

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
Mr T McGiven

Land at Ornsby Hill
Lanchester
County Durham

archaeological evaluation

report 5200
October 2019

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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 on land at Ornsby Hill, Lanchester, County Durham. The works comprised the excavation and recording of 16 evaluation trenches.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Mr T McGiven and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 The remains of probable water or drainage channels were identified in trenches 1, 2, 8, and 9, with the outwash from one of these channels exposed in trench 10. Data from the Coal Authority indicates that much of the northern part of the site has been subject to shallow coal mine workings in the past, and two former mine adits are located at the western edge of the site. These channels are likely to be related to this mining activity.
- 1.4 Plough furrows, the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, were identified on the northern side of the site in trenches 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7. These are of limited archaeological significance.
- 1.5 Modern pits were exposed in trenches 5 and 13. No archaeological deposits were recorded in trenches 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16.

Recommendations

- 1.6 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 on land at Ornsby Hill, Lanchester, County Durham (NGR centre: NZ 16790 48420). It covers an area of approximately 1.9 ha. To the north was Back Lane, Ornsby Hill House and farmland; to the east and south was farmland. and to the west was Lodge Plantation, a row of houses, and the A6076 Howden Bank road.

Development proposal

- 2.2 The proposed development is for holiday lodges, a management building and an access road joining the A6076 to the south-east. The planning application reference number is DM/16/01861/FPA.

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.

Research Objectives

- 2.4 The regional research framework (Petts & Gerrard 2006) contains an agenda for archaeological research in the region. The scheme of works was designed to address agenda items Riv: Roman native and civilian life; Rix: Roman landscape and environment; MD1: Later Medieval settlement; MDii: Later Medieval landscape.

Specification

- 2.5 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University (reference DS17.111r2) and approved by the planning authority.

Dates

- 2.6 Fieldwork was undertaken w/c 14th October 2019. This report was prepared for October 2019.

Personnel

- 2.7 Fieldwork was supervised and this report prepared by Mark Randerson, with illustrations by Dr Helen Drinkall. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.8 The site code is **LOH19**, for **Lanchester Ornsby Hill 2019**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the County Durham Archaeological Archives 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 **archaeol3-372078**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of this evaluation, the proposed development area comprised one field of rough grassland.

- 3.2 The area occupied an east-facing slope. This slope was uneven, with the ground surface undulating across the study area. Two long, shallow sets of ridges and linear hollows crossed the site on a roughly east/west orientation, following the general slope of the ground. Elevations across the field ranged from approximately 150m OD in the north-east corner to 140m OD in the west.
- 3.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Carboniferous strata of mudstone, siltstone and sandstone of the Pennine Lower Coal Measures Formation, which are overlain by Devensian diamicton till (The British Geological Society 2019). An inferred coal seam broadly follows the edge of Lodge Plantation, on the west side of the study area. A fossil horizon of shelly mudstone broadly corresponds to the northern and eastern edges of the site.

4. Historical and archaeological background

Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 The site has previously been subject to a scheme of geophysical survey (Archaeological Services 2019b). This survey identified large strong magnetic anomalies in the central part of the study area: it was suggested that these correspond to former mine adits and workings, enclosed by a possible boundary. Land drains and former ploughing were also identified.

The prehistoric period (up to AD 70)

- 4.2 Little evidence for prehistoric activity has been recorded in the vicinity of Lanchester, mostly comprising occasional finds of flint tools. Tumuli were once reported at Maiden Law, over 1km to the north-east of the site, although no trace of these now survives; they may have been destroyed by quarrying or open-cast mining.

