the west of the Roman fort (NMR No.: NZ 16 NW 41 (1007945)). Post-medieval industrial activity, though on a small scale, is also indicated in the vicinity. A spoil heap and a relict tramway, both associated with coal extraction, have been identified, indicating coal workings to the south and north of Rudchester (NMR Nos. NZ 16 NW 171 (1440731) and NZ 16 NW 134 (1440348)). A quarry to the south east of the hamlet is depicted on early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps.
- 4.7 Recent archaeological interventions at Rudchester have continued to identify Roman features, although several have also produced negative results. During 1991, the excavation of a water pipe located possible building foundations, flagged flooring and a road surface, all associated with the fort; some possible remains associated with the *vicus* were also identified (NMR No.: 652611; AIP data: Bishop 1991). Works associated with the excavation of an electricity cable trench revealed undated pits and narrow linear features which are also thought to be Roman (NMR No.: 1106874; AIP data: The Archaeological Practice 1997). In 2000, an evaluation located on the northern boundary of the grassed courtyard revealed several Roman cut features (NMR No.: 1341138; AIP data: The Archaeological Practice 2000). However, it should be noted that an earlier evaluation at Stable Cottage itself recorded only post-medieval finds (ADS: EHNMR-1337314). Two surveys of the fort have also been carried out: in 1987 a geophysical survey revealed parts of the fort wall, some

evidence of internal buildings and the line of the vallum (NMR No. 1012621); the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England carried out a topographical survey in 1990 (NMR No.: 1012611).

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Statement of confidence and introductory comments

- 5.1.1 The methods adopted and the conditions under which the work was carried out allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved.
- 5.1.2 The extent of the groundworks is shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural analysis are presented in Appendix 1. The following sections should be read in conjunction with these data.

### 5.2 Natural deposits

- 5.2.1 Natural subsoil was not exposed during the excavations.

### 5.3 Post-medieval deposits

- 5.3.1 Below the turf-line, a mid-greyish brown sandy silt with inclusions of stone, charcoal, mortar, ceramic building material and pottery was observed (context 605; Figure 3; Plates 1 and 2). This deposit extended to the limit of excavation (0.35 m below ground level). The pottery recovered included fragments from the Roman and post-medieval periods (Appendix 2). The Roman sherds are clearly residual and the soil appears to be redeposited material laid down in the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps during landscaping or a building phase at the site. The deposit was cut by a ceramic land drain (context 603) and a modern patio wall (context 601).
- 5.3.2 Part of the existing patio was also removed during the groundworks. A modern 'make-up' layer, rich in mortar and small stones, was revealed below it (context 600). This deposit lay above layer 605.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The watching brief has provided no additional information on the Roman phases of occupation at Rudchester. In particular, no evidence of the *vicus* was identified (it is thought to extend southwards from the fort). The residual Roman pottery recovered during the works, however, indicates occupation during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. This is consistent with dating evidence retrieved from the fort (its barrack blocks were rebuilt during the late 2<sup>nd</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> century).
- 6.2 No medieval features were identified during the watching brief, although a single fragment of early post-medieval pottery was recovered from deposit 605 (a sherd similar to 'Ryedale ware' and probably dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century).
- 6.3 There appears to have been landscaping to the rear of Stable Cottage during the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, represented by deposit 605. A similar deposit was observed during a separate watching brief to the rear of Rudchester Manor barn, immediately to the north of Stable Cottage (AOC Archaeology 2010). This 'made ground' may be associated with the building programmes that are known to have occurred at the site during this period.

## 7. RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS

- 7.1 The results of the watching brief do not advance our knowledge of the Roman phases of activity at Rudchester, although the residual pottery confirms 2<sup>nd</sup> to mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century occupation. No evidence of the fort's *vicus* was identified.
- 7.2 The results of the watching brief do not aid research into medieval occupation at Rudchester.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 8.1 AOC Archaeology Group would like to thank the following for their assistance in the successful conclusion of this project: Mr Oliver Ojikutu, Mr Charles Collins (Lancaster Associates Architects) and Mr Nick Best (Northumberland County Council Archaeology and Conservation Team).
- 8.2 The project was managed by David Lakin. Fieldwork was undertaken by David Lakin and report preparation by Stephen Potten.

