

GILSLAND VICARAGE, GILSLAND, CUMBRIA.



WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CP. No: 898/09

18/09/2009

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Quality Assurance

This report covers works as outlined in the brief for the above-named project as issued by the relevant authority, and as outlined in the agreed programme of works. Any deviation to the programme of works has been agreed by all parties. The works have been carried out according to the guidelines set out in the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Standards, Policy Statements and Codes of Conduct. The report has been prepared in keeping with the guidance set out by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd on the preparation of reports.

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SUMMARY

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd were commissioned by Jon Tate, on behalf of English Heritage, to undertake an archaeological watching brief on groundworks relating to the construction of a new fence line at the Vicarage, Gilsland, Cumbria (NGR NY 63210 66254). The Vicarage is situated in the immediate vicinity of Hadrian's Wall. A fence is to be constructed to keep livestock away from the Wall. As the area is of high archaeological interest, Andrew Davison (Inspector of Ancient Monuments North West Region) has recommended that an archaeological watching be in place during the ground works. The archaeological watching brief was undertaken over four days between the 14th July 2009 and 17th September 2009. The watching brief monitored the insertion of approximately 127 postholes along the line of Hadrian's Wall on both the north and the south sides. No archaeological remains were noted within any of these postholes, apart from several pieces of dressed stone which may have originated from the Wall.

As this archaeological watching brief was conducted as part of a recommendation to observe groundworks in association with the development of a new fence line, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the high archaeological potential of the area, it is recommended that any future work be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would like to thank Jon Tate of English Heritage, for commissioning the project, and for all assistance throughout the work.

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd would also like to extend their thanks to Martin Dawkins of Martin Dawkins Ltd., and the family at The Vicarage, for their help and hospitality during this project.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by David Jackson, Frances Wood, Jocelyn Strickland and Fiona Wooler. The report was written by Frances Wood and the drawings were produced by Jocelyn Strickland. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, Project Manager for NPA Ltd. The report was edited by Martin Railton, Project Manager for NPA Ltd.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 In April 2009, North Pennines Archaeology were invited by English Heritage to maintain an archaeological watching brief at Gilsland Vicarage, Gilsland, Cumbria, (NGR NY 63210 66254; Figure 1), during groundworks associated with the construction of new fence lines. The proposed works lie within the immediate vicinity of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Hadrian's Wall (SM No. 26072). Because of the proximity to a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Andrew Davison, Inspector of Ancient Monuments North West Region, requested that all ground reduction be subject to a programme of archaeological observation and investigation. This is in line with government advice as set out in the DoE Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16).
- 1.1.2 All groundworks associated with the development of construction of the fence lines had to be excavated under full archaeological supervision and all stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2008), and were consistent with the specification provided by Frank Giecco, 2009 and generally accepted best practice.
- 1.1.3 This report outlines the monitoring works undertaken on-site, and the results of this scheme of archaeological works.

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 English Heritage for an archaeological watching brief of the study area. Following acceptance of the project design by Andrew Davison, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by the client to undertake the work. The project design was adhered to in full, and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

2.2.1 The works involved a structured watching brief to observe, record and excavate any archaeological deposits from the development site. A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, on a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed (IfA 2008).

2.2.2 The aims and principal methodology of the watching brief can be summarised as follows:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
- to carry out further excavation and recording work in adequate time, if intact archaeological remains are uncovered during the project;
- to accurately tie the area watched by the archaeologist into the National Grid at an appropriate scale, with any archaeological deposits and features adequately levelled;
- to sample environmental deposits encountered as required, in line with English Heritage (2002) guidelines;
- to produce a photographic record of all contexts using colour digital, 35mm colour slide and monochrome formats as applicable, each photograph including a graduated metric scale;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful of dating purposes;

- to produce a site archive in accordance with MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and MoRPHE standards (English Heritage 2006).

2.2.3 Postholes were excavated by hand that measured approximately 0.40 metres by 0.40 metres. These postholes were excavated to a depth of 0.60 metres and spaced over a distance of 250 metres. The postholes were generally in a straight line approximately 1.0 metres to the north and south of Hadrian's Wall. Archaeological monitoring and supervision of groundworks commenced on 14th July 2009. A summary of the findings of the watching brief is included within this report.

