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Sign Assembly Erection.

**Birdoswald Roman Fort, Gilsland,
Brampton, Cumbria:
Archaeological Recording**

Data Structure Report No. 1611

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Fig. 1 Site location

Fig. 2 Hole excavated for sign assembly, north-facing section

Fig. 3 Photograph of north-facing section

0. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 0.1 Archaeological recording under Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in February 2009 for a sign assembly erection at Birdoswald Roman Fort, Gilsland, Brampton.
- 0.2 This programme of works involved the recording of a hole previously excavated for the sign assemblage. The groundworks for the sign assembly had been cut into modern made-ground and no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified.
- 0.3 Section 1 below summarises the background to the work. The detailed methodology is described in Section 2, while the results are described in Section 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

1.1.1 This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological recording undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) on the 18th February 2009 for a sign assembly erection at Birdoswald Roman Fort, Gilsland, Carlisle (NGR: NY 6163 6635) (Fig. 2). The work was commissioned by Capita Symonds on behalf of Cumbria County Council.

1.1.2 A Written Scheme of Investigations (WSI) for the programme of works was produced by CFA. The WSI was based upon the documents sent to CFA by Capita Symonds on 08 February 2007. It presents the methodology for the conduct of an archaeological watching brief during the erection of the new sign.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 The location of the new sign (Fig. 1) lies within the scheduled area encompassing Birdoswald Fort and associated section of Hadrian's Wall and Vallum (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 26073). As such Capita Symonds was obliged to apply for scheduled monument consent. This was granted with the condition that an archaeological watching brief be undertaken during groundbreaking works associated with the sign assembly and erection.

1.2.2 The hole for the sign assembly had been excavated prior to the 18th February 2009. The object of this programme of works was to clean the sides and base of the hole to allow the sections and any deposits to be examined for archaeological significance prior to the completion of the excavation and erection of the sign.

1.3 Archaeological Background

1.3.1 Hadrian's Wall was constructed in a number of sections and phases (Breeze 2006). It comprised the Wall itself and a ditch to the north, with a counterscarp bank of upcast material from the ditch placed on the north side of the ditch. The berm between the Wall and the ditch is normally about 2.44m wide on the Turf Wall but can vary. The first plan appears to have been for a stone wall 10 Roman feet (3m) wide from the lower Tyne to the River Irthing, and a turf rampart 20 Roman feet (6m) wide for the remainder to Bowness-on-Solway. At every mile there was a fortified gate (milecastle) and in between two towers or turrets. No forts were placed on the Wall in this phase. While work was in progress, two significant changes were made. The first was to erect a new series of forts along the whole line, and an earthwork Vallum was added behind the Wall from Newcastle to Bowness. An associated change was to reduce the Stone Wall from 10 Roman feet in width to about 8 feet or less.

1.3.2 Between Harrow's Scar and Bowness, Hadrian's Wall was originally constructed from turf, but was subsequently replaced by the stone-built Wall. It is not clear why this sector was built in a different material from the rest, but

it has been suggested (Breeze 2006) that it was to do with the absence of limestone, which was used to make mortar. The two mile sector of Hadrian's Wall to either side of Birdoswald, extending from Harrow's Scar to Wallbowers, is of particular interest because it is the only known sector where the replacement stone wall was on a different alignment to the original turf wall. This phase of rebuilding was probably undertaken during the 130s and moved the Wall at Birdoswald c.50m further north, bringing it into alignment with the northern wall of the fort. The reasons for this change are unclear, but Wooliscroft (2001) has suggested that changing signalling requirements may have necessitated that the line of the Wall was brought into visibility from the fort at Birdoswald.

1.3.3 Birdoswald (Banna) Fort was occupied by Roman auxiliaries from the early 2nd to the early 5th century AD. It is one of the best preserved of the seventeen forts along Hadrian's Wall, being number eleven from the eastern end of the Wall. The first fort appears to have been turf and timber, but this was replaced by a stone fort in the usual playing card shape, with gates to the east, west and south. Within the fort there was a central headquarters (*principia*), granaries (*horrea*), barracks and an exercise building (*basilica exercitatoria*). Excavations carried out by Channel 4's Time Team also identified signs of a settlement (*vicus*) outwith the fort. Birdoswald is the only site on Hadrian's Wall to contain evidence of significant post-Roman occupation, with the remains of a 5th century timber hall being uncovered.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The aims of the archaeological work were:

- To monitor the groundbreaking works associated with the sign assembly erection.
- To clean, excavate and record any archaeological remains that may be disturbed by the works permitted under the terms of the SMC
- To produce a report on the findings of the fieldwork, setting out the potential for any further work and dissemination of the results, as appropriate.

