



Camp Farm, Papcastle

Cumbria

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Prepared by: Paul Clark
Position: Project Officer
Date: May 2012

Checked by: Alan Lupton
Position: Operations Manager
Date: May 2012

Signed

A. Lupton

Approved by: Alan Lupton
Position: Operations Manager
Date: May 2012

Signed

A. Lupton

Oxford Archaeology North

Mill 3, Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1GF
t: (0044) 01524 541000
f: (0044) 01524 848606

© Oxford Archaeology Ltd (2012)

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0EA
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk
e: [oanorth@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarch.co.uk)

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SUMMARY

Between 19th and 23rd April 2012, OA North undertook a watching brief during alterations to the electricity network at Camp Farm, Papcastle by Electricity North West. The works comprised the repositioning of the stay wire attached to an existing pole, the installation of a new H pole, and the excavation of a trench to lay a cable from the new pole to Papcastle Road, through the garden of Camp Farm House and the field immediately to the north.

At their closest point the alterations were located *c* 50m south-west of the scheduled monument of *Derventio* Roman fort (SM 22499), but no features or finds dating to the Roman period were identified during the watching brief. Indeed, beyond sewers and a land drain, the only feature observed was a dump of roughly-shaped stone which appears to represent the discarded remains of a relatively recently dismantled section of field boundary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to Gregg Davies of Electricity North West for commissioning the work and to all the staff of Electricity North West who undertook the site work for their cooperation and assistance. Paul Clark undertook the watching brief and compiled this report. Mark Tidmarsh created the illustrations and Alan Lupton managed the project and edited this report.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Following a proposal from Electricity North West to carry out alterations to the electricity network at Camp Farm, Papcastle, the Historic Environment Officer (Development Control) at Cumbria Historic Environment Service advised that the works be carried out under archaeological supervision. The works comprised the repositioning of the stay wire attached to pole 073206, the installation of a new H pole, numbered 073207, and the excavation of a trench to lay a cable from the pole to Papcastle Road, through the garden of Camp Farm House and the field immediately to the north. Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) were subsequently commissioned to undertake a watching brief during the alterations, which took place from 19th to 23rd April 2012.

1.2 SITE LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 1.2.1 The village of Papcastle lies in north-west Cumbria, on the north-western edge of the Lake District, with the agricultural lands of the Solway Plain to the north. It lies approximately 35km south-west of Carlisle and *c* 2km west-north-west of Cockermouth (Fig 1), and occupies an elevated position on the north bank of the River Derwent. Camp Farm House lies towards the western extent of the village, to the north of Papcastle Road. The groundworks were located *c* 50m south-west of the Roman fort (*Section 1.3.4*) at their closest point, slightly down slope of it.
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology of the area around Papcastle is composed of Kirkstile slates, which, as part of the Skiddaw group, are the oldest rocks exposed in the Cumbrian mountains (Jackson 1978, 79). The Kirkstile slates are blue-grey striped, silty mudstones (*ibid*). The soils are from the Brickfield 3 Association, which are essentially clays (*ibid*).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 ***Prehistoric Period:*** little is known of the prehistoric period in the immediate vicinity of Papcastle, although this is probably more a reflection of the lack of organised and systematic fieldwork in the area rather than any real absence of activity. A late neolithic or early Bronze Age stone circle is known nearby at Elva Plain (Rollinson 1967, 16), and a Bronze Age collared urn has been recovered from Papcastle (*op cit*, 22). This would suggest burial activity in the area, although no other evidence has been found to date.
- 1.3.2 By the Iron Age, the area may have been part of the tribal federation of the Brigantes, which appears to have dominated much of the North (Salway 1993, 36, 126; Cunliffe 1991). The local tribal unit was known as the Carvetii during the Roman period (Higham and Jones 1985). Again, little Iron Age activity has been recognised in the area, but this is probably more a reflection of the lack of a distinct 'Iron Age' culture, rather than any real lack of activity *per se*.

