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***LAND ADJACENT TO THE WEST GATE OF  
BREMENIUM ROMAN FORT  
NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK***

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
DURING EXCAVATIONS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF AN  
INTERPRETATION PANEL**

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JULY 2022

***The Archaeological  
Practice Ltd.***



# REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF DURING INSTALLATION OF AN INTERPRETATION PANEL

## BREMENIUM ROMAN FORT NORTHUMBERLAND



**Frontispiece:** View looking SSE along the western rampart of Bremenium Roman Fort, with post-hole excavations for a new interpretation panel visible in the foreground.

<b>Grid reference:</b>	<i>NY 83206 98612</i>
<b>Date of fieldwork:</b>	<i>20<sup>th</sup> July 2022</i>
<b>SMC No.</b>	<i>S00242648</i>
<b>Client:</b>	<i>Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership</i>
<b>Project code:</b>	<i>AP 22/19</i>
<b>Stage:</b>	<i>Final</i>
<b>Compiled by:</b>	<i>Marc Johnstone</i>
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# CONTENTS

## SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF THE WATCHING BRIEF
2. WATCHING BRIEF
3. RESULTS
4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## APPENDIX 1:

*Application for Scheduled Monument Consent, Bremenium Roman Fort, High Rochester*

*Scheduled Monument No: SM ND 20, HA 1006610*

*Ref: S00242648*

*Application on behalf of Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme*

## APPENDIX 2:

*Supplied design drawings of proposed information lectern*

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Front Cover:** View of post-hole excavations outside the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort, in July 2022.

**Frontispiece:** View looking SSE along the western rampart of Bremenium Roman Fort, with post-hole excavations for a new interpretation panel visible in the foreground.

### **Location Maps and Plans:**

- **Illus. 01:** Regional view, showing the location of Bremenium Roman Fort (circled in red) at the heart of Northumberland National Park.
- **Illus. 02:** Detail of Northumberland National Park, showing the location of Bremenium Roman Fort (circled in red).
- **Illus. 03:** Village view, showing the location of watching brief (circled in red) at Bremenium Roman Fort.
- **Illus. 04:** Fort view, showing the location of watching brief (circled in red) outside the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort.
- **Illus. 05:** Site view, showing the location of the proposed interpretation panel (highlighted in red) outside the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort.

### **Historic Maps & Documents:**

- **Illus. 06:** Detail of the 1787 Rochester plan.
- **Illus. 07:** Detail of the second edition Ordnance Survey plan, 1897.

### **Photographic Record of Archaeological Watching Brief, November 2021.**

- **Photo 1.** View looking WNW towards the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort, prior to excavations for an interpretation panel.
- **Photo 2.** View looking WNE towards the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort, during excavations for an interpretation panel.
- **Photo 3.** View looking west at excavated post-holes for interpretation panel, with fort west gate in background.
- **Photo 4.** View looking east at excavated post-holes for interpretation panel, with vicus terrace in background.
- **Photo 5.** Overhead west view of excavated post-holes for interpretation panel.
- **Photo 6.** Detail of northernmost post-hole excavated for interpretation panel.
- **Photo 7.** Detail of southernmost post-hole excavated for interpretation panel.

## SUMMARY

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*An archaeological watching brief was conducted in July 2022, to mitigate the impact of groundworks associated with the installation of an interpretation panel/display board at Bremenium Roman Fort, High Rochester, Northumberland. The watching brief site was located in the field-verge approximately 7 m to the west of (and exterior to) the fort's western gateway (centred upon NGR: NY 83206 98612).*

*Bremenium was for two centuries the northernmost fort of the Roman Empire and its outline remains clearly visible, defining the boundaries of the current settlement of High Rochester, with multiple ditch & bank ramparts present on all but the west sides.*

*The watching brief site lays within the area of Scheduled Ancient Monument (Monument No. SM ND 20, HA 1006610) for Bremenium Roman Fort, and therefore an application for Scheduled Monument Consent was necessary to carry out the works. The application was proposed by Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme and approved by the Historic England Inspector of Monuments, provided a requirement for the groundworks to be monitored by means of an archaeological watching brief were undertaken to mitigate their impact on any surviving archaeological remains.*

*The results of archaeological watching brief concluded that no significant remains of any kind were observed in the small post-holes excavated for the new display board to the depth of 0.30 m below ground level.*

*Below the topsoil was a deposit of loamy sandstone rubble, observed to the maximum depth of excavation and extending in every direction. Although compact, this rubble had no structural form and has been interpreted as infill or clearance rubble.*

*No further archaeological mitigation work is required in association with this scheme. However, given the high potential for significant archaeological remains to exist in and around Bremenium Roman Fort and in the broader area of High Rochester, it is recommended that any future developments in the vicinity should be considered on their own merits with respect to the need for archaeological intervention.*

## 1. PURPOSE OF WATCHING BRIEF

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### 1.1 *Introduction*

1.1.1 This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in July 2022, to mitigate the impact of groundworks associated with the installation of an interpretation panel/display board at Bremenium Roman Fort, High Rochester, Northumberland. The watching brief site was located in the field-verge approximately 7 m to the west of (and exterior to) the fort's western gateway (*centred upon NGR: NY 83206 98612*).

1.1.2 The watching brief site is situated immediately adjacent to Bremenium Roman Fort, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Monument No. SM ND 20, HA 1006610). The area in question is entirely covered by the scheduling. The groundworks follow a successful application for Scheduled Monument Consent (Appendix 1) by Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme.

1.1.3 Having assessed the potential impact of the development on the archaeological resource, Lee McFarlane, the Historic England Inspector of Monuments, provided a requirement for the groundworks to be monitored by means of an archaeological watching brief to mitigate their impact on any surviving archaeological remains. Scheduled Monument Consent for the works was duly granted (HE SMC ref: S00242648)

1.1.4 The groundworks involved excavation of two post-holes to accommodate posts for the new display panel. These post-holes were excavated by hand – by a specialist signage installation contractor under direct supervision of a professional archaeologist from the Archaeological Practice Ltd.

