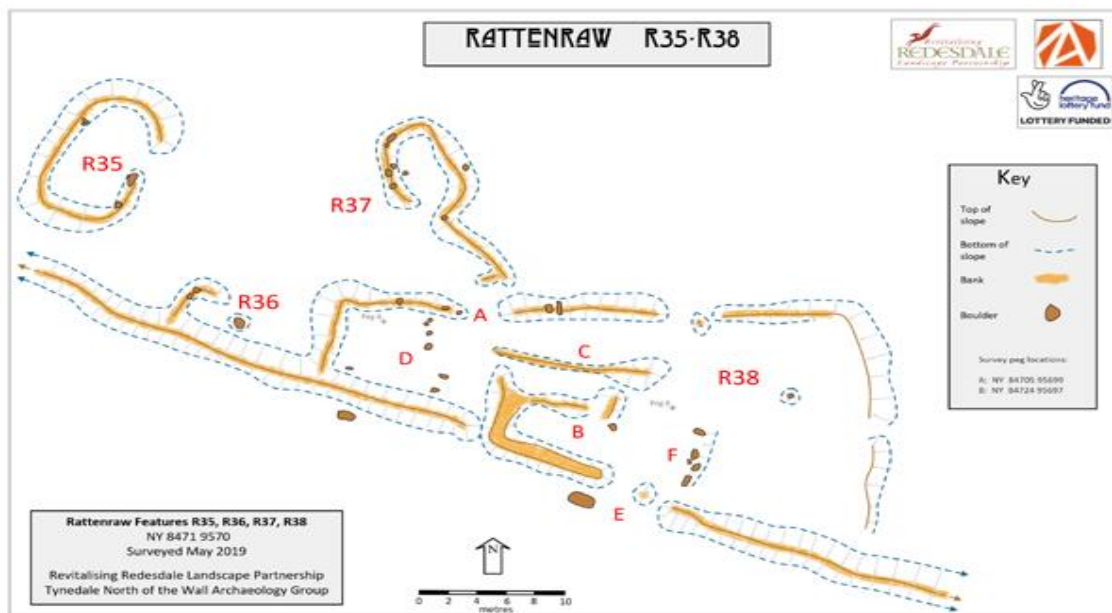


Community Archaeology Survey of a Farmstead Site at Rattenraw Farm, Redesdale May 26th-28th 2019



1. Introduction and Acknowledgements

A Level 3 Survey of what is believed to be a possible farmstead settlement at Rattenraw Farm (structures R35-38) was carried out in May 2019, by volunteers from North of the Wall Tynedale Archaeology Group (NOWTAG) and Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership. The site is in Northumberland at grid reference NY84719570.

The level 3 survey followed an earlier Level 1 survey of this site, which was carried out by members of NOWTAG in February 2018, and a Level 3 survey at the nearby enclosed settlement R00 carried out by volunteers in October 2018. The principal aim of this Level 3 survey was to more precisely measure and record the extent and dimensions of the structures that comprise R35-38. In addition, a further structure, R09, which bore similarities to structure R35, was also surveyed. The results of the survey are discussed in this report.

Over the course of three days, from 26th-28th May 2019, volunteers took part in the survey, which was organized and run as a training opportunity and volunteer event, forming part of Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership's 'Lost Redesdale' community archaeology project. The event was led by a team of members of NOWTAG, comprising Phil Bowyer and Andy Curtis.

13 volunteers took part in the survey, learning and developing skills in archaeological surveying techniques and contributing to our understanding of Redesdale's heritage. Their contribution is much appreciated. Participants included: Phil Bowyer, Andy Curtis, Malcolm McCallum, Pauline Hogarth, Roisin Hogarth, Dylan Hogarth, Richard Wilson, Katy Wilson, Anita Laird, Mike Powell, Ian Craig, Ian Cooper and Alastair Murray.

Special thanks go to Phil Bowyer and Andy Curtis for their generosity, expertise and patience in training the inexperienced volunteers and leading the survey. Special thanks also to Susan and Dennis Salt for their kindness, support and enthusiasm in welcoming us to their farm and hosting this event.

This survey report has been compiled on behalf of Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership and Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group by Phil Bowyer, Andy Curtis and Martin Green.

Karen Collins
Revitalising Redesdale Heritage & Engagement Officer
June 2019

2. Summary

2.1 In February 2018, members of Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group had undertaken a Level 1 walkover survey on Rattenraw Farm, a full report of which is downloadable from our website www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk. In October 2018, community volunteers completed a Level 3 detailed measurement survey of the Romano-British Enclosed Settlement (designated R00 on our plan) under the auspices of the 'Revitalising Redesdale' project.

2.2 The main focus for our Level 3 detailed measurement survey in May 2019 was a possible farmstead site adjacent to a long east-west bank and ditch towards the north of the farm. When the site, comprising structures R35-38, was examined in 2018, the extent of vegetation cover had made identification of structures difficult. Following the dry spring in 2019, various features had become more visible. Detailed measurement of these features and the resulting plan drawing tends to support the interpretation of the site having been at some time a farmstead but have raised questions as to whether all the structures are contemporary with each other, or whether the site may exhibit multi-period aspects.

