

# **BAMBURGH RESEARCH PROJECT**

## **LAND AT THE FRIARS BAMBURGH NORTHUMBERLAND**



## **REPORT ON TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

Compiled for Mr Graeme Ash by The Bamburgh Research Project: Commercial Projects Section

BRP 15/04c

December 2015

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## SUMMARY

*This document has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project (BRP) for Mr Graeme Ash during December 2015 and details the results of the trial trench evaluation undertaken on land at The Friars, Bamburgh, Northumberland. The work was undertaken in compliance with a WSI prepared by BRP in October 2015 and in order to fulfil a requirement for an archaeological evaluation in advance of the consideration of the planning application. The present study represents the second phase in a process of archaeological assessment and is intended to provide evidence to inform the design process and also to assess the need for additional work to be conducted, prior to the submission and determination of a planning decision.*

*The proposed development area lies on the extreme western edge of the urban area of Bamburgh Village, which lies 7km east of Belford in north east Northumberland. The site is currently a pasture field to the immediate east of The Friars and is centred on grid reference NU 1738 3479 (Figures 1 and 2).*

*The site in front of The Friars is currently an overgrown meadow, trapezoidal in plan and measuring 60m east to west by 125m north to south, being some 6,700m<sup>2</sup> in area. It is relatively even and slopes noticeable, but not steeply, down from north-west to south-east (Figure 2).*

*The Historic Environment Record (HER) report for the vicinity of the site, to a radius of 1km shows that fifty six of the seventy eight entries are of post-medieval date, including numerous listed buildings and World War II defensive items. Five items are of prehistoric date, including evidence for Mesolithic activity, Bronze Age burial and probably Iron Age cropmarks, indicative of a settled landscape. With the exception of two, undated features, the remaining fifteen items are of early medieval and medieval date, underlining the importance of Bamburgh in the medieval period. A Dominican friary (HER 5353), founded in AD 1265, lay some 300m west of St Aidan's church at Friars Farm, immediately east of the proposed development site. The original land holding was not recorded but Henry III granted an additional seven acres to the friars in the year of its foundation (Bateson 1893, 138-142). Six additional acres 'in the old mill pond of Bamburgh' and four more in the 'Greenwellflat' were granted in 1266. Parts of the medieval fabric of the main friary buildings survived and were incorporated into the post medieval Friary Farm. In a survey of c.1715 mention was made of a "Friary with a church in ruins, length 42 (yards), breadth 7 (yards)" (Hodgson, 4). A sketch made c. 1780, and now held by the Bodleian Library, show the structure of the friary church as a substantial ruin. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 saw the friary and its lands pass into secular hands. Prior to 1560 it was in the possession of Thomas Horsley, but in that year passed to Nicholas Pynd and Thomas Reve. It is clear from the documents listing the lands that they were distributed about the open fields of Bamburgh, which may mean that the friary site itself may not have been extensive.*

*Burials and some of the structural remains were identified by excavation at Friary Farm in the 1960s. First by the discovery of burials in 1967, during construction of grain storage bins, and later during excavation by Dr Brian Hope-Taylor in 1969. Sadly few records of these interventions survive (HER 5253). Further archaeological work was undertaken at the time of the construction of the recent housing development in 1992, when fabric of the north and east walls of the church were identified within the farm buildings, 0.8m wide at the base and surviving up to 5.5m in height. The cloister to the south of the church has been estimated as 16m square, but the exact line of the east side has not been identified. The west wall of the*

west range of the farm is thought to have been in part medieval, and an archway is thought to mark the entrance to an outer western court. The full extent of the friary precinct is not known and no trace of the precinct boundary or gate has been identified (*ibid*).

Historical records and cartographic evidence place the site immediately to the west of the known focus of the medieval Dominican Friary. What is much less certain is the extent of the boundary of the friary site in the medieval period. The limited cartographic evidence depicts the boundary between the site and Friary Farm as present from the earliest detailed maps. This together with the fact that the boundary continues two fields further to the south, as far as Lucker Road, could be seen as evidence that it represents a long lived feature. The presence of ridge and furrow cultivation on the site area can be seen as supporting evidence that the site lay beyond the friary precinct, on cultivated ground. The Mill Burn (Spital Burn) forms the southern boundary to the present site and extends to the east into the area of the friary. Cartographic evidence demonstrates the presence of a pond, perhaps the mill pond mentioned in the medieval endowment of the friary. The pond was filled in before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the adjacent trees will have substantially de-watered the ground.

Eight trenches were excavated in total, all 30m by 1.5m with the exception of Trench 3 which was 20m by 1.5m. They were distributed to give a wide coverage of the site with an emphasis on the eastern boundary, close to the known focus of the friary site. The majority of the trenches were oriented north to south (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7) with Trench 4 oriented east to west and Trench 8 south-west to north-east. Topsoil over the trenches was a dark grey-brown sandy silt throughout and no features of archaeological interest were identified within Trenches 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Figure 3).

Trench 2 contained a single feature of interest 7m south of the north end of the trench. It was a stone constructed drain (203) extending broadly east to west and was 1.3m wide, north to south and extended across the trench for 1.5m continuing beyond the excavation in both directions. It was constructed with two parallel rows of roughly squared and roughly dressed sandstone blocks with a 0.3m to 0.35m channel between them, the upper surface at 24.39m OD. The fill (202) of the channel was half sectioned and a flat stone slab exposed at the base. No top capping stones were seen and the single fill of the feature, which was 0.15m thick comprised a very stony red-brown sandy silt. No dating evidence was present, but the dressing of the stone blocks appears to be post-medieval in style and as far as a superficial examination could determine, similar in form to the surviving farm structures to the east (Figure 3 and Plate 10). Trench 7 revealed a series of medium to large undressed sandstone blocks (701), present 2m from the north end of the trench. They crossed the trench on an east to west alignment and appear to represent a crudely constructed drain. A cut would almost certainly have been present, but was not seen in either plan or section.

A single feature comprising a spread of cinder and ash (801) was present within Trench 8, 10m south-west of the north-east end of the trench, at 26.17m OD. The layer was thin, c. 0.05m in thickness and partly removed by machine, as it was encountered. No finds were associated with the deposit and it appeared to represent a simple spread. The feature is thought to represent remnants of a crude path extending from a gate in the east wall of the field across the site, on an east to west alignment, as depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS. It would also have passed across Trench 1, but no trace of ash was seen here leading to the assumption that it had previously eroded (Figure 3).

