
NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Project Designs and Client Reports No. CP/56/03

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT
AND EVALUATION OF
LAND AT HINNINGS FARM
DISTINGTON
CUMBRIA**

**For GOLDFINCH
(ESTATES) LTD**

**NGR NY 0039 2348
Planning Application No.
4/03/0245**

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6th October 2003



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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned to undertake an archaeological desk-based assessment and field evaluation on land at Hinnings Farm, Distington, Cumbria, ahead of a proposed residential development. This involved the consultation of the Cumbria County Council Sites and Monuments Record and County Records Office, Whitehaven and the excavation of a series of linear trial trenches in order to assess the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains.

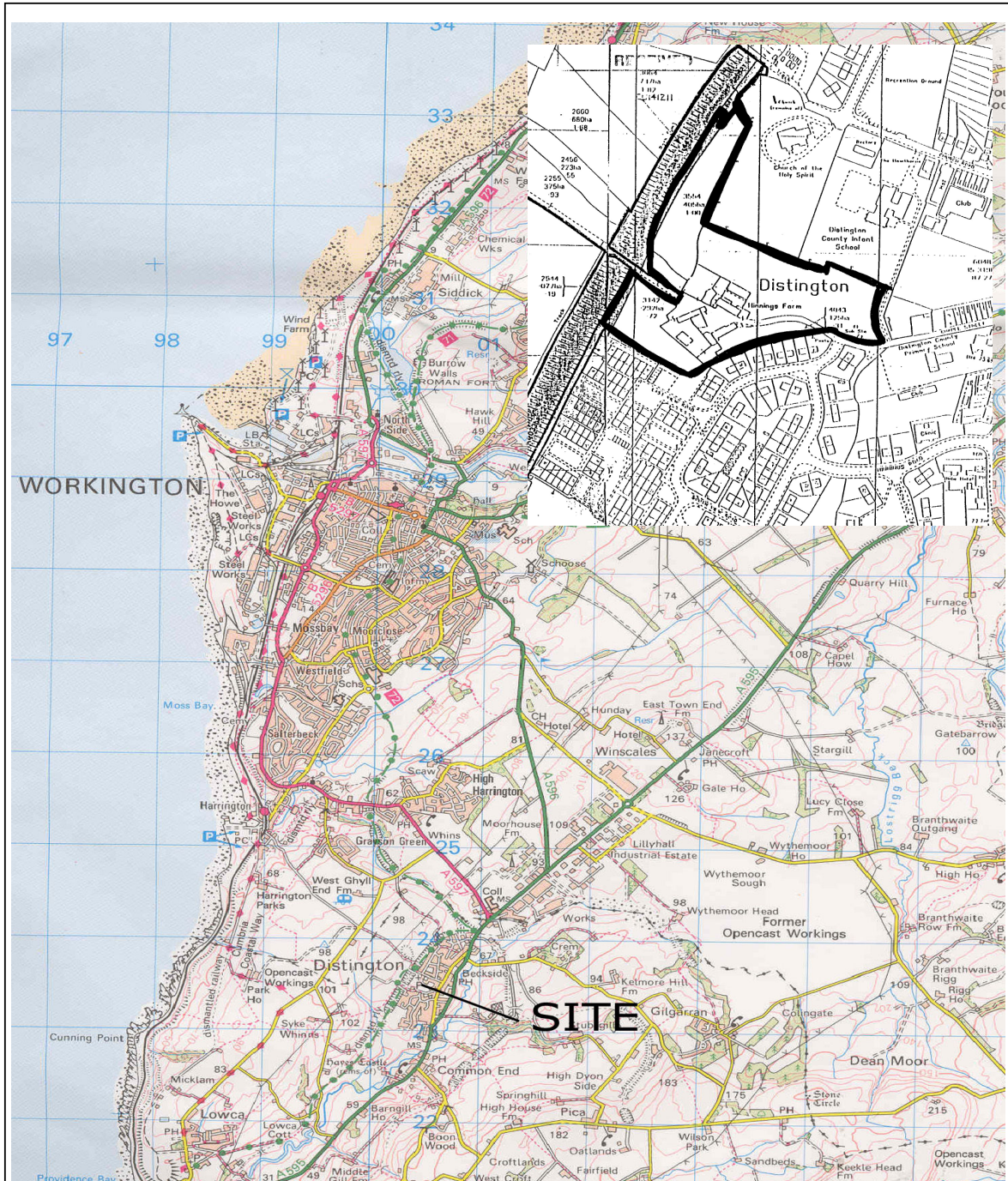
A total of 9 linear trial trenches were excavated. The foundations of a wall were observed in trench 3, which were identified as the remains of a former field boundary wall. No other archaeological remains were present across the site.

