

SEWINGSHIELDS WOOD, NORTHUMBERLAND



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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
SUMMARY.....	3
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1 Circumstances of Project.....	4
1.2 Historical Background.....	4
1.3 Location and Topography.....	6
2. METHODOLOGY	8
2.1 Project Design	8
2.2 The Evaluation	8
2.3 Archive	9
3. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS	10
3.1 Trench 1.....	10
3.2 Trench 2.....	11
3.3 Trench 3.....	12
3.4 Watching Brief	12
3.5 The Finds.....	13
3.6 Palaeoenvironmental Sampling.....	13
4. DISCUSSION	14
4.1 The Site	14
5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16
5.1 Impact.....	16
5.2 Recommendations	16
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	17
6.1 Cartographic Sources	17
6.2 Secondary Sources.....	17
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	19
PLATES	20
APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN	21
APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LIST	28
APPENDIX 3: FINDS CATALOGUE	29

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SUMMARY

An archaeological evaluation and watching brief was carried out by Oxford Archaeology North (OAN), on behalf of The Countryside Agency and English Heritage, during July 2002, along the proposed alignment of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail within Sewingshields Wood, Northumberland (NY 8084 7028 - NY 8098 7028). This lies within the Scheduled Monument of *Hadrian's Wall and associated features, between the boundary east of Turret 34a and the field boundary west of Milecastle 36, in Wall miles 34, 35 and 36 (SM26057)*, and such forms part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. The evaluation involved the excavation of three trial trenches, designed to establish the position and extent, character and integrity of the archaeological remains of Hadrian's Wall in the vicinity of Sewingshields Farm. The trenches were placed across the projected line of the Wall, which survived as a low, linear earthwork through Sewingshields Wood, although its precise line was unclear around the outbuildings of Sewingshields Farm. The watching brief was maintained during the installation of a new gate at the eastern boundary of the Wood, and some 9m to the south of the Wall.

The remains of the Wall were encountered in each of the evaluation trenches, at depths of between 0.09m and 0.32m below the modern ground surface. In all cases, the Wall had been extensively robbed of its stone, with only the foundations surviving *in situ*. Nevertheless, the evaluation has confirmed the precise alignment of the Wall immediately to the east and west of the farm outbuildings, and has indicated that its width at this point conforms to Narrow Wall proportions. It has also furnished new information on the stone robbing of the Wall during the post-medieval period.

The results of the evaluation indicate that the current permissive path on both sides of the farm outbuildings is to the north of the Wall, informing a decision on the detailed specification of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, which in this area requires some engineering to traverse the steep slope to the north of the farm.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF PROJECT

- 1.1.1 The Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, currently being developed by The Countryside Agency, aims to improve access to the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site whilst helping to conserve the monument. Much of this development work in the central sector relates to existing footpaths or areas of access and is concerned with proactive measures to deter or halt erosion, together with the creation of short sections of Public Rights of Way to link existing paths and, in some cases, the adjustment of these to ensure the integrity of the monument. In Sewingshields Wood, there is an existing access agreement to allow entry to an area of the monument in the Guardianship of English Heritage. Within the Wood, however, the Wall has survived only as a low, vegetation-covered earthwork, and around the outbuildings of Sewingshields Farm the precise line of the Wall remained unclear. Following discussions with English Heritage, it was agreed that a limited programme of archaeological work should be carried out to determine the precise alignment of the Wall in advance of the formal designation of the Path, in order to minimise potential disturbance of significant archaeological deposits by increased visitor pressure (Fig 1).
- 1.1.2 In accordance with a Project Design by the then Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology North (OAN)) in April 1999, the first stage of archaeological evaluation was undertaken at the eastern edge of the Wood (LUAU 1999). The primary objective was to quantify and qualify the archaeological potential of the proposed alignment of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail within Sewingshields Wood, and thereby inform a decision on the specification for the Path. The results also informed an updated Project Design in June 2000 (*Appendix 1*), which specified a second stage of archaeological evaluation. This focused on the areas immediately to the east and west of Sewingshields Farm, and provided for the excavation of three evaluation trenches (Fig 2). This work was carried out in July 2002. The project was funded entirely by The Countryside Agency.
- 1.1.3 This report sets out the results of the work in conjunction with a method statement, and an assessment of the impact that the development proposals will have upon any archaeological resource.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 Hadrian's Wall is well documented and, whilst a full historical account would be inappropriate in the context of this report, a summary of the salient points may be of relevance.
- 1.2.2 The beginning of the second century saw much unrest in the north of England, and the Roman Army struggled to consolidate their territorial gains of the late first century. About AD 105, the unrest culminated in the destruction of many of the forts north of the Tyne-Solway line, probably at the hands of hostile tribesmen (Daniels 1978, 5). During a visit to Britain by the Emperor Hadrian in AD 122, the decision was made to create a continuous and permanent frontier barrier from Tyne to Solway. Aulus

Platorius Nepos, legate of Britain from AD 122, began construction of the Wall, which was largely completed in its initial format during the AD 120s (Stevens 1966, 82).

- 1.2.3 As originally designed, the Wall was to be 10 Roman feet wide, based on a foundation of stone and puddled clay, or else large flagstones. The foundations were laid in advance of the main body of the Wall, and this continued from Newcastle to the North Tyne and thereafter intermittently as far as Willowford, before a decision to complete the work to a narrower gauge was taken (Daniels 1978, 16). Hence, between the North Tyne and Willowford, the Wall is Narrow Gauge but in places it stands on foundations prepared for the Broad Gauge. Variations also occur in the construction of the Wall's lowest courses. These may take the form of a single course of large stones above the foundation, and then a single offset course, or consist of three or four courses of small stones above the foundation, then the offset (*op cit*, 18).
- 1.2.4 Both faces of the Wall were clad in squared freestone blocks of a uniform size. The face of the stone exposed to the weather was cut across the natural bedding of the stone, so as to avoid flakings, while the stone tapers towards the back so as to bond better with the core (*op cit*, 41). Between the ashlar faces, the core of the Wall was packed with rubble. On the Broad Wall, the rubble was set either in mortar or puddled clay, whilst the Narrow Wall was set wholly in mortar (*op cit*, 43). At some points the rubble of the core has been packed into place, often laid slanting, like herring-bone masonry (*op cit*, 44), whilst in other places it is much more random.
- 1.2.5 During AD 139 the Roman Army made a new advance in Scotland, which seemingly resulted in the virtual abandonment of Hadrian's Wall. Gains in Scotland could not be consolidated however, and Hadrian's Wall was re-occupied during the later AD 150s (Salway 1981, 202). At some point between the late second century and the early third century, the Wall is recorded as having been breached by the northern tribes, who inflicted much damage and destruction to the fortifications (*op cit*, 222). This uprising was rapidly suppressed, but the Wall required some restoration. The late second and early third centuries saw a period of continued rebuilding and modification along the Wall, and nearly a century later, a further programme of Wall restoration and modification occurred under Constantius.
- 1.2.6 The year AD 367 is recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus (Syme 1968), as the date when Roman rule was overrun in Britain and, although the invaders were subsequently quelled by Count Theodosius, and the Wall was again restored, the end of Roman occupation had been signalled. Occupation of the Wall continued after this date, as evidenced by the various discoveries of late fourth century pottery and coins, but little is known of its history throughout the following centuries. There is, however, increasing evidence that elements, particularly some forts and even milecastles, remained in occupation beyond the formal end of Roman administration (Wilmott 1997).
- 1.2.7 According to Mawer (1920, 174), the name Sewingshields is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means 'the shields of Sigeuire', which implies that the initial settlement there was no more than seasonally occupied shelters that were used by herdsman during the summer months (Haigh and Savage 1984, 52). By the twelfth century, Sewingshields lay at the boundary between the northern and southern parts of the medieval Lordship

of Tynedale, which, from 1158, was held by the kings of Scotland (Harbottle and Newman 1973, 138-47). In 1296, Tynedale was annexed by Edward I during his invasion of Scotland, but it was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the border between the two countries was stabilised, and the major campaigns aimed at conquest were replaced by the succession of border raids and skirmishes that continued on into the sixteenth century (Bond 1867, 329-35). Nevertheless, Sewingshields is mentioned in a record of the assize court at Wark in 1279 (Bain 1887, 168-9), which indicates there to have been a series of buildings at Sewingshields. Similarly, the excavation of Milecastle 35 revealed evidence for the construction of buildings there during the thirteenth century, and an extensive system of enclosed fields containing ridge and furrow suggest a period of growing prosperity (Haigh and Savage 1984). This prosperity appears to have been short lived, and the medieval buildings at Milecastle 35 seem to have been abandoned during the early fifteenth century (*op cit*, 55), perhaps as a result of an increase in border raiding. Lasting stability in the area was finally achieved following the suppression of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1746, which is likely to have encouraged renewed settlement and resulted in an increase in Wall-robbing activity to construct new farm buildings.

