

# **Knabs Ridge, Harrogate, North Yorkshire**

## **archaeological evaluation**

*on behalf of*  
**Entec UK Ltd**

**ASUD Report 1313**

August 2005

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*Archaeological Services University of Durham*

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*Canon Court North, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 5DE*

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## **1. Summary**

### ***The project***

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation conducted in advance of a proposed development at Knabs Ridge, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The works comprised the excavation of six evaluation trenches.
- 1.2 The works were commissioned by Entec UK Ltd, and conducted by Archaeological Services University of Durham in accordance with a Method Statement provided by Archaeological Services, and based on a Proposed Trench Location Plan provided by Entec, both of which were approved by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section.

### ***Results***

- 1.3 A shallow linear cut with a flat base was identified at the northeast end of Trench 3 in Area 3. No finds were recovered and the feature is therefore undated and of unclear function.
- 1.4 Four circular features aligned in an arc were identified in Trench 4, also in Area 3. These were all vertical-sided, 0.9m in diameter and more than 0.5m deep. They were too deep to fully excavate by hand but one was machine-excavated to its base, proving to be 1.55m in depth. No finds were recovered and no material suitable for radiocarbon dating was present. Therefore these features are undated, although their size and curvilinear alignment suggests a prehistoric date and a function as post settings for a timber circle.
- 1.5 No archaeological features were identified in any of the other trial trenches and no artefacts were recovered.

### ***Recommendations***

- 1.6 It is recommended that, should planning consent be granted for the proposed development, a suitable mitigation strategy should be agreed between the developer and the North Yorkshire County Heritage Section. The area around the southeast pylon (Area 3) should be stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision and subject to a full scheme of archaeological excavation.
- 1.7 No further archaeological works are recommended in relation to the remainder of the proposed development.

## **2. Project background**

### ***Location (Figure 1)***

- 2.1 The study area is located on land at Knabs Ridge, between Skipton Road (A59) and Penny Pot Lane, Felliscliffe, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire (NGR centre: SE 23069 55923).

### ***Development proposal***

- 2.2 The evaluation has been carried out in connection with a planning proposal comprising the erection of eight wind turbines, access routes and associated buildings and equipment.

### ***Objective***

- 2.3 The objective of the evaluation was to assess the nature, extent and potential significance of any surviving archaeological features 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 advance of development.

### ***Methods statement***

- 2.4 The works have been undertaken in accordance with a Method Statement provided by Archaeological Services and based on a Proposed Trench Location Plan provided by Entec, both of which have been approved by North Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section.

### ***Dates***

- 2.5 Fieldwork was undertaken between 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005. This report was prepared between 1<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2005.

### ***Personnel***

- 2.6 Fieldwork was conducted by Neil Adamson and Jamie Armstrong, supervised by Andy Platell. This report was prepared by Andy Platell, with illustrations by Martin Railton and Janine Fisher. Specialist analysis was conducted by Dr Charlotte O'Brien (macrofossil analysis). The Project Manager was Daniel Still.

### ***Archive/OASIS***

- 2.7 The site code is **HKR05**, for **Harrogate Knabs Ridge 2005**. The archive is currently held by Archaeological Services University of Durham and will be transferred to Harrogate Museum in due course. The Accession Number **HARGM 13551** has been designated for this archive. Archaeological Services University of Durham is registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS** project (OASIS). The OASIS ID number for this project is **archaeol3-9749**.

## **3. Landuse, topography and geology**

- 3.1 At the time of the evaluation the study area mainly consisted of grassland used for the grazing of livestock or set aside for silage production. An area of acid

grassland was present in the centre of the study area, which was also used for animal grazing. The survey area was subdivided into a number of rectangular areas, bounded by dry stone walls, modern fence lines, and hedged boundaries. Many of the modern fence lines were situated on or adjacent to stone revetted banks and drainage ditches, which are likely to be earlier field boundaries.

