

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Frenchman's Row, Throckley, Northumberland



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Northumberland County Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Frenchman's Row, Throckley, in Northumberland. The watching brief was carried out while a replacement bus shelter was erected, involving the hand excavation of foundation slots, on the line of Hadrian's Wall.

The shelter is situated at Frenchman's Row, Hexham Road, Throckley, Northumberland (Figs. 1 and 2). The shelter is located in a very archaeologically sensitive location, positioned on the course of Hadrian's Wall, with the associated Vallum and ditch to the south. Frenchman's Row exists mid way between the villages of Throckley and Heddon-on-the-wall. Hadrian's Wall and the Vallum, the associated ditch to the north of the Military Road and the verge to the south of the road are Scheduled Monuments (Monument number: 26037) and lie within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

Neither Hadrian's Wall, nor any of its associated features, were encountered during the watching brief.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and Scope of Work

1.1.1. In September 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Northumberland County Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the installation of a replacement bus shelter at Frenchman's Row, Throckley in Northumberland (figure 1).

1.1.2 The shelter is situated at Frenchman's Row, Hexham Road, Throckley, Northumberland (Figs. 1 and 2). The shelter is located in an archaeologically sensitive location, positioned on the course of Hadrian's Wall, with the associated *Vallum* and ditch to the south. Frenchman's Row exists mid way between the villages of Throckley and Heddon-on-the-wall. Hadrian's Wall and the *Vallum*, the associated ditch to the north of the Military Road and the verge to the south of the road are Scheduled Monuments (Monument number: 26037) and lie within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

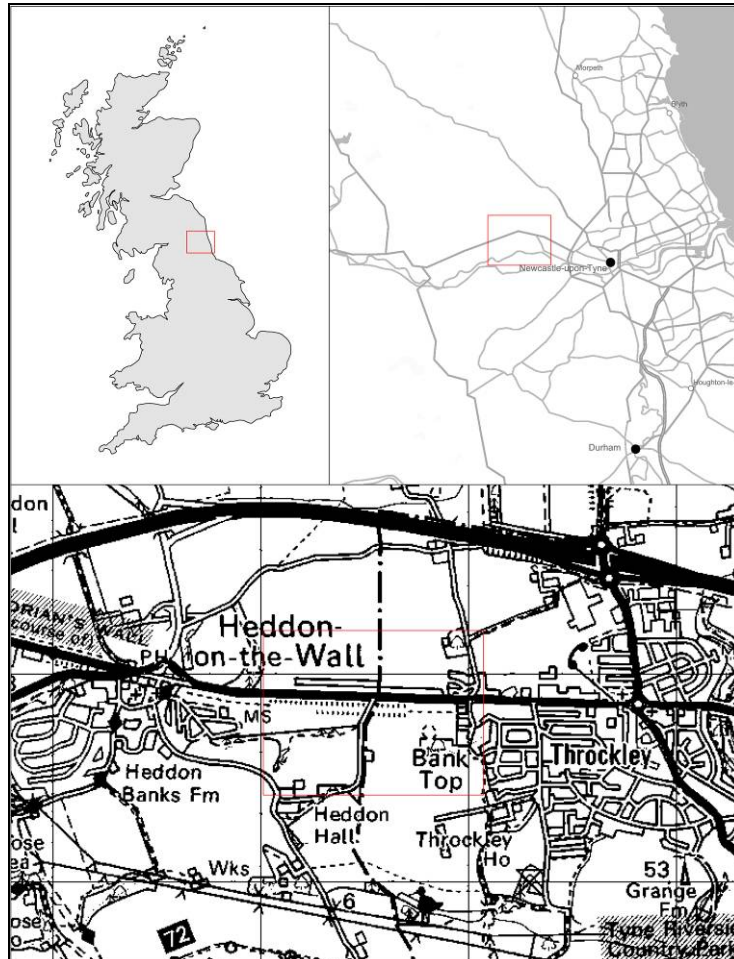


Fig. 1 Location of site.
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1.2. Geology and soils

1.2.1. The solid geology of the area is formed by the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation and the South Wales Lower Coal Measures Formation. The overlying drift geology comprises superficial deposits of Diamicton 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 groundwork involved excavation with hand tools to remove the existing bus shelter foundation including existing main gantries of 1500mm x 300mm and existing intermediate post 300mm x 300mm to a depth of no more than the original 300mm excavation. Within the existing shelter foundation footprint, new main gantries of 1500mm x 300mm and intermediate post 300mm x 300mm were installed as well as the reinstatement of the footway sub base and wearing course. There was to be no requirement for excavation beyond the footprint of the existing bus shelter. (Fig. 2).

