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**Riccall Hall, Riccall**  
North Yorkshire  
Archaeological Evaluation  
Interim Report

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### Introduction

Riccall Hall presently stands to the south of Back Lane, in the village of Riccall (SE 6205 3864) in well maintained landscaped gardens extending to 0.45 ha. The Hall and land have been offered for sale with the intention of constructing six new dwellings. This programme of works would involve the demolition of the present Hall and the construction of a new dwelling as a replacement, and five new properties with detached garages. Access to the development would be from two points on Back Lane.

The present Riccall Hall is a mixture of 19th century build with 20th century additions. The gardens are a pleasant mixture of trees, flower beds and lawned areas.

The site stands on soils of the Everingham Series on an Aeolian sand geology.

Very little is known about Riccall Hall and possible earlier buildings on the site (see below). This report summarises information gained through a Desktop Survey and Trial Trenching undertaken in October 1996.

All work has been funded by Hogg the Builder, of York, the proposed developer of the site.

### Historical Background

This category of information is based on documentary research and cartographic evidence. Unfortunately both suffer from a lack of evidence for references to the site pre-16th century.

A consideration of the history of the village of Riccall shows that there were three important houses. There was *Wheel Hall* on the western limits of the village, owned by the Church until 1855 and with references to a building being on the site from at least the 14th century.

To the north-west of the Church stands the *Manor House*, first mentioned in 1295, the present building still retains portions of a 15th century building. Surrounding the house are earthworks representing the moat.

In 1538-9 documents refer to a holding in Riccall belonging to the Beckwith family. In 1654 the Beckwiths transferred the holding over to Edward (Eduardus) Wormley. The conveyance included a dwelling, which became the seat of the Womileys in the village. The parish records illustrate the importance of the Womiley family. Edward Womley was buried in the chancel of the village church and is recorded in the register as Eduardus Womley 'armiger' (of knightly status). This prestigious title is also recorded for many more of the successors to Edward. Although there is only this single reference to a dwelling, the importance of the Womiley family dictates that a house in keeping with their social standing must have existed.

The house built in the mid-late 18th century by Edward Womley was typical of the period, mirroring Classical style book architecture, which was adopted 100 years later in the north than in the south of England. A painting of the Hall is very similar to other prestigious houses built in the surrounding countryside at about the same time, for example Skipwith Hall. The painting currently stored in Wakefield Art Gallery shows the Hall in 1777. Interestingly the hand written title reads "Beckwith Hall", with a lower caption of "A view of Mr Wormleys House at Riccall taken 1777". The retention of the name '*Beckwith Hall*' may suggest that within this

'new' house existed elements of the earlier hall, as constructed by the Beckwiths possibly in the 16th/17th centuries

In 1858 the Hall and lands passed to B Lawley, Baron Wenlock, who made additions and improvements to the house

Cartographic evidence illustrates the development of the Hall. In 1720 Warburton's map just shows a stylised Hall on the site. Even so this confirms the presence of a prestigious house prior to the building programme of Edward Womley in c 1770's. The mid 19th century (first edition 6" map - 1860) shows the Hall's position and the additions made by Wenlock, namely additional wings to the south and north and a major alteration of the east facing elevation. The County Series Map of 1908 illustrates changes to the servants quarters to the south-west of the Hall and the construction of a building connecting the servants quarters to the Hall.

In the early 1950's the Hall and surrounding land was sold to L Winder who in 1952 demolished the Hall. The servants quarters were retained and converted into the present day Hall.

Therefore the cartographic and documentary sources suggest the presence on the site of building activity from possibly the 16th century through to the early 20th century. The objectives of the next stage of evaluation, the Trial Trenching was to attempt to establish the presence, degree and nature of archaeological deposits at the site, which might be threatened by development.

#### **Excavation Methods**

A total of nine trenches were excavated, five within the house plots of the proposed new dwellings (Trenches 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6), two on the alignment of the road (Trenches 5 and 9), and two further trenches located in the north-eastern corner of the site (Trenches 7 and 8). Observation of the foundation survey testholes had indicated a very varied depth of deposits and changes in the levels at which natural sands occurred on the site. Trenches 7 and 8 were excavated to assess this factor further.

All trenches were excavated to the top of archaeology or natural deposits, whichever was the higher. Sections and the base of the trench were drawn at scales of 1:10 and 1:20. A colour and slide photographic archive was maintained.

Trenches 1-4 and 6 reflect the numbering of housing plot numbers on the development.

#### **Excavation Results**

Each trench is summarised individually, before a consideration of the information as a whole.

##### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was located on a high point of the site within lawn areas. Aligned east to west the only features of note were the remnants of a hand made brick wall of 17th century date aligned north-east / south-west and a pit/depression filled with sand and building materials above the natural sands.

