NAA

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING FINAL REPORT

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YARM ROAD
MIDDLETON ST GEORGE
CO. DURHAM

prepared for

Calmont Homes (Oak Meadows) Ltd.

Project No.: 2034

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NAA 20/28
March 2020

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| QUALITY ASSURANCE | | |
|---|---|---|
| Project Number | 2034 | |
| Report Number | 20/28 | |
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| Draft | Eddie Dougherty | |
| Graphics | Dawn Knowles | |
| Edit | Matthew Town | |
| Authorised | Helen Devonshire | |
| *Issue 1* | | 16/03/20 |



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Client Calmont Homes (Oak Meadows) Ltd.
Location Yarm Road, Middleton St George, County Durham, DL2 1EU
District Darlington
Planning Ref 17/01175/FUL
Grid Ref NZ3528513617

# YARM ROAD. MIDDLETON ST GEORGE, CO. DURHAM
# ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRIAL TRENCHING
# FINAL REPORT

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*Summary*

*This document presents the results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken at Yarm Road, Middleton St George, County Durham (NGR NZ 35285 13617; Fig. 1). The proposed development area (PDA) comprised a rectangular plot of land, 1.65ha, bordered by the Tees Valley Train Line to the north, residential and farm buildings to the east, and Yarm Road to the south and west. At the time of the archaeological works the PDA consisted of pastureland divided into three fenced paddocks. This report has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) for Calmont Homes (Oak Meadows) Ltd. The investigative works were carried out as part of a granted planning phase (ref:17/01175/FUL) by Darlington Borough Council.*

*The investigation consisted of 12 evaluation trial-trenches (numbered 1 to 12, Fig. 2). These were positioned to examine shallow earthworks running across the majority of the PDA, and anomalies identified from geophysical survey, also conducted by NAA (NAA 2017).*

*The only features record were the truncated bases of plough furrows, these were identified in section or plan in all trenches and aligned east-northeast to west-southwest. Their spacing was fairly regular at an average of 4m apart. In Trenches 4 and 9, sections through the furrows were machine excavated to confirm the interpretation and to characterise them.*

*There were minimal finds recovered from the excavated deposits, and they were largely from the modern agricultural topsoil within the PDA. None of them were retained.*

*The agreed fieldwork programme of machine-cut trial-trenches has been successful in understanding the characteristics of the PDA and has uncovered no significant archaeological remains. No further work is recommended.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Calmont Homes (Oak Meadows) Ltd commissioned Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) to undertake a programme of trial trenching to support granted planning permission (Ref 17/01175/FUL) for a residential development of 61 dwellings with car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure on land to the north of Yarm Road, Middleton St George, County Durham (NGR: NZ 35285 13617; Fig. 1).

1.2 This programme of trial trenching was designed to test a previous examination of the site in the form of a geophysical survey (NAA 2017). Prior to the commencement of the trial trenching a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was agreed with Durham County Council Archaeology Section (DCCAS) (NAA 2019). This document presents the results of the trial-trenching phase of archaeological investigation works.

1.3 The archaeological evaluation was undertaken to inform the planning process by characterising features identified by the geophysical survey, by determining the presence or absence of any other archaeological remains within the site, and ascertaining the extent, condition, character and date of any such remains. This information will be used by DCCAS to assess the significance of those remains that may be affected by the proposal, and to inform the need for further archaeological mitigation, either before or during construction.

1.4 The field work constituted 12 trenches, ranging from 15.1m to 30.2m in length, and took place between the 26th February and 4th March 2020. All archaeological works were undertaken in accordance with relevant standards, guidance and best practice published by Historic England (2015a; 2015b) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014a; 2014b; 2014c) and English Heritage (1995; 2008). All archaeological fieldwork has been subjected to post-excavation assessment, analysis and reporting. Copies of all reports will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by DCCAS, the recipient museum service and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

## 2.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

### Location

2.1 The area of archaeological investigation comprised 1.65ha of corralled pasture divided into three paddocks, located to the east of Middleton St George (Fig. 1). The site was

bordered by the Tees Valley Train Line to the north, residential and farm buildings to the east, and Yarm Road to the south and west.

