
RUDCHESTER FARM
HEDDON-ON-THE-WALL
NORTHUMBERLAND

~ ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ~

JANUARY 2022



Prepared for: <i>Clare Grundy, Spence & Dower</i>		By: <i>The Archaeological Practice Ltd.</i>		
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RUDCHESTER FARM
HEDDON-ON-THE-WALL
NORTHUMBERLAND

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Prepared by:

The Archaeological Practice Ltd.



Frontispiece: Rudchester Farm, south-east view.

Grid Reference: NZ 11274 67409
Client: Spence & Dower Architects
Dates of fieldwork: 30th November, 3rd December 2021
Project Code: AP21/39
Oasis Number: thearcha2-510260

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S1017533- 30032020**

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SUMMARY

This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in Winter 2021-2022 during groundworks associated with renovation of a building at Rudchester Farm, Northumberland. The groundworks consisted of the excavation of trenches and pits for new drainage within a standing building in the central, east-west aligned range of buildings at Rudchester Farm. This location lies within the Hadrian's Wall Corridor, specifically within the environs of Vindobala Roman fort. The site area falls entirely within the bounds of Scheduled Monument No. 1017533.

Historic England (HE) advised that any work extending 300mm or more below the level of the present ground surface required archaeological supervision. Much of the modern floor surface within the building was able to be removed without an archaeologist present, being within the 300mm depth advised by HE. The monitoring of all works reaching levels deeper than 300mm below the present ground surface was carried out by a trained archaeologist from the Archaeological Practice over one working day.

A trench was excavated by hand along a north-south alignment in the centre of the building and a small pit was excavated by hand at the north wall of the cottage, to the west of the doorway. Both of these excavations continued northwards under the wall to meet pre-existing services in the yard. Neither of these excavations revealed any archaeological features. Both excavations bottomed out in the same layer of dark grey-brown made ground that the excavations started in. A further reduction of ground, this time with a half-tonne 360° excavator, was observed to depth, producing similar debris.

It is concluded that no archaeological features were disturbed during hand or machine excavation at Rudchester Farm. No layers below modern made ground were impacted by the groundworks.

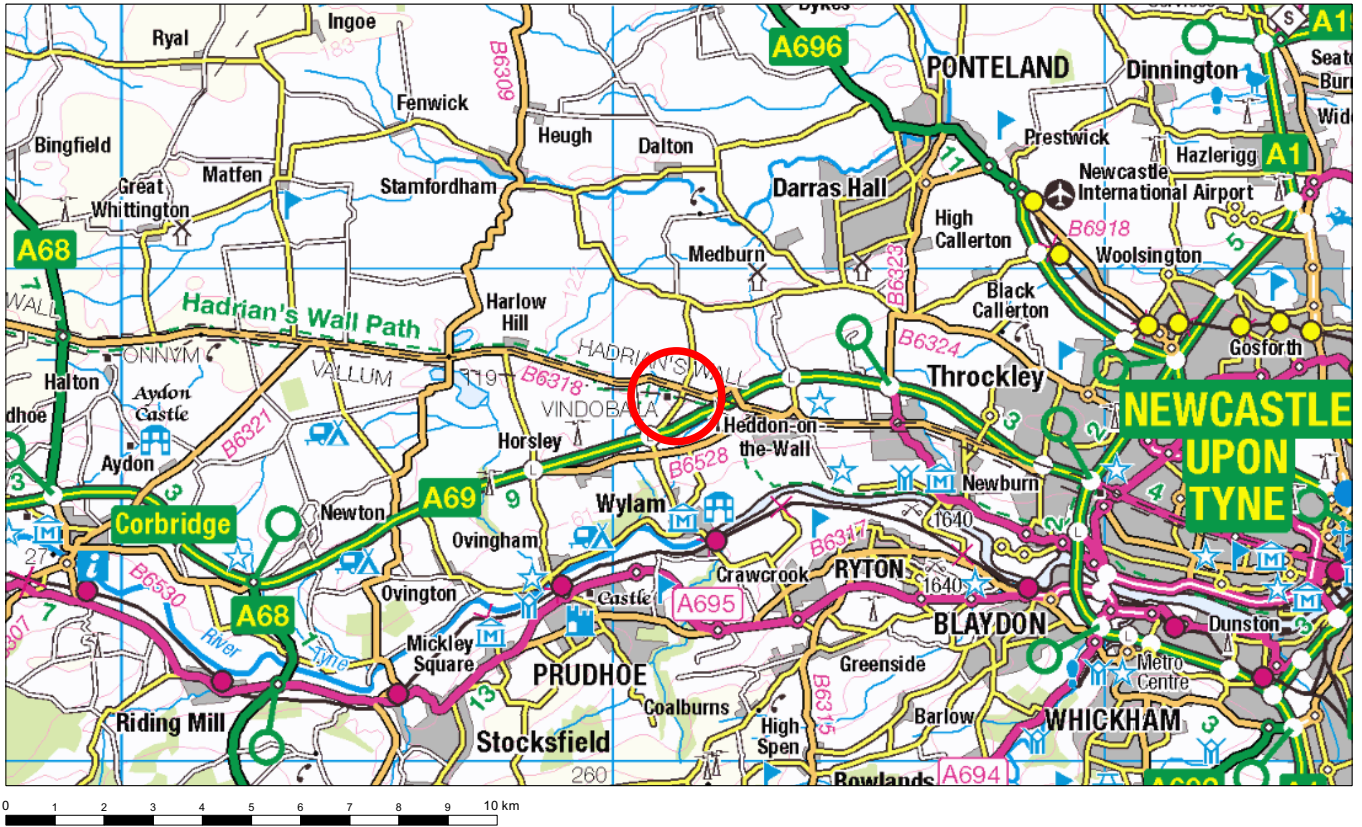
1. PURPOSE OF WATCHING BRIEF

1.1 This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in late November and early December 2021 during groundworks associated with the renovation of a building at Rudchester Farm NZ 11274 67409 (*see Illus. 01-04*). The work was carried out to specifications from architects Spence & Dower Architects.