- 1.3.3 **Roman Period:** the Roman occupation in the North West is known to have begun in the early AD 70s (Shotter 2004, 26). By the end of the first century AD, a frontier had probably been established across the Tyne-Solway isthmus (Hodgson 2000), on the line of a Roman road known from the medieval period as the Stanegate. In the AD 120s, the frontier was formalised as a continuous barrier by the Emperor Hadrian, known today as Hadrian's Wall. Behind this, a network of forts, roads and other settlements was established in the hinterland.
- 1.3.4 The fort at Papcastle (*Derventio*; Rivet and Smith 1981, 334) occupied a strategically important site, on a hill overlooking fertile agricultural land, close to a fording point on the River Derwent, and with good road connections to other forts in the area, including Old Carlisle, Maryport, Moresby and Brougham (Collingwood 1913, 131). A fort may have been established as early as the late first century AD (Shotter 2004, 62), although evidence is lacking. Pottery from the site suggests a pre-Hadrianic presence (Birley 1963, 111), whilst the earliest occupation levels within the settlement south of the fort are seemingly of late first/early second-century date (Olivier *et al* in prep); however, no trace of a Flavian/Trajanic fort has yet been found. Indeed, with the exception of the ceramic evidence, which does suggest second-century occupation on the fort site, there is as yet very little firm indication, in the form of securely dated buildings or defences, for the existence of a fort before the second half of the second century, although the occupation evidence from the area south of the later fort clearly indicates an earlier military presence. On present evidence, it has been suggested that Papcastle may be an early second-century foundation, replacing an earlier fort at Caermote (Breeze 1988, 13 and fig 1).
- 1.3.5 The known stone fort was probably built in the late second or early third century, although even this is not entirely certain (Birley 1963, 121). At approximately 2.8ha (*c* 7 acres) it was larger than most of the forts in the area, leading to the suggestion that it may have been a key site with special command responsibilities, perhaps related to securing the rich agricultural lands of the Solway Plain (Shotter 2004, 62, 115) and keeping watch over the Lakeland mountains to the south (Birley 1963, 120). Occupation appears to have been continuous into the second half of the fourth century (*ibid*). In the south-east quadrant, excavations in 2004 revealed a fourth-century stone barrack that had been partly demolished later in the century (Giecco in prep). At least some of the surviving walls were then rebuilt in timber, employing large boulders as post-pads (*ibid*). A stone or stone-footed barrack of fourth-century date was also found to the north during excavations in 1961-2 (Charlesworth 1965).
- 1.3.6 In view of the fort's size, it was long suspected that its third-century garrison was likely to have been a 500-strong cavalry regiment (Birley 1963, 122), quite possibly one of several quingenary *alae* that are known to have been in Britain during the third century but whose whereabouts at that date are unknown. Subsequently, one of these units, the *ala I Tungrorum*, was confirmed as the likely third/fourth-century garrison by the discovery of seven lead baggage sealings within the fort in 2004 (Giecco in prep).
- 1.3.7 In addition to the fort itself, Papcastle has long been known as the site of a considerable Roman civilian settlement (Birley 1963). This developed south of the fort during the second century and parts at least continued to be occupied until the mid-fourth century or

later (Olivier *et al* in prep; OA North 2008). Antiquarian observations suggested that the settlement may have been enclosed by a rampart and ditch (Birley 1963, 106-7), but this has not yet been confirmed by excavation. What was probably the fort bath-house was observed in the mid-eighteenth century, probably somewhere within Sibby Brows Field (*op cit*, 102-3). Excavations by the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit (CLAU, now OA North) in the part of the vicus immediately to the south of the fort, an area known as the 'Burroughs', revealed several phases of structural and industrial activity dating from some time before the mid-second century and continuing into the early third century (Olivier *et al* in prep). This took place within bounded plots and was represented by waterlogged deposits, post-built structures, timber storage containers and furnaces/fire boxes. These were replaced in the third century by a monumental stone structure, possibly a temple (an interpretation supported by the discovery of an extremely fine, small statuette of the satyr Marsyas from a related deposit), which had been built on a raised platform, and other, smaller, stone buildings (*ibid*). A not dissimilar multiphase sequence was identified during the Time Team evaluation at Derwent Lodge Cottage and Sibby Brows Field, both within the vicus to the south of the fort (OA North 2008). At Derwent Lodge Cottage, a succession of poorly preserved, probably timber, structures, dating to the second to third century, was replaced by a possible monumental stone building on a massive clay and cobble foundation. Probable timber strip buildings were constructed on the site in the fourth century. The remains in Sibby Brows Field were dated to around the late first to early second century AD, and comprised drainage features, cobbled surfaces and the remains of a probable timber structure (*ibid*).

