

## An Archaeological Watching Brief at 29 Military Road, Heddon-on-the-Wall



**ARS Ltd Report 2011/70**  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*In May 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mr. P. Taylor of Blueprint Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief at 29 Military Road, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland. The Watching Brief observed the demolition of the existing dwelling and the removal of its foundations as well as the excavation of foundation trenches for the new development.*

*The property is located between Hadrian's' Wall to the north and the vallum and ditch, which cross the site, to the south. Hadrian's Wall, the associated ditch to the north of the Military Road and the verge to the south of the road are Scheduled Monuments and lie within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.*

*No archaeological finds, features or buried land surfaces were encountered during the watching brief.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location and Scope of Work

- 1.1.1. In May 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Mr. P. Taylor of Blueprint Architects to undertake an archaeological watching brief at 29 Military Road, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Northumberland. The Watching Brief observed the demolition of an existing dwelling, including the removal of foundations, and the excavation of foundation trenches for the new development. The site is centred at NZ 13136 67033.
- 1.1.2. The property is located in a very archaeologically sensitive location, between Hadrian's Wall to the north and the vallum and ditch, which cross the site, to the south. Hadrian's Wall, the associated ditch to the north of the Military Road and the verge to the south of the road are Scheduled Monuments and lie within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out on several sites to the east of 29 Military Road. These investigations have revealed the remains of Hadrian's Wall surviving under the Military Road.

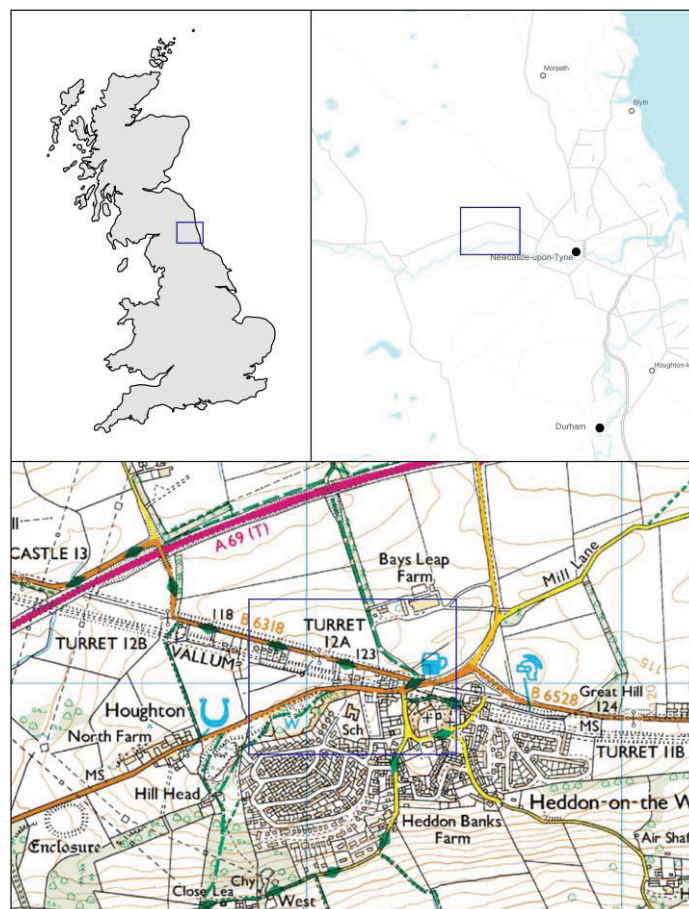


Fig. 1 Location of site.  
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## **1.2. Geology and soils**

- 1.2.1. The solid geology of the area consists of Pennine lower coal measures formation of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, overlain by superficial geology of Devensian till (British Geological Survey 2011).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1. An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to establish whether any archaeological features were affected by the ground works and to assess the depth and condition of any features present. The works involved the demolition of an existing dwelling, which also involved the removal of the foundations. The watching brief then monitored the digging of foundation trenches for the new build.

## **3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The earliest evidence of occupation in the parish of Heddon-on-the-Wall dates from the prehistoric period. This includes a number of small Mesolithic flint tools that were found in fields at Heddon Law and Neolithic stone axes have been discovered in Heddon. A Bronze Age round cairn at Heddon Laws Farm was reused during the medieval period as a beacon. Standing stones and hut circles also provide evidence of occupation of the area during the prehistoric period.
- 3.2. Settlement remains from the Iron Age include a defended settlement at Haughton consisting of a protective ditch and bank around it. Despite Hadrian's Wall being built across the parish, there is no evidence of the local population in the Roman period. The section of the Wall crossing Heddon consisted of turrets, milecastles and a fort at Rudchester. Many of these turrets and milecastles sit beneath the Military Road. The vallum ditch can still be seen either side of Heddon village and to the east there is a consolidated stretch of the Wall on display.
- 3.2. The only evidence of early Medieval occupation is some late Saxon stonework incorporated into the nave of the Church of St Andrew. In the Medieval period, people lived in villages and hamlets at Whitchester, East Heddon, West Heddon, Rudchester and Houghton. At the same time, a chantry was founded at Close House and the Church of St Andrew was altered. A house and tower constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and now incorporated into Rudchester Hall. It was probably built to protect against Scottish raids.
- 3.3. Farming and industry developed during the post-Medieval period. Some of the villages went into decline and were replaced by large farms. Many new farms were built during the Agricultural Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These included West Heddon and Heddon Banks.

