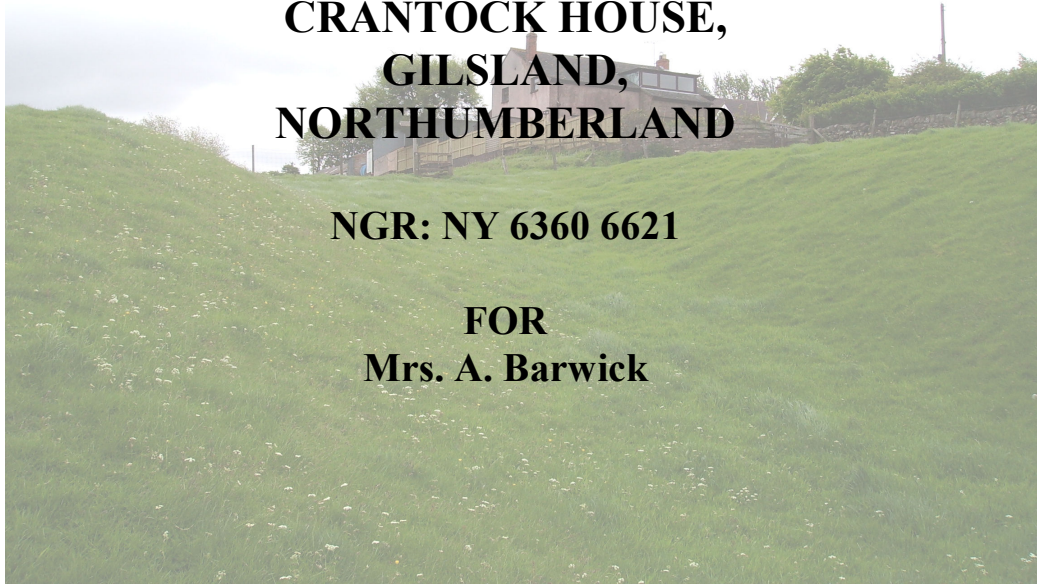

NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Client Reports No. CP/337/06

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
AT
CRANTOCK HOUSE,
GILSLAND,
NORTHUMBERLAND**

NGR: NY 6360 6621

**FOR
Mrs. A. Barwick**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2006, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd undertook a watching brief on land located within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, between Hadrian's Wall to the north and Hadrian's Wall Vallum to the south (NY 6360 6621), on behalf of Mrs A. Barwick. The site lies within the Roman Military zone, which is known to include a Roman road, the location of which is believed to lie to the immediate south of the development area. There was a strong possibility that groundworks associated with the development may have impacted upon significant archaeological remains.

As a result, all groundworks associated with the development on the land, a two-storey side extension to the south side of Crantock House, Gilsland, were observed. These works entailed the excavation of one trench along the footprint of the extension, to allow for the construction of foundations. This trench formed the west, south and east side of a rectangle, measuring 3m by 7.5m, with a maximum depth of 0.9m. The width of the trench was 1.2m. All sections of this trench were devoid of any archaeological remains.

It is clear from this investigation that levelling of this area of land has meant that any surviving archaeological features within the vicinity are located at a depth where they will remain undisturbed by this development. As such, no further archaeological intervention is required.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Mrs A. Barwick for commissioning the project, and Mark Barwick and family for undertaking the groundworks, and for their assistance throughout the fieldwork. Thanks are also extended to Karen Derham of Northumberland County Council for her advice during the completion of this project.