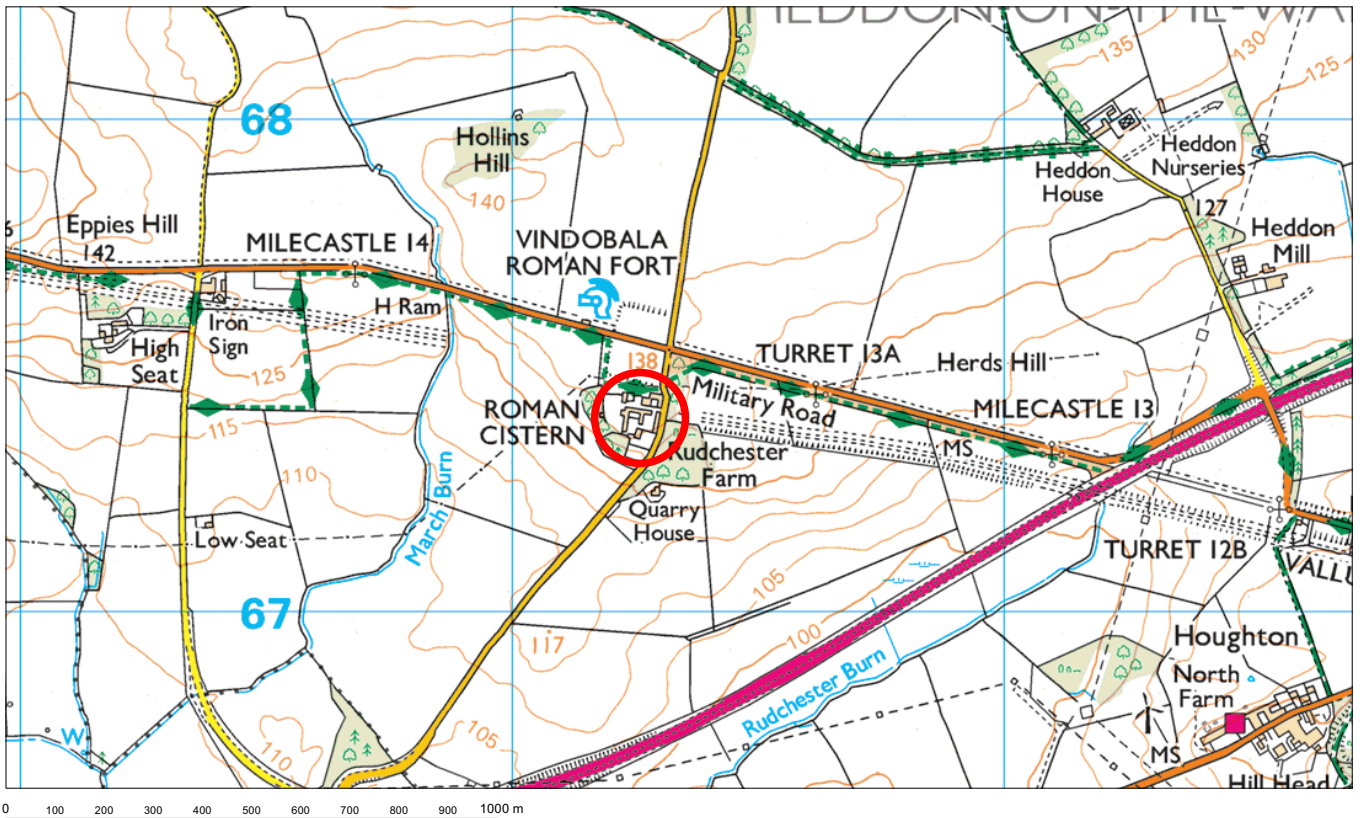
1.2 The groundworks consisted of the excavation of trenches and pits for new drainage within a standing building in the central, east-west aligned range of buildings at Rudchester Farm. This location lies within the Hadrian's Wall Corridor, specifically within the environs of Vindobala Roman fort. The site area falls entirely within the bounds of Scheduled Monument No. 1017533.

1.3 Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was granted to the client by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This consent was granted to the client on the advice of Historic England on the basis that the works were shallow and unlikely to impact on archaeological features or deposits.

1.4 Historic England (HE) advised that any work extending 300mm or more below the level of the present ground surface required archaeological supervision. Much of the modern floor surface within the building was able to be removed without an archaeologist present, being within the 300mm depth advised by HE. The monitoring of all works reaching levels deeper than 300mm below the present ground surface was carried out by a trained archaeologist from the Archaeological Practice over one working day.



