

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
IMPEC Real Estate Ltd

Land adjacent to Barcusclose Lane
Burnopfield
County Durham
archaeological evaluation

report 5289
March 2020

Contents

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

Photographs

- Photo 1: Cut [F4], looking north-east
Photo 2: Former field boundary ditch [F8], facing south-west

Figures

- Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Trench locations
Figure 3: Trenches 4 and 14, plans and sections

1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted in advance of a proposed development on land adjacent to Barcusclose Lane, Burnopfield. The works comprised the excavation of 16 archaeological trial trenches.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by IMPEC Real Estate Ltd and conducted by Archaeological Services Durham University.

Results

- 1.3 No significant archaeological resource was identified.

Recommendations

- 1.4 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 at Barcusclose Lane, Burnopfield, County Durham (NGR centre: NZ 1848 5619). It covers an area of approximately 5 ha. Domestic housing occupies the area of Crookgate Bank, to the north-west of the site, with open fields surrounding all other sides. The course of Barcusclose Lane marks the line of the north-eastern boundary.

Development proposal

- 2.2 A residential development is proposed for the site.

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: lii: Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement; liii: Late Bronze Age and Iron Age landscapes; Riv: Roman native and civilian life; Rix: Roman landscape and environment; 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 DS20.15) and approved by the planning authority.

Dates

- 2.6 Fieldwork was undertaken w/c 24th February 2020. This report was prepared for March 2020.

Personnel

- 2.7 Fieldwork was conducted by Daniel Adamson and Mark Randerson (supervisor). This report was prepared by Mark Randerson, with illustrations by David Graham. Specialist reporting was conducted by J Jones. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

- 2.8 The site code is **BBL20**, for **Burnopfield Barcus Close Lane 2020**. 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 **archaeol3-387949**.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of this evaluation, the proposed development area comprised a single field of open pasture, with a small stand of trees present on the north-eastern edge.
- 3.2 The site was uneven, with irregular undulations across the whole of the study area. These varied between 215m OD and 212m OD. A large, shallow hollow occupied the centre of the site, where the ground was heavily waterlogged: several further waterlogged depressions and undulations were spread across the remainder of the area.
- 3.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Carboniferous mudstones, siltstones, and sandstones of the Pennine Middle Coal Measures Formation, which are overlain by Quaternary Devensian diamiction till.

4. Historical and archaeological background

Previous archaeological works

- 4.1 The study area has been subject to a detailed heritage assessment and a programme of geomagnetic survey. The results of these projects are summarised below.

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

- 4.2 Several cropmarks have been identified as potential prehistoric sites to the west of the study area, with a prehistoric settlement identified at Syke Road, to the immediate south. The Roman fort of *Vindomora* lies at Ebchester, 6.5km to the west.

The medieval period (5th century to 1540)

- 4.3 The study site lies at some distance from known medieval settlement in the area, and was probably moorland for much of the period. It may have been used as agricultural land. The possible remains of former ridge and furrow ploughing was identified by the geophysical survey in the north of the study site.

The post-medieval period (1541 to 1899)

- 4.4 Three mineshafts are recorded by historic mapping north-west of the site. The Coal Authority also records a mine entry within the site boundary, although the location of this shaft is not noted on any plans of the area. Possible historic mining activity was identified by the geophysical survey.

The modern period (1900 to present)

- 4.5 A hedgeline which previously subdivided the area was removed in the early 21st century.

5. The evaluation trenches

Introduction

- 5.1 16 trial trenches were excavated across the area. One of these, Trench 5, was moved slightly south of the specified location in order to avoid the entrance to the site, and to maintain access. Several of the trenches were positioned to investigate previously-identified geomagnetic anomalies. The remainder were distributed across the site to provide a representative sample of the area.

- 5.2 Detailed trench information is provided in Table 1.2 (Appendix 1).