The watching brief was conducted by Matt Town, and the report was compiled by Martin Sowerby and Cat Peters. The figures were completed by Cat Peters and Matt Town. The whole project was managed by Matt Town, NPA Project Manager, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on behalf of Mrs A. Barwick at Crantock House, Gilsland Northumberland (NY 6360 6621). The aim of the watching brief was to record any significant deposits uncovered during the proposed groundworks at the site which involved the excavation of a limited number of interventions associated with the construction of an extension to the house and associated services/landscaping around the existing structure. This area is located within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site between Hadrian's Wall to the north and the Hadrian's Wall Vallum to the south; an area known as the Roman Military Zone.
- 1.1.2 This report sets out the results of the work in the form of a short document outlining the results of the archaeological recording undertaken during the watching brief.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 A project design was submitted by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in response to a request by Mrs Barwick of Crantock House, Gilsland for an archaeological watching brief in accordance with a brief prepared by Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist at Northumberland County Council. Planning Permission has been applied for these works, and, due to the archaeological sensitivity, Northumberland County Council Conservation Team advised Tynedale District Council that a condition should be attached to the permission requiring that all of the groundworks be excavated under a full watching brief condition. Following acceptance of the project design, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work.
- 2.1.2 The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 PROJECT ARCHIVE

- 2.2.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design, and in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (1991).

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The village of Gilsland lies on the border between Northumberland and Cumbria, on the watershed between two major river systems; the River Irthing flows past the village, where it eventually empties into the River Eden, whilst the Tipalt Burn runs to the east (Countryside Commission 1998). Previously the village had been known as Rose Hill, after a prominent outcrop, which was levelled to make way for the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway station (LUAU 1999a).
- 3.1.2 The village lies within a narrow but distinctive lowland corridor, which separates the North Pennines from Spadeadem Forest (Countryside Commission 1998). North of the village is the land known as Bewcastle Waste, characterised by upland moorland, with mixed heather, rough grasslands, blanket bog and a network of small streams and mosses (*ibid*). Crantock House lies in the southern part of the village, and is located between Hadrian's Wall and the Vallum.
- 3.1.3 The underlying solid geology consists of sedimentary rocks of the Carboniferous age, a repetitive succession of limestones, sandstones and shales belonging to the Middle or Upper Limestone Groups (Countryside Commission 1998). Towards Gilsland Spa Hotel on the Cumbria side of the River Irthing a number of large boulders which are known locally as the 'The Popping Stone and its Daughters,' are made up of rounded boulders of coarse sandstone. Sources of which are abundant in the Upper Border Group of strata which outcrops along the upper reaches of the Irthing. Two sub-units of this group, the Poppingstone Sandstone and the Crammel Linn Sandstone form the cliffs above immediately upstream the from the Poppingstone (Day 1970). The drift geology consists of melt out debris and fluvio-glacial deposits dating from the Devensian period, predominately boulder clay or till (Countryside Commission 1998).

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.2.1 **Roman Period:** the Roman advance on the northwest during the 70s and 80s AD may have been launched from bases in the northwest Midlands such as Wroxeter and Little Chester, proceeding north via the valleys of the Eden and Lune. By 72 AD the earliest timber fort was constructed at Carlisle (Philpott ed. 2004), and the campaigns of Agricola, governor of Britain AD 78-84, consolidated the Roman hold on the North. During the Roman period, there was certainly a heavy military presence in Cumbria. Hadrian's Wall, perhaps begun in 122 AD, was built to define the northern limit of the Roman empire and a network of military roads, forts and settlements soon sprung up around the focus of Hadrian's Wall (Breeze and Dobson 1976).
- 3.2.2 The extravagant expansion of the Empire, which was undertaken by the Emperor Trajan (98-117), forced Hadrian (117-138) to realise that Rome could no longer afford to continue this policy of expansion to envelop the whole known world as foreseen by Augustus (Frere 1978). During Hadrian's many protracted visits of inspection and reform throughout the Empire he determined to define its limits and consolidate the

defences. During the course of these visits, in AD 121 to 122, Hadrian visited Germany to reassess the linear German-Raetian frontier, which most likely represented the first fixed frontier the Roman Empire had seen. In 122 Hadrian came to Britain to establish the northern limit of the Empire. The time of the visit could have followed a period of insurrection by northern tribes culminating the construction of the wall (Taylor 2000).

