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84 RAVENSDOWNE,  
BERWICK-UPON-TWEED,  
NORTHUMBERLAND  
AN INVESTIGATION AND  
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT

Bev Kerr



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Bev Kerr

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## **SUMMARY**

No. 84 Ravensdowne was built between 1860 and 1865 by local millwright Samuel Riddle on land once known as Old Windmill Hill. It is likely that Riddle purchased the land to construct a house for his growing family, attracted by the street's once fashionable character, but restricted to this one available piece of land in upper Ravensdowne on which a coach house stood. The gardens belonging to the house were once larger, and included a bowling green to the east. Constructed from local stone, the symmetrical two storied villa with slate roof is of a modest size. The lack of architectural detailing suggests a house built out of economy, suitable for a man of modest means. Originally it would have been simply laid out with a central hall and stair, heated parlour and living kitchen, behind which, in the rear wing, was a scullery and larder. Upstairs were three bedrooms, two of which were heated. Much of the interior has undergone significant modernisation in the 20th century including the removal of fireplaces, the replacement of windows and removal of shutters. The layout has also changed upstairs to incorporate a bathroom, corridor and a fourth bedroom, whilst downstairs the scullery was converted to serve as a kitchen and enlarged by the removal of the larder wall. An outside store has also been lost. However, the house retains some original features, including doors, architraves and stairs. Despite internal alterations, externally No. 84 makes a positive contribution to the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area. Whilst it is not on its own of particular architectural significance, it is its contribution to the local street scene which is 84 Ravensdowne's most important asset.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

The English Heritage Archive  
The Engine House  
Fire Fly Avenue  
Swindon SN2 2EH

## **DATE OF SURVEY**

Survey was undertaken on the 30th and 31st of July 2012.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

English Heritage, 37 Tanner Row, York, YO1 6WP  
Simon Taylor, (01904) 601915, [simon.taylor@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:simon.taylor@english-heritage.org.uk)

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## INTRODUCTION

Following a request by Carol Pyrah, Planning Director (North East) of English Heritage National Planning and Conservation Department, the Assessment Team (North) were asked to provide an architectural and historical account of 84 Ravensdowne and its contribution to the character of the Conservation Area of Berwick-upon-Tweed. The request was made in response to proposed regeneration plans which may affect Berwick Barracks and other English Heritage property in the town. Additionally, 84 Ravensdowne, which is owned by English Heritage, has suffered from subsidence for a number of years and although regularly monitored, its future has been under question.

Site visits were made on the 30th and 31st July 2012 by Bev Kerr, Simon Taylor and Kirsty Tuthill when the building was investigated and a plan drawn of the ground floor. The main source of documentary evidence was the Berwick-upon-Tweed record office, whilst English Heritage Estates Office in Newcastle-upon-Tyne provided copies of management and tenancy documents. The original ownership documentation relating to 84 Ravensdowne are held by The English Heritage Records Management Team at Swindon.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

There are a number of published histories of the border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, including a recent publication in English Heritage's *Informed Conservation* series which provides an understanding of the historic character of Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal.<sup>1</sup> This report does not seek to reproduce these works, although it has consulted secondary sources to provide a background and context for the building which is the subject of this report. Primary sources consulted included historic maps, trade and street directories, building control plans, deeds, census returns and electoral rolls.

An early view of Berwick *circa* 1580 entitled 'The true description of her Majesties towne of Barwick'<sup>2</sup> shows that the early town developed around the crossing of the River Tweed. The eastern side of Berwick, where the street of Ravensdowne is located, between Cow Port and Kings Mount, is shown as mainly open land, but there is a suggestion that the laying out of the southern end of Ravensdowne had commenced by this time.

Documentary sources indicate that Ravensdowne has been known by a variety of names over time. Deeds regarding the transfer of Berwick Barracks in 1723 to the Board of Ordnance indicate that the street was known by two different names, describing it as 'Rottenrow alias Ravensdowne'.<sup>3</sup> The local historian FM Cowe suggests the latter was derived from the word 'Ravensden', meaning the 'the dean of the ravens'<sup>4</sup> whilst Rottenrow, or 'Ratten Raw', shown on Andrew Armstrong's map of 1769, supposedly means 'rat infested street'.<sup>5</sup> John Fuller's Map of 1799 within *The History of Berwick-upon-Tweed* shows the street as 'Back Way'.<sup>6</sup> At the start of the 19th century it was renamed Union Street to commemorate the union of Great Britain and Ireland,<sup>7</sup> but this name was short lived, and by the mid 19th century it was again known as Ravensdowne.<sup>8</sup>

Speed's map of 1610 clearly depicts the street of Ravensdowne and indicates that by then it was lined with buildings<sup>9</sup> but the 1725 Army Plan of the town suggests that the east side of Ravensdowne was completely undeveloped at that date.<sup>10</sup> Fuller's town map of 1799, published in his volume *The History of Berwick-upon-Tweed*, shows buildings on both sides, but development on the east side of the street stops well short of the Barracks which had been built by 1721. It is important to note that the land upon which No. 84 is built, was at this time open ground. It is also depicted as such on John Wood's map of 1822, which also shows more detail of individual buildings and indicates the houses of some of the towns more prestigious inhabitants. Ravensdowne, in contrast to the western side of the town, is of low density, with open land behind housing on its eastern side. Even today Berwick's eastern fringe retains a green and undeveloped character.

The first indication of a structure occupying the site of what is now 84 Ravensdowne is shown on Lowrey's map of 1844 on which a small rectangular building is depicted in the top left corner of plot 4.<sup>11</sup> Further detail is given of this building on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1852 (Fig 1).<sup>12</sup> This shows an 'L' shaped building standing square to the road marked 'Ch', which, in Ordnance Survey shorthand, can indicate either a 'church', 'club house' or 'coach house'. The plot of land on which it sits is otherwise divided from



Figure 1. Ordnance Survey map of 1852 showing an L-shaped building on a large plot now occupied by 84 Ravensdowne.

the road by a wall with gated access to the south. A pump and water trough are also shown within the plot.

