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**Hadrian's Wall: The Vallum Near Milecastle 10 (Walbottle Dene),
Northumberland: Interim Report on Archaeological Evaluation,
September 2000**

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Summary

Milecastle 10 is one of thirteen of these installations on Hadrian's Wall under regular or intermittent ploughing. Field evaluation was carried out on these milecastles in 1999-2000.

Milecastle 10 was sampled in 1999, and in 2000 it was decided to evaluate the archaeological potential of the Vallum mounds where it appeared that they had been ploughed away. The work showed that a very small portion of the north mound survived, sealing a buried ground surface which had the potential to provide evidence for the pre-Roman environment.

Keywords

Excavation
Roman
Milecastle

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HADRIAN'S WALL: THE VALLUM NEAR MILECASTLE 10 (WALBOTTLE DENE), NORTHUMBERLAND

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1. Project background

Thirteen out of the milecastles on the World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall have been identified as being under potentially damaging land regimes, principally cultivation either in rotation, or annually for cereal crops. A programme of field evaluation to investigate the condition of the remains and their vulnerability to further cultivation was put forward in a Project Design (Austen and Wilmott 1999) in June 1999, and the first phase of the work, during which five of the milecastles were evaluated, took place during August 1999. A further phase of work which covered seven more milecastles took place in Autumn 2000.

The primary objective of the fieldwork was to provide data on the survival and vulnerability of these milecastles in order to inform discussions with land owners and managers over their future management. Archaeological information on the shape, size, internal layout and dating of the milecastles was also recovered.

Pending the production of a formal MAP2 assessment on the completion of the whole project, it has been decided to produce a series of short interim reports summarising the results of the work on each site. These will be circulated to archaeological curators, and also to the owners and managers of individual sites.

The work on Milecastle 10 Vallum mounds was undertaken by permission of the site owner, Mr R. Johnson of Grange Farm, Newburn.

2. The Site

The site of Milecastle 10 (Fig 2) was evaluated as part of the Milecastles project in 1999 (Wilmott 1999). Additional work was requested by the Co-ordinator for Hadrian's Wall, Paul Austen, to examine the survival of the mounds of the Vallum in the field in which the milecastle lay. At the foot of the hill to the south of the milecastle was the line of the Vallum. Though the earthwork was visible in a field to the immediate east, OS plot 4760 (in which the milecastle lay) had been regularly ploughed for a long time, and the Vallum completely levelled. Despite this, when the field was freshly ploughed two parallel "stripes" of pale clay were visible on the surface, and were thought to represent the surviving remnants of the Vallum mounds.

3. Original aims

The original aims for the work were:

- MC10.1 to establish the state of preservation of the ploughed Vallum mounds.
- MC10.2 to establish the state of preservation and potential of any buried soil horizon beneath the Vallum mounds.
- MC10.3 to establish the impact on the site of past cultivation, and the implications of its continuance.

4. Site Methodology

Two trenches (Fig 2) measuring 8m x 2m were excavated across the northern and southern vallum mounds. The trenches were located by sighting up the field using 2m ranging poles as it was difficult to see the mounds at the eastern end of the field due to the slope and dip of the land. The trenches were dug to include a part of the Vallum ditch so that it could be certain that the excavation trench was in the right area if the mounds had been completely obliterated by ploughing. In each hand excavated trench, a slot was dug through the end of the trench furthest away from the Vallum ditch, to be sure that the mound would be seen in section if it still survived. These slots were approximately 3m long x 1m wide. In the event of finding a buried land surface beneath the Vallum mounds, the soil horizons were to be sampled for palynological and pedological analysis.

5. Archaeological results

5.1 Description

Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated across the southern Vallum mound, with the trench aligned north- south across it. It was expected that the Vallum mound would be constructed with material very similar to the natural subsoil as it would have been upcast from the excavation of the Vallum ditch, and so caution was taken in interpreting the pale orangey-grey sandy clay (822) which lay beneath the ploughsoil (821). It became apparent as the excavation deepened, that very little of the southern Vallum mound survived and it had been almost completely obliterated by ploughing. There was no distinct difference between the natural subsoil (823) and the mound material (which survived at its maximum depth to 0.10m), and no buried land surface was visible beneath this. The mound was highest towards the south, and tapered in thickness towards the Vallum ditch.

