



EXCAVATION REPORT

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WINSTON BRIDGE, OVINGTON,
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WINSTON BRIDGE, OVINGTON, COUNTY DURHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

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WINSTON BRIDGE, OVINGTON, COUNTY DURHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

Summary

This document presents the results of a phase of archaeological strip, map and record relating to a development at Winston Bridge, Ovington, County Durham. It has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) on behalf of Meridian Parks. The archaeological works were required to discharge a condition of planning consent for a proposed extension to a caravan park (Planning Ref: (DM/19/02010/FPA)).

In 2019, archaeological evaluation of the development site was carried out by Archaeological Services Durham University (ASDU). No significant archaeological remains were found in the north-western field. In the south-eastern field the terminus of a feature (F6 in the ASDU report) interpreted as an early prehistoric ditch was recorded.

Due to the presence of this feature, and its archaeological importance, Durham County Council Archaeology Service (DCCAS) requested that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken to mitigate any potential loss of, or damage to, any associated archaeological remains. Following discussion with the DCCAS Senior Archaeologist, it was agreed that the programme of archaeological works would comprise targeted archaeological strip, map and record of an area around feature F6, in order to expose its full extent and facilitate its preservation by record.

The archaeological work was undertaken on the 28th and 29th May 2020 and comprised the removal of topsoil and colluvium/agricultural subsoil from three areas around the position of feature F6. These works demonstrated that feature F6 was not a ditch and did not extend into the areas investigated. It is likely that feature F6 was a pit, or a tree-throw hole that contained dumped occupation waste from nearby activity.

A lone pit was also recorded to the north-east of feature F6 which appeared to have supported a large post. This feature produced a fragment of unworked flint and some charcoal (oak). Together feature F6 and pit 3 demonstrate some level of prehistoric activity in the vicinity, as well as the potential for further related remains to exist in the local area. The nature, extent and date of this activity, however, remains elusive.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document presents the results of a phase of archaeological strip, map and record relating to a development at Winston Bridge, Ovington, County Durham (NZ 1405 1547; Fig. 1). It has been prepared by Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) on behalf of Meridian Parks in response to conditions 8 and 9 of planning consent Ref. No. DM/19/02010/FPA, which stated:

- Condition 8. No development shall commence until a written scheme of investigation setting out a programme of archaeological work in accordance with ‘Standards for All Archaeological Work in County Durham and Darlington’ has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The programme of archaeological work will then be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme of works.
- Condition 9. The development shall not be occupied until the post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation. The provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results, and archive deposition, should be confirmed in writing to, and approved by, the Local Planning Authority.

1.2 The work undertaken followed the methodologies detailed in a written scheme of investigation (WSI) (NAA 2020a) and an addendum (NAA 2020b), both of which were agreed in advance with the Durham County Council (DCC) Archaeologist (Historic Environment Record Officer). The archaeological mitigation work was carried out in accordance with relevant standards and guidance published by English Heritage (now Historic England) (EH 2008a and HE 2015a), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d) and Durham County Council (2019). All work was also undertaken in compliance with the Regional Statement of Good Practice (South Yorkshire Archaeology Service 2018).

2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 The development area occupied a site of approximately 2.25ha, to the south-east of the existing caravan park, divided into two fields (Fig. 2). The expansion of the park comprised the demolition of structures, the construction of 36 static-caravan pitches and/or lodge pitches, a site office and parking with associated infrastructure, alterations to the site access, engineering works and landscaping.

- 2.2 In 2019, archaeological evaluation (Fig. 3) of the development site was carried out by Archaeological Services Durham University (ASDU 2019a; 2019b). The associated report (ASDU 2019a) stated that no archaeologically significant remains were found in the north-western field (Area 1). In the south-eastern field (Area 2), the only remains of archaeological significance was the terminus of a feature (F6) interpreted as an early prehistoric ditch (ASDU 2019a, 7).
- 2.3 Due to the presence of this feature, and its archaeological importance, Durham County Council Archaeology Service (DCCAS) requested that a programme of archaeological works be undertaken to mitigate any potential loss of, or damage to, archaeological remains as a result of the development groundworks. Following discussion with the DCCAS Senior Archaeologist, Lauren Pratt, it was agreed that the programme of archaeological works would comprise targeted archaeological strip, map and record of an area around feature F6, in order to expose its full extent and facilitate its preservation by record.
- 2.4 The archaeological work was undertaken on the 28th and 29th May 2020 and comprised the removal of topsoil and colluvium/agricultural subsoil from three areas (A–C) around the position of ASDU Trench 7 (Figs 2 and 3).

