

**Nertherton Hall, Nr. Bradbourne, Matlock,  
Derbyshire.  
Results of an Archaeological Watching  
Brief.**



Location of a new access road to Netherton Hall

**Archaeological Research Services**

**Report No. 2010/3**

January 2010

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**Compiled By:**

Brian Marshall

Archaeological Research Services Ltd

Angel House

Portland Square

Bakewell

Derbyshire

DE45 1HB

**Checked By:**

Dr. Richard Chatterton

Tel:01629 814540

Fax:01629 814657

[admin@archaeologicalresearchservices.com](mailto:admin@archaeologicalresearchservices.com)

[www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com](http://www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com)

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## *Executive Summary*

*In January 2010 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Amos Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Netherton Hall, Nr. Bradbourne, Derbyshire. The monitoring was carried out during groundworks in various locations while undertaking renovation to neglected stone outbuildings plus services and new access road.*

*The work had been requested by the Development Control Archaeologist of Derbyshire County Council and required an archaeologist from Archaeological Research Services Ltd to be on site to observe all ground works and to ensure preservation by record of any archaeological deposits discovered.*

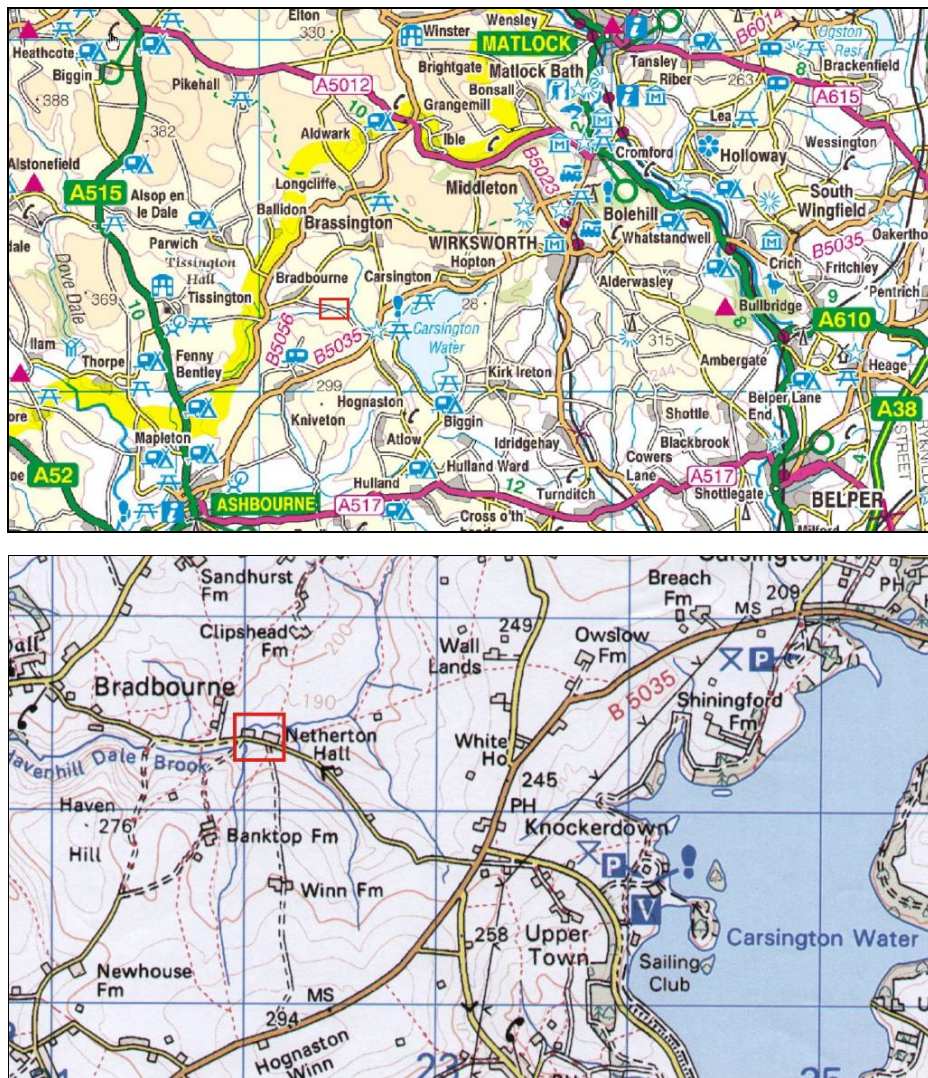
*Other than modern features exposed in trench 3 the watching brief did not identify any significant archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds within the extent of excavation.*