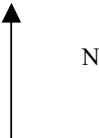
1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

- 1.1 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr Trevor Sayle, of Goldfinch (Estates) Ltd, to undertake archaeological works on land at Hinnings Farm, Distington, Cumbria (Planning Application Reference No. 4/03/0245). This consisted of a desk based assessment and field evaluation. This report fulfils the brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service.
- 1.2 Hinnings Farm is situated to the west of Distington in West Cumbria, south of the Church of the Holy Spirit. The site consists of three fields of former pasture to the south-west, north and east of the main farm buildings. The area is shown in Figure 1.
- 1.3 The most recent buildings on the site were demolished prior to the archaeological assessment taking place. The site consisted of areas of low standing walls, demolition rubble and concrete yard surfaces within the area previously occupied by farm buildings.
- 1.4 The purpose of the fieldwork was to evaluate the site in order to define the presence or absence of archaeological remains. The fieldwork was undertaken in a single phase of five days duration. No archaeological features were observed within trenches 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with the exception of 19th century field drains. Within trench 3 the remains of a dry stone wall foundation were observed and recorded. Across the site a sequence of layers of a natural postglacial deposit (clay-silt) was sealed by a thick (0.50 m average) layer of loamy topsoil.
- 1.5 The site consists of a gently undulating landscape, the highest point of which is situated close to the church of the Holy Spirit, at a height of 85 m, falling to a height of approximately 74 m AOD.

2 PREVIOUS WORK

- 2.1 There has been no direct archaeological work on the site of Hinnings Farm.



<p>North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Nenthead Mines Heritage Centre Alston CUMBRIA CA9 3PD</p> <p>Tel: (01434) 382045 Fax: (01434) 382294 Email: np.ht@virgin.net</p>	<p>PROJECT: HINNINGS FARM, DISTINGTON</p> <p>FIGURE: 1</p> <p>SCALE: 1:50,000</p> <p>TITLE: Site Location</p> <p>Reproduced from Landranger® 1:50,000 scale by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown Copyright (1997) All rights reserved. Licence Number: WL6488.</p>	
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3 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk-Based Assessment

3.1.1 This involved the consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal in the first instance, and the County Record Office, Whitehaven. This included the assessment of all readily available primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material and all available aerial photographs. To achieve as fully an understanding as possible regarding the nature of the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site.

3.1.2 The desk-based assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-Based Assessments* (IFA 1994).

3.2 Visual Site Inspection

3.2.1 A visual site inspection was undertaken by the author on 15th September 2003. This was in order to note any surface features of potential archaeological interest and to identify any potential hazards to health or constraints upon archaeological work, such as the presence of live services, Tree Preservation Orders or problems of access to the site.

3.2.2 The visual site inspection noted a number of constraints to fieldwork on the site of the farm buildings in the form of low standing walls, rubble and areas of concrete and also a gas main crosses the eastern half of the site between Chapel Street and Distington County Infant School. An Electricity Sub-Station was present at the south-east of the site and an overhead electricity cable also crosses the site. The positions of these services were known from service plans provided by the Client and all trenches were accordingly positioned away from these hazards.

3.3 Field Evaluation

3.3.1 The field evaluation consisted of the excavation of a series of linear trial trenches in order to produce a predictive model of surviving archaeological remains detailing zones of relevant importance against known development proposals.

3.3.2 In summary, the main objectives of the excavation were:

- to establish the presence/absence, nature, extent and state of preservation of archaeological remains and to record these where they are observed,
- to establish the character of those features in terms of cuts, soil matrices and interfaces,
- to recover artefactual material, especially that useful for dating purposes,
- to recover paleoenvironmental material where it survives in order to understand site and landscape formation processes.

- 3.4 Each trench was mechanically excavated by a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.50 m toothless ditching bucket. A representative section of each trench was manually cleaned and recorded according to the North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Recording Manual at a scale of 1:10. Trenches where no archaeological features or deposits were observed were planned at 1:100, other Trenches at 1:50 and individual features at a scale of 1:20. Photography was undertaken using a Canon EOS 100 Single Lens Reflex (SLR) manual camera. A photographic record was made using 200 ISO colour print film.
- 3.5 All work was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* (IFA 1994).

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Place Name Evidence

- 4.1.1 Distington, or *Dystington*, is said to be of Anglian origin (Armstrong et al, 1971). The name most likely derives from ‘home of the descendants of *Dyrst* or *Dyst*. *Inghton* and *Ingham* are common Old English place-name elements meaning ‘home of the descendants of’ (Lee 1998, 28).

4.2 Prehistoric

- 4.2.1 Little is known regarding the prehistoric settlement of the area around Distington. A polished stone axe of basalt was found in a field close to Distington, although the present whereabouts of this find are unknown.

4.3 Roman

- 4.3.1 No significant Roman settlement is known around Distington. However, it has been suggested that the Roman road from Papcastle to More follows the line of the A595. In April 2001 a significant hoard of 67 Roman coins of the 4th century AD, 15 of which were contained in a folded leather container were found in a private garden at 41 Main Street (Caruana and Shotter, 2002). It is possible that the Roman road acted as a focus for settlement by farmers, merchants and trades people, (Ibid.) although no evidence of settlement has been found.

4.4 Medieval

- 4.4.1 The earliest evidence for settlement at Distington are three cross heads and a shaft of 10th century character, found during the demolition of the ‘old church’. These are kept within the present church. No other firm evidence has been found regarding medieval settlement at Distington, however, the presence of an early church suggests a medieval settlement a short distance from it. As with the Roman period, it is likely the road remained a focus for small scale settlement during the medieval period, and the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1868) could represent a fossilised medieval pattern of field systems perpendicular to a main street (see Figure 4).

