

on behalf of Jason Tobbell

Plot 1 Land to the rear of Methodist Church Boldron County Durham

archaeological watching brief

report 5316 August 2020



Contents

1.	Summary	1
2.	Project background	2
3.	Landuse, topography and geology	3
4.	Historical and archaeological background	3
5.	The deposit sequence	3
6.	The artefacts	4
7.	The palaeoenvironmental evidence	7
8.	The archaeological resource	8
9.	Recommendations	9
10.	Sources	9
Appe	ndix 1: Data tables	10
Appe	ndix 2: Stratigraphic matrix	12

Photographs

Photo 1:	Gully terminus [F4] pre-excavation, looking east
Photo 2:	Gully terminus [F4], looking east
Photo 3:	Payed stone surface [F10] looking north-west

Photo 3: Paved stone surface [F10], looking north-west Photo 4: Stone spread [F9=F206], looking east

Photo 5: Pit [F7] overlain by rubble deposit [6=202=204], looking north-east

Photo 6: Stone slabs [F13=F201] surrounded by rubble deposit [6=202=204], looking

south

Figures

Figure 1: Site location
Figure 2: Location of works

Figure 3: Plan of archaeological features

Figure 4: Sections

1. Summary

The project

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted for a development at Boldron, County Durham. The works comprised the monitoring of groundworks for a house plot.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Jason Tobbell and conducted by personnel from Green Man Archaeology, Northern Archaeological Associates and Mai Walker and Henry Callender.

Results

1.3 A gully terminus and a pit or gully terminus, both of post-medieval date, were recorded. A stone rubble deposit in a wide shallow cut overlay one of these features. Remnants of a paved surface comprising roughly-cut stone slabs was recorded in the east of the trench. Medieval pottery was recovered from amongst the slabs. Two further stone deposits were also recorded. These features may relate to boundaries and pathways that became dilapidated over time.

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 on land to the rear of Boldron Methodist Church, Boldron, County Durham (NGR centre: NZ 0360 1426). It covers an area of approximately 0.3 ha. To the north is Boldron Methodist Church, to the west is housing and to the east is the village hall. with agricultural land beyond and to the south.

Development

The development is for a single dwelling and access road. The planning application reference number is DM/19/02935/FPA.

Objective

2.3 The objective of the monitoring programme was to identify and record any archaeological features uncovered during groundworks.

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:

Later Medieval

MDi Settlement

MDiii Urbanism

MDvii Medieval ceramics and other artefacts

Specification

2.5 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by Archaeological Services Durham University (reference DS19.658) and approved by the planning authority. A narrow strip along the southern edge of the trench was not excavated due to the presence of a recent gravel track.

Dates

2.6 Fieldwork was undertaken between 23rd April and 11th May 2020. This report was prepared for August 2020.

Personnel

2.7 Fieldwork was conducted by personnel from Green Man Archaeology, as well as Mai Walker and Henry Callender. Survey was carried out by Damian Ronan of Northern Archaeological Associates. This report was prepared by Rebekah Walsh, with illustrations by David Graham. Specialist reporting was conducted by Dr Carrie Armstrong (palaeoenvironmental). Sample processing was undertaken by Ed Treasure. The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

Archive/OASIS

2.8 The site code is **BOL20**, for **Bol**dron Methodist Chapel 20**20**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services Durham University and will be transferred to the County Durham Archaeological Archives in due course. The palaeoenvironmental residues were discarded following examination. The flots and charred plant remains will be retained at Archaeological Services Durham University. 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 archaeol3-400513.

3. Landuse, topography and geology

- 3.1 At the time of these works, the development area comprised two fields of pasture.
- 3.2 The area sloped gradually from an elevation of approximately 255m OD in the southwest down to around 244m OD in the north. The Thorsgill Beck is located around 640m to the north of the site, with the River Tees approximately 2.8km to the northeast.
- 3.3 The underlying bedrock geology of the area comprises Carboniferous strata of limestone of the Great Limestone Member, overlain by Devensian diamicton till (British Geological Survey 2020).

