

## Archaeological Observation



**Land at Moorgate Farm  
Moorend Road  
Yardley Gobion  
Northamptonshire  
NN12 7QG**

On behalf of

**Mr F. Gorst**

**November 2021**

## GENERAL ENQUIRIES

**e:** [info@borderarchaeology.com](mailto:info@borderarchaeology.com)    **t:** 01568 610101    **w:** [borderarchaeology.com](http://borderarchaeology.com)

### Administration

The Plaza, Owen Way, Leominster Enterprise Park, Leominster, HR6 0LA

### Post-Ex Facility – Leominster

**t:** 01568 610101  
**e:** [postex@borderarchaeology.com](mailto:postex@borderarchaeology.com)

### Post-Ex Facility – Milton Keynes

**t:** 01908 533233  
**e:** [postexmk@borderarchaeology.com](mailto:postexmk@borderarchaeology.com)

## REGIONAL OFFICES

### Milton Keynes

Common Farm  
Calverton Lane  
Milton Keynes  
MK19 6EU

**t:** 01908 533233

### Leeds

No 1 Leeds  
26 Whitehall Road  
Leeds  
LS12 1BE

**t:** 0113 8187959

### London

The Old Fire Station  
140 Tabernacle Street  
London  
EC2A 4SD

**t:** 02033 015670

### Newport

Merlin House  
No1 Langstone Business Park  
Newport  
NP18 2HJ

**t:** 01633 415339

### Bristol

First Floor,  
Citibase Bristol Aztec West  
Aztec Centre, Aztec West  
Almondsbury  
Bristol  
BS32 4TD

**t:** 0117 9110767

### Winchester

Basepoint Business Centre  
Winnall Valley Road  
Winchester  
SO23 0LD

**t:** 01962 832777



## COMPILATION

Lottie Farrer

## ARTWORK

Holly Litherland BA (Hons)

## EDITING

George Children MA MCIfA

## FINAL EDIT & APPROVAL:

George Children MA MCIfA

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*Cover: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25-inch map of 1884 (Sheet LXI.I)*

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## 1 Non-Technical Summary

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*This report presents the results of a programme of Archaeological Observation undertaken by Border Archaeology on behalf of Mr F. Gorst in connection with the erection of an agricultural livestock building and associated works at Moorgate Farm Moorend Road Yardley Gobion Northamptonshire NN12 7QG (Planning Ref. S/2019/1579/FUL).*

*The groundworks area measured approximately 100m × 21m (Trench 001) and was excavated by machine and toothless 1.8m bucket under continuous archaeological supervision down to the geological horizon; no subsoil was present.*

*A northwest/southeast cultivation furrow was revealed towards the midpoint of the excavated area. The single fill contained no finds but was sealed by topsoil, suggesting a post-medieval date. No other archaeological finds or features were encountered.*

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## 2 Introduction

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Border Archaeology Ltd (BA) was instructed by Mr F. Gorst to carry out a programme of Archaeological Observation (AO) in connection with the erection of an agricultural livestock building and associated works at Moorgate Farm Moorend Road Yardley Gobion Northamptonshire NN12 7QG (Planning Ref. S/2019/1579/FUL) (NGR: SP 75005 44014) (*fig. 1*).

An area of approximately 100m × 21m was opened and recorded on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 2020.

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## 3 Site Description

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The site is roughly 4.5km NW of Milton Keynes, 6.5km SE of Towcester, 1.5km NW of Potterspury and c.260m NE of Roman Watling Street, the modern A5. It lies at c.101m AOD within a gently undulating agricultural landscape, forming part of large field accessed off Moorend Road, adjacent to existing polytunnels. Moor End Castle moated site and fishponds located c.700m to the NE is the nearest Scheduled Monument (BA 2020)

At the time of AO, the site had been consistently used as a driveway for public access to events, as well as for the use of heavy plant.

