Redesdale Landscapes through Time
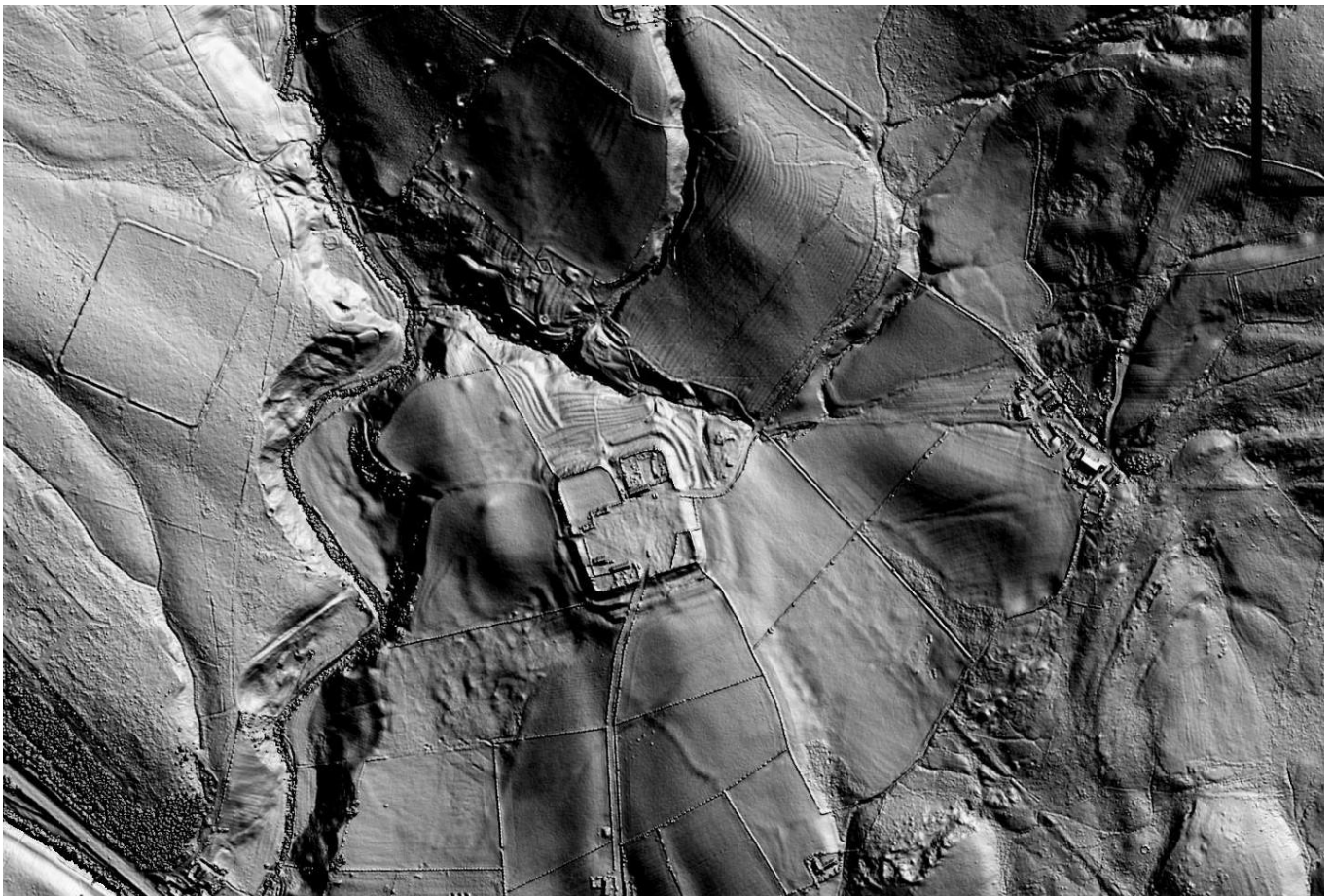
Landscape Area 1

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This report is one of a series of six, produced by project volunteers during the *Redesdale Landscapes through Time* project, part of the NLHF-funded *Revitalising Redesdale* Landscape Partnership scheme. The project was managed by Karen Collins (Revitalising Redesdale Heritage & Engagement Officer).

The project background, methodology and general results are summarised in a general Project Report by the Project Consultant, Paul Frodsham (ORACLE Heritage Services). The Project Report and all six Area Reports are available on the Revitalising Redesdale website: https://www.revitalisingredesdale.org.uk/

Any questions about the project prior to September 2022 should be addressed to Karen Collins: karen.collins@nnpa.org.uk

From September 2022 onwards, please address any questions to Paul Frodsham (ORACLE Heritage Services):   paulfrodsham@hotmail.com

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Cover illustration

Lidar imagery of part of Area 1. This image, extracted form the actual imagery used by volunteers during the Landscapes through Time *project, shows the complex multi-period landscape around Bremenium (High Rochester) Roman fort, at the heart of Area 1. Volunteers used this imagery, along with other sources, to construct 'landscape biographies' for each of the project's six areas.*
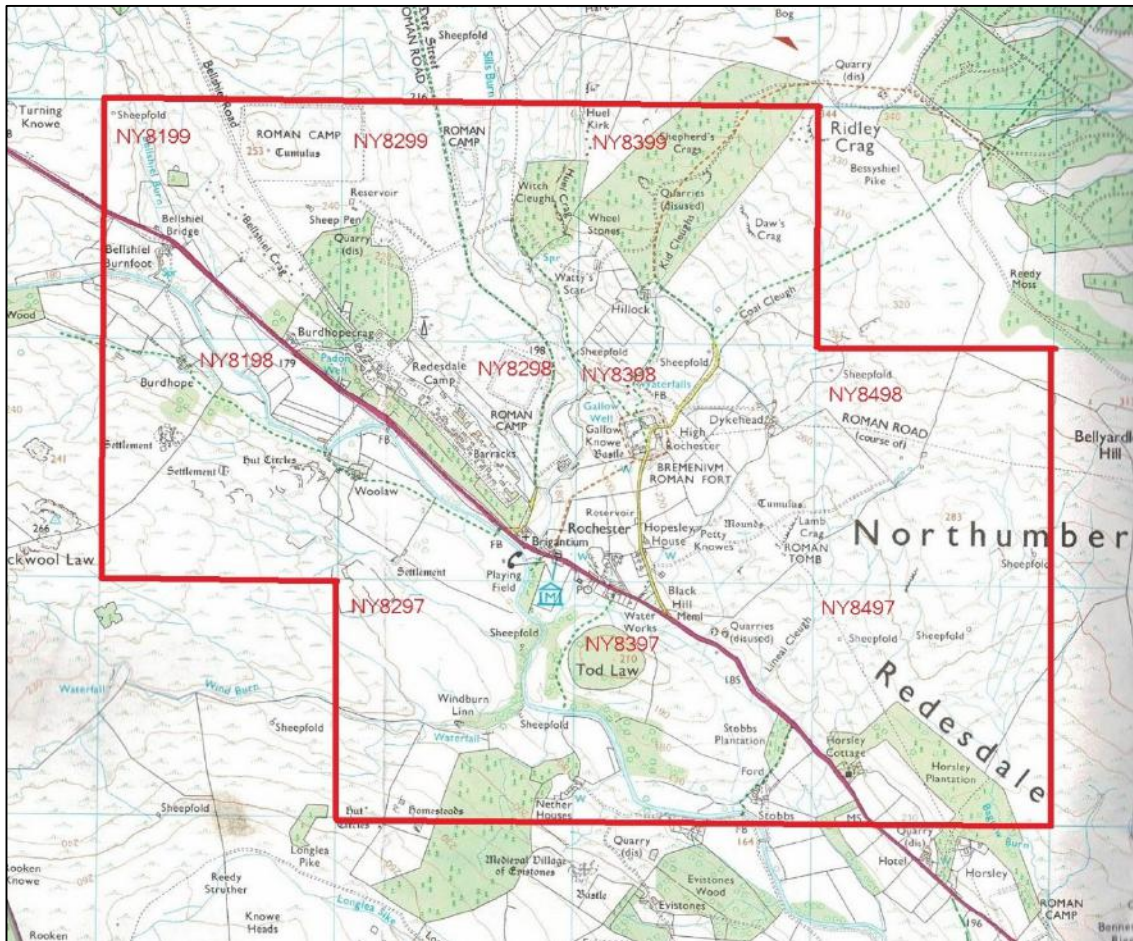
Redesdale Landscapes Through Time - Area 1

And thou, romantic sweet Tod-law,
Shalt grace the Minstrel's humble lay,
"Thou bear'st the bell amang them a',"
When clad in verdant Spring array;

Thy heathy hill, thy waving wood,
Thy clustering nuts and jetty sloes,
The limpid Reed's meand'ring flood,
That round thy flow'ry meadow flows;

From *The Lay of the Reedwater Minstrel* by Robert Roxby (1832)