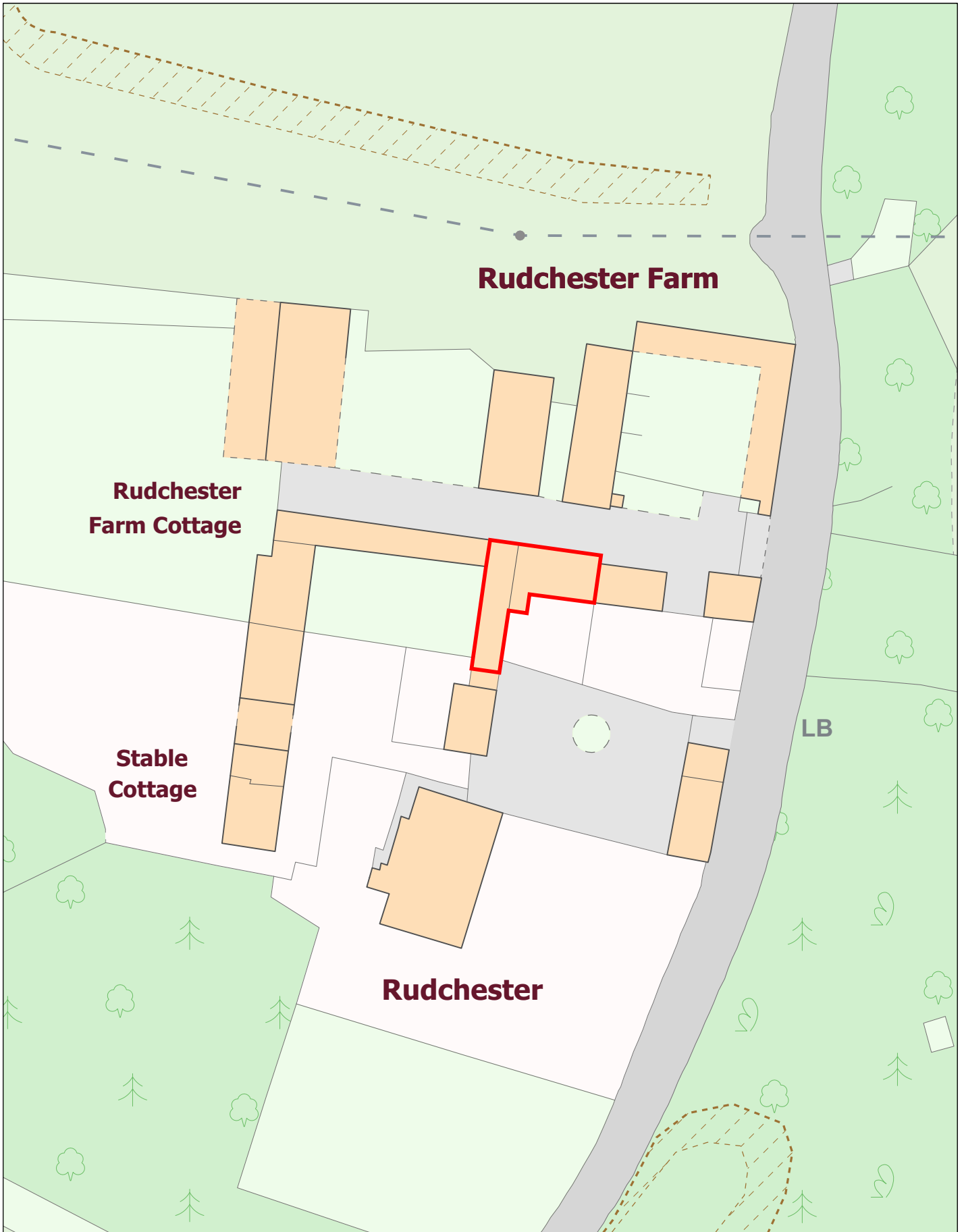
Illus. 01: Regional view, showing the location of Rudchester (circled in red), in south-east Northumberland.



Illus. 02: Villages view, showing the location of Rudchester Farm (circled in red), south of the 'Military Road'.



Illus. 03: Farm view, showing the location of groundworks within the farm complex and its wider setting.



Scale 1:750

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50m

Illus. 04: Detailed view, showing the location of groundworks within the central range of farm buildings.

2. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

2.1 Roman

The Roman fort of *Vindobala* (HER 10856; SM 1017533; cf. Daniels 1978, 76-81; Breeze 2006, 168-72) straddles the Military Road (B6318) directly west of the north-south aligned Stamfordham Road. It is the fourth fort on the wall-line from the east, after *Segedunum* (Wallsend), *Pons Aelius* (central Newcastle) and *Condercum* (Benwell). The fort's south ramparts lie in the field directly north of the farm complex, whilst the east curtain and ramparts lie to the west of Stamfordham Road. The fort was reportedly well preserved until the 18th Century when it was reduced by stone robbing.

The area of the fort has evidently been ploughed and cultivated, with ridge and furrow earthworks overlying the southern half of the fort. The fort defences and interior have been seriously investigated twice, in 1924 and 1972. The 1924 excavations focused on the main west and south gates, the minor west gate, and the buildings of the central range. In this area, the southern part of headquarters (*principia*), a large granary to the west and a small part of the commanding officer's house (*praetorium*) to the east were excavated. The 1972 excavations directed by J P Gillam and M Harrison (HER Event no. 12973) examined the area to the south of the central range where three phases of buildings were revealed, the earlier two representing barrack blocks. Ard marks found beneath the earliest building and the *via quintana* suggested the area had been cultivated arable farmland before the arrival of the Roman army's builders. In 1989, seven trenches were excavated to locate a water main which crossed the fort from north to south extending from the B6318 to the farm south of the fort, while a watching brief along the course of this main was undertaken in 1991 to replace the pipe. This investigation revealed a number of walls belonging to stone buildings in the fort interior and in the area of the *vicus* immediately to the south.

