NORTH PENNINES HERITAGE TRUST

Project Designs and Client Reports No CP45/03

REPORT FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT DRUMBURGH, CUMBRIA

NGR: NY 2692 5670

FOR

UNITED UTILITIES

Planning Application Ref: 1726/EW/JFC

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In late September 2003 North Pennines Heritage Trust was commissioned by United Utilities to carry out an archaeological evaluation on the proposed line of a new service trench at Drumburgh house, Drumburgh, Cumbria. The only significant deposits were probable 14th century deposits form an ill defined cut feature, no significant Roman deposits were recorded in trenches 1-4. Two additional trenches were excavated as part of this scheme to define the archaeological potential in the area of a proposed extension to Drumburgh house. The 4 trenches on the proposed service trench found major truncation resulting from probable terracing associated with the construction of Drumburgh house in the 19th century.

Trenches 5 and 6, positioned to the rear of Drumburgh, house located the probable line of the wall ditch and the position of the berm between the wall and the ditch. Again the archaeology was heavily truncated but to a lesser degree than at the front of Drumburgh house. The remains of the berm and associated cobbling were only 0.10m below the present ground surface, and are therefore extremely vulnerable to any development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following people and institutions for their assistance during the undertaking of the project: Ken Denham, Mike Collins, Julia Collinson and the staff of United Utilities for their invaluable assistance throughout the project.

1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

1.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust was invited by Julia Collinson of United Utilities to submit a tender for an archaeological evaluation to be undertaken on land inside the Roman fort at Drumburgh, Cumbria. The site is recorded on the Cumbria Sites and Monuments Record (SMR 387) and is protected as a scheduled ancient monument (ref 26121).

1.1 The proposed work will involve the installation of an electricity cable between the main road through Drumburgh and Drumburgh House. In order to advise on an application by United Utilities for scheduled monument consent, English Heritage requested an archaeological evaluation in order to provide information concerning the impact of the proposed cable on archaeological remains associated with the Roman fort.

1.2 The proposed cable trench runs through the centre of the presumed site of the Roman fort, starting just to the east of the south gate and continuing into the centre of the fort (see figure 2). The projected extension of Drumburgh House runs into the projected line of Hadrian's wall.

1.4 The brief for this project was discussed on site with Mike Collins, English Heritage's Archaeologist for the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and representatives of United Utilities. The proposed service trench runs inside the eastern side of the Roman fort of *Congavata*. 1.5 The site is located at NY 2692 5670, and consists of an area of approximately 1623.4m^2 (see figure 1).

2 PREVIOUS WORK

2.1 The site lies in the Roman fort of *Congavata* a Scheduled Ancient Monument, World Heritage Site and penultimate fort on Hadrian's Wall (NY 2650 5978).

2.2 The foundations of the fort and much of the ramparts are said to have been removed in the lifetime of Richard Lawson esquire, who was still residing in Drumburgh in the 1860s (Whelan 1860).

2.3 Whelan also states that the northern rampart of the fort did not come up to the wall but was removed a few yards from it, in which space the military way was presumed to have run (Whelan 1860). The idea of there being two separate walls with a road running between them does not appear plausible and is not recorded on any other fort. Whelan may be recounting a confused account of a possible track way running on the northern side of the wall between the wall and ditch.

2.4 Very little is known about the fort with the only significant archaeological work having been carried out by I Richmond and F Richmond in the 1930s. This comprised limited trial trenching which confirmed the exact location of the fort. No further work was carried until 1999 when Carlisle Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by North West Water to undertake a watching brief during groundwork in and around the village.

2.5 Forty trenches were excavated, with very little archaeology present in any of the trenches. No evidence was recorded of any vicus and only 1 sherd of Roman pottery was retrieved from all of the trenches. Trench 40 was situated over the projected south-eastern corner of the fort and recorded modern overburden directly overlying the natural silty clay subsoil. The trench contained no evidence of the fort whatsoever. The reason for this lack of evidence for the fort appears to be major terracing in the south-eastern half of the fort, which may have resulted in its total removal in the area around Overdale House.

