

# TOP O'TH' HILL, RIVINGTON LANE, RIVINGTON, LANCASHIRE



## Trial Trenching Evaluation Report

Matrix Archaeology

August 2023

TOP O'TH' HILL,  
RIVINGTON LANE,  
RIVINGTON,  
LANCASHIRE

Trial Trenching Evaluation Report

Report No. 2023-07 (MA856)

Client: Mr & Mrs Pitalia

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## Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Top o'th' Hill Farm, Rivington, on the site of a farmhouse which had been demolished in 1897. There was documentary evidence to support occupation here from the late 17th century, and possibly earlier. Three trial trenches were excavated, one of these locating the basal remains of a flag floored half-cellar, probably of 18th century date. This indicated that the earlier house had been thoroughly demolished and most of the footings and floors robbed out, before being covered by a cobbled yard related to the existing farmhouse, which was constructed in 1897. Further landscaping, probably undertaken during the late 20th century, resulted in this 1897 yard area being concealed beneath a modern hard standing. All of the recovered finds were of late post-medieval date. The only recommendation is that a watching brief should be conducted during any proposed groundworks at the site.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The site of Top o'th' Hill was formerly that of a working farm, which is now detached from the original landholding. At present, the site comprises a farmhouse and nearby barn, both constructed in 1897, along with a large steel-framed shed (Figures 1 & 2).
- 1.2 None of the buildings at the site were Listed, and although the site was within the periphery of the historic Lever Park, it was excluded from the Park designation.
- 1.3 The present owners, Mr & Mrs Pitalia, are proposing to redevelop the site as a residence. In order to mitigate any potential constructional impact upon the surviving archaeological resource, Katie Lewis-Pierpoint, the client's planning consultant, from Knightsbridge Planning Ltd, commissioned an archaeological evaluation to inform any planning application.
- 1.4 In 2021, an historic building survey was undertaken of the barn at the site (Matrix Archaeology Report No. 2021-10; MA810); and in 2023 an historic building survey was undertaken of the farmhouse at the site (Matrix Archaeology Report No.2023-06; MA856).
- 1.5 There are no records of any previous archaeological investigation works at, or near to, Top o'th' Hill.
- 1.6 The works were undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Matrix Archaeology Ltd, and following guidance issued by the CIfA, 'Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation', 2014.
- 1.7 ***Acknowledgements***  
The trial trenching evaluation was undertaken by Steven Price and Mark Fletcher. The site history was produced by Dr Peter Arrowsmith. The Finds Report (Appendix) was produced by Legh Dodd of Earthworks Archaeology. The tenant at Top o'th' Hill, Mr Peter Van Schalkwyk, kindly provided facilities.

## **2. Scope and methodology**

- 2.1 Three trenches were excavated on the former footprint of the pre-1897 farmhouse, designated as Trenches 1, 2 and 3. At the time of excavation, this area comprised a large area of level hardstanding, located to the east of the existing farmhouse.
- 2.2 The initial trench stripping was undertaken using a mini-digger. Upon encountering deposits of archaeological significance, excavation was then undertaken by hand, followed by photography and recording. All of the finds were assessed (Plates 16 - 21), and are described in the Appendix.
- 2.3 Levels provided relate to Ordnance Survey, being derived from the original topographic survey, as supplied by the architects.

### **3. Site Location**

- 3.1 The site was located within the curtilage of Top o'th' Hill Farm, just off Rivington Road, 1km to the south of Rivington village, about 4km to the north of Horwich; and 6km to the south-east of Chorley, in Lancashire. The buildings were no longer related to working farmland, and are within the heart of Rivington Country Park.
- 3.2 Between the high west-facing scarp of Rivington Moor, and the Lower Rivington Reservoir, the existing landscape comprises undulating parkland, with a mixture of pastureland and woodland. The farm site is located at about 166m AOD, and is overlooked by a high bank immediately to the east, whilst to the south-west is a low hillock of 169.50m AOD. From the site, prior to woodland being planted, there would have been good aspects to the north and to the west.
- 3.3 Geologically, the solid hereabouts is the Ousel Nest Grit of the Carboniferous period, which is a coarse sandstone. Numerous small quarries within the Rivington area have exploited this good building stone. Overlying the solid to significant depths, the superficial geology comprises glacial till deposits, specifically boulder clays, of the Pleistocene period.

## 4. Site history

### 4.1 Rivington

#### 4.1.1 *Manor of Rivington to 1900*

Historically Top o'th' Hill lay within the township of Rivington. From about the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the early 17<sup>th</sup>, the principal landowners in this township were members of the Pilkington family. In 1611, however, their manor of Rivington was sold and divided, with one half being acquired by Robert Lever of Darcy Lever and the other by Thomas Breres of Preston. In 1727 the two halves were reunited when John Breres sold his share to John Andrews, the heir to the Darcy Lever estates. Following the death of a later John Andrews in 1865, the manor passed to John William Crompton.<sup>1</sup>

Successive owners of the manor of Rivington are known to have constructed residences in the township. Robert Pilkington built a hall and cross-chamber here in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>2</sup> although a hall can be assumed to have existed at an earlier date. The present Rivington Hall is a Grade II\* Listed Building, which includes fabric of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century built by William Breres, but the greater part of the house was constructed by Robert Andrews in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (LHER PRN 930). A second hall site, the New Hall, is recorded in 1544 and 1610, and was used by junior members of the Pilkington family. This building, which was located on Sheep House Lane, later became a farmhouse and was demolished in c. 1912 (LHER PRN 928).

#### 4.1.2 *William Hesketh Lever, Liverpool Corporation and Lever Park*

Reservoirs were built at Rivington and Anglezarke between 1850 and 1857 to provide a water supply for Liverpool, although the system also incorporated a smaller reservoir constructed in 1850 to serve Chorley (LHER PRN 15148). In 1899 Liverpool Corporation turned down the opportunity to buy the Rivington Hall estate and manor, and in 1900 these were sold instead to the industrialist William Hesketh Lever, Lord Leverhulme. The sale allowed John William Crompton to remain at Rivington Hall as tenant, while Leverhulme built a new residence for himself on high ground to the east. Known as Roynton Cottage or the Bungalow, it was rebuilt after an arson attack in 1913 by the suffragette Edith Rigby (LHER PRN 37157).<sup>3</sup>

In 1901 Leverhulme offered to donate c. 160 ha of the estate to Bolton Corporation for a public park. In order to protect the water supply, in 1902 Liverpool Corporation sought the compulsory purchase of the gathering grounds for the reservoirs through an Act of Parliament. Following a challenge by Leverhulme, the final legislation exempted some properties in Rivington village and also the curtilage of his own dwelling. Leverhulme also retained the right to create a public park at his own expense, which once completed was to be managed and maintained by Liverpool Corporation. Lever Park (LHER PRN

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<sup>1</sup> Farrer & Brownbill 1911, 286-91.