4. Historical and archaeological background

- 4.1 Geophysical surveys have been conducted along The Green, to the north of the site (Archaeological Services 2013). This identified several former pathways.
- 4.2 The earliest origins of the village remain uncertain but there was certainly a village here from the medieval period. There have been many variations in the spelling of its name, which may have Scandinavian roots. The village was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and again in 1280 as 'Bulerun' during the 'Yorkshire Inquisition'.
- 4.3 The structure and layout of the village has not changed significantly since the tithe map of 1841, save for the addition of several buildings. For example, Boldron Chapel and Boldron Mission Church were both built on the south side of The Green in the second half of the 19th century, and additional housing has infilled gaps on the north side.
- 4.4 The site of the new dwelling is located on the edge of the former medieval village of Boldron, adjacent to the manor house.

5. The deposit sequence

Introduction

5.1 A sub-rectangular area measuring approximately 23m by 19m was excavated (Figure 2). This comprised a topsoil strip using a machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. A narrow strip along most of the southern edge of the trench was not excavated due to the presence of a recent gravel track. A trench plan and sections can be seen on Figures 3 and 4; context data is summarised in Table 1.1.

The monitored area

5.2 Natural subsoil, an orange-brown clay [3], was identified between 0.3m and 0.35m below the ground surface (a mean elevation of 238.65m OD across the trench).

- 5.3 In the north-eastern corner of the trench was a linear gully terminus [F4: over 0.84m long by 0.34m wide, up to 0.25m deep], aligned roughly east / west and cutting the natural subsoil (Photos 1 & 2). It extended beyond the eastern edge of excavation and was filled by a grey-brown silty clay [5] containing frequent large stones, from which a small sherd of pottery of 17th / 18th century date was recovered.
- 5.4 Almost immediately to the south of this was a paved surface [F10: over 1.88m long by 1.69m wide, approximately 0.1m deep] comprised of rough stone slabs (Photo 3). Some of these had been shaped to form straight edges, and they were laid on a north-west / south-east alignment. Medieval pottery and a jet / shale bead were recovered from around these stones. Overlying this was a layer of rubble [11: over 3m long by over 2m wide, 0.1m deep] comprised of small sub-angular stones within a grey-brown silty clay.
- 5.5 Near the north-western corner of the trench was a small stone spread [F9=F206: 1.2m long by 0.98m wide, 0.21m deep]. This consisted of several angular stones, measuring 400mm x 300mm x 150mm on average, set within a grey-brown silty clay (Photo 4).
- Approximately 3m to the east of stone spread [F9=F206] was a small pit or gully terminus [F7: over 1m long by 0.8m wide, 0.43m deep], the full dimensions of which were unclear due to later deposits (Photo 5). This had a gently rounded base and was filled by an orange-brown clayey silt [8] containing post-medieval pottery.
- 5.7 A large rubble deposit [6=202=204: over 9.7m long, 6.06 wide, 0.35m deep] was identified in the centre of the trench, extending beyond the northern edge of excavation, on a rough north/south alignment. This was sitting within a deliberate cut [F205] in the natural subsoil. The stones varied in size and most were fairly angular, though some cobbles were present. They were mixed with a grey-brown silty clay from which medieval pottery was recovered. This deposit overlay pit / gully [F7] (Photo 5). Within deposit [6] were two large stone slabs [F13=F201]. The western slab measured 1.01m by 0.62 by 0.21m, with the eastern slab measuring 0.92m by 0.66m by 0.15m (Photo 6). The purpose of these slabs was unclear.
- 5.8 Two truncated sheep burials [F102; F103] were located in the south-west corner of the trench. These are likely to be early modern / modern and were not recovered.
- 5.9 A layer of grey-brown silty clay subsoil [2: 0.1m deep] was present across the trench. In the south-west of the trench this was overlain by a spread of black grit and gravel [101: up to 0.1m deep]. This may have been a surface or levelling deposit for a shed [F100] constructed of corrugated metal and wooden sleepers, some of which were visible on the ground surface prior to excavation. Overlying this and the whole trench was a layer of grey-brown silty clay topsoil [1: 0.2m-0.25m deep].

6. The artefacts

Pottery assessment

Results

The site produced a total of 79 sherds weighing 1586g (Table 1.2). Thirty-three sherds (41%) were found unstratified [u/s].

