



MONITORING DURING
EMERGENCY STABILISATION
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 report presents the results of two days of archaeological monitoring (watching brief) carried out on the 30th and 31st of October 2019 during a scheme of emergency stabilisation and strengthening works at General Lambert's House, numbers 31 and 33 Narrowgate, Alnwick Northumberland, NE66 1JG (NGR: NU 1849 1349). It has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) for Michael Atkinson Architecture + Heritage on behalf of Stablewood Leisure Ltd.

General Lambert's House is a Grade II listed building, also known as Narrowgate House. The stabilisation works comprised the construction of cantilevered raft foundations against the rear wall of the property, supported on 25 machine driven piles. Given the moderate to high potential for the survival of medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the property, the Northumberland County Council Assistant County Archaeologist requested archaeological monitoring be conducted during the excavation of the three foundation raft trenches (Trenches 1, 2, and 3) located against the rear wall of the property, and any related ground reduction associated with the stabilisation works. The aim of this work is to 'preserve by record' any archaeological remains lost as a result of the emergency stabilisation works. No monitoring was required during subsequent pile driving.*

The main feature of interest was a section of wall (204) in Trench 2. This ran north-east across three-quarters of the excavated area and was on a clearly different alignment to the main house and existing garden wall. A free standing structure in this location does not appear on any of historic maps. It is suggested that the wall could relate to a street fronted property built on an earlier street alignment, when 'Narrowgate' was wider at its southern end, possibly opening out to accommodate a market place. Evidence for this can possibly be seen in Wilkin's map of 1774, which shows the properties at the south-west end of 'Narrow Gate' were stepped forward slightly from those on the north-west side, at the junction with Bailiff Gate. However, there was nothing to suggest that structure 204 formed part of the medieval town wall. Two fragment of 12th to 14th century pottery were found within Trench 2, indicating a degree of activity in the area during the medieval period.

The development sequence of the main house has already been well-documented. Trenches 2

and 3 were excavated along the base of the western extension which was built in two phases, the first pre-dating 1774, and the second pre-dating 1827. The foundations of this building, where were roughly squared blocks, sitting almost flush with the rear wall of the building. In contrast, the foundations of the small vestibule adjoining the north wall of the western extension were stepped out and were visible in both Trenches 1 and 2. This was the final structure to be added to the rear of the building, built between 1827 and 1860.

The only other feature of interest recorded during the monitoring was a culvert (303) in Trench 3, which extended under western extension. The feature had been blocked, but its form was discernible, comprising a low arched top with vertical sides. A roof tile was found pressed into the base of the culvert. The rest of the trench has been badly disturbed by the installation of modern services.

No further work is recommended in relation to the emergency stabilisation of the rear wall of the property. However, given the potential significance of wall 204, archaeological monitoring is recommended during any future works in this area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of two days of archaeological monitoring (watching brief) carried out on the 30th and 31st of October 2019 during a scheme of emergency stabilisation and strengthening works at General Lambert's House, numbers 31 and 33 Narrowgate, Alnwick Northumberland, NE66 1JG (NGR: NU 1849 1349; Fig. 1). The property is a Grade II* listed building, also known as Narrowgate House.
- 1.2 The stabilisation works comprised the construction of cantilevered raft foundations against the rear wall of the property, supported on 25 machine driven piles. The archaeological monitoring requirement was detailed in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) agreed in advance with the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist (NAA 2019a). Monitoring was conducted during the excavation of three foundation trenches for the raft foundations. No monitoring during the pile driving was required.
- 1.3 The following report has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) for Michael Atkinson Architecture + Heritage on behalf of Stablewood Leisure Ltd. It 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). Geo-technical 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 slopes 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.

Previous archaeological works

- 2.5 A six-trench evaluation was conducted to the rear of the property in 2008 to inform an earlier planning application (ASUD 2008; Fig. 3). Medieval and post-medieval remains were identified at the east end of the garden, close to General Lambert's House. These comprised two probably medieval pits and a gully, and two post-medieval walls with associated cobble surfaces. However, the features in this area were truncated by a large modern cut that extended 0.35m into the natural subsoil. A small assemblage of medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered, dating to the 12th–13th century.
- 2.6 The report concluded that significant archaeological remains could be preserved across the site beneath the later garden soil deposits (ASUD 2008, 1).
- 2.7 In 2018 a detailed historic building record of the house, coach house, stables and garden structures was prepared by Northern Counties Archaeological Services (NCAS). This detailed the development of the property over the past 300 years.
- 2.8 In May 2019, NAA monitored geotechnical investigations to inform the current emergency stabilisation scheme. This comprised the excavation of two hand-dug launch pits in advance of borehole drilling, and five inspection trial pits positioned along the rear wall of the building. Although limited in scope, the excavations provided an opportunity to investigate the foundations of the building and demonstrated clear evidence of variation in foundation construction (NAA 2019b).