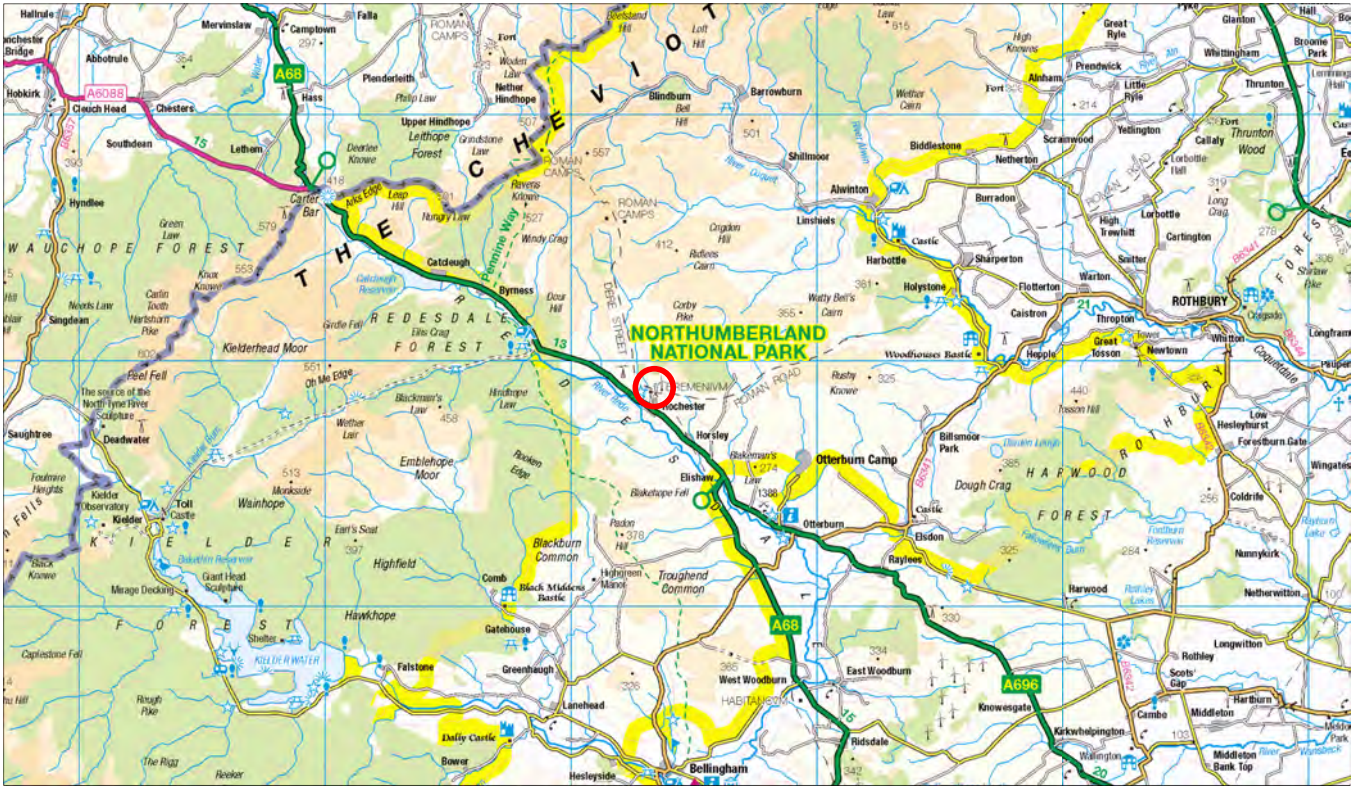
### 1.2 *Cultural Heritage Background*

The Roman fort of Bremenium at High Rochester was for two centuries the northernmost fort of the Roman Empire and its outline remains clearly visible, defining as it does the boundaries of the current settlement of High Rochester, with multiple ditch & bank ramparts present on all but the west sides. The routes of two Roman roads, Dere Street and the Redesdale to Alndale 'Link Road' cross immediately east of the fort, and an extensive cemetery has been surveyed and selectively excavated, most recently by Beryl Charlton (Charlton & Micheson 1984), close to the course of Dere Street south-east of the fort.

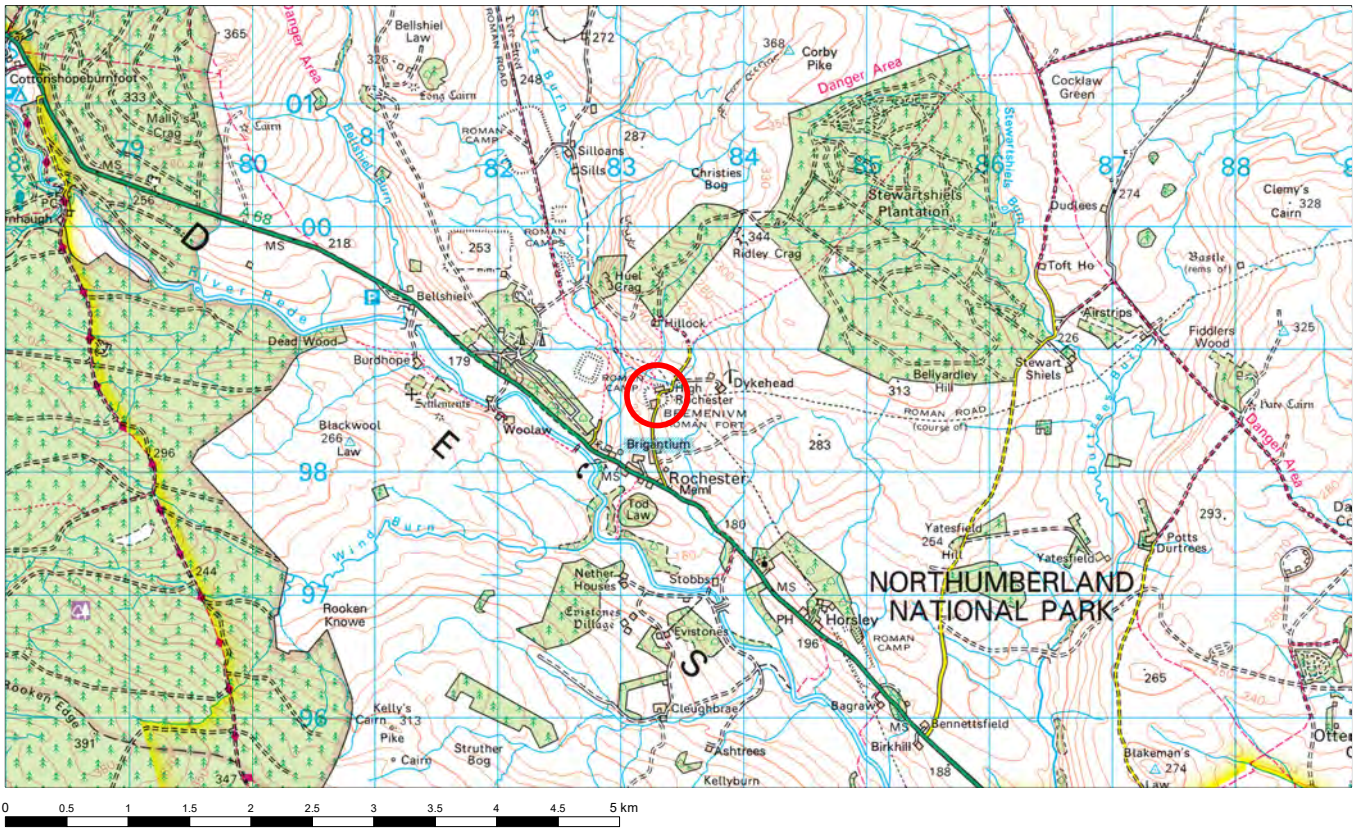
The Roman name of the site, Bremenium, signifies, "the place on the roaring stream", presumably a reference to the adjacent Sills Burn in spate. Bremenium remains one of the best-preserved archaeological sites in Northumberland National Park. The surviving remains of the fort are oriented NNW-SSE and are sub-rectangular in plan with rounded corners, being slightly longer on the N-S axis (147 m) than the E-W axis (136 m) axis. Multiple, surrounding ditch & bank ramparts are visible on all but the west sides, with the inner rampart surviving around the entire circuit, the remains of the curtain wall, towers and gates surviving upon it in places. Geophysical evidence backed up by limited excavation attests to a possible underlying late prehistoric enclosure and/or probable military annexe(s) containing numerous features immediately to the west of the fort, while recent Lidar survey evidence suggests the possibility of a civilian settlement, or vicus, to the south.