2.6 No previous archaeological work is known to have taken place within the confines of the site.

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PROJECT: DRUMBURGH

FIGURE: 1

TITLE: SITE LOCATION

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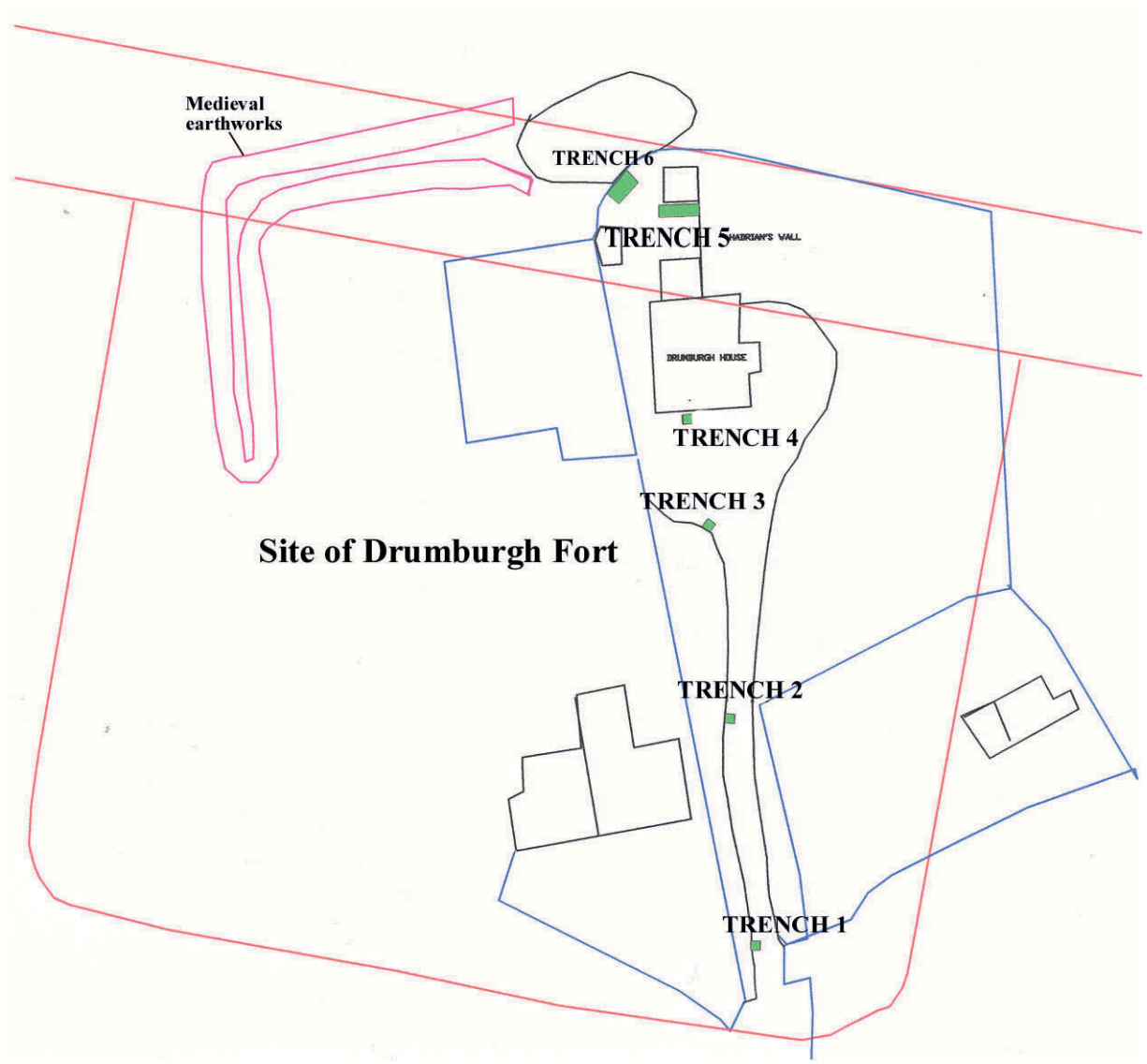

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PROJECT: DRUMBURGH

FIGURE: 2

TITLE: TRENCH LOCATION

SOURCE: FROM 1:2500 PLAN PROVIDED BY NORWEB PLC

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3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The proposed work consisted of an archaeological evaluation. This comprised the excavation of a series of trial trenches in order to establish:

- the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record them;
- to establish, wherever possible, the significance of archaeological remains;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- depending upon the results of the work, to prepare a report for publication.