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 Eglingham, 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 Given the moderate to high potential for the survival of medieval and post-medieval remains, the NCC Assistant County Archaeologist requested archaeological monitoring to be conducted during the excavation of the foundation raft trenches (Trenches 1 to 3; Fig. 2) and any related ground reduction associated with the stabilisation works. The aim of this work is to 'preserve by record' any archaeological remains lost as a result of the emergency stabilisation works. No monitoring was required during subsequent pile driving.

4.2 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 A continuous watching brief was mounted during groundworks in order to limit any potential loss of heritage significance arising. Three trenches were dug along the rear wall of the building, by a combination of machine (fitted with toothless bucket) and hand excavation. One was situated north of the vestibule leading to the staircase and two directly abutted the rear wall of the main building (Fig. 3).

- 5.2 This was continued down to a depth of at least 0.60m (600mm). A 1m square sondage was excavated within Trench 2 to establish the depth of natural soil deposits.
- 5.3 All work was conducted in accordance with the approved WSI (NAA 2019a), and current standard and guidelines as issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014a; 2014b; 2019) and Historic England (2015; 2016).
- 5.4 A full record (written, graphic and photographic, as appropriate) was made for all work, using NAA's pro forma record sheets. Plans and section drawings were drawn at 1:50, 1:20 and 1:10 scales as appropriate. The location of archaeological features, together with the edges of the excavated areas, were recorded in relation to readily identifiable and permanent structural features on the ground.
- 5.5 A photographic record of all contexts was maintained in a digital format and include a clearly visible, graduated metric scale. A register of all photographs has been prepared and will be submitted with the archive.
- 5.6 No archaeologically significant artefacts were found during the excavations, and no paleoenvironmental or other samples taken.
- 5.7 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

Trench 1

- 6.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 4a) was located to the north of the vestibule and incorporated the test pit (TP4) excavated as part of the earlier phase of site investigations (NAA 2019b). The trench was oriented north-west to south-east and measured approximately 2.5m by 1.4m. It was excavated down to the impact level, at a depth of 0.6m. An additional 0.2m by 0.3m sondage was dug to a depth of 0.78m to establish the full extent of building foundations. The natural soil deposits were not reached in Trench 1. At a depth of 0.6m, a light brown redeposited sand (**108**) was recorded.
- 6.2 Cut into the sand was a drainage ditch (**107**) which curved around from Trench 2. Associated with this was a pipe entering the building just north of Trench 1. The fill of the ditched consists of a dark brown sandy clay with a high percentage of sandstone

fragments inclusions. Cut into (108) was what appeared to be a square posthole (106). This measured 0.3 by 0.3m and was of unknown date, but with the same fill as (107).

- 6.3 On the south side of the trench, the foundations of the house were exposed. These comprised four courses of roughly dressed sandstone (105). Each course consisted of roughly shaped rectangular blocks that projected slightly forward from the course above. There was no indication of a cut associated with a foundation trench (Plate 2).
- 6.4 Above 107 was a thick layer of redeposited clayey sand (104) which contained large amount of post-medieval to modern pottery fragments and stones. Sitting above this in the east corner of the trench was section of an earlier stone surface, constructed of pale brown sandstone (103) set within a lime mortar (Plate 1).
- 6.5 Overlaying this was a mixed levelling deposit (102), and above this a compact sandy bedding layer (101) beneath the modern pavement slabs (100).

Trench 2

- 6.6 Trench 2 (Fig. 4b) was located immediately south-west of Trench 1 and incorporated two of the test pits (TP1 and TP2) as part of the earlier phase of site investigations (NAA 2019b). The trench began at the north corner of the vestibule and extended southwards along the main building. It measured 5.0m north-south by 2.8m east-west and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m. The natural soil horizon was not reached within the trench.
- 6.7 At the bottom of the trench was a deposit of redeposited sand (210 and 209), cut by later features. Close to the rear of General Lambert's House were two distinct cuts (206 and 207) cut through a reddish redeposited sand (209). Comparing the excavation plan with the basement floor plan of the building in the NCAS report (2018, Fig. 15) it is likely that cut 206 relates to the construction of north basement extension (Room 27). A possible posthole (208) was identified which might be associated with a scaffolding post. However, this was poorly defined and could equally be related to animal disturbance.
- 6.8 On the west side of the trench, the remains of a wall (203) were uncovered, on a different alignment to the present building (Plate 4). This was 0.8m wide and stood two courses high, built of stones of various sizes cemented with lime mortar. Beneath 203 was a single course of stones projecting east of the wall. These are almost certainly the foundation of the wall, but could represent an earlier phase of building. A single stone

at the north end of **203** was set slightly to the west of the main structure and probably relates to a return wall, or internal division, running west out of the trench.

