

**Land at Todd Hill**  
**near Pigdon, Northumberland**

*Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*

*October 2008*



*Report No. 1871*

C L I E N T

Arcus Renewable Energy Consulting Limited

**Land at Todd Hill,  
near Pigdon, Northumberland**

**Archaeological Desk-based Assessment**



ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SERVICES  
WYAS

**Report Information**

Client: Arcus Renewable Energy Consulting Limited  
Address: Arcus Renewable Energy Consulting Ltd, Suite 2F, Swinegate Court East, 3 Swinegate, York, YO1 8AJ  
Report Type: Desk-based Assessment  
Location: Todd Hill, near Pigdon  
County: Northumberland  
Grid Reference: NZ 1562 8923  
Period(s) of activity represented: Medieval, Post-Medieval  
Report Number: 1871  
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## Contents

Report information .....	ii
Contents.....	iii
List of Figures .....	iv
List of Plates.....	iv
 <b>1 Introduction.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
Site location and topography	
Geology and soils	
<b>2 Methodology and Sources .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Archaeological records and archives	
Designated sites or areas	
Published and unpublished documentary sources	
Geological and soil surveys	
Aerial photographs	
Walkover survey	
<b>3 The Study Area.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Identified archaeological sites, buildings and features	
Designated sites and areas	
Historic Landscape Characterisation	
Previous archaeological investigations	
Archaeological background, sites and features	
<b>4 Catalogue of Archaeological Sites and Buildings.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>9</b>

Figures

Plates

### Appendices

Appendix 1: Table of vertical aerial photographs consulted, from the English Heritage NMR

Appendix 2: Northumberland County Council HLC map

Bibliography

## **List of Figures**

- 1 Site location
- 2 The study area, proposed development site and catalogued archaeological features (1:15 000 based on 1:25 000 scale mapping)
- 3 Extract from the Pigdon Tithe Map of 1840, with the proposed development site highlighted (Northumberland Archives ref. DT 374 M)
- 4 Extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1866, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (sheet 63)
- 5 Combined extracts from the Ordnance Survey 6 inch maps of 1898, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (sheet 63 NE and 63 SE)
- 6 Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1924, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (new series sheet 60 SE)

## **List of Plates**

- 1 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 1, looking north-west
- 2 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 2, looking south-east
- 3 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 3, looking north-west
- 4 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 4, looking west
- 5 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 5, looking north
- 6 The proposed site of Wind Turbine 6, looking south-east
- 7 The boundary bank along the township boundary, looking south

## 1 Introduction

Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by Arcus Renewable Energy Consulting Limited to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment of land at Todd Hill, near Pigdon, Northumberland, prior to the proposed construction of six wind turbines on the site.

### Site location and topography

The proposed development site covers an area of approximately 119 hectares situated to the immediate north of Pigdon, 4km to the north-west of Morpeth, centred at NZ 1562 8923 (Figs 1 and 2). The site comprises an area of gently undulating hills, which slope downwards to the west, from about 120m above OD to about 100m above OD. The site is divided into a number of fields by modern fences, with fields of improved pasture in the centre and south-eastern parts of the site, and areas of rough pasture at the northern end of the site on Todd Hill. The fields on the west and south-west sides of the site are currently under arable cultivation. A steep sided wooded valley, Blagdon Gill, cuts east to west across the southern side of the site, down which runs Blagdon Burn, which has been partly dammed to form a pond. Benbridge Moor farm lies adjacent to the south-east corner of the proposed development site.

The study area comprises all land within 1km of the boundary of the proposed development site.

### Geology and soils

The underlying geology of the proposed development site consists of Namurian Millstone Grit (BGS 2001). The overlying soils comprise slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, fine loam and clay soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1980).

## 2 Methodology and Sources

Where sites listed in the catalogue (Section 4) are mentioned in the text, the relevant catalogue number is given in bold-type.

The following sources of information have been consulted in order to meet the requirements of the desk-based assessment, and are in line with the guidelines laid down by the Institute of Field Archaeologists for such work (IFA 2001).

### Archaeological records and archives

Information on previous archaeological finds and investigations within the study area was obtained from the Northumberland County Council Historic Environment Record (HER) and from the Archaeology Data Service website (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>). The Northumberland

Archives, Woodhorn, were consulted for historic maps and plans, antiquarian histories, local directories, aerial photographs and other relevant documentary sources.

### **Designated sites or areas**

Information on designated sites of historic or archaeological significance, including Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings, was obtained from the Northumberland County Council HER, the Archaeology Data Service website (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>) and English Heritage's Listed Building's website 'Images of England' ([www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk)).

### **Published and unpublished documentary sources**

A range of published and unpublished material has been researched and consulted. This includes academic articles, together with general sources on the area and its wider archaeological and historical background. These are listed in the bibliography.

### **Geological and soil surveys**

Information on the underlying geology and soils within the study area was taken from data collected by the British Geological Survey (BGS 2001) and the Soil Survey of England and Wales (1980).

### **Aerial photographs**

The English Heritage National Monuments Record (NMR) was consulted for vertical and oblique aerial photographic coverage of the study area. The details of the photos consulted are listed in a table in Appendix 1.

### **Walkover survey**

A walkover survey was undertaken on the 27th August 2008, in order to assess the survival of previously recorded and documented features, to identify any further archaeological sites visible on the ground and to determine the potential for any future archaeological investigations.