4.4.2 Distington is first mentioned as the inheritance of Sir Gilbert de Dundraw, Lord of Distington, Dundraw and Crofton and grandson of Odard, Lord of Wigton Barony in the late 12th and early 13th centuries (Hutchinson 1794-97). By the late 15th century, Distington had become part of the Dykes family estate and later the Lonsdale family estate. Distington is also situated north of Hayes Castle, supposed seat of the Moresby family since the mid 14th century (SMR 1032).

4.5 Post Medieval

4.5.1 The earliest map evidence dates to 1780 where a plan was drawn up depicting the fields and tenureships of the Church fields (see Figure 3). The fields are allotted by name and responsibility for the maintenance of boundaries indicated by initials. Hinnings Farm land is partially shown and titled 'Hinning' and was owned in 1780 by John and Lawrence Crosthwaite. There have been additional references to a Mr Crosthwaite working Moss and High Pits by 1781, which could refer to either John or Lawrence (Wilson, 1988).

4.5.2 The principal phase of development at Distington followed the construction of the London & North West and Furness Joint Railway, Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont branch between 1877 and 1879 (Caine), with new housing built along Church Road and Chapel Street (see Figure 5). The layout of the town, however, remained largely unchanged from that of pre-1861. Between 1925 and 1967 substantial development took place with housing estates north and south of Hinnings Farm. The farm itself was in the ownership of William Dixon during the mid 20th century, and continued in use until the late 1980s, since when the buildings were vandalised and the grounds used for unlawful tipping. According to one local resident, the buildings were deliberately demolished in 1990 as they had become unsafe.

5 RESULTS

5.1 A team of professional field archaeologists directed in the field by Chris Jones, BA, MA, PIFA, North Pennines Archaeology Ltd Principal Archaeologist undertook the evaluation. Ken Denham, JRC Jones and Joanne Beaty assisted him.

5.2 A total of nine linear trial trenches were excavated, measuring between 20 and 30 m x 1.50 m. Trench 1 was excavated to 40 m x 1.50 m in order to fully assess a long strip close to the site of the old church.

5.3 All references to cardinal directions refer to site grid north.

5.4 Trench 1

5.4.1 Trench 1 was located at the north-west of the site, within field A (see figure 2), close to the site of the old church, and was oriented approximately north-east to south-west. Natural subsoil consisting of mid-brown clay silt was observed at a depth of 0.50 m, sealed by a thick layer of loamy topsoil (0.40 m thick). No archaeological deposits were observed cut into the natural subsoil. A sondage 1.0 m x 0.50 m was excavated to confirm the nature of the subsoil.

5.5 Trench 2

5.5.1 Trench 2 was located south of Trench 1, also within field A, and was oriented east-west. Natural subsoil was observed at 0.50 m sealed by topsoil (100). No archaeological deposits other than 19th century field drains were observed within this trench.

5.6 Trench 3

5.6.1 Trench 3 was located at the south of field A, and was oriented north-west to south-east. Natural subsoil was observed at 0.50 m sealed by topsoil (100). At the north-west part of the trench, a wall (104) oriented approximately north-east to south-west was observed and sectioned (see Figure 8, 9). The wall was constructed from angular, dry stone blocks and measured approximately 0.50 m wide. The wall was sealed by a thin clay deposit which was in turn sealed by topsoil (100). It is likely this wall represented a field boundary pre-existing the construction of the railway, visible on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (See Figure 4).

5.6.2 A stone-lined culvert was also observed and recorded within trench 3. This was constructed from angular dry stone blocks and measured approximately 0.40 – 0.50 m wide.

5.7 Trenches 4-9 (Fields B and C, see figure 2)

5.7.1 No archaeological structures or deposits were observed within trenches 4-9. Each consisted of natural subsoil observed at a depth between 0.35 m and 0.50 m sealed beneath topsoil (100).

6 THE FINDS

- 6.1 The finds recovered from trench 3 consisted of entirely late 19th and 20th century pottery. None of these finds were retained. No finds were recovered from any of the other trenches.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 There is no evidence of archaeological settlement within the three fields which surround Hinnings Farm which pre-dates the 19th century. The farm itself pre-dates 1780 and although the current state of the farm buildings was prohibitive of evaluation on health and safety grounds, it is likely that the earliest form of settlement exists within the farm compound.
- 7.2 No significant archaeological deposits were observed within any of the trenches with the exception of a dry stone wall (104) within trench 3.

