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LOW TOWN  
GREENHEAD  
NORTHUMBERLAND

~ ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF ~

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OCTOBER 2019



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LOW TOWN  
GREENHEAD  
NORTHUMBERLAND

REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Prepared by:

*The Archaeological Practice Ltd.*



**Frontispiece:** *View of Low Town farmhouse from the west, showing earthworks probably associated with an earlier phase of the farmstead.*

*Grid Reference:* NY 6836 6632  
*Planning ref:* 17NP0050  
*Date of fieldwork:* August 2019  
*Oasis Number:* thearcha2-

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## SUMMARY

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*This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in July 2019, to mitigate the impact of proposed development works on at Low Town (centred on grid reference NY 89043 92905)*

*He works monitored by watching brief comprised development works associated with ground disturbing works in the development area, including the construction of a treatment plant and proposed installation of new underground services to the property.*

*Monitoring was carried out in three areas, Trenches 1 to 3. Trenches 1 and 2 were narrow (0.70m wide) service trenches running from the north central part of the extant building, to both the west (Trench 1), and the east (Trench 2). Trench 3 was a rectangular area measuring approximately 6m by 8m located against the west end of the building.*

*Similar stratigraphy was observed in each trench. Below the 0.20m thick turf and topsoil [01] was a 0.30m thick sandy subsoil [02], sitting on yellow sandstone bedrock [04], which in places was friable and fractured along natural laminations. No archaeological features or finds were present within any of the service trenches.*

*It was concluded that no significant archaeological features or deposits were disturbed during the groundworks carried out at Low Town and monitored by archaeological watching brief.*

*No further archaeological monitoring is required as part of this project. However, given the high potential for significant archaeological deposits to exist in the wider area, it is recommended that any future work should be considered on its own merits with respect to the need for archaeological intervention.*

## 1. PURPOSE OF WATCHING BRIEF

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**1.1** This document reports on a process of archaeological monitoring conducted in July 2019, to mitigate the impact of proposed development works on land at Low Town (*centred on grid reference NY 6836 6632*), near Greenhead in west Northumberland (*Illus. 01-03*).

**1.2** Based on the available information with respect to the archaeological potential of the site, The Northumberland National Park Heritage Officer stipulated that an archaeological watching brief should be maintained on the excavation works associated with the scheme to ensure that any archaeological remains found to exist on the site are appropriately recorded to determine their character and state of survival.

**1.3** The groundworks monitoring and archaeological report respond to the following planning conditions:

Condition 15.

15. The developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeologist is present during the undertaking of any ground disturbing works in the development area required in connection with the construction of the extension hereby permitted to the western elevation of the building, the construction of the treatment plant and proposed installation of new underground services to the property so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief shall be undertaken to the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The Local Planning Authority shall be informed, in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development of the name of the said archaeologist. No work shall begin until the Local Planning Authority has confirmed, in writing, that the proposed archaeologist is suitable. A copy of the watching brief report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within two months of the fieldwork being completed by the archaeologist.

**Reason:** In order to ensure that provision is made for the recording of any archaeological features or finds during the development, in accordance with Core Strategy policy 18 and Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

