
NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Project Designs and Client Reports No. CP/143/04

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FIELD EVALUATION ON
LAND AT ABBEY FARM
ABBEYTOWN
CUMBRIA**

NGR: NY 1763 5082

**Planning Reference
2/03/1249**

**FOR
ABBEY HOMES (CUMBRIA) LTD**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Abbey Homes (Cumbria) Ltd, to undertake an archaeological field evaluation on land at Abbey Farm, Abbeytown, Cumbria. The work was required in response to a planning application for the construction of 5 link houses.

The work involved the consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record and the County Record Office in order to assess the existing information regarding the site's historic, archaeological, topographical and geographical context. This involved the collection of all readily available information regarding the archaeological landscape of the study area, including the locations and settings of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings, Parks and Gardens and other, non-designated archaeological remains.

The development area falls within an area of archaeological potential, adjacent to the remains of the 12th century Holmcultram Abbey, a Scheduled Monument. The site is situated north of the abbey remains on land at present occupied by modern agricultural buildings associated with Abbey Farm.

The archaeological field evaluation revealed a number of features of exclusively modern date, from the later 19th to the 20th centuries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following people and institutions who gave help and assistance during the compilation of this report: Jo Mackintosh of Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record, Mr Mike Armstrong and Mr John Armstrong and all the staff at the County Record Office, Carlisle and Carlisle Local Studies Library.

The desk-based assessment was undertaken by Joanne Beaty BA and the field evaluation was directed by Ken Denham BA, assisted by Joanne Beaty and Patricia Crompton BA. The report was written by Chris Jones BA, MA, AIFA and edited by Juliet Reeves BA. The project was managed by Chris Jones.

1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

- 1.1 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Abbey Homes (Cumbria) Ltd, to undertake an archaeological field evaluation on land at Abbey Farm, Abbeytown, Cumbria.
- 1.2 The work followed a planning application for a residential development, a scheme that affects an area of high archaeological potential adjacent to the remains of the 12th century Holmcultram Abbey. As a result, Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service recommended that a programme of archaeological work should be undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation submitted to and approved by CCCAS.
- 1.3 The work comprised a desk-based assessment of the existing resource, followed by a field evaluation consisting of the excavation of a series of linear trial trenches and/or test pits comprising a minimum 5% sample of the total development area.
- 1.4 The site is situated on land occupied by modern agricultural buildings associated with Abbey Farm (NY 1763 5082), adjacent to the site of the earthwork remains of the 12th century Holmcultram Abbey (SAM 302) (See Figure 1).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There has been no previous work undertaken on the site.

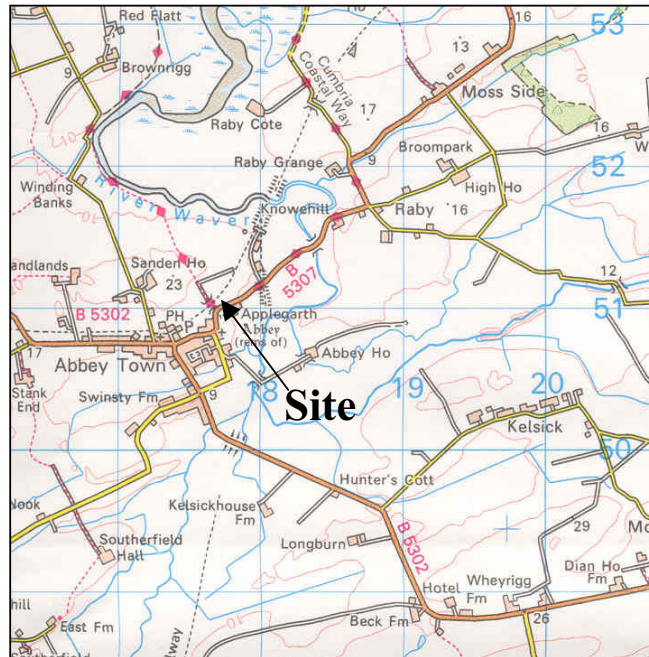


Figure 1: Site Location. Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Landranger® 1:50,000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright (1997) All rights reserved. Licence Number WL6488

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN

3.1.1 A project design was prepared in response to a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service for an archaeological desk-based assessment and field evaluation. This included a detailed specification of works to be carried out, which consisted of a desk-based assessment prior to fieldwork, the excavation of a linear trial trench and a programme of post excavation and reporting.