## 9. SITE ARCHIVE

The site archive consists of:

- 1 Trench record sheet
- 6 Context sheets
- 2 Scale drawings
- 2 Digital photographs
- 8 Pottery sherds
- 1 Clay pipe stem

The project archive is intended to be deposited at:

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums  
Discovery Museum  
Blandford Square  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
Tyne and Wear NE1 4JA

Tel: 0191 232 6789

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**Stable Cottage,  
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**Appendices**

## APPENDIX 1

### Trench summaries

#### Trench 6

Dimensions:

Length: 11.50 m

Width: 5.00 m

Depth: 0.35 m (MAX)

Orientation: N-S

Context	Classification	Description	Depth below ground surface
600	Made ground	Loosely compacted mid yellow/brown and red/brown silty mortar; frequent small-medium angular stones.	0.00 – 0.35m
601	Stone wall	Stone wall with stones c. 500mm x 250mm, squared and roughly shaped; bonded with pale yellow/brown lime mortar.	Extends at least 0.35 m below ground level
602	Fill	Moderately compacted mid-dark grey/brown sandy silt; frequent mortar fragments and small angular stones. Fill of [603].	0.00 – 0.35m
603	Cut	Linear in plan with near vertical sides; base not observed. Filled by 602 and 604.	0.00 – 0.35m+
604	Drain	Ceramic drain pipe.	0.35m+
605	Made ground	Moderately compacted mid greyish brown slightly sandy silt; moderate large charcoal flecks; occasional mortar fragments and CBM.	0.14m – 0.35m+
606	Topsoil	Turf and topsoil layer.	0.00 – 0.14m

## APPENDIX 2

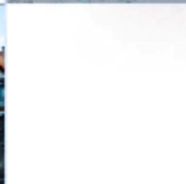
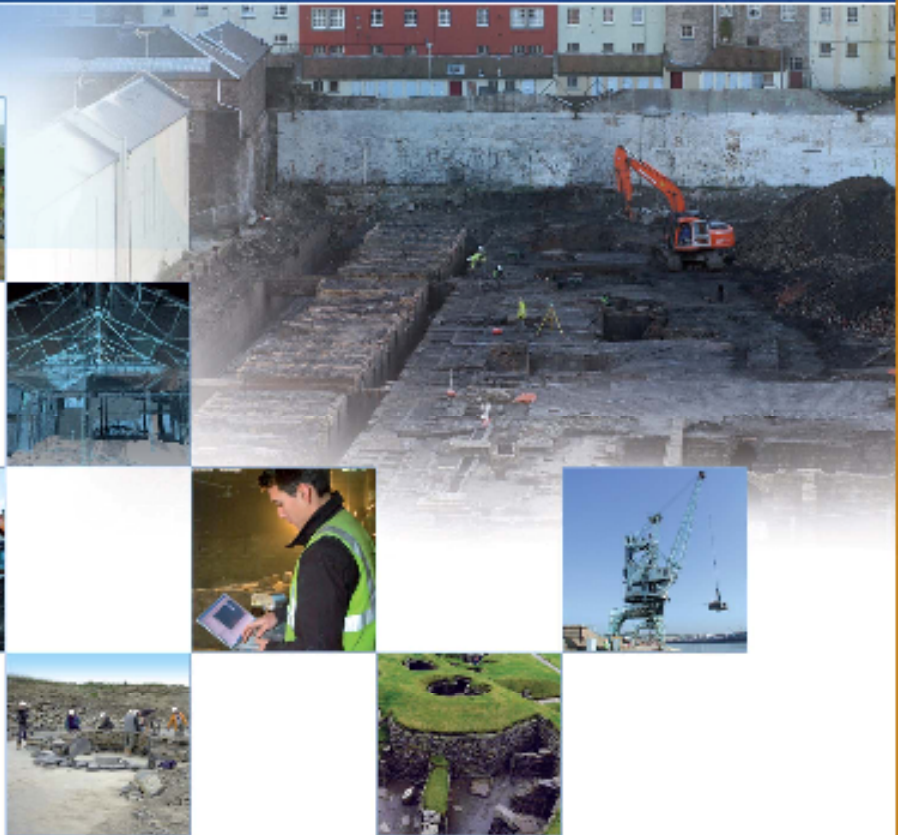
### Pottery assessment, by Ailsa Mainman, with spot-dates and identifications of the Roman material by Ruth Leary

This is a small collection of pottery which includes both Roman and post-medieval wares. In themselves these have no potential for further research but provide some chronology for the site.

**Table 1: The pottery**

Context	Date	No of sherds	Description
605	18 <sup>th</sup> century	8	1 grey ware body sherd with acute lattice burnish (2 <sup>nd</sup> century) 1 grey ware bowl/dish form (mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> -mid 3 <sup>rd</sup> century) 2 misc grey wares 1 post medieval red ware 2 slipware sherds - open form 1 open form – Ryedale-type ware (1 tobacco pipe stem)





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