



SCARGILL HOUSE,
KETTLEWELL,
NORTH YORKSHIRE

YDNPA HER MYD 2785

EXCAVATION REPORT FOR
STONE DWELLING NO.2

AUGUST 2019

Debbie Hallam
dhallam@bradford.ac.uk

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Site history.....	1
2. Aim of Excavation	1
3. Objectives.....	2
4. Site location and description	2
5. Methodology	4
5.1 Excavation Methods	4
5.2 South sub-circular feature	4
5.3 Northern rectangular feature	6
6. Results	7
7. Discussion and Conclusions.....	7
8. Further Recommendations.....	9
9. Further reading	9
10. Appendix 1: Site Plans	11
10.1 South side excavation plan, initial trench TR001	11
10.2 South side, excavation of TR002 to bedrock	12
10.3 Section plan of Context 004	13
10.4 Unexcavated North Side rectangular feature	14
10.5 Site overview plan.....	15

INTRODUCTION

Scargill House is an estate situated approximately one mile from Kettlewell and is owned by the Scargill Movement Trust (<https://scargillmovement.org>) who operate the house as a retreat, conference centre and hotel run on Christian principles. The house has origins in the C18th when it was occupied as a farmhouse with associated farm buildings.

In 1900 the site was acquired by Mr. Clement Houldsworth, a textile manufacturer from Halifax, West Yorkshire who redeveloped the house and farm buildings from their C18th origins and created a country residence to be used for grouse shooting. When the estate was listed again for sale in 1957, in addition to the house, it was described as having two stock farms totalling 1000 acres, 70 acres of park and woodland, fishing rights on the Wharfe and shooting rights on Conistone Moor. Following the auction in 1957, the estate became the property of the Church of England.

1. SITE HISTORY

As the estate grounds have been used primarily for visitors to enjoy the tranquillity of the woodland walks and views, little is known about the archaeology which lies within. Scargill Movement Trust have identified two features of interest for their visitors by placing signage to indicate early dwelling no.1 and early dwelling no.2 against two earthworks on the terraces above the walled garden area however nothing is known about either of these features, they do not appear on the OS map and are not recorded by the YDNPA HER (historic environment record).

Scargill Movement are keen to learn more about their estate and to be able to inform their visitors therefore a decision was taken to undertake 5-day excavation of the larger early dwelling no.2 to investigate the archaeology further.

2. AIM OF EXCAVATION

The aim of the excavation is to explore the putative 'hut circle' (identified as the south side feature) of early dwelling no.2 and attempt to establish a date period for the structure and the adjoining rectangular earthwork (identified as the north side). As the two structures are

adjoining but quite different footprints, the nature of their structural relationship is intriguing and there will be an attempt made to record the sequence if possible.

3. OBJECTIVES

A 1 metre wide trench will be placed down the centre of the south side hut circle in order to uncover any possible hearth, padstones for roof support or evidence of occupation. The soils banking up against the internal and external face of the boulders which form the front or lowest point of the circle will also be excavated to investigate evidence for post holes which may have suggested the use of a fence or palisade.

The dividing wall will be investigated to determine any visible relationship or sequence with the southern feature however this will only be done if it is deemed safe to do so.

A walkover survey of relict walling features will also be undertaken to establish any possible link between the excavation site and an associated field system. This will enable comparisons to be made with other similar archaeological sites in the locality in order to understand the extent of contemporary use of the wider landscape.

