

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
Persimmon Homes

Former Moorfield Greyhound Stadium
Easington
County Durham

archaeological building recording

report 5171
October 2019

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1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological recording project conducted in advance of demolition work at the former Moorfield Stadium, Easington, Co Durham. A photographic survey of the stadium and its buildings has been carried out.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Persimmon Homes and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

The stadium

- 1.3 The greyhound track, originally called the Moorfield Stadium, opened in 1934. It was laid out as a 380-yard track. In the 1960s and 1970s the Easington site included 70 kennels and had a licenced and a tea bar; races were held on Thursday and Saturday evenings. The main annual events were the Moorfield Challenge Trophy and the Bank Holiday Stakes. The track was finally closed in 2017. The track and all of its buildings have been photographed and recorded.

2. Project background

Location (Figure 1)

- 2.1 The former Moorfield Stadium lies on the east side of the B1432 Sunderland Road at North Hill, a little to the west of Easington, County Durham. The central grid reference is NZ 4166 4440. The site is irregular in plan and covers an area of approximately 1.93ha. It is surrounded by agricultural land.

Development proposal

- 2.2 Proposals have been drawn up for clearance of the site to make way for a residential development. The planning reference is DM/17/03999/FPA.

Objective

- 2.3 The objective of the project was to provide a record of the stadium and its buildings in their present state. The regional research framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) contains an agenda for archaeological research in the region, which is incorporated into regional planning policy implementation with respect to archaeology. In this instance, the scheme of works was designed to address agenda item MOvii: Sports and leisure.

Specification summary

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Dates

- 2.5 The stadium was examined on 30th September 2019. This report was prepared for October 2019.

Personnel

- 2.6 The survey work was carried out by Richard Annis and Hilly Andrews; this report was written by Richard Annis. The illustrations were prepared by Dr Helen Drinkall.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.7 The project archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the Co Durham Record Office and ADS 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 **archaeol3-369671**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

Landuse

- 3.1 The site consists of the disused stadium, track outbuildings and car park, together with a private bungalow called Hill Crest. This is contemporary with the stadium but will be retained in the proposed development, and it has not been recorded as part of this project. Most of the surrounding land is used for arable farming.

Site and situation

- 3.2 The stadium is at about 105m above sea level at the top of a slope running north-west towards the Loaning Burn, a tributary of the Hawthorn Burn. The track has

been cut into the natural slope to create a level area and there is a fairly steep bank along its north-west side. The buildings are on the south-east side of the oval track.

Geology and soils

- 3.3 The bedrock is Late Permian dolostone of the Ford Formation, which is overlain by glacial till.

4. Historical and archaeological development

- 4.1 The history of the site has been set out in an earlier report (Archaeological Services 2018) and that account is summarised here.
- 4.2 The site of the existing stadium was open ground until the 20th century. A colliery opened east of Easington in 1899 and a new village called Easington Colliery was developed. The greyhound track, originally called the Moorfield Stadium, arrived considerably later; it opened in 1934. The sport as it is known today developed in the USA and arrived in Britain in the years after the First World War. By the end of the 1940s there were more than 30 greyhound racing tracks in the north-east of England (Pearson 2010, 123). Dirt track riding, which developed into speedway, was introduced at about the same time as dog racing. Some stadiums, such as Byker and North Boldon (now called Sunderland), were built with a speedway track inside the sand circuit laid for greyhound racing.
- 4.3 In its early days, greyhound racing had a strong appeal to working people, because it was relatively cheap, because meetings were held in the evenings after working hours, and because it offered opportunities for legal on-course gambling. The latter was a controversial issue and there were objections to the establishment of greyhound racing venues on the grounds that they would encourage gambling and criminality. Among notable objectors were the National Anti-Gambling League and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill; in 1927, he wrote to the Home Secretary warning that greyhound tracks were no more than “animated roulette boards” that would spread dangerous behaviour among British workers (Laybourn 2019). Despite these objections, dog racing thrived in the inter-War period. Large crowds were recorded at weeknight and weekend meetings and sizeable terraces, both open and covered, were built to accommodate spectators. The popularity of the sport peaked in the mid-1950s but numbers attending stadiums fell after that time. This was the result of the arrival of television, the legalisation of high street betting shops in 1961, and changes in attitudes to leisure.
- 4.4 Some greyhound racing venues in Great Britain are registered by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain and others, known as 'independent' or 'flapping' tracks are unaffiliated to a governing body. There are registered tracks at Pelaw Grange, Birtley and Byker. The Easington stadium had always been a flapping track. Other unaffiliated tracks were established at Wheatley Hill and Cambois.
- 4.5 Moorfield Stadium was laid out as a 380-yard track. In the 1960s and 1970s the Easington site included 70 kennels and had a licenced and a tea bar; races were held on Thursday and Saturday evenings. The main annual events were the Moorfield Challenge Trophy and the Bank Holiday Stakes. The track was finally closed in 2017.