The fort long played an important role as an outpost fort beside Dere Street, the easterly Roman route into Scotland, and had a large mixed garrison usually consisting of a military equitate cohort and a unit of scouts (*numerus exploratorum*). Excavations in the 1930s (Richmond 1936 & 1940) provided evidence that the original Agricola Fort (A.D. 78-85) consisted of a single ditch and rampart, later replaced by a larger rampart and complex system of ditches. In the Antonine period (AD 139-Late 2nd century) the fort was rebuilt with a rubble wall and clay rampart. During the Severan period (Early-Late 3rd century AD) the defences were levelled and a fort wall was built. The final alterations appear to have occurred during the Constantinian period (c. A.D. 306-mid 4th century) when a larger stone wall, four gateways and angle and interval turrets were added. Water was supplied to the fort via an aqueduct, which entered through a stone-covered channel through the south gate. Thus, the base was occupied during the Flavian period and from the Antonine period onwards with rebuilding phases in the early 3rd century and at the beginning of the 4th century. Military withdrawal from the site seems to have taken place in the early 4th century, perhaps under Constantine (Casey & Savage 1980).

The evidence regarding the date the fort of High Rochester was relinquished by permanent Roman garrisons presents some intriguing contradictions (cf. Crow 2004a, 222-3). The coin evidence recovered to date suggests that the fort was abandoned in the first or second decade of the 4th century and the pottery assemblages from Crow's excavations in the 1990s were almost devoid of the East Yorkshire grey wares (Crambeck etc.) which become common on the northern frontier from the late 3rd century onwards. Yet, as noted by Rushworth, the repairs to the west curtain between the west gate and the south west angle appear more characteristic of modifications made at other northern frontier forts, such as Housesteads and Vindolanda along Hadrian's Wall, much later in the 4th century or even later still. Could this reflect continued military occupation of the fort by a reduced force until at least the middle of the 4th century, or perhaps even its transfer to a friendly federate chieftain?