The Roman period (AD 70 to 5th century)

- 4.3 The Lanchester area was incorporated into the Roman Empire in the late first century AD. The line of one of the principal Roman roads to the north, now known as Dere Street, lies to the west of Lanchester, to the south-west of the site.
- 4.4 The Roman fort of Longovicium, located 1.6km to the south-west of the site, was built at around AD 150 and covers an area of 2.3 hectares. The fort was a later addition to a chain of defensive forts along Dere Street.
- 4.5 Several phases of geophysical survey have been undertaken both inside the fort and over much of the surrounding land. It is anticipated that numerous buildings within and outside the fort are likely to be relatively well preserved. Previous surveys and other investigations have identified an extensive vicus to the north, east and south, along the line of Dere Street, and aqueducts, a cemetery and probable industrial areas to the west and south-west of the fort (eg Archaeological Services 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017 & 2019a; Casey *et al.* 1992; The Friends of Longovicium 2007 & 2011; Turner 1990).

The medieval period (5th century to 1540)

- 4.6 The possible Deserted Medieval Village of Greencroft lies approximately 800m to the north of the study area. Further medieval settlements in the parish included Lanchester, whose All Saint's Church in was built in the 12th century, and possibly

Tanfield, Newbiggin and Colepike Hall. The site itself was probably used as agricultural land during the medieval period.

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

- 4.7 The site appears to have continued to be used as farmland throughout post-medieval and modern periods, and was possibly enclosed in the 16th or 17th centuries.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

- 5.1 16 trenches were excavated across the site (Figure 2). The majority of these trenches were 25m long, with the exception of trenches 4, 5, and 10, all of which were 15m long. A number of the trenches were positioned to investigate previously identified geomagnetic anomalies, or were located within the footprints of the proposed lodge buildings. The remainder were distributed across the site to provide a representative sample of the area. Selected trench plans and sections can be seen on Figure 3; context data is summarised in Table 1.1. Detailed trench information is provided in Table 1.2.

The trenches

- 5.2 Natural subsoil [1] was exposed across the base of all trenches. This was a changeable deposit, showing frequent natural geological variation across the site. It was mainly characterised as either a mottled light yellow-grey heavily compact stiff silty clay, or a yellow clay, with inclusions of occasional well-rounded to angular small to large stones and cobbles. The deposit was mottled with large irregular lenses of dense grey clay, orange-brown coarse sand, and light grey/white sandy silt.
- 5.3 A substantial, sub-linear channel was identified crossing the site on a roughly east/west orientation, arcing slightly towards the south at each end. This feature was exposed in trenches 1, 2, 8, and 9, following one of the hollows which crossed the site, and also following the location of one of the linear anomalies identified by the geomagnetic survey. This channel [F12=F16=F19=F22: over 123m long, 4.5m wide, 0.7m deep at maximum extents] had uneven, gentle to moderately sloping sides which rounded onto an irregular, smooth base (Photo 1). It was deepest in the centre and eastern parts of the site, where the natural slope of the ground was the steepest, but became wider and shallower in trench 1, to the west (Photo 2). It contained two broadly similar deposits. These comprised a primary fill of light bluish-grey silty clay [14=18=21=24: 1.8m wide, up to 0.3m deep], sealed by a layer of moderately compact reddish-brown clayey silt [13=17=20=23: 4.5m wide, 0.41m deep]. This channel is most likely associated with the former mine adits on the site, perhaps relating to drainage.
- 5.4 A second, shallower channel was exposed in trenches 8 and 9, again following the course of a visible hollow and the location of a linear geomagnetic anomaly. This channel [F6=F10: over 33m long, 2.56m wide, 0.15m deep at maximum extents] had gently sloping sides and a rounded, smooth base. The pointed, leaf-shaped terminus was located within trench 8, at the higher, eastern side of the site. This channel contained a single fill of mottled grey-brown and red-brown clayey silt [7=11]. To the west, a similar deposit was exposed in trench 10. This deposit [15: 2.55m wide, 0.1m deep] was less mottled, and contained occasional lenses of fine sand and inclusions

of pea grit. However, no definite cut could be identified, with deposit [15] appearing to fill a gentle natural hollow in the surface of the natural subsoil [2]. It is probable that this deposit represented the 'wash' from channel [F6=F10], with material carried downhill by water action and accumulating in a hollow at the base of the slope. This deposit was most probably the origin of a geomagnetic anomaly identified in this area.