- 1.2.8 During the later medieval period, the Wall provided an ideal source of building materials for houses and boundary walls along its length, and was consequently extensively robbed. Daniels comments that, ‘the farmhouse of Sewingshields is entirely built out of Roman stones’ (1978, 136). In general terms, however, the single most destructive event inflicted on the Wall was the construction of the Newcastle to Carlisle Military Road between 1751 and 1759. The specification for the works noted that stones ‘that may easily be got out of the ruin of the Old Roman Wall must be reserved to make a Stone Wall on each side of the Road...’ (Lawson 1973, 181). Similarly, a letter written by the Rev Henry Wastell in 1754 recorded that the Wall had been entirely destroyed for miles and the stones beaten to pieces to make a foundation (*ibid*). For some of its course the Military Road is built directly on top of Hadrian’s Wall, re-using the rubble core for foundations and facing stones for the flanking walls. At Sewingshields the Military Road runs to the south of Hadrian’s Wall, although close enough to warrant continued robbing activity, particularly of the facing stones. Hodgson (1812), however, notes that much of the Wall in the vicinity was pulled down in 1811 to construct outbuildings at Sewingshields Farm.

1.3 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.3.1 The site lies at the approximate centre of Sewingshields Wood, Northumberland, centred on NY 8090 7028, and is almost exactly halfway between Newcastle upon Tyne and Carlisle (Fig 1). It lies within the Scheduled Monument of *Hadrian’s Wall and associated features, between the boundary east of Turret 34a and the field boundary west of Milecastle 36, in Wall miles 34, 35 and 36* (SM26057), and as such forms part of the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site. The section of the proposed Path under consideration lies between Turret 34a and Milecastle 35 in Wall mile 34 and follows the approximate line of Hadrian’s Wall through Sewingshields Wood.
- 1.3.2 Sewingshields is situated at a height of approximately 300m above sea level, and lies towards the eastern end of the high, quartz dolerite crags to the north of the Tyne Valley. The Whin Sill outcrops here in a series of dramatic and rugged north-facing

escarpments (Countryside Commission 1998). Immediately to the north-west is a sheer drop of c30m to the base of the crags, while to the south-east the hillside slopes steeply down towards the line of the Vallum, some 425m away.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN

- 2.1.1 A project design (*Appendix 1*) was submitted by the then Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology North), in response to a request from Mr D McGlade of The Countryside Agency, for an archaeological evaluation at Sewingshields Wood to inform the precise alignment of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail.
- 2.1.2 The project design provided for an archaeological evaluation involving the excavation of three trenches, in order to determine the position and extent, character and integrity of the archaeological remains of Hadrian's Wall within Sewingshields Wood. The results of the evaluation were intended to assist in the formulation of a strategy for the preservation and management of the archaeological remains, specifically the alignment of the Path so that it will not compromise below ground archaeological deposits.

2.2 THE EVALUATION

- 2.2.1 Following discussions with English Heritage, three evaluation trenches were excavated manually in the positions noted in Figure 2. Trench 1, orientated approximately north to south and measuring 6.7m by 1.5m, was placed adjacent to the line of the established path at the eastern side of the outbuildings north of Sewingshields Farm. Trenches 2 and 3 were placed a short distance to the west of the outbuildings, following an approximate north/south alignment, and measured 3.7m and 1.9m long respectively.
- 2.2.2 The overlying turf deposit was removed manually and stacked ready for replacement at the completion of the investigation. All subsequent deposits were excavated in a strictly stratigraphical manner with minimal disturbance of intact archaeological features. On completion, the trenches were backfilled manually in a stratigraphical manner and the turf replaced.
- 2.2.3 The recording methods employed by OAN accord with those recommended by English Heritage's Centre for Archaeology (CfA). Recording was in the form of *pro forma* Context Sheets for each of the features identified, together with accompanying digitally-generated plans for output at an appropriate scale. A photographic record was maintained and all finds recovered were bagged and recorded by context.
- 2.2.4 The archaeological features were surveyed by EDM tacheometry using a total station linked to a pen computer data logger, the accuracy of detail generation being appropriate for a 1:250 output. The survey was enhanced by manual survey on site using AutoCAD 14 within the pen computer. The position of the trenches was located with respect to surrounding landscape features, and was similarly recorded using a total station and data logger.

2.2.5 All artefactual material was processed in accordance with OAN standard practice, which follows current IFA guidelines. This has been fully catalogued and prepared for deposition with the final archive.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 A full archive of the evaluation trenches has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper archive will be deposited with the Northumberland Record Office and any finds of significance will be deposited with the Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University. In addition, a copy of the report will be forwarded to the County Sites and Monuments Record and a further copy will be deposited with the RCHME database for Hadrian's Wall.

3. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

3.1 TRENCH 1

- 3.1.1 Trench 1 was placed adjacent to a well-established permissive path at the eastern side of the outbuildings north of Sewingshields Farm (Fig 2). Aligned approximately north/south, the trench measured 6.7m by 1.5m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.41m (Plate 1).
- 3.1.2 Situated at the southern end of the trench, two large, freestone blocks (**54**) were encountered at a depth of 0.09m below the modern ground surface (Fig 3). Both blocks were faced on the southern side and were laid bed-on, seemingly *in situ*, and whilst there was no clear presence of a bonding material, traces of highly degraded mortar existed between the stones. The stones were orientated east/west across the trench, and it is certain that they represented the remains of Hadrian's Wall.
- 3.1.3 A second linear grouping of stones (**52**) was exposed at a distance of 2.45m to the north, and at a depth of 0.19m. This alignment was similarly orientated east/west across the trench, and comprised large freestone blocks, at least three of which appeared to be *in situ* (Fig 3). The size, shape, and distribution of the blocks indicated that, like stones **54**, they were also the remnants of Hadrian's Wall (Plate 2). Limited investigation along the northern edge of **52** revealed that the blocks were only a single course deep, suggesting that they were the foundation course of the north face.
- 3.1.4 Butting the interior edges of faces **52** and **54** was a spread of closely-packed rubble (**53**), which comprised medium and small angular to sub-angular stones, in a yellow-orange-brown sand matrix, together with abundant plant roots. Many of the component stones were highly degraded, and displayed clear evidence of exfoliation. Traces of degraded mortar were noted between the stones, but in insufficient quantity to ascertain firmly that it had been used to bond the component stones. Nevertheless, it is likely that **53** represented the remains of the Wall's rubble core, and was thus not excavated below its upper surface, which was exposed at a depth of 0.22m.
- 3.1.5 Butting the exterior of northern face **52** was another rubble spread (**51**), which continued northwards beyond the edge of the excavated trench, and presumably extended below the established footpath. This spread was not as closely-packed as rubble core **53**, comprising 60% large, medium and small sub-angular to sub-rounded stones, randomly set in a sandy-silt matrix, together with abundant plant roots. It was notable that spread **51** did not contain any facing stones, suggesting that it represented the material discarded during stone robbing.
- 3.1.6 All deposits were sealed by mid-grey brown, silty-sand horizon **50**. This topsoil had a maximum depth of 0.34m, although in places it was considerably thinner, particularly where it covered the south face, **52**. The topsoil contained up to 20% small and medium sub-angular stones, abundant plant roots, occasional concentrations of charcoal, and supported a scrub vegetation. The topsoil also yielded 23 fragments of pottery. Whilst this group included some nineteenth century material, 20 fragments

were of Roman origin, with a broad date range of between the second and fourth centuries (*Section 3.5.2* below).

