

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on
the B6318 near Halton Shields,
Northumberland**



ARS Ltd Report 2011/35
April 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief on the B6318 near Halton Shields in Northumberland. The Watching Brief was carried out while a small trench was dug, by hand, between two existing junction boxes prior to the installation of an armoured copper cable

The site sits to the east of the milecastle (20), located at Halton Shields, and to the west of the wall turret located south of South Clarewood Farm. Milecastle 20 stands in the garden of a cottage at the east end of Halton Shields. The area of trenching lay immediately to the north of the line of Hadrian's Wall in this area, and may have encountered defensive features associated with the wall on its north facing side. The line of the wall at its foundations was discovered by archaeological recording immediately to the south of the area of trenching, on the opposite side of the B6318, in 1983.

Neither the 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 April 2011 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by BT Openreach to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of a small service trench on the B6318 near Halton Shields in Northumberland prior to the installation of an armoured copper cable (figure 1).

1.1.2 The site sits to the east of the milecastle (20), located at Halton Shields. The site is centred at NZ 02211 68676. Milecastle 20 stands in the garden of a cottage at the east end of Halton Shields. The development site lies immediately to the north of the line of Hadrian's Wall in this area, which means that defensive features associated with the wall on its north facing side may have been encountered during the watching brief. The line of the wall at its foundations was discovered by archaeological recording immediately to the south of the area of trenching, on the opposite side of the B6318, in 1983.

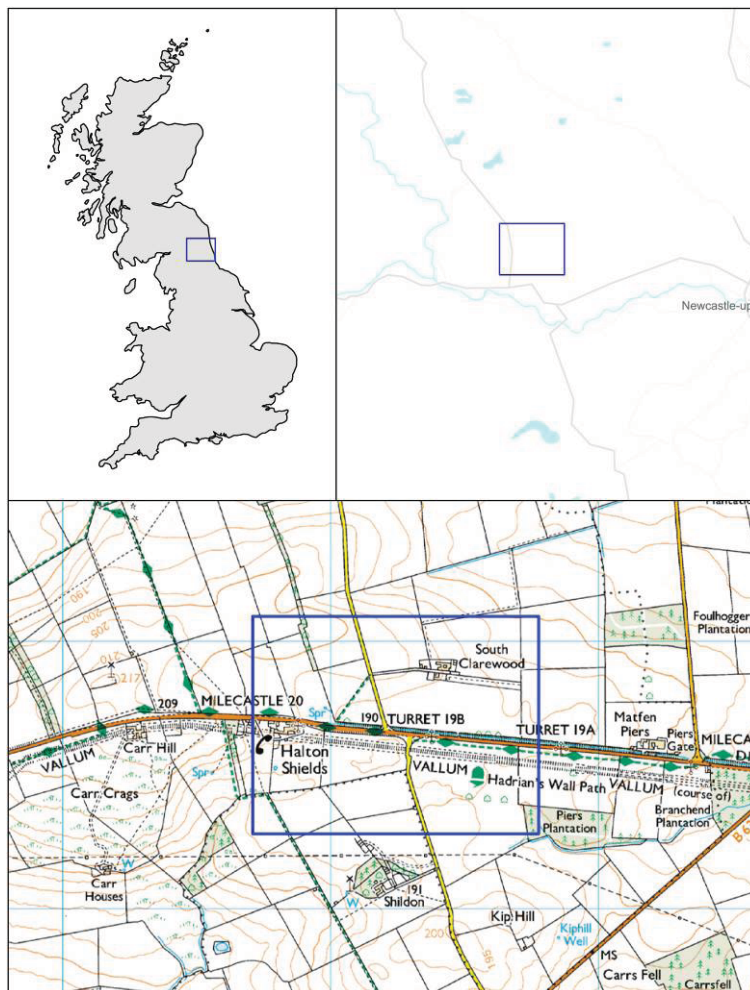


Fig. 1 Location of site.

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1.2. Geology and soils

- 1.2.1. The solid geology of the area is limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Yoredale Group. 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 the digging of a narrow trench between two existing junction boxes. The trench measured 41m in length and was dug to a depth of approximately 0.3m. The entire trench was dug using a drain spade (Fig. 2).

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Evidence for prehistoric activity near the study area includes a Neolithic cup and ring marked stone that was found near Hallington (ref). There is also evidence of Iron Age and Roman settlement (ref). The oldest settlement near the study area dates to the Iron Age and consist of an enclosure and some terraces (Keys to the Past N9253).
- 3.2. The Roman roads of Dere Street and the Devil's Causeway run near to the site as well as Hadrian's Wall at Halton Shields. The remains include the wall itself, turrets, milecastles and a fort at Halton Chesters. This fort would have been large enough to provide for a market and civilian settlement. The fort housed a bathhouse and an aqueduct. Milecastle 20 of Hadrian's Wall sits to the west of the site in the garden of a cottage at the east end of Halton Shields. The south wall and gate are covered by the new house to the immediate west. The milecastle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Keys to the Past N12392).
- 3.3. During the Medieval period, people lived in villages and hamlets at Whittington, Little Grottington, Bingfield, Clarewood and Halton. Remains of these settlements can be seen in the form of earthworks along with field systems (Keys to the Past N8665).