### Topography

2.2 The topography of the area covered by the archaeological trial trenching was reasonably level and lay at 35m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

### Geology and soils

2.3 The solid geology of the survey area consists of sandstone of the Sherwood Sandstone Group with superficial deposits of Devensian Till – Diamicton (BGS 2017). The soils are mapped as Crewe (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983), consisting primarily of stagnogley soils in reddish, stoneless till, or lacustrine clay (Jarvis *et al*. 1984, 145).

## 3.0 SUMMARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 NAA undertook a search of the County Durham Historic Environment Record (HER) and a geophysical survey of the PDA in 2017. The report (NAA 2017) contains results of the survey and search; a summary is reproduced below.

3.2 The geophysical survey identified a buried utility cutting across the north part of both northern paddocks within the PDA. Trenches 1 and 4 were reduced in length to 15m to avoid impacting the line of this service. Numerous and regularly spaced linear anomalies indicative of agricultural practices in the form of ridge and furrows and land drainage were also identified.

3.3 From the survey, a number of weak and diffuse anomalies were also identified. These were all in a cluster near the southern boundary of the PDA. Generally, these anomalies did not produce a strong response to enable interpretation of their origins.

3.4 The majority of the trenches were positioned to test and identify the geophysical anomalies.

### Prehistoric land use

3.5 The earliest evidence for prehistoric occupation within the environs of the investigation area lies to the north-west of the site. This is represented by a possible Neolithic pit alignment (HER 643) identified from aerial photographs.

3.6 In the wider historical landscape, recorded human occupation dating to the Bronze Age has been uncovered at Ingleby Barwick c.10km to the east of the village. This was in the form settlement where funerary remains were excavated, further settlements from this period and into the Iron Age are also known across the Tees lowlands.

### Roman period

3.7 A number of Roman sites are known to lie within the wider landscape. These include the significant villa sites at Ingleby Barwick and Quarry Farm. These were also supported by a well-established, road network comprising Dere Street and the projected line of Cade's Road (HER 6716).

### Medieval

3.8 During the medieval period, the village's centre of occupation can be traced to the area surrounding Low Middleton Hall and its church which may date from this time. This settlement lies southeast of the present-day village of Middleton St George. The name Middleton is known to have origins in the Anglo-Saxon period. This may suggest a date prior to the Norman Conquest for the settlement and the environs close to the investigative area. At that time the land usage was mainly agricultural with little or no change until the introduction of the railways.

### Post-medieval and modern

3.9 The area under investigation remained relatively similar in agricultural character until the early 19th century and the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. With the construction of the railways a period of enlargement of the village occurred. This took the form of constructing more and larger housing to accommodate the ever-increasing, wealthier members of the local population. This time of prosperity and the newly established railways were instrumental factors in the industrialisation of the local area. For example, the Dinsdale Moor Iron Works was founded near the village in 1837 and comprised a number of furnaces for the production of pig iron. The iron works itself was built on land acquired to the south of Middleton St George from Palm Tree House Farm.

### Geophysical survey

3.10 The most prominent anomalies found as a result of the geophysical survey corresponded to a known buried service running from east to west across the site. The majority of the remaining anomalies appeared to relate to general disturbance of the ground caused by

agricultural practices. It is possible that the responses that correspond to ridge and furrow had the potential to mask truncated archaeological features below. However, given the lack of previously recorded heritage assets within the immediate proximity of the site, this was considered unlikely. The ridge and furrow indicated a lack of any major ground disturbance at least within the last two centuries.

## 4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 The main aim of the archaeological trial-trenching was to assess the potential for the presence of sub-surface archaeological remains. If remains were present, the trial-trenching aimed to confirm their location, extent, nature, date and importance so that an informed assessment of the impact of the development upon these remains could be undertaken and a suitable mitigation strategy agreed.