- 3.2 The study area occupied a gently undulating ridge situated at a mean elevation of *c.*215m AOD
- 3.3 The solid geology of the area is the Millstone Grit Series, comprising a succession of alternating sandstone and shale strata. The eastern half of the site is underlain by sandstone, the western half by sandstone and shales. Drift deposits of boulder clay cover the solid geology, whilst the soils on site mainly consist of peaty topsoils and loamy subsoils (Wilcocks I Association). Artificial drainage on site has rendered these soils suitable for livestock grazing.

#### **4. Historical and archaeological background**

- 4.1 Although no sites are recorded in the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) within the proposed development area, this region has experienced relatively little field investigation. The potential for discovering previously unrecorded archaeology has been demonstrated by community projects in the area (e.g. Dacre Pasture Project 2004) which have recorded remains associated with various industries from the Iron Age through to post-medieval periods, together with the discoveries of prehistoric rock art, often incorporated into dry stone walling (NYCC 2005). These findings indicate long-term human presence and exploitation of the landscape which has often gone unnoticed, furthermore there are a number of sites recorded surrounding the proposal site which might indicate the possibility for the survival of early land-use, management and potentially settlement within the study area.
- 4.2 The proposal site lies within the former Forest of Knaresborough, to the north-east of two Scheduled Ancient Monuments: John of Gaunts' Castle, a medieval royal hunting lodge (National Monument number: 29547); and the Bank Slack Camp earthworks (County Monument number NY133). The Roman road known as Watling Street lies to the north, with an associated area of building platforms, believed also to be Roman, recently discovered to the west (NYCC 2005).
- 4.3 A number of crop marks are recorded in the Historic Environment Record for the surrounding area, including a group of rectilinear enclosures to the north of the A59 (NYM 14991), a group of rectilinear enclosures to the south of the A59 aligned upon a trackway orientated northeast-southwest, whose projected alignment could extend into the proposal area (NYM 14961), as well as crop marks representing possible rectilinear enclosures and trackways to the north and south of Penny Pot Lane (NYM 15003, NYM 14977, NYM 13379). To the west of the application area there is evidence for former quarrying, and a

possible medieval boundary stone situated to the north of Penny Pot Lane and west of Constable Ridge Road (NYCC 2005).

- 4.4 A number of previously unknown crop and soil-mark features were also identified in this area during the production of an Environmental Statement by Entec (NYCC 2005). One of these, a possible rectilinear enclosure, falls within the area to be impacted upon by development and is located within Area 8 (Figure 2).

#### ***Previous archaeological works***

- 4.5 The proposed development area has been subject to a Desk-Based Assessment (NYCC 2005) and a Geophysical survey (ASUD 2005).

## **5. The evaluation trenches**

### ***Introduction***

- 5.1 Six trial trenches were excavated, in locations specified in a Proposed Trial Trench Location Plan provided by Entec and approved by the Heritage Section at North Yorkshire County Council (Figure 2). All trenches were machine-excavated to the base of the topsoil and then cleaned, sample-excavated and recorded by hand.

### ***Trench 1***

- 5.2 This trench measured 10m by 4m and was located to investigate potential ridge and furrow and an area of dipolar anomalies. Natural subsoil, a yellow boulder clay [2] was reached at a depth of 0.15m. Immediately above this was the topsoil [1], a dark grey-brown loam. No archaeological deposits were identified, and no artefacts recovered.

### ***Trench 2***

- 5.3 This trench also measured 10m by 4m and was located to investigate an area of dipolar anomalies. The natural subsoil (yellow boulder clay as in Trench 1) was reached at a depth of 0.2m, directly below the topsoil. No archaeological deposits were identified, and no artefacts recovered.