- 6.2 The earliest pieces were unglazed gritty ware [202], unglazed buff sandy ware [10], abraded sherds of patchy brown-glazed sandy ware [6] and [u/s], splashed glazed sandy ware [u/s] and 6], all of c.12th / 13th century date.
- 6.3 Sherds of *c*.14 / 15th century reduced greenware dominated the medieval assemblage, coming from contexts [6, 10, 202 & u/s]. Glazed sandy wares, *c*.15-17th century, came from [6, 8 & u/s].
- Other post-medieval material included three pieces from a c.17th century Bellarmine stoneware jug [u/s], sherds of 17th century Staffordshire slipware [u/s], a tiny scrap of red-bodied 17th / 18th century slipware from the sample from [5] and 17th / 18th century blackware / late blackware from [u/s & 8].
- 6.5 Later 19th century material included plain and transfer-printed whiteware, cane coloured ware, colour-glazed ware, stoneware, mocha ware and yellow-glazed coarseware, all found [u/s].

Discussion

- 6.6 The pottery shows medieval occupation, with most medieval sherds dating to around 14th / 15th century. Sherd numbers appear to decline in the late medieval / early post-medieval period, followed by a more recent increase.
- 6.7 However, as nearly half of this small assemblage was recovered unstratified, interpretation of the results is tentative.

Recommendation

6.8 No further work is recommended.

Animal bone assessment

Results

- 6.9 Faunal remains were recovered by hand from two contexts: Context [8] contained a horse mandibular molar 3 in wear. A very poorly preserved shaft fragment from a cattle size long bone, possibly a humerus, was recovered u/s.
- 6.10 Fragments of bone were found in the sample residues from two contexts. Context [8] contained small fragments of unidentifiable calcined bone. Context [11] contained a fragment of cattle femur and small unidentifiable fragments.

Discussion

6.11 Other than the fact that the species represented are cattle and horse, there are too few finds for any interpretation.

Recommendation

6.12 No further work is recommended on the present finds.

Jet/shale bead assessment

Results

6.13 A hemispherical bead, made of jet / shale, 11mm diam x 4mm high, came from the sample residue from context [11], taken from around stone slabs [10]. The bead has a slightly worn 2.5mm diam perforation. The rounded surface is well-finished and

fairly regular, though not shiny. The flat side is slightly irregular, however, though its edges are slightly wear-rounded, suggesting it continued in use *in situ* after breakage. It is likely that this is half of an originally circular bead. No tool marks are visible inside the perforation at X10 magnification.

6.14 Pottery from [10] was found to be medieval, giving a possibly similar date for the bead. Jet beads sometimes formed parts of rosaries from around the 14th century onwards (Blair, 1991, 138).

Recommendation

6.15 No further work is recommended.

Clay pipe assessment

Results

- 6.16 Nine clay tobacco pipe fragments were found, comprising 8 plain stem fragments, and one part bowl plus stem fragment [all u/s].
- 6.17 The bowl has a flat, circular heel, to either side of which are the initials 'l' and 'R' in relief. This likely refers to Gateshead pipe maker John Rodchester, active c.1688 1718. Similar fragments with initials were found in the Oakwellgate, Gateshead excavations (Vaughan 2007, 199).

Recommendation

6.18 No further work is recommended.

Glass assessment

Results

- 6.19 Thirteen glass fragments were recovered, all of them [u/s].
- 6.20 The material included two slightly weathered, mid-green wine bottle bases, one complete, 117mm diam, with a deep kick-up, perhaps from a mallet type wine bottle of mid-18th century date; two unweathered, green wine bottle body sherds and a bottle neck and string rim, whose shape suggests a mid-18th century date; four unweathered window glass fragments up to 7mm thick, of recent date; three unweathered food / medicinal bottle fragments, including a mould-made oval base, 90 x 55mm, of late 19th / early 20th century date.

Recommendation

6.21 No further work is recommended.

Building materials assessment

Results

6.22 A fragment of modern glazed service pipe was found unstratified.

Recommendation

6.23 No further work is recommended.

Iron objects assessment

Results

6.24 Five iron objects were recovered, all the stratified material being fragments of nails. Context [11] had a short (19mm) fragment of very highly corroded nail shank.

- 6.25 A lightly corroded piece of rectangular-sectioned (7 x 4.5mm) bent metal, 196mm long, one end slightly tapered was recovered unstratified. Of unknown use and date.
- 6.26 Two nail fragments, one a very highly corroded shank, 58mm long, the other a lightly corroded sub-circular head (8mm diam) plus shank fragment, 29mm long were recovered unstratified.
- 6.27 Context [202] had one very highly corroded, but straight shank, 141mm long.
- 6.28 The nail shanks are undateable, but corrosion levels suggest they could be of some antiquity.