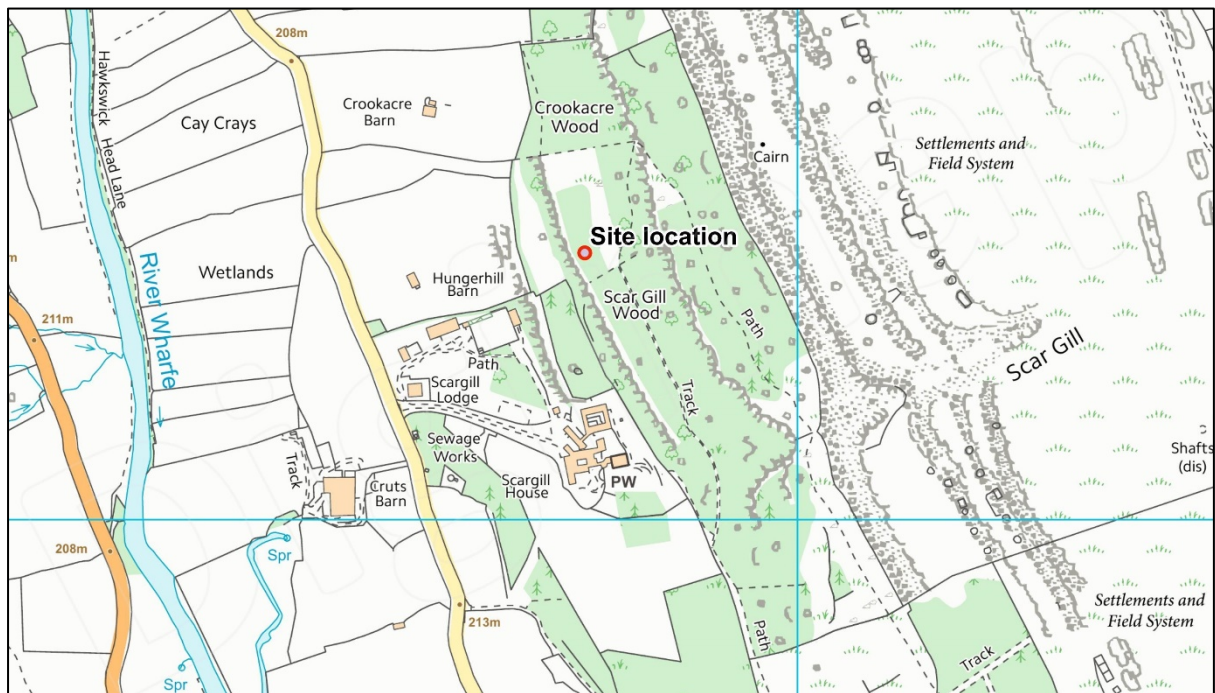
4. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Scargill estate is heavily wooded on the north-east side of the building complex with mature broadleaved trees, saplings and a large blanket plantation of conifers. Much of the ground cover within the wood is composting leaf litter, long grass and bracken which obscures the underlying limestone geology, particularly in summer.

Areas of limestone scree outcrop and there are long horizontal terraces and cliffs in succession from around 230m OD up to 350m OD. Dominating the landscape, the glacial feature known as Scar Gill is a rocky scree covered former waterfall which may have an associated cave system, however it is unclear when any water last ran above ground at this location. Limestone by its nature, allows water to emerge and disappear often over very short timescales.

The presence of a water supply may have made the area attractive in prehistory, and this is borne out by the wealth of lithic finds made by collectors in the area above and around Scar Gill.

The excavation site itself is on a sloping gradient and there is a narrow pathway around the lowest point of the terrace before a foliage covered hillside drops away. This has made it difficult for siting spoil heaps and care has had to be taken not to over-excavate the outer areas of the southern feature.



Map of the Scargill Estate and excavation site location. Scale 1:5000.

The structure known as the 'early stone dwelling 2' is situated on one of the lower terraces (centroid SD 97762 71300) and appeared to comprise of two halves, the southern side being sub-circular, measuring approximately 4.3 x 3.8m and a rectangular northern side, dimensions approximately 6.2 x 2.5 m., measured from the inner faces of the earthworks.

The two halves are divided by a substantial limestone block wall around 0.7m width and which is extant to a maximum of 5 courses. The wall belongs to the rectangular northern side. Daylight can be seen in between some of the larger stones and the core appears to be packed with smaller irregular shaped stones.

There are no signs of any tooling or architectural features on the wall or northern feature that would indicate provision for a roof, doorways or windows, nor are there any signs of demolition debris such as stone or slate roofing tiles.

The northern rectangular earthwork is set at an odd obtuse angle to the wall, it does not align to anything and the opposite end is a jumble of fallen walling stones. Almost all the blocks used in the walling stone and rectangular earthwork are far too heavy for one person to lift or move and in fact originally it is believed they would have required at least 2 strong persons to move and put in place.

For this reason, none of the large boulders were moved during this excavation, apart from one in the southern circle which was rolled a short distance by two excavators.

