



**RAVENSTONE HALL, ASHBY ROAD,  
RAVENSTONE**

**A report on the archaeological watching brief 2009.**

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**Project code: RHA**

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**RAVENSTONE HALL, RAVENSTONE, COALVILLE, LEICESTERSHIRE**  
**A Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief**

**SUMMARY**

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Mr. C. Wade to carry out an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of an ornamental lake on land immediately adjoining the north-west side of Ravenstone Hall.
- Early 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping and documentary evidence suggest the former presence of formal gardens, orchards and fish ponds (probably originating in the 18<sup>th</sup> century), on or near the location of the current ground works.
- Although the current topography suggests elements of the more major components of the formal landscaping may remain, no trace of the more detailed layout was observed during the course of the watching brief.
- A 19<sup>th</sup> century drain carrying storm water away from the village was recorded, as were field drains of the same period. Modern field drains were also present, consistent with the low lying location and the continuing issue of water management.
- A scatter of pot sherds dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was recovered from the stripped surface, but was not associated with any observable features. A dump of similar material, also containing near complete glass and ceramic bottles, was recovered during the topsoil stripping.
- The results of the watching brief enhanced by limited documentary analysis have clarified the potential sequence of landscape development at Ravenstone Hall in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Historic mapping suggests an apparent change of land use from formal gardens/landscaped parkland to arable and/or pasture, probably in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This change is likely to have occasioned the removal of the majority of the 18<sup>th</sup> century features, no traces of which were discerned during the watching brief.
- An 1815 O.S. map appears to show formal gardens/orchards and probable ponds fed by Blower's Brook to the north-west of the Hall. By 1849 mapping suggests the realignment and possibly canalisation of the Brook, moving its course to the north-west to its present line where it forms the boundary between Spring Wood and the grounds of Ravenstone Hall.
- The barrel vaulted drain and horseshoe field drains appear likely to have formed part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century reorganisation. They are inconsistent with the continuation of the brook along its earlier course, and the presence of fish ponds, but reflect continuing issues of water management in this locality.

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**CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
SUMMARY	1
CONTENTS	2
List of Figures	2
List of Plates	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	3
3. SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY	4
4. METHODOLOGY	4
5. RESULTS	4
6. CONCLUSION	5

References and works consulted

Appendix A Summary context list

Appendix B Summary finds catalogue.

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 Site location.

Figure 2 1815 O.S. 2" to 1 mile map of Leicestershire (extract). British library reference OSD263,12.

Figure 3 1815 O.S. Detail with annotations showing possible ponds and gardens.

Figure 4 1849 OS 6" 1<sup>st</sup> Edition showing apparent change in the course of Blower's Brook..

Figure 5 Showing areas that were re-stripped under controlled conditions.

Figure 6 Site plan, showing outline of topsoiled area and recorded features.

Figure 7 Section through barrel vaulted drain, 0005.

Figure 8 Plan of barrel vaulted drain.

Figure 9 South-west facing section of Area 06.

Figure 10 East facing section of core trench.

Figure 11 North-west facing section of excavation, 0007.

Figure 12 South-east facing section of core trench, 0015.

**List of Plates**

Plate 1 Barrel vaulted drain, 0004.

Plate 2 Barrel vaulted drain showing construction and inspection hatch.

Plate 3 Barrel vaulted drain with slate slab covering inspection area.

Plate 4 Lead pipe passing under barrel vaulted drain.

Plate 5 Lead pipe passing under concave base of barrel vaulted drain, 0005

Plate 6 North-eastern end of excavation, looking south-west.

Plate 7 Ravenstone Hall from south-west of excavation, looking south.

Plate 8 Section of eastern end of excavation, 0007, looking south-east.

Plate 9 East facing section of core trench, 0015, with possible stream deposits.

Plate 10 Modern field drain, 0009, looking north-east.

Plate 11 Core trench, looking north.

Plate 12 Section of excavation, 0013, looking north-west.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Trent and Peak Archaeology was contracted by Mr Charles Wade to carry out an archaeological watching brief on groundworks associated with the construction of an ornamental lake in the grounds of Ravenstone Hall, Ravenstone, Coalville, Leicestershire, centred on SK 39963 14073.
- 1.2 The watching brief was carried out in compliance with a planning condition imposed by Leicestershire County Council, planning order 08/01062. The condition required that the developer provide for an archaeological watching brief to be conducted during intrusive ground works. This requirement is in agreement with local plan policy and national planning guidance (PPG16, *Archaeology and Planning*).
- 1.3 Fieldwork and reporting has been conducted in accordance with the provisions of *A Brief for Archaeological Attendance for Inspection and Recording (an Intensive Watching Brief) at Ravenstone Hall, Ashby Road, Ravenstone* (Directorate of Environment, Development Control Division, North West Leicestershire District Council, 9/10/2008) and the approved *Project Design & Method Statement for an intensive archaeological watching brief during intrusive groundworks at Ravenstone Hall, Ashby Road, Ravenstone, Leicestershire* (Trent & Peak Archaeology 2008).
- 1.4 Fieldwork and reporting has been undertaken by suitably qualified members of TPA according to accepted archaeological practice and the 'Standard and Guidance' produced by the Institute for Archaeologists.
- 1.5 The ground works took the form of machine excavation and landscaping, as part of the creation of an ornamental lake immediately to the north-west of Ravenstone Hall (Figure 1). Topsoil was removed from an area encompassing c.0.8ha, with further excavation of the underlying clay of the Mercia Mudstone formation to produce the desired contouring.