- 6.9 On the east side of the trench, at the northern end of the excavations, the foundations of the later building extension were exposed and recorded. These were the same as those observed in Trench 1, comprising five courses of roughly dressed sandstone (**204**), with each course projected slightly forward from the course above. No indication of a construction cut was visible in plan or section.
- 6.10 A series of modern features cut deposits **206**, **207**, **209**, and **210**, and wall **204**. A service trench (**205**), which contained an operational reddish-brown ceramic sewage pipe, bisected the trench from north to south and extended north-east into Trench 1 as ditch **108** and south into Trench 3 (**302**).
- 6.11 All above features and deposits were sealed by a thick mixed layer of made-ground (**202**) and stone/rubble deposit (**211**) which consisted of clayey sand with few large stones (probably from wall **204**) and large quantity of post-medieval bottle glass and ceramic. Overlying the backfill was a layer of sand or clayey sand (**201**).

Trench 3

- 6.12 Trench 3 (Fig. 4c) was located to the south of Trench 2, abutting the boundary wall to the property. It measured 2.1m by 2.7m and was excavated to depth of 0.6m. The natural soil horizon was not reached within the trench.
- 6.13 At the base of the trench at 0.6m was a pale brown clay (**305**) which contained a shallow concave depression (**304**) with stones and roof tile in the bottom. This extended west for about 1.7m before being truncated by a later drain (Plate 7). This connected with culvert (**303**) which extended under the southern extension of the building. Deposit **305** was also cut by a modern drain (**302**) which ran north to south and measured 0.9m wide. This was associated with pipework still observed in-situ extending into the existing property.
- 6.14 The above deposits were overlain by a dark brown mixed deposit (**301**) containing large amount of sandstone fragments and post-medieval pottery fragments. This is interpreted a mix of backfill associated with the construction of the drains and levelling deposits as part of later landscaping. Above **301** was a cobble surface (**300**) set with four flat sandstone slabs up against the rear of the building (Plate 5).

7.0 THE FINDS

- 7.1 Four artefact fragments were recovered from deposit **107** in Trench 1, one of which was a fragment of medieval pottery dating to the 12th to 14th century. However, this was a mixed deposits which also contained a piece of ceramic building material (CBM) dating to the 18th to 19th century and two fragments of 19th century pottery.
- 7.2 Within Trench 2, two artefacts were recovered from the loose sand deposits at the base of the trench. A further fragment of 12th to 14th century pottery was collected from deposit **210**. Also in Trench 2, a fragment of 19th century glass, of an unspecified vessel type, was retrieved from deposit **209**.
- 7.3 In Trench 3, the tile recovered from the base of feature **304** dates to 18th to 19th century.

8.0 DISCUSSION

- 8.1 The excavation of the three trenches along the rear wall of the building has advanced a greater understanding of the development of the property. The main feature of interest was a section of wall (**203**) in Trench 2. This ran north-east across three-quarters of the excavated area and was on a clearly different alignment to the main house and existing garden wall. A free standing structure in this location does not appear on any of historic maps of the area (NCAS 2018, 19 – 22). While the accuracy of some of these may be called into question, a structure or wall of size would almost certainly have been depicted given that the garden wall, steps, stable and other backplot structures are all shown. This suggest that wall **203** pre-dates the earliest detailed map of the town drawn by Thomas Wilkin in 1774.
- 8.2 It is also notable that all of the existing structures on the site are aligned with the main house, which runs roughly north to south. In contrast, wall **203** is set at a more acute angle, running north-east, suggesting it probably pre-dates the construction of the listed property, built in the late 17th or early 18th century. There is some evidence to suggest that it may relate to an earlier street alignment, when 'Narrowgate' was wider at its southern end, possibly opening out to accommodate a market place. Wilkin's map shows the properties at the south-west end of 'Narrow Gate', at its junction with Peter Gate, are stepped forward slightly from those on the north-west side, at the junction with Bailiff Gate, indicating a potential modification to the original street layout (Fig. 5).
- 8.3 Unfortunately, any associated deposits on the east side of wall **203** have been destroyed by later activity, in particular the cutting of ditch **205**. This service trench contained a

drainage pipe that extended from the house to run parallel with the rear of the property, cutting through much of the evidence in the northern half of the trench and destroying any surfaces or deposits relating to **203**. The reddish brown sand recorded on the east and west side of the trench (**209** and **210**), may be contemporary with **203**, but there in the absence of any direct physical relationship between the two, any meaningful interpretation is limited. Preservation may be better on the west side of the wall, outside the limit of the present excavations. As such, further investigation would be recommended during any future works in this area.



