



## FINAL REPORT

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## GENERAL LAMBERT'S HOUSE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

prepared for

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Architecture + Heritage

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***Summary***

*This document presents the results of archaeological monitoring carried out on the 28th of May 2019 during geotechnical and structural investigations at 31 and 33 Narrowgate, Alnwick Northumberland, NE66 1JG, a Grade II\* listed building known as General Lambert's House. It has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd for Michael Atkinson Architecture + Heritage.*

*An earlier phase of archaeological evaluation within the garden to the rear of the property identified a moderate to high potential for the survival of medieval and post-medieval remains. Of particular interest was whether there was any evidence relating to the former medieval town wall, the course of which was believed to run through the property, although there were no extant remains surviving.*

*The works comprised the hand excavation of two launch pits in advance of borehole drilling, and the excavation of five trial pits abutting the rear wall of the house. The monitoring requirement was discussed in advance with the Northumberland County Council Assistant County Archaeologist.*

*Although excavation was limited, the five trial pits did provide an opportunity to investigate the construction of building, which has been dated to the late 17th to early 18th century. Variations in the nature of the foundations clearly showed different phases of build. In the two trial pits located against the oldest part of the house, the foundations were found to be flush with the rear wall, while those associated with an early extension projected slightly forward from the façade. Those against the south wall of a later extension were quite shallow, comprising only a single course of stonework sitting on the natural sand deposits. No evidence of the medieval wall was found or any archaeological deposits or features pre-dating the house. However, the overall percentage of the site that was sampled was very small.*

*The structural investigations have confirmed underpinning will be required to secure the long-term stability of the structure. A detailed methodology is being prepared by the architects and will need to be evaluated in terms of potential archaeological impact, but given the*

*archaeological sensitivity of the area, together with the heritage significance of the building, archaeological monitoring during any groundworks is likely to be required.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring (a watching brief) carried out on the 28th of May 2019 during geotechnical investigations at 31 and 33 Narrowgate, Alnwick Northumberland, NE66 1JG (NGR: NU 1849 1349; Fig. 1), which is a Grade II\* listed building known as General Lambert's House. It has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) for Michael Atkinson Architecture + Heritage.
- 1.2 The archaeological works comprised the hand excavation of two launch pits in advance of borehole drilling, and the excavation of five trial pits abutting the rear wall of the building. The monitoring requirement was discussed in advance with the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist who agreed that a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) would not be required in this instance.
- 1.3 This report has been prepared in accordance with the standards and guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014a; 2014b; 2019) and Historic England (2015; 2016).

## **2.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

### **Location**

- 2.1 General Lambert's House is located in the historic market town of Alnwick. The property is a Grade II\* listed building (National Heritage List for England No.: 1041425) dating to the late 17th to early 18th century, with early 19th-century modification (NCAS 2018). It is located on the west side of the medieval street of Narrowgate, just north of the junction with Pottergate, and is in close proximity to Alnwick Castle. To the west (rear) of the property is an extensive area of backland, including the remains of a separate coach-house and stables range.

### **Geology and soils**

- 2.2 The solid geology of the area comprises of Scremerston Coal Group and Carboniferous Limestone Group sediment of the Lower Carboniferous Period (BGS 2019). These are overlain by boulder clay, which in turn is overlain by glacial sand (SSEW 1983). Geotechnical boreholes, excavated in 2002 in advance of development at nearby Pottergate, established between 4.7m and 6.8m of sands overlying 6.5m to 9.0m of boulder clay (ASUD 2008, 4)

### **Topography and land-use**

- 2.3 The site comprises an enclosed, overgrown garden plot to the rear of the listed property. The ground sloped gradually downwards in an easterly direction from an approximately height of 54m above Ordnance Datum.

### **Designations**

- 2.4 General Lambert's House, 31 And 33, Narrowgate, Alnwick, Northumberland, Alnwick is a Grade II\* listed Building (NMLE: No: 1041425), designated in August 1977.

