NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

Project Designs and Client Reports No. CP95/04

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT DRUMBURGH CUMBRIA

For
UNITED UTILITIES

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26/7/04

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Company Registration Number : 2241272, Charity Registration Number: 700701, Vat Registration Number: 621280476

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In August 2003 North Pennines Heritage Trust was commissioned by United Utilities to carry out a watching brief during the excavation of a number of pole holes and new electric cable trenches on land adjacent to the vallum, at Glasson, Cumbria. No features of archaeological note were observed in any of the cable trenches. The pole holes confirmed the location of the vallum as it was clear that these trenches were situated over a large cut feature filled with a sequence of infilling probably dating from the soon after the feature was excavated up to the 19th century when the feature appears to have been totally infilled.

LIST OF FIGURES

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 North Pennines Heritage Trust carried out an archaeological watching brief on land adjacent to theVallum of Hadrians wall at Glasson, Cumbria by United Utilities. This project has been given the unique project identification site code of GLS-A in the North Pennines Heritage Trust archive.

1.2 The work involved maintaining a watching brief during the excavation of series of trenches involved with the overhead line refurbishment and one open cut trench associated with a new underground electric cable.

1.3 This report has been produced in accordance with the Standards and Guidance for Desk-Based Assessments and Field Evaluation produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists and in line with a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service in line with Planning Policy Guidance note 16 (Department of the Environment 1990),

2 SITE LOCATION

2.1 The site is located in the village of Glasson, Cumbria (NY2535 6057). The village lies just inland from the Solway coast approximately eight miles west of Carlisle, within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Zone. The line of the ValIum (National Monument number 26122), which lay south of the Wall, runs through the village, and although no trace of this monument is now visible within the village itself, its earthworks are still clearly defined in the fields to the east.

3 PREVIOUS WORK

3.1 The only archaeological work that is known to have taken place on the site. was undertaken by Carlisle Archaeology Ltd in September 1999. The project confirmed the location of the Vallum in the village and the possible survival of organic remains in some sections of the vallum. No evidence of any associated Roman activity or later medieval settlement activity was discovered.

4 AIMS

4.1 The rapid desktop survey

4.1.1 This involved the consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal and County Record Office, Carlisle in the first instance. This included the assessment of all readily available primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material and all available aerial photographs. To achieve as fully an understanding as possible regarding the nature of the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site.

4.1.2 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1994).

4.2 The aims of the watching brief were as follows:

- To supervise all topsoil stripping and excavation trenches and clean and record any putative archaeological features and produce a stratigraphic record;
- to record archaeological deposits;
- to establish, wherever possible, the depth of archaeological remains;
- to establish, wherever possible, the condition of the remains;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover paleoenvironmental material where it survives;
- to prepare a report for United Utilities setting out the salient conclusions;

5 RESULTS

5.1 The work was undertaken under the overall direction of Frank Giecco, BA, Dip Arch, AIFA. Principal Archaeologist. The watching brief was maintained by Frank Giecco and Dan Miller between the 7th of March and the 31st of March and spread over eleven days. All staff involved, were experienced archaeologists, with significant Cumbrian experience of urban and rural sites.

5.2 To aid on site recording the open cut cable trench was divided into three trenches (Trench 15, 16 and 17).

5.3 The Desk Based Survey

5.3.1 No prehistoric activity has been recorded in Glasson.

5.3.2 The Vallum of Hadrian's wall (SM 26122) passes through the centre of the village. The position was confirmed in 1999 during a watching brief carried out by Carlisle Archaeology Ltd[1].

5.3.3 The Vallum was a large flat bottomed ditch with near vertical sides running between two wide banks. The average width of the ditch was 6m with a depth of 3m being the norm, the ditches on either side measured 6m in width giving a width of approximately 18m for the whole monument.

5.3.4 The wall and Vallum were constructed at approximately the same time with a date of between 128AD -130AD normally given for the construction date for this major earthwork. The exact purpose of the Vallum is still unclear

but was is clear is the Vallum soon became redundant with evidence of second century infilling recorded on numerous sites along the wall. It is therefore possible that the section of Vallum passing through Glasson could have been partially infilled by the third century. This may not have been by deliberate action but by neglect, as the ditch would have required constant cleaning.

5.3.5 A sandstone building stone inscribed Legions ii Aug Coh iii was reportedly found in the vicinity of Glasson in the 18th century[2].

5.3.6 No other associated Roman features have been recorded in Glasson.

5.3.7 The place name of Glasson is thought to derive from the Anglo-Scandinavian *glaise* which means a small stream[3].

5.3.8 There were no recorded details of any medieval settlement at Glasson although hemp retting is known to have taken place on nearby Glasson Moss in the early medieval period[4].

5.3.9 The earliest map of Glasson is undated but thought to date to the mid eighteenth century at which time the hamlet was made up of 21 dwellings. The main axis of the village runs along the line of the vallum, which must have been largely filled in by this period.

5.3.10 The tithe map of 1838 records 32 dwelling in Glasson. The centre of the village still straddles the line of the vallum.

5.3.11 From the first edition OS map of 1864 to the third edition OS map of 1926 the village experienced a gradual expansion up to approximately 68 dwellings. The growth in the village was undoubtedly aided by the construction of the Port Carlisle Branch railway line.

5.4 The Watching Brief (see figure 5 for trench location)

5.4.1 Trench 10 (figure 6)

5.4.2 Trench 10 measured 0.60m by 0.60m and was excavated to a depth of 1.60m. The trench was situated over the projected line of the vallum. The earliest recorded deposit was a light brown silty sand measuring in excess of 0.35m deep (context 104), this layer was very clean and appeared to be water-lain, possibly representing natural infilling.

5.4.3 Context 104 was sealed by a dark grey silt measuring 0.10m in depth (context 103) which in turn was sealed by a light grey organic silt measuring 0.55m in depth. The dating of these three deposits are difficult as finds of any kind were recovered, making the firm dating of this infilling problematic.

5.4.4 Context 102 was sealed by 0.60m of modern 20th century road make up.

5.4.5 The depth of infilling recorded in this trench points strongly to the trench being situated over the Vallum ditch.

5.5 Trench 11 (figure 7)

5.5.1 Trench 11 measured 0.40m by 0.45m and was excavated to a depth of 1.65m. The trench was situated over the projected line of the vallum. The earliest recorded deposit was a grey silt (context 109) measuring over 0.25m in depth which was very similar to context 111 recorded in trench 12.

5.5.2 Context 109 was sealed by a compact thin band of silty clay (context 108) measuring 0.06m in depth. This deposit was then sealed by another grey silty layer (context 107) measuring 0.28m in depth. A further compact clay layer (context 106) overlay context 107, measuring 0.10m in depth.