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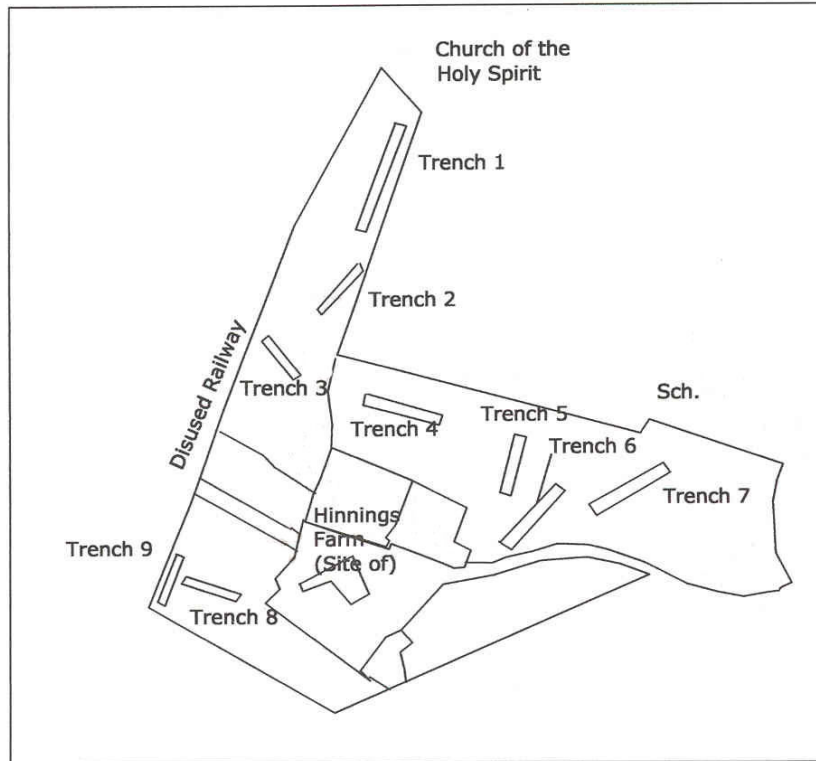
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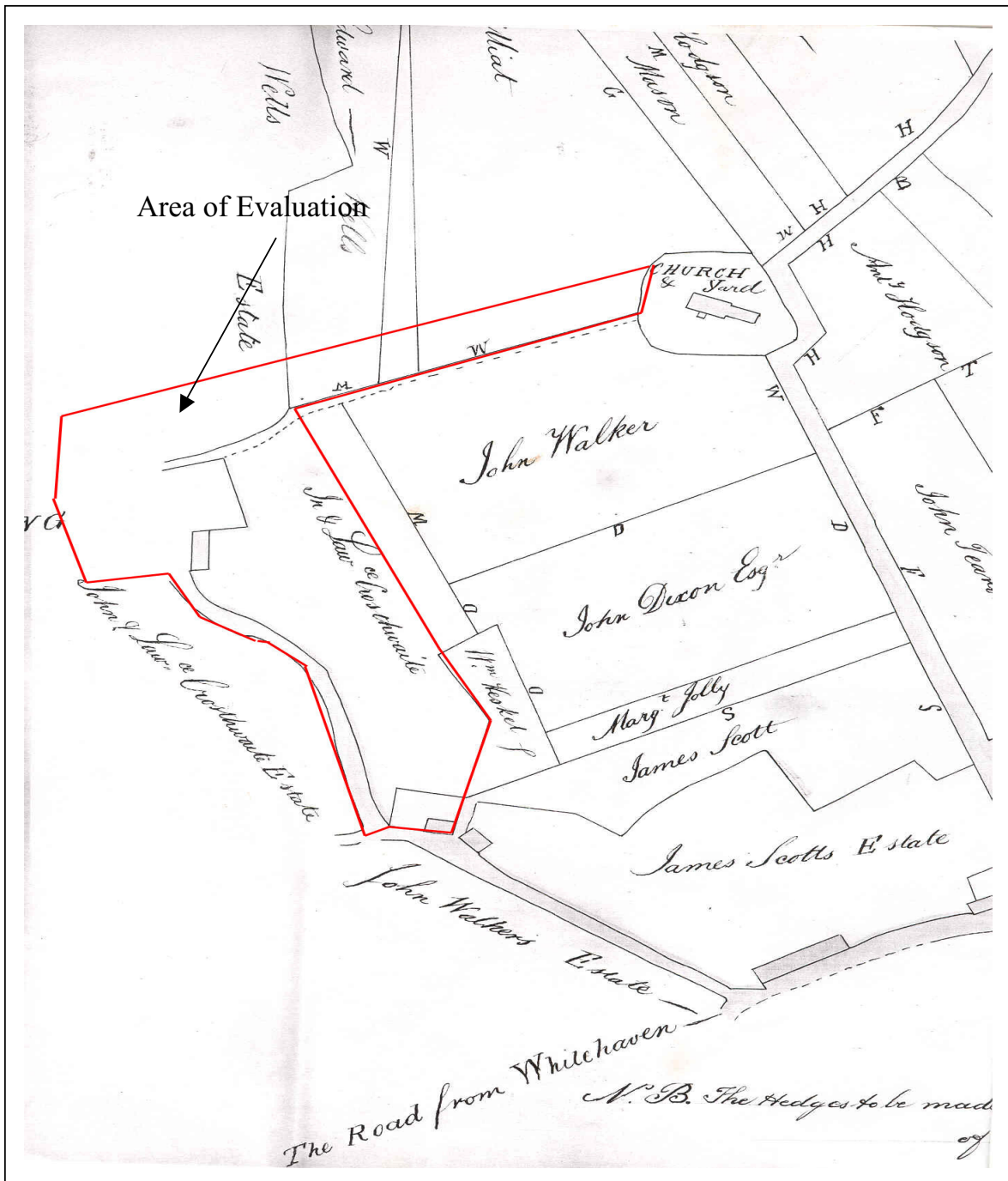
Wood, O. (1988) West Cumberland Coal 1600-1982. *Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Extra Series*. Titus Wilson.