Few features were identified during the trial trenching, and none of significance. The stone drain (203) was the most interesting and, given its likely post-medieval date, is best seen as

*extending from Friary Farm, perhaps draining from that site into what is likely, from the high winter water table encountered, to be land prone to intermittent flooding.*

*The water table was high, leading to standing water accumulating extensively in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 and to a lesser extent in the lower lying parts of the other trenches with the exception of Trench 8. The trenching was undertaken at the end of November, and during a period of consistent rain, but the presence of the water table only centimetres below the ground surface in the south and east part of the site may be significant in accounting for the relative lack of archaeological features as the water table is unlikely to have been lower in the medieval period and earlier. Indeed the presence of a pond-like area of water depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, to the immediate south-east of the site would in part support this.*

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BAMBURGH  
NORTHUMBERLAND  
REPORT ON  
TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.0.1 This document has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project (BRP) for Mr Graeme Ash during December 2015 and details the results of the trial trench evaluation undertaken on land at The Friars, Bamburgh, Northumberland.
- 1.0.2 The work was undertaken in compliance with a WSI prepared by BRP in October 2015 and in order to fulfil a requirement for an archaeological evaluation in advance of the consideration of the planning application. The present study represents the second phase in a process of archaeological assessment and is intended to provide evidence to inform the design process and also to assess the need for additional work to be conducted, prior to the submission and determination of a planning decision.

### **1.1 Location**

- 1.1.1 The proposed development area lies on the extreme western edge of the urban area of Bamburgh Village, which lies 7km east of Belford in north east Northumberland. The site is currently a pasture field to the immediate east of The Friars and is centred on grid reference NU 1738 3479 (Figures 1 and 2).

## **2.0 THE SITE**

### **2.2 Description**

- 2.1.1 The site in front of The Friars is currently an overgrown meadow, trapezoidal in plan and measuring 60m east to west by 125m north to south, being some 6,700m<sup>2</sup> in area. It is relatively even and slopes noticeable, but not steeply, down from north-west to south-east (Figure 2).

### **2.2 Archaeological background**

- 2.2.1 The Historic Environment Record (HER) report for the vicinity of the site, to a radius of 1km shows that fifty six of the seventy eight entries are of post-medieval date, including numerous listed buildings and World War II defensive items. Five items are of prehistoric date, including evidence for Mesolithic activity, Bronze Age burial and probably Iron Age cropmarks, indicative of a settled landscape. With the exception of two, undated features, the remaining fifteen items are of early medieval and medieval date, underlining the importance of Bamburgh in the medieval period.
- 2.2.2 Bamburgh like Edinburgh and Dumbarton is believed, from documentary evidence, to

have formed a focus to a British kingdom in the immediate post-Roman period. Anglo-Saxon settlement is thought to have begun at Bamburgh in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century (H.E., 562). By the 7<sup>th</sup> century Bamburgh had become the pre-eminent centre of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty that came to dominate Northumbria. It is clear from archaeological and documentary sources that an early medieval site of international importance lies beneath the castle. It is also highly probable that an early medieval site also lies in the area of the modern village. While references to Bamburgh in pre-conquest documents use the Latin term *urbs* (walled city) to denote the residence of the kings, Bede notes the existence of a separate but closely linked settlement nearby. St. Aidan is stated as having died within a church in a royal *vill* (*villa regis*) near to the *urbs* of Bamburgh. Royal *vills* were the centres of extensive estates, to which the local populace owed service and taxes (Campbell 1979, 44). The present parish church at Bamburgh (HER 5257) is unique as the only known medieval dedication to St. Aidan. This, together with its position, strongly suggests that the church in which St. Aidan died was the predecessor of the present parish church, and that a royal *vill* or estate centre lies under the present village (Cambridge 1995, 136-8).

- 2.2.3 A number of medieval features and sites are known to have been present in and around the site of the present village. The church of St Aidan located at the west side of the village (HER 5257) contains structural work of the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Masonry believed to be a part of The Master of Bamburgh's Tower, first noted in AD 1415, is preserved within the east wall of the churchyard (HER 5258). A cell of Augustinian canons was founded at Bamburgh in AD 1121. Masonry remains now built into the farm buildings adjacent to Bamburgh Hall are noted as possibly representing part of the monastic buildings (HER 24160). A borough is known from documentary sources to have been present at Bamburgh during the medieval period. The names of six streets within the town are mentioned by these records. The post-medieval history of the village is dominated by its ownership by a series of great estates beginning with the purchase of the castle and village by Nathaniel Crewe, Bishop of Durham, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was purchased by the first Lord Armstrong in 1888 and remains in the ownership of the Trustees of Lord Armstrong to the present.
- 2.2.4 A Dominican friary (HER 5353), founded in AD 1265, lay some 300m west of St Aidan's church at Friars Farm, immediately east of the proposed development site. The original land holding was not recorded but Henry III granted an additional seven acres to the friars in the year of its foundation (Bateson 1893, 138-142). Six additional acres 'in the old mill pond of Bamburgh' and four more in the 'Greenwellflat' were granted in 1266. Parts of the medieval fabric of the main friary buildings survived and were incorporated into the post medieval Friary Farm. In a survey of c.1715 mention was made of a "Friary with a church in ruins, length 42 (yards), breadth 7 (yards)" (Hodgson, 4). A sketch made c. 1780, and now held by the Bodleian Library, show the structure of the friary church as a substantial ruin. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 saw the friary and its lands pass into secular hands. Prior to 1560 it was in the possession of Thomas Horsley, but in that year passed to Nicholas Pynd and Thomas Reve. It is clear from the documents listing the lands that they were distributed about the open fields of Bamburgh, which may mean that the friary site itself may not have been extensive. The estate passed to the Forsters from the Widdringtons and from them to Lord Crewe and in turn to the Armstrong Estate.