3.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY

- 3.1 The development area (hereafter ‘the site’) was located to the immediate south-east of Winston Caravan Park, between Ovington and Winston Bridge, County Durham (NZ 1405 1547; Fig. 1). It was close to the southern bank of the River Tees and to the east of Fewster Gill Farm. The site comprised two fields (Figs 2 and 3, Areas 1 and 2); the archaeological groundworks were undertaken within Area 2.
- 3.2 The site comprised a relatively flat area that undulated gently and sloped downwards from south-east to north-west with elevations between c.125m to 115m aOD. The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Carboniferous strata of the Stainmore Formation and Rookhope Shell-Beds Limestone, which are overlain by Devensian till (BGS 2019). The soils in the local area are the Brickfield 3 Association, being slowly permeable fine loam over clay (Jarvis *et al.* 1984; SSEW 1983).

4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 A description of the archaeological sites known to exist within the vicinity of the development was presented in the trial-trenching report compiled by ASDU (2019a, 3–4). A summary of this with addition relevant sites in the local area was provided within the WSI (NAA 2020a) and is presented below as a setting for the recorded archaeological remains.

Early prehistory

4.2 Although early human activity within the middle and upper sections of the Tees Valley is poorly understood (Petts and Gerrard 2006, fig. 13), the area is known to have been occupied and/or visited throughout early prehistory (Coggins 1986). The discovery of numerous Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age finds, along with the presence of cup-and-ring marked stones (Robinson 2016), burial monuments, a possible cursus near Gainford (Greg Speed, pers. comm.), cairnfields and settlements in Upper Teesdale and on Barningham Moor, highlight the potential for the area to contain previously undiscovered below-ground remains.

4.3 Bronze Age sites are more common in Upper Teesdale, especially on open moorland where later farming has not impacted the upstanding remains of round barrows, burnt mounds, field systems and settlements. Although no such remains had previously been recorded within the vicinity of the development, Bronze Age finds have been recovered from the Tees riverbank near Barnard Castle.

4.4 These finds include two bronze swords and a gold hair ornament discovered together on the banks of Gill Beck at Startforth. Additionally, a bronze spearhead was found close to a Bronze Age urn to the south of Barnard Castle at 'The Demesnes', which is public space on the banks of the Tees. The finds and the pottery recovered during the trial-trenching on the development site (ASDU 2019a) suggest wider utilisation of the area during this period.

Later prehistory and the Roman period

4.5 Few sites attributable to the Iron Age have been recorded in middle and Upper Teesdale (Petts and Gerrard 2006, fig. 19). It is likely, however, that the largely undated upstanding remains of fields enclosures, settlement enclosures and structures, particularly in the well-preserved landscapes of Upper Teesdale include at least some

remains of this period (Coggins 1986, 48; Harding 2004, 41; Petts and Gerrard 2006, 37).

- 4.6 Within the vicinity of the Winston Bridge development, three sites of a later prehistoric or Roman-period date are known. These are cropmark sites to the west and the north-east of the caravan park, and a hillfort 'Cockshot Camp' (Fig. 1) to the west of Ovington (Challis and Harding 1975, 48).
- 4.7 The first cropmark site comprises a sub-rectangular enclosure of possible prehistoric date. This was identified from aerial photographs and is located approximately 600m west of the site, on the opposite bank of the Tees. Further aerial photographic evidence shows another cropmark site, forming a rectilinear enclosure and associated field systems, to the south-west of Winston Bridge. This has been tentatively interpreted as a Roman fort protecting a river crossing (Plate 1, blue arrow); however, an irregular enclosure containing a circular feature visible to the immediate south-east (red arrow) could be a later prehistoric settlement (ASDU 2019a).



Plate 1: Aerial imagery showing cropmarks to the north-east of the site (blue arrow = rectilinear enclosure; red arrow = irregular enclosure; white arrow = Winston Bridge)

- 4.8 To the west of Ovington, the 'Cockshot Camp' earthworks (Fig. 1) probably represent the remnants of an Iron Age promontory fort (Challis and Harding 1975, 48). It is situated on a cliff above the River Tees and encompasses approximately 1.61ha. The visible earthworks comprise two ramparts and a ditch with entrances in the north and south sides and a hollow way leading up to the south-west corner. Additionally, a findspot of several Iron Age quern stones is known from Ovington.
- 4.9 It is likely, based on work elsewhere in County Durham (see Haselgrove 2016, 358–75; Wood and Robinson 2015, 36–8), that these known sites are just part of an intensively utilised later-prehistoric and Roman-period landscape.