## **3 The Study Area**

### **Identified archaeological sites, buildings and features**

A total of five archaeological sites, features and historic buildings have been identified within the proposed development site with a further 15 in the study area within 1km of the boundary of the site. These sites are discussed below and have been catalogued in Section 4.

### **Designated sites and areas**

The study area contains one Listed Building (1), but no designated Scheduled Monuments, Registered Battlefields or Registered Parks and Gardens.

## **Historic Landscape Characterisation**

Northumberland County Council has carried out Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of the study area, characterising the field pattern within the proposed development site as being a result of piecemeal and surveyed post-medieval enclosure (see Appendix 2).

## **Previous archaeological investigations**

There have been no previous archaeological investigations undertaken in the proposed development site, or study area. Building recording was carried out at South Pigdon Farm by Archaeological Services University of Durham in 2007, but identified only late 19th century structures (12).

## **Archaeological background, sites and features**

### *Early prehistoric period (c. 10,000 - 2500 BC)*

The earliest human activity within northern England probably followed the retreat of the ice sheets around 10,000 BC, as small nomadic groups moved north with the improving climate. Evidence of Palaeolithic activity remains scarce, and is largely restricted to upland cave sites, and no archaeological remains of this date have previously been found in the study area. The post-glacial landscape largely comprised treeless tundra, but by the early Mesolithic period, about 7600 BC, this gave way to woodland as the climate improved. Such environmental change increased the potential for human activity as the spread of woodland led to an expansion in animal and plant resources. The nomadic nature of Mesolithic groups has meant that they have left few occupation remains, and archaeological evidence for them is largely limited to finds of flint implements, such as microlithic blades. A number of sites concentrated along the coast near Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, about 12km to the east of the proposed development site, have produced Mesolithic flint tools (Davies 1983), but none have been identified within the study area.

The Neolithic period is marked by the introduction of farming, as nomadic hunter-gatherer subsistence gave way to agriculture and the domestication of animals. This appears to have had a dramatic effect on the landscape with a marked change in the character of forest vegetation and a major decline in woodland coverage from about 3000 BC (Smith 1970). This period is also characterised by the introduction of large ritual and funerary monuments, including long barrows, stone circles and henges, such as the probable henge site at Blyth, 15km to the south-east of the site. The Bronze Age saw the introduction of limited copper and bronze working, but is also marked by a change in burial practices away from collective inhumations and cremation, to single burials, often placed beneath barrows. Despite the numerous sites of Neolithic and Bronze Age date previously identified in Northumberland, there is limited settlement evidence for these periods, and there is no evidence for any features of these dates within the study area.



*Iron Age period (c. 800 BC – c. AD 79)*

During the late Iron Age the study area probably fell within the tribal territory of the Votadini, which extended from the Firth of Forth to the River Tyne. Two main Iron Age settlement types have been identified within this area; ‘scooped enclosures’ comprising walled enclosures containing buildings and yards terraced into natural hill slopes, and settlements consisting of stone built buildings and structures (Cunliffe 2005, 217). There were also numerous hill forts and defended enclosures throughout Northumberland during the late Iron Age, although many of the smaller examples appear to have been abandoned, or replaced by undefended settlements, by the 1st century AD (Frodsham 2004, 43).

Although no definite evidence of Iron Age activity has been identified within the proposed development site, the remains of two Iron Age settlements, defined by roughly oval shaped banks and a ditch, are located on Gallowshaw Hill, about 4km to the north-west of the proposed development site (HER 11380). An Iron Age farmstead has also been excavated at Pegswood Moor Farm, about 5km south-east of the proposed development site (HER 11549). Aerial photographic analysis has identified the likely remains of two sub-rectangular enclosures surviving as cropmarks within the study area close to Maidens Hall (2) and in fields to the south of Cockshot Wood (14), and it is possible that these may be Iron Age in date.

*Roman period (c. 800 BC – c. AD 79)*

In AD 79 the Roman general Agricola invaded the territory of the Votadini, and as the Roman armies moved north to complete the conquest of northern Britain they established a new network of roads and forts, including a temporary camp situated near Longshaws, 2km to the south-west of the proposed development site (HER 11036). In the last years of the first century AD there was a reduction in Roman military forces in what is now southern Scotland, and by about AD 105 the Roman authorities had abandoned the area and moved back to the line of the Tyne-Solway isthmus which was later to be permanently marked by the construction of Hadrian’s Wall in the AD 120s. In the AD 140s the Romans decided that it was strategically necessary to reoccupy the area of southern Scotland leading to the construction of the short-lived Antonine Wall, from the Forth to the Clyde. A probable rebellion of the Brigantes in about AD 154 led to army units being moved southwards, and the overstretched requirements of the army probably led to the final Roman withdrawal back to the line of Hadrian’s Wall by about AD 163 (Wacher 1978, 48).

Despite the sporadic Roman military occupation of the territory of the Votadini, it appears that many late Iron Age settlements continued in use into at least the 1st and 2nd centuries, with Roman finds discovered at many such sites (Ritchie and Ritchie 1972, 53). A number of hillforts also appear to have continued to function as important tribal centres throughout the Roman period, and beyond (Cunliffe 2005, 217). There is, however, no evidence for Roman period activity within the study area.