- 5.5 A similar deposit was also identified at the north end of trench 8. This deposit [25: 1.6m wide, 0.15m deep] again appeared to fill a natural hollow, with no definite cut visible. It was a grey clayey silt, containing occasional pea grit and small rounded gravel and frequent flecks of iron panning and manganese. This possibly represented another former channel, following a similar course downslope, but remaining far shallower.
- 5.6 A large, irregular pit was partially exposed in the centre of trench 5. This pit [F8: 2.1m wide, over 0.8m deep] was not fully excavated, and both the east and west sides of the feature extending beyond the limits of excavation. The pit had uneven, moderate to very steeply sloped sides. The base was not exposed. It contained a very mixed, friable to plastic fill of moderately compact large irregular lenses of brownish-orange silty clay, brown silty sand, and dark grey clayey silt, with inclusions of decomposed timber and copper cable. This fill was clearly of modern origin, and several segments of telegraph pole and large fragments of iron plate were exposed at the bottom of the excavation (Photo 3). A disused telegraph pole stood in the woodland of Lodge Plantation, directly to the south; pit [F8] may have been the location of another pole along this line, or it may have served as an earthing point or waste pit.
- 5.7 Another irregular pit was exposed at the northern end of trench 13, which continued beyond the trench edge. The south-western face of the cut [F3: 2.5m wide, over 0.5m deep] was steeply sloping. It contained a main fill of clean, dark grey sub-angular dolomite gravel [5], overlain by a deposit of dark grey-brown sandy clayey silt [4: 0.45m deep]. Both of these fills appeared to be of modern origin, with deposit [4] most probably representing a consolidation dump, capping the looser dolomite below. Anecdotal evidence suggested that this feature was connected with the re-instatement of former mine workings.
- 5.8 The remains of plough furrows were identified in trenches 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7, cutting the natural subsoil. These furrows were all very shallow, suggesting that they had undergone a significant degree of horizontal truncation. They were only identified on the higher, northern side of the site and it is possible that only this area was formerly ploughed, although it seems more probable that any other furrows on the site have been destroyed by modern disturbance. Field drains were also identified across the area, again cutting the natural subsoil. Several of these drains were laid along the course of the channels [F6] and [F12]. All trenches were sealed by a layer of grey-brown clayey silt topsoil [1: 0.2m to 0.4m deep]. No artefacts were recovered.

6. The artefacts

- 6.1 No artefacts were recovered.

7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence

- 7.1 No material suitable for palaeoenvironmental assessment was identified.

8. The archaeological resource

- 8.1 The remains of probable water or drainage channels were identified in trenches 1, 2, 8, and 9, with the outwash from one of these channels exposed in trench 10. Data from the Coal Authority indicates that much of the northern part of the site has been subject to shallow coal mine workings in the past, and two former mine adits are located at the western edge of the site (The Coal Authority 2019). These channels are likely to be related to this mining activity.
- 8.2 Plough furrows, the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing, were identified on the northern side of the site in trenches 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7. These are of limited archaeological significance.
- 8.3 Modern pits were exposed in trenches 5 and 13. No archaeological deposits were recorded in trenches 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16.

9. Impact assessment

- 9.1 Development of the site is unlikely to impact on any archaeologically significant deposits.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 No further scheme of archaeological works is recommended in relation to this development.

11. Sources

- Archaeological Services 2008a *North vicus at Longovicium, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **1908**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2008b *East vicus at Longovicium, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical surveys*. Unpublished report **2102**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2009 *Land at Longovicium, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical surveys*. Unpublished report **2313**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2013 *Cadger Bank, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **3141**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2014 *Land west and south of Longovicium, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **3472**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2017 *Land west and south of Longovicium, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **4575**, Archaeological Services Durham University