Recommendation

6.29 No further work is recommended.

7. The palaeoenvironmental evidence Methods

- 1.1 A palaeoenvironmental assessment was carried out on four bulk samples of possible medieval/post-medieval origin taken from a possible wall layer, around stone slabs, a pit and a gully. Further soil directly associated with an unstratified pot sherd was also examined but no material of archaeological significance was recovered from this. The samples were manually floated and sieved through a 500μm mesh. The residues were examined for shells, fruitstones, nutshells, charcoal, small bones, pottery, flint, glass and industrial residues, and were scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were examined at up to x60 magnification using a Leica MZ6 stereomicroscope for waterlogged and charred botanical remains. Identification of these was undertaken by comparison with modern reference material held in the Palaeoenvironmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University. Plant nomenclature follows Stace (2010). Habitat classifications follow Preston *et al.* (2002).
- Selected charcoal fragments were identified, in order to provide material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The transverse, radial and tangential sections were examined at up to x500 magnification using a Leica DMLM microscope. Identifications were assisted by the descriptions of Schweingruber (1990), Gale & Cutler (2000) and Hather (2000), and modern reference material held in the Palaeoenvironmental Laboratory at Archaeological Services Durham University.
- 1.3 The works were undertaken in accordance with the palaeoenvironmental research aims and objectives outlined in the regional archaeological research framework and resource agendas (Petts & Gerrard 2006; Hall & Huntley 2007; Huntley 2010).

Results

1.4 The samples produced few finds comprising generally of small fragments of coal, coal shale and clinker/cinder. Pottery fragments were recovered from contexts [5], [6] and [8]. A jet/shale bead fragment was recovered from the sample taken from around stone slabs F10, along with a trace of metal-based remains. The flots are moderate in size and include modern roots and small fragmented charcoal and clinker/cinder pieces.

1.5 Charred plant remains from rubble cairn layer [6] include an oat grain, large grass seed and two indeterminate cereal grains along with rare small-diameter heather twigs and small charcoal fragments. A single charred hazel nutshell was recovered from pit context [8] alongside a small amount of charcoal including oak stemwood. A single cherry family (*Prunus* sp) roundwood fragment was present in gully terminus fill [5]. No charred material was recovered from the sample from around stone slabs [11]. The results are presented in Table 1.2. Material for radiocarbon dating is available for three of the samples, although some of this material may be unsuitable due to long-lived species or insufficient weight of carbon.

Discussion

- and a few charred plant macrofossils indicates the remains of domestic waste in some of the deposits. The poor condition of the charred remains and the absence of diagnostic chaff prevent definite species identification of the cereal crops in context [6] beyond the presence of oat, and provides little information about the age of the deposit. The indeterminate cereal grains were noted as being of poor condition. Puffing and pitting of grain may reflect exposure to intense heat (cf. Boardman & Jones 1990), although some of the surface damage may also have been post-depositional. The single oat grain in [6] is broken so size determination is difficult, although it appears of larger dimensions. While few diagnostic remains in terms of dating evidence are present, larger oat grains are consistent with a medieval or post-medieval date.
- 1.7 The charred fragment of hazel nutshell from pit context [8] suggests wild-gathered foods were utilised at the site.

Recommendations

1.8 No further analysis is required for these samples, due to the low number and poor preservation of diagnostic palaeoenvironmental remains.

8. The archaeological resource

- 8.1 A gully terminus of post-medieval date was recorded in the north-east of the site. Remnants of a paved surface comprising roughly-cut stone slabs was recorded directly to the south. Medieval pottery was recovered from amongst the slabs, although these may be residual.
- 8.2 A pit or gully terminus of post-medieval date was also recorded in the north-west of the site. This was overlain by a stone rubble deposit in a wide shallow cut. These features may relate to boundaries and pathways that became dilapidated over time.
- 8.3 The deposits contain small quantities of burnt material comprising occasional charcoal fragments, cereal grains including oat and a hazel nutshell fragment. The material likely represents a background scatter of domestic waste in the features. The remains are generally not diagnostic in terms of dating evidence, although the presence of oat would be consistent with a medieval or post-medieval date.