Introduction

Area 1 covers an area of 10 sq km roughly centred on the Roman fort of High Rochester in the parish of Rochester, Northumberland. It includes land on both N and S sides of the River Rede which runs diagonally through the area in a direction NW to SE.
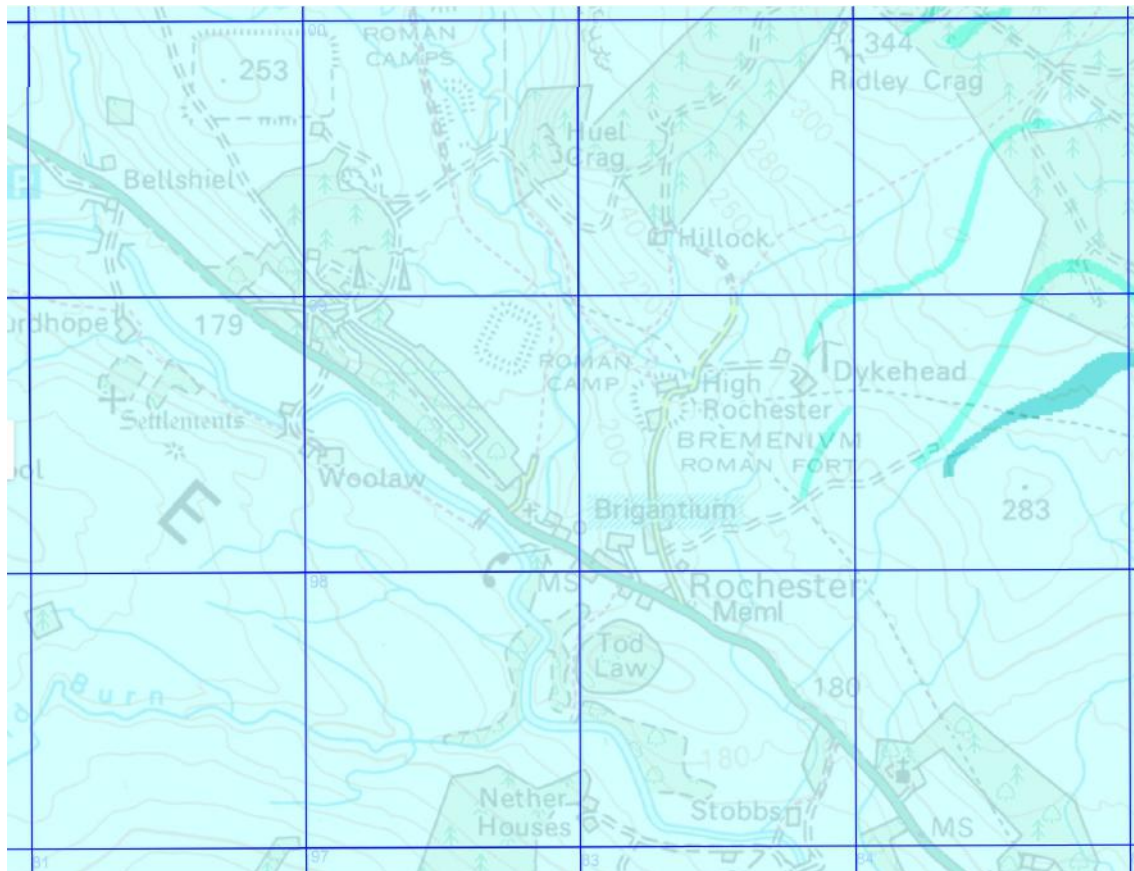

The Rede valley is closely followed by the main road A68 which links Corbridge to Jedburgh via Carter Bar. The river valley is also crossed by the Roman Road of Dere Street which takes a more northerly line via High Rochester, onto the military ranges and over the Anglo-Scottish border near the Roman Camps at Chew Green.

The river valley rises from a height of about 165m near Stobbs in the SE corner of Area 1 to around 180m in the NW corner near Bellshiel. On the N side of the valley the land rises to 344m at Ridley Crag. On the S side it rises to 240m W of Nether Houses and around 250m on the eastern slope of Blackwool Law, W of Woolaw.

The river is now largely constrained by compensation flow from Catcleugh Reservoir further up the valley but is subject to increased flow in wet weather from its unconstrained downstream tributaries, particularly Wind Burn on the S side of the Rede, and Bellshiel and Sills Burns on the N side.

The current farms S of the river – Burdhope, Woolaw and Nether Houses – are all at altitudes of between 180 and 190m. On the N side of the Rede valley, Dykehead is around 250m and Hillock about 240m.

The north side of Area 1 is divided by Sills Burn. It is crossed by Dere Street in the vicinity of High Rochester and takes a northerly direction on the W side of the valley.

OS 1:50,00 map with bedrock geology overlay from BGS (Where's Your Path)

As shown on the above map, the underlying geology is relatively uniform and composed of the Tyne Limestone Formation. This is made up of sedimentary layers of limestone, sandstone, siltstone and mudstone formed approximately 331 to 343 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period when the local environment was dominated by shallow carbonate seas.
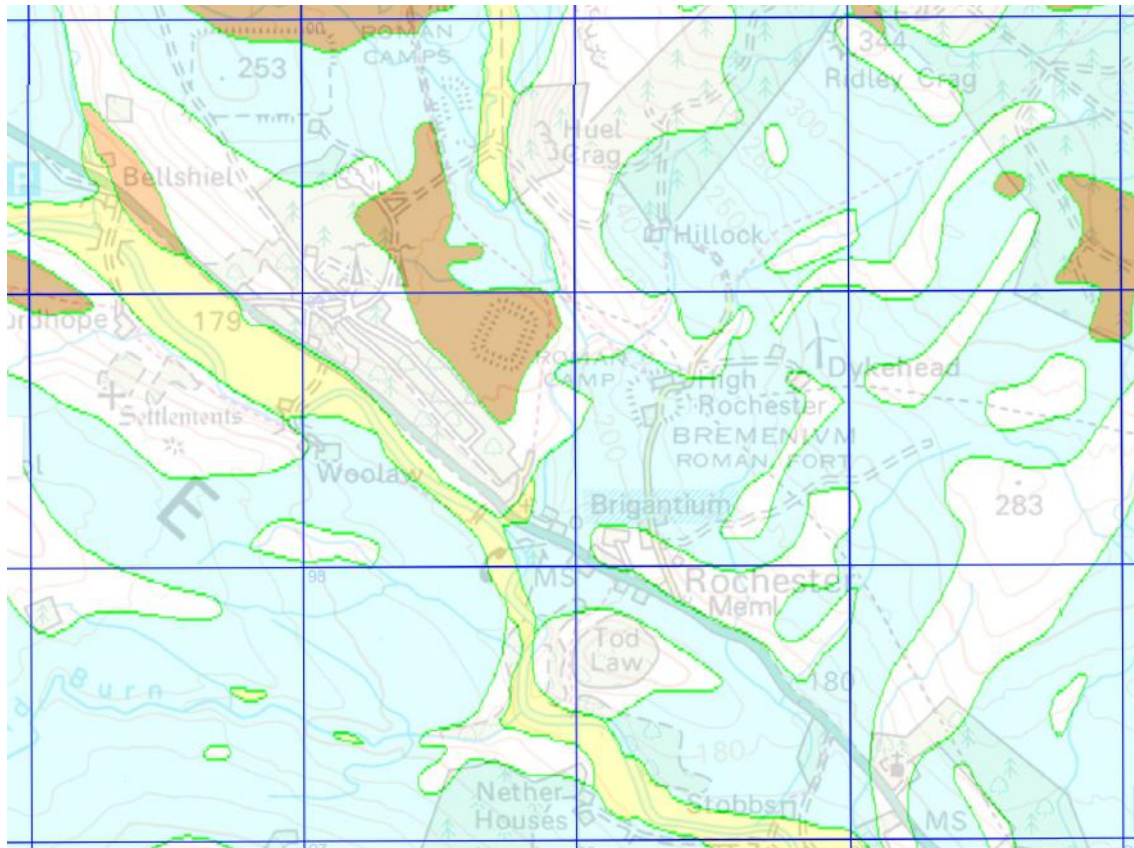
On the east side of Area 1, distinct narrow bands of limestone have been mapped and relate to the same Period. Where distinguishable, these bands are referred to as the Redesdale or Fourlaws

Limestone (light green) or, more generally, just Limestone of the Tyne Limestone Formation (dark green). They are biogenic and detrital in origin, generally comprising carbonate material (coral, shell fragments), forming beds and locally reefs.

Superficial deposits are shown below. Areas dominated by peat are indicated in brown. They were formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period in areas of the local environment previously dominated by organic accumulations, either lacustrine (associated with lakes) or palustrine (marshes, bogs and swamps).

Much of the area is covered by till (light blue). These deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period (Devensian) when the local environment was dominated by glacial and inter-glacial ice age conditions. The till accounts for a wide range of different types of deposits and geomorphologies.

OS 1:50,00 map with superficial deposit overlay from BGS (Where's Your Path)

The valley of the River Rede and, to the north, of the Sills Burn are identified by superficial deposits of alluvium (yellow). These are clay, silt, sand and gravel formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period when the local environment was dominated by rivers, therefore fluvial in origin. The deposits are detrital, ranging from coarse- to fine-grained, and form beds and lenses of deposits reflecting the channels, floodplains and levees of rivers and larger tributaries.

