

**WRITTEN STATEMENT
OF INVESTIGATION**

In respect of

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONITORING & EXCAVATION**

at

**THE CHESTERS FORT
RABBIT-PROOF FENCE INSTALLATION**

For

Historic Environment Scotland

By

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INTRODUCTION

OS Grid Reference: NT 506 782 – NT 509 783

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This assessment outlines the archaeological issues associated with the proposed installation of a new rabbit-proof fence and six below-ground ‘drop’ boxes at The Chesters Fort (Fig.1). The proposed new works are components of a suite of pest-control measures at the site to address long-term infestation by rabbits, and have the potential to impact upon archaeological levels.

A proposed new fence surrounding the site will have posts approximately every 3m with strainer posts approximately every 100m. Foundations for strainer posts will be excavated to a maximum depth of 700mm below the present ground surface. In addition, a series of rabbit ‘drop’ boxes will be created along the south side of the monument, set into the ground flush with the surface. These will each typically measure 700mm x 700mm x 600mm deep.

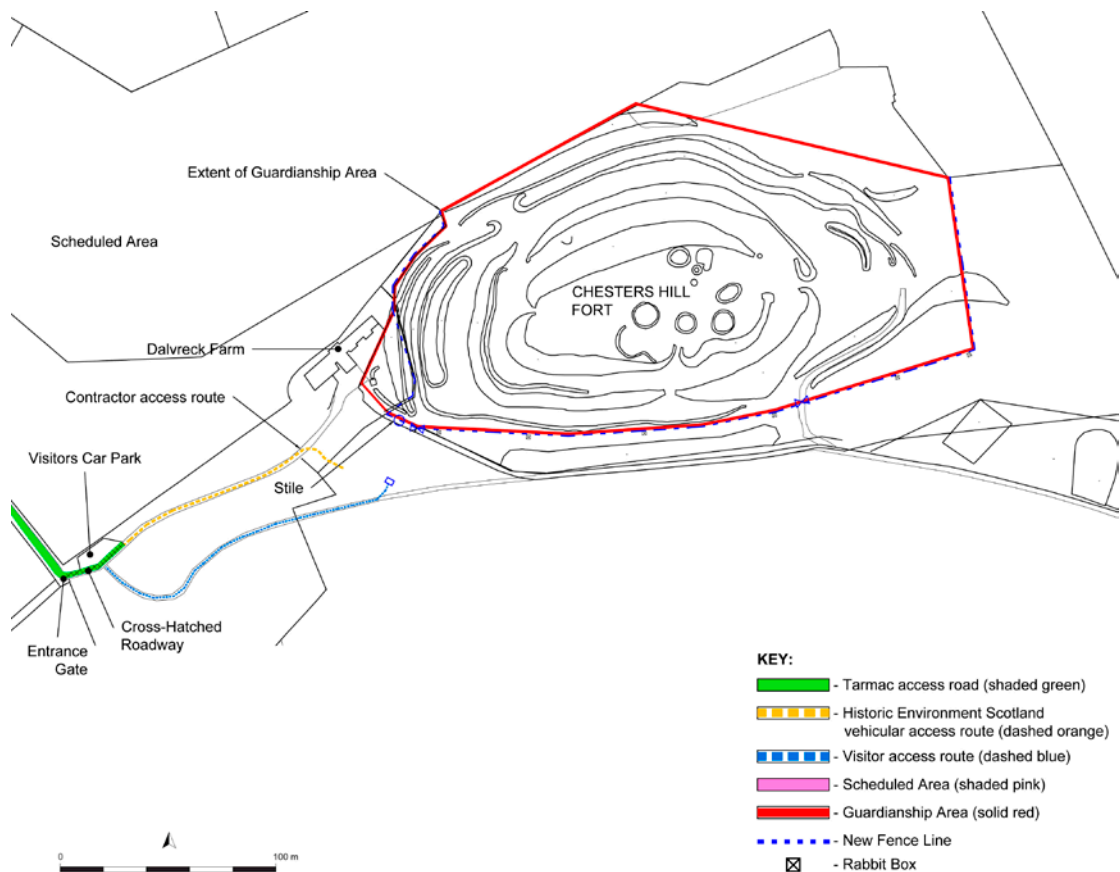


Figure 1: Plan showing the location of the new rabbit-proof fence and rabbit 'drop' boxes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chesters is an earthwork fort with several lines of enclosure and complex gateway defences. It sits at the centre of a landscape rich in cropmark remains of settlements and field boundaries which seem fairly likely to be roughly contemporary with it. The innermost enclosure measures about 115m by 45 m within a ruinous rampart. The two inner ramparts have a maximum height of around 5m where best preserved on the north-west. The outer rampart survives to a height of 3.5m. This is surrounded by another rampart, along with traces of up to six others.

It is considered that the fort was constructed in several phases, the earliest of which may date to the early first millennium BC. Its most spectacular features seem to belong to the second half of the first millennium BC, and the house scoops and stances in the interior probably reflect a relatively late phase of settlement in the first few centuries AD, at a time when some parts of Scotland were controlled by the Romans.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The removal of a gun emplacement in 1976, near the eastern entrance to the fort, offered an opportunity to examine a partial section through the rampart. There was no sign of revetting within the bank and no tip lines were visible. The interior of the fort contains the surface traces of several houses, which vary in size. Some of them appear to be later than the ruined defences. An exploratory programme of geophysical survey was carried out in 2012, with the primary intention of exploring the archaeological potential of the later prehistoric pit alignment systems around the fort, and to assess various geophysics methods. A possible pit alignment and enclosure were among the new features discovered during this work, and the results appeared to confirm the complexity of some areas of the monument. In 2014, an erosion survey was carried out across the site, providing an assessment of the damaged caused, partly by rabbit activity.