3.2 The work was undertaken under the direction of Frank Giecco, BA, Dip Arch. AIFA, North Pennines Heritage Trust Principal Archaeologist. He was assisted by Ken Denham, Project Assistant. All staff were fully briefed on the project background and made aware of the work required under the specification, and understood the projects aims and methodologies.

3.3 Topsoil was excavated using a mini excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine work was undertaken under the direct supervision of a NPHT archaeologist. Each trench was excavated either to the natural subsoil or the top of archaeological deposits, and was cleaned by hand.

3.4 Excavation both by hand and machine was undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features which appeared to merit preservation in situ. Written, drawn, and photographic records were produced in accordance to guidelines set out in the North Pennines Heritage Trust excavation manual (Giecco 2001). The stratigraphy of all trenches was recorded even where no archaeological deposits had been identified.

3.5 Reasonable access to the site for the purposes of monitoring the archaeological scheme was afforded to the Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist or his nominee at all times.

3.6 Spoil was placed next to the trenches, which were backfilled immediately upon completion.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The evaluation took place over three days between the 18th and 22nd of September. A total of six trenches were excavated, all situated within the Roman wall fort of Drumburgh (see figure 2).

4.2 Trench 1

4.2.1 Trench 1 measured 1m x 1m and was excavated was excavated to a depth of 0.90m. Compact natural bolder clay (context 117) was recorded below 0.30m of modern road make up (context 105).

4.2.2 No features of archaeological note were recorded.

4.3 Trench 2 (see Plate 1)

4.3.1 Trench 2 measured 1.20m x 0.90m and was excavated to a depth of 0.94m. Natural subsoil was not encountered in the trench. The earliest recorded deposit was a dark brown slightly organic sandy silt (context 110), which was sealed by context 106, a sandy clay silt. Both these deposits appeared to be filling a large cut feature (as yet undefined). Context 110 produced one rim sherd of red gritty ware pottery giving this feature a probable 13th century date.

Plate 1: East facing section of trench 2

4.3.2 The upper fill of this feature was cut by a 19th century ceramic land drain (contexts 107 and 108). The land drain was sealed by approximately 0.35m of road make up material (context 105).

4.3.3 Context 110 was sampled to assess its environmental potential.

4.4 Trench 3

4.4.1 Trench 3 measured 1 m x 0.80m and was excavated to a depth of 1.10m. Compact natural bolder clay (context 117) was recorded below 0.25m of light grey silty clay subsoil (context 101). Context 101 was sealed by a 0.20m thick layer of redeposited silty clay (context 116). This clay layer may represent a Roman levelling deposit associated with the construction of the fort, but as it was only observed in such a small area and contained no dating evidence, any interpretation must remain speculative.

4.4.2 Context 116 was sealed below 0.45m of modern road make up material (context 105).

4.5 Trench 4

4.5.1 Trench 4 measured 1.05m x 1.05m and was excavated to a depth of 0.50m. Natural subsoil (context 101) was recorded below 0.35m of modern disturbance, the whole area being badly disturbed by the foundations of a small lean-to structure that once occupied the site.

4.5.2 No features of archaeological note were recorded.

4.6 Trench 5 (see figure 3 and 4)

4.6.1 Trench 5 measured 4m x 1.5m and was excavated to an average depth of 0.25m. The trench was positioned over the projected line of Hadrian's wall. The trench contained three probable Roman deposits (contexts 112, 113 and 122). The earliest recorded deposit was context 113, a compact layer of silty clay and cobbles measuring over 0.20m in depth, this layer was sealed by a thin band of sandy silt (context 122) which measured 0.05m in depth.

4.6.2 Context 122 was sealed by a later clay and cobble surface (context 112), again of probable Roman date (see plate 2 and 3). This layer was cut by a large pit (context 115) in the north-west corner of the trench; although the feature was undated a medieval rather than Roman date appears more likely, but due to the heavy truncation throughout the site firm dating for any of these features proved difficult.

4.6.3 The pit (context 115) was filled by a grey brown sandy silt (context 114), which had a depth of in excess of 0.40m. The fill of this pit was sealed below 0.15m of modern levelling material (context 111).

4.6.4 Context 113 produced one body sherd of grey ware suggesting a Roman date for this deposit. A sherd of 13th/14th century green glazed pottery was retrieved from the top of context 112, but is thought to be residual, and had been pressed into an earlier, presumably roman deposit. Context 114 the fill from the probable medieval pit was sampled and produced a selection of seeds, (raspberry, flax seeds and a very small amount of charcoal were recorded.