The trenches

- 5.3 Natural glacial subsoil [2] was exposed across the base of all trenches. This was a changeable deposit, showing natural geological variation across the site. It was mainly characterised as a light yellow or yellow-brown heavily compact stiff silty clay, with inclusions of occasional well-rounded to sub-angular large stones and cobbles. The deposit was mottled with occasional large irregular lenses of light grey sand: this natural geological variation appeared to be the origin of the geomagnetic anomalies identified in Trenches 13 and 14.
- 5.4 An irregular horizon of subsoil was present across the site. This was identified in Trenches 1, 3, 6-8, 11, 12, and 15, where it appeared to be the source of the geomagnetic anomalies investigated by these excavations. This deposit [3: up to 0.5m thick] was a moderately compact, soft to plastic light grey and grey slightly sandy silty clay containing inclusions of occasional pea grit, small well-rounded to sub-angular gravel, and irregularly-deposited sub-angular coal fragments. This deposit was generally encountered in areas of lower-lying or marshy ground, suggesting that it had collected in depressions and hollows in the glacial subsoil, or had accumulated through root action and silt deposition in waterlogged areas. In certain parts of the site, such as the waterlogged hollow where Trenches 6 and 7 were excavated, this subsoil horizon was observed to overly plough scars and marks. This may imply that some of the deposit was connected to modern activity, possibly ground raising or landscaping.
- 5.5 Part of a large pit cut was exposed at the northern end of Trench 4. Only the southern side of this pit [F4: 5.8m long, over 0.7m deep] was identified, with the remainder extending beyond the limits of the evaluation trench. The cut had a steeply-sloping, irregular side which broke onto a gently-sloping 'step' before becoming steep again: the base of the feature was not excavated. This pit contained fills of moderately compact fine angular coal waste [5: 2.6m long], dense, firm brownish-red burnt clay [6: 2.4m long], and stiff, heavily compact mottled yellow-brown silty clay and angular stone fragments [7] (Photograph 1). All of these deposits are typically derived from mining waste, and it seems probable that the pit itself was related to mining activity. However, no upcast deposits were observed and, with the exception of occasional burnt or scorched patches on the surface of the glacial subsoil, no further archaeological features were observed. It therefore seems unlikely that this feature represents the remains of a mine shaft or pithead.
- 5.6 A linear ditch cut was exposed in Trench 14. This cut [F8: 1.8m long, 0.3m deep] had moderately-sloping sides and a flat, smooth base. It was orientated north-east/south-west, and was clearly related to the field boundary which formerly crossed the site (Photograph 2). It contained a single deposit of loose dark grey-black sandy silt and coarse angular gravel [9], probably a deliberate backfill. A linear drain cut was exposed in Trench 6, following a similar north-east/south-west orientation. This contained a stone drainage culvert, with pieces of machine-made brick and safety glass identified in the backfill deposit, suggesting a very recent origin. This drain was most probably related to the buildings of Barcus Close, which previously stood directly to the north-east.

- 5.7 A layer of moderately compact, plastic to friable dark grey-brown clayey silt topsoil sealed all the trenches and extended across the whole of the area. This layer [1: up to 0.45m thick] contained moderate small to medium well rounded to sub-angular gravel and occasional pea grit and coal fragments. No archaeologically significant features were identified.

6. The artefacts

Pottery assessment

Results

- 6.1 A single piece (12g wt) came from pit fill context [5]. It is a rim sherd from a 19th century salt-glazed stoneware vessel.

Recommendation

- 6.2 No further work is recommended.

7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence

- 7.1 No material suitable for palaeoenvironmental assessment was identified.

8. The archaeological resource

- 8.1 No archaeological deposits were recorded in Trenches 1-3, 5, 7-13, 15, and 16. The remains of probable mining activity were exposed at the northern end of Trench 4. A single fragment of 19th-century pottery was recovered from this feature, suggesting that it might be related to the historic mining sites known to the north-west. A former field boundary ditch was identified in Trench 14. Field drains and a single, larger drain were exposed across the whole site, particularly in waterlogged and boggy areas. No significant archaeological resource was identified.

