

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of

The Woodland Trust

Low Hill House Farm
Ferryhill
County Durham

archaeological evaluation

report 3221
August 2013

Contents

1.	Summary	1
2.	Project background	2
3.	Landuse, topography and geology	2
4.	Historical and archaeological background	3
5.	The evaluation trenches	3
6.	The artefacts	5
7.	The archaeological resource	5
8.	Impact assessment	6
9.	Recommendations	6
10.	Sources	6
	Appendix 1: Data tables	7
	Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices	8

Figures

Figure 1:	Site location
Figure 2:	Location of the trenches
Figure 3:	Trench plans and section
Figure 4:	Trench 1, looking south
Figure 5:	Trench 2, looking southeast
Figure 6:	Ditch [F202], northeast facing section
Figure 7:	Trench 3, looking northwest with drain [302] visible
Figure 8:	Trench 4, looking northwest with [F402] visible
Figure 9:	Trench 4, hand excavated slot in [F402] looking northeast
Figure 10:	Trench 4, machine excavated slot in [F402] looking northeast
Figure 11:	Trench 4, machine excavated slot in [F402] looking southeast
Figure 12:	Trench 5, looking northwest

1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted in advance of proposed tree planting at Low Hill House Farm, Ferryhill, County Durham. The works comprised the machine excavation of five trenches targeted on anomalies detected by geophysical survey.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by The Woodland Trust and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 No significant archaeological deposits were encountered. No archaeological feature was identified in Trench 1. A late post-medieval / modern ditch was identified in Trench 2, and a drain in Trench 3, both of which coincide with the geophysical anomalies. A coal deposit was identified in Trench 4. In trench 5 a variation in the natural subsoil may have caused the geophysical anomaly.

Recommendations

- 1.4 No further scheme of archaeological works is recommended.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located to the north of Low Hill House Farm, Ferryhill, County Durham (NGR centre: NZ 277 333). It is roughly rectangular in plan, and covers an area of approximately 70 ha. The site is surrounded by agricultural land with an area of woodland to the north-east and industrial estates to the west and south-east. Spennymoor lies to the north-west and Ferryhill to the south-east. The A167 runs along the eastern boundary of the site. The area of the site investigated by the evaluation trenching was at the western end.

Development proposal

- 2.2 Tree planting is planned across the area.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature and potential significance of the geophysical anomalies, so that an informed decision may be made regarding the nature and scope of any further scheme of archaeological works that may be required in relation to the development.

Methods statement

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with instructions from the client and in line with national standards and guidance.

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken in July 2013. This report was prepared for August 2013.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Dr David Webster and Nathan Thomas (supervisor). This report was prepared by Nathan Thomas, with illustrations by David Graham, artefact assessment by Jennifer Jones, and editing by Peter Carne.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The site code is **FLF13**, for **Ferryhill, Low Hill House Farm 2013**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Bowes Museum in due course. Archaeological Services Durham University is registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations project (OASIS)**. The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-156098**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

Landuse

- 3.1 The area of investigation comprised improved grassland in which trees have been planted, and is currently being used for informal grazing.

Topography

- 3.2 The proposed development area rose steeply from 100m OD in the north to approximately 160m in the south. The eastern part of the site rose to over 150m in the east as a result of landscaping following decommissioning of the Dean and Chapter colliery.

Geology and soils

- 3.3 The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Pennine Middle Coal Measures, which are overlain by Devensian till.

