



# SEGEDUNUM ROMAN FORT, WALLSEND TYNE AND WEAR

## Archaeological Watching Brief



**Oxford Archaeology North**

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## SUMMARY

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The Countryside Agency commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to design and install seven information panels along the length of the Hadrian's Wall National Trail Path, from Solway to Wallsend. One of the panels is to be situated at Segedunum Roman Fort, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear (NGR NZ 30143 65947). In order to install the information panel a watching brief was required during the groundworks as a condition to the planning consent (Planning Application No 05/00412/ADV) granted by North Tyneside Council due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site. The permanent presence watching brief was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

A single post-hole was manually excavated entirely through imported or redeposited topsoil and no archaeological deposits were encountered nor disturbed during the work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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OA North would like to thank David McGlade of the Countryside Agency for commissioning the project, and Mr David Entwistle of Malcolm Lane and Son for his assistance on site during installation. Thanks are also extended to Tyne and Wear Museums for their cooperation.

The watching brief was undertaken by David Tonks, who also wrote the report. The drawings were compiled by Christina Clarke, and the project was managed by Emily Mercer who also edited the report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

1.1.1 The Countryside Agency has commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) to design and install seven information panels along the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, from Solway to Wallsend. Following the submission of a planning application (ref: 05/00412/ADV) by OA North on behalf of the Countryside Agency, to erect an interpretation panel at the south-east corner of Segedunum Roman Fort, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear (NGR NZ 30143 65947, Fig 1), North Tyneside Council (NTC) granted consent with a condition that an archaeological watching brief be conducted during any groundworks due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site. In accordance, OA North carried out the watching brief on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006 during the excavation of a post-hole. This report sets out the results in the form of a short document.

### 1.2 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

1.2.1 Segedunum Roman Fort is located in Wallsend, an eastern suburb of modern-day Newcastle-upon-Tyne, directly north of the Swan Hunter shipyard on the River Tyne (Fig 1). The fort is located on flat ground on the north bank of the river and there is a steep incline down the bank to the south of the fort towards the shipyard. An old inclined plane, now a pedestrian footpath and cycleway, runs obliquely north-east/south-west across the embankment. The site of the information panel is on the northern verge of the pathway, adjacent to an exposed section of Hadrian's Wall, near to the south-east corner of the fort (Fig 2).

1.2.2 The area of the Tyne and Wear Lowlands is an undulating landform formed by the incisions of the rivers Tyne and Wear and their tributaries (Countryside Commission 1998, 65). The area is generally characterised by widespread urban and industrial development with the concomitant expanse of a dense network of major road and rail links (*ibid*). The area is underlain almost entirely by Coal Measure rocks of Upper Carboniferous age comprising mainly a succession of shales, sandstones and coal seams (*op cit*, 66). The solid geology is overlain by a mantle of glacial debris, mainly boulder clay or till, deposited during the last glaciation (*ibid*). The soils are otherwise unsurveyed and classified only as urban (Ordnance Survey 1983).

### 1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.3.1 Wallsend derives its name from its position at the east end of Hadrian's Wall (Mills 1998; Collingwood Bruce 1978, 55), the same location at which the Romans had first built a fort, *Segedunum*, meaning "strong" or "victory" fort (Breeze forthcoming). The fort covers an area of 1.66 ha (4.1 acres) (*ibid*) and was extensively excavated between 1975 to 1984. It was first discovered in 1903 during the expansion of the neighbouring Swan Hunter shipyard in order to build the famous passenger liner *Mauretania* (Griffiths 2000, 40). More

recently, it was excavated during its preparation for display in 1999 (Breeze forthcoming).