Both these conjoined features are located at the narrowing northern end of a long flat terrace. Although trees and foliage obscure the view today, if the terrace was unwooded it would permit a long unrestricted view up towards Kettlewell and further up the Wharfe Valley and across the valley bottom westwards towards Knipe Wood, Hawkswick Moor and Middlesmoor Pasture.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 EXCAVATION METHODS

All work was carried out using hand tools. Deturfing was not necessary as the surface ground cover was a mixture of leaf-mould, weeds and brushwood. Soil was removed carefully and placed on tarpaulins to protect the ground cover underneath. Stones were removed if they became loose in the soil matrix and could be carried comfortably by one person. The hut circle trench was excavated on an east-west orientation and worked by trowel until either bedrock was reached or no archaeology detected.

Trench measurements, spot heights and soil conditions were recorded, and trench and section plans drawn. Colour photographs were taken of all stages and a drone record was attempted but abandoned due to windy weather.

5.2 SOUTH SUB-CIRCULAR FEATURE

On the initial trowelling pass trench TR001 (1m width) was found to be covered in a dark brown humic soil with pockets of a lighter brown silty clay soil [001].

The soil matrix became increasingly stony with palm-sized irregular limestones littering most of the trench at a depth of 10-20cms. No finds were recovered from this context. The trench was expanded in a southerly direction to its limit with the inner face of the boulders forming the perimeter edge [002].



Photo of TR002 under excavation

Stones increased with sizes varying until all the soil had been removed at a depth of 40cms to reveal an uneven bedding plane of limestone banded horizontally (NW-SE) with some rounded rocks becoming loose where solution joints had caused a weakness.

An area of deeper soil within a central group of rocks was investigated downwards for hearth evidence but none was found [005]. One large rock appeared to have been driven into place and wedging stones placed either side possibly to provide anchorage for others [003]. This suggests that some of the bedding stones may have been placed by human rather than natural agency.

A natural 'kerb' was observed [006] where the bedding plane at [003] dropped slightly and gave way to the interface of a flatter bedding plane of limestone.

The slightly banking soil at the outer perimeter area of the earthwork at its lowest point (SD 97761 71298) was found to have a thin layer of humic soil covering palm-sized irregular shaped stones held in place by a kerb of flat stones [006] presumably to provide revetment. A sondage was placed into the revetting stones and a front boulder removed. This showed that

the single course boulder wall was placed over a pre-prepared stony foundation, which itself was sat directly on the flat bedding plane [004].



Photo showing a flat bedding plane running below a single course of perimeter boulders.

No finds or further archaeology was detected in the southern feature therefore it was backfilled and closed.

5.3 NORTHERN RECTANGULAR FEATURE

Time constraints meant it was not possible to fully investigate this feature. The footprint of the northern site was planned for future reference and the site was cleared of foliage so it could be seen better. It was noted that some of the boulders used at the junction with the dividing wall were huge (1m on the horizontal plane) and others were naturally misshapen and irregular which would have made it very difficult to place stone on top of stone.

Much of the northern and eastern sides of the site was obscured due to thick foliage and moss cover therefore it made planning these areas difficult and it has been left for future researchers to reveal the nature of what could be loosely termed a gable end.

A quick 1m box trench was attempted on the last day but time was spent trying to remove a stout tree root. All the indications were that this rectangular building also had a floor of

limestone like its neighbour as stone was observed just emerging above the 10cm deep trench, which was then closed for backfilling.

6. RESULTS

There were no finds detected in either the north or south structures during the 5 days of excavation. The shallow depth of soil encountered (generally around 40-50cm overlaying bedrock) may indicate that both the structures had a limestone floor which was open to the elements for a prolonged period following abandonment, giving ample opportunity for any ecofacts to be lost, removed or eradicated.

The southern side has been used recently for camping as a broken plastic tent peg was found along with surface chunks of charcoal, some of which had found its way up to 10cm below the surface.

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Although it was not possible to remove the boulders and conclusively prove, the thick dividing wall appears to be sat on the perimeter of the earlier stone circular earthwork which curves into and away from the wall at either end.

This southern circular structure is set into the sloping hillside and the height of the built walls around it varies. In some areas, particularly at the back or highest point of the circle, walling stone has augmented the existing limestone outcrop. Within the circle it is highly likely that the occupation floor was the sloping bare bedrock which could have given some protection from water ingress by draining it away in the grykes, solution cracks or small channels. Up to the post medieval period floors had rushes and meadowsweet laid directly on the beaten earth and if this were the case here, no evidence would remain.

