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BINCHESTER HALL FARM, BINCHESTER ROMAN FORT, CO DURHAM
EXCAVATION FOR A SHEEP DIP IN 1996

EXCAVATION REPORT

Kath Buxton, Brenda Dickinson, Jeremy Evans, Stephanie Rákai, Clare de Rouffignac, Jan Summerfield, Colin Wallace and Pete Wilson

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECTS

ENGLISH HERITAGE

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SUMMARY

Small scale excavations in 1996 inside a building at Binchester Hall Farm, within the area of Binchester (Vinovia) Roman fort but outside the scheduled area, revealed well-preserved Roman deposits and features close to the surface. Deposits from the Flavian to Hadrianic periods were recorded, along with a possible Antonine abandonment horizon, a sequence that parallels that known from the area of the Commandants house (Ferris and Jones in preparation). Also found was part of a Roman building of third/fourth-century date fronting onto Dere Street, along with deposits within its interior, including a possible hearth. The surface of Dere Street was also recorded. Post-dating the Roman deposits was a wall from post-medieval (?)hexagonal building, possibly a dovecot or horse-engine house related to the Binchester Hall Farm complex.

Finds included Roman pottery, coins, glass and metalwork, along with small quantities of animal bone. Some later material was also recovered.

Cover photograph – Dere Street with features 7, 23, 24 and 38 in the background

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been made possible by the hard work and support of many people. English Heritage wish to thank Mr and Mrs G. Sedgewick and Tim Sedgewick the farm tenants for their help and hospitality, Mr and Mrs P. Weston for their welcome and excellent accommodation, the curators of the Binchester Fort visitor centre, and the (then) Durham County Archaeologist Niall Hammond.

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INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In April 1996 a request was made by Henry Owen-John, then Inspector of Ancient Monuments for the North East, for assistance in excavating an area suitable for the location of a sheep dipping pit at Binchester Hall Farm, Binchester Roman fort, County Durham (Figure 1).

A change in tenant farmer at the farm brought about a change in agricultural practice with a much greater emphasis being placed on sheep. Ministry of Agriculture, Farming, and Fisheries (MAFF) regulations, necessitated the development of appropriate sheep dipping facilities, a process which required the building of a new dipping tank and associated holding pens. Although the holding pens were to be laid on the existing ground surface, and the area required for the tank was relatively small, the excavation necessary to set the tank in the ground was considered likely to cause considerable damage to the monument. As the area of the fort (and the farm situated within it) is a scheduled monument, and the preservation of Roman structures (as displayed in an area adjacent to the farm, by Durham County Council) is extremely good, it was felt that the granting of scheduled monument consent for the tank was not appropriate, even if archaeological investigation was to be carried out in advance of the tanks construction.

Refusal to grant scheduled monument consent was, however, likely to lead to the re-siting of the tank, which did not need planning permission, outside the scheduled area. This re-siting would place the construction in the area of the *vicus* which, although not as scheduled, was also likely to be of considerable archaeological importance. Although one possible solution was the emergency scheduling of the *vicus* as part of the Monument Protection Programme (MPP), this was thought to be too large a job to do on an *ad hoc* basis, and would in any case not resolve the issue of where to site the dipping tank.

The most appropriate course of action was, therefore, the archaeologically controlled excavation of the tank site at an agreed location, within the Binchester Hall Farm complex, parts of which are not included in the scheduled area. Although the developer would normally be required to fund this work, the proposal was not controlled by the planning process, and the preferred location of the tank lay outside the scheduled monument. The tenant could therefore proceed legally with development without consent. Therefore it was appropriate for the (then) Central Archaeological Service (CAS) of English Heritage to undertake the appropriate excavation work.

The purpose of the excavation was to:

- locate the most suitable position for the siting of the sheep dipping tank in order to minimise damage to the archaeological resource. Although it was anticipated this would involve a location on the line of Dere Street within the fort, in practice this was not the case (see
  below).