- 1.3.2 Where the Wall joins the fort from the west, it is of one build and narrow gauge, which suggests that it was built during the second phase of planning of the Hadrianic frontier. The new plan included the whole of the Wall from Newcastle to Wallsend (Collingwood Bruce 1978, 42). The internal buildings of the fort were initially constructed of stone or timber and included granaries, barracks, storehouses, military headquarters, the commander's house and what has been interpreted as a hospital (Breeze forthcoming). The earlier timber buildings were all replaced in stone in the late second century AD (*ibid*) and there were modifications to the defences in the early third century AD. In the second quarter of the third century AD, major changes were undertaken including the demolition and reconstruction of the barracks (*ibid*). The nature of the restructuring might imply a reduction of men stationed at the fort at this time, or possibly that more cavalrymen were garrisoned in proportion to infantrymen (*ibid*).
- 1.3.3 It appears that the *vicus*, the civilian settlement associated with the fort, extended along the north bank of the river (Collingwood Bruce 1978, 58) and was abandoned by the late third century AD, although minor amendments to the fort continued into the fourth century AD (Breeze forthcoming). The fort is presently a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is open to the public as a museum.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 A project design (*Appendix 1*) was submitted by OA North and approved by NTC. This was adhered to in full and the work was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists and generally accepted best practice.

### 2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 Close liaison was maintained between OA North staff and the site contractors during the watching brief. The programme comprised observation during the excavation of a post-hole with, where appropriate, the examination and recording of any archaeological horizons exposed and the recovery for analysis of any artefacts uncovered. In addition, a photographic record in colour slide and monochrome formats was compiled. The groundworks were undertaken manually with a pinch-bar and shovels.

### 2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full archive of the work undertaken has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The site archive, along with an index to the archive, will be deposited with the Museum of Antiquities in Newcastle University and a copy of the report sent to the Northumberland Sites and Monuments Record.



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### 3. RESULTS

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#### 3.1 OBSERVATIONS

- 3.1.1 *Introduction:* a single post-hole was excavated by hand just to the north of the cycleway and approximately 1.0m west of the extant Wall (Fig 2).
- 3.1.2 *Post-hole:* this measured 0.4m x 0.4m x 0.52m (Plate 1) and the excavated material entirely comprised loose dark-grey/black sandy-clay topsoil with inclusions of modern litter and other debris. Two unworked sandstone fragments were removed as part of the upcast during the excavation.
- 3.1.3 The interpretation panel was installed (Plate 2) and there were no archaeological horizons encountered and no finds recovered during the works.

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## 4. DISCUSSION

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### 4.1 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 The sandstone fragments removed in the spoil from the excavations may have once formed core material of the Wall, but they had evidently been re-deposited and, consequently, are of little archaeological significance.
- 4.1.2 The post-hole was excavated entirely through made ground comprising imported or re-deposited topsoil and there was no damage to the monument during the groundworks.
- 4.1.3 There is no requirement or recommendations for further archaeological works to be conducted.

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## 5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Fig 2: Watching Brief Location Plan

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Plate 1: Post-hole facing north