- 3.2.3 ***The Stanegate System:*** by the turn of the first and second centuries AD, the Roman armies had formally withdrawn from Scotland to the Tyne-Solway isthmus. The total abandonment of lowland Scotland is evidenced only by the destruction of the forts on Dere Street at Newstead and Corbridge, and the burning of forts at Dalswinton, Cappuck, Glenlochar, Oakwood and High Rochester, all of which were abandoned sometime between A.D.100 and 105 (Salway 1985). Following this, the so-called northern frontier in Britain fell upon line of forts running across northern England from the supply depot at Corbridge on the Tyne to the Flavian fort at Carlisle on the Solway, both of which sites were notable as they were positioned upon the two Roman lines of advance into lowland Scotland, Dere Street in the east and the imperfectly-known western route through Annandale. Between these two military highways a number of forts were established to act as a buffer against the lowland tribes just recently conquered, these were arranged along the line of a Roman road now known by its medieval name, the Stanegate (*ibid*).
- 3.2.4 It is likely that the road was extended to the east of Corbridge, possibly heading for the fort at Washing Well and subsequently to South Shields. Along the Stanegate a number of military sites have been discovered suggesting that they may be part of the Trajanic frontier. On pottery evidence forts at Corbridge, Vindolanda, Nether Denton and Carlisle had been in existence since the Flavian period (AD 75 -120). Carvoran fort 2km east of Thirlwall has been generally assumed to be of similar date, though what evidence there is from the pottery assemblage, indicates that the fort was occupied during the Trajanic period. The fort at Brampton Old Church is thought to have had a short occupation of about the time of Trajan. Newbrough has yielded pottery of the 4th century, however an earlier fort on this site is generally postulated as it fits a regular spacing of forts along the Stangate.
- 3.2.5 The garrison along the Stanegate was also supplemented by the establishment of new 'fortlets' and 'small forts' between the larger stations, at Newbrough, Haltwhistle Burn, Throp and Boothby. In addition, beyond the known terminus of the Stanegate there were further forts, at Burgh-by-Sands overlooking the Solway estuary and at Kirkbride on the River Wampool in the west (Breeze and Dobson 2000). Another fort overlooking the Tyne at Washing Wells near Gateshead in the east was discovered by aerial photography in 1970 shows evidence of several phases and is thought to date from the Trajanic period (*ibid*).
- 3.2.6 The recent discovery of a timber palisade running beneath the Trajanic fort at Burgh-by-Sands and traces of the same linear work associated with a timber watch-tower along the whale-backed ridge at Fingland, coupled with evidence of a Roman road east of Kirkbride, aligned towards the fort at Burgh-by-Sands, points to some sort of frontier work, very-likely contemporary with the Stanegate system and evidence of pre-Hadrianic frontier management in northern Britain (Higham & Jones 1985). This

transient and elusive palisade and watch-tower system overlooking the Solway perhaps evidence a change in strategy on the part of the Roman military (*ibid*).