There are a few quarries in Area 1 although these appear small in size and probably provided stone used locally for building or roads. There is also evidence for the quarrying of limestone with lime-kilns in several places including one close to the River Rede below Tod Law. North of the River Rede

coal seams are found quite close to the surface, even outcropping in places. Nearly all the areas were worked from the surface as bell pits and will be discussed in a later section.

Most of the land-use in the area is agricultural and mainly pastoral with the raising of sheep and cattle on improved grassland in the river valley and around the farms, and on rough pasture higher up. The widespread introduction of sheep will have kept native woodland from re-establishing after clearance.

LIDAR and satellite imagery provides evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing, in some places going back to the Iron Age or perhaps earlier, and shows that arable cultivation has been more extensive at least at some times in the past. Arable farming may always have been marginal here, depending on climatic conditions, soil and rainfall. The presence of the Roman army and *vicus* at High Rochester may have created an economic incentive for the provision of grain locally, something that may have fallen into decline with reduced population levels.

Some of the land has been given over to forestry including large areas around Birdhopecrag, west of Nether Houses and an extension of Stewartshiel Plantation north of Hillock.
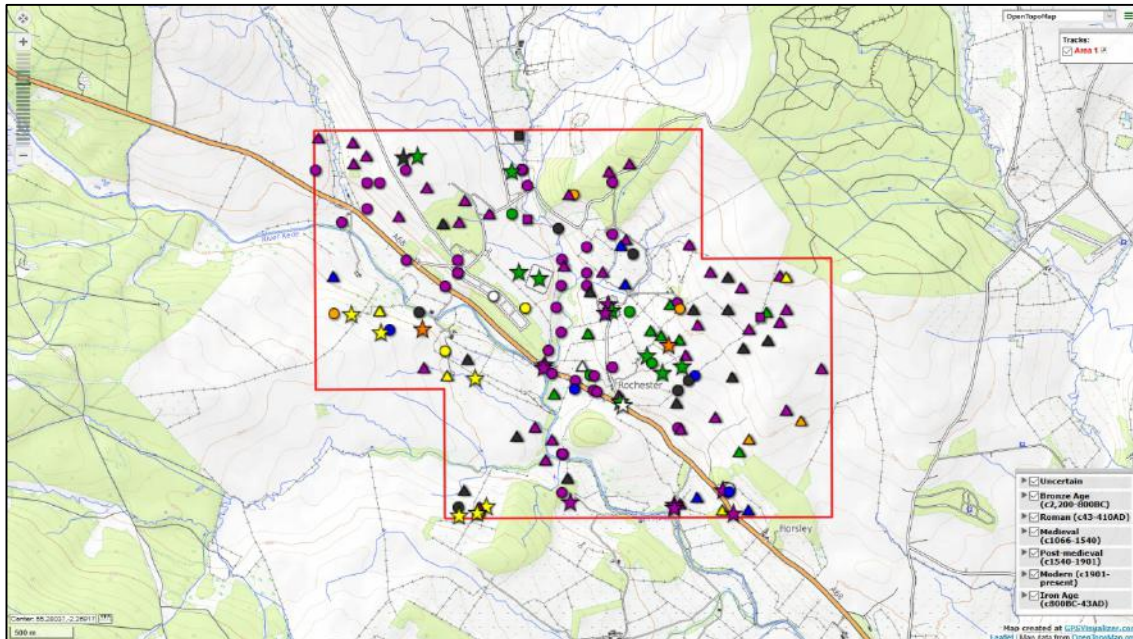
Place names in our area have been described recently in Chapter 1 of Jonathan West's book, *The Place-names of the Old County of Northumberland. Vol 1: The Cheviot Hills and Dales* (2017). Some interesting information is also provided by the Ordnance Survey Name Books, collated by the surveyors c.1860 for inclusion on the first edition 6" maps. Area 1 is included in the volumes of Elsdon Parish and can be seen online at https://namebooks.org.uk

The name of the River Rede has been associated with red and chalybeate or with the name of the local Reiver family but an alternative is the meaning to *run*, describing the river in spate. West informs us that High Rochester may have been named after Rochester in Kent, *'the fort where rooks nested,'* from the River Rede itself or from mist and fog as in Rooken Edge. The earliest name for this northerly outpost is Bremenium which possibly preserves the early name of the River Rede.

The settlement on the main road was developed much later and took the name Rochester, possibly a corruption of *Rede-chester*. Horsley, the other linear settlement along the main road to the south, suggests a clearing and is perhaps derived from the original Horsley Inn, a coaching Inn before the Redesdale Arms. This may have originally stood on the course of Dere Street but the Roman camp just to the south is only a temporary or marching camp and was unlikely to have had a *vicus* as West has suggested.

Archaeological sites in our area of interest will be discussed according to the following periods. They are indicated as distinct colours on the interactive map.

Uncertain	Black
Mesolithic (c10,000-4,000BC)	Brown
Neolithic (c4,000-2,200BC)	Red
Bronze Age (c2,200-800BC)	Orange
Iron Age (c800BC-43AD)	Yellow
Roman (c43-410AD)	Green
Early medieval (c410-1066)	light blue
Medieval (c1066-1540)	Blue
Post-medieval (c1540-1901)	Purple
Modern (c1901-present)	White

Area 1 archaeological sites shown on interactive map

Mesolithic period (c10,000-4,000BC)

No remains of Mesolithic people have been found in Area 1 or to our knowledge within the parishes of Rochester, Otterburn or Elsdon. If this represents the true situation, then the River Rede was apparently not part of the routes regularly used for the passage of hunter-gatherer peoples passing through the landscape as were the Tyne and Tees valleys further south.

It remains more likely however that the absence of Mesolithic activity in the area is a result of our inability to easily find the evidence. Such finds are often made by chance and would include, for example, scatters of worked flint often found on river terraces. The absence of regularly ploughed arable land or recent forestry work make such chance finds less likely but field walking opportunities need to remain under consideration as they may arise from either agricultural or other developments along the River Rede valley.

At Brownchesters Farm, just south of Otterburn (shown on early Ordnance Survey maps with the simple descriptive place-name, Bog) analysis of a series of cores taken from old courses of the River Rede (palaeochannels) was thought to indicate Mesolithic activity, including some supposed very early evidence for cereal pollen. However, Frodsham (Archaeology in Northumberland National Park, 2004) considered the presence of cereals at such an early date as being highly unlikely.
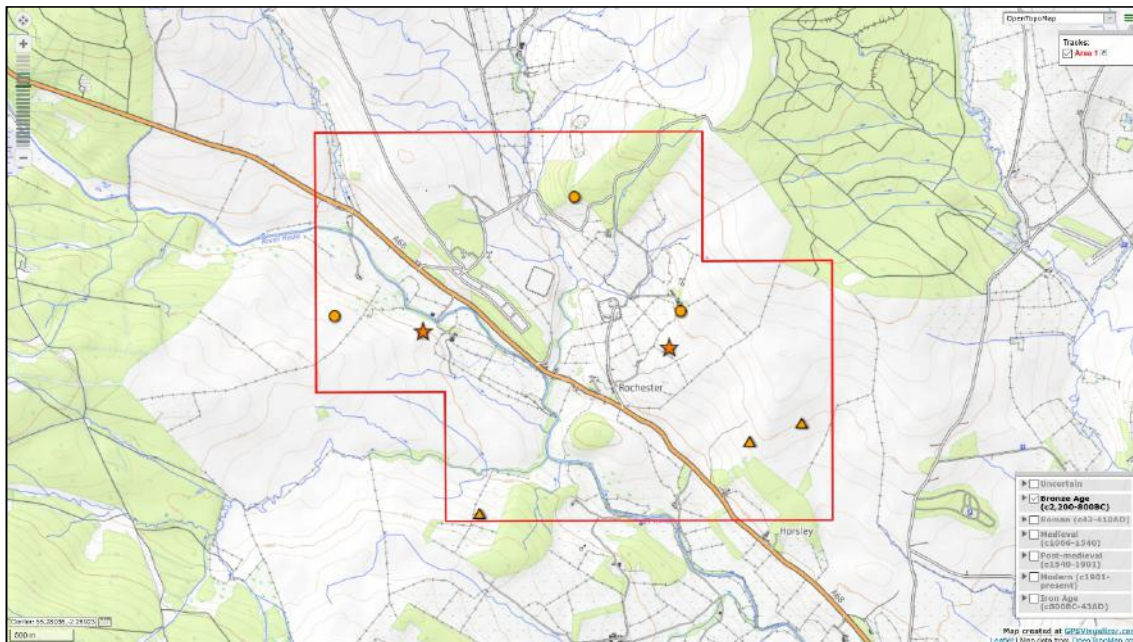
Neolithic period (c4,000-2,200BC)

Neolithic activity in the River Rede valley floor was also documented at Brownchesters Farm, where pollen from one palaeochannel suggested a constant human presence from c4000BC, with sustained levels of cereal cultivation, greater than those visible in upland cores. An increase in grass pollen was also noted at this site from c2300BC and thought to mark the onset of large-scale clearance of woodland in this part of Redesdale. This contention is supported by data from another palaeochannel at Brownchesters, the infill of which seems to have accumulated at a very rapid rate from cl800BC.