1.4.2 The research aims of the work were to inform wider regional, national and period based research frameworks, particularly the *North West Archaeological Research Framework* (NWARF), initiated by English Heritage and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Work was conducted with regard to the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct and Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Fieldwork.
- 2.2 The work took place within the scheduled area of Hadrian's Wall (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 26073) (Fig. 1) and complied with the terms of the SMC.
- 2.3 All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, photography and by completing standard CFA record forms. The stratification of all excavated areas was fully recorded whether or not significant archaeological deposits were identified.
- 2.4 The excavation of the hole for the sign assembly was carried out by hand.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 3.1 The programme of works was carried out in accordance with the SMC. Numbers in bold refer to contexts (Appendix 2).
- 3.2 The hole excavated for the sign assembly measured 1.2m north to south by 0.6m wide by 0.65m deep. The deposits (Fig. 2 & 3) within the hole consisted of c. 0.5m of modern made-ground (**001**) overlying a layer of tarmac (**002**), which was c. 0.07m thick. Beneath the tarmac there was an associated base of shattered limestone chips (**003**).
- 3.3 Natural subsoil was not reached and there were no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance identified. It is thought that the area where the sign assembly will be located was either a slightly different alignment of the modern road or a parking place that subsequently fell out of use and was landscaped. This may have been done when the large car park (Fig. 1) situated slightly to the north-east was constructed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

- 4.1 A programme of archaeological recording was carried out on a hole excavated for a sign assembly within the Scheduled area of Hadrian's Wall next to Birdoswald Roman fort. The hole was found to have been cut into modern made-ground, which overlay a layer of tarmac. No features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance were identified.
- 4.2 CFA recommends that no further archaeological works are required in relation to this programme of works.
- 4.3 The online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis> will be completed.
- 4.4 An archive will be prepared in accordance with the recommendations of *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition 1991, and arrangements made for its deposition with an appropriate repository. A copy will be offered to the National Monuments Record.

5. REFERENCES

Breeze, D J 2006, *J Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall* 14th Edition, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Wooliscroft, D J 2001, *Hadrian's Wall from the air* Tempus.

APPENDIX 1: Photograph Register

Film 1 (B&W Prints / Colour Slides / Digital)