Plate 2: Interpretation panel in position, facing north



Figure 1: Site Location

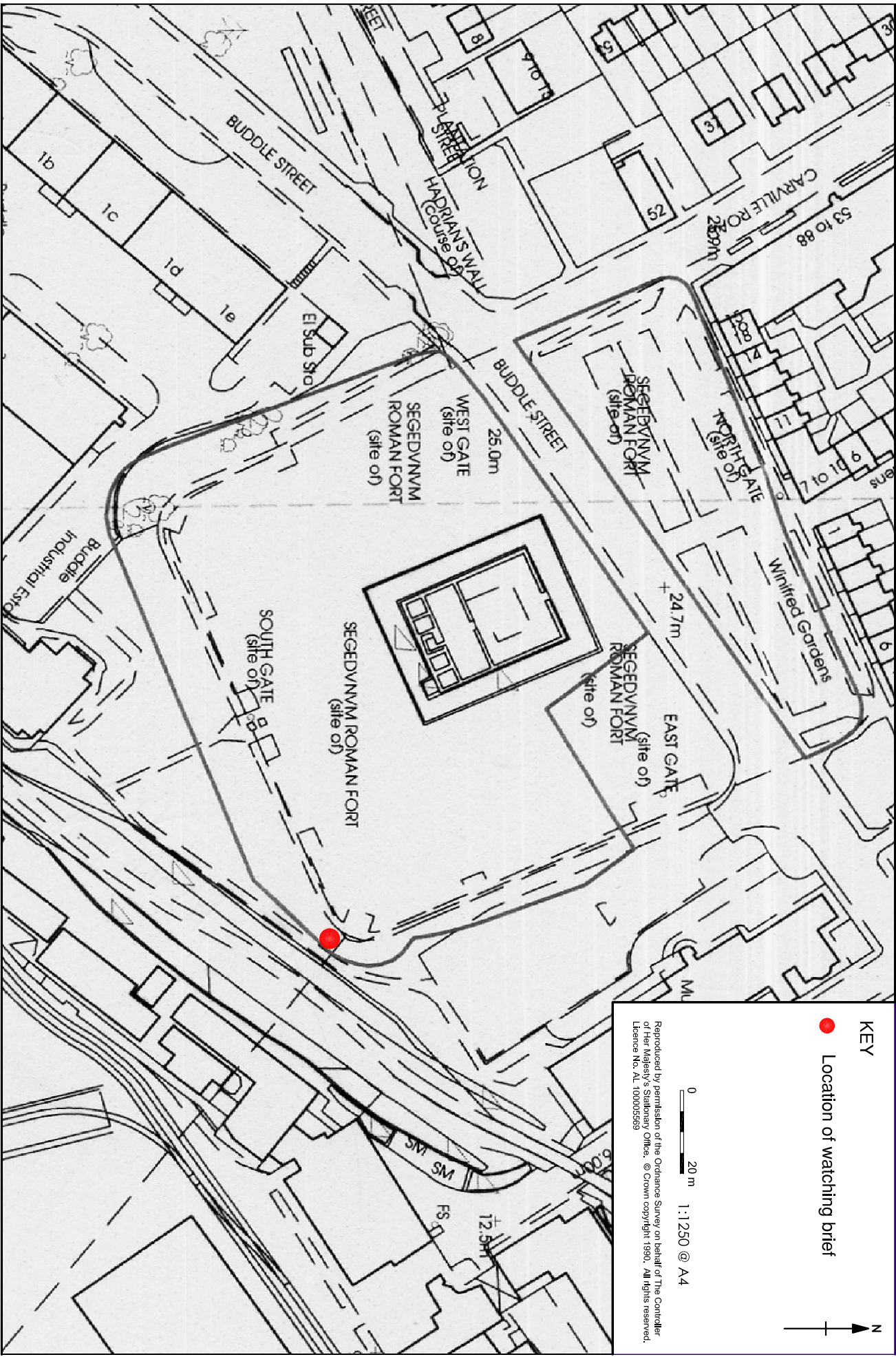


Figure 2: Watching brief location plan



Plate 1: Post-hole, facing north



Plate 2: Interpretation panel in position, facing north

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## APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 North Tyneside Council has requested Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) submit proposals to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the erection of an interpretation panel for the Hadrian's Wall National Trail on behalf of the Countryside Agency. The panel will be sited on land to the south of Segedunum Roman Fort. The planning application has been approved subject to a condition for an archaeological presence during the groundworks (Planning Application No 05/00412/ADV).

#### 1.2 OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

1.2.1 Oxford Archaeology North has considerable experience of excavation of sites of all periods, having undertaken a great number of small and large scale projects throughout Northern England during the past 24 years. Evaluations, assessments, watching briefs and excavations have taken place within the planning process, to fulfil the requirements of clients and planning authorities, to very rigorous timetables.

1.2.2 OA North has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. OA North is an Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) **registered organisation, registration number 17**, and all its members of staff operate subject to the IFA Code of Conduct.

### 2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The following programme has been designed to identify any surviving archaeological deposits and provide for accurate recording of any archaeological remains that are disturbed by ground works for the proposed panel.