Figure 5: extract from map prepared by Thomas Wilkin's, 1774. Taken from NCAS 2018, 20.

- 8.4 Based on the dimensions and construction of the wall **203** it is highly unlikely that the structure formed part of the medieval city wall, that is believed to have run along the east side of Narrowgate. Measuring only 0.80m wide, the wall would have been far too insubstantial to offer any degree of protection to the town. Instead, it was almost certainly a domestic building of some form; possibly a late medieval or 17th century precursor of current street fronted property. However, the two fragment of 12th to 14th century pottery found within Trench 2 may indicate a degree of activity in the area during the medieval period.

- 8.5 The development sequence of the main house has been well-documented in the earlier Historic Building Report prepared by NCAS (2018, 40). Trenches 2 and 3 were excavated along the base of the western extension. This was built in two phases, the first pre-dating 1774, and the second pre-dating 1827. The foundations of this building, comprised roughly squared blocks, sitting almost flush with the rear wall (Plate 3). In contrast, the foundations of the small vestibule adjoining the north wall of the western extension were stepped (Plate 2), visible in both Trenches 1 and 2. This was the final structure to be added to the rear of the building, built between 1827 and 1860.
- 8.6 The only other feature of interest recorded during the monitoring was a culvert (303) in Trench 3, which extended under western extension. The feature had been blocked, but its form was discernible, comprising a low arched top with vertical sides. A roof tile was found pressed into the base of the culvert. The rest of the trench has been badly disturbed by the installation of modern services.

