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**Hadrian's Wall Milecastle 71 (Wormanby), Cumbria: Interim
Report on Archaeological Evaluation, September 2000**

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Summary

Milecastle 71 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.

The milecastle was first located and partially excavated by S Bartle in 1961. Five trenches were excavated, and both the line of Hadrian's Wall and the eastern wall of the milecastle were located. Hadrian's Wall survived to a height of two courses above the demolished turf Wall. The milecastle wall had been reduced by ploughing and robbing to a small remnant of core, but the lower course of turf of the turf Wall milecastle survived well. There was no trace beneath the turf Wall of the cobble foundations discovered slightly to the west at Burgh by Sands and at milecastle 72.

Keywords

Excavation
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HADRIAN'S WALL MILECASTLE 71 (WORMANBY), CUMBRIA

Interim Report on Archaeological Evaluation, September 2000

1. Project background

Thirteen 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 evaluations 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 71 was undertaken by permission of the landowner Mr R C Sheffield through Mr M McInnes of land agents Clark Scott-Harden, and of the tenant Mr D W Little. We would like to thank Mr Little for assisting in back-filling the site, and generally for his assistance with, and enthusiasm for the work.

2. The Site

The site of Milecastle 71 (Fig 1, 2) was located in 1960 at NY3381 5921 by S H Bartle (1961). Bartle had first located Milecastle 72 (Fauld Farm), and identified the site of Milecastle 71 by measurement eastwards of 1621 yards or one Roman mile. This simple measurement proved valid despite the fact that there were no surface indications of the site. The lack of any visible trace was true in MacLauchlan's time as well, though he records the possible site of a milecastle between Beaumont and Burgh-by-Sands (MacLaughlan 1858, 80). This site, which can still be traced on the ground, seems in fact to be that of Turret 70b and lies, as Bartle pointed out, one third of a Roman mile east of Milecastle 71. The site of Milecastle 71 lies to the south of Milldikes Lane, some 600m east of Greathill Beck, on the top of the ridge or spur which dominates the broad, shallow

valley of the beck. It was designed to command a good view to the site of Milecastle 72, though this was subsequently obscured by the construction of the fort at Burgh-by-Sands. Bartle excavated “successive trial trenches [revealing] remains of the axial road where it runs through the Wall, and also the milecastle’s west and south walls; the east wall lies beneath a field boundary, and could therefore not be located”. Two worked flints and two Roman sherds were recovered (Bartle 1961, 39-40). No location plan of the trenches was produced, and there is no record of their number. No site plan exists either. His report does not say in what condition the milecastle was, except that it was cut by field drains, and was in worse condition than Milecastle 72 (Fauld Farm) “in spite of the relative isolation of the site which might have been expected to give it greater protection from stone robbers” (ibid). Excavation at Mc72 in 1989 (Austen 1994) demonstrated both that this milecastle survived well and that Bartle’s conclusions were not secure. This work did show what might be expected from Mc71 however, in demonstrating that the Turf Wall milecastle was built upon a broad cobble raft foundation, on top of which the later stone walls were built.

Bartle’s large scale location plan of the various milecastles and turrets in the area seems to indicate that his work was located in OS Parcel 7700, and that he believed the eastern wall to lie beneath or to the east of the field boundary on the east side of this parcel, dividing it from Parcel 9100. Parcel 7700 is under permanent pasture, while Parcel 9100 is under pasture which is periodically renewed by ploughing. The site is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument under MPP revision number 26116.

3. Original aims

M71.1 to locate any remains of the milecastle walls within OS Parcel 9100 without disturbance to *in situ* surviving remains.

M71.2 to ascertain the depth below the present surface at which remains of the milecastle survive

M71.3 to assess the impact on the site of past cultivation, and the implications of its continuance.

4. Site Methodology

In the absence of either surface traces or any data from remote sensing, the site methodology developed as the work continued. Trench 1 at 8 x 2m was excavated across the supposed line of Hadrian’s Wall on the barely perceptible crest of a low ridge. Having established the line of the Wall by these means, a further four trial trenches were excavated in an attempt to find the eastern milecastle wall. Trenches 2-4 were each 5 x 1m, and Trench 5 measured 6.5 x 2m (Fig 2).

5. Archaeological results

5.1 Description

Trench 1 (Fig 3, 4)

The ploughsoil (909) was 280mm deep. It sealed the fill of a field drain (906) containing a square-sectioned ceramic drain, which cut a plough furrow (903) interpreted as the levelled remnant of ridge and furrow. Beneath this was an irregular pit (922) filled with soil and a moderate amount of sandstone rubble (901) with an upper fill of sandy silt. This may have been an early robbing cut for Hadrian's Wall, the remains of which lay directly beneath this fill. The southern edge of the pit was cut into a grey-brown sandy and silty clay subsoil (902).

The stone Wall (905) survived as a partial single course of facing stones over a flat, flagstone base. The facing stones were of hard grey sandstone, and the foundation course combined this material with softer red sandstone. The core was of compacted and crushed red and yellow sandstone rubble. Neither the facing stones nor the core showed any signs of bonding in either mortar or clay. The flagstone foundation course was 120mm thick, the facing stones were 260mm high, up to 390mm deep, and averaged 380-400mm in width.