- 1.3.8 **Early Medieval Period:** the date at which the garrison at Papcastle ceased to exist is uncertain, and little is known of the area in the post-Roman period. Evidence of early medieval activity is, however, known from nearby church sites containing pre-Norman sculpture, such as those as Bridekirk, Brigham and Isel (Bailey and Cramp 1988). In addition, a possible burial with Scandinavian affinities may have existed at Brigham, where a ring-headed pin was found beneath the church tower (Edwards 1998).
- 1.3.9 **Medieval Period:** the name Papcastle first appears in AD 1260 as *Pabecastr*, presumably from *caestre* (Old English), meaning fort, and *papi* (Old Norse), a hermit (Armstrong *et al* 1971, 308-9). This perhaps indicates that Papcastle was a Christian site of some antiquity. Antiquarian sources suggest that Papcastle was the centre of a pre-Norman lordship until the end of the eleventh century (Nicolson and Burn 1777, 69) but Norman administrative power was established in nearby Cockermouth (Winchester 1986). Cockermouth was then a new settlement, established to encourage urban and market functions in the region (*ibid*). It was established at the gates of a castle built in 1134, which, tradition has it, incorporated stones from the fort at Papcastle in its construction (Winter 1992, 1).
- 1.3.10 It seems that Papcastle continued as a manor of some importance, however, coming by marriage into the hands of Gilbert Pipard, who was one of Henry II's judges in the mid-twelfth century. It is likely that he built a castle, known as Pipard's castle, and this has led to some confusion over the origin of the name Papcastle. The lands subsequently passed by marriage to several of the foremost families in the county, including the Lucys, Multons and Dacres, being forfeited to the Crown, for an act of rebellion by the last of the Dacres in 1569, during the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1596, it was granted to Launcelot Salkeld, Thomas

Braithwaite and Richard Tolson (Nicolson and Burn 1777, 105).

- 1.3.11 Papcastle is traditionally viewed as the site of a leper hospital, known as St Leonard's, dating to the mid-thirteenth century and apparently under the control of the Dominican friars at Carlisle (Wiseman 1987, 87). Field names just to the east of the village, such as Spital Ing, attest to this. Whilst no specific reference to a hospital has been identified, the Cockermouth Castle Court Rolls do refer to a St Leonard's chapel and hermitage (*ibid*).
- 1.3.12 **Post-medieval Period:** some of the land owned by Launcelot Salkeld, Thomas Braithwaite and Richard Tolson was subsequently sold on to Sir Thomas Lamplugh, who gave it to his wife Agnes, the daughter of Thomas Braithwaite (Nicolson and Burn 1777, 105). Papcastle was known as a site of some antiquity from at least the sixteenth century onwards, and is depicted as a Roman ruin on maps included in Camden's *Britannia* (Birley 1963, 97). Antiquarian accounts from the eighteenth century, including those by Stukeley, mention stone remains, likely to be Roman, in the vicinity of Papcastle (*ibid*).