2.3 Additionally, apparent similarities between structure R35 and three structures, R07-09, in the south-west section of the 2018 survey area prompted a detailed measurement of structure R09 as part of the 2019 survey.

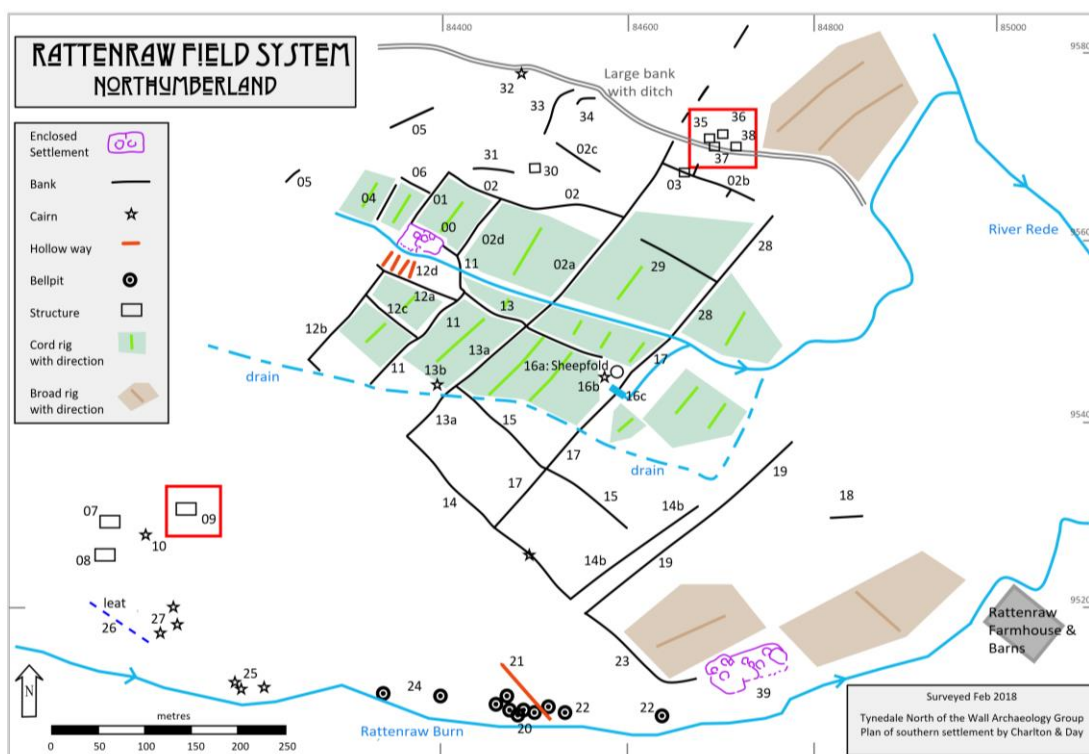


Fig.1 Location of May 2019 surveys (red rectangles)

2.4 Whilst our detailed survey drawing, Figure 2 below, appears to confirm the view that there was a roughly rectilinear yard-type enclosure adjacent to the long east-

west bank and that there was a smaller rectilinear structure, possibly a farmhouse, abutting the east-west bank, there remain a number of unanswered questions concerning the nature and function of features recorded.

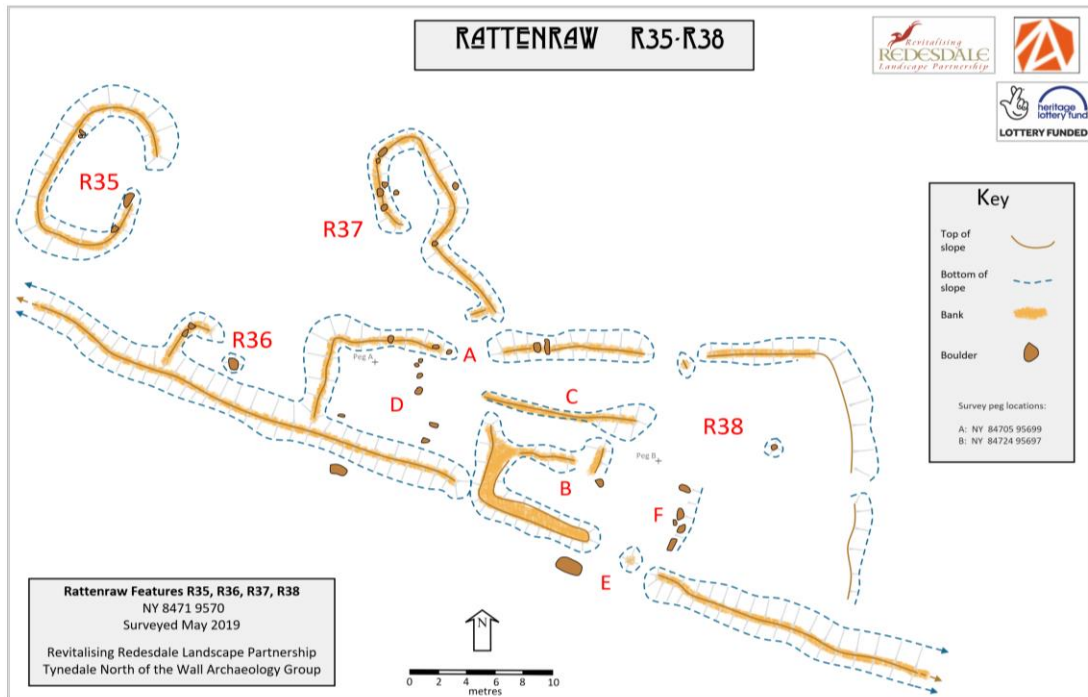


Fig.2 Rattenraw Farmstead Site (computerised version of Figure 4)