9. Recommendations

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

10. Sources

- Archaeological Services 2013 *The Green, Boldron, Barnard Castle, County Durham:*geophysical surveys. Unpublished report 3164, Archaeological Services
 Durham University
- Blair, J, 1991 English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products, London. Boardman, S, & Jones, G, 1990 Experiments on the effects of charring on cereal plant components. J Archaeol Sci 17, 1-11
- Gale, R, & Cutler, D, 2000 Plants in archaeology; identification manual of vegetative plant materials used in Europe and the southern Mediterranean to c.1500.

 Otley
- Hall, A R, & Huntley, J P, 2007 A review of the evidence for macrofossil plant remains from archaeological deposits in northern England. Research Department Report Series no. 87. London
- Hather, J G, 2000 *The identification of the Northern European Woods: a guide for archaeologists and conservators.* London
- Huntley, J P, 2010 A review of wood and charcoal recovered from archaeological excavations in Northern England. Research Department Report Series no. **68**. London
- Petts, D, & Gerrard, C, 2006 Shared Visions: The North-East Regional Research Framework for the Historic environment. Durham
- Preston, C D, Pearman, D A, & Dines, T D, 2002 New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora. Oxford

Schweingruber, F H, 1990 *Microscopic wood anatomy*. Birmensdorf Stace, C, 2010 *New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge Vaughan, J, 2007 Clay Pipes, in J Nolan and J Vaughan, Excavations at Oakwellgate, Gateshead, 1999, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 5th series Vol **XXXVI**, 126-249.

Websites

www.bgs.ac.uk - British Geological Survey, accessed 15.05.2020

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, B bone, M metals, F flint, I industrial residues, G glass, C ceramic building material, O other materials.

Context	Description	P	В	M	F	ı	G	С	0
1	Topsoil								
2	Subsoil								
3	Natural subsoil								
F4	Cut of gully terminus								
5	Fill of gully terminus [F4]								
6	Rubble deposit	•							
F7	Cut of pit/gully terminus								
8	Fill of pit/gully terminus [F7]		•						
F9	Stone spread								
F10	Possible stone surface								
11	Layer of rubble around [F10]	•	•						
12	Void								
F13	Two large flat stones within rubble								
F13	[6]								
F100	Shed remains								
101	Modern surface								
F102	Sheep burial (south)								
F103	Sheep burial (north)								
200	Void								
F201	Two large stone slabs, same as								
F201	stones [F13]								
202	Rubble deposit, same as deposit [6]								
203	Void								
204	Rubble deposit, same as deposit [6]								
F205	Cut for rubble deposit [6]								
F206	Stone spread, same as stone spread [F9]								

Table 1.2: Sherds by context, number and type

Context	No	Wt (g)	Includes
5 <3>	1	<1	SLW
6	14	134	BGSW; SGSW; RGW
6	2	7	RGW; GSW
8 <2>	2	3	BLW; GSW
10	4	78	UBSW; RGW
202	3	25	UGW; RGW
u/s	53	857	BGSW, SGSW; RGW; SSLW, BGFW, BLW, GSTW, GSW;
			SSLW; TPWW; CCW; CGW; STW; MW; YGCW
Total	79	1586	

Key:			
BGFW	Brown-glazed fineware	SSLW	Staffordshire slipware
BGSW	Brown-glazed sandy ware	STW	Stoneware
BLW	Blackware	TPWW	Transfer-printed whiteware
CCW	Cane coloured ware	UBSW	Unglazed buff sandy ware
CGW	Colour-glazed ware	UGW	Unglazed gritty ware
GSTW	German stoneware		
GSW	Glazed sandy ware		
MW	Mocha ware		
RGW	Reduced greenware		
SGSW	Splash-glazed sandy ware		
SLW	Slipware		

Table 1.3: Data from palaeoenvironmental assessment

Sample	Context	Feature	Volume processed (I)	Flot volume (ml)	C14 available	Rank	Notes
1	6	-	17	175	?	*	Occasional clinker/cinder and rare coal/coal shale fragments. Rare charred heather twigs and charcoal fragments. Occasional modern roots. Charred plant macrofossils comprise a charred oat grain and two indeterminate cereal grains in very poor condition and a large grass family caryopsis. (Medieval/Post-Medieval?)
2	8	F7	12	450	Y	*	Common clinker/cinder fragments and common modern roots. Occasional charcoal fragments including both oak stemwood and diffuse porous roundwood. A single charred hazel nutshell fragment.
3	5	F4	3.5	100	?	*	Occasional coal/coal shale fragments and rare clinker/cinder pieces. A trace of unburnt bone. Common modern roots. No charred plant macrofossils present, and a single mineralized <i>Prunus</i> sp roundwood fragment observed.
4	11	F10	14	500	N	*	Common coal/coal shale and clinker/cinder fragments. A trace of unburnt bone and common modern roots noted. No charcoal or charred plant macrofossils present. Jet/shale bead fragment.