- 2.2.5 Speed's map of AD 1610 depicts Bamburgh in a stylised fashion and is unable to contribute any information regarding the layout of the village. Armstrong's map of AD 1769 is the first to depict the village with any detail, showing the triangular plan of the village green and an indication of houses along the streets, together with the church and the ruins of the friary at the west end of the village. Fryers map of AD 1820 has little to add but Greenwood's map of AD 1828 depicts the village in somewhat greater detail, confirming the presence of the core of the village, as it exists to the present day, and depicts buildings at the friary site. The Tithe map of AD 1846 and the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, of c. AD 1860, are the first to depict the village with any reliable detail. The Friars and the farm buildings at Friary Farm are both depicted, but the proposed development site is shown as open ground. The first edition does appear to show that the burn extended out to form a pond to the immediate south of the site and it is conceivable that this may be the Mill Pond of Bamburgh associated with the Henry III land grant of 1265. Though a further two ponds appear to be present to the north of the glebe. It may be significant that the boundary between the Friars and Friary Farm follows its present line, indicating a long lived boundary (BRP 2015, 14/05b).
- 2.2.6 Burials and some of the structural remains were identified by excavation at Friary Farm in the 1960s. First by the discovery of burials in 1967, during construction of grain storage bins, and later during excavation by Dr Brian Hope-Taylor in 1969. Sadly few records of these interventions survive (HER 5253). Further archaeological work was undertaken at the time of the construction of the recent housing development in 1992, when fabric of the north and east walls of the church were identified within the farm buildings, 0.8m wide at the base and surviving up to 5.5m in height. The cloister to the south of the church has been estimated as 16m square, but the exact line of the east side has not been identified. The west wall of the west range of the farm is thought to have been in part medieval, and an archway is thought to mark the entrance to an outer western court. The full extent of the friary precinct is not known and no trace of the precinct boundary or gate has been identified (ibid).
- 2.2.7 Historical records and cartographic evidence place the site immediately to the west of the known focus of the medieval Dominican Friary. What is much less certain is the extent of the boundary of the friary site in the medieval period. The limited cartographic evidence depicts the boundary between the site and Friary Farm as present from the earliest detailed maps. This together with the fact that the boundary continues two fields further to the south, as far as Lucker Road, could be seen as evidence that it represents a long lived feature. The presence of ridge and furrow cultivation on the site area can be seen as supporting evidence that the site lay beyond the friary precinct, on cultivated ground. The Mill Burn (Spital Burn) forms the southern boundary to the present site and extends to the east into the area of the friary. Cartographic evidence demonstrates the presence of a pond, perhaps the mill pond mentioned in the medieval endowment of the friary. This raises the possibility that waterlogged material could be preserved towards the southern boundary of the site. The pond was filled in before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the adjacent trees will have substantially de-watered the ground, but the prospect that some preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains by water-logging could remain in the extreme south of the site cannot be ruled out. To the north, within the general area of



the site, such preservation is very unlikely given the know free draining nature of the soils of the Bamburgh area.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Trial Trench Evaluation**

3.1.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of eight trial trenches, located to investigate the area to be impacted by the footprint of the proposed development and to provide a representative sample of the site to a safe working depth or to subsoil.

3.1.3 All work was carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2010) and their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (IfA 2008), and Field Evaluation (IfA 2008).

3.1.4 The excavation of the trenches was undertaken using a machine with a toothless bucket, in controlled spits, until features of archaeological interest were encountered or subsoil reached. Excavation was subsequently undertaken by appropriately trained members of the archaeological staff, excavating by hand.

#### **3.2 General standards**

3.2.1 All archaeological features identified were to be sample excavated according to their type and form.

50% of all discrete features.

25% of the area of a linear/curvilinear features with a non-uniform fill.

10% of the area of linear/curvilinear features with a uniform fill.

3.2.2 A 40 litre bulk palaeoenvironmental sample would be taken from any features recognised as suitable for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.

3.2.3 Secure contexts would be sampled for dating where appropriate, whether on site or as sub samples of bulk samples. Any concentrations of charcoal or other carbonised material recovered on site would be retained. Provision will be made for the use of archaeomagnetic dating on appropriate features, should they be identified.

3.2.4 Pottery and Animal Bone would be collected as bulk samples whilst significant artefacts will be three-dimensionally recorded prior to processing. All finds recorded and processed according to the BRP system and submitted for post-excavation assessment. Finds recovery and storage strategies would be in accordance with published guidelines (English Heritage 1995 and IfA Guidelines for Finds Work).

3.2.5 In the event of Human burials being revealed they would be left *in situ* and treated in an appropriate manner. After consultation with the County Archaeological Officer, if excavation was required, work would comply with the relevant home Office regulations.

3.2.6 Any archaeological features encountered would be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded:

1. A photographic record will be taken using black and white print, colour slide film at 35mm format. In addition a digital photographic record will be compiled and provision made for deposition with the ADS as part of the site archive.
  2. A written description of features will be recorded using the BRP *pro forma* context recording system.
  3. All features will be drawn at an appropriate scale using pre-printed permatrace. Plans will normally be drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10.
- 3.2.7 All archaeological features and horizons were accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels were tied in to Ordnance Datum.
- 3.2.8 Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive within 6 month of the completion of the post-excavation report.

## 4.0 EXCAVATION RESULTS

4.0.1 Eight trenches were excavated in total, all 30m by 1.5m with the exception of Trench 3 which was 20m by 1.5m. They were distributed to give a wide coverage of the site with an emphasis on the eastern boundary, close to the known focus of the friary site. The majority of the trenches were oriented north to south (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7) with Trench 4 oriented east to west and Trench 8 south-west to north-east. Topsoil over the trenches was a dark grey-brown sandy silt throughout (Figure 3).

### 4.1 Trench 1

4.1.0 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m and comprised a red brown sandy silt (101). A single large sandstone block was present protruding from the subsoil at the north end of the trench. It was un-worked and not within a cut and almost certainly represented a glacial feature.

### 4.2 Trench 2

4.2.1 The subsoil was encountered between 0.25 and 0.3m below the topsoil and comprised a dark red-brown sand and silt with some patches of gleying causing variant colours at the south end of the trench (204). In localised patches a thin layer of marl was removed during the machine excavation (201). It seems unlikely that this material formed *in situ*, despite the high winter water table, it seems likely that the material derived from activity in the vicinity and was dumped on site.

4.2.2 A single feature of interest was encountered 7m south of the north end of the trench. It was a stone constructed drain (203) extending broadly east to west and was 1.3m wide, north to south and extended across the trench for 1.5m continuing beyond the excavation in both directions. It was constructed with two parallel rows of roughly squared and roughly dressed sandstone blocks with a 0.3m to 0.35m channel between them, the upper surface at 24.39m OD. The fill (202) of the channel was half sectioned and a flat stone slab exposed at the base. No top capping stones were seen and the single fill of the feature, which was 0.15m thick comprised a very stony red-brown sandy silt. As the fill was mostly stone fragments and roots were seen penetrating to the base it was deemed too contaminated to sample. No dating evidence was present but the dressing of the stone blocks appears to be post-medieval in style and as far as a superficial examination could determine, similar in form to the surviving farm structures to the east (Figure 3 and Plate 10).