*Post-Roman and early medieval Period (c. AD 410 to 1066)*

In the century following the end of Roman rule in AD 410, the former province fragmented into a number of smaller kingdoms, some of which were controlled by the British population, with others established by incoming Anglian groups from northern Europe. By the late 5th century the territory of the Votadini appears to have been divided, with the southern part, lying between the Rivers Tweed and the Tyne, forming the British kingdom of Bernicia. By the mid-6th century, however, Bernicia was under the control of an Anglian king, Ida, and during the early years of the 7th century Bernicia and Deira, the kingdom to the immediate south, were ruled jointly, creating the kingdom of Northumbria. In the late 8th century, Viking raids began on the Northumbrian coast, and in AD 867 Northumbria was conquered by the Danes. Northumbria was re-conquered by the kingdom of Wessex in the 10th century, and subsequently reduced to an earldom within the new kingdom of England.

Archaeological evidence for the post-Roman and early medieval periods in Northumberland is scarce and unclear. It has been suggested that there may have been little change in the settlement pattern and nature of occupation on many sites in the immediate post-Roman period, especially to the north of Hadrian's Wall, and evidence of the continuous occupation of buildings on former Roman sites has been discovered dating into the 5th and 6th centuries (Frodsham 2004, 65). However, most of the former Roman settlements appear to have been abandoned by the 7th century, by which time there appears to have been a change in the pattern of settlement, perhaps due to the influence or presence of incoming Anglian groups. Place-names provide much of the evidence for Anglian influence on the settlement pattern in Northumberland, including the name of the village of Pigdon, which itself may derive from the Anglian personal name *Pica* together with an Old English word for pasture, *Denn* (Ekwell 1960, 366). However, apart from this, there is no archaeological evidence for post-Roman or early medieval activity within the study area.

*Medieval period (1066 to c.1500)*

Following the Norman Conquest of 1066, there was constant unrest amongst the northern Earls against William's authority, leading to open rebellion in 1069. This was rapidly put down by a Norman army, which proceeded to devastate the north of England, a period known as 'the harrying of the north'. During this period new castles were established close to the proposed development site at Mitford and Morpeth, to reinforce Norman control over the surrounding area.

The village of Pigdon, to the immediate south of the proposed development site, is first recorded in a document of about 1205 as 'Pikedenn' (Ekwell 1960, 366), and in a mid-13th century document as 'Pykeden' (Hodgson 1832, 81), although as stated above, the Anglian form of its name suggests an earlier origin. It has also been suggested that the medieval village of Pigdon may have been more extensive than the existing village, although there appears to be little archaeological evidence to support this apart from tracts of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing that have apparently been identified in fields surrounding Pigdon (10).

The township boundary between Pigdon and Benridge runs through the centre of the proposed development site, and is followed by a low wide bank, about 8m wide and 0.3m high, which may be a medieval boundary bank (15; Plate 7).

#### *Post-medieval and modern periods*

Much of the present landscape within the study area is a product of developments carried out from the 17th century onwards, as the former medieval fields were enclosed by private agreement, creating an irregular pattern of fields used for both pasture and arable cultivation. Some of the new field boundaries, such as the north to south boundaries within the proposed development site, are likely to have been aligned on the former medieval field pattern, and appear to follow the reverse 'S' curve characteristic of medieval plough ridges. The fields within the proposed development site had certainly been laid out before the first half of the 19th century, and today are unchanged from those shown on the Pigdon Tithe Map of 1840 (see Fig. 3). The field pattern on the eastern side of the study area, between Benridge Moor farm and Lough House, is defined by straight sided fields, laid out by surveyors, and are likely to date to the late 18th or early 19th century (see Fig. 4). It is possible that Benridge Moor farm, adjacent to the south-eastern edge of the proposed development site, was also established as part of this phase of landscape re-organisation. Building recording carried out at South Pigdon Farm has also shown that the buildings here originated no earlier than the mid-19th century (12). The earliest building within the study area is a late 18th century barn at Maidens Hall, almost 1km from the edge of the proposed development site, where there is also an early 19th century 'gingang' or horse engine, both of which are Grade II listed (1).

The study area contains a number of small areas of woodland, of which two, Abshiels Wood to the north of the proposed development site and Cockshot Wood to the south of the site, are defined as Ancient Woodland by the Northumberland County Council HLC, originating by at least 1600. The woodland coverage along the valley sides of Blagdon Gill dates to before 1840, when it is shown on the Pigdon Tithe Map (see Fig. 3). In the late 19th century small plantations of coniferous woodland were also established on Todd Hill (Ordnance Survey 1866; see Fig. 4) and on the north-eastern edge of the proposed development site at Blackcock Plantation (Ordnance Survey 1898; see Fig. 5).

Apart from agricultural activity, there is limited evidence for small scale quarrying in the study area, with an old quarry marked on late 19th and early 20th century Ordnance Survey mapping on the north-western side of Blagdon Gill (11; Ordnance Survey 1898a; 1924; see Figs 5 and 6), and the remains of former quarrying survive at Quarry Hill, to the east of the proposed development site (19). Other post-medieval features in the study area include a number of wells, washpools and ponds (3, 4, 5, 6, 18 and 20), the locations of former fords (7, 8, 9 and 13) and a small lambing pen (16), all of which are marked on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 (see Fig. 4).

## 4 Catalogue of Archaeological Sites and Buildings

### Archaeological features and sites

Catalogue entries have been ordered geographically from west to east, and given a numerical identifier. The catalogue entry includes a National Grid Reference (NGR) and the Northumberland County Council HER number where appropriate.

