

Hadrian's Wall: A National Mapping Programme project



Hadrian's Wall is the most well-known surviving frontier of the Roman Empire and is the most important monument built by the Romans in Britain. The Hadrian's Wall National Mapping Programme (NMP) mapped the whole of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site (WHS) and its landscape setting.

The data provides a comprehensive archaeological record, which aids the management and conservation of the WHS and the surrounding landscape.

The results of the project have been incorporated into the recently published archaeological map of Hadrian's Wall



Housesteads Roman fort, Northumberland photographed on 31 March 2006. The fort is built on the edge of the Whin Sill crags and commands a strategic position overlooking Ridley Common (NMR 20534/027). © Historic England



An Archaeological Map of Hadrian's Wall (1:25000 Scale)

Published 15 February 2014

Revised Edition. This is the only map at any scale to depict the archaeology of the Hadrian's Wall corridor with all recent archaeological discoveries and revisions. The map complements the OS Landranger and Explorer maps by providing focussed heritage and tourist information.

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Background to the project

The project area of 1693 square kilometres extended from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Bowness-on-Solway and along the Cumbrian coastal defences as far south as Maryport.

It included the Wall structures and archaeology of all periods within an area up to 15 kilometres wide. It spanned the counties of Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

The landscape around Hadrian's Wall had been occupied for many thousands of years before the Romans arrived in Britain. The NMP project recorded sites dating from the Neolithic onwards.

Clear evidence for settlements dating to the Iron Age, the period immediately prior to the Roman invasion, is however relatively scarce. A few defended enclosures, such as the hillfort at Warden Hill, occupy commanding positions in the landscape. Others such as Broomy Hill lie on sloping ground and are described as 'hillslope' enclosures.



Light snow conditions help to pick out the ramparts of the multi-vallate Iron Age hillfort on Warden Hill photographed here on 5 February 2003. An undated linear settlement can also be seen beyond it (NMR 17799/9). © Historic England

The Wall

The Wall was built by the order of the Emperor Hadrian in AD 122 to separate the Romans from the Barbarians. It covered 80 Roman miles from Wallsend-on-Tyne to Bowness-on-Solway and marked the northern extent of the Roman Empire.

To the south of the Wall are a road, the Military Way, and a large ditch flanked by banks called the Vallum. The Vallum, running the length of the frontier, was built after the Wall, controlling movement of people into the military area.

Forts, camps, milecastles and turrets

There were gates at mile intervals along the Wall, each defended by a milecastle. Two towers or turrets were placed between the each pair of milecastles.

In the section of the Wall running between milecastles 36 and 44 there are at least seven branch roads linking the milecastles and turrets to the Military Way. While some were known from ground survey, three of these branch roads were revealed by aerial survey.



Milecastle 39, also known as Castle Nick, photographed on 31 March 2006, provides a defended gate through Hadrian's Wall near Crag Lough (NMR 20535/013) © Historic England.

The forts were positioned along the wall at intervals of 5 to 12 kilometres. There were already a number of forts and camps in the area, but new forts were built to station soldiers to protect the province from attack.

The best known of these is the fort at Housesteads, built in the second phase of construction when forts were built alongside or even astride the Wall. Vindolanda Fort to the south, was built before the Wall.

As at most of the forts, Vindolanda shows evidence for the growth of a civilian settlement (vicus) around it. Amongst the buildings were a lodge for travellers (mansio), a bath house, workshops, and temples.



Vindolanda Roman Fort photographed on 22-JUL-2014 (NMR 28560/12) © Historic England

Camps and earthworks

As well as the stone built forts, the NMP project identified a total of 65 temporary camps as earthworks or cropmarks, 16 of which were previously unrecorded.

Hadrian's Wall terminated at Bowness-on-Solway, but the Roman defences continued along the Solway peninsula where the defences mirrored the pattern of milecastles and turrets on the Wall.