5. The track (Figure 2)

- 5.1 The stadium is roughly 900m north of the historic centre of Easington village; the church tower can be seen from the track (Photograph 1). The circuit is at a lower level than the buildings, entrance and car park on the south and east sides, giving a sloped site used for the outside terraces for spectators (Photograph 2). The raised level of the ground on the west side is bounded by a low concrete wall over which there are long views towards Hawthorn (Photograph 3). Wooded ground and a few isolated houses lie just to the north. All of the stadium buildings are at the east and south sides; most are above track level but there is an open-fronted shed on the sand at the south-east side (Photograph 4).
- 5.2 The starting traps have been removed but their position is marked with race distances of 410 and 760m (Photograph 5). Plastic tubular rails, some recently stolen, line the inside of the track (Photograph 6). There is an alternative set of starting traps at the north-west side of the circuit, near a small wooden shed used for maintenance work (Photographs 7-9). At Easington, the track for the hare runs around the outside of the running track. It is made of welded sections of steel angle bearing the marks of friction from the plain steel plates that carried the lure (Photograph 10). Power for the hare came from an electric motor set in a pit beside the kennels at the north end of the building; here, a combination of a rubber drive wheel and a spare wheel from a car gripped the blue rope that ran around the circuit under the rails (Photographs 11, 12). The hare, which was in fact a kind of wind-sock, was attached to a pair of steel plates attached to this rope (Photograph 13).
- 5.3 A windowless concrete-block shed at the south-west side of the track formerly housed kennels (Photograph 14). This has a small shed and a mess-room at the south end and the base courses of blockwork kennels survive inside (Photographs 15, 16). On the side of the track at the south end of the terraces is a steel post with a hinged gantry that was used for indicator lights (Photograph 17).

6. The buildings

- 6.1 The buildings are shown in Figure 3; room numbers used on the plan are given in square brackets in the text below.
- 6.2 The stadium buildings form a long irregular block that is built from a mixture of brick, concrete blocks, timber and sheet metal (Photographs 18, 19). Low walls separate the open terraces from the track. The main building, now fronted by lean-to glazed extension for spectators lounges, is a plain rectangular block with a hipped roof of corrugated steel sheets. North of this, the main terraces are partly covered by a canopy and end at the tall control room block. A low concrete-block structure at the north end houses kennels (Photograph 20). Throughout the block, the construction is simple and cheap; the stepped terraces are uneven but they offer a comprehensive view of the racetrack (Photographs 21, 22).
- 6.3 The entrance leads to one of three glazed lounges [1, 3, 4], all similar in form (Photographs 23, 24). There is a plain windowless kitchen [2] at the south end (Photograph 25). The central lounge [3] gives access to the bar [5] (Photograph 26), from which large windows open onto the longer northern room [4] (Photograph 27). At the south-east corner is a small barred window to a plywood Tote cubicle (Photograph 28). Most of the area of the older building is occupied by the bar, which

has a performance area and toilets [6, 7] at its south end (Photographs 29-31). The betting cubicle [8] by the entrance has a window facing the bar; at the north end there is a row of three old betting windows, now closed up (Photographs 32, 33). The bar's cellar [9] is a bare concrete-block lean-to on the east side of the older building (Photograph 34). At the north end of the old block there are a number of smaller rooms. A narrow space behind the old betting windows has become an office and a store [10, 11] but retains the counter that served the barred windows (Photograph 35).