No Neolithic remains or finds have been located in Area 1 and the same comments apply as made above. There are, however, limited remains in some of the other five areas in the project. For example, stone axes found near Elishaw Bridge and Troughend would have been used to clear woodland and undergrowth, perhaps so crops could be planted. Just outside Area 1, to the north-west, there are long cairns at Bellshiel Law and another on Dour Hill. These are quite rare monuments nationally and although no clear evidence was found on excavation they were presumably used for Neolithic burials.

Neolithic people also carved symbols on rock and there is an example of cup-marked stones in the parish just south of the Bellshiel Law long cairn, although again just outside Area 1. However these might have been created much later, possibly in the early Bronze Age, as they appear to be associated with likely burial and clearance cairns from that period. The nearest cup and ring marked rock outcrop, perhaps more likely to be of Neolithic age, is at Tod Crag in Elsdon parish.

Bronze Age (c2,200-800BC)

Bronze Age sites shown on interactive map

The earliest settlement remains in Area 1 are of Bronze Age date. The unenclosed hut circle settlement west of Woolaw (Site No: 1.063) is likely to date from this period but could feasibly be Iron Age.

A record shown on K2P (N8142) as 'Hut circle' but given an 'uncertain' period here (1.062) is located on the south bank of the River Rede but is not seen on LIDAR or satellite images. Only a 6 figure grid reference is provided and, if its location was really so close to the river, its survival must be in doubt. [See: Northern Archaeological Survey, 1975. *Archaeology in the North: gazetteer (Durham),* 113.]

The report of an unenclosed round-house near Hillock (1.008), possibly originally identified from aerial photography, should be treated with caution unless it has been visited on the ground due to

its close proximity to what appears to be the remains of a bell-pit. Other bell-pits are now hidden in an area of forest plantation to the north-east.

There are several examples of burial cairns of Bronze Age type including those near Burdhope (1.058), Dyke Head (1.007) and Petty Knowes (1.009). The Elsdon Ordnance Survey Name Book (c.1860) notes that the mound a little south-east of Dyke Head was shown on McLauchlan's Plan of Watling Street as a tumulus but had been opened by members of the antiquarian society and declared to be nothing other than natural.

The first edition OS map records a standing stone (1.129) on the small hill (230m) west of Nether Houses which could have been another Bronze Age monument. Its location is immediately adjacent to a post-medieval bield apparently comprising short dry-stone walls erected in a cross shape for sheltering stock. The OS Name Book entry (c1860) indicates that the name was actually applied to the hill itself and that the surveyors make it clear that "*it is supposed*" that a remarkable stone once stood there and was used in the building of the walls.

The Three King's stone circle, with a supposed Bronze Age burial placed in the centre of its four stones, is located on the same side of the River Rede outside Area 1 to the north-west. With a height of about 250m another monument here wouldn't be inconsistent, but any surviving remains of our standing stone are probably unlikely.

Two possible sites in the south-east of Area 1 were only revealed by the Redesdale LIDAR Landscapes survey and need further investigation on the ground. A possible Bronze Age landscape was revealed by LIDAR north of Horsley Plantation (1.143) and a possible barrow cemetery on higher ground to its east (1.144). The former site at a height around 240m includes curvilinear field boundaries and many circular cairns together with 2 or 3 probable round houses, particularly around NY 84380 97600, with all the hallmarks of a Bronze Age settlement and field system. Previously unrecognised and potentially very important, especially as it appears relatively undisturbed by later development.

Possible Bronze Age banks and round-houses (LIDAR 1m DSM) centred on NY 84340 97590

The possible barrow cemetery consists of a cluster of eight quite large circular mounds clearly visible on LIDAR imagery. Nothing is shown at that location on historic OS maps and there is no indication of any industrial activity so it may be fair to assume that they are probably quite ancient. They could also be Roman given the proximity of Dere St just 500m to the W but, on balance, a Bronze Age date is considered more likely.
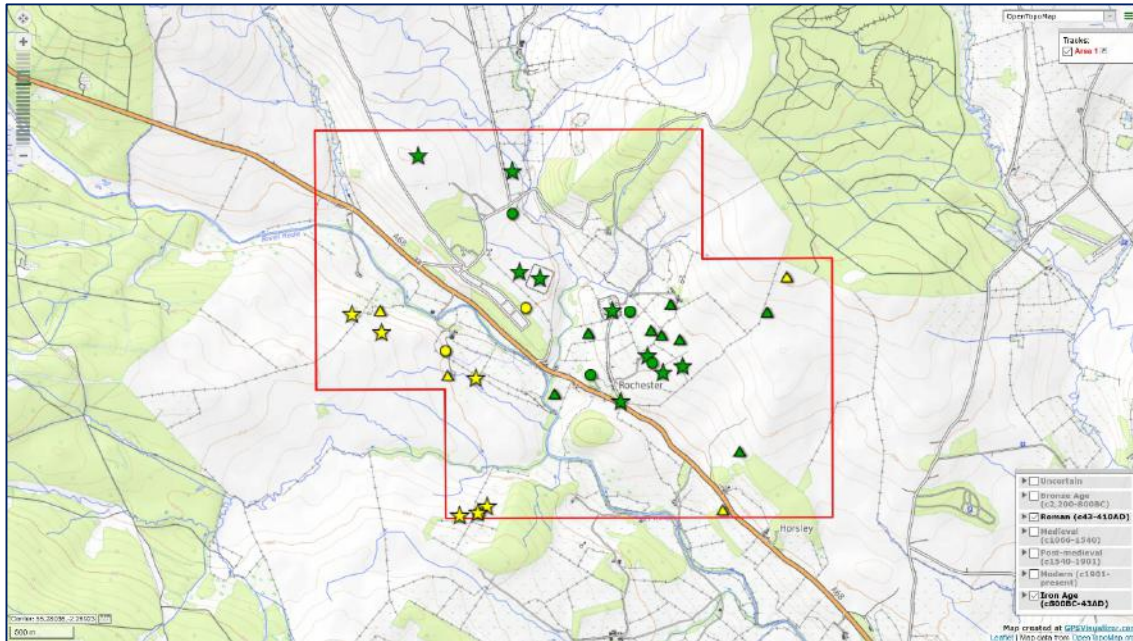
Iron Age (c800BC-43AD)

It has been difficult to adequately differentiate sites considered to be Iron Age from those of the Roman or Romano-British period. For the purpose of this discourse, we have identified native (domestic or agricultural) sites from these periods as Iron Age, and those sites considered as being part of the Roman military as of the Roman period. It is most likely that the time-periods of these two groups will overlap, but often the exact dating evidence is absent.

Mapping of these sites is shown on the interactive map below with Iron Age coloured yellow and Roman as green. When this distinction is made it is clear that sites of a native character are nearly all located south of the River Rede, and all sites identified as Roman to the north. There are two exceptions on the north side. This distinction seems to go against the usual observation that farmsteads would have been better placed on the northern slopes of the river valley, with a south-facing aspect. Perhaps that was the case with native settlements before the Roman arrival, but afterwards the Roman military may have operated some constraint on use of 'their' areas adjacent to the Roman roads and the Roman fort at High Rochester.

It is more than likely that some of these settlements could have been established or certainly co-existed within the period of Roman occupation and can illustrate movement and trade between the local indigenous tribes and the Roman army. A piece of glass bangle found during excavations at Rattenraw in 2020 is one of many such fragments found in IA/Romano-British settlements and also in Roman forts and camps along the Tyne from Arbeia to Corbridge and along the route of Dere Street up through north Northumberland and the Borders, with Traprain Law in East Lothian being a potential site for the recycling and reuse of Roman glass to make decorative jewellery and drinking

vessels (see, among other references, Ingemark, D. 2014. *Glass, alcohol and power in Roman Iron Age Scotland*. Edinburgh).

There is a possible Romano-British settlement in Area 1 shown adjacent to the former Redesdale Military Camp (1.122). This site is recorded on K2P as N27440 and said to be damaged by tree-planting work. The source for this record is stated as field survey associated with an archaeological assessment for Redesdale Experimental Husbandry Farm given in a summary report dated 1984. We have not been able to see any remains on LIDAR or satellite images that could be interpreted as such a settlement in this area although platforms and building remains of the Redesdale Camp have severely disturbed the area.

Iron Age (yellow) & Roman (green) sites shown on interactive map

Secondly there is an extensive patch of cord rig on high ground (290m) to the north east (1.162) observed on satellite imagery during the LIDAR Landscape Survey. This could genuinely be of the Iron Age or Romano-British period being perhaps sufficiently far away from the Roman fort at High Rochester and the Roman roads, although it may be of even earlier date.

On the south side of the River Rede, from NW to SE there are several monuments that potentially date to this period.

The Burdhope settlement (1.056) has prehistoric enclosures and round house platforms clearly visible on LIDAR imagery. At least five round houses, or hut circles, with yard areas in front have been identified. The site was clearly reused or perhaps in remaining use in the medieval or post-medieval periods which will have damaged the earlier remains.