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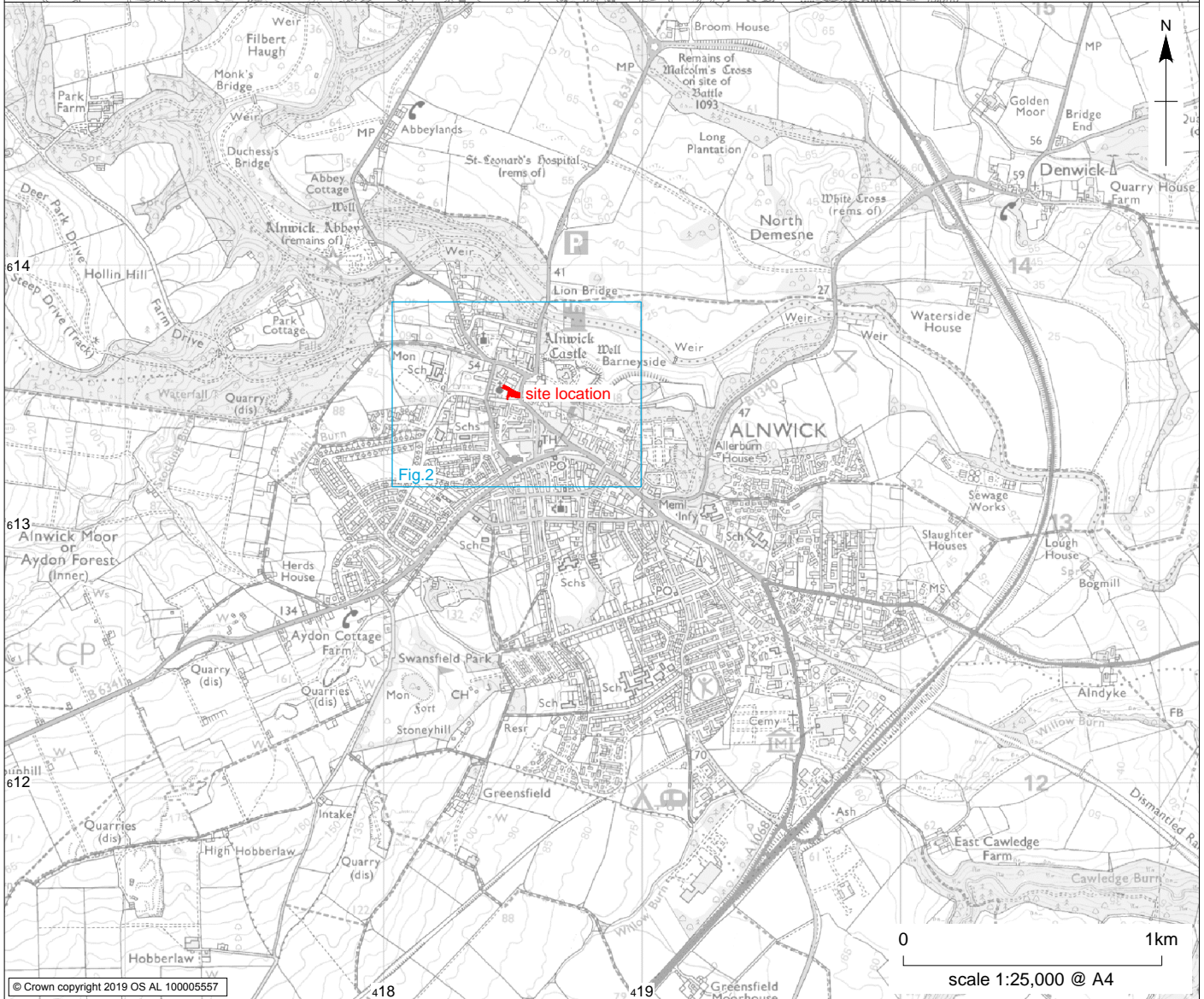
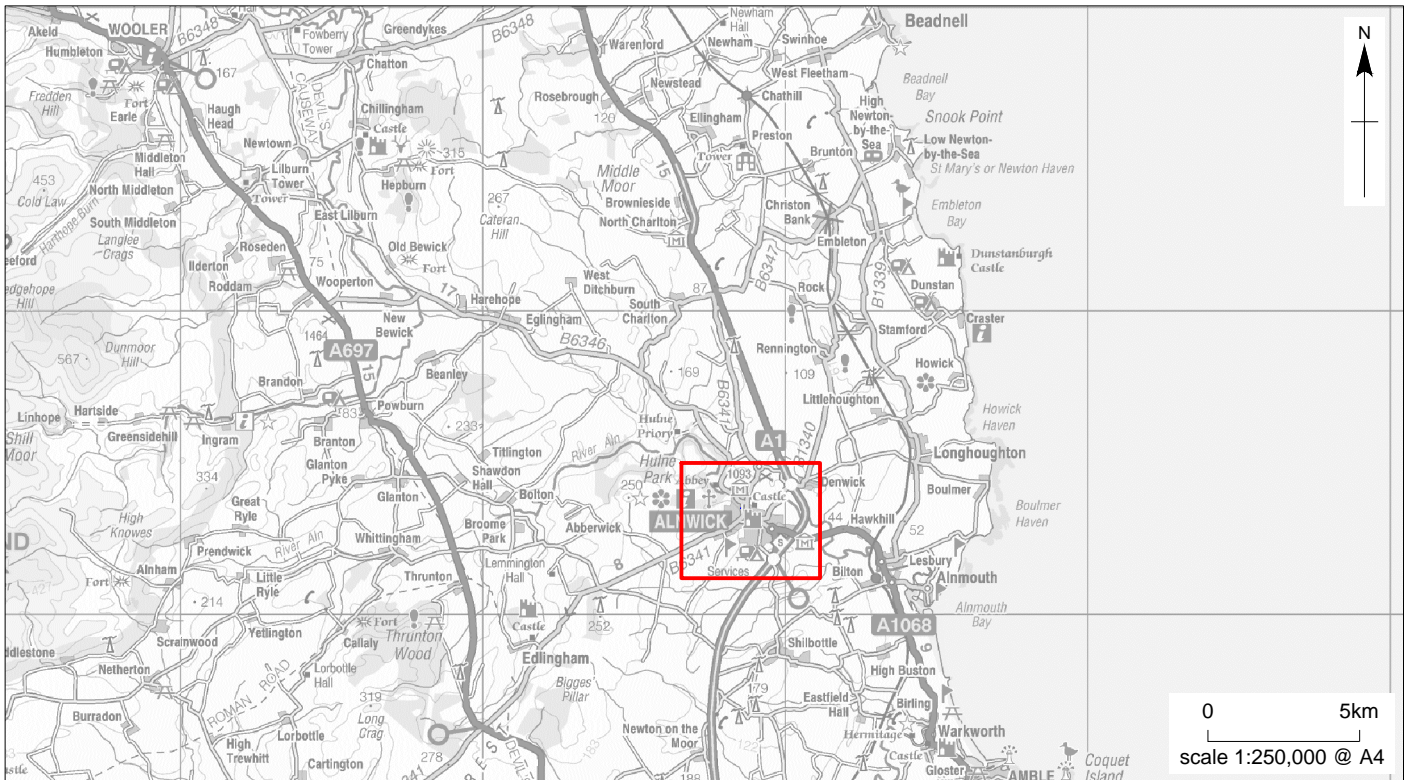
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Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) (1983) *Soils of England and Wales Sheet 1: Northern England.*