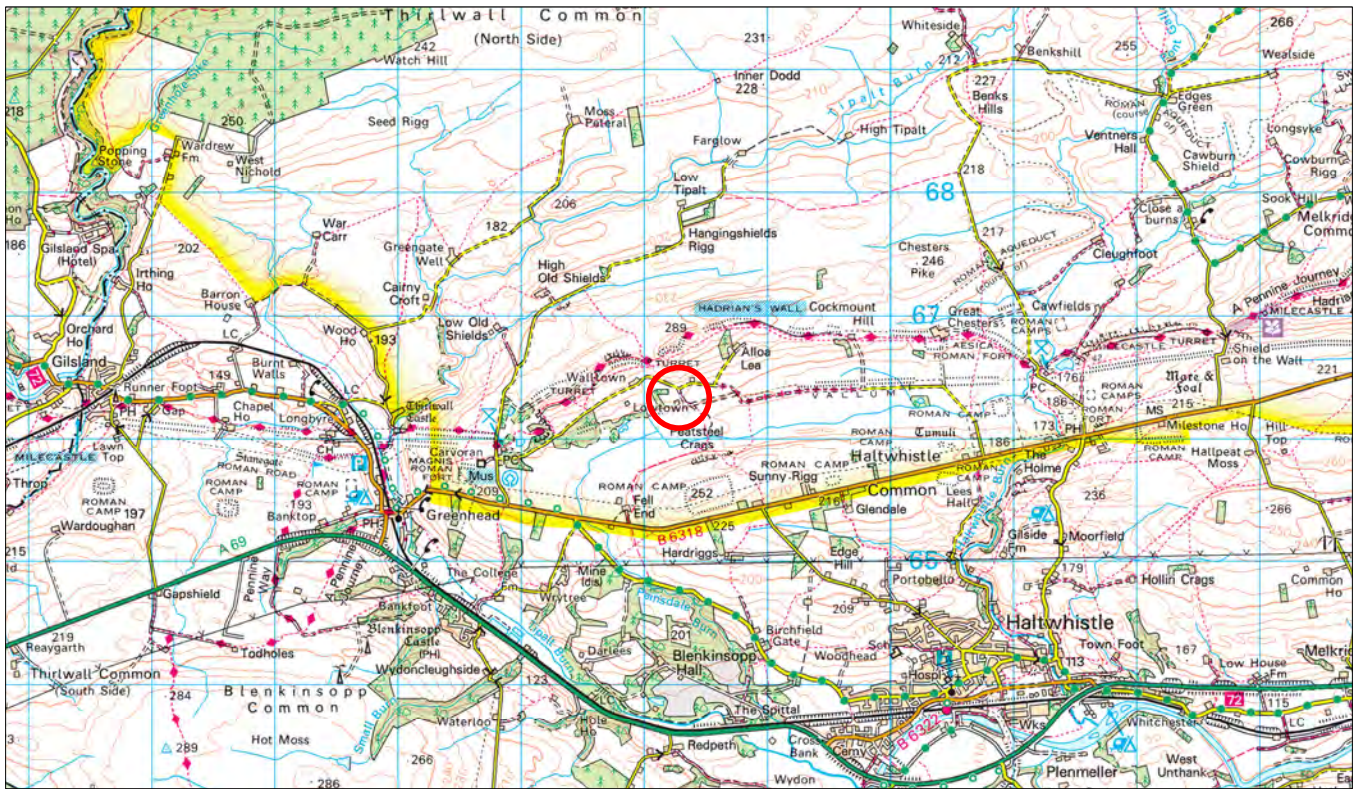
Condition 16.

16. Should any excavation required in connection with the implementation of the Hardcore/ Gravel or Paving areas shown on the Indicative Landscape Plan (LT/08/ILP/04), received 8th May 2017 exceed the excavation depths stated on this plan the developer shall ensure that a suitably qualified archaeologist is present during the undertaking of the ground disturbing works in the development area so that an archaeological watching brief can be conducted. The archaeological watching brief shall be undertaken to the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The Local Planning Authority shall be informed, in writing, at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the development of the name of the said archaeologist. No work shall begin until the Local Planning Authority has confirmed, in writing, that the proposed archaeologist is suitable. A copy of the watching brief report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority within two months of the fieldwork being completed by the archaeologist.