9. Impact assessment

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

10. Recommendations

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

11. Sources

Archaeological Services 2005 273-281 *Land adjacent to Barcusclose Lane, Burnopfield, County Durham: archaeological desk-based assessment and geophysical survey*. Report **4832r**, Archaeological Services Durham University
Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 *Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment*. Durham

Appendix 1: Data tables

Table 1.1: Context data

The • symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of artefacts of the following types: P pottery,

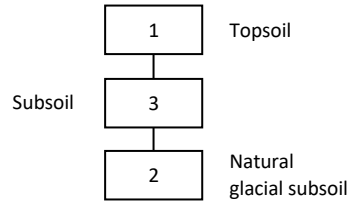
No	Trench	Description	P
1	1-16	Topsoil	
2	1-16	Natural glacial subsoil	
3	1,3,6-8,11,12, & 15	Subsoil horizon	
F4	4	Cut of pit	
5	4	Fill of [F4]	•
6	4	Fill of [F4]	
7	4	Fill of [F4]	
F8	14	Cut of former field boundary	
9	14	Fill of [F8]	

Table 1.2: Trench data

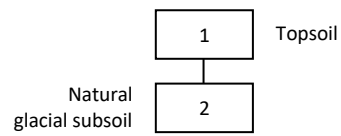
Trench	Length (m)	Depth (m)	Glacial Geology	Subsoil	Field Drains- number and orientation	Features
1	25	0.3-0.65	Light yellow and yellow-grey silty clay	Present for 11m, NW end of trench	1: NW/SE	None
2	25	0.35-0.45	Light yellow and yellow-grey silty clay	None present	2; NW-SE	None
3	50	0.25-0.45	Light yellow-brown and yellow-grey silty clay	Present for 4.5m, NW end of trench	4; NW/SE	None
4	50	0.3-0.95	Light yellow-brown silty clay	None present	1; NW/SE	Cut [F4]
5	25	0.35-0.4	Light yellow and yellow-brown silty clay	None present	None	None
6	25	0.4-0.95	Yellow-brown and yellow-grey silty clay	Present for 13m, centre and S end of trench	2; NE/SW	Stone culvert
7	50	0.35-0.7	Light yellow and yellow-brown silty clay	Present for 22m at the E end of trench	4; NE/SW	None
8	50	0.4-0.5	Light yellow-grey silty clay	Present for 4m, centre of trench	2; NW/SE	None
9	25	0.35-0.45	Light yellow and yellow-brown silty clay	None present	5: 1 NW/SE, 4 NE/SW	None
10	25	0.35-0.45	Light yellow-brown and yellow-brown silty clay	None present	2; NE/SW	None
11	25	0.35-0.5	Light yellow and yellow-brown silty clay	Present for 4m, near the S end of trench	3; NE/SW	None
12	25	0.4-0.45	Light yellow and yellow silty clay	Present across the whole trench	3; NE/SW	None
13	50	0.3-0.4	Yellow and light yellow-brown silty clay	Nope present	4; 3 NE/SE, 1 NW/SE	None
14	25	0.3-0.4	Yellow and yellow-orange silty clay	None present	None	Ditch [F8]
15	25	0.4-0.45	Light yellow and yellow-grey silty clay	Present for 6m, centre of trench	2; 1 NE/SW, 1 N/S	None
16	25	0.4-0.45	Light yellow and yellow-grey silty clay	None present	1; NE/SW	None