- 3.2.7 The Stanegate system was not efficient enough to police the local tribes of the Brigantes, Selgovae and Novantae effectively. It is suggested that there may have also been interaction between the Brigantes (within Roman Provincial territory) and the Selgovae (in Lowland Scotland). British threats to the Empire had become a pressing concern at the beginning of Hadrian's reign; this is indicated by his biographer who mentions that 'The Britain's could no longer be kept under control' (Taylor 2000).
- 3.2.8 ***Hadrian's Wall:*** the Wall was a composite military barrier, which in its final form, comprised several separate elements; a stone wall fronted by a V-shaped ditch, and a number of purpose-built stone garrison fortifications such as forts, milecastles and turrets. A large earthwork and ditch, built parallel with and to the south of the Wall, known as the Vallum and a metalled road linking the garrison forts, which is known as the 'Roman Military Way'. The Wall begins in the east at Wallsend in Tyneside and continues to the west terminating at Bowness-on-Solway in Cumbria, a distance of 80 Roman miles (73.5 English miles or 117 kilometres). The Wall conceived by Hadrian was to be ten feet wide and about fifteen feet high. The front face of the wall most likely sported a crenulated parapet, behind which the soldiers patrolled along a paved rampart-walk (Bedoyere 1998). The foundations of Hadrian's ten-foot wide Wall were laid from Newcastle-upon-Tyne eastward for 23 Roman miles to Chesters in Northumberland, but thereafter, apart from a few short lengths further west, the wall is reduced to eight or sometimes, six feet in width. We can assume that at some time during the early construction of the Wall, a decision was made to reduce its width, probably in order to speed-up the work during times of threat from the tribes of southern Scotland. The wall to the west of the River Irthing was originally built out of turf and about sixteen feet wide, topped by a wooden palisade and walkway and punctuated by timber-framed turrets and milecastles. This 'turf-wall' did not endure long, and it was all replaced in stone within a few years, section by section. It is thought that the reason the western part of the Wall was built of turf was due to the fact that there were no ready supplies of stone or lime close to hand at the time of construction, and it was left to a later date to replace this with a regular stone wall. The interior structures in each milecastle seem to have varied, but all contain at least one recognizable barrack-block. They housed a varying number of men with a conjectured maximum of approximately 64 soldiers, and were effectively large gate-houses, whose garrison were originally stationed to control egress through the Wall, and perhaps to levy a tax on goods carried through.
- 3.2.9 Between each milecastle were two smaller turrets, equidistant from each other and the milecastles to either side. They were of a uniform pattern, about 20 feet square, recessed into the Wall and built-up above the height of the Wall rampart walk. In the original plan the Wall was to be garrisoned and patrolled from the milecastles, and there was no requirement for any large forts to be built on the Wall itself. The wall was to be reinforced when needed, from the forts already in existence along the Stanegate, which runs parallel, to the rear of the wall. This format was to prove inadequate, however, and the wall was soon modified by the inclusion of several auxiliary forts along its length. These garrison forts were of a standard 'playing-card' profile, but varied in size between 3 and 5 acres, depending on the type of unit it was

built to house. In the infantry forts, the Wall itself generally formed the northern defences of the camp, which projected wholly to the south, as is the case with the milecastles and turrets. In the cavalry forts, or those of part-mounted units, the forts were generally built across the line of the Wall with three of its major gates opening out onto its northern side, part of the wall having to be demolished in order to accommodate the fort. In some cases forts were sited on top of milecastles, which had to be demolished, as at Bowness on Solway.