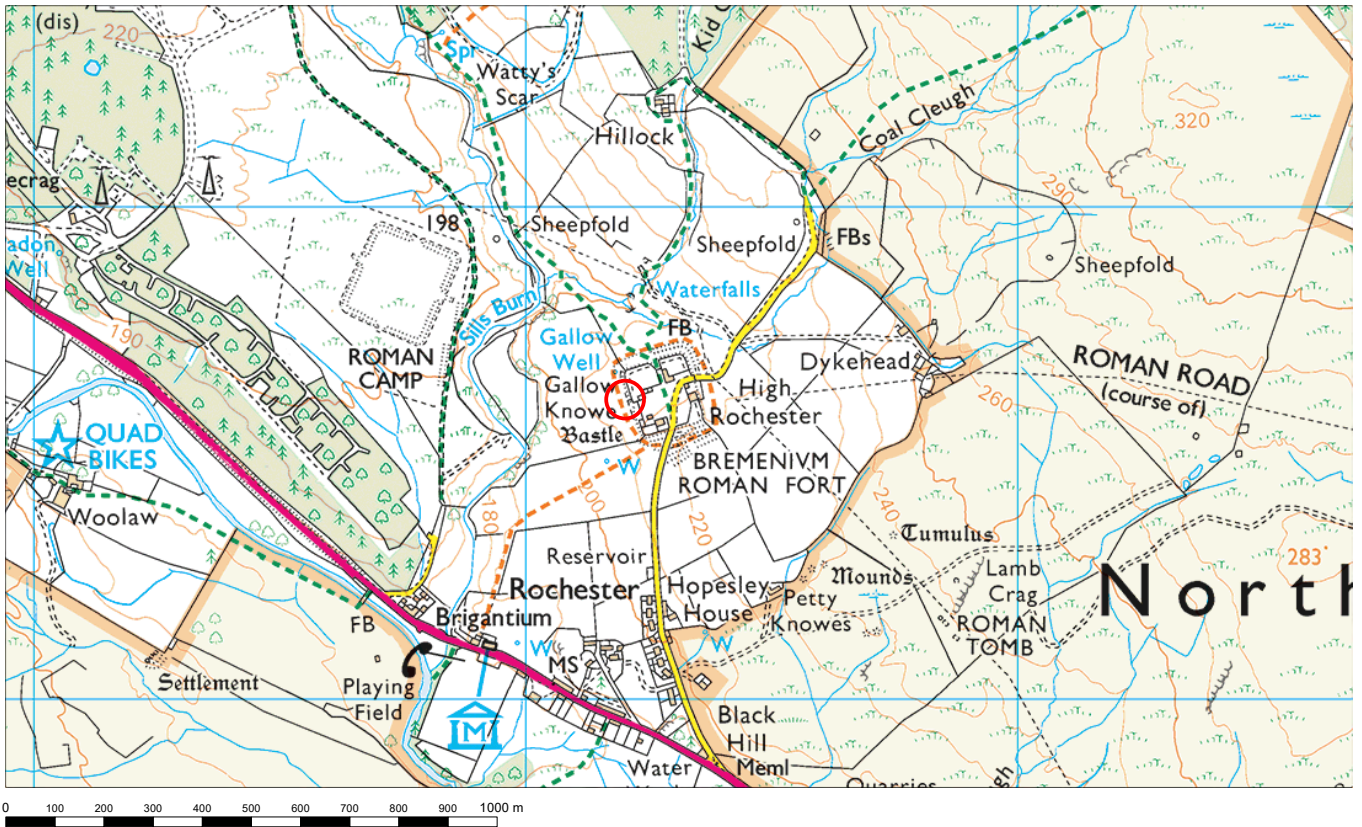


*Illus. 01: Regional view, showing the location of Bremenium Roman Fort (circled in red) at the heart of Northumberland National Park.*

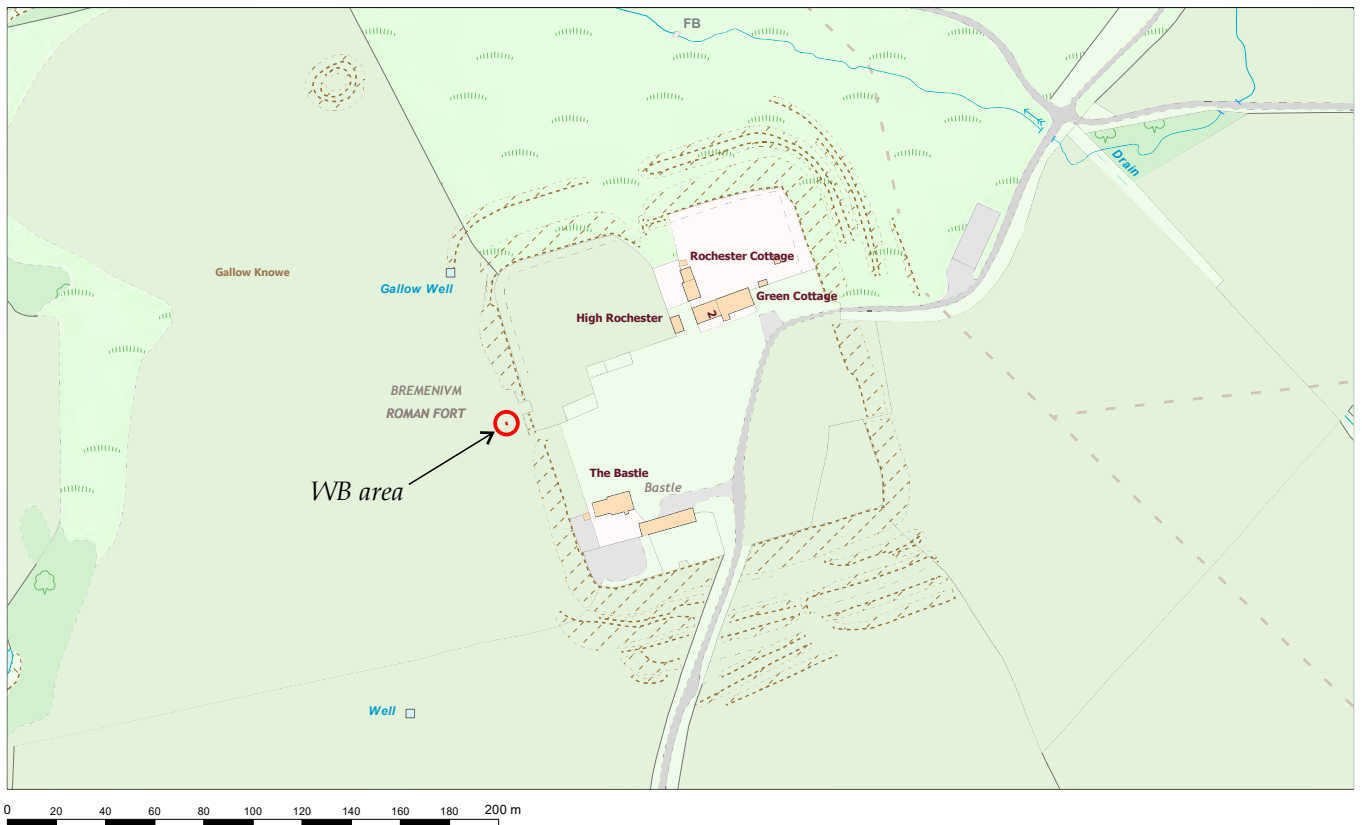


*Illus. 02: Detail of Northumberland National Park, showing the location of Bremenium Roman Fort (circled in red).*

