
NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Project Designs and Client Reports No. CP/80/03

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF ON
LAND ADJACENT TO
GARTH HOUSE
BOWNESS-ON-SOLWAY
CUMBRIA**

For Mr and Mrs C Bell

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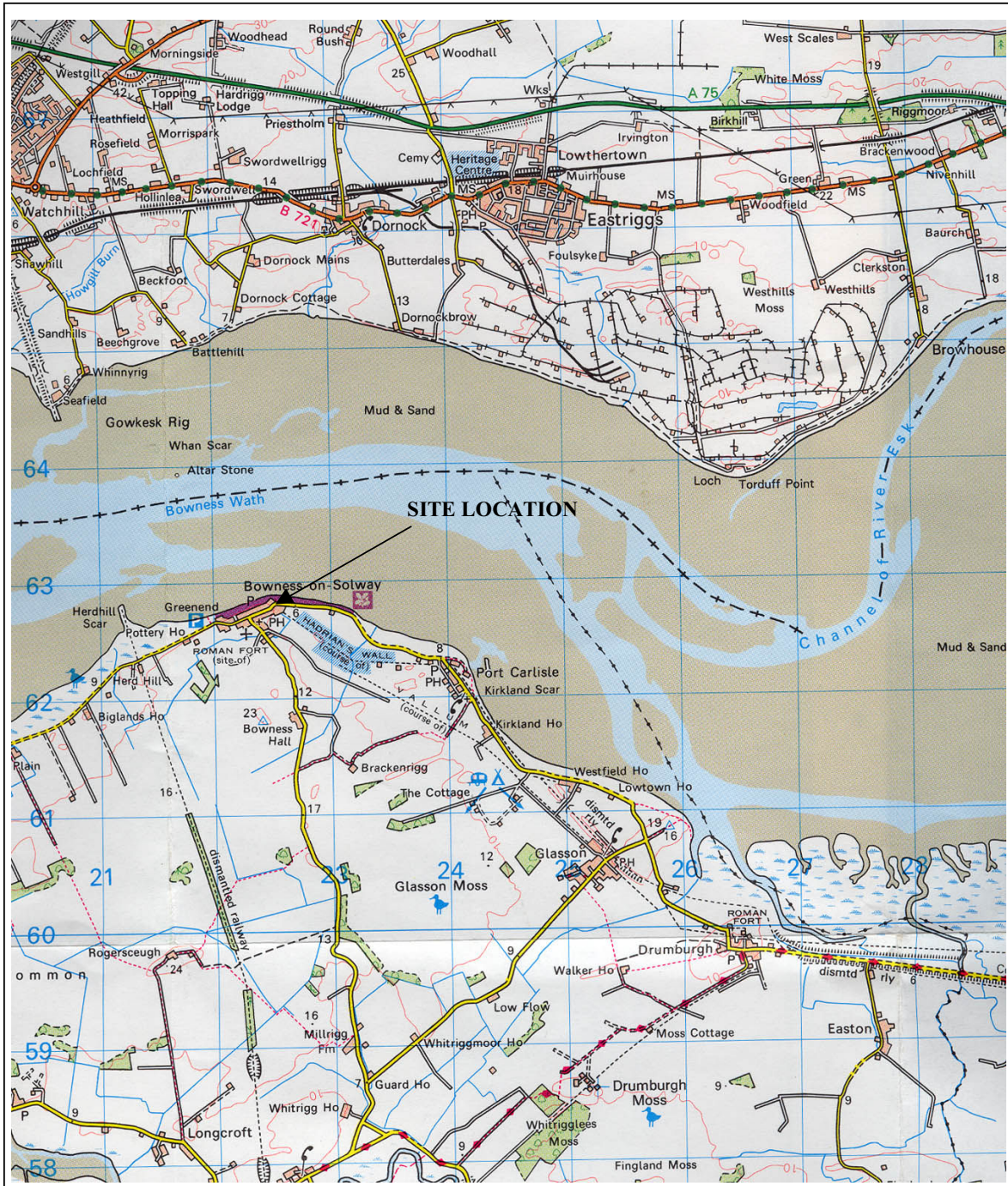
1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

- 1.1 In October 2003 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was invited by Mr C Bell to maintain a watching brief of works adjacent to Garth House, Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria. This was in response to a request by Jeremy Parsons, Cumbria County Council Assistant Archaeologist. The work involved the construction of a garage on land to the rear of Garth House, which involved the excavation of foundation trenches approximately 5.0 m x 0.50 m x 0.50 m.
- 1.2 The site is located within the village of Bowness-on-Solway, which is situated approximately 13 miles west of Carlisle on the south shore of the Solway Firth (NY 224628). The village lies on the site of the Roman fort of *Maia*, which guarded the strategic final fording point on the Solway, and formed the western terminus of Hadrian's Wall.
- 1.3 The fort is located at a height of approximately 15 m AOD, on poorly drained boulder clay subsoil of the Clifton series.
- 1.4 The site lies on land behind Garth House and comprised a plot of land used as garden space and measuring approximately 10 m x 6 m.