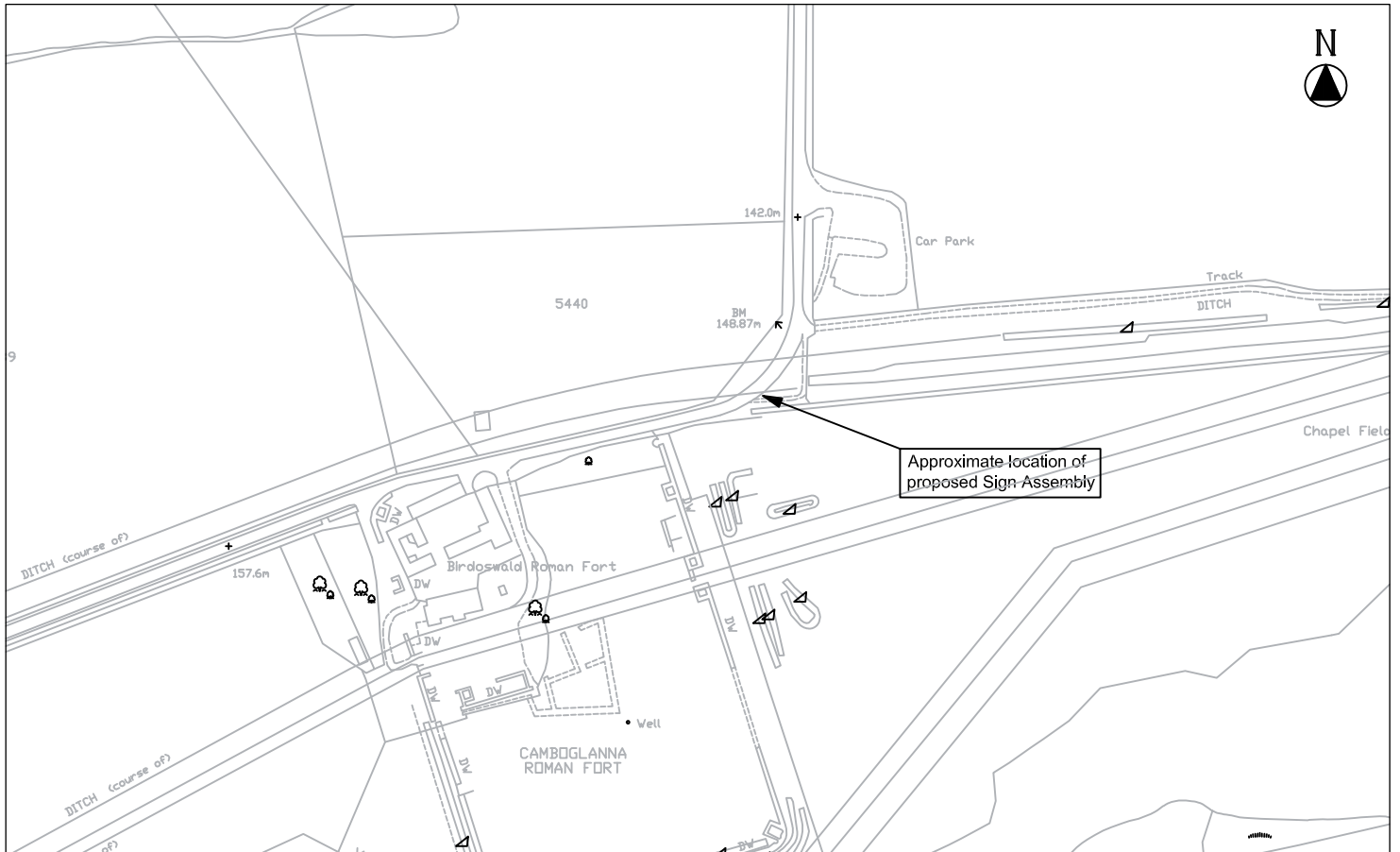
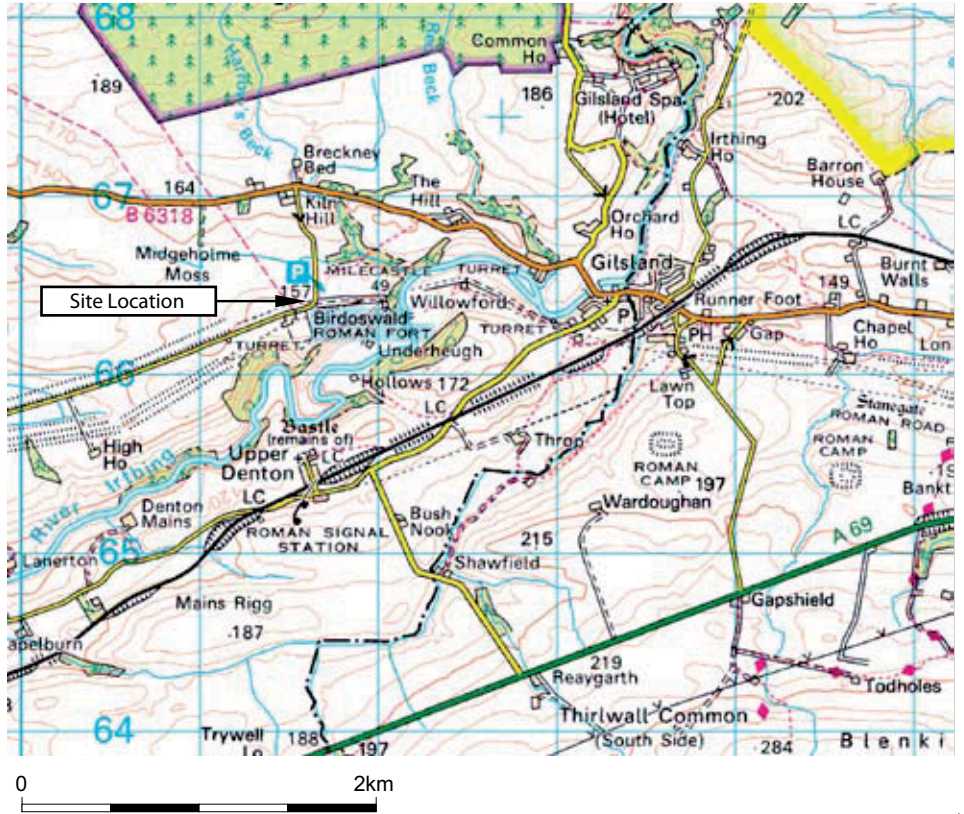
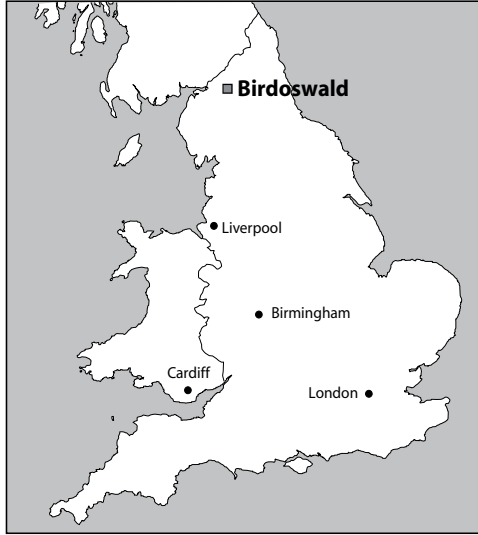
| Photo No. | Description | Conditions | From |
|-----------|--|------------|-------|
| 1-2 | Hole excavated for sign assemblage, north facing section | Overcast | North |
| 3-4 | Hole excavated for sign assemblage, south facing section | Overcast | South |
| 5-6 | Hole excavated for sign assemblage, east facing section | Overcast | East |
| 7-8 | Hole excavated for sign assemblage, west facing section | Overcast | West |