5.5.3 No finds were recorded from these four deposits, but a possible sequence of natural silting followed by deliberate dumping appears to have occurred in trench 11, with both contexts 109 and 107 representing water bourne silting and contexts 108 and 106 periods of deliberate infilling.

5.5.4 Context 106 was sealed by a light grey silty clay layer measuring 0.20m in depth. This deposit contained one fragment of transfer printed willow pattern china, dating to the mid to late 19th century.

5.5.5 As with trench 10 the depth of infilling recorded in this trench points strongly to the trench being situated over the Vallum ditch.

5.6 Trench 12 (see figure 8)

5.6.1 Trench 12 measured 0.40m by 0.45m and was excavated to a depth of

1.40m. The trench was situated over the projected line of the vallum. The earliest recorded deposit was a grey silt measuring over 0.50m in depth (context 111). This layer was sealed by a compact mixed clay deposit measuring 0.20m in depth (context 110) that had the feel of deliberate infilling. Neither context 111 or 110 produced any dating evidence.

5.6.2 Context 111 was sealed by a light grey silty clay measuring 0.28m in depth (context 105). This deposit produced several sherds of 19th century transfer printed ceramic sherds and was in turn sealed by 0.30m of modern road make up.

5.6.3 As in trenches 10 and 11 the depth of infilling recorded in this trench points strongly to the trench being situated over the Vallum ditch.

5.7 Trench 13 (see figure 9 and plate 2)

5.7.1 Trench 12 measured 0.40m by 0.45m and was excavated to a depth of 1.40m and was situated over the projected line of the vallum. The earliest recorded deposit was a pale grey silty clay (context 115) measuring over 0.20m in depth.

5.7.2 This deposit was sealed by a water lain organic rich silt deposit measuring 0.45m in depth (context 114). A nineteenth century build up of sity clay (context 113) was found to overlay context 114, which in turn was sealed by layer of redeposited natural clay (context 112) measuring a 0.50m deep.

5.7.3 Context 112 was sealed by 0.15m of modern garden soil (context 100). As in the previous three trenches the depth of infilling points strongly to the trench being situated over the Vallum ditch.

5.8 Trench 14 (see figure 10)

5.7.1 Trench 14 measured 0.40m by 0.40m and was excavated to a depth of 1.25m and was situated over the projected line of the vallum. A large cast iron sewer pipe was recorded at the bottom of this trench, the pipe lay on a sitting on a bed of mixed silty clay (context 116), a deposit which produced several sherds of late 19th century pottery.

5.7.2 No archaeological deposits were recorded.

5.9 Trench 15 (see plate 1)

5.8.1 Trench 15 measured 0.60m by 1.2m and was 184m in length. The whole length of the this section was cut through very poorly drained ground. It was obvious throughout the trench that attempts had been made in the 19th century and continuing to this day to improve the drainage with a series of shaped ceramic and plastic land drains criss-crossing both fields. No

archaeological deposits were recorded. Modern topsoil was recorded overlying the natural silty clay natural subsoil which was recorded at a average depth of 0.25m below the present ground surface.

5.8.2 No archaeological deposits were recorded.

5.10 Trench 16

5.10.1 Trench 16 measured 0.60m by 1.1m and was 184m in length. The trench ran under the road surface and tarmac footpath into Mill road. The majority of this trench was following an earlier pipe trench. The natural clay subsoil was recorded at approximately 0.35m below the present ground surface.

5.10.2 No archaeological deposits were recorded.

5.10 Trench 17

5.10.1 Trench 17 measured 0.60m by 1.1m and was 111m in length. As in trench 15 the whole length of the this section was cut through very poorly drained pasture land, attempts had been made in the 19th century to improve the drainage with a series of horse-shoe shaped ceramic land drains criss-crossing the fields. No archaeological deposits were recorded. Modern topsoil was recorded overlying the natural silty clay natural subsoil.