4. RESULTS

- 4.1. The trench was dug through turf and undergrowth to dark brown/black topsoil (001) with a depth of around 0.25m. Below this, at the base of the trench was orange/pale brown subsoil with small sandstone inclusions (002).
- 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 was most probably due to 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).

7. STATEMENT OF INDEMNITY

- 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 Ian Seccombe of BT Openreach and Mike Collins of English Heritage.

9. REFERENCES

Websites

British Geological Survey
Keys to the Past

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

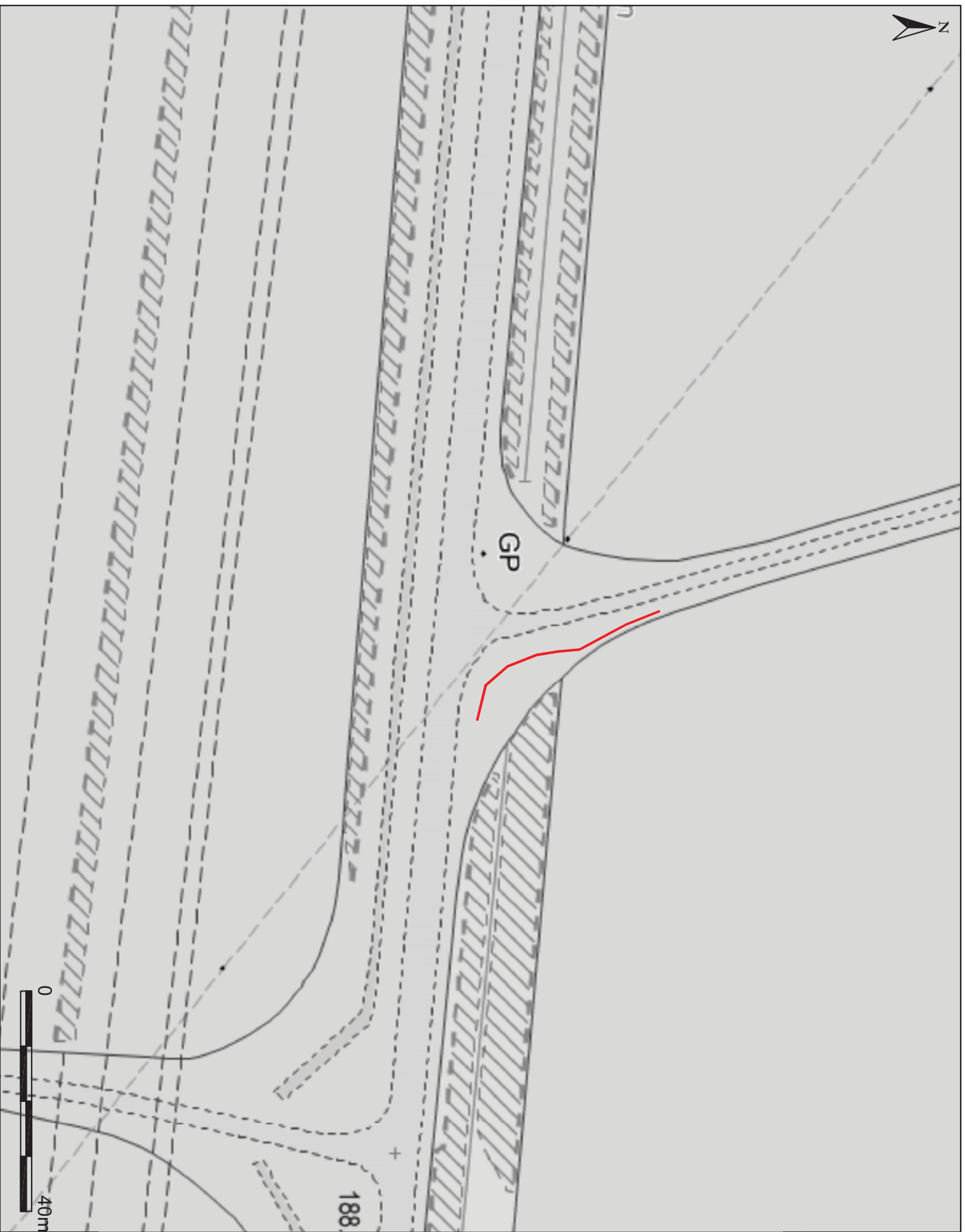
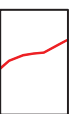


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of 41m trench

Scale = 1:1000 at A4

Key:



Trench

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Figure 3. Small section of the trench.



Figure 4. Trench with armoured copper cable installed.