The associated civil settlement (*vicus*) lay to the south and south-west of the fort, much of it covered by the farm buildings (HER 10897). The only visible feature today is a rock-cut cistern known as Giant's Grave. The Mithraeum to the south-west of the fort was excavated by Gillam and MacIvor in 1953, after five inscribed altars were found in 1844. A series of terraces between the fort and the Mithraeum are probably representative of the *vicus*, perhaps created as building platforms, although there is no dating evidence for the earthworks. More recently, in 2000, four trenches were excavated by the Archaeological Practice (Newcastle University) in the area south of the fort and west of the farm buildings, revealing Roman deposits, ditches and gullies (HER Event 246). In Trench 1, the vallum ditch had been infilled and covered by a metalled surface with flanking banks. A number of other interventions – trial trenching or watching briefs related to the installation and improvement of services – have identified gullies, ditches or pits of probable Roman date, most likely representing features associated with the *vicus*., at various locations beneath the farm and further south around Quarry House.

The *vallum* approaches from the east on an alignment which gradually diverges south of the fort. The projected course of the vallum, as proposed by Goulty and Hudson (1994) runs through the central range of farm buildings where the proposed groundworks are due to take place, although whether this is the case is yet to be proven.

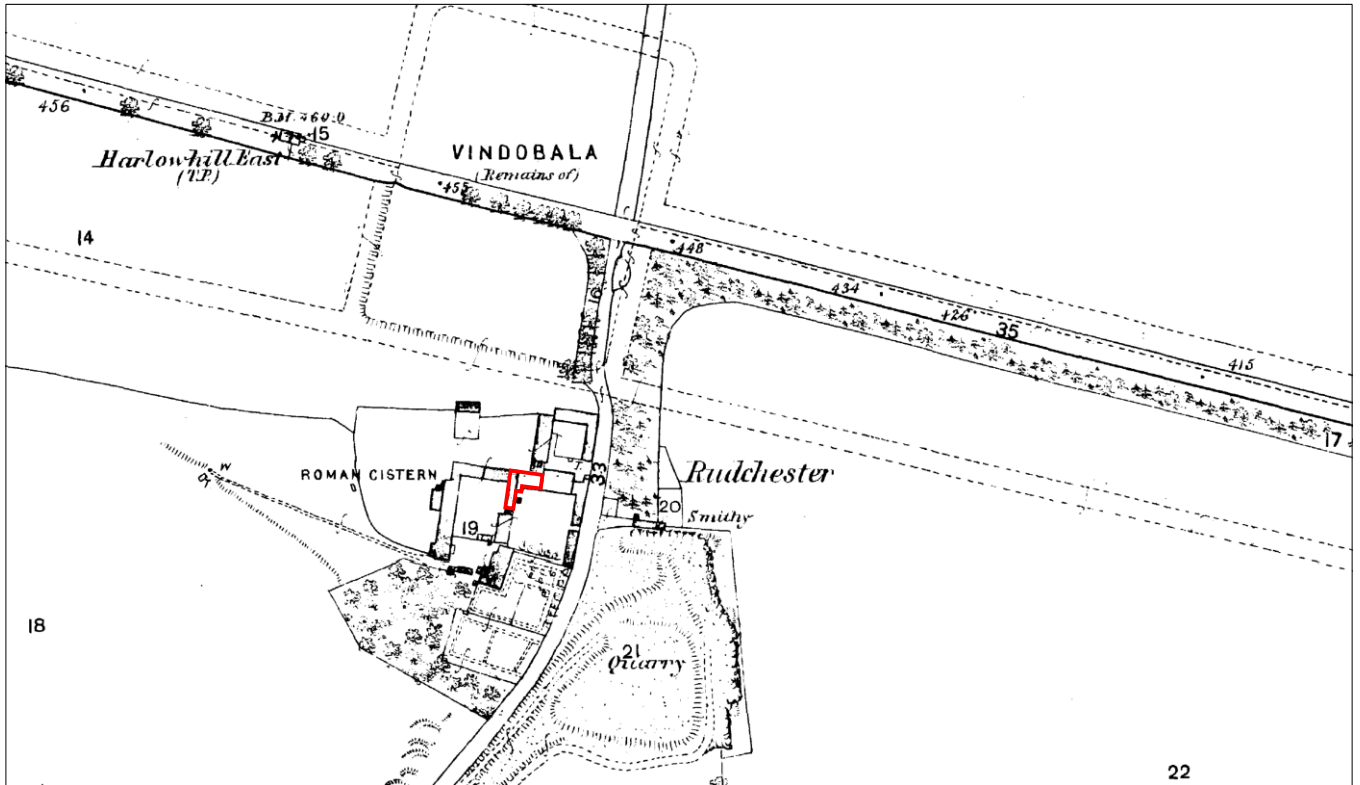
2.2 Medieval and Modern

The early medieval history of Rudchester following the collapse of Roman Britain is unknown. By the high Middle Ages, Rudchester was the site of a nucleated village or hamlet settlement (HER 10878) with a manor house (HER 10874). Seven taxpayers were recorded at Rudchester in the 1296 Lay Subsidy, and these would most likely only have represented the settlement's most well-to-do inhabitants (Wrathmell 1975, 475). Seven houses are shown on the Military Road survey map of 1749, by which time the settlement may have been in decline. Armstrong's county map of 1769 shows the site as emparked and containing only the hall.