## 2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The current Ravenstone Hall was built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, probably on the site of an earlier building. The hall was built for the Fosbrooke family of Shardlow who had acquired the former Wilkins estates in 1740, the latter included 'a noble mansion house of brick and stone with outhouses, stables, gardens, grove orchards and fishponds' (Nicholls 1802, 932). The 'noble mansion house' was replaced by the present hall which was built in the 1750's for the Fosbrooke family. The background to this is given by Nicholls:  
  
'Mr Wilkins built a very large and magnificent seat in which Mr Cave afterwards lived but which Mr Fosbrooke, soon after his purchase pulled down, sold the greater part of the material and built an handsome, though much smaller seat in its place.' (Nicholls 1802, 933).
- 2.2 The ordnance survey map of 1815 shows the current hall with possible gardens and orchards. On the same map a stream is shown with indications of possible ponds and, along with the gardens and orchards, these may correlate with Nicholls' description (Figures 2 and 3).
- 2.3 The site was uncultivated at the time the watching brief was carried out but satellite imagery shows that in the recent past it had been used for arable production.
- 2.4 The Historic Environment Record (HER) indicates that the site lies in an area of archaeological interest. The topography of the site along with information derived from the Ordnance Survey Drawings prepared at the start of the nineteenth century suggest evidence of an earlier formal landscape (including a water feature, pond or otherwise) associated with either the former mansion or the present hall. To the north of the site the presence of later prehistoric archaeological remains is suggested by the identification of a series of crop marks (Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Environment Record ref.: MLE16881-3).

### 3. SITE TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1 The site lies at the bottom of a steep slope which falls away from the Hall, probably enhanced as part of historic landscaping. To the north-west it is bounded by Blowers Brook beyond which lies Spring Wood, to the north-east the land rises to form a rounded hill. To the south-west the site abuts Ashby Road. In the centre of the site and running towards the hall out-buildings there is a deep cleft cut into the slope. This looks to be artificial and has a brick culvert issuing from it. The cleft and the culvert lay outside the area of soil stripping.
- 3.2 Below the top and subsoil the site is on Mercia Mudstone, red clay interspersed with bands of soft grey/green rock, see Figures 11 and 12.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 With the exception of an initial phase all topsoil stripping was done with a bladed ditching bucket under archaeological supervision.
- 4.2 All field work was conducted in accordance with the Trent and Peak Manual. Any features uncovered by the soil stripping were marked on a scaled site plan and given a unique context number, e.g. 0001. Features were excavated sufficient to demonstrate character and date, and a section was recorded by drawing and photograph. Small finds were given a unique finds code, e.g. AAA.
- 4.3 Where deep excavations took place, sections were recorded by photograph and scale drawing.
- 4.4 Due to a lapse in communications the client's contractors started soil stripping prior to Trent & Peak Archaeology being informed. This resulted in a significant area being stripped using a toothed bucket and without archaeological attendance. 10% of this area was subsequently re-stripped using a bladed bucket. This was done in four metre strips each of which was given an area number, 01-06 (see Figure 5 for location).

### 5. RESULTS

- 5.1 No underlying features were revealed in the observed areas, 01 to 05. The remaining area of the ground works was then stripped using a bladed bucket. This revealed a number of nineteenth century features all of which were associated with water management. These comprised a number of field drains made up of horseshoe sections and a brick-built barrel-vaulted storm drain that carried surface water from the village and discharged into Blowers Brook. Both of these are reported on below. In addition to these a number of modern plastic field drains had been inserted, probably in the 1980's by the NCB as a result of flooding due to subsidence caused by Sibston pit whose galleries run beneath the site.
- 5.2 Across the site there was a considerable quantity of brick, rubble glass and pot immediately below the topsoil. None of the brick was suggestive of in situ structures but rather appeared to have been dumped from elsewhere. The pot was similarly scattered across the site rather than from observable features and perhaps suggests night-soiling of the field, probably when it was in arable production. The majority of the glass came from one specific area, 0011 (Figure 6). It may have originally been in a shallow pit but if so this had been subsequently disturbed by the planting of a small tree or shrub. Consequently all that remained were a number of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century glass and ceramic bottles and numerous pot sherds of the same date.
- 5.3 **Field Drains.** 'Horseshoe' field drains were noted at various points on the site. Made up of a ceramic arch placed over a flat base these date to the 19th century and may suggest that the site was prone to water-logging. The best preserved of these, 0006, ran east to west across the site with feeders running into it north to south. The locations of these are marked on the site plan. Modern field drains, in the form of corrugated plastic pipes 0009, 0010 and 0012, were also observed.
- 5.4 **Barrel Vaulted Drain.** This substantial and impressive structure was observed running across the site, following a south-east/north-west axis, and had been built to carry storm water away from the

village. In construction the drain was circular in cross-section seated on a brick plinth (see Figures 7 and 8 and plates 1 and 2). At its lowest point, just before it discharges into Blowers Brook, the drain becomes rectangular in profile and was capped by large slate slabs. These may have enabled access to the drain for cleaning and removal of blockages (see Plate 3).

- 5.4.1 The drain (0018) was recorded at a number of places along its length both to establish its extent and orientation and to ascertain its constructional form. These interventions are marked on Figure 6 where, for recording purposes, discrete lengths were given individual context numbers (0003, 0004, 0005 and, at its intersection with 0006, as 0014).
- 5.4.2 At the intersection of the barrel vaulted drain and the field drain 0006, the latter appears to be fed below the base of the main drain by means of a lead pipe. The constructional sequence is uncertain. Whatever the case both drains would seem to have been in use contemporaneously and perhaps more significantly, their presence is arguably inconsistent with the continued presence of ponds in this locality.
- 5.5 Along the lowest part of the site the remains of what was possibly a small water course were intermittently observed. This was partially seen in a section of Area 06 (Figures 5 and 9) and a possible continuation was recorded in a section of the 'core trench'. Although discontinuous, this may represent the earlier line of Blower's Brook as shown on the 1815 O.S. map (Figures 2 & 3)

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The results of the watching brief enhanced by limited documentary analysis have clarified the potential sequence of landscape development at Ravenstone Hall in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6.2 The 1815 O.S. map appears to show formal gardens/orchards and probable ponds fed by Blower's Brook to the north-west of the Hall (Figures 2 & 3). By 1849 the O.S. mapping suggests a realignment and possibly some canalisation of the Brook moving its course to the north-west to its present line where it forms the boundary between Spring Wood and the grounds of Ravenstone Hall (Figure 4).
- 6.3 Although the watching brief recovered no obvious deposits suggestive of either formal gardens/orchards or ponds it did provide limited evidence of the former course of Blowers Brook, see Figures 9 and 10.
- 6.4 The barrel vaulted drain and horseshoe field drains appear inconsistent with the possible earlier brook line and ponds, indeed drain 0006 cuts potential earlier brook line deposits. It is possible that once the ponds were removed that water continued to gather on the ground surface necessitating the installation of the field drains.