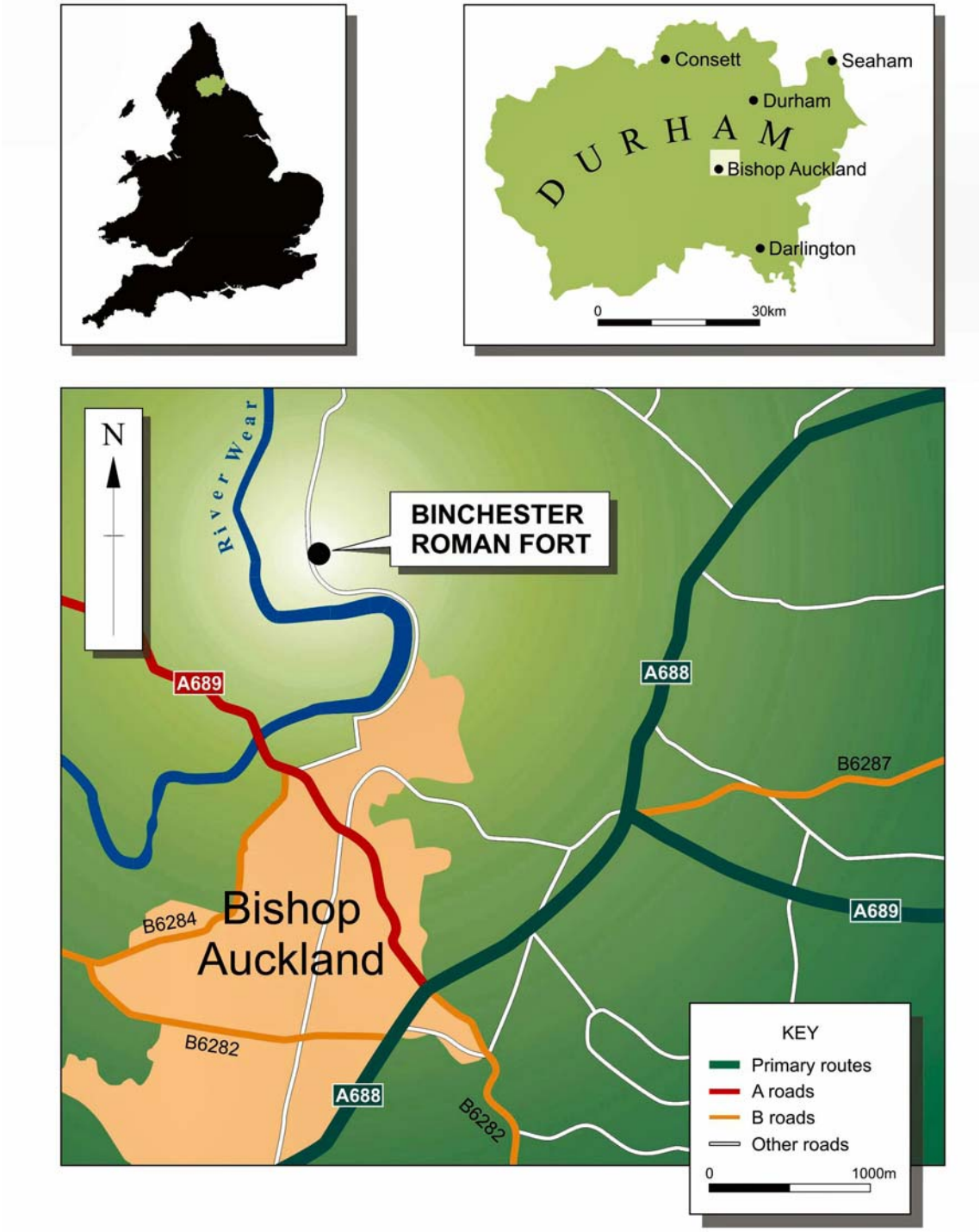

Figure 1 - Location of Binchester Roman Fort

- clear and record the archaeology in the agreed position of the sheep dipping tank, in order to gain as much information as possible from the destruction of the deposits.
- collect data, of value in its own right, regarding the nature, extent, chronology, and preservation of the deposits, in order to add to the growing body of knowledge about Binchester Roman Fort and Dere Street., and (possibly)
- contribute information to both the analysis project being undertaken on the 1976-1981 and 1986-1991 excavations focussed on the Commandants House *(praetorium)* and it's bath-suite (Ferris and Jones *in preparation*), and to English Heritages' Monument Protection Programme to inform possible revision to the extent of the scheduled monument.

Archaeological background

Binchester Fort, (*Vinovia*), and its surrounding *vicus*, stand on a spur of high ground some 2km north of Bishop Auckland (NGR NZ 210313), in an obvious defensive position overlooking a loop in the river Wear (Figure 2). The fort, about 3.6ha in size, is known to have been garrisoned by cavalry, the *ala Vettonum*, a unit of Frisians, and perhaps a detachment of the Sixth Legion for at least parts of it life.

At the time of the Roman invasion, the North East formed part of the territory of the Brigantes, although there is, as yet, no archaeological evidence for pre-Roman activity on the site itself. The fort was built in AD 79, and was one of a series of forts on Dere Street, the main Roman road which ran north from York to southern Scotland. The road is *c* 5m wide, and surfaced with river cobbles set into a clay and gravel base. The south side is retained by a kerb of sandstone blocks, while to the north it is edged by a ditch.

As at many fort sites in the Roman north (e.g. Ribchester: Buxton and Howard-Davis 2000), the first fort, built of timber, was replaced in the early second century with a stone built complex, the fort itself acting as an important supply depot for the building of Hadrian's Wall (AD 122). The fort itself remained in use throughout the Roman period and sixth century occupation is also recorded, while the large surrounding civil settlement (Hooppell 1879; 1891; Geoquest 2004) probably remained in occupation for a comparable period. From this date, although there is evidence of sporadic use, the fort was largely demolished, the stone being re-used elsewhere in the vicinity.

Excavation background

Although known from the 16th century the first excavation work of any substance did not take place until the 19th century (Hooppell 1879; 1891). These excavations uncovered traces of both the civil settlement, where at least three phases of stone building were identified, and the fort, where a number of large buildings within the fort itself. Subsequent excavation in the 1930s (Steer 1938) examined the fort defences, while work on its interior in the 1960s (on behalf of the then Ministry of Works) uncovered evidence of considerable industrial activity, and part of what may be an Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Other work in the 1960s by local archaeological groups concentrated on the late Roman bath house now in the care of Durham County Council and displayed to the public. The most recent phase of work at Binchester was undertaken between 1976 and 1991 by Ferris and Jones (1976-1981) and Clarke and Jones (1986-1991) (Ferris and Jones 1980; 1991; 1996; 2000; *in preparation*). This comprised geophysical survey and excavation work concentrated in the area of the already exposed bath house, trial trenching ahead of proposed development within the fort, and

fieldwalking to the east of the fort which attempted to define the area of the civil settlement. This work produced evidence of 14 major phases of activity, together with a number of sub-phases. That the site was obviously occupied before the Roman invasion is demonstrated by the presence of a number of early, irregular, cut features and struck flints. The first major phase of activity (Phase 1) does, however, appear to be associated with clearance prior to construction at the beginning of the Roman period, late AD 60s-79. Modification and rebuilding appears to have taken place throughout the Roman period (Phases 2-8), with at least sporadic industrial activity occurring during the medieval period (Phase 11); later activity being of post-medieval date (Phases 12-14).

More recently Geoquest Associates have undertaken geophysical survey as part of the Durham County Council Time Detectives' outreach programme over the northern and eastern parts of the fort and the *vicus* outside the east gate (Geoquest 2004). Previously geophysical surveys have been undertaken by Ferris and Jones (1980; 1991) and D Still (1987). During April 2007 Time Team undertook geophysical survey and evaluation excavations in areas to the south-east, north-east and north-west of the fort (report *in preparation*).

METHODOLOGY

Trench location

Following a meeting between Henry Owen-John (EH), David Batchelor (EH), Niall Hammond (County Archaeologist), and Mr Sedgwick (the farmer), it was agreed the tank would be located within a standing barn which forms part of the farm buildings complex. Although the barn is within the fort itself, it is excluded from the scheduled area, and therefore scheduled monument consent was not required.

The trench was aligned approximately north-east to south-west, parallel to the standing building, and at right-angles to the predicted line of Dere Street. Prior to excavation it was intended to site the tank as close as possible to Dere Street, the position of which, in this area, appeared to have been relatively constant throughout the Roman period. This, coupled with the importance of Dere Street as a route way, suggested it was unlikely buildings were constructed on the route of the road itself. Given that structures were, however, probably situated adjacent to the road, it was felt that excavation through the road surfaces was likely to cause the least damage to the archaeological resource. Upon excavation however, the preservation differential of deposits, coupled with the impracticality (for the farmer) of placing the tank above Dere Street necessitated a change in plan, as the most suitable area for the excavation of a deep trench lay east of the road, inside what appears to have been a road side building of some substance.