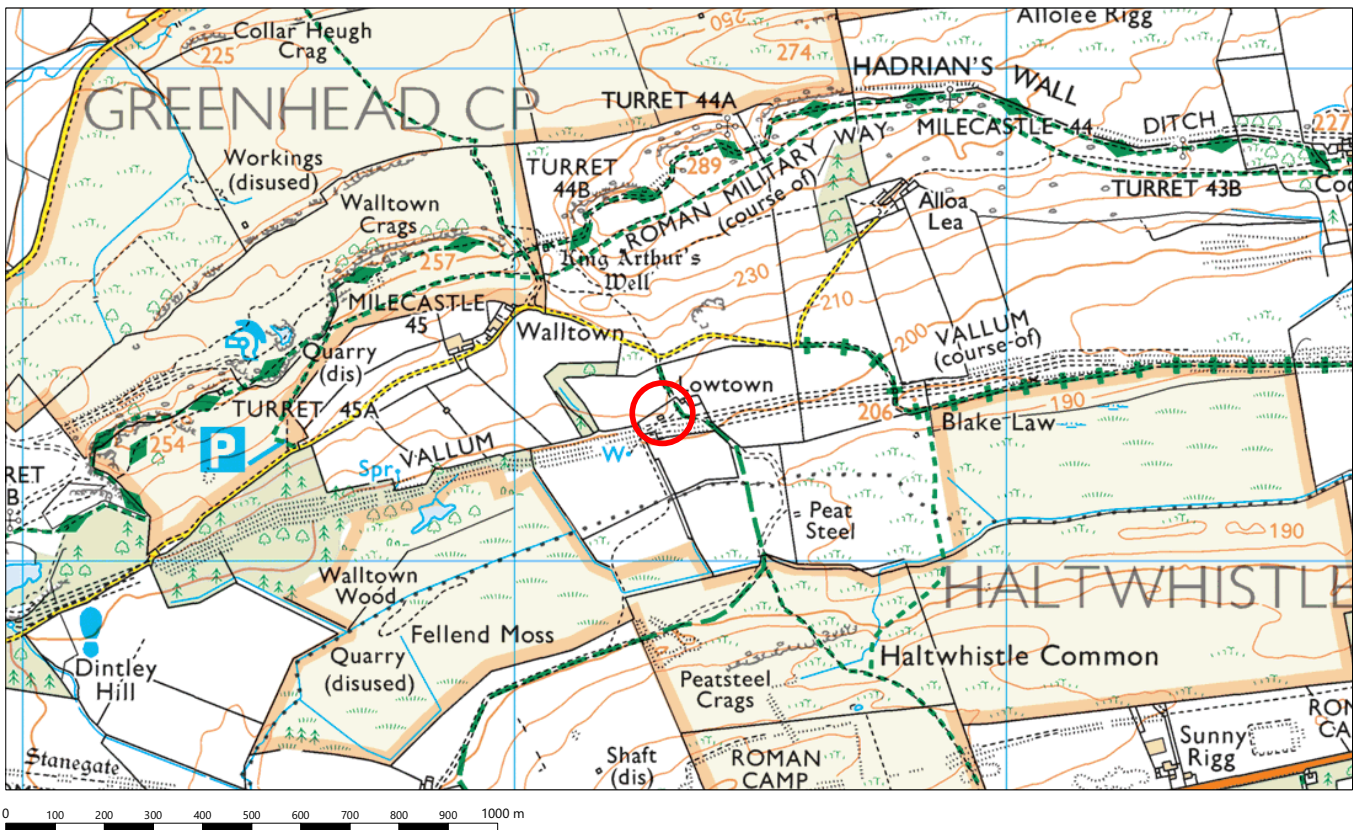
**Reason:** In order to ensure that provision is made for the recording of any archaeological features or finds during the development, in accordance with Core Strategy policy 18 and Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

**1.4** Accordingly, the watching brief covered development works associated with ground disturbing works in the development area, including the construction of a treatment plant and proposed installation of new underground services to the property.