APPENDIX A
CONTEXT CATALOGUE

Table 2: recorded contexts

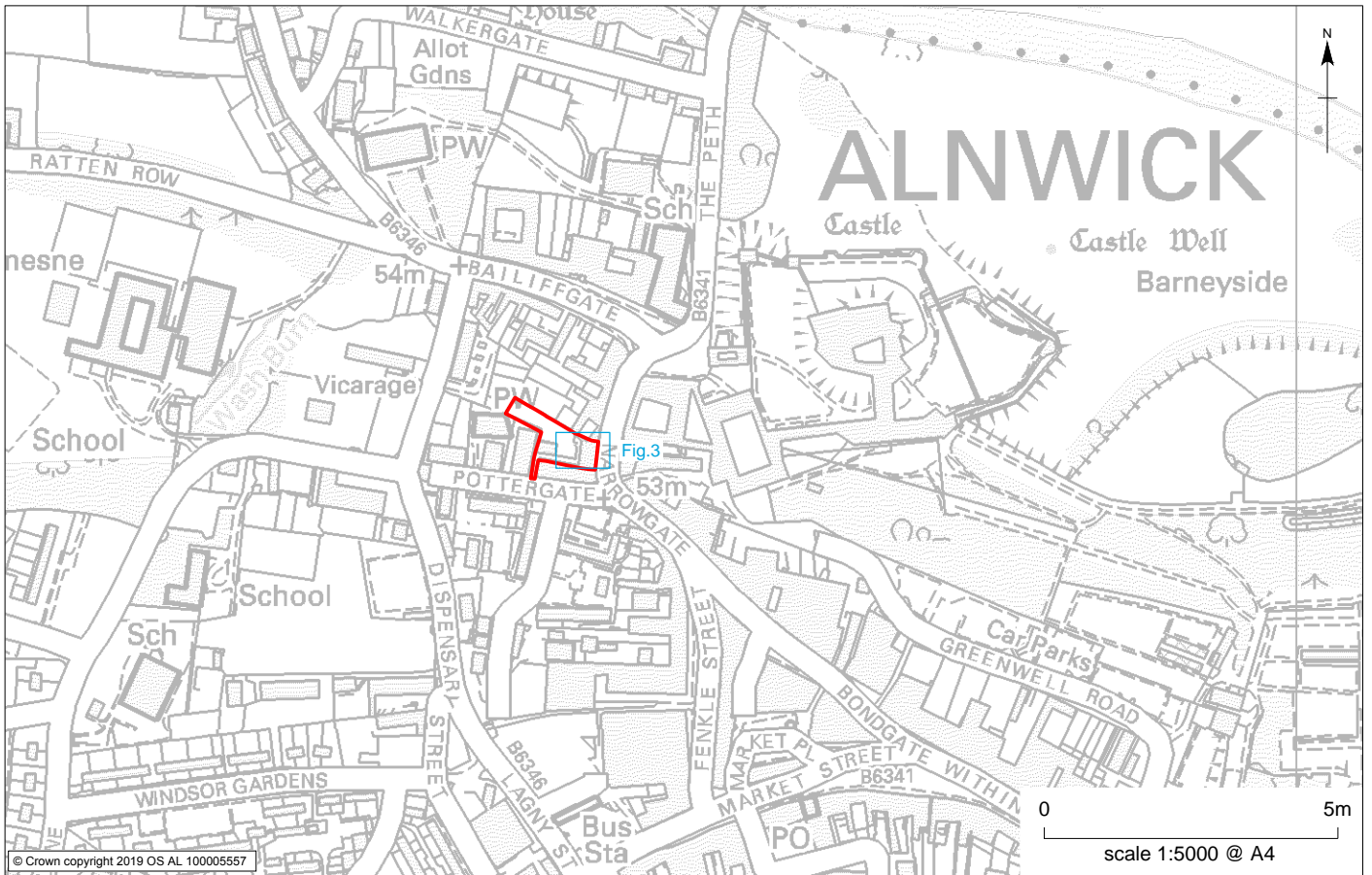
Trench	Context No.	Interpretation	Deposit description
1	100	Pavement	Current pavement
1	101	Levelling sand	Sand under current pavement
1	102	Make-up layer	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
1	103	Pavement fragment	Possible older pavement surviving in the corner next to building
1	104	Make-up layer	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
1	105	Foundations for building extension	Stepped foundations made of sandstone
1	106	Posthole	Possible square posthole
1	107	Ditch	Ditch for Victorian drainage pipe which enters the building just north of trench
1	108	Redeposited sand	Loose reddish-brown coarse sand
2	200	Pavement	Same as 100
2	201	Sand	Same as 101
2	202	Make-up layer	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
2	203	Wall	Stone wall with lime mortar
2	204	Foundations for building extension	Stepped foundations made of sandstone
2	205	Ditch	Same as 107. Got some pale clay same as 305
2	206	Building cut	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
2	207	Building cut	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
2	208	Posthole	Dark grey clayey sand
2	209	Redeposited sand	Loose reddish-brown coarse sand
2	210	Redeposited sand	Loose reddish-brown coarse sand
2	211	Deposit	Mixture of mortar and stones
3	300	Cobbles	Rounded cobble surface
3	301	Make-up layer	Redeposited material possibly filling construction trench
3	302	Drain	Shallow drain extending from culvert under building extension
3	303	Culvert	Culvert extending under building
3	304	Current drain	Victorian with modern addition
3	305	Clay	Pale brown clay