2.5 In particular we are prompted to review our initial 2018 interpretation of the westernmost structure, R35, as a possible stack stand. The closer examination that had become feasible tends to make alternative interpretations more plausible. In 2018, structure R37, immediately north of the large rectilinear yard enclosure, was interpreted as a possible stock enclosure, with a line of stones running SE towards a possible entrance to the yard. Although this initial interpretation remains plausible our detailed examination has prompted consideration of other possibilities. These questions will be addressed in more detail in the body of this report.



Fig.3 Volunteers surveying with theodolite and disto

3. Survey results

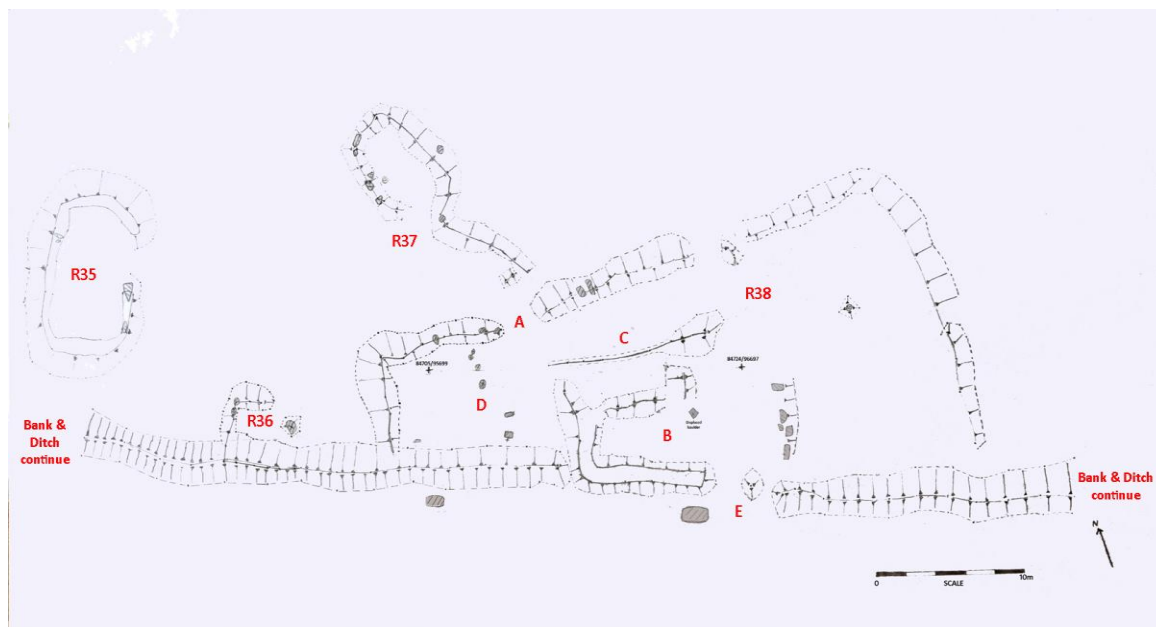


Fig.4 Annotated plan drawing of R35-38 (see Figure 2 for digital version)

3.1 One of the key questions concerning the site is the physical relationship between the extensive east-west bank and structures R38 and R36, in particular whether the structures pre-date or post-date the bank. Close visual examination of the alignment of the bank suggested that it may diverge very slightly, by less than a metre northwards, where it coincides with the southern edge of structure B within R38, although this is far from conclusive as the boundary over its whole length does not follow a straight line. Examination of locations where the north-south banks of R38 and R36 meet the east-west bank was also inconclusive.



Fig.5 Alignment of E-W bank and structure R38B looking east

3.2 We did observe that along parts of the southern side of the east-west bank there are lengths of well-constructed stone revetting similar to that visible on banks to the east of the present-day farmhouse. Although there is a ditch along the southern side of the bank it is clear that the bank itself is not a sod-cast structure. We also noted indications that there must have been considerable robbing-out of stone from structure R38B and along the probable east bank of the yard/enclosure boundary.

Although the survey has not produced definitive evidence, we do feel that on the balance of probabilities structures R35-R38 pre-dated the east west bank, had fallen out of use, and that stone from them was used in the construction of the bank.