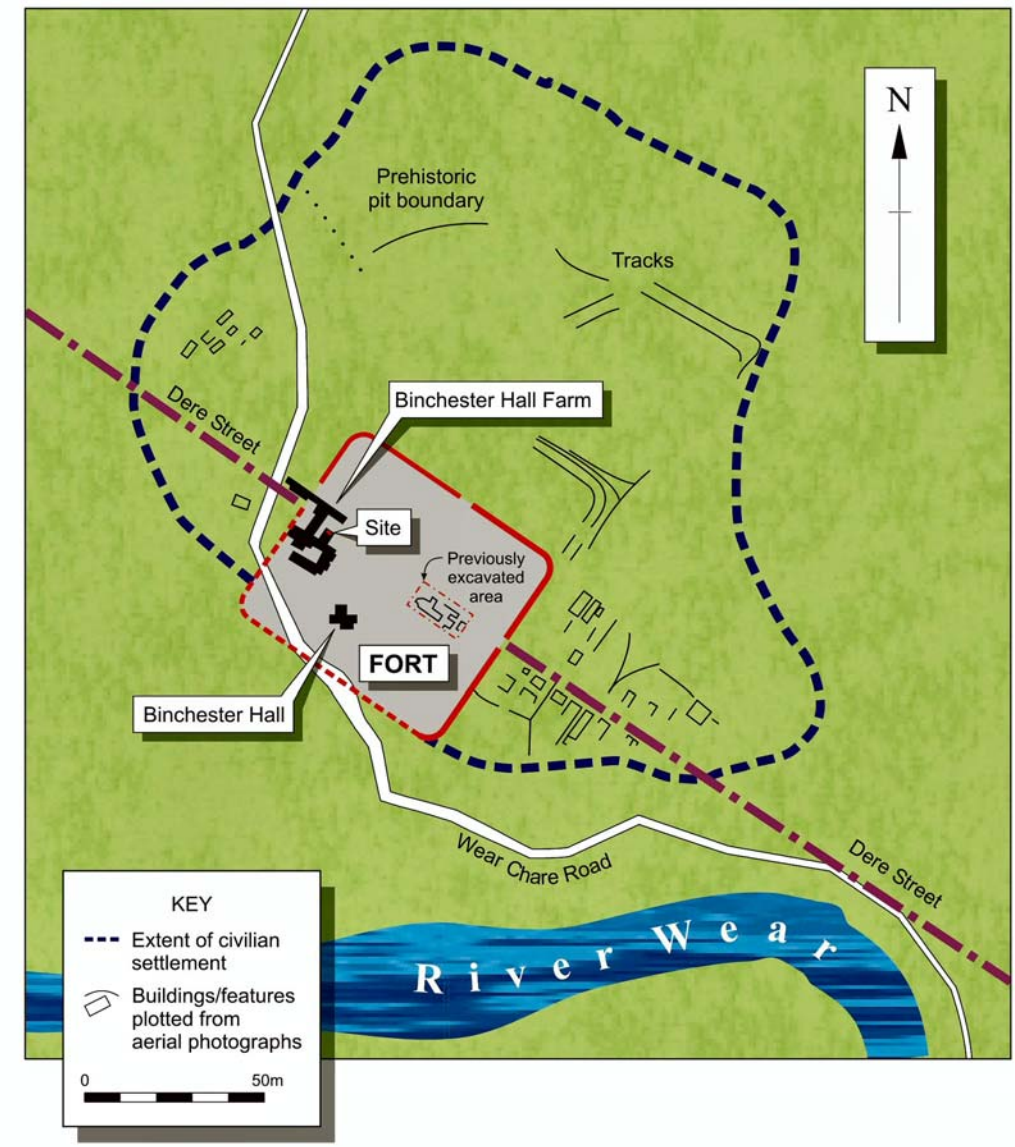

Figure 2 - Trench location plan

The excavation (CAS Site 586) took place between Tuesday 16th July and Friday 26th July 1996.

Excavation methodology

The trench measured 6m by 3.8m (north-east south-west), the slightly larger size than was suggested in the project design (*c* 5m by 3.5m) being necessary to accommodate the alignment of structural features encountered (walls [7], [20], and [21] (see below and Figure 7)). Although it was originally planned to excavate an area *c* 3m by 3m square in order to incorporate the deepest part of the sheep dip, in the light of discoveries this was altered to *c* 3.8m by 1.7m, effectively the area to the east of the wall [7]. Similarly, although the project design suggested the trench would be excavated to a depth of *c* 2m, accurate measurement of the dip demonstrated it could be adequately accommodated within a depth of 1.6m.

Spoil was dumped adjacent to the trench and was either used to backfill areas around the sheep dipping tank or removed by Mr Sedgwick.

All excavation was by hand in an archaeologically controlled, stratigraphic manner. All work was recorded according to the then current CAS guidelines and standards set out in the CAS Recording Manual.

Post-excavation methodology

All artefacts were recorded according to standard CAS procedures, and were handled and stored according to standard practice (following the then current Institute of Field Archaeologists guidelines). A minimal amount of material suitable for environmental analysis was recovered, this was also recovered and recorded in line with standard CAS procedures. Other than those above, there were no deviations from the project design.

All work was undertaken in accordance with *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage 1991).

In 2007-8 the report was edited and updated in advance of publication.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

The stratigraphy

In the following text context numbers are given in parentheses [ ].

The earliest deposits within the trench were investigated exclusively to the east of wall [7] (see below), the earliest horizon being 0.95m below the present ground surface (Figure 3). This comprised four comparable layers, in total more than 0.65m deep, of silty clay and sandy gravel. In general the material became lighter and more gravelly with depth, the earliest, [53], light yellowish brown in colour, grading through gingerish brown, [52], to darker grey brown material, [49], although the uppermost layer, [37] was again a lighter, yellowish brown. Although similar to natural (and presumably grading to natural below the trench depth), this material was obviously disturbed as it contained flecks of charcoal, Roman pottery, and occasional, badly degraded features. The earliest of these features, seen at a depth of 1.60m, was a small patch, 0.51m by 0.31m, of dense charcoal, [54], presumably the product of localised burning. A 100% sample [405] of this context produced a large quantity of charcoal, with a few small fragments of calcined bone present. Twelve charred cereal grains were also recovered, only one of which was identified (as *Hordeum* sp (barley)). Two small fragments of charred *Corylus avellana* (hazel) nut shell were present. The material implies a short-term usage for the burning area, with the cereal grains and nutshell fragments thrown onto the fire for disposal. Vague traces of occupation levels were also seen within these layers. A very badly degraded pebble surface [50] (Figures 3 and 4) butted to the north by the fragmentary remnants of an east-west aligned structure, [51], perhaps a kerb or wall, lay *c* 1.20m below the ground surface, while a single stake-hole, [36], 0.09m in diameter and 0.14m deep, and filled with slightly sandy loam [35] (not on plan) cut the upper surface of layer [37].