3.2 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

3.2.1 The assessment involved the consultation of the Cumbria County Council Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal. This was in order to obtain information on the location of all designated sites and areas of historic interest and any other, non-designated sites within the study area, which included monuments, findspots, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

3.2.2 An electronic enquiry was also made of English Heritage's National Monuments Record and the website of the Archaeology Data Service. This was in order to enhance and augment the data obtained from a search of the appropriate repositories.

3.2.3 Further documentary study was undertaken at the County Record Office, Carlisle, which involved the collection of all relevant historical maps and documents including surveys, Tithe and Enclosure Maps, Acts of Parliament and early Ordnance Survey maps.

3.2.4 The desk study was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1994).

3.3 FIELD EVALUATION

3.3.1 The field evaluation consisted of the excavation of a series of linear trial trenches in order to produce a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals.

3.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the excavation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they are observed;
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces;
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes;
- to recover paleoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

- 3.3.3 Each trench was mechanically excavated by a JCB 3CX excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision, to the top of archaeological deposits, or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first. Each trench was then manually cleaned and all features investigated and recorded according to the NPA standard procedure as set out in the company Excavation Manual.
- 3.3.4 Photography was undertaken using a Canon EOS 100 Single Lens Reflex (SLR) manual camera. A photographic record was made using 400 ISO colour print film.
- 3.3.5 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IFA 1994).
- 3.3.6 A programme of environmental sampling was undertaken following an agreed sampling strategy formulated in consultation with English Heritage and CCCAS.

3.4 PROJECT ARCHIVE

- 3.4.1 The full archive has been produced to a professional standard in accordance with the current English Heritage guidelines set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (English Heritage, 2nd Ed. 1991). The archive will be deposited within an appropriate repository and a copy of the report given to the County Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier NPA 04 ABF-A.

4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 PLACE NAME EVIDENCE

- 4.1.1 The name Abbeytown derives from the Abbey of St Mary's, which was founded in the 12th century by Prince Henry of Scotland.

4.2 MEDIEVAL

- 4.2.1 The medieval history concerning Abbeytown is largely in connection with the Cistercian monks of St Mary's. The abbey has been given several dates for its foundation. The official founder of the Abbey is Henry II the date for this is around 1150. However the unofficial founder is Henry prince regent of Scotland, 1135. Henry was granted Cumberland by King Stephen of England to rule as vassal to Stephen for his acquiescence in the usurpation of the throne. This was a time when England was in the throes of civil war between King Stephen and Empress Matilda. Both sides granted lands in their possession to their loyal followers.
- 4.2.2 When Henry of Scotland was granted Cumberland by Stephen he gave two thirds of the land at Holm Cultram to the Cistercian monks for the foundation of the Abbey and be used as pasture and meadow. The remaining third was given to Alan of Waldieve. Alan of Waldieve subsequently gave his remaining third to the Abbey.
- 4.2.3 In 1301 Bishop Halton granted the Abbot at Abbeytown the right to open a church at Skinburness with all the rights and privileges of a parochial establishment. The church at Skinburness was now the parochial capital of Holm Cultram until 1305 when the church and all roads to it were ravaged by the sea. In 1305 the Abbot petitioned King Edward I to move the church and market to Kirkby Johan (Newton Arlosh) as he had already paid a fine of 100 marks to the king for a fair and market at Skinburness. The abbey had previously been using the land at Kirkby Johan (Newton Arlosh) as pasture and meadow until the flood at Skinburness.
- 4.2.4 The Abbey of St Mary's at Abbeytown was not immune to the raids of Robert the Bruce, despite the fact that his father Earl Carrick, Lord of Annandale was buried there. In 1385 a ransom of £200 was paid to Earl Douglas to stop destruction of Abbey property from raiding parties. Raids from the Scots on churches were paramount at this time. The nearby church of Newton Arlosh was testament to this and was built more like a fortress than a place of worship "stone towers were added to the churches at Newton Arlosh, Burgh-by Sands and Great Salkeld" (Townhill 1991, 56).