1.4 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

- 1.4.1 A detailed and extensive review of the antiquarian references to Roman activity in Papcastle was undertaken by Eric Birley in 1963 (Birley 1963). The first formal excavations, conducted by R G Collingwood in 1912 and mostly concentrated in the north-east corner of the known stone fort, found evidence for two phases of stone defences (Collingwood 1913). The earlier phase could not be dated, but was presumed to be second-century, whilst the later phase was believed to be late second- or early third-century, possibly Severan (*op cit*, 141). Pottery dating from the first century to the fourth century was recovered, suggesting a long period of occupation. Other excavated features included the remains of the east gate, and a stone building outside this gate.
- 1.4.2 Further excavations were carried out within the fort in 1961-2 (Charlesworth 1965), close to the east gate identified by Collingwood. These indicated the possible existence of an earlier timber gate and revealed drains and a possible bath-house connected to the commanding officer's quarters. Traces of a timber barrack block beneath a later stone barrack were also found (*op cit*, 103). This timber phase could not be dated, whilst the overlying stone building was seemingly of fourth-century date (*op cit*, 105), although the small samian assemblage was predominantly Antonine (Birley 1963). Extensive levelling of the fort site in the late third or early fourth century was suggested as an explanation for the absence of later second- and third-century levels (Charlesworth 1965, 105).
- 1.4.3 In 1984, an extensive excavation was undertaken by the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeological Unit (CLAU) at The Burroughs, within the extramural settlement to the south of the fort (Olivier *et al* in prep). Several phases of activity were identified, the earliest, seemingly of late Flavian/Trajanic to Hadrianic date, represented by two phases of waterlogged timber structures and other organic strata associated with hearths/furnaces, drains, and storage hoppers, and surrounded by a ditch (*ibid*). Following a possible short abandonment, a further sequence of timber buildings was erected in the late Hadrianic/Antonine period, some of which had been constructed on clay and cobble platforms. The latest of these structures went out of use in the early third century and was

replaced by a monumental stone building with substantial foundations, 1.5m wide, set on a stone-revetted clay and cobble platform (*ibid*). A road aligned north to south was also found. The function of this structure, which probably continued in use into the late third-early fourth century, is unclear, but the apparent presence within it of a large hearth or oven would seem to rule out its identification as a temple, unless this was used for sacrificial purposes. Other possible interpretations include a bath-house or a *mansio* (an official residence associated with imperial communications). Following the demolition of this building in the late third-early fourth century, a gravel surface was laid. Slight traces of one or more timber structures, presumably of fourth-century date, were also recorded (*ibid*).

- 1.4.4 In 1989, archaeological work was carried out during the construction of the Papcastle bypass, to the north and west of the fort and *vicus* (Turnbull 1991). An area 20 x 10m was excavated after a geophysical survey recorded the presence of strong anomalies in the area immediately north of the River Derwent, near to the Papcastle Sewage Works (NY 1024 3125). Upon excavation, the anomalies were revealed to be a north/south aligned ditch, approximately 1m wide, which had been infilled in two phases. The fills contained Romano-British pottery, and evenly spaced iron nails, as if derived from a fence line. The ditch was interpreted as a field boundary possibly for enclosing arable land.
- 1.4.5 In March 1998, a programme of archaeological work was carried by Channel 4's *Time Team*, in conjunction with the Carlisle Archaeological Unit (OA North 2008). The work consisted of geophysical surveying and the excavation of four trenches to the south of the fort, two in the gardens of Derwent Lodge Cottage (Trenches A and B) and two in Sibby Brows Field, to the south-west (Trenches C and D). Trenches A and B were placed in an area of known extramural activity; the field in which Trenches C and D were situated had not previously produced evidence for Roman occupation, although antiquarian observations suggested that the field may have been the site of the fort's bath-house. Trenches A and B revealed a complex sequence of Roman activity, with at least five identifiable phases of occupation. The earliest, probably dated to the first half of the second century, consisted of soil deposits, whilst the second comprised a possible floor overlain by soil. The third phase comprised ephemeral traces of a possible timber structure dating to the first half of the third century, which was succeeded, perhaps in the third century, by what was probably a monumental stone building, represented in the archaeological record by a massive clay and cobble foundation. The final phase of Roman occupation comprised two timber structures, probably of the strip-building type, erected on footings of large sandstone blocks set on shallow layers of cobbles and broken sandstone. The associated pottery indicated a fourth-century date. Three phases of Roman activity were recorded in Trench C, with the two earliest phases comprising a small ditch, which was sealed by a soil build-up, overlain by a metallised surface associated with a probable beam slot. The final phase was represented by two clay and cobble wall foundations, one of which supported two courses of clay-bonded sandstone masonry. In Trench D, where only the latest Roman levels were exposed, a metallised surface, bounded to the south by a stone-lined drain, was found. The discovery of occupation levels in Trenches C and D, combined with the results of the geophysical survey, suggested that the Roman settlement was considerably larger than had hitherto been thought, and may have been laid out, in part at least, with a regular street pattern (*ibid*).