## **3.0 SUMMARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Pre medieval**

- 3.1 There is no evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity either on the site or within its immediate environs. Material has been found in the wider vicinity of Alnwick, including numerous settlement and funerary sites, as well as the Roman road that runs 9km west of the town (ASUD 2001).
- 3.2 The name 'Alnwick is Old English in origin, meaning a trading centre or fortified residence (wic) on the River Aln. The early medieval settlement is believed to have been established c.AD600, at the meeting point of routes leading to Eglington, Edlington and Lesbury. Narrowgate and Bondgate are believed to follow the line of the historic route north, while Clayport Street and Market Street follow that to the south.

### **Medieval**

- 3.3 Following the Norman Conquest, the administration of the region was restructured, although the border remained continually contested. The Great North Road was established as the principal route through the region and Alnwick developed as a stopping place along the section of the route between Newcastle and Berwick. This road followed the course of Narrowgate, before crossing the Bow Burn and heading north along The Peth.
- 3.4 In the late 11th century, Yvo de Vescy built the first Alnwick castle. This was acquired by Henry de Percy in 1309 and extensively rebuilt.
- 3.5 In 1433, a licence was granted to fortify the town, but this took nearly 50 years to complete due to difficulties in funding. Towers are believed to have been constructed on the wall at Bondgate, Clayport, Pottergate and Narrowgate, although only Bondgate

survives in its original form today. The course of the wall is believed to have run along the west side of Narrowgate, passing through the site. There are no extant remains visible within the area, but archaeological material may survive below the ground surface. Medieval pottery, possibly dating to the 12th–13th century, was found during evaluation trenching in the garden of the house by ASUD (2008), although detailed specialist pottery analysis was not completed at the time (NCAS 2018).

#### **Post-medieval and modern**

3.6 An early 17th-century town plan (Norton 1624) shows no house in existence on the Narrowgate land plot at this date. By the mid-18th century, maps show a single pile building on the property (Armstrong's 1769 town plan). In 1827, Wood produced a detailed map of Alnwick, on which the owner of the property is recorded as John Lambert Esq. The property boundaries shown on this map reflect those of the modern site, although there is an additional division running parallel with Pottergate (ASUD 2001; 2008).

#### **4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 Monitoring was requested by the Northumberland County Council (NCC) Assistant County Archaeologist during the excavation of two geotechnical boreholes and five trial pits within the garden of the Grade II\* listed property (Fig. 2). This work was required to inform the design of immediate remedial works to structural underpin the rear wall of the property.

4.2 An earlier phase of archaeological evaluation within backland plot to the rear of the property identified a moderate to high potential for the survival of medieval and post-medieval remains across the area (ASUD 2008). Of particular interest was whether any evidence existed that related to the former medieval town wall.

4.3 The main aims of the archaeological monitoring were:

- to identify the presence or absence of archaeological remains during the sampling;
- to determine whether there was any potential for the preservation in situ of any of the remains, and
- to record any structural information appertaining to the foundations of the listed structure.



4.4 The objectives were:

- to establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of any archaeological remains within the boreholes or trial pits;
- to provide a detailed record of any such archaeological remains;
- to recover and assess any associated structural or artefactual evidence;
- to undertake a programme of investigation in accordance with national and regional standards (Historic England 2015; ClfA 2014a; 2014b; Petts and Gerrard 2006); and
- to prepare an illustrated report on the results of the archaeological investigations to be deposited with the Northumberland Historic Environment Record (HER).

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The engineering investigations had the potential to disturb unrecorded archaeological remains and it was therefore considered that a watching brief was an appropriate archaeological response to limit any potential loss of heritage significance.

5.2 The archaeological works comprised the hand excavation of two launch pits in advance of borehole drilling, and the excavation of five trial pits abutting the rear wall of the building. The monitoring requirement was discussed in advance with the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist who agreed that a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) would not be required in this instance.

5.3 All excavation was conducted by hand under archaeological supervision. No archaeological features other than the wall foundations were encountered. As these were to be preserved in situ they were photographed and recorded but no other action taken. One section was drawn (Fig. 3) to illustrate the nature of the associated deposits.

5.4 A digital photographic record of all contexts was maintained. A clearly visible, graduated metric scale was used where applicable. A register of all photographs has been prepared and this, together with the digital photographs, will be submitted to the Northumberland HER.