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrices

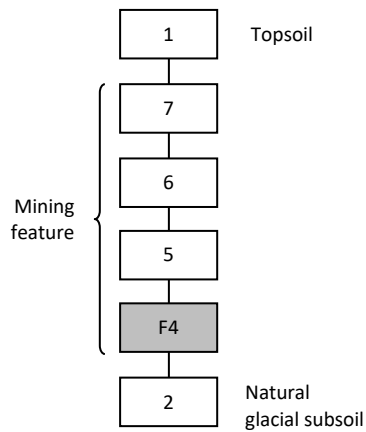
Trenches 1, 3, 6 - 8, 11, 12, and 15



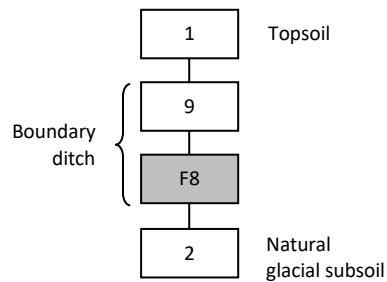
Trenches 2, 5, 9, 10, 13, and 16



Trench 4



Trench 14





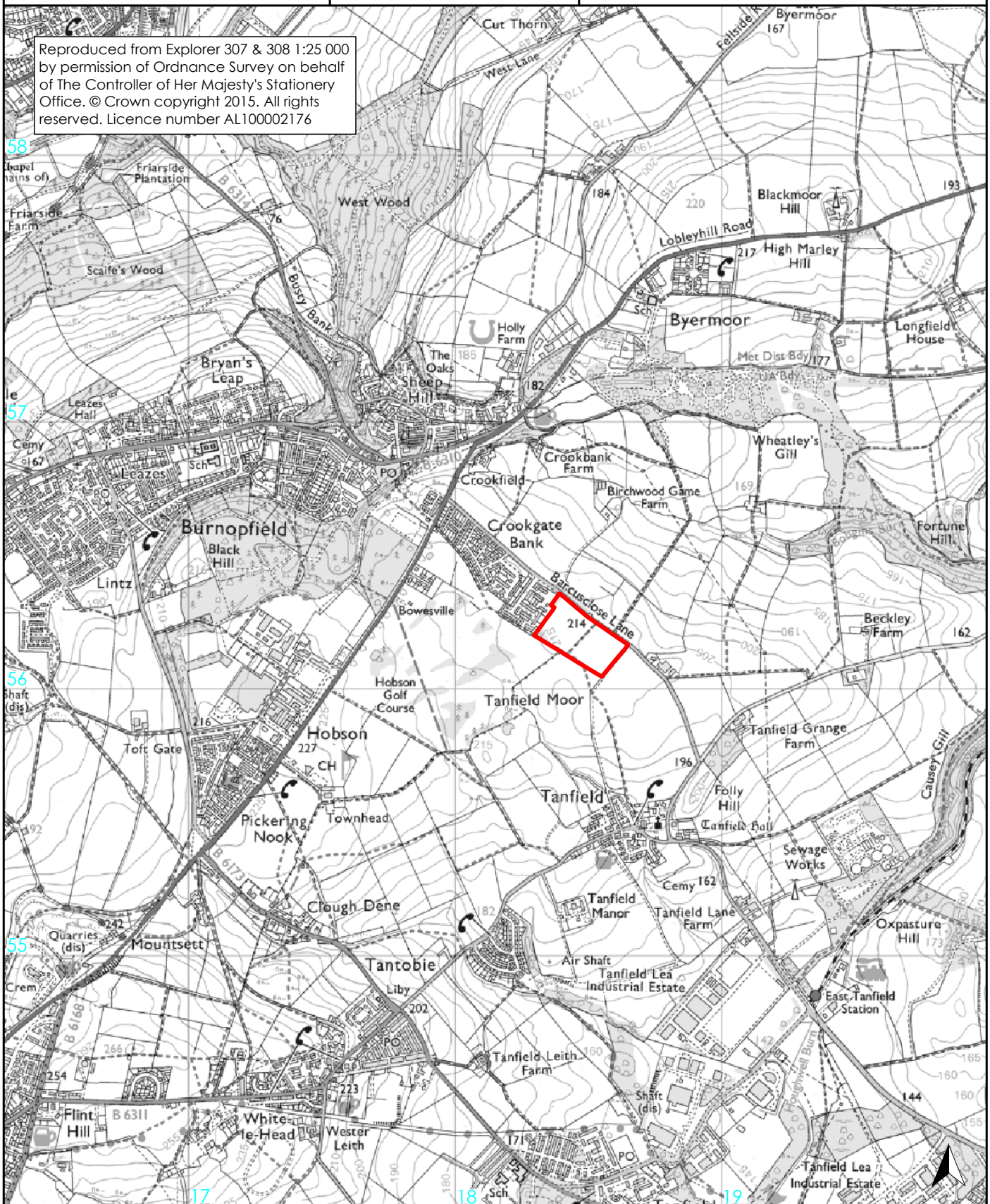
Photograph 1: Cut [F4], looking north-east. The three interleaving fill deposits can be seen