- Archaeological Services 2019a *Longovicium Roman Fort and Environs, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **4980**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Archaeological Services 2019b *Land at Ornsby Hill, Lanchester, County Durham: geophysical survey*. Unpublished report **5162**, Archaeological Services Durham University
- Casey, PJ, Noel, M, & Wright, J, 1992 The Roman Fort at Lanchester, Co. Durham: a Geophysical Survey and Discussion of Garrisons. *Archaeol J*, **149**, 69-81
- Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*. Durham
- The Friends of *Longovicium* 2007 *Longovicium: Lanchester's Roman Fort*. Lanchester Partnership
- The Friends of *Longovicium* 2011 *Longovicium: A Roman town at Lanchester*. Lanchester Partnership
- Turner, R, 1990 A Romano-British Cemetery at Lanchester, Durham. *Archaeol Aeliana* 5th Series, **18**, 63-77

Websites

- www.bgs.ac.uk – The British Geological Society, accessed 30-10-2019
- <https://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/coalauthority/home.html> - The Coal Authority, accessed 30-10-19

Appendix 1: Data tables

Table 1.1: Context data

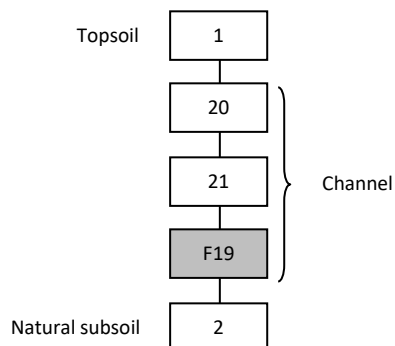
No	Trenches	Description
1	1-16	Topsoil
2	1-16	Natural subsoil
F3	13	Cut of modern pit (mine re-instatement)
4	13	Fill of [F3]
5	13	Fill of [F3]
F6	8	Cut of shallow channel/terminal
7	8	Fill of [F6]
F8	5	Modern pit
9	5	Fill of [F5]
F10	9	Cut of shallow channel
11	9	Fill of [F10]
F12	9	Cut of channel
13	9	Secondary fill of [F12]
14	9	Primary fill of [F12]
15	10	Subsoil/waterborne deposit
F16	2	Cut of channel
17	2	Secondary fill of [F16]
18	2	Primary fill of [F16]
F19	1	Cut of channel
20	1	Secondary fill of [F19]
21	1	Primary fill of [F19]
F22	8	Cut of channel
23	8	Secondary fill of [F22]
24	8	Primary fill of [F22]
25	8	Subsoil/waterborne deposit

Table 1.2: Trench data

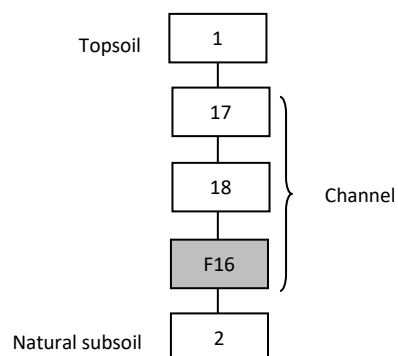
Trench	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Glacial Geology	Furrows				Field Drains- number and orientation	Features
				Number	Spacing (m)	Orientation	Width (m)		
1	25m	0.3-0.9m	Yellow boulder clay	-	-	-	-	3; E/W 1; NE/SW	Channel [F19]
2	25m	0.3-1.05m	Yellow boulder clay	2	5-6m	NE/SW	0.5-1.2m	3; E/W 1; NE/SW	Channel [F16]
3	25m	0.2-0.35m	Yellow/grey boulder clay	3	5-6m	NE/SW	0.5-1m	-	None
4	15m	0.3-0.35m	Yellow/grey boulder clay	1	-	NE/SW	0.8m	-	None
5	15m	0.2-1m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	-	Pit [F8]
6	25m	0.25-0.4m	Yellow/grey boulder clay	2	5-6m	NE/SW	0.7m	-	None
7	25m	0.3-0.4m	Yellow/grey boulder clay	1	-	NE/SW	0.6m	3; NW/SE	None
8	25m	0.25-0.75m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	2; E/W	Channels [F6] and [F22], deposit [25]
9	25m	0.3-1m	Yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	2; E/W	Channels [F10] and [F12]
10	15m	0.3-0.4m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	1; E/W	Deposit [15]
11	25m	0.25-0.4m	Yellow/brown boulder clay	-	-	-	-	1; E/W	None
12	25m	0.25-0.4m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	2; E/W	None
13	25m	0.25-0.6m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	2; E/W	Pit [F3]
14	25m	0.25-0.3m	Mottled orange/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	3; E/W	None
15	25m	0.3-0.4m	Mottled yellow/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	2; E/W	None
16	25m	0.3-0.35m	Mottled orange/grey boulder clay	-	-	-	-	-	None