<sup>2</sup> Farrer & Brownbill 1911, 289.

<sup>3</sup> Smith 1998.



10219) was opened in 1904. The landscaping was carried out by Thomas Hayton Mawson, who also designed the gardens at the Bungalow (LHER PRN 15038).<sup>4</sup>

The farms at Top o'th' Hill and, to the south, Middle Derbyshire are not part of Lever Park although both are surrounded by it. According to the Historic Park and Garden description, these farms 'were excluded from the sale in 1902 to Liverpool Corporation and they have never been part of the Park'.<sup>5</sup> However, in a letter of 6 September 1901 in which Leverhulme offered to donate the land for the park to Bolton Corporation, he noted 'Within these boundaries there are other properties which do not belong to myself, and which of course are not included with the lands I am now proposing to give'.<sup>6</sup> The research for the present report has confirmed that Top o'th' Hill was not part of Leverhulme's estate.

## 4.2 Top o'th' Hill: Owners and Occupants

- 4.2.1 The barn carries a datestone inscribed with the year '1703' and the initials 'I' (ie I or J) B A'. The stone is reused, being nearly two centuries earlier than the present building, and although its precise original position is unknown it can be assumed to have been set within an earlier building at Top o'th' Hill itself. The convention is for the central initial to belong to a family name, with others being the first names of family members, typically a husband and wife. According to local historian D A Owen, the inscription dates from when the farm was in the possession of John and Alice Brownlow. Owen also states that 'the Brownlows had been in the farm since long before 1599, when Margaret Brownlow made her will'.<sup>7</sup>

The present research has not confirmed the identification of the individuals on the datestone. Published Hearth Tax returns for Rivington township show two Brownlow households in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, headed in 1663 by Richard Brownlow and George Brownlow, and in 1673-4 by Richard Brownlow and John Brownlow.<sup>8</sup> Lancashire Archives hold a dozen or so probate records for Brownlows living in Rivington, beginning with the will of Margaret Brownlow which was proved in 1600. They include the will of John Brownlow, which mentions his wife Alice, but this was written in 1683 and proved the following year.<sup>9</sup> However, another John Brownlow is named in the will of George Brownlow of Rivington, written in 1697 and proved in 1698. In this the testator left to his wife Elizabeth 'my message and tenement in Rivington which was my grandfather George Brownlow's', with instruction that after her death this was to pass to his brother John Brownlow.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cobham Resource Consultants 1988.

<sup>5</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000948>.

<sup>6</sup> Smith 1998, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Owen 2019, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Irvine 1904, 47, 175.

<sup>9</sup> Lancashire Archives WCW/Supra/C238A/68; Irvine 1904, 176.

<sup>10</sup> Lancashire Archives WCW/Supra/C269/62; Irvine 1904, 178-9.

#### 4.2.2 *1780-c. 1831: occupants under George Brownlow and Betty Higson*

Although the identity of earlier occupants has not been confirmed, consultation of primary sources for the present report has enabled the owners and occupants to be traced from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A key source from this period are the Land Tax assessments for Rivington for 1780-1831. In 1826-1831 these list Top o'th' Hill by name, enabling the property to be securely traced back in the assessments of earlier years (see Appendix 1). Thus in 1780-2 the owner is given as George Brownlow under whom the occupant is named in 1780 as George Wadington and in 1782 as John Brownlow. The assessments for 1783-7 are missing but in 1788 the owner is named as Mrs Betty Higson. Her association with the property was particularly long-lived, for the name of Mrs Higson, sometimes given as Tyrer Higson, appears as the owner in subsequent assessments until 1830. Other evidence shows that Betty Higson was a daughter of Elizabeth Shaw of Rivington, one of the two sisters and heirs of Hugh 15<sup>th</sup> Baron Willoughby of Parham who died in 1765 and is commemorated on the Willoughby monument in Rivington Chapel. In 1771 Betty Shaw had married John Higson, of the parish of Deane, at Rivington parish church. She died in March 1823, at the age of 83.<sup>11</sup> The significance of the name Tyrer in the Land Tax assessments is uncertain, but may relate to a joint owner.

In 1788 the Land Tax assessment lists Top o'th' Hill as occupied by John Brownlow junior. His name continued to appear until 1802, and he may be the John Brownlow of Rivington whose will was proved in July 1803.<sup>12</sup> Between 1803 and 1809 the occupants are named in turn as Joseph and Emma Sunter, followed in 1810-16 by Thomas Farbrother, in 1817-23 by Robert Hampson, and from 1824 by Peter Hampson who was still named as the occupant in 1831, now under Mrs Higson's executors.

#### 4.2.3 *c. 1834-1861: John Nightingale and John Turner as tenants*

In the tithe award agreement of 1845 the owners of Top o'th' Hill were given as 'Christopher Shaw and others'.<sup>13</sup> Shaw, who died in July 1853, was a great-nephew of the 15<sup>th</sup> Baron Willoughby of Parham, and therefore may have been the nephew of Betty Higson.<sup>14</sup> At the time of the 1851 census he was living at Hamers Farm in Rivington, and was described as a farmer and land proprietor. In 1852 he sold part of his estate to Liverpool Corporation for the construction of the Lower Rivington Reservoir.<sup>15</sup> In his will dated December 1851 he named as his heirs his brother-in law Richard Mason of Horwich, Mary Mason who was Richard's daughter, and his nephew John Howarth.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Liverpool Mercury* 8 April 1831, p 7 col 1.

<sup>12</sup> Lancashire Archives WCW/Supra/C607C/46.

<sup>13</sup> Lancashire Archives DRM 1/85.

<sup>14</sup> *Manchester Courier* 30 July 1853, p 11 col 6.

<sup>15</sup> Hampson 1893, 160.

<sup>16</sup> Lancashire Archives WCW/Supra/C1258B/49.

Peter Hampson's occupancy of Top o'th' Hill seem to have ended by 1834 when John Nightingale of Top o'th' Hill was churchwarden of Rivington parish church.<sup>17</sup> Nightingale is also listed as head of the household at the farm in the census of 1841, and is named as the occupant in the Rivington tithe award agreement in 1845. The 1841 census described Nightingale as farmer and stone mason (see Appendix 2). OS mapping surveyed in 1845-7 indicates a quarry (LHER PRN 9617) just to the east of the farm but trees are shown within its interior suggesting that it was not being worked at this date (Figure 3). John Turner and his family were also members of the household in 1841. His occupation is given as agricultural labourer, presumably in Nightingale's employment. Turner is again listed at Top o'th' Hill in the censuses of 1851 and 1861, on the first occasion as a farmer of 28 acres, and on the second as retired. Under both Nightingale and Turner, Top o'th' Hill was also the home of Charles Worsley. He was a farmer's son and is described in the language of the census as an 'idiot', living on independent means.