Photograph 2: Former field boundary ditch [F8], facing south-west

Figure 1: Site location

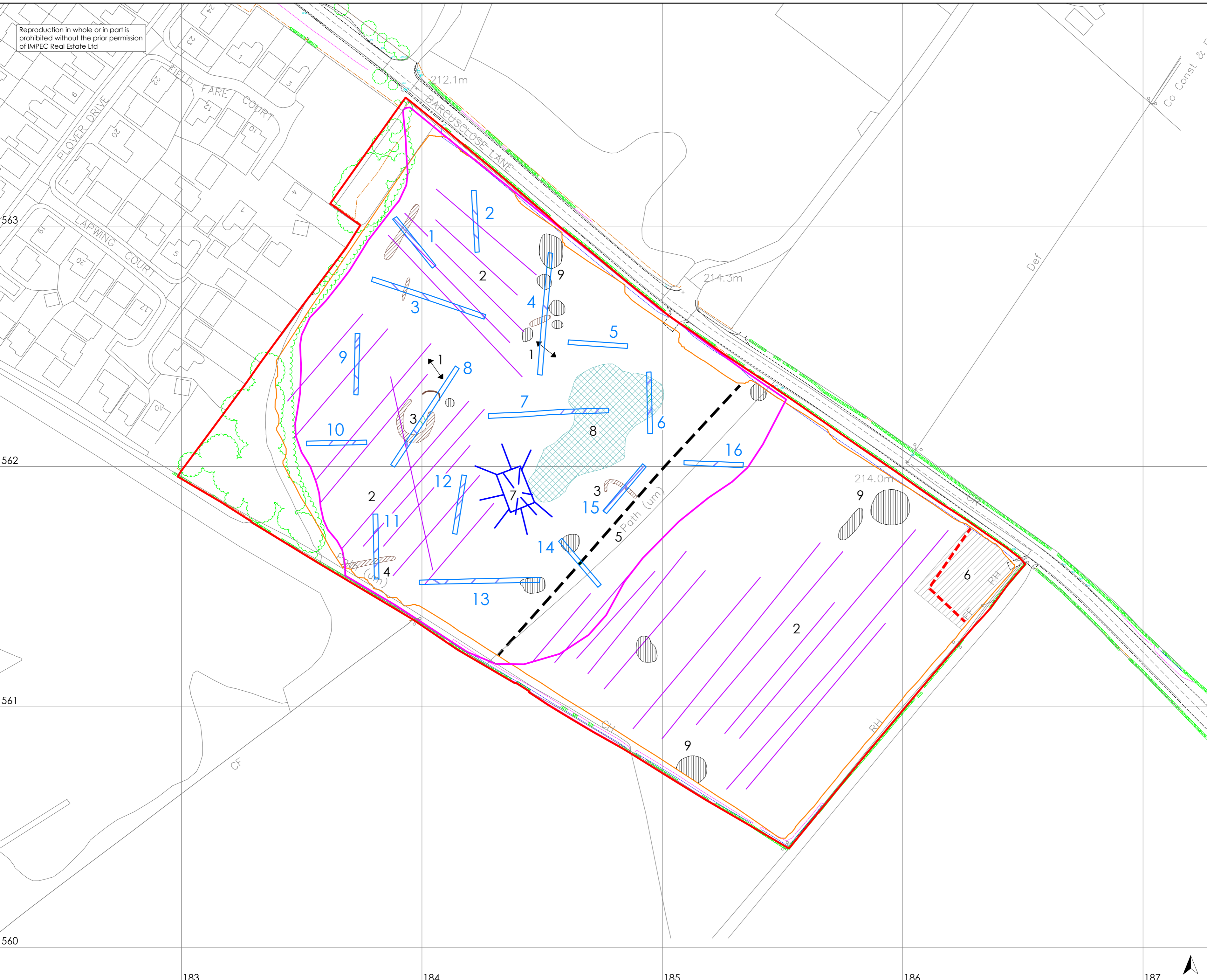
Reproduced from Explorer 307 & 308 1:25 000 by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100002176