### ***Trench 3 (Figure 3)***

- 5.4 This trench was T-shaped, with the southwest-northeast branch measuring 60m by 2m, and the northwest-southeast branch measuring 30m by 2m. It was located to investigate an area of very faint curving anomalies. As in Trenches 1 and 2, the yellow boulder clay subsoil lay directly below the topsoil. A number of particularly large boulders (more than 1m in diameter) were present in the subsoil in this area. One feature was identified in the extreme northeast end of the trench. This was a flat-bottomed gully [F4] 2.3m wide and 0.2m deep, filled with a grey-brown loam [3] similar to the topsoil. No artefacts were recovered from this feature or from the remainder of the trench.

***Trench 4 (Figure 4)***

- 5.5 This trench measured 10m by 4m and was located to investigate an area of very faint geophysical anomalies. As in the earlier trenches, the boulder clay lay directly below the topsoil. Four circular features were identified, aligned in an arc that opened towards the north. Each measured 0.9m in diameter and was separated from its neighbours by a distance of 2.5m to 3m, from centre to centre. Three of these features were half-sectioned [F6, F8 and F10]; each being vertical-sided and too deep to fully excavate by hand. All contained a similar fill of yellow clay mixed with patches of brown and grey clay and occasional lenses of peat [5, 7 and 9 respectively]. Following hand-excavation, [F8] was machine-excavated to determine its total depth; this proved to be 1.55m. No artefacts were recovered from any of these features or from the remainder of the trench.

***Trench 5***

- 5.6 This trench was L-shaped, with its east-west branch measuring 10m by 4m and its north-south branch measuring 5m by 4m. It was located to investigate a faint curvilinear geophysical anomaly. In this trench the natural boulder clay was stonier than elsewhere on the site and also contained many irregularly shaped patches of topsoil, some containing grass root remains. These are thought to have been caused by the recent removal of stones from the subsoil, perhaps for the construction of dry-stone walls and the former Knabs Ridge Farm. No evidence for the curvilinear geophysical anomaly was identified, and no artefacts were recovered.

***Trench 6***

- 5.7 This trench measured 10m by 4m, and was located to investigate a possible crop mark, visible on an aerial photograph but not detected geophysically. As in the other trenches, the natural boulder clay lay directly below the topsoil. No archaeological deposits or other features that may have accounted for the possible crop mark were identified and no artefacts were recovered.

**6. The finds**

- 6.1 No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

**7. The environmental evidence**

- 7.1 Contexts [5], [7] and [9] from Trench 4 were assessed for plant macrofossils. Each was manually floated and sieved through a 500 µ mesh. The residues were retained, described and scanned using a magnet for ferrous fragments. The flots were dried slowly and scanned at x 40 magnification for waterlogged and charred botanical remains.

***Results***

- 7.2 The flots comprised a large amount of modern roots but other plant remains were absent. An insect fragment occurred in Context [5] and a few small

fragments of charcoal were present in Contexts [5] and [9]. The contents of the flots are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Contents of the flots from HKN05

Sample	1	2	3
Context	5	7	9
<i>Volume processed (ml)</i>	4000	5000	5000
<i>Volume of flot (ml)</i>	250	100	150
<i>Volume of flot assessed (ml)</i>	250	100	150
<i>Flot matrix (relative abundance)</i>			
Charcoal	1	-	1
Insect	1	-	-
Modern roots	4	4	4

Relative abundance is based on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

### ***Discussion***

- 7.3 In view of the well-drained nature of the site, and the presence of modern roots in the flots, the insect fragment in Context [5] is likely to be modern. The small fragments of charcoal in the flots of Contexts [5] and [9] may reflect incidences of burning at the site, or may have been blown in from a distance.
- 7.4 The poor concentration of plant remains and other environmental evidence means that the samples provide little chronological or economic information about the site.

### ***Recommendations***

- 7.5 No further work is recommended for any of the contexts due to the low concentration of plant remains. Material suitable for radiocarbon dating is absent.