2.3 THE ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the specification, and in line with current UKIC (1990) and English Heritage Guidelines (1991) and according to the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2007). The archive will be deposited within the Museum of Tullie House, Carlisle, with copies of the report sent to the County Historic Environment Record at Carlisle, available upon request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier **NPA VIC-A, CP 898/09**.

2.3.2 North Pennines Archaeology, and English Heritage, supports the **Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS)** project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by North Pennines Archaeology, as a part of this national project.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION AND GEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 Gilsland Vicarage lies within the village of Gilsland, which spans the two counties of Northumberland and Cumbria. The Vicarage is situated in close proximity to Hadrian's Wall, and the Newcastle to Carlisle railway line. The countryside is undulating farm land, mostly used for sheep grazing. The village of Gilsland lies approximately 18 miles east of Carlisle and 42 miles west of the city of Newcastle at a height of between 120 to 130m AOD. The River Irthing flows westwards to the north the village (Countryside Commission 1998). The area is shown in Figure 2.
- 3.1.2 The Vicarage is situated in the Tyne Gap, a landscape that forms a narrow but distinctive lowland corridor that separates the North Pennines from the Border Moors and Forests. To the west, the Tyne Gap merges with the pasture landscape of the Solway Basin and Eden Valley. To the east, it merges into the more densely populated Tyne and Wear Lowlands. 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. The drift geology consists of melt-out debris and fluvio-glacial deposits from the Devensian Period, predominantly boulder clay or till.

3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 *Introduction:* this historical background is compiled mostly from secondary sources, and is intended only as a brief summary of historical developments specific to the study area.
- 3.2.2 *Roman:* the Roman advance into the northwest of England was launched during the 70s and 80s AD, and the campaigns of Agricola who was the governor of Britain between AD 78-84. During the Roman period, there was certainly a heavy military presence in Cumbria. Hadrian's Wall, possibly begun in 122 AD, was built to define the northern limit of the Roman empire. A network of military roads, forts and settlements soon began to appear around the focus of Hadrian's Wall (Breeze and Dobson 1976).
- 3.2.3 Hadrian's Wall, a prominent Roman monument, runs through Gilsland. 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 was built parallel with

and to the south of the Wall, known as the Vallum. A metalled road linked the garrison forts that was known as the 'Roman Military Way'. The Wall began in the east at Wallsend in Tyneside and continued 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 as conceived by Hadrian was to be ten feet wide (3.04m) and about fifteen feet (4.57m) high. (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 (1.82m) in width. The wall to the west of the River Irthing was originally built out of turf and about sixteen feet (4.88m) 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 (Sowerby and Peters 2006).

- 3.2.4 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).
- 3.2.5 At The Vicarage, Hadrian's Wall forms the divide between the garden and the paddock. There used to be a small ditch directly on the north side of the Wall but this has silted up within living memory. Within 25m east of The Vicarage there is a stretch of wall containing several culverts at the base (also partially silted up), which were probably to allow the shallow north-south stream to pass through.
- 3.2.6 In 1951, to the west of The Vicarage, two centurial stones were found. These stones were found while clearing debris from the wall in preparation for its preservation by the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works. It was thought that these stones were found near to the positions that they originally occupied in the south face of the wall. The first stone read '*Sixth cohort, century of Lousius Suavis*.' This was found 59 metres to the east of Turret 48a (Willowford East). The second stone read '*Century of Cocceius Regulus*' found 9.8m to the east of turret 48a (Gillam 1955).
- 3.2.5 *Post-medieval and Modern*: previously the village of Gilsland had been known as Rose Hill, after a prominent outcrop. This name was changed with the advent of the railway, when the outcrop was levelled to make way for the railway station (LUAU, 1999).