5.5 The project has been logged on OASIS and the OASIS number is cited at the beginning of this report. A pdf copy of which will be uploaded to OASIS once approved by the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist.

## 6.0 RESULTS

### Boreholes

- 6.1 Launch pits for the two boreholes were excavated by hand and then drilled; archaeological monitoring was maintained throughout this process. No structural evidence was identified within the hand-excavated segments or the borehole cores. A summary of the deposits recorded in each borehole is presented in Table 1

*Table 1: borehole summary*

Borehole	Context	Dimensions	Depth of Deposit	Deposit description
1	21	0.35m x 0.35m	0.14m	Silty clay topsoil
1	22	0.35m x 0.35m	0.36m	Made-ground deposit of silt including red brick and stone fragments
1	23	0.35m x 0.35m	0.50m	Fine silty clay including rare inclusions of stone
2	21	0.30m x 0.30m	0.16m	Silty clay topsoil
2	22	0.30m x 0.30m	0.14m	Thin deposit of silt containing lenses of discoloured grey ash
2	23	0.30m x 0.30m	0.60m	Fine silty clay including rare inclusions of stone

### Trial pits

- 6.2 Five trial pits were excavated by hand along the rear wall of building (Fig. 3). One was situated next to the vestibule leading to the staircase (TP 1), two directly abutted the rear wall of the main building (TP 2 and 3), one was at the junction of the building and adjacent property (TP 4), and the fifth was along the south wall of a later extension at the northern end of the building (TP 5). For the purpose of the engineering investigations the pits were only excavated down to the base of the wall foundations rather than to the natural soil deposits.

#### *Trial Pit 1*

- 6.3 TP 1 was located below a ground floor window in the vestibule leading to the north staircase (Plate 1). It was aligned east–west, measured 1.10m by 0.50m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.13m. The depth of the natural soil deposits was not reached within the trench. The building foundations were exposed at the eastern end, which comprised six courses of roughly dressed sandstone (05). Each course consisted of roughly shaped rectangular blocks that projected slightly forward from the course above (Plate 1). There was no indication of a cut associated with a foundation trench. A dark brown sandy deposit (02) butted up against the foundations and was overlain by a compact light brown clay deposit with stony inclusions (04). Above this was set a

roughly squared sandstone flagstone (01), which formed part of the yard surface extending to the rear of the building.



*Plate 1: Trial Pit 1, showing wall foundation 5.*

***Trial Pit 2***

6.4 TP 2 was located towards the north-east corner of the main building. It measured 0.50m by 0.50m and was excavated to a depth of 1.15m. As with TP 1, the natural deposits



were not reached. The wall foundations in this location comprised four courses of rough dressed sandstone (07). No foundation cut was visible. A thick deposit of compact light brown clay with frequent stone inclusions (09) butted up against the rear wall. This material was found in all the other trial pits. It was sealed by an accumulation of fine grey silty clay (08), which filled a rectangular void left by the extraction of a sandstone flag associated with the yard surface.



*Plate 2: Trial Pit 4, showing wall foundation 14 overlying discoloured natural sand 12.*

***Trial Pit 3***

- 6.5 TP 3 was located against the rear wall (06) of the building, approximately 2m south of TP 2, and was slightly repositioned to avoid a known basement area. It measured 0.8m by 0.50m and was excavated to a depth of 0.8m; the natural deposits were not reached. The earliest deposit observed was a deep deposit consisting of a compact light brown clay with common inclusions of sandstone (09). Cut into this material, and aligned parallel to the rear wall 06, was narrow modern trench 24. The primary fill of this was modern concrete (10), which was in turn overlain by redeposited building material 25. This was sealed by a rectangular dressed sandstone flagstone belonging to yard surface 01, which divided the property from the overgrown garden.