The medieval and post-medieval periods (5th century to 1899)

- 4.10 Both Ovington and Winston are believed to have originated in the medieval period, and there are several medieval farmsteads in the vicinity. These include manor houses at Heighley Hall, 500m to the north-west, and Osmond Croft, approximately 1km to the west. Further evidence of medieval settlement in the area includes a chapel or hermitage at Heighley.
- 4.11 Winston Bridge (Plate 1, white arrow) is a Grade II* listed structure. It was designed by Sir Thomas Robinson and built in 1764. When it opened, it was thought to be the longest single-span bridge in Europe. Although there are no remains of earlier bridges there is documentary evidence of a medieval crossing at Winston. This, combined with the putative Roman fort to the south and possible Roman dressed stone used in the building of the church at Winston, could be evidence of a considerably older river crossing.
- 4.12 The area was probably in use as farmland throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods and remained agricultural land throughout the 19th and early 20th century.

The modern period (1900 to present)

- 4.13 Historic Ordnance Survey editions (not illustrated) show very little change within the site until the late 1960s or early 1970s, when a property called Westwood Field cottage and associated outbuildings and sheds were built.

Previous archaeological work

- 4.14 A geomagnetic survey was undertaken prior to the archaeological evaluation (ASDU 2019b). This identified possible soil-filled features of uncertain age and origin in the

eastern part of the site. Modern and existing features, including made-ground, landscaping, probable drains and possible services, were also detected.

- 4.15 The site was evaluated by trial-trenching in September 2019 (ASDU 2019a). The associated report stated that no archaeologically significant remains are present in the north-eastern and north-western areas of the site. In addition, it stated that the terminus of an early prehistoric ditch was exposed in Trench 7 (Fig. 3), on the southern side of the centre of the site, and further remains associated with this may be present in the vicinity.

5.0 UPDATED RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 Research objectives are set out within the regional research agenda (Petts and Gerrard 2006) and the fieldwork at Winston Bridge had the potential to inform several priorities relating to early and later prehistoric settlement, land use and burial practices. Due to the scarcity of archaeological features in the investigated areas, as well as the lack of artefacts and material suitable for radiocarbon dating, the project has made only a minor contribution to these research objectives. The project of mitigation works has, however, highlighted the potential for further important below-ground remains to exist in the vicinity.

6.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The aim of the archaeological strip, map and record was to identify the presence and location of archaeological remains within the area of development, and sample, excavate and record any such remains in order to achieve their 'preservation by record'.

- 6.2 The objectives of the archaeological work were to:

- establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of the feature identified during trial-trenching (ASDU 2019a);
- establish the presence, nature, extent, preservation and significance of any other archaeological remains within the vicinity of the feature;
- provide a detailed record of any such archaeological remains;

- recover and assess any associated structural, artefactual and environmental evidence;
- undertake a programme of investigation that meets with national and regional standards (Historic England 2015a; ClfA 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d); and
- prepare an illustrated report on the results of the archaeological investigations to be deposited with the DCC Historic Environment Record (HER).

7.0 METHODOLOGY

7.1 The detailed methodology was presented in previous reporting (NAA 2020a; 2020b); a summary of the relevant information is presented below.

Machine excavation

7.2 Excavation was undertaken using a back-acting excavator fitted with a toothless or ditching bucket under direct supervision of the monitoring archaeologist (Plate 2).



Plate 2: Machine removal of topsoil to the south-west of ASDU Trench 7 (facing east)

7.3 The mechanical excavator removed overburden (topsoil, turf and colluvium/agricultural subsoil) under archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation continued to a level at which significant archaeological deposits were identified or down to natural glacial clay deposits. This level was determined by the monitoring archaeologist.

Location and extent of strip, map and record trench

7.4 As stated in the addendum to the WSI (NAA 2020b), overburden was first removed from Area A (Fig. 2) to the immediate south-west of ASDU Trench 7 to locate feature F6. It was clear that this feature did not extend into this area (see section 8.0 Results).

7.5 Following this, the remaining two areas to the north-east (Area B) and north-west (Area C) were stripped of overburden. Other than modern features (field drains and a service trench), a single pit was encountered.

Hand excavation and recording

7.6 The area around the pit was cleaned and it was excavated by hand and recorded in accordance with current guidance (DCC 2019, section 4) and the WSI (NAA 2020a). A full and proper record (written, graphic and photographic) was made of the feature, using pro-forma record sheets and text descriptions appropriate to the work. Accurate scale plans and section drawings will be produced at 1:20 and 1:10 scales respectively. The location of the pit, together with the edges of the excavated areas, was surveyed by sub-centimetre accurate GPS. A photographic record of the work was taken in digital format at a minimum resolution of 12 megapixels; all photographs of the pit included a clearly visible, graduated metric scale. All photography followed current guidance (Historic England 2015b).

7.7 Finds were recovered, processed and stored in accordance with established guidelines (English Heritage 1995; Watkinson and Neal 2001; Baker and Worley 2019). Finds were appropriately recorded and processed using the NAA system and submitted for post-excavation assessment (see Appendix B). Palaeoenvironmental samples were taken and submitted to the NAA's environmental specialist for assessment of environmental potential (see Appendix C). This included examination for charcoal, small bones, cereal grains, pollen, molluscs and macro-environmental material. Recovery and sampling of environmental remains was in accordance with published guidelines (Campbell *et al.* 2011; English Heritage 2008b; 2010).

