## FENTON ESTATE WOODLAND CREATION SCHEME:

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL WALK-OVER SURVEY

**JULY 2018** 



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## Fenton Estate Woodland Creation Scheme

Archaeological Assessment

Prepared by

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Frontispiece: View of culvert on the east side of the site.

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#### **SUMMARY**

This document provides a report on a rapidly completed walk-over survey undertaken by The Archaeological Practice Ltd with respect to a proposed Woodland Grant Scheme project on the Fenton estate on Doddington Moor, North Northumberland, currently in use as rough grazing land.

In addition to site visits, the assessment involved consultations with the local planning authority, an examination of historic maps and documentary records for the area, consideration of the results of previous archaeological investigations pertaining to the area and consultation and synthesis of data held by the Northumberland Heritage Environment Record (HER).

The main findings of the assessment are that the only known sites of historic importance are those of 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century mining associated with the Doddington Moor Colliery, including bell pits and associated drains. Rig and furrow predominantly found in the north of the site is probably of similar date while some of the boundaries of the site may be older. While prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlement sites are well-attested in the vicinity, there is no specific evidence for such sites within the present assessment area. Thus, while there is potential for as yet unrecognised early prehistoric settlement sites to survive within the site as built features or lithic scatters, no guidance can be given as to the potential location of such putative sites.

The extensive remains of coal mining probably dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are of interest as a remnant of an industrial landscape, but individual features within that landscape, such as bell pits and drains, are not independently of high value. This mining activity, coupled with 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century improvement of the north part of the site, has potentially damaged or destroyed earlier features there.

It is recommended that any planting of the site should be associated with more detailed mapping of known sites of historic importance so that these can be recorded and/or left as unplanted open areas within the planting scheme. Should the planting scheme go ahead, it may be considered desirable to leave a portion of the historic mining landscape unplanted, following a similar pattern to the scheme recommended in 2016 on the adjacent Doddington North Moor site.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of Assessment

This survey, prepared by the Archaeological Practice Ltd., was commissioned by Scottish Woodlands to inform a proposed Woodland Grant Scheme project on the Fenton Estate. The request was for a rapid initial assessment that would identify areas of potential significance and suggest how these could be incorporated into the proposed new woodland scheme in line with UK Forestry Standard Guidelines and in particular the guidelines relating to the historic environment as set out in 'Forests and Historic Environment' (Forestry Commission 2011). As such, this is not a comprehensive assessment, the production of which will necessitate further research in the field and into various historic sources.

#### 1.2 Policy Background

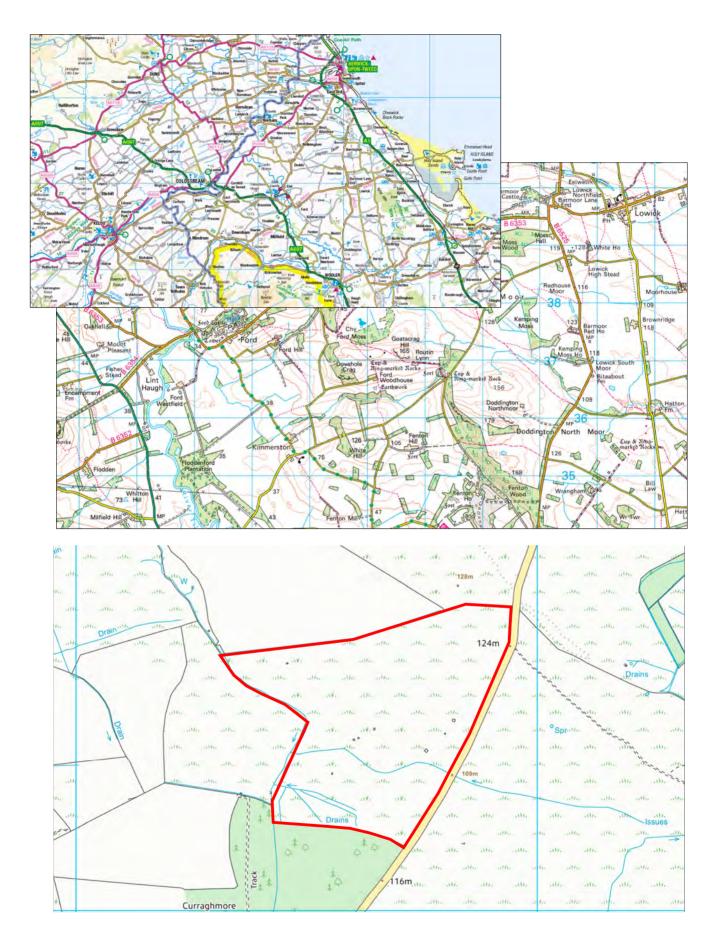
As noted above, the current WGS proposal for this part of the Fenton Estate is being developed in full compliance with Forestry Commission Standard Guidelines. In 'Forests and Historic Environment' (Forestry Commission 2011, chapter 6) it is specifically noted that:

- 1. All landscapes have intrinsic historical value and many have special cultural significance, as can the individual elements within them. The historic context provides the starting point in forest planning for the historic environment.
- 2. Assessing the evidence is vital in establishing the historic environment value of a site.
- 3. Consideration of the historic environment forms part of the forest planning process in both new woodlands and the redesign of existing woodland.
- 4. Open space is often the most appropriate setting for historic environment features; open areas may have to be managed to minimize erosion or inappropriate woodland regeneration.
- 5. Forest operations, ground disturbance and heavy machinery involved in earthworks all have the potential to seriously damage historic environmental features.

In relation to these issues, the following specific guidelines relating to forestry and the historic environment are specified. This assessment represents the first stage in the application of these guidelines to the current WGS proposal.

#### 1.2.1 Historic context

- 1. Contact the local historic environment services for information on the historical context; check to see if a historic assessment /categorisation has been undertaken or the landscape is listed or registered as being of historic or design interest.
- 2. Use the historic assessment /categorisation or any description given in a historic register or list, together with the landscape character assessment, to inform the development of proposals.
- 3. Consider the impacts of forestry on the historical context and landscape character in forest management plans; consider opportunities to complement, enhance or re-create landscapes of historic interest.



Illus. 00: Location of the Proposed Forestry site on the Fenton Estate at Doddington Moor

#### 1.2.2 Evidence of the historic environment

- 4. Take advice on the historical interest of the site from the historic environment services and by checking the historic environment records.
- 5. Look for indications of the historic environment on the ground and conduct further investigation where evidence is found; commission specialist surveys where evidence is significant.
- 6. Ensure those working in woodlands are aware of the importance of the historic environment; encourage them to recognise evidence and assist in gathering information.
- 7. Include long-established boundaries, banks and veteran trees as historic environment features to be protected.
- 8. Record the nature and position of any historical features or objects such as pottery, flint or bone, and report them to the relevant historic environment services.
- 9. Where historic environment surveys are requested, offer access and assistance to help extend historic environment records.

#### 1.2.3 Forest planning

- 10. Ensure the historic environment considerations are fully integrated into the forest planning process.
- 11. Plan an appropriate area of open space around features of historical significance; for Scheduled Monuments this will normally be a minimum of 20 m. Consider the setting as well as the individual features.
- 12. Where evidence suggests that significant historical remains may be present, but specific features have not been identified, identify these areas in forest management plans, restrict any planting to smaller trees or shrubs and minimise ground disturbance.
- 13. For new woods in areas where the landscape history is important, consider restoring tree cover on previously wooded sites.
- 14. Take particular care to avoid sites of historic interest where short rotation forestry crops are proposed.

#### 1.2.4 Woodland heritage

- 15. Manage trees and shrubs that may damage important historical sites and features: limit the establishment of woody vegetation and consider removing large trees vulnerable to windthrow.
- 16. Retain and manage existing veteran trees and select and manage suitable individuals to eventually take their place.
- 17. Monitor important historic environment sites and features, including woodland features, to check they are not being damaged or degraded.

#### 1.2.5 Open space

- 18. Aim to maintain the open settings for features of historical interest; where appropriate monitor changes in vegetation and consider using grazing or mowing as part of the management plan.
- 19. Manage public access so that open settings for historical features are not subject to erosion or damage caused by visitor pressure.

#### 1.2.6 Forest operations

- 20. If operations are planned near a Scheduled Monument, consult the relevant historic environment authority before site operations commence. If operations are likely to affect other known or suspected features of historic environment interest, seek advice on operations from the local historic environment service.
- 21. Avoid disturbing the ground on or near sites of historical significance.
- 22. Identify relevant historic environment features in the operational plan and identify them on the ground; ensure they are excluded from the operational area and that the plan is communicated to all those working on the site.
- 23. Avoid using areas of historical importance for storing material, stacking timber or as a parking area for machinery.
- 24. Where operations are a necessity near vulnerable historical features, take precautions to avoid damage and take particular care with felling and extraction.