Figure 3 - Eastern trench edge section

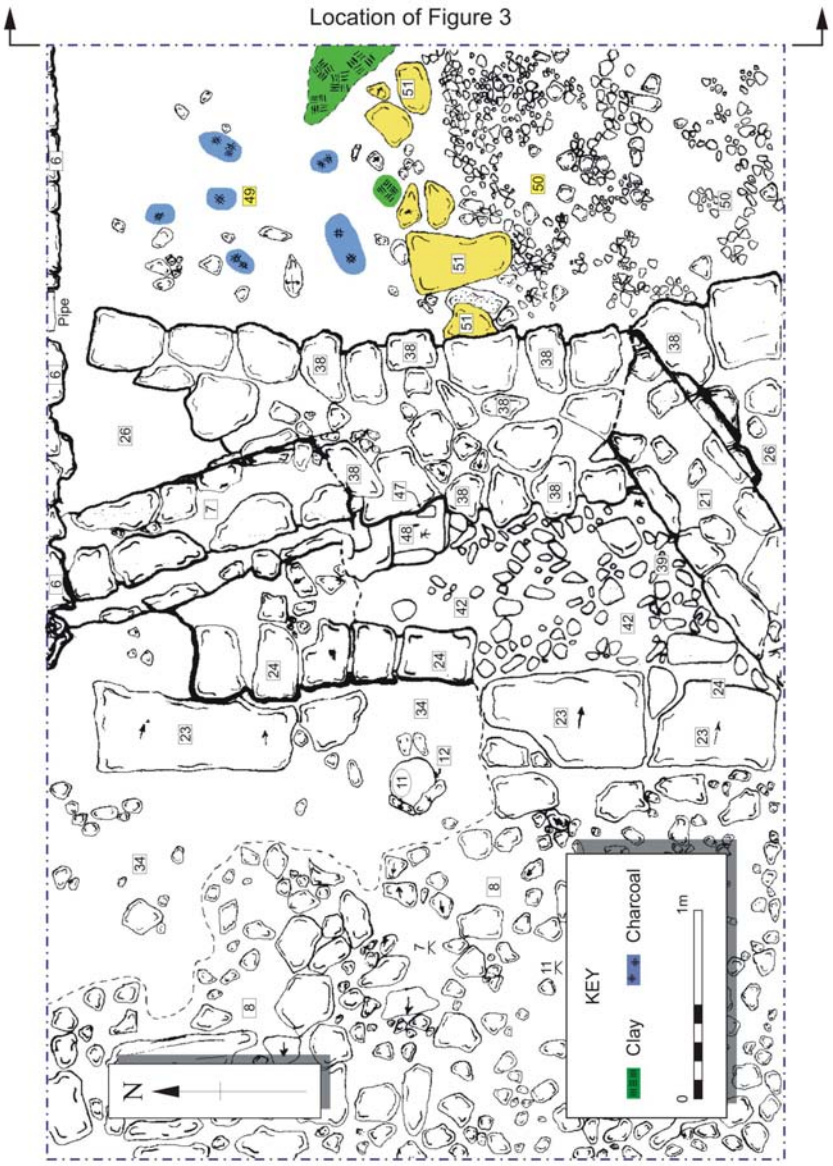

Figure 4 - Earliest associated Roman features

These early deposits lay below *c* 0.35m of mid brown loamy material [26] (Figure 3), perhaps an abandonment layer, which, in turn, lay below the more substantial structures.

The major period of Roman activity seen in this area (Figure 5) was obviously associated with Dere Street, [8], itself seen aligned north-south in the western part of the trench, and a roadside building defined by a similarly aligned wall represented by a single course of foundations [38], comprising of two parallel outer rows of semi-squared sandstone infilled with smaller, unworked stone and rubble. The upper road surface of small pebbles, *c* 0.03m

in diameter, was all but absent, the majority of material being somewhat larger (up to 0.24m in diameter) and presumably representing the make-up layer below the surface proper. Although only the eastern part of the road was uncovered, a discernable camber was evident, the edge dropping to a well constructed gutter. The central area of the gutter was damaged by later activity (see below) but two large flat stones and a single, very large (*c* 1m by 0.50m) lipped stone [23] remained. Directly east of the gutter lay a very tightly packed surface of small (*c* 0.04m diameter) pebbles [42], above which lay a line of unmortared, squared, well faced kerb stones, [24], measuring *c* 0.27m by 0.22m by 0.13m. Although the kerb stones were aligned directly with the eastern edge of the gutter/western edge of surface [42], it is tempting to suggest they were in fact a later addition associated with the insertion of a post-hole, or possibly, given the very limited area excavated, a covered water channel [47], latterly filled with (unexcavated) soft silty loam [48], and overlain by a rough slab surface [39] (Figure 6). The possible water channel and surface butted wall foundation [38]. The wall represented by foundations [38] curved slightly to the east and extended almost all the way across the width of the trench, although it was damaged to the north. Its width was *c* 1m which suggests a fairly substantial structure. In what was presumably the interior of this building lay the fragmentary remnants of a slab surface [10] surrounding what may have been a hearth, and a large fragment of amphora shoulder, although the existence of a hearth in this area can only be surmised due to the presence of a patches of compact, burnt, yellow brown [32] and reddish brown [46] clay (the majority of the conjectured hearth lying outside the trench). Although 100% samples ([403] and [404]) were taken from the limited material available, both [32] and [46] contained no charred remains. The amphora fragment, [43], evidently with a complete 0.60m diameter at the time of deposition was presumably set upright as a container. It lay within a shallow, 0.15m deep, vertically sided pit, [40], which although it appeared to be cut from a slightly lower level had been disturbed by later activity (see below), and is presumed to be directly associated with the amphora. The pit was filled with compact grey brown and red silty clay [41], while the inside of the amphora was filled with a circular pad of compacted light grey clay [45], below mid brown clay loam, [44], containing a large number of amphora fragments, fire cracked stones, and three iron nails. The seed assemblage (sample 402) from the flot contained mostly unidentifiable carbonised cereal grains, with a few wheat and barley grains present. Two weed seeds were noted, of *Gramineae* (grass) and C album (fat hen). The small number of charred remains and their poor condition suggests that the material was not directly associated with the amphora, but from a similar source to that found in [9] (fill of gutter [23] – below). It is suggested this set-up was used for water (or other liquid) heating, stones heated on the conjectured hearth being tossed into the improvised clay lined amphora container.

