

SCOTS DYKE TO TURNPIKE: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE A66, GRETA BRIDGE TO SCOTCH CORNER

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Front cover: *The A66 development corridor at Melsonby Crossroads, looking west; Denarius of the Roman emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79) found during the A66 project*

Rear Cover: *Area of Carkin Moor Roman fort, bisected by the modern A66; Late Iron Age/early Romano-British roundhouse at Scotch Corner; the A66 development corridor near Scotch Corner; archaeological excavation at Gatherley Moor*

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Summary

In 2006-7, the Highways Agency began works to improve two sections of the A66 trunk road between Greta Bridge, County Durham, and Scotch Corner, further to the east, in North Yorkshire. These included the construction of a second carriageway alongside the existing single carriageway in two places: running for approximately 5 km between the Greta Bridge bypass (NZ 0890 1307) and the top of Stephen Bank (NZ 1280 1034); and for approximately 6 km between Carkin Moor (NZ 1622 0827) and the Scotch Corner A1 Interchange (NZ 2140 0530).

It was clear, from the earliest stages of planning, that the proposed scheme would encounter buried archaeological remains, as well as encroaching on several visible or upstanding features of historical significance. As early as 1998, a condition survey of the various route options was undertaken, in order to review and update the extant archaeological information. Subsequent to this, in 1999-2000, a programme of detailed field evaluation was initiated, assessing the archaeological potential and the impact of the scheme on the archaeological resource, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Transport's *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11, Environment Assessment*. In 2006, Balfour Beatty Atkins were employed by the Highways Agency to design and build the road, and their *Scheme Specific Archaeological Design* (Atkins Ltd 2006), produced in response to the Highways Agency's requirements, identified the range of archaeological investigations required to mitigate the impact of the scheme on the historic environment. These investigations were undertaken in 2006-7 by Oxford Archaeology North, in advance of and during the road construction.

Sites of archaeological interest investigated as part of the project included two Scheduled Monuments: Carkin Moor Roman fort (SM 28289/02; SCA2) and the Scots Dyke (SM26946; SCA10); part of an Iron Age settlement at Rock Castle, west of Melsonby Crossroads (SCA8); and extensive late Iron Age / Romano-British enclosures and settlement remains between Sedbury Home Farm and Scotch Corner (sites SCA13 and SCA15). Several watching briefs were also undertaken during the course of the project, some of which also yielded significant data.

The earliest human activity recorded was dated to the late mesolithic-neolithic period, and is represented by residual or unstratified flint artefacts recovered from several sites. In addition, a pit containing early Bronze Age pottery was excavated at SCA13. Excavation adjacent to the known Iron Age settlement at Rock Castle (SCA8) exposed part of a roundhouse and enclosure ditches of Iron Age date, and extensive late Iron Age-early Romano-British settlement remains were investigated at SCA15. Perhaps most significantly of all, the investigations occasioned a radical revision of the dating for the part of the Scots Dyke investigated at SCA10, placing its origins in the late Iron Age / early Roman period, rather than the early medieval period (sixth-seventh century AD), as previously thought. Part of a ditch of probable Roman date, identified at SCA2, is likely to have formed part of the defensive system for Carkin Moor Roman fort.

With the exception of a few scattered artefacts, no good evidence for medieval activity was found, as expected, given the rural nature of the road corridor, though there were many features associated with the post-medieval agricultural landscape. Evidence for post-medieval stone quarrying, in the form of small, disused quarries and quarry-pits, was recorded at several sites, as were bridges, culverts, and other articles of road furniture associated with the A66.

Abbreviations

aOD	above Ordnance Datum
BP	Before Present. In terms of radiocarbon dates, present is defined as AD 1950
HER	Historic Environment Record, incorporating the old Sites and Monument Record and data on the wider historic environment, which are held by the Heritage, Landscape and Design Regeneration and Economic Development, 5th Floor, County Hall, Durham, County Durham, DH1 5UQ, and by North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8AD
NMR	National Monuments Record, now The English Heritage Archive, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon SN2 2EH
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
OSL	Optically Stimulated Luminescence
PAZ	Pollen Assemblage Zone
RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England
SM	Scheduled Monument
TLP	Total Land Pollen



Figure 1: Location of the A66 road improvements