#### 1.2.7 Site hydrology

- 25. Keep drains well away from known archaeological deposits; as a guide a minimum of 20 metres.
- depending on the nature of site hydrology.
- 26. Where there is preserved archaeology, and drains may be having a detrimental effect, consider blocking or re-routing them.
- 27. Avoid the establishment of new woodlands or short rotation coppice on areas where changes in hydrology may affect preserved remains.

#### 1.2.8 Access and interpretation

- 28. Consider providing access to features of historical interest.
- 29. Consider how the historic environment could be interpreted for visitors as part of an integrated access strategy if that is a management objective.
- 30. Ensure historical features and any visitor facilities associated with them are well maintained.

#### 1.3 Methodology of Assessment

This assessment will:

- Define the principal sources of information available for archaeological assessment (Section 3).
- Present a catalogue (Section 4) and chronological synthesis (Section 5) of archaeological data derived from various sources. Accompanying base maps will locate established structures and features within, or in close proximity to, the assessment area.
- Provide an assessment of archaeological potential with respect to the development area and potential threats represented by the WGS proposal (Section 6).
- Recommend further work to define more clearly the nature of the archaeological record and facilitate management or mitigation of this resource (Section 7).

#### ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Location and Extent of the Assessment Area (Illus. 01- 03).

The assessment area comprises c. 20 hectares of land, bounded on the east by a minolr road running broadly NE-SW from the B 6525 (Devil's Causeway) south of Lowick to Milfield on the A 697. The area is bounded to the west by the Brromridgedean burn, to the south by Fenton Wood and to the north by field boundaries.

The area forms part of the Fell Sandstone ridge overlooking the east side of the Milfield Basin, although the views in this direction are somewhat obscured by Fenton Wood. Topographically, the ground falls from both north and south to a seasonal stream, or drain, running roughly east-west through the site and culverted under the road (see *Frontispiece*).

Today, the north and west of the area is open moorland, used for rough grazing, with improved pasture fields to the north. A large conifer plantation stands at the southern margin of the site.

#### 2.2 Previous Archaeological Investigations

Although no archaeological assessments or interventions have previously been carried out on the site or in its immediate vicinity, investigations have been carried out in the wider locality which shed contextual light on the development of the area and the potential nature of archaeological resources within the current assessment site.

Of particular relevance to the area's prehistoric, Roman and early medieval history are two substantial recent volumes by Passmore & Waddington (2009 & 2012). These set out the results of a decade of aerial survey and fieldwork in and around the Milfield Basin, and demonstrate beyond any doubt the national importance of this area's archaeology; they do not, however, make any specific mention of Doddington Moor or Fenton wood.

Of particular relevance to post-medieval coal mining in the area are the investigations undertaken in association with the recently constructed Barmoor Windfarm which lies immediately north of the survey area (CFA Archaeology Ltd 2006, 2014), and a walk-over survey carried out alongside desk-based work in relation to Doddington North Moor (TAP 2016). The evaluation trenches at Barmoor uncovered remains dating from prehistoric to post-medieval times, and as the Doddington North Moor and Barmoor coalmining landscapes are effectively one and the same, the nature of buried archaeological deposits in the present survey area may reasonably be supposed to be of similar character to those investigated at Barmoor and, more recently noted on Doddington North Moor directly east of the present survey area. Most of the features investigated at Barmoor related to post-medieval coalmining, but a single pit containing prehistoric pottery was found on a little island of sandy subsoil. The general absence of pottery and other artefacts in the topsoil was accounted for by the fact that the ground was not improved by drainage until after WWII, and thus had not been manured with domestic refuse as generally happened in fields of earlier date; this will presumably also pertain to the current site.

#### 2.3 Nature of Proposed Scheme

This survey relates to a Woodland Grant Scheme proposal to create new mixed woodland over the survey area. Although the current site is relatively small, there may be scope for leaving unplanted clearings within the overall planting scheme, notably around archaeological sites in line with Forestry Commission guidelines (note that sites in such clearings may require some ongoing management if they are not grazed).

Ground preparation in advance of planting will be by a range of methods and the planted ground will eventually be disturbed by tree roots. On the unploughed ground, mounding would be the preferred method, this involves creating a shallow scrape for each tree that is usually around a foot in depth or less and 2ft across.