4. Historical and archaeological background

Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 A desk-based assessment (Archaeological Services 2012a) and geophysical survey (Archaeological Services 2012b) have both been undertaken as part of the archaeological works. The results from these are summarised below.
- 4.2 No archaeological resource has been identified which requires preservation *in situ*. There are no historic or statutorily protected buildings in the vicinity of the site. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on or in the vicinity of the site.
- 4.3 There is no direct evidence of prehistoric or Roman activity in the proposed development area. There is, however, evidence that the surrounding area was exploited in prehistory, and an as yet unidentified resource relating to this has the potential to survive within the proposed development area.
- 4.4 The site is to north-west of the medieval village of Ferryhill and it is probable that the area was used in the medieval and post-medieval periods as agricultural land rather than for settlement. Evidence relating to this, in the form of ridge and furrow cultivation and field boundaries, may survive on the site, although this is likely to be of limited archaeological significance.
- 4.5 Evidence for 19th-century quarries, Barn Farm and elements of the 1902-1966 Dean & Chapter Colliery may survive in parts of the site. The colliery covered the eastern part of the site. The spoilheaps and colliery area were landscaped in the late 20th century, and so these areas were excluded from the geophysical survey.
- 4.6 The geophysical survey was conducted in the western part of the site and covered approximately 18 ha. This indicated that the landscaping associated with the reclamation of the colliery site extended further west than had been anticipated. Beyond this area, some anomalies of potential archaeological significance were identified.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

- 5.1 Five trenches were machine excavated to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or natural geological substrate, whichever was encountered first. All the trenches were located over anomalies detected by the geophysical survey in Areas 2 and 4. For trench locations see Figure 2.

Trench 1 (Figure 3, 4)

- 5.2 This trench was 10m by 1.5m and was located over a pair of parallel linear geomagnetic anomalies. The natural geology, a mid yellowish brown till [101], was identified at a depth of 0.3m (125.57m OD). Immediately above the natural was topsoil [100: 0.3m deep], a dark greyish brown sandy silt, that contained fragments

of post-medieval ceramics. No archaeological or natural features were encountered in the location of the identified geophysical anomalies.

Trench 2 (Figures 3, 5 and 6)

- 5.3 This trench was 15m by 1.5m and was located over a linear geomagnetic anomaly. The natural geology, a light orange-yellow clay [201], was identified at a depth of 0.25m (122.55m OD). Cutting the natural, in the centre of the trench, was a linear feature [F202: 1.1m wide and 0.23m deep]. This feature was filled with [203], a mottled orange brown clay, that contained a section of ceramic field drain (not *in-situ*) and other broken fragments of field drain (Figure 6). Ditch [F202] coincides with the location and orientation of the identified geophysical anomaly and is of post-medieval/modern origin. Immediately above [203] was topsoil [200: 0.25m deep], a dark greyish brown sandy silt, that contained fragments of post-medieval ceramics.

Trench 3 (Figures 3, 7)

- 5.4 This trench was 12m by 1.5m and was located over a linear geomagnetic anomaly. The natural geology, a mid orange-brown till [301], was identified at a depth of 0.25m (148.56m OD). Cutting the natural was a drain [F302: 0.5m wide]. Drain [F302] was filled with [303], angular fragments of limestone. Drain [F302] coincides with the location and orientation of the identified geophysical anomaly. Drain [F302] is of late post-medieval/modern origin. Immediately above [303] was topsoil [300: 0.25m deep], a dark greyish brown sandy silt, that contained fragments of post-medieval ceramics, glass and clay pipe.

Trench 4 (Figures 3, 8-11)

- 5.5 This trench was 15m by 1.5m and was located over a pair of parallel linear geomagnetic anomalies. The natural geology [401] was identified at a depth of 0.2m (153.35m OD). The natural varied across the length of the trench. At the southern end of the trench a light yellow sand was present. At the northern end of the trench a mid orange brown till was encountered. Cutting the natural, in the centre of the trench, was a loose deposit of black coal in an oval shape [403]. This was initially hand-excavated as a large pit [F402: 1.8m long and 1.2m wide; Figure 9]. This established that the coal deposit continued under the natural subsoil, and further machine excavation confirmed that this was the case (Figures 10-11). Immediately above [403] was topsoil [400: 0.25m deep], a dark greyish brown sandy silt. No archaeological features were encountered in the location of the identified geophysical anomalies.

Trench 5 (Figures 3, 12)

- 5.6 This trench was 12m by 1.5m and was located over a linear geomagnetic anomaly. The natural geology [501] was identified at a depth of between 0.46m and 0.3m below ground level (152.45m and 151.8m OD). The natural again varied across the length of the trench. At the southern end of the trench a light yellowish pink clay was present. At the northern end of the trench a dark blue black mudstone was encountered. The boundary between these two geologies coincides with the identified geophysical anomaly. Immediately above [501] was topsoil [500: 0.3m – 0.46m deep] a dark greyish brown sandy silt. No archaeological features were identified; however, variations in the natural geology coincided with the location of the geophysical anomaly.