## **8. The potential archaeological resource**

- 8.1 Archaeological features were identified in Trench 4 and the extreme northeast end of Trench 3 (*i.e.* the end closest to Trench 4). None of these features can be positively identified but the curvilinear nature and large size of those in Trench 4 suggests a prehistoric date and a ritual function for these features, perhaps as post settings for a timber circle. Although Trench 4 lies outside the proposed development area and will therefore not be impacted by the proposals, these features do indicate the presence of archaeological activity in this general region. It is possible that this activity extends into areas that will be affected by the proposed development. Therefore the area around the southeast pylon (Area 3) should be regarded as being of medium archaeological potential.
- 8.2 No archaeological features were identified in the remainder of the trial trenches and this fact, together with the lack of geophysical anomalies, indicates that these areas are of low archaeological potential.



## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) advises planning authorities to consider any archaeological implications of planning proposals. The following recommendations are made in accordance with this guidance note.
- 9.2 It is recommended that, should planning consent be granted for the proposed development, a suitable mitigation strategy should be agreed between the developer and the North Yorkshire County Heritage Section. The area around the southeast pylon (Area 3) should be stripped of topsoil under archaeological supervision and subject to a full scheme of archaeological excavation.
- 9.3 No further archaeological works are recommended for the remainder of the site.

## **10. References**

ASUD 2005 *Knabs Ridge, Harrogate, North Yorkshire; Geophysical Surveys*  
ASUD Report **1285**

Dacre Pasture Project 2004 *Dacre Pasture Project, Final Report 2004*, Local  
Heritage Initiative Project **YH00701**

NYCC 2005 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation  
by Geophysical Survey: Land at Knabs Ridge, between Skipton Road  
(A59) & Penny Pot Lane, Felliscliffe, North Yorkshire*, North  
Yorkshire County Council Heritage Section

## **Appendix 1: Context data**

Summary list of contexts. The • symbols in the columns at the right indicate the presence of finds of the following types: P pottery, B bone, M metals, F flint, S slag, O other materials.

<b>No</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>O</b>
1	Topsoil						
2	Natural boulder clay						
3	Fill of F4						
F4	Linear cut in NE of Trench 3						
5	Fill of F6						
F6	Posthole in centre of Trench 4						
7	Fill of F8						
F8	Posthole in east-centre of Trench 4						
9	Fill of F10						
F10	Posthole in west-centre of Trench 4						