[Rank: *: low; **: medium; ***: high; ****: very high potential to provide further palaeoenvironmental information. ? - material may be unsuitable for AMS dating due to small size or long-lived species]

Appendix 2: Stratigraphic matrix

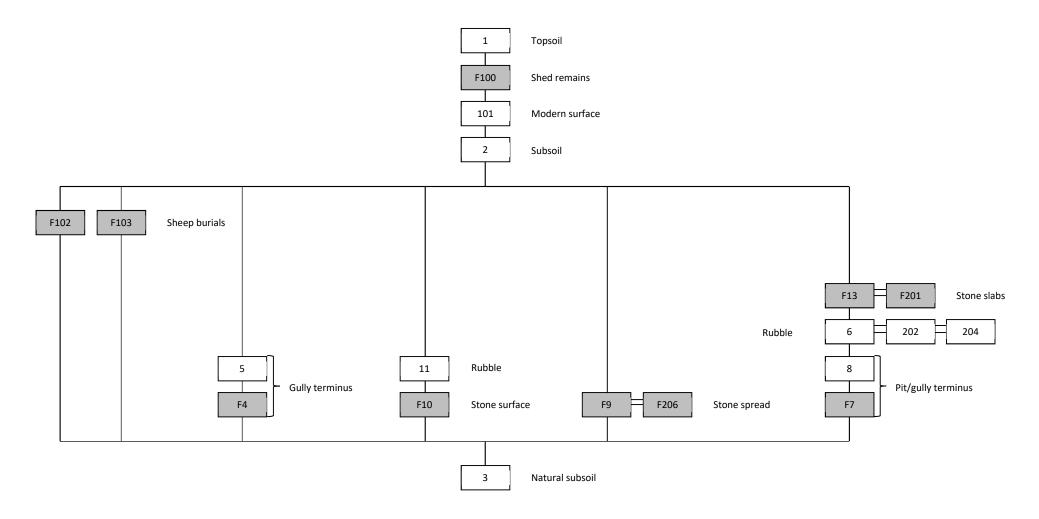




Photo 1: Gully terminus [F4] pre-excavation, looking east



Photo 2: Gully terminus [F4], looking east



Photo 3: Paved stone surface [F10], looking north-west



Photo 4: Stone spread [F9=F206], looking east



Photo 5: Pit [F7] overlain by rubble deposit [6=202=204], looking north-east



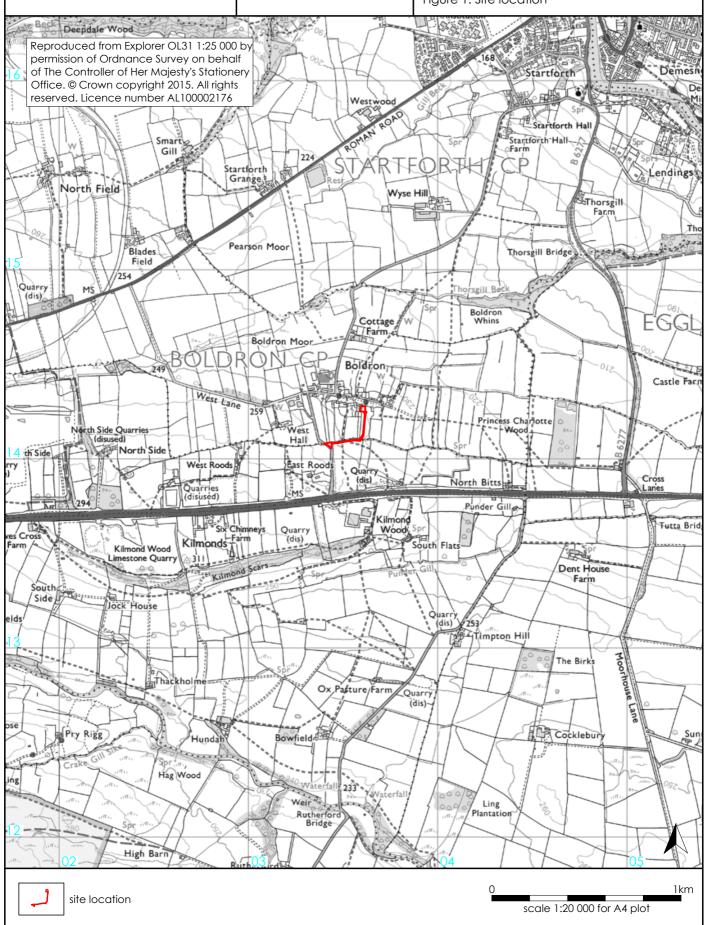
Photo 6: Stone slabs [F13=F201] surrounded by rubble deposit [6=202=204], looking south