- 6.4 An irregular lobby [12] gives access to the rooms at the north end; here too there is a small hatch into the workshop [15], now boarded up (Photograph 36). At the west side, a steel roller shutter leads to the terraces under the canopy (Photograph 37). A smaller lobby [13] gives access to a cupboard [14]. At the north-east corner, the workshop [15] and office [16] are bare rooms with a single window (Photographs 38-40).
- 6.5 At the back of the terraces is a wooden wall with a row of four disused betting windows (Photograph 41). There is a narrow room [17] behind these, reached by a door at the back of the control room block. At first-floor level, the control room block is entered by small lobby [18] that leads up to the vet's room [19] with a large window looking out over the track (Photograph 42). North of this, the control room [20] is directly above the finish line. It has windows on three sides and a view of the whole of the track and its surroundings (Photographs 43-46). A small store room [21] at the rear has rungs set into its north wall; these lead to a small roof-top room clad with roofing felt (Photographs 47, 48). This has a rough platform at its front (Photograph 49); the room could not be entered because of the rotten state of its floor.
- 6.6 Abutting the north side of the control room block is an open-fronted shed [22] that gives access to the lower rooms under the back of the terraces (Photograph 50). At its north side is a large triangular kennel [23]. This is a recent structure with concrete-block walls and a profiled sheet roof (Photograph 51). There are four blocks of kennels, each a bare concrete box with a raised wooden platform on the floor; three small holes above the door are the only source of light and air (Photograph 52). The south end has a row of obscured glass windows looking into the shed [22] and a door leading the ground behind the stadium block (Photograph 53).
- 6.7 Beneath the control room and its store is a small store room [24] that contains another disused betting booth (Photograph 54). This small room [25] has three hatches; its cement render finish suggests that it was not formerly enclosed. At the east side is a shuttered door to a long rear store room [26]. The interior of the old betting kiosk [25] retains its wooden counters and shelves (Photograph 55). Under the rear of the stand is a long room [26] used as a store for timber and other building materials. A wooden ladder leads from its north end to room [21] at the back of the control room (Photograph 56).
- 6.8 The stadium's original electricity sub-station [27] stands at the back of the building (Photographs 57, 58). It now has a later shed built onto its north end. The heating boiler for the main building is in a small shed [29] near the south end (Photograph

- 59); at the south-east corner of the old block is a bare store room [30] (Photograph 60).
- 6.9 The original entrance to the stadium was a pair of turnstiles [31, 32] in the buttressed brick wall at the south end (Photograph 61). The south entrance has been abandoned and a modern wall has been inserted to narrow the entrance (Photograph 62). The northern booth [31] retains parts of the turnstile (Photograph 63) and this has its original maker's plate on the counter (Photograph 64). The inscription reads "ELLISON'S / PATENT / RUSH-PREVENTIVE / TURNSTILE / SOLE MAKERS / W.T.ELLISON & Co. / LIMITED / IRLAMS O-TH-HEIGHT / MANCHESTER" and the serial number is 10434. Ellison's specialised in this kind of device and supplied a hundred turnstiles for Wembley Stadium, as well as equipping many other sports grounds (Inglis 2004). South of the turnstiles is the main vehicle entrance [33] with a bricked-up pedestrian gate beside it (Photograph 65).
- 6.10 Betting, which was an important part of the business of the track, was not confined to the various Tote booths inside the buildings. In common with other tracks and horse-racing tracks, provision was made for independent bookmakers on the terraces. A low wall [34] at the front of the stand, that once carried a transparent canopy for weather protection, has posts with boards for posting the odds and hooks for the bookie's trademark briefcase (Photograph 66).
- 6.11 Beyond the front of the stadium, the outside of the building is very plain. The south end is exposed brick and concrete slab roofs (Photograph 67); the back of the main block, apart from the cellar, is covered with profiled metal sheets (Photographs 68, 69). The back of the terraces is a wall of corrugated steel and brick (Photograph 70).
- 6.12 Apart from the brass plate on the turnstile, only two significant inscriptions were seen during the survey. One is a notice warning customers about the somewhat unusual outside track for the hare (Photograph 71); the other is a damaged trophy found abandoned on the floor of the workshop (Photograph 72). This has the inscription "Moorfield Greyhound Stadium / Whit Handicap Trophy". There is no date, list of winners or maker's mark.

7. Sources and references

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Appendix: Catalogue of photographs

The photographs were taken by Richard Annis on 30th September 2019, using a Nikon D3300 digital SLR. The archive photo filenames are 01-72_Easington_Stadium_5171.