APPENDIX 2: Context Register

| Context Number | Description |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 001 | Modern made ground |
| 002 | Layer of tarmac |
| 003 | Shattered limestone underlying tarmac |

APPENDIX 3: Drawings Register

| Drawing Number | Scale | Description |
|----------------|-------|--|
| 1 | 1:10 | North facing section of hole excavated for sign assembly |



Key:



Fig. No: **1** Revision: **A** Client: **Capita Symonds**
 Title: **Site Location**
 Project: **Sign Assembly Erection, Birdoswald Roman Fort**

Scale: **NTS**



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Drawn by: **NK** Page No: Report No: **1611**

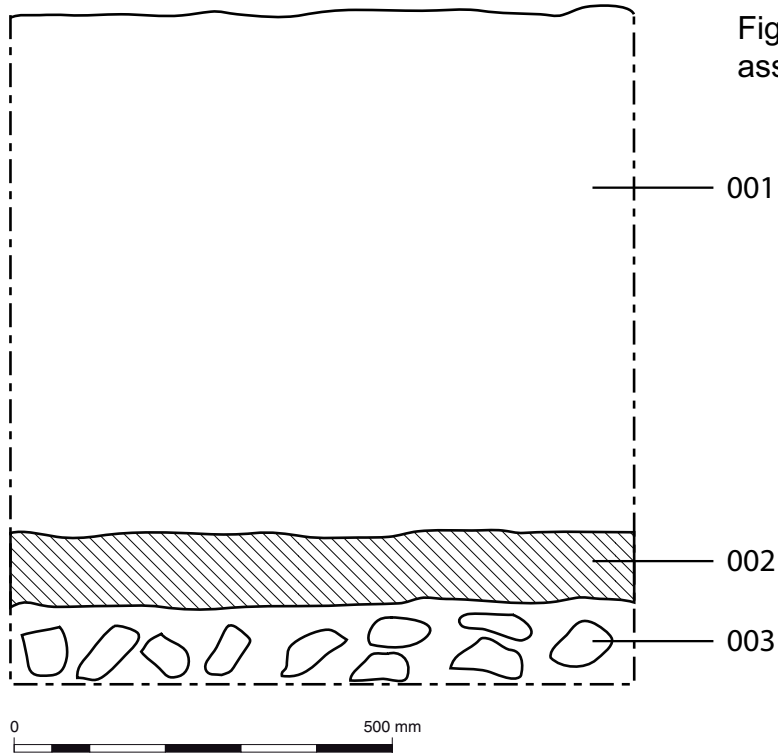



Fig. 2 - Hole excavated for sign assembly, north-facing section



Fig. 3 - Photograph of north-facing section

| | | | | | | |
|------------|----------|---|-----------|---|---------|---|
| Key: | Fig. No: | 2-3 | Revision: | A | Client: | Capita Symonds |
| | Title: | | | | | |
| | Project: | Sign Assembly Erection, Birdoswald Roman Fort | | | | |
| Scale: | NTS | | | | |  <p>CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD The Old Engine House Eskmills Park Musselburgh East Lothian, EH21 7PQ t: 0131 273 4380 f: 0131 273 4381 e: info@cfa-archaeology.co.uk w: www.cfa-archaeology.co.uk</p> |
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