Table 1: Catalogue of Sites, Monuments and Findspots held in the County SMR

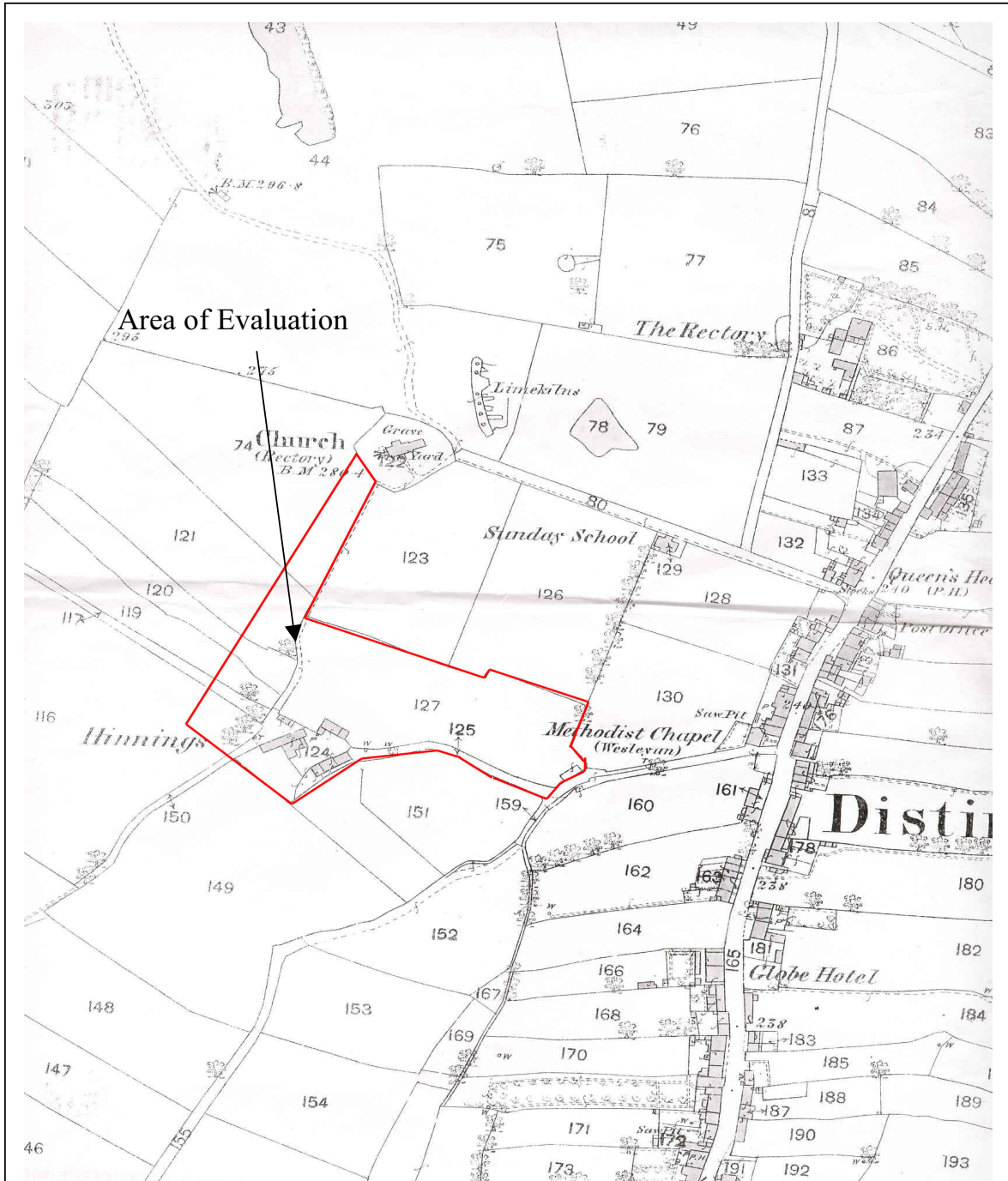
SMR NO.	Description	Period	Scheduled
1017	Benthow Quern Find	Roman	
1032	Hayes Castle, Distington	Medieval	SAM/LB
1037	Church of the Holy Spirit, Distington	Med-Post Med	LB
1038	Distington Spear Head Find	Unknown	
1039	Distington Axe Find	Prehistoric	
4604	Grave Slab Find, Distington	Medieval	
4605	Distington Carved Stone Find	Medieval	
5963	Castlemill, Distington	Unknown	
11584	Barfs Quarry	Unknown	
11586	Distington Watermill	Unknown	
11587	Distington Lime Kilns	Unknown	
11588	Distington Sunday School	Unknown	
11589	Distington Saw Pit	Unknown	
11590	Prospect Kennels, Distington	Unknown	
11591	Prospect Forge, Distington	Unknown	
11593	Common End Brewery	Unknown	
11720	Distington Toll Bar	Unknown	
11722	Distington Sawmill	Unknown	
19783	Hoard of Roman Coins	Roman	