***Trial Pit 4***

- 6.6 TP 4 was located at the junction of the building and neighbouring property, directly beneath a ground floor window. It measured 1.10m by 0.50m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9m. The rear wall (13), was constructed of evenly set, rectangular ashlar blocks with vertical and oblique tooling. Associated with this were three courses of rough dressed sandstone foundations (14), beneath which was a level deposit (12) of mid brownish sand, identified as natural. No foundation cut was observed. Abutting the wall up to the first course of blockwork (13), was a deep layer of compact light brown clay and commonly occurring sandstone fragments (11). Covering this material and abutting the outer face of the buildings rear wall was a yard surface comprising of roughly rectangular sandstone flagstones (1).

***Trial Pit 5***

- 6.7 TP 5 was aligned north–south and placed against the south wall of a later extension, located at the northern end of the main building. It measured 1.15m by 0.5m and was excavated to a depth of 0.7m below present ground levels. The earliest deposit observed was a brownish fine sand (16), which was similar to to deposit 12 in TP 4 and was probably the natural. This material was observed to slope north to south at the base of the pit. At the southern end, it was overlain by a firm compacted mid brownish clay and stony deposit (15), while at the northern end it was overlain by a single course of clay bonded, roughly rectangular, sandstone block foundations (20). These were the foundation for a stone block-built, part mortar rendered rear wall (19) that was associated with the building extension. Abutting the wall, and set on mixed construction material (18), was a glazed ceramic open drain (17). Both, deposits and a thin strip of

natural sand **16** were sealed by the sandstone flagged yard surface (**1**), which extended across the area and was found in TP 1, 2, 3 and 4.

## **7.0 THE FINDS**

7.1 No artefacts were recovered during the works, which was unsurprising given the limited nature of the ground disturbance.

## **8.0 DISCUSSION**

8.1 The excavation of the five trial pits along the rear wall of the building provided an opportunity to further investigate the construction of the historic property. Although excavation was limited, variation in the nature of the foundations did clearly show the different phases of build. In the two trenches position against the main house (TP 2 and 3) the foundations were flush with the rear wall of the building, while those in TP 1, which was associated with the first phase of extension, projected slightly forward from the building façade. In TP 4, at the junction of the extension and adjacent property, the foundations were again vertical to the wall. Finally, in TP 5, located against the south wall of a later extension, the foundations were quite shallow, comprising only a single course of stonework sitting on the natural sand deposits.

8.2 The investigations have confirmed underpinning of the building will be required to secure the long-term stability of the structure. A detailed methodology is being prepared by the architects but will probably entail the removal of the flagged yard surface to the rear of the property, excavation beneath the wall foundations, and potentially a degree of ground reduction. Given the archaeological sensitivity of the area, together with the heritage significance of the building, archaeological monitoring during any groundworks is likely to be requested by the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist.