3.2 TRENCH 2

- 3.2.1 Trench 2 was placed across the projected line of the Wall, some 7.3m to the west of the outbuildings at the approximate centre of Sewingshields Wood (Fig 2). Aligned approximately north/south, the trench measured 3.7m by 1.3m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m (Plate 3).
- 3.2.2 In stratigraphic terms, the earliest feature encountered within Trench 2 comprised two large freestone blocks (**58**), which were exposed at a depth of 0.3m, and formed an alignment orientated east/west across the approximate centre of the trench (Fig 3). The stones were laid bed-on and were seemingly *in situ*, although there was no clear trace of any bonding material between the stones (Plate 4). The northern face of each stone was dressed and each had been cut to a uniform thickness of c0.25m, which is consistent with the dimensions of facing stones recorded in excavations at the eastern end of Sewingshields Wood (LUAU 1999). Limited investigation along the southern edge of stones **58** revealed that they were only a single course deep, suggesting that they represented the foundation course of the north face.
- 3.2.3 The north face was overlain by a deposit of light orange-brown sand (**59**), which contained frequent small and medium sub-rounded and sub-angular stones, and abundant plant roots. Whilst some of these component stones may have represented the vestiges of the Wall's rubble core, deposit **59** had clearly sustained some later disturbance as a fragment of clay tobacco pipe (207) of a late seventeenth/early eighteenth century date was retrieved (*Section 3.5.4* below).
- 3.2.4 Deposit **59** was overlain by rubble spread **57**, which comprised stones of all sizes and configurations, although it did not incorporate any facing stones. The stones formed c85% of the deposit, and were set randomly in a sandy-silt matrix. Spread **57** was exposed along the entire trench, although the most dense concentration of stones occurred at the southern end. Towards the southern end of the trench, the uppermost surface of the spread was exposed at a depth of 0.02m, whilst at the northern end, **57** was not encountered above a depth of 0.24m. Limited excavation of spread **57** revealed it to have a thickness of approximately 0.4m. The distribution of stones within this deposit suggested that it most probably represented the material discarded during stone robbing.
- 3.2.5 Situated above spread **57**, and therefore deposited at a later date, were three large freestone blocks (**56**), which were clearly Wall face components. The distribution of these facing stones (Fig 3) suggested that they represented tumble from the northern face of the Wall, as opposed to stones discarded during robbing activity. It may thus be suggested that **56** represented genuine *in situ* collapse of what remained of the Wall subsequent to robbing activity.
- 3.2.6 Deposits **56** and **57** were sealed by a mid-grey brown, silty-sand horizon, **55**. This topsoil had a maximum depth of 0.3m, although in places it was considerably thinner,

particularly where it covered stone spreads **56** and **57**. It contained up to 20% small and medium-sized stones, and abundant plant roots.

3.3 TRENCH 3

- 3.3.1 Trench 3 was placed across the projected line of the Wall, some 1.7m to the west of Trench 2 (Fig 2). Aligned approximately north/south, the trench measured 1.9m by 1.2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.52m.
- 3.3.2 An alignment of large, freestone blocks (**62**) were exposed at the northern end of Trench 3, and were orientated east/west across the trench. Some of the component stones had clearly been disturbed, although at least two appeared to remain *in situ*. The uppermost *in situ* stone was revealed at a depth of 0.32m, and appeared to have been laid upon another stone, which was offset to the north by c0.2m. This may have represented the foundation course of the north face, with the upper stone representing the first course of the Wall. In contrast to Trenches 1 and 2, firm evidence for the use of mortar was produced from Trench 3, where it was seen to adhere to the southern edge of component stones of **62**.
- 3.3.3 The north face was overlain by a light orange-brown sand (**63**), that contained c10% small and medium-sized, sub-rounded and sub-angular stones. This material was very similar to deposit **59** (Trench 2), and is likely to have been the result of stone robbing activity.
- 3.3.4 Deposit **63** was overlain by a rubble spread (**61**), which comprised stones of all sizes and configurations, set randomly in a sandy-silt matrix. Spread **61** extended across the entire trench, and was exposed at a depth of 0.04m at the southern end of the trench. The deposit was comparable to **57** (Trench 2), and, as there, the distribution of stones within deposit **61** suggested that it most probably represented the material discarded during stone robbing.
- 3.3.5 Spread **61** was sealed by a mid-grey brown silty-sand horizon (**60**), which contained up to 25% small and medium-sized stones, abundant plant roots, and a fragment of clay tobacco pipe stem (211) that was probably of a nineteenth century date. This topsoil had a maximum depth of 0.3m, although in places it was considerably thinner.

3.4 WATCHING BRIEF

- 3.4.1 In conjunction with the evaluation, a watching brief was also undertaken at the eastern boundary of Sewingshields Wood (Fig 3), during the installation of a new gate. This work involved the manual excavation of two postholes, each measuring c0.4m in diameter. Each posthole was excavated to a depth of c1.0m through an homogeneous mid-orange-brown sandy-clay, most probably natural subsoil, that contained up to 60% small sub-rounded to sub-angular stones. The position of the new gate lies some 9m to the south of the known position of the Wall, which was revealed during the course of an archaeological evaluation in 1999 (LUAU 1999). No archaeological features were identified during the course of the watching brief, and no artefacts were retrieved.

3.5 THE FINDS

- 3.5.1 In total, 39 artefacts were recovered from the trenches during the course of the evaluation. The bulk of the assemblage comprised ceramic vessel fragments (26 fragments), and also included clay tobacco pipe fragments, animal bone, glass, ceramic building material, and fragments of mortar. In general terms, the pottery was in poor condition, and many fragments were clearly quite abraded. Catalogues of the artefacts have been included in *Appendix 3* in Context Number order. All finds were treated in accordance with OAN standard practice.
- 3.5.2 The majority of the ceramic vessels fragments were of Roman date (19 sherds), all of which were retrieved from the topsoil (50) of Trench 1. The assemblage comprised fragments of at least six coarseware vessels, including undecorated grey wares, oxidised wares, buff wares, Black Burnished ware Category 1, a fragment of Crambeck ware, and a single fragment of amphora, probably of Spanish origin. The small number of diagnostic rims precluded the firm identification of vessel forms, although at least one was likely to be a small storage jar. The pottery was in an abraded condition, with many sherds showing surface erosion. The breaks in most of the fragments, however, were not worn, indicating that they had not moved far from their original place of deposition. The bulk of the material is likely to date from the mid- to late second century, with a small component dating to the fourth century.
- 3.5.3 Other ceramic vessel fragments were retrieved from the topsoil of Trench 1 (50) and Trench 3 (60). These comprised sherds of kitchen and table wares, all of which were of a nineteenth century date, and are of little archaeological interest.
- 3.5.4 A fragment of clay tobacco pipe (207) produced from disturbed subsoil 59 (Trench 2) has a complete bowl and a footring that bears a stamp. This has been identified as being the product of either John Parke (1660-1720) or John Pattison (1669-75), both of Gateshead, indicating a late seventeenth/early eighteenth century date (Oswald 1975, 169). A fragment of clay pipe stem was retrieved from the topsoil (60) of Trench 3, and is likely to be of nineteenth century date.