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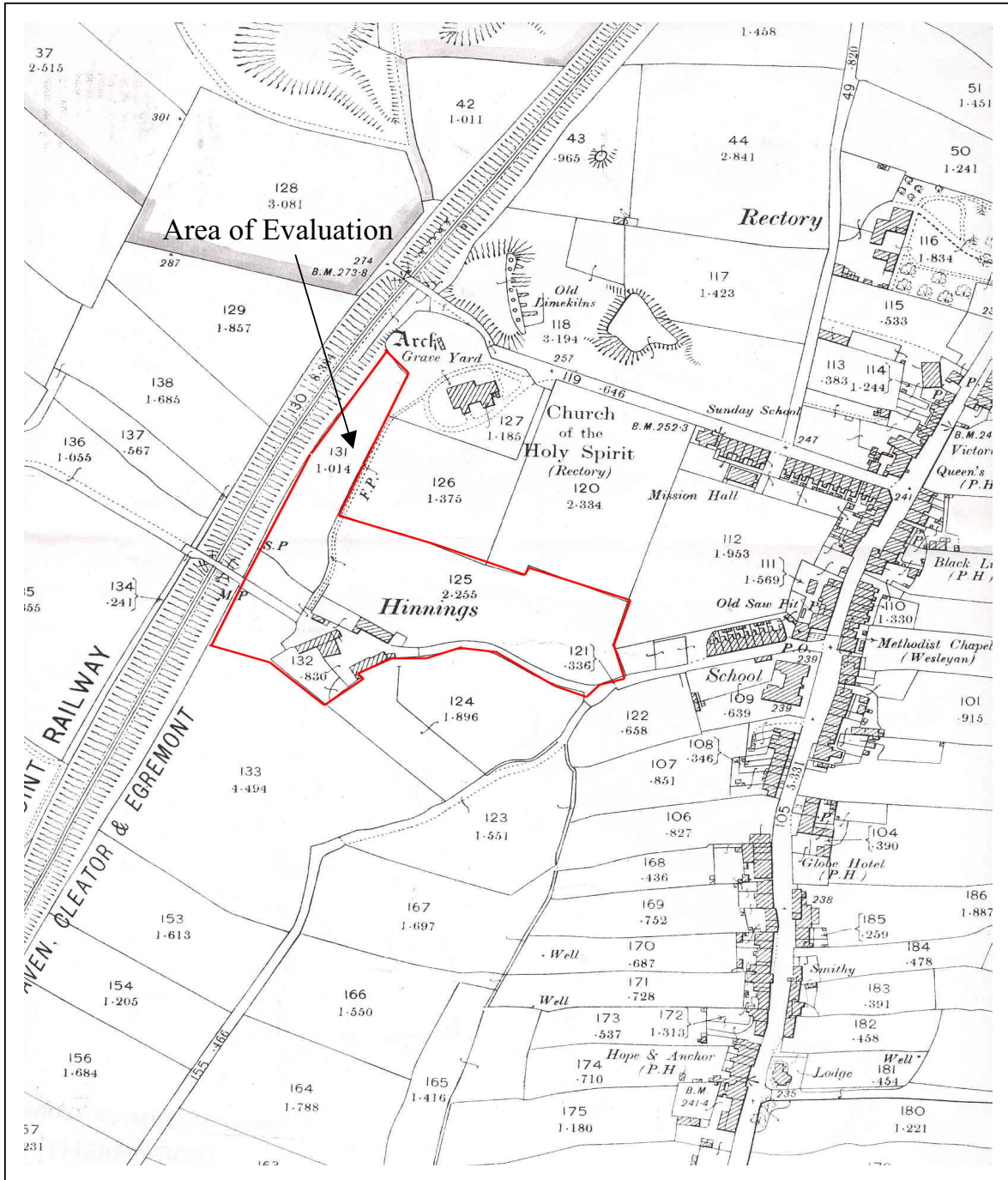
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FIGURE: 4