Regardless of the method of ground preparation, the key to avoiding damage to archaeological features is to undertake adequate initial assessment, and to maintain a degree of flexibility once ground preparation is underway so that any sites discovered during ground disturbance can be appropriately accommodated into the scheme.

#### 3. SOURCES FOR ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Archival Material and Secondary Sources

The report collates evidence from a wide range of published, documentary and cartographic sources consulted in the following archival repositories:

Northumberland Historic Environment Record, County Hall, Morpeth (HER)

Northumberland County Record Office, Woodhorn.

The Archaeological Practice archive (AP)

#### 3.2 Types of Information

Included amongst the various kinds of information used from each of the above sources to assess the significance of the assessment area are the following:

#### 3.2.1 HER and Listed Buildings Records

#### Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The Scheduling of a site by the Secretary of State denotes it is of at least national significance and provides statutory protection over a defined area. There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the present assessment area, but immediately south is Roughting Linn rock art complex and hill-fort.

#### **Listed Buildings**

The listing of structures by the Secretary of State denotes historical or architectural interest but does not necessarily include all buildings of significance or local importance. There are no listed buildings within or in the immediate vicinity of the site.

#### Sites Appearing on the Heritage Environment Record (HER)

The County HER has been accessed for entries within and in close proximity to the assessment area that may be impacted by proposed developments. Consideration of sites outside the defined area enables better evaluation of its archaeological and historical context, highlighting the nature of potential remains within the assessment area. There is one entry within or bordering the defined assessment area:

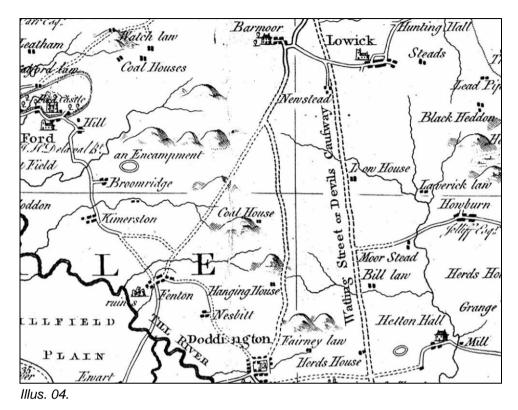
Site no. 01: HER 19545; Coal pits at Southmoor noted on OS 1866

Other sites have been considered for contextual purposes in the wider vicinity.

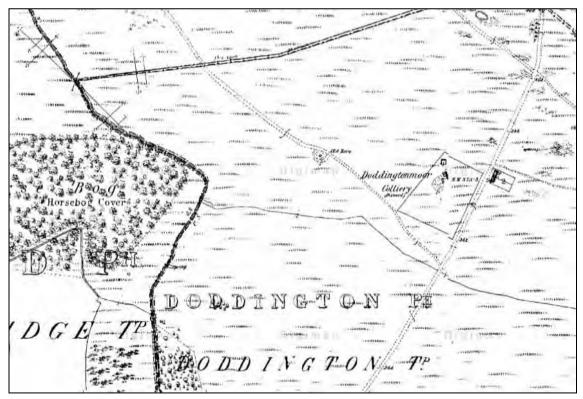
#### 3.2.2 Historic Map Evidence (see Illus. 00-00)

The study of early maps provides invaluable evidence for the historical development of the area. The following maps have been consulted for the purposes of this report:

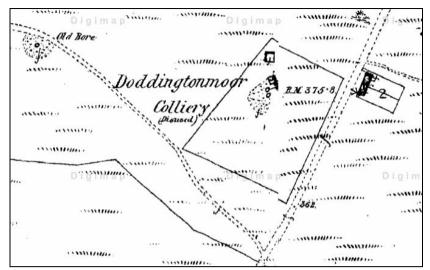
### County Maps of Northumberland by Morden (1695), Armstrong (1789), Fryer (1820), Greenwood' (1828).



1st Edition Ordnance Survey, surveyed 1850s

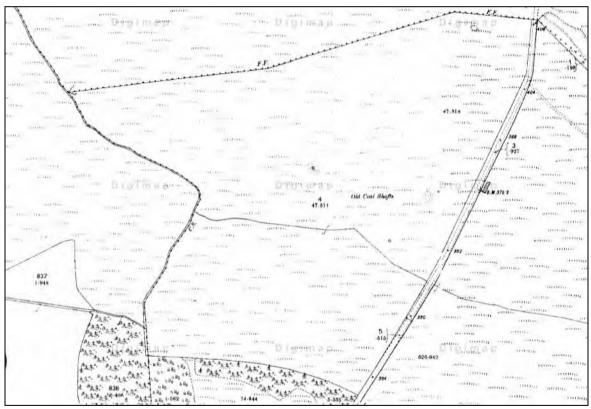


Illus. 05i.