#### 4.2.4 *c. 1865-1903: Mary and Anne Mason and their tenants*

Details of later ownership are provided by rating valuations for Rivington, commencing in 1865 when the owners are named as 'Mary Mason and others' (see Appendix 1). 'Miss Mason and others' are listed in 1889-1897, and 'the executors of Miss Mason and others' in 1904. Mary Mason was born in 1822, the daughter of Richard Mason of Horwich and Mary Shaw of Rivington, whose marriage took place at Rivington parish church in September 1818. In 1851, as noted above (4.2.3), she was named as a co-heir in the will of Christopher Shaw, the then owner of Top o'th' Hill. Census returns show that by 1871 Mary Mason was living at Foxholes in Horwich with her younger sister Anne, both of whom were described as landowners. Mary died in January 1889, leaving a personal estate valued at £5049. Her heir was his sister Anne Mason who continued to live at Foxholes until her death, aged 78, in August 1903.<sup>18</sup> Her own effects were valued at £22,828. She was described in the press as 'the survivor of two wealthy but parsimonious and eccentric sisters. Their house was poorly kept up, and when the roof became so damaged that the rooms could not be lived in the sisters did the repairs themselves'.<sup>19</sup> Anne Mason's will shows that in Rivington, in addition to Top o'th' Hill, she owned the Higher and Lower Knowle, Middle Derbyshire and Pilkingtons farms. Her portfolio also included Foxholes, Marklands and Claypool farms in Horwich and a half share of Foxholes Mill, as well as properties in Westthoughton and Blackrod.

In 1865 the occupant of Top o'th' Hill was William Ryder, who is also listed as occupant of the neighbouring Crosses Farm and Wards Farm. He appears to have worked these as a single concern, since he was described as farming 72 acres in the census of 1861, the same census which describes John Turner at Top o'th' Hill as retired. Ryder himself lived at Ward's Farm until his death in 1867. He also had a second source of income, as a roller and spindle maker.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hampson 1893, 138.

<sup>18</sup> *Bolton Evening News* 2 September 1903, p 4 col 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Northern Times* 10 September 1903, p 6 col 6.

<sup>20</sup> Clegg 1883, 227.

By 1871 Top o'th' Hill was held by Thomas Settle, described as a farmer of 25½ acres, implying that the farm was again being worked in its own right. In 1881, however, the farmhouse was vacant, and this may also have been the case in 1889. Such periods of vacancy may have been due to the national agricultural depression which commenced in the 1870s and continued into the 1890s. At the time of the 1891 census, Top o'th' Hill was occupied by Henry Evans, who had a second source of income since he is described as a farmer and coal miner. This last occupation is also given for his eldest son, Samuel, and an 'adopted son', John P Kelly.

In February 1897 the property again seems to have been unoccupied but in August of the same year a rating valuation names the tenant as John Hudson Saul. The 1901 census, which lists him as John H Saul, also places him at Top o'th' Hill. The censuses of 1881 and 1891 give his name as John Hodgson Saul and show that at this period he was living at Shaw Place in Heath Charnock, where in 1881 he was described as farming 186 acres, a fairly substantial holding. At the time of the 1901 census his household included four adult daughters, and two grandchildren. Only one of his three unmarried daughters, Dina Saul, is listed as having an occupation, as a professional singer. Newspapers of the time show that she was a classical soprano. John Hodgson Saul died in 1910 in Southport, presumably in retirement. The overall impression of John Hodgson Saul is of a relatively prosperous individual, and this may be of relevance for understanding the building development of Top o'th' Hill farm (see below, 4.3.2).

#### 4.2.5 *c. 1904 onwards: the Makinsons and Liverpool Corporation*

Saul had left Top o'th' Hill by July 1904, when it was occupied by Evan Makinson. Census returns show that he was born c. 1835, and in 1901 was living at Bradley's Farm in Rivington. He died in December 1905, and the tenancy of Top o'th' Hill passed to his son Noah (born c. 1886). The census of 1911 gives the occupation of Noah Makinson as a poultry and dairy farmer, and that of his sister Margaret as dairy work. Noah was still living here in 1939 but had retired from farming, which was being continued by younger members of the family. The Makinsons were still farming here in the 1960s.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ownership of the farm passed to Liverpool Corporation. This purchase was presumably made under the powers granted to the Corporation under the 1902 Act but the precise date of this transfer is uncertain. The rating valuation books show that it had occurred by September 1911, while in July 1904 the owners were listed as the executors of Miss Mason.

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<sup>21</sup> Smith 1989, 152-3.

## 4.3 Building Development

### 4.3.1 *Pre-1897*

The earliest mapping to depict the farm in any detail is the OS 6in to 1 mile sheet surveyed in 1845-7 (Figure 3). It shows two main buildings which also appear, with greater accuracy, on 1:2500 mapping surveyed in 1892 (Figure 4). The more northerly of these was a roughly L-shaped building (building 06) which was situated to the east of the present house and was almost certainly the earlier farmhouse. To the south was a longer range (building 04), approximately of the same size as the present barn but less regular in plan and with its long axis situated further to the north, showing that this too was an earlier structure. Its form suggests a barn with extensions on the west and north-east. A third, much smaller building (building 08) is indicated between the two. On the 1892 map it is shown at the south-east corner of a possible garden enclosure to the rear of the farmhouse. On same map a smaller yard is marked to the north of the larger outbuilding (building 04), in the north-west corner of which seems to have been a pair of pens, possibly a pigcote.

### 4.3.2 *The 1897 rebuilding and later*

Comparison of successive editions of OS mapping reveals that the present house and barn were both constructed between 1892 and 1907 (Figures 4 & 5), replacing the earlier buildings on the site. According to M D Smith, the farm was rebuilt in 1898.<sup>22</sup> The rating valuation books for Rivington suggest a slightly earlier date. In February 1897, the rateable value of the buildings was assessed at £3 5s, the same amount as in 1894. By August 1897, this figure had risen to £13. It seems highly likely, therefore, that construction took place during that year, perhaps being underway in February when no occupant was listed at the property.