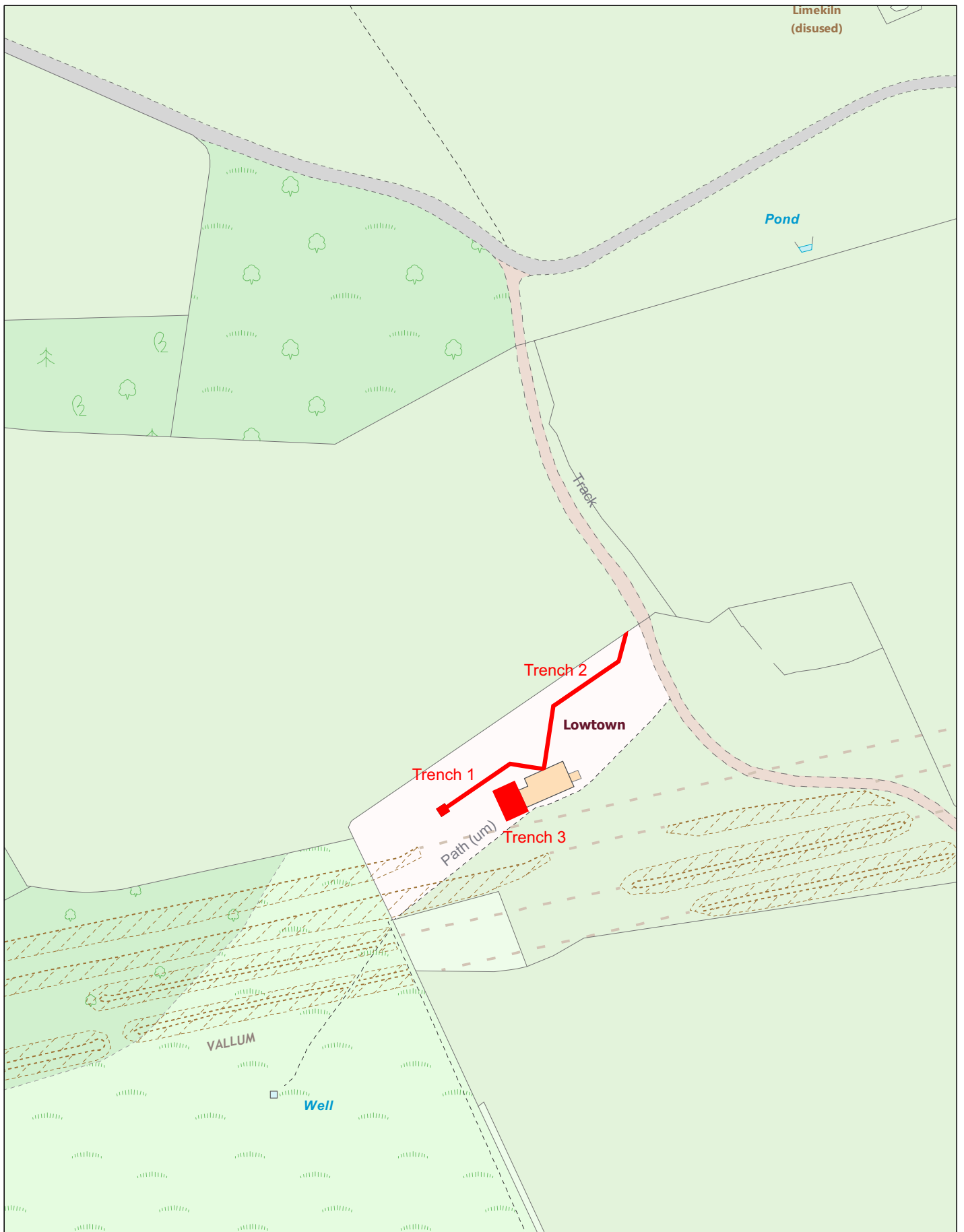


**Illus. 01:** Regional view, showing the location of Low Town (circled in red) to the northeast of Greenhead in southwest Northumberland.

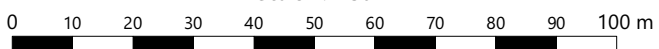


**Illus. 02:** Town view, showing the location of Low Town (circled in red) in the intervallum area of the Hadrian's Wall frontier, near the hamlet of Walltown.





Scale 1:1250



**Illus. 03:** Site view, showing the location of watching brief (highlighted in red) at Low Town, immediately north of the Vallum.

## 2. CULTURAL HERITAGE BACKGROUND

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The information in this section is derived from the Northumberland County Historic Environment Record (NHER), from readily accessible historic map evidence and published sources.

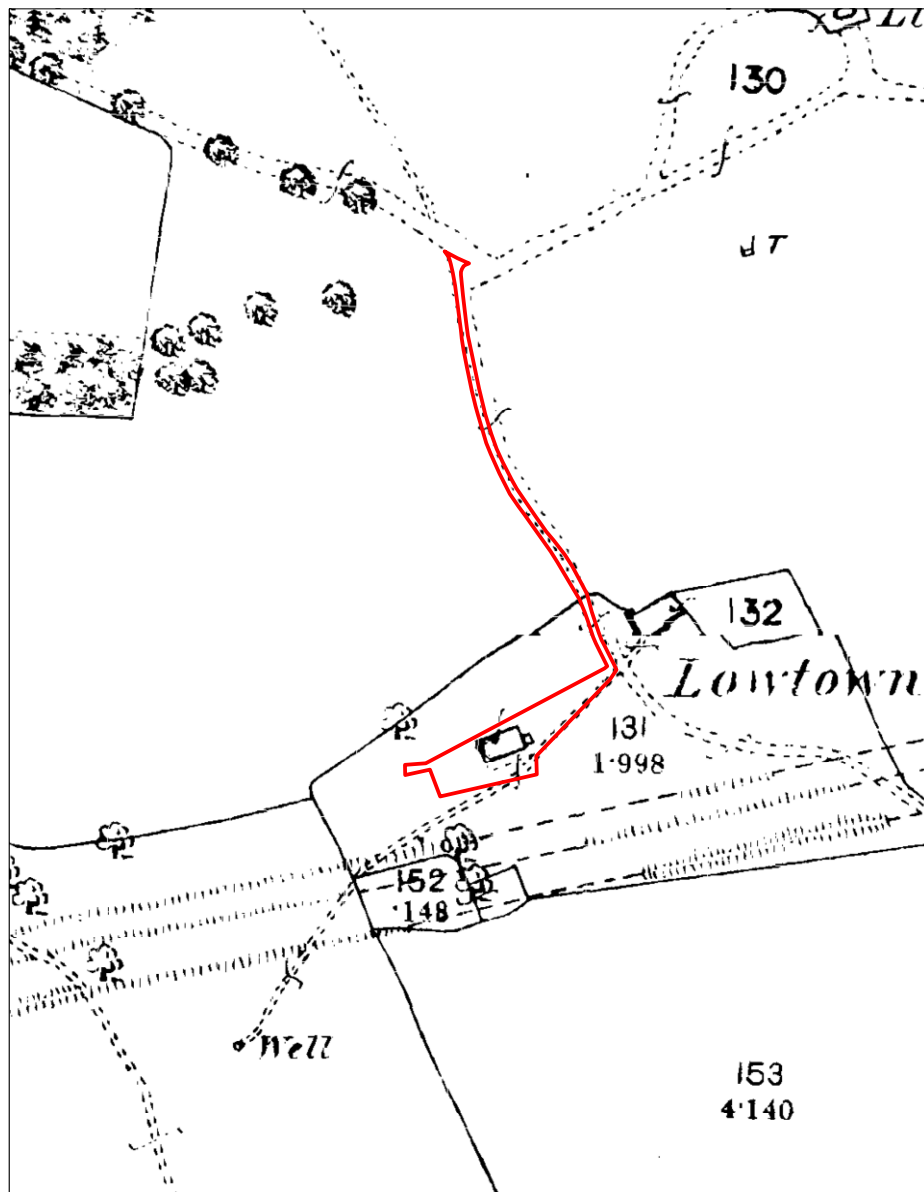
Low Town Farm is an early 19th century farmhouse (NHER 13706), with a date of 1800 on the door lintel, and is protected as a Grade II Listed Building. It is situated in Greenhead Civil Parish some 360m SE of Walltown hamlet, where a tower was recorded in the 1541 Border Survey of Bowes and Ellerker (NHER 6706; cf. MacLauchlan 157 plan; 1858, 47 n.6). Greenhead village lies c. 3.5km to the WSW. The historic map evidence from the mid-19th-century 1st edition Ordnance Survey onwards shows there was formerly a second building at Low Town, perhaps a barn, detached from and located to the NE of the farmhouse. This was adjoined the enclosure wall around the farm complex.

