

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
URS

Laverock Hall Road
Blyth
Northumberland

archaeological evaluation

report 3453
June 2014

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1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted in advance of a proposed development at Laverock Hall Road Blyth. The works comprised the excavation and recording of sixteen trial trenches
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by URS and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 In the north-eastern part of the site, results from the evaluation trenches indicate that the area has been truncated by modern activity, and no archaeological resource has been identified.
- 1.4 Furrows, the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, were recorded in all trenches except 8 and 11. These furrows reflect two different field systems, with those in the northern half of the site aligned north-east/south-west and those in the southern half of the site aligned north-west/south-east.

Recommendation

- 1.5 As no significant archaeological resource was identified, no further scheme of archaeological works is recommended in relation to this development.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The site is located south of Laverock Hall Road, Blyth, Northumberland (NGR centre: NZ 2972 7898). It covers an area of 12.4ha. To the north and west is open farmland; to the north-east is residential housing. The site is bounded by the A1061 to the south and Laverock Hall Road to the north.

Development proposal

- 2.2 The proposed development is residential.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the scheme of works was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any archaeological resource within the proposed development area, 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.

Specification

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by URS and approved by the planning authority.

Dates

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between 27th May and 4th June 2014. This report was prepared for June 2014.

Personnel

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Beverley Still and Rebekah Watson (supervisor). This report was prepared by Rebekah Watson, with illustrations by David Graham. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The site code is **LHB14**, for **Laverock Hall Blyth 2014**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Great North 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 **archaeol3-180796**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of this assessment, the proposed development area comprised one large agricultural field under crop.
- 3.2 The survey area was gently undulating with an elevation ranging from approximately 18.5m OD to 21m OD. There was a notable rise in the south-east corner of the field.
- 3.3 The underlying solid geology of the area comprises Pennine middle coal measures, overlain by Devensian-Diamecton till.

4. Historical and archaeological background

4.1 A detailed examination of the historical and archaeological background of the site has been undertaken (URS 2014); the results of that report are summarised below.

Previous archaeological works

4.2 A geophysical survey was conducted on the site (Archaeological Services 2014), which identified extensive ridge and furrow cultivation and an area of probable modern disturbance in the north-east of the proposed development area. Assessments have also been conducted in the surrounding area. Geophysical survey at South Newsham Road revealed a series of furrows. Geophysical survey and trial trenching adjacent to the east of the site revealed a prehistoric water channel and prehistoric flints, as well as furrows of presumed medieval origin.

The prehistoric period and Roman periods (up to 5th century)

4.3 The site of a possible rectilinear enclosure was identified immediately east of the proposed development area (PDA). However, an archaeological evaluation did not detect the enclosure, although one flint core was recovered. There are no known Roman sites within or near the PDA.

The medieval period (5th century to 1540)

4.4 The PDA was situated within an area of three medieval farmsteads known as the village of Newsham. It is likely the PDA was in use as agricultural land during the medieval period.

The post-medieval period and modern periods (1541 to present)

4.5 The former Plessey wagonway closed in 1812 and lies 500m north of the PDA. The line of the former Morpeth to Bedlington railway lies immediately to the west of the PDA.

4.6 The PDA had remained undeveloped through the post-medieval and modern periods.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

5.1 Sixteen trenches were excavated within the proposed development area (Figure 2). All measured 50m by 2m. Trench 13 was moved approximately 8m to the north-east, in order to avoid a pond. The context data is summarised in Table 1.1 (Appendix 1). Trench plans and sections are shown on Figure 3.