2 PREVIOUS WORK

- 2.1 The current extent of knowledge concerning Roman Bowness has been summarized by Birley (1961, 211-14) and Daniels (Handbook to the Roman Wall (13th Ed., 1978, 255-8; Handbook for the Eleventh Pilgrimage to Hadrian's Wall 1989,19-20).
- 2.2 The stone built fort is estimated to be approximately six acres in extent, the second largest on Hadrian's Wall. The construction date is uncertain, though likely between the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries AD. There is no evidence for any sub-Roman or post-Roman activity until the 12th century, although substantial truncation of archaeological deposits may have removed most of this evidence.
- 2.3 The main programmes of archaeological investigation took place in 1930, 1955, 1967, 1973 and 1975, during which the western ramparts, the west gate and intervallum road, and adjacent barrack block were located. In 1973 part of the west rampart and west gate of both the original turf and timber fort and the later stone rebuild were found. Further excavations in 1988 demonstrated that the line of the eastern defences of the stone fort was over 30 m further west than previously thought, reducing the size of the fort from a presumed seven acres to approximately six (Austen 1989, 19-20; Giocco 2001).
- 2.4 Bellhouse (1988) undertook work in a field west of the church (Field 1322), where earthworks regarded as belonging to the settlement or *vicus* were present. Bellhouse suggested these were post-Roman in origin, and postulated a Roman road south of the fort did not exist, although the limited scope of the work was insufficient to enable a view to be formed as to the nature and date of the earthworks and waterlogged deposits in this area.

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- 2.5 In 1996, Carlisle Archaeological Unit undertook a limited programme of work in the grounds of Maia House. No trace of the outer fort or ditch was found, but a medieval ditch was recorded (Zant, J. 1996).
- 2.6 In 1999 Carlisle Archaeology undertook a watching brief and programme of recording (Giecco et al 2000). This work involved the recording of 26 trenches of variable size. This demonstrated that, within the village, few Roman deposits survived beneath the modern roads, although south of the fort deposits including organic remains, woodwork, leatherwork and other artefacts were found within deposits up to 3 m deep.
- 2.7 In 2000, Carlisle Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological investigation within Bowness-on-Solway (Giecco, F, et al 2001). This involved a watching brief of 131 trenches across the village. This found the line of the eastern defences of the stone fort, and possibly part of the turf and timber fort and possible post-Roman use of the fort. Trenches 32 and 33 were located close to the present site, but no archaeological features were observed in either trench.



<p>North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre Nenthead Alston CUMBRIA CA9 3PD</p> <p>Tel: (01434) 382045 Fax: (01434) 382294 Email: np.ht@virgin.net</p>	<p>PROJECT: GARTH HOUSE</p> <p>FIGURE: 1a</p> <p>NGR NY 2250 6270</p> <p>TITLE: Site Location Reproduced from Landranger® 1:50,000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright (1997) All rights reserved. Licence Number: WL6488</p>	
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3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The work undertaken consisted of a watching brief.

3.2 Watching Brief

3.2.1 **The aims of the watching brief were as follows:**

- to supervise all topsoil stripping and excavation for footings and/or service 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.

4 RESULTS

4.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within the foundation trenches. A layer of silty clay (101) was observed at a depth of c. 0.50 m sealed by a mixed layer of slightly humic garden soil (100) c. 0.45 m thick.

5 A NOTE ON THE FINDS

5.1 The finds recovered whilst the watching brief was maintained all date to the late 19th and 20th centuries, with 1 sherd from a brown glazed earthenware vessel possibly dating to the 18th century. These include glass bottles, one green glass inscribed with 'Iredale Dairies' and a brown glass bottle inscribed 'Bovril Limited'. The ceramic evidence includes two sherds of porcelain, representing two plates, 1 brown glazed stoneware tile, 1 sherd from an early 20th century glazed cooking pot, and 1 rim sherd from an earthenware storage jar.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 No archaeological structures or deposits could be observed within any of the trenches. The quantity of ceramic waste material does not suggest a deliberate dump, but rather the casual loss of fragments of material from a dump located elsewhere.

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