1. **Introduction**

1.1 In January 2010 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Amos Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Netherpton Hall, Nr. Bradbourne, Derbyshire. The watching brief had been requested as part of the planning process by the Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire County Council. The work was carried out during several phases of groundworks during renovation of outbuildings and other service and access related developments within the vicinity of Netherpton Hall.

2. **Location and Geology**

2.1 Netherpton Hall is situated 1.2km east of the village of Bradbourne, which itself is situated 7km north of Ashbourne and 11km south-west of Matlock (Fig. 1), and is currently operating as Livery Yard and Holiday Cottage. It is located between the village of Bradbourne and Knockerdown, on Brackendale Lane at NGR SK22135237, situated at a height of 187m OD overlooking the nearby Haverhill Dale Brook which runs to the north of the property.



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Fig. 1: Location Maps of the Development Site

2.2 The site lies close to the geological boundary of two bedrock formations, the Widerpool Formation consisting of Limestone and Mudstone, Interbedded and the Bowland Shale Formation of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone. These formations are overlain by a narrow east west running band of Alluvium, consisting of Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (BGS 2010).

### 3. Background

3.1 Netherton Hall is a three storey Grade II Listed Building, with a stone lintel inscribed 1684 above mullion windows in the south elevation of the building. It is built of coursed limestone rubble with gristone dressings and quoins. Four metres to the north stands an east west orientated range of outbuildings. These consist of a former two storey coursed limestone building with four small rooms to the east, and a one roomed single storey building built of rough limestone rubble to the west. A further single storey building with two small rooms was added to the range by erecting north and south facing walls of rough limestone rubble in the void between the two buildings.

3.2 Netherton Hall forms part of the shrunken Medieval village of Netherton or Nether Town (Fig 2) which is referred to in documentary sources as early as 1361. There is an earthwork bank clearly visible to the north and south of the hall, which along with ridge and furrow ploughing of fields to the north, may suggest that the 17<sup>th</sup> century structure is the successor of an earlier Medieval hall or manor.

3.3 There is also potential for evidence of roman activity at Netherton Hall. Roman Derbyshire Ware, mortaria and grey ware have been found in the immediate vicinity and a roman road may pass through the site in a north-south direction.

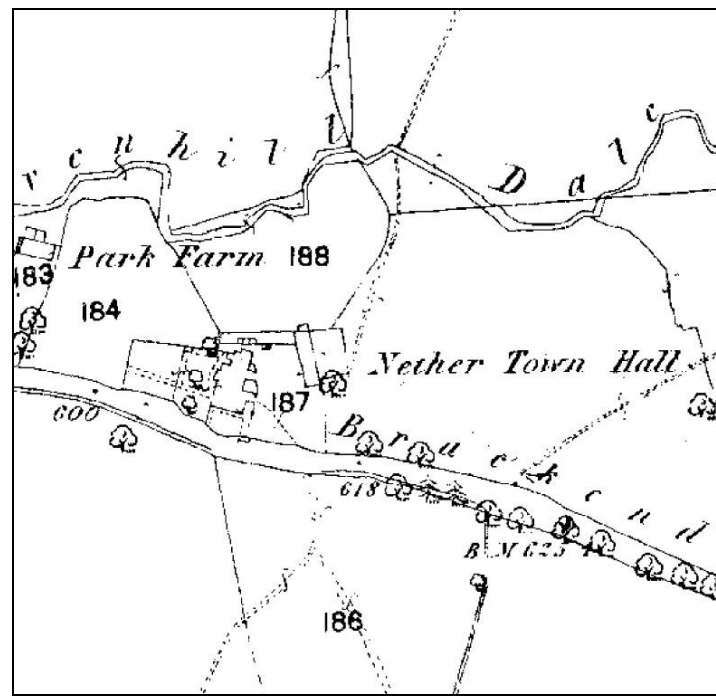


Fig. 2: Map of Nether Town Hall 1880.OS.County Series 1:2500.