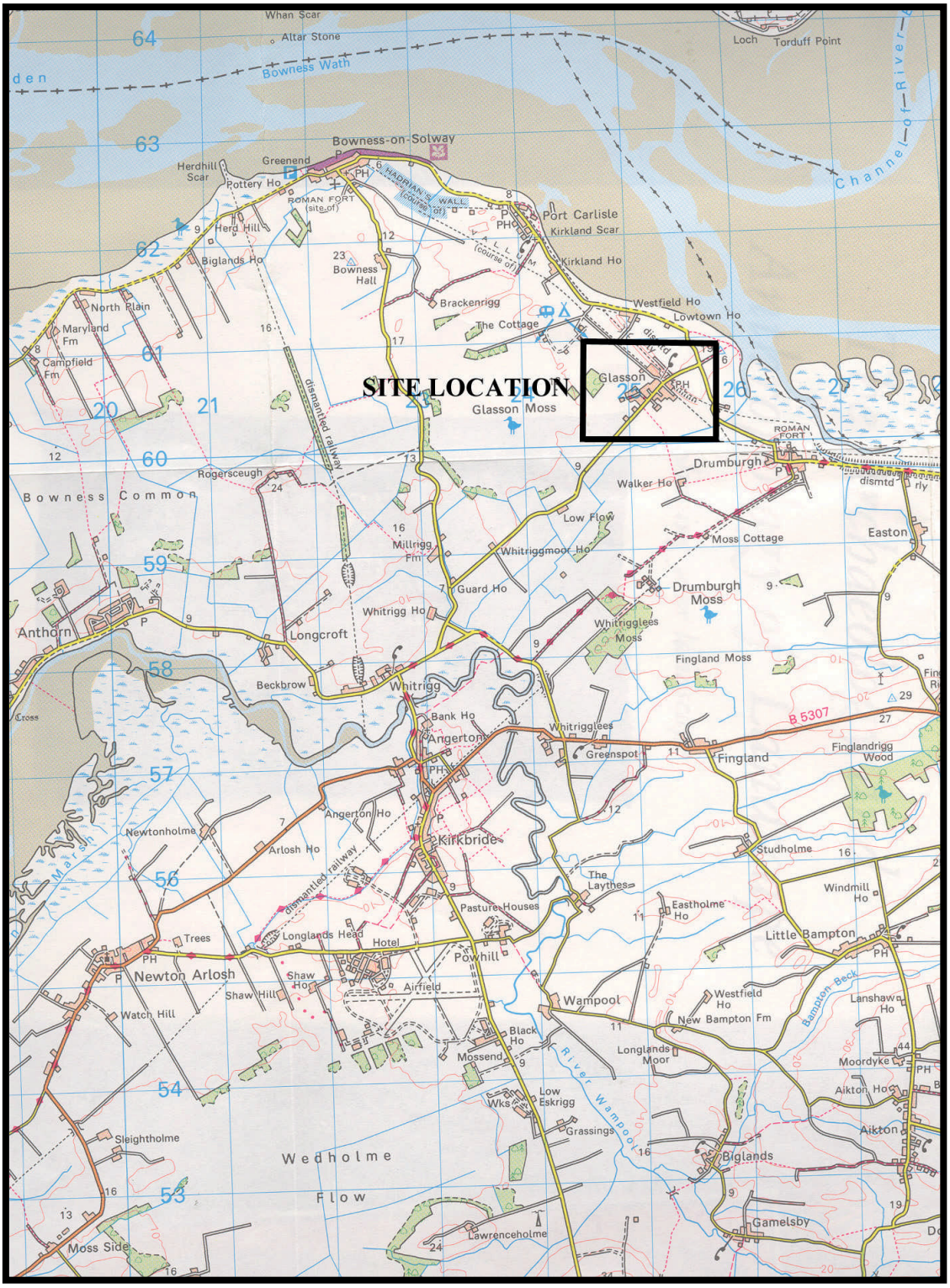

Figure 1: Site Location

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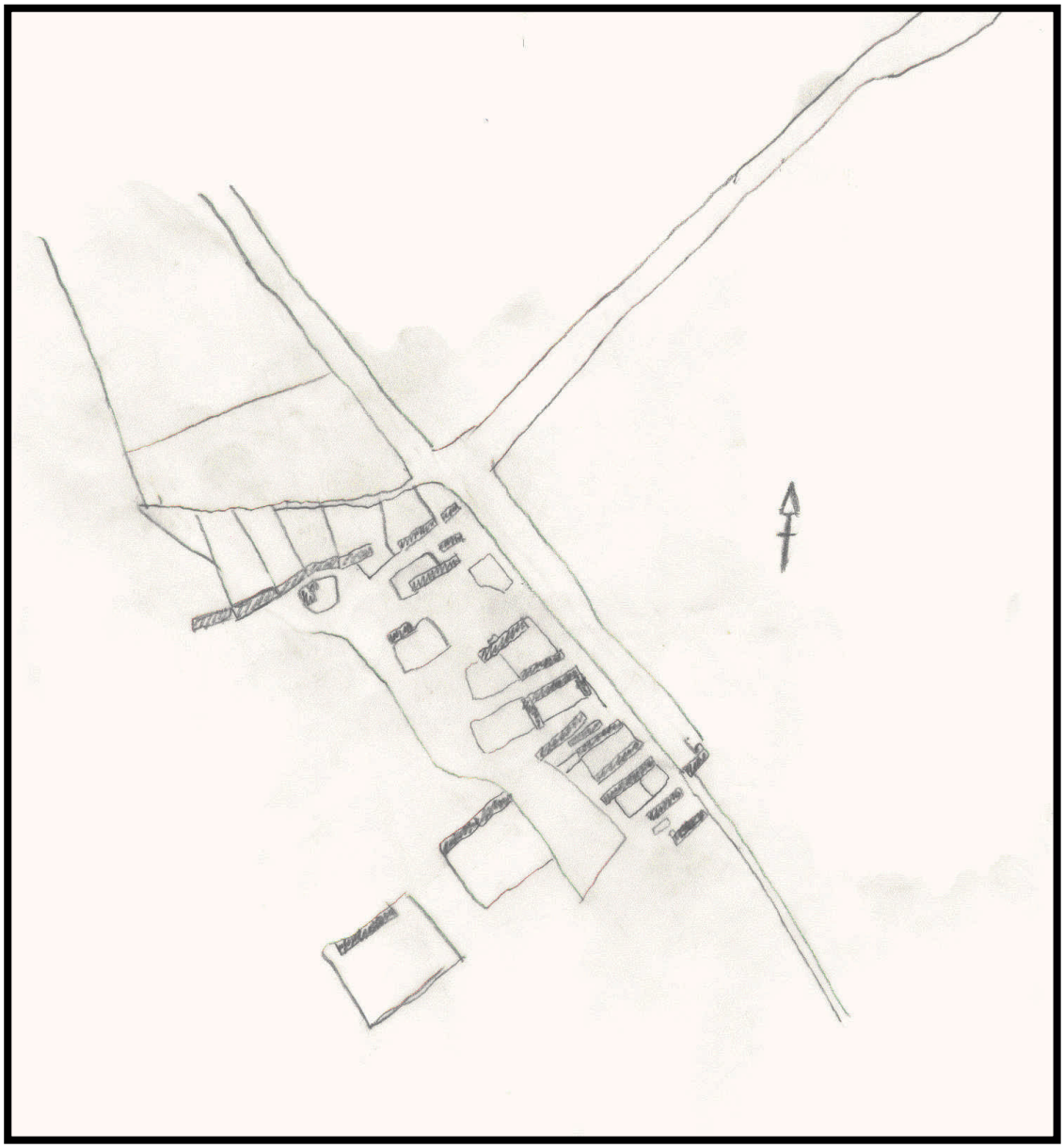

Figure 2: Extract from 18th century map. Survey of the Parish of Bowness in the Burgh Barony.
Scale: N/A