To the east of the settlement, patches of cord rig (1.059) have been identified on aerial photos between areas of later ploughing, again suggesting continuity of agriculture relating to the Burdhope settlement.

Only 250 m SE of the Burdhope Settlement there is another but well preserved enclosed settlement of this period, the Woolaw Iron Age/Romano-British farmstead (1.060) which shows up very clearly

on LIDAR imagery. It has two yards and four circular houses inside a sub-rectangular enclosure of 39 x 35 metres. Part of the farmstead was excavated in 1977, when a paved stone pathway was uncovered leading across the yards towards the houses. The rest of the yard surface was made up of tightly packed cobbles. Small finds included a few sherds of native pottery, a fragment of opaque white glass from a bangle, a single jet bead and parts of the base stone of a rotary quern. By analogy with similar finds elsewhere, these point to a *terminus post quem* of the second century AD for the construction of the final phase of occupation (Charlton, D.B. and Day, J.C., 1978. Archaeologia Aeliana 5th Series 6, 62-72).

The Woolaw enclosed settlement is one of several settlements of the North Tyne-type in Redesdale, although their distribution is sparse compared with those of the North Tyne Valley. A landscape survey of a wider area located seven additional sites in Redesdale, all on the south side of the River Rede, at Woolaw East, Netherhouses East and West, Rattenraw, Blakehope, Meadowhaugh and Woodhill West. All have two sunken forecourts and a dividing wall, with the round stone houses located towards the rear of each site. Three of the sites, Woolaw East, Rattenraw and Blakehope, showed signs of later settlement expansion.

Reconstruction of the Woolaw enclosed farmstead at Brigantium.
cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Walter Baxter - geograph.org.uk/p/292002

Close to the current farm of Woolaw is the 'Woolaw East IA settlement' (1.106). The description on K2P (N8150) is: 'East of Woolaw lie the remains of a group of Iron Age round houses together with a plot of cord rig cultivation. The houses are not enclosed by an enclosure.' It is located with only a 6 figure grid reference and we cannot be certain as to what this relates although the remains might not be particularly visible on LIDAR or satellite imagery. The reference provided is Bowden, M., Mackay, D. and Topping, P. 1989. *From Cornwall to Caithness* (Oxford), 155. It describes an 'unenclosed site with ring-groove houses and contemporary cord rig in small plot cultivation' and was probably identified on aerial photography.

There is a scheduled monument (1009374) further east – 'Romano-British settlement South East of Woolaw' – but this is of the enclosed type (1.091). It is recorded on K2P as N8110. It comprises a rectangular enclosure measuring 32m long by 31m wide defined by a bank, or wall, up to 3m wide and 1m high. The west side of the enclosure only survives as a low bank of earth as most of it has been levelled. Inside, the settlement is divided into two by a wall and the remains of four round houses are set into the north-west side of the enclosure bank.
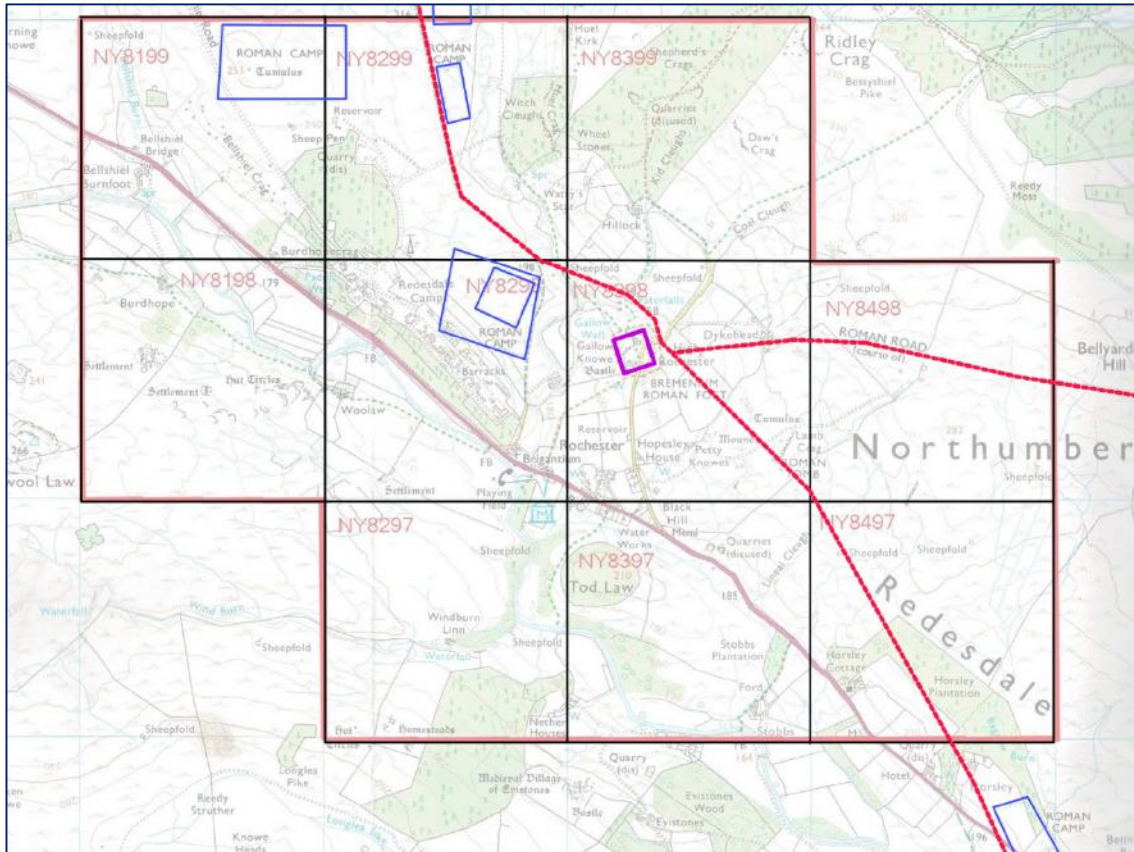
Another site nearby (1.124) was identified from LIDAR imagery (82981) and was suggestive of an IA/RB settlement with roundhouses, though these could be natural and need to be checked on the ground.

In the south of Area 1, west of Nether Houses, there is another scheduled monument of this period (1015529). This monument is an extensive area comprising of two unenclosed stone hut circles (1.087) and is associated with two other settlements and a field system with cord rig ploughing. The hut circles measure 4m and 8m across with a stone wall 1m and 1.6m wide respectively.

One of the settlements is identified as an Iron Age/Romano-British homestead (1.110) and the other is just outside Area 1 although clearly visible on LIDAR given on K2P as N8100. This settlement is rectangular in shape, measuring 30m by 23m. It is surrounded by a rubble bank between 3m and 4m

wide and up to 0.7m high in places. Inside, the settlement is divided by a rubble bank into two sunken yard areas. The southern yard has the remains of at least two stone founded round houses and a third may lie at the north-west corner of the yard.

As has already been stated, most of the native sites are about 400m south of the River Rede at heights of between 190 and 220m. The only exception is the possible settlement east of Stobbs (1.142) about 400m north of the river at a height of 170m. The settlement west of Nether Houses (1.110) is around 600m west of the river but closer to Wind Burn which is to its north. It is possible that other sites may have existed closer to the River Rede but may have been obliterated by later agriculture.

Main Roman sites shown on OS 1:50,000
Red: Roman roads, Purple: High Rochester Roman Fort, Blue: Roman camps

Roman (c43-410AD)

The main Roman monuments in the area are shown on the map above.

The Roman road, Dere Street, can be seen entering the area in the south-east corner shortly after it crosses the River Rede where its route diverges from the main road (A68). Its line crosses the main road near Horsley heading for the Roman fort at High Rochester and is often visible on LIDAR. North of the fort its route is harder to follow but is thought to have crossed the Sills Burn at a ford and continuing north onto the Military Ranges where its line is followed by a modern road.

There are several Roman camps along the route of the Roman road including one just south-east of Area 1 at Horsley (Bagraw Roman Camp) and another on the northern edge of our area south of Sills (just north of 1.168). Our area includes four Roman camps. These are considered to be temporary or marching camps built and used by Roman soldiers travelling along Dere Street.

In the NW of the area the scheduled Bellshiel Camp (1.079) is sub-rectangular in shape with rounded corners and gateways with enhanced defences. It measures a maximum of 490m east-west by 330m north-south. It is surrounded by a substantial earthen rampart 3m wide and up to 0.5m high which has been obscured on the north side by a field bank and levelled at the south-eastern corner by ploughing. There is a 3m wide and 0.4m deep external ditch on all sides except the south where it is believed that the nature of the underlying rock prevented the digging of a ditch. The camp dates from the Roman occupation of Britain in the first century AD and is large enough to have been used periodically on a temporary basis by a full strength legion of soldiers advancing northwards and also by smaller groups engaged in routine maintenance. A round cairn of Bronze Age date is situated inside the camp on the highest part of the ridge.