3.3 The alignment of the yard/enclosure northern boundary differs from that of the east-west bank that today constitutes the southern edge of R38. It is noteworthy that the eastern boundary feature is perpendicular to the northern boundary but approaches the east-west bank at an angle. The shorter length of the western boundary of R38 is also not perpendicular to the east-west bank. The northern edge of structure B and the stony linear feature C appear to have a similar alignment as the northern enclosure boundary bank. There were, however, no indications of remains of any continuation of a western boundary for R38 in the area south of the east-west bank and ditch. LIDAR images are also inconclusive and disturbed by drainage.

3.4 The above-mentioned alignments lend further support to the view that the east-west bank and ditch post-date structure R38.

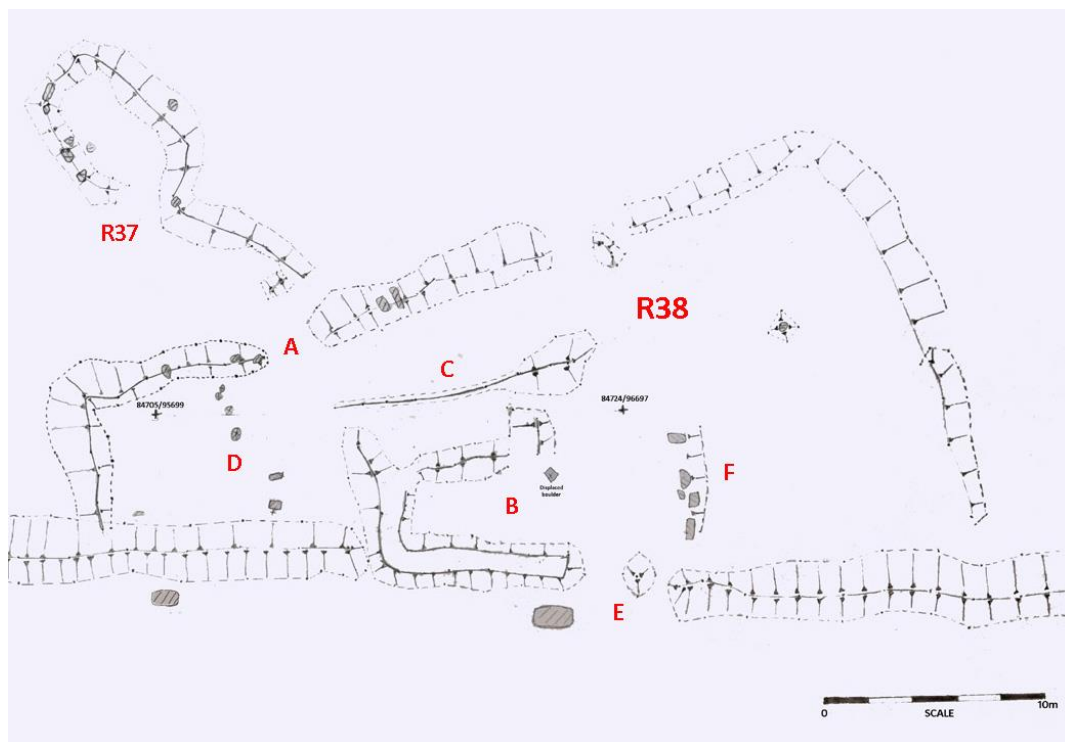


Fig.6 Detail of R38 plan drawing annotated (an enlarged section of Figure 4)

3.5 The recordable remains of structure B fall short of providing the basis for a clear interpretation of its original size and function. Our initial examination in 2018 suggested a rectilinear building 7m east-west by 5m north-south. With reduced vegetation cover in 2019 we found that our originally posited location for its eastern edge is unlikely to have been correct. A 0.3m x 0.3m cube-shaped boulder, which appeared to mark the north-east corner of the structure, turns out to have been displaced. The farmer has confirmed that he has observed the bull pushing it around.

3.6 In 2019 we have been able to record a line of boulders, F, along what had previously been noted as a change of slope. If F represents the remains of a wall, it may well have constituted the eastern end of structure B, giving an east-west dimension of 13.5m. The line of boulders stops short of the east-west bank and ditch, interestingly at the point where its alignment runs slightly to the south of its continuation along the southern edge of structure B.

3.7 Interpretation is further complicated by a gap in the bank here at point E. We were unable to determine whether this arises from the original structure R38, or from the construction of the east-east bank, or from later damage from farm vehicles or livestock.

3.8 Along the northern edge of structure B there are two short protrusions that may just be tumble, but which we cannot be sure are not remains of structural elements.

3.9 It must also be noted that there are today no surface indications of remains of the northern edge of B extending east of the displaced stone to connect to the line of boulders at F.

3.10 We do have a greater degree of confidence in suggesting that at A there are indications of a 2m wide entrance into the yard/enclosure. Immediately north of A we recorded a low stony bank running NW towards enclosure R37. The stony bank could well represent the remains of a feature functioning to channel livestock towards the yard entrance. R37, measuring 6.5m x 4m with a 1.5m wide entrance, may have served as a stock-handling pen.

3.11 There are features within the yard area that may be indications of some internal sub-division. The line of stones at D, with a possible central gap, may have controlled access to the western end of the yard. At C there is a line of stones, some sub-surface, running parallel to the northern edge of structure B. This may constitute the base of a structure protecting building B from livestock and/or enclosing a 'kitchen garden'. The two protrusions mentioned in 3.8 above could potentially be related to such a feature.