Trench 1 (Figure 4)

5.2 This trench was located towards the westernmost edge of the site, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil [2] varied between a yellow-brown clay and a grey-brown clay and was identified at a depth of 0.3m. Cut into this were five furrows, approximately 1m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. A field drain was also cut through the natural subsoil and running east/west. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figure 5)

- 5.3 This trench was located towards the westernmost edge of the site, to the east of Trench 1, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil [2] varied between a yellow-brown clay and a grey-brown clay and was identified at a depth of 0.3m. Cut into this were six furrows, approximately 1m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 3 (Figure 6)

- 5.4 Trench 3 was located towards the centre of the northern edge of the field, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.25m below the ground surface. Cut into this were six furrows, approximately 2m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.25m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 4 (Figure 7)

- 5.5 This trench was located to the east of Trench 3, at the northern edge of the site, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at a depth of 0.3m. Cut into this were seven furrows, approximately 2m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. Running parallel in between the furrows were six field drains, also cutting the natural subsoil. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 5 (Figure 8)

- 5.6 Trench 5 was located in the north-eastern corner of the site, and oriented north-east/south-west. This corner was not included in the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified between 0.3m and 0.85m below the ground surface. One furrow was cut into this, oriented north-east/south-west. This was only visible for approximately 16m in the centre of the trench, as it was truncated by a modern rubble deposit [3: 0.55m deep] at the south-western end of the trench. This deposit contained bricks, concrete, disused cables and plastic. Overlying the whole trench and filling the furrow was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 6 (Figure 9)

- 5.7 This trench was located towards the west of the proposed development area, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics, which also highlighted a possible field boundary running north-west/south-east through the centre of this trench. Natural subsoil [2] varied between a yellow-brown clay and a grey-brown clay and was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. The anomaly identified in the centre of the trench reflected natural geological variation. One furrow was cut into the natural subsoil, oriented north-east/south-west. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrow was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 7 (Figure 10)

- 5.8 Trench 7 was located in the centre of the site, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were seven furrows, between 1.5m and 2m wide, and oriented north-east/south-west. Running parallel to these furrows and also cut into the natural subsoil were four field drains. The north-west half of the trench was truncated by modern disturbance. Overlying the whole trench and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 8 (Figure 11)

- 5.9 This trench was located in the north-east corner of the proposed development area, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of modern disturbance identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil [2] varied between a yellow-brown clay and a grey-brown clay and was identified between 0.7m and 1.7m below the ground surface. Cut into this was a field drain running east/west across the trench. Immediately above this was a layer of modern rubble [3], 0.4m deep at the north-east end of the trench, increasing to 1.4m deep at the south-west end. This deposit contained bricks, concrete, disused cables and plastic. Immediately above this was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 9 (Figure 12)

- 5.10 Trench 9 was located towards the south-western boundary of the site, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.25m below the ground surface. Cut into this were seven furrows, approximately 2m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.25m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 10 (Figure 13)

- 5.11 This trench was located in the centre of the proposed development area, and oriented north-west/south-east. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were five furrows, approximately 2m wide and oriented north-east/south-west. Running parallel to these furrows were four field drains, also cutting the natural subsoil. Another field drain ran north-west/south-east for approximately 35m in the south-eastern half of the trench, cutting through two furrows. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 11 (Figure 14)

- 5.12 This trench was located in the centre of the proposed development area, to the east of Trench 10, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of modern disturbance identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a grey-yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 1.4m below the ground surface. Immediately above this was a modern rubble deposit [3: 1.2m deep], containing brick, concrete and plastic. Overlying the whole trench was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.2m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 12 (Figure 15)

- 5.13 Trench 12 was located towards the southern edge of the site, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were ten furrows, approximately 1.5m wide and oriented north-west/south-east. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 13 (Figure 16)

- 5.14 This trench was located to the north-east of Trench 12, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. It was moved approximately 8m to the north-east from its original proposed position in order to avoid a large pond in the field. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were eight furrows, between 1.5m and 2.5m in width, and oriented north-west/south-east. Also cutting the natural subsoil and five of the furrows were two field drains, one running north-east/south-west and another running east/west, crossing each other at the south-western end of the trench. Overlying the whole trench was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 14 (Figure 17)