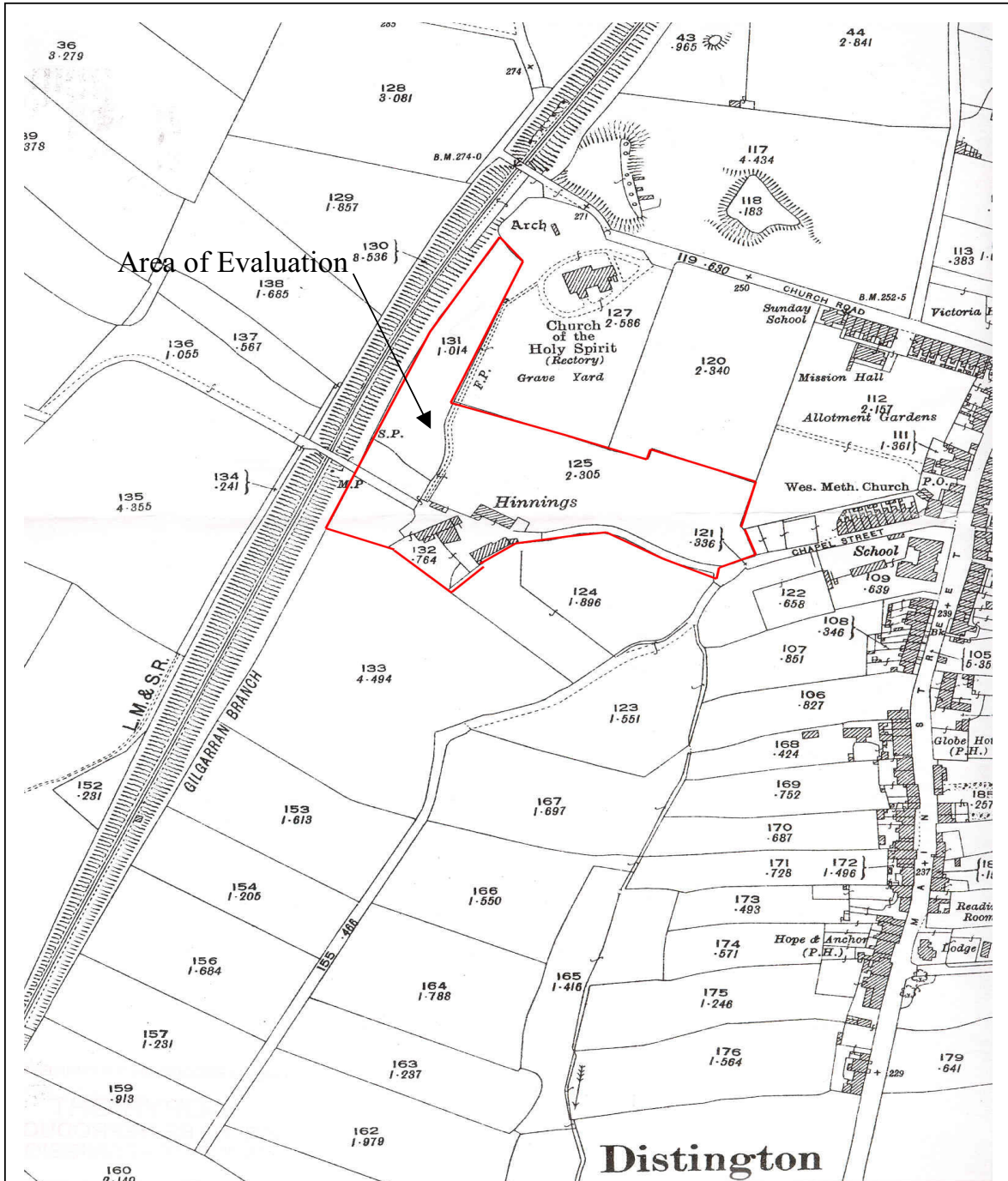
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TITLE: Ordnance Survey 1st Edition





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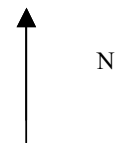
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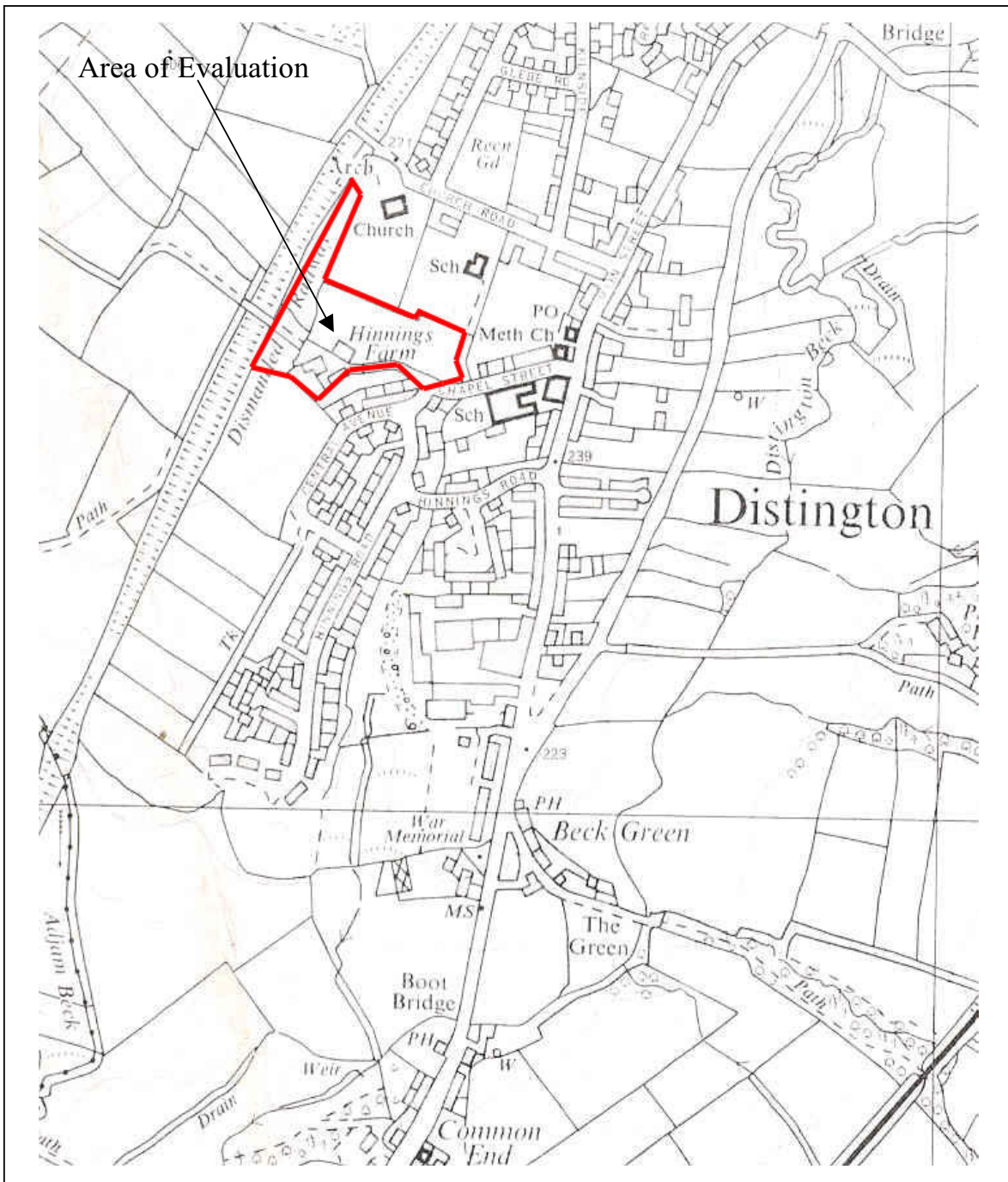
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FIGURE: 6