- 1.4.6 A watching brief to the south of Braeside House, south of the fort, undertaken in 2001 by the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (Lancaster University Archaeological Unit 2001). Three archaeological features were recorded: a probable post-medieval well; an undated feature cut by the well; and a possible Roman pit or ditch. In addition, a few Roman artefacts were recovered, but these were not clearly associated with surviving archaeological deposits.
- 1.4.7 The most substantive recent excavation at Papcastle was carried out in 2004 by North Pennines Archaeology adjacent to Derventio House (Giecco in prep), in the south-east quadrant of the fort. Up to five phases of occupation were identified, seemingly extending from the first half of the second century to the late fourth century (*ibid*), although most of the activity appears to have been of fourth-century date rather than earlier. Part of a probable timber barrack block was revealed; this was thought to be possibly Hadrianic, although the samian assemblage from the site showed a strong bias towards the second half of the second century, with no South Gaulish material present and very little of the Hadrianic-early Antonine period (Wild in prep). This structure was replaced by a stone or stone-footed barrack, seemingly of fourth-century date. As with the excavations of 1961-2, the absence of late second- and third-century deposits was attributed to extensive levelling of the site, probably in the later third- or early fourth century. The stone barrack underwent extensive modification in the later fourth century, when much of the building seems to have been demolished, and may have been replaced at an even later date by a timber structure in which large boulders were employed as post-pads (Giecco in prep). Several lead baggage sealings of *ala I Tungrorum* were recovered, suggesting that this unit formed the garrison in the third-fourth century (Caruana in prep).
- 1.4.8 A community geophysical survey on the environs of Papcastle, led by Grampus Heritage (Graham 2011), was undertaken in 2009, revealing significant remains across the area surveyed. This led to an archaeological evaluation on land to the south of the River Derwent, adjacent to Low Road, Cockermouth, in 2010, by North Pennines Archaeology Ltd (Giecco and Jackson, 2011). The evaluation revealed significant Romano-British features in each of the eight trenches excavated, with the majority of the surviving features dating to a period of intensive occupation extending from the early second-century through to the late third-century, with some level of occupation extending into the fourth-century. The make-up of the settlement was mixed including timber buildings located within small enclosures with signs of small-scale industrial activity and more extensive structures with substantial stone foundations with possible military connections, including a water mill and associated mill race. A possible early marching camp and a circular feature measuring approximately 60m in diameter of unknown function were also identified (*ibid*).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1.1 A programme of field observation accurately recorded the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. This work comprised observation during the excavation for these works, including trenches for cables, stay wires and the new pole, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.
- 2.1.2 Putative archaeological features and deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, were cleaned by hand, using either hoe, shovel scraping, and/or trowel depending on the subsoil conditions, and where appropriate sections were studied and drawn.
- 2.1.3 Recording comprised a full description and preliminary classification of features and materials revealed, and their accurate location (on plan and/or section). Features were planned accurately at appropriate scales. A photographic record was undertaken simultaneously.

2.2 ARCHIVE

- 2.2.1 The results of all archaeological work carried out will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991) and the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the IFA in that organisation's code of conduct.

3 RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 The work observed comprised the erection of a new H pole, numbered 073207, in the field to the north of Camp Farm House, the laying of a cable from this pole to Papcastle Road, and the repositioning of the stay wire attached to pole 073206 (Fig 2). The below ground disturbance associated with the erection of the new pole consisted of two trenches, measuring 1m x 0.5m x 2m deep, for the wooden poles (Plate 1), and a trench for the stay wires, measuring 4m x 0.6m x 1.5m deep. The cable was laid in a trench that measured 75m x 0.7m x 0.7m deep, through both the field to the north of Camp Farm House and the garden of Camp Farm House (Plates 2 and 3). An additional 18m of 0.6m wide trench was excavated to 0.6m deep, in the vicinity of the new H pole, for an earth cable (*ibid*). The trench for the stay wire attached to pole 073206 measured 2m x 0.5m x 1.5m deep (Plate 4).
- 3.1.2 The excavations in the field to the north of Camp House Farm were undertaken using a tracked mini digger equipped with a 0.5m wide toothed bucket. This field was under pasture prior to excavation. The excavation of the cable trench in the garden of Camp Farm House, was undertaken using a tracked mini digger equipped with a 0.3m wide toothless bucket and was excavated through both lawn and flower beds.