The south-western circuit of wall reduces from a few courses down to a single course of boulders which forms the front wall nearest the pathway and hillside. It was noted that these rounded and irregular shaped boulders would make it difficult to place more on top however such large rocks would provide good anchorage for posts or ropes used for a temporary dwelling. A central tent pole might have sat on the bedrock. It is equally possible that the

lower walls might have been increased in height using turf or wood, neither of which would survive.

The presence of angular small stones gently banking up to the front single course of boulders at the southern site may have provided purchase for traffic (human or animal) on the trackway which drops away to the western edge. That this was deliberate and not a natural scatter can be proven by the presence of the edging kerb holding it in place. Without this feature, continual use of the trackway at this point would soon erode it away and make it unsafe.

The northern rectangular structure is later than the southern side but only by virtue of the dividing wall which appears to be set on the perimeter of the circular feature.

At Scargill there are no obvious entrances in either structures. Where a gap in the perimeter wall appears to be present, there is a corresponding tumbled boulder and access may have been to stepover. Structures lacking entrances have been recorded by David Johnson and the Ingleborough Archaeology Group during the excavations at Brows Pasture at Chapel-le-Dale (2017) as have the same use of limestone block floor however it should be noted that the Brows Pasture structures were much later in date than the Scargill features.

Historic England (2018) have recorded stone hut circles attributable to the Roman-British Iron Age as having a diameter as small as 3m but often larger, and in areas of unploughed upland walls have been recorded as surviving up to 1m. There is also some archaeological evidence for these structures having a turf covered roof carried on internal wooden eaves resting on the wall. In the steep terrain of the hillside at Scargill, annexing a rectangular building may have added stability to the structure and allowed for extra floor area as the terrace narrowed.

Siting of the Scargill structures at the end of the terrace may have enabled the shepherd or farmer to be close to his stock. At the other side of the modern footpath approximately 50m away, there is an ancient wall running uphill which ends at a steep cliff. Measurements were taken by the team that show it is 4m thick in some places. Walls of this thickness have been recorded in association with Iron Age hut circles at Long Ashes, near Threshfield (HER MYD 4105).

At Kettlewell near Crookacre Wood, scooped building platforms of probable Romano-British Iron Age have been recorded by Roger Martlew (HER reference MYD55852) and there is ample evidence from local archaeological investigations to attest to the Late Iron Age local population adopting and using Roman style objects.

Historic England suggest that based on archaeological evidence the Romano British Iron Age style of closed and unenclosed stone dwellings and associated field systems spanned a time period of 0 to 1000 AD and possibly endured quite some time beyond. It is suggested that the Scargill circular structure and associated field system is contemporary with this period, however the rectangular northern feature may be later and still requires further investigation.

8. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scargill estate lies within an area rich in archaeological heritage of all periods. Beyond the immediate estate boundaries there have been many prehistoric finds recovered (mainly of flint) and below towards the river Wharfe there have been important discoveries relating to the Anglo-Saxon period. It is suggested that Scargill Movement Trust consider a winter walkover survey of their estate to locate any standing archaeology to ensure that it can be recorded and added to the Historic Environment register. Such a survey need not concentrate only on early periods as mapping the estate as used by the Houldsworth family in more recent times (carriage rides, shooting butts etc) would be of interest to many.

9. FURTHER READING

Historic England (2018) *Prehistoric and Romano-British Settlements with structures*. Available from: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-prehistoric-romano-british-settlements-structures/heag215-prehistoric-romano-british-settlements-structures/>