Plate 2: General shot of trench 5 from the west.

Plate 3: Detail of cobble spread 112 in trench 5.

4.7 Trench 6 (see figure 5 and 6)

4.7.1 Trench 6 measured 3m by 1.4m and was excavated to maximum depth of 1.25m (see plate 4) and again positioned over the projected line of Hadrian's wall. The trench contained two probable Roman deposits (contexts 119 and 118). The earliest recorded deposit was context 121, a compact light grey silty sand, as the deposit was only observed in a sondage. The layer could either be interpreted as natural silting up of the ditch or as a slight variation in the natural subsoil, which would have been cut by the wall ditch.

4.7.2 This layer was sealed by a dark brown sandy silt (context 119) and had distinct tip lines from south to north, which is likely to represent silting up of the wall ditch. This layer was in turn sealed by an undated pink brown clay and cobble layer (context 118), which was similar in nature to context 112 recorded in Trench 6. Context 118 is likely to represent the continued infilling of the wall ditch, as the material appears to have slumped into the ditch.

4.7.3 Context 118 was sealed by context 120, a mid brown sandy silt measuring 0.40 m in depth which produced several sherds of 19th century pottery. The likely explanation for this layer would be as 20th century infilling of the wall ditch.

Plate 4: East facing section of trench 6

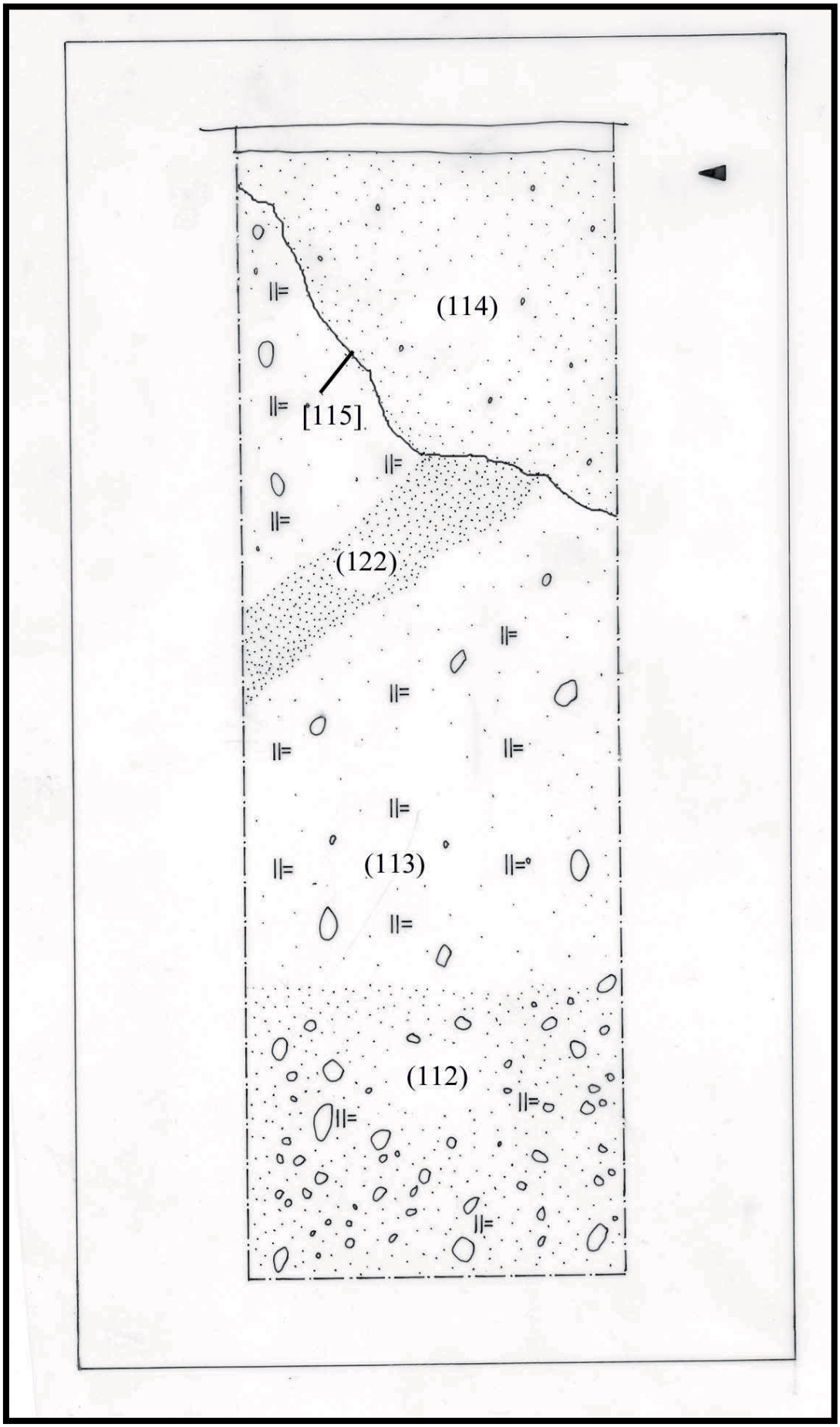

Figure 3: Plan of trench 5

Scale 1:40

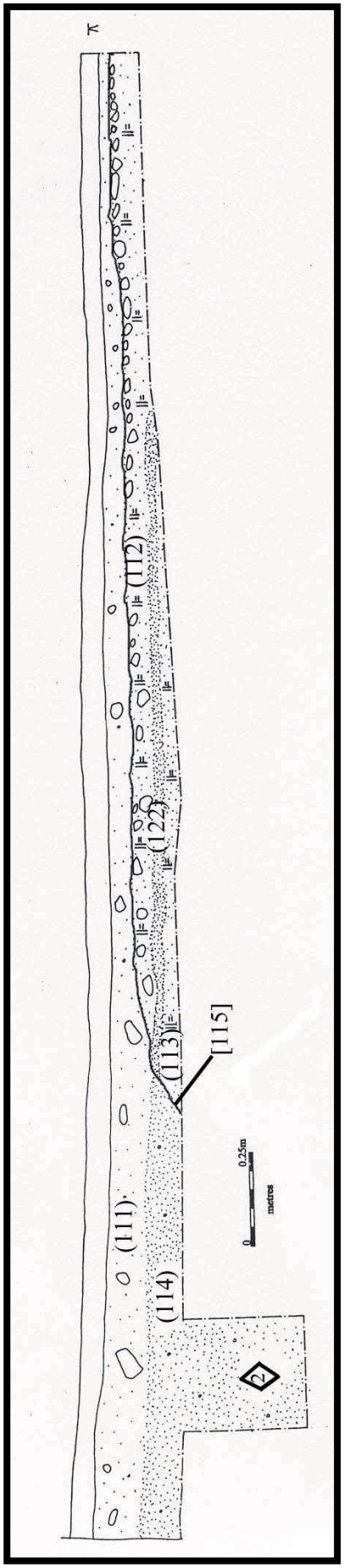

Figure 4: North facing section of trench 5.