#### 4. **Aims of the Project**

The project was an archaeological watching brief and the aims of the project were as follows:

- To observe all groundworks for the presence of archaeology
- To alert all interested parties to the possible destruction of archaeological features.
- To fully record and excavate any archaeological features encountered.

#### 5. **Method Statement**

5.1 All machine excavation on the site was observed by an archaeologist to ensure that no archaeological remains were disturbed. Any features or structures were to be fully cleaned and recorded in accordance with the standards stipulated by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and the guidance provided in 'Archaeological Science at PPG16 Interventions' (English Heritage 2003).

5.2 Any features or structures were to be photographed, recorded and, where possible, fully-excavated. All the contexts were recorded on pro-forma sheets and a context register was maintained.

5.3 Photographs were taken using a 35mm SLR camera with black and white print film, and colour transparency, as well as with a digital camera (7.1 megapixel resolution).

Archaeological Research Services Ltd  
 Angell House  
 Portland Square  
 Bakewell  
 Derbyshire  
 DE45 1HB

Site Code: NETH-ALL  
 Drawing Ref: 15-01-10  
 Date: BM  
 Drawn: 1:750 at A3  
 Scale:

Figure 3 Site Plan

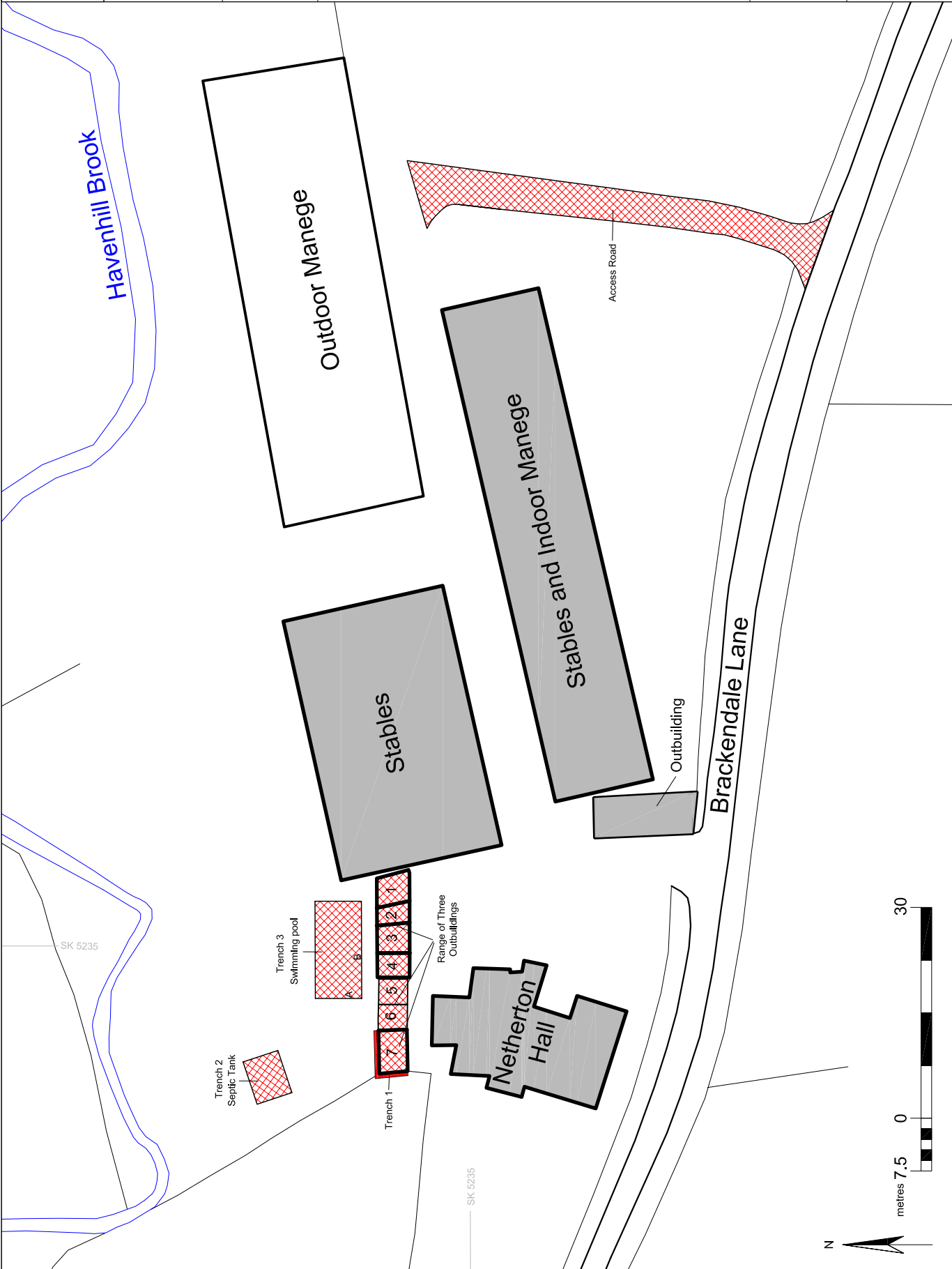
Key:

Areas of Excavation

A: location of red brick structure  
 B: location of fired clay feature

Notes:

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## 6. Summary of Results

- 6.1.1 Phase one of the groundwork commenced within seven rooms incorporated in the east west orientated range of outbuildings north of Netherton Hall (Fig. 3). Rooms 1 to 6 measured approximately 3.6m north to south and varied in width between 2.4m and 3.75m, room 7 measured 3.6m x 6m. Prior to archaeological involvement solid floor levels of concrete and flooring tiles had been removed from the above rooms revealing a compacted clay surface.
- 6.1.2 The mid to darkish brown compacted clay surface (001) represented made ground which was reduced to facilitate a level surface at a predetermined level below the proposed new floor surface. The maximum depth excavated of (001) in rooms 1 to 4 was no more than 0.15m, with small areas requiring the ground to be built up. Excavation of (001) revealed it to contain small amounts of red brick, tile and stone fragments with the occasional full red brick, remnants still remaining in the levelled ground surface (Fig. 4). Two handmade thin bricks were recovered from within (001) whose measurements varied from  $8\frac{7}{8}'' \times 4\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}''$  to  $9\frac{1}{8}'' \times 4\frac{5}{8}'' \times 1\frac{3}{4}''$ . Although thin bricks of this size may be associated with manufacture prior to the brick tax of 1784 (Lloyd N. 2003), it is not considered these bricks derive from that period. The context from within which they were discovered, along with lack of mortar and evidence of bedding sand on other fragments suggests a modern paving brick.
- 6.1.3 Rooms 5 and 6 did not require any excavation, only the removal of surface debris. With no roof cover on room 7 the ground had a frozen upper surface of 30mm. Below the frozen surface ground conditions were identified as (003), this contained a pocket of yellowish brown sand, possibly deposited during a period of building work. The depth of excavation again was not greater than 0.15m.



Fig. 4: Post excavation ground conditions in rooms 1 to 7.

6.2.1 Excavation was next undertaken adjacent to the north facing and west facing walls of room 7 (trench 1) and an area of ground 13m north of this (trench 2), which was the location for a new septic tank (Fig. 3).



Fig. 5:  
Post-ex of trench 1 running east west.



Fig. 6:  
Post-ex of trench 1 running north south.

6.2.2 Stabilization of the wall foundations to the west and north of room 7 were an element of the planning requirements. To undertake this requirement trench 1 was excavated c. 7m along the external wall of room 7 east west and 5m on the north south external wall, the trench was 0.6m wide and had a maximum depth of 0.8m. Removal of building tumble banked against the walls and excavation of the trench revealed the ground stratigraphy to consist of a layer of dark brown silty clay topsoil (002) 0.18m thick, overlaying mid brown coloured boulder clay (003) with a general depth of 0.5m. At the limit of excavation underlying (003) there was a finer clay deposit without pebble inclusions (004), which contained small areas of black mudstone (figs.5 & 6).