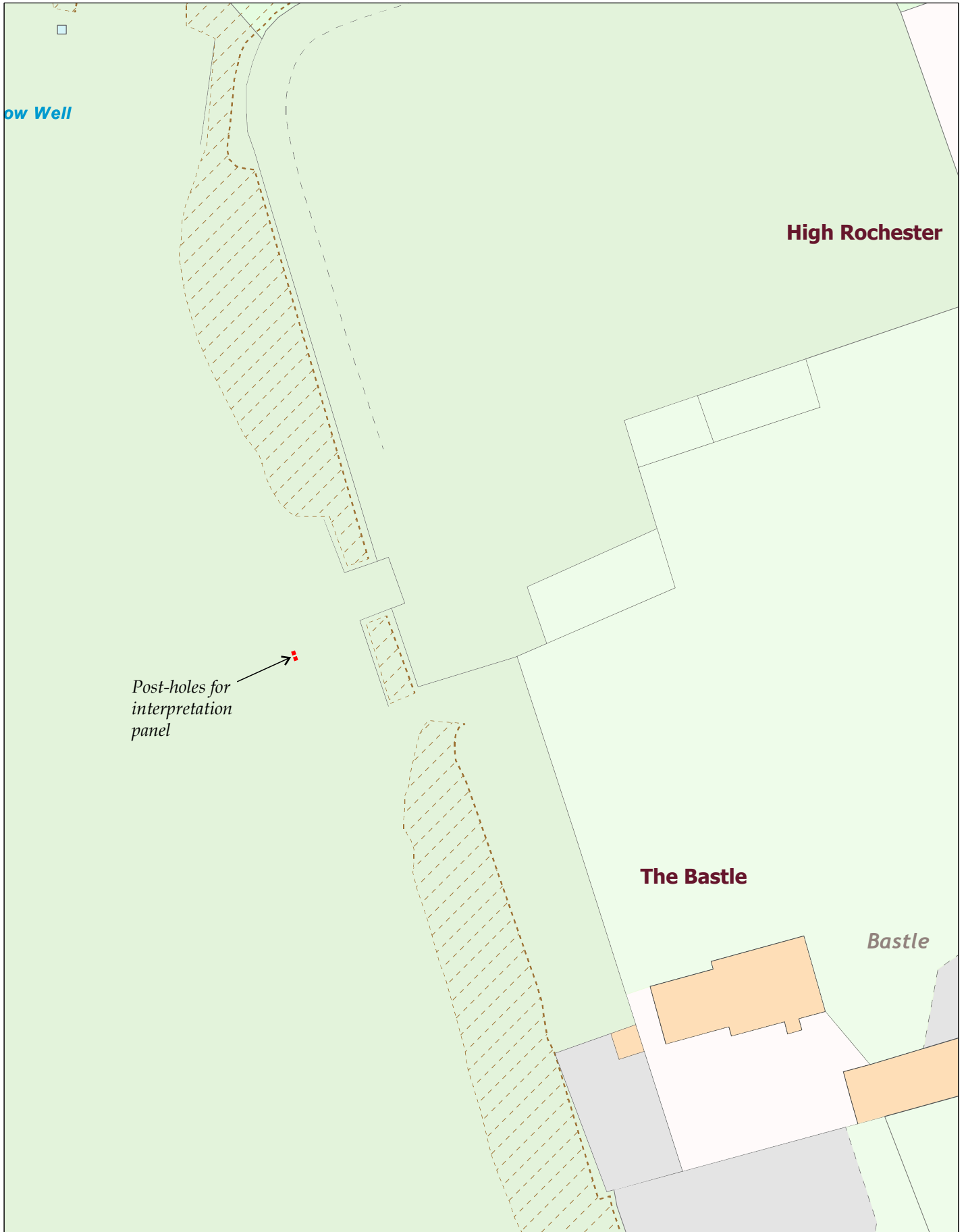




*Illus. 03: Village view, showing the location of watching brief (circled in red) at Bremenium Roman Fort.*



*Illus. 04: Fort view, showing the location of watching brief (circled in red) outside the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort.*



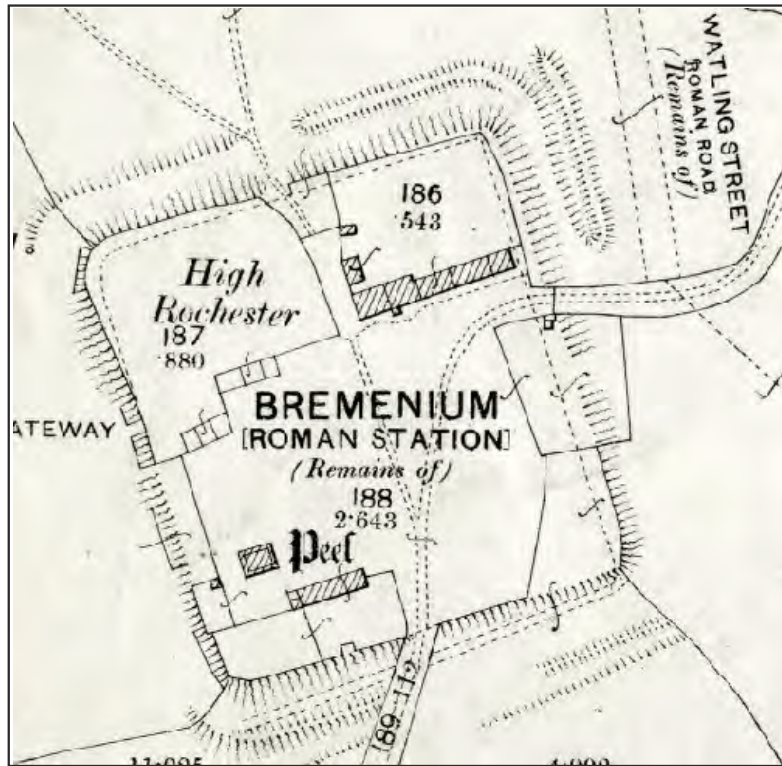
Scale 1:500

0 4 8 12 16 20 24 28 32 36 40 m

*Illus. 05: Site view, showing the location of the proposed interpretation panel (highlighted in red) outside the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort.*



*Illus. 06: Detail of the 1787 Rochester plan.*



*Illus. 07: Detail of the second edition Ordnance Survey plan, 1897.*

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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**2.1** The watching brief which took place in July 2022 (*see Illus. 05*), involved monitoring the excavation of two post-holes to accommodate uprights for a new display panel. These post-holes were excavated by hand – by a specialist signage installation contractor.

**2.2** The Field Investigation was carried out by means of an Archaeological Watching Brief; all work was carried out in line with the Institute for Archaeologists By-Laws – Code of Conduct (CIFA 2010) and the Yorkshire, The Humber and the North East Regional Statement of Good Practice for Archaeology in the Development Process (2009).

**2.3** Accordingly, all excavations were closely monitored by a suitably trained and experienced archaeologist from The Archaeological Practice Ltd.

## 3. RESULTS

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### 3.1 Groundworks in 2022

The groundworks carried out adjacent to the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort were monitored on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 with the following results:

#### 3.1.1 *Location and Dimensions* (see *Illus. 05; Photos 1-7*)

The site selected for the new display panel, was located on the slope to the west of the Fort West Rampart, grading down in a westward direction to the flatter ground for the fort vicus (attached civilian settlement). Two small post-holes were excavated by hand to accommodate posts for the new display panel, located in the field-verge approximately 7 m to the west of (and exterior to) the fort's western gateway (centred upon NGR: NY 83206 98612). The post-holes were positioned 0.58 m away from each other, from centre to centre.