It is not until the 1897 Ordnance Survey map<sup>13</sup> that there is published evidence of further change (Fig 2). The land south of Ordnance House was by then divided up into smaller plots and an irregular 'U' shaped building stood in the same position as the building marked 'Ch' in 1852. The same building is represented on later Ordnance Survey maps, such as that of 1924,<sup>14</sup> which also shows that the land to the east of the house was used as a 'Bowling Green'.

It appears that 84 Ravensdowne stands on ground which was once part of a larger tract of land sometimes referred to as 'Old Windmill Hill'. Two windmills are shown on Speed's plan of 1610, one is located on Windmill Bastion (lending its name to the defensive earthwork), whilst the other is positioned nearby. Another plan, of 1745, drawn



Figure 2. Ordnance Survey map of 1897 showing 84 Ravensdowne.



up during proposals for the erection of a new Military Hospital, shows 'a windmill mount' within an enclosed field opposite (Fig 3).<sup>15</sup> The Title Deeds for 84 Ravensdowne record that this piece of land was bought by John Pratt in 1824 from the executors of James Mills' will.<sup>16</sup> We know from later documents that he was responsible for building a coach house upon the land (see below). This is almost certainly the building marked 'Ch' on the Ordnance Survey map of 1852 which occupied the site on which No. 84 now stands.

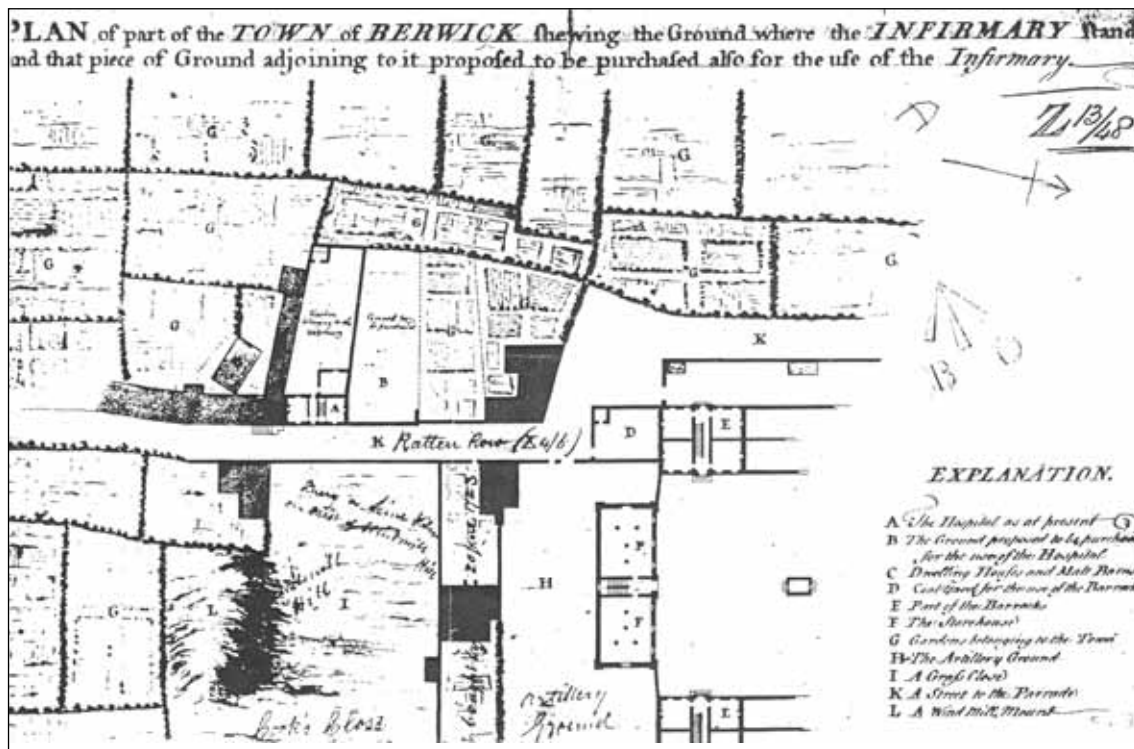


Figure 3. 'Plan of Part of the Town of Berwick shewing the Ground where the Infirmary stands and that piece of Ground to be proposed to be purchased also for the use of the Infirmary' of 1745. A and B indicate the present location of the 18th century hospital. 84 Ravensdowne now stands in the upper right-hand corner of the close opposite.

In 1857 the land, then called 'Captain's Close', along with the coach house, 'sometime since erected by the said John Pratt', was sold to George Gilchrist for £490.00.<sup>17</sup> However, following Gilchrist's death, the land was divided again and the coach house and part of the close was bought in 1860 by Samuel Riddle for £210.00. At this time, the land extended to the east as far as the town fortifications, was bounded on the north by Ordnance House, and to the south was the remainder of the close in which the windmill mound was probably located. Ownership of the rest of the field passed to Gilchrist's daughter, Georgina, who had converted it into a garden.<sup>18</sup>

Electoral records, census returns and historic directories provide evidence that Mr Riddle was the son of another Samuel Riddle and worked in the family millwright business of S. Riddle & Sons which was based in High Street, Tweedmouth.<sup>19</sup> The business appears to have been a prosperous one; Samuel's brother Andrew, who was running the business

when the 1861 census was taken, is known to have employed 39 men and 16 boys. By 1865 Andrew was affluent enough to have moved to Turret Villa, a large detached house on Etal Road with his wife and family.<sup>20</sup>

Like his brother, Samuel Riddle may conceivably have been seeking a suitable home for his growing family in the 1860s and purchased the land in Ravensdowne for this purpose. The electoral roll for Berwick for 1864-65 provides documentary evidence that the Riddles were living in a 'house and garden' in Ravensdowne. By the time the 1871 census was taken, Samuel Riddle had retired and four of his five children were living at home. He was also able to employ a domestic servant, considered by most to be an absolute necessity for a Victorian middle class family.