6. The artefacts

Pottery assessment

Results

- 6.1 Eleven sherds (113g wt) of domestic and utilitarian pottery came from three contexts. All the material is 19th century or later in date (Table 1). The sherds are mostly small and several are damaged and abraded.
- 6.2 Included are sherds of yellow glazed coarseware in contexts [100] and [200], colour glazed ware and a brown glazed stoneware bottle rim in [200], plain bone china in [100] and [300], a body sherd from a buff stoneware jar in [300], and a rim sherd of sponge printed white ware (post 1840) also in [300].

Context	Sherd nos
100	3
200	3
300	5

Table 1: Sherd numbers by context

Recommendation

- 6.3 No further work is recommended.

Clay pipe assessment

Results

- 6.4 A single clay tobacco pipe stem was found in context [300]. It has no stamps or maker's mark. This is post-medieval.

Recommendation

- 6.5 No further work is recommended.

Glass assessment

Results

- 6.6 Context [300] has a small wall sherd from a mid-green glass bottle. The outside appears scratched and worn from use. This is 19th century in date.

Recommendation

- 6.7 No further work is recommended.

Building materials assessment

Results

- 6.8 A small piece of pantile with no original edges came from context [100]. This type of tile was first introduced into Britain in the 17th century and the piece is therefore post-medieval in date.

Recommendation

- 6.9 No further work is recommended.

7. The archaeological resource

- 7.1 No significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

- 7.2 No archaeological feature was identified in Trench 1. A late post-medieval / modern ditch was identified in Trench 2, and a drain in Trench 3, both of which coincide with the geophysical anomalies. A coal deposit was identified in Trench 4. In trench 5 a variation in the natural subsoil may have caused the geophysical anomaly.

8. Impact assessment

- 8.1 Tree planting on the site is unlikely to impact on any significant archaeological deposits.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 No further scheme of archaeological works is recommended.

10. Sources

Archaeological Services 2012a *Low Hill House Farm, Ferryhill: archaeological desk-based assessment*. Unpublished report **3002**, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2012b *Low Hill House Farm, Ferryhill: geomagnetic survey*. Unpublished report **3023**, Archaeological Services Durham University

Appendix 1: Data table

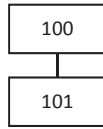
Table 1.1: Context data

The • symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of artefacts of the following types: P pottery, B bone, M metals, F flint, I industrial residues, G glass, C ceramic building material, O other materials.

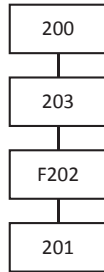
No	Area	Description	P	B	M	F	I	G	C	O
100	Tr1	Topsoil	•					•		
101	Tr1	Natural								
200	Tr2	Topsoil	•					•		
201	Tr2	Natural								
202	Tr2	Cut of ditch								
203	Tr2	Fill of ditch								
300	Tr3	Topsoil	•	•				•		
301	Tr3	Natural								
302	Tr3	Cut of drain								
303	Tr3	Fill of drain								
400	Tr4	Topsoil								
401	Tr4	Natural								
F402	Tr4	Coal deposit delineation								
403	Tr4	Coal deposit								
500	Tr5	Topsoil								
501	Tr5	Natural								