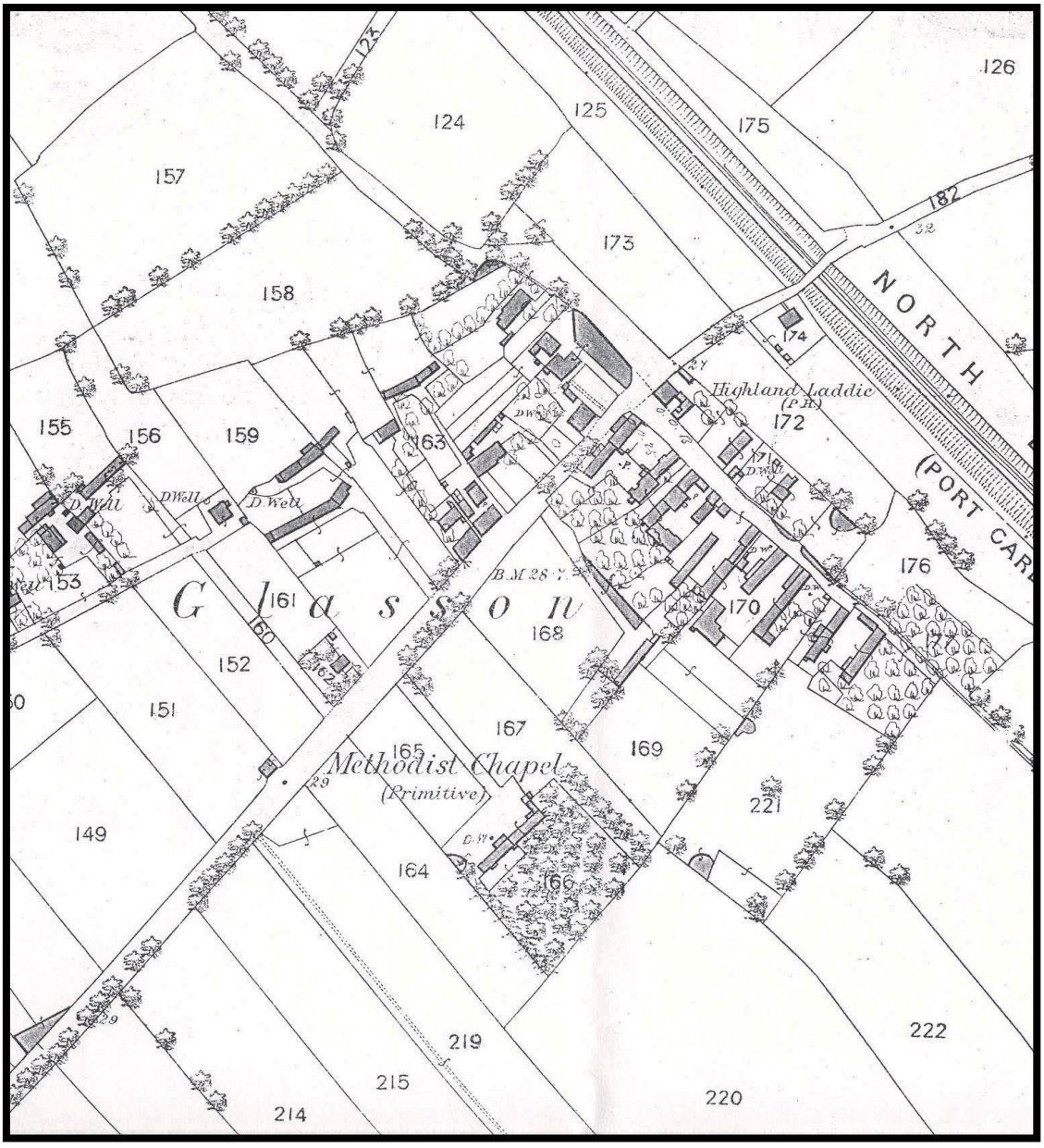

Figure 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1865
25 inch to 1 mile

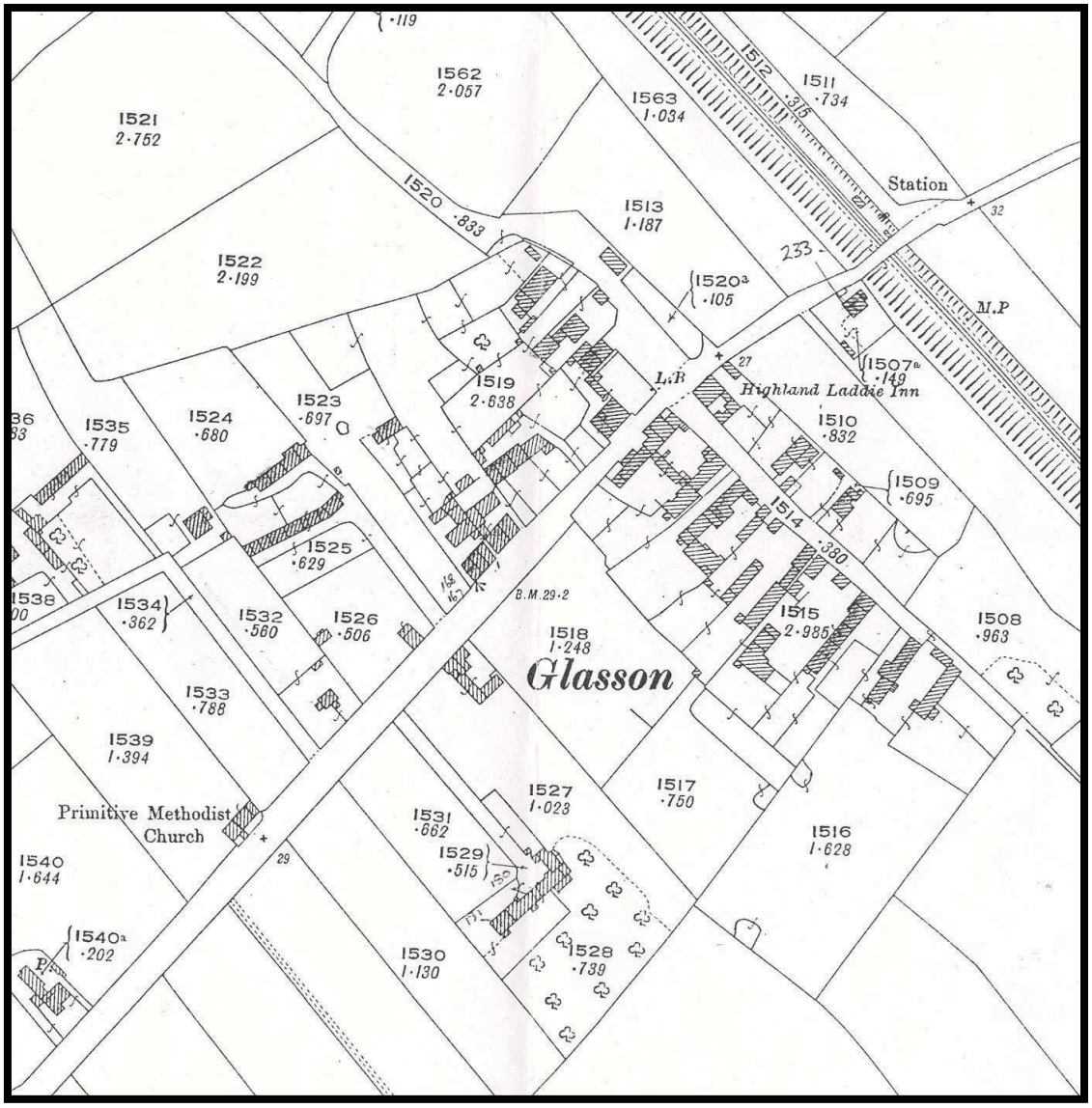

Figure 4: Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1926
25 inch to 1 mile