Riddle died in 1888, at the age of 83, leaving 84 Ravensdowne and a 'Garden Bowling Green' to his daughter Elspeth Eleanor in trust whilst she remained unmarried.<sup>21</sup> She did not choose to stay on in the house for long, and records indicate that the house was let out. In 1894 *Kelly's Northumberland Directory* lists Bernard Grieve Thompson as living there.<sup>22</sup> The 1901 census return for Berwick-upon-Tweed shows he was living at No. 84 with his wife, two children and a domestic servant. Mr Thompson is known to have been a local tradesman, who, along with his brother, ran the ironmongers' shop bearing their name at 41-43 High Street (now Marygate).<sup>23</sup>

Attracting tenants from the military would not have been difficult given the close proximity to the barracks. According to census returns, Francis Claughton, a Captain in the Kings Army, was living at No. 84 in 1891. By the 1911 census a Colour Sergeant by the name of William Hilton Scott Blades occupied the house, and Lieutenant Commander Willits is mentioned as the tenant in a conveyance document of 1921.<sup>24</sup>

The house and garden remained in the Riddle family until 1921 when the land was further sub-divided; the bowling green and driveway were sold to representatives of the newly formed Ravensdowne Bowling Club,<sup>25</sup> whilst the house was sold for £700.00 to Charles Drummond a retired hosier from Berwick. Miss Riddle was by now 60 years old and according to the conveyance deeds had moved to fashionable Campden Hill Square in London.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, Charles Drummond did not spend much of his retirement at 84 Ravensdowne as he died soon after in 1923. The house passed to his wife Margaret Drummond and after her death in 1928 it was sold to John Brown, a Berwick publican, for £800.00<sup>27</sup> and then again in 1936 to a Berwick bank cashier, Henry Ogle, for £650.00.<sup>28</sup> With war looming it appears that the Ministry for Defence set about purchasing property close to the barracks. They had already bought the Bowling Green next to 84 Ravensdowne in 1937 from the disbanded Bowling Club.<sup>29</sup> Then in 1939 they purchased No. 84 from Mr Ogle for £975.00; representing a substantial profit for the cashier in just 3 years.<sup>30</sup>

The Ministry of Defence used 84 Ravensdowne as married quarters for officers until as recently as 1995, despite its sale to the Department for the Environment in 1981.<sup>31</sup> The sale was part of a much wider agreement which saw Berwick Barracks and land

stretching from the Cow Port in the north, to Wellington Terrace in the south, passing in turn into the care of English Heritage. No longer required by the Army, English Heritage has let 84 Ravensdowne since 1995, initially to their custodians based at Berwick Barracks, and latterly to private tenants.

## DESCRIPTION

### Ravensdowne

Ravensdowne, as has already been noted, is situated on the eastern side of Berwick-upon-Tweed within the town defences. It continues the line of Palace Street East northwards, rising steeply up to the junction of Woolmarket before ascending more gently northwards, terminating near Berwick Barracks on Parade. The gentle curve of the street reflects the line of the town wall to the east. Towards the northern end of Ravensdowne the roadway narrows and eventually veers sharply west, then continues north as it skirts around the barrack walls (Fig 4).



*Figure 4. The point at which Ravensdowne narrows. Note, No. 84 is in the background, to the far left (Photograph: Bob Skingle 2008 DP065186 © English Heritage).*

The street appears to have become an attractive location for many of the town's wealthier residents in the 18th and 19th centuries, facilitated perhaps by the demilitarisation of the town ramparts.<sup>32</sup> With space for large houses and gardens away from the busy commercial heart of town, Ravensdowne's apogee was probably reached during the first half of the 19th century. Pevsner says of Ravensdowne that 'nearly all the houses are worth a glance'.<sup>33</sup> The lower end of Ravensdowne boasts some elegant early 19th-century houses which have been described as the 'most opulent in town' (Fig 5).<sup>34</sup> Many are set back from the road behind front gardens, whilst further to the north, an almost continuous line of houses face directly onto the street – access to the rear is afforded by covered passages. However, this line of frontages from individual or paired houses is occasionally broken by gardens; for example Nos. 51-53 are a pair of mid-19th century houses set back in their gardens.<sup>35</sup> By the 1850s much of Ravensdowne appears to have been built up, mainly with residential houses. The construction of No. 84 possibly represents one of the last acts of infilling with domestic housing along the street.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the houses along Ravensdowne are of moderate to large size for the town, often of three storeys and up to five bays long. However, there is also evidence for less

salubrious accommodation in the street at the time of Samuel Riddle's purchase of the land in Ravensdowne. The plot immediately south, then No. 78 but now demolished, was probably occupied by a type of court housing. The Ordnance Survey map of 1852 shows individual dwellings huddled around a small courtyard reached from Ravensdowne via a passageway (see Fig 1). The 1881 census records 6 families living here; their employment includes rope making, an omnibus driver and a grocer's porter. The largest family had eight children whilst another had five. They suggest a less fashionable aspect to upper Ravensdowne, close to the Military Hospital and barracks. No. 84 would have been built facing this court housing.<sup>37</sup>



*Figure 5. Early 19th-century housing in Lower Ravensdowne (Photograph: Bob Skingle 2008 DP065190 © English Heritage.*

Although mainly domestic in character, there is some evidence of commercial and even light industrial activity in Ravensdowne. For example, the icehouses, used by the fishing industry for the storage of fish, with their tall stone walls facing onto the east side of Ravensdowne, are still extant (Fig 6).<sup>38</sup> The 1852 Ordnance Survey map shows a large timber yard and fish smoking house to the rear of the elegant houses on the east side of lower Ravensdowne. A rope works also existed well into the twentieth century and was situated between the ice houses, the doors of which opened directly onto Ravensdowne. Other small-scale commercial activity also appears to have been carried out from residential houses including Mr Bowlam's Land Agent offices located at No. 76 (Fig 7). The census of 1881 indicates that Mr Bowlam and his large family resided in 72 Ravensdowne.

