



NORTH OF THE WALL  
**TYNEDALE  
ARCHAEOLOGY  
GROUP**



**Greyside Farmstead  
Molehill and Test Pit Survey  
March 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2019**



**Fig 1. 2018 Greyside Survey location**

### **Introduction**

During February 2018 our community archaeology group undertook a Level 1 ('walkover') landscape survey of a large field on Greyside Farm, north of Newbrough. In the course of this, we surveyed a site towards the north-east of the field that had previously been recorded on the Historic Environment Record, No. 1445647, as an enclosure with animal pens. In our 2018 survey report, (available to download from our website <http://www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk>) we found evidence which supports this site being re-interpreted as a settlement. Our description of the site reads as follows:

**HER/NMP MONUMENT NO. 1445647**

**GPS NY 86816 70186**

**Description** *Three adjoining rectangular stone-walled structures, 5.5m wide N-S. The stone walls are 0.7m wide and an exposed area is clearly double-faced. The central section appears to be two-celled with the eastern cell 6m x 5.5m, and the western cell 3.4m x 5.5m, with a probable entrance on its S side. Molehills close to the walls in the central section contain what appears to be lime mortar. Ceramic sherds were also found in the molehills, some possibly datable to about 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The Eastern section of the tripartite building is 10.3m x 5.5m. The western section is 9m x 5.5m. The stone walling continues beyond the NW corner of the western section for 2m before bending N as the 1m wide enclosure bank with an outer ditch bounding a sub-rectangular area 35.5m N-S, 27.4m E-W at its north, where the bank widens to 2m and the ditch becomes deeper, and 30.5m E-W at its south formed by the northern wall of the tripartite building. The structure has previously been recorded as an enclosure with three animal pens, but requires re-interpretation in the light of our site visit.*

We very much appreciate the support of Mr Walton of Greyside Farm in allowing us access during March 2019 in order to carry out a follow-up survey of this site.

We also very much appreciate the efforts of the 13 volunteers who participated in the survey despite the often very challenging weather conditions. Conditions were such that two of the originally

planned four days had to be postponed and yet the efforts of the volunteers still ensured that we were able to complete most of the survey objectives.

### Landscape context of farmstead site

The land within which the field surveyed in 2018 lies, slopes from a shallow ridge in the N, used by Hadrian's Wall, down to Newbrough and the River Tyne in the S, and occupies the region between 160m to 200m above sea level. The field is rough grassland, now only used for grazing (sheep, cattle). Some improved land e.g. west of Meggie's Dene Burn and west of Newbrough Burn (Greyside Dene), show signs of medieval or post-medieval rig and furrow. Much of the land is poorly drained and has been extensively cut with parallel drainage ditches, probably to the detriment of much of the remaining archaeology. Further information pertaining to the geography and historical background of the whole field is given in our 2018 survey report, available to download from our website

<http://www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk>

As figure 2 below illustrates, the farmstead site is located within an area bounded by the low lying remains of a north-south field boundary running from the present-day northern field boundary to a prominent bank and ditch running east-west. In turn, further low lying remains of a field boundary run south from the ditch and bank and continues to the southern boundary of the present-day field. To the east of this north-south boundary are the quite extensive remains of what appears to be a medieval field system.

The farmstead site does not appear on the 1860 OS map, or on any later OS maps.



Fig 2. 2018 Greyside Survey Area ... all features

### 2019 Survey

The primary objectives of the survey were to recover potentially datable materials from the site via a systematic molehill survey and to excavate a small number of test pits for an initial exploration of the building structure.

On the first day volunteers worked in two teams, one undertaking the molehill survey and the other carrying out a tape and offset survey of the structure to create a detailed plan drawing.

### Molehill Survey Report

*Prepared by Will Higgs*

It was decided to examine a 16m x 10m cluster of molehills lying to the south-east and adjacent to the rectangular outlines of a possible dwelling. Small pieces of glazed pottery could be seen in some of the molehills, which had appeared since the previous visit a year ago. There were a few other molehills lying outside the main cluster, to the north-east of the eastern room of the building, and these were also examined, the finds being categorised as outliers.

A grid was constructed over the main area of molehills, consisting of four 4m x 10m rectangles aligned with the south wall of the building. Finds from each rectangle and the outlier area were collected separately for later washing, examination and photography.