## References.

*Nicholls History and Antiquities of Leicestershire, Volume 3, part 2, West Goscote Hundred. 1802.*

## Published Works & Maps consulted,

*Ravenstone Conservation Area Appraisal and Study, North west Leicestershire District Council, 2001.*

*White, History Gazetteer and Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland, Sheffield, 1877.*

*Slater's Directory, Leicestershire, 1850.*

*Wright's Directory, Leicestershire, 1880.*

*Wright's Directory, Leicestershire, 1884.*

*Wrights Directory, Leicestershire, 1894.*

*1815 OS 2" to 1 mile map of Leicestershire, (extract). British library reference OSD263,12.*

*1849 OS 6" 1<sup>st</sup> Edition with permission of H.M.S.O. © Crown Copyright Licence No. 1000206 18.*

**Appendix A Summary Context List.**

- 0001 topsoil
- 0002 subsoil
- 0003 barrel vaulted drain
- 0004 same as 0003
- 0005 same as 0003
- 0006 horse shoe drain
- 0008 horse shoe drain
- 0009 modern drain, corrugated plastic pipe
- 0010 modern drain, corrugated plastic pipe
- 0011 dump of nineteenth/twentieth century pot and glass
- 0012 modern drain
- 0014 length of barrel vaulted drain (same as 0003) at intersection of 0005 and 0006
- 0016 possible earlier course of Blower's Brook
- 0017 concrete manhole cover, modern