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

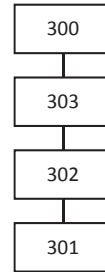
Trench 1



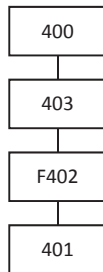
Trench 2



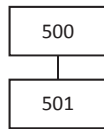
Trench3



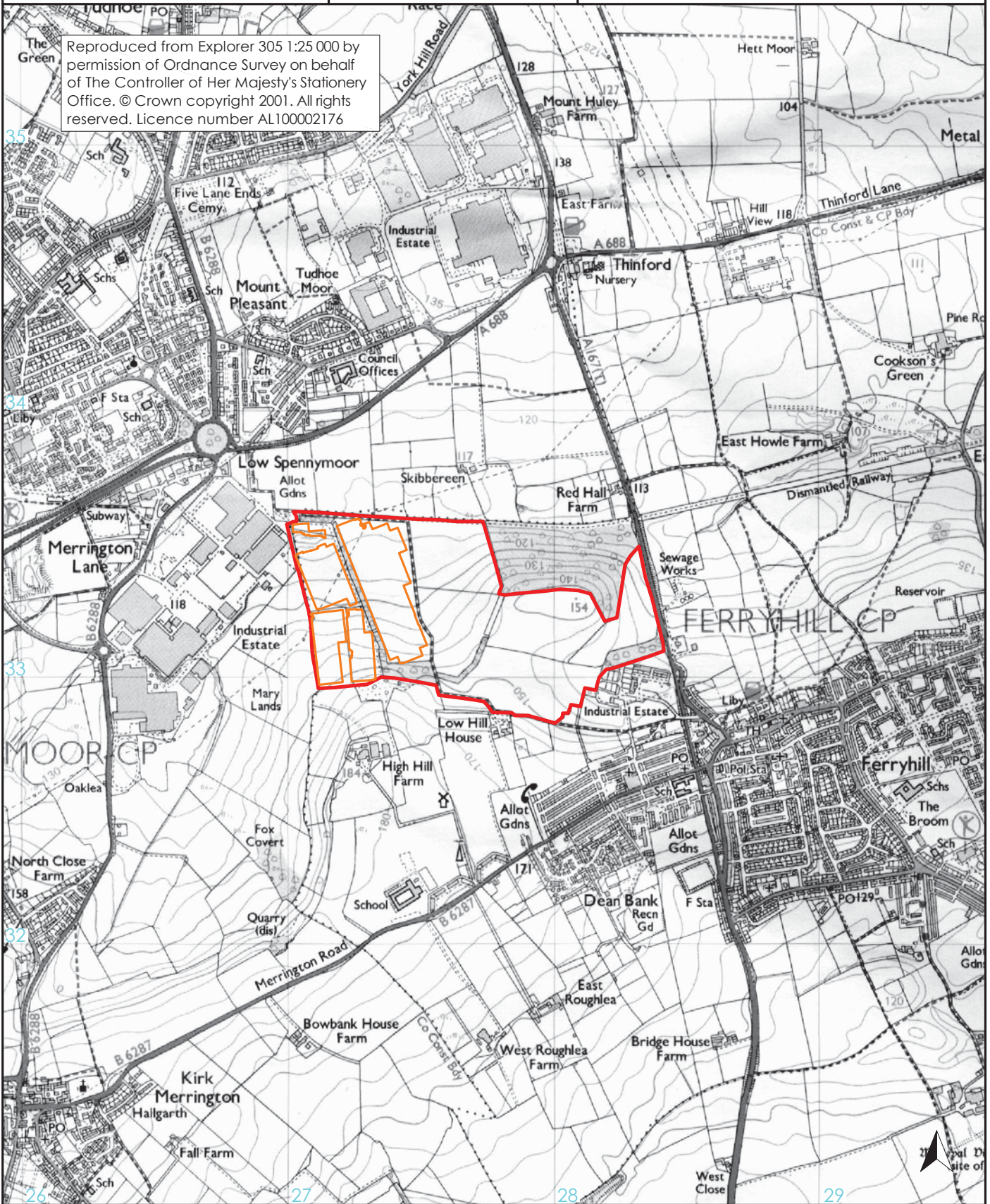
Trench 4



Trench 5



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site location

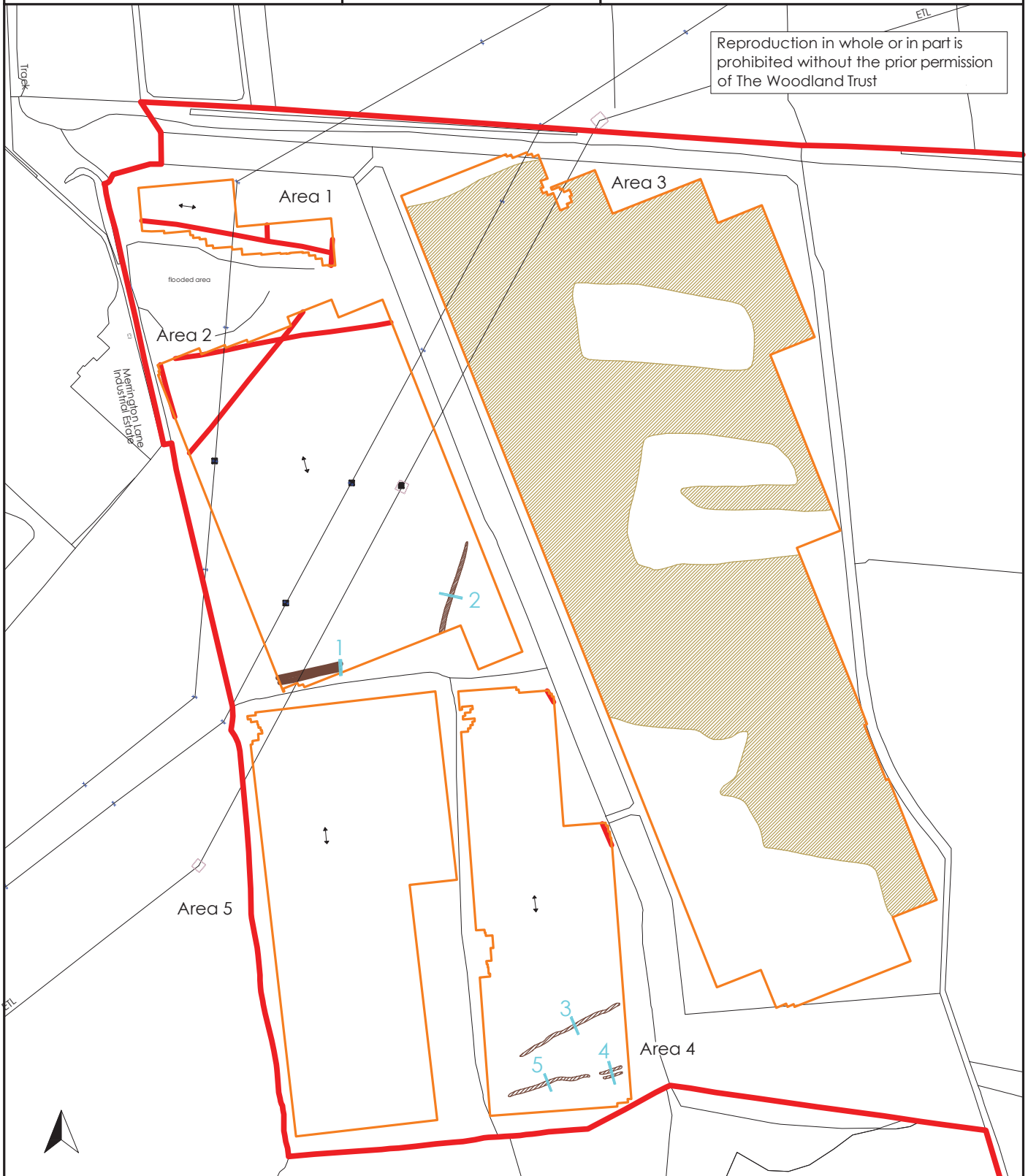


survey area



scale 1:20 000 for A4 plot

Figure 2: Location of the trenches



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proposed development area

magnetic survey

trench

0 140m
scale 1:3500 for A4 plot

archaeological interpretation
 soil-filled feature

former ploughing

disturbed area

pylon

service pipe

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Figure 3: Trench plans and
section