**1. Barn and gingang** **HER 22333** **NZ 14367 88436**

A late 18th century barn and early 19th century ‘gingang’, or horse engine, constructed of tooled stone with dressings. The barn has a pantile roof and the gingang a slate roof. This building is Grade II Listed (no. 238326).

**2. Cropmark enclosure** **HER 11061** **NZ 1440 8830**

A large sub-rectangular enclosure identified as a cropmark on aerial photographs (RAF 1947).

**3. Well** **HER 17693** **NZ 14575 88377**

A well recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 to the east of Maidens Hall.

**4. Washpool, Fence Burn** **HER 17676** **NZ 14762 89686**

A washpool recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 on Fence Burn.

**5. Spring and pond** **HER 18220** **NZ 15025 88976**

A spring and pond recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866.

**6. Well, Abshiel** **HER 11423** **NZ 15275 90457**

A well recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 to the south-east of Abshiel.

**7. Ford, Blagdon Gill** **HER 18221** **NZ 15289 88836**

An un-named ford recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 on Blagdon Gill.

**8. Ford, Broad Wood** **HER 18237** **NZ 15303 87566**

A ford recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 on a stream in Broad Wood.

**9. Ford** **HER 18223** **NZ 15373 88572**

A ford recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 across a burn to the north of Pigdon.

**10. Pigdon, Deserted Medieval Village** **HER 11093** **NZ 155 883**

Pigdon may be the site of a shrunken medieval village, and ridge and furrow has been identified in several of the surrounding fields.

**11. Quarry**

The site of an 'Old Quarry' is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1898 and 1924, on the north-western side of Blagdon Gill (see Figs 5 and 6; Ordnance Survey 1898b; 1924).

**12. Building recording, South Pigdon Farm** **HER 13850** **NZ 1554 8828**

Building recording was undertaken at South Pigdon Farm by Archaeological Services University of Durham in 2007, in advance of the conversion of agricultural buildings to make three dwellings. Six agricultural buildings were examined and photographed. All the buildings date from the period between the mid-19th and mid-20th century. The buildings are part of a 19th century steading that is typical of the region. They are unremarkable in form and contain no unusual features. As is the case with most working farmsteads, the buildings have been altered and extended over time to suit different purposes.

**13. Ford, Blagdon Gill** **HER 18222** **NZ 15565 88847**

An un-named ford recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 on Blagdon Gill.

**14. Cockshot Wood enclosure** **HER 11118** **NZ 1580 8765**

An enclosure visible as a cropmark on an aerial photograph 100m south of the south-east corner of Cockshot Wood (RAF 1947). It measures about 75m by 75m.

**15. Boundary bank**

A bank aligned north to south, running along the field edge to the south of Blackcock Plantation. It is about 8m wide and survives to a height of approximately 0.3m, and may have marked the boundary between the parishes of Pigdon and Benridge.

**16. Enclosure** **HER 18224** **NZ 16656 88915**

A small irregular rectangular enclosure attached to a field boundary is recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866. It may be a lambing pen.

**17. Benbridge, Deserted Medieval Village** **HER 11081** **NZ 167 881**

The suggested site of a deserted medieval village. Benbridge now consists of four farmsteads and a small dwelling, but there is no evidence of depopulation and the 'village' was probably a non-nucleated settlement.

**18. Well, Lough House** **HER 18204** **NZ 16791 89524**

A well recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 near Lough House.

**19. Quarry Hill quarry****HER 18219****NZ 17224 89107**

An area of quarrying shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866.

**20. Clark's Well, Low Heighly****HER 11222****NZ 1735 8902**

A well recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1866 to the north of Low Heighly.

## **5 Conclusion**

It is probable that the proposed development site has remained in use as mixed agricultural land since at least the medieval period. The existing field pattern within the site is a product of post-medieval enclosure, although the curvilinear alignment of the field boundaries probably reflects the influence of earlier medieval land divisions.

Apart from agricultural activity, and some minor quarrying, there is no archaeological evidence for previous activity within the proposed development site. However, no archaeological survey or excavation has been undertaken on the site, and it is possible that sub-surface features or deposits that pre-date the medieval period could survive in the area. Further archaeological investigations, possibly geophysical survey if the soils, geology and ground conditions are suitable, and subsequent evaluation excavation, may be required to determine the nature and extent of any possible remains. Any such work should form part of an overall archaeological strategy to be agreed with Northumberland County Council Archaeology Service.

