

EXCAVATIONS AT 6 STRACHAN STREET, BANTASKINE, 2022.

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Introduction

The house at 6 Strachan Street (NS 8697 7990) lies on the line of the Rampart of the Antonine Wall and consequently in 2008 became part of the World Heritage Site associated with the Roman frontier. In 2022 the owners contemplated placing a single storey extension on the south side of the dwelling and so the author was called in to undertake an archaeological excavation to provide information on

the stratigraphy in this area in compliance with the Special Panning Guidance for the WHS. The proposed extension is located just to the south of the linear barrier, in an area often occupied by ancillary structures such as enclosures and expansions. The excavation was undertaken on 23 April 2022.



**Illus: Location
plan (Barry
Sturrock).**

There is a slight slope down to the north from the house to the street, but the garden to the south is relatively level, which suggesting some terracing.

Excavation

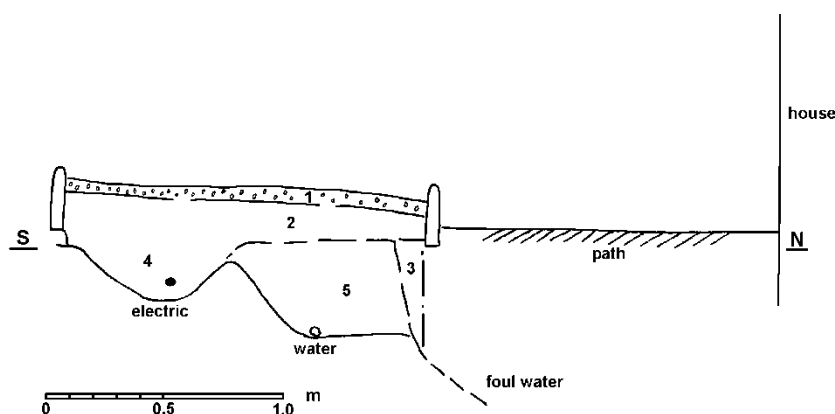
A N/S 1.0m wide trench was dug by hand between two flagged paths in the area of the proposed new-build with the intention of extending it at either end. However, the results of the excavation meant that these extensions were not required.

The area was covered with stone chippings resting on a tarpaulin (layer 1 – see section). Below this was an orange-brown clay loam (layer 2) which had been compacted on the top. It contained sherds of 19th century pottery and a fragment of a tobacco pipe bowl of that date. At the south end of the trench this material, mixed with brick and some gravel, extended down into a W/E channel 0.6m wide at the top and 0.24m deep (layer 4). Towards the bottom was an armoured electricity cable.

0.7m to the north of the electricity cable trench the south edge of another W/E trench was observed (layer 3). The fill was dark grey and brown clay loam with flecks of coal. As this was evidently modern and extended under the path, it was not excavated. From its location this trench would have been dug to hold the foul water pipe for the row of houses.

Illus: Section across the excavation trench.

- 1 – stone chippings;**
- 2 – orange-brown clay loam;**
- 3 – dark grey & brown clay loam with coal flecks;**
- 4 – brown clay loam with bricks;**
- 5 – bright orange loamy clay with grey patches.**



Between these two service trenches was a layer of bright orange loamy clay containing patches of silty grey clay – typical of the turfwork of the Rampart of the Antonine Wall. Small fragments of white china were noted in its upper fill and so this material was sectioned in order to determine if it



was redeposited in recent times. The material (layer 5) was clean with no ash or topsoil incorporated within it. However, tiny sherds of transfer pattern china continued throughout its depth of 0.4m. At the bottom was a copper water pipe.

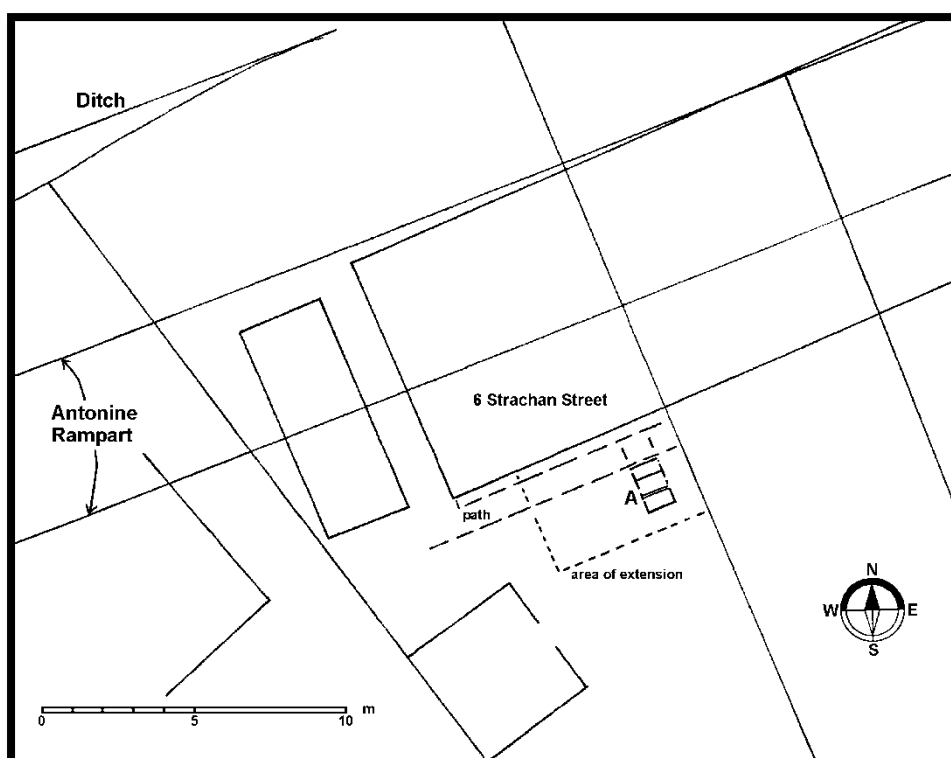
Illus: excavation trench looking west.

All of the service trenches had been cut into the brown-orange loamy clay natural.

Discussion

The 3m strip of land to the south of 6 Strachan Street is fully occupied by three service trenches running parallel to the house. These all cut into the natural deposits leaving no possibility of any Roman stratigraphy surviving. To the south of them the brown clay loam (layer 2), which presumably represents the plough soil from when this was a field, lay directly upon the natural. There was no garden soil in the area of the excavation trench as this had been replaced by flagstones and chippings.

Layer 5 appears to represent redeposited Roman turfwork and as such must have been derived from the construction of 6 Strachan Street. The Rampart lay under the north side of the house and material from the foundation trenches there was probably used to level up the garden to the south. This is in agreement with the observed sequence which suggests that the water pipe and layer 5 were deposited before the electricity or the foul water trenches were dug. It also explains the flat base of the water pipe trench as it was evidently a terrace created for the construction work.



Illus: Plan showing the location of the archaeological trench in relation to other features. The line of the Rampart is taken from Ordnance Survey maps.