PROPOSED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

Because there is a possibility that the excavations for post foundations and rabbit 'drop' boxes will impact on archaeological deposits, all excavations will be monitored by an archaeologist, with larger foundations (*e.g.* for the 'drop' boxes) to be excavated and recorded archaeologically by hand, maximising the potential for vertical sections to be carefully recorded.

If significant archaeological deposits are encountered within the required depth to which any of the work is conducted, work will cease while the significance of the deposits is discussed with Historic Environment Scotland's Cultural Resources Team and Heritage Directorate.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESPONSE

F I E L D W O R K

The work will comprise two elements - archaeological monitoring of all fence post installation, and archaeological excavation of all strainer post settings and drop boxes.

M O N I T O R I N G

This will entail:

- The presence on site of at least one site archaeologist during all ground breaking works.
- The archaeologist should be able to direct rate, location and method of excavation employed by contractor.
- The archaeologist should suspend excavation if necessary, in order to examine / clean / retrieve any archaeological features, surfaces, structures or artefacts that may be exposed during excavation.
- All spoil will be suitably stored for examination before backfill/reinstatement.

A R C H A E O L O G I C A L E X C A V A T I O N A N D R E C O R D I N G

This will entail:

Excavation

- Each potential excavation site will be marked on the ground by HES staff.
- Turf and topsoil will be stored separately on boards or plastic sheeting.
- Excavation will only use hand tools.
- General spoil will be located on plastic sheeting or ton bags, near each trench for reinstatement or disposal (by HES staff).
- All excavations will be suitably demarcated with hazard tape and signage.

Drawing

- Confirmation of site plan as supplied by the Client.
- Location plan of all interventions at a suitable scale, 1:50/1:100.
- Detailed, individual area plans of all interventions – at significant stages of excavation if appropriate and on completion of excavation, drawn at a scale of 1:20.
- All sections, or a representative selection, will be drawn in detail at a scale of 1:10.
- All drawing will be annotated with site feature numbers, site code, scale, date and name(s) of staff.

Photography

- Still photographs will be colour digital and will record general location of works, plus detailed coverage during, and on completion of, excavation.
- All photographs will have a suitable scale visible.
- All photographs will be listed in a full photo register (describing content, orientation and date).
- 'Documentary' photographs will also be taken in order to represent site conditions, constraints and resources.
- If appropriate, digital moving coverage will be taken for further illustration of site conditions, constraints and resources.

Site Recording: Buried Archaeology

- Description of all excavated material will be expressed in terms of archaeological features, each of which will be assigned a unique three digit number. The numbering will also reference the site code and any individual trench number.
- Each discrete feature will be described on site *pro forma* which will cover stratigraphic relationships, finds, physical description, location, drawing references and interpretation.
- Each feature will also be listed in a feature register – comprising a brief description, date, and feature number.

Sampling

When required, three levels of sampling are proposed for above and below ground investigations:

- **General:** Bulk sample per context removed.
- **Special:** Specific sample identified for later specialist study (charcoal, industrial waste, environmental, infestations, organics).
- **Specialist:** Monitoring of any independent sampling strategy from external specialists (dendrochronological, mortar, paint, *etc.*)

GENERAL ISSUES

In the event of the discovery of significant remains and/or artefacts, which may be impacted by the proposed works, excavation should be suspended until further instruction is received from relevant agencies. At this point the Historic Environment Scotland CRT should also be informed and consulted.

All artefacts, faunal remains and samples will be processed off-site. Disposal and/or examination/ conservation of this material will be assessed in the light of results of fieldwork. Any programme of specialist post-excavation work on finds, faunal remains and analysis of samples will be assessed on completion of the fieldwork

Any human remains revealed during the excavation will remain *in situ*. All discoveries of human remains will be reported to the local police and Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

If human remains are to be excavated during any subsequent work, this will be completed in line with Historic Scotland policy on the treatment of human remains.

REPORTING

The results of the Fieldwork and DBA will be presented in an illustrated Data Structures Report (DSR) with accompanying digital documentation as specified by the Historic Environment Scotland CRT.

Copies of the report and digital files will be produced as specified. Typically this comprises:

- Four bound paper copies.
- Two digital versions on CD including all photographs (the latter in .tiff or jpeg format).

This will include an assessment of all assemblages and recommendations for any further specialist work.

A costed programme for the full sample analysis towards publication of the findings will be included if appropriate.

A short note will be submitted to 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland'.

The position of all trenches, excavation areas *etc.*, will be supplied on CD disk, as a georeferenced .dxf file.

Reports will be submitted within 20 working days of completion of the fieldwork.

ARCHIVE

If there is no further requirement for reporting beyond the DSR and D&E entry, the report and site records will be compiled in a suitable archive comprising primary data and digital documentation as appropriate, suitable for submission to local and national archives.

The archive will follow current guidelines for archival standards set by the Archaeology Data Service and RCAHMS.

The project archive will be deposited with the NMRS within six months of completion of fieldwork and relevant post-excavation analyses. Finds will be subject to the Scots laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*, and will be reported to the Crown Agent for disposal. Appropriate conservation of finds will be conducted before disposal.

Gordon Ewart
24th December, 2016