The wall was only one course in construction and a single brick in width and lay directly onto natural sands.

##### **Trench 2**

Situated just to the north of the present access road this trench was also characterised by substantial levelling deposits of topsoils and dumping to a depth of 0.0m. Cut into the natural  
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sands was a linear feature abnged east to west, but with no associated finds to provide dating evidence The exact function of the feature is problematic but it may represent a boundary ditch

#### Trench 3

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Located on the extreme northern edge of the site this trench was excavated to over 00m m depth, at which natural sands were encountered. Above the natural sands was a thick deposit of sdty sand with the occasional brick fragment inclusions (0 45m m depth), a deposit of brick, tde, mortar with bands of soil (0 3m m dcpdi) This deposit was sealed by a deposit of clays which was mturn sealed by old and recent topsoils (0 55m m depth)

Other than the building materials no further finds were located withm the fills of this trench

#### Trench 4

Withm a house plot, this trench produced the highest quantity of pottery and bmlng materials from the excavations Much of the trench was characterised by the presence of a deep, wide cut (0 6m deep) which was removed by machme down to the top of two large York stone paving slabs Lifting of one of the slabs revealed a circular hand made brick well, which measured in excess of 1m m diameter and 3 8m m depth to thc top of the silts

Deposits to the north and south of the well cut consisted of thin deposits of dark sdty material and mortar deposits suggestive of floor deposits (to a total depth of 0 4m) Pottery, ceramic building materials and clay pipes from these deposits varied gready m date from at the earliest the 16th century through to the late 19th century Pottery of 16th century date was recovered from the contaminated natural

In the extreme northern portion of this trench was a very well constructed brick wall which would appear to relate to the early 20th century construction joming the Hall to the servants quarters

Natural occurred at 0 77m (9 33m AOD) from the present land surface, this is 0 11m higher than the occurrence of natural m Trench 1 and 1 16m higher than natural deposits m Trench 2 and 1 69m m Trench 3

#### Trench 5

Excavation m this trench ceased at 0 75m The deposits were characterised by bands of demohition materials sand and a relatively thick deposit of silty sand which possibly represents a previous ground surface At the base of the trench two cuts were located, filled with charcoal flecked sdty sands Apart from the bmlng material of 19th century date no other finds were located, with the exception of a fragment of a 19th century chimney pot

#### Trench 6

Agam located on the higher ground on the site withm a lawned area, thns trench had suffered severely from the installation of land drauis, and water/sewage pipes, as well as walls of recent date and one very substantial wall m the north of the trench which must be part of the Hall

A number of features cut into the base of the trench were invctigated, two were of recent date a dram and a pit of demolition debris Two sub-circular features filled with sdty sands and small amounts of charcoal provided no dating evidence

Natural sands occurred at approximately 1m (8 80m AOD) from the present ground surface in this trench.

### Trench 7

Trench 7 was placed to assess in greater detail a substantial depth of stratigraphy initially seen in the foundation survey testholes. The depth of stratigraphy in this part of the site was puzzling considering the shallowness some 14m to the south.

Excavation located 0.9m of garden soil material before a dump of building materials (0.25m deep), which included tile both ceramic and limestone, brick and cobbles. Below this dump layer was a deposit of cobbles and a pivot stone. One find from this trench of particular note was an iron axe from just below the cobble layer (SF1). Excavation ceased at this level in the south of the trench.

Excavation in the north of the trench down to the top of natural showed that it occurred at 1.58m from the present land surface. As natural did not occur in the south of the trench, and natural had been found in Trench 1 less than 14m to the south, it was decided to pull a further trench (Trench 8) to determine the exact location and depth at which natural occurred. It was not possible to continue Trench 8 to meet Trench 1 due to standing trees and their root systems. Therefore Trench 8 is a little to the east of Trenches 1 and 7.

### Trench 8

Excavation located similar deposits to Trench 8, but in the southern part of the trench natural occurred at 1m to 1.79m from the present land surface and that natural therefore fell off sharply to the north.

Within the base of the trench beneath the rubble dump were further cobbles. The cobbles did not have the looseness of a dump, but rather suggested a deliberate laid surface, which continued into Trench 7. The actual function of the cobbled surface is problematic. It may represent a road/track surface either up to the Hall (the 6" OS map of 19th century date shows a track in this general area of the site) or they may represent hard standing in a courtyard.

A pottery candlestick (SF 2) of 17th century date was recovered laying on top of the cobble layer.

### Trench 9

The stratigraphy in this trench was very similar to that in Trench 5, ie demolition and old topsoils.

### Summary

The excavations have verified the initial interpretation of the site as based on the observation of the foundation testholes, in that a good proportion of the site utilises a naturally higher piece of land. Initially the differences in natural were thought to be the result of artificially raising the site by means of creation of a moated platform. Although it is still not possible to discount this interpretation it looks more likely that at a point (as yet to be determined) quantities of demolition materials were deliberately dispersed around the site to raise the lower lying land to the same level as that accommodating the main domestic buildings.