3.12 Within the overall context of R38 it is still plausible to postulate that B does represent the remains of a farmstead building, but excavation would be required to confirm this.

3.13 15m west of the western end of yard/enclosure R38 lies a rectilinear structure, R35, with bowed ends. It measures 10m x 6m and has a possible east-facing 1.5m wide entrance. In addition to a number of visible stones, the perimeter has a continuous series of sub-surface stones. A striking feature is the lack of any internal change of slope from the perimeter bank. The plan drawing is shown as Figure 7 below. In 2018 we had suggested that R35 may be a stack stand because of the raised interior, but on closer examination this is most unlikely, given the amount of stone in the perimeter and the possible entrance. The remains recorded would not be incompatible with a shieling building which could have potentially pre-dated the possible farmstead. It should also be noted that such an interpretation would not exclude the possibility that the structure was subsequently re-used for some purpose during the period of occupation of the farmstead.

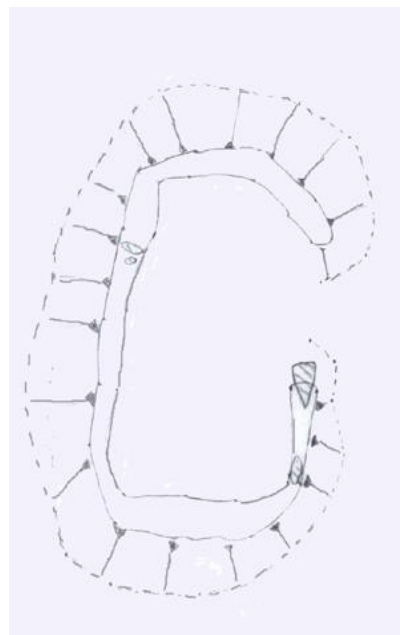


Fig.7 R35 plan drawing



Fig.8 R35 Possible shieling (red flags top of bank, green bottom)

3.14 Structure R36 comprises a 3m x 3m L-shaped bank abutting the east-west bank and ditch. There is a large boulder positioned at its eastern end, but it is unclear whether this formed the basis of an eastern end to the structure or represents a tumble from the bank.

3.15 Whilst checking the surrounding terrain for further features we identified lengths of a low stony linear bank similar in form to the Iron Age/Romano-British field boundaries that we had recorded in 2018. The alignment of three separate lengths (NY 844661 95726 to NY 84665 95734, NY 84679 95749 to NY 84668 95764 and NY 84717 95808 to NY 84734 95830) matches field boundary R02a shown on the plan of the field system (Figure 1). Whilst these aligned lengths were the only probable remains of the Iron Age/Romano-British field system that we have thus far discovered north of the east-west bank and ditch, it does suggest that the field system extends further north than was identified in 2018.



Fig.9 Linear field boundary (Iron Age/Romano-British)

3.16 Having noted similarities between structure R35 and three rectilinear structures with bowed ends, R07, R08 and R09, that we had identified in 2018 located on higher ground at the south-west of the survey area (shown in Figure 1 above) we decided to undertake a detailed measurement of R09 for comparison. This is situated at grid reference NY 84122 95303. The tape and offset surveying method was used.

3.17 R09 measures 13.5m x 5.9m x 0.3m high and is entirely turf covered. Prodding revealed that there is a continuous run of sub-surface stones constituting the perimeter. As the plan drawing indicates (Figure 10 below) there are no visible

indications of an entrance or any internal divisions. As noted in 2018, at all three of these structures (R07, R08 and R09), there are today no signs of other stony tumble adjacent to the lines of single stones constituting their perimeters. None of the structures showed signs of any internal division.