Beneath the stone Wall and above the natural grey clay (921) were two thin layers. The lower deposit was a dark-brown organic silty clay (908), and above this was grey soil, slightly sandy, but otherwise identical to the natural clay (907). Column samples of this material were taken, but the preliminary interpretation is that these deposits represent the bottom layer of inverted turfs of the Turf Wall.

Trenches 2-4

All three of these trenches showed the natural clay (921) beneath a layer of subsoil (902) with ploughsoil above this (909). The concentration of stone in the upper layers was significantly less than in Trenches 1 and 5, and there was no sign of the turf layers at the base of the sequence. These were deliberately sought by re-opening part of Trench 2, in order to establish whether they were uniform across the site, or restricted to areas where stone structures overlay them.

Trench 5 (Figs 5, 6)

As in other trenches, the ploughsoil (909) was 280mm deep. The subsoil beneath this (910) was the same grey-brown sandy and silty clay which was defined in Trench 1. Beneath this material lay the remains of the east wall of the milecastle, and possibly the east wall of an interior building as well. It should be noted that the remains of the

milecastle were extraordinarily slight, having been virtually obliterated by robbing and past ploughing.

The most obvious features on removal of the sub-ploughsoil deposit (910) was an interrupted line of fragmentary and degraded sandstone blocks (911), and, 2.98m west of this, a single such block (912). These were on the same north-south orientation, with the flat faces presented to east and west respectively. Between these stones was a mottled sandy layer containing a high proportion of small sandstone pieces (913). The sandy part of this deposit was clearly decayed red, yellow, and grey sandstone. The entire feature represents the very bottom of the side wall of the stone milecastle. The sections of the trench showed a possible feature cutting through the sub-ploughsoil deposit. This was defined more by slight texture differentiation and a concentration of sand and sandstone (917). Interpreted, it appears to have been a 470mm wide, straight-sided, flat bottomed feature running parallel to the milecastle wall, which lay 1.04m to the east. It is just possible that this represents a vague trace of the east wall of an internal building.

These residual stone structures sat on a light-grey silty sand deposit (914=915=919) containing sandy patches (920), beneath which was a partial black organic deposit (916). This profile is identical to that under the stone Wall in Trench 1, and is similarly interpreted; as the base of the demolished wall of the primary turf Wall milecastle. This material lay directly on top of the natural clay (921).

5.2 *Interpretation*

The archaeological remains recovered, though slight, are of great importance given the lack of basic knowledge regarding the Wall and associated structures in this area. Bartle's discovery of the milecastle is confirmed, as is its virtually totally robbed condition. The east wall of the milecastle actually lies to the east of the boundary between OS Parcels 7700 and 9100, and not upon it as postulated by Bartle. It is clear that two archaeological phases of the milecastle survive. The turf Wall and the walls of the turf Wall milecastle survive to a single turf course, and the stone Wall and milecastle occupy the identical site following a thorough demolition; a pattern found at turf Wall milecastles from the easternmost (Milecastle 49, Harrows Scar) to the westernmost (Milecastle 79, Solway House 1952). The presence of turf work lying directly upon the natural clay beneath shows conclusively that the cobble raft footings found beneath the turf Wall at Burgh-by-Sands and at Milecastle 72 (Austen 1994) were not present at Milecastle 71. This useful observation narrows down the area where this exceptional form of construction was employed. The interpretation of a nebulous feature in Trench 5 as the wall of an interior building is strengthened by the fact that it is in exactly the place where such a feature might be predicted. It was 470mm wide and 1.04m to the east of the milecastle wall. Extremely similar measurements have been recovered for the location of such walls at many sites, including those excavated during the present project (eg Milecastle 9; 540mm and 1.02m (Wilmott 2001)).

6. Conclusions

6.1 *Original aims*

The original aims were fully realised. The milecastle walls were located, as was Hadrian's Wall itself. (M71.1). The milecastle has been virtually totally robbed such that the stone structure is barely visible in excavation. The stone Wall survives moderately well for this area. The most archaeologically valuable deposits on the site are those relating to the turf Wall and milecastle, which have the potential to provide good paleoenvironmental evidence. The little that is left of the stone milecastle is sufficiently deeply buried (M71.2) to be unthreatened by occasional ploughing for pasture renewal. The Wall itself is somewhat less deeply buried, as it occupies a slight ridge from which soil cover has become eroded. There is some trace of past plough damage to the upper stones of the Wall (M71.3).

6.2 *Recommendations*

The milecastle is not threatened by the current regime of occasional ploughing for pasture renewal, though any change in land-use, such as deep ploughing might present a threat in the future. The Wall is vulnerable to ploughing, however. It is recommended that the current land-use is continued, but that the farmer is encouraged to lift the plough when passing over the line of the Wall which is faintly visible as an earthwork. The location of the Wall is known to the present farmer, who is also well-disposed to its preservation.

Evaluation by: Jean Riddell (Supervisor)

Date: September 2000

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Date: 25th May 2001

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Enclosed figures and plans

Figure 1 Location of milecastle 71 on Hadrian's Wall

Figure 2 Location of site and trenches

Figure 3 Plan of Trench 1

Figure 4 West facing section of Trench 1

Figure 5 Plan of Trench 5

Figure 6 South facing section of Trench 5