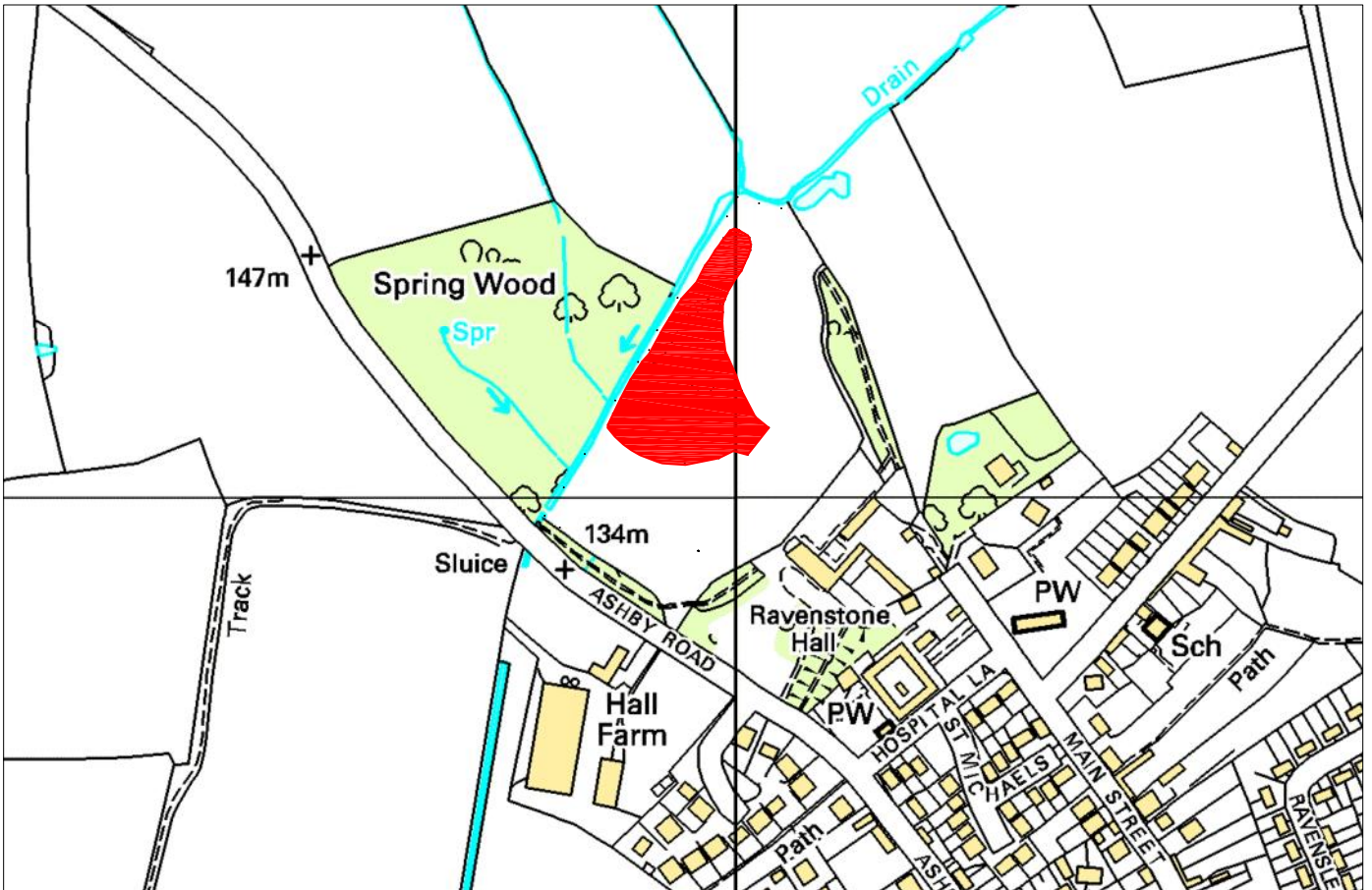
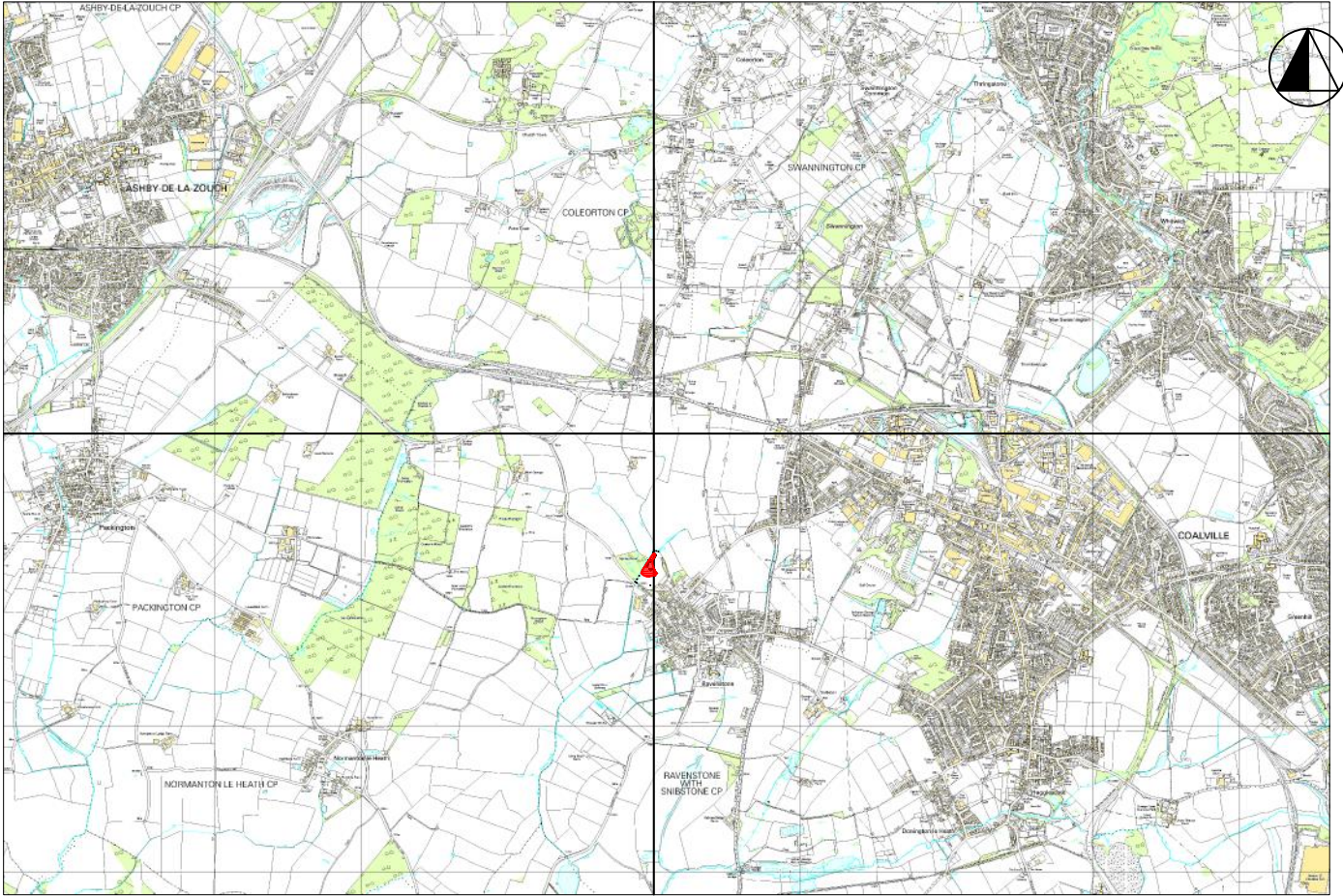
**Appendix B Finds Catalogue,**


(identifications and descriptions by Dr David Walker and Lee Elliott of TPA.)

FIND CODE	DESCRIPTION	CONTEXT
AAA	Pot, blue transfer print, part of saucer, stamp on base indicates Derby Porcelain Works, 1878-90.	0011
AAB	Glass, clear, base of bottle, no maker's marks. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAC	Pot, white glaze, base of bottle, S. Maling, Newcastle, manufacturer of the jar for Keillers marmalade, 1862.	0011
AAD	Glass, clear bottle, complete, G.B on base. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAE	Glass, green, small bottle, nearly complete, some damage near the base, no markings. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAF	Pot, white glaze spout or funnel, 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAG	Pot, tea pot spout, brown salt glaze, late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAH	Metal, part of knife blade, corroded, late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAI	Glass, clear, nearly complete bottle, damage to neck, no makers name but 2037 on base. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century.	0011
AAJ	Pot, white glaze with green transfer print around rim, part of bowl. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAK	Glass, green, base of bottle with makers name Breffits Ld, London and 8668, possible pattern number. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century.	0011
AAL	Glass, brown bottle, complete, W moulded on base, late 19 <sup>th</sup> century.	0011
AAM	Glass, green, base of bottle with Breffit's, Calder. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century.	0011
AAN	Pot, stone ware jar with indentation around the top and vertical incised decoration. A capital G is stamped into the base. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century.	0011
AAO	Pot, stoneware complete bottle, Skey, Tamworth in oval stamp near base. No labelling on bottle. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAP	Glass, green, bottle, nearly complete, damage to neck, Symington and Co, Edinburgh, coffee and chicory. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAQ	Glass, blue/green bottle, nearly complete, damage to neck. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAR	Pot, white glaze, part of makers name on base, late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0011
AAS	Horse shoe drain, 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0006
AAT	Moulded stone probably from a building associated with the Hall, no dating evidence.	0005
AAU	Pot, stone ware, part of the shoulder of bottle, no maker's marks. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
AAV	Pot, white glaze, part of tea pot spout. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup>	0001