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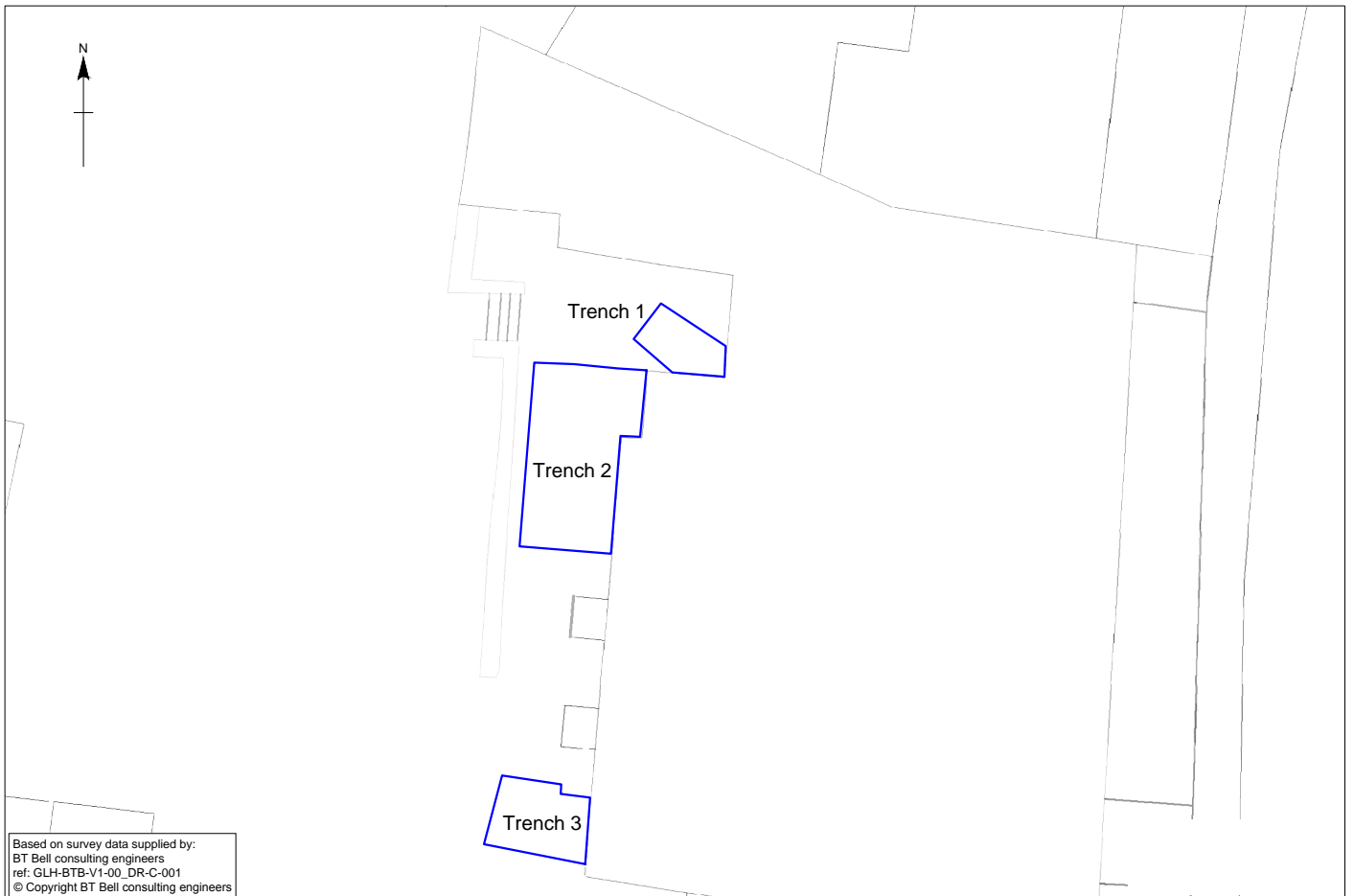
General Lambert's House, Alnwick: site location