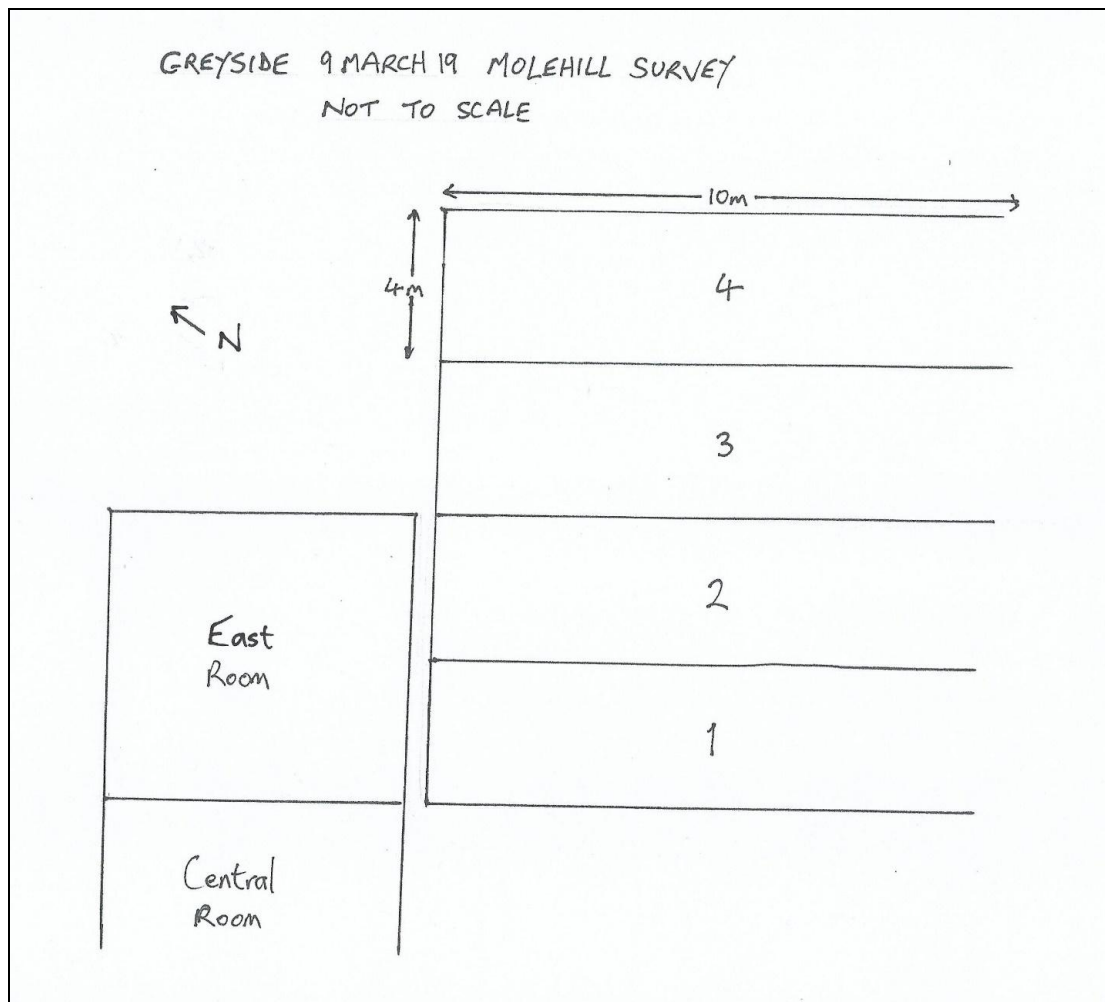


Fig. 3. Plan of molehill survey grids

## FINDS

Grid ref.	1	2	3	4	Outliers	Total
Pottery	3	9	13	3	2	30
Clay pipe	-	4	-	1	-	5
Coal	3	7	4	1	1	16
Burnt stone	4	8	12	2	2	28
Lime mortar	4	12	-	-	1	17
Glass	-	-	2	-	1	3
Various	-	1 nail	1 pc. slate	-	-	101

The survey delivered a surprising number of finds, considering the limited volume of soil sampled over a small area. Images of the finds are included in Appendix 1.