3.6 PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLING

- 3.6.1 All soil deposits encountered during the course of the evaluation were of a loose, sandy texture, which was clearly highly permeable and susceptible to contamination. Under such conditions, the potential for palaeoenvironmental samples is extremely low, and consequently none were taken.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 THE SITE

- 4.1.1 The evaluation has established the position and extent, character and integrity of the archaeological remains of Hadrian's Wall within Sewingshields Wood. Unsurprisingly, extensive robbing of the monument was revealed in each of the evaluation trenches. Daniels (1978, 136) holds the builders of Sewingshields Farm responsible for much of the damage to the Wall, and the clay tobacco pipe (207) found within the disturbed subsoil of Trench 2 implies a late sixteenth to early seventeenth century date for some robbing activity. However, it is perhaps an over-simplification to ascribe all the stone robbing to a single campaign (the construction of the Newcastle to Carlisle Military Road between 1751 and 1759, for instance, may bear some responsibility), and the distinction between the disturbed subsoil horizon and overlying rubble spreads in Trenches 2 and 3 may represent completely separate events. It is interesting to note that, whilst the remains exposed in Trench 1, immediately to the east of the farm, demonstrated the Wall to have been extensively robbed, it was nevertheless better preserved than a section further east, which was excavated previously (LUAU 1999), yet this latter lies some 180m from Sewingshields Farm.
- 4.1.2 The upper surface of the surviving Wall was at a height of between 279.65m (Trench 1) and 284.58m (Trench 2) above Ordnance Datum, running along an approximate east to west alignment (Fig 2). Within Trench 1, the foundations of the Wall appear to have had a width of c2.9m, which conforms to the Narrow Wall standard (see above, *Section 1.2.3*), and the offset of the foundation course exposed in Trench 3 was up to 0.20m, implying that Broad Wall foundations were not laid at this location.
- 4.1.3 Original bonding material within the fabric of the Wall had been badly eroded, although the presence of mortar was clearly identified at the interface of the north face and the rubble core in Trench 3. This appeared to have 'seeped' through small interstices, suggesting the liberal use of mortar in the construction of the Wall core. Similarly, the rubble core between the north and south faces in Trench 1 also contained traces of degraded mortar and, as may be expected at this point along the Wall, there was no evidence at all of any puddled clay being used for bonding purposes. The core material within Trench 1 appeared to have been randomly placed into position, showing no evidence of being deliberately laid. The foundations appeared to have been laid directly onto the former ground surface as no construction cut was identified, and there was no evidence of any flagstones being used. These results confirm the findings of the previous archaeological evaluation undertaken at the eastern end of Sewingshields Wood (LUAU 1999).
- 4.1.4 Prior to this project, the precise line of the Wall in the immediate vicinity of Sewingshields Farm was uncertain. It is now clear that the Wall lies several metres to the south of the formerly projected line, and is aligned broadly east/west through Sewingshields Wood. The results of the evaluation, however, indicate that the Wall incorporates a slight bend to the south between Trench 1 and the eastern edge of the Wood, and a reciprocating bend to the north between Trenches 1 and 3 (Fig 2).

- 4.1.5 The retrieval of Roman pottery from Trench 1 was surprising and of some interest. Whilst it was retrieved from the topsoil, and will therefore have been redeposited, its presence does imply some domestic activity in the vicinity. The most likely focus for this is Turret 34b, situated some 59m to the west.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 IMPACT

- 5.1.1 The evaluation has located the position, and has established the character and integrity, of the archaeological remains of Hadrian's Wall within Sewingshields Wood. The upper surface of *in situ* remains, located in Trench 1, was revealed at a depth of 0.09m below the ground surface.
- 5.1.2 The current permissive path is to the north of the Wall as it approaches Sewingshields Farm from the east, and runs above the spread of rubble from robbing activity. The formalised line of this route over these remains, as part of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, is unlikely to compromise the archaeology, the greatest negative impact coming from tree root action and the permeable nature of the sandy subsoil, which facilitates natural erosion processes, such as freeze-thaw action.
- 5.1.3 The evaluation has shown that the remains of Hadrian's Wall in the immediate vicinity of Sewingshields Farm are flanked to the north and south by spreads of stones, manifested on the southern side by a low mound. This mound, created from discarded stones during robbing activity, is of limited archaeological significance. The spread to the north, however, was seen to contain facing stones, implying that this may represent collapsed Wall face. Consequently, this spread may be seen to be of some archaeological significance. As this deposit is not buried to any depth, the negative impact of pedestrian traffic would be great and should therefore be avoided.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.2.1 The evaluation has shown that extensive robbing of the Wall within the Wood has resulted in limited preservation of archaeological remains, although the *in situ* remains are not deeply buried. It is therefore recommended that the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail is aligned such that it does not impinge upon the monument and, as the current location of the permissive path over these remains immediately to the east of Sewingshields Farm is unlikely to compromise the archaeology, the greatest threat to the monument at present is from tree root action and the permeable nature of the sandy subsoil, which facilitates natural erosion processes such as freeze-thaw action.
- 5.2.2 On the western side of Sewingshields Farm, the current permissive path follows a line some 3.5m to the north of the Wall as it passes Trenches 2 and 3 (Fig 2). As the Path continues westwards, however, the presence of the steep escarpment immediately to the north will dictate a diversion of the Path to the south of the Wall, and may require a sacrificial path to be laid as it crosses the line of the Wall in order to counteract the damage from increased visitor pressure.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1 Location Map