Figure 1



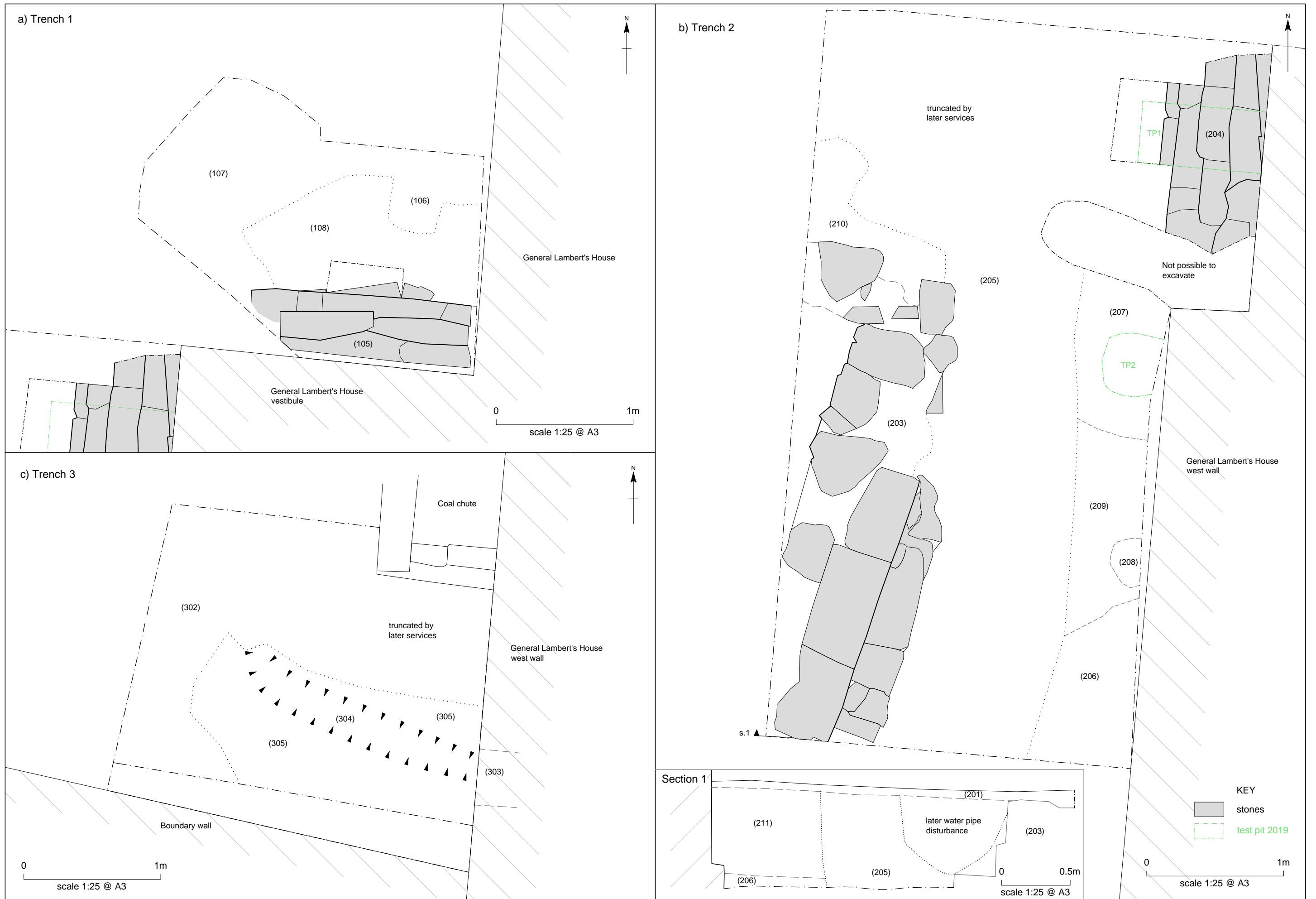
General Lambert's House, Alnwick: detailed site location

Figure 2



General Lambert's House, Alnwick: location of trenches

Figure 3





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Remains of older flagstones (103)

Plate 1



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Trench 1 post-excitation

Plate 2



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Trench 2 post-excitation

Plate 3



©NAA 2019

Wall (204)

Plate 4



©NAA 2019

Cobbles (300)

Plate 5



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Trench 3 post-excavation

Plate 6



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Culvert (303) and drain (304)

Plate 7