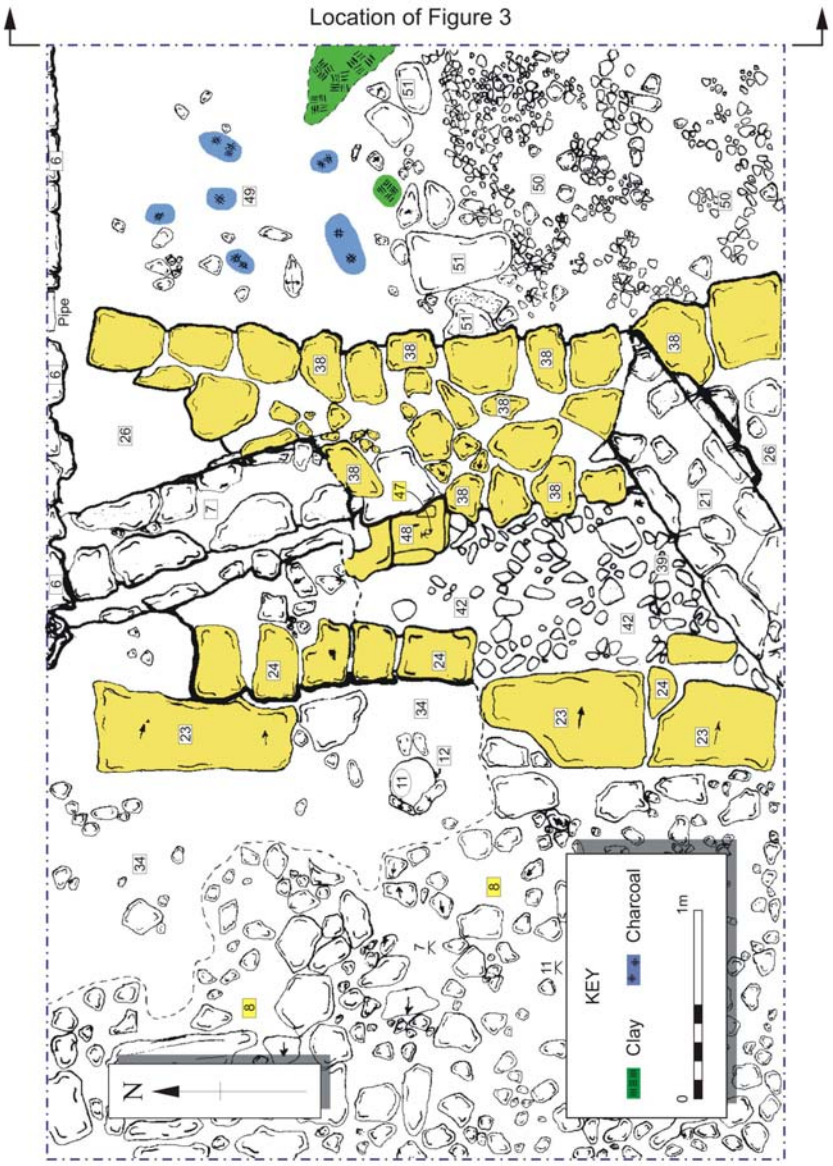

Figure 5 - Dere Street and associated Roman layers (1)

Few deposits of Roman date lay above the road/building phase of activity. The gutter [23] was filled with soft mid brown loam [9], the sample [401] from which contained animal bone, most of which was in good condition with diagnostic fragments. The species represented were sheep/goat, cattle, pig, and fowl. The small flot contained charcoal and carbonised cereal grains, most of which were poorly preserved, although a few could be identified as Hordeum sp (barley) and *Triticum spelta* (spelt wheat). No chaff was present. A number of charred weed seeds were also recovered; these were Rumex sp (dock), *Chenopodium album* (fat hen), *Brassica* sp (cabbage type) and *Papaver* sp (poppy). The seed assemblage

probably represents secondary deposition of waste from a fully processed crop, burnt during small-scale drying for flour making; this was disposed of with other domestic refuse including the animal bones in the gutter.

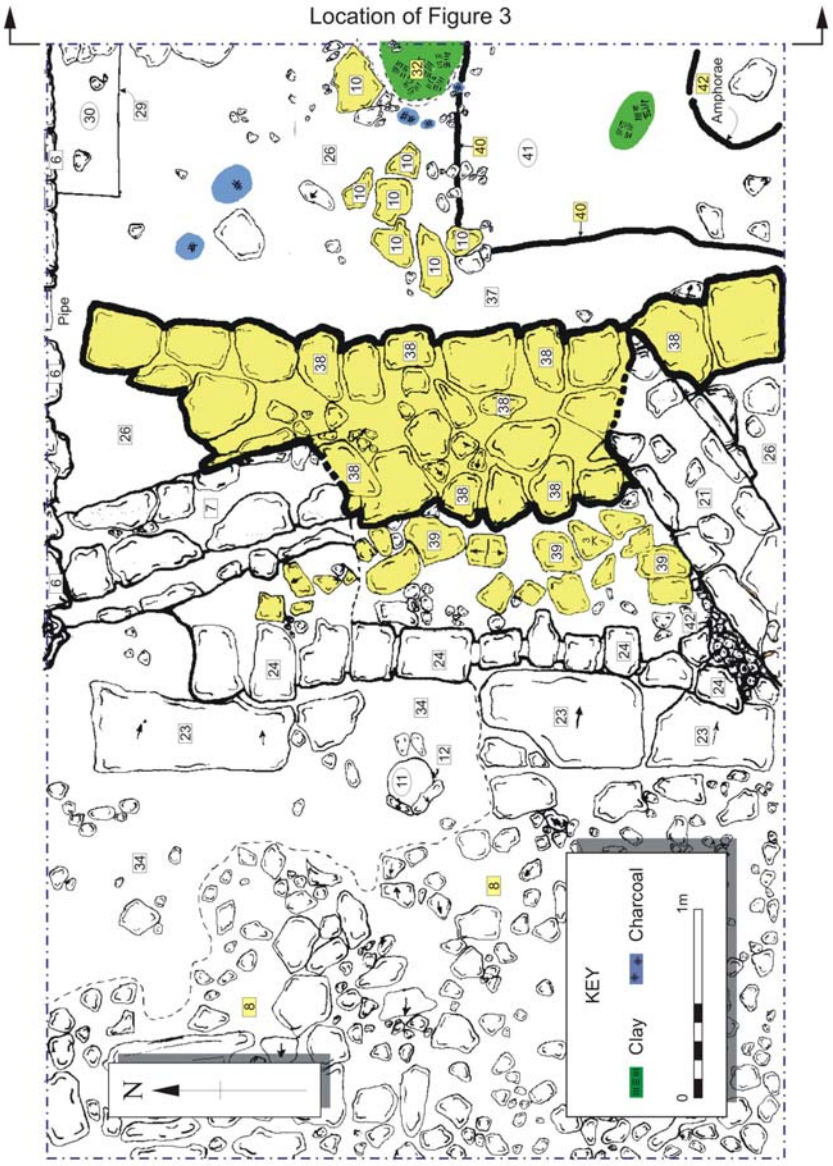

Figure 6 – Dere Street and associated Roman layers (2)

Although the early silty clay and sandy gravel deposits presumably lay below Dere Street and the other surfaces and structures described above, they were, as mentioned before, only excavated to the east of wall [7]. The earliest post-Roman layer seen both to the east and west of wall comprised 0.11m of mixed mid brown loam [5]. This was very similar to the material, [26], seen below the slab surface [10], but contained occasional fragments of more

modern material presumably associated with the construction of a later, (?)hexagonal building (see below). Similarly, a small amount of loose, unbonded rubble [25], seen to the west of wall foundation [38] from where it was probably derived, is again likely to have been deposited during this later activity.