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

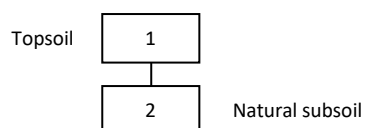
Trench 1



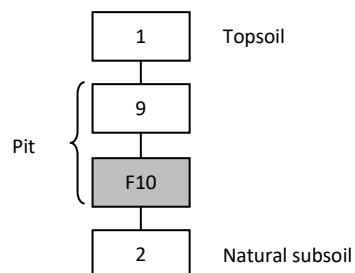
Trench 2



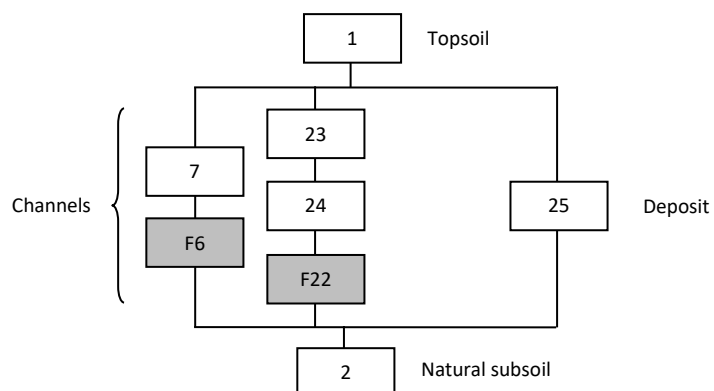
Trenches 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, & 16