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Figure 1

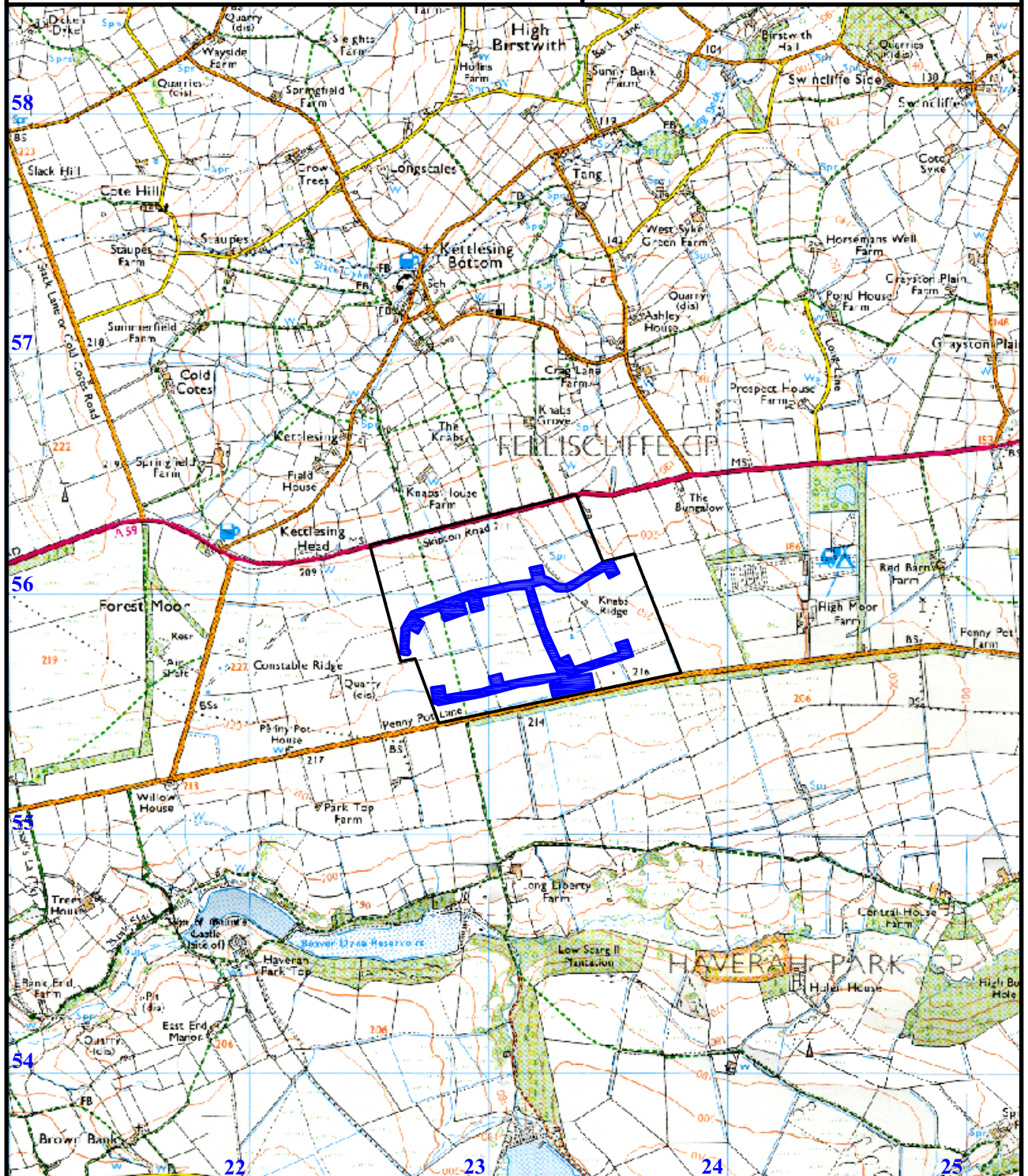
Location map

(area of proposed development in blue)