- 4.2.5 St Mary's Abbey at Abbeytown suffered again with the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536. Henry VIII took over the Abbey in the 29th year of his reign, but it was in the reign of Mary that the Abbey was given to the scholars at Oxford University "The abbey was suppressed, and surrendered to the crown in the 29th Henry VIII. Being valued at £427 19s 3d." (Parson and White 1829, 340). "Queen Mary, in the first year of her reign, granted the *rectory* to the chancellor, master, and scholars of Oxford University, who are still the appropriators and patrons of the benefice" (Parson and White 1829, 340). After the dissolution the tenants of Abbeytown regretted the loss of the abbey more for the new owners than the loss of worship "Although in 1573 a group of tenants who had held land from Holm Cultram Abbey expressed a sense of loss at the house's dissolution they were regretting a number of secular perquisites rather than spiritual deprivation" (McCord and Thompson 1998, 105)
- 4.2.6 The residents of Abbeytown were required again in times of trouble. "Under regulations of 1538, substantial tenants of Holm Cultram Abbey (holding 15-20 acres) had to muster in time of war mounted and fully armed" (Mc Cord and Thompson 1998, 83). This refers to the battle of Solway Moss in 1542 which ended in an English victory over an invading Scottish army. Again in 1643 Abbeytown was affected by the civil war as an attempt was made to seize Carlisle. Sir Wilfred Lawson brought in Sir William Armyne and together with a parliamentary army lay siege to Carlisle. The siege was unsuccessful and the local militia drove them to Abbeytown and subsequently released them on condition they kept quiet "However, the gentry of the country, their tenants and neighbours, and militia defeated these persons and their following, and drove them to Abbeyholme, but there let them go, on promise of keeping quiet." (Ferguson 1890-1, 107).
- 4.2.7 In 1600 the tower of St Mary's fell revealing the remains of a doorway leading from the choir to the transept. In the choir was found a slab showing a woman holding a child. Also found was a stone image of a woman with a cross in her arms.

4.3 POST MEDIEVAL

- 4.3.1 The evidence for post medieval Abbeytown is of that of an expanding agricultural community. The introduction of clay buildings started around the 17th century. "Small district in the neighbourhood of Abbeyholm where they are all built of mud" (Messenger 1975, 83). The only buildings built out of stone in the area were either ecclesiastical or manorial. All other buildings were built out of clay. Clay was the obvious choice as other building materials such as stone and wood were in short supply until the introduction of the railways in the area around the 19th century. 'Clay dabbins' as they were called were an ingenious way of using materials available freely in the local vicinity. The structures were built using large pad stones for foundations and wooden crucks or supports. The walls were built out of a mixture of clay and sand, making them sturdy and warm.

- 4.3.2 There is evidence for a windmill once being in operation at Abbeytown. The base is thought to have been around 20ft in diameter. The windmill has its own tale of misfortune as a young girl was supposed to have gone to get the miller for his dinner, but was struck by one of the sweeps and died. The mill was fitted with a pair of French burrs and a pair of grey stones together with barley and dressing mills. The mill is thought to have been in operation around the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 4.3.3 A news and reading room was established in the village around 1856. In 1906 the Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological Society was given permission to excavate the eastern portion of the graveyard. The floor of the choir was found to have tessellated tiles and on the floor of the north transept were four clay tiles with glazed surfaces of a floral design, which were in good state of preservation.