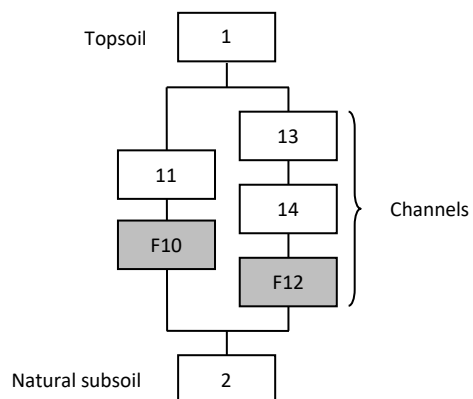
Trench 5



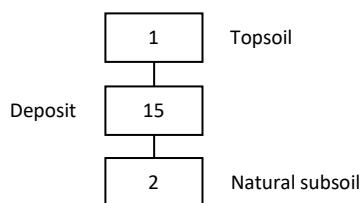
Trench 8



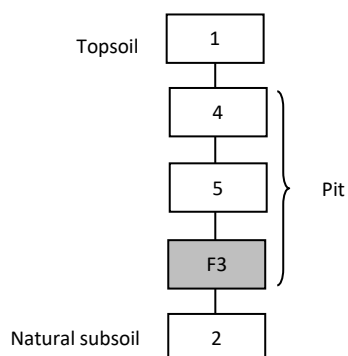
Trench 9



Trench 10



Trench 13





Photograph 1: Trench 9, channel [F12], looking north-west

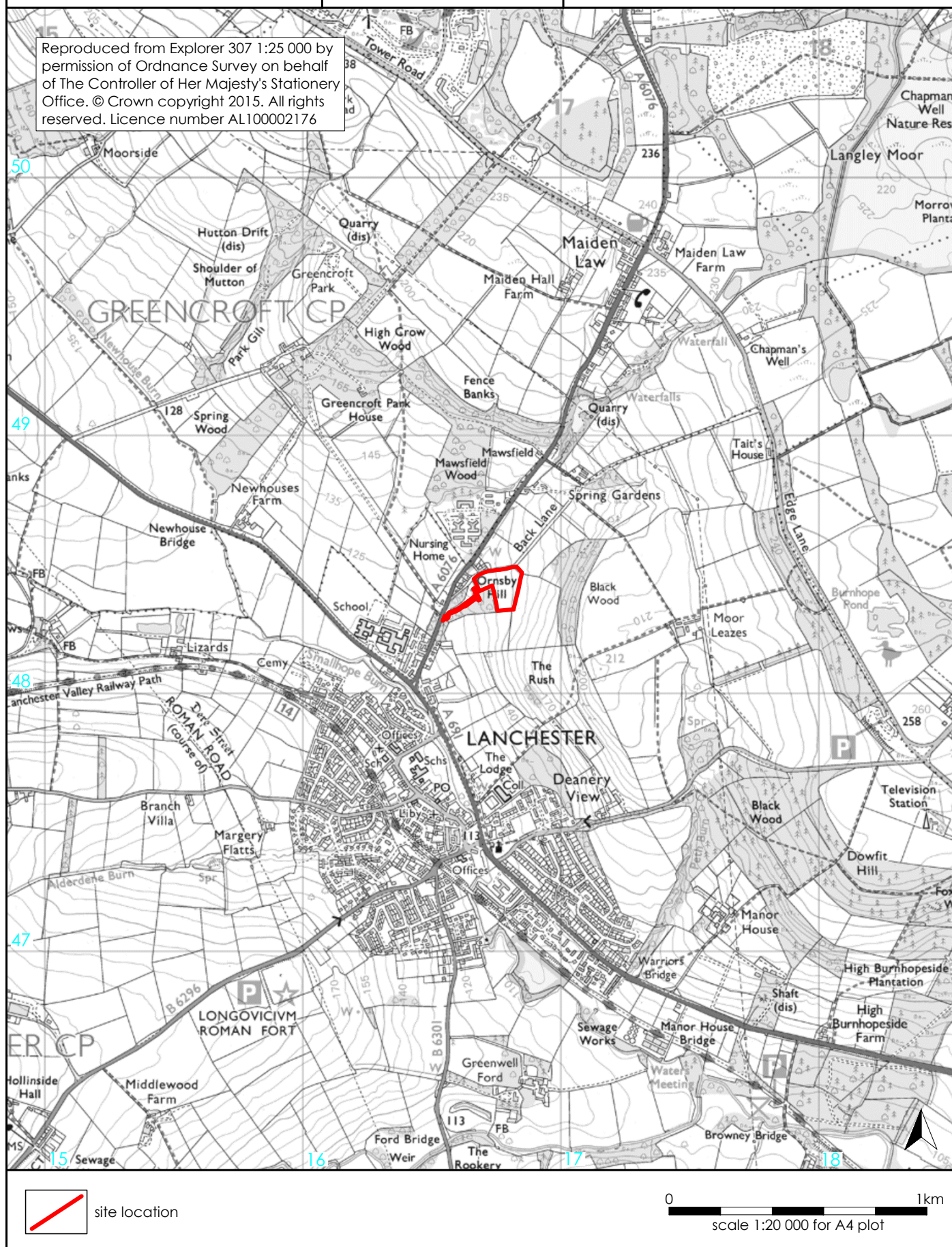


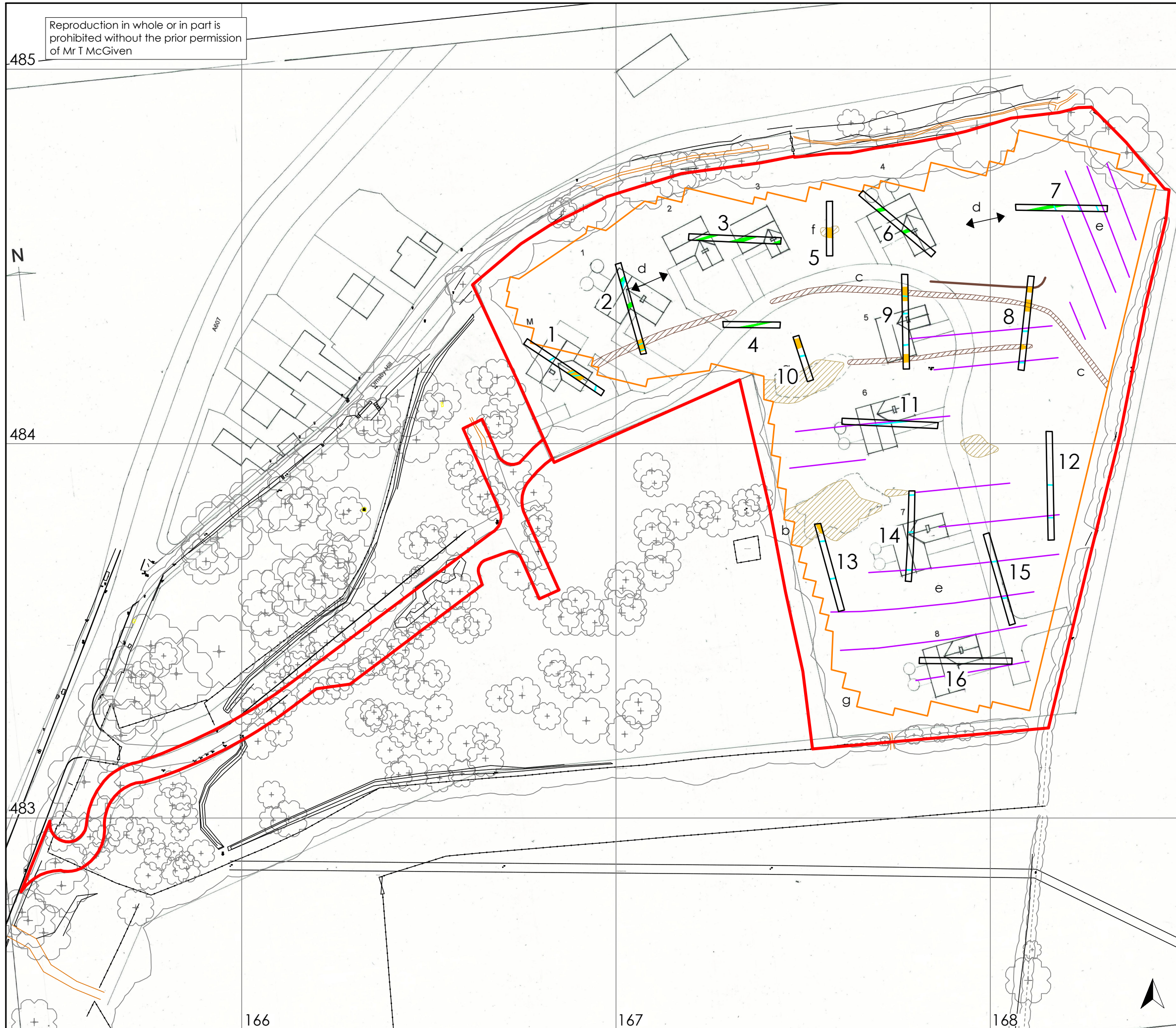
Photograph 2: Trench 1, channel [F22], looking south



Photograph 3: Part of a telegraph pole recovered from pit [F8] in trench 5

Figure 1: Site location





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








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Figure 2: Trench locations

0 50m
scale 1:1000 for A3 plot

-  site boundary
-  magnetic survey
-  soil-filled feature
-  former mine workings
-  land drain
-  former ploughing
-  trench
-  feature
-  furrow
-  pipe/ drain