The rebuilding of the farmhouse and barn thus occurred during the ownership of Miss Anne Mason. It also preceded by several years the acquisition of the neighbouring Rivington Hall estate by Lord Leverhulme, and the creation of Lever Park. Precisely why the rebuilding was carried out is not recorded but several suggestions can be made. It may have been necessitated by the property falling into neglect. For over a hundred years the farm had been let to tenants, and probably since at least the death of Betty Higson in 1831 it had changed ownership through inheritance rather than purchase. If the assertion that the sisters Mary and Anne Mason were 'wealthy but parsimonious' was accurate, any neglect on the part of the owner may have been exacerbated in recent years. Periods in which the property was vacant may also have contributed to its decline. A second possibility is that the rebuilding of the farm represented an investment during recovery from the national agricultural depression. Certainly from the evidence of the 'barn', it would seem to be part of a regional shift to specialization in milk production to supply the growing urban and industrial communities. Finally, there is the person of John Hodgson Saul, the first occupant of the new farmhouse. As noted above (4.2.4), he appears to have been a man of some wealth. If the owner Anne Mason was not

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<sup>22</sup> Smith 1989, 152; 1995, 62.

responsible for the rebuilding, the natural conclusion is that this was funded by Saul himself to provide a new home for his family.

- 4.3.3 As shown on the 1907 OS mapping (Figure 5), when the barn was originally built as a narrow range fronted by two pens projected from the west end of the north elevation, probably a pigcote (building 03). On the same map, the existing farmhouse was shown, although the north-east part was indicated as a subdivision of the building, which suggested that it was then newly added.

By 1927 (Figure 6) an extension (building 02) had been added against the west end elevation of the barn, and another (building 01) against the west end of the south elevation. A range now butted against the north-east corner of the house (building 05), where a row of wooden sheds can be seen on a photograph of 1974 published by M D Smith.<sup>23</sup> The 1927 mapping indicates that the south-west part of the farmhouse was not yet constructed; it also shows a detached building to the north-east of the farmhouse (building 07), and another to the south of the barn (building 09).

A large building on the site of the shed to the south of the barn is shown on a published photograph dated 1961.<sup>24</sup> OS 1:2500 mapping of about the same date suggests this to have been a Dutch barn.

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<sup>23</sup> Smith 1989, 153.

<sup>24</sup> Smith 1989, 152.

## **5. Evaluation Results**

### **5.1 Introduction**

All three of the trenches were excavated under archaeological conditions, and were fully recorded contextually. Following excavation, the trenches were backfilled and compacted, and left in a safe condition.

### **5.2 Trench 1 excavation**

This trench was excavated to locate any remains of the west-facing external wall of the original farmhouse. It measured 5.0m east-west, by 1.1m north-south, and had a maximum depth of 0.75m.

The earliest unit encountered was (05), which comprised redeposited natural clay subsoil. This was a dark brown firm, sandy clay, which included small subangular stones and occasional pottery fragments. This was exposed where the overlying context (03) had been removed.

Cobbled layer (03) appeared to have been bedded into (05), although the coverage of (03) was intermittent across the trench area. The cobbles varied from 150mm by 100mm; to 80mm by 60mm. Within the centre of the trench, irregular feature (04) comprised a hard, roughly circular patch of clay, which was pale orange to yellow, and hard. It was about 50mm thick, and overlay cobbles (03).

Contexts (03), (04), and (05) were sealed by layer (02), which was a 0.3m thick deposit of mid brown, soft, gritty clayey sand. It contained subangular stone fragments, patches of mortar, brick fragments and patches of orange sand.

Layer (02) was overlain by (01), which comprised a depth of between 0.2m and 0.43m of MOT No.1 crushed stone, sealed by a 70mm thick layer of tarmac.

### **5.3 Trench 1 interpretation**

Context (05) appeared to form the bedding for an intermittent layer of cobbling (03), which was interpreted as the farmyard surface for the existing farmhouse. Context (04) may have represented a post-pad for the timber sheds shown on the 1974 photograph (Smith, 1989, 153). Contexts (02) and (01) represent post-1974 infill, to create the existing hard standing area.

### **5.4 Trench 2 excavation**

This trench was excavated to locate any remains of the south-facing external wall of the original farmhouse. It measured 5.0m north-south, and 1.1m east-west. It had a maximum excavated depth of 1.15m.

The earliest context excavated was (04), an orange brown, firm sandy clay, with patches of sand. This had a maximum thickness of 0.12m. Overlying (04) was fill (03), which was a dark brown clay, with a high content of sandstone fragments and lime mortar, with a maximum thickness of 0.3m.

Above (03) was (02), a layer of dark grey-brown, stiff gritty clay, which included subangular sandstone fragments, patches of mortar, brick fragments, and pieces of modern plastic. This was up to 0.65m thick. Sealing (02) was context (01), a layer of MOT No.1 crushed stone, up to 0.2m thick, with a 70mm thick capping of modern tarmac.

### **5.5 Trench 2 interpretation**

Clay (04) was interpreted as the natural clay. Directly overlying this was what appeared to be demolition material (03), probably related to the 1897 demolition of the original farmhouse. This in turn was sealed by the post-1974 fills (02) and (01). No evidence was encountered for either the south wall of the farmhouse, or for any cobbled surface, and it is suggested that these were removed during the 1897 demolition works, or by the post-1974 landscaping works.

### **5.6 Trench 3 excavation**

This trench was intended to locate any surviving remains of the east external wall of the original farmhouse. It measured 5.0m east-west, by 1.1m north-south, and had a maximum depth of 1.20m.

The earliest recorded deposit encountered was natural context (08), seen in the western part of the trench, at a depth of 0.83m. This comprised a dark orange, firm clay, which included a few small pebbles.

Clay (08) was cut by wall remains (06) and floor (07). Wall (06) was L-shaped in plan, and stood to a height of 0.4m above floor (07). The wall was fairly crude in construction, although solidly built of gritstone slabs with white lime mortar bonding. The north-south limb of the wall had been cut back into clay (08); and the wall height had clearly been truncated. Within the angle of the two wall sections, a 'core' of stonework was encountered, which may have been the truncated remains of a short flight of stone steps. The stone slabs had a maximum size of 0.52m by 0.34m by 0.14m.

The floor (07) comprised a surface of contiguous flagstones, which were constructed to respect the walls (06). The floor surface was located at 164.17m AOD, with a maximum trench depth of 1.2m. This floor surface extended further to both north and east, but was not excavated any further.

Context (05) overlay (06), (07) and (08), varying in depth between 0.3m and 0.6m. This comprised a matrix of hard orange clay, with inclusions of brick fragments,



lime mortar, angular sandstone fragments and cinders. This compact and deep infill contained a variety of finds, including pottery, glass, and iron.

Overlying (05) and sealing it was an irregular layer of worn river cobbles (04), rounded and up to 120mm across. In turn, these were sealed by a dark brown, soft gritty clay, which contained brick fragments, small stones and plastic fragments. This had a thickness of up to 0.3m. Overlying (05) was (02), a thick layer of MOT No.1 crushed sandstone. This comprised white, angular fragments of local gritstone, within a crushed matrix of the same material. Overlying this, and forming the ground surface, was a 70mm depth of tarmac.