Illus. 05ii: 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, surveyed 1850s (detail of mine area)

#### 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey, 1890s



Illus. 06.

#### 3rd Edition Ordnance Survey, 1920s.

Illus. 07.

#### 3.2.3 Photographs:

A search of historic aerial photographs of the site was not carried out. However, Google Earth images were consulted in association with Lidar data, revealing numerous archaeological features of relatively low importance in the form of earthworks and cropmarks.

In addition to aerial views, a search for historic photographs of the defined assessment area did not return any significant results.

#### **3.2.4** Site Inspection and Local Information (see Site photos in Appendix 1)

Two visits were made to the site in June 2018 defined assessment area and to view the location, accessibility and current state of the site. During these visits photographic recording of the development site was carried out at ground level and using a quadcopter in order to provide a record of significant features observed (see *Appendix 1*). No features suggestive of high archaeological potential were apparent within the assessment area during these visits which revealed an extensive landscape of coal-mining and improved pasture comprising the following elements:

- 1. Area of bell pits against the western boundary of the site. At least four bell pits are visible in the central part of the western boundary area with a further one close to the extreme north-west corner of the site.
- 2. Double-ditched boundary or drain feature with central mound up to 7 metres wide running SW-NE for some c.100m from the centre of the eastern boundary.



Illus. 08.

3. A complex of at least four main ditches, 1.5-3 m wide, with associated parallel banks, running WSW-ENE in the north-west corner of the site, some extending to the east.



Illus. 09.



Illus. 10.

4. Possible rig & furrow earthworks between drains in the north-east corner of the site.



Illus. 11.



Illus. 12.

5. Winding ditch feature, possibly originally natural but now dry, running east-west through the lower, southern part of the site, culverted across the course of the c-road forming the eastern boundary of the site. Smaller drains running SW-NE feed into it from bell pits to the north and north-east.

- 6. Extensive area of bell pits and associated drains running in wide belt from WNW to ESE across the centre of the site, north and south of (but mainly north of) the central drain (Site 4) noted above.
- 7. Doddington Moor mine depot shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey plan comprising an embanked enclosure, visible on the ground as a low mound up to 0.5 m high, with internal mound in the north-east marking the site of former shaft.



Illus. 13.





Illus. 14.

Illus. 15.

8. Extensive area of narrow, relatively modern rig & furrow earthworks.



Illus. 16.

- 9 Earthwork mounds suggesting the presence of former mining in the extreme north-east corner of the survey area.
- 10 Field boundaries. The boundaries enclosing the site to the south, west and north all appear on early editions of the Ordnance Survey series and may be of some antiquity, perhaps based on medieval or earlier land divisions.

#### 4. SYNTHESIS

Doddington Moor within the Fenton Estate lies within a wider landscape of immense archaeological importance, containing evidence of human activity extending back some 10,000 years. Some archaeological sites are very obvious within today's landscape, while others are more subtle; an unknown number remain entirely hidden and yet to be discovered. A recent large-scale survey project has confirmed the complexity of this landscape and provided much new information about it; the results are published in two substantial volumes (Passmore & Waddington 2009, 2012)...