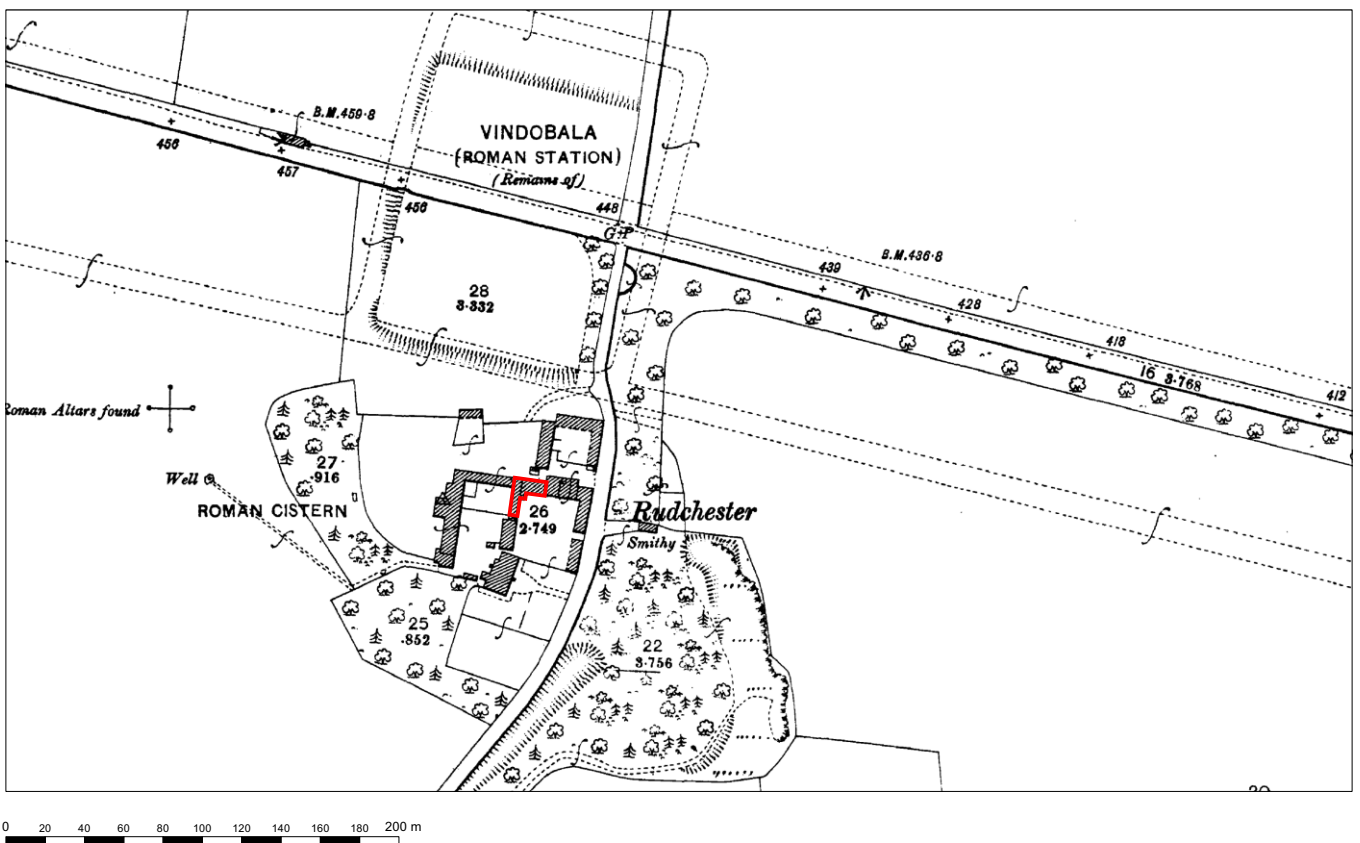
Rudchester Hall, on the south side of the farm steading, is a Grade II* Listed Building (List no. 1154705; HER 10874). Documentary evidence (cf. NCH XII (1926), 198-9) suggests that the hall was first constructed in 1285 by Simon of Rudchester (though one might suspect that there was a timber predecessor to Simon's stone hall). The present building is, externally, late 18th-century Gothic in appearance, but the surviving fabric contains the remains of a medieval tower in the south-east corner, incorporating an ogee-headed window of probable 14th century date. On the basis of its relatively small dimensions, plus the form of the window, Ryder (1994-5, 29-31) suggests that this may have been a solar tower, an addition to Simon of Rudchester's original, late 13th century (two storey?) hall house, which was probably attached to the tower's west side. Two storey hall-houses were the dominant form of northern gentry residence in the 13th century, with solar towers commonly being added from the 14th century onwards, as security in the border counties deteriorated, whilst in some cases wholesale replacement by freestanding tower houses occurred.

Rudchester farm (HER 24707) was constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century, following the removal of the last remnants of the medieval settlement. The visible, Roman remains inside the fort were also cleared in the late 18th century and the farm buildings may have been erected using stone robbed from these structures. Certainly, when the tithes for Rudchester were sold in November 1794, the accompanying description indicates that the farm buildings were already in existence by then. The 1841 tithe map and 1860 first edition Ordnance Survey confirm that the majority of the farm buildings had been built by those dates (see *Illus. 05-06*). The buildings are arranged in a regular courtyard E-plan with a U-plan courtyard to the north. However, the original farmhouse has since been largely demolished and replaced by a smaller, 20th-century, brick-built house (see *Illus. 05-08*).