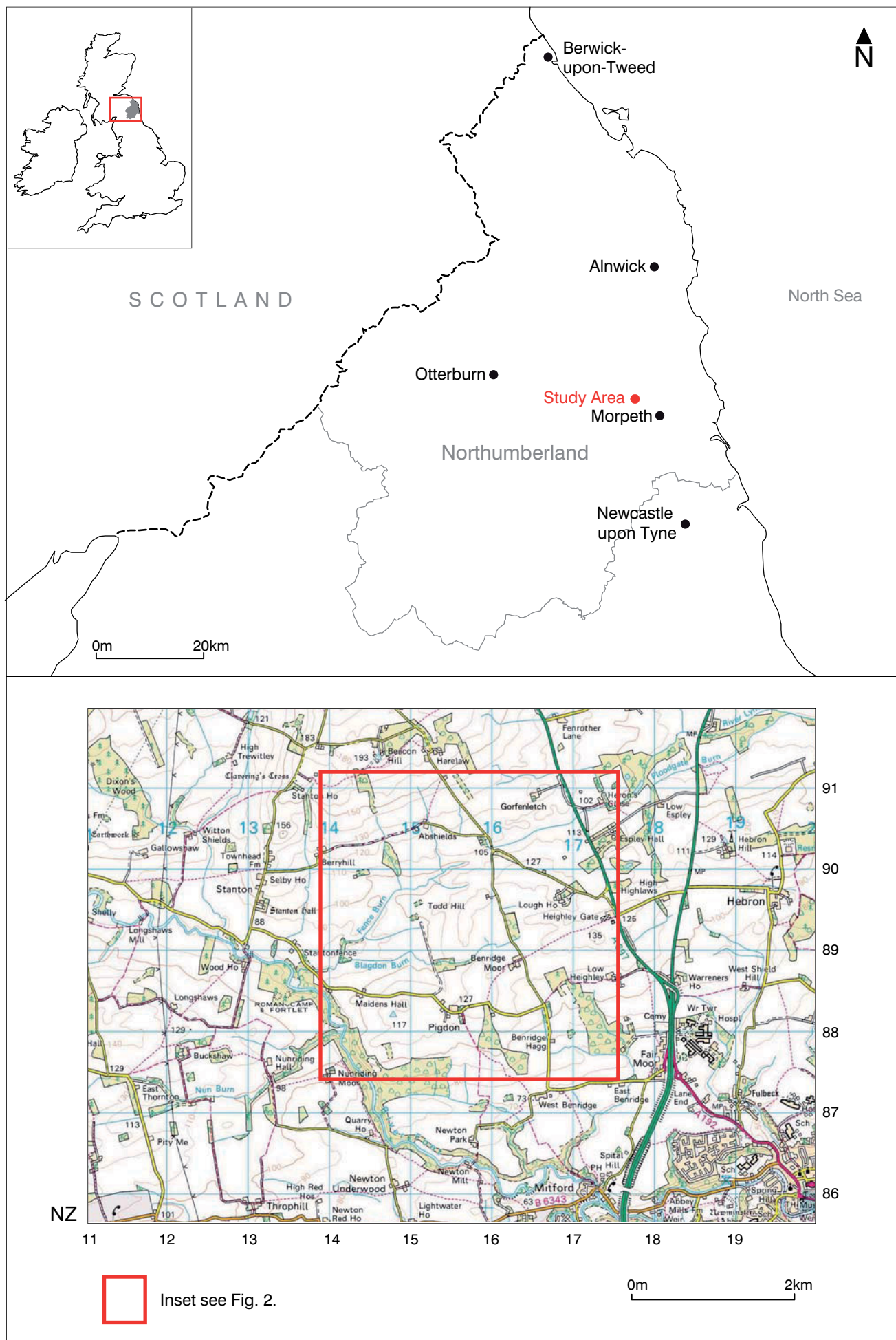
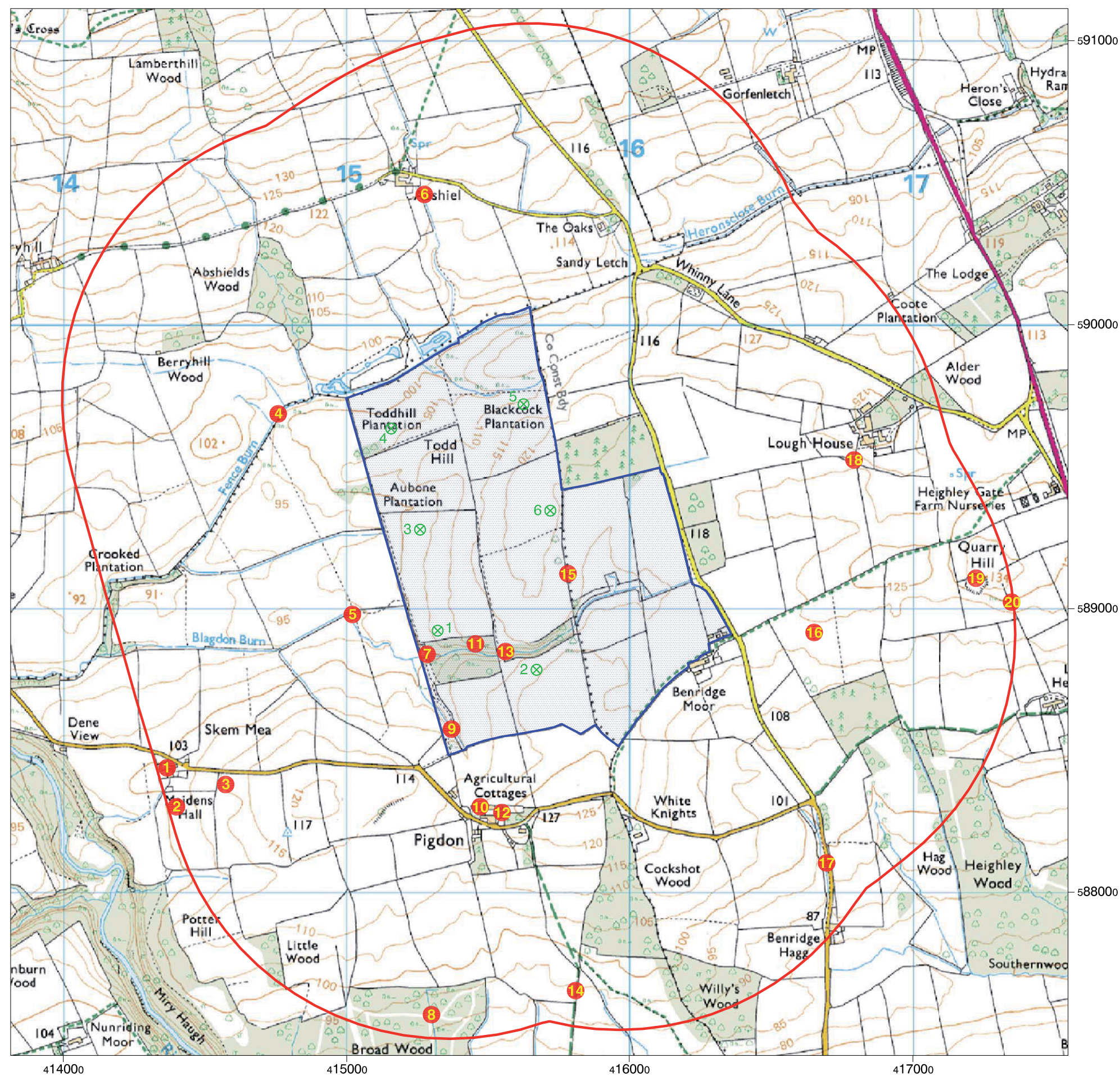