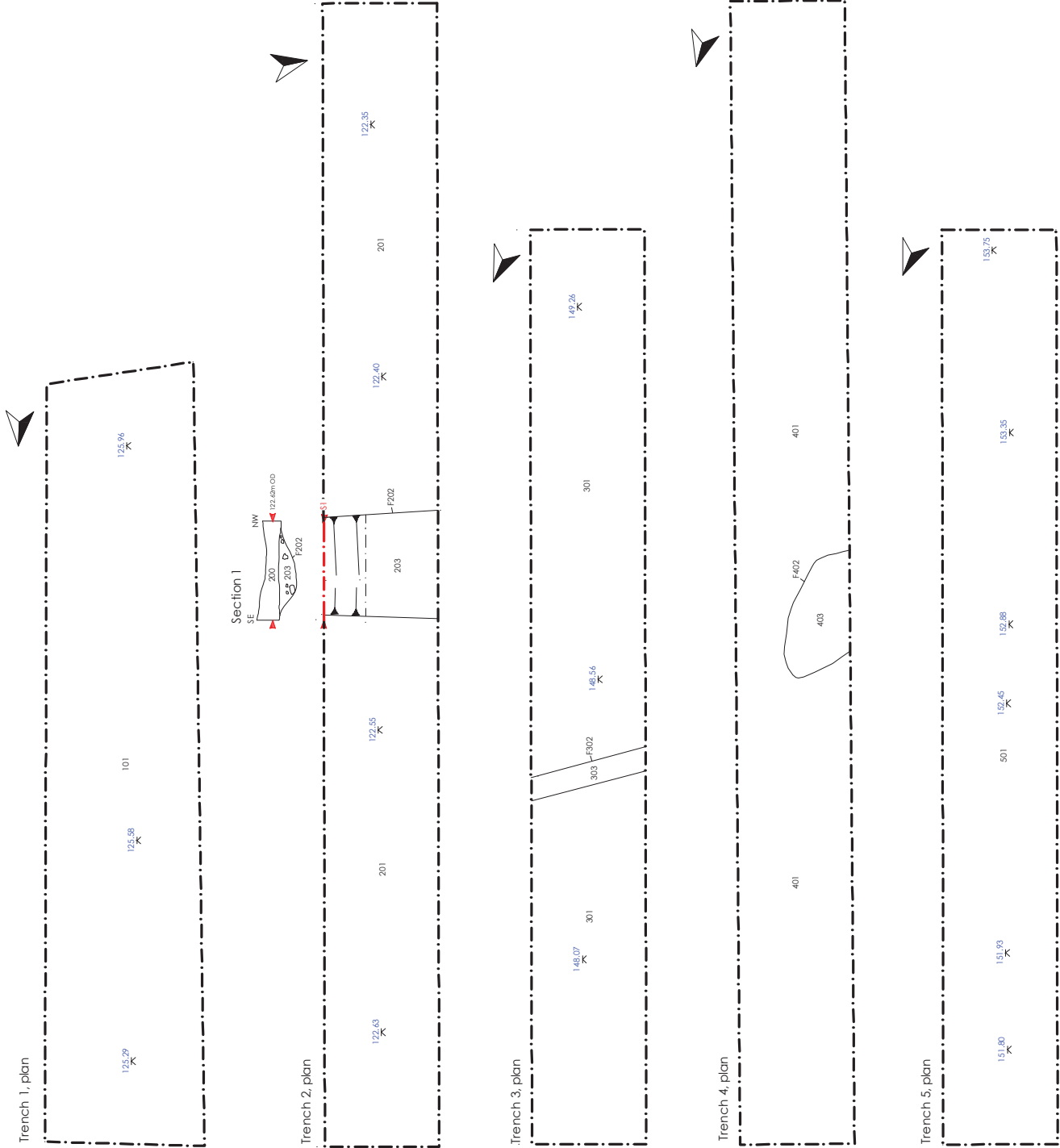
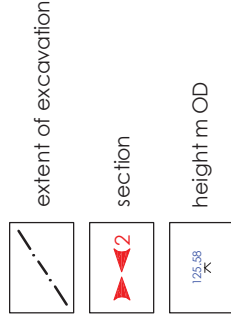




Figure 4: Trench 1, looking south



Figure 5: Trench 2, looking southeast



Figure 6: Ditch [F202], northeast facing section



Figure 7: Trench 3, looking northwest with drain [F302] visible



Figure 8: Trench 4, looking northwest with [F402] visible



Figure 9: Trench 4, hand excavated slot in [F402] looking northeast



Figure 10: Trench 4, machine excavated slot in [F402] looking northeast



Figure 11: Trench 4, machine excavated slot in [F402] looking southeast



Figure 12: Trench 5, looking northwest