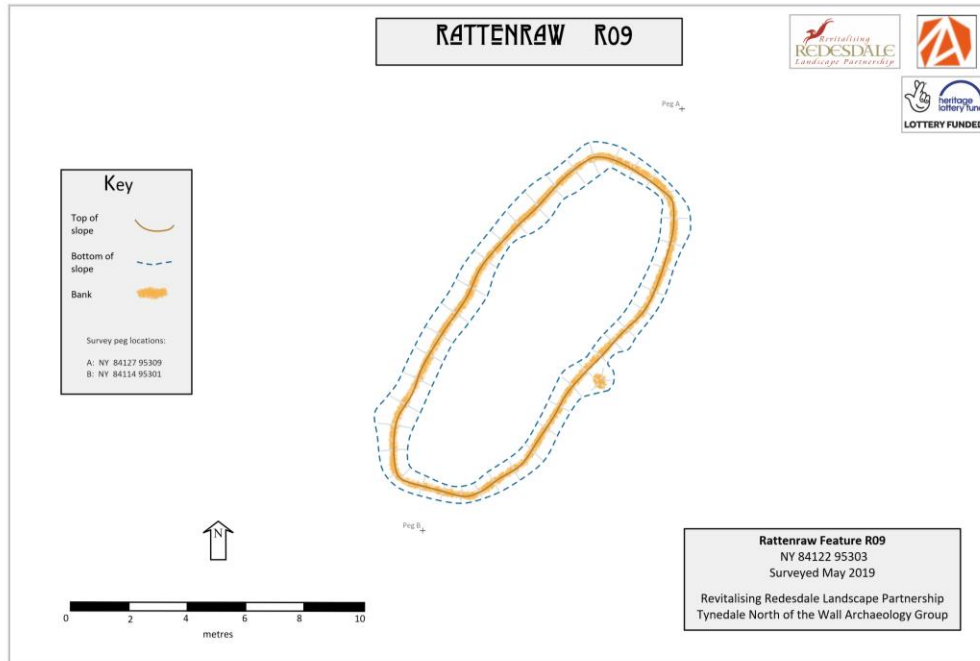


Fig.10 Plan drawing of R09



Fig.11 Tape and offset measurement at R09

4 Site context

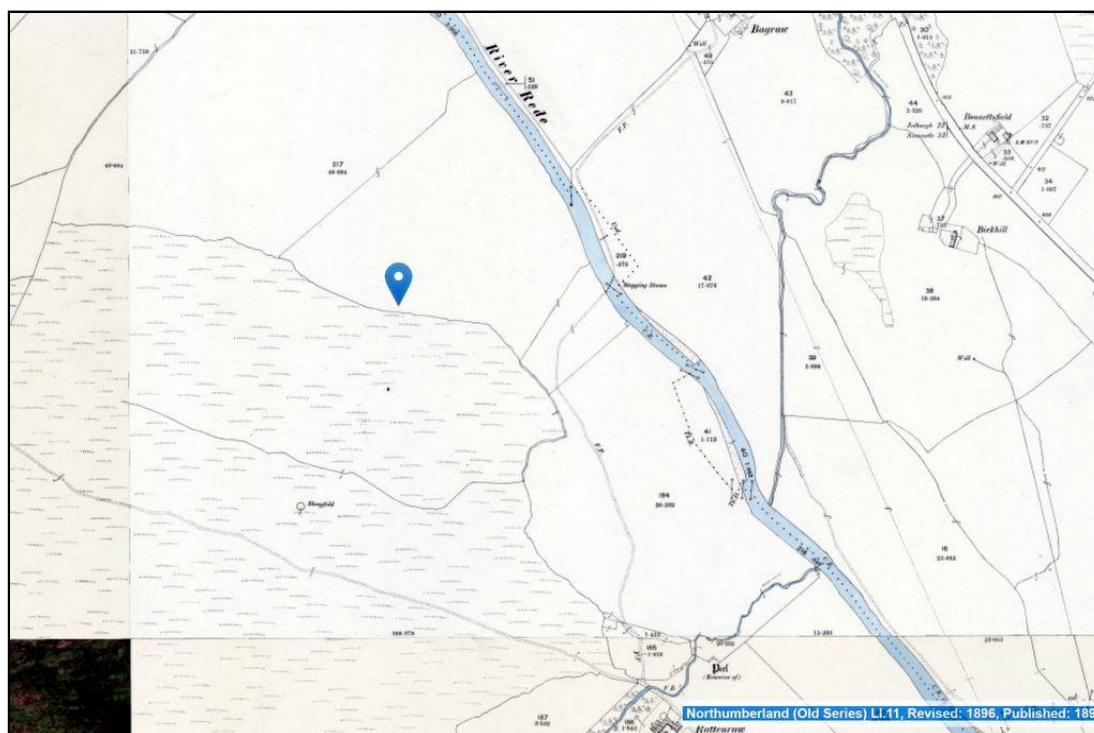


Fig.12 Ordnance Survey 25in to 1mile 1897: marker at approximate site location
Map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland, <https://maps.nls.uk>

4.1 The 25 inch to 1 mile OS map of 1897 clearly shows the old boundary feature commencing north of Rattenraw farmhouse, curving north along the west edge of improved land, then west past our survey site to join the boundary with the neighbouring farm of Ashtrees. At this junction a wall running south to north ends and the boundary continues towards the river as a fence. The west to east boundary feature is shown marking a junction between the flatter and possibly improved land on the north side bordering the River Rede, and what is shown as rough moorland to the south. Today this flat area of grassland north of the boundary is very rough grazing and poorly drained. The boundary itself is not a straight feature; it has several kinks and turns but largely follows the 170m contour marking the edge of the flat, riverside haugh land.

4.2 Although we cannot be sure that there is any relationship between the farmstead settlement and ridge and furrow ploughing, it is also worth noting that the LIDAR image (Figure 13) shows broad rig of a medieval type, orientated SW-NE, north of the boundary bank, starting close to the east end of our survey area (see Fig. 1). There is no ploughing visible on the farmstead site itself or immediately to its north and west although modern parallel drainage ditches are visible here suggesting the ground may have been wetter. This drainage is parallel to the larger straight ditch, west of the farmstead site, which is shown on the map apparently dividing the riverside land. Broad rig and furrow commences north-west of that ditch, possibly bounded on its south side by an old water-course.