6.2.3 The ground to the north of room 7 fell away steeply towards Havenhill Brook. Trench 2, a rectangular area c. 5-5m x 4.5m was situated on this down slope 13m north of room 7, it was excavated down to natural ground prior to locating a new septic tank. At the southern extent of the trench topsoil (002) was 0.015m in depth, while due to soil creep (002) increased to 0.3m at the northern extent. Topsoil (002) directly overlay natural ground (003) throughout the trench. Nothing of archaeological interest was exposed within the two trenches.

- 6.3.1 A further planning requirement was the construction of a new access road c. 80m east from the original entrance along Brackendale Lane (Fig. 3) Orientated north south for 60m the new access road would connect with a metalled surface laid around the stable buildings of Netherton Hall
- 6.3.2 Within this area of topsoil strip, topsoil 005 had a general depth of 0.2m. Underlying (005) was a natural deposit of boulder clay (006), mid lightish brown in colour containing rounded pebbles and cobbles <0.15m. Deposits (005) and (006) were consistent throughout the excavated area which continued from the entrance at a width of 4.6m and maximum depth of 0.35m (Fig. 7). A sub circular area of limestone rubble 1.5m in width was located 20m north of Brackendale Lane. The observation of diagonally west to east running land drains close by which then connected to a north south main land drain suggest an area of ground susceptible to waterlogging. Nothing of archaeological interest was exposed within this excavation phase.



Fig. 7: Excavated access road facing Brackendale Lane to the south. Scale 1m & 2m

- 6.4.1 The final phase of excavation was undertaken on ground directly to the north of the range of outbuildings (Fig. 3). Prior to the current renovation programme a modern steel framed outbuilding with concrete base had been situated at this location, the steel frame of the structure was to be retained as the footprint for a new swimming pool building. The concrete base was removed prior to archaeological observation.
- 6.4.2 Figure 8 illustrates the nature of the sloping ground which can be seen by the dip of the dry stone wall extending south to north in the background. The first deposit encountered in trench 3 consisted of made ground of hardcore and rubble infill to level the sloping ground.



Fig. 8: Trench 3 swimming pool area prior to excavation. Facing west: Scale 1m & 2m

- 6.4.3 Excavation of a trench measuring 13.5m east to west x 6.6m north to south with a maximum depth of 1.5m at its southern extent commenced with removal of made ground (007) from its western extent, this revealed the remains of a red brick structure (008) 1.6m north of its southern extent. Two east west orientated walls extended for 1.9m east from the western extent of the trench, they were connected by a slightly curved north to south orientated brick wall measuring 1.67m in length, this enclosed the eastern extent of the structure (Fig. 9). The walls were two courses in width (0.22m) constructed from orange/red solid machine made brick measuring 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" x 3". The southern wall was exposed at eleven courses in height (the limit of excavation), built with rows of brick at four and three courses high in stretcher pattern and broken by a row of headers, roughly bonded using a firm gritty sand mortar. The structure had its own individual fill (009) which consisted of a dark silty matrix containing modern household debris, this included glass bottles, paint tins, plastics and metal buckets and a pram frame.
- 6.4.4 The exposed components of this structure built into sloping ground are of modern origin. Without further excavation or research of this feature it is not possible to assign a possible function.



Fig. 9: Structure (008) with slightly curved eastern wall and part standing southern wall, at the limit of excavation. Facing south: Scale 1m & 2m

- 6.5.1 Excavation continued east with the removal of natural ground (003) at the southern extent of the trench which sloped downhill to the north for approximately 4.5m where made ground continued the limit of excavation northwards (Fig 10). Natural ground at this limit was heavily made up of laminated black mudstone.



Fig. 10: Western extent of trench highlighting dip of natural ground to the north, overlain by made ground. Facing west: Scale 1m & 2m

6.5.2 At a point 5.5m east from the western extent of the trench an area of redeposited natural ground (010) was encountered, on removal of (010) feature (011) was exposed abutting a concrete foundation within the southern extent of the trench (Fig. 11). The concrete abutment is one of three located within the trench at its southern extent supporting the modern steel construction. The base of feature (011) was 0.8m below made ground at this point and had also been disturbed by the construction of a modern pipe trench which ran south-east to north-west across its northern extent Fig. 12).