Trench 2 (Figs 3, 4)

Trench 2 was excavated across the northern Vallum mound, and a slot was dug at the

northern end of the trench as the Vallum ditch was visible at the southern end. Below the ploughsoil (824), the cut for a land drain (826) was revealed. This ran in an east west alignment across the trench, and when excavated was shown to contain a blue crock pipe. This truncated a deposit of pale mottled yellow-grey silty clay (827) which was 0.17m thick. This was all that remained of the northern Vallum mound, which tapered to the south to a thickness of 0.05m. Directly below this, and above the natural silty clay (829), was a mid to light brown-grey sandy silt (828) varying in thickness between 0.10m and 0.16m. This deposit was interpreted as a buried soil horizon. It contained frequent charcoal flecks but no finds. It was sampled for pollen and soil analysis, and the location of these samples were recorded on the section drawing.

6. Conclusions

6.1 *Original aims*

The aims were realised. It is clear that very little survives of either the southern or northern Vallum mounds, as they have been almost completely obliterated by ploughing (MC10.1). The northern Vallum mound survives to a greater thickness than the southern, and the remains of a pre-Roman land surface exist beneath it. This may produce important environmental information which will shed light on the pre-Roman environment and the land use in this area before the Vallum was constructed (MC10.2). Plough-damage continues, and there is little doubt that what remains of the paleoecological resource beneath the Vallum mounds will not survive in the long term (MC10.3).

6.2 *Recommendations*

The samples recovered from this evaluation will be analysed very shortly. Decisions on any mitigation must await this analysis, as if little or no paleo-ecological data survives there will be little point in entering into mitigation arrangements. If, however the potential of this material is demonstrated, a decision will have to be made on the correct response. The most cost-effective mitigation will probably be to accept the continued attrition of what remains, and to undertake a programme of augering in order to maximise data retrieval from the buried soil deposit before its final disappearance.

Evaluation by: Helen Moore (supervisor)
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George Marchant.

Date: September 2000

Report by: Helen Moore & Tony Wilmott

Date: 25th May 2001

References

Austen, P S, and Wilmott, T, 1999 *Milecastles under cultivation on Hadrian's Wall: A Project Design*, CAS, English Heritage

Wilmott, T, 1999 *Milecastle 10 (Walbottle Dean), Excavations 1999; Interim Report*, English Heritage, Centre for Archaeology

Enclosed figures and plans

- Figure 1 Location of milecastle 10 on Hadrian's Wall
- Figure 2 Milecastle 10 with 1999excavation trenches, and trenches excavated in 2000 shown against modern mapping
- Figure 3 Plan of Trench 2
- Figure 4 South-north and west-east sections of Trench 2