	century	
AAW	Pot, white glaze interior, mustard yellow glaze exterior. 19 <sup>th</sup> century?	0001
AAX	Pot, white glaze with pale blue transfer print, part of plate or bowl. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
AAZ	Pot, white glaze with green transfer print, part of bowl or dish. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABA	Pot, white glaze with blue transfer print, part of plate. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABB	Pot, white glaze, part of cup, no stamp or mark, late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABC	Glass, green, part of rim and neck of bottle, fits with ABH. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABD	Glass, green, base of bottle with PAT..... on base. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABE	Pot, brown salt glaze, part of base, with foot ring, of dish, teapot or bowl. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABF	Glass, green, base of bottle, no maker's mark. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABG	Pot, white glaze with green transfer print, part of bowl or dish. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABH	Glass, green, part of rim and neck of bottle, fits with ABC. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> /early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABI	Glass, clear, fragment. Probably 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABJ	Glass, clear, fragment. Probably 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABK	Glass, clear fragment, probably 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABL	Pot, white glaze, two fragments. Probably 20 <sup>th</sup> century	0001
ABM	Pot, brown salt glaze, part of bowl. 19 <sup>th</sup> century	0001






 RHA, Ravenstone Hall,  
 Figure 1, Site location,  
 Scales 1:50,000 and 1:5000 at A4. LP 13/1/10




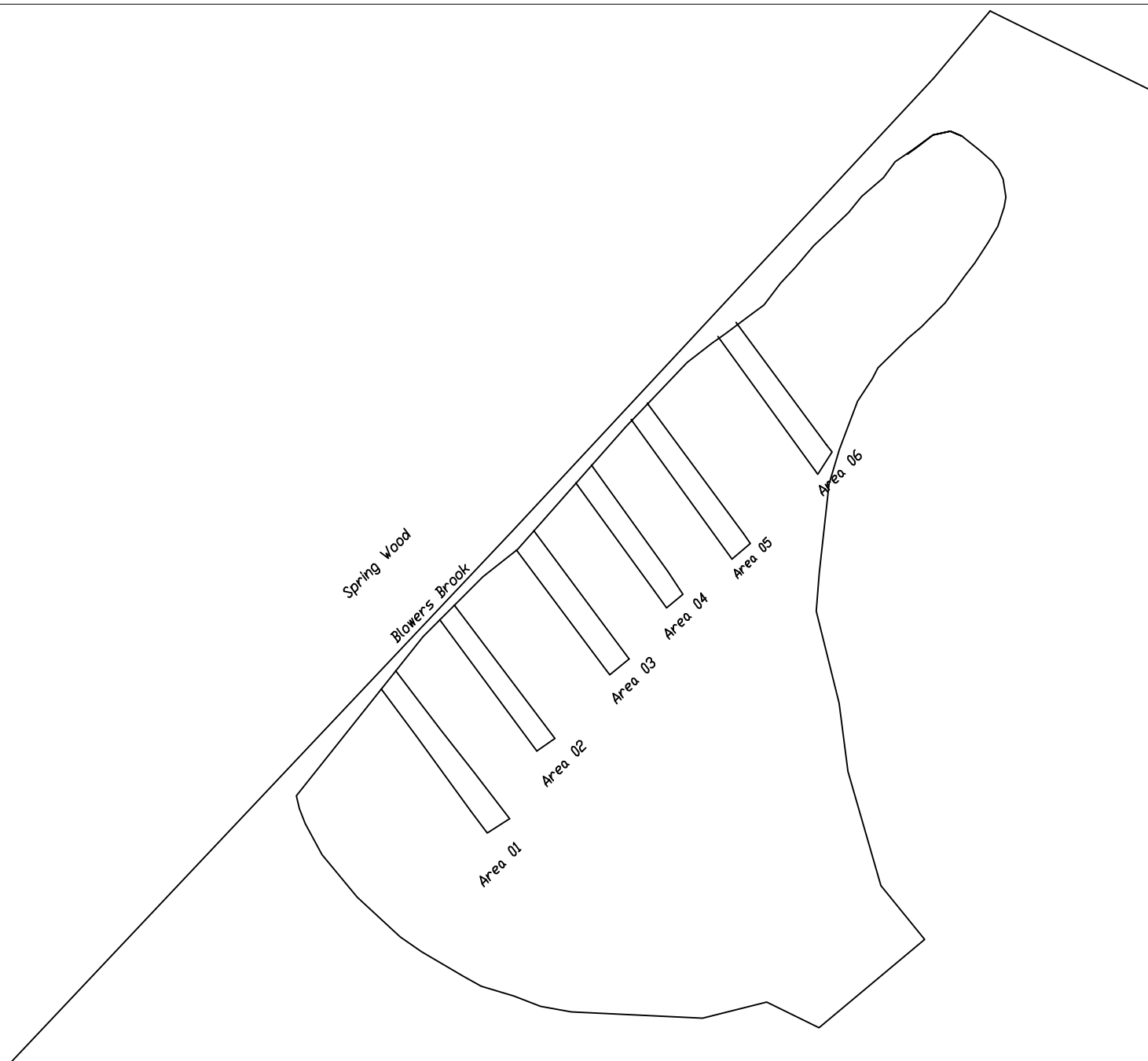
Detail shown in figure 3.



Figure 3. Detail of the 1815 2" Ordnance Survey Map , with annotations showing possible ponds and gardens. No scale. L.P. 8/1/10.