7.8 Suitable material for radiocarbon dating was not retrieved from the sampled contexts. The recovered charcoal fragments large enough for submission were identified as oak (see Appendix C), and hence would be subject to the 'old wood effect' (Waterbolk 1971).

8.0 RESULTS

8.1 Machine removal of overburden revealed yellow-brown glacial clay in all three areas. This was overlain by up to 0.3m of topsoil and turf in Areas A and C. In Area B, a layer of colluvium or a deposit of former topsoil was encountered beneath the topsoil. This was c.0.3m deep at the western edge of Area B but increased in depth to c.0.5m downslope to the north-east.

8.2 After the removal of topsoil, it was immediately clear that feature F6 did not extend into Area A (Plate 3; Fig. 4), undisturbed glacial clay was encountered across the majority of this area. The only disturbance visible were a modern field drain and service trench.

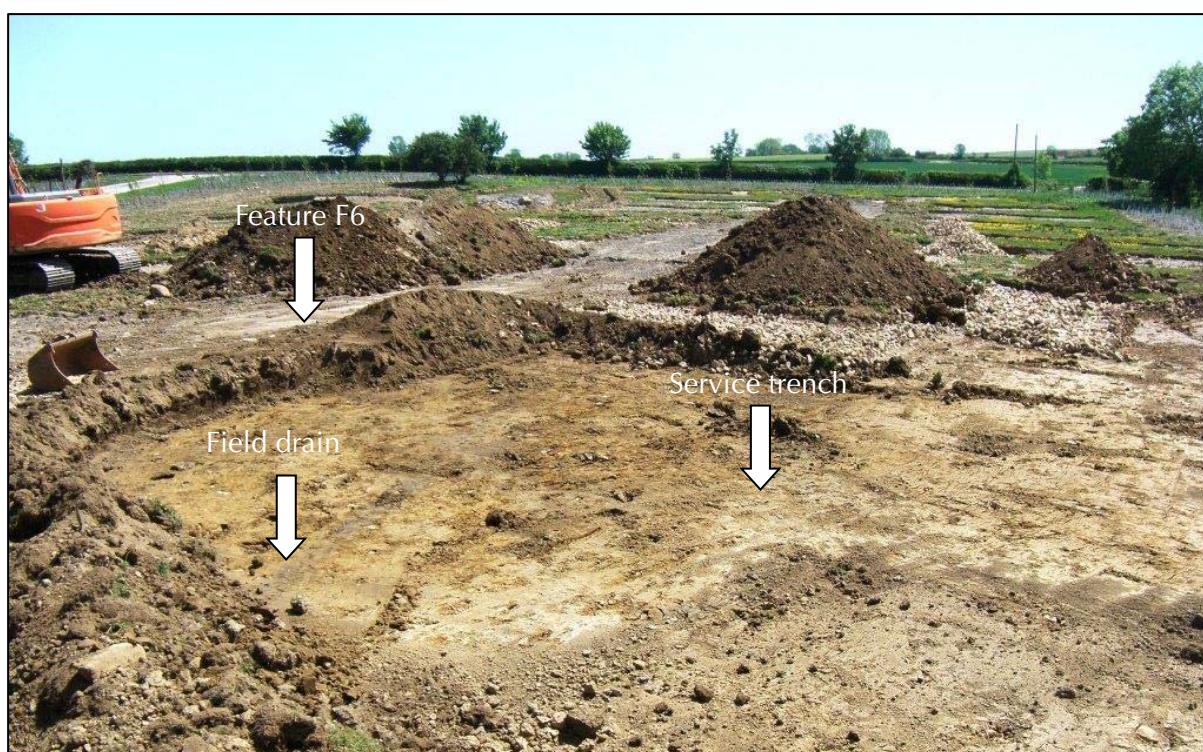


Plate 3: Excavated area to the south-west of feature F6 (facing east)

8.3 In Area B, a single sub-square pit (3) was encountered (Plate 4). This feature measured 0.75m by 0.8m by up to 0.44m deep and had steep sides and a flat base; its southern edge was steeply sloped, the other three sides were vertical. It was filled by four

deposits (4, 5, 6 and 7) that appeared to have been dumped into the feature, potentially to support a large post. The primary fill (7) was redeposited clay that had been placed against the lower northern edge. This was overlain by a mixed clay and silt deposit (6) that extended around the lower southern and eastern portions of the pit. Deposit 6 contained occasional large stones and flecks of charcoal. A similar, but darker deposit (4) had been placed in the western portion of the pit. All three of these fills were packed around an irregular broadly U-shaped post-void that had been filled with a dark silty deposit that contained charcoal and numerous large packing stones. A single piece of flint was recovered from this fill (see Appendix B), although this was probably not worked.