No.	Subject
1	A view of the stadium from its north-west corner with Easington village on the horizon beyond it
2	The stadium buildings and the east side of the track, showing the slope
3	A view looking north across the track, with Hawthorn village beyond the dene
4	The track seen from the south, with the open shed in the foreground
5	The start line, with the traps removed to the trackside in the background
6	Plastic tube fencing on the inside of the north-east bend
7	The secondary start line, with the traps and wooden maintenance shed
8	Starting traps at the north-west side of the circuit
9	The doors at the back of the traps
10	Detail of the hare track showing a typical welded join between straight sections and evidence of wear. The blue cable (centre) draws the hare along
11	The pit for the hare motor, beside the kennels [23]
12	The electric motor, drive wheels and the blue cable
13	Two plates and spacers carry the hare on a loop of cable
14	The detached kennel building at the south-west side of the site
15	Mess room at the south end of the detached kennel
16	Interior of the kennel building, with the bases of the boxes at either side
17	The hinged gantry for indicator lights, near the starting traps
18	A view of the stadium buildings from the west side of the track. The hipped blue roof at the centre covers the oldest part of the structure
19	The buildings and the open and covered terraces, seen from the south
20	The buildings seen from the north-west. The low building at the left is the kennel block [23], with the tall control room to its right
21	A view from the end of the canopied terraces towards the start line
22	The finish line seen from the north end of the terraces
23	The entrance and spectator lounge [1], seen from the north end
24	A view looking north through the lounges [1], [3] and [4]
25	Kitchen [2]
26	The central lounge [3] with the door to the bar [5] at the right
27	The large northern lounge [4] seen from the north end
28	The window of the betting booth at the south-east corner of room [4]
29	The performance area at the south end of the bar [5]
30	The bar [5], seen from the south end
31	A view looking south in the bar, with doors to the toilets [6, 7] at the far end
32	The plywood betting booth [8]
33	Old betting windows at the north end of the bar
34	Interior of the bar cellar [9]
35	The former betting booth, later an office and store [10, 11]
36	The entrance lobby [12] that opens onto the terraces has a blocked door and hatch in its east wall
37	Lobby 12, showing the shuttered terrace entrance and the door to the small lobby [13]
38	The workshop [15] has a steel-barred window to the rear
39	The west wall of the workshop, with the blocked hatch from lobby [12]

No.	Subject
40	The windowless main office [16]
41	Betting booths at the rear of the covered terrace. A view looking south-east
42	The vet's room [19] at first-floor level
43	Control room [20]
44	The start line seen from the control room
45	The finish line seen from the control room
46	The north end of the track seen from the control room
47	A view looking from west store room [21] into the control room. A ladder to the upper room is out of shot on the right-hand wall
48	The upper room seen from the ladder. A view looking south-west
49	The windows of the control room [20] and vet's room [19], with the felt-covered upper room and the open platform above
50	The open shed [22]. Doors partly hidden by the central pillar lead to the old betting kiosk [25] and the rear store [26]
51	A view looking north into the kennel block [23]
52	A typical kennel of bare concrete and timber. It is covered with corrugated sheets
53	The view from the north end of the kennel block [23]
54	The store room [24] on the ground floor of the control room block, with an old betting kiosk inside it
55	Interior of the old betting kiosk [25], seen from the open shed [22]
56	A view looking north in the ground-floor store [26] under the terraces. The ladder crossing the door leads up to the small store room [21]
57	The front of the old electrical sub-station behind the stadium buildings
58	The old sub-station and its later shed, seen from the south
59	Boiler house [29]
60	Store room [30] at the south end of the old building
61	The original pedestrian entrance
62	The turnstile blocks [31, 32] at either side of the old entrance. The white internal wall is a recent addition
63	Interior of the northern turnstile room [31]. The remains of the broken turnstile are covered by a zinc sheet
64	The brass plate on the top of the turnstile [31]
65	The turnstile blocks [31, 32] and the main vehicle entrance [33], seen from the north
66	The bookmakers' stand at the foot of the terraces
67	The south end of the building. Boiler house [29] is at the left, with windows to toilets [7] in the middle and the store room [30] to the right
68	The east face of the building, with blocked openings to store [30] left of centre and the white-painted cellar [9] at the right
69	The rear of the building to the north of the cellar, with the window to the workshop [15]
70	The rear of the stands and store room [26]
71	Notice to customers, posted at the foot of the terraces
72	An old trophy cup found in the workshop