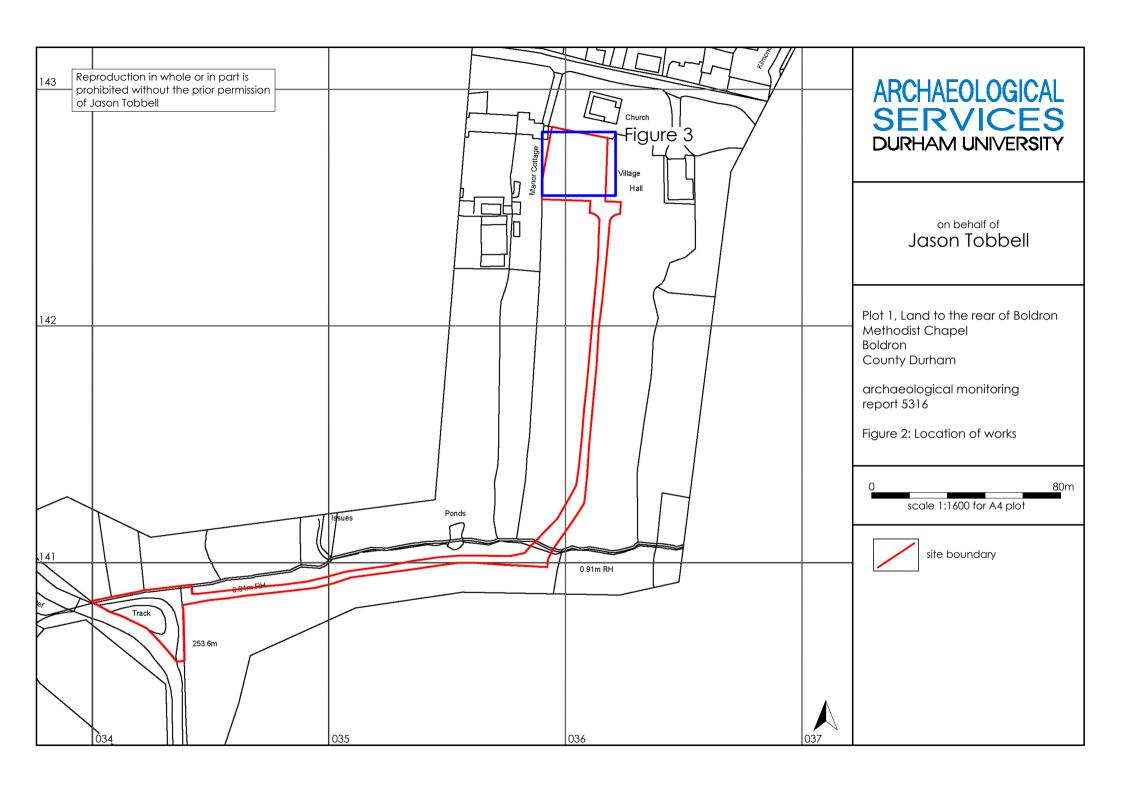


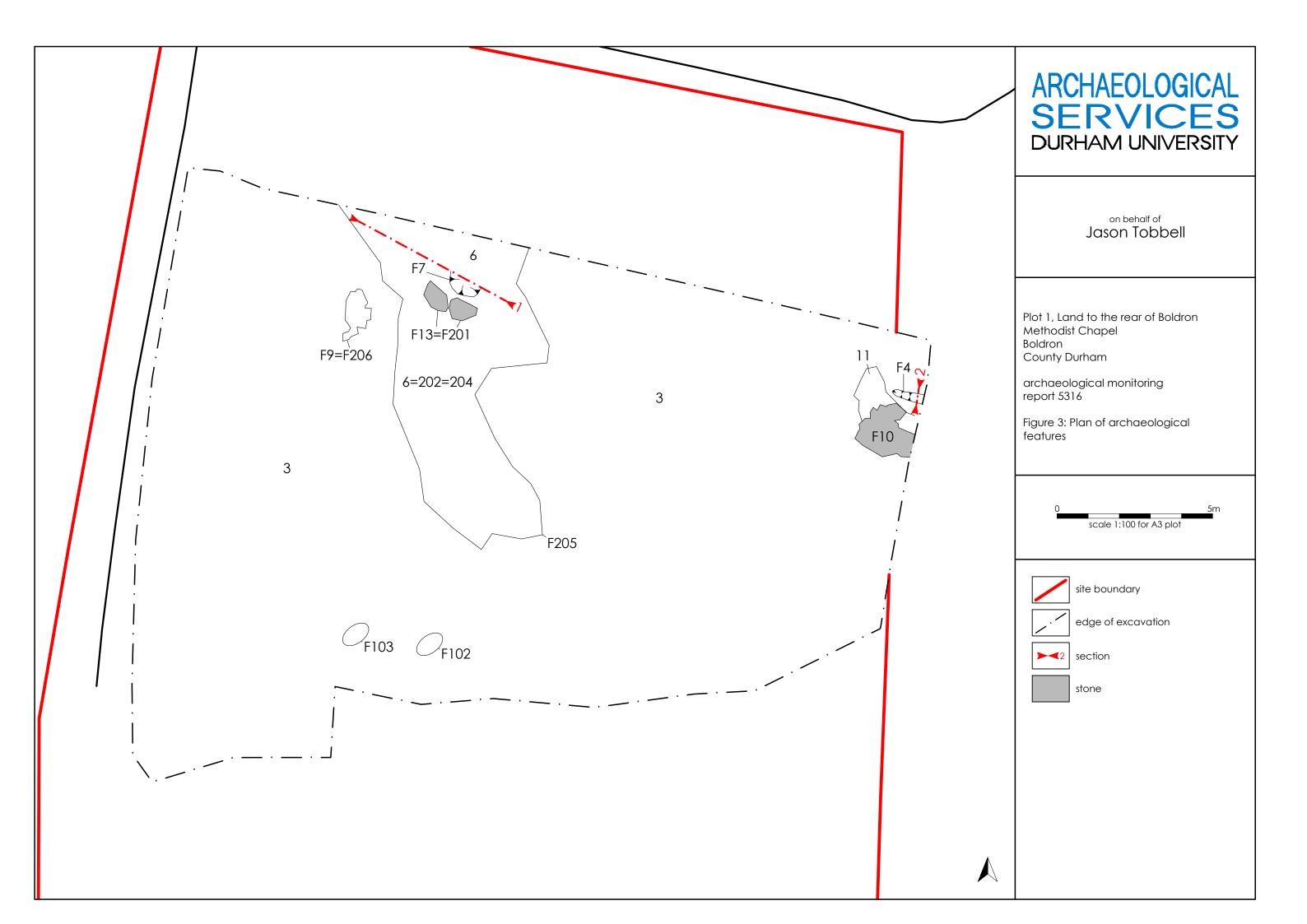
on behalf of Jason Tobbell Plot 1, Land to the rear of Boldron Methodist Chapel Boldron, County Durham

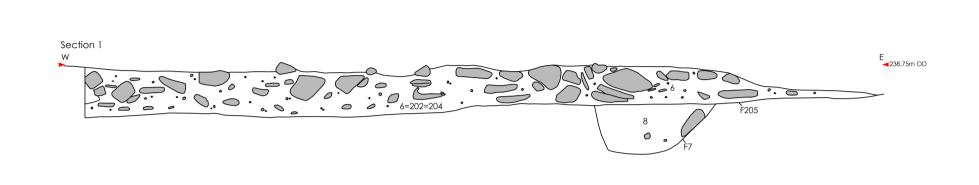
archaeological monitoring report 5316

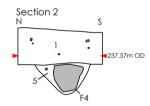
Figure 1: Site location













on behalf of Jason Tobbell

Plot 1, Land to the rear of Boldron Methodist Chapel

Boldron

County Durham

archaeological monitoring report 5316

Figure 4: Sections