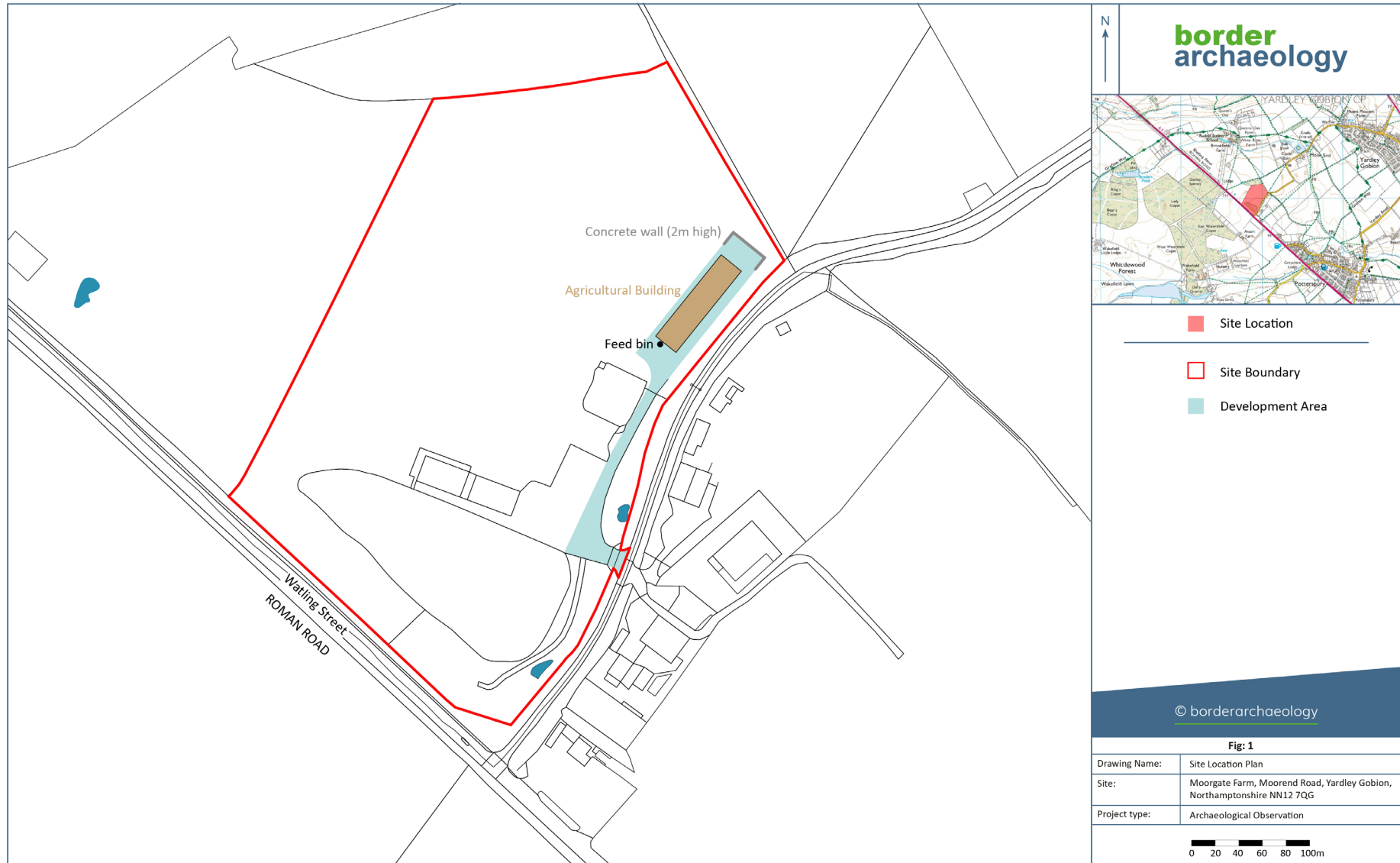
### 3.1 Soils and Geology

The Soil Survey of England and Wales (SSEW) records an area of pelo-stagnogley soils of the DALE series (712g) composed of slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged clayey, fine loamy over clayey and fine silty soils on soft rock, the underlying geology being Carboniferous and Jurassic clay and shale (SSEW 1983).

The British Geological Society (BGS) records bedrock of the Lias Group, composed of predominantly grey, well-bedded, marine calcareous mudstone and silty mudstone, with thin tabular or nodular beds of argillaceous limestone, particularly in the lower part. No superficial deposits are recorded. A borehole to the NW of the site recorded yellow boulder clay to a depth of 1.5m (BGS 2020).

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## 4 Aims

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The aims are set out in full in the Written Scheme of Investigation (BA 2020), these, in brief, being to:

- Clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbance and intrusion and assess the degree of archaeological survival of buried deposits and structures of archaeological significance;
- Consider the extent to which any archaeological features, structures or deposits present within the site provided further information of relevance to the regional research themes and objectives identified by the *East Midlands Archaeological Research Framework Project* (Cooper 2006; Knight, Vyner & Allen 2012).