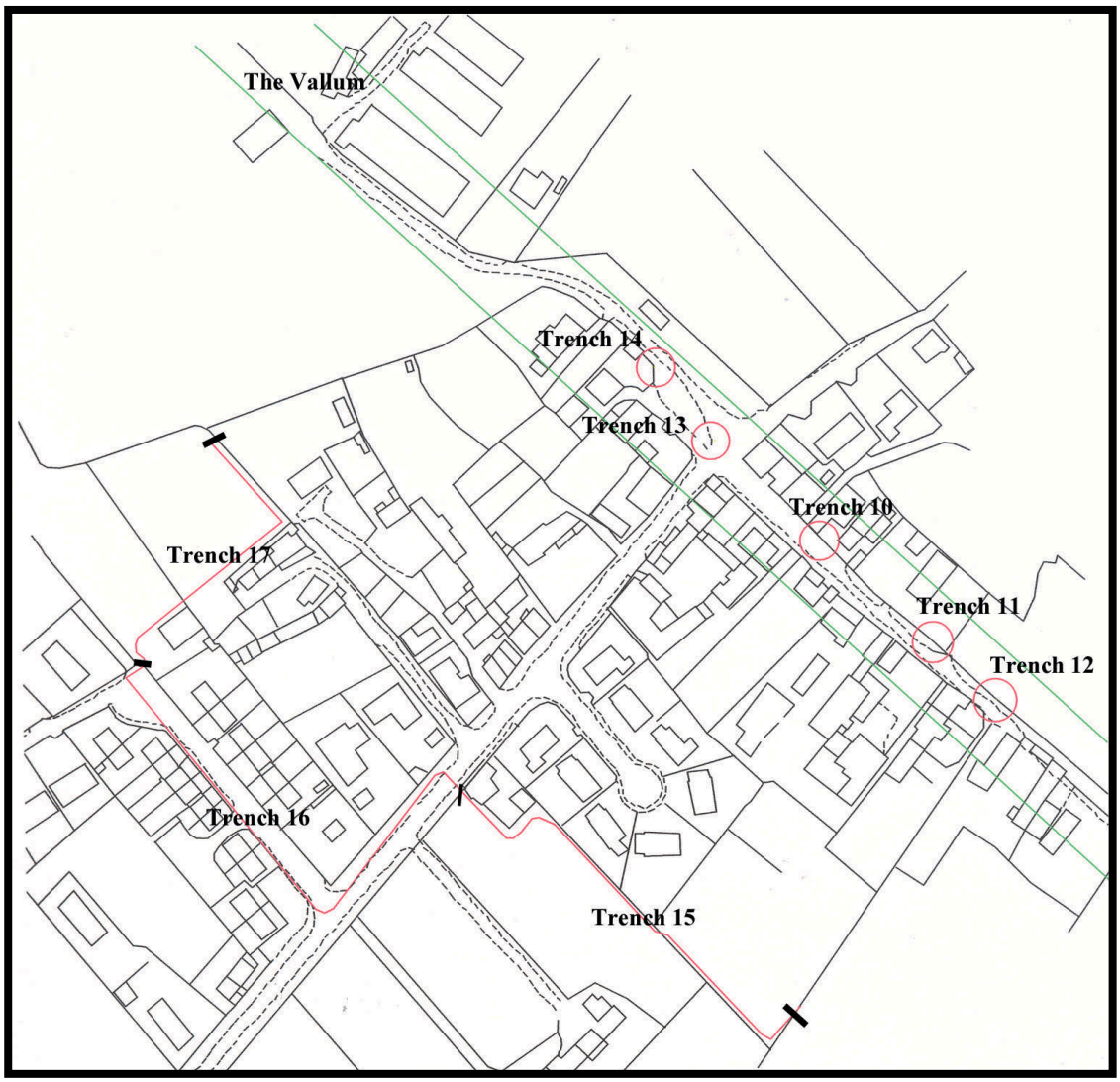

Figure 5: Trench Location Survey
Scale: 1:2000
Trenches 10-14 are centred in the red circles.
Trenches 15-17 are one open trench split into 3 for convenience

