



Level 2 Historic Building Record

Nissen Hut Located at the Roman Army Museum, Greenhead, Northumberland. CA8 7JB

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1. Northumberland National Park Planning Authority.
2. Archaeology Data Service (Oasis).

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1. Introduction.

The Vindolanda Trust has been requested, as part of a planning application condition, to produce a written historic building record of a Nissen shed /hut located within the boundaries of Carvoran House, Greenhead, Northumberland CA8 7JB, and within the vicinity of the existing Roman Army Museum.

Planning permission for the development has been granted by Northumberland National Park Planning Authority (Ref: No. 22NP0037) with a condition that.

“Prior to demolition of the Nissen hut, a Level 2 Historic Building Record shall be carried out. On completion of the Historic Building Record, it should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its records. Reason: To ensure the historic significance of Nissen Hut is recorded by virtue of it being a non-designated heritage asset in accordance with Local Plan policy DM15 and the NPPF”.

It is intended that the Nissen hut will be demolished to make way for a proposed extension to the Roman Army Museum to provide facilities for volunteer excavators at the adjacent site of Roman Magna and an associated activity centre.

The structure is not recorded as a Listed Building by Historic England but is regarded as having a character that is ‘historical’ to the setting of the area.

A Level 2 record is described as a ‘descriptive’ record, comprising photos of the structure, a descriptive record, plans, analysis of the building’s development and use and the conclusions reached. This report has therefore been compiled on that basis.

1.2 Assumptions and limitations.

Some information used in the report consists of secondary evidence provided by the current property owner and the assumption is that this information is reasonably accurate.

2. Site Location

The Nissen hut is located on unscheduled land that is within the boundaries of the Roman Army Museum but is immediately adjacent to the site of Roman Magna (sometimes known as Carvoran) which is part of the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site. UK-OSNG reference: NY665656. It originally formed part of a working farm known also as Carvoran.

3. Historic Background

The Vindolanda Trust acquired the c 42-acre farm of Carvoran in 1972 which included the site of Magna, Carvoran farmhouse and barns. The Trust subsequently sold the farmhouse, barns and a parcel of the non-scheduled land whilst retaining the main Magna site for future research.

The barns were transformed into the Roman Army Museum which then reverted to Trust ownership by way of long-term leasehold.

The Nissen hut was in situ when the initial purchase was made by the Vindolanda Trust in 1972 and the condition of the structure indicated that it had been there for a considerable time. The exact date of the placement is however unknown.

Nissen huts were developed during the First World War by Major Peter Norman Nissen of the 29th Company, Royal Engineers. It is estimated that at least 100,000 were produced in World War 1. They provided cheap and easily erected provision for accommodation and storage, and it is therefore no surprise that they continued to be manufactured and used during WW2.

The Carvoran example most likely dates to the post WW2 period when Nissen huts, or sections thereof, were sold off and became popular with farmers across the country as cost effective agricultural buildings. The Nissen hut does not appear on the OS 1942 map published in 1952.

The Carvoran farming family of that time may well have availed themselves of such an opportunity. Under such a scenario, the nearest potential source for the Carvoran Nissen hut would have been the WW2 POW Camp at Featherstone Castle, approximately 4.5 miles from Carvoran. The camp housed German POWs in 200 Nissen type huts + tents in four compounds and closed in May 1948. An alternative source may also have been a much smaller satellite camp on Plenmeller Common near Haltwhistle. These must however remain speculative hypotheses.

4. Description

The Carvoran Nissen hut is a barrel-vaulted structure of typical standard construction formed with three rows of corrugated asbestos sheeting giving a combined internal span of c. 7.5 metres. Length 10.66 metres.

The sheeting is bolted together with two rows of iron bolts with the base of the sheeting being cast into a mass concrete base wall. At the east end of the Hut there is a basic extension with stone walling erected in c 1981. Internally there is a raked concrete floor. This replaced the hard packed earth floor which existed in 1972.

The west end of the hut, looking towards the site of Magna, has three panels of glazed windows inserted in c 1981. Prior to this the end of the building had a large single door placed in a brick surround.

The south wall of the building has a retaining wall with an adjacent mound built up from rubble and farming rubbish which was capped with topsoil and 'greened' prior to 1971. This area is shown as a small orchard or field in the earliest maps of the property but was used by the farm for chicken pens and coups prior to 1972.

Externally the roof was coated with a roughly applied water-proofing material in 2011 as the water tightness had failed due to the ageing of the structure.