Plate 4: Pit 3 (facing south-east)

9.0 DISCUSSION

9.1 The strip map and record works demonstrated that feature F6, recorded during evaluation trial-trenching (ASDU 2019a), was not a ditch and did not extend into the areas investigated during the strip, map and record. This demonstrates the dangers of interpreting archaeological remains recorded within narrow trenches, without seeing

their full (or wider) extent. It is likely that feature F6 was a pit, or a tree-throw hole that contained dumped occupation waste from nearby activity.

- 9.2 The feature is fully described in the trial-trenching report (ASDU 2019a); in summary, it measured 3.7m by 0.95m by up to 0.34m deep and had a U-shaped profile in the recorded section. It is described as having two fills (though three were visible in the photograph) and the upper charcoal-rich deposit produced three abraded pottery sherds (8g), five very small fragments (<1g) of calcined bone, a single retouched chert flake, two fragments of heat-shattered stone, abundant charcoal (including oak, ash and hazel) and some charred hazel nutshells.
- 9.3 Pit 3 appeared to have supported a large post, which could have been related to occupation that produced the waste recovered from feature F6. A lack of dating evidence, however, means that the two features were not necessarily contemporary.
- 9.4 Together, feature F6 and pit 3 demonstrate some level of prehistoric activity in the vicinity, as well as the potential for further remains relating to this to exist in the local area. Considering the cropmarks to the north-east, the hillfort to the south-west and the lack of archaeological investigations in the surrounding fields, there is a strong potential for previously unknown prehistoric (and later) archaeological features to exist in this area. The nature, extent and date of this, however, remains elusive.

10.0 ARCHIVE

- 10.1 The site archive will contain all data collected during the investigative work including site records, copies of the relevant reports and any significant artefacts and environmental remains. It will be quantified, ordered, indexed, and internally consistent. Archiving work will be undertaken in accordance with national guidelines (Brown 2011; ClfA 2014b). The archiving of any digital data arising from the project will be undertaken in a manner consistent with professional standards and guidance (Archaeology Data Service/Digital Antiquity 2011).
- 10.2 An online OASIS form will be completed for the results of the works. This will include submission of a PDF version of the final report to the Archaeology Data Service via the OASIS form.
- 10.3 In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2019) para. 199, a copy of the site report and full site archive will be deposited with County Durham

Archaeological Archive, subject to the agreement of the landowner with respect to the finds. Deposition will be in accordance with written guidelines on archive standards and procedures (ClfA 2014b). NAA will liaise with the museum curator regarding requirements for ordering, boxing and labelling the archive. The archive will be maintained by NAA until deposition with the museum.

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APPENDIX A
CONTEXT AND FINDS CATALOGUE

Context	Interpretative description	Relationships	Finds and sample information (on site)
1	Topsoil		
2	Natural glacial clay		
3	Pit	Filled by 7, 6, 4 and 3	
4	Mixed clay fill of pit 3		
5	Upper fill of pit 3		Contained a worked flint and possible fragments of pottery; 10-litre soil sample taken
6	Mid-fill of pit 3		10-litre soil sample taken
7	Primary fill of pit 3		

APPENDIX B

THE LITHICS

Julie Shoemark

INTRODUCTION

Two stone objects and one flint object were recovered during archaeological investigations carried out in advance of the expansion of Winston Bridge caravan park.

METHOD

The finds were assessed by eye on 20th July 2020. They were examined using a hand lens at 20x to identify any working. All objects were assessed for anthropogenic, thermal and natural modification.

OUTLINE OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

Flint

A single flint object weighing 1.4g was recovered from fill 5 of pit 3. The object is a piece of heavily starch-fractured flint. It does not display any signs of human modification; however, the extent of starch fracturing across the surface is such that any trace may have been removed.

Stone

Two fragments of fossiliferous stone, probably limestone, containing corroded iron inclusions and weighing a total of 22.2g were recovered from fill 5 of pit 3. They do not show any sign of human modification.

DISCUSSION

None of the objects exhibit human modification and there is no evidence to suggest deliberate collection or curation. As such, the assemblage should be considered as being comprised of naturally occurring objects and cannot contribute further to an understanding of the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All three objects should be discarded as they cannot contribute further to the archaeological record.

APPENDIX C
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Robin Putland

INTRODUCTION

This assessment covers the charred plant remains assemblage from fills 5 and 6 of pit 3 from Winston Bridge. Two large fragments were identified to the genus *Quercus* (oak) as their size made them potential candidates from radiocarbon dating; however, due to the 'old wood effect' associated with oak they were not considered suitable for this purpose.