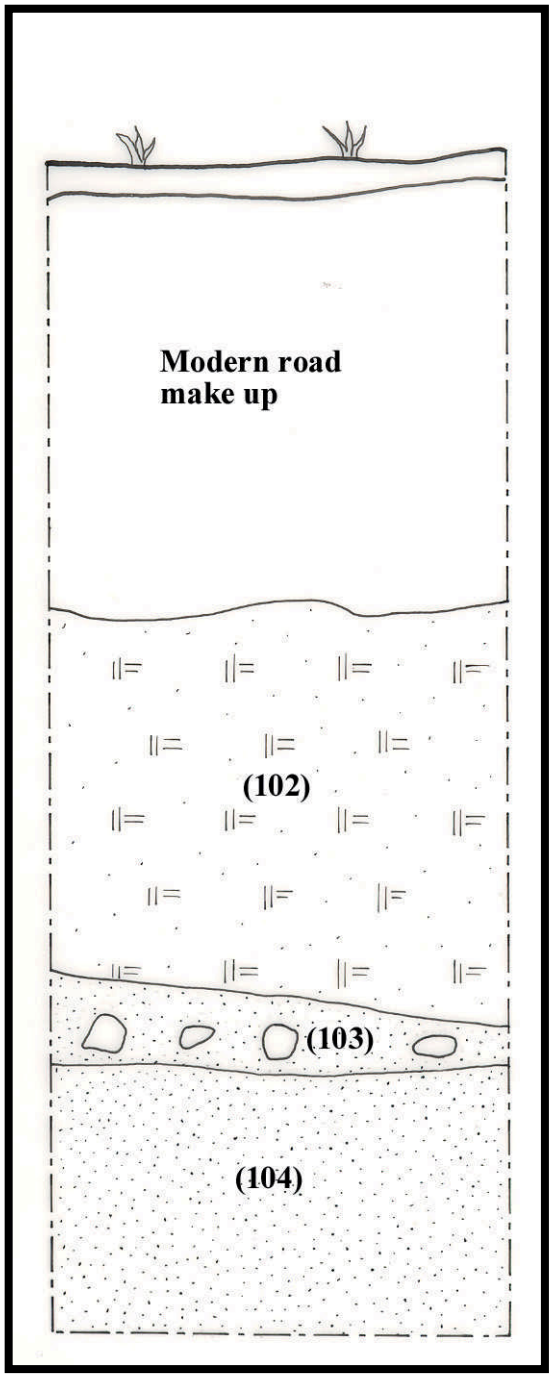

Figure 6: East facing section of trench 10
Scale 1:10
Drawn by FG

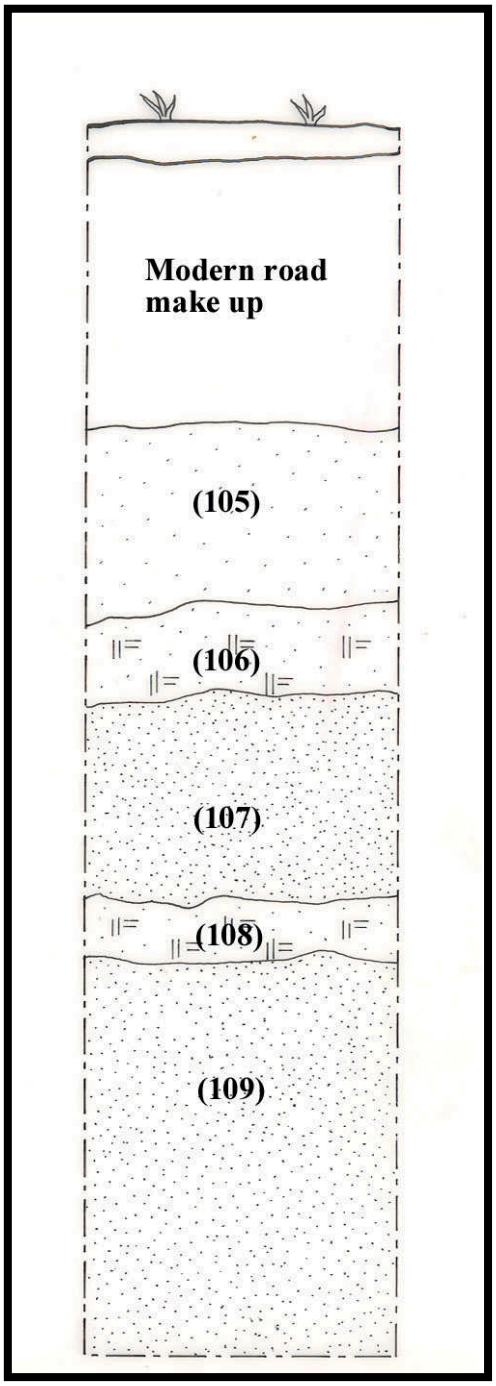

Figure 7: East facing section of trench 11
Scale 1:10
Drawn by FG

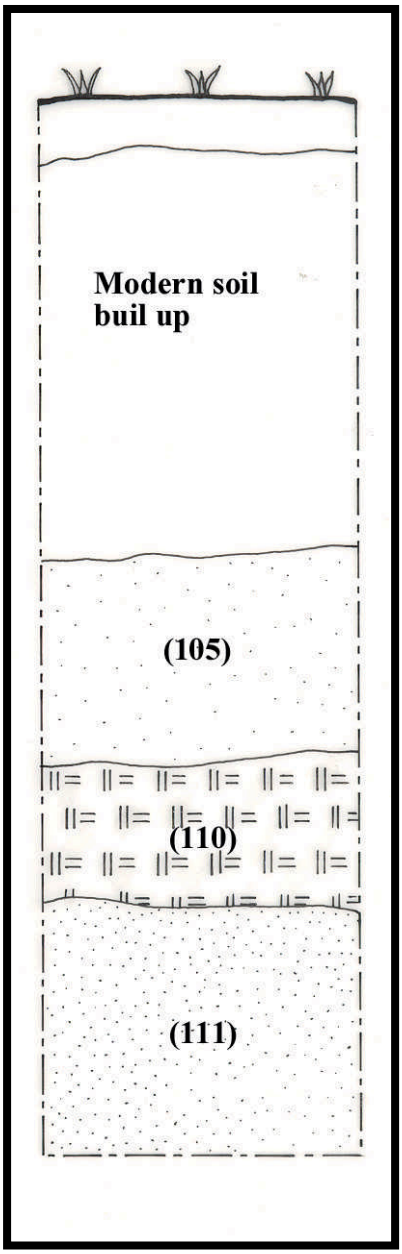

Figure 8: East facing section of trench 12
Scale 1:10
Drawn by FG

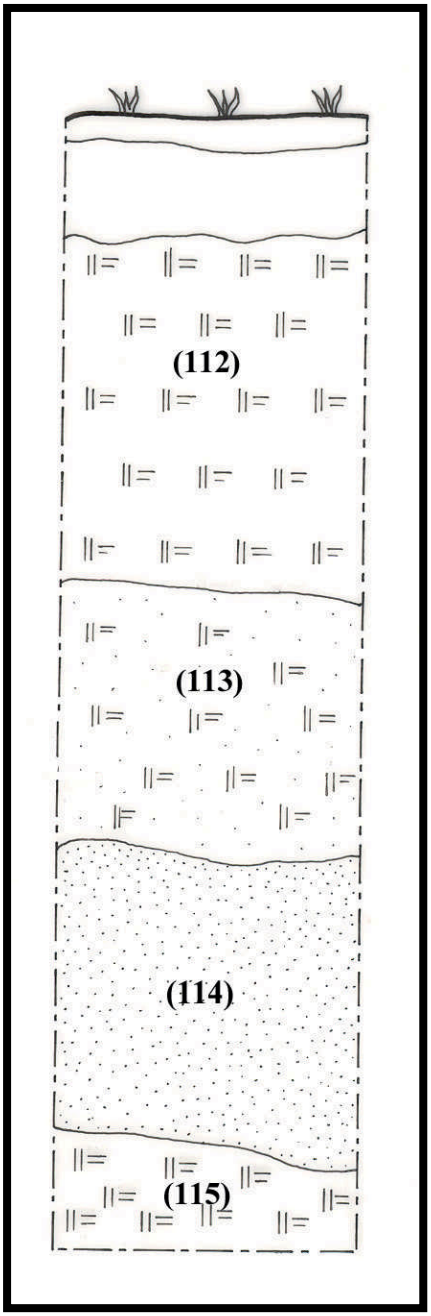

Figure 9: East facing section of trench 13
Scale 1:10
Drawn by FG

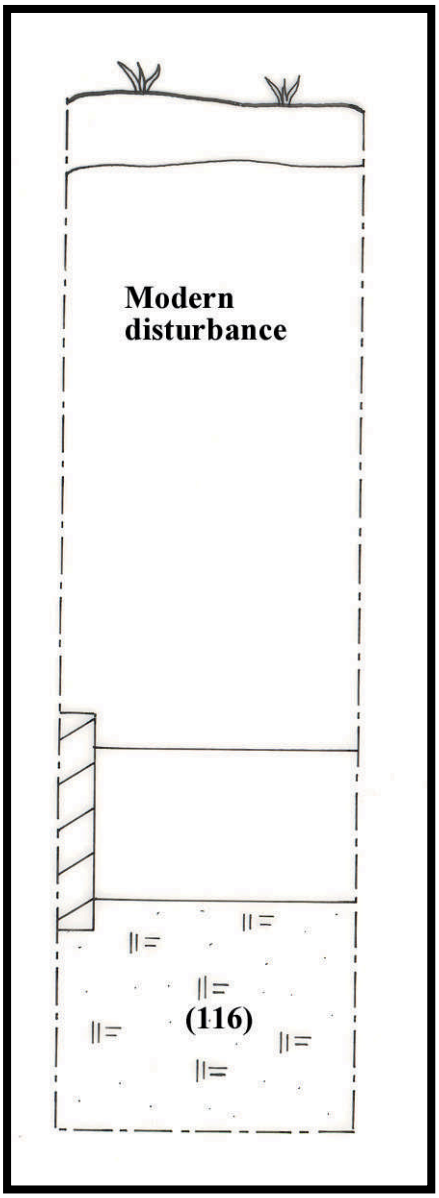

Figure 10: North facing section of trench 14
Scale 1:10
Drawn by FG

PLATE 1: Representative section in trench 15 illustrating depth of topsoil above natural clay

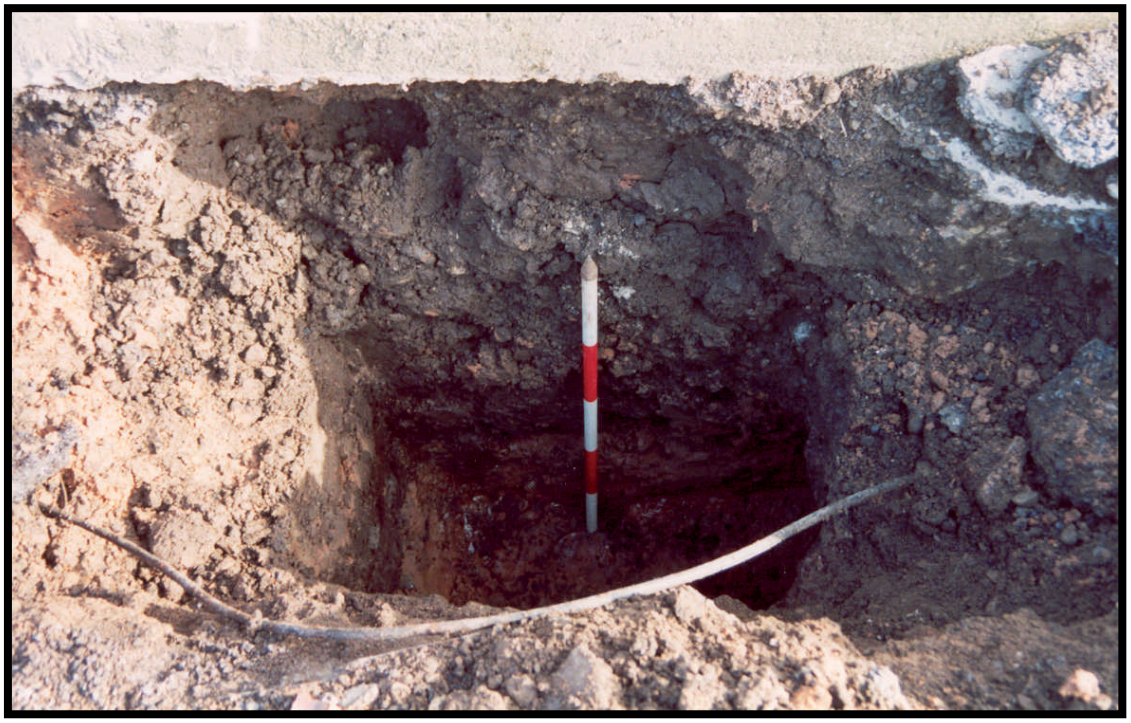

PLATE 2: East facing section of trench 13

6 THE ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES

6.1 Methodology

6.1.1 Of the 8 trenches 4 produced matrices considered suitable for analysis. Two samples were taken from trench 10, three from trench 11, one from trench 12, and one from trench 13. In each case approximately 1 litre of material was removed from each context. All these samples were then subjected to manual water flotation.

6.1.2 Flotation separates the organic, floating fraction of the sample from the heavier mineral and finds content of sands, silts, clays, stones, artefacts and waterlogged material. Heavy soil and sediment content measuring less than 1mm falls through the retentive mesh to settle on the bottom of the tank. Flotation produces a 'flot' and a 'residue' for examination, whilst the heavier sediment retained in the tank is discarded.

6.1.3 The residue, as well as retaining the soil matrix matter measuring more than 1mm, contains the larger artefacts of bone, pottery etc, which can then be extracted and recorded. The floating fraction or 'flot' generally comprises the organic material of mainly plant matter, seeds, small or parts of bone, both charred and uncharred, and insect remains. A rapid assessment by scanning the material with a hand lens or microscope then allows for recommendations to be made as to the samples' potential. Further work by palaeobotanists or entimologists can then be carried out if necessary.