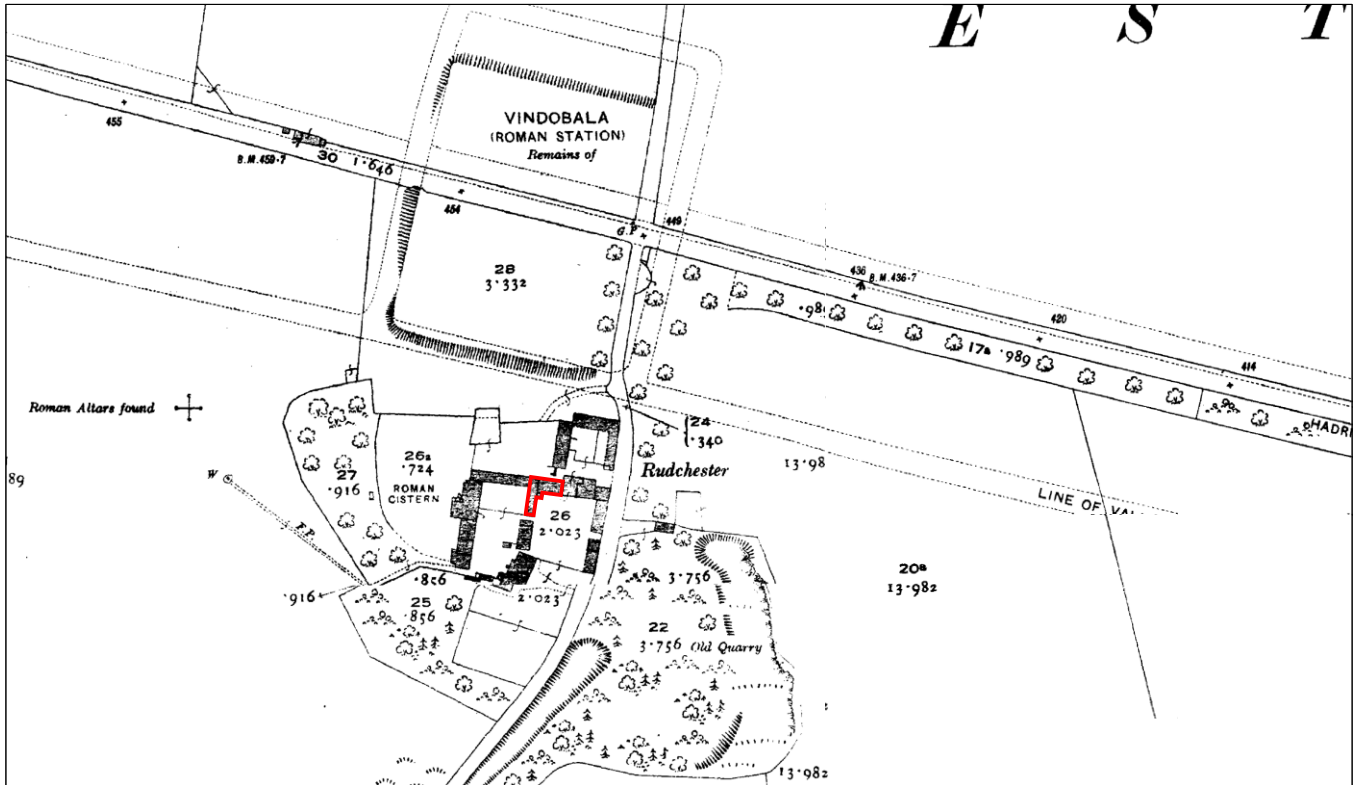
The present B6318 highway (known as "the Military Road") was constructed as a turnpike road in the 1750s, using the demolished Roman Wall as a foundation, to promote economic development and improve strategic communications in the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion (Lawson 1966; 1973). A roadside toll-house, associated with the turnpike, stood just to the west of the fort.



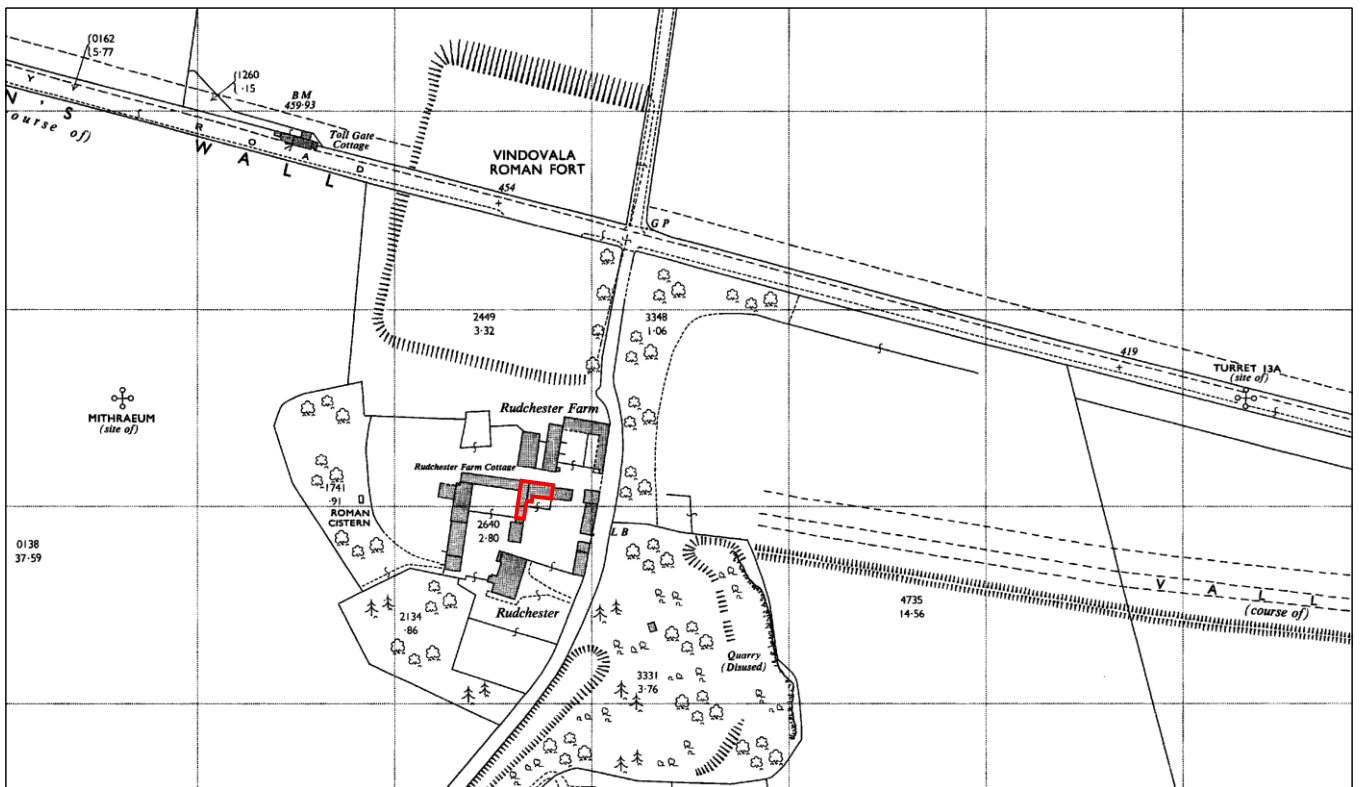
Illus. 05: Extract from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Northumberland, 1:2500, c.1859, showing Rudchester Farm and the proposed watching brief site (highlighted in red).