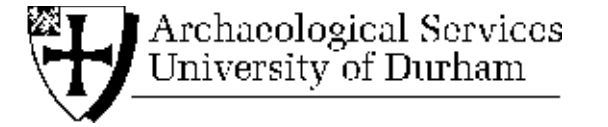
on behalf of

**Entec**

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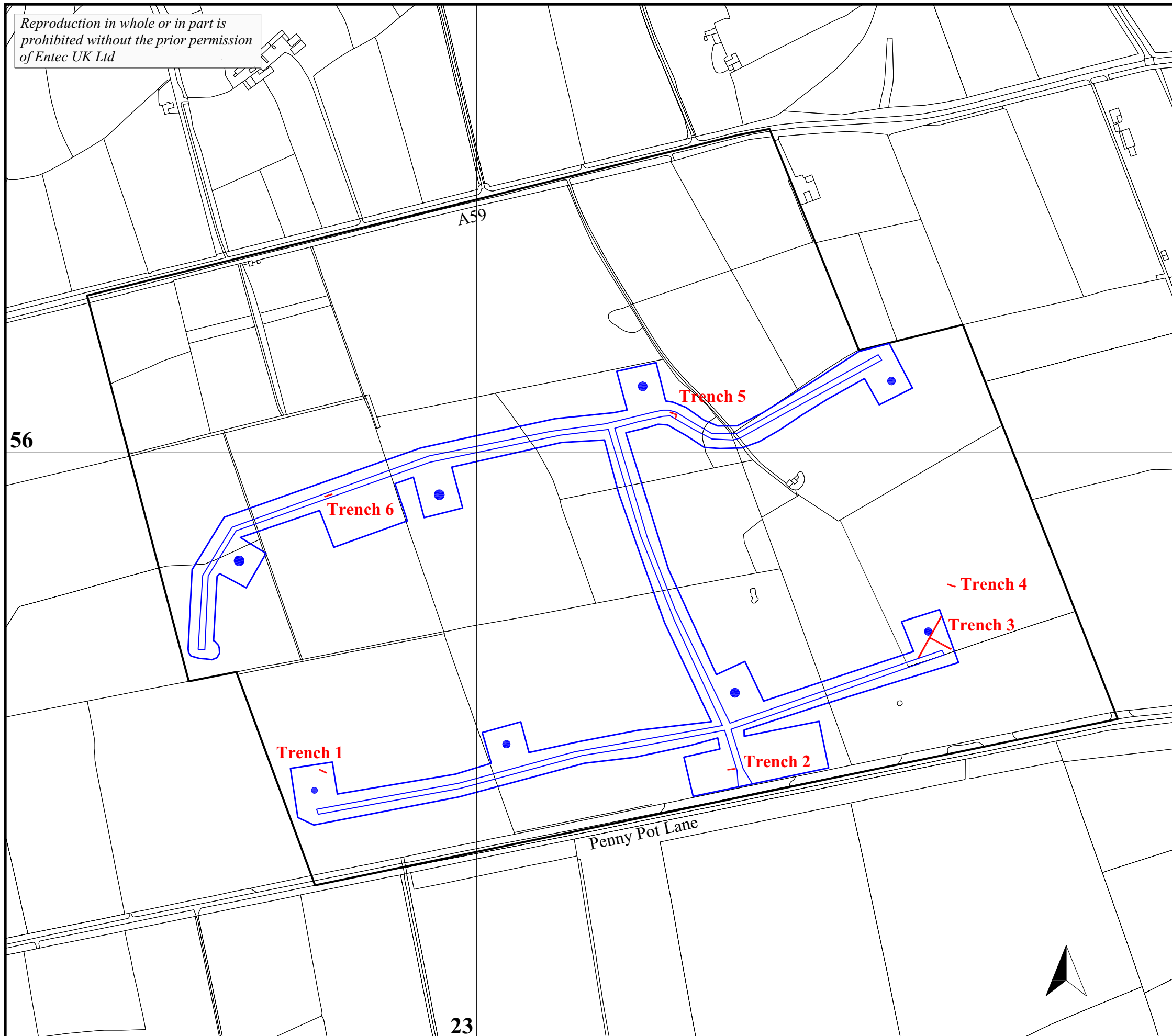
**Knabs Ridge, Harrogate,  
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Figure 2

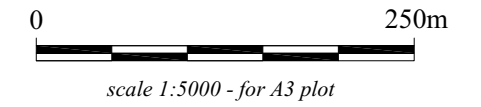
*Map showing location of trenches and proposed development area*



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on behalf of

**Entec**



-  proposed development area
-  trench locations

23



**Trench 3**

3

F4

**Section 4**

SW

NE

1

3

F4

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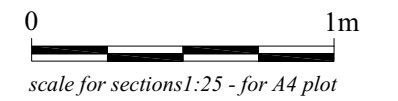
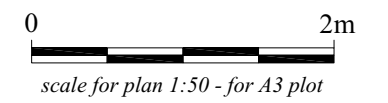
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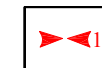
Figure 3