South of Sills Farm, between Dere Street and Sills Burn, is another scheduled Roman camp (1.085) clearly visible on LIDAR imagery. It is overlain by post-medieval ridge-and-furrow which has damaged the ramparts in places, notably in its southern half. It was discovered by aerial photography in 1934. It measures 75m east to west by 220m north to south and is surrounded by a bank of earth with a ditch around the outside. These earthwork ramparts still stand 1.5m high above the bottom of the ditch.

Also on flat land west of Sills Burn in the centre of our area there are two clearly visible Roman camps. The outer, also known as Birdhope 1 (1.084), is trapezoidal in shape and measures 311m by 372m. The other, Birdhope 2 (1.083), is situated within its bounds, and is better preserved and easily visible on the ground. It is sub-rectangular in shape measuring 205m by 175m and has four gateways, all protected on the outside by a short earthen bank called a traverse. It is clear from the good preservation of camp 2 that it must have been later in date than camp 1. Close examination on the ground has revealed changes in the boundaries of this second camp from an earlier one identified as Bellshiel 3. The whole complex is protected as a scheduled monument.

LIDAR has identified a field with rounded corners on the north bank of the Rede, immediately south of Rochester Bridge which may be another possible Roman marching camp (1.136). Although this could have been a defensive site, it is at a further distance from Dere Street than the other camps and requires further confirmation.

A branch of the Dere Street road heads east from High Rochester, passing just south of Dykehead, over Bellyardley Hill. Its camber is clearly visible as an earthwork on LIDAR imagery of our area. Its route is towards Holystone, crossing the River Coquet near Sharperton. It eventually makes a junction with the Devil's Causeway near Thrunton in the vicinity of Learchild Roman Fort.

Outside the Roman fort at High Rochester archaeologists discovered traces of the civilian settlement (*vicus*) as well as the line of Dere Street Roman road (1.017). In 1995 geophysical techniques were used across the field lying south-east of the fort and followed by excavation and field walking. Rectangular buildings and yards were revealed, showing a pattern of ribbon development along the road.

The LIDAR landscapes survey also detected rectilinear earthworks in the field SW of Bremenium Fort (1.016) which may represent a previously unrecognised area of the *vicus*.

We can't be certain but it is possible that the Romans from Bremenium may have exploited some of the shallow coal reserves in the area, particularly those naturally outcropping in stream valleys in the vicinity of the fort. Iron ore is also found nearby as shown by the slag heaps in Lineal Cleugh (1.037) and these could also have been exploited, although these particular remains are considered to be post-medieval.

Shallow stone quarries in the area may also be Roman in origin, providing stone for building the Roman fort or for lining the Roman roads (e.g. 1.018) but are notoriously difficult to date.

A very interesting scheduled monument in the same area, south-east of the Roman fort, is the Petty Knowes Roman cemetery (1.013, 1.015 and 1.019). Three groups of supposed burial cairns have been recognised covering a large area. Burials are also reported west of the Sills Burn, mixed with bell-pits within the boundary banks of the large and earliest Birdhope 1 Roman camp (1.084).

Stone from the Roman fort has certainly been used in the much later buildings on that site (e.g. the scheduled bastles 1.047 and 1.053). Nether Rochester is a late 18th century cottage south of the fort (1.014) which has the date '1775' carved on a Roman altar built into a wall. Nearby, the porch of Rochester Old School House (1.045), added to the building in 1852, was built almost entirely out of Roman stones including the incorporation of lengths of stone guttering and finials created from ballista balls. There are some broken remains of fluted Roman quern-stones within the porch of Holy Trinity Church at Horsley and also an inscribed Roman altar dedicated to Victory and Peace found near Featherwood, about three miles north of Bremenium.

Early medieval (c410-1066)

No Early Medieval remains are known from this area or indeed from any of the areas in this survey. It is likely that following withdrawal of the Roman Army from this region c.410 the local population may have reduced although probably maintained their presence particularly in the area of High Rochester fort and its *vicus*, if not elsewhere. While some IA/Romano-British sites may be multi-period with habitation continuing into the Early Medieval period, it is likely that any remains of timber buildings have left little evidence visible today or have been destroyed by later settlement and ploughing.
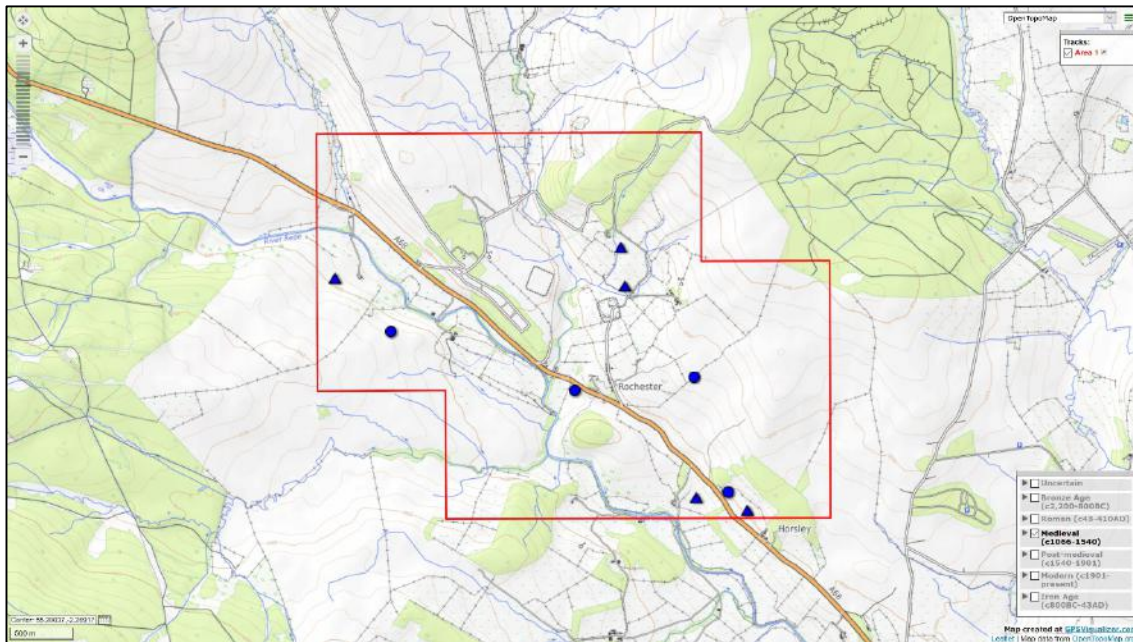
The settlement at Burdhope (1.056) is a possible contender in our area for an Early Medieval settlement overlying the older Iron Age or Romano-British remains. It may indeed provide evidence for continuous occupation from the Iron Age to Medieval periods but it is a scheduled site and necessary excavation to evaluate its history would be complex.

Cores at Brownchesters showed a marked peak of oat and wheat pollen occurred in Redesdale up to c.AD685. This has been interpreted as a move towards much more intensified crop production even following the Roman withdrawal with no indication of any subsequent economic collapse.

An early medieval battle in the fifth or sixth century (said to be one of the 12 major battles of King Authur) is recorded by Nennius (AD 796) at a place called *Breguoin*. Because the Old Welsh name of Bremenium is *Brewyn* It has been suggested that this may equate to High Rochester. The location is however unknown and an alternative site has been proposed in Herefordshire where there is another Roman fort with a similar name, *Bravonium*.

Medieval (c1066-1540)

In medieval times people lived in a substantial village at Evistones and a hamlet at Kellyburn, both just outside the southern boundary of Area 1. There have been speculations of other early settlements such as that at Stobbs (1.151), shown on Keys to the Past with only a 6-figure grid reference perhaps from aerial observation of nearby medieval-type of ridge and furrow (1.141). It is assumed that traces of older buildings have been obscured by modern buildings, including the church. Enclosures observed on LIDAR just east of Stobbs farm (1.028) are hard to date but this could be an alternative location while retaining the place-name.

Medieval (blue) sites shown on interactive map

A similar speculation has been made regarding Rochester (1.026) but it seems to us more likely that any medieval settlement in this area would have been at High Rochester on the site of the Roman fort and later bastles. LIDAR has identified areas of medieval-type, broad ridge and furrow (1.024 and 1.025) to the north of the fort as well as a possible field boundary (1.022) to the east that may support this. Unlike the situation at many other Roman fort sites, High Rochester doesn't appear to have developed as a Medieval settlement of any great significance. The reasons for this are uncertain but perhaps due to later changes in how the Roman roads continued to be used or perhaps, more likely, the difficulty of protecting anything more than a few fortified farmsteads from depredations of the nearby Scots.

The original IA/RB settlement at Burdhope (1.056) was reoccupied in the medieval period as indicated by the foundations of at least seven long rectangular buildings. They mostly range in length from 10m to 15m but one is 44m long and is thought to be the remains of a medieval timber long house. The remainder of the buildings are likely to be barns and other ancillary buildings. A document records the destruction of `*Birdhup*' by the Scots in 1584 which possibly refers to this medieval site.

