



ERRINGTON ARMS INN, STAGSHAW CORBRIDGE NORTHUMBERLAND

Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology North

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SUMMARY

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 alongside the Errington Arms Inn, Stagshaw, Corbridge, Northumberland (NGR NY 9874 6863). The site lies within the scheduled area of National Monument No 26047, between the course of the Vallum and Hadrian's Wall.

Planning consent was provided by Tynedale Council (ref: 20050160), with a condition for a permanent archaeological presence required during any groundworks. Due to the scheduled status, the work also required Scheduled Monument Consent which was granted by the DCMS and monitored by English Heritage. Unlike the other six installation sites where the panel would be mounted on a lectern, English Heritage required the panel to be mounted on a coarse stone plinth, with limestone mortar, considered to be more sympathetic to its rural location. The watching brief was carried out during the construction and associated groundworks of the plinth on 21st August 2006.

A single shallow trench was manually excavated entirely through topsoil and no archaeological deposits were encountered nor disturbed during the work. No further recommendations were made for archaeological intervention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OA North would like to thank David McGlade of the Countryside Agency for commissioning the project, and Alan Gledson, also of the Countryside Agency for his assistance on site. Thanks are also extended to IDEEL Developments and to Punch Taverns for their permission to site the panel within the grounds of the Errington Arms Inn.

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 The Countryside Agency 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: 20050160), by OA North on behalf of the Countryside Agency, to erect an interpretation panel to the south of the Errington Arms Inn, Stagshaw, Corbridge, Northumberland (NGR NY 9874 6863, Fig 1), Tynedale Council granted consent with a condition that an archaeological watching brief be conducted during any groundworks due to the archaeological sensitivity of the site.
- 1.1.2 The site also lies within the scheduled area of National Monument No 26047, between the course of the Vallum and Hadrian's Wall. Therefore, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was provided by DCMS and monitored by English Heritage. One of the conditions of the SMC was that the panel was to be mounted on a coarse stone plinth, bonded with limestone mortar, which was considered to be more sympathetic to its rural location, unlike the other six installation sites where the panel would be mounted on a lectern.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with the planning condition and SMC conditions, OA North carried out the watching brief on 21st August 2006 during the excavation of a shallow trench to accommodate a stone plinth. This report sets out the results of the watching brief in the form of a short document.

1.2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.2.1 The Errington Arms Inn is located on a relatively new roundabout immediately west of the A68. It is proposed to locate the interpretation board on the landscaped lawns to the south of the Inn and east of its car park (Fig 2, Plate 1). The site lies on ground overlooking the Tyne Valley to the south, with rough pasture surrounding it.
- 1.2.2 The area of the Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall is a narrow corridor extending east/west through lower-lying ground between the uplands of the Pennines visible to the north and south (Countryside Commission 1998, 48). The area is characterised by farmland, pastoral in the west merging to mixed and arable in the east, with broadleaved woodland and conifer plantation on the slopes of the Tyne Valley (*ibid*). There are open and windswept semi-improved agricultural landscapes at higher elevations and rough moorland associated with the Whin Sill (*ibid*) The solid geology comprises sedimentary rocks of Carboniferous age incorporating a repetitive succession of limestones, sandstones and shales, and a small number of mineral veins (*ibid*). The overlying soils are typical brown earths of the Ellerbeck association (Ordnance Survey 1983).