### 4.3 Trench 3

4.3.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m and comprised a red brown sandy silt (301) with much evidence of gleying colouration in places. No feature of interest were encountered.

### 4.4 Trench 4

4.4.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m and comprised a red brown sand and silt (401) with some evidence of gleying colouration in places. No feature of interest were encountered.

#### **4.5 Trench 5**

- 4.5.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m to 0.3m and comprised a red brown silty sand (501). No feature of interest were encountered.

#### **4.6 Trench 6**

- 4.6.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m to 0.35m and comprised a red brown sand and silt (601). No feature of interest were encountered.

#### **4.7 Trench 7**

- 4.7.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m to 0.35m and comprised a red brown sand and silt (702). A series of medium to large undressed sandstone blocks (701) were present 2m from the north end of the trench. They crossed the trench on an east to west alignment and appear to represent a crudely constructed drain. A cut would almost certainly have been present, but was not seen in either plan or section. A section of the subsoil was excavated to 1m below ground level, by machine, immediately to the north of 701, in order to confirm that colluvial material had not build up on site (Figure 3 and Plate 9).

#### **4.8 Trench 8**

- 4.8.1 Subsoil within the trench was exposed at c. 0.25m to 0.30m and comprised a red brown sand and silt (802). A single feature comprising a spread of cinder and ash (801) was present 10m south-west of the north-east end of the trench at 26.17m OD. The layer was thin, c. 0.05m in thickness and partly removed by machine, as it was encountered. No finds were associated with the deposit and it appeared to represent a simple spread. The feature is thought to represent remnants of a crude path extending from a gate in the east wall of the field across the site, on an east to west alignment, as depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS. It would also have passed across Trench 1, but no trace of ash was seen here leading to the assumption that it had previously eroded (Figure 3).

### **5.0 DISCUSSION**

- 5.0.1 Few features were identified during the trial trenching, and none of significance. The stone drain (203) was the most interesting and, given its likely post-medieval date, is best seen as extending from Friary Farm, perhaps draining from that site into what is likely, from the high winter water table encountered, to be land prone to intermittent flooding. The drain did not extend as far as Trench 5 so likely terminated between the trenches. The cinder path (801) can be seen on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS leading to The Friars and logically would be contemporary in date to that building (Figure 2).
- 5.0.2 The water table was high, leading to standing water accumulating extensively in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 and to a lesser extent in the lower lying parts of the other trenches with the exception of Trench 8. The trenching was undertaken at the end of November, and during a period of consistent rain, but the presence of the water table only centimetres below the ground surface in the south and east part of the site may be significant in accounting for the relative lack of archaeological features as the

water table is unlikely to have been lower in the medieval period and earlier. Indeed the presence of a pond-like area of water depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, to the immediate south-east of the site would in part support this. No indication of waterlogged deposits were seen, but the presence of such material close to the southern boundary cannot be ruled out.

## **6.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.0.1 The relatively high water table and the presence of the drain features is indicative of the development site lying on land that is likely in the past to have been prone to intermittent flooding. This would account for the general lack of archaeological material identified within the evaluation by very much limiting its attractiveness for occupation.

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## **APPENDIX I: WRITTEN SCHEDULE OF EXCAVATION**

### **LAND AT THE FRIARS BAMBURGH NORTHUMBERLAND TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.0.1 This document has been compiled by The Bamburgh Research Project (BRP) for Mr Graeme Ash during October 2015 and comprises a Written Schedule of Investigation for the trial trench evaluation of a site adjacent to The Friars, Bamburgh, Northumberland, currently proposed for a housing development.
- 1.0.2 The document has been prepared in order to fulfil a requirement for an archaeological evaluation in advance of the consideration of the planning application, and in order to inform the decision. The present study represents the second phase in a process of archaeological assessment. It will provide evidence to inform the design process and also to assess the need for additional work to be conducted, prior to the submission and determination of an application.

#### **1.1 Location**

- 1.1.1 The proposed development area lies on the extreme western edge of the urban area of Bamburgh Village, which lies 7km east of Belford in north east Northumberland. The site is currently a pasture field to the immediate east of The Friars and is centred on grid reference NU 1738 3479 (Figures 1 and 2).

#### **2.0 THE SITE**

##### **2.3 Description**

- 2.1.1 The site in front of The Friars is currently an overgrown meadow, trapezoidal in plan and measuring 60m east to west by 125m north to south, being some 6,700m<sup>2</sup> in area. It is relatively even and slopes noticeable, but not steeply, down from north-west to south-east (Figure 2).

##### **2.2 Archaeological background**

- 2.2.1 The Historic Environment Record (HER) report for the vicinity of the site, to a radius of 1km shows that fifty six of the seventy eight entries are of post-medieval date, including numerous listed buildings and World War II defensive items. Five items are of prehistoric date, including evidence for Mesolithic activity, Bronze Age burial and probably Iron Age cropmarks, indicative of a settled landscape. With the exception of two, undated features, the remaining fifteen items are of early medieval and medieval date, underlining the importance of Bamburgh in the medieval period.
- 2.2.2 Bamburgh like Edinburgh and Dumbarton is believed, from documentary evidence, to have formed a focus to a British kingdom in the immediate post-Roman period. Anglo-Saxon settlement is thought to have begun at Bamburgh in the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century (H.E., 562). By the 7<sup>th</sup> century Bamburgh had become the pre-eminent centre of the Anglo-Saxon dynasty that came to dominate Northumbria. It is clear from archaeological and documentary sources that an early medieval site of international importance lies beneath the castle. It is also highly probably

that an early medieval site also lies in the area of the modern village. While references to Bamburgh in pre-conquest documents use the Latin term *urbs* (walled city) to denote the residence of the kings, Bede notes the existence of a separate but closely linked settlement nearby. St. Aidan is stated as having died within a church in a royal *vill* (*villa regis*) near to the *urbs* of Bamburgh. Royal *vills* were the centres of extensive estates, to which the local populace owed service and taxes (Campbell 1979, 44). The present parish church at Bamburgh (HER 5257) is unique as the only known medieval dedication to St. Aidan. This, together with its position, strongly suggests that the church in which St. Aidan died was the predecessor of the present parish church, and that a royal *vill* or estate centre lies under the present village (Cambridge 1995, 136- 8).