The farm is located on the northern edge of the Vallum earthwork, the broad and deep, flat-bottomed ditch flanked by earthen linear mounds to the north and south. The farm is positioned just beyond the northern mound.

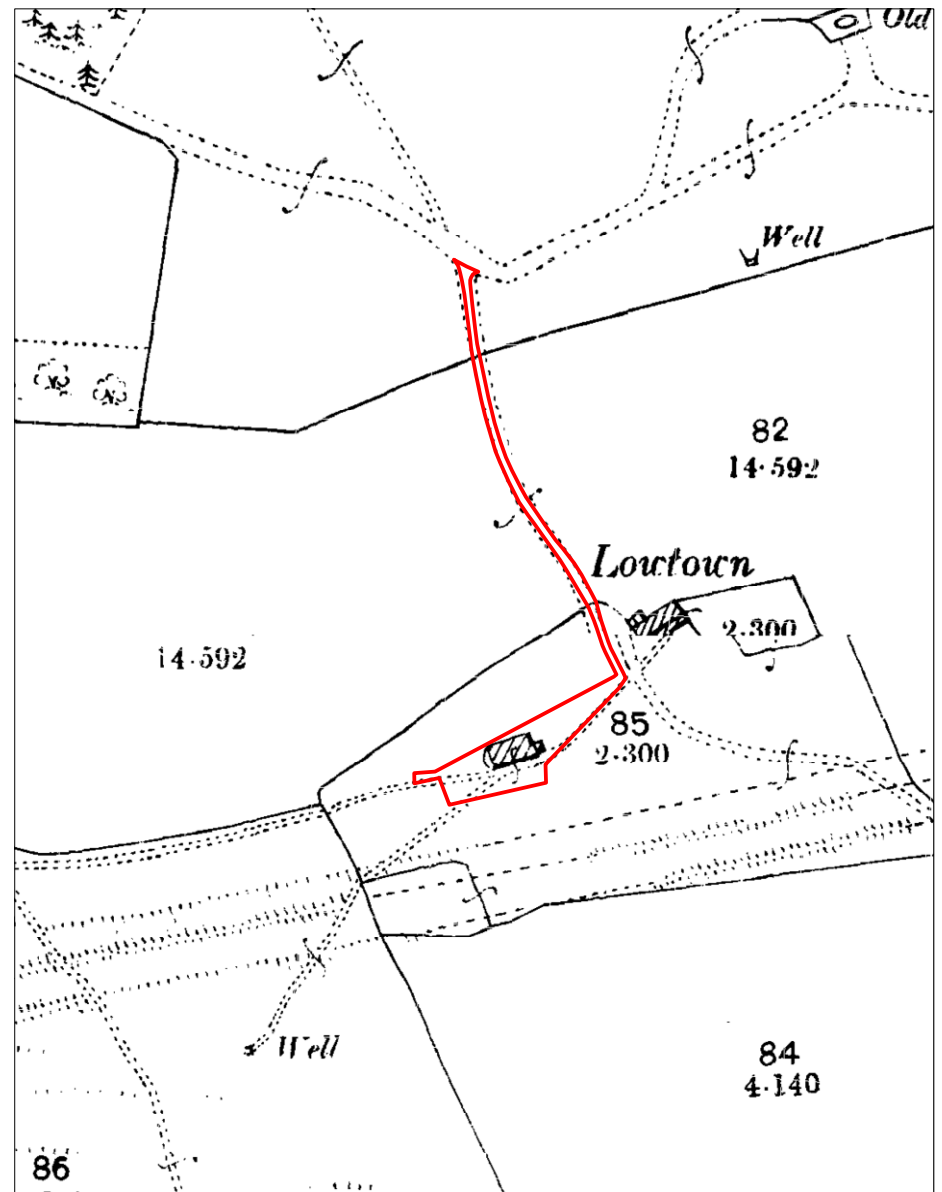
At this point, in Wall mile 44, Hadrian's Wall itself traces an irregular course, as it runs along the crest of Walltown Crags, and the Vallum does not run close behind the Wall curtain, as it typically does in more level terrain. Instead it diverges to follow a more direct course across lower ground, some 400-500m further south, before skirting the northern edge of Fellend Moss.