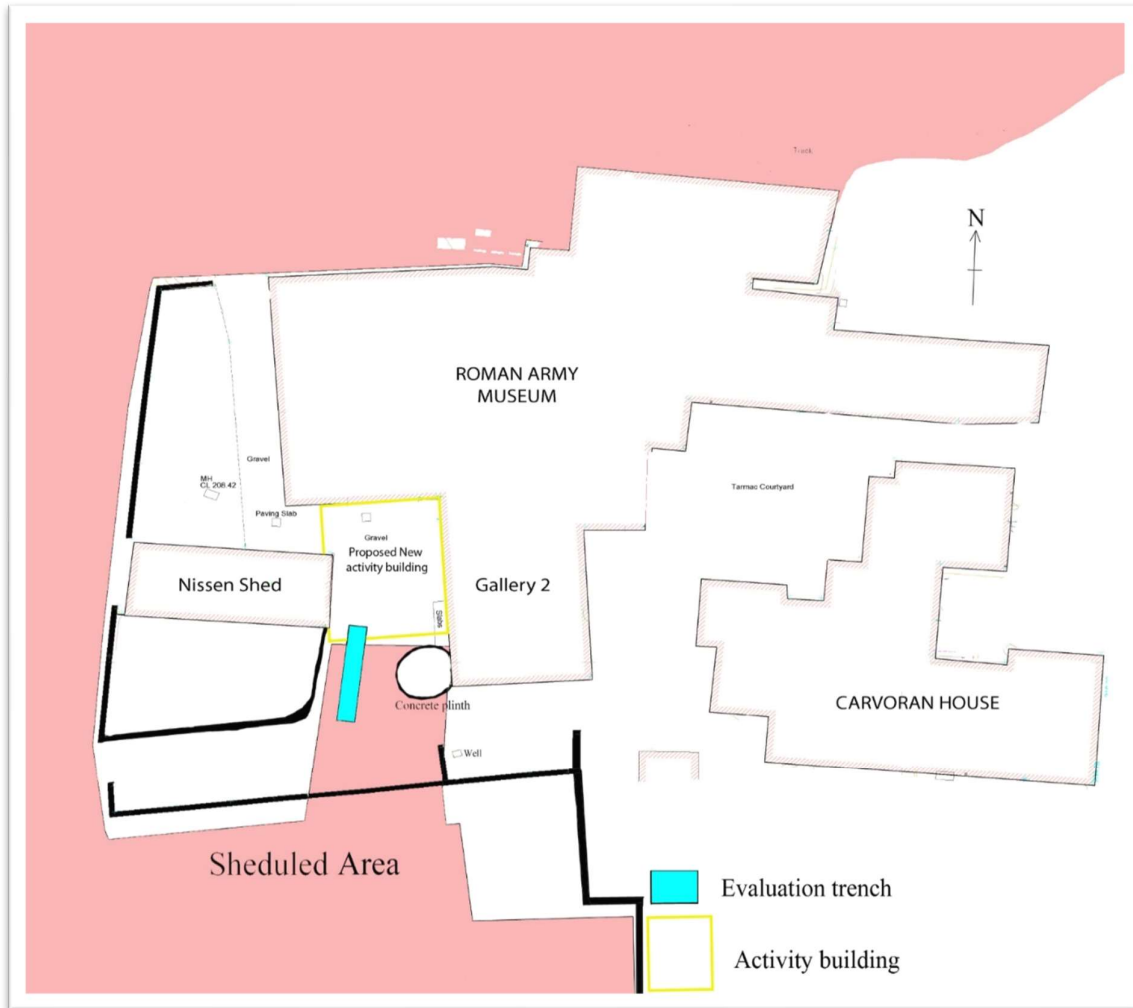
5. Conclusions.

The Carvoran Nissen hut has been a feature of the local landscape, most probably for around 60-70 years. During that time, it has functioned as an agricultural building and from 1980 onwards has been used for general storage. Like other Nissen structures across the country, the passage of time, exposure to weather and moss growth has caused the asbestos sheeting to deteriorate rendering the building unsuitable for adaptation or continued long term use.

6. References

- History | The Original Nissen Hut
 - <https://www.nissenhut.co.uk/heritage>
- Carvoran Roman fort and Hadrian's Wall and vallum
 - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1010991>
- *Birley, Robin (1998). The Fort at the Rock: On Hadrian's Wall: Magna and Carvoran. Vindolanda Trust. ISBN 978-1-873136-56-0.*
- 1945 ICRC camp list – Base Camp. 18. Featherstone Park Camp, Haltwhistle, North'b'l'd.
- Haltwhistle.org for Digital copies of photographs of Featherstone Park POW Camp 18, Haltwhistle, Northumberland [c1947] showing prefabricated concrete buildings

7. Site Plan



8. Photographic Record



1. The Nissen Hut as viewed from the site of Magna



2. The hut from the south & the built-up mound

3. the 1981 eastern 'extension'



4. Asbestos sheeting & concrete base



5. Interior View