## 5 Historical & Archaeological Background

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The site lies within a landscape containing evidence of multi-period activity. Two possible Bronze Age round barrows and a possible Neolithic long barrow were recorded in vicinity of Yardley Gobion the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, although nothing now remains visible, whilst a number of possible enclosures and linear features are visible as cropmarks, many of which are undated but which are potentially of Iron Age or Romano-British date. Further features were recorded during geophysical survey over four fields at Blackwell End in 2014. Of these, Field 1, roughly 450m SE of the site, contained at least five linear anomalies, which were, in places, vague and discontinuous, but which may be indicative of infilled ditches, possibly forming part of a series of small enclosures (Webb 2014).

In terms of finds, a fieldwalking survey following on from a desk-based assessment undertaken in connection with the Salcey-Deanshanger Mains Duplication Pipeline Stage 3 in the 1990s recorded evidence of three low-density prehistoric flint scatters c.370m NE of the site (NGR SP 75300 44200) and two Iron Age/Romano-British sites. An evaluation carried out along the pipeline route revealed ring-gullies of possible Iron Age date together with ditches and linear features, some of which corresponded with cropmarks (Meek 1997).

In addition, a section of Watling Street, running NW-SE from Towcester (*Lactodurum*) to Fenny Stratford (*Magiovinium*), extends c.260m SW of the site at its closest point. Recent archaeological investigations undertaken as part of the Milton Keynes Western Expansion Area development have identified several occupation sites of Late Iron Age and Romano-British date in various locations along or close to the road and it was thus considered possible that evidence of settlement features may be encountered during the groundworks (BA 2020).

The medieval landscape centres on the Scheduled earthwork remains of Moor End Castle moated site and fish pond (List Entry Number: 1010806) located c.800m NE of the site (NGR SP 75427 44633), which survives as a water-filled ditch 17m-25m wide and large pond, together with the earthwork remains of Moor End medieval shrunken village, consisting of rectangular enclosures and building platforms. The application site lies on the edge of Potterspury medieval deer park, which was established in 1229 when William de Ferrers, earl of Derby, was granted licence to impark land between Moor End and Watling Street (centred on NGR SP 745 445). The park was enlarged in 1537, finally becoming disused the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Slight earthwork remains of the park pale have been recorded (BA 2020).

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The park contains well-preserved remnants of ridge-and-furrow cultivation features recorded during the *Midlands Open Field Project* (Hall 2001) and is crossed by the earthwork remains of two hollow-ways up to 12m wide and 1m deep, one of which runs from Moor End to Watling Street (NGR SP 753 444 to NGR SP 745 442) whilst the second crosses the application site on a line between Moorend Road and Watling Street (NGR SP750 440 to NGR SP747 440). Whilst these routeways are at present undated, it thought they are likely to predate the park (BA 2020).

## 6 Methodology

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AO was carried out according to *the Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2020) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014). BA adheres to the *ClfA Code of conduct* (2019) and to project management advice set out in *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The Project Managers' Guide* (Lee 2015).

ClfA states (2020, 4) that the purpose of a watching brief (AO) is:

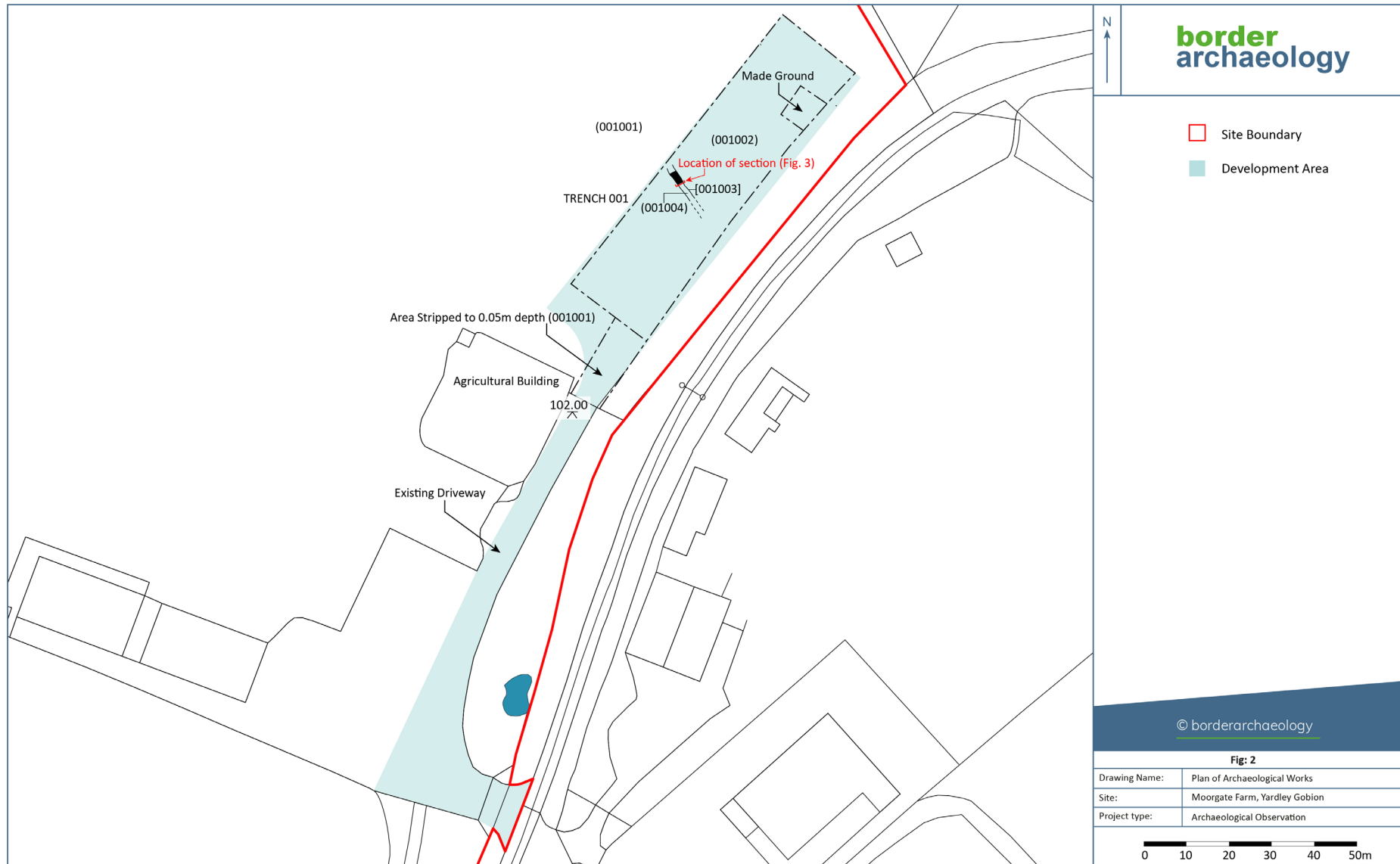
- a. *To allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works;*
- b. *To provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.*

### 6.1 Site Specifics

The excavation area (Trench 001) was laid out by Mr Gorst, with the SE extent reaching the land boundary where a treeline denoted the start Moorend Road. The area was then opened by machine under archaeological supervision using a toothless 1.8m wide bucket, which removed the topsoil down to the geological horizon; no subsoil was present.

The full extent of the groundworks reached 100m in length × 21m in width, which included a 20m × 10m area to the S where only 0.05m depth of topsoil was removed to form part of a driveway to the agricultural livestock building. An area of made ground on the E side of the trench measuring 8m × 7m was shown to be cut into the natural substratum; it was clear that this area had been established as a previous access point from Moorend Road and was therefore left *in situ*.