6.1.4 Where the preservation has been favourable, the organic remains may produce a valuable suite of information regarding the depositional environment of the material. This can include seasonality and climate, anthropogenic activities, and elements of the economy.

6.2 Sample 1 (**Context 102**)

6.2.1 This sample was taken from a distinct organic layer of light grey, silty clay appearing in the section of Trench 10. This context had visible were inclusions of twigs and pebbles and it was one of several contexts infilling what was probably the upper part of the Vallum ditch.

6.2.2 The flot produced several seeds, twigs with a diameter up to 1cm and some well preserved grass. The context contained some organic plant remains and waterlogged wood but there was no evidence that the fill had come from an anthropogenic source.

6.2.3 The residue produced waterlogged wood, which was very soft and spongy, with a diameter of up to 2cm and lumps of blue/grey clay, 5x4cm and ovoid. There were also angular stones 4x3cm, 7cmx5cm and approximately 1cm thick. Waterlogged wood or parts from a woody shrub of about 2cm diameter were very well preserved, with the structural pores still visible.

6.2.4 This context produced a suite of finds conducive with a general fill containing some organic plant remains and waterlogged wood but with no evidence of the fill having come from an anthropogenic source.

6.3 Sample 2 (**Context 103**)

6.3.1 This sample was removed from Trench 10 in a layer of dark grey silty clay with inclusions of cobbles and twigs with some ferrous material. The deposit formed the lowest recorded deposit in the trench.

6.3.2 The flot produced only 2 seeds but it was rich in grass and/or cereal stems. There was a small amount of wood matter and also some pupae cases, probably from beetles. All the material appeared to be modern with no evidence of charring or fossilisation.