The character of Ravensdowne was also influenced by the presence of military structures, particularly at its northern end. Here the 18th-century barracks, former Military Hospital and Ordnance House are or were situated. Samuel Riddle built his new house to the immediate south of Ordnance House. A drill hall, situated on the west side of the street and facing the barracks, was added to the ensemble in 1892. The Ordnance House was demolished in the second half of the twentieth century although part of the garden wall survives.



Figure 6. Ice houses on the east side of Ravensdowne  
(Photograph: Bob Skingle 2008 DP065251 © English Heritage).



Figure 7. Signage in a doorway of 76 Ravensdowne  
(Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012 © English Heritage).

## 84 Ravensdowne

Documentary evidence suggests No. 84 Ravensdowne was built between 1860, when the land was purchased by Samuel Riddle, and 1865, when Mr Riddle first appears on the electoral register in Ravensdowne. He may have purchased the land to construct a house for his growing family, attracted by the street's once fashionable character, away from the commercial heart of the town, but restricted to one available piece of land in upper Ravensdowne, immediately south of the Ordnance House and military barracks, opposite the Military Hospital and next to the court housing of No. 78.

It is a modest-sized detached villa and not unlike other small villas of this period.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to most of the houses which line Ravensdowne and face directly onto the street, No. 84 is set at right angles to it, taking advantage of a southerly aspect (Fig 8). The western gable end is flush with the edge of the street and a stone wall shields the rest of the plot and provides an element of privacy to the house and garden. Pedestrian access



Figure 8. Western elevation of No. 84 aligned with the street  
(Photograph: Kirsty Tuthill 2011 © English Heritage).



is via a gate set close to the front wall of the house. It is probable that the earlier field gate shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1852 also afforded access to the gardens, although access to a modern garage now occupies the same position and the evidence has now been lost.

To the north of No. 84 Ravensdowne is the site of the former Ordnance House, which was demolished in the later 20th century, its approach and rear garden. The boundary of the early 18th-century barracks complex is to the north of this in turn. To the south, and beyond the low wall, modern garage and driveway of No. 84, the nearest property is No. 76; whilst to the east lies ground which was once belonged to No. 84 and was used as a bowling green and later as a tennis court.<sup>40</sup> The tennis court has fallen out of use and the area, now colonised by bushes and trees, is separated from 84 Ravensdowne by a high conifer hedge. Initially, therefore, the gardens, or grounds, of No. 84 would have been relatively large, with views eastwards towards Windmill Bastion, one of the five Elizabethan earthworks which form part of the town defences.<sup>41</sup>

With such a large plot of land at his disposal, one might ask why Mr Riddle constructed his house in one corner and did not set his house at the centre of his large gardens. Perhaps he had seen the land as an investment opportunity and may have intended to sell part of the land off for development.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the reason, Riddle chose to position the house beside the street, reusing the site of the coach house identified on the Ordnance Survey map published in 1852.

## Exterior

No. 84 Ravensdowne is two storeys high, with a symmetrical principle elevation of three bays (Fig 9). The main body of the house is one room deep. A two storeyed wing at the rear makes the whole 'L' shaped in plan. The house is built of solid stone walls, with roughly coursed rectangular blocks of the local pink-grey sandstone on an ashlar



*Figure 9. Front elevation  
(Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012  
© English Heritage).*

plinth and has ashlar quoins to the corners. The less publicly visible elevations are of poorer-quality stonework. The house has a pitched slate roof with raised copings, a small centrally placed roof light which is probably a modern insertion, modern plastic guttering and end chimney stacks of brick. The house's slightly irregular plan is the result of the western gable respecting the alignment of Ravensdowne, rather than this wall being set at right angles to its south facing façade (see appendix).

The front door is modern, timber and half glazed. The surround has interrupted ashlar jambs, above which is a projecting stone hood on paired brackets. A thin line of paint on the door surround and lintel which runs across the hood brackets, indicates that a timber pitched hood or porch was once set above the front door. It is likely to have resembled other pitched hoods which can be seen on a number of other houses, such as No. 75, on Ravensdowne.

The central door is flanked by sliding sash windows to the ground floor, with three similarly proportioned and evenly spaced windows to the first floor. All windows have stone sills and interrupted stone jambs, whilst there are stone relieving arches above the ground floor lintels. All the sashes and their boxes are recent replacements but are probably not dissimilar to the originals. Although the window openings appear superficially similar, none of the monolithic window jambs, lintels or sills are of equal length or width. This has been partially masked on the jambs and lintels by deliberate tooling, creating false edges on some stones, whilst others have been tooled to imitate coursed stone blocks (Fig 10). This gives the impression around each window of stone jambs and lintels of similar dimensions.



*Figure 10. Window with interrupted jambs tooled to imitate coursed stone  
(Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012  
© English Heritage).*



The western gable end of the house is flush with the edge of the street and is of roughly coursed stone rubble with ashlar quoins and an integral brick chimney stack, containing two flues, which breaks the ridge. The wall extends northwards as the side of the rear wing and the rear slope of the roof continue over the wing with a shallower pitch. The stonework has been repointed and repaired in a number of areas with cement, and is particularly heavily pointed towards the base of the wall, probably due to salt erosion of the soft sandstone. All window openings in this elevation are within the rear wing, two to the ground floor lighting the kitchen and one to the first floor rear bedroom. All have monolithic stone surrounds and interrupted jambs. The ground-floor windows share the central jamb but are of different sizes, as are their respective other jambs, sills and lintels, the latter bearing tool marks of contrasting character. The interrupted jambs on the first-floor window are of unequal height. Rubble-stone boundary walls butt against the western elevation to both north and south and there is a square stone in the northern wall which is inscribed with '5 WD' – an, increasing rare, War Department boundary stone, a type which can be found elsewhere on the town fortifications and the barracks and is indicative of ownership, referring in this case to the southern boundary of the barracks (Fig 11).<sup>43</sup>



*Figure 11. War Department boundary stone  
(Photograph: Kirsty Tuthill 2011  
© English Heritage).*

A possible ragged joint is evident 1.5 metres from the right edge of the west boundary wall, rising about 1.8 metres from the ground, which might suggest the extent of part of the earlier wall of the coach house, shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1852, incorporated into the fabric of the replacement house (Fig 12). The joint itself is not, however, sufficient in itself to categorically support this hypothesis. The coach house was aligned to the street in much the same way as the present building, but no other wall of the present house corresponds to its footprint. For example, the north wall of the present house is aligned with the northern plot boundary, but the north wall of the coach house, as depicted on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map, is not. The most likely scenario was that the coach house was completely dismantled to make way for Riddle's new house.