3.3 PREVIOUS WORK

- 3.3.1 Numerous excavations and investigations have occurred in the immediate area around Gilsland, including several phases of work at Willowford Farm, located across the road from The Vicarage, (Sowerby 2007).
- 3.3.2 In 1894 excavations at The Vicarage in Gilsland exposed six sections of the Vallum and one section of the wall. The Wall and Vallum passed through the grounds of The Vicarage at no more than 30 metres apart. At this time, it was stated that the wall was '*admirably preserved.*' In one section the inner face of the wall was exposed to reveal four courses of walling stone, 0.73m high, that rested on four projecting layers that were about 0.22m thick. As previously mentioned, six section of the Vallum were exposed. The north mound of the Vallum could be seen, the south mound to a lesser extent (TCWAAS 1894).
- 3.3.3 Monitoring of minor groundworks for the construction of two sets of steps and associated step stiles within the area of the northern Wall ditch took place by Willowford Farm, along with the excavation of two trenches, one on either side of the River Irthing, for a footbridge forming part of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail. No archaeological deposits were recorded and the only finds were modern. Work was undertaken as part of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Alignment Project in 1998 by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit.
- 3.3.4 An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in January 2007 by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd in the immediate vicinity of the proposed construction work, at Willowford Farm, Gilsland. In this single trench, several features were uncovered which were identified as the foundation cut for Hadrian's Wall, the Wall ditch and the associated earthen bank. A sherd of medieval pottery was also uncovered, which was suggestive of medieval activity in the area (Sowerby and Peters 2006).
- 3.3.5 Further work was undertaken in February 2007 at Willowford Farm, in the form of an archaeological watching brief. The work was carried out to monitor the insertion of a septic tank and associated pipe work. This phase of works failed to locate any significant archaeological remains despite the proximity to the wall and the Vallum (Sowerby 2007).

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring was undertaken over several non-consecutive days. The first day was on Tuesday the 14th of July 2009. This was followed by further days on the 16th July, 23rd July, and 17th September 2009.

4.2 THE WATCHING BRIEF

4.2.1 The watching brief covered the excavation of a series of postholes in preparation for the erection of new fence lines to protect Hadrian's Wall from surrounding livestock. (Figure 3).

4.2.2 The work was all hand dug, and the spoil was left on site; some will be used for backfilling after the posts have been concreted in. The topsoil (100) comprised was a moderately loose dark brown sandy silt. On the north side of Hadrian's Wall, the topsoil was redder in colour but of similar consistency and was present across the site to a depth of 0.13m. Beneath the topsoil, the subsoil (102) was a loose gritty sandy clay of an orangey light brown colour. The depth varied across the site but the average was 0.47m. The natural substrate (101) was an orangey brown sand and only visible in selected postholes to the north of the Wall. No archaeological features were noted during the groundworks.

4.2.3 Work began on the south side of Hadrian's Wall, at the western end of the proposed fence line. On the first day of work (14th July) 27 postholes were dug, from the west to the east. These were located between 1m and 1.30m south of Hadrian's Wall. The postholes were dug to a depth of between 0.60m and 0.80m, and were spaced evenly apart, with a distance of 1.80m from centre to centre. The diameter of these postholes was 0.50m. On the second day of work (16th July), a further 16 postholes were excavated along the same alignment. The final and most eastern posthole abutted the boundary wall running north-east/south-west. There was a change in the appearance of the ground at the fifth posthole from the west. Here the ground was pastureland and the topsoil was deeper and a richer brown shade. The deepest topsoil observed was 0.70m in this area.



Plate 1: West facing section of posthole to the south of Hadrian's Wall



Plate 2: Looking west along the postholes excavated on the 14th July on the south side of the Wall



Plate 3: Looking east along the line of the postholes on the south side of the Wall excavated on the 16th July

- 4.2.4 On the north side of the Wall, further postholes were excavated. The first began at the west, opposite the first posthole south of the Wall. Ten holes were excavated on the 16th July. The postholes on the north side of Hadrian's Wall were located 1.05m of the Wall. Work was again carried out in a west to east direction. The ground appeared to be different from the ground to the south of the Wall, in that the topsoil was much more shallow and the subsoil was orange and grey sandy clay. The topsoil was between 0.05m and 0.10m deep and below the subsoil in this area, the natural substrate (101) was also visible to a depth of 0.15m. This was, however, only from the fifth hole from the west end onwards, as the postholes progressed down the slope.
- 4.2.5 On the 23rd July a further 32 postholes were dug. The postholes were dug west to east and were a continuation of the work from 16th July. In total 30 postholes were dug to the north of the wall and two postholes to the south (Plates 4-5). Dressed stones were found in four of these postholes. These stones were presumably tumble from the wall as these stones were isolated occurrences that had no structure and were found in the subsoil (Plates 6-8).

The posthole closest to the wall on the northern side encountered stones from a modern boundary wall constructed because of the raised nature of the ground (Plate 9).



