

NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES
Wansbeck General Hospital, Ashington, Northumberland
NEGATIVE WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Site name: Wansbeck General Hospital **Grid reference:** NGR NZ 290 878

Parish: Ashington **District:** Morpeth **County:** Northumberland

Administrative authority: Northumbria County Council

Development: Creation of replacement car park

Client: Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust **Contractor:** Kier Construction

Planning application reference: 11/02572/OUT

Site supervisor: Alistair Zochowski **Project manager:** Matthew Town

Date(s): 05/05/2015 - 13/05/2015

NAA project number: 1009

Site code: WBH 15

Reasons for watching brief: topsoil strip prior to the construction of a new car park for the hospital.

Results:

An area measuring 130m by 110m was stripped using a combination of two twenty tonne 360° tracked excavators. The topsoil and patchy subsoil was removed down to a yellow orange boulder clay natural.

A number of north / south aligned furrows were observed running across the entire site (Plates 1 & 2).



Plate 1 furrows looking east



Plate 2 furrows looking north

The furrows were all roughly 3m in width and spaced roughly 7m apart. Sample excavation of the furrows showed them to have a maximum depth of 0.18m (Plate 3). Truncating all of the

furrows were modern field drains that ran on the same alignment and presumably drained into the large pond situated to the south east of the site.



Plate 3: excavated furrow looking south east

Surface finds recovered from the furrows consisted of 1 clay tobacco pipe bowl, six pieces of 17th century ceramic and two pieces of 19th century ceramic. These finds indicate that the furrows were originally excavated at some point during the 17th century and presumably were still in use up until the 19th century.

Situated close to the north western boundary of the site were two small fire pits. The smaller of the two pits 004 was subcircular in shape and cut through the subsoil. Upon excavation it was found to contain plastic within the fill, thus providing a modern date for the fire (plate 4).



Plate 4 :Fire Pit 004, looking south south west

The second fire pit (006) was situated slightly further to the east. Again the pit was subcircular in shape and contained several large stones within the charcoal rich fill. No finds were

recovered during the excavation of this feature, but is most likely to be modern in date (plate 5).



Plate 5: Fire Pit 006 looking south south east

Situated toward the eastern boundary of the site was a large hollow, (014) that extended outside the area of site (plate 6). The hollow had a width of 4.80m and a visible length of 3m. When excavated it was shown to have a maximum depth of 0.30m; four pieces of medieval ceramic were recovered from the surface of the hollow, but no finds were found in the fill of the hollow.



Plate 6: hollow 014, looking south west

This hollow could be the remains of a pond that has silted up or simply an undulation in the natural underlying geology that has collected silt.

Running for a visible distance of roughly 30m on a north / south alignment was a probable drainage ditch.(012) It had an average width of 0.70m and average depth of 0.14m. It was

filled with a mid grey silty clay, most likely deposited by water activity. No finds were found in the two interventions cut into the ditch (plate 7).

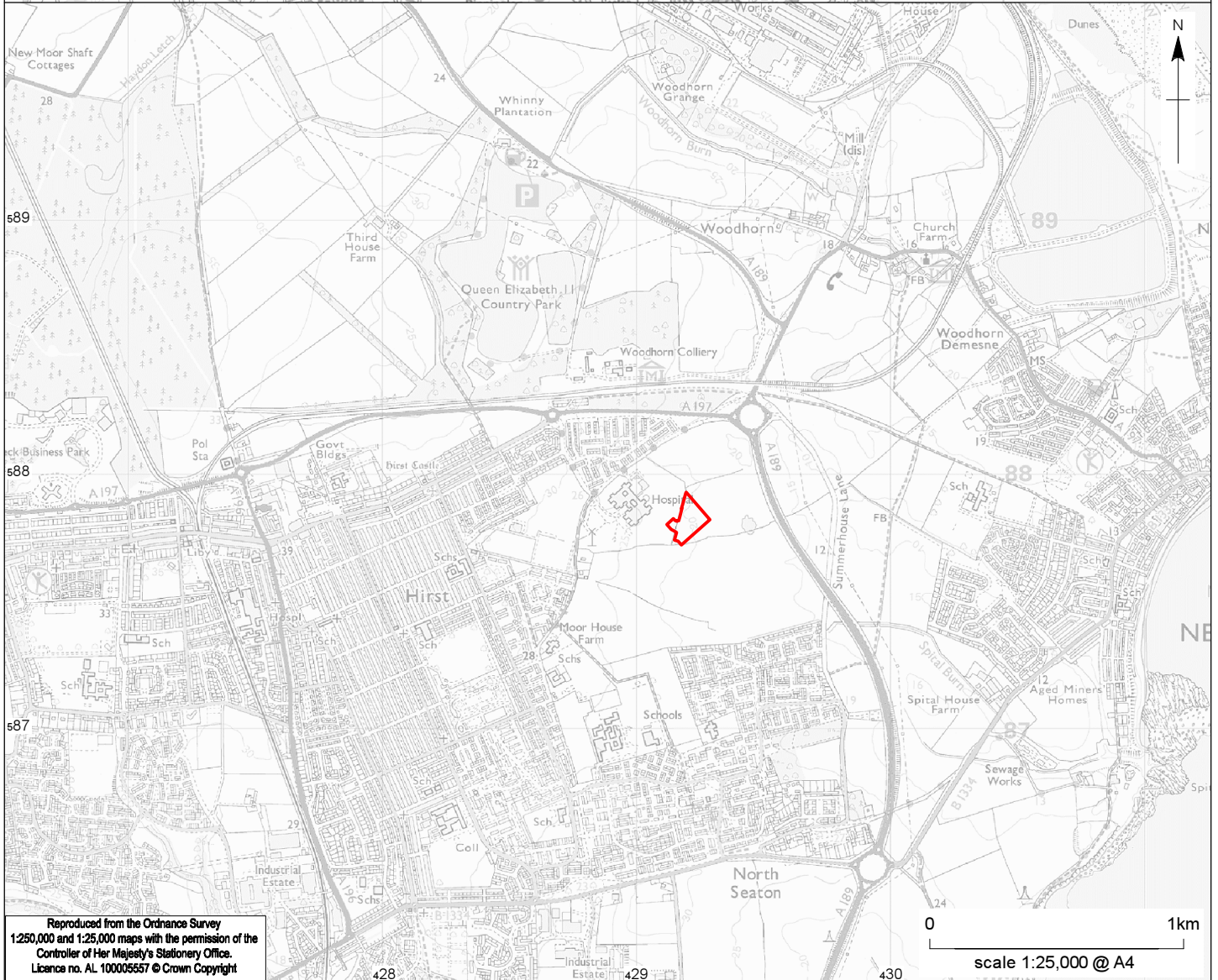


Plate 7: north / south aligned ditch 012

Documentation: The archive consists of 17 context sheets. 6 plans and sections and 135 digital photos.

Archive deposition: Woodhorn Museum

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Wansbeck General Hospital, Ashington: site location

Figure 1