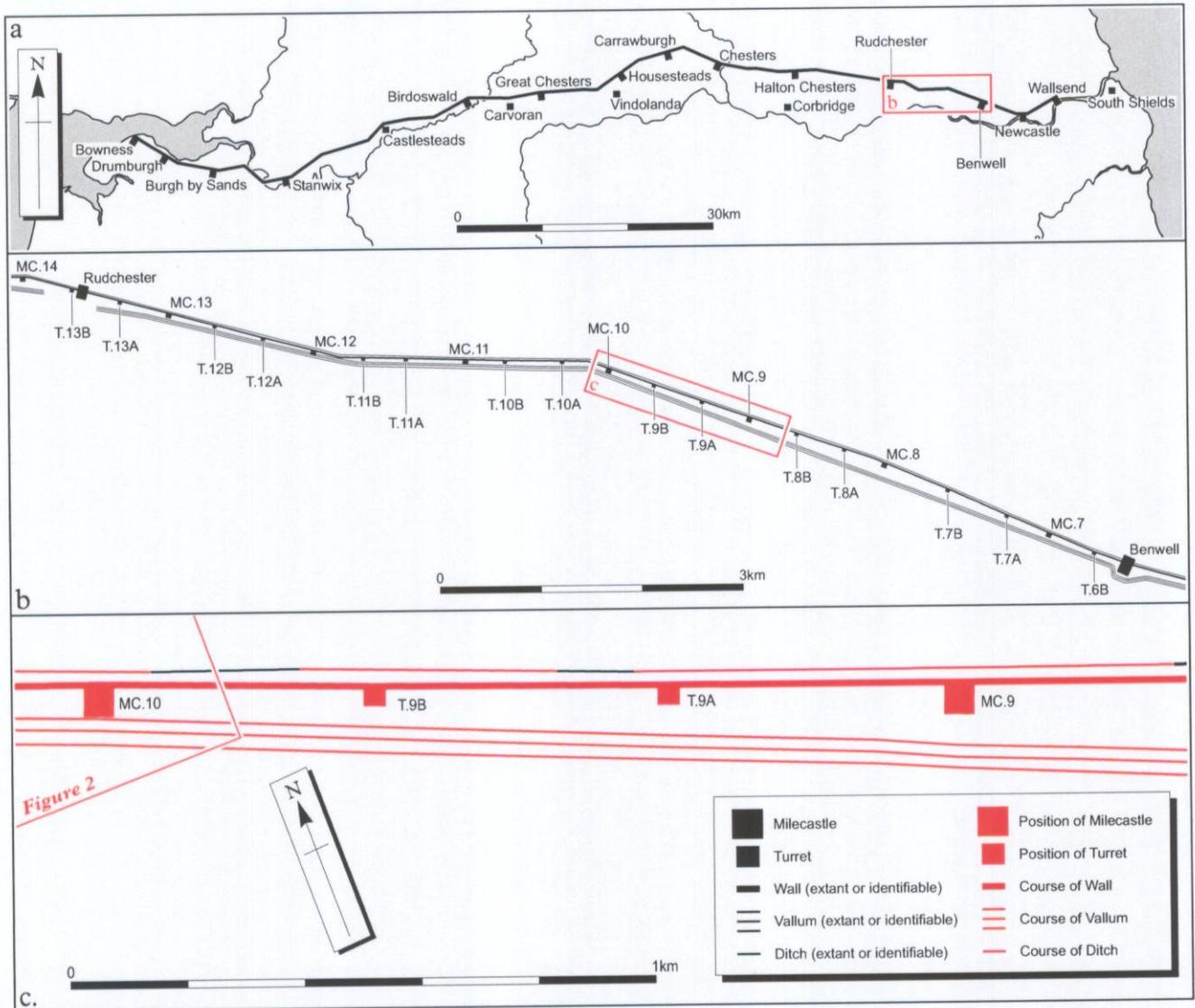


Figure 1 Location of Milecastle 10 on Hadrian's Wall

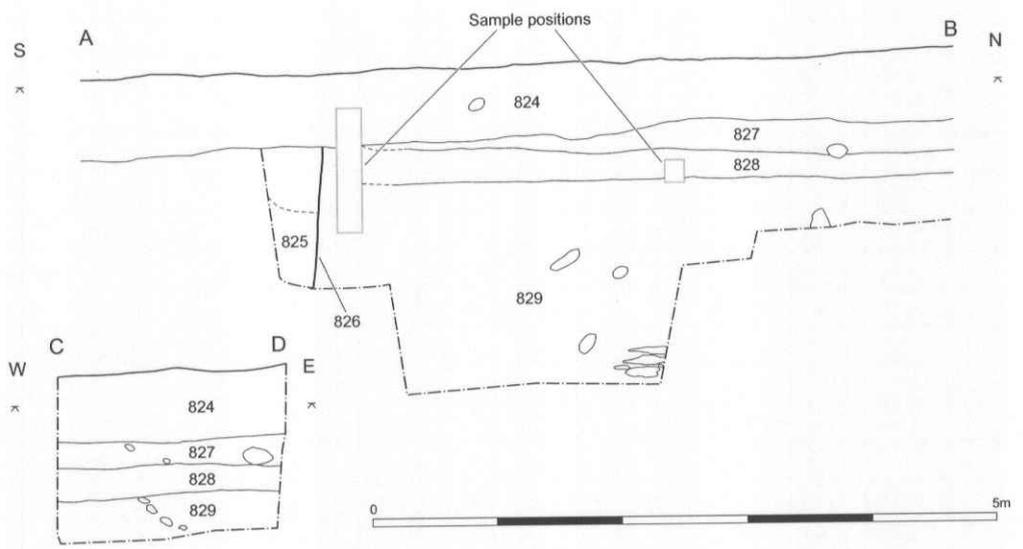


Figure 4
 South - North, and
 West - East sections
 in trench 2, cutting
 the north mound of
 the Vallum