The single later structure seen within this trench appears to have been a (probably) hexagonal building, only one complete wall of which was uncovered (Figure 7). Wall [7], running approximately north-west to south-east, lay almost directly above the Roman wall foundation, [38], and was 2.78m long and *c* 0.44m wide. Set on slightly wider foundations, [14], of large, rounded, roughly faced river boulders, the wall itself was two courses deep. The coursing was random and comprised occasional brick fragments and roughly faced stones (typically measuring 0.15m by 0.29m by 0.14m). The wall cavity was infilled with loose rubble and buff yellow mortar. Both walls [20] and [21], seen in section to the north and south of [7] respectively, were of similar construction to, and bonded with [7], but unlike [7] were not set above Roman-period masonry. All three walls were set in a single U-shaped foundation trench, [16], filled with very sandy/gritty loam [17]. An area of disturbance, [34], to the surface of Dere Street [8], the roadside gutter [23], where a large slab had obviously been removed, and the overlying material [5], appear to be associated with the construction of this building. The probable cause of this disturbance appears to have been the siting of a rectangular (unexcavated) post-hole, [12], measuring 0.33m by 0.23m and filled with very sandy gritty material, incorporating cinders and packing stones [11]. As would be expected the deposits, [33], directly above this area demonstrated considerable signs of disturbance and included patches of gritty material similar to that found in the post-hole, although no cut as such was discernable. A distinct, but fragmentary layer of buff yellow mortar, [15] (Figure 3), similar to that both bonding and infilling walls [7], [20], and [21] lay above the area of disturbance. In places this appeared to be two separate bands the upper containing the more solid material, the lower the sandy element, almost as if the material had separated. This material was seen both east and west of the building ([7] etc.) which, together with its similarity to the wall bonding agent suggest it represents the first floor surface associated with the structure. A single pit, [27], was situated to the east of wall [7]. This measured 0.65m+ by 0.64m by 0.26m deep and contained sandy loam [28], very similar to the buff yellow mortar layer, [15], although it included a higher soil content. The function of this pit remains unknown, although its virtual contemporaniety with [15] is clear.

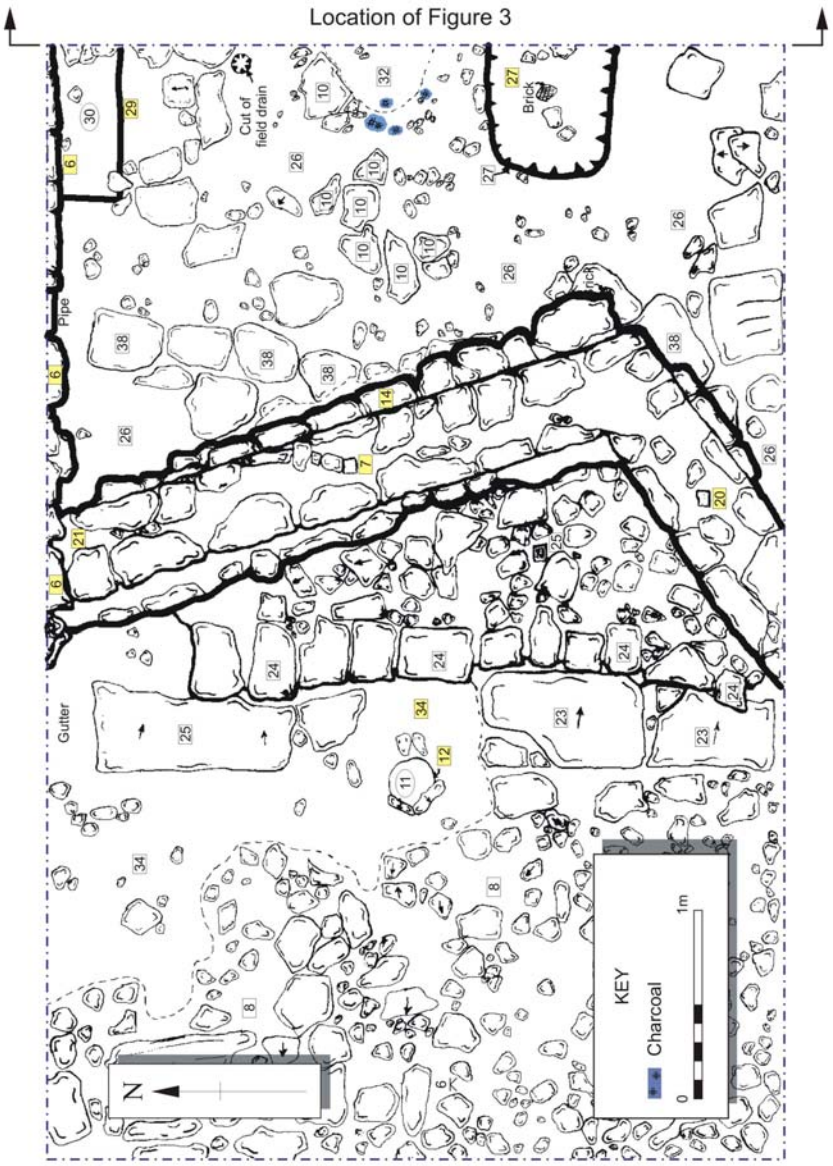

Figure 7 – Post-Medieval structure and associated deposits

Above the early mortar surface lay several bands of material apparently related to the use of this structure. The earliest comprised friable, grey brown sandy loam. To the east of the building, presumably the outside, this material [4] was very dark, while to the west, and conversely inside, it contained fewer course components [22]. Both these deposits lay below a second upper layer of creamy buff mortar [3].

All other features and deposits uncovered are of very modern date, and must relate to the present farm buildings. A random square coursed wall, [6], presumably set in a foundation

trench [18]/[19], was aligned east-west along the northern edge of the trench/side of the barn. It contained a ceramic drain [31] filled with modern material [30] and set in a slight cut [29], This is presumed to relate to a former barn or farm building in the same position. Two modern surfaces lay in the eastern area of the barn, a closely packed small pebble surface [2] below a layer of unbonded bricks [1], while the western area was covered by a layer of dark brown soil and rubble [13] containing numerous fragments of general refuse and brick.

The pottery

Some 142 sherds (14.031kg) of Roman pottery were recovered from the site. The majority of these (55% by count) were from a Dressel 20 amphora, the complete lower half of which was set in pit [40]. Material ranging in date from the Flavian period until the later 4th century was recovered. The fabric groups used here are those used in the report on the Ferris and Jones excavations (Evans and Rátkai *forthcoming*).