The earthworks observed on LIDAR about 200m west of Burdhope (1.057) may also fall into this category. Here are the remains of at least three rectilinear buildings, possibly medieval longhouses. LIDAR has also detected a hollow-way (1.064) which may have connected the sites of Burdhope and

Evistones on the west side of the River Rede. It runs around the north side of an earlier settlement at Woolaw (1.060) and it is possible that it may even date back to prehistoric times.

Some smaller settlements are shielings that were used in summer months by shepherds looking after sheep on high pastures. Often the only remaining evidence for this transhumance are place-names, such as Bellshiel and Stewartshiels.

In medieval and early post-medieval times, the border region of England and Scotland was a very unsettled and sometimes dangerous place to live. There were battles and skirmishes taking place on both sides and an obvious need for some defences. Probably the only medieval example in Rochester parish is at Troughend where there was a tower referred to in 1415. A sword was found at Silloans in 1986 shows that personal weapons were also called for.

Post-medieval (c1540-1901)

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, as feuds between border families arose, some people built specially defended farmhouses called bastles. At Evistones at least three bastles were built amongst the remains of the medieval village.

At High Rochester two bastles were built within the ruins of the Roman fort (1.047 & 1.053). The northernmost, now part of Rose Cottage, appears to have been rebuilt, though the boulder plinth along the base of the north wall may have formed part of the original structure. The southern bastle, now part of The Bastle, has been altered to form a private dwelling, and is Grade II Listed. Both buildings are thought to date from the 16th or 17th century.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when more peaceful times returned to the region, people began to convert the old bastles into less defensive homes, such as Stobbs (1.052) and the Redesdale Arms Hotel, and build new farms such as Yatesfield (these two just outside our area). The name *Stobbs* is probably a plural of *stob* (tree stump) a common name for cleared land.
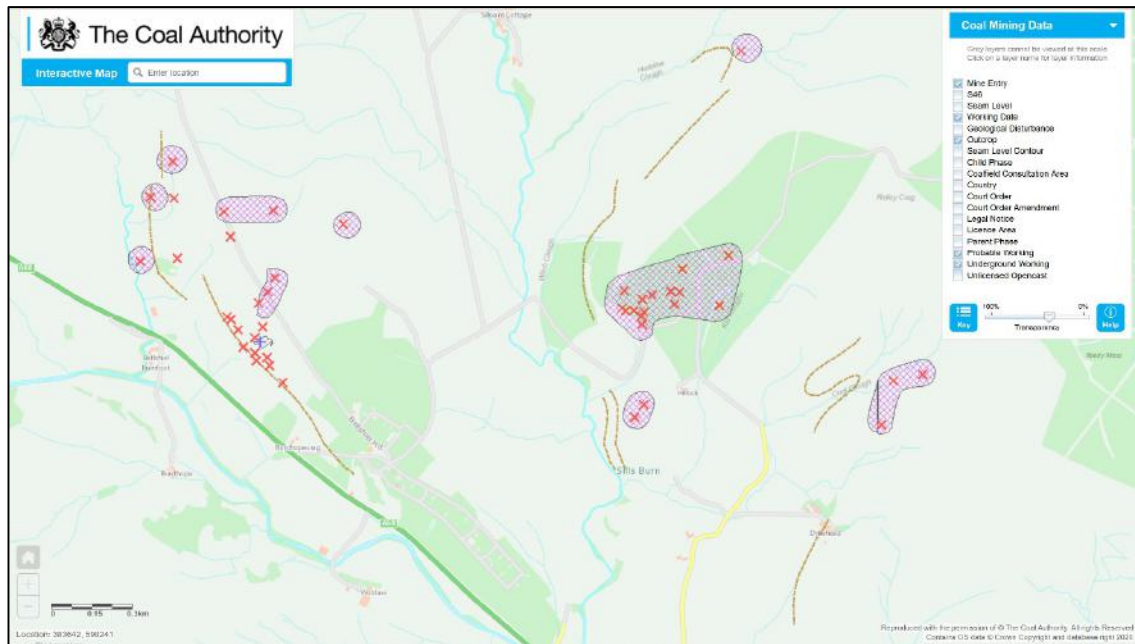
Although farming has always been the staple activity of the parish there is evidence of other industries. There were watermills at Byrness and Kellyburn (outside our area) and two known in Area 1 at Birdhope (1.112 & 1.099) and Todlaw (1.117).

A water mill for grinding corn at Birdhope was first referred to in 1705. The two sites shown on the interactive map derive from two entries on Keys to the Past (N8156 and N8121) but there is better evidence for the more northerly location (1.112). The more southerly location (1.099), although closer to present day settlement, doesn't fit the description and appears unlikely from the steepness of the stream valley.

According to *The Geology of the Country Around Otterburn and Elsdon (explanation of Quarter-sheet 108 S.E.)* (New Series Sheet 8) by Hugh Miller & Charles Thomas Clough (1887) in reference to a bore-hole at the Old Mill close to the Sills Burn on the Birdhope Craig Estate: "*The old mill has now disappeared. It stood beside the stream a little below the ancient ford above High Rochester, near a sheepfold which has probably been built from its materials.*" It is recorded that parts of the mill race can still be seen although these remains are unclear on LIDAR. The other mill at Todlaw (or Stobbs), close to the River Rede, was first recorded in 1748 and last recorded in 1779.

Ironstone workings are known at Featherwood and Harelaw Cleugh, just north of Area 1, and within our area at Netherhouses (1.123), Sills Burn (1.094) and Linnels Cleugh (1.037) although the slag-heaps reported at the latter location are not readily seen on LIDAR.

There is considerable evidence for coal mining in area 1, particularly north of the River Rede, as summarised on the Coal Authority map below.

Coal Authority interactive map showing area north of the River Rede:
outcrops (brown), worked areas (purple hatch), mine entry (red)

Over most of this area coal seams were exploited by shallow workings from the surface and large numbers of bell-pits and spoil heaps can be seen in some areas. Hillock Colliery (1.036, 1.039) operated from the late 18th to early 19th centuries. Many of its workings higher up are now hidden under the trees of Stewartshiels Plantation but partly revealed by DTM LIDAR. Bell-pits are readily visible south of Coal Cleugh (1.027, 1.029), Birdhope Crag (1.096), within the area of Bellshiel Roman Camp (1.078), at Sills Burn (1.098) and further west in the north-west corner of Area 1 (1.069, 1.070). Perhaps the most exploited was Bellshiel Colliery (1.074) where there are the remains of a pit cottage, eleven bell pits and six waste heaps.

Underground workings are only indicated on the Coal Authority Map Viewer in one place, probably the same as our site no. 1.075 at Bellshiel where the working date recorded is 1935.

Stone quarries of post-medieval date are known from several sites. In the east of our area there are earthworks of old quarries (1.160, 1.161) visible on LIDAR. The latter probably exploits one of the linear bands of limestone in that area (shown on the geology map) and associated with lime-kilns nearby. In the same area, an old quarry (1.156) is shown on the OS 2nd edition map of 1897 and limekilns indicated on the 1st edition. The earthworks are clearly visible on LIDAR imagery, partly water-filled and shown as ponds on modern maps. A large disused quarry east of Bellshiel Crag (1.127) is shown on 1950s OS map, but not earlier, and falls into the Modern Period, perhaps used to provide material for local roads on the Military Range.

There is evidence for lime kilns at Netherhouses (1.105), east of Dykehead (1.167) and Bateinghope Burn Quarry.

Turnpikes replaced difficult earlier tracks along both sides of the River Rede and the ancient routeways provided by the Roman roads in the late 18th century. These would have been responsible for some of the ribbon development seen along the route at Horsley, for the settlement at Rochester and possibly for a reduction in the importance of the settlement at High Rochester, north of the new road. A coaching inn was established at Horsley, just south of Area 1.

The road was carried over the Sills Burn by a new bridge at Rochester (1.119). Milestones and mileposts were established as part of the conditions of turnpike (1.147, 1.038, 1.114, 1.077), and some of these have been listed later as monuments of importance.

A parliamentary report on the state of the roads in 1840 described a 20 mile stretch of turnpike through the valley controlled by two check gates with the current condition of the road as very good. This road became the modern A68.

As the country as a whole became more industrialised, new approaches to Christianity developed in many of the industrial cities and in time these ideas spread into the countryside. Known as nonconformists, this new breed of worshippers built plain and simple chapels such as the former Presbyterian Chapel at Birdhopecraig (1.108). This chapel or meeting-house had a stone with the date 1682 carved on it, dating from the period when the Presbyterians, or Covenanters, were persecuted by Kings Charles I, Charles II and James II. It was a long and narrow building measuring 6.8m by 18.6m long and was converted to a coach house and stables for nearby Burdhopecraig Hall (1.104) in 1826.

In the far north of our area near Huel Crag is the place-name Huel Kirk. This may refer to its possible use as an outdoor Presbyterian meeting place before the first church was built near Birdhopecraig Hall in 1682. *Huel* may be a compound of *heugh* meaning a precipitous hill or even be derived from *holy*. There is a Babswood Kirk outside our area.