### Pottery

The pottery was mostly plain white glaze on a white clay, with some cream glazed on red clay. Only two fragments had traces of “fancy” decoration, although one of the utilitarian pieces had a striking if crude grooved decoration. I interpret this assemblage as utilitarian kitchen/dairy ware and cheap domestic china typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with nothing to suggest the early part of the century.

### Clay Pipes

Four of the five fragments can be assigned to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consisting of three sections of thin, small-bore stem and one piece of thin bowl. The other piece is a distinctly different type of stem, being much thicker with a wider bore, typical of earlier dates.

### Coal & Burnt Stone

The abundance of these materials suggests that the house was heated with coal, the large amount of burnt stone, much of which is shale, usually associated with coal, suggests that it was poorly sorted cheap coal, possibly from a nearby drift mine. Ashes, including unburnt coal and burnt stone from the coal fire may have been spread on footpaths near the house.

### Glass

There were two pieces of bottle glass and one piece of thin window glass. I have seen the latter elsewhere in small, isolated 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses. It suggests a modern type of building, as does the slate fragment and round-headed nail.

### Lime Mortar

It was pleasing to see the lime mortar restricted to the grids nearest the house wall, indicating that organised molehill collections can give an indication of distribution of finds. The use of mortar again suggests a relatively recent date in such a remote location where the older, similar types of building such as shielings would have been drystone.

### Discussion

Most of the finds from this molehill survey suggest that the site was most recently occupied in the mid to later 19<sup>th</sup> century. One item, the thick clay pipe stem, stands out as inconsistent with the rest of the assemblage and may indicate earlier post-medieval occupation, for instance a shieling. It would therefore be worth carefully examining the structure of the building for evidence of alteration of a former type of structure.

The presence of coal and lime mortar suggest that transport of these heavy materials to the site was not too great a problem and a cart track may have connected it with the Military Road (B6318) or

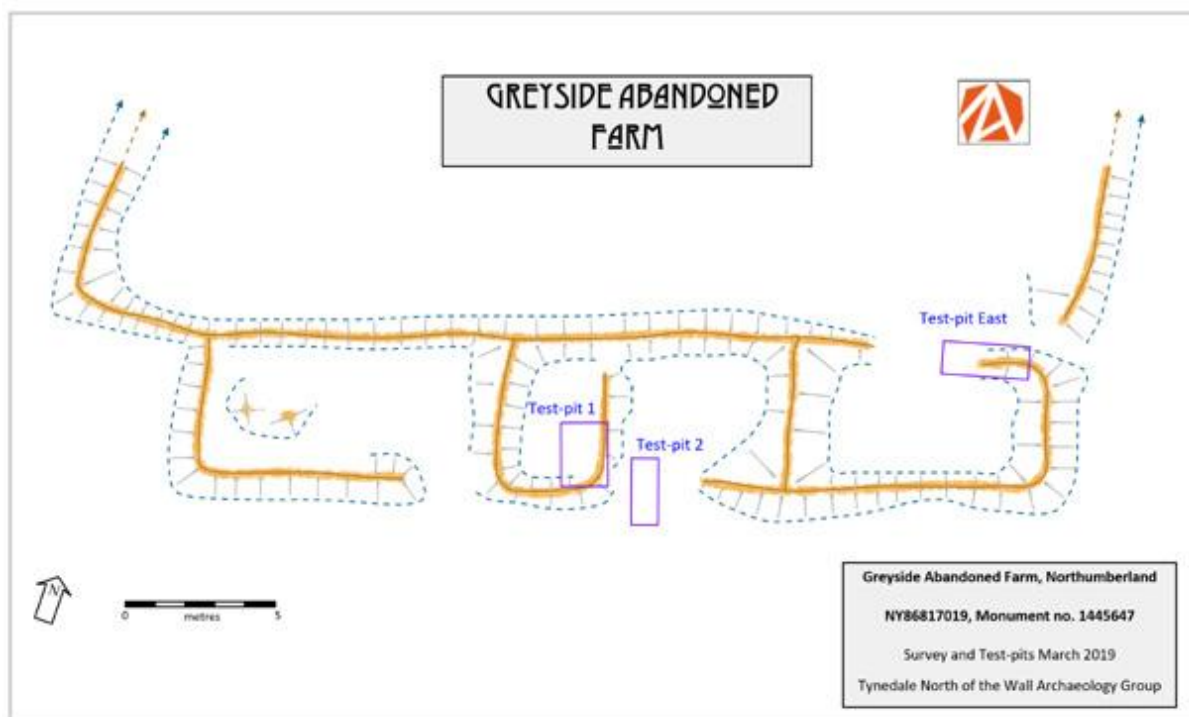
Newbrough. The presence of a family living there in relative comfort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would mean that parish records or census are probably available and may reveal the site's name and dates.