Fig. 1. Site location





	Proposed development site
	Study area
	Catalogued archaeological site or feature
	Site of proposed wind turbine
<div>0m</div> <div>500m</div>	


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 Tel: 0113 383 7500 Fax: 0113 383 7501  
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Fig. 2. The study area, proposed development site and catalogued archaeological features (1:15 000 based on 1:25 000 scale mapping)





Fig. 3. Extract from the Pigdon Tithe Map of 1840, with the proposed development site highlighted (Northumberland Archives ref. DT 374 M)



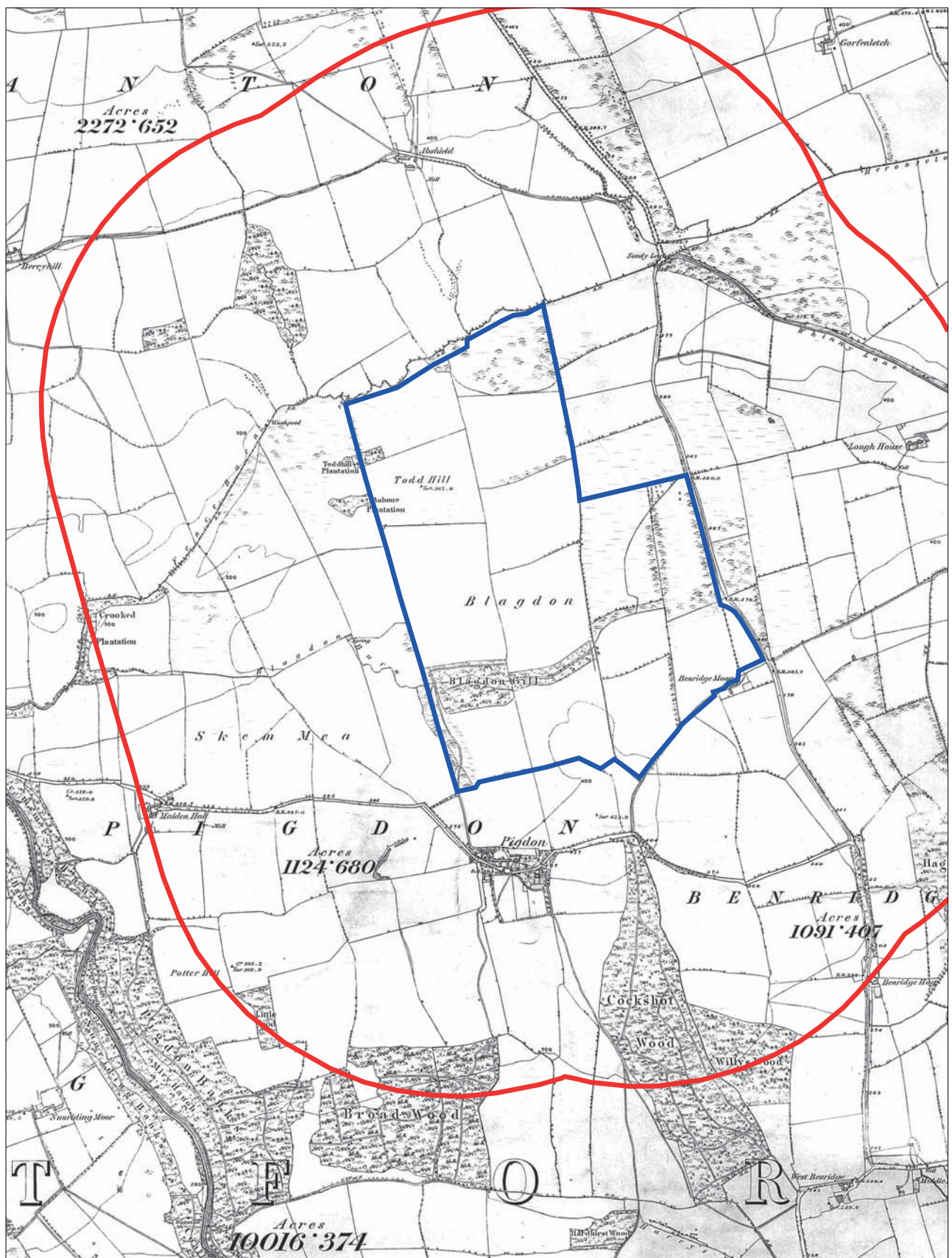


Fig. 4. Extract from the First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1866, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (sheet 63)