The dimensions of each post-hole were as follows:  
0.30 m (length) x 0.30 m (width) x 0.30 m (depth)

#### 3.1.2 *Stratigraphic description*

Below the turf and topsoil [01] was a deposit of loamy sandstone rubble [02], observed to the maximum depth of excavation and extending in every direction. Although compact, this rubble had no structural form and has been interpreted as infill or clearance rubble. No archaeological remains or discernible features of any kind were observed.

#### 3.1.3 *Context List*

- [01] Turf and shallow topsoil. Observed to depths of between 0.08-0.12 m.
- [02] Mid grey-brown loamy sandstone rubble, irregular and subrounded pieces with no structural form, but compact. Observed to the maximum depth of post-hole and extending in every direction. Interpreted as infill or clearance rubble.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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4.1 The result of groundworks monitored under watching brief conditions within the field-verge located west of Bremenium Fort's west gate, in July 2022, concluded that no significant remains of any kind were observed in the small post-holes excavated for a new display board to the depth of 0.30 m below ground level.

4.2 Below the turf and topsoil was a deposit of loamy sandstone rubble, observed to the maximum depth of excavation and extending in every direction. Although compact, this rubble had no structural form and has been interpreted as infill or clearance rubble.

4.3 No further archaeological mitigation work is required in association with this scheme. However, given the high potential for significant archaeological remains to exist in and around Bremenium Roman Fort and in the broader area of High Rochester, it is recommended that any future developments in the vicinity should be considered on their own merits with respect to the need for archaeological intervention.

## Photographic Record



*Photo 1. View looking WNW towards the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort, prior to excavations for an interpretation panel.*



*Photo 2. View looking WNE towards the west gate of Bremenium Roman Fort, during excavations for an interpretation panel.*





*Photo 3. View looking west at excavated post-holes for interpretation panel, with fort west gate in background.*



*Photo 4. View looking east at excavated post-holes for interpretation panel, with vicus terrace in background.*



*Photo 5. Overhead west view of excavated post-holes for interpretation panel.*



*Photo 6. Detail of northernmost post-hole excavated for interpretation panel.*



*Photo 7. Detail of southernmost post-hole excavated for interpretation panel.*

## APPENDIX 1:

*Application for Scheduled Monument Consent, Bremenium Roman Fort, High Rochester*

*Scheduled Monument No: SM ND 20, HA 1006610*

*Ref: S00242648*

*Application on behalf of Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme*



Historic England

Ms Karen Collins

Direct Dial: 0191 4031659

Northumberland National Park

Eastburn

Our ref: S00242648

South Park

Hexham

NE46 1BS

23 May 2022

Dear Ms Collins

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

**BREMENIUM ROMAN STATION, HIGH ROCHESTER**

**Scheduled Monument No: SM ND 20, HA 1006610**

**Our ref: S00242648**

**Application on behalf of Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme**

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 received 8 April 2022 in respect of proposed works at the above scheduled monument concerning the replacement of three existing timber ladder stiles with timber wicket gates and the installation of one interpretation panel to improve public access and interpretation of this nationally important monument. The access improvements are in line with the principle of access for all, improving opportunities for a wider range of people to visit and appreciate the cultural heritage of the Northumberland National Park.

The works will require the removal of existing ladder stiles, dismantling a 150cm section of dry stone walling, excavating two 300mm diameter post holes to 1.20m,



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installing self closing timber wicket gate and rebuilding walls to edge of posts. In addition, an interpretation panel outside the west gate of the Roman fort will require excavation of two holes 300mm x 300mm x 795mm deep.

It is known that there are stones in the field walls which relate to the Roman fort. These will be recorded in situ and where they cannot be incorporated into the rebuilt wall sections, they will be retained on hard standing adjacent to existing cottages within the fort for the purposes of informal display. The works were detailed in the following documentation submitted by you:

SMC Application form

Supporting document setting out the status of the monument, a description, previous work and method statement

Site Location Plans at 1:10,000 and 1:1000

Aerial photograph, composite archaeological survey plan and LIDAR image

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 beneficial for the presentation and public enjoyment of the monument, but necessitating unavoidable but on balance an acceptable minimal amount of ground disturbance. Necessary archaeological excavation and recording arrangements are noted within the application and can be covered by condition. 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:

- (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 Ms. Lee McFarlane, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Historic England, Bessie Surtees House, 41-44 Sandhill, Newcastle, NE1 3JF; 0191-403-1659/ 07774-331422; lee.mcfarlane@HistoricEngland.org.uk in order that an Historic England



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

- (b) The specification of work for which consent is granted shall be executed in full.
- (c) This consent may only be implemented by *Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme*.
- (d) No ground works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work 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.
- (e) Prior to installation, the interpretation panel design and content to be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.
- (f) All those involved in the implementation of the works granted by this consent must be informed by the Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme 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.
- (g) 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 other than that which is expressly authorised in this consent.
- (h) A report on the archaeological recording shall be sent to the Northumberland Historic Environment Record and to Lee McFarlane, Inspector of Ancient Monuments (as in (a) above) at Historic England within 3 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).
- (i) The contractor 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



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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

**Lee McFarlane**

Inspector of Ancient Monuments

E-mail: [lee.mcfarlane@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:lee.mcfarlane@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

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

cc: Mrs Karen Derham, Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council, by email