1.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1 The site of the proposed interpretation panel lies within the Scheduled area of Hadrian's Wall, National Monument No 26047, between milecastle 23 to the west and 22, known as Portgate, to the east. Milecastle 22 was excavated in 1930 which showed that it had been blocked following reconstruction work by Septimus Severus due to the fact that an adjacent gateway through the Wall was of more use (Collingwood Bruce 1966, 73). The gateway was positioned on what is now the busy A68. This road was constructed soon after Agricola's advance into Scotland in the AD 70s, and became known as Dere Street in the medieval period. During the Roman period it became the most important route leading out of the Roman Empire to the north towards two outpost forts, at Risingham and High Rochester, which were occupied at least until the later fourth century AD. From here the road then led onwards into Scotland. To the south, it links the Wall with York, via the forts at Corbridge 2.25 miles to the south, Ebchester, Lanchester, Binchester and Catterick (*ibid*).
- 1.3.2 Evidence of the Wall Ditch deviating northwards around a guardhouse or a gate shows that a structure existed between milecastles 22 and 23 long before Hadrian's Wall. However, when the Wall was built a great gate had to be constructed on the northward Dere Street, which became known as the Portgate, an Anglo-Saxon name (R Newman pers comm). The gate lies beneath the Errington Arms and the roundabout (Fig 1), and was partly excavated in 1966, before road improvements. The walls was built of massive blocks of masonry, and had towers projecting to the north, but it has never been seen in its entirety (Daniels 1978). The Errington Arms was built at this important crossroads, as an inn for travellers, a role it still serves today.
- 1.3.3 The Vallum lies close behind Hadrian's Wall, and between the A68 and the top of the hill to the west it survives as a very visible feature for the next three miles to the west (Collingwood Bruce 1966, 73). The Wall itself, as in so much of eastern Northumberland, was demolished when the Military Road (now the B6318) was constructed in the 1750s, following the Jacobite Rising in 1745. The demolished Wall was found to form suitable foundations for a road (R Newman pers comm).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 The project design (*Appendix 1*) was approved by both Tynedale Council and English Heritage and was adhered to in full. 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 contractor during the watching brief. The programme comprised observation during the digging of a shallow trench restricted to a maximum of 200mm beneath the surface and within the topsoil. Any potential archaeological horizons exposed were examined and recorded. In addition, a photographic record in colour slide and monochrome formats was compiled. The groundworks were carried out manually with a spade.

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.

3. RESULTS

3.1 OBSERVATIONS

- 3.1.1 *Introduction:* a single trench to accommodate a stone plinth was dug by hand on landscaped grounds just to the west of the car park south of the inn (Plate 1).
- 3.1.2 *Plinth Trench:* this measured 0.8m x 0.5m x 0.12m (Plate 2) and the excavated material entirely comprised turf and loose mid grey-brown sandy-clay topsoil with few inclusions and much disturbed by root action. There were no finds and no archaeological horizons were encountered during the works.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 The excavated material entirely comprised imported turf and topsoil from the landscaping works around the car park. It is understood from the Northumberland Highways Department that the site overlay the line of the earlier A68 prior to its realignment and the underlying ground would, therefore, have been previously disturbed.
- 4.1.2 No damage was maintained to the monument during the groundworks and there is no requirement or recommendations for any further archaeological works to be conducted as part of the proposal.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Countryside Commission, 1998 *Countryside Character, Volume 1: North East*, Cheltenham

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Ordnance Survey 1983, Soil Survey of England and Wales

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Fig 2: Location plan of the stone plinth for the purpose of the information panel

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Plate 1: Location of proposed plinth, facing east