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Photograph 2: The stadium buildings and the east side of the track, showing the slope



Photograph 3: A view looking north across the track, with Hawthorn village beyond the dene



Photograph 4: The track seen from the south, with the open shed in the foreground



Photograph 5: The start line, with the traps removed to the trackside in the background



Photograph 6: Plastic tube fencing on the inside of the north-east bend



Photograph 7: The secondary start line, with the traps and wooden maintenance shed



Photograph 8: Starting traps at the north-west side of the circuit



Photograph 9: The doors at the back of the traps



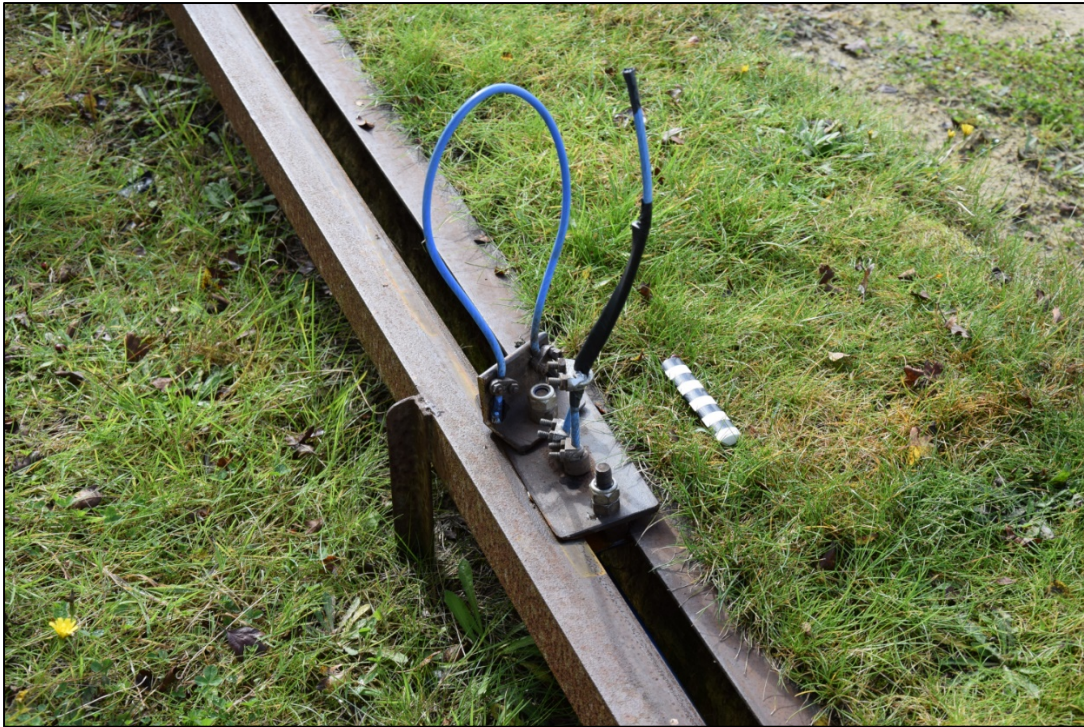
Photograph 10: Detail of the hare track showing a typical welded joint between straight sections and evidence of wear. The blue cable (centre) draws the hare along



Photograph 11: The pit for the hare motor, beside the kennels [23]



Photograph 12: The electric motor, drive wheels and the blue cable



Photograph 13: Two plates and spacers carry the cable on a loop of cable



Photograph 14: The detached kennel building at the south-west side of the site



Photograph 15: Mess room at the south end of the detached kennel



Photograph 16: Interior of the kennel building, with the bases of the boxes at either side



Photograph 17: The hinged gantry for indicator lights, near the starting traps



Photograph 18: A view of the stadium buildings from the west side of the track. The hipped blue roof at the centre covers the oldest part of the structure



Photograph 19: The buildings and the open and covered terraces, seen from the south



Photograph 20: The buildings seen from the north-west. The low building at the left is the kennel block [23], with the tall control room to its right



Photograph 21: A view from the end of the canopied terraces towards the start line