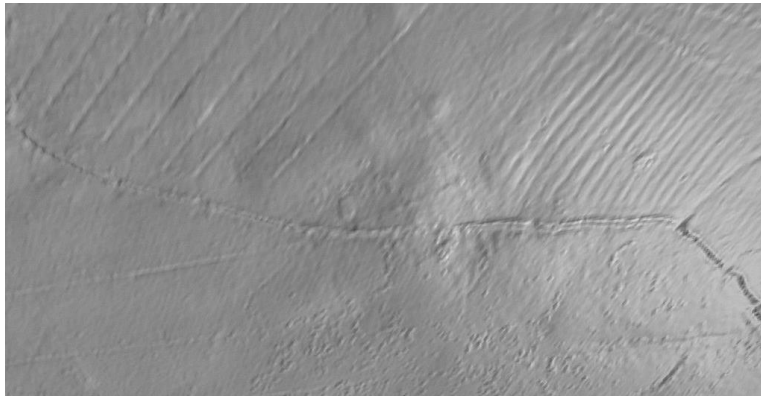


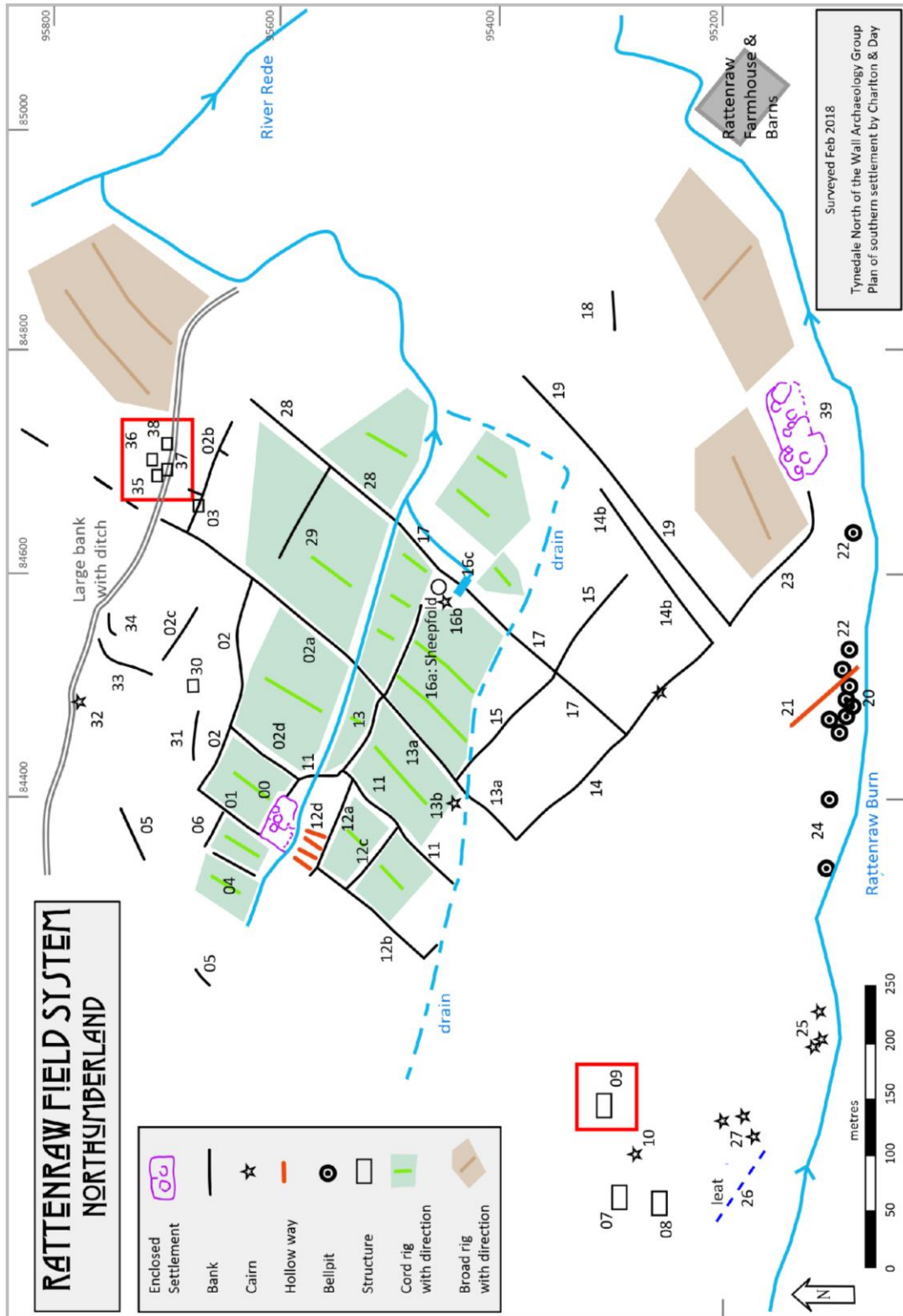
Fig.13 LIDAR image of farmstead site
Data copyright Environment Agency