### **5.7 Trench 3 interpretation**

Context (08) was clearly the natural local clay. Walls (06) and floor (07) had been constructed by cutting deep into the natural clay. This below-ground structure is interpreted as the half-cellar of the original farmhouse, with the mass of masonry within the wall angle representing the remains of the steps into the cellar.

Subsequently, walls (06) had been truncated, and deposit (05) dumped onto the floor (07). All of this had probably occurred during demolition of the original farmhouse. Unit (05) was then sealed by a cobbled surface (04), which is interpreted as comprising the farmyard of the 1897 farmhouse.

Probably sometime in the late 20th century, the cobbled farmyard was covered by reworked natural material (03), which in turn was sealed by a thick layer of MOT, and this was then overlain by the existing tarmac hard standing.

### **5.8 Recovered finds**

Late post-medieval pottery and tile fragments were recovered from the following contexts:

- Trench 1, (02).
- Trench 1, (03).
- Trench 1, (05).
- Trench 2, (02).
- Trench 3, (03).
- Trench 3, (04).

## **6. Evaluation interpretation**

### **6.1 Phase 1 – natural subsoil**

The natural subsoil comprised englacial boulder clay (or till), and was encountered within Trenches 2 (04) and 3 (08).

### **6.2 Phase 2 – post-medieval period**

Both documentary and cartographic evidence indicate that an earlier farmhouse had existed on a site just to the east of the existing farmhouse, and that this predecessor was demolished in 1897. It has been suggested from the will of Margaret Brownlow that an earlier farmhouse existed at Top o'th' Hill in 1599, although the late 17th century Hearth Tax indicated two Brownlow families at Rivington occupying different residences (4.2.1 above).

The 1703 datestone, located on the gable end of the existing barn, may well have been recovered from the demolished farmhouse, although it may not reliably indicate when the farmhouse had been constructed. Half-cellars were characteristic features of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses; they were frequently located beneath the staircase at the rear of the house, and the sunken arrangement ensured that such spaces were cooler than the other rooms, for the preservation of milk, butter, cheese, and other perishable foodstuffs.

It is possible that the farmhouse demolished in 1897 had simply been one of a sequence of earlier buildings, and not necessarily the structure noted by the Hearth Tax assessors during the 1660s.

### **6.3 Phase 3 – 1897**

The original farmhouse was probably demolished in this year. The walls were removed, and their footings grubbed out, all excepting the base of the half cellar which was revealed in Trench 3. The materials of the farmhouse were probably reused within the construction of the existing barn, and the existing farmhouse. The former farmhouse site was then levelled up, and a yard area created, using river cobbles laid as a hard standing.

### **6.4 Phase 4 - post 1974**

The topography of the site at the time of the evaluation was not one which would have been conducive to the functioning of a late post-medieval farm. It was very clear that the site had been landscaped, at some point after 1974 (Smith, 1989, 153), when it ceased to function as a working farm.

When the 1897 farmhouse was constructed, it could be assumed that the area to the east and south of the farmhouse comprised an extensive cobbled yard area, without any abrupt changes in level. Hence the cobbled surface noted in Trench 1 would have lain at a similar level to the existing sunken perimeter on the east side of the farmhouse.

This relatively modern build-up of material may have been partially derived from the evident scarping back of the hillside on the east side of the car park, providing material for infilling over the old farmhouse site.

## **7. Discussion and Recommendation**

- 7.1 The trenching succeeded in identifying fabric related to the pre-1897 farmhouse, although the remains had been significantly truncated, and may be no more extensive than the remains encountered within Trench 3. The finds evidence only related to deposits of the late Victorian period and later, with none being related to construction of this earlier building. However, as documentary evidence strongly suggests that the Top o'th' Hill farm site was occupied during the late 17th century and probably earlier still, it seems possible that deposits and structures may survive elsewhere on the site.
- 7.2 In the event that the proposed building works are progressed, it is suggested that a watching brief is undertaken during the initial groundworks, to record any additional archaeological features which may become exposed.

## **Appendix - Finds Assemblage, by Leigh Dodds**

### **The Ceramic Assemblage**

#### **Introduction**

An assemblage totalling 42 sherds of pottery dating to the late post-medieval and early modern periods, was recovered from six contexts across three trenches. Recovery of the assemblage was through hand collection and all finds were collected and retained.

The assemblage is in very fragmentary condition, though the sherds are generally in good condition, with some vessels represented by multiple sherds.

The pottery is described in detail according to ware group for each context; the assemblage summarised and quantified (by count, weight and minimum number of vessels (MNV)) according to trench, context and pottery ware group in the table below (Table 1).

None of the finds are considered significant enough to warrant illustration.

#### **The assemblage**

##### Trench 1

##### Context (02)

A single sherd from the rim to a large jar in stoneware was recovered from this context. This jar has a rim diameter of approximately 35cm and is brown-glazed on the exterior surface only. A small sherd from the wall of a mug, or similar cylindrical vessel, in red fabric with rouletted decoration under a clear glaze was recovered also. The final sherd from this context was from a wall tile in white fabric with clear-glazed surface.

The two sherds of pottery may date to the later 18<sup>th</sup> century or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The wall tile may be of 19<sup>th</sup>- or 20<sup>th</sup>-century date.

##### Context (03)

Vessels from this context were represented by single sherds from a blackware jar; stoneware bottle; blue-banded pearlware mug or jar; white ware mug; white bone-china cup, and two sherds from white wall tiles.

These sherds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.

### Context (05)

This context produced two joining sherds from the base to a blackware jar of 18<sup>th</sup>- to 19<sup>th</sup>-century date.

### Trench 2

#### Context (02)

Two sherds of pottery dating to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century were recovered from this context. These sherds were from the body of a mottled ware cup, or similar rounded vessel, and the rim to a blackware vessel, probably a large mug or small jar. A third sherd, from a large bowl in brown-glazed red-bodied earthenware was recovered also.

The remaining sherds from this context were from white-bodied tablewares of 19<sup>th</sup>-century date. These included a whiteware cup with red-painted band; a blue transfer-printed bowl and a cup, and bone-china cup with traces of lustre banded decoration.

The final sherd from this context was part of a wall tile decorated with a black transfer-printed design.

### Trench 3

#### Context (03)

The earthenwares from this context included single sherds from both a blackware jar and a red-bodied bowl coated internally with white slip beneath a clear lead glaze, along with two sherds from a single stoneware bottle with brown glaze.