Photograph 22: The finish line seen from the north end of the terraces



Photograph 23: The entrance and spectator lounge [1], seen from the north end



Photograph 24: A view looking north through the lounges [1], [3] and [4]



Photograph 25: Kitchen [2]



Photograph 26: The central lounge [3] with the door to the bar [5] at the right



Photograph 27: The large northern lounge [4] seen from the north end



Photograph 28: The window of the betting booth at the south-east corner of room [4]



Photograph 29: The performance area at the south end of the bar [5]



Photograph 30: The bar [5], seen from the south end



Photograph 31: A view looking south in the bar, with doors to the toilets [6, 7] at the far end



Photograph 32: The plywood betting booth [8]



Photograph 33: Old betting windows at the north end of the bar



Photograph 34: Interior of the bar cellar [9]



Photograph 35: The former betting booths, later an office and store [10, 11]



Photograph 36: The entrance lobby [12] that opens onto the terraces has a blocked door and hatch in its east wall



Photograph 37: Lobby 12, showing the shuttered terrace entrance and the door to the small lobby [13]



Photograph 38: The workshop [15] has a steel-barred window to the rear



Photograph 39: The west wall of the workshop, with the blocked hatch from lobby [12]



Photograph 40: The windowless main office [16]



Photograph 41: Betting booths at the rear of the covered terrace. A view looking south-east



Photograph 42: The vet's room [19] at first-floor level



Photograph 43: Control room [20]



Photograph 44: The start line seen from the control room



Photograph 45: The finish line seen from the control room



Photograph 46: The north end of the track seen from the control room



Photograph 47: A view looking west from store room [21] into the control room. A ladder to the upper room is out of shot on the right-hand wall



Photograph 48: The upper room seen from the ladder. A view looking south-west



Photograph 49: The windows of the control room [20] and vet's room [19], with the felt-covered upper room and the open platform above



Photograph 50: The open shed [22]. Doors partly hidden by the central pillar lead to the old betting kiosk [25] and the rear store [26]



Photograph 51: A view looking north into the kennel block [23]



Photograph 52: A typical kennel of bare concrete and timber. It is covered with corrugated sheets



Photograph 53: The view from the north end of the kennel block [23]



Photograph 54: The store room [24] on the ground floor of the control room block, with an old betting kiosk inside it



Photograph 55 (left): Interior of the old betting kiosk [25], seen from the open shed [22]

Photograph 56 (below): A view looking north in the ground-floor store [26] under the terraces. The ladder crossing the door leads up to the small store room [21]





Photograph 57: The front of the old electrical sub-station behind the stadium buildings



Photograph 58: The old sub-station and its later shed, seen from the south



Photograph 59 (left): Boiler house [29]

Photograph 60 (below): Store room [30] at the south end of the old building





Photograph 61: The original pedestrian entrance



Photograph 62: The turnstile blocks [31, 32] at either side of the old entrance. The white internal wall is a recent addition



Photograph 63 (above): Interior of the northern turnstile room [31]. The remains of the broken turnstile are covered by a zinc sheet



Photograph 64 (left): The brass plate on the top of the turnstile [31]



Photograph 65: The turnstile blocks [31, 32] and the main vehicle entrance [33], seen from the north



Photograph 66: The bookmakers' stand at the foot of the terraces



Photograph 67: The south end of the building. Boiler house [29] is at the left, with windows to toilets [7] in the middle and the store room [30] to the right



Photograph 68: The east face of the building, with blocked openings to store [30] left of centre and the white-painted cellar [9] at the right



Photograph 69: The rear of the building to the north of the cellar, with the window to the workshop [15]



Photograph 70: The rear of the stands and store room [26]