Chronology

The earliest excavated deposits, contexts [52], [53], and [54] contain very little material with six sherds in fabrics W31 and O13, the latter being a predominantly Flavian fabric.

The pebble surface, [50], and associated kerb/wall [51], along with layer [49], contained fabrics O08, W31 and O181. Fabric O181 seems to be Flavian here and O08 Flavian-Trajanic, whilst the barrel jar with flanged rim of Usk type 17 from 50 is Flavian.

These deposits are sealed by layer [37], and cut by stakehole [36] and pit [40]. Pit [40] was the setting for the lower half of a Dressel 20 amphora and contained a Hadrianic-Antonine BB1 jar rim, and layer [37] contained a BB1 dish with acute lattice decoration probably of Hadrianic-early Antonine date.

After the series of orange-brown gravelly layers in this sequence the next layer [26], was a brown loam, suggested as an abandonment layer which contained a sherd of early-mid Antonine Dr 31 Central Gaulish samian.

Above [26], lay a stone flagged structure with a hearth [32], and a stone wall [38], from which there is no ceramic evidence.

Over much of the trench the only Roman structures examined were the latest surface of Dere Street [8], and its associated guttering [23]. These have no recovered stratigraphic relationship to the other structures. The only ceramic dating evidence from this was a Crambeck type 6 mortarium of very late 3rd to mid or later 4th century date from the upper layer of Dere Street [8].

Although the evidence from this sequence is slight it does seem possible to suggest some correlations with the period scheme on the 1978-81 excavations. The nature of the deposits up to and including layer [37] is similar to that of the phases 1-5 on the recorded in the 1978-91 excavations (Ferris and Jones *in preparation*) and the sequence seems to end at the same date, the Hadrianic era. It seems likely therefore that the sequence associated with layer [37] can be equated with phase 5. That this is sealed by a natural soil, [26], with Antonine dating evidence, tends to confirm the identification. This evidence is lacking from the main site, but is expected given the hiatus in occupation on the site between the early

Hadrianic period and the mid-later Antonine era, and would represent the hypothetical phase 5a on that site. The building associated with wall [38] would then represent any phase after 5a, most likely in phases 6-8.

Returning to the early layers, given that natural was not reached it is impossible to suggest good equations for these other than that deposits below [37] must represent phases 1-4.

Fabrics

Table 1 Roman fabrics occurring on CAS site 586 (by count), shows the Roman fabrics occurring on the site. The vessels only typed to ware class are from post-Roman contexts.

A02	78	55%	M072	1	1%	O184	1	1%
B01	7	5%	M191	1	1%	Q00	2	1%
B02	5	4%	O00	1	1%	R00	8	6%
B10	1	1%	O04	2	1%	R061	1	1%
F10	1	1%	O06	1	1%	R10	1	1%
F11	1	1%	O08	1	1%	R11	1	1%
F61?	1	1%	O09	1	1%	S10	1	1%
G00	1	1%	O11	1	1%	S20	6	4%
G01	4	3%	O13	5	4%	S21	1	1%
G10	1	1%	O181	1	1%	W31	5	4%

As noted above the majority of sherds come from the single amphora base. The rest of the material is a diverse collection of small amounts of ceramics mainly of 1st to 3rd century date.

Form catalogue

1. Context 8. Fabric M191. Crambeck (Corder 1937) type 6 mortarium, *c* AD 285-350/55+.

2. Context 37. Fabric O09? A small globular beaker with beaded rim, perhaps Flavian-Trajanic.

3. Context 37. Fabric B01. Grooved rim dish with acute lattice on exterior, Hadrianic to mid Antonine.

4. Context 41. Fabric B01. Jar rim, sooted, cf Gillam (1976) nos 1-5, Hadrianic-Antonine.

5. Context 50. Fabric O181. Flange rimmed jar, as Usk type 17, Greene (1993), Flavian.

6. Context 5, post-Roman. Fabric B02. Simple rimmed dish in the Catterick BB1 copy fabric (Busby *et al* 1996).

7. Context 9, post-Roman. Fabric F61? Dr 38 copy bowl, red-brown slipped, in a 'crisp' oxidised fabric with some moderate sand temper, not likely to be a Crambeck product, possibly from Catterick.

The small finds

A total of twenty one small finds were recorded using the methodology laid out in the CAS recording manual. The twenty one objects break down by material as follows:- ten iron, eight copper alloy, one misc. alloy (aluminum?), one bone objects and two fragments of glass recovered from soil samples (recorded under one number). All the objects were conserved with the exception of the objects recovered from environmental sieving.

This assemblage is typical of small scale excavations, although five coins are more than might be expected (SF's 205,206,208,210 &216). The only other datable object is the spoon handle, with a broad date range of second to fourth century AD (SF 214). The five nails could date to any period but are most likely to be of a Roman date. Three objects are definitely modern (SF's 201,204 &207). A copper alloy stud and a fragment of an iron bar complete the assemblage.

The date range of the metalwork shows that the contexts are mixed, however the coins and spoon handle are stratigraphically accurate in relation to the pottery.

The Roman coins

There were two early Roman coins, the identifiable one, SF 216, being a Flavian *as,* and three late Roman coins, the identifiable one, SF 208, being of the House of Constantine. The late Roman contexts, the surface of Dere Street [8], and the fill of the roadside drain [9], produced the later coins, while one of the early ones came from low down in the site sequence (general horizon [37]). The other early coin being from surface [10] was extremely worn. Therefore, it can be said that the coin dates do not disagree with those suggested by the small amounts of pottery from contexts [8], [9], and [37].

The environmental material

The bulk samples are given in Table 2. Recording of the samples was carried out on site by the Project Manager. The mesh sizes used for sieving were 1mm for the residue and flot. The samples were sieved using a modified Siraf tank at Fort Cumberland. It was thought inappropriate to sieve the two small samples (403 and 404) containing fragile daub and these were air-dried and checked for any other remains.

Table 2

Sample number	Context number	Size (l)	Type of feature
401	009	20	Gutter fill
402	044	20	Fill of amphora
403	032	1	Clay from hearth (n/s)
404	046	1	Clay from hearth (n/s)
405	054	10	Patch of local burning

The flots from the samples were examined under a low power light microscope and seeds extracted for identification. The numbers of seeds recovered are given on a logarithmic scale in Table 3, where + represents 1 item, ++ represents 1-10 items, and +++ represents 10-100 items. The seeds were identified using the CAS comparative collection and a cereal identification guide (Jacomet 1987). Habitats for the plant species were taken from Stace

(1991). The residues were sorted to 4mm and all ecofactual and artefactual remains above this size were extracted.

