
NORTH PENNINES ARCHAEOLOGY LTD

Project Designs and Client Reports No. CP/94/04

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
WATCHING BRIEF
AT BLENCARN
PENRITH
CUMBRIA**

**FOR
UNITED UTILITIES**

NGR: NY 637 313 (Centred)

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

In June 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by United Utilities to undertake an archaeological watching brief of works within the village of Blencarn, Penrith, Cumbria. The work involved the laying of underground cables through the village, a scheme that would affect an area of archaeological significance, recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record. As a result, United Utilities were required to commission a programme of archaeological works during the course of the ground works within the specified areas.

The work involved consultation of the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record and the County Record Office, Carlisle, and consisted of a search of all readily available maps, documents and aerial photographs relevant to the study area. Information was collected regarding the presence of any Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings or other designated sites or areas of historic interest. This was followed by the monitoring of all groundworks within a specified area by a qualified archaeologist, and the recording of all features of archaeological significance.

The village of Blencarn is a classic medieval settlement, recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record (No. 6792). The village has a small green and hall at one end, and there are traces of strip fields which are indicative of medieval agriculture. A possible Bronze Age barrow also once existed in a corner of the village green, although no traces of this survive.

No structural archaeological remains earlier than the 19th century were revealed in any of the trenches. A number of individual finds were recovered including a piece of worked flint found from within the topsoil of trench 1, and a number of fragments of medieval pottery from within a subsoil layer from trench 26. No further work is recommended.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the following people and institutions: Jo Mackintosh of Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record, the staff at the Carlisle Record Office, Linda Young of United Utilities.

The watching brief was undertaken at various stages by Frank Giecco, Ken Denham, Trish Crompton and Gerry Martin. The desk-based assessment and report writing was undertaken by Chris Jones, NPA Project Archaeologist and the report edited by Juliet Reeves. The project was managed by Frank Giecco, NPA Technical Director.

1 INTRODUCTION AND LOCATION

- 1.1 In April 2004 North Pennines Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by United Utilities to maintain a watching brief of works within designated areas of the village of Blencarn. This was in response to a brief prepared by Cumbria County Council Archaeology Service (Parsons 2004). The work involved the installation of an underground electricity supply and consisted of the excavation of a linear cable trench approximately 0.30m wide and 0.90m deep. This scheme affects an area of archaeological significance, recorded on the County Sites and Monuments Record (No. 6792) and consequently archaeological work was required by CCCAS.
- 1.2 The site is located in the centre of Blencarn, a medieval village which still retains its village green and associated strip fields (SMR No. 6792), and lies 4 miles to the east of Penrith. The line of the cable runs throughout the medieval settlement and also past an area that is thought to have contained a Bronze Age barrow.

2 PREVIOUS WORK

- 2.1 There has been no previous archaeological work on the site.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 PLACE NAME EVIDENCE

- 3.1.1 The name Blencarn derives from the Celtic *blaen* and *carn*, literally hill with a cairn (Lee 1998, 10).

3.2 PREHISTORIC

- 3.2.1 Little is known regarding prehistoric activity at Blencarn. A barrow, presumably of Bronze Age date, was situated on the village green, although this does not survive at present. The barrow was reported to have been removed for road repairs (OS Index/CCC SMR 994). Tom Clare surveyed the site in 1972 and reported nothing visible except for a few hummocks (SMR entry, Clare 1973).
- 3.2.2 A cairnfield was recorded by Tom Clare on Stubmire Moor, a short distance North-East of Blencarn (SMR entry; 19914).

3.3 ROMAN

- 3.3.1 The Maiden Way Roman road passes by approximately 500m – 1km east of Blencarn. The road runs in a north-south direction by the settlement at Brougham (Penrith) towards the Stanegate and Hadrian's Wall (SAM 275; SMR 3600).

3.4 MEDIEVAL

- 3.4.1 A runic stone was said to have been found on Skirwith Moor before 1881, although its present whereabouts are unknown (SMR 1004).
- 3.4.2 Blencarn is a classic green-village with a hall at one end, with earthworks to the south of village suggesting a shrunken medieval village (SMR 6792).

3.5 POST MEDIEVAL

- 3.5.1 The village is a mix of 17th, 18th and 19th century houses, indicating a gradual development throughout the post medieval period with little dramatic change. An old corn mill is marked on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map, which was still extant in 1900, when