Illus. 06: Extract from the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Northumberland, 1:2500, c.1897, showing Rudchester Farm and the proposed watching brief site (highlighted in red).



Illus. 07: Extract from the 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Northumberland, 1:2500, c.1919, showing Rudchester Farm and the proposed watching brief site (highlighted in red).



Illus. 08: Extract from the c.1963 Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Northumberland, 1:2500, showing Rudchester Farm and the proposed watching brief site (highlighted in red).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief took place during all invasive groundworks carried out on site. These groundworks consisted of shallow excavations for drainage within a derelict building in the central range of Rudchester Farm (*Photos 01-03*). Initial excavations for drainage were conducted by hand, as per the original specification of the SMC. Later excavation to remove layers of concrete and upper levels of made ground were carried out with a half-tonne digger by agreement with the Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist.

The aims of the watching brief were to identify and determine the character of any remains uncovered during groundworks on the site, and to make an appropriate record of significant finds and features, especially any features pertaining to the Roman occupation of the site, by photographic and other means. This included the photographic recording of negative results.

All intrusive groundworks likely to impact on archaeological remains were monitored between the 30th November 2021 and the 3rd December 2021. All excavations were closely monitored by a suitably trained and experienced archaeologist from The Archaeological Practice Ltd.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Excavations for Drainage

A trench of c. 0.40m width and approximately 0.25m depth was excavated by hand along a north-south alignment in the rough centre of the cottage (*see Photo 02*). This trench was excavated into dark grey-brown made ground below the removed concrete surface of the building, and continued under the north wall of the building to the east of the doorway, meeting the existing (re-excavated) east-west service run in the yard. This made ground contained frequent sandstone rubble fragments and occasional fragments of brick and glazed tile debris. Beyond this debris, no finds were encountered.

The only other excavation below concrete level within the building footprint was a small pit excavated by hand at the north wall of the cottage, left of the doorway, also by hand (*see Photo 01*). This excavation also carried on under the wall to meet with the existing service run in the yard. The same made ground encountered in the trench described above was encountered, with similar debris. No finds were recovered.

Neither of these excavations revealed any archaeological features. Both excavations bottomed out in the same layer of dark grey-brown made ground that the excavations started in. A further reduction of ground, this time with a half-tonne 360° excavator, was observed to depth, producing similar debris, this time including fragments of roofing slate (*see Photo 03*). Again, no finds relating to habitation or use-life of the structure were encountered.

5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is concluded that no archaeological features were disturbed during hand or machine excavation at Rudchester Farm. No layers below modern made ground were impacted by the groundworks.

5.2 The deposits encountered during groundworks consisted of made ground below concrete and hard-standing layers. Fragments of sandstone and brick within the made ground may reflect phases of demolition associated with the reshaping of the settlement and construction of the farmstead in the 18th-19th centuries.

5.3 No further archaeological monitoring is required during the groundworks associated with this scheme. However, given the potential for significant archaeological deposits associated with the fort complex and *vicus*, it is recommended that any future interventions should involve archaeological monitoring.

6. REFERENCES

Breeze, D. J. (ed) (2006) *J Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall*, 14th edn. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

Daniels, C. M. (ed) (1978) *Handbook to the Roman Wall (J C Bruce)*, 13th edn., Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Harold Hill and Son

Dodds, M. H. (1926) *History of Northumberland*, vol. 12, Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumberland County History Committee

Lawson, W. (1966) 'The Origin of the Military Road from Newcastle to Carlisle', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4th ser. 44, 185-207

Lawson, W. (1966) 'The Construction of the Military Road in Northumberland', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5th ser. 1, 177-193

Ryder, P. F. (1994-5) *Towers and Bastles in Northumberland. 3: Castle Morpeth District*

Ryder, P. F. (2021) *Towers and Bastles: Defensible Buildings in Northumberland*, Seaton Burn: Northern Heritage Services

Wrathmell, S. (1975) *Deserted and Shrunken Villages in Southern Northumberland from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Centuries*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Cardiff



Photo 01. View looking north at pit excavated for drainage against the north wall of the building.



Photo 02. View looking north at excavated trench for drainage.



Photo 03. View looking west at excavations into made ground after concrete removal.