Sherds from white-bodied tableware vessels included five sherds from a large mug or similarly cylindrical vessel decorated with blue underglaze transfer-printed chinoiserie design similar to the ubiquitous *Willow* pattern. Two further sherds from blue transfer-printed vessels were recovered consisting of a plate and a bowl. A sherd from a small whiteware plate, and two sherds from a bone-china bowl, both with traces of lustre banding, were recovered also

#### Context (04)

This context produced a single sherd from a blackware jar, along with sherds from a whiteware cup and a sherd from plate decorated with blue underglaze transfer-printed chinoiserie design.

## **Conclusion**

The pottery assemblage was very fragmentary and represents waste material of a general domestic nature, the vessels represented being largely a mixture of utilitarian storage jars and tablewares, including blue transfer-printed whitewares and finer bone-china.

The earliest vessels recovered were represented by the sherds of pottery to the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century recovered from trench 2, context (02). These sherds were from the body of a mottled ware cup, or similar rounded vessel, and the rim to a blackware vessel, probably a large mug or small jar.

However, the majority of the assemblage is clearly of 19<sup>th</sup> century date and of little archaeological significance.

No further work on the finds assemblage is deemed necessary and it is recommended that the assemblage is not retained.

Table 1: Quantification of pottery wares by trench and context (No. = number of sherds; Wt. = weight (g); MNV = maximum number of vessels)

Trench no.	1			1			1			2			3		
Context no.	(02)			(03)			(05)			(02)			(03)		
Ware/Quantification	No.	Wt.	MNV	No.	Wt.	MNV	No.	Wt.	MNV	No.	Wt.	MNV	No.	Wt.	MNV
Blackware				1	24	1	2	85	1	1	10	1	1	5	1
Bone-China				1	2	1				1	12	1	2	15	1
Brown-glazed ware	1	6	1							1	67	1			
Mottled ware										1	3	1			
Pearlware				1	3	1									
Slipware													1	15	1
Stoneware	1	82	1	1	66	1							2	62	1
Whiteware				1	7	1							2	18	2
Whiteware- printed				1	3	1				3	45	2	7	78	3
Wall tiles	1	6	1	2	15	1				1	52	1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>9</b>

Trench no.	3			Total		
Context no.	(04)					
Ware/Quantification	No.	Wt.	MNV	No.	Wt.	MNV
Blackware	1	15	1	6	139	5
Bone-China				4	29	3
Brown-glazed ware				2	73	2
Mottled ware				1	3	1
Pearlware				1	3	1
Slipware				1	15	1
Stoneware				4	210	3
Whiteware	4	24	2	7	49	5
Whiteware - printed	1	3	1	12	129	7
Wall tiles				4	73	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>31</b>



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[Geology of Britain viewer | British Geological Survey \(BGS\)](#)

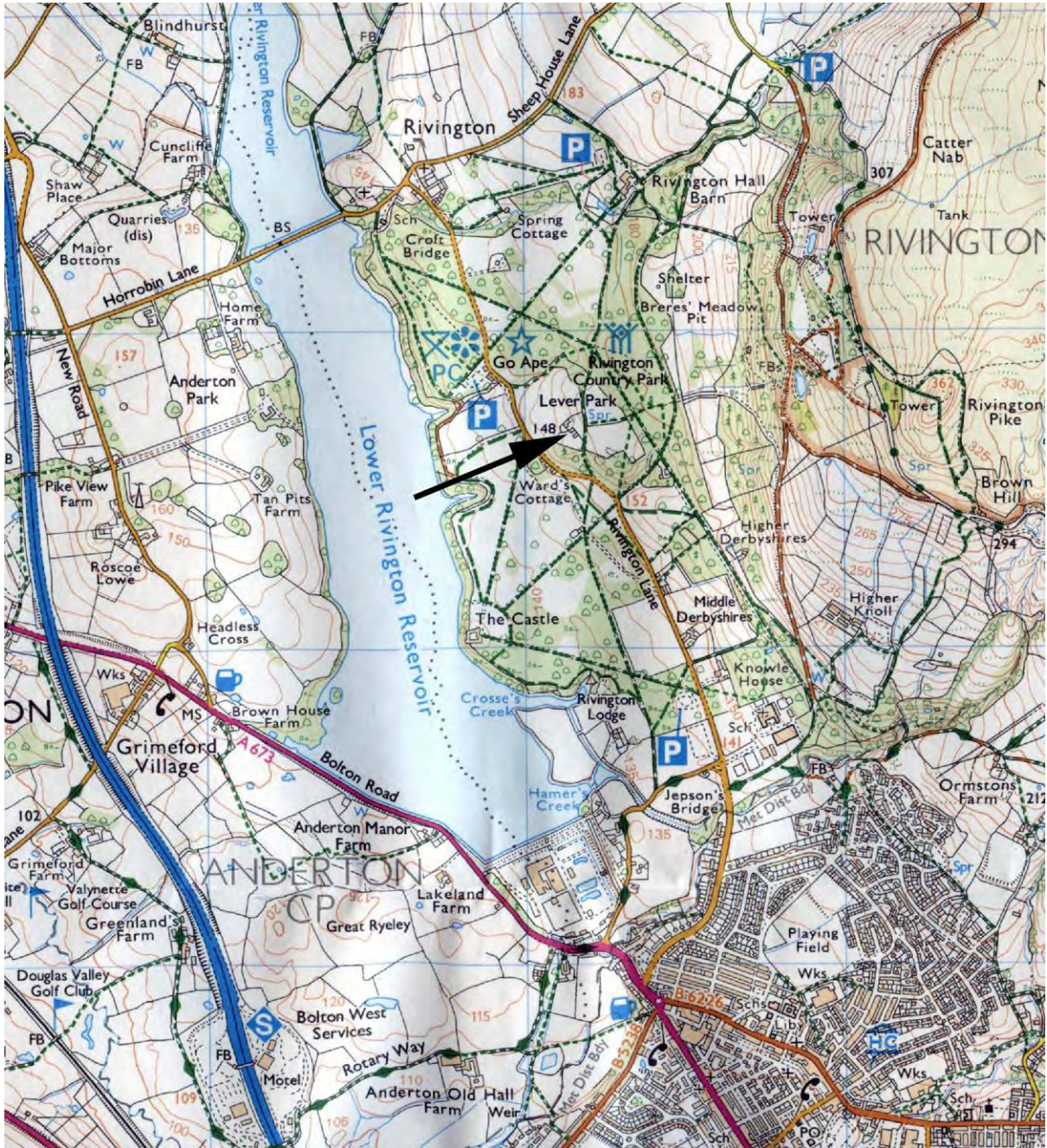
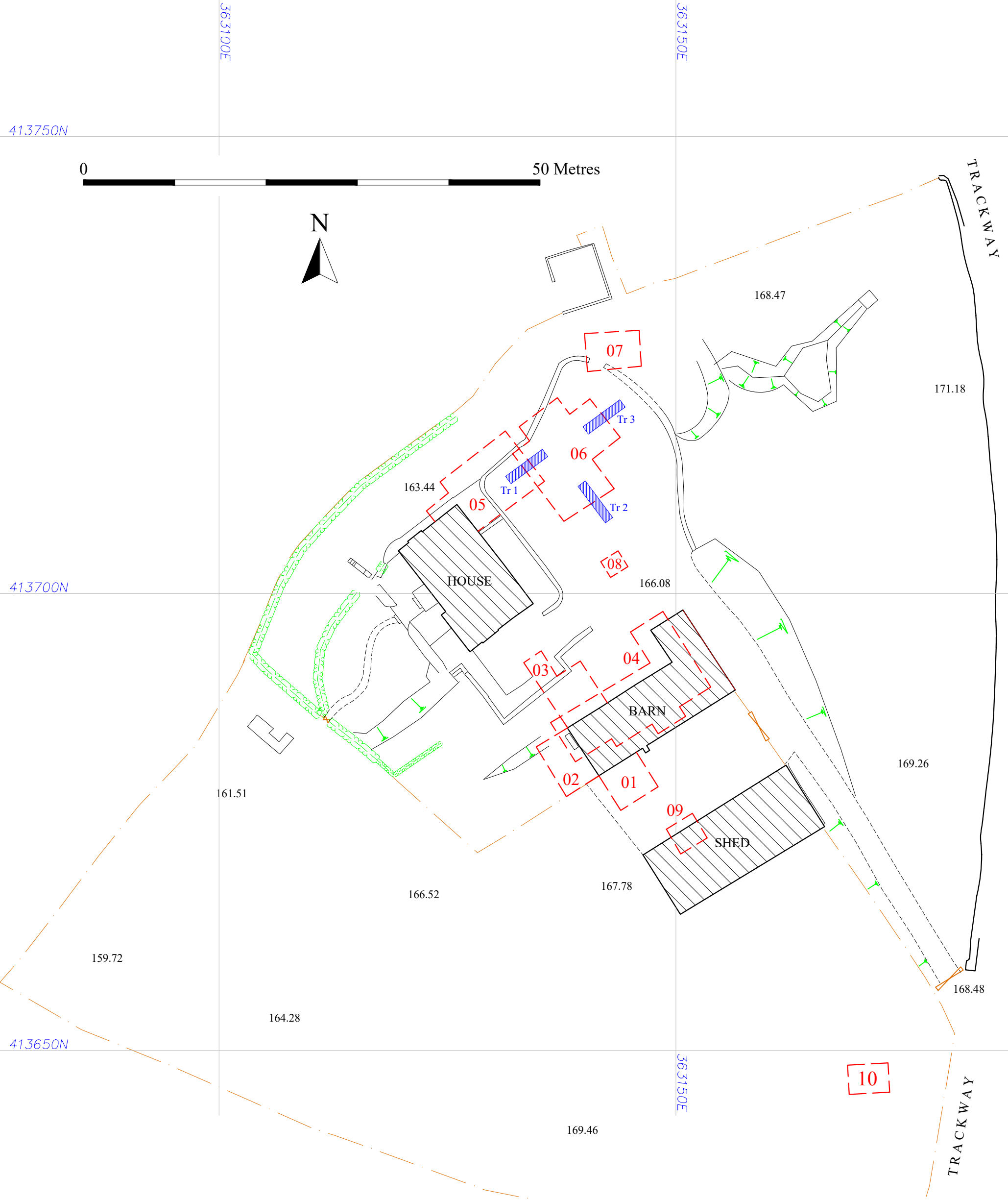