- 2.2.3 A number of medieval features and sites are known to have been present in and around the site of the present village. The church of St Aidan located at the west side of the village (HER 5257) contains structural work of the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Masonry believed to be a part of The Master of Bamburgh's Tower, first noted in AD 1415, is preserved within the east wall of the churchyard (HER 5258). A cell of Augustinian canons was founded at Bamburgh in AD 1121. Masonry remains now built into the farm buildings adjacent to Bamburgh Hall are noted as possibly representing part of the monastic buildings (HER 24160). A borough is known from documentary sources to have been present at Bamburgh during the medieval period. The names of six streets within the town are mentioned by these records. The post-medieval history of the village is dominated by its ownership by a series of great estates beginning with the purchase of the castle and village by Nathaniel Crewe, Bishop of Durham, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was purchased by the first Lord Armstrong in 1888 and remains in the ownership of the Trustees of Lord Armstrong to the present.
- 2.2.4 A Dominican friary (HER 5353), founded in AD 1265, lay some 300m west of St Aidan's church at Friars Farm, immediately east of the proposed development site. The original land holding was not recorded but Henry III granted an additional seven acres to the friars in the year of its foundation (Bateson 1893, 138-142). Six additional acres 'in the old mill pond of Bamburgh' and four more in the 'Greenwellflat' were granted in 1266. Parts of the medieval fabric of the main friary buildings survived and were incorporated into the post medieval Friary Farm. In a survey of c.1715 mention was made of a "Friary with a church in ruins, length 42 (yards), breadth 7 (yards)" (Hodgson, 4). A sketch made c. 1780, and now held by the Bodleian Library, show the structure of the friary church as a substantial ruin. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 saw the friary and its lands pass into secular hands. Prior to 1560 it was in the possession of Thomas Horsley, but in that year passed to Nicholas Pynd and Thomas Reve. It is clear from the documents listing the lands that they were distributed about the open fields of Bamburgh, which may mean that the friary site itself may not have been extensive. The estate passed to the Forsters from the Widdringtons and from them to Lord Crewe and in turn to the Armstrong Estate.
- 2.2.5 Speed's map of AD 1610 depicts Bamburgh in a stylised fashion and is unable to contribute any information regarding the layout of the village. Armstrong's map of AD 1769 is the first to depict the village with any detail, showing the triangular plan of the village green and an indication of houses along the streets, together with the church and the ruins of the friary at the west end of the village. Fryers map of AD 1820 has little to add but Greenwood's map of AD 1828 depicts the village in somewhat greater detail, confirming the presence of the core of the village, as it exists to the present day, and depicts buildings at the friary site. The Tithe map of AD 1846 and the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, of c. AD 1860, are the first to depict the village with any reliable detail. The Friars and the farm buildings at Friary Farm are both depicted, but the proposed development site is shown as open ground. The first edition does appear to show that the burn extended out to form a pond to the immediate south of the site and it is conceivable that this may be the Mill Pond of Bamburgh associated with the Henry III land grant of 1265. Though a further two ponds appear to be present to the north of the glebe. It may be significant that the boundary between the Friars and Friary Farm follows its present line, indicating a long lived boundary (BRP 2015, 14/05b).



- 2.2.6 Burials and some of the structural remains were identified by excavation at Friary Farm in the 1960s. First by the discovery of burials in 1967, during construction of grain storage bins, and later during excavation by Dr Brian Hope-Taylor in 1969. Sadly few records of these interventions survive (HER 5253). Further archaeological work was undertaken at the time of the construction of the recent housing development in 1992, when fabric of the north and east walls of the church were identified within the farm buildings, 0.8m wide at the base and surviving up to 5.5m in height. The cloister to the south of the church has been estimated as 16m square, but the exact line of the east side has not been identified. The west wall of the west range of the farm is thought to have been in part medieval, and an archway is thought to mark the entrance to an outer western court. The full extent of the friary precinct is not known and no trace of the precinct boundary or gate has been identified (ibid).
- 2.2.7 Historical records and cartographic evidence place the site immediately to the west of the known focus of the medieval Dominican Friary. What is much less certain is the extent of the boundary of the friary site in the medieval period. The limited cartographic evidence depicts the boundary between the site and Friary Farm as present from the earliest detailed maps. This together with the fact that the boundary continues two fields further to the south, as far as Lucker Road, could be seen as evidence that it represents a long lived feature. The presence of ridge and furrow cultivation on the site area can be seen as supporting evidence that the site lay beyond the friary precinct, on cultivated ground. The Mill Burn (Spital Burn) forms the southern boundary to the present site and extends to the east into the area of the friary. Cartographic evidence demonstrates the presence of a pond, perhaps the mill pond mentioned in the medieval endowment of the friary. This raises the possibility that waterlogged material could be preserved towards the southern boundary of the site. The pond was filled in before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the adjacent trees will have substantially de-watered the ground, but the prospect that some preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains by water-logging could remain in the extreme south of the site cannot be ruled out. To the north, within the general area of the site, such preservation is very unlikely given the know free draining nature of the soils of the Bamburgh area.

### **2.3 Impact of the development**

- 2.3.1 Bamburgh is noted within the North East Region Research Framework for the Historic Environment (Petts and Gerrard 2006, 61) as a site of national as well as regional importance. An early medieval site of some importance lies in the vicinity of the present village, but as yet no evidence of such a site has emerged from any archaeological intervention. As such it is only possible to speculate on the potential extent of such a site using analogy with comparable sites within the region. In addition the ephemeral and distributed nature of early medieval sites would make its presence within the development at least plausible.
- 2.3.2 The available evidence provides a quite compelling argument that medieval Bamburgh was more extensive, and potentially more densely settled, than the present village. The extent of the friary site is unknown and its boundaries uncertain, but the close proximity of the surviving elements, less than 30m to the east of the present site boundary, strongly support the potential for archaeological material, of importance to understanding the friary site to be present within the development area, and vulnerable to development activity.
- 2.3.3 It is clear, due to the historic nature of the area that the new development will have the potential to impact on preserved archaeological remains and that the proposed trial trenching evaluation will advance our understanding of the potential impact of the proposed development and further aid the formation of a mitigation strategy.