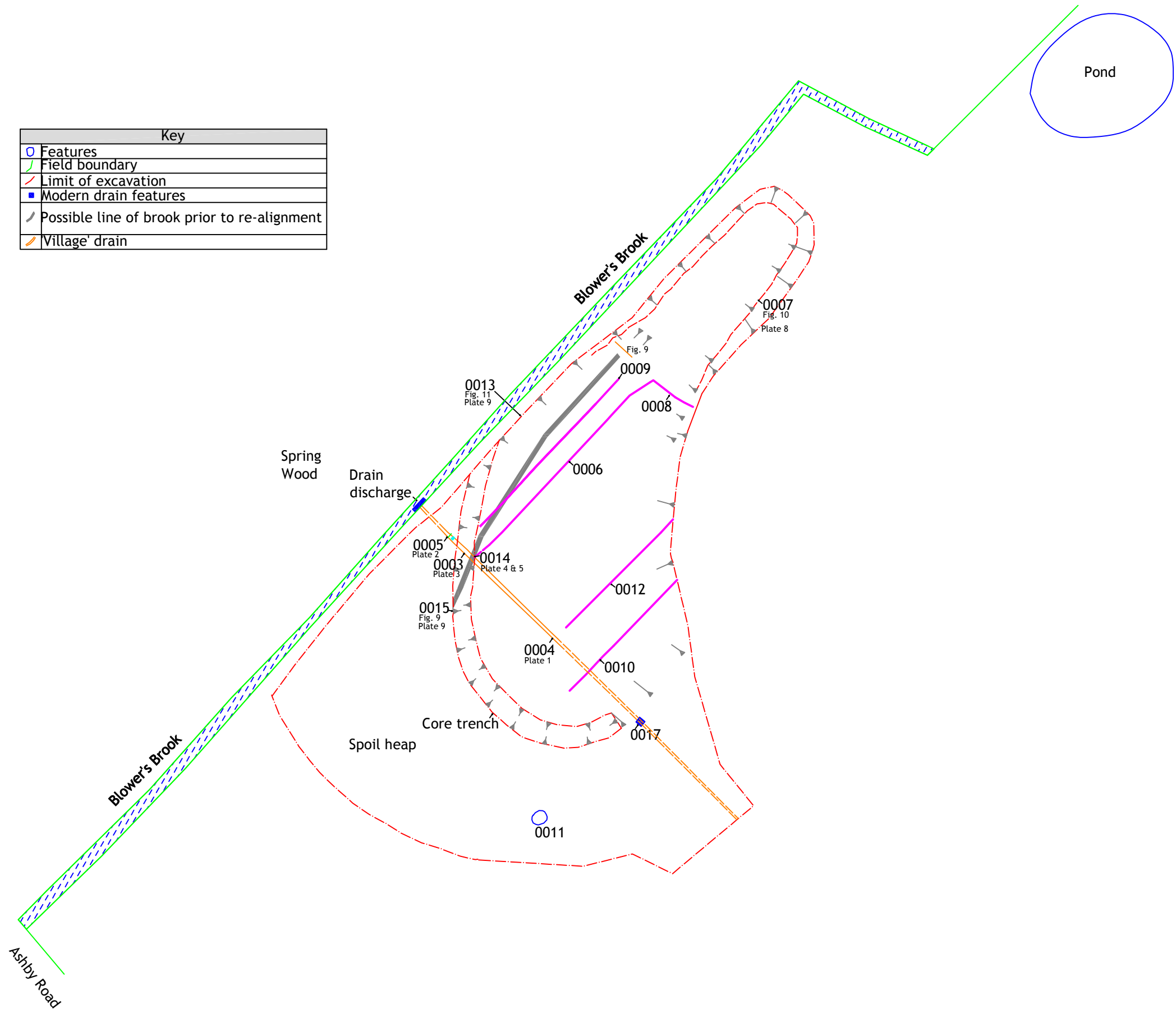


 RHA: Ravenstone Hall, Leicestershire  
 Figure 4. Detail of the 1st edition, 1849-1889, Ordnance Survey six-inch Map, showing apparent change in the course of Blower's Brook.  
 Scale 1:5000 at A4 DW 13/07/2010





Key	
	Features
	Field boundary
	Limit of excavation
	Modern drain features
	Possible line of brook prior to re-alignment
	Village' drain



- (a) Brick, drain structure
- (b) Soft mid dark brown clay, inwash from surrounding subsoil and Mercia mudstone
- (c) Soft reddish brown clay, in wash from surrounding Mercia mudstone.
- (d) Brownish grey gritty sand, deposit washed down drain whilst still in use.
- (e) Mid brown firm clay, part of Mercia mudstone formation
- (f) Mid brown firm clay, part of Mercia mudstone formation
- (g) Reddish brown firm clay, part of Mercia mudstone formation
- (h) Reddish brown firm clay, part of Mercia mudstone formation
- (i) Red brick with mortar
- (k) Mortar