METHOD

The bulk environmental samples were processed at NAA with 0.5mm retention meshes using the Siraf method of flotation (Williams 1973). The plant remains were identified to species by as far as possible by using Cappers *et al.* (2006) and Jacomet (2006).

Two large fragments of charcoal were identified to genus, smaller fragments were weighed but not identified (Table C1) as they were not considered potential candidates for radiocarbon dating.

OUTLINE AND PROVENANCE OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

The assemblage comprised charred plant remains in the form of wood charcoal from two fills of pit 3, context 5 the upper fill and context 6 the mid-fill. Within the confines of this assessment no inferences can be drawn with regards to the source of the material.

Table C1: wood charcoal by weight

Context no.	cf <i>Quercus</i> (g)	Unidentified (g)
5	0.4	2.0
6	0.0	<0.01

DISCUSSION

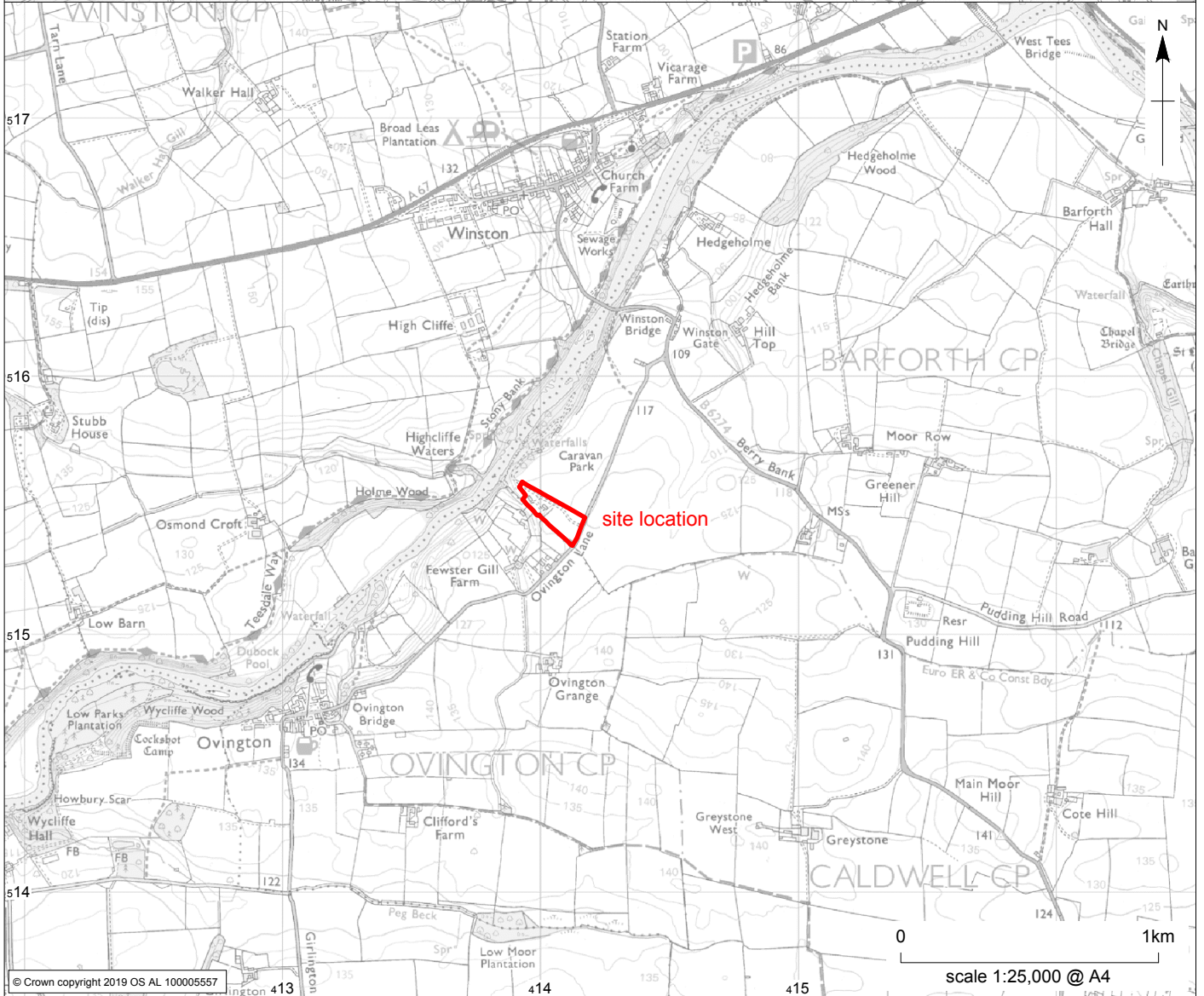
Two large fragments of wood charcoal were identified to genus as *Quercus* (oak). These two were the only positive identifications made from the assemblage due to their potential for radiocarbon dating. However, as oaks are long-lived species and charcoal is environmentally stable, radiocarbon dating of this material would probably be subject to the 'old wood effect' and is therefore not suitable. The assemblage does highlight the high quality of preservation within the fills of charred plant remains, in particular wood charcoal which with further investigation in the area could yield a statistically viable assemblage for analysis of wood use and forestry practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The assemblage has potential for further species identification if required and should therefore be stored for further research.