APPENDIX 1:
SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT – HISTORIC ENGLAND
S1017533- 30032020



NORTH EAST AND YORKSHIRE OFFICE

Ms Tina Gough
Spence and Dower
Arch 6, Stepney Bank
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 2NP

Direct Dial: 07771 388308

Our ref: S1017533- 30032020

29/05/2020

Dear Ms Gough

**Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); Section 2
control of works
Application for Scheduled Monument Consent**

**Rudchester Roman fort, associated civil settlement and a section of Hadrian's
Wall and vallum from the A69 to the March Burn in wall mile 13**

Scheduled Monument No: 1017533

Our ref: S1017533-30032020

Application on behalf of Professor R. and Dr C. Plummer

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to advise you of the decision regarding your application for Scheduled Monument Consent dated 27th March 2020 in respect of proposed works at the above scheduled monument concerning alterations to and conversion of existing farm buildings to provide 5no. new dwellings and 1 no. extended dwelling. The works were described in the following documentation submitted by you:

- M629 20Bext Drainage and landscaping
- M629_01 Topographical survey
- M629_02 Existing site plan
- M629_04 Units 1-3 existing plans
- M629_05 Units 1-3 existing elevations_1
- M629_06 Units 1-3 existing elevations_2
- M629_07 Unit 4 existing plans and elevs
- M629_08 Unit 5 existing plans and elevs
- M629_09 Unit 6 existing plans and elevs
- M629_10 existing workshop and Dutch barn
- M629_11 Proposed site plan
- M629_12 Units 1-3 Proposed plans
- M629_13 Units 1-3 Proposed elevs_1
- M629_14 Units 1-3 Proposed elevs_2
- M629_15 Unit 4 Proposed Plans and elevs



- M629_16 Unit 5 proposed plans and site elevs
- M629_17 Unit 5 Proposed elevs_edit
- M629_18 Unit 6 proposed plans and elevs
- M629_19 Proposed roof plan

In addition, I refer to:

- 'M629 Rudchester Heritage Design and Access Statement.pdf'
- 'Additional Information relevant to the Scheduled Monument Consent Application for Rudchester Fort, Northumberland'

Both documents submitted 13th April 2020 09.53 by email by Tina Gough of Spence and Dower. It is on this more detailed basis that this application is determined.

2. In accordance with paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 1 to the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State is obliged to afford you, and any other person to whom it appears to the Secretary of State expedient to afford it, an opportunity of appearing before and being heard by a person appointed for that purpose. This opportunity was offered to you by Historic England and you have declined it.

3. The Secretary of State is also required by the Act to consult with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Historic England) before deciding whether or not to grant Scheduled Monument Consent. Historic England considers the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be

Works which would not significantly diminish the visual amenity of the monument but could cause significant damage to the monument's archaeological deposits or evidence, which can be acceptably mitigated by conditions to ensure prior archaeological excavation, supervision and recording. The effects of the works on the setting of the monument have also been assessed and are not considered to be an overriding factor in this instance.

I can confirm that the Secretary of State is agreeable for the works to proceed providing the conditions set out below are adhered to, and that accordingly Scheduled Monument Consent is hereby granted under section 2 of the 1979 Act for the works described in paragraph 1 above, subject to the following conditions:

The following conditions are intended to ensure a degree of quality control over the works, irrespective of type:

- (a) The works to which this consent relates shall be carried out to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State, who will be advised by Historic England. At least 4 weeks' notice (or such shorter period as may be mutually agreed) in writing of the commencement of work shall be given to Mike Collins, Historic England, Bessie Surtees House, 41-44 Sandhill, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3JF, 07771 388308, mike.collins@historicengland.org.uk, in order that an Historic England



representative can inspect and advise on the works and their effect in compliance with this consent.

- (b) This consent may only be implemented by **Professor R. and Dr C. Plummer**
- (c) No building works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work before and/or during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.
- (d) All those involved in the implementation of the works granted by this consent must be informed by the owner that the land is designated as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended); the extent of the scheduled monument as set out in both the scheduled monument description and map; and that the implications of this designation include the requirement to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent for any works to a scheduled monument from the Secretary of State prior to them being undertaken.
- (e) Equipment and machinery shall not be used or operated in the scheduled area in conditions or in a manner likely to result in damage to the monument or ground disturbance other than that which is expressly authorised in this consent.
- (f) No landscaping works shall take place until the applicant has agreed a detailed landscaping plan in writing, in accordance with the outline information on landscaping, which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.
- (g) The written scheme of investigation referred to under condition c (including analysis, post-excavation and publication proposals) for which consent is granted shall be executed in full, unless variations have been agreed under the terms of condition a.
- (h) The archaeological contractor implementing the written scheme under condition c shall complete and submit an entry on OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations - <http://oasis.ac.uk/england/>) prior to project completion, and shall deposit any digital project report with the Archaeology Data Service, via the OASIS form, upon completion.

4. By virtue of section 4 of the 1979 Act, if no works to which this consent relates are executed or started within the period of five years beginning with the date on which this consent was granted (being the date of this letter), this consent shall cease to have effect at the end of that period (unless a shorter time period is set by a specific condition above).



5. This letter does not convey any approval or consent required under any enactment, bye law, order or regulation other than section 2 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

6. Your attention is drawn to the provisions of section 55 of the 1979 Act under which any person who is aggrieved by the decision given in this letter may challenge its validity by an application made to the High Court within six weeks from the date when the decision is given. The grounds upon which an application may be made to the Court are (1) that the decision is not within the powers of the Act (that is, the Secretary of State has exceeded the relevant powers) or (2) that any of the relevant requirements have not been complied with and the applicant's interests have been substantially prejudiced by the failure to comply. The "relevant requirements" are defined in section 55 of the 1979 Act: they are the requirements of that Act and the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1971 and the requirements of any regulations or rules made under those Acts.

Yours Sincerely

Mike Collins

Team Leader, Development Advice, North East and Yorkshire

E-mail: mike.collins@historicengland.org.uk

For and on behalf of the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

cc Liz Williams and Sara Rushton - NCC County Archaeology