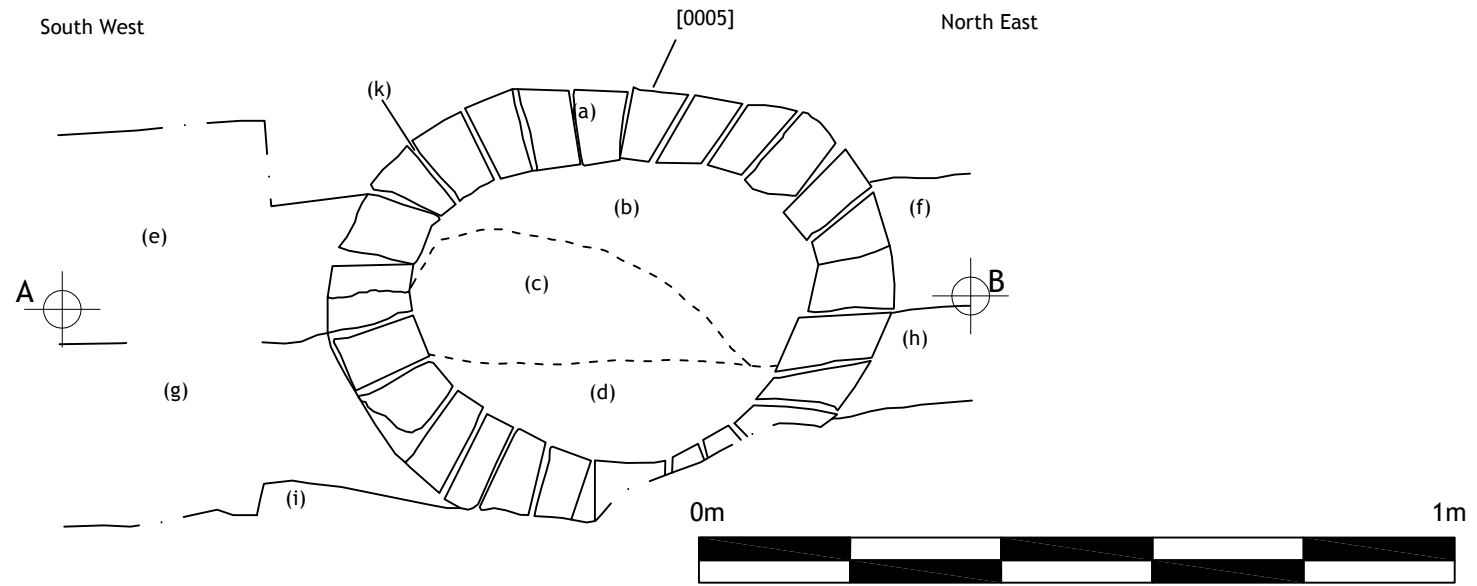
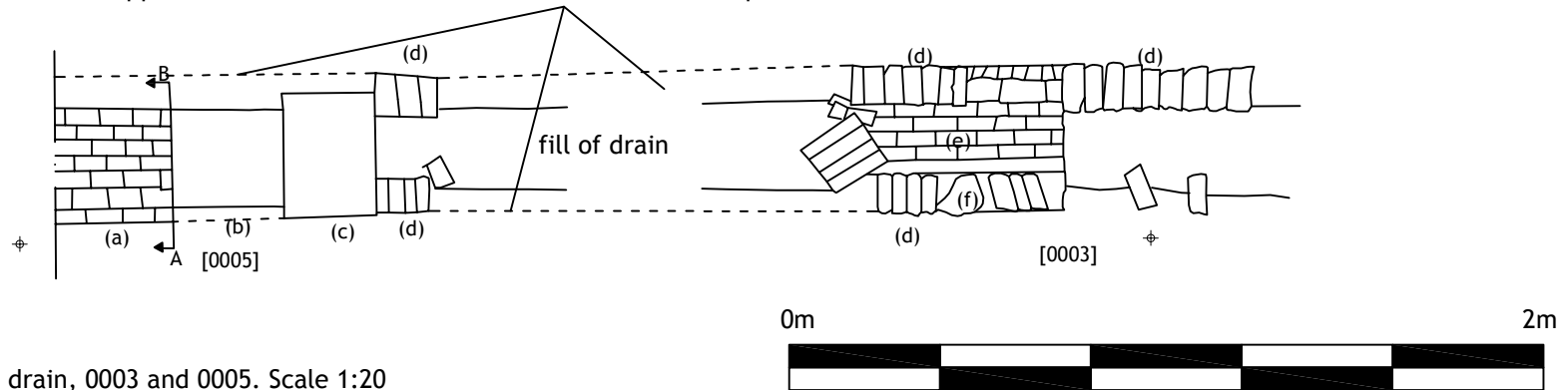


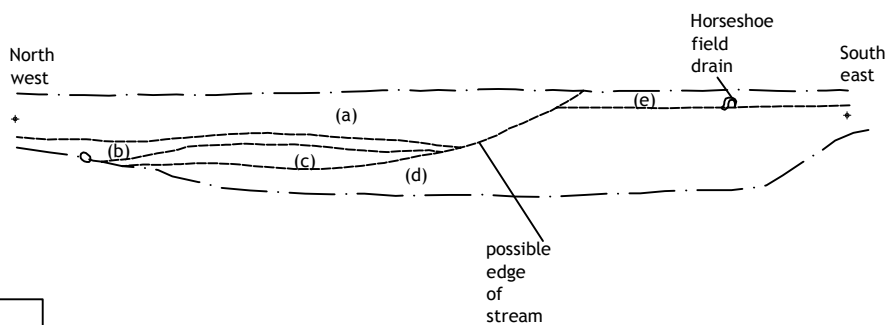
Figure 7. 0005, section through barrel vaulted drain. Scale 1:10

upper course of bricks removed and void filled with top and sub soil.



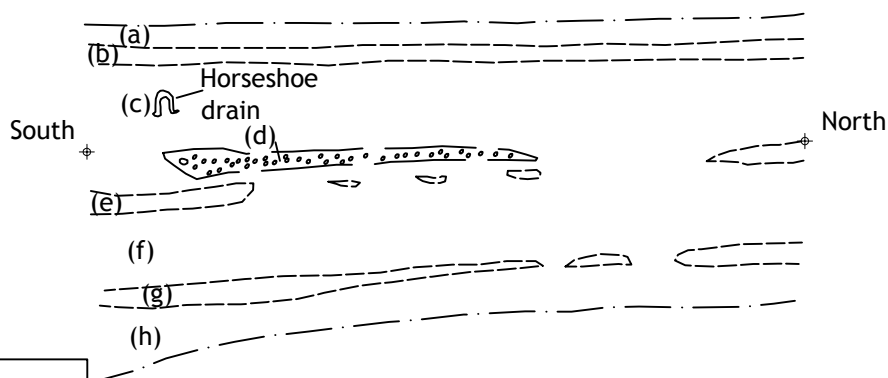
- (a) Brick, top of barrel vaulted drain
- (b) line of drain
- (c) Slate slab
- (d) brick sides of drain
- (e) brick base of drain
- (f) Fragment of slate slab