4.2 The objectives of the archaeological trial-trenching were to:

- establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of any archaeological remains within the trenches;
- provide a detailed record of any such archaeological remains;
- recover and assess any associated structural, artefactual and environmental evidence;
- determine which areas within the footprint of the proposed scheme required archaeological mitigation in the form of preservation in situ, open-area investigation in advance of construction, or monitoring of soil stripping during construction works;
- prepare an illustrated report on the results of the trial-trenching to be deposited with the HER held by DCCAS;
- evaluate the potential for further unrecorded significant archaeological remains being present within the site; and
- undertake a scheme of work, in line with current professional standards (CIfA 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; English Heritage 1995; 2008; Historic England 2015a; 2015b).

4.3 Based on the archaeological and historical background, any archaeological resource within the PDA had the potential to contribute to the research agendas identified within the North-East Regional Research Framework (NERRF) (Petts and Gerrard 2006):

- 'What is the effect of industrialisation on settlement patterns along the Tees Valley? This needs to be broken down chronologically; 16th/17th century industrialisation is very different from 18th/19th century industrialisation.' (*ibid.*).

4.4 In accordance with the WSI, with the completion of the trial trenching the requirement for further mitigation will be agreed through consultation with the client and DCCAS.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Twelve trial trenches were excavated within the PDA (numbered 1 to 12): 10 trial trenches measuring 30m by 1.6m, two measuring 15m by 1.6m. Their locations are shown on Fig. 2. DCCAS were consulted regarding the trench arrangement. The trenches were positioned to target the remains of the earthworks and geophysical anomalies identified throughout the site. The 12 trial trenches represented a 4% sample of the investigation area. Trenches could be realigned, or a different number excavated, as requested.

5.2 The back-acting mechanical excavator removed overburden under archaeological supervision down to a level at which significant archaeological deposits were identified, or down to natural subsoil deposits, whichever was first. Mechanical excavation ceased in any areas where archaeological remains deemed to be significant by the monitoring archaeologist were identified. Thereafter, all archaeological work was conducted by hand.

### Recording

5.3 Written description of archaeological features/deposits were recorded on pro-forma record sheets, which employ standard archaeological recording conventions.

5.4 A photographic record of each trench was made using a digital camera.

### Finds recording

5.5 The finds encountered described modern use of the field which the PDA occupies, consisting of modern pottery and glass. These were not significant finds and were therefore not retained.

## 6.0 RESULTS

6.1 The following text describes the evaluation trenches in numerical order and are further discussed in Section 7.0. Trenches which are devoid of archaeological remains have been summarily described.

6.2 All 12 trial trenches contained at least visible evidence of east –northeast to west-southwest plough furrows, but no other archaeological features or deposits were present. The furrows themselves survived only as the bases of individual plough furrow cutting the strata. A section of these furrows were machine excavated to confirm their interpretation. The natural substrate across the site was a very firm light-greyish yellow, mottled with orange, clay with very few stony inclusions. The subsoil was the same across the site, being a firm, medium-brownish grey silty clay with occasional stony inclusions on average 0.16m in depth. This was in turn overlain by a topsoil consisting of dark-brownish grey varying in thickness between 0.18m and 0.25m thick.

### Trench 1

6.3 Trench 1 was located in the north eastern paddock at the north western corner of the field covered by the PDA aligned north-northwest to south-southeast across three shallow earth works identified as furrows **05**, **06** and **07**. It was 15.3m long with a maximum depth of 0.42m. At the northern end, and cutting at least one furrow (**07**), was a narrow land drain trench. The land drain was unexcavated to avoid the possibility of flooding the trench.

### Trench 2

6.4 Trench 2 was located in the south-eastern paddock at its western end, parallel to a double wooden paddock fence, on a similar alignment to the trench. It measured 30.1m in length with a maximum depth of 0.4m. The trench was positioned to test one east-west shallow geophysical anomaly and two possible land drains. A total of seven furrows **08**, **09**, **10**, **11**, **12**, **13** and **14** were encountered in varying states of preservation all evenly set apart.

### Trench 3

6.5 Trench 3 was the second of two trenches to be positioned in south-eastern paddock. It was situated in a more central location to examine three fairly shallow east-west aligned parallel furrows. The trench measured 30.1m to a machined depth of 0.42m and aligned northwest to southeast. On completion of the machining, remains of six truncated

furrows (**15**, **16**, **17**, **18**, **19** and **20)** were encountered. These were subsequently cut by a northeast-southwest aligned set of land drains to aid drainage.