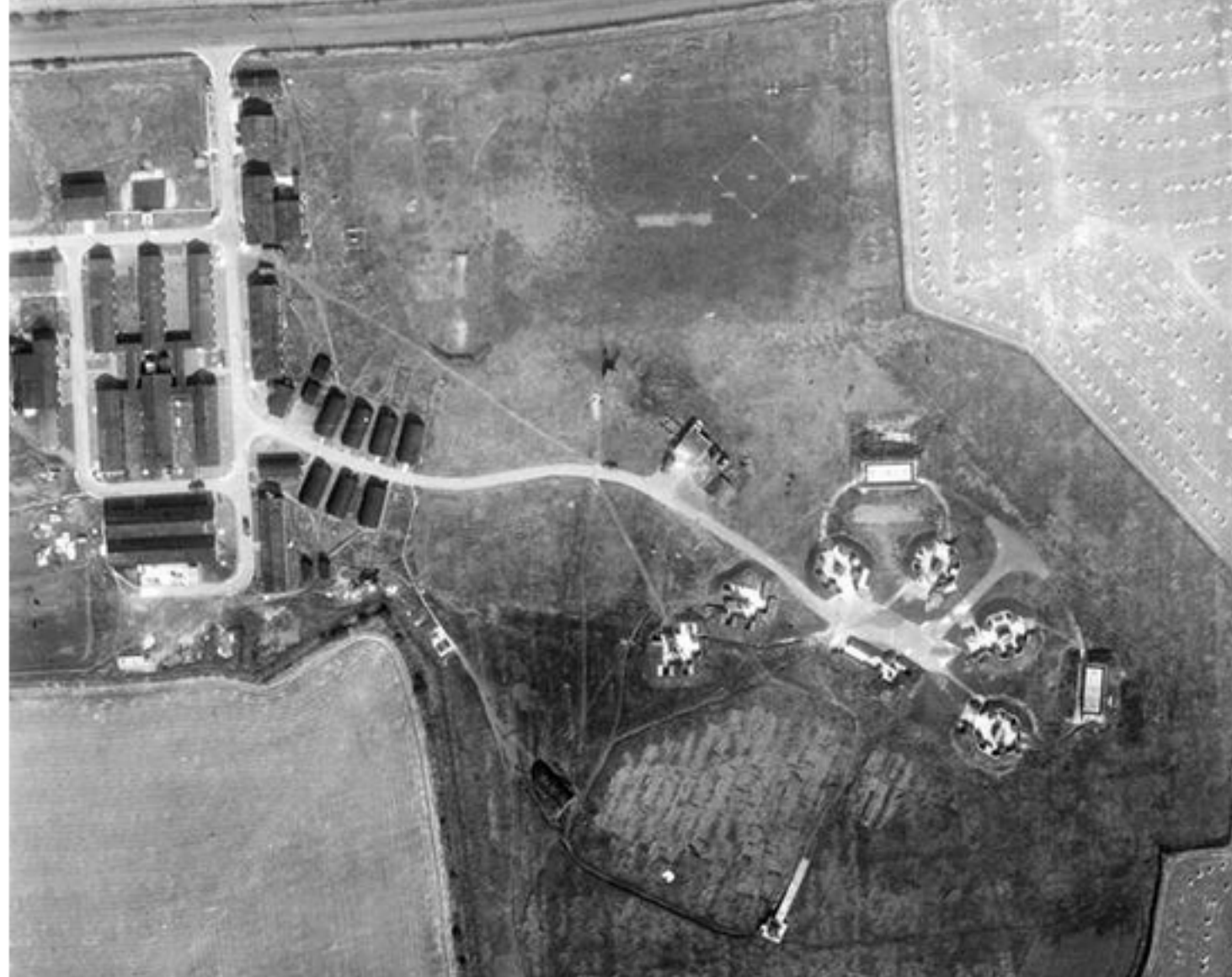
The installations continued down the Cumbrian coast to St Bees Head, with a Roman road linking the forts. Maryport, one of the largest frontier forts, survives well as earthworks, whilst at Beckfoot the fort and vicus are levelled but revealed as cropmarks.

Post-Roman activity

Extensive non-Roman remains were also identified in the project. These ranged in date from the Neolithic to the 20th century. The coast's association with defence was also important during the Second World War.

During the war the Newcastle and Gateshead docks and shipyards were a prime target for air raids. They were protected by over 40 barrage balloon sites, heavy anti-aircraft batteries and radar stations.

There were also anti-invasion defences, such as aircraft obstructions, pillboxes, tank traps, trenches and minefields. Air raid shelters, often built in the grounds of schools and factories, provided protection for the civilian population.



Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery site near Cleadon, South Tyneside photographed on 28 August 1945. The octagonal GL mat can be seen to the south of the gun emplacements (RAF/106G /UK/745 V 6255). © Historic England RAF Photography