#### **4. RESULTS**

- 4.1. It was evident that the ground across the site on Military Road had been disturbed considerably prior to the watching brief. Made ground (001) consisting of very dark grey/orange silty clay was present with a depth of between 0.2m and 0.5m. The made ground contained modern brick, stone, concrete and other waste. Below this was the natural orange/grey clay (002) that continued beyond the depths of the excavation. The foundation trenches were dug to a depth of between 0.45m and 0.8m.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1. There were no archaeological finds, features or buried land surfaces encountered during the watching brief. No evidence of Hadrian's Wall or its associated features were discovered at 29 Military Road. It is assumed that any remains that may have been present within the site have been removed by later landscaping or construction works. Archaeological investigations carried out to the east of 29 Military Road in previous years have encountered Hadrian's Wall beneath the Military Road itself.

#### **6. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT**

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- 6.2. Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

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- 7.1. All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

#### **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 8.1. Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved in this project, in particular Paul Taylor of Blueprint Architects.

## **9. REFERENCES**

### **Websites**

British Geological Survey  
Keys to the Past

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm>  
<http://www.keystothepast.info/>



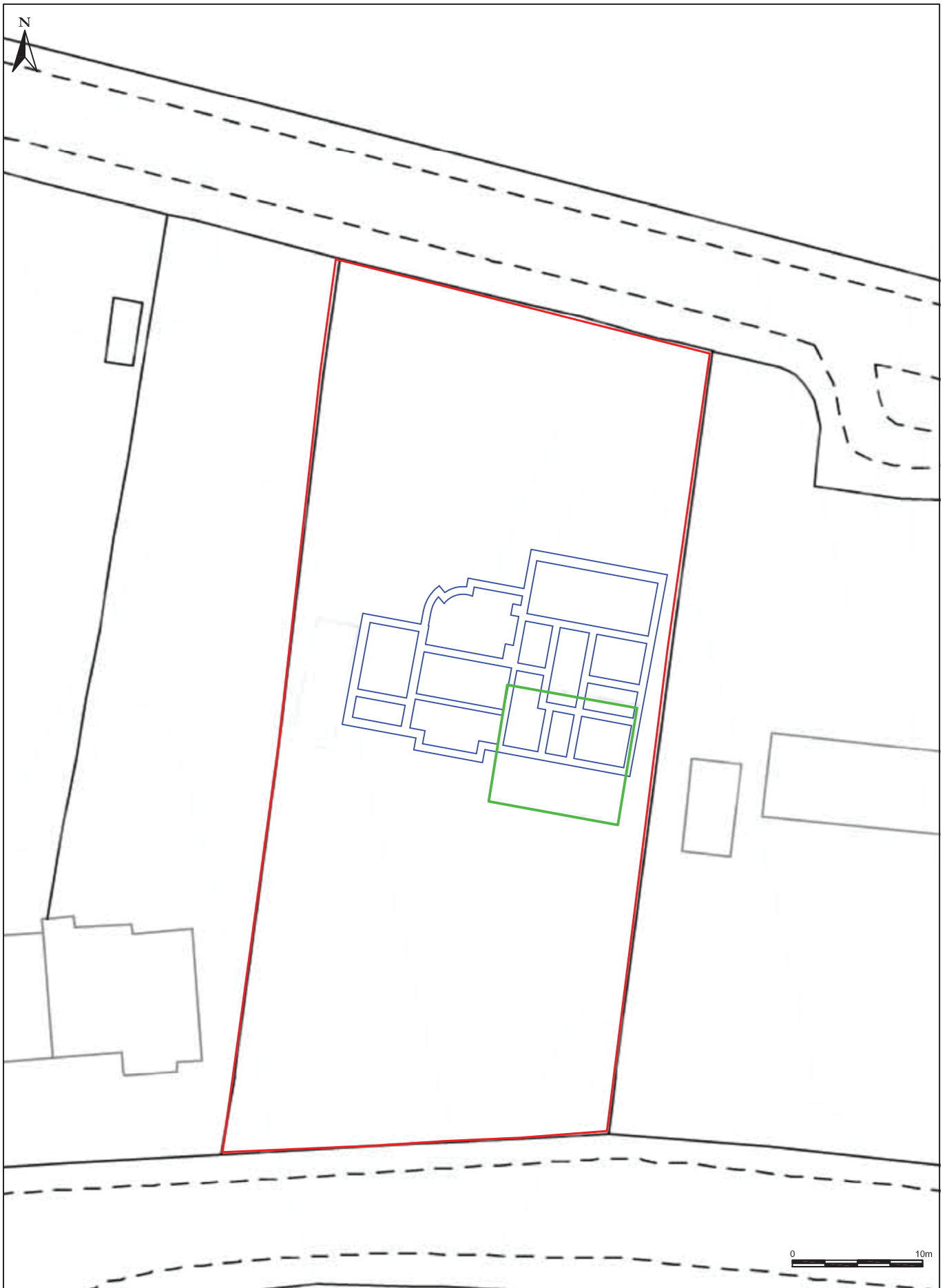
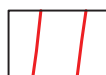


Figure 2: Site plan showing the areas of foundation trenching observed during the watching brief

Key:



Site boundary



Foundation trenches



Footprint of original dwelling

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Figure 3. Looking across the site to the south-east during demolition.



Figure 4. Looking into a foundation trench.





Figure 5. Looking across the site to the north-west.



Figure 6. Looking across the site to the east.