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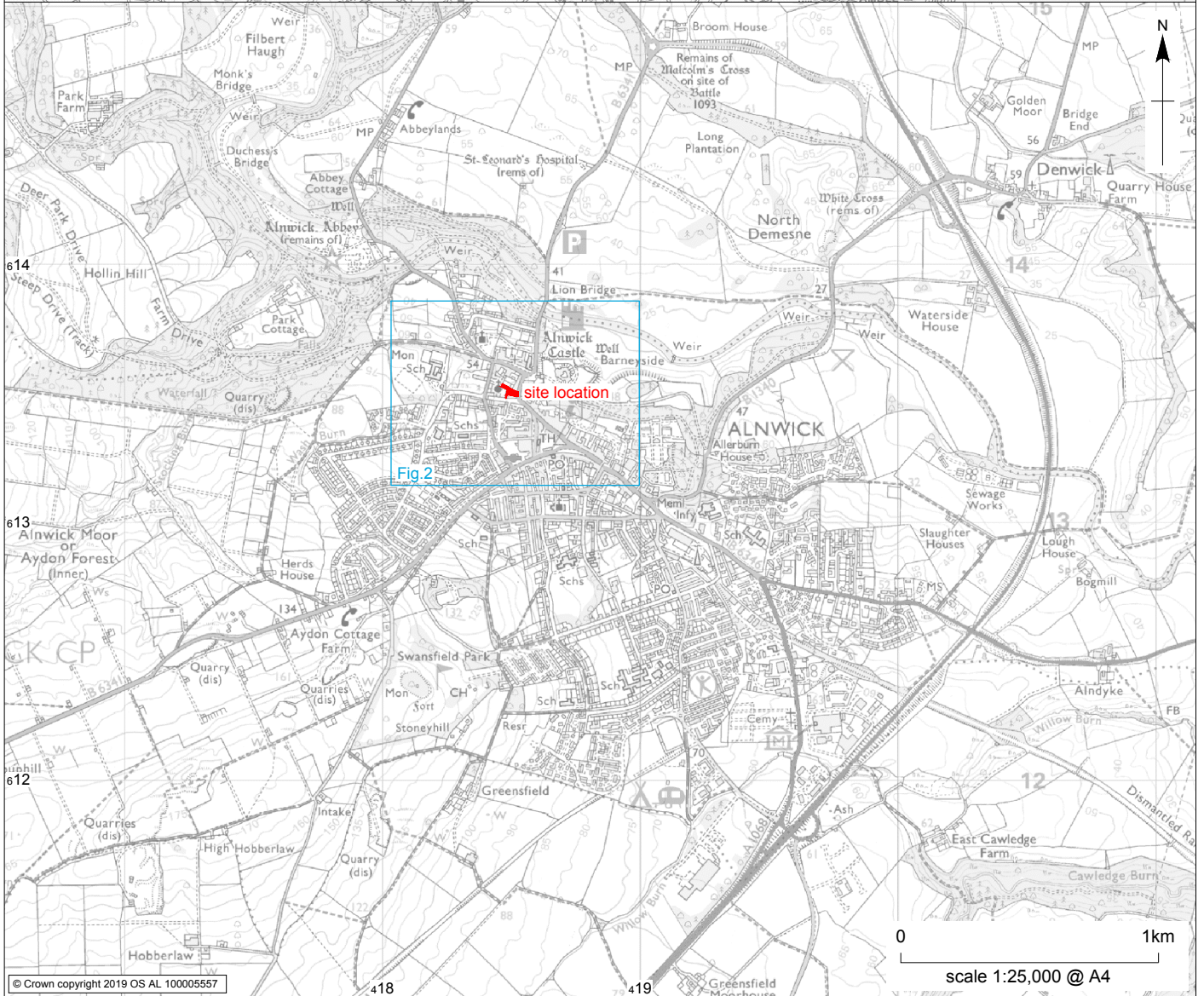
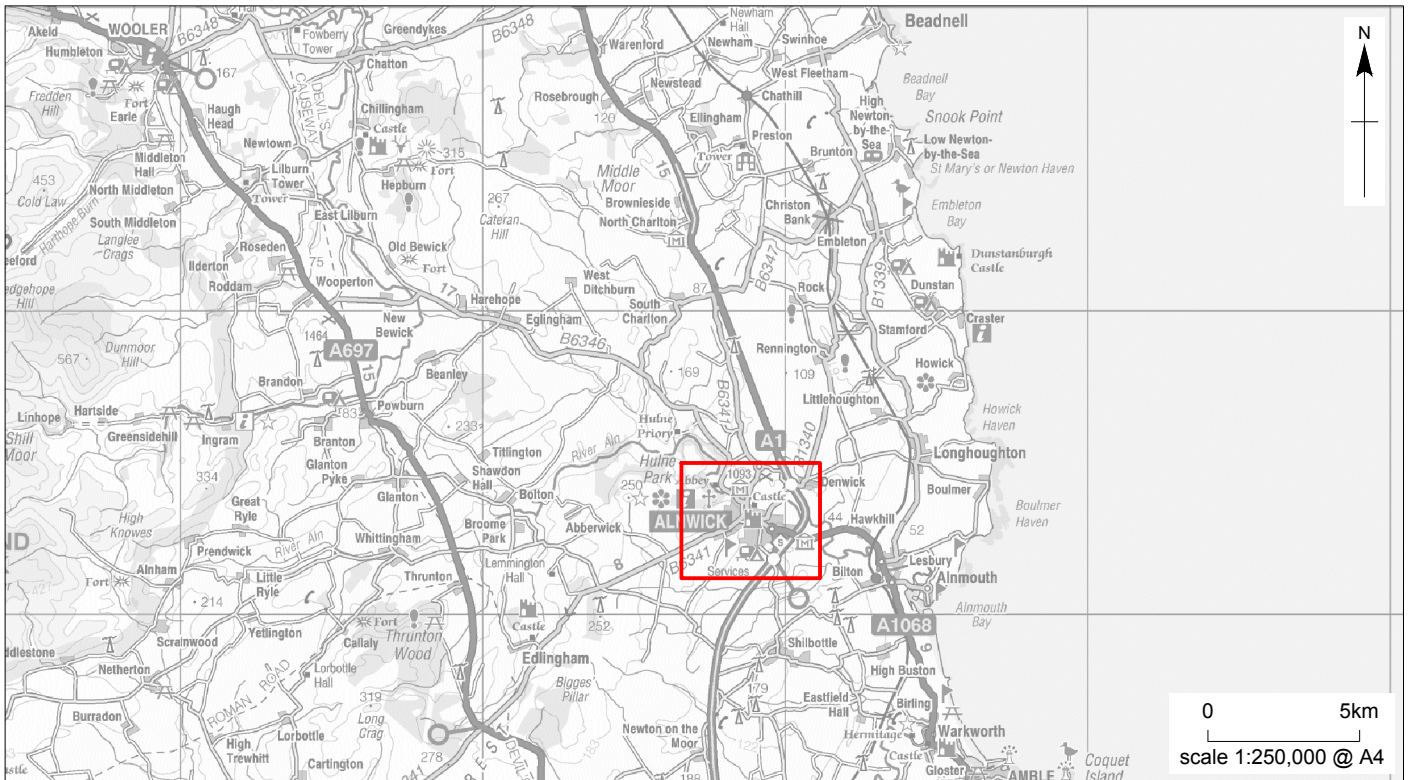
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**APPENDIX A**  
**CONTEXT CATALOGUE**