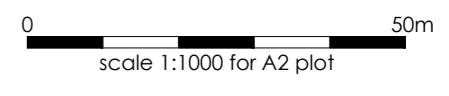
 site location

0 1km
scale 1:20 000 for A4 plot

Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without the prior permission of IMPEC Real Estate Ltd



- site boundary
- magnetic survey
- possible soil-filled feature
- structural remains & building rubble
- possible historic mining activity
- back filled trenches
- in-filled hollow/water logged area
- probable former service
- ridge and furrow
- land drain
- former field boundary & footpath
- area impacted by proposed development
- trench
- field drain/pipe
- feature



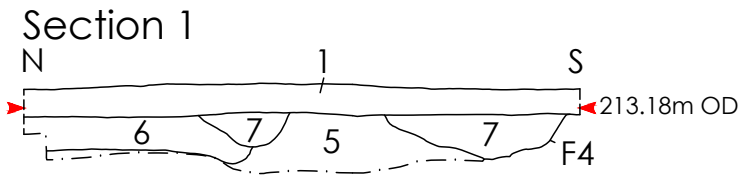
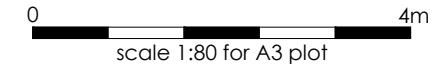
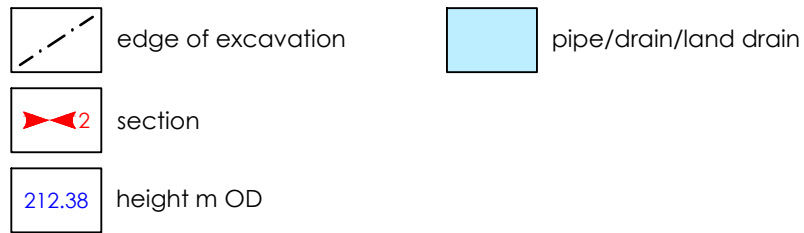
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

on behalf of
IMPEC Real Estate Ltd

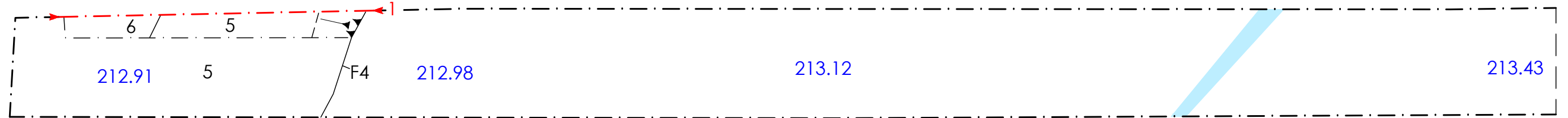
Land adjacent to Barcusclose Lane
Burnopfield
County Durham
archaeological evaluation
report 5289

Figure 2: Trench locations

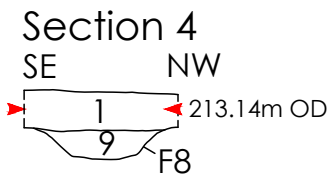
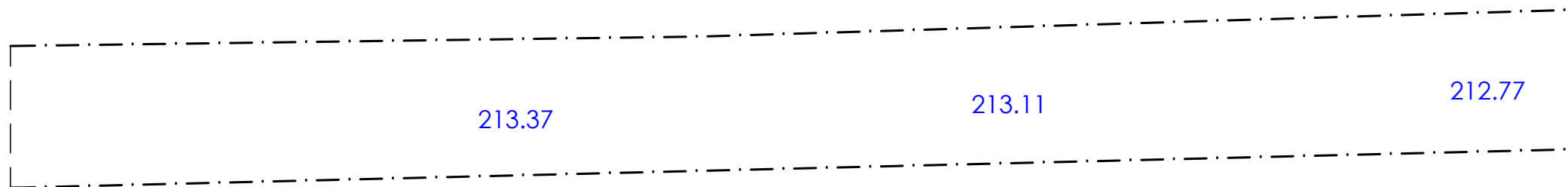




Trench 4, plan



continues below



Trench 14, plan