### Trench 4

6.6 Trench 4 was the first of eight trenches positioned in the western paddock, which made up the majority of the land covered by the PDA. The trench itself was situated in the southeastern corner placed over weak isolated positive responses identified from the geophysical survey. It was aligned northwest-southeast and measured 30m and excavated to depth of 0.4m. The only evidence of human intervention observed was the faint evidence of plough furrows in sides of the trench, and three obliquely excavated land drains.

*Plate1: view of machined excavated plough furrows 24 and 25, in Trench 6 facing northwest.*

### Trench 5

6.7 Trench 5 was positioned north of Trench 4 on a similar alignment to test identified geophysical anomalies. It measured 30m in length and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.4m. The only positive features encountered were three furrows **21**, **22** and **23**, and two stone-filled land drains.

### Trench 6

6.8 Trench 6 was located to the north of Trenches 4 and 5 in the northeast area of the paddock, aligned north to south. It was one of the two 15m trenches and machined to a maximum depth of 0.42m. The only features uncovered were two plough furrows (**24** and **25)**, a single land drain which were identified during the previous geophysical survey.

### Trench 7

6.9 Trench 7was placed along the southern boundary parallel to Yarm Road in the south of the paddock, aligned west-southwest to east-northeast. The trench measured 30m and was excavated to a maximum of 0.45m. A single plough furrow (**26)**, was visible running the total length of the trench. The furrow was subsequently cut by three evenly spaced diagonally aligned land drains.

*Plate 2: view of truncated east-to west aligned furrow 26 facing northwest, along Trench 7*

### Trench 8

6.10 Trench 8 was situated north of Trench 7, and west of Trenches 4 and 5 in a central position within the paddock, aligned south-southeast to north-northwest. It was 30m in length with a maximum depth of 0.45m. It was situated to test numerous geophysical anomalies identified during the survey. These linear anomalies were identified as furrows **27**, **28**, **29** and **30**, which were later truncated by more recent drainage measures.

*Plate 3: view of east-west anomalies in Trench 8, plough furrows 27,28 and 29, with a land drain in the foreground*

### Trench 9

6.11 Trench 9 was located southwest of Trench 8 and followed a similar alignment to Trench 7. This trench was also placed close to the southern boundary of the PDA. Its measured 30m in length and did not exceed a depth of 0.3m throughout. The only features uncovered in its base were two evenly spaced land drains, both of which ran diagonally across the line of the trench. Shallow furrows were visible as undulations of the subsoil in section but did not cut the natural drift geology.

### Trench 10

6.12 Trench 10 was positioned north of the western end of Trench 9, aligned south southwest to north northeast. It measured 30m in length and machine excavated to a maximum depth of 0.45m. At regular intervals the base of the trench was cut the fragmentary remains of four shallow plough furrows, **31**, **32**, **33** and **34**. In the southwest end furrow **31** was truncated by a later land drain.

*Plate 4: view of Trench 11 facing southeast with furrow 39 in the foreground.*

### Trench 11

6.13 Trench 11was situated close to the southern boundary of the paddock, and roughly similar distances from the western ends of Trenches 9 and 10. It was positioned slightly obliquely to numerous parallel linear anomalies, recorded from the results from the geophysical survey. These features were identified after the machine strip as regular cut

plough furrows (**35**, **36**, **37**, **38** and **39**). The central furrow **37** was partly cut by a later land drain.

### Trench 12

6.14 Trench 12 was placed closest to the western boundary of the investigation area, parallel to an open water filled drainage ditch. The trench itself followed a similar south-southwest to north-northeast alignment to Trench 10 situated to the east. It had a total length of 30m and maximum depth of 0.4m. From the geophysical survey results, six obliquely running linear anomalies were observed cutting intended line of the trial trench. On completion of the soil strip, only five shallow features (furrows **40**, **41**, **42**, **43** and **45**), were exposed. These were in-turn cut by a solitary stone-filled land drain.