REFERENCES

- Cappers R. T. J., Bekker R. M. and Jans J. E. A. (2006) *Digitale Zadenatlas Van Nederland: Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands*. Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing.
- Jacomet S. (2006) *Identification of cereal remains from archaeological sites (2nd Ed.)*. Archaeobotany Lab, IPAS. Basel University.
- Williams D. (1973) 'Flotation at Siraf.' *Antiquity* **47**, 198-202.



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Winston Bridge: site location

Figure 1



Winston Bridge: location of NAA mitigation excavation areas

Figure 2

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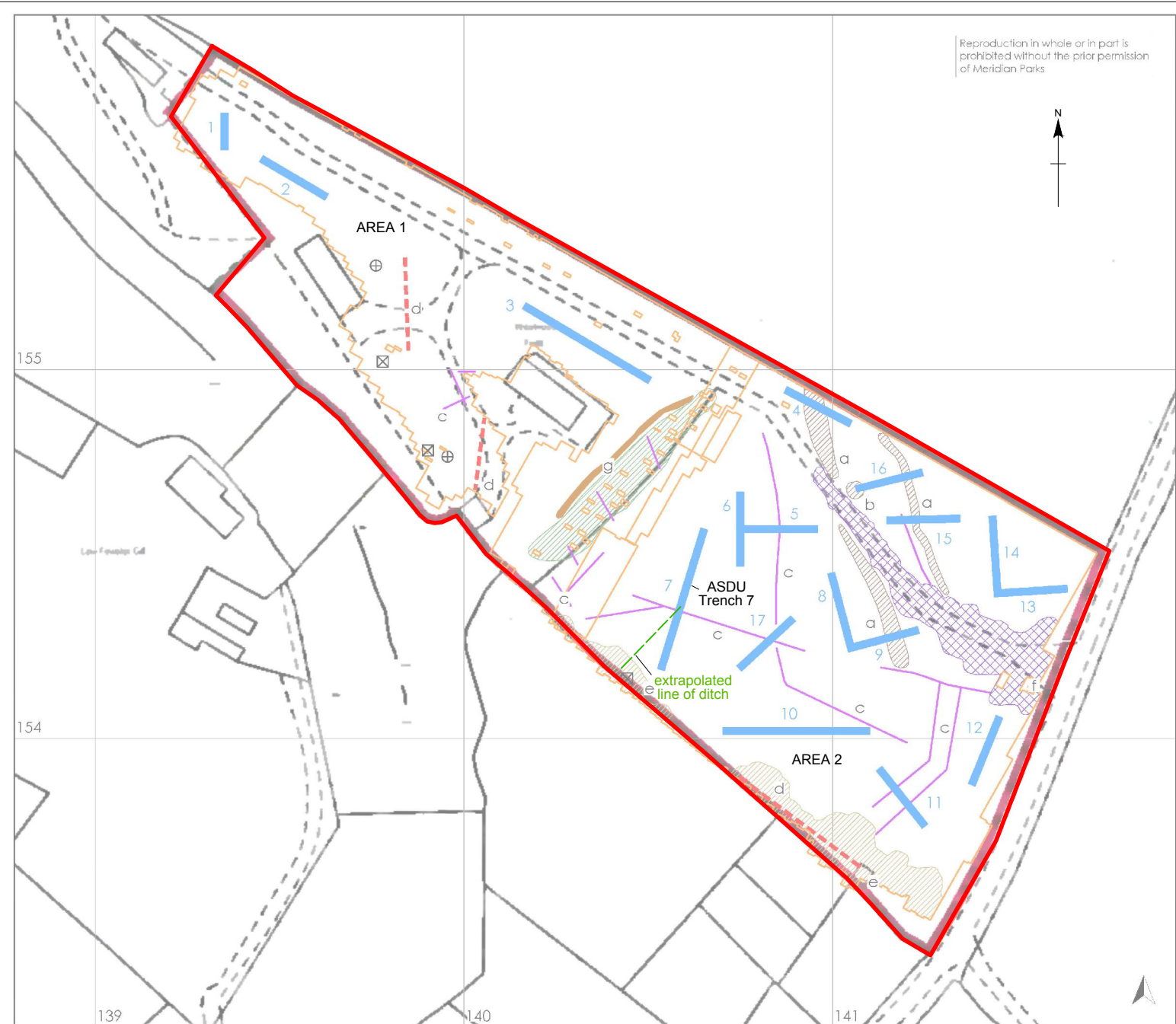
on behalf of
Meridian Parks