There is also a tradition of a 'camp' having once stood to the north of Low Town (NHER 6069). This takes the form of a roughly triangular, irregular enclosure surrounded by a very low rampart or bank. The camp is shown on the first edition (1:2500) Ordnance Survey map of 1863, and figures on MacLauchlan's Survey of the Roman Wall (1857 plan; 1858, 47 n.5). More recent investigations of the site have not found any trace of this camp and the area is covered with later ridge and furrow cultivation. A 'tumulus' is also marked on the MacLauchlan's 1857 plan and on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map at the NW angle of the enclosure, but no trace has been noted more recently and it is suggested this may simply have been a natural feature.

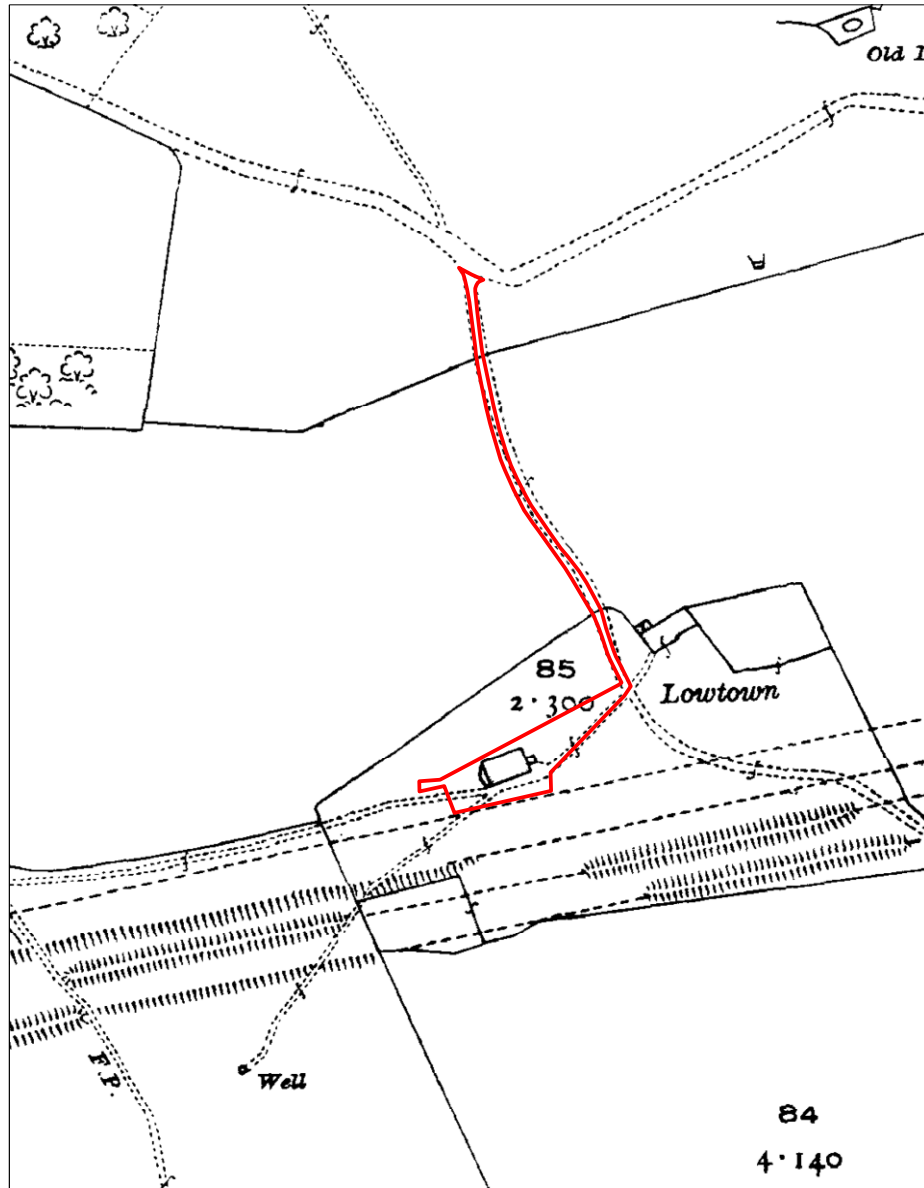
No archaeological work is known to have occurred at Low Town Farm itself prior to the current programme of work.