Table 3

Species	401	402	403	404	405
Cereal indeterminate	+++	+++			+++
Triticum spelta	++	++			++
Hordeum sp	++	++			++
Rumex sp	+				
Chenopodium album	+	+			
Papaver sp	+				
Brassica sp	+				
Gramineae		+			
Corylus avellana					+

The context specific results have been incorporated into the stratigraphic text.

The samples indicate the preservation of seeds was poor, whilst the animal bones from [009] were in good condition. However the limited quantity of animal bone recovered precludes meaningful examination of species distributions and economy. Similarly, conclusions cannot be drawn from the few plant remains recovered. The size and composition of the environmental assemblage gives it local rather than regional or national significance.

CONCLUSIONS

by Kath Buxton

Given the substantial Roman deposits found in Binchester, and the location of the trench within the fort, it is not surprising Roman remains were found during this excavation. It is, however, important to note the exceptionally good preservation, and the proximity of the undisturbed Roman material to the modern ground surface, even within the confines if standing farm buildings. The data from this intervention adds to our understanding of the Roman occupation of Binchester, the evidence as recorded suggests some useful correlations with the period scheme on the 1978-91 excavations. The presence of a natural soil [26] with an Antonine date, which although expected given the hiatus in occupation on the site as a whole, was lacking from the main site, is particularly important and would represent the hypothetical phase 5a on that site. The excavation of this trench then demonstrates the archaeological value of all deposits within both the fort itself, and, one presumes from the evidence, the surrounding extra-mural area, and demonstrates that substantial information can by gained from even small trenches at Binchester. [This suggestion was borne out by the Time Team campaign of 12-14 April 2007 which produced significant new data with regard to both the military occupation and the associated *vicus* (report *in preparation*) – PRW].

It is likely that the post-medieval structure overlying the Roman-period remains represents either a horse-engine shed, or possibly a dovecote, associated with Binchester Hall Farm [PRW].

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APPENDIX 1 ARCHIVE FINDS SUMMARY

This collection features material from 14 contexts, and consists of pottery, tile, slag, mortar, animal bone and 21 small finds. It is housed in two standard and one skull size boxes and one Stewart.

The small finds comprise: copper alloy (coins, nail, stud, spoon handle and modern alloy fragment), iron (nails, tacks, bar and a modern handle) and glass vessel fragments. A fragment of burnt bone was also been allocated a small find number.

Artefacts from sampled contexts have been amalgamated with the appropriate material.
NB; < 2mm Residue from sample 405 is retained unsorted.

Pottery (J. Evans and B. Dickinson).

Fabric types are as used in the Ferris and Jones excavation report (Evans and Rátkai, *forthcoming*)

Context 5: Nine sherds (235g) include 2 samian, 3 coarsewares and 4 Catterick BB1 copy rimmed dish sherds.

Context 8: Two sherds (88g) include a colour coat and a Crambeck type 6 mortarium rim. Late 3rd/4th century.

Context 9: Twenty two sherds (16 from sample 401) weighing 193g, include 2 samian, 4 post Medieval glazes, 1 BB1 rim, a possible Catterick bowl rim and 15 coarsewares.

Context 14: Six sherds (39g) include 4 post Medieval glazes and two Roman coarsewares.

Context 25: Four sherds (57g) include 3 coarsewares and 1 samian.

Context 26: Three sherds (543g) include amphora, samian and a coarseware.

Context 37: Eighteen sherds (209g) include a samian rim, a Catterick type BB1 dish base, a beaded rim globular beaker fragment, mortaria base and 14 coarsewares.

Context 41: Six sherds (74g) include 3 coarsewares, 2 amphora and 1 samian.

Context 43: Eighty sherds of Dressel 20 amphora.

Context 49: Two sherds (26g) see type fabrics as used on CAS site 580.

Context 50: Two sherds (18g) include flange rimmed jar Usk type 17, and a coarseware.

Context 52: Five sherds (97g) see type fabrics as used on CAS site 580.

Context 54: One sherd (9g) from sample 405, coarseware.

Coins (C. Wallace)

SF 205 context 9 [Ruler?] [denomination?]

Obverse: illegible
Reverse: illegible
Issue date: C3 or C4
Condition: conserved - 'lifted' corrosion layer removed

SF 206 context 10 [Ruler?] sestertius
Obverse: illegible
Reverse: illegible
Issue date: C1 or C2
Condition: surface extremely fragile

SF 208 context 9 (House of Constantine) AE3
Obverse: hard to read
Reverse: altar with globe; legend Beata Tran-quilitas
Issue date: AD 318-324
Condition: conserved - fragments joined together and surface cleaned

SF 210 context 8 [Ruler?] [denomination?]
Obverse: illegible
Reverse: illegible
Issue date: C3 or C4
Condition: conserved - surface corrosion removed

SF 216 context 37 ?Vespasian *as*
Obverse: bust facing right, legend hard to read
Reverse: eagle on globe
Issue date: AD 69-79
Condition: conserved - surface corrosion removed

Small finds (J. Summerfield)

Copper alloy objects

SF 201 context 4: nail (modern), SF 209 context 9: stud,
SF 214 context 5: spoon handle (2nd to 4th century).

Iron objects

SF 207 context 11 handle (modern) x-ray plate A10714
SF 211 context 14 bar x-ray plate A10716

Iron nails

SF 203 context 5 x-ray plate A10713
SF 212 context 8 x-ray plates A10713/A10716
SF 213 context 28 x-ray plate A10713
SF 215 context 37 x-ray plates A10713/A10716
SF 217 context 9 x-ray plate A10713

SF 218 context 9 tacks (2) from sample 401
SF 219 context 44 nails (4) from sample 402
SF 220 context 44 tacks (2) from sample 402.

Alloy

SF 204 context 4 unidentifiable fragment ?waste x-ray plates A10713/A10716.

Glass

SF 221 context 4 vessel fragments (2): Iridescent/clear thick walled body fragments-Roman.

Building material

Seven pieces of tile and brick were recovered from contexts: 8 (tile 126g); 9 (3 tile fragments weighing 203g and 1 brick of 975g); 14 (brick 185g) and 25 (tile 29g).

One bag of mortar was retrieved from sample 401 weighing 32g.

Slag/charcoal

Three contexts provided: 48g from context 8, 40g from sample 401 possible kiln waste, and 18g from sample 402. Sample 405 provided one small bag of charcoal.

Animal bone (C de Rouffignac)

Largely sheep and domestic.
Context 5: 82g
Context 8: 79g
Context 9: 1011g
Context 14: 3g
Context 25: 239g
Context 37: 156g
Context 41: 1g burnt fragment
Context 44: 11g
Context 50: 66g
Context 52: 133g
Context 54: 0.8g burnt fragment






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