Plate 2: Excavated plinth trench, facing east

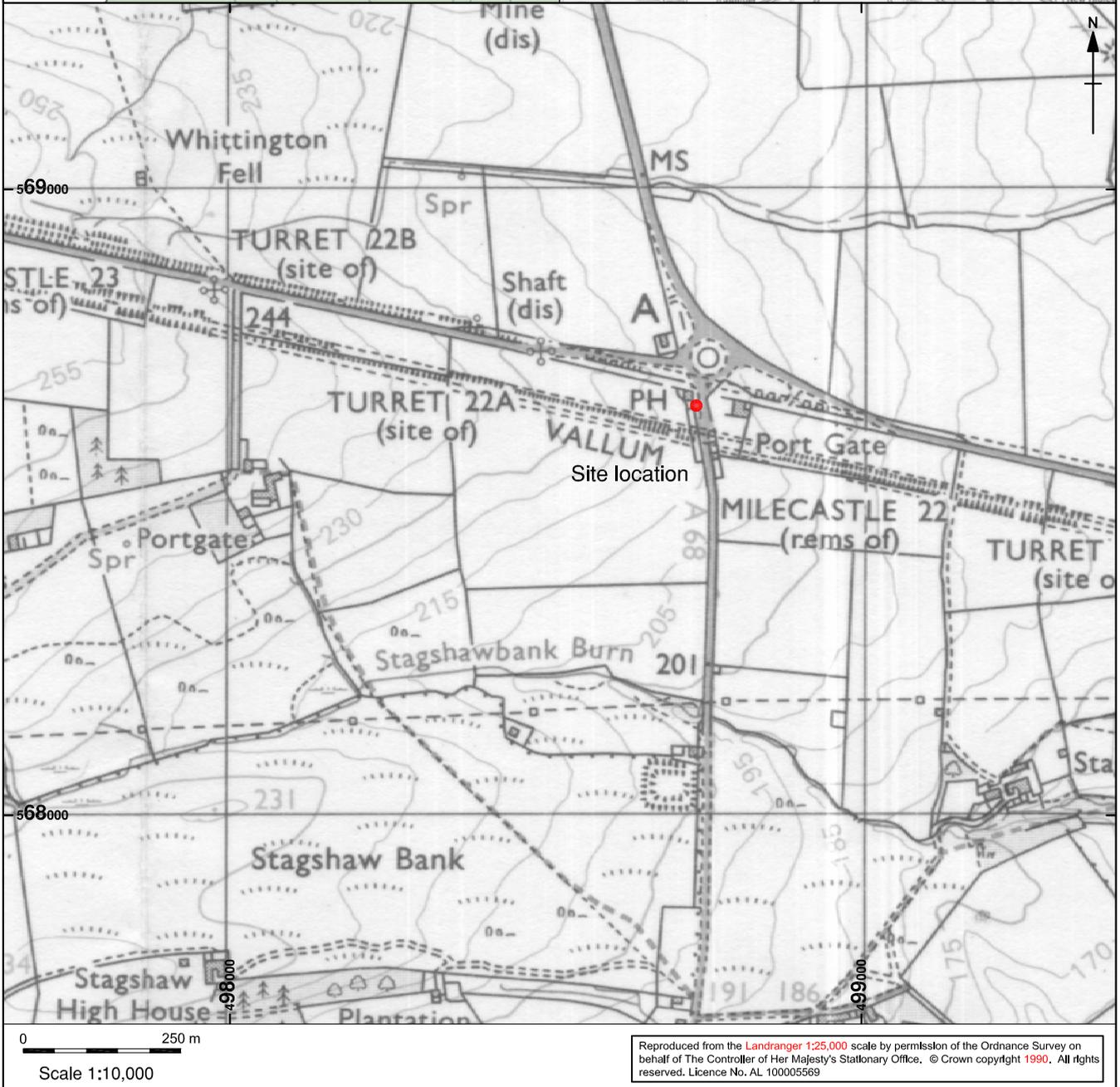
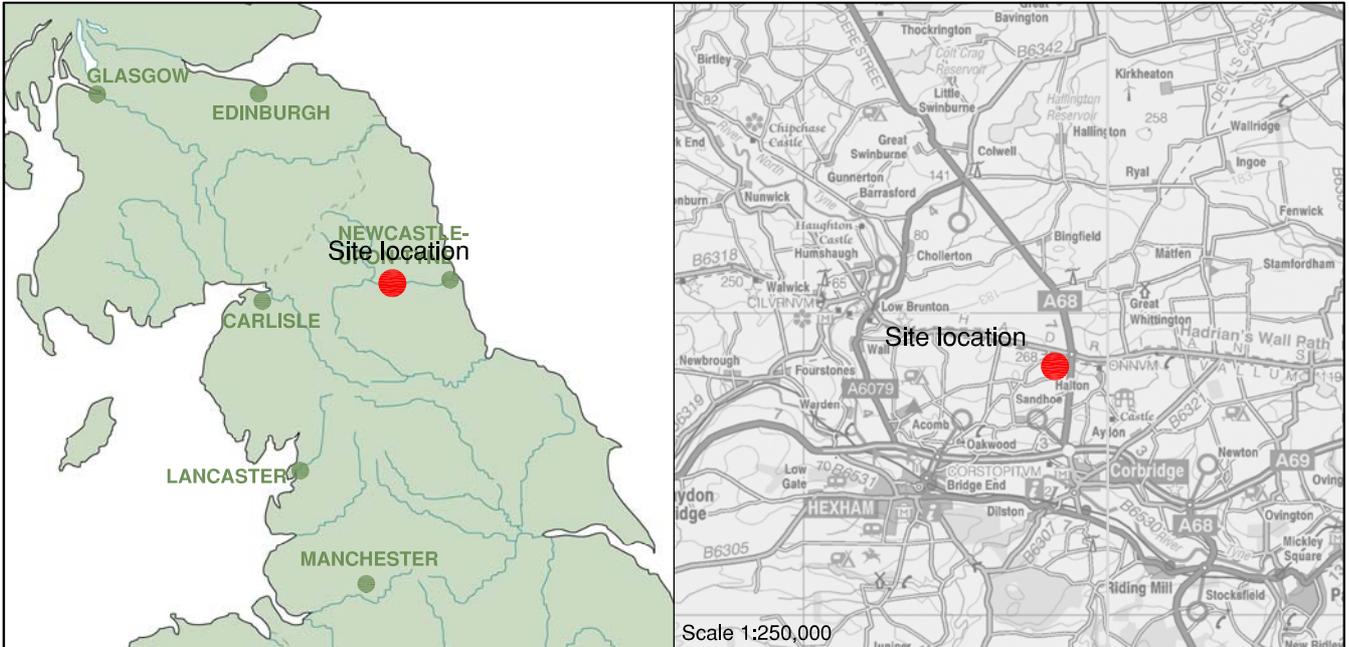