5. Further investigation

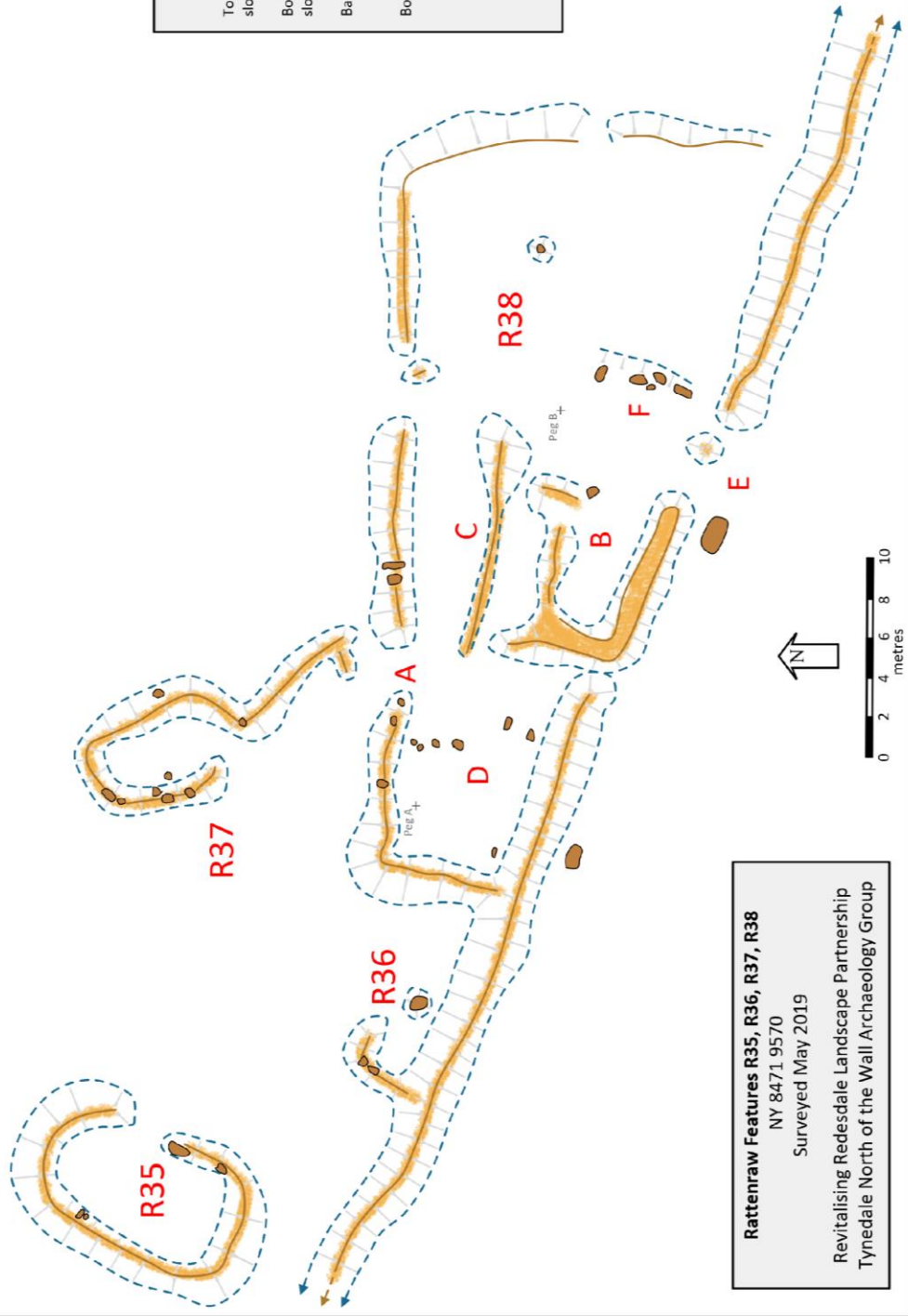
5.1 Perhaps unsurprisingly our survey has left us with more questions than answers. Among the remaining issues that will need addressing in order to advance our understanding of the sites surveyed are the following:

- a) Is it possible to identify a date for the construction of the extensive east-west bank and ditch passing at the southern edge of features R35-R38? Researching any available archives from the Otterburn Hall Estate may provide relevant information.
- b) What is the physical relationship between this bank and the now conjoined structures?
- c) Could selective excavation (to reveal sub-surface remains) provide answers to this and to questions concerning the nature of underlying structures within the yard/enclosure that appear to have been robbed out?
- d) Could selective excavation tell us more about the nature and function of R35? Was it once a shieling building? Was it subsequently re-used? Would this assist our understanding of structures R07, R08 and R09?
- e) What was the function of structure R37 in relation to the rest of the farmstead?
- f) Are there any other remnants of the Iron Age/Romano-British field system, or other features from that period north of the east-west bank and ditch? A systematic walkover survey of the area would address this.

6 Appendix: Full-page versions of plans



RATTENRAW R35-R38



Key

- Top of slope
- Bottom of slope
- Bank
- Boulder

Survey peg locations:
 A: NY 84705 95609
 B: NY 84724 95697

Rattenraw Features R35, R36, R37, R38
 NY 8471 9570
 Surveyed May 2019
 Revitalising Redesdale Landscape Partnership
 Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group