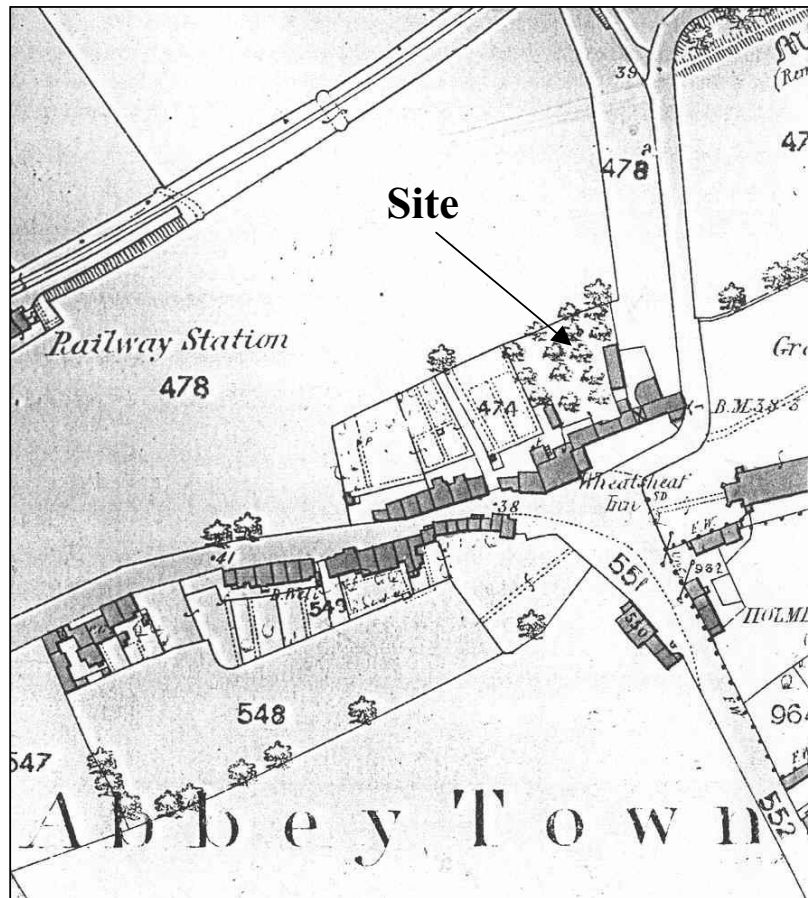


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1865)

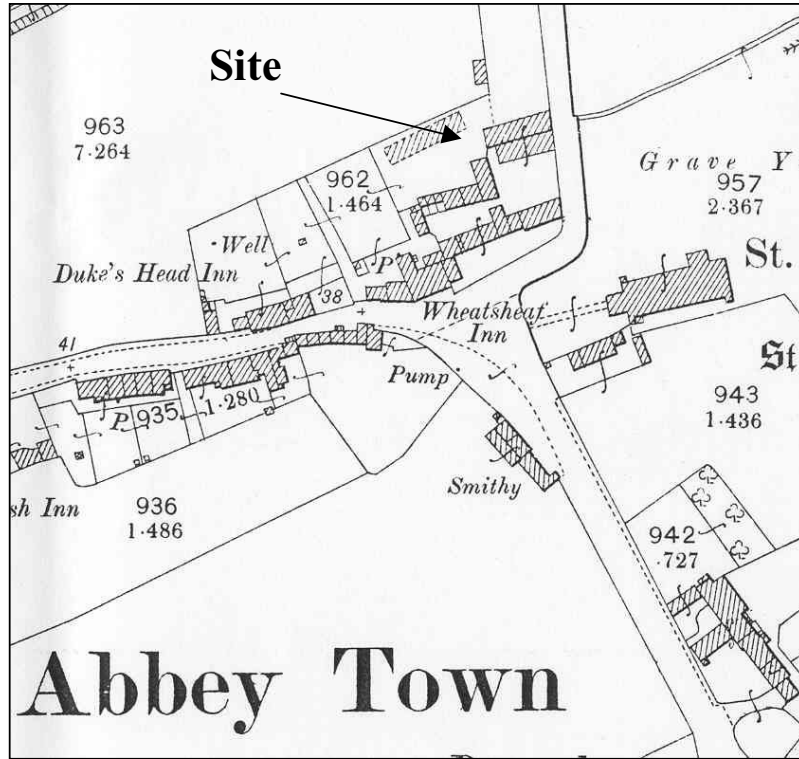


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition (1900)