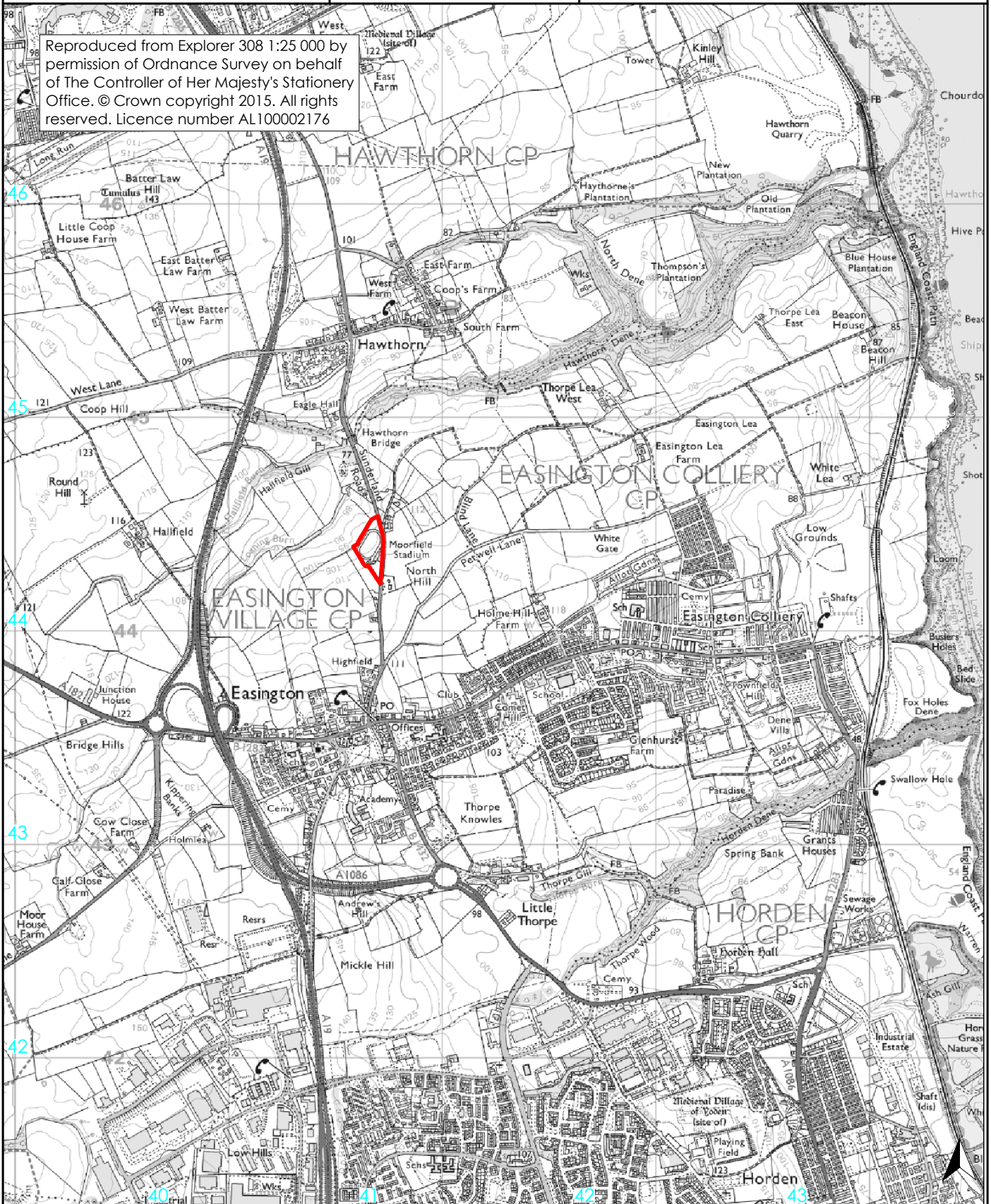
Photograph 71: Notice to customers, posted at the foot of the terraces