Figure 1: Site Location

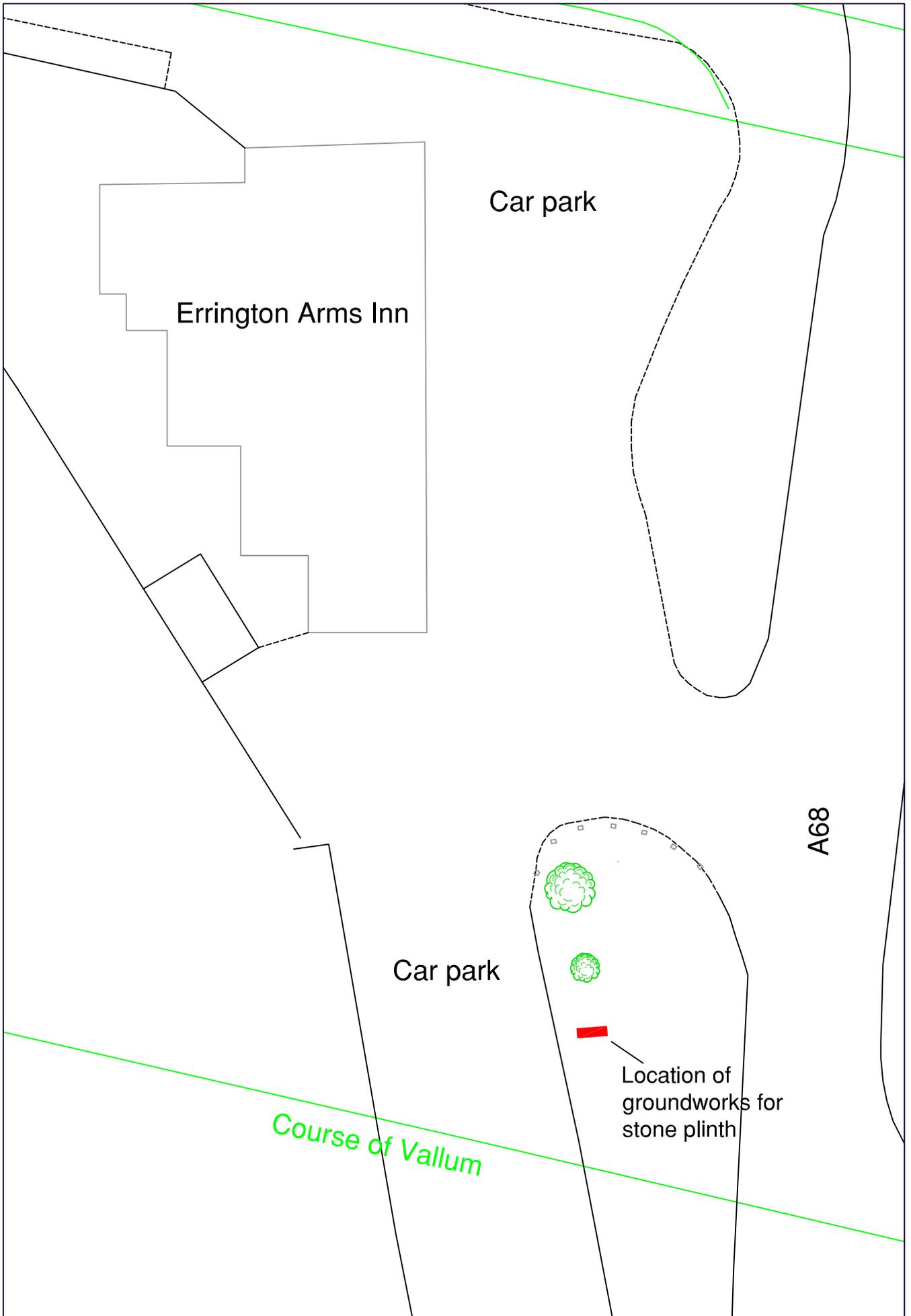


Figure 2: Location Plan of the Stone Plinth for the purpose of the Information Panel

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Plate 1: Location of proposed plinth, facing east



Plate 2: Excavated plinth trench, facing east

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Tynedale 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 mounted on a stone plinth and sited on land to the south of the Errington Arms Inn, Stagshaw, Corbridge, Northumberland. The planning application has been approved subject to a condition for an archaeological presence during the groundworks (Planning Application No 20050160), due to the site being within the scheduled area of National Monument No 26047. Scheduled Consent has also been received from the DCMS, and, in turn, the works shall be monitored by English Heritage.

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 will be destroyed by ground works for the installation of the proposed panel. The work will be undertaken in accordance with the IFA Standards for Watching Briefs.

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 As per the applications for the siting of the panel (Tynedale advertising consent and Scheduled Monument Consent), the excavations for the plinth will be limited to a maximum depth of 200mm below the present ground surface. Any machinery and equipment will be used via the car park of the Errington Arms in order to minimise disturbance.

3.1.2 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 shallow footings for the stone plinth, onto which the panel will be mounted, 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.