Activity on the site diminishes away from the known area of the Hall. The relatively large amount of pottery found in Trench 4 reflects its close proximity to the activity centre and the date range from the 16th through to the 20th century confirms documentary sources which suggest habitation of the site in this period.

What the Trial Trenching failed to do was to locate any real evidence for the 16th and 17th century buildings on the site. If each successive Hall was built close to or on the exact site of the previous building then it seems unlikely that detailed information in the archaeological record would be forthcoming, especially considering the high degree of disturbance that the 18th and 19th century building activity on the site entailed.

#### **Foundation Information**

It is proposed subject to planning consent being granted that the favoured foundations for the new dwelling would be strip foundations. The depth of the foundations would be dependant as to what level natural sands occurred within the particular building plot. The following is a summary of the foundation report by RPT Consultants Ltd (Malton)

Plot 1 (Trench 1) Ground bearing floor slab, reinforced strip footings (c 500mm)

Plot 2 (Trench 2) Suspended ground floor slab, reinforced strip footings (c 1500mm)

Plot 3 (Trench 3) Suspended ground floor slab, reinforced strip footings (c 1500mm)

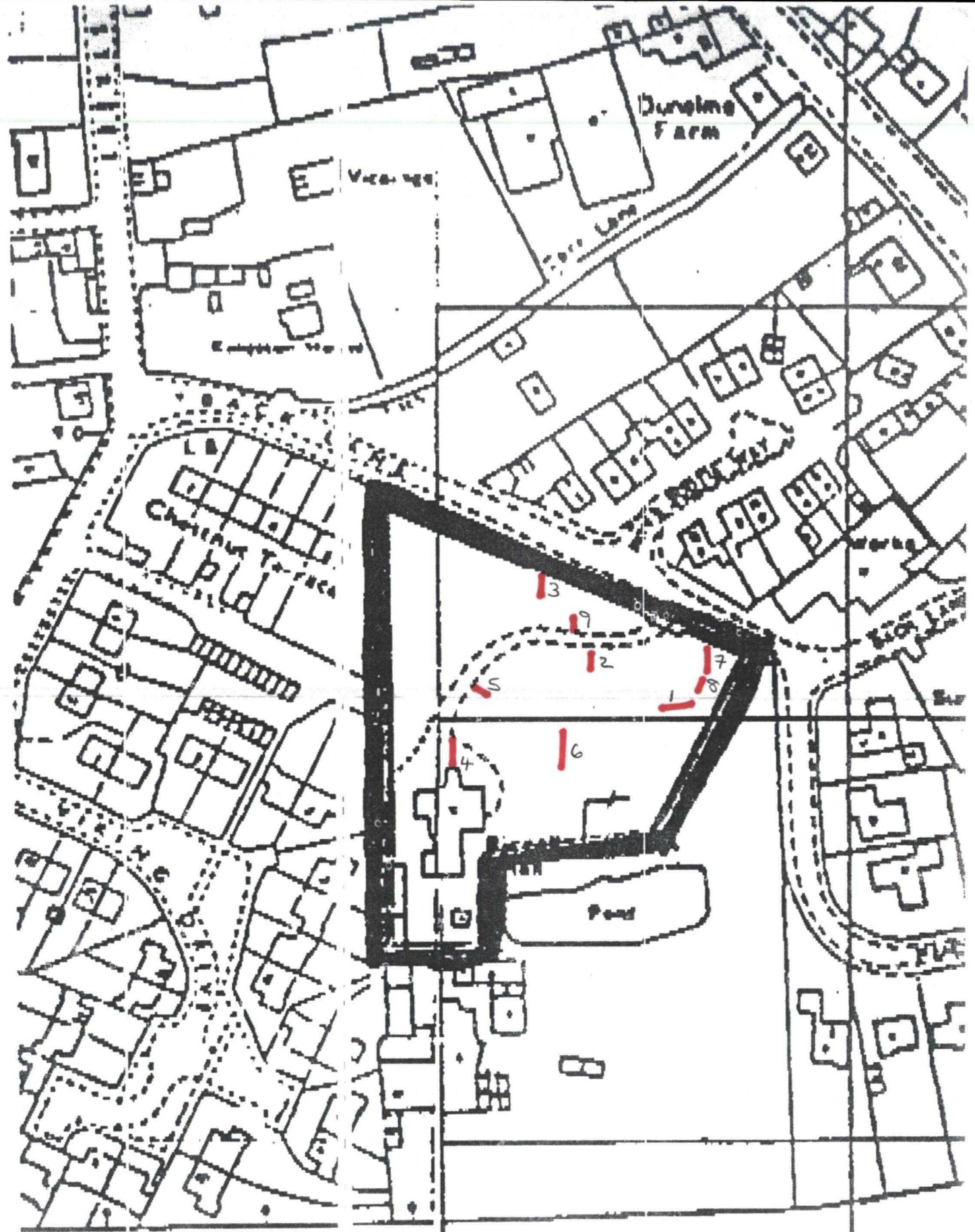
Plot 4 (Trench 4) Ground bearing floor slab, reinforced strip footings (c 1000mm)