*Table 2: trial pits summary.*

Trial Pit	Context No.	Dimensions	Depth of Deposit	Deposit description
1	01	1.5m x 0.4m	0.13m	Sandstone flagged surface
1	02	1.1m x 0.4m	0.27m	Light brown fine silty clay, with common inclusions of crushed sandstone
1	03			Section of stonework belonging to rear of building
1	04	1m x 0.4m	1m x 0.4m	Fine mixed dark brown sand including sub-angular sandstone fragments
1	05	0.4 x 0.4m	1.02m	Six courses of sandstone stepped wall foundation
2	06	0.0m x 0.0m	0.0m	Section of stonework belonging to rear of building
2	07	0.5m x 0.1m	0.7m	Four courses of sandstone block foundation
2	08	0.5 x 0.5m	0.45m	Topsoil filling void after removal of flagstone
2	09	0.5 x 0.5m	0.7m	Fine mixed dark brown sand including sub-angular sandstone fragments
3	01	0.8m x 0.5m	0.13m	Sandstone flagged surface
3	06	0.0m x 0.0m	0.0m	Section of stonework belonging to rear of building
3	09	0.5m x 0.3m	0.67m	Fine mixed dark brown sand including sub-angular sandstone fragments
3	010	0.5m x 0.5m	0.2m	Concrete deposit abutting wall foundations
3	24	0.5m x 0.55m	0.47m	Modern trench cut
3	25	0.5m x 0.55m	0.27m	Back fill material within cut 24, overlying concrete 10
4	01	1.1m x 0.45m	0.2m	Sandstone flagged surface
4	11	0.6m x 0.45m	0.5m	Deposit of mixed silty clay
4	12	0.6m x 0.45m	0.2m	Course brown sand natural
4	13	0.0m x 0.0m	0.0m	Section of stonework belonging to rear of building
4	14		0.7m	Four courses of sandstone block foundation
5	01	0.8m x 0.5m	0.1m	Sandstone flagged surface
5	15	0.7m x 0.5m	0.3	Mixed clay and fine silt
5	16	1.15 x 0.5m	0.6	Course brown sand natural
5	17	0.7m x 0.3m	0.1m	Glazed ceramic open drain
5	18	0.5m x 0.4m	0.15m	Mixed dark grey silt and fine stone fragments
5	19	-	-	Rear wall of extension
5	20	0.5m x 0.05m	0.15m	Single course of rough sandstone wall foundations