## 7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 During the programme of works it became apparent very little ground disturbance had occurred within PDA, the most recent activity being the line of a modern utility cutting across the northern part of the investigation area.

7.2 The PDA had clearly experienced use as agricultural land during the medieval and later periods. The historical features identified in the development area were confined to evenly spaced shallow truncated plough furrow filled with subsoil, all of which followed an east-northeast to west-southwest alignment, and were subsequently cut by obliquely aligned network of land drains. These are presumed to be of medieval date, though no dating evidence was uncovered during the works.

7.3 Trenches 2, 3 and 5 were situated over weak isolated positive responses in the geophysical survey, comprising diffused linear features and what may have constituted a broken curvilinear feature and two circular pit alignments. Unfortunately, these were not visible in the machined trenches, and may be the result of densely packed clays or outcrops of bedrock within the natural stratum.

7.4 Based on the results of the programme of archaeological evaluation described in this report the potential for archaeological remains and/or deposits within the PDA beyond those already encountered is very low.

## 8.0 ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

8.1 The full archive from the archaeological investigations, including paperwork, digital data, is to be deposited with the Sevenhills repository, Spennymoor.

8.2 The archive was prepared in accordance with national guidelines (Brown 2011; CIfA 2014b; Archaeology Data Service/Digital Antiquity 2011). In addition to the site records, the archive contains

- a summary report synthesising the context record.

8.3 The integrity of the primary field record will be preserved. Security copies will be maintained where appropriate. The archive will be maintained by NAA until deposition with the museum.

8.4 An online OASIS form will be completed for the results of the works within three months of the completion of the project. This will include submission of a PDF version of the final report to the Archaeology Data Service via the OASIS form.