*Figure 12. Possible ragged joint on the western elevation (Photograph: Kirsty Tuthill 2011 © English Heritage).*

The eastern elevation is gabled and partially obscured by late cement smear pointing which appears to be ashlar scored. However, there are also traces of earlier lime render or wash on the unpainted stonework. There are single ground and first-floor window openings, with modern sliding sashes, to the left of an integral central brick chimney stack with two flues, which breaks the ridge. The windows are of similar size to those on the front elevation and there is a narrow relieving arch above the ground floor window. They also have monolithic stone surrounds with interrupted jambs which, like those in the front elevation, bear tooling which imitates stone coursing to mask the irregular lengths and widths of the stones used. The sill to the ground-floor window protrudes to the right, well beyond the base of the jamb which is not seated on the shoulder of the sill. This suggests a number of possibilities; either the window has been narrowed or the sill was not originally made for this opening. Given the consistency of window widths between first and ground floor and the lack of evidence for narrowing in the stonework, the latter seems more likely.

The northern elevation, or rear of the main house, also has ashlar-scored cement smear pointing and again there are traces of residual lime render or wash also suggesting that it might have always been rendered. This elevation contains two windows; one on the first floor lighting the central stairs and a second shorter window immediately below lighting the understairs area. Both window openings contain modern sliding sashes, and the pattern of monolithic surrounds is repeated here, though the ground-floor window has no projecting sill and stubbier jambs. To the left of the window tier is a large rectangular area of wall which lacks cement render. It extends almost four metres from the left edge (east) of the wall, up to first floor window-sill level. This indicates the area where a small rear extension once stood. This structure is shown on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map and photographs taken prior to its demolition, show it to have been a single storeyed, lean-to structure with slate roof and stone walls (Fig 13).<sup>44</sup> The lean-to was not keyed into the main house suggesting it was not part of the original build, but the monolithic stone jambs and lintels, shown in the photographic evidence, match those of the rest of house and indicate that it was probably built soon after. To allow access to the back door;



*Figure 13. Photograph taken of the rear store prior to demolition (Photograph: English Heritage Estates Office © English Heritage).*

the lean-to appears to have had a passageway running through it, and access into the lean-to must have been off of this passage. It is likely it was used for storage, perhaps of coal, but was removed in 1989 when, following subsidence damage, the cost of rebuilding proved to be prohibitive.<sup>45</sup>

The rear wing appears to be a primary component of the house although the nature of the junction of the main house and the east wall of the wing is obscured by ashlar-scored cement render which extends across the east wall of the wing. A doorway on the left side of the south wall affords access to the interior. To its right, and sharing the same monolithic jambs, is a small window. The kitchen window sill and opposite jamb have been consolidated in cement. There is a small low, square, brick stack rising through the north east corner. On the first floor is a small modern window which has been inserted to light the modern bathroom. The north wall of the wing has a central window opening containing modern sliding sashes. This wall also serves as the northern boundary of the property.

## **Interior**

The plan of the original house was relatively simple; a central hall and stair was flanked by a heated parlour to the right and living kitchen (see appendix) to the left, with access from there to a scullery and larder in the rear wing. Upstairs were three bedrooms, two of which were heated and reached directly from the upper stair hall, whilst a small third bedroom was located in the wing, originally reached directly through the second bedroom. It appears to have been unheated. Evidence for the original decoration of the house is limited, but what remains suggests it was not elaborate or expensively finished but suitable for a relatively comfortable lower middle-class family.

Describing in sequence what we know of the original character of the ground-floor rooms, the front door opens into a small plain entrance hall with simple skirting. Doorways, which retain their original four-panelled doors and architraves, lead to the original parlour and living kitchen on the right and the left respectively. Immediately facing

is the stair which rises to the first floor. To the left of this is a door which now leads into an understair water closet. Given the decorative treatment of the stairs and the architrave, it is likely that the understairs area was not originally enclosed as it is now.

The original open-string dog-leg stairs has continuous winders, two simple square-section balusters per tread and a slender embellished newel post of cast iron which resembles the rising stem of a plant or flower. The newel is topped with a circular cap and joined to a handrail (Fig 14). Each tread end is carved to resemble a console-like bracket. The stairwell is lit by a north facing window.



*Figure 14. Newel post  
(Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012 ©  
English Heritage).*

Turning to the right, one enters the present living room which would have been the parlour (Fig 15). The original moulded four-panelled door has its architrave but like most of the doors in the house, the original door furniture has been lost. The room enjoys views of the garden through south and east facing windows, making it a bright and pleasant room. Both windows have splayed reveals indicating that the window openings were probably once furnished with shutters. Records indicate that both the shutters and their boxes were removed in 1989.<sup>46</sup> The room would have been heated by a fireplace in the centre of the east wall, to the left of the east window. The flue is contained entirely within the thickness of east wall but the opening is now partially blocked and completely obscured by a modern gas fire and surround. The present cornice, with egg and dart moulding, and the ceiling rose are modern and no other evidence remains to indicate the nature of any original decorative plasterwork. The square-topped skirting is modern.