- 5.15 This trench was located to the south-east of Trench 12, and oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were nine furrows, between 1.5m and 2.5m in width, and oriented north-west/south-east. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 15 (Figure 18)

- 5.16 Trench 15 was located towards the eastern boundary of the proposed development area, and was oriented north-east/south-west. . It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were seven furrows, between 1.5m and 2m in width and oriented north-west/south-east. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

Trench 16 (Figures 3 and 19)

- 5.17 This trench was located in the south-eastern corner of the site, and was oriented north-east/south-west. It was located in an area of probable ridge and furrow cultivation identified by geophysics. Natural subsoil, a yellow-brown clay [2], was identified at 0.3m below the ground surface. Cut into this were ten furrows, oriented north-west/south-east. The six furrows at the north-eastern end of the trench were approximately 1m wide and the four furrows at the south-western end were approximately 2m wide. Immediately above the natural subsoil and filling the furrows was a grey-brown silty-clay topsoil [1: 0.3m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

6. The artefacts

- 6.1 No material suitable for assessment was recovered.

7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence

- 7.1 No material suitable for palaeoenvironmental assessment was recovered.

8. The archaeological resource

- 8.1 In the north-eastern part of the site, results from the evaluation trenches indicate that the area has been truncated by modern activity, and no archaeological resource has been identified.
- 8.2 Furrows, the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, were recorded in all trenches except 8 and 11. These furrows reflect two different field systems, with those in the northern half of the site aligned north-east/south-west and those in the southern half of the site aligned north-west/south-east.

9. Impact assessment

- 9.1 Development of the north-eastern part of the site is unlikely to impact on any archaeological deposits.
- 9.2 Development is likely to remove the existing ridge and furrow cultivation across the rest of the site.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 As no significant archaeological resource was identified, no further scheme of archaeological works is recommended in relation to this development.

11. Sources

- Archaeological Services 2014 *Laverock Hall Road, Blyth, Northumberland: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **3405**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- URS 2014 *WSI for Archaeological Trial Trenching, Laverock Hall Road, Blyth*. URS Infrastructure and Environment UK Ltd.

Appendix 1: Data table

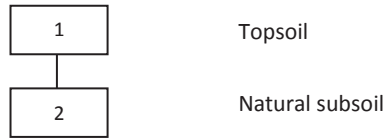
Table 1.1: Context data

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.

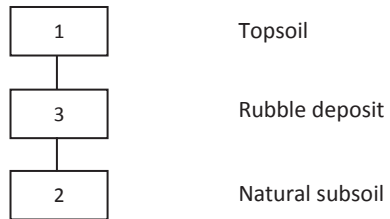
No	Area	Description	P	B	M	F	I	G	C	O
1	1-16	Topsoil								
2	1-16	Natural subsoil								
3	5,8,11	Modern rubble deposit								