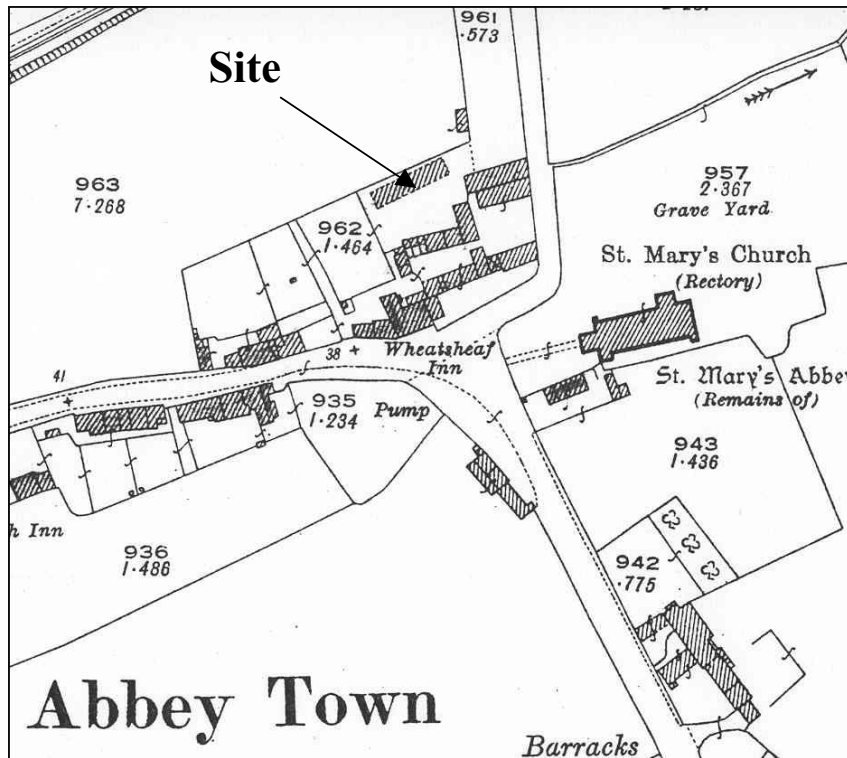


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition (1925)

5 RESULTS (SEE FIGURE 5)

- 5.1 The evaluation was undertaken by a team of professional field archaeologists comprising Ken Denham BA, Joanne Beaty BA and Trish Crompton BA.
- 5.2 The work was undertaken within 3 working days between the 1st and 3rd September 2004.
- 5.3 All references to cardinal directions refer to site grid north.

5.4 TRENCH 1

- 5.4.1 Trench 1 was located west of the North Barn, within the area of the proposed link houses, oriented northeast – southwest and measured 15.60m x 2m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 1.0m and consisted of mixed Devensian till comprising alluvial sands and gravels with boulder clay (101). This was sealed by dark brown sandy loam subsoil (102), which was in turn sealed by dark brown loam topsoil (100).
- 5.4.2 A number of features were probably cut into the natural substrate, all of 19th and 20th century origin. These consisted of two sub-circular shallow pits (108, 110) and two shallow linear gullies (104, 106). These features contained fragments of 19th and 20th century pottery and ceramic building material.

5.5 TRENCH 2

- 5.5.1 Trench 2 was located to the north of and parallel to trench 1, and measured 15.60m x 2m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 1.0m and consisted of mixed Devensian till comprising alluvial sands and gravels with boulder clay (101). This was sealed by dark brown sandy loam subsoil (102), which was in turn sealed by dark brown loam topsoil (100).
- 5.5.2 A shallow linear ditch, oriented northeast – southwest (114) was observed at the west end of the trench. No anthropogenic material was recovered from its fill (113). Other features observed within this trench consisted of plough scarring, a tree bole and a sheep burial.

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PROJECT:

ABBEY FARM
ABBETOWN
CUMBRIA

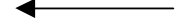
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD
EVALUATION

TITLE:

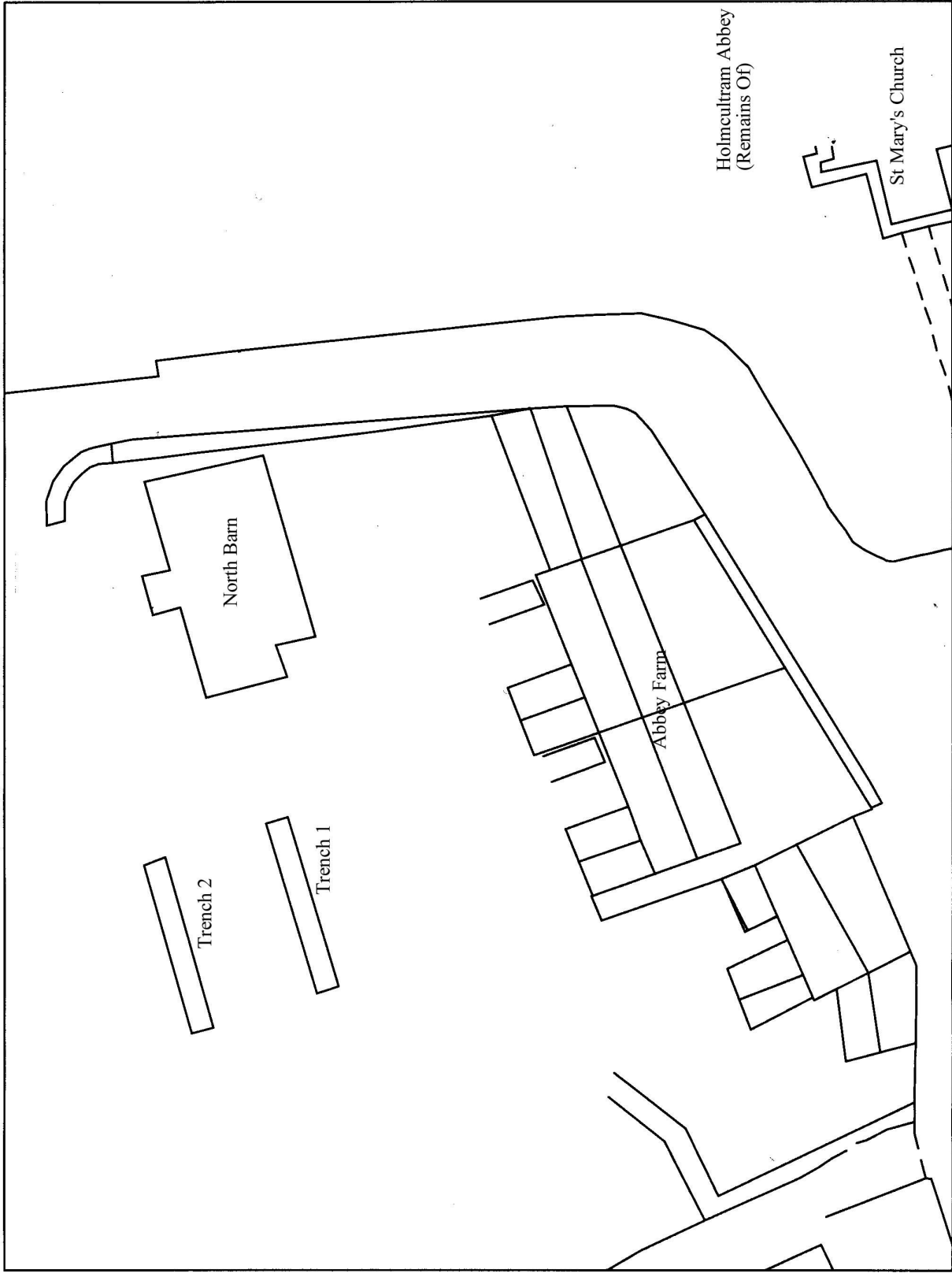
FIGURE 5
TRENCH LOCATION PLAN

SCALE: 1:500

DRAWN BY: KD



FOR THE USE OF ABBEY
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6 THE FINDS

TABLE 1**ABBEY FARM, ABBEYTOWN ABF-A: FINDS BY CONTEXT**

TRENCH	CONTEXT	POTTERY	BONE	GLASS	OTHER
1	Unstratified	37	0	6	0
Total		37	0	6	0

- 6.1 There were 37 pottery sherds recovered during the evaluation, all of which were of 19th and 20th century date. In addition to this, 6 shards of glass, also of 19th and 20th century date were recovered.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The evaluation revealed no significant archaeological features or deposits, and none earlier than the 19th century. The features which were revealed probably resulted from agricultural activity during the 19th and 20th centuries. No evidence of medieval activity, associated with the 12th century Abbey and settlement was revealed in any of the trenches.

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