6.3.3 The residue produced mainly twigs of up to 2cm in diameter, some of which appeared to be waterlogged. There were stones and pebbles present of sizes 3x2cm, 2x1cm (predominant), and 1x0.5cm. The residue was mainly made up of twigs with a small amount of fibrous plant matter.

6.3.4 This context produced a suite of finds conducive to that of a general fill containing some organic plant remains and small wood but with no evidence of the fill having come from an anthropogenic source. Considering the sample size of approximately 1 litre there was a high ratio of remaining flot and residue from the original matrix. The flot and the residue all appear to be modern deposits.

6.4 Sample 3 (**Context 107**)

6.4.1 The sample removed from this dark grey silty clay layer had inclusions of occasional pebbles and came from Trench 11. The flot produced few seeds but interestingly contained a charred oat grain and some small inclusions of charred wood. Also recovered was a piece of charred cereal grain stalk as a rachis fragment but the species was indeterminate. Due to the small sample size, however, more grain may have been missed in recovery of the sample. The suite also contained twigs and woody parts of plants.

6.4.2 The residue contained a few more seeds. It also contained small pebbles between 0.5 and 2 cm in diameter, in addition to 2 larger stones. The twigs in the assemblage measured from 1mm to 1cm in diameter. There were also a few small fragments of charred wood or charcoal.

6.4.3 The flot and the residue in this sample produced a minimal amount of charred material containing one oat grain. This does, however, suggest anthropogenic changes within this depositional layer, but their origins and purpose are unclear as the sample size is so small, and only represents a fraction of the context in question.

6.5 Sample 4 (**Context 108**)

6.5.1 Sample 4 came from a mixed clay- silt deposit towards the bottom of trench 11. The flot from this sample was almost non existent. The main matrix of this context was made up of a fine blue/grey clay. Removal of this left pebbles between 1mm and 4cm. A small piece (3x2mm) of what appeared to be slag was also found, and several perfectly round balls (1mm diameter) of what appeared to be metal origin, which could be that of metal droplets, formed when forging iron. There were several angular stones of various sizes, the greatest being 5x4cm and 1cm deep. There was also a piece of pot assigned to the 18th century or later.

6.5.2 This depositional layer suggests it originated from a source where metalworking was carried out in the vicinity, from the evidence of the metal finds. Other anthropogenic activities are seen to be limited.

6.6 Sample 5 (**Context 109**)

6.6.1 This layer of waterlogged grey silt was recovered from the earliest deposit in trench 11. The flot contained a few seeds, and was also rich in small twigs with some plant foliage within it. The sample also contained some pupae cases, probably from beetles.

6.6.2 The residue produced larger seeds, possibly from fruits. There were also small twigs and stems of grasses, which may be cultivated species, but without further work this cannot be determined. Both the flot and the residue seem to be modern material and show no signs of fossilisation, charring or waterlogging. Considering the small size of the sample there was a high flotation and residue content. The sample seems to have little or no anthropogenic content.

6.7 Sample 6 (**Context 111**)

6.7.1 This sample was retrieved from the bottom of Trench 12 and was a grey silty layer, containing some pottery from the 19th Century which may have been intrusive. There was a high flot content but no seeds were detected. There were a lot of grass or cereal stems present and also plant stems of various types. The sample also contained flattened stalks that had a spongy layer running through the centre, which is conducive to types of marsh grasses or sedges. There was some root matter present and also some fine black hair or wool, probably from either rabbit or sheep.

6.7.2 From the residue a piece of wood that appeared to be waterlogged was recovered measuring 7x8x2cm. It was soft and spongy and appeared to be the outer rings minus the bark. It was well preserved and the pores were still evident. This piece could probably be identified to species. There were a lot of pebbles present ranging in diameter from 0.5cm to 3cm. There were also present in a small quantity, stem remains of grasses, and sedges.

6.7.3 The lack of seeds but the presence of waterlogged material suggests there was a lack of flowering vegetation in the immediate area, or that the depositional layer was formed in the winter or spring when few seeds would have been present. The layer shows no evidence of anthropogenic activity.

6.8 Sample 7 (**Context 114**)

6.8.1 This rich dark humic silty layer was almost black in colour due to the high organic content. There appeared to be little or no mineral content, which was borne out by the lack of residue and the peat-like resulting flot. Due to the large amount of flot recovered from the sample only a small part of it was examined. The flot content was very organic and peaty with a few quartz particles held in the matrix, seen only under the microscope.

6.8.2 The organic matter appeared to be composed of plant fibres, seeds, seed cases and other plant parts, moss stalks and the remains of insect exoskeletons. The majority of the volume was made up of fine, fibrous plant matter. The occasional small fragment of charcoal or charred wood was also noted, with part of a carbonised grain (unidentified) also present.

6.8.3 There was no evidence for layering of this deposit in the sample but this may have been destroyed due to its removal on sampling. Layering may have been apparent in the original unexcavated context. This deposit, with its lack of inclusions, indicates a steady build-up of water lain deposits. This would be conducive with its position towards the bottom of a ditch and suggests this area remained partially unfilled for a period to allow the deposit to form from the surrounding organic plant and tree matter being washed into the ditch periodically.

6.9 Conclusion and recommendations

6.9.1 These depositional layers show little or no evidence of direct anthropogenic activity. The chance occurrences of pottery and minimal metal remains suggest only that these deposits came from other areas that had seen some activity in that vicinity. There is no evidence that any of these samples came from specific areas of human activity. It is therefore recommended that no further work be carried out on any of these samples.

7 THE FINDS

7.1 No finds of archaeological note were recovered during the watching brief. The assemblage of late 19th and 20th century pottery was not retained.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 No evidence of any prehistoric or medieval activity was recorded during the watching brief.

8.1 The position of the Vallum ditch was again confirmed in the village of Glasson, although no evidence of the bank was recorded. No other features of archaeological note were recorded during the watching brief.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that no further archaeological work take place.

9.2 It is recommended that the archive be deposited in the County Archive for long term storage.

10 THE CONTRACTOR

101 North Pennines Heritage Trust is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It works in close association with and under the approval of the County Archaeologist. Based in Nenthead, Cumbria, the company has considerable experience extending over more than twelve years of archaeological investigation in Cumbria.

10.2 The company has a fully staffed professional field team capable of undertaking work ranging in scale from large-scale archaeological excavations to small desk based projects.

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Margaret Cox, John Chandler, Chris Cox, Julie Jones and Heather Tinsley. *Trans Cumbria and Westmorland Antiq Archaeol Soc*, 4th ser, Vol C, **2000**

12 NOTES

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