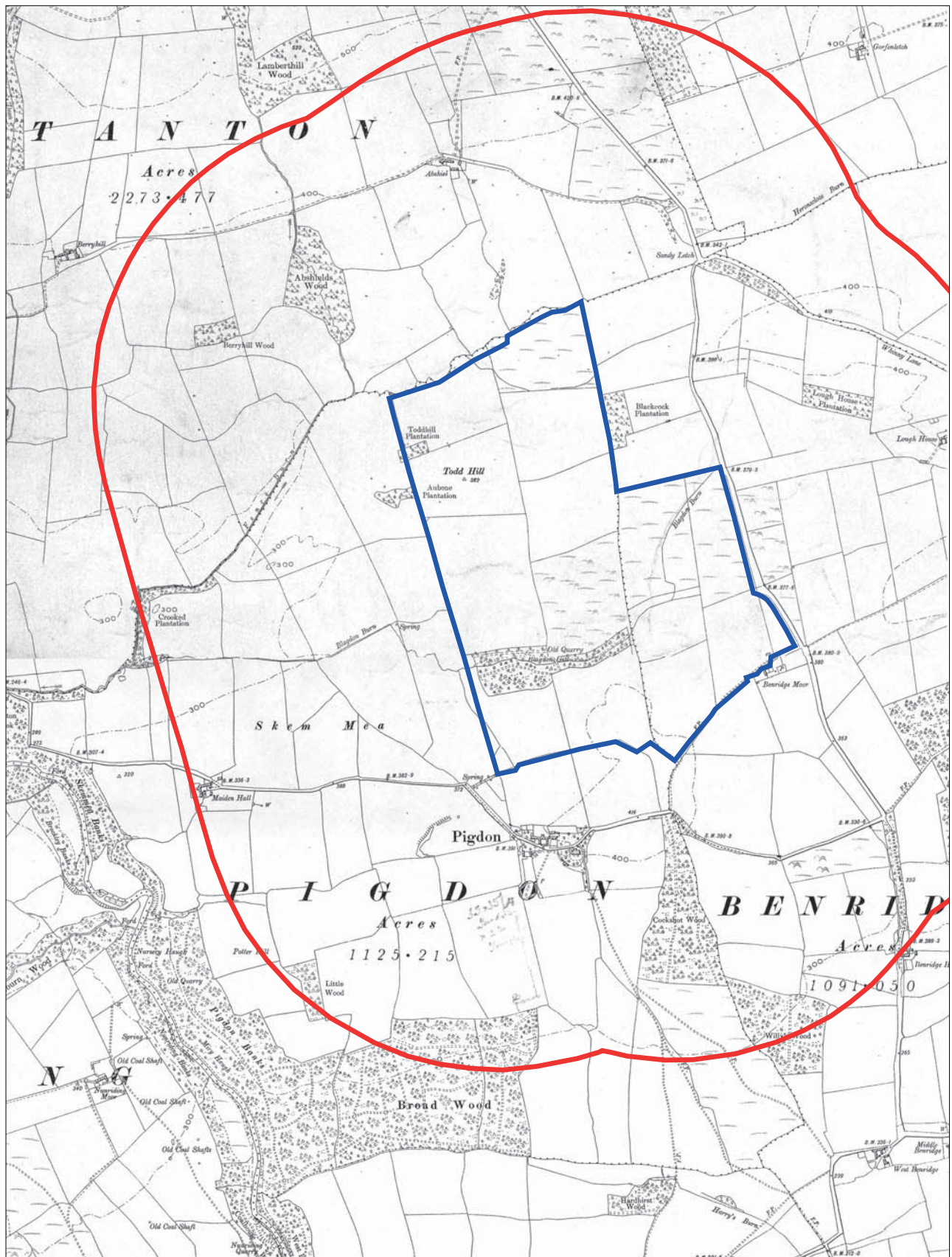


Fig. 5. Combined extracts from the Ordnance Survey 6 inch maps of 1898, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (sheets 63 NE and 63 SE)





Fig. 6. Extract from the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1924, with the proposed development site and part of the study area highlighted (new series sheet 60 SE)



*Plate 1. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 1, looking north-west*



*Plate 2. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 2, looking south-east*





*Plate 3. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 3, looking north-west*



*Plate 4. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 4, looking west*



*Plate 5. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 5, looking north*



*Plate 6. The proposed site of Wind Turbine 6, looking south-east*





*Plate 7. The boundary bank along the township boundary, looking south*



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RAF, 1947, Aerial Photograph, CPE/SCOT/UK/221 Frames 3184 and 3122, 27th June 1947