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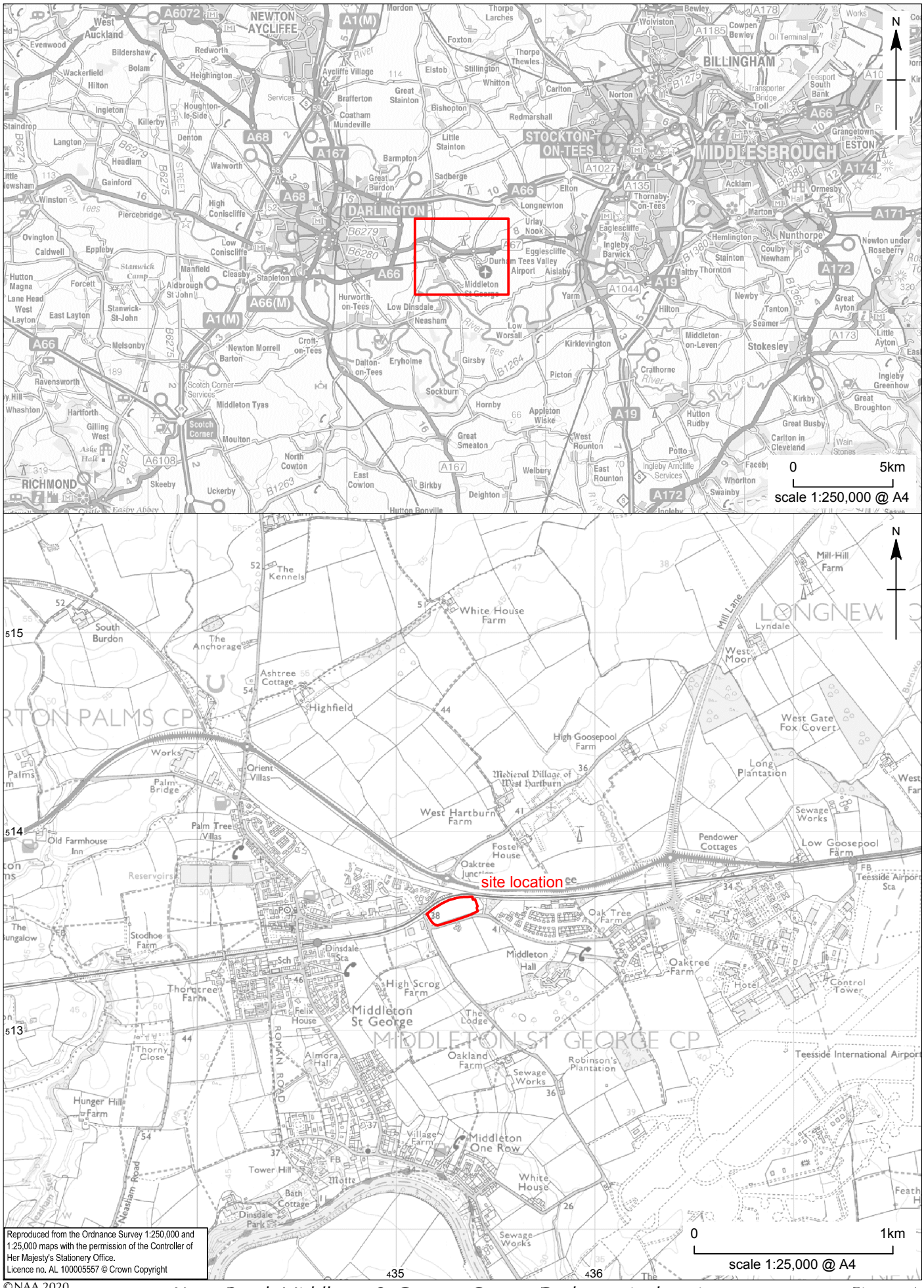
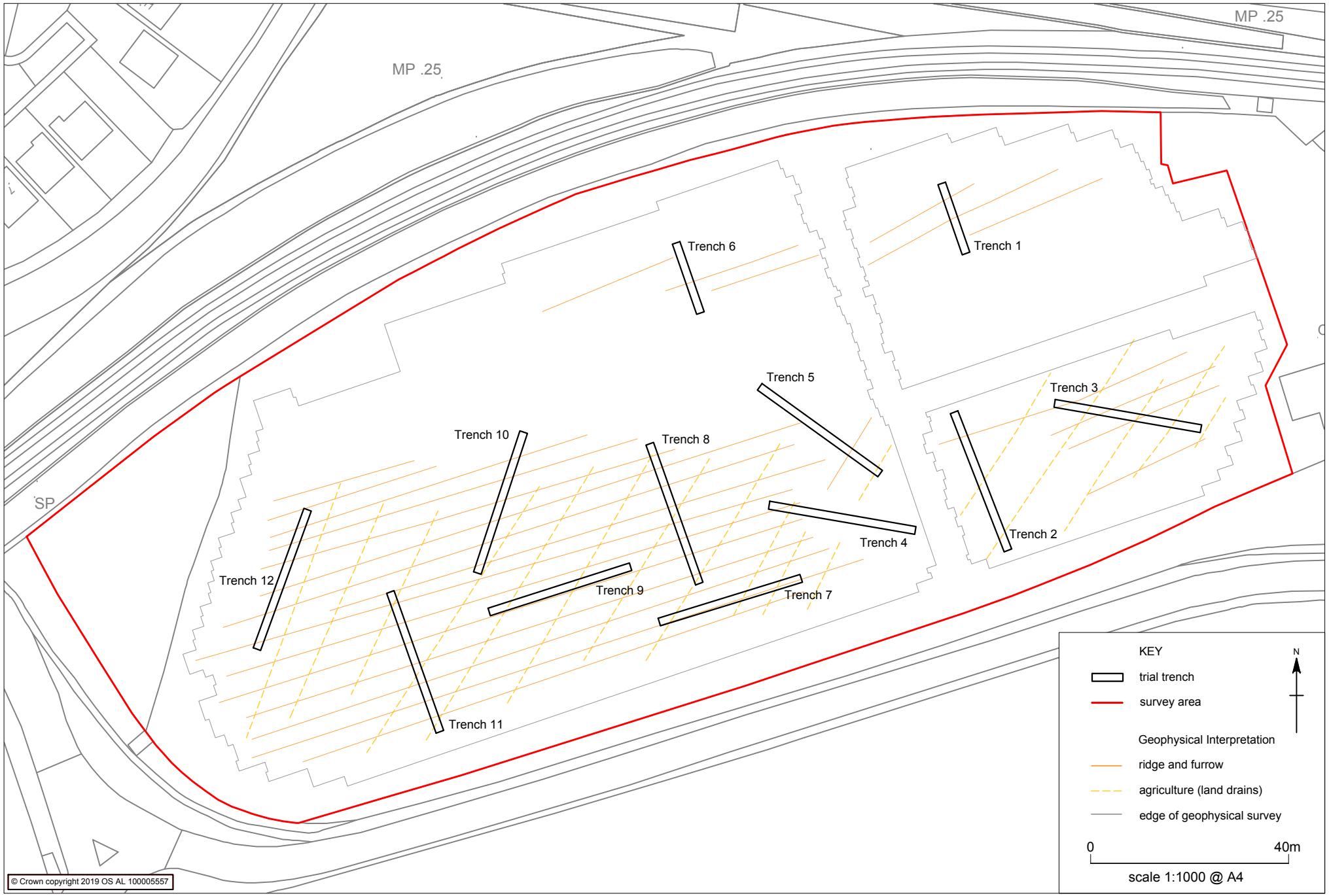
## APPENDIX A: CONTEXT AND FINDS CATALOGUE