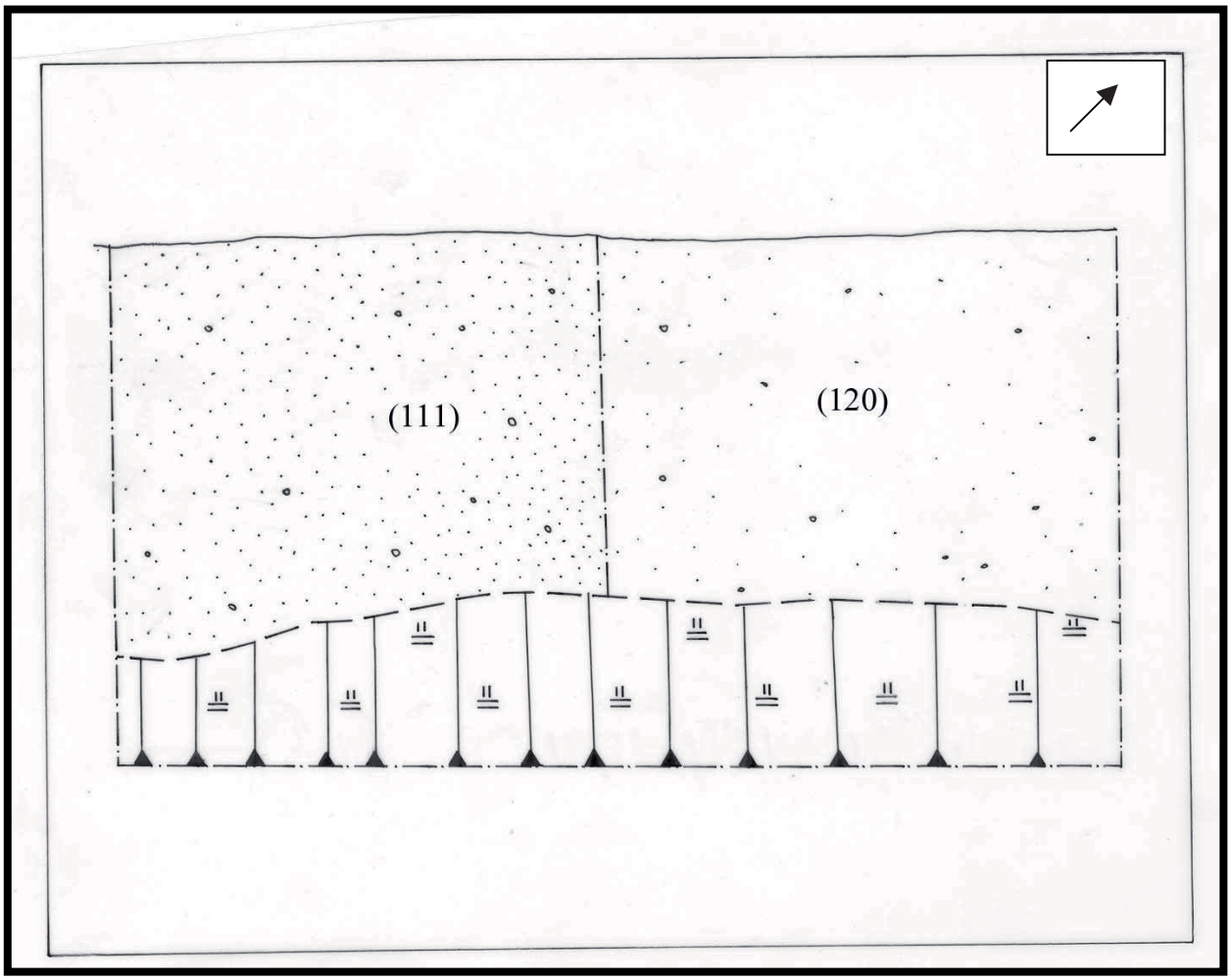

Figure 5: Plan of trench 6

Scale 1:20

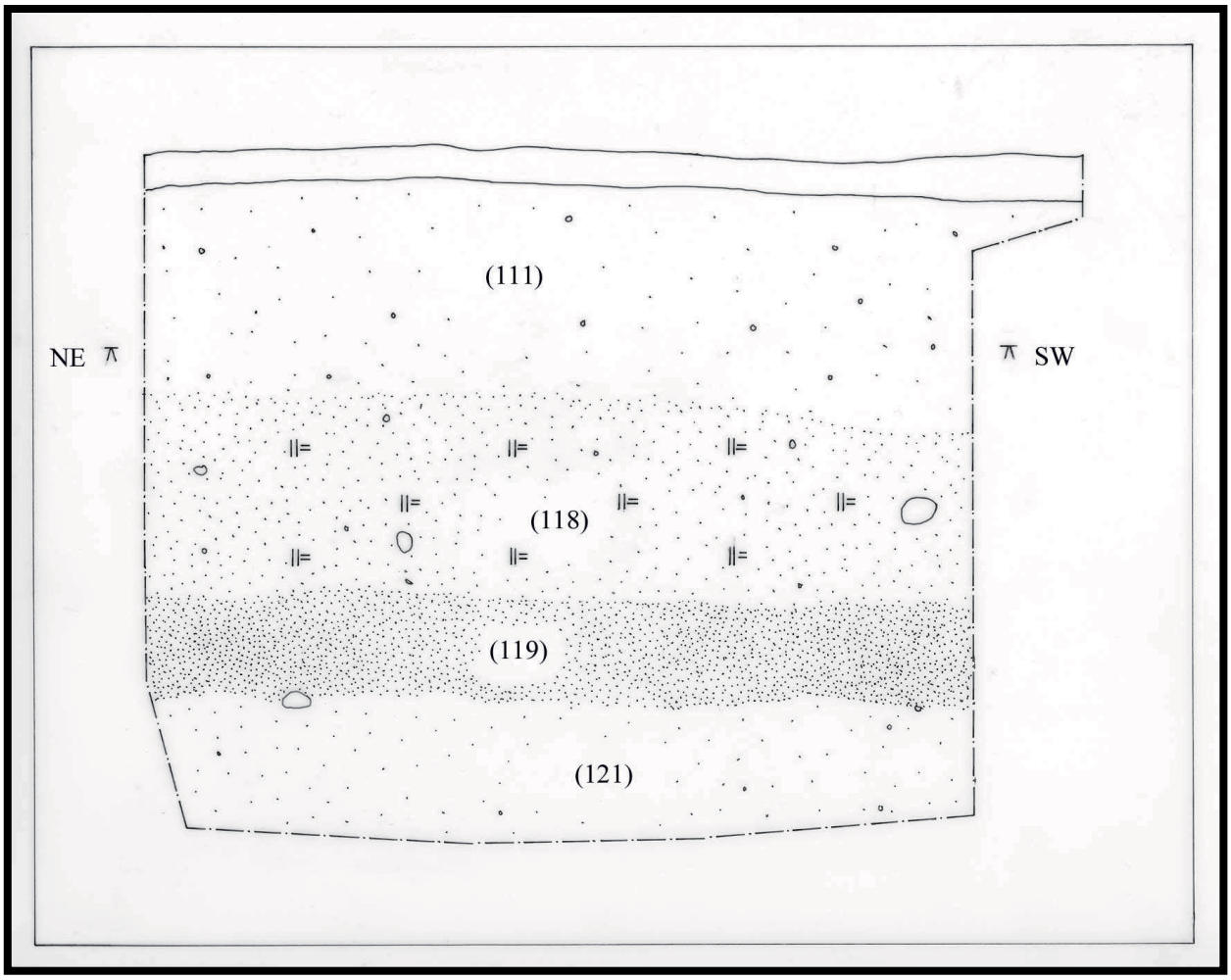

Figure 6: North-west facing section of trench 6. A more informative sections could not be drawn due to the extensive tree disturbance.

Scale 1:10

5 THE ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL and BONE REPORT

5.1.1 Introduction – Environmental remains

5.1.2 Two contexts were sampled. Both the whole earth samples were selected for processing in order to assess their environmental potential. The methodology employed required that the whole earth samples be broken down and split into their various different components. This was achieved by a combination of water washing and flotation.

5.1.3 The process of flotation, by passing the sample through a flotation tank, serves to separate the matrix of the whole earth sample into the organic fraction and the heavier mineral content of mainly sands, silts, clays and stones. The two resultant sub-samples are the flot and the retent or residue, the soil matrix (less than 1mm) being removed by the water and washed away.

5.1.4 The flot consists of the material that floats on water as the light or floating fraction. This recovers mainly organic and charred remains. The heavy retent fraction consists of the denser material that usually sinks, which includes the waterlogged material. The method relies purely on the variation in density of the recovered material to separate it from the soil matrix, allowing for the recovery of ecofacts (organics) and artefacts from the whole earth sample. The recovered remains can then be assessed for content.

5.1.5 The retent, like the residue from wet sieving, will contain any larger items of bone or artefacts. The flot or floating fraction will generally contain organic material such as plant matter, fine bones, cloth, leather and insect remains. A rapid scan at this stage will allow further recommendations to be made as to the potential for further study by entomologists or palaeobotanists, with a view to retrieving vital economic information from the samples. Favourable preservation conditions can lead to the retrieval of organic remains that may produce a valuable suite of information in respect of the depositional environment of the material, which may include anthropogenic activity, seasonality and climate and elements of the economy.

5.1.6 Both of the 2 samples produced flots containing very little organic material of sufficient quantity, quality or diversity for further assessment. The samples are listed in Table 1 with details of contents in Table 2. There was very little material in the samples to provide evidence of what was occurring in these deposits and most of the seeds recovered were weed or shrub seeds. There was no evidence of seeds from arable crops, nor was there any grain present.

5.1.7 Other environmental remains

5.1.7 There were no mollusc remains and bone was limited to one small fragment recovered from Environmental Sample 1 (context 110). This fragment was a sheep metacarpal with some evidence of gnawing by small rodents.