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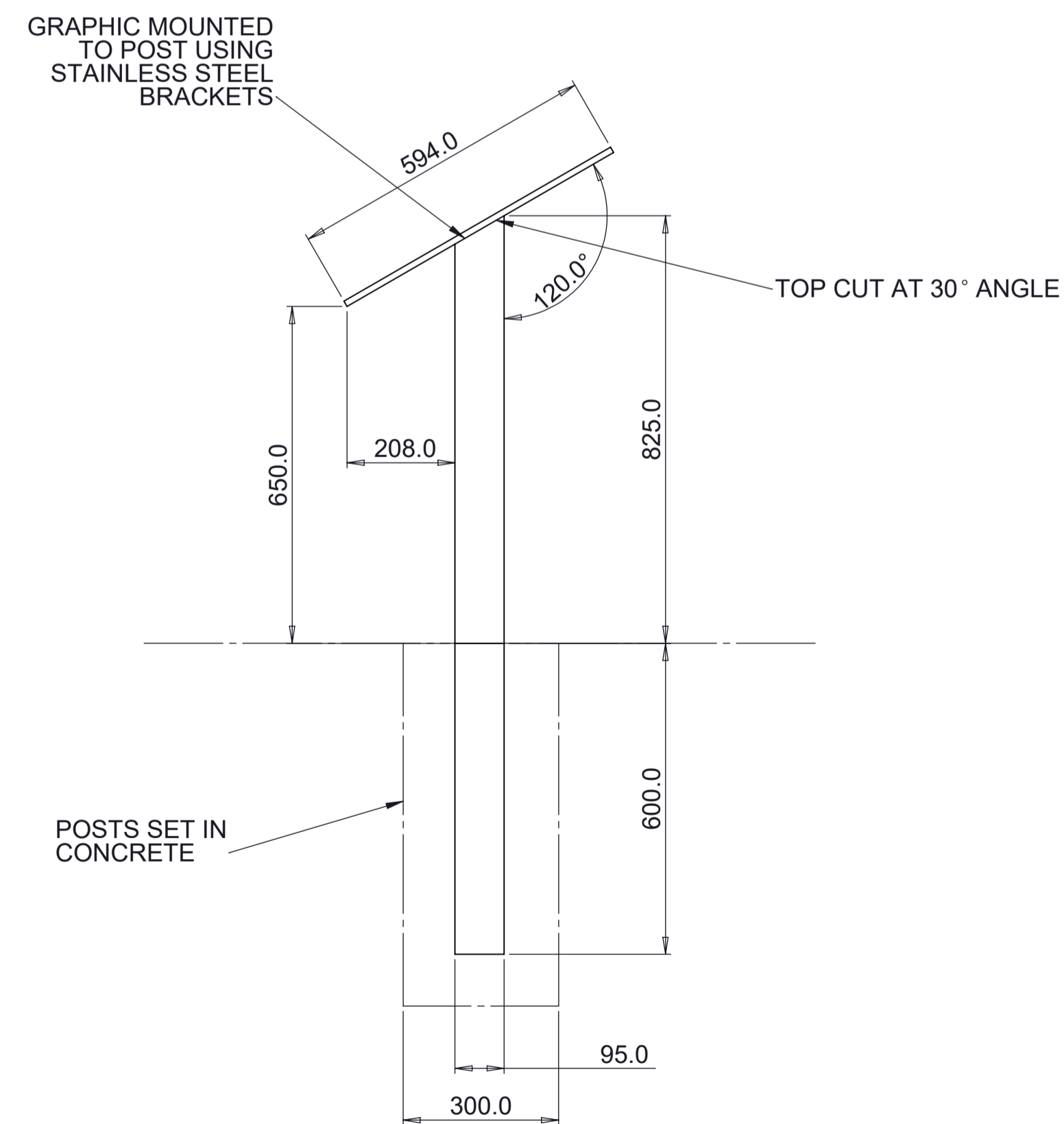
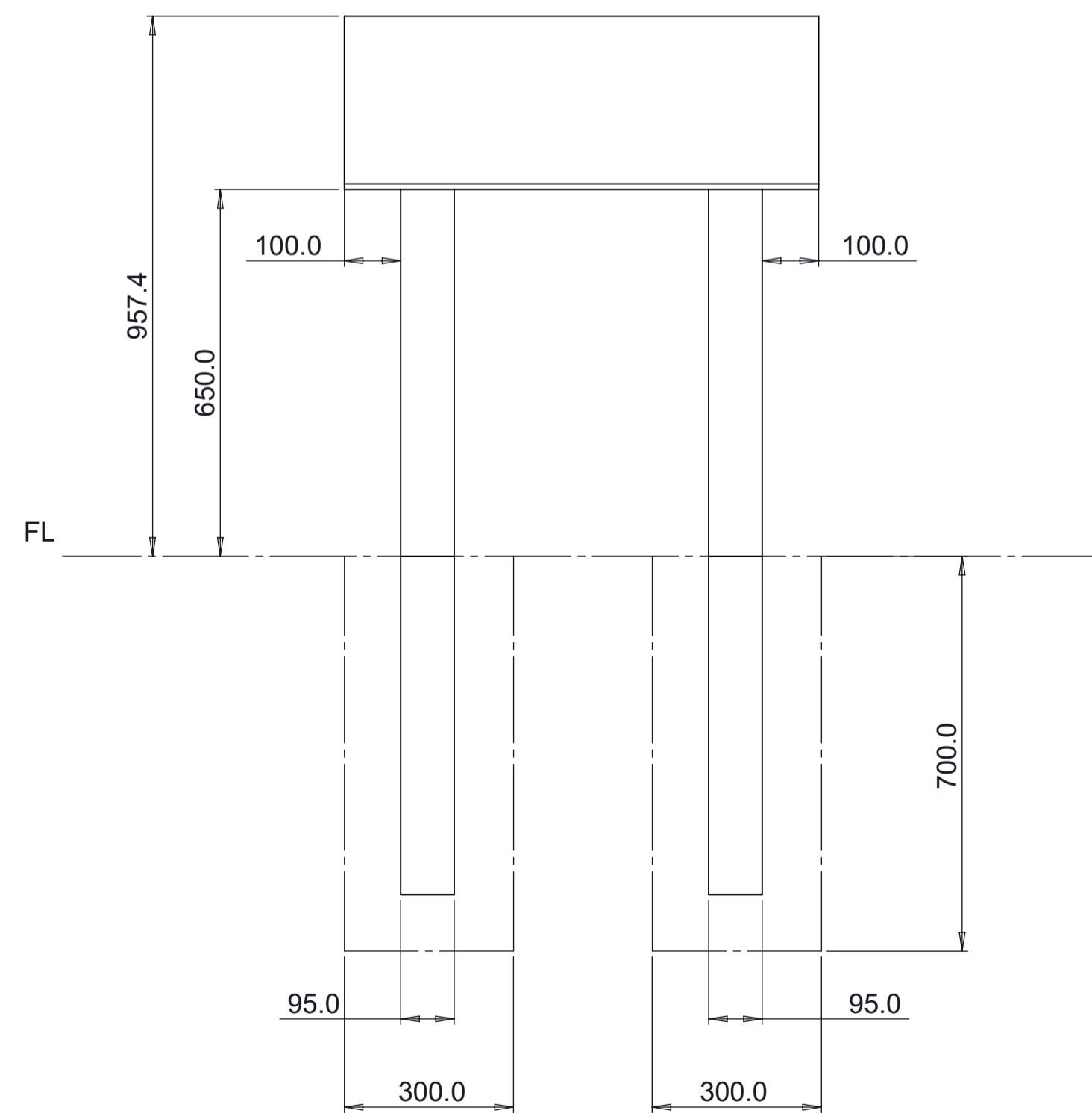
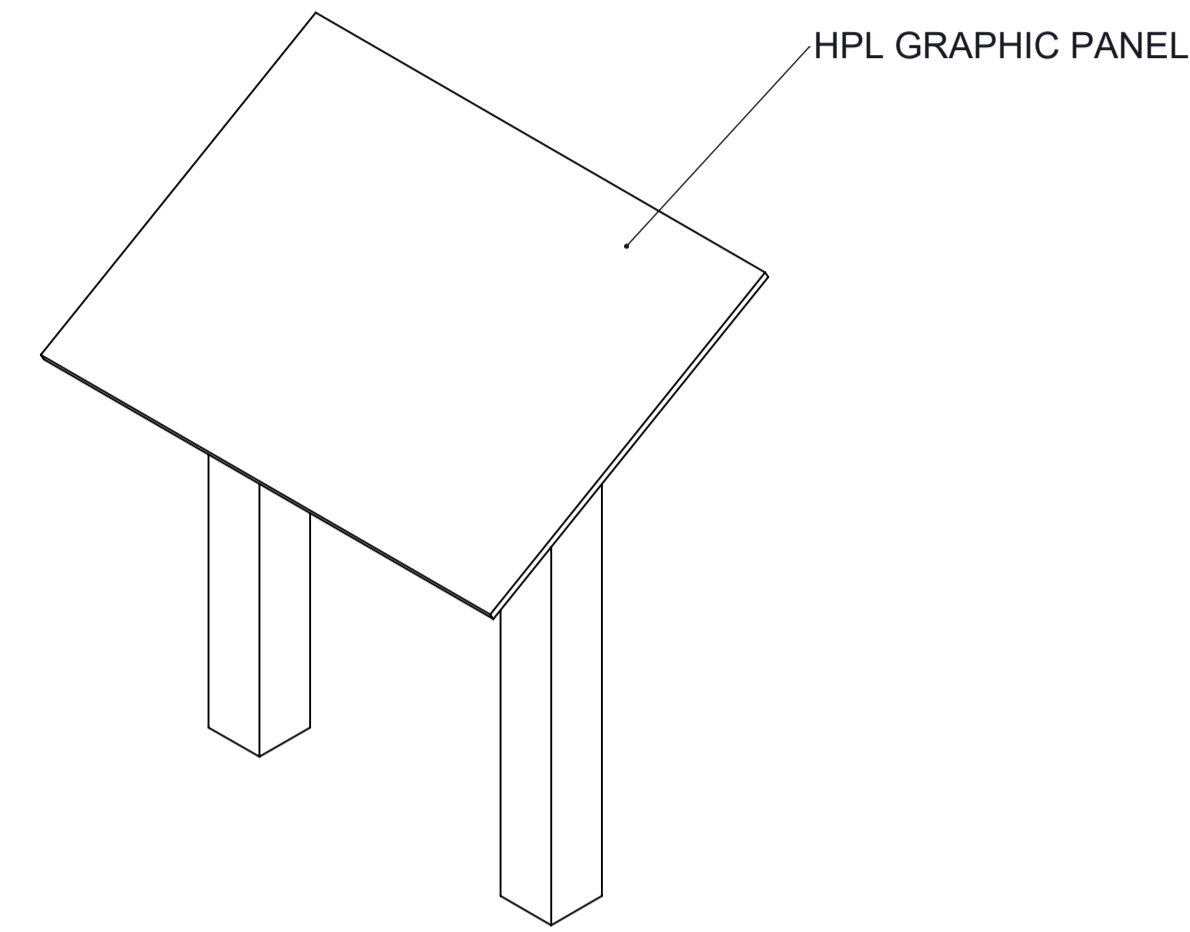
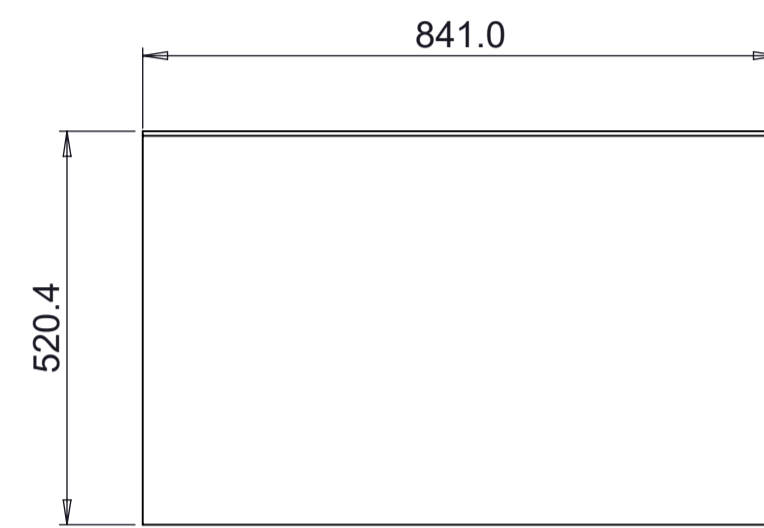
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## APPENDIX 2:

*Supplied design drawings of proposed information lectern*





**SPECIFICATION**

**MATERIALS**  
 95x95mm Siberian Larch Timber - PAR A Grade  
 HPL Graphic Panel  
 Stainless Steel Brackets  
 Concrete - P260 100 Slump  
 Please note dims of concrete pour are approximate and to be properly assessed on site during install

**FINISHES**

-

**HARDWARE**

-

**GENERAL NOTES**

12no UNITS

Rev	Date	Amendment	Drawn
A	15.10.21	Drawing amended to note grade of timber, panel material and brackets	JPF

**APPROVAL**

NAME	
SIGNED	
DATE	

This drawing is for approval by the client for the materials, fabrication, method of construction and quantities of units.

STATUS	A	B	C
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A = Full approval, proceed to manufacture  
 B = Proceed to manufacture, approved subject to client comments  
 C = Resubmit as per client comments



Project:  
 REVITALISING REDESDALE

Title:  
 INFO LECTERN TIMBER

Drawing No:  
 4669-001

Scale: 1:10 @ A1	Drawn:
Date: 10/07/2021	Sheet: 1 - 1
Ref No: -	Rev: A

# The Archaeological Practice Ltd.



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