Winston Bridge
Ovington
County Durham
archaeological evaluation
report 5149

Figure 2: Trench locations

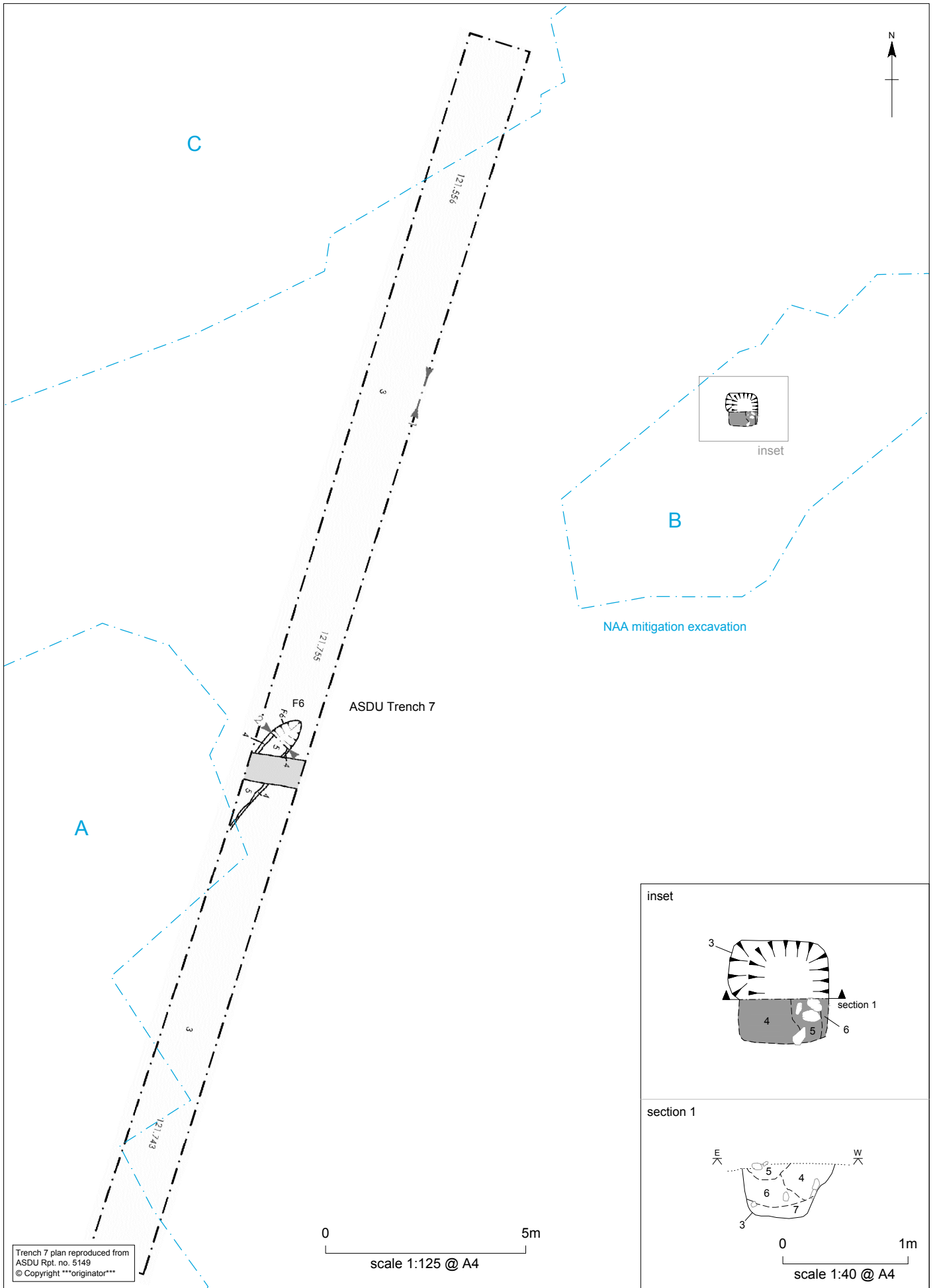
0 50m

- magnetic survey
- soil-filled feature
- disturbed area
- trees
- landscaped bank
- trench
- made ground
- services
- drains
- telegraph pole
- inspection cover



Winston Bridge: geophysical survey results and ASDU trench locations

Figure 3



Trench 7 plan reproduced from ASDU Rpt. no. 5149 © Copyright ***originator***

Winston Bridge: excavated features

Figure 4