| Context | Interpretative description | Trench | Period | Finds | Sample information |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Topsoil | All | Modern | None | None |
| 2 | Sub-soil | All | Post medieval | None | None |
| 3 | Natural | All | | None | None |
| 4 | Group number for truncated furrows | All | Medieval | None | None |
| 5 | Shallow truncated furrow | 1 | Medieval | None | None |
| 6 | Shallow truncated furrow | 1 | Medieval | None | None |
| 7 | Shallow truncated furrow | 1 | Medieval | None | None |
| 8 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 9 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 10 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 11 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 12 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 13 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 14 | Shallow truncated furrow | 2 | Medieval | None | None |
| 15 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 16 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 17 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 18 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 19 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 20 | Shallow truncated furrow | 3 | Medieval | None | None |
| 21 | Shallow truncated furrow | 5 | Medieval | None | None |
| 22 | Shallow truncated furrow | 5 | Medieval | None | None |
| 23 | Shallow truncated furrow | 5 | Medieval | None | None |
| 24 | Shallow truncated furrow | 6 | Medieval | None | None |
| 25 | Shallow truncated furrow | 6 | Medieval | None | None |
| 26 | Shallow truncated furrow | 7 | Medieval | None | None |
| 27 | Shallow truncated furrow | 8 | Medieval | None | None |
| 28 | Shallow truncated furrow | 8 | Medieval | None | None |
| 29 | Shallow truncated furrow | 8 | Medieval | None | None |
| 30 | Shallow truncated furrow | 8 | Medieval | None | None |
| 31 | Shallow truncated furrow | 10 | Medieval | None | None |
| 32 | Shallow truncated furrow | 10 | Medieval | None | None |
| 33 | Shallow truncated furrow | 10 | Medieval | None | None |
| 34 | Shallow truncated furrow | 10 | Medieval | None | None |
| 35 | Shallow truncated furrow | 11 | Medieval | None | None |
| 36 | Shallow truncated furrow | 11 | Medieval | None | None |
| 37 | Shallow truncated furrow | 11 | Medieval | None | None |
| 38 | Shallow truncated furrow | 11 | Medieval | None | None |
| 39 | Shallow truncated furrow | 11 | Medieval | None | None |
| 40 | Shallow truncated furrow | 12 | Medieval | None | None |
| 41 | Shallow truncated furrow | 12 | Medieval | None | None |
| 42 | Shallow truncated furrow | 12 | Medieval | None | None |
| 43 | Shallow truncated furrow | 12 | Medieval | None | None |
| 44 | Shallow truncated furrow | 12 | Medieval | None | None |
| 45 | Group number for furrows | All | Medieval | | None |
| 46 | Group number for land drains | All | Modern | | None |






*Yarm Road, Middleton St George, County Durham: site location* *Figure 1*






*Yarm Road, Middleton St George, County Durham: trench locations*

*Figure 2*