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 The objective of the evaluation is to investigate the archaeological potential of the development area by the excavation of eight trial trenches, representing some 5% of the site by area. Seven of the trial trenches will be 30m by 1.5m and distributed to give a good coverage of the site area, with an eighth trench, measuring 20m by 1.5m located in the south-east corner close to the line of the Mill Burn. The trenches are to be excavated to the first significant archaeological horizon or to subsoil should no archaeological material be present (Figure 2).
- 3.2 The excavation of the trial trenches will clarify the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area and the nature of the archaeological material encountered within the trenches. Any archaeological features encountered will be sampled in order to establish their location, extent, date and nature, and the degree of their preservation.
- 3.3 The results of the evaluation will enable the impact of the proposed development on any deposits of archaeological significance to be more accurately assessed in order that an appropriate mitigation strategy can be devised.

### **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Trial Trench Evaluation**

- 4.1.1 The evaluation will comprise the excavation of eight trial trenches, located to investigate the area to be impacted by the footprint of the proposed development and to provide a representative sample of the site to a safe working depth or to subsoil.
- 4.1.3 All work will be carried out in compliance with the codes of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2010) and their Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation (IfA 2008), and Field Evaluation (IfA 2008).
- 4.1.4 The excavation of the trenches will be undertaken using a machine with a toothless bucket, in controlled spits, until features of archaeological interest are encountered. Excavation would then be undertaken by appropriately trained members of the archaeological staff, excavating by hand.

#### **4.2 General standards**

- 4.2.1 All archaeological features identified will be sample excavated according to their type and form.
- 50% of all discrete features.
  - 25% of the area of a linear/curvilinear features with a non-uniform fill.
  - 10% of the area of linear/curvilinear features with a uniform fill.
- 4.2.2 A 40 litre bulk palaeoenvironmental sample will be taken from all features recognised as suitable for the preservation of palaeoenvironmental remains.
- 4.2.3 Secure contexts will be sampled for dating where appropriate, whether on site or as sub samples of bulk samples. Any concentrations of charcoal or other carbonised material recovered on site will usually be retained. Provision will be made for the use of archaeomagnetic dating on appropriate features, should they be identified.
- 4.2.4 Pottery and Animal Bone will be collected as bulk samples whilst significant artefacts will be three-dimensionally recorded prior to processing. All finds will be recorded and processed according to the BRP system and submitted for post-excavation assessment. Finds recovery and storage strategies will be in accordance with published guidelines (English Heritage 1995 and IfA Guidelines for Finds Work). Should artefacts of gold or silver covered by the 1996

Treasure Act be recovered, appropriate procedures will be followed.

- 4.2.5 In the event of Human burials being revealed they will be left *in situ* and treated in an appropriate manner. After consultation with the County Archaeological Officer, if excavation is required, work will comply with the relevant home Office regulations.
- 4.2.6 Any archaeological features encountered will be hand-cleaned, excavated and recorded:
1. A photographic record will be taken using black and white print, colour slide film at 35mm format. In addition a digital photographic record will be compiled and provision made for deposition with the ADS as part of the site archive.
  2. A written description of features will be recorded using the BRP *pro forma* context recording system.
  3. All features will be drawn at an appropriate scale using pre-printed permatrace. Plans will normally be drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at a scale of 1:10.
- 4.2.7 All archaeological features and horizons will be accurately tied into the Ordnance Survey grid. All levels will be tied in to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.2.8 Arrangements will be made with the appropriate museum for the deposition of the site archive within 6 month of the completion of the post-excavation report.

## **5.0 CONTINGENCY**

- 5.0.1 A contingency has been allowed within the evaluation program for the excavation of an additional 200m square of trenching, representing a further 3% of the development by area, in order to answer particular issues that may arise during fieldwork. This additional work will be undertaken after discussion with, and with the agreement of the client and the Assistant County Archaeological Officer.

## **6.0 MONITORING**

- 5.1 Access will be made available at all reasonable times to the archaeological representatives of the Northumberland County council Conservation Team to inspect the excavation site.
- 5.2 Access to the site will be on the basis of prior notification and subject to any relevant health and safety considerations.

## **6.0 POST-EXCAVATION WORK, ARCHIVE AND REPORT COMPILATION**

- 6.1 On completion of the excavation an assessment of the site records and finds will be undertaken in accordance with English Heritage (1991) guidelines and the IfA Standard and Guidance for field Evaluation (IfA 2008). This will include:
- collation of all site records
  - compilation of a report
  - production of context, photographic, finds and illustration databases
  - analysis of the finds assemblage by relevant specialists
  - environmental assessment of selected bulk samples
- 6.2 The assessment report, with each page and paragraph numbered and with cross referenced

illustrations, will include:

- summary of the project background
- site location
- methodology
- results of the watching brief
- site location plans and illustrations of results at appropriate scales
- interpretation of the results in an appropriate context
- post-excavation assessment of the site archive
- catalogue and assessment of the artefactual archive
- catalogue and assessment of the faunal remains
- catalogue and assessment of the palaeoenvironmental samples recovered
- appendix containing a list and summary of each recorded context

- 6.3 A copy of the report should be submitted by the archaeologist to the commissioning client, and the County Council Conservation Team within 20 working days of completion of the work. A summary will be prepared for 'Archaeology in Northumberland' and an article will be submitted to a local or national journal if appropriate.
- 6.4 The site archive will be prepared to the standard specified in the Management of Archaeological Projects, appendix 3 (HBMC 1991) and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage (UKIC 1990). A summary account of the context record will be included and written by the supervising archaeologist. The archive will be deposited at the specified museum within 6 months of completion of the work on site.
- 6.5 An online OASIS form will be completed for the project as part of the post-excavation assessment process.

## **7.0 PERSONNEL**

- 7.1 The designated project manager Graeme Young, is one of the five directors of the Bamburgh Research Project. A graduate of Newcastle University, with 28 years of experience in field archaeology including directing a number of excavations of urban medieval sites in Newcastle and Durham. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 7.2 Additional field staff, with appropriate archaeological experience, will be engaged as required.

## **8.0 SUB-CONTRACTED SPECIALISTS**

- 8.0.1 Although it is not possible to predict the range of artefacts that may be recovered provision has been made for the analysis of the most common artefacts.