3.2 RESULTS

- 3.2.1 In the field to the north of Camp Farm House, from the new H pole to the boundary with Camp Farm House, the stratigraphy revealed comprised dark brownish-grey sandy-silt topsoil, which varied in depth between 0.25m and 0.5m, overlying a light yellowish-brown boulder clay, containing frequent stones, which was the natural geology. No significant archaeological remains were revealed, with the only proven anthropogenic activity evidenced by a small dump of roughly-shaped stone. Relatively recent pottery was also discovered within the dump material. All finds recovered from the topsoil were also of relatively recent date.
- 3.2.2 The trench for the stay for pole 073206 revealed a similar stratigraphy, of topsoil overlying boulder clay, to that seen further south, although the natural geology was significantly less stony here. No archaeological features were observed within this trench.
- 3.2.3 The southernmost part of the cable trench within the garden of Camp Farm House was excavated entirely within the backfill of a pair of sewer pipes; the only finds recovered from the backfill comprised modern pottery. Further north within the garden the stratigraphy exposed comprised topsoil, overlying the natural boulder clay. A single ceramic land drain was the only feature observed. No artefacts were recovered from this portion of trench.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 DISCUSSION

- 4.1.1 Given the proximity of the groundworks to the Roman fort it is perhaps somewhat surprising that no finds or features dating to the Roman period were identified during the watching brief; however, it is difficult to know whether this represents a genuine lack of Roman activity in the area, or whether it is merely a function of the relatively small amount of ground disturbance caused by the alterations.
- 4.1.2 Beyond sewers and a land drain, the only feature observed was the dump of roughly-shaped stone located close to the northern boundary of Camp Farm House. This probably represents the remains of a relatively recently dismantled section of field boundary and is not considered to be archaeologically significant.

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6 ILLUSTRATIONS

6.1 PLATES

Plate 1: East-facing view of trench for H pole 073207

Plate 2: North-east-facing view of cable trench within field to north of Camp Farm House

Plate 3: North-facing view of cable trench within garden of Camp Farm House

Plate 4: South-west-facing view of trench for stay wire for pole 073206

6.2 FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Plan of groundworks

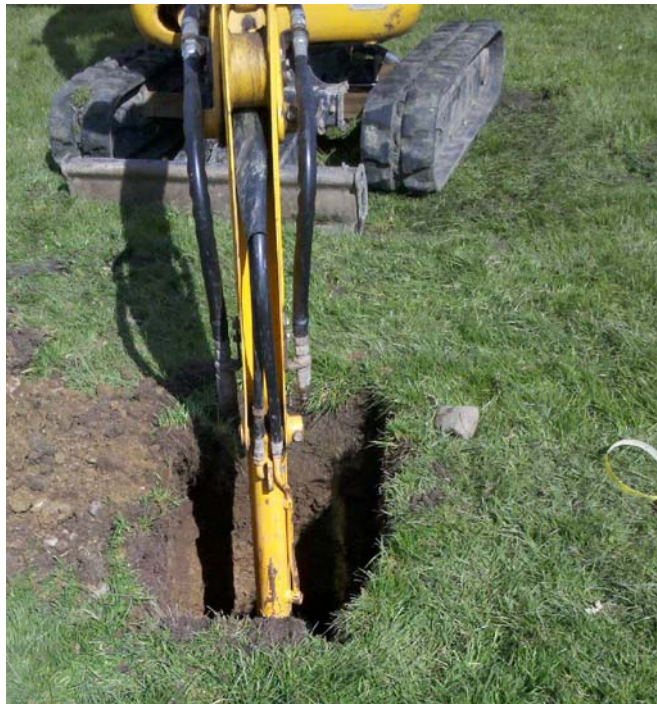


Plate 1: East-facing view of trench for H pole 073207



Plate 2: North-east-facing view of cable trench within field to north of Camp Farm House