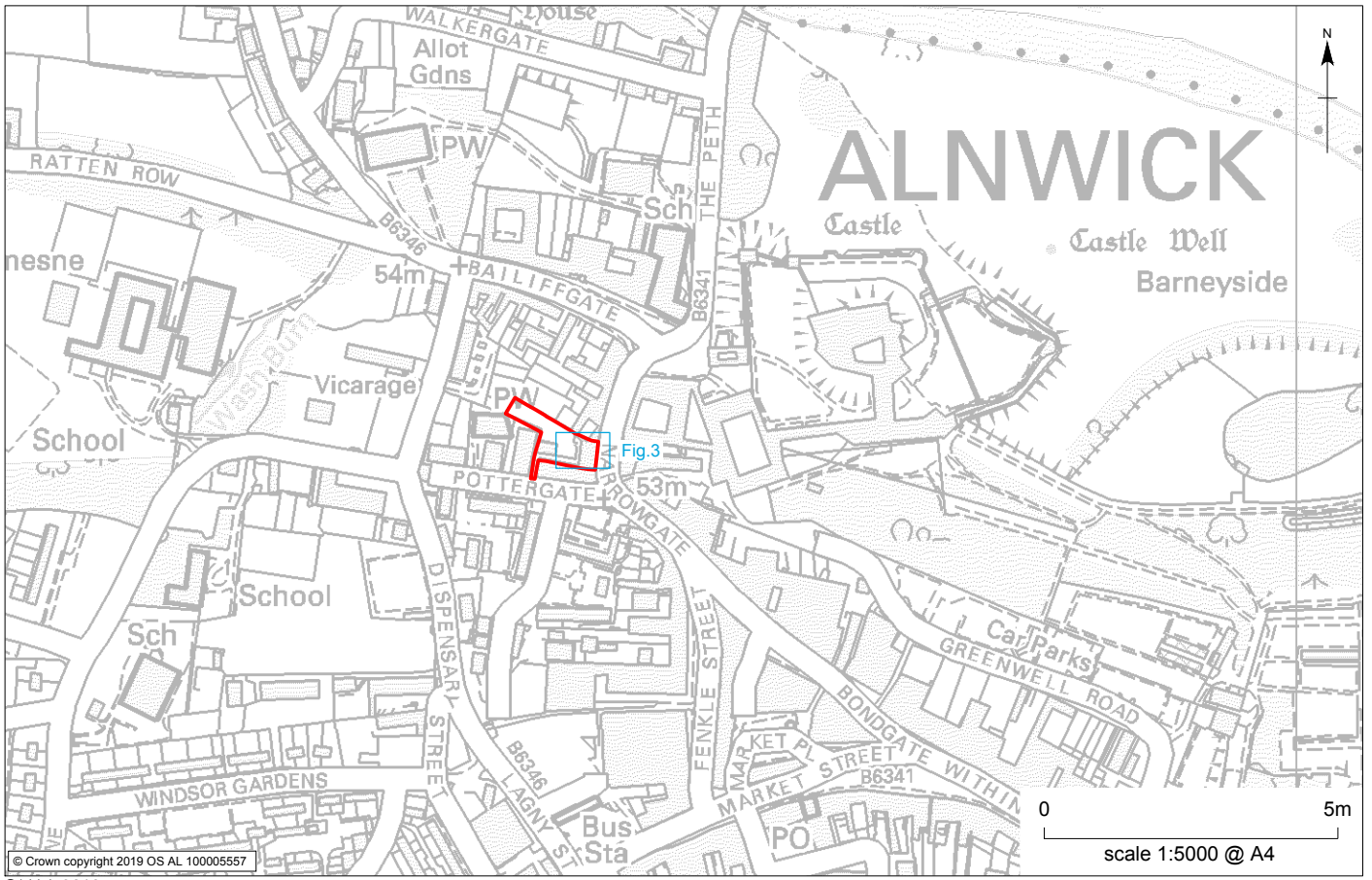


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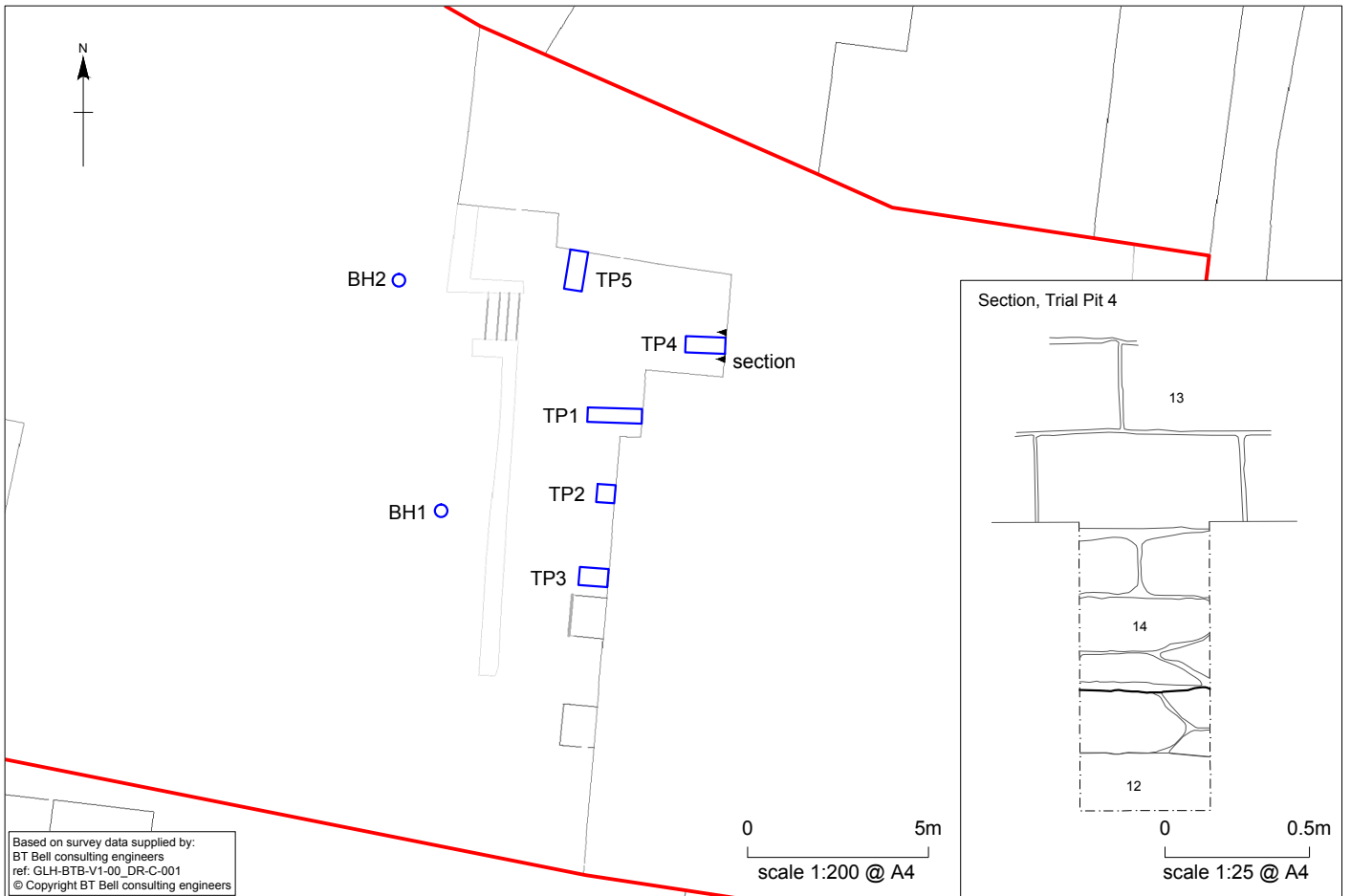
General Lambert's House, Alnwick: site location

Figure 1



General Lambert's House, Alnwick: detailed site location

Figure 2



General Lambert's House, Alnwick: location of Trial Pits and Bore Holes

Figure 3