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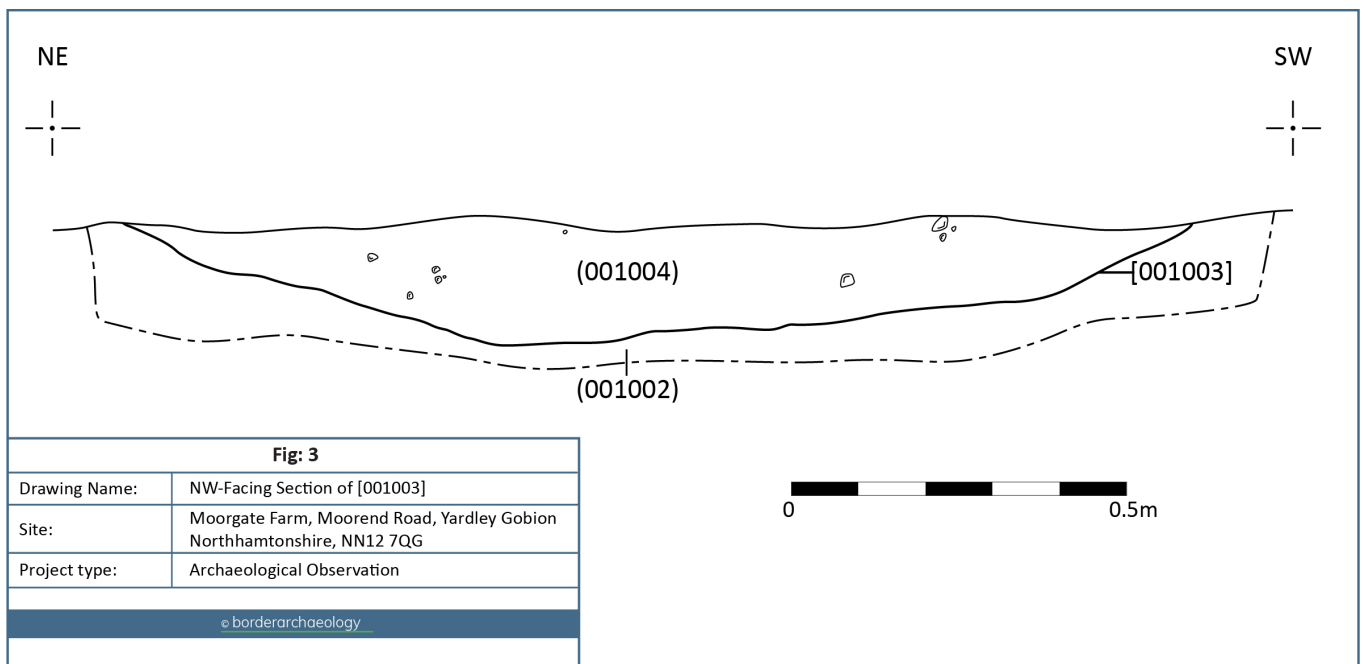
## 7 Results

A context table is presented as an appendix to this report.

No archaeology was identified aside from a single NW/SE furrow [001003] (*Plate 1; fig. 3*). This was investigated and found to be cut into the natural substrate, its fill underlying the topsoil; the furrow was not visible prior to topsoil removal by machine. It measured 1.60m (width) × 0.19m (depth), with a minimum length of 3m, petering out to the NW and SE.

No datable evidence was recovered from the furrow but it probably formed part of a known area of post-medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation in the area.

Only topsoil was present within the excavated area - to a maximum thickness of 0.32m.





*Plate 1: NW-facing section of [001003]. 1m scale*



*Plate 2: SW-facing, showing Trench 001*

## 8 Conclusion

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The programme of archaeological work carried out at Moorgate Farm revealed no significant archaeological features, with minimal evidence of post-medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation evident.

The use of the site as public access for events, together with the impact of modern plant and vehicle movements, appear to have impacted the topsoil, reducing this to a fairly shallow depth and compacting and levelling the area over time.

Such activity may account for the absence of any further evidence of post-medieval cultivation.

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## 11 Appendix: Context Table

Trench	Context	Slot	Type	F/B	F/O	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Sample No	Provisional Date
001	(001001)	-	Deposit	-	-	Moderately compacted mid-to-dark red-brown clayey silt; very occasional small sub-rounded stones; max. depth 0.32m. Overlies (001004).	Topsoil.	-	-	Modern
	(001002)	-	Deposit	-	-	Firm mid-yellow-orange silty clay; occasional gravel patches, occasional small sub-rounded stones. Cut by [001003].	Natural substrate.	-	-	-
	[001003]	-	Cut	(001004)	-	Linear; orientated NW-SE; moderately sloping sides to a concave base; >3m × 1.60m × 0.19m. Filled by (001004). Cuts (001002).	Cut of furrow.	-	-	Post-Medieval
	(001004)	-	Fill	-	[001003]	Moderately compacted mid-grey-brown clayey silt; very occasional small sub-angular stones; >3m l × 1.60m × 0.19m. Underlies (001001). Fills [001003].	Singular fill of furrow.	-	-	Post-Medieval

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Editing	George Children MA MCI fA		
Artwork	Holly Litherland BA (Hons)		
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