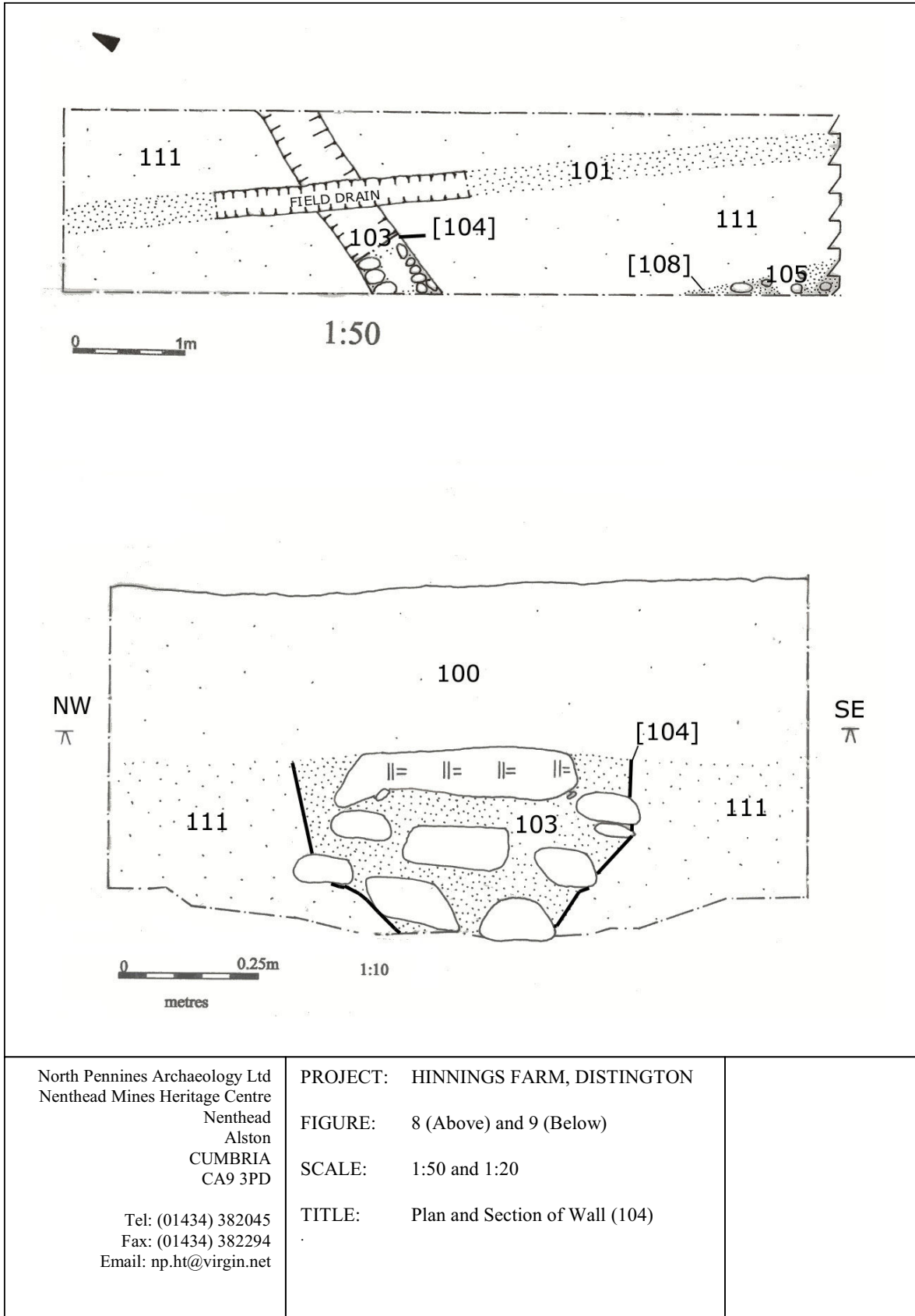
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PROJECT: HINNINGS FARM, DISTINGTON
 FIGURE: 8 (Above) and 9 (Below)
 SCALE: 1:50 and 1:20
 TITLE: Plan and Section of Wall (104)



Plate 1: Pre-Excavation photograph of Wall (104) (Photo: J.R.C. Jones)