2.2 **Watching brief:** to carry out a watching brief during associated ground disturbance, to determine the quality, extent and importance of any archaeological remains on the site.

2.3 **Report and Archive:** a report will be produced within eight weeks of completion of the fieldwork. A site archive will be produced to English Heritage guidelines (MAP 2) and in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990).

### 3 METHOD STATEMENT

#### 3.1 WATCHING BRIEF

3.1.1 **Methodology:** a programme of field observation will accurately record the location, extent, and character of any surviving archaeological features and/or deposits within the proposed ground disturbance. This work will comprise observation during the excavation for the panel lectern mount, the systematic examination of any subsoil horizons exposed during the course of the groundworks, and the accurate recording of all archaeological features and horizons, and any artefacts, identified during observation.

3.1.2 The watching brief will cover the whole of the area to be disturbed by the development including building foundations, service trenches and other earthmoving activities.

3.1.3 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified by the machining process, together with the immediate vicinity of any such features, will be cleaned by hand, using either hoes, shovel scraping, and/or trowels depending on the subsoil conditions, and where appropriate sections will be studied and drawn. Any such features will be sample excavated (ie. selected



pits and post-holes will normally only be half-sectioned, linear features will be subject to no more than a 10% sample, and extensive layers will, where possible, be sampled by partial rather than complete removal).

3.1.4 During this phase of work, recording will comprise a full description and preliminary classification of features or materials revealed, and their accurate location (either on plan and/or section, and as grid co-ordinates where appropriate). Features will be planned accurately at appropriate scales and annotated on to a large-scale plan. A photographic record will be undertaken simultaneously.

3.1.5 A plan will be produced of the areas of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.

## 3.2 ARCHIVE/REPORT

3.2.1 **Archive:** 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 (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the HER (the index to the archive and a copy of the report). OA North practice is to deposit the original record archive of projects (paper, magnetic and plastic media) with the County Record Office, and a full copy of the record archive (microform or microfiche) together with the material archive (artefacts, ecofacts, and samples) with an appropriate museum.

3.2.2 **Report:** one bound copy and a digital copy supplied as pdf files will be submitted to Tyne and Wear HER within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork. Any finds recovered will be assessed with reference to other local material and any particular or unusual features of the assemblage will be highlighted. The report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived.

3.2.3 **Confidentiality:** all internal reports to the client are designed as documents for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in the project brief and project design, and should be treated as such. They are not suitable for publication as academic documents or otherwise without amendment or revision.

## 4 HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.1 OA North provides a Health and Safety Statement for all projects and maintains a Unit Safety policy. All site procedures are in accordance with the guidance set out in the Health and Safety Manual compiled by the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (1997). OA North will liaise with the client to ensure all health and safety regulations are met. A risk assessment will be completed in advance of any on-site works. It is assumed that any information regarding health and safety issues on site will be made available by the client to OA North prior to the work commencing on site.

## 5 WORK TIMETABLE

5.1 The duration of the archaeological presence for the watching brief is likely to be one day on site.

5.2 The client report will be completed within approximately eight weeks following completion of the fieldwork.

## 6 STAFFING

6.1 The project will be under the direct management of **Emily Mercer BA (Hons) MSc AIFA** (OA North Senior Project Manager) to whom all correspondence should be addressed.

6.2 The watching brief and any subsequent excavation will be supervised in the field by an OA North project supervisor.

6.3 Assessment of the finds from the evaluation will be undertaken under the auspices of OA North's in-house finds specialist **Chris Howard-Davis** (OA North project officer). Chris acts as OA North's in-house finds specialist and has extensive knowledge of all finds of all periods from archaeological sites in northern England.

7 INSURANCE

7.1 OA North has a professional indemnity cover to a value of £2,000,000; proof of which can be supplied as required.

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English Heritage, 1991, *Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edn, London

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC), 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of archives for long-term storage*, London

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