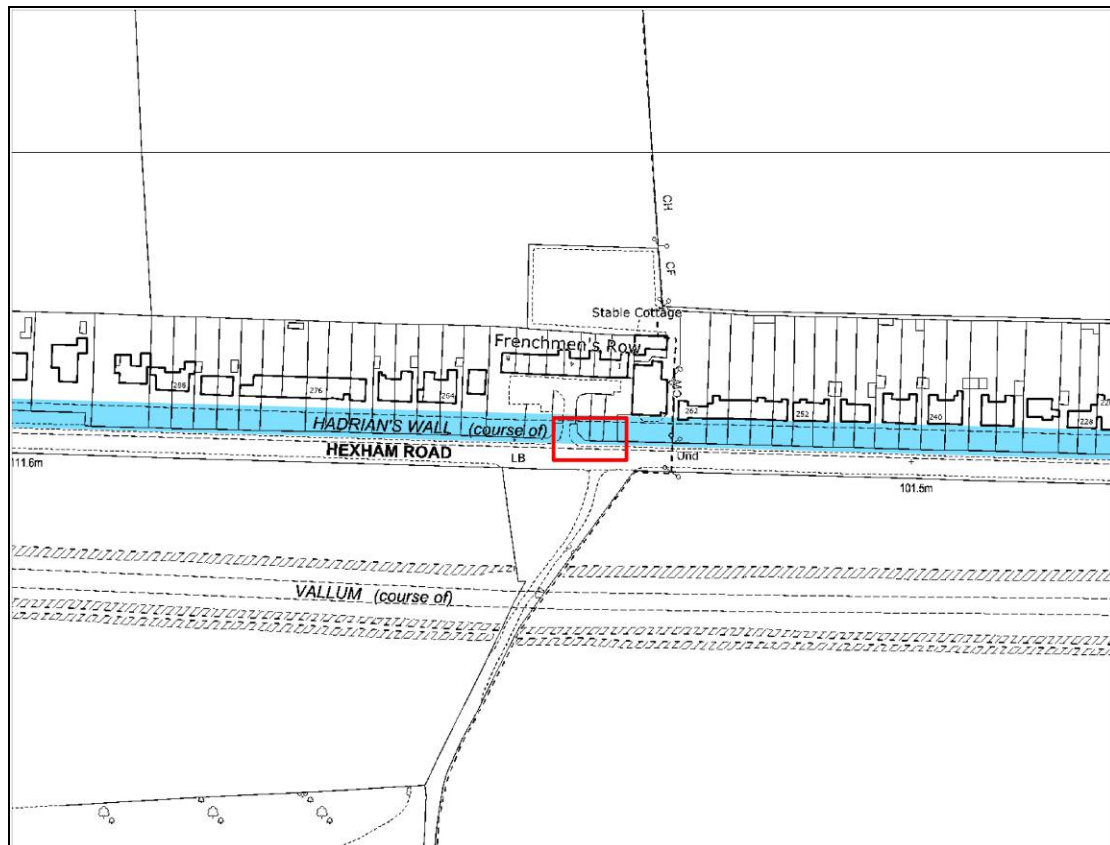


Figure 2: Location of excavation, relative to line of Hadrian's Wall

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 During 2001 and 2002 a number of archaeological excavations and watching briefs took place (Frain *et al* 2002) along the B6528 (Hexham Road) in Throckley. The excavations took the form of disconnected trenches (ten in total) along the length of the proposed water main insertion, a distance of some 2.2km. The trenches discovered a series of *cippi* pits which appeared to be continuous along the eastern part of the wall. These discoveries prompted further investigations including a watching brief, which covered the excavation of six offset trenches in order to connect the water main to existing services. In the trenches where no pits were recorded, it is believed that either the trenches were too shallow, or the pits had been truncated during previous work along the road. Given the evidence found in this investigation it is suggested that the pits may continue the full length of this section of wall, including the area to be monitored during the bus shelter watching brief. Monitoring the work will therefore further the understanding gained from the previous works conducted here, by enabling a cross referencing any evidence, or lack there of.

3.2 A previous watching brief (The Archaeological Practice 2005) was undertaken during the initial construction of the original bus shelter. No finds of archaeological significance were discovered during the excavation work, which reached a maximum depth of 0.30m. Although no evidence was found, there is still the possibility of it existing at a greater depth. A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out, both prior to and during construction work, on several sites to the west of Frenchman's Row in Heddon-on-the-wall. These investigations have revealed the remains of Hadrian's Wall surviving under the Military Road (Hexham Road). The investigations also identified a number of remains associated with Hadrian's Wall, some contemporary with the wall's use, some associated with tumble or demolition of the wall and others undated.

3.3 An evaluation trench excavated across the upper deposits of the *vallum*, 800m west of the proposed development area revealed dumped medieval deposits associated with domestic waste and industrial waste. The archaeological remains so far uncovered to the west of this site in Heddon indicate the potential for significant Roman and medieval remains.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The groundworks involved excavation with hand tools to remove the existing bus shelter foundation including existing main gantries of 1500mm x 300mm and the existing intermediate post, measuring 300mm x 300mm, to a depth of no more than the original 300mm excavation. Within the existing shelter foundation footprint, new main gantries of 1500mm x 300mm and intermediate post 300mm x 300mm were installed as well as the reinstatement of the footway sub base and wearing course. There was to be no requirement for excavation beyond the footprint of the existing bus shelter.

4.2 Neither Hadrian's Wall, nor any of its associated features, were encountered during the watching brief.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1. No evidence of Hadrian's Wall or any of its associated features was encountered during the watching brief. However, this may be more representative of the shallow depth of the trench rather than the lack of archaeological features.

6. PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

6.1. Any publicity will be handled by the client.

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 Margaret Field of N.C.C. and Mike Collins of English Heritage.

9. REFERENCES

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The Archaeological Practice Ltd. 2005. *Frenchman's Row Bus Shelter, Throckley, Northumberland. Archaeological Watching Brief*. Unpublished archaeological report.

Websites

British Geological Survey

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



Figure 3. Extent and arrangement of excavations.



Figure 4. Excavation for eastern gantry.



Figure 5. Excavation for western gantry.



Figure 6. Excavation for intermediate post.