#### 4.1 Early Prehistoric

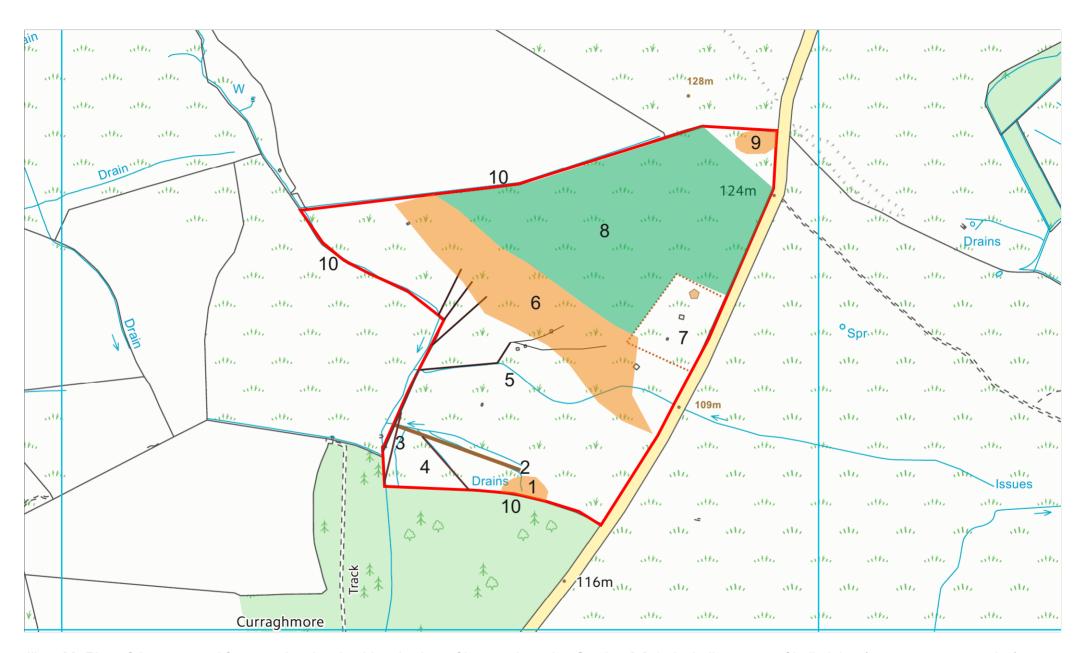
The earliest evidence for human presence in the Doddington area dates from the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age), c10,000 - 4,000BC. This was a time when people lived by hunting, fishing and gathering wild resources, moving round the landscape on an annual cycle to take exploit resources in different places throughout the landscape rather than living in one place.

The Neolithic period (c4000 - 2400BC) saw the introduction of farming, known to have been underway in the Milfield Basin, just a few kilometres from Doddington, by about 4000BC. With the introduction of farming, the large scale clearance of the mesolithic woodland began. The Neolithic period also saw the introduction of pottery (of which much is known from various sites around Milfield), and new types of stone tools including polished stone axes. As with the earlier Mesolithic period, evidence of Neolithic settlement usually exists in the form of lithic scatters, though settlement sites including timber buildings and pits containing various artefacts have been excavated near Milfield. Several ceremonial sites of Neolithic date, including a large 'henge' (open air temple) at Coupland, have been recorded in the general area, while a number of smaller henge-type enclosures dating from the very late Neolithic or early Bornze Age are also known here. The area around Doddington is well known for its mysterious Neolithic 'cup-and-ring marks', circular carvings of unknown purpose on outcrops of sandstone, of which arguably the best example in the whole of Britain exists at Roughting Linn, immediately adjacent to the Doddington North Moor WGS area.

The Bronze Age (c. 2,400 – 800BC) saw large-scale expansion of farming throughout north Northumberland into areas that seem previously to have been used largely for seasonal grazing. In many places in the Cheviots and on the Fell sandstones, large areas are covered by relic field systems consisting of clearance cairns, field banks and sometimes platforms for roundhouses. A scheduled ancient monument on the adjacent Doddington North Moor probably falls into this category, and other small cairns nearby may also date from this period. The discovery of a Bronze Age bronze axe at Barmoor South Moor is further evidence of Bronze Age activity in the local landscape.

#### 4.2 Late Prehistoric and Romano-British

During the Iron Age (c800BC – AD100), the open, undefended settlements of the Bronze Age gave way to defensible settlements, initially surrounded by timber palisades and later by earthwork ramparts which could reach great size and complexity. These settlements are known to us as 'hillforts' or 'camps', and many examples survive as earthworks in the landscape around Doddington, such as just west of the WGS area at Roughting Linn, to the SW at Fenton, and a little further south on Wooler golf course above Doddington village. In addition to



Illus. 00: Plan of the proposed forestry site showing historic sites of interest keyed to Section 3.2.4., including areas of bell pitting (orange transparencies), associated drains (brown lines), mine compound (no. 7) and rig & furrow (green transparency).

these defensible settlements, a great many smaller farmsteads of roundhouses with paddocks, often in association with quite extensive field systems of 'cord-rig' (narrow rig and furrow) survive in north Northumberland. There are no confirmed examples of any such remains within the current survey area.