### **Material**

Medieval pottery  
Post-medieval pottery  
Prehistoric pottery  
Roman Pottery  
Animal bone  
Palaeoenvironmental  
Conservation

### **Specialist**

Jenny Vaughan  
Jenny Vaughan  
Blaise Vyner  
Blaise Vyner  
Durham University Archaeological Services  
Durham University Archaeological Services  
Durham University Archaeological Services

## **9.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 9.0.1 The Bamburgh Research Project complies with the 1974 Health and Safety Act and its subsequent amendments in all its operations. The SCAUM manual and the Bamburgh Research Project Health and Safety Policy Document is followed for all site works. A designated and appropriately trained first aider is present at all times during working hours. A First Aid kit, Accident Book and telephone are provided for each project. Safety footwear is mandatory on all excavation sites. Where required safety helmets and reflective jackets are provided. It is policy for a vehicle to be present at an excavation and staff must be appropriately equipped for bad weather.
- 9.0.2 All staff undergo a safety induction prior to commencing work on site. A written risk assessment is undertaken specific for each site. The safety assessment is reviewed on a daily basis and changes to the working conditions monitored continually during adverse weather conditions.

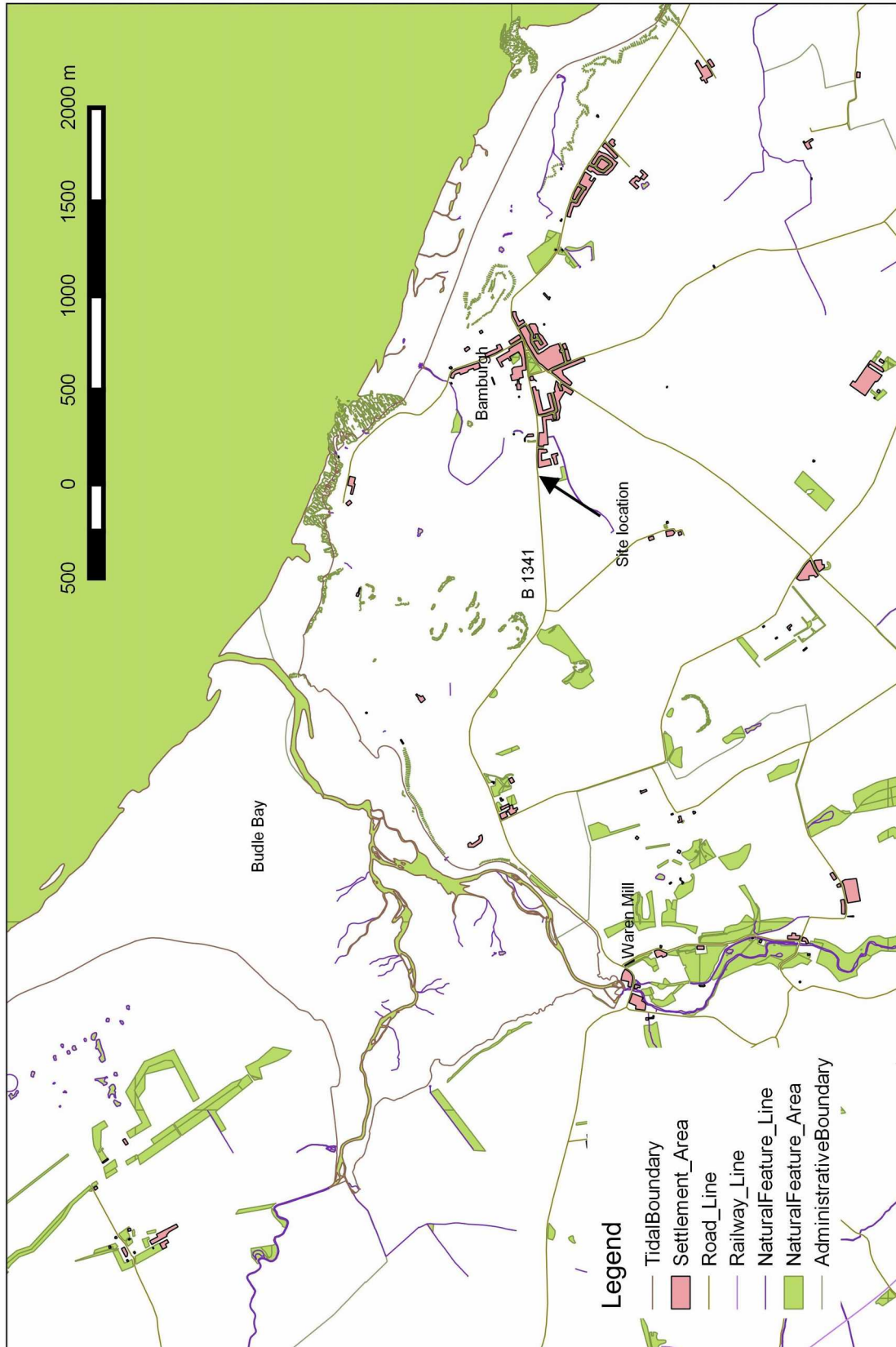


Figure 1 Location

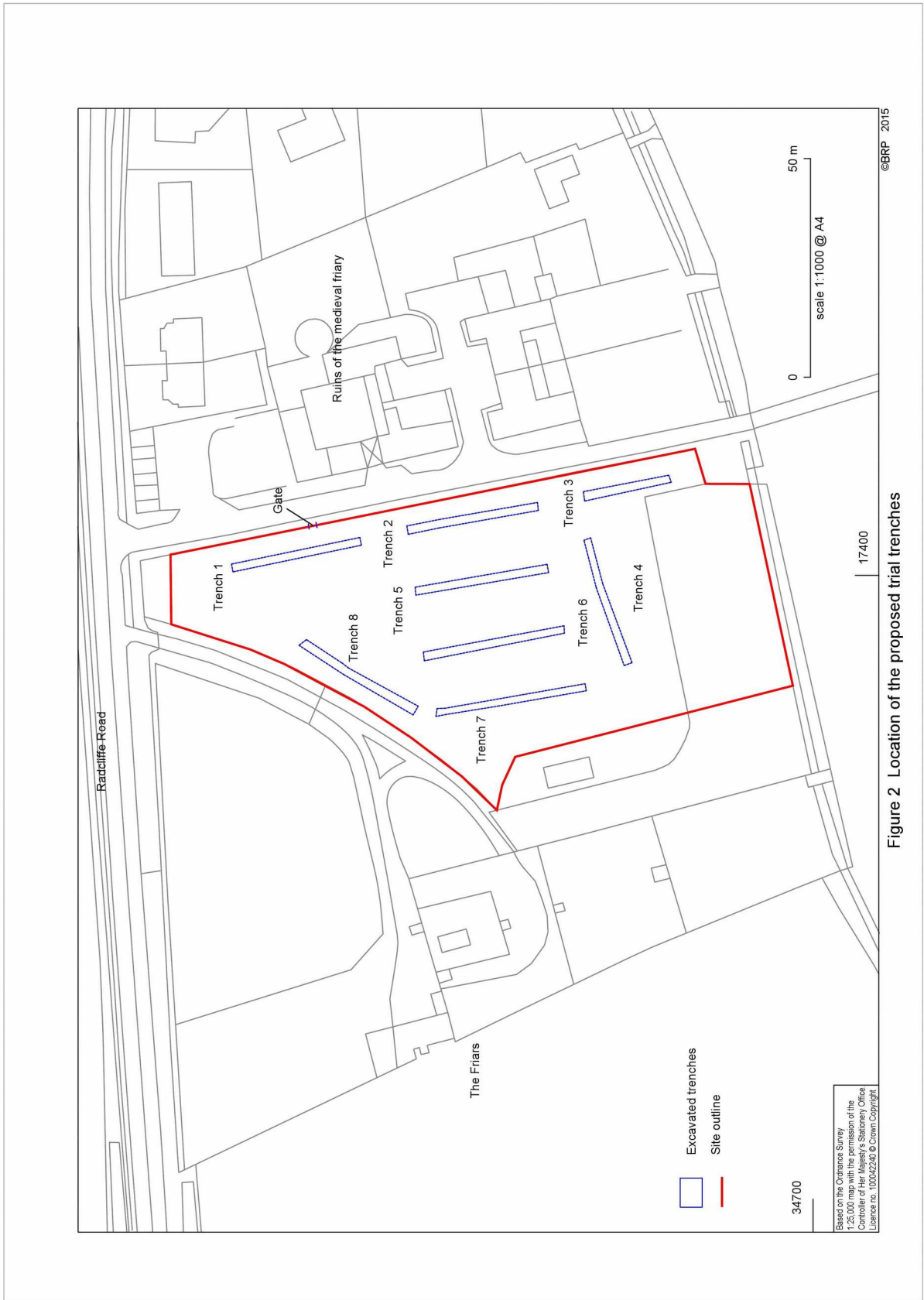
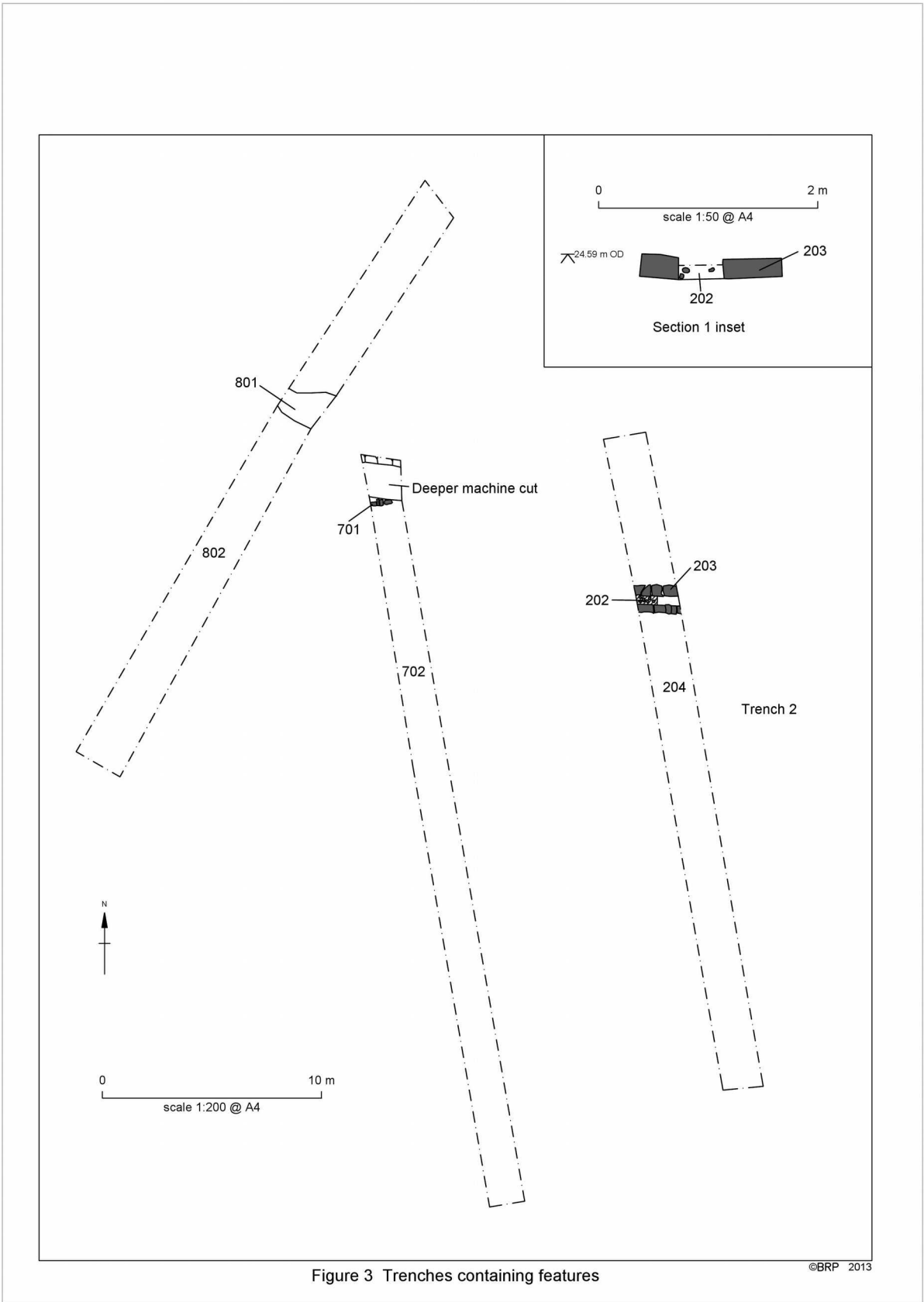


Figure 2 Location of the proposed trial trenches







*Plate 1: Trench 1, facing south*



*Plate 2: Trench 2, facing south*



*Plate 3: Trench 3, facing south*



*Plate 4: Trench 4, facing west*



*Plate 5: Trench 5, facing north*



*Plate 6: Trench 6, facing south*



*Plate 7: Trench 7, facing south*



*Plate 8: Trench 8, facing south-west*



*Plate 9: Feature 701, facing west*



*Plate 10: Stone drain 203, facing west*