Figure 2 Trench location plan, showing the projected line of Hadrian's Wall

Figure 3 Detail of Trenches 1-3

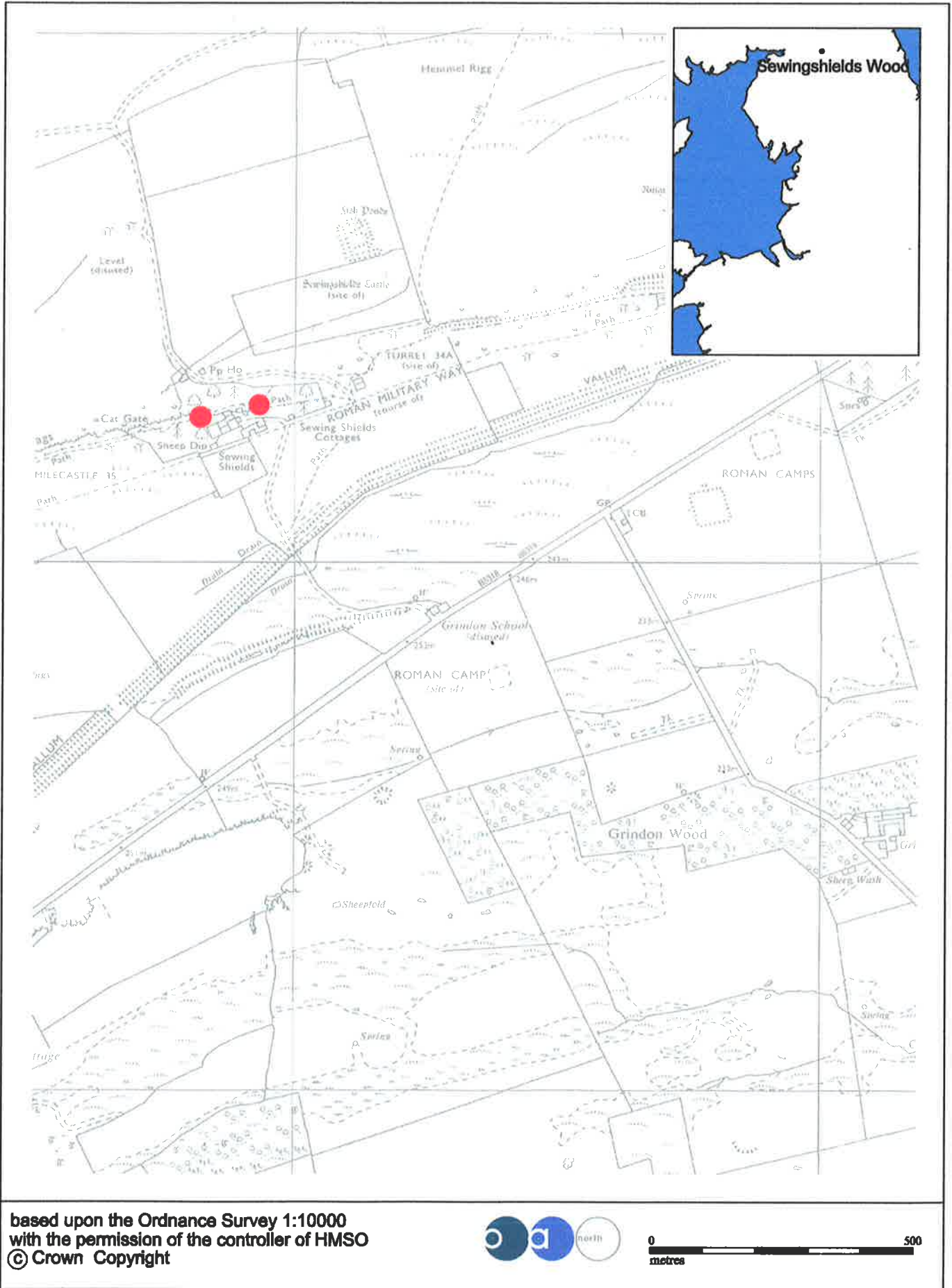


Figure 1: Location Map



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Fax 01524 848606

PROJECT:

Sewingshields Wood,
Northumberland

DRAWING No:

02

0 25m

Scale 1:1000 at A3






DRAWN BY: ELC

DATE: August 2002

LOCATION:



KEY

-  2002 trenches
-  2002 trenches showing wall
-  conjectural line of wall
-  2002 watching brief
-  1999 trenches

TITLE:

Trench Location Plan, showing
conjectured line of Hadrian's Wall

COMMISSIONED BY:

Countryside Agency

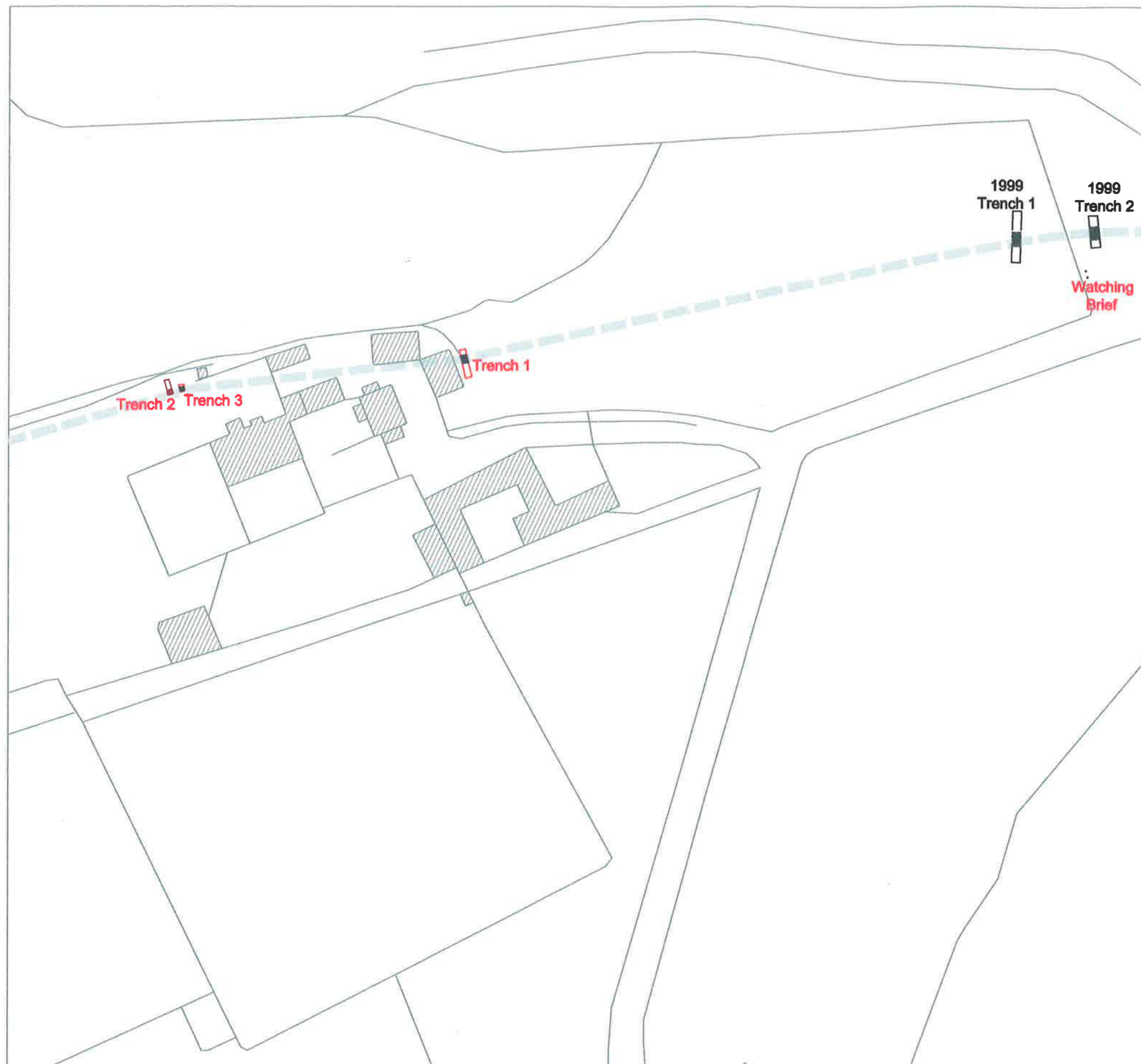


Figure 2 : Trench Location Plan, showing projected line of Hadrian's Wall



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Tel 01524 848666
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PROJECT:

Sewingshields Wood,
Northumberland

DRAWING No:

03



Scale 1:50 at A3

DRAWN BY: ELC

DATE: August 2002

LOCATION:



KEY

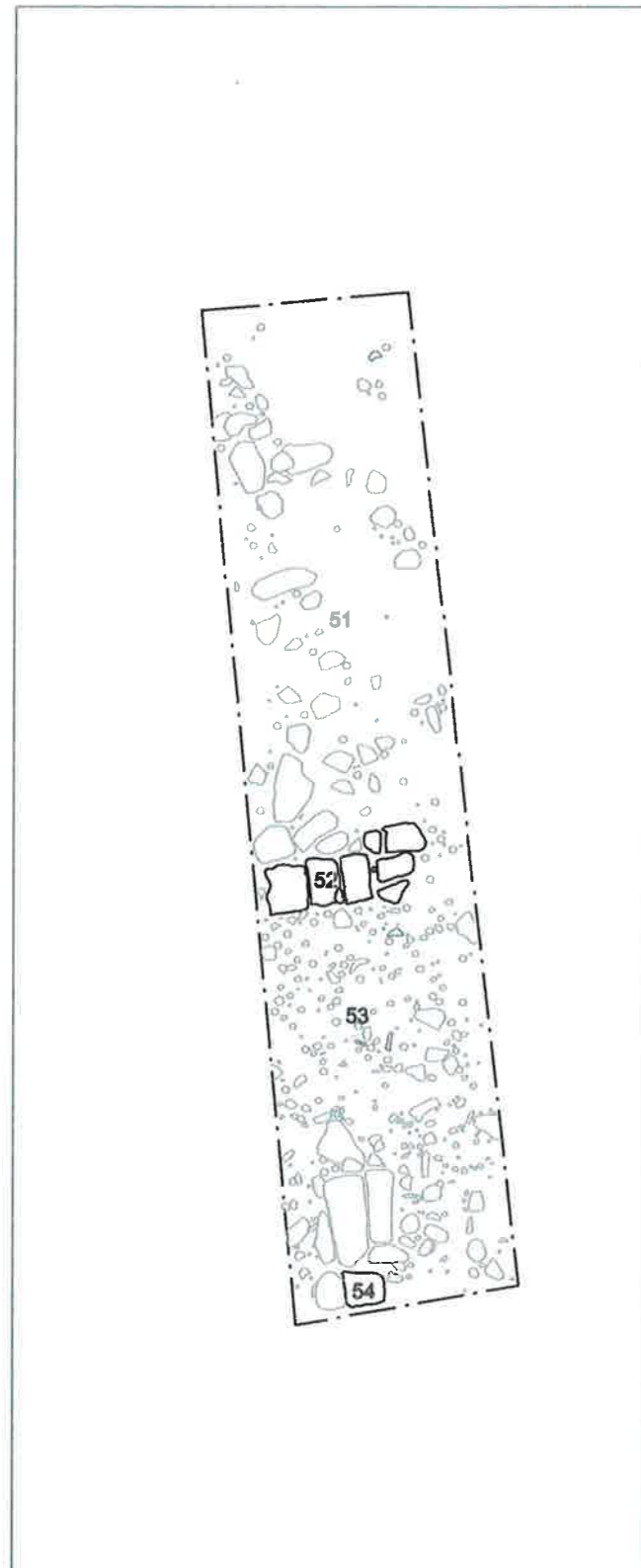
- Stone
- Stone Facing
- Tumbled Facing
- Mortar
- Trench
- Sondage