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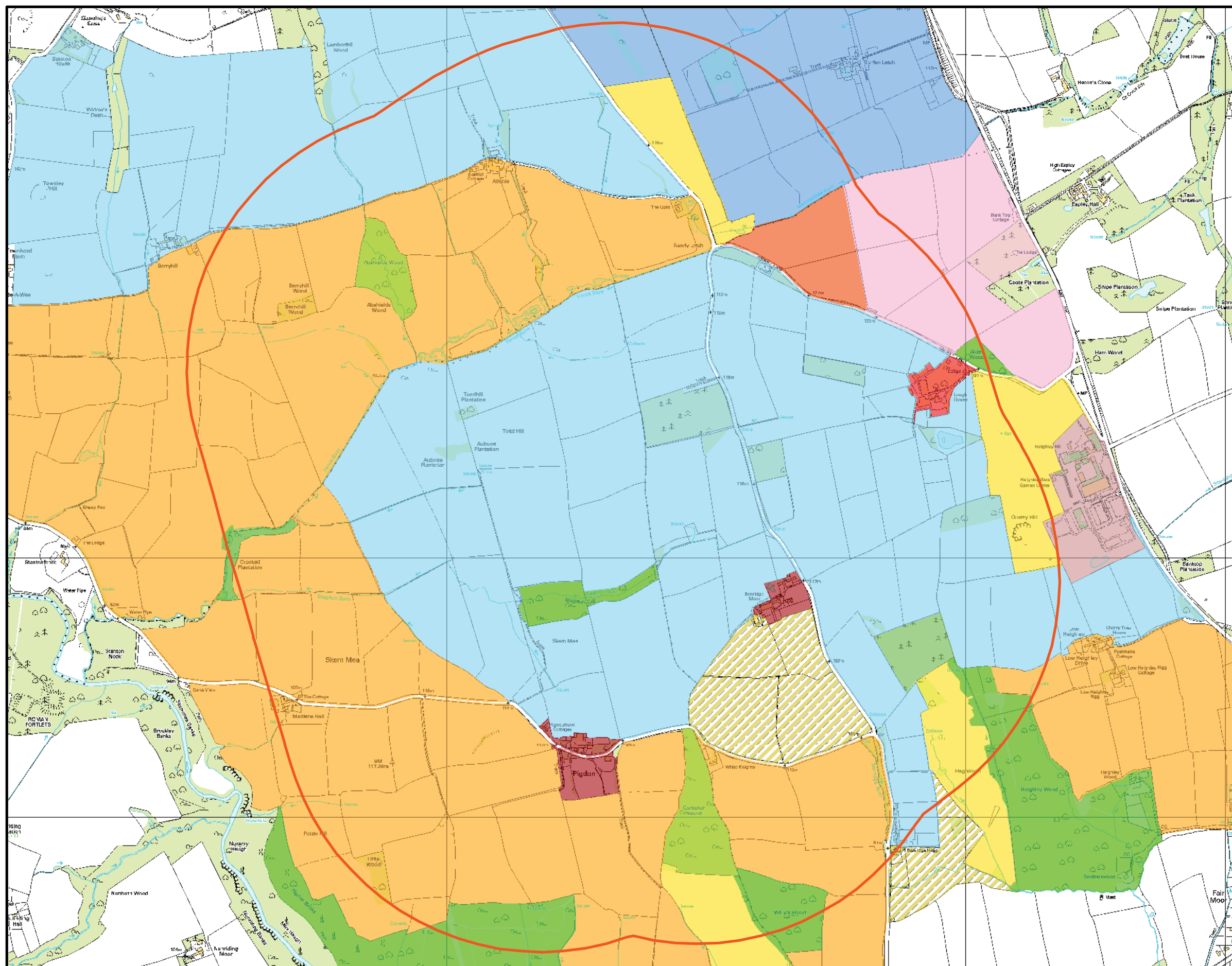
## Appendix 1

Table of vertical aerial photographs consulted, from the English Heritage NMR.

Sortie number	Frame	NGR	Date
RAF/CPE/SCOT/UK/221	4182	NZ 157 896	27 JUN 1947
RAF/CPE/SCOT/UK/221	4183	NZ 152 896	27 JUN 1947
RAF/541/A/485	4078	NZ 157 899	24 JUN 1949
RAF/541/A/485	4079	NZ 150 898	24 JUN 1949
RAF/58/2625	155	NZ 162 890	08 NOV 1958
RAF/58/2657	30	NZ 159 893	30 DEC 1958
RAF/58/2657	31	NZ 152 892	30 DEC 1958
RAF/106G/SCOT/UK/138	4171	NZ 161 891	03 JUL 1946
RAF/106G/SCOT/UK/138	4172	NZ 153 890	03 JUL 1946
OS/71041	26	NZ 158 889	09 APR 1971
OS/95063	149	NZ 156 896	06 APR 1995

## **Appendix 2**

Northumberland County Council HLC map



# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD Consultation

Todd Hill

For Archaeological Services WYAS

## Historic Landscape Character

- search area
- piecemeal enclosure
- reorganised piecemeal enclosure
- surveyed enclosure wavy edged
- surveyed enclosure straight edged
- other medium irregular fields
- late C19 fields
- other C20 fields
- horticulture
- pre-1860s settlement
- 20th century settlement
- ancient woodland
- pre-1860 woodland
- late 19th century woodland



**Northumberland**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

DATE: 13/08/2008 SCALE @A3 1:15,000

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