Plate 4: Postholes excavated to the north of Hadrian's Wall on July 23rd, 2009, looking east



Plate 5: Two postholes to the south of the wall excavated on July 23rd, looking east



Plate 6: Dressed stone found in one of the postholes on the northern side of the wall, excavated on July 23rd.



Plate 7: Dressed stone found further east than the previous photograph, on the northern side of the wall



Plate 8: Two further dressed stones found in postholes to the north of Hadrian's wall, excavated on July 23rd



Plate 9: Stones from a boundary wall encountered at a depth of 0.40m abutting the wall to the north

- 4.2.6 There were two postholes excavated to the southern side of the wall on 23rd of July. One of these postholes was located 0.05m from the Wall. To the east and west of this area was part of the wall that was expected to be encountered in this area as well (Plate 10). However, the wall did not extend into this area. Here Hadrian's Wall appeared to rest directly in the ground with a thin layer of modern cement between the ground and the first layer of stones. This cement appeared to be modern and it was thought that this area of the wall had been robbed out and possibly rebuilt on top of a layer of cement in order to prevent subsiding (Plate 11). No archaeological features or artifacts were encountered on July 23rd.
- 4.2.7 The postholes for the remaining sections of fence line were excavated on the 17th September 2009 from the area where the Wall disappears heading in a westerly direction towards the boundary wall with the road. It was noted that the line of the Wall from the point where it disappears, was defined by a line of kerb stones on each side, with concrete noted along each length, possibly relating to works undertaken by the Ministry of Works. A large tree has until recently been located within a section of the wall line.
- 4.2.8 A total of 23 holes were excavated by land to the south of the wall, all measuring approximately 0.50m by 0.5m, and 0.60m deep, although two postholes on both the north and south sides of the Wall were excavated to a depth of 0.80m to allow for the insertion of gateposts. The postholes were

located approximately 1.65m from the outer face of the Wall, and c.1.80m apart centre to centre. The excavated material from the south side of the wall consisted of topsoil (100) which varied in depth due to the gradient of the slope northwards. Beneath the topsoil, the excavated material consisted of a loose, red gravelly layer which included rounded and angular stones (102), some of which may have been tumble from the Wall, although none appeared to have been from the outer faces (Plates 12 ,13 and 14).

- 4.2.9 Along the northern side of the Wall, a total of 18 postholes were excavated each of similar dimensions to those already referred to. The excavated material from these postholes was similar to those on the south side. Towards the western end of the fence line, the topsoil was much deeper presumably as this area forms part of the present garden. Located in one of the postholes close to the garden fence a small diameter metal pipe was exposed, aligned roughly north-east to south-west (see Figure 3). It is possible that a trench may have been excavated at some point through the area where the Wall is no longer visible, to allow for the laying of this pipe (Plate 16).



Plate 10: Posthole on the southern side of the wall. Arrow points to a lower part of the wall that should have been present in the area of the posthole



Plate 11: South facing section of posthole to the south of Hadrian's Wall. Arrow is pointing to the thin layer of concrete found at the base of the wall



Plate 12: View looking east showing the postholes excavated to the south side of the wall immediately opposite The Vicarage



Plate 13: Detail of excavated material from one of the postholes on the south side of the wall (Scale = 1m)



Plate 14: View looking west showing excavated postholes to the south side of Hadrian's Wall (Scale = 1m)



Plate 15: View looking west showing excavated postholes on the north side of the Wall (Scale = 1m)



Plate 16: Detail of metal water pipe exposed in posthole to north side of Hadrian's Wall

4.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

- 4.4.1 The only archaeological finds retrieved during the excavation of the postholes was 20th century pottery, which was discarded on site, and pieces of seemingly dressed stone which presumably originated from the Wall.
- 4.4.2 No environmental samples were taken during the duration of the watching brief.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 The excavation of the postholes relating to the construction of fence lines either side of Hadrian's Wall at The Vicarage, Gilsland, was undertaken by hand under archaeological supervision. The new fence lines were successfully constructed with no damage caused to any features of archaeological significance.
- 5.1.2 The watching brief revealed no archaeological features or deposits, despite its close proximity to Hadrian's Wall, apart from several pieces of seemingly dressed stone which may have originated from the Wall. It was noted during the watching brief that some consolidation work or repairs had been undertaken in the 20th century, with the missing section of wall having been defined two lines of kerbs, and the insertion of concrete in sections.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 As this watching brief was conducted as a condition of groundworks associated with the construction two fence lines to prevent animals having access to this section of Hadrian's Wall, no further archaeological work is deemed necessary. However, given the site's location in relation to the Scheduled Ancient Monument, it is recommended that any work conducted in the future be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation.