TITLE:

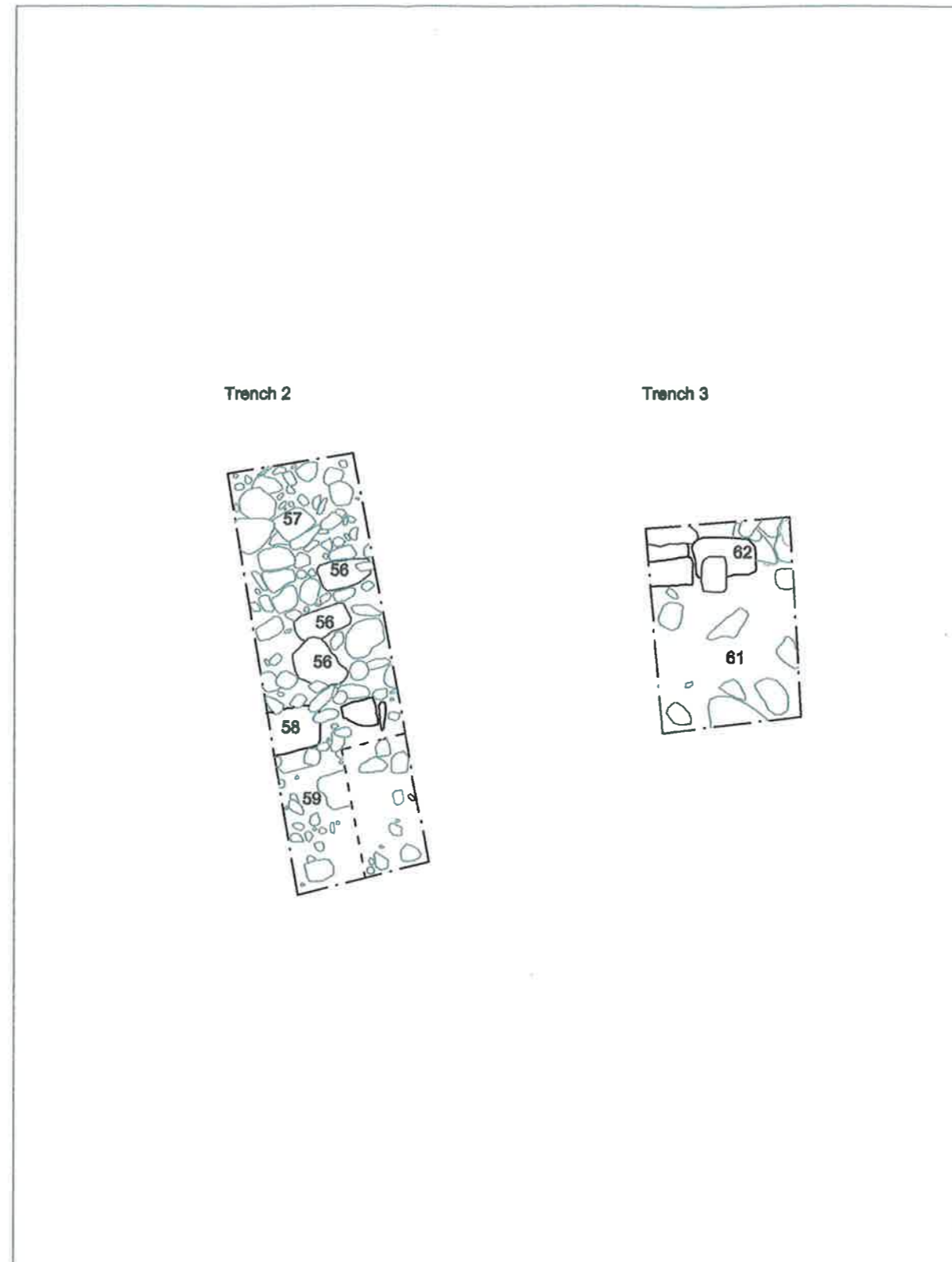
Detail of Trenches 1 - 3

COMMISSIONED BY:

Countryside Agency



Trench 1



Trenches 2 and 3

Figure 3 : Detail of Trenches 1 - 3

PLATES

- Plate 1 General view of Trench 1, looking north-east
- Plate 2 North face **52**, Trench 1, looking east
- Plate 3 Looking east across Trench 2, showing rubble spread **57** and collapse **56**
- Plate 4 North face **58** and rubble spread **57**, Trench 2
- Plate 5 General view of Trench 3, looking north
- Plate 6 North face and foundation **62**, Trench 3



Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking north-east



Plate 2: North ashlar face 52, Trench 1, looking east



Plate 3: Looking east across Trench 2, showing rubble spread 57 and collapse 56



Plate 4: North face 58 and rubble spread 57, Trench 2

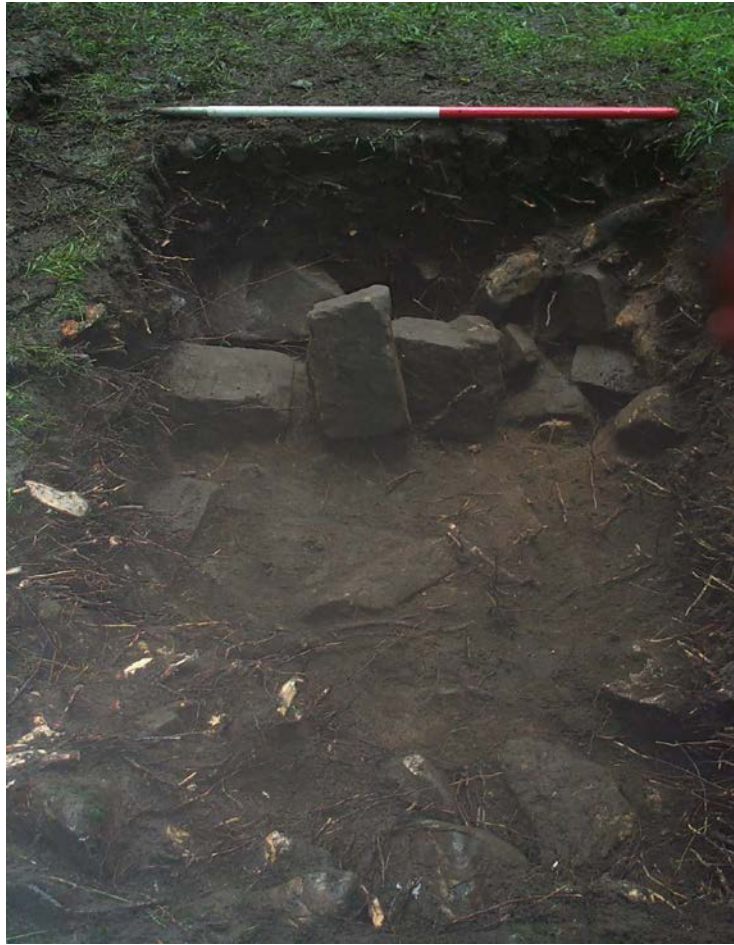


Plate 5: General view of Trench 3, looking north



Plate 6: North face and foundation **62**, Trench 3

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT DESIGN

June 2000

**Lancaster
University
Archaeological
Unit**

SEWINGSHIELD WOOD NORTHUMBERLAND

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION PHASE 2

Proposals

The following project design is offered in response to a request received from Mr T Fish of Northumberland County Council on behalf of the Countryside Agency, for an archaeological evaluation at Sewingshields Wood, to inform the precise alignment and building specification of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail in this locality.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, currently being developed by the Countryside Agency, aims to help conserve the monument whilst allowing the public to enjoy the great drama and beauty of the Wall and its surroundings. In the central sector of the route, through the Northumberland National Park, much of this development work relates to existing footpaths or areas of access and is concerned with proactive measures to deter or halt erosion, together with the creation of short sections of Public Rights of Way to link existing paths, and in some cases the adjustment of these to ensure the integrity of the monument. In Sewingshields Wood, there is an existing access agreement to allow entry to an area of the monument in the Guardianship of English Heritage. Within the Wood, however, the Wall survives only as a low, vegetation-covered earthwork, seemingly created by the robbing of Wall stones, and around the outbuildings of Sewingshields Farm the precise line of the Wall is unclear. Following discussions with English Heritage, it has been agreed that a limited programme of archaeological work should be carried out in advance of the formal designation of the Path, to aid its precise alignment to the west of the outbuildings, and to establish its presence or absence to the north of the outbuildings prior to the detailed specification for a sacrificial surface there being finalised. Both these objectives have the aim of minimising disturbance of significant archaeological deposits as a result of visitor pressure.

1.2 The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) has provided advice to the Countryside Agency since 1996 on archaeological matters relating to the development and implementation of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail. LUAU has the professional expertise and resources to undertake the project detailed below to a high level of quality and efficiency. The organisation operates subject to the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct and is a registered organisation (No. 27).

1.3 Site Location

1.3.1 The element of the monument with which this project design is concerned lies at the approximate centre of Sewingshields Wood, from NGR NY 8084 7028 to NY 8098 7028. This lies within the Scheduled Monument of Hadrian's Wall and associated features between the boundary east of Turret 34a and the field boundary west of Milecastle 36 in Wall Miles 34, 35 and 36, designated as SM 26057.

1.3.2 The section of the Path under consideration lies between Turrets 34a and 34b in Wall Mile 34 and follows the approximate line of Hadrian's Wall through Sewingshields Wood. The precise alignment will require walkers to cross the line of the Wall on two occasions, once to the east of the outbuildings north of Sewingshields Farm, and again to the west. In order to influence the route and establish the most appropriate position for these crossing points, it is proposed that an investigation of the condition of the underlying archaeology be undertaken. It is proposed that three trenches be excavated, one to the east of the outbuildings and two to their west.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The purpose of the evaluation will be to establish the position and extent, character and integrity of the archaeological remains of Hadrian's Wall on the proposed alignment of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail to the east and west of the outbuildings north of Sewingshields Farm. The aim will be to quantify and qualify the archaeological potential of these limited areas, with a view to formulating a strategy for the preservation and management of the archaeological remains, through the design and alignment of the Path so that it will not compromise below ground archaeological deposits. The results will be placed in the public domain in a manner appropriate to their significance.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation Trenches

- 3.1.1 Three trenches will be excavated manually in the positions noted on Figure 1. As discussed with English Heritage, at the eastern side of the outbuildings north of Sewingshields Farm there is a well-established path giving access to that part of the monument to the west in the Guardianship of English Heritage. The ground to the immediate north drops near vertically and the gap between this drop and the outbuildings is narrow, with numerous mature trees limiting the space available. There is therefore little opportunity to vary the line of the Path in this location and, indeed, a sacrificial surface will need to be engineered above the present ground level to allow safe access for walkers. Trench 1 will thus be placed across the line of the established path, in an approximately north-south alignment, with the aim of identifying the precise line of the Wall, since the earthworks visible further east have faded by this point, and the exact line of the Wall has never been established there. It will measure approximately 5m by 2m.
- 3.1.2 The area to the west of the outbuildings is more open and there is a greater opportunity to vary the position at which walkers will be guided across the line of the Wall. It is therefore proposed that two trenches should be excavated there, to determine which location is the most suitable for the establishment of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail. The present path follows the earthwork of the Wall, and walkers will be discouraged from continuing along this path, in order that the earthworks be protected, crossing to the south of the Wall in an area where earthworks do not survive. Trench 2 will be placed immediately to the west of the outbuildings, and Trench 3 will be placed a short distance to the north-west, both approximately over the line of the Wall. Each will measure approximately 4m by 2m, again following an approximately north-south alignment.
- 3.1.3 Turf and topsoil will be removed manually and where feasible will be stacked neatly for replacement at the end of the evaluation process. Excavation will then proceed stratigraphically.

- 3.1.4 Any investigation of intact archaeological deposits will be minimal and exclusively manual. The upper surface of any archaeological layers will be identified, cleaned and recorded. Any further excavation will be carried out only with the agreement of English Heritage and the Countryside Agency. Should this be agreed, however, further excavation will be limited to sampling by partial rather than complete removal to establish the level of preservation of the monument. Any finds recovered will be retained for assessment and spot dating.
- 3.1.5 All information identified in the course of the site works will be recorded stratigraphically, with sufficient pictorial record (plans, sections and both black and white and colour photographs) to identify and illustrate individual features. The trenches will be located with respect to surrounding landscape features.
- 3.1.6 Results of all field investigations will be recorded using a system, adapted from that used by the Centre for Archaeology of English Heritage, based on *pro forma* contexts, object records, and survey sheets. 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). All artefacts and ecofacts will be recorded using the same system, and will be handled and stored according to standard practice (following current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines) in order to minimise deterioration. Primary records will be available for inspection at all times.
- 3.1.7 Samples where appropriate will be collected for technological, pedological, palaeoenvironmental and chronological analysis. Samples will be 30 litres in volume. All samples will be wet sieved at LUAU's offices in Lancaster and the residues subject to a rapid preliminary analysis by LUAU's palaeoenvironmentalist in order to allow an assessment of their potential.
- 3.1.8 If necessary, access to conservation advice and facilities can be made available. LUAU maintains close relationships with Ancient Monuments Laboratory staff at the Universities of Durham and York and, in addition, employs artefact and palaeoecology specialists with considerable expertise in the investigation, excavation and finds management of sites of all periods and types, who are readily available for consultation.
- 3.1.9 Each trench will be backfilled manually on completion in a stratigraphical manner and the surface relaid where feasible. To the west of the outbuildings, however, the trench agreed to be on the line of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail will be covered with terram or a similar interface prior to conventional backfilling, to allow the unconsolidated backfill to be removed at a later date, before a sacrificial surface is laid. Reinstatement of the trenches to the same level as that prior to evaluation cannot be guaranteed, however, since the ground in all three locations is relatively uncompacted with little surface cohesion.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 4.1 LUAU considers health and safety to be of paramount importance on all their projects. LUAU have considerable experience in applying modern health and safety practices in large- and small-scale archaeological projects.
- 4.2 LUAU 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 (1996 rev.). A written risk assessment will be undertaken in advance of project commencement and copies will be made available on request to all interested parties.
- 4.3 Where necessary, trenches will be fenced temporarily to prevent access by stock and walkers. LUAU also reserve the right to cease work in unusually windy weather, when there may be a danger of personnel being blown over the cliff edge.
- 4.4 LUAU will undertake a Cat scan as a matter of course in advance of the commencement of excavation.