- 3.2.10 The original concept of the Wall fulfilled what Hadrian's biographer wrote, that he 'drew a wall along the length of eighty miles to separate barbarians and Romans' (Birley 1961). This concept reflected the form of the German Raetian *limes* in that the Wall relied on the forts of the Stanegate for reinforcements in case of need. Its main purpose was to control movement in and out of the Province, as well as forming a base for military activity on or north of the frontier, and was never intended to be a defensive feature (*ibid*).
- 3.2.11 **The Vallum:** shortly after work on the Wall had been completed a large earthwork was constructed a short distance to the south, which followed along almost the full length of the Wall. This earthwork, known as the Vallum, consisted of a continuous steep-sided trench, with a flat-bottom. Unlike the ditch fronting the Wall to the north, which had a normal Roman military V-shaped profile this flat-bottomed ditch, twenty Roman feet (5.9m) wide and 20 feet deep, was flanked by 10 feet (3m) high and 20 feet wide mounds, positioned 30 feet (8.9m) away on either side. These features combined created a 120-foot (35m) wide system of earthworks. The Vallum usually diverts around forts therefore, it is probably safe to assume that it was created after work on the Wall had commenced. The Vallum may have formed part of the original plan but was perhaps not scheduled to be constructed until Hadrian's Wall was substantially completed. The Vallum followed the route of the Wall closely for almost its entire length, being conspicuously absent in the stretch from Wallsend to Newcastle, but running uninterrupted from the bridge over the River Tyne to the large auxiliary fort at Bowness on the Solway Firth. The Vallum runs almost parallel to the Wall all the way to the fort at Stanwix in Carlisle deviating from this route for only a short stretch at Castlesteads. Beyond the large cavalry fort at Stanwix, the Vallum proceeds westwards to the Bowness terminus with only three or four relatively minor re-alignments, and mostly ignores, the meandering course of the Wall in this part of the Solway region. It is thought that the Vallum was intended to mark-out a kind of rearward boundary or "exclusion zone" behind the Wall, another school of thought is that its main purpose was as a communication route. An idea recently expounded, is that the Vallum served no other purpose than to punctuate the northern frontier of Rome, and was deliberately built on a monumental scale on the orders of emperor Hadrian.
- 3.2.12 **The Military Way:** at first, the Wall garrisons were supplied along roads, which issued from the gates at the rear of each fort and were possibly connected to the Stanegate, which ran parallel with the Wall. These supply-roads were provided to each of the main forts on the Wall, and also to a few of the milecastles. Around the time that the Vallum went out of use *c* AD 140, the Wall was provided with its own purpose-built, metalled supply road, which ran between the Wall and the Vallum. This new road connected each of the garrisons on the Wall, and ran through the rear portion of each fort. In addition to providing a shorter and more secure route between each fort, there

were branch-roads serving the milecastles, and pathways to all of the turrets probably branched-off from it (Bedoyere 1998). The modern name for this road is the Roman Military Way.

3.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.3.1 Hadrian's Wall, the Vallum and the Stanegate have been subject to extensive archaeological interventions in the Gilsland area since at least the 19th century, however the results of some of these excavations have not always been fully documented and published. The majority of the Wall that runs through Gilsland was probably removed to build a number of houses in the area, which includes the medieval castle at Thirlwall. Only a small section of the Wall survives in Gilsland and that is in the garden of the Vicarage. Immediately to the west of Gilsland one of the best preserved sections in Cumbria is visible (LUAU 1999a).
- 3.3.2 A number of excavations have been carried out in and around Gilsland, most notably by antiquarians. More recently, the most extensive excavations undertaken in this area have been confined to Birdoswald fort, approximately 2km west of the site in 1987 to 1992 and 1997 to 1999 (Wilmott 1997). However, a large scale excavation, close to Gilsland was undertaken in 1910 on the Stanegate fort at Throp (Simpson 1913; Birley 1961; Collingwood Bruce 1978). The fort had similar dimensions to the fort at Haltwhistle Burn, having entrances on the north-east and south-east-sides, the latter leading to the Stanegate approximately 80m away. Based on the pottery assemblage found inside the fort, it was thought that the fort is Hadrianic in date, presumably fitting with the Stanegate construction. The line of the Stanegate was also examined in 1910 (Simpson 1913). A crossing point was discovered over Poltross Burn east of Throp fort, and the road was traced for 75 feet (22.5m). Excavations near to the burn revealed that the outer edge of the road had been levelled up with clay, upon a foundation of large stones. The line postulated by Simpson is the line currently marked on the present day Ordnance Survey (OS) map.
- 3.3.3 In 1999, a geophysical survey and field evaluation was undertaken by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU 1999a), on the site of the former cattle market, south of the Station Hotel, and north of Hadrian's Wall. Evidence was uncovered for the northern counterscarp of the Wall, at the southern end of the site, but the later cattle mart had destroyed any archaeological evidence in this area.
- 3.3.4 Archaeological works prior to the opening of the long distance Hadrian's Wall Footpath saw a number of watching briefs undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OAN), formally LUAU, at Gilsland. The watching briefs showed that no archaeological remains relating to the Wall were visible, however the work only concerned the excavation of small holes for the insertion of fences, kissing gates and signposts (e.g. LUAU 1999b).
- 3.3.5 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken close to the development site, on land at Eastwood Villa in Gilsland, in 2004 by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd. (Fig 2: Jones 2004). Although the site was within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, no significant archaeological features or deposits of the Roman period were encountered during these excavations, although a straight-sided narrow feature containing wood and fragments of 19th and 20th century pottery was discovered at the east of the trench.