The original living kitchen is also reached from the entrance hall through the opposite doorway (Fig 16). At present it is used as a dining room and is lit by a single central south



*Figure 15. Present living room, formerly the parlour, with a view through to the hall and dining room. (Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012 © English Heritage).*

facing window with splayed reveals. The room is almost rhomboidal in shape, caused by the walls' alignments with Ravensdowne and the boundary of the old Ordnance House plot. The original fireplace has been replaced and ceiling decorations are modern. We do, however, know that the room once had a picture rail which was photographed in the later 20th century before it was removed.<sup>47</sup> The room does retain its original door, architrave and skirting which is finished with a simple roll top. It also has two built-in storage cupboards, with their original doors and locks. One cupboard with four panels is located to the right of the projecting chimney breast whilst the other cupboard is built into the south facing wall; its door has two panels and is crudely constructed to fit the opening.



*Figure 16. Present dining room, formerly the living kitchen, with view through to the present kitchen in the rear wing. (Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012 © English Heritage).*



The present kitchen, also a rhomboid in shape, is reached from the dining room. This was probably originally a large scullery and is now lit by four windows to the west, north and east. The back door, which would have led out into a small yard and outside store is located to the right (east). A boxed-in flue in the north-east corner of the room, which has a small single chimney externally, suggests a copper may have once occupied the corner: a fairly typical arrangement to provide heated water for washing food, utensils and clothes. We know from records that this room was once divided,<sup>48</sup> with a larder in the south-west corner, lit by a single window (Fig 17). This window has a recess beneath the sill which might suggest a blocked door to the street. However, there is no external evidence for this and it is more likely that the recess provided more storage space beneath the full-width stone sill which served as a shelf.



*Figure 17. Present kitchen showing former larder, photo taken in 2002 (Photograph: English Heritage Estates Office © English Heritage).*

At the top of the stairs is a very small central box room. The large splayed south-facing window seems oversized for such a small space, and although the skirting, four-panelled door and architrave appear to be early, on the landing side the wall bisects the architrave of the neighbouring doorframes. This indicates the wall was inserted later, creating an additional room out of the large landing. The bedroom above the parlour (Fig 18) has two splayed window openings which look to the south and east. Apart from the original door and architrave there are no other original features in this room and the fireplace has been removed and blocked. On the opposite side of the stairs, an opening with architrave indicates the original position of the doorway into the bedroom above the living kitchen. The door has been removed and a corridor has been inserted into the east side of the bedroom giving direct access to the rooms in the rear wing from the landing. The room above the living kitchen has a single splayed window facing south. It is also rhomboidal in shape, similar to the living kitchen room below. A full-height cupboard has been built in-between the bedroom door and south wall. There is a shallow projecting chimney breast on the western wall but evidence of the fireplace has now been removed. The north wall of the room is also a later insertion, reducing the size of the room to allow the creation of the corridor.

A further bedroom in the wing was probably originally reached directly from the west bedroom but entry to this room is now via the corridor and the room has been divided



*Figure 18. Main bedroom with a view through to the landing and stairs.*

*(Photograph: Simon Taylor 2012 © English Heritage).*

to provide a modern upstairs bathroom which is lit by a splayed window facing west on to Ravensdowne. A modern lintel marks the line of the original wall between this and the west bedroom, and is a continuation of the back wall of the main house. The bathroom is a modern insertion into this room, as is the window.

### **Alterations in the 19th Century**

As with most buildings, No. 84 has undergone change over time. A number of these may have occurred in the 19th century. As has been discussed above, a lean-to store is known to have existed against the northern elevation. The store does not appear to have been keyed into the stonework of the main house, suggesting that it was probably built after the main house had been completed in the 1860s. It is not clear when this took place, but the lean-to was *in situ* by 1897 and shown on the Ordnance Survey map of that date.

It is also likely that a fourth bedroom, or box room, was an early addition to the upstairs landing. The stud wall bisects the architrave of the neighbouring doorframes providing evidence that this was a later insertion. The four-panelled door, architrave and the landing skirting all suggest an early date for the work. An additional bedroom may have been required as Samuel Riddle's family continued to expand; we know from census returns that Mr Riddle's son, Peter, was born in 1868, soon after they are known to have moved there, and the 1871 census indicates that for a time Mr Riddle needed to employ a live-in servant.

### **Alterations in the 20th Century**

Further alterations were made in the 20th century, some of which can be dated from documentary sources, whilst others cannot be precisely dated. On the first floor, the insertion of a corridor to access the rear bedroom, the addition of an upstairs bathroom with new window, and the relocation of a wall between the second bedroom and bedroom in the rear wing, probably took place at some point in the 20th century. The

plain door, the skirting, architrave and the lintel suggest they are modern additions, but there is little definite evidence which might date these changes.

More precisely, we know from documents held by English Heritage that major 'upgrading' took place in 1989. After many years of use as married quarters by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), concerns were expressed in October 1984 about the condition of the house by the Department of the Environment's property division: 'the property is now reaching such a state that MOD are seriously considering purchasing alternative premises in Berwick and leaving 84 Ravensdowne vacant'.<sup>49</sup> However, the cost to the MOD of purchasing a new property deterred such a move and a programme of modernisation was finally drawn up in early 1988, and carried out in the spring of 1989.

The proposed modernisations were extensive. Originally estimated at £15,000 the costs finally came to £33,000, to the consternation of the MOD. The works included the replacement of the cast iron gutters, removal of the shutters, and the complete renewal of the living room floor, the removal of tiled fire surrounds a new kitchen, new bathroom and boiler. New floorboards were also installed in the second bedroom and the house was completely redecorated.

At the same time it was noted that subsidence of the property was causing issues both internally and externally. As a result the lean-to store was demolished, leaving a scar on the north-facing wall which has been discussed above. Furthermore, it led to the removal of features such as the picture rails and the re-levelling of floors, which would explain the lack of original skirting in many rooms. The realignment of doorframes and cupboards also took place at this time. Cracks on the exterior walls have required periodic filling and the condition of the property continues to be monitored.

Finally, the most recent major change has been to the layout of the kitchen. Originally a scullery with separate larder, the wall separating the two was removed to create a larger kitchen. No records have been found to confirm when this took place, but a photograph taken during an inspection of 2002 shows the wall to be still extant (Fig 17).



## HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

84 Ravensdowne is located in one of Berwick-upon-Tweed's most architecturally important streets where many of the town's most affluent citizens lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was built in the first half of the 1860s on one of the few remaining pieces of land available for development in Ravensdowne. The house and gardens replaced a coach-house and pasture, the former having been constructed earlier in the century. Prior to this, it appears to have been part of a larger tract of land known as Old Windmill Hill which, over time, was broken up into smaller parcels. A windmill mound is known to have existed to the rear of neighbouring houses.

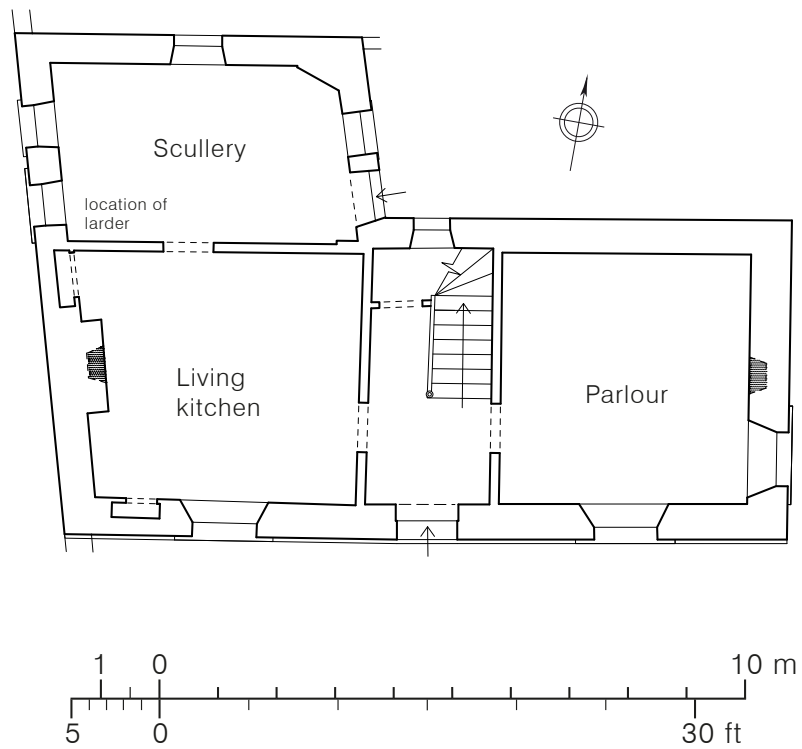
The building was erected at a time when towns and cities were rapidly expanding and there was an increased need for new housing; many villas of a similar type were being built in new suburbs. 84 Ravensdowne is likely to have been designed and built by a local builder. It is of modest size with simplicity of layout and lack of internal decoration that indicates a house built out of economy. Externally, there was an attempt to deceive the onlooker through the masking of materials, some of which may have been re-used. The picture which has been revealed is one of a local man who aspired to middle class comforts and respectable living, having made money from a successful family business in Tweedmouth. The house was also associated with Thompson's, a local ironmonger's business in Marygate which flourished in the late 19th century, and later became part of the history of the military barracks, as it was the home for senior military personnel and their families.

No. 84 sits in an important part of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area. It is within view of the historic town walls, immediately south of the 18th-century barracks and old military hospital, and is within an area which is predominantly residential in character. Its construction from local materials ensures that the house blends well with its neighbours. The house's orientation, set at a right angle to the street, is unusual in Ravensdowne, allowing a more pleasant south facing aspect for the inhabitants. Its alignment on the edge of the street maintains the enclosed nature of this part of Ravensdowne, which is also punctuated by the occasional glimpses of gardens and the town walls.

Although 84 Ravensdowne is not of exceptional architectural quality and has undergone a number of internal alterations over time, it has played a part in the history of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Its position, materials and architectural style mean that it blends well with other buildings in Ravensdowne. Whilst on its own it is not of architectural significance, it is the contribution it makes to the character of the local streetscape and the wider Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area, which is 84 Ravensdowne's most important asset.

# APPENDIX: RECORD DRAWING

Ground-floor plan



84 Ravensdowne  
Berwick-upon-Tweed

NGR: NU 00105300  
Surveyed July 2012  
Drawn by BJK



## NOTES

- 1 A Menuge and C Dewar, *Berwick-upon-Tweed: three places, two nations, one town* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2009).
- 2 'The true description of her Majesties towne of Barwick' c. 1580, British Library.
- 3 Deed of Assignment and Grant, 20th June 1723, between Captain Phillips to the Governors of Officers of the Ordnance Held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 4 F M Cowe, *Berwick-upon-Tweed: a short historical guide* (Berwick: Bells' Bookshop, 1975), 33.
- 5 Andrew Armstrong & Son, 'A Plan of Berwick', in the margin of 'A Map of the County of Northumberland with that part of the County of Durham which is North of the River Tyne Also the Town of Berwick and its Bounds Taken from an Actual Survey and laid down from a Scale of an Inch to a Mile'; By Lieu.t And.w Armstrong and Son. Engraved by Tho.s Kitchin, Geogr.; 1769, National Archives.
- 6 R Scott (engraver), 'A Plan of the Town of Berwick', in John Fuller, *The History of Berwick upon Tweed, including a short account of the villages of Tweedmouth and Spittal, &c.* (Edinburgh, 1799; reprinted Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1973).
- 7 Cowe 1975, 33.
- 8 Ordnance Survey 1:528, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Sheet 9, surveyed 1852, published 1855.
- 9 John Speed, 'Barwick', in the margin of Speed's map of Northumberland (1610), published in his 'Theatrum Imperii Magnae Britanniae' (London, 1611). Bar scale of 40 'paces'. Reproduced in Nigel Nicholson and Alasdair Hawkyard (eds) *The Counties of Britain: A Tudor Atlas by John Speed* (London: Pavilion, 1988), 138.
- 10 'A Plan of Berwick upon Tweed 1725', British Library.
- 11 William Lowrey, 'Map of the Parish and Town of Berwick upon Tweed from An Actual Survey Made in the Year 1844 by William Lowrey of Barmoor'. Scale 4 chains to an inch [1:3168]. In 'Berwick-upon-Tweed 1844 Survey', Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office.
- 12 Ordnance Survey 1:528, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Sheet 9, surveyed 1852, published 1855.
- 13 Ordnance Survey 1:2500, Northumberland, Sheet IV.5, revised 1897, published 1898.
- 14 Ordnance Survey 1:2500, Northumberland, Sheet NIV.2, revised 1922, published 1924
- 15 'Plan of Part of the Town of Berwick shewing the Ground where the Infirmary stands and that piece of Ground to be proposed to be purchased also for the use of the Infirmary', plan no. Z13/48 dated 1745, reproduced in RCHME Historic Building Report, Old Military Hospital, 69 Ravensdowne, NMR, Swindon, June 1993.
- 16 Attested Copy Release regarding 'a close and premises in Berwick-upon-Tweed', 6th May 1824, between Mr James Mills and John Pratt, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 17 Attested Copy Conveyance regarding 'a field in Ravensdowne formerly the Old Windmill Hill', 4th April 1857, between the trustees of J Pratt deceased to George Gilchrist, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.