Plate 3: North-facing view of cable trench within garden of Camp Farm House



Plate 4: South-west-facing view of trench for stay wire for pole 073206

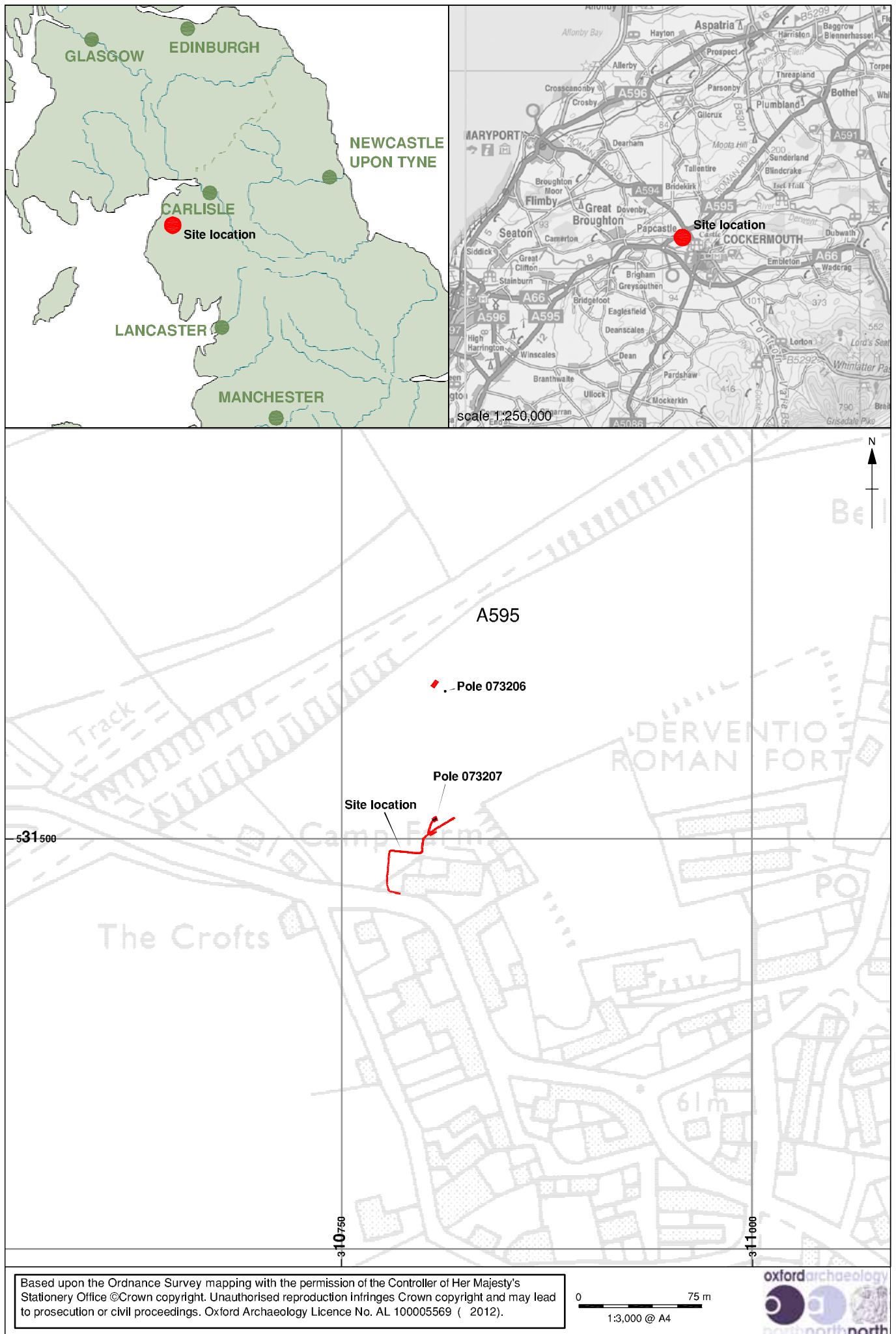


Figure 1: Site location

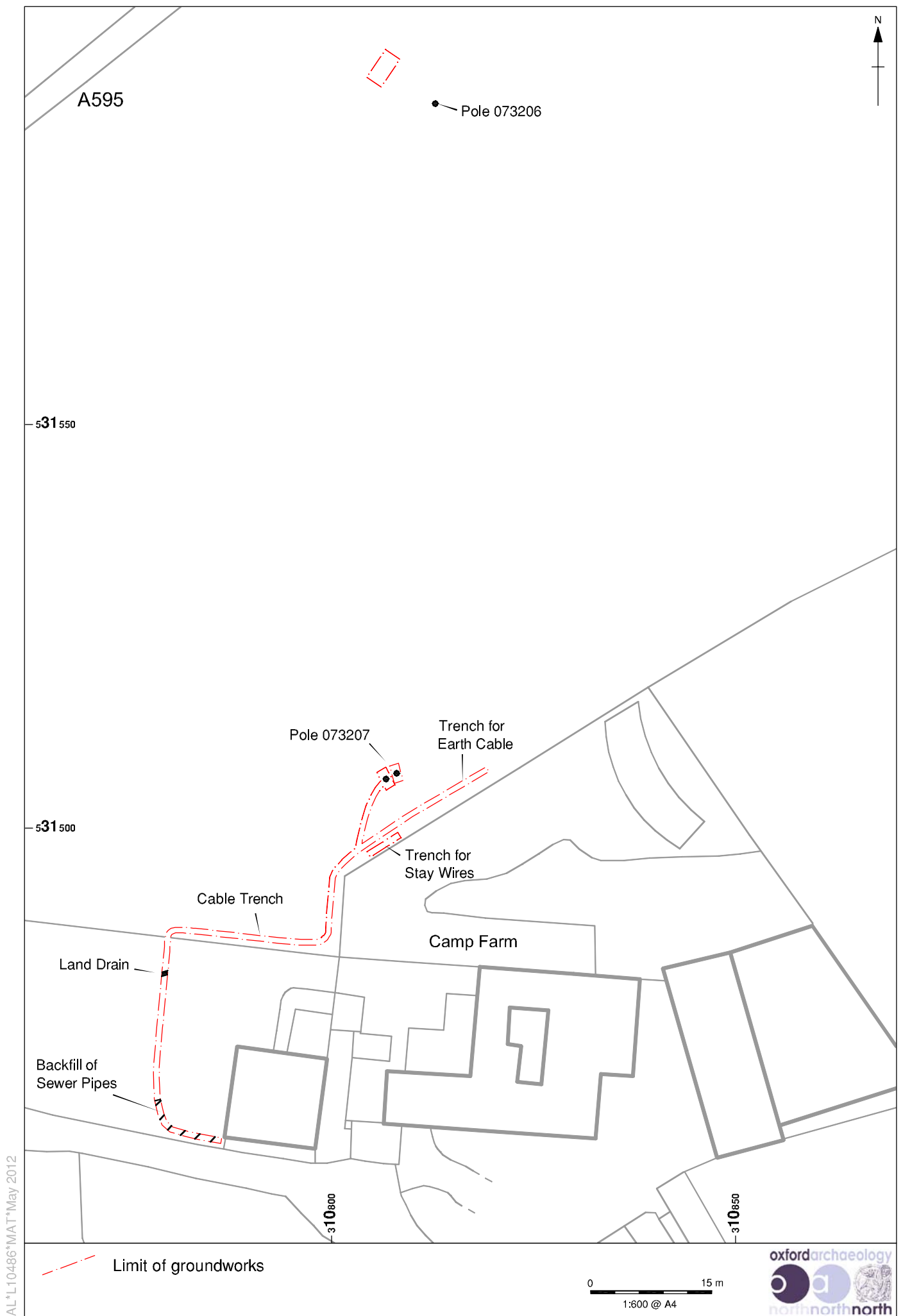


Figure 2: Plan of groundworks