### Test Pit Survey

After weather conditions had led to the postponement of day 2 of the survey and in the knowledge that the forecast was unfavourable for the scheduled fourth day it was necessary to be selective regarding the location of exploratory test pits.

Three target areas were selected, as illustrated on figure 4 below:

1. Test-pit 1 ... in the central cell of the building in order to investigate what appeared to be a partition wall dividing the cell.
2. Test-pit 2 ... across the presumed entrance into the central cell.
3. Test-pit East ... on the northern side of the eastern cell where an entrance appeared to open onto the D-shaped enclosure, thought to be a livestock enclosure.



**Fig. 4. Plan of farmstead building with test-pit locations**

### Test-pit 1

Upon excavation it became apparent that what we had thought might be a partition wall was a more substantial stone-built structure, double-faced and 1m wide. Although initially planned as a 2m x 1m test-pit, we extended it to 2.5m x 1.75m in the light of the substantial nature of the N-S wall being uncovered. As a result of this extension we were able to identify that to both the west and the east of the wall the floor surface was stone covered.

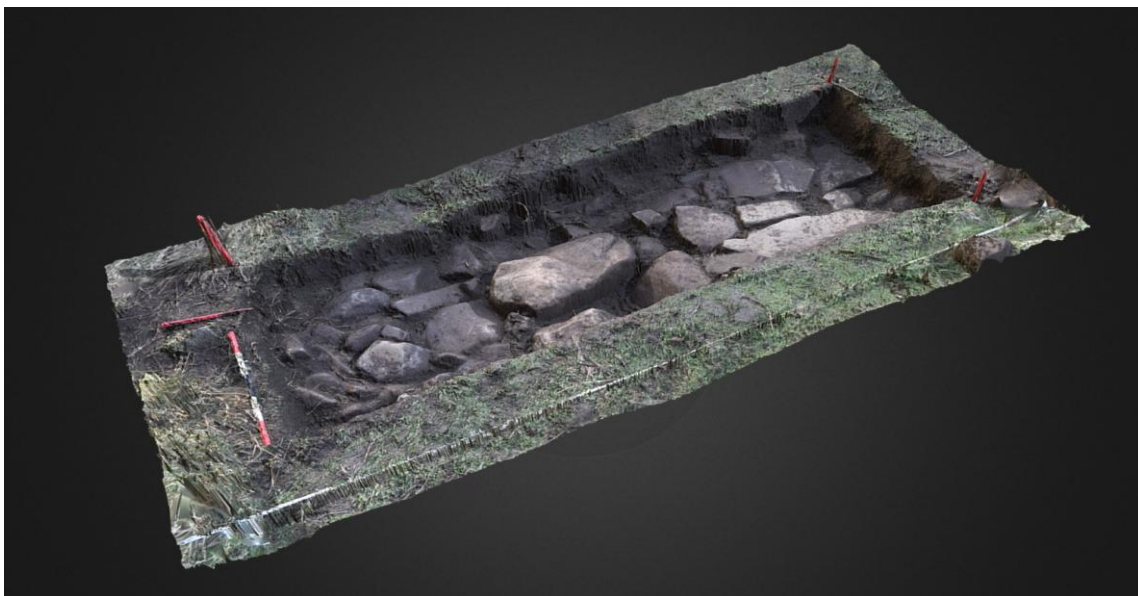
Among a limited amount of small finds was a piece of broken slate suggesting that at its final phase of occupation the building was, at least in part, slate-roofed. In the time available it was not possible to extend the test-pit further north in order to identify a possible entrance.



**Fig. 5. Photogrammetric image of Test-pit 1** (Red peg indicates north. Scale rod = 50cm )

#### **Test-pit 2**

Test-pit 2 was planned as 2m x 1m N-S across the probable entrance into the central cell of the building and extending south beyond the E-W line of the southern wall. When we discovered that the stone-covered surface continued south beyond the external wall, we extended a further 1m. As the stone-covered surface had not terminated within the extended area it appears likely that there would have been a stone path leading to the probable entrance.



**Fig. 6. Photogrammetric image of Test-pit 2.**

#### **Test-pit, eastern cell**

A 3m x 1m E-W test-pit was excavated with the objective of finding evidence of a north facing entrance to what might have been a byre or barn related to the large enclosure.

Although this exploratory test-pit does not fully resolve the identification of the entrance, or the function of the building, the surface immediately west of the possible terminus of the wall (indicated by the upright stone slab just to the right of the centre of the southern edge of the test-pit) is stone-covered and includes pieces of broken flagstone.

There was insufficient time to extend further south to identify whether this stone surface continues within the eastern cell of the building.



**Fig. 7. Photogrammetric image of eastern test-pit**

Finds included two pieces of coarse brick, two small fragments of slate, pieces of glazed ware and a sherd of a decoratively glazed terracotta lipped bowl as shown in figure 8 below.



**Fig. 8. Finds from eastern test-pit**



## **Discussion**

As outlined above, the findings of our survey indicate a probable final occupation date for the farmstead of the mid to late nineteenth century. Given this, it is surprising that neither the 1860 OS map nor any subsequent editions make any reference at all to the site, nor are there mapped indications of trackways to the site. We intend to carry out further archival research in the hope of resolving this apparent anomaly.

As pointed out in the review of the molehill survey the finds do not provide evidence as to when the site was first in use, and for what purposes. Does the anomaly with the OS maps suggest that it may have only been occupied for a very short period?

There are a number of issues that potentially could be addressed by further selective excavation at the site:

1. Might it be possible to identify phases of construction for the building? Could evidence be found to indicate any phases of occupation or usage?
2. The unexpectedly substantial nature of the wall uncovered in test-pit 1 raises questions as to whether the entire central cell was used for habitation, or whether one portion may have served as a byre. Was there a hearth within the central cell?
3. The test-pit on the eastern cell also raises further questions. We have as yet not identified the width of the apparent north-facing entrance, nor established the nature of the floor surface within the cell.
4. The western cell as yet remains unexplored. Its northern wall appears to have been continuous and there are indications of an entrance on its south side. There appears to be an area of tumble in its interior not immediately adjacent to the remains of its western wall.

As tends to be the case with many archaeological surveys we are left with more questions than when we started. We intend to consider the feasibility of further exploration at the site targeted at seeking answers to some of these questions.

## **Acknowledgements.**

Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group is grateful to Mr Walton of Greyside Farm for allowing us access to the site.

We are also grateful to the Altogether Archaeology group for the loan of their tent and some items of equipment.

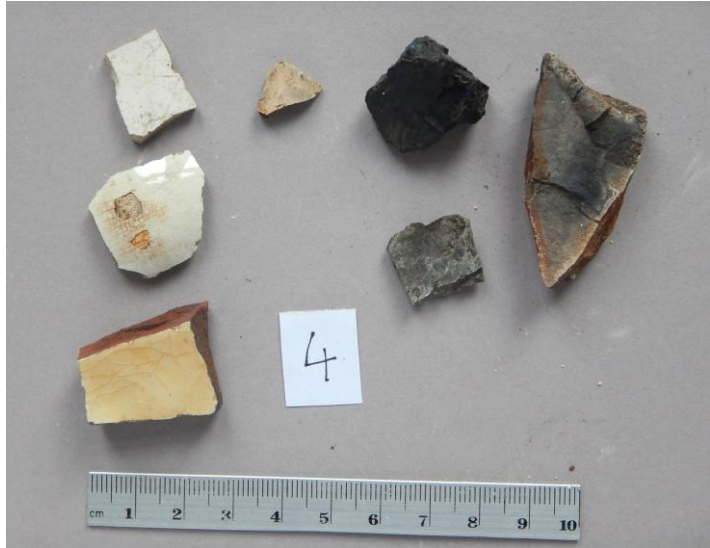
All the volunteers who braved the challenging conditions to complete a substantial body of work within a shortened time-scale deserve thanks for their sterling efforts: Phil Bowyer, Lorraine Clay, Andy Curtis, Derek Gunby, Martin Green, Will Higgs, Malcom MacCallum, Wendy Thrower, Jake Thrower, Toby Thrower, Elaine Vallack, Christine Ward and Andy Willis.

This report was compiled by Phil Bowyer, Will Higgs, Andy Curtis (Photogrammetry), and Martin Green (Digital mapping).

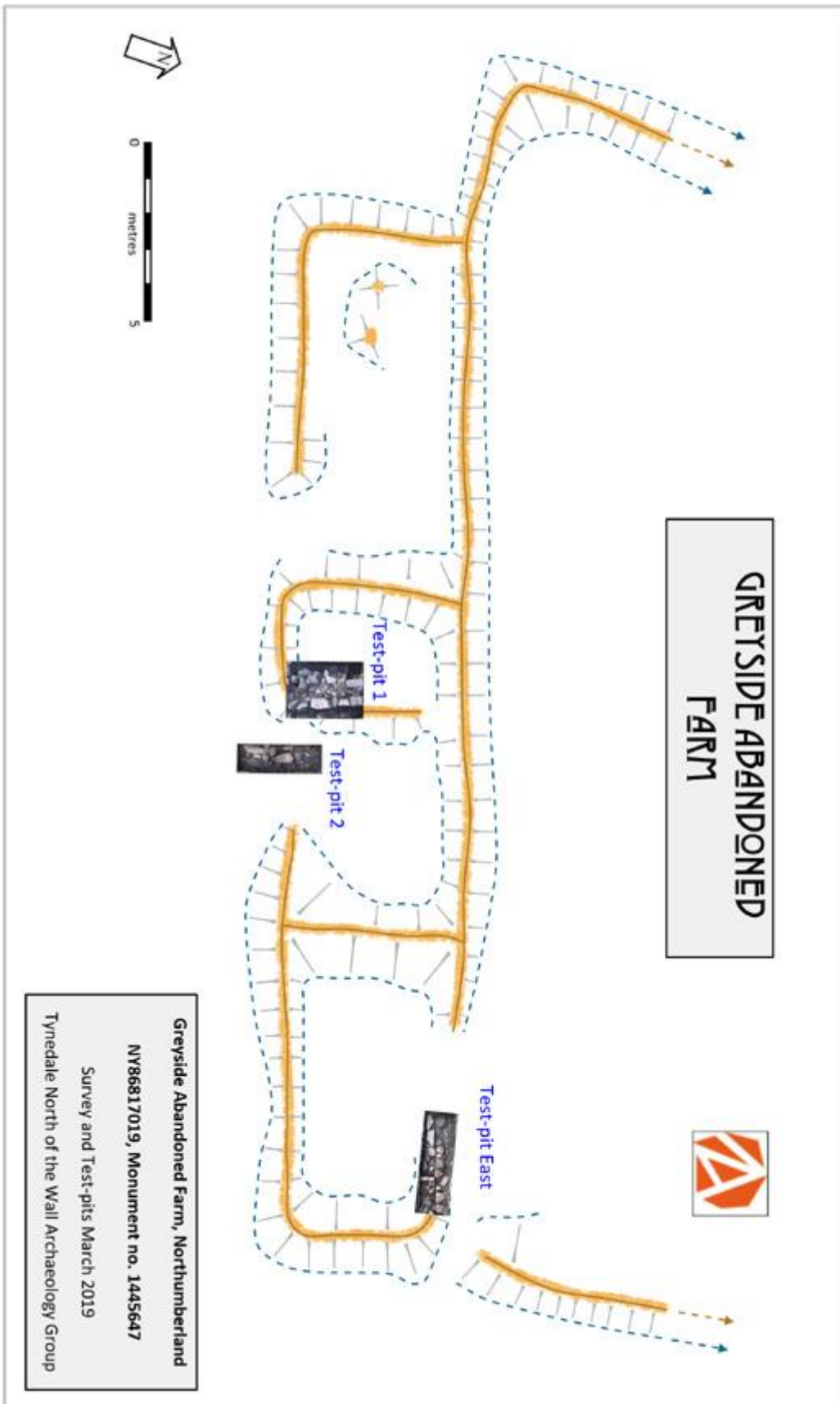
# Appendix 1

## 2019 Molehill Survey Finds





## Appendix 2





**Test-pit 1 - vertical photogrammetry view**



**Test-pit 2 - vertical photogrammetry view**



**Eastern test-pit - vertical photogrammetry view**