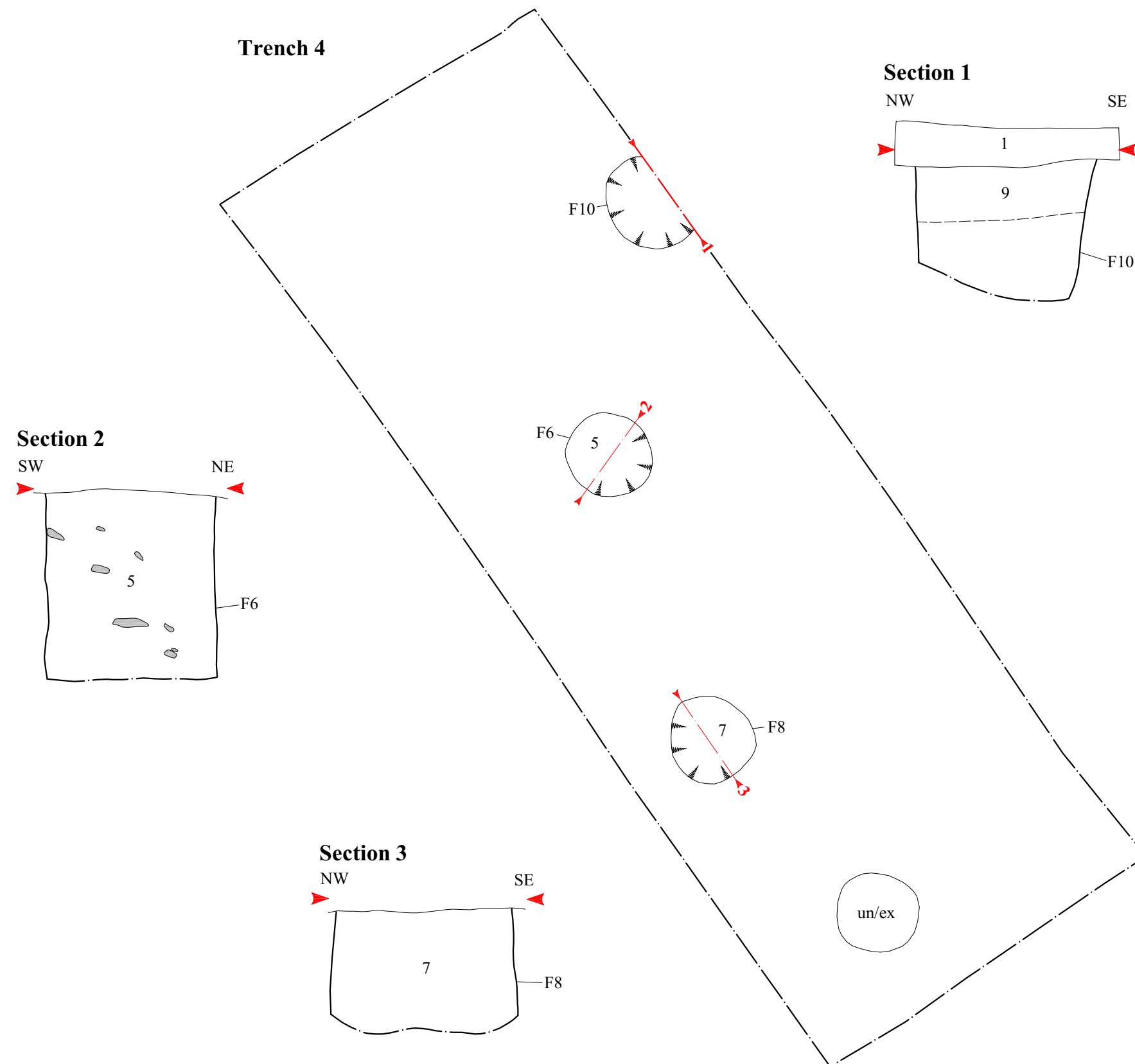
*Plan and section of features in Trench 3*

on behalf of

**Entec**



-  extent of excavation
-  section






on behalf of

**Entec**

0 2m  
 scale for plan 1:50 - for A3 plot

0 1m  
 scale for sections 1:25 - for A4 plot

-  extent of excavation
-  section
-  stone