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

Trenches 1-4, 6-7, 9-10, 12-16



Trenches 5, 8 and 11











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 site location

0 1km
scale 1:25 000 for A4 plot

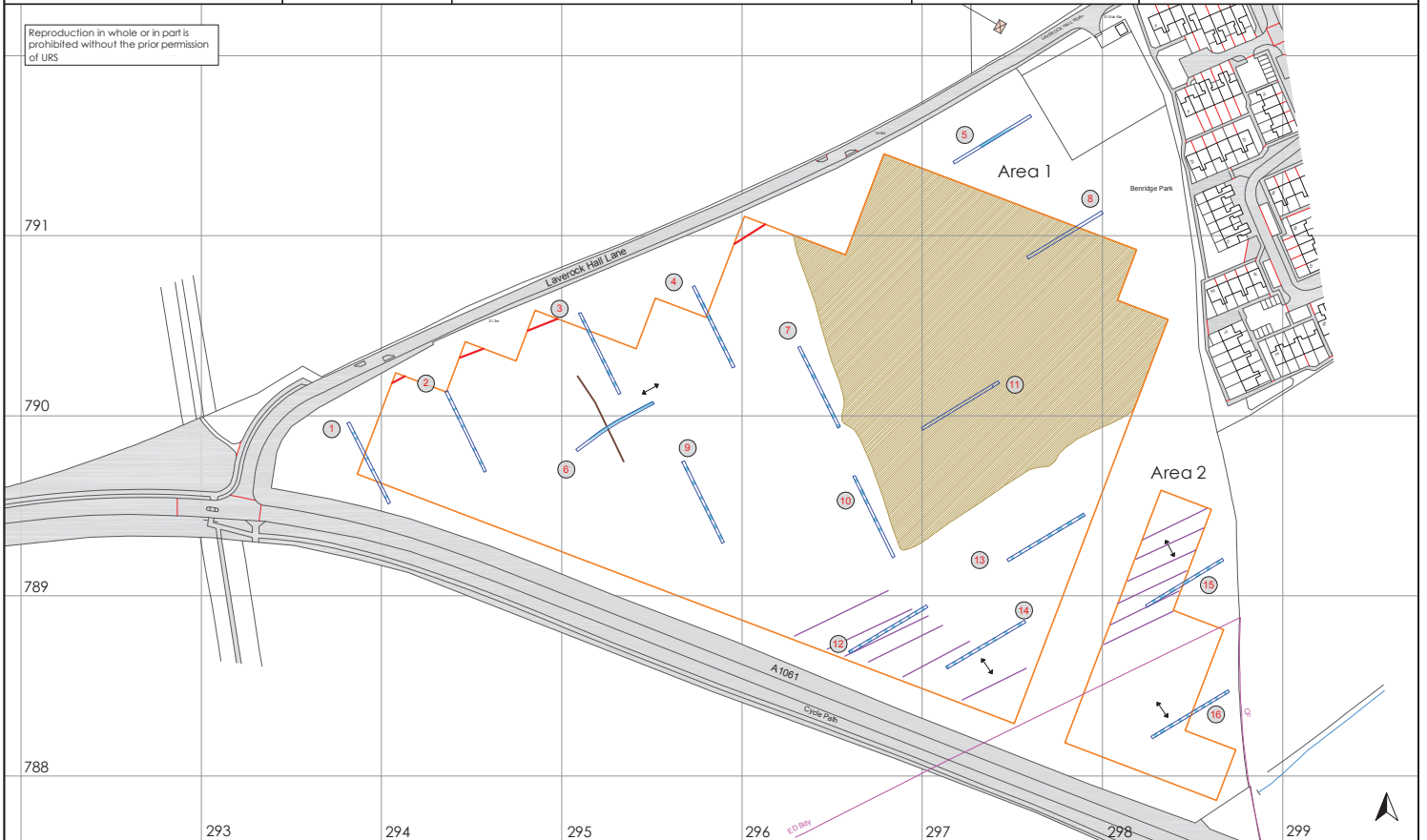
on behalf of
URS

archaeological evaluation		geophysical interpretation	
	trench		magnetic survey
	furrow		soil-filled feature
			disturbed area/ rubble
			service pipes
			ridge and furrow
			land drain