5. ATTENDANCES

- 5.1 The Countryside Agency or their agents are requested to arrange all access and any provisions for backfilling beyond those listed in 3.1.9 above.

6. ARCHIVE

- 6.1 The results of the evaluation will form the basis of a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. It will include summary processing and analysis of any features and finds recovered during fieldwork, in accordance with UKIC guidelines. 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.
- 6.2 The paper archive will be deposited with the Northumberland Record Office and any material archive with the Museum of Antiquities at Newcastle University, with the land owner's permission, unless English Heritage deem otherwise. A copy of the report will be deposited for inclusion in the Northumberland Sites and Monuments Record and a further copy will be deposited with the RCHM(E) database for Hadrian's Wall.
- 6.3 All finds will be treated in accordance with LUAU standard practice which follows current IFA guidelines.

7. REPORT

- 7.1 A report of the findings will be compiled following completion of the fieldwork. This report will examine and describe the archaeology and, if appropriate, the palaeoenvironment of the site. The report will also seek to establish the significance of the results.
- 7.2 The report will consist of a typescript illustrated with line drawings, including finds if necessary, and, if suitable, black and white photographs.
- 7.3 This report will be submitted to English Heritage as part of the Scheduled Monument Consent, and to the Countryside Agency and their agents, Northumberland County Council, to inform the decision-making process as to the exact alignment and construction details of the Path.

7.4 Confidentiality

- 7.4.1 The report is designed as a document for the specific use of the Client, for the particular purpose as defined in this project design, and should be treated as such; it is not suitable for publication, save as a note, without amendment or revision. Any requirement to revise or reorder the material for submission or presentation to third parties beyond the project design, or for any other explicit purpose, can be fulfilled, but will require separate discussion and funding.

7.5 Publication

- 7.5.1 If the results of the evaluation justify such a course of action, the work should be published as a short article, submitted to *Archaeologia Aeliana*.

8. PROJECT MONITORING

- 8.1 Any proposed variations to the project design will be agreed with English Heritage in co-ordination with Northumberland County Council and the Countryside Agency. LUAU will arrange a preliminary meeting, if required, and English Heritage, Northumberland County Council's Archaeology Service and the Northumberland National Park archaeologist will be informed of the commencement of the project in writing.

9. OTHER ISSUES

- 9.1 Temporary facilities will need to be established on-site for the duration of the evaluation. In particular, temporary toilet facilities will be established, in a position of convenience for both land owner and tenant, but away from the projected line of Hadrian's Wall.

- 9.2 The insurance in respect of claims for personal injury to or the death of any person under a contract of service with LUAU and arising in the course of such person's employment shall comply with the employers' liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 and any statutory orders made there under. For all other claims to cover the liability of LUAU in respect of personal injury or damage to property by negligence of LUAU or any of its employees, there applies the insurance cover of £1m for any one occurrence or series of occurrences arising out of one event. Details will be sent if required.
- 9.3 Excavation will be undertaken on the basis of a five day week, within daylight hours only.

10. WORK TIMETABLE

- 10.1 It is likely that LUAU could commence the evaluation within two weeks of receipt of Scheduled Monument Consent. It is estimated that the evaluation will take one week to complete on-site, inclusive of backfilling. LUAU would be able to submit the report on the evaluation to the Countryside Agency within two months of the completion of the fieldwork.

11. PROJECT TEAM

- 11.1 The work will be directed on site by a Project Officer, probably Ian Miller BA, who has a wide range of experience of British archaeology of all periods, and was the director of an earlier evaluation of the Wall a short distance to the east. He recently acted as Site Supervisor in the English Heritage excavations at Birdoswald Roman fort and nearby at Appletree. In addition, three Project Assistants would work on site.
- 11.2 The project will be managed by Rachel Newman BA (LUAU Deputy Director) who has acted since 1996 as the archaeological consultant to the Countryside Agency in the development of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail.

APPENDIX 2: CONTEXT LIST

CONTEXT NUMBER	TRENCH NUMBER	DESCRIPTION GROUND	DEPTH BELOW
50	1	Turf and topsoil	-
51	1	Rubble spread	0.2m
52	1	North face	0.19m
53	1	Wall rubble core	0.22m
54	1	South face	0.09m
55	2	Turf and topsoil	-
56	2	Wall collapse	0.09m
57	2	Rubble spread	0.02m
58	2	North face	0.3m
59	2	Disturbed subsoil	0.45m
60	3	Turf and topsoil	-
61	3	Rubble spread	0.04m
62	3	North face	0.32m
63	3	Disturbed subsoil	0.45m

APPENDIX 3: FINDS CATALOGUE

Context	OR No	Description	Date
50	200	19 fragments ceramic coarseware vessels	Mid-second to fourth centuries
50	201	One fragment amphora	?Third century
50	202	Three fragments ceramic vessels	Nineteenth century
50	203	One fragment glass vessel	Nineteenth/twentieth century
50	204	One fragment tile	Roman?
50	205	One fragment ceramic pipe	Twentieth century
50	206	One iron nail	-
59	207	One fragment clay tobacco pipe	1660-1720
59	208	One fragment cow teeth	-
59	209	One fragment mortar	Roman?
60	210	Four fragments ceramic vessel	Nineteenth century
60	211	One clay tobacco pipe stem	Nineteenth century
60	212	Three fragments animal bone	-
62	213	One fragment mortar	Roman

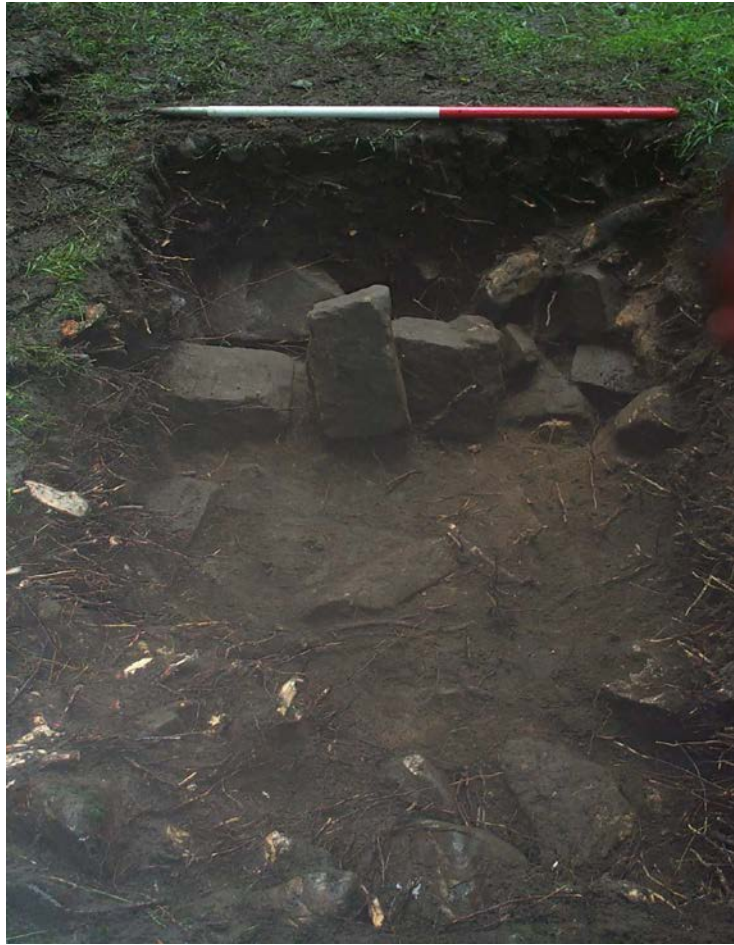


Plate 5: General view of Trench 3, looking north



Plate 6: North face and foundation **62**, Trench 3



Plate 1: General view of Trench 1, looking north-east



Plate 2: North ashlar face 52, Trench 1, looking east



Plate 3: Looking east across Trench 2, showing rubble spread 57 and collapse 56



Plate 4: North face 58 and rubble spread 57, Trench 2



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