Figure 8. Plan of barrel vaulted drain, 0003 and 0005. Scale 1:20



- (a) orange/brown silt
- (b) grey/brown soft clay
- (c) gravel in matrix of soft clay
- (d) red clay
- (e) light grey sandy clay

Figure 9, south west facing section of Area 06. Scale 1:100

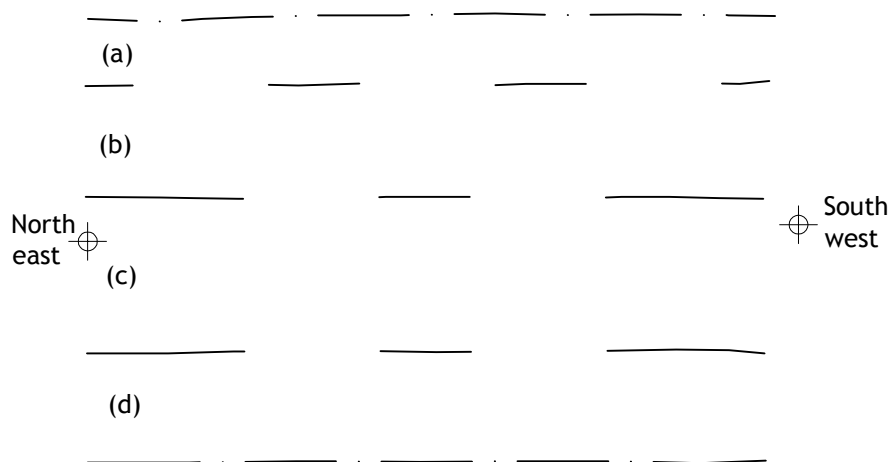


- (a) red silty firm clay
- (b) greenish grey decayed stone
- (c) greyish brown very firm clay
- (d) gravel band
- (e) light greenish grey stone
- (f) red clay
- (g) light greenish grey stone
- (h) red clay

Figure 10, East facing section of core trench. Scale 1:50

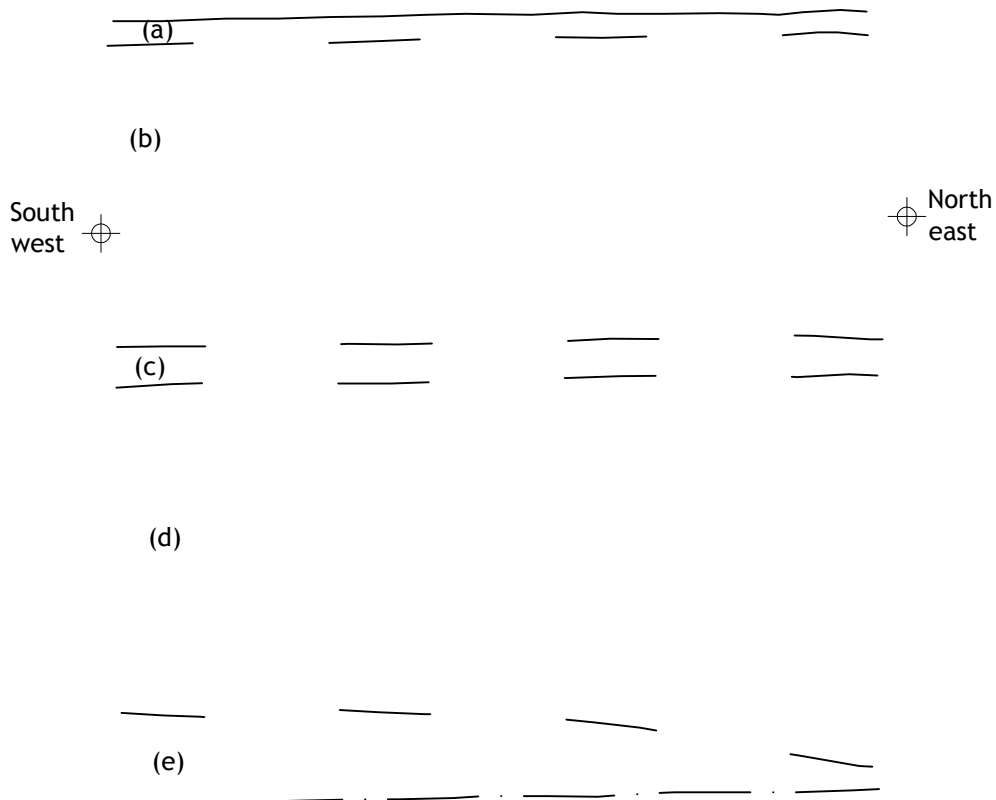






- (a) greenish grey stone
- (b) red silty firm clay
- (c) greenish grey stone
- (d) red very soft clay

Figure 11, north west facing section of excavation, 0007  
scale 1:20



- (a) light brown silty sand
- (b) red clay
- (c) light greenish grey stone
- (d) red clay
- (e) light greenish grey stone

Figure 12, south east facing section of core trench, 0015.  
scale 1:20





**Plate 1. Barrel vaulted drain.**



**Plate 2. Barrel vaulted drain showing circular construction adjoining the inspection hatch.**



**Plate 3. Barrel vaulted drain with slate slab covering inspection area.**



**Plate 4. Lead pipe passing under the barrel vaulted drain. The pipe connects with the horse shoe field drain, 0006.**



**Plate 5. Lead pipe, 0006, passing under 0005 the concave base of which can be seen to the right of the scale.**



**Plate 6. North eastern end of the lake, looking south west.**



**Plate 7. Ravenstone Hall from the south west of the excavation, looking south.**



**Plate 8. 0007, section at the eastern end of the excavation. Looking south east.**



**Plate 9. 0015, east facing section of core trench with possible stream deposit.**



**Plate 10. Modern field drain, 0009, looking north east.**



**Plate 11. Core trench, looking north.**



**Plate 12. 0013, section of excavation, looking north west.**