#### 4.3 Early medieval (c410-1066)

After a period of turmoil in the centuries following the collapse of Roman imperial authority at the beginning of the 5th century, the great Kingdom of Northumbria, one of the most powerful kingdoms of early medieval Britain, was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Doddington Moor lies between the great early medieval royal centres at Yeavering/Milfield and Bamburgh, and several settlements of timber houses from this period have been excavated in the Milfield Basin, but nothing of the period is known from the survey area.

#### 4.4 Medieval (c1066-1603)

There is no evidence for medieval activity of any kind within the survey area on the Fenton Estate, although documentary evidence shows the area to have been reasonably populous in medieval times, with thirty inhabitants of Doddnington assessed for the subsidy of 1296. It is noted that the general area, including adjacent settlements of Lowick and Barmoor to the north, as well as Doddington to the south, suffered repeatedly from Scottish raids in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and on the basis of current evidence we must assume that the area was rough pasture at this time. Whether any coal mining took place during medieval times is not known.

#### 4.4 Post Medieval and Modern (c1603 – present)

The post medieval story of the landscape within and around the current survey area on the Fenton Estate is one of agriculture and industry. There is no sign of a steading here on any of the early maps, but the remains of a mine is present on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map of 1860, suggesting that it dates to the later 18<sup>th</sup> or first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The extensive improved fields are likely to be of later date. The creation of these improved fields may have resulted in the destruction of older earthworks. Estate papers or other surviving documents may provide more information about the origins and history of the steading and fields.

Industrial activity in the form of coal-mining has clearly taken place on quite a large scale on Doddington Moor during post-medieval times. Evidence of coal mining exists primarily in the form of large numbers of bell pits, principally in a band running ENE-WNW across the middle of the site. This is clearly part of the same industrial complex that was investigated on the site of the recently constructed Barmoor windfarm and noted on Doddington North Moor to the east. The 1860 OS map records 'Doddingtonmoor colliery (disused)' on the east boundary of the survey area, comprising a rectangulare enclosure bounding the road, with shaft and apparent spoil heap within and cotages with gardens associated over the road to the east. An additional 'Old Bore' is marked to the east. The 1890s OS map records 'old coal shafts' in the area, also depicting (coal spoil) mounds in the far north corner of the site and showing the former redidential property associated with the mine still standing on the east side of the road.

Subsequent maps show no more detail and indicate that the aforementioned residence was abandoned by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or soon thereafter. Subsequent use of the site appears to have been restricted to grazing, although the designation of a substantial area of

neighbouring Doddington North Moor as a practice bombing range during the Second World War. Suggests the possibility that some bomb craters may still be present in today's landscape, in places intermingled with bell pits.

The combination of coalmining and agricultural land improvement during post-medieval times, not to mention bombing during WWII, may well have destroyed evidence for earlier human activity on Doddington Moor where the historic environment appears rather less complex than that of surrounding areas. However, the extent to which this is due to a lack of activity in the distant past, or to destruction of evidence in post-medieval times, is not currently known. There is certainly considerable potential for the discovery of further sites through careful survey or during ground disturbance.

#### 5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL & IMPACTS

#### 5.1 Archaeological Potential

Although it is reasonable to notey that the landscape of Doddington Moor appears relatively lacking in significant archaeological remains in comparison to adjacent areas, most notably the Milfield Basin to the west, there are still significant remains here and also considerable potential for as yet unrecognised further sites which may come to light during preparation of the ground for woodland creation.

The principal known remains of archaeological or historic interest on the site are those of early modern coal-mining associated with Doddington Moor Colliery, the compound for which survives as an earthwork feature within the current site and is associated with extensive areas of bell-pits, drains and trackways which are best preserved in the west part of the survey area (see *Illus. 17*)

#### 5.2 Impacts on the Survival of Archaeological Remains

All of the sites and areas of potential archaeological significance discussed in this report are potentially at risk of damage or destruction through creation of the proposed new woodland.

The principle danger is through ground preparation, whether ploughing or scraping and mounding, although there is a also a risk from subsequent changes in the land management regime – for example if sites are left in clearings but not grazed then natural regeneration will occur leading to damage through root penetration, windblow or other agencies.

In order to minimise the impact of the proposed WGS scheme on the local historic environment, it is important that all known sites and areas of high potential are accurately plotted on a large scale map, enabling informed decisions to be made about which areas should be left unplanted and how these should be best managed in future.

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