- 3.1.3 **Suspension of works:** discovery of archaeological remains will require stoppage of the construction work to allow OA North archaeologists sufficient time to adequately excavate and record the remains.
- 3.1.4 Putative archaeological features and/or deposits identified by the excavation 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 fully excavated.
- 3.1.5 **Recording:** all information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and both monochrome and colour photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features. Primary records will be available for inspection at all times.
- 3.1.6 A plan will be produced of the area of groundworks showing the location and extent of the ground disturbance and one or more dimensioned sections will be produced.
- 3.1.7 Results of the field investigation will be recorded using a paper system, adapted from that used by Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage. The archive will include both a photographic record and accurate large scale plans and sections at an appropriate scale (1:50, 1:20, and 1:10). Levels will be tied into the Ordnance Datum.
- 3.1.8 **Contingency plan:** in the event of significant archaeological features being encountered during the watching brief, discussions will take place with the Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist, as to the extent of further works to be carried out. All further works would be subject to a variation to this project design.
- 3.1.9 **Environmental Sampling:** environmental samples (bulk samples of 30 litres volume, to be sub-sampled at a later stage) will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits and will particularly target negative features (gullies, pits and ditches). Subject to the results of the fieldwork, an assessment of any environmental samples will be undertaken by the inhouse palaeoecological specialist, who will examine the potential for further analysis. The assessment would examine the potential for macrofossil, arthropod, palynological and general biological analysis. The palaeoecological assessment will be subject to the agreement of the Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist.
- 3.1.10 Samples will also be collected for technological, pedological and chronological analysis as appropriate. If necessary, access to conservation advice and facilities can be made available. OA North maintains close relationships with Ancient Monuments Laboratory staff at the Universities of Durham and York and, in addition, employs artefact and palaeozoological specialists with considerable expertise in the investigation, excavation and finds management of sites of all periods and types, who are readily available for consultation.
- 3.1.11 **Treatment of finds:** all finds will be exposed, lifted, cleaned, conserved, marked, bagged and boxed in accordance with the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC) *First Aid For Finds*, 1998 (new edition) and the recipient museum's guidelines, in this case the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle.
- 3.1.12 All identified finds and artefacts will be retained, although certain classes of building material can sometimes be discarded after recording if an appropriate sample is retained on advice from the Museum of Antiquities's archive curator.
- 3.1.13 The deposition and disposal of artefacts will be agreed with the legal owner and the Museum of Antiquities. Should the landowner retain any artefacts, these will be fully recorded.

- 3.1.14 **Treasure:** any gold and silver artefacts recovered during the course of the excavation will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act, 1996. Where removal cannot take place on the same working day as discovery, suitable security will be employed to protect the finds from theft.
- 3.1.15 **Human Remains:** any human remains uncovered will be left *in situ*, covered and protected. No further investigation will continue beyond that required to establish the date and character of the burial until the Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist and the local Coroner have been informed. Where any part of a human burial is disturbed, it will be necessary to excavate the whole of the burial. It will be recorded by photography and the use of a *pro forma* skeleton recording sheet.
- 3.1.16 Exhumation of any funerary remains will require the provision of a Home Office license, under section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857. An application will be made by OA North for the study area on discovery of any such remains and the removal will be carried out with due care and sensitivity under the environmental health regulations. The cost of removal or treatment will be agreed with the client and costed as a variation.

3.2 REPORT

- 3.2.1 One bound copy and a digital copy supplied as pdf files will be submitted to Northumberland HER within eight weeks of completion of fieldwork, one bound copy will be sent to Mike Collins, Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist, English Heritage, and one to OA North's client. 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 include;
- a site location plan related to the national grid
 - a front cover to include the advertising consent number and the NGR
 - a concise, non-technical summary of the results
 - the circumstances of the project and the dates on which the fieldwork was undertaken
 - description of the methodology
 - a summary of the historical background
 - appropriate plans showing the location and position of features or sites located, and any sections
 - table of deposits, features, classes and numbers of artefacts encountered and spot dating of any significant finds
 - a statement, where appropriate, of the archaeological implications
 - monochrome and colour photographs as appropriate
 - a copy of this project design, and indications of any agreed departure from that design
 - the report will also include a complete bibliography of sources from which data has been derived
- 3.2.2 A short report of the work will be submitted to a local journal if appropriate.
- 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.

3.3 ARCHIVE

- 3.3.1 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 (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). This archive will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and will be submitted to the HER (the index to the archive and a copy of the report) within 6 months of the completion of the fieldwork.
- 3.3.2 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, in this case the Museum of Antiquities, Newcastle.

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 Two weeks notice of the groundworks will be given to Mike Collins, Hadrian's Wall Archaeologist, English Heritage, in order that a representative may visit the site during the fieldwork.
- 5.3 The 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers), 1997 *Health and Safety Manual*, Poole