5.2 Further work

5.2.1 There is little environmental evidence to suggest that further investigation should be required but this cannot be certain unless a full investigation is carried out. Further work carried out at the site may require more environmental samples to be taken and assessed but this must be determined at the time of excavation when a sampling strategy can be implemented.

Table 1: List of sample numbers, sizes and contexts. Unstrat = unstratified context. HR=hand recovered, F=flotted.

SAMPLE NUMBER	CONTEXT NUMBER	TRENCH	TYPE	SAMPLE SIZE	FLOT SIZE (mls)	RETENT SIZE (mls)
1	110	2	F	10 litres	10	2000
2	114	5	F	4 litres	2	1000

Table 2: List of soil sample contents after processing. The retent fraction was quantified by a number system. The key is as follows: 0=absent, 1=present, 2=frequent, 3=abundant, Dep=deposit, Sur=surface.

DETAILS			RETENT FRACTION							LIGHT FRACTION												
Context	Context type	Sample number	Cinders and coal	Charred wood	Waterlogged wood	Plaster and mortar	Bone	Burnt bone	Stones	Insects	Charred wood	Waterlogged wood	Nematode cases	Charred grain	Common nettle	Small nettle	Chenopodium	Raspberry	Pale persicaria	Bindweed	Elder	Other seeds
110	Dep	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
114	Dep	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1

5 THE FINDS

5.1 The pottery and other artefactual material has been cleaned, marked and packaged according to standard guidelines, and recorded under the supervision of Frank Giecco. The pottery and finds are quantified in table 3 below. No further work is required on the finds assemblage.

5.2 The Roman Pottery

5.2.1 One undiagnostic grey ware body sherd was recovered from context 113 in trench 5.

5.3 The Medieval Pottery

5.3.1 Two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered during the evaluation. One body sherd of partially reduced green glazed pottery of 13th /14th century date was recovered from context 112 in trench 6. The second piece of pottery was beaded rim fragment of red gritty ware of 12th /early 13th century date, which was recovered from context 110 in trench 2.

5.4 Post-Medieval Pottery

5.4.1 Eighteen sherds of post medieval pottery were recovered from modern overburden (contexts 100) and three sherds from early 20th century infilling of the probable wall ditch. All the pottery ranged in date from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

5.5 Iron

5.5.1 One machine cut iron nail was recovered from context 100 in trench 4.

5.6 Building material

5.6.1 Eight fragments of undiagnostic handmade brick were recovered from several trenches. The five pieces of brick recovered from context 113 in trench 5, due to its stratigraphic position are likely to be Roman in date.

5.7 Glass

5.7.1 One fragment of modern window glass was recovered from context 100 in trench 4.

Table 3: Drumburgh (DRB-A), The finds assemblage by number

Trench	Context	Iron	Building material	Glass	Bone	Roman pottery	Medieval pottery	Post-medieval pottery
4	100	1	2	1				15
2	110						1	
5	112		3				1	
5	113		5			1		
6	120		1					3

6 CONCLUSION

7.1 Trenches 1 to 4 illustrate the heavy truncation of all the Roman deposits in the eastern side of the fort. The only surviving deposits were large cut features, or the faint traces of probable levelling deposits of possible Roman date recorded in trench 3.

7.2 Trenches 5 and 6 were situated over the projected line of the wall and ditch. Again both trenches showed signs of heavy truncation with the probable Roman cobbled surface in trench 3 only 0.10 m below the present surface.

7.3 Although the wall itself was not recorded trench 6 appears to have pinpointed the location of the wall ditch. Trench 5 must therefore have been very close to the wall itself, with the clay and cobble deposits possibly representing the berm between the wall and ditch that may have acted as a walk way.

7.4 Future groundwork on the proposed cable run evaluated between Trenches 1 and 4 would result in little impact on the archaeological resource, and would be adequately recorded by a watching brief.

7.5 The proposed development at the rear of Drumburgh House if utilizing conventional foundations could have a serious impact on what remains of the wall and associated deposits in this area. A further evaluation trench could be positioned to the south of trench 5 to trace the position of the wall and assess the condition of the remains. If a *no dig* foundation design could be adapted using a raft type of foundation design the surviving archaeology should be adequately protected.

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