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APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT TABLE

Context Number	Context Type	Description
100	Deposit	Topsoil
101	Deposit	Natural
102	Deposit	Subsoil

Table 1: List of Contexts issued during Watching Brief

APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

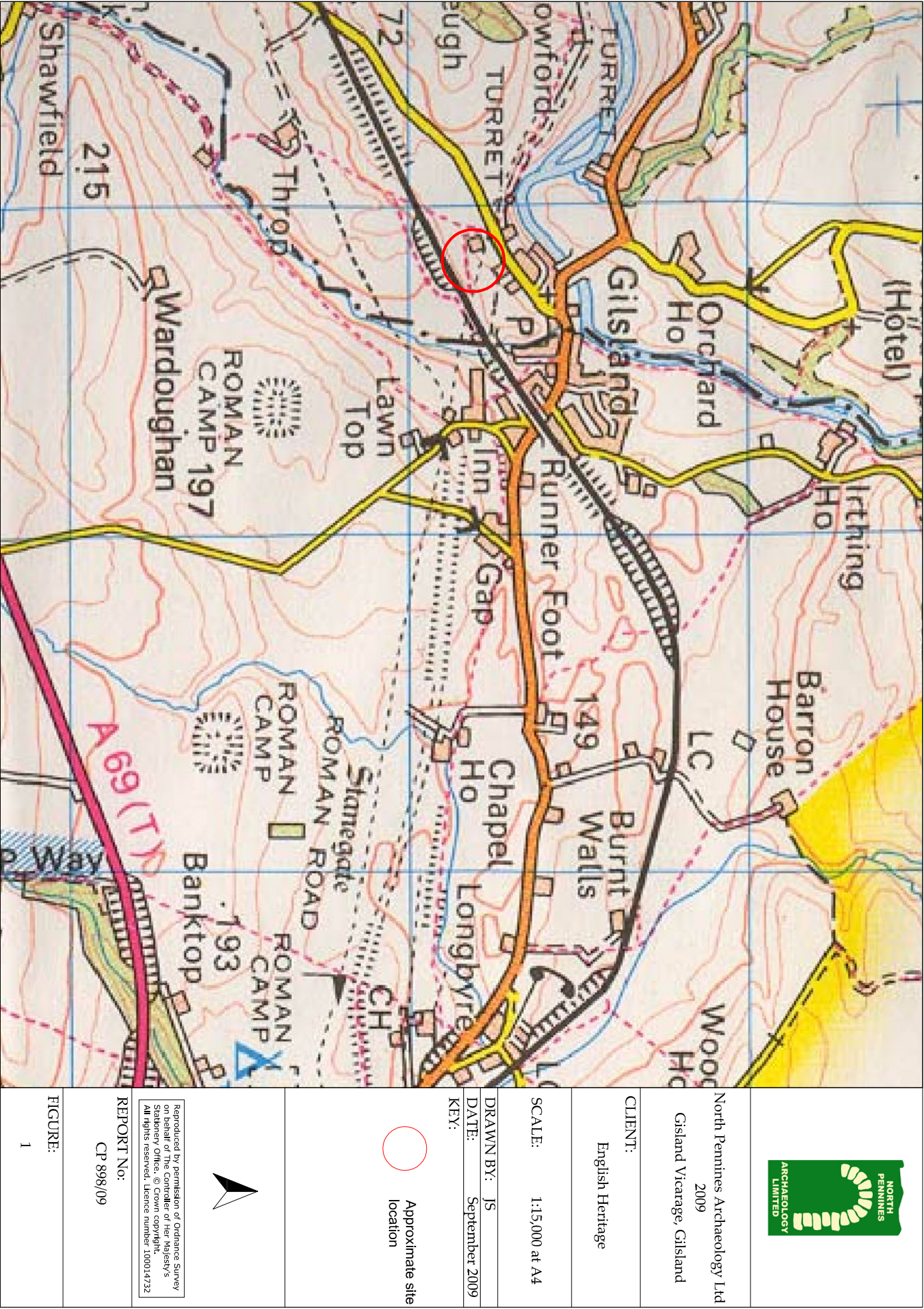


Figure 1: General Site Location



Figure 2: Location of watching brief at Gilsland Vicarage, Gilsland, Cumbria

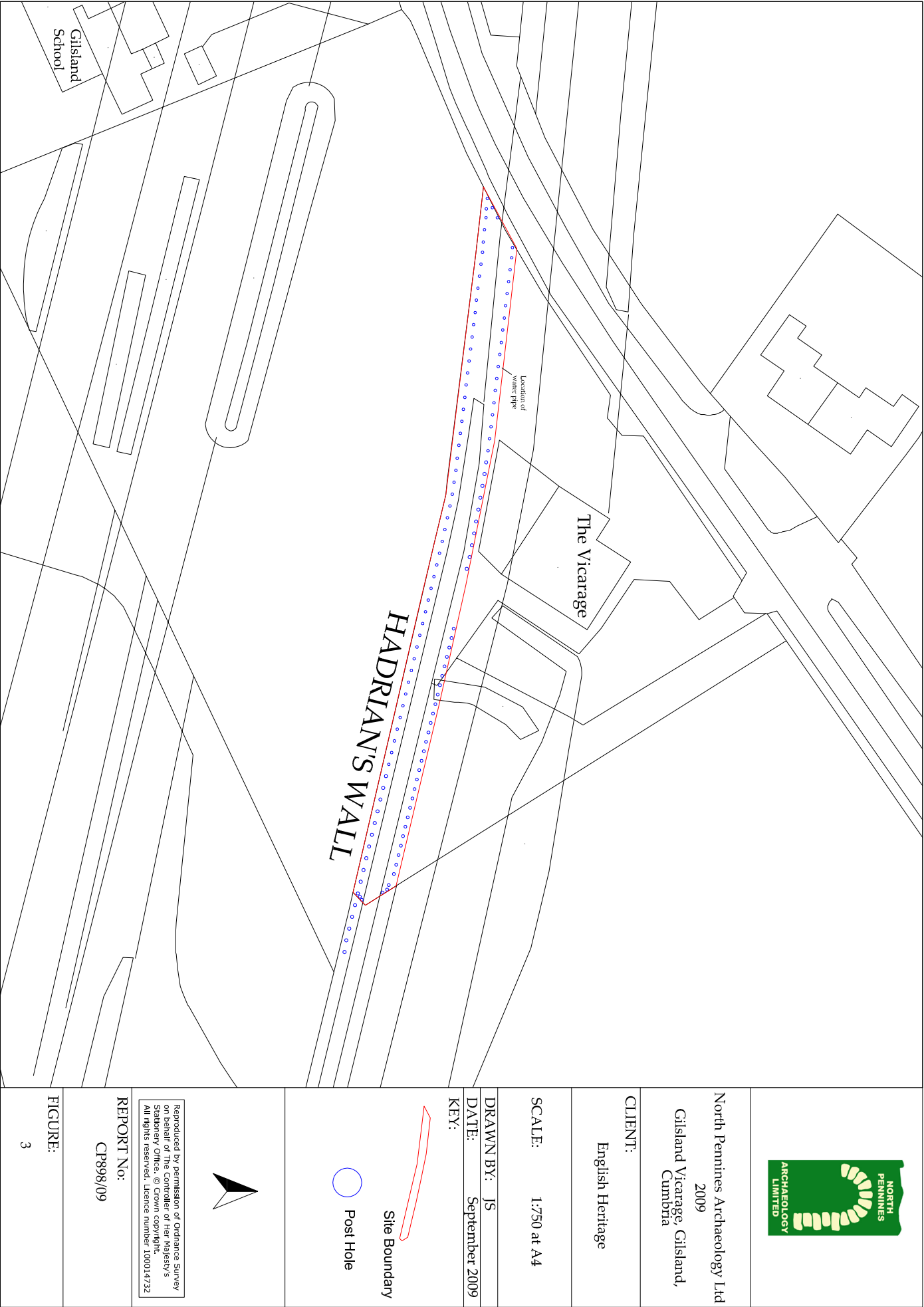


Figure 3 : Location of Post Holes