Figure 1. Site location map, derived from O. S. 1:25,000 series. Crown copyright, O.S. Licence No. AL100032621 (Matrix Archaeology Ltd).



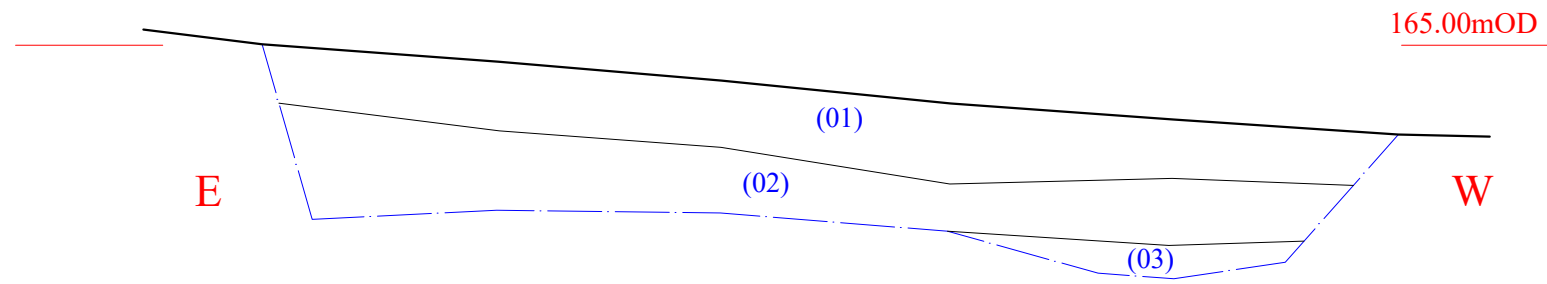
**TOP O'TH HILL, RIVINGTON LANE,  
RIVINGTON, LANCASHIRE**

**Evaluation Trench Location Plan**

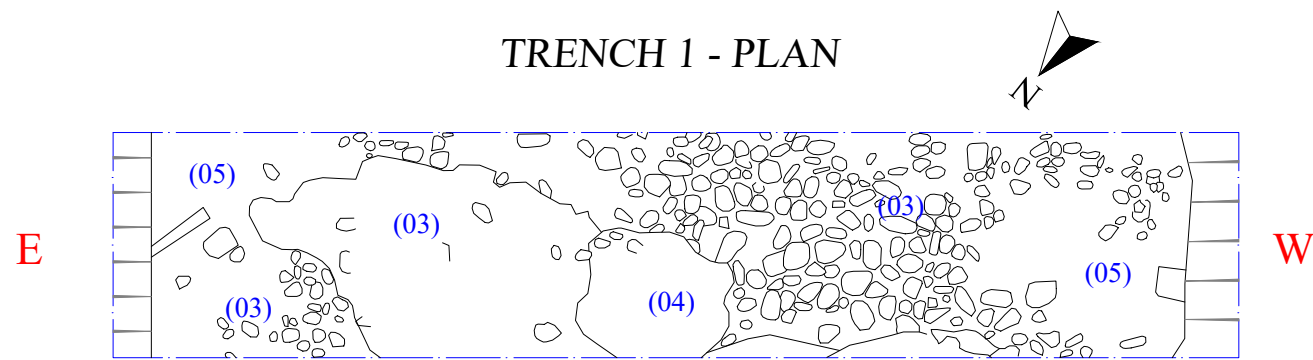
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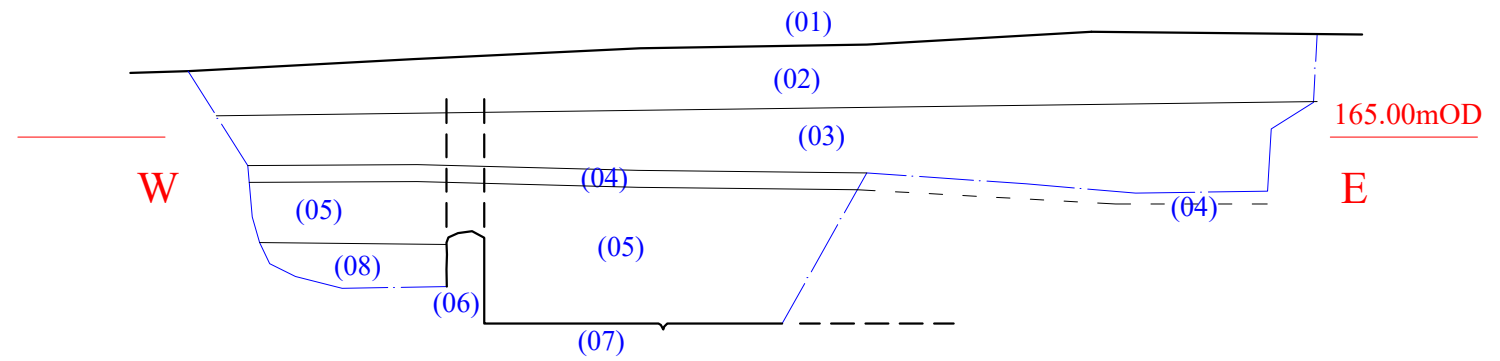
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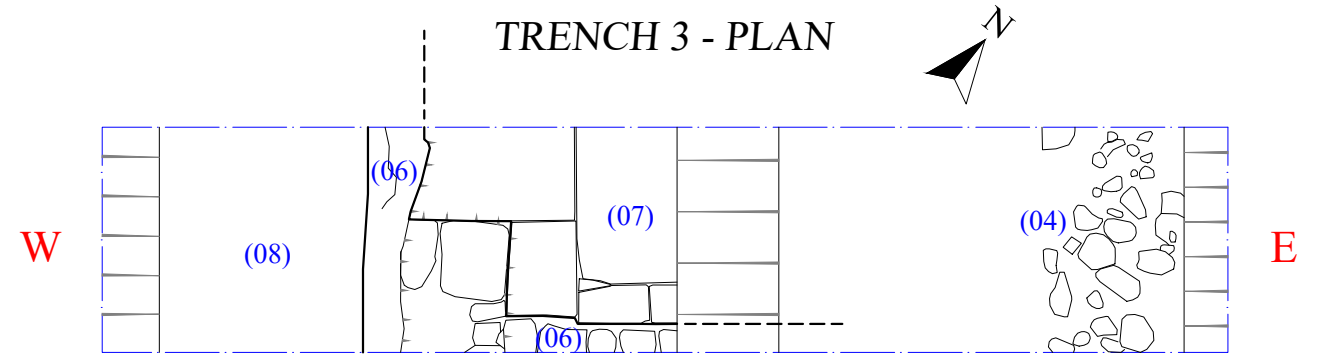
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TRENCH 3 - SECTION



TRENCH 3 - PLAN



TRENCH 2 - SECTION

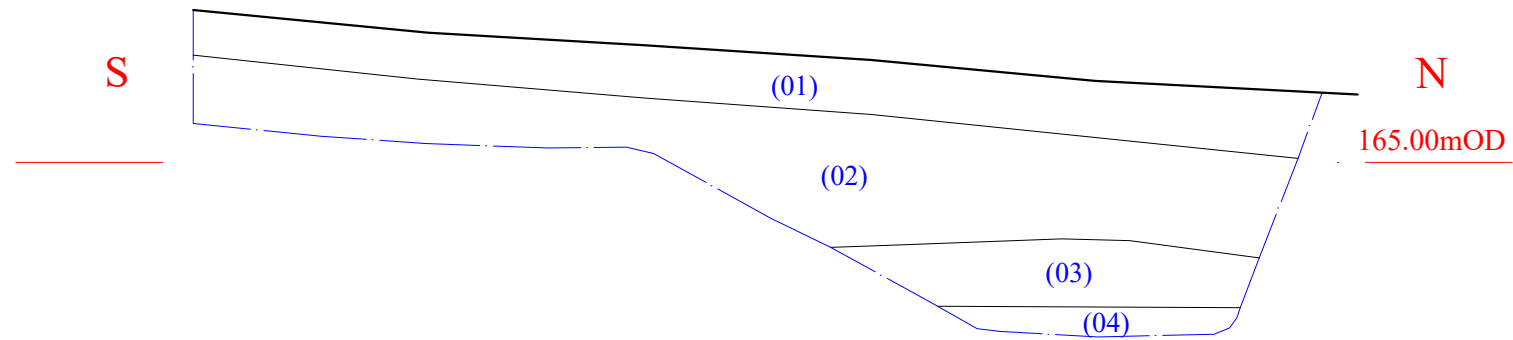




Plate 1. Site during trenching, viewed from above, farmhouse to left, north at top.



Plate 2. Trench 1, viewed from east.





Plate 3. Trench 1, viewed from east.



Plate 4. Trench 1, viewed from west.



Plate 5. Trench 1, central part, viewed from south.



Plate 6. Trench 3, part excavated, viewed from east.



Plate 7. Trench 3, part excavated, viewed from west.



Plate 8. Trench 3, fully excavated, viewed from west.



Plate 9. Trench 3, fully excavated, viewed from east.



Plate 10. Trench 3, fully excavated, viewed from north.



Plate 11. Trench 2, viewed from south-east.





Plate 12. Trench 2, viewed from north-east.



Plate 13. Trench 2, viewed from south.



Plate 14. Trench 2, viewed from north.



Plate 15. Trench 2, north end, viewed from east.



Plate 16. Finds from Trench 1, context (02).



Plate 17. Finds from Trench 1, context (03).



Plate 18. Finds from Trench 1, context (05).





Plate 21. Finds from Trench 3, context (04).