- 18 Conveyance deeds 2nd July 1860 between Mr George Carr to Mr Samuel Riddle, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 19 For example, Kelly's Post Office Directory of Northumberland & Durham for 1858 lists 'Riddle Samuel and Sons, millwrights engineers and boiler makers' in Tweedmouth (p. 229). Earliest electoral rolls record a Samuel Riddle living in Main Street, Tweedmouth in a 'house and workshop'. Census returns indicate that Samuel senior was born in Durham circa 1776. The census return of 1861 describes a 56 year-old Samuel then living in Parade with his family, as a 'millwright and engineer'.
- 20 Census returns of 1861 and electoral rolls 1865-66.
- 21 Copy extract from the last will and testament of Samuel Riddle dated 9th October 1885, and copy of probate 18th August 1888, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 22 Kelly's Directory of Northumberland 1894 (London: Kelly Publishing), 8.
- 23 L. Bankier, *Berwick-upon-Tweed Illustrated 1894-1994* (Berwick-upon-Tweed: Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council, 1995), 36-37.
- 24 Conveyance deeds 1st April 1921 of the 'bowling green' between Miss E Riddle to Alex Darling and others, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Conveyance deeds 31st August 1921, between Miss E.E. Riddle and another to Charles Drummond, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 27 Conveyance deeds 10th October 1928 between Messrs Charles WL Stevens and Robert G Waugh to Mr John Brown and Mrs M Brown, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 28 Conveyance deeds 22nd February 1936 between John Brown and his wife to Henry Ogle, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 29 Conveyance deeds 4th March 1937 between Alexander Darling and HM Principle Secretary of State for the War Department, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 30 Conveyance deeds 2nd August 1939 between Henry Ogle and HM Principle Secretary of State for the War Department, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 31 Conveyance deeds 1st July 1981 between The Secretary of State for Defence to The Secretary of State for the Environment, held by Records Management Services, English Heritage, Swindon.
- 32 Menuge and Dewar; 2009, 64.
- 33 N Pevsner et al, *The Buildings of England: Northumberland* (London: Penguin, 1992), 183.
- 34 Menuge and Dewar; 2009, 66.
- 35 The houses do not appear on Lowry's Map of 1844 but are shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1852 (see note 8).

- 36 The Ordnance Survey 1:528 plan of Berwick-upon-Tweed (see note 8) provides a great deal of useful detail. The plot bought by Riddle was at this time an open field, apart from the coach house in one corner. The remainder of Ravensdowne is shown to be built upon apart from a number of gardens and the area where the icehouses were located
- 37 Menuge and Withey mention court housing at Nos. 59 to 63 (A Menuge and M Withey, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Tweedmouth and Spittle: Rapid Character Assessment, Architectural Investigation Division Report Series B/013/2005), but the Ordnance Survey map of 1852 shows gardens and a coach house associated with the houses here, suggesting that, in origin at least, it was not quite as lower class as No. 78 might have been.
- 38 See Menuge and Dewar, 2009, figure 56.
- 39 Similar houses (of single pile layout, central stair and symmetrical frontage) of this period can be found in other locations. A nearby example is Balmoral House, on South Greenwich Road in Spittal, a similar mid-19th century, symmetrically fronted villa of a comparable size (see Menuge and Dewar, 2009, figure 96).
- 40 See the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of Berwick-upon-Tweed, published in 1962. It is also referred to as a 'tennis court' in sales deeds of 1981 when 84 Ravensdowne, the barracks and other parts of the town were transferred to The Department of the Environment (see note 31).
- 41 These multi-phase defences encircling Berwick were scheduled as an Ancient Monument in the 1960s. The designation boundary is now contiguous with the present eastern garden wall of 84 Ravensdowne.
- 42 Riddle's daughter finally sold the bowling green in 1921 (see note 24).
- 43 Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council, Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area Character Appraisal, 2008, 94, [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)
- 44 Photographs are held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle.
- 45 Ministry of Defence letter dated 31st January 1989 from the Families Housing and Welfare Services Tyne and Tees, to the Ministry of the Environment's Property Services Agency Sub District Works Office in Alnwick, held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- 46 A letter from the Ministry of the Environment's Property Services Agency, Sub District Works Office in Alnwick, dated 20th April 1989 to the Ministry of Defence outlines works carried out to modernise the house. It notes that in order to insert replacement windows, the shutters to all windows and their boxes were removed and the reveals were replastered. Letter held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle.
- 47 Photographs held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The picture rail was said to have been removed in the Ministry of Defence modernisation of 1989 (see note 46 above).
- 48 Photographs held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, show the larder wall in place in 2002.
- 49 From J F Turner of the Property Services Agency of the Ministry of the Environment dated 9th October 1984, to S Pilcher of Historic Building & Monuments Commission, London. Held by English Heritage Estates Office (National Collections: Historic Properties), Newcastle-upon-Tyne.



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