With the coming of the main road through the valley, a school was established in 1850 on the corner of the lane leading from the main road to High Rochester, along with a house and garden for the teacher. It was endowed provisionally with £10 per annum by Lord Redesdale. The porch was built in 1852 using Roman stones from the fort and is a Grade II Listed Building. The school became a permanent replacement for the more informal education of the preceding period and would have had a large area of catchment including the children from many remote shepherds' cottages. In 1923, there were 39 children at the school. It was closed in 1963 when teachers and pupils moved to Otterburn and the building is now a private house.

Burdhopecrag Hall is first recorded in 1584 and appears in several documents in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was rebuilt around 1850 as a shooting box for the Earl of Redesdale, and served a huge 26,000 acre estate which reached northward to the Scottish border. In 1911, the hall and nearly 3,000 acres were sold to the War Office to form an army training area, part of the Redesdale Camp. The hall and its outbuildings were used by the army as an administrative site from about the 1930s but the hall was destroyed by fire in August 1957 and the site was finally cleared in 1964. A lodge for the hall (1.102), built between 1850 and 1860, stands by the main road south of the site.

The former chapel was replaced in 1860 by Birdhopecraig United Reformed Church (1.109), just west of Rochester. It was originally Scottish Presbyterian and is inscribed with the words BIRDHOPE CRAIG SCOTCH CHURCH 1826 over the door. Inside, there is a gallery around three sides supported on columns, and a central pulpit. It is now let as holiday accommodation but is a Listed Building and retains its inside features.

Nearer Horsley, the Church of the Holy Trinity (1.148) was built in 1844 by John and Benjamin Green in Romanesque style. It was originally built as a chapel of ease to the St Cuthbert's Church in Elsdon. It is a Grade II Listed Building. It was funded by John Thomas Freeman-Mitford, Earl of Redesdale, who later commissioned the vicarage, now Horsley House (1.150), situated behind the church. It was built in 1884 in Gothic style to the designs of William Hodgson along with an adjoining Carriage House (1.149), both Grade II Listed.

A farm was established at Stobbs (1.052) in the 17th century and altered and extended in 1724. It is Grade II Listed as is Nether Houses to its west (1.115), a house and cottage dated to the early C19th. In the west of Area 1 a building at Bellshiel Burnfoot (1.068) was indicated in 1680s and extant until the 1970s. North-east of Bellshiel Bridge buildings are named on early maps at Low Bellshiel (1.072) and High Bellshiel (1.071) but now reduced to rubble, perhaps cleared from the artillery range. North of High Rochester there is a farm at Hillock (1.034), first shown in the Elsdon Parish Registers of 1675-1811. It is marked on a late 18th century map and listed in the census returns of 1851 and 1871. To its south there is a building called Bush (1.050) shown on the 1st edition OS map. The Elsdon Ordnance Survey Name Book (c.1860) describes it as a '*small cottage in a bad state of repair … built for the accommodation of laboring men working on the adjacent farms*'. To the east is Dyke Head (1.032), built in the early to mid-19th century though the farm buildings are much altered.

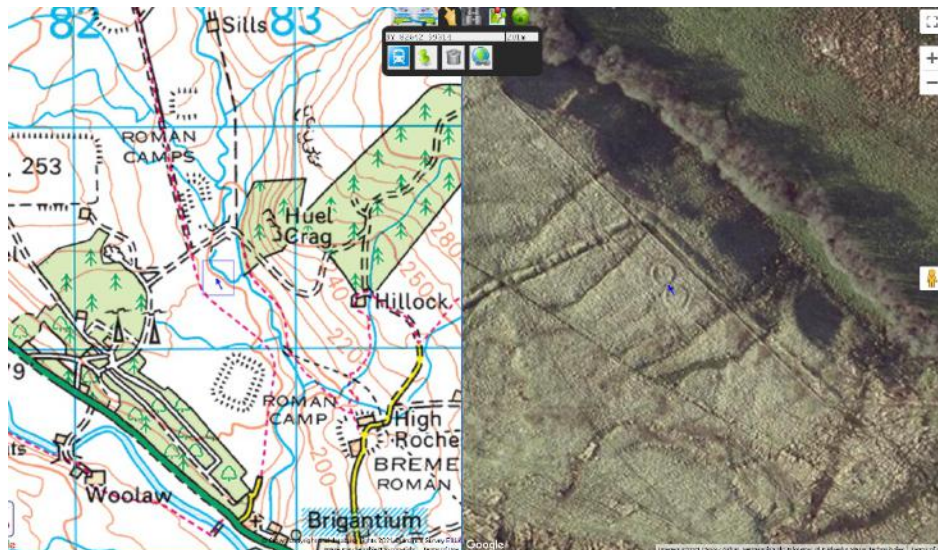**Northumberland XLII 6" OS (1866)**

Farms have also been established south of the River Rede at Burdhope and Woolaw, and at Silloans and Sills along the Sills Burn to the north. It is possible that some of these farms could have taken their names from older nearby settlements. Woolaw for example could be derived from '*Wolf Hill*' and lies close to the River Rede below Blackwool Law. Wolves were extinct in England by the 15th century and one of the last may have been killed in this area, at Wolf Crag, one mile south of Ottercops.

Pastoral farming is indicated by a cruciform bield west of Nether Houses (1.130) and a modern stock shelter near Hillock (1.042). There are several sheepfolds of the common circular pattern as expected in an upland landscape (1.145, 1.146, 1.164, 1.165, 1.049, 1.137, 1.067, 1.081).

Enclosure of large areas of common land by Acts of Parliament made an enormous change in the character of the landscape and how the land was owned and used. The Enclosure Award for Elsdon Common was in 1731 but the process continued during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Long straight stone walls and hedge-banks built by cheap local labour divided up the land into large parcels replacing the older, winding sod-cast banks, both clearly visible on LIDAR. Most of the enclosed fields in our area were for pasture. Field improvement and drainage gradually removed the need for ridge and furrow in arable land and continued the obliteration of older archaeological features.

Stack stands are a more enigmatic monument, little understood or dated. The Keys to the Past glossary defines them as "*a sub-circular or sub-square raised platform on which winter fodder was stored to dry.*" They are reasonably common in the Northumberland uplands and upland fringe and usually dated to the post-medieval although with little evidence. One was recorded on the HER (8125) just west of the Sills Burn (1.100) and we have provided a more precise grid reference (NY 82645 99575). Another pair (1.170) were found on satellite imagery during this study, situated close together inside old field boundary banks, just to the south of the other, at NY 82643 99314. They are not well resolved on LIDAR, presumably because of the low height of the earthworks, but very clear on satellite imagery.

No others have been found in our area and there must be some reason for the cluster here.

Stack stands just west of the Sills Burn (shown on OS and Google satellite)

Modern (c1901-present)

A large part of our area north of the A68 is taken over by Redesdale Artillery Practice Camp (1.116). The Redesdale firing range opened in 1912 to provide live firing practice for both Regular and Territorial Force artillery units based in the north of England and Scotland.

Local legend has it that it was Sir Winston Churchill himself who first suggested using the moorland for military training. Local historian, David Walmsley said *"he was staying with Lord Redesdale on a shooting holiday at Birdhopecraig Hall but they mustn't have had a good day as he reportedly said that the moorland would be better used for shooting much bigger guns!"* https://www.hexham-courant.co.uk/features/16622544.the-aldershot-of-the-north/

Before World War II, facilities here were very basic with personnel housed in tents and few purpose-built structures built until after 1932. Redesdale diminished in importance when Otterburn Camp was completed in World War II, but the camp was revived in the 1960s. Most of the original buildings were demolished and large numbers of new buildings were erected however most of these have been cleared again in recent years.

Rochester War Memorial (1.055) was erected in a prominent location at the junction with the road to High Rochester in about 1920 and is built in Arts and Crafts style. It is a Grade II Listed Building protected by law. Names inscribed on the memorial include 36 who died and a further 17 who served but survived.

Plainly visible on LIDAR are several of the modern archaeological reconstructions within Lord Redesdale's *'Brigantium'* archaeological park, close to the café in Rochester. Although now closed, it should be noted on the HER to avoid any possible future confusion with genuine antiquities. *'Brigantium'* was a new name, coined by the owner on account of the British tribe, the Brigantes.

Future Work

Recommendations:

- Field visits to specific sites to determine if the HER records could be tidied up, to remove or merge apparent duplicate entries and, in some cases, to provide more accurate grid references. The region around Woolaw appears particularly confused.

- Carry out a detailed landscape survey in the south-east part of the area, north of Horsley Plantation, to record and investigate the supposed Bronze Age landscape (1.143) and possibly related nearby barrow cemetery (1.144).

- Carry out a modern topographic survey of the Burdhope settlement (1.056).

- Survey the route of the hollow-way between Burdhope and Evistones via Woolaw to establish the movement of people between these settlements and possibly carry out bio-arch and enviro-dating. Dating may show if there are earlier settlements with continuity of use from Iron Age or earlier in the search for some evidence of Early Medieval habitation in the area. Though Evistones lies outside of Area 1, these three sites warrant further investigation to potentially fill in missing gaps in Redesdale's history.

Report produced by the Area 1 team: Hilary Bronski, Lorraine Clay, Andy Curtis & Elaine Vallack May 2021. Later alterations and additions by Andy Curtis August 2021.