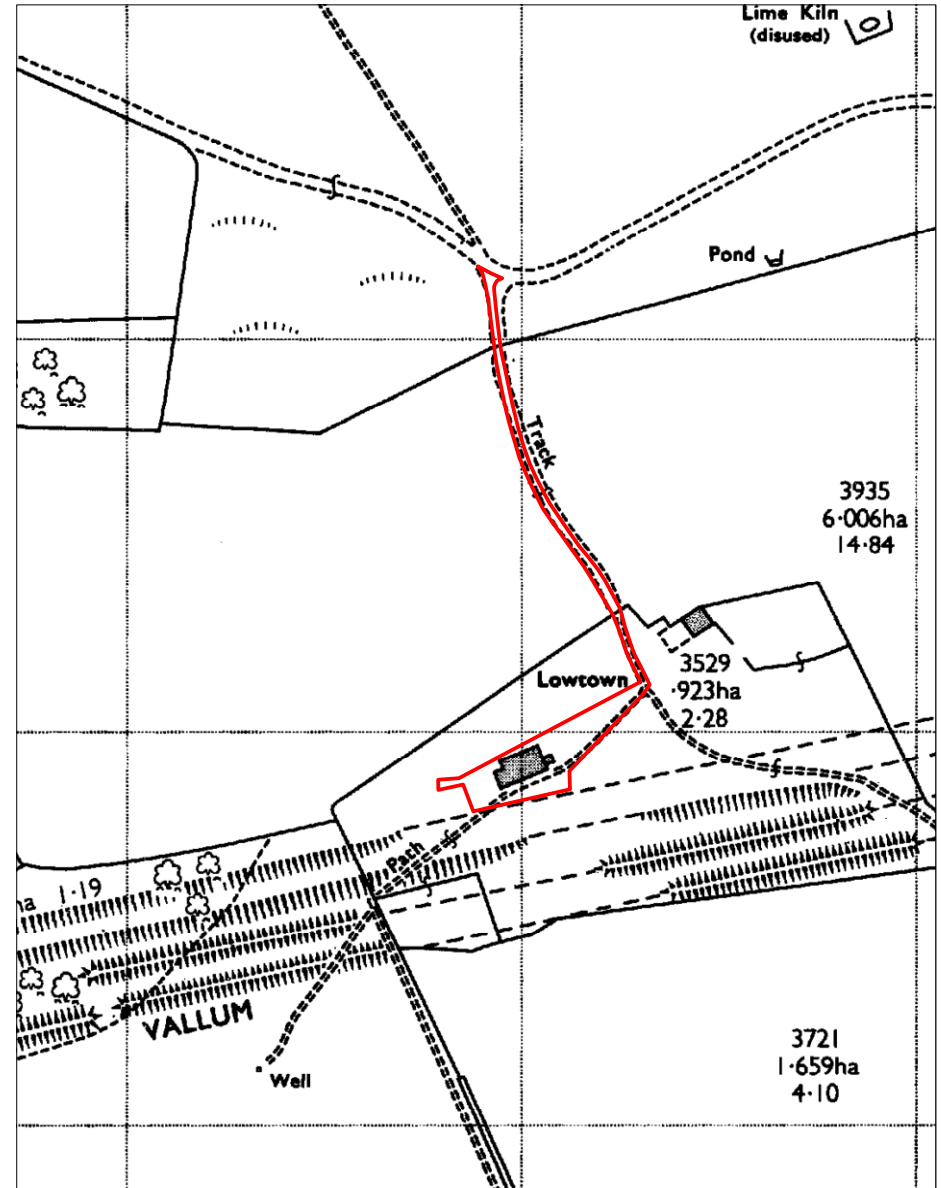
**Illus. 04:** Extract from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Plan of c.1864, showing the location of the watching brief site (highlighted in red).