- 3.3.6 Oxford Archaeology North carried out an evaluation on land to the south of Gilsland in 2004, across the course of the Vallum and the supposed line of the Stanegate. In total, four trenches were excavated. It showed that whilst the majority of the proposed development area had been truncated by ploughing or been deliberately destroyed, a number of archaeological features survived. Trench 4 uncovered a large bank of re-deposited natural gravel approximately 5m across. This was tentively identified as the south mound of the Vallum. Trench 2, uncovered a large compacted stone/cobble surface, which could possibly be the line of the Stanegate, however further examination of the surface would be required to confirm this (Town 2004).

4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 4.1.1 Summary results of the watching brief are presented below. Figure 2 shows the location of the development area studied during the watching brief, in relation to previous archaeological investigation in Gilsland (Jones 2004) and Figure 3 shows the location of the foundation trench that was excavated during groundworks within the footprint of the building extension. The machinery used for the groundworks were a JCB 3CX and a one tonne mini digger; with a combination of toothed and ditching buckets.
- 4.1.2 The excavation was undertaken on 27th May 2006. It began with the western side of the foundation trench where machining removed 0.4m of dark blackish grey clayey silt, interpreted as old garden soil. This overlay a mid-orange sandy gravel with sub-rounded large stones, containing brick. This was a redeposited natural. Remnants of a sandstone wall were observed along the southern edge of the trench, beside the path, which had been mortared. This was modern.
- 4.1.3 The excavation of the south side of the trench followed the same profile as the western side. Here the redeposited natural layer became increasingly more clayey and silty, and the topsoil decreased to a depth of 0.25m. A brick manhole was observed at the eastern end of the trench.
- 4.1.4 The excavation of the eastern side of the trench revealed topsoil of a more rubble-like nature surviving to a depth of 0.6m, which was the total depth of the trench in this area. This was due to the area having been excavated previously for services, including water and sewage pipes. Gravel and clay-like silt was observed at the base of the trench, similar to that encountered in the south side. High quantities of brick rubble and concrete was observed in the topsoil.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 The watching brief encountered no features of an archaeological nature during the excavations associated with the extension to the building, and no archaeological finds were discovered. The groundworks were not extended deep enough to reveal the natural drift geology. This might be explained by the fact that the whole area had previously been used as a rubbish tipping location, and that redeposited natural had since been used as levelling material, when the area was being prepared for the construction of Crantock House (Mark Barwick, *pers. comm.*).
- 5.1.2 The archaeological potential of the area is high, and although no features of an archaeological nature were encountered during these groundworks, this can largely be explained by modern land-use of the area, rather than by the lack of previous activity in the area. The potential for Roman remains in the area remains high.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 This watching brief was undertaken as a condition of planning permission advised by Northumberland County Council Conservation Team, and granted by Tynedale District Council, consenting to the construction of a two-storey side extension to Crantock House, Gilsland. As no features of an archaeological nature were disturbed or encountered during the groundworks associated with the groundworks of that construction, no further archaeological intervention will be required.

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APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

APPENDIX 2: PLATES



Plate 1: Location of trench to the south of Crantock House, facing west



Plate 2: View of south and west part of the trench, facing north-west



Plate 3: View of visible earthwork remains of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site to the north of Crantock House, facing east



Plate 4: View of eastern section of trench under excavation, facing north