Photograph 72: An old trophy cup found in the workshop



Figure 1: Site location

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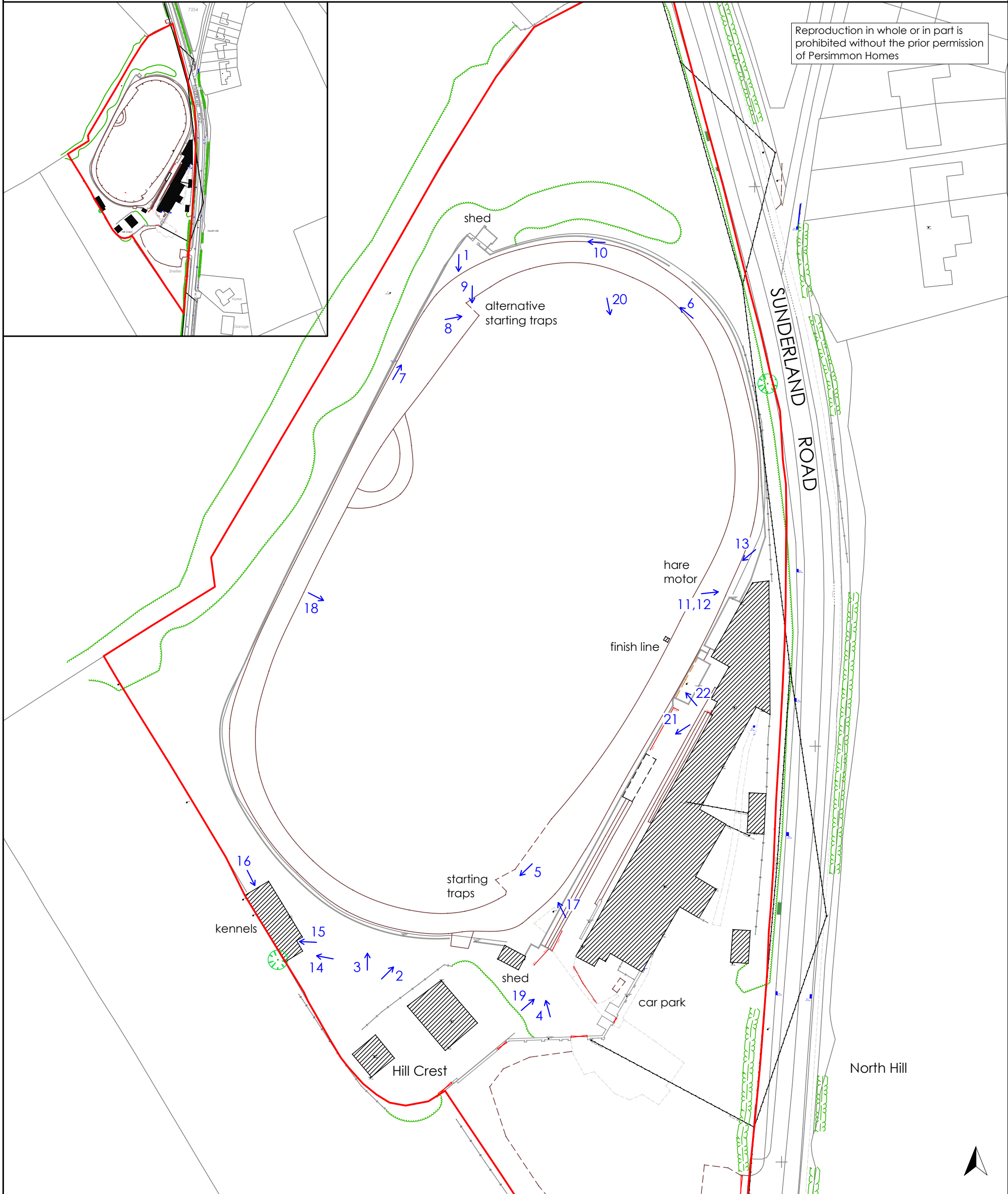


 site location

0  1km
scale 1:25 000 for A4 plot

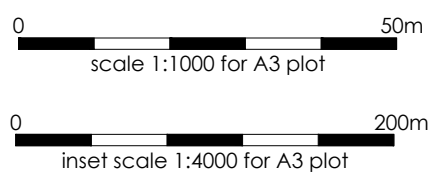
-  site boundary
-  photograph

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

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Former Moorfield Greyhound Stadium
Easington
County Durham

archaeological building recording
report 5171

Figure 2: The stadium

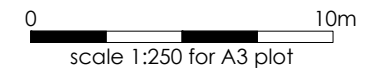
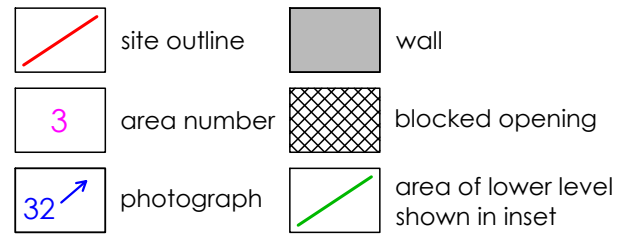


Figure 3: The buildings