**Illus. 05:** Extract from the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan of c.1896, showing the location of the watching brief site (highlighted in red).



**Illus. 06:** Extract from the 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey Plan of c.1921, showing the location of the watching brief site (highlighted in red).



**Illus. 07:** Extract from the c.1973 Edition Ordnance Survey Plan, showing the location of the watching brief site (highlighted in red).

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

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The watching brief took place during groundworks carried out as part of the development, specifically:

Excavations for the provision of services

Groundworks associated with site clearance and landscaping activities

The aims of the watching brief were to identify and determine the character of any remains uncovered during groundworks on the site, and to make an appropriate record of such finds by photographic and other means.

The excavations were closely monitored by a suitably trained and experienced archaeologist from The Archaeological Practice Ltd.

The excavations in the areas to be surfaced with hardcore/gravel or paving did not exceed the excavation depths shown on the Indicative Landscape Plan (LT/08/ILP/04).



## 4. RESULTS

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### 4.1 Location and Dimensions:

The archaeological watching brief undertaken in July 2019 to monitor groundworks associated with the installation of service connections was carried out over three areas, Trenches 1 to 3.

Trenches 1 and 2 were narrow (0.70m wide) service trenches running from the north central part of the extant building, to both the west (Trench 1), and the east (Trench 2). Trench 3 was a rectangular area measuring approximately 6m by 8m located against the west end of the building.

#### 4.1.1 Trench 1

This trench ran roughly west from the north central doorway of the building, in two stretches – the first measuring 8.3m long, and the second 18.2m. At the western end of this a 2m by 2m trench was dug for the insertion of a septic tank. The two straight lengths of trench reached a maximum depth of 1.60m, whereas the septic tank was excavated to 2m depth.

The same stratigraphy was recorded in each part of the trench. Below the 0.20m thick turf and topsoil [01] was a 0.30m thick sandy subsoil [02]. This lay above the yellow sandstone bedrock [04], which in places was more friable and fractured along natural laminations [03].

No archaeological features or finds were present within the Trench.

#### 4.1.2 Trench 2

This trench ran roughly east from the north central doorway of the building, in three stretches – the first measuring approximately 16.00m, the second 21.00m, and the third 7.50m, at which point it connected with an existing water tank.

As in Trench 1, the sections revealed turf and topsoil [01] over sandy subsoil [02] and then the natural solid bedrock [03] with areas of more fractured lamination [04].

No archaeological features or finds were present within Trench 2.

#### 4.1.3 Trench 3

This trench reached a maximum depth of 0.50m, and contained the turf and topsoil [01], sandy subsoil [02], and the upper surface of the natural sandstone bedrock [03].

No archaeological features or finds were present within Trench 3.

#### 4.1.4 Context List

[01] Turf and Topsoil. 0.10 to 0.20m thick.

[02] Sandy subsoil, yellow-orange in colour. Loose compaction, clean. Up to 0.30m thick.

[03] Natural bedrock. Yellow-brown sandstone. From approximately 0.70m below modern surface, though rising closer in areas.

[04] Fractured upper surface of sandstone bedrock caused by fracturing along natural laminations. From approximately 0.50m below modern surface.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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**5.1** It is concluded that no significant archaeological features or deposits were disturbed during the groundworks carried out at the Low Town development site and monitored by archaeological watching brief.

**5.4** No further archaeological monitoring is required during the groundworks of this development site. However, given the high potential for significant archaeological deposits to exist in the wider area, it is recommended that any future work should be considered on its own merits with respect to the need for archaeological intervention.

## 6. REFERENCES

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Breeze, D J 2006 (ed) *J Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall*, 14th edn. Newcastle upon Tyne: The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne .

MacLauchlan, H, 1857 *The Roman Wall and Illustrations of the Principal Vestiges of Roman Occupation in the North of England*. (Atlas volume) London: privately printed.

MacLauchlan, H 1858 *Memoir written during a Survey of the Roman Wall, through the counties of Northumberland and Cumberland in the years 1852-1854*. London



***Illus. 08:*** Trench 1 looking East towards the house



***Illus. 09:*** Trench 1 looking south towards the house



***Illus. 11:*** Trench 1, north-facing section of the central section,



***Illus. 12:*** West end of Trench 1, with house to rear.





**Illus. 12:** Trench 2 looking south towards the farmhouse.



**Illus. 13** The west-facing section of Trench 2 close to the house.



**Illus. 14** The route of Trench 2 east of the house.



**Illus. 15** North-east end of Trench 2 viewed from SW.