Plot 5 - foot print of existing Hall - remove all foundations, ground bearing slab, reinforced footings

Plot 6 (Trench 6) Ground bearing floor slab, reinforced strip footings (c 500mm)

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that during the construction of the houses and service trenches that a Watching Brief is undertaken by a professional archaeologist.

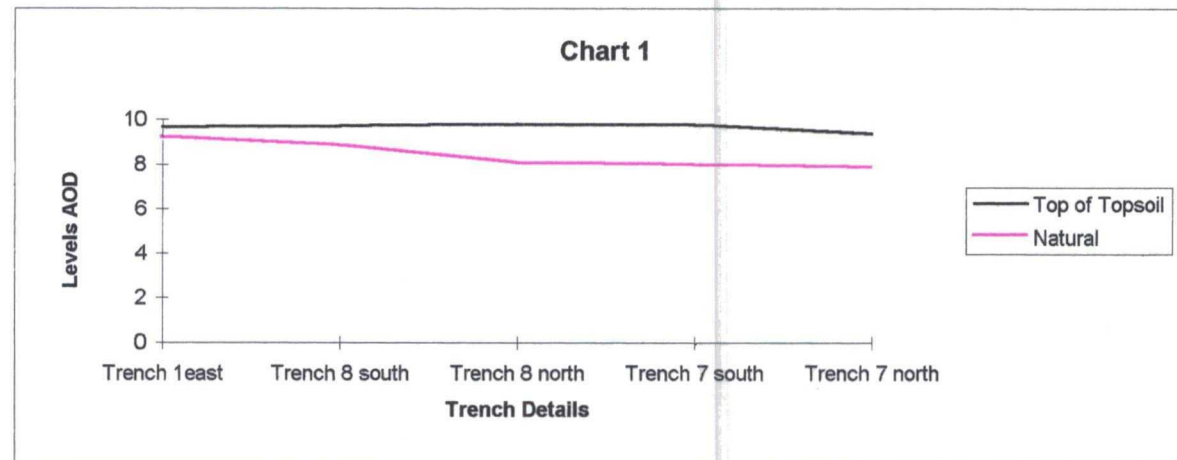


 Approximate  
branch locations

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DEPOSIT LEVELS**

**Table 1**

	Trench 1 east	Trench 8 south	Trench 8 north	Trench 7 south	Trench 7 north
Top of Topsoil	9.67	9.71	9.79	9.76	9.38
Natural	9.15	8.76	8.00	7.90	7.80

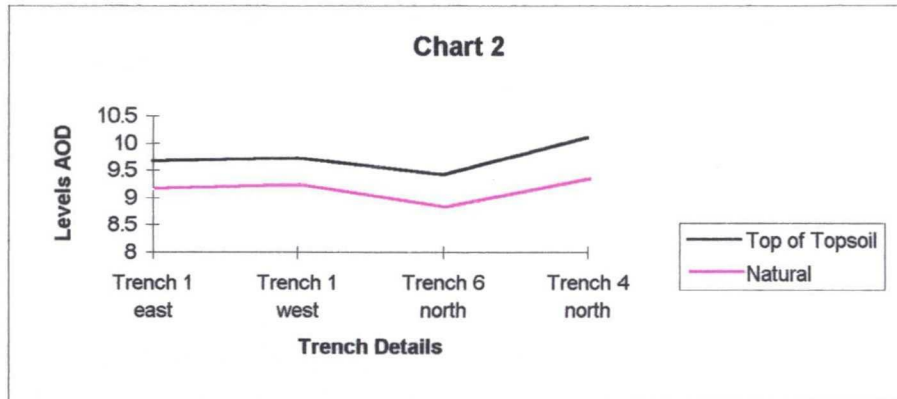




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DEPOSIT LEVELS**

**Table 2**

	Trench 1 east	Trench 1 west	Trench 6 north	Trench 4 north
Top of Topsoil	9.67	9.72	9.42	10.10
Natural	9.15	9.22	8.81	9.33



**Table 3**

Datum	Trench 1 east	Trench 2 south	Trench 2 north	Trench 3 south	Trench 3 north
Top of Topsoil	9.67	9.32	9.3	8.94	8.84
Natural	9.15	8.17	8.37	7.82	7.64