Fig. 11: Feature (011) post-ex condition.  
Facing east: Scale 1m



Fig. 12: Feature (011) with base half sectioned. Note gravel from within abutting drainage trench. Facing east: Scale 1m x 2.

- 6.5.3 On unearthing evidence of a heat affected surface below redeposited natural (010) excavation was undertaken by mattock and heavy troweling. Surprisingly removal of (010) which was the entire fill of feature (011) revealed its clean nature, there was no evidence of primary working deposits, in-situ burning or material culture.
- 6.5.4 The partial remains of (011) suggest a circular pit cut to create a level platform within the south to north sloping ground, consisting of shallow very steep sides at the northern extent which rise to very steep sides of 0.65m depth at the southern extent. The base was flat with a probably diameter of 1.26m. Exposed to a depth of 0.11m the base was predominately fine silty red fired clay and was overlain by a few irregular shaped slate tiles <0.2m in width. The outer extent of the base area had changed to a darker red colour which extended up the walls of the pit for a maximum of 0.1m, at this point a transformation of the surface was undertaken where the surface became a solid mass which was irremovable by hand tools. The colouring changed to an orange red with its solid form a conglomerate of the pebble and clay natural ground (003). The conglomerate was 0.09m thick with a band of dark red fired clay extending a further 0.15m thick (Fig 12).
- 6.5.5 The form of this feature is man made with obvious changes to the surface composition through intense heat, although no evidence of in-situ burning directly onto the surface was identified. The evidence of slate tiles overlying the fired base as seen in fig. 12, may suggest a floor surface on which a brazier was placed with the heat produced transferred to the surrounding surfaces.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 During the course of the watching brief at Netherton Hall trench 3 exposed a section of a brick built feature which was of modern origin but with an unknown function. Also exposed in trench 3 was a segment of fired clay from a probable circular feature which had been affected by modern disturbance, leaving no material evidence to ascertain a functional date to the feature.
- 7.2 The watching brief on other areas of excavation did not produce any significant archaeological features, deposits, buried land surfaces or small finds relating to a possible medieval hall or earlier activities.

## **8. Archive Statement**

Within two months of the completion of the project the site archive will be deposited in accordance with the procedures set-out in "Procedures for the Transfer of Archaeological Archives" (2003) with the relevant Museum, which in this instance is;

**Buxton Museum and Art Gallery**  
Terrace Road  
Buxton  
Derbyshire  
SK17 6DA  
01298 24658

The accession number for this archive is DERSB 2010.5

## **9. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright**

- 9.1 Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 9.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

## **10. Statement of Indemnity**

- 10.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

## **11. Acknowledgements**

- 11.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with the smooth running of the project, especially Steve Baker the Development Control Archaeologist for Derbyshire County Council, Mark Johnson and the staff of Amos Developments.



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### Websites

British Geological Survey [www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index.htm)

## Appendix One: Context Register

Feature Number	Description
001	Madeground of compacted Mid to darkish sandy clay. Inclusions of fragmented and complete red brick in addition to angular stone fragments.
002	Dark brown silty clay topsoil with a maximum depth of 0.3m. Ground to north of Netherton Hall
003	Layer of mid brown sandy clay with a small amount of rounded pebble and cobble inclusions <0.09m (boulder clay). Underlying 002. (Same as 006)
004	Layer of finer silty clay with no inclusions and exposed areas of laminated mudstone. Underlying 003.
005	Homogenous friable mid to dark brown sandy clay topsoil supporting coarse grassland. Field cover in grazing pasture of access road.
006	Mid to lightish brown sandy clay with a fair proportion of rounded pebble and cobble inclusions >0.15m. Boulder clay underlying 005. (Same as 003)
007	Made ground of broken brick and building demolition plus redeposited natural ground. Located to north of outbuildings in trench 3.
008	Modern red brick built structure extending east from western extent of trench 3, 1.9m length x 1.67m width.
009	Dark silty matrix heavily include with modern household debris, this included glass bottles, paint tins, plastics and metal buckets and pram frames. Within structure 008.
010	Redeposited Natural same as (003), located around three concrete abutments exposed in the southern wall of trench 3.
011	Burnt clay feature. Semi circle remains of possible pit with fired walls due to intense heat. No evidence of in-situ burning.