0 100m
scale 1:2000 for A3 plot

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Figure 2: Trench locations

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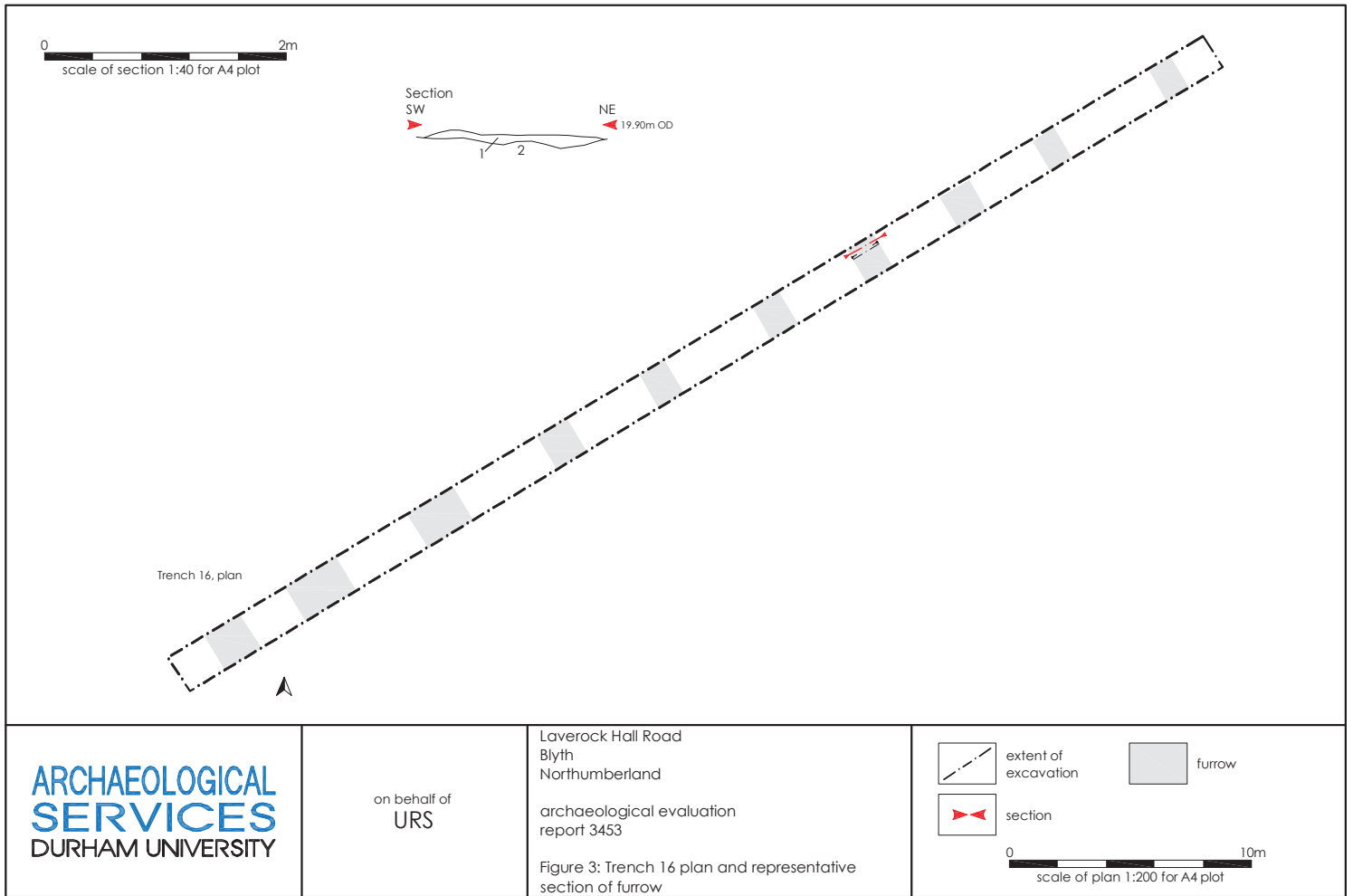




Figure 4: Trench 1, looking north-west



Figure 5: Trench 2, looking north-west



Figure 6: Trench 3, looking north-west



Figure 7: Trench 4, looking north-west



Figure 8: Trench 5, looking north-east



Figure 9: Trench 6, looking south-west



Figure 10: Trench 7, looking north-west



Figure 11: Trench 8, looking north-east



Figure 12: Trench 9, looking north-west



Figure 13: Trench 10, looking north-west



Figure 14: Trench 11, looking south-west



Figure 15: Trench 12, looking north-east



Figure 16: Trench 13, looking south-west



Figure 17: Trench 14, looking south-west



Figure 18: Trench 15, looking north-east



Figure 19: Trench 16, looking north-east