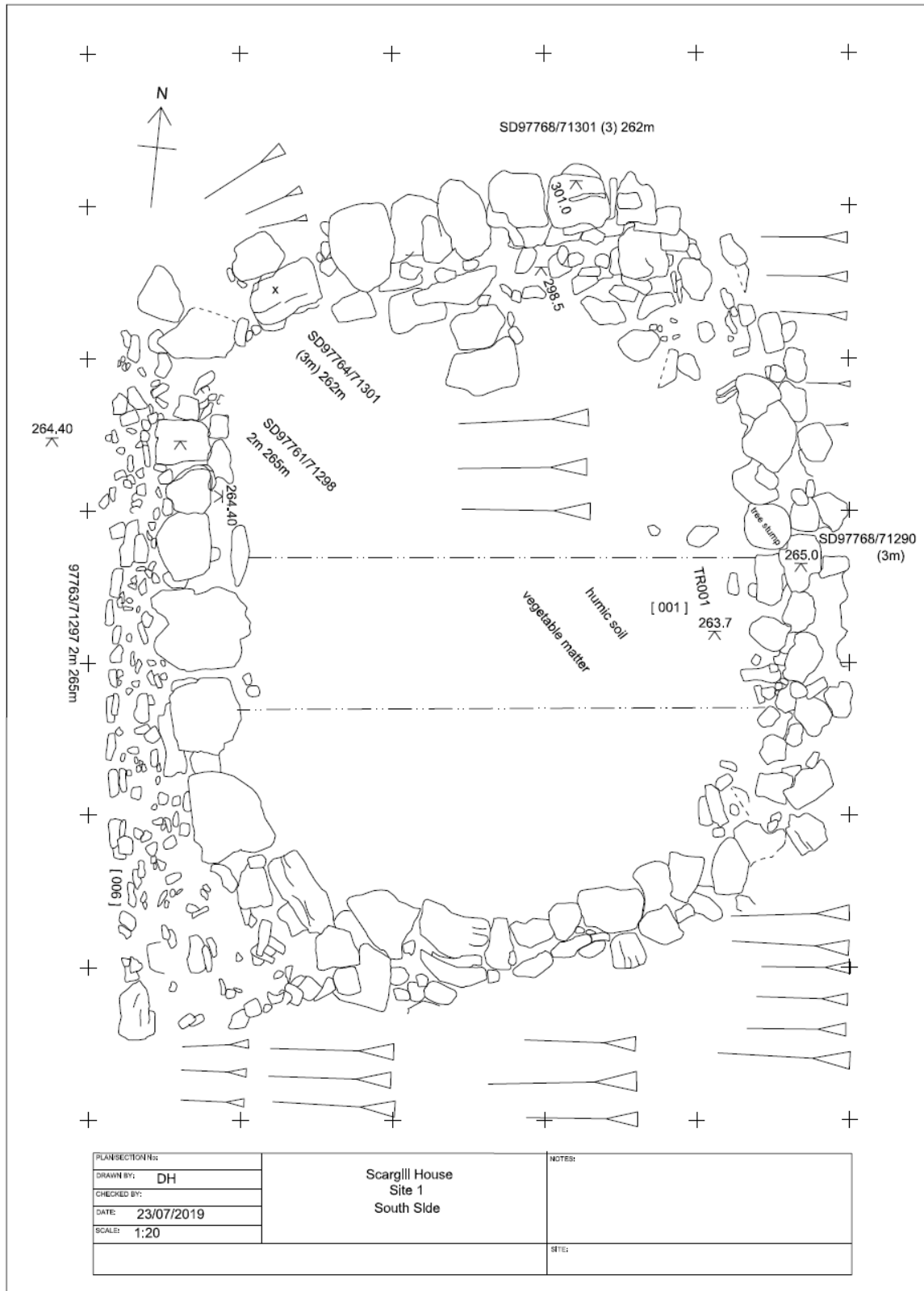
Johnson, D (2017) *Excavation of two Anglo-Saxon farmsteads in Brows Pasture, Chapel-le-Dale, North Yorkshire*. YDNPA Report number SYD13981. Ingleton: Ingleborough Archaeology Group.

Acknowledgements:

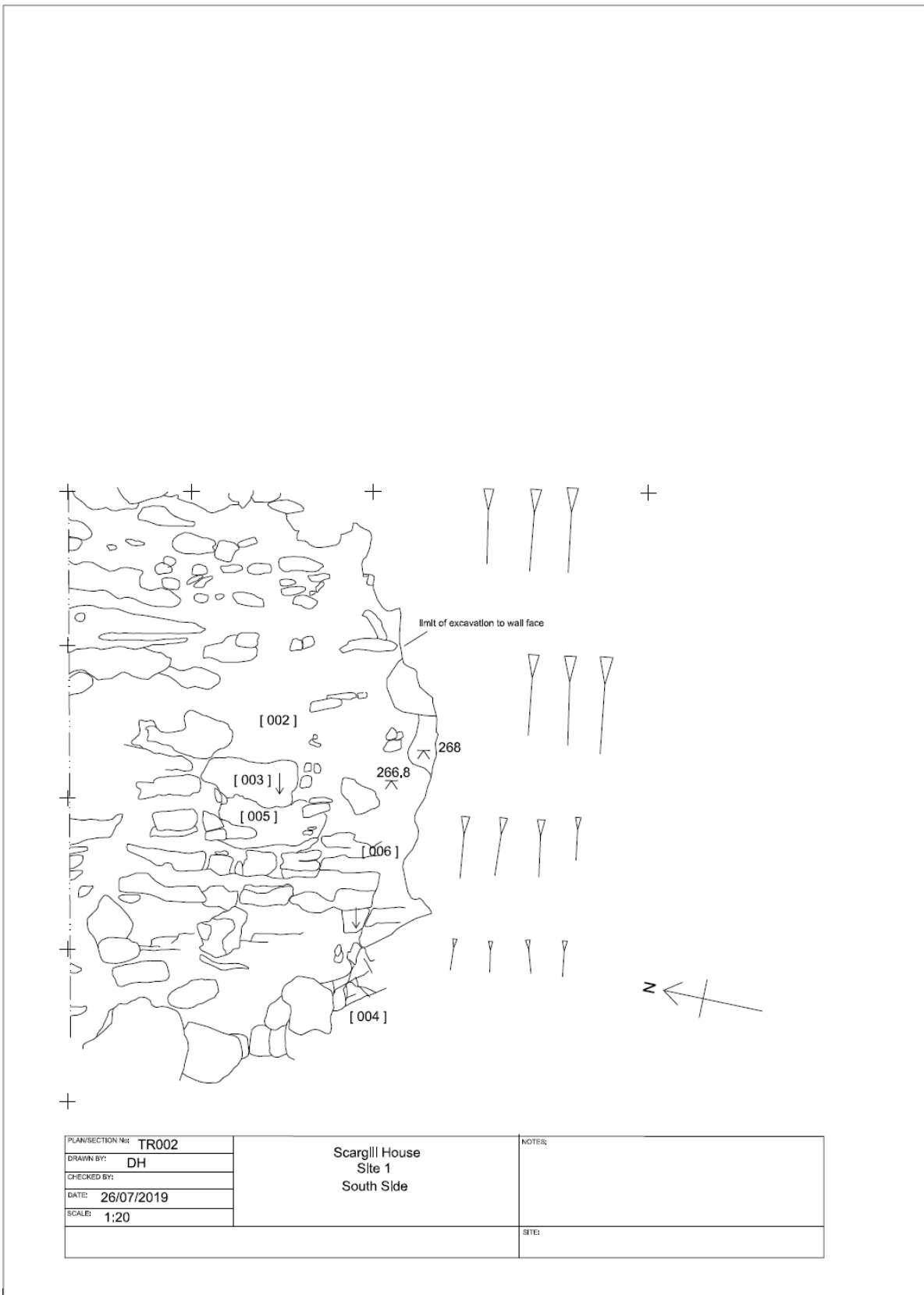
I would like to thank Ivan, Ruth and Scargill Movement Trust for their encouragement and interest and excavators Karen Gibson, Pat and Phil Carroll, Peter Gallagher, Gordon Jackson, Sarah Chaffe, Gayle Wray and Richard Stroud for photography and Frank Jolley for digitising the plans.

10. APPENDIX 1: SITE PLANS

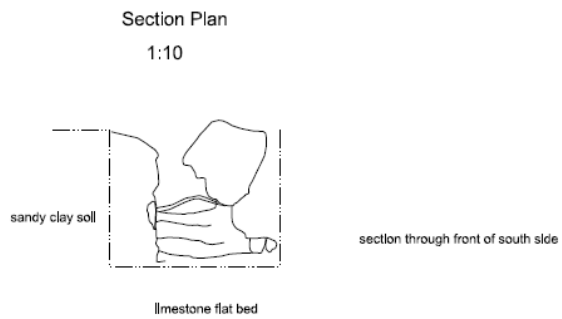
10.1 SOUTH SIDE EXCAVATION PLAN, INITIAL TRENCH TR001



10.2 SOUTH SIDE, EXCAVATION OF TR002 TO BEDROCK

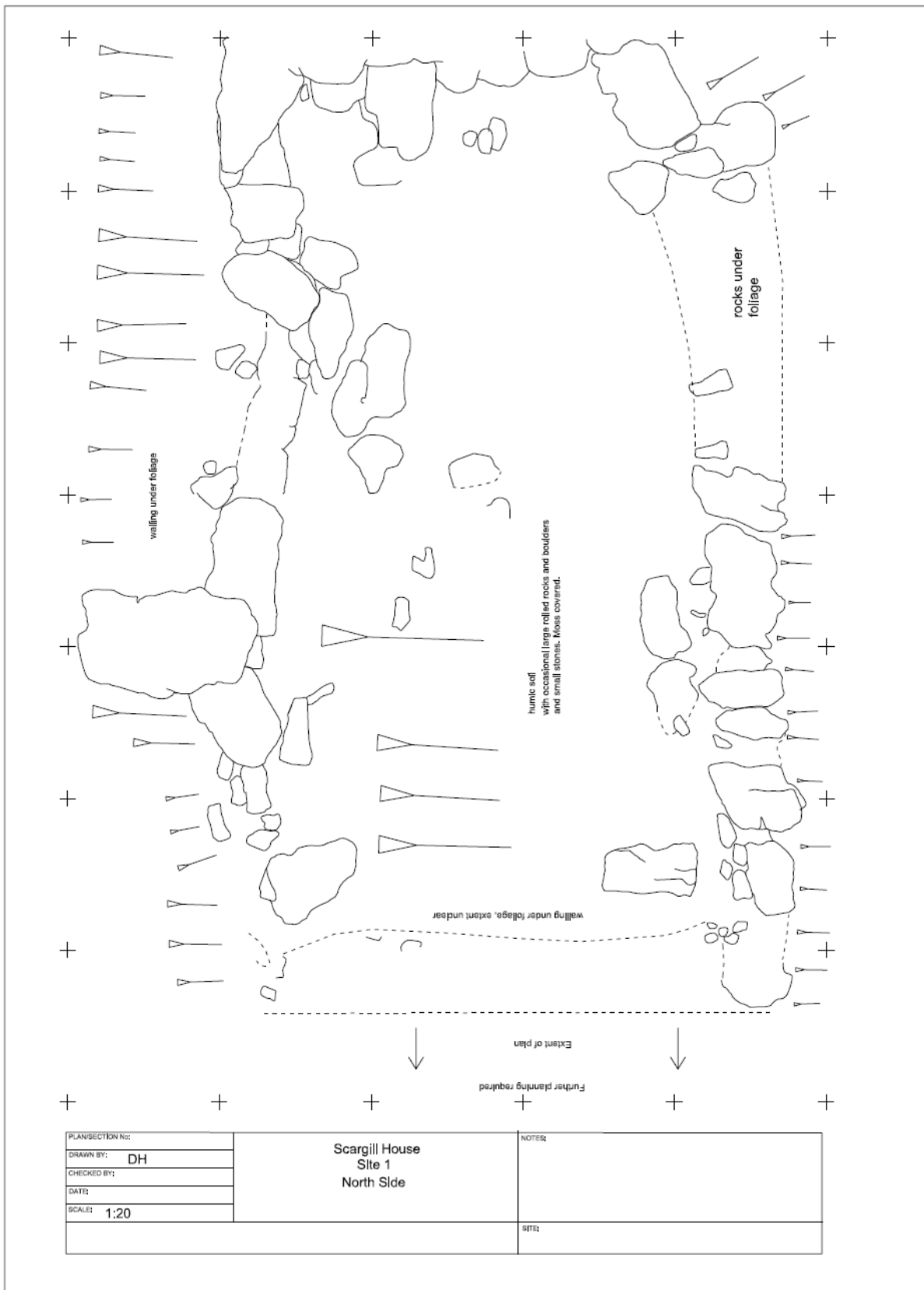


10.3 SECTION PLAN OF CONTEXT 004



<small>PLAN/SECTION No:</small>	Scargill House Site 1	<small>NOTES:</small>
<small>DRAWN BY:</small> DH		
<small>CHECKED BY:</small>		
<small>DATE:</small> 24/07/2019		
<small>SCALE:</small> 1:10		<small>SITE:</small>

10.4 UNEXCAVATED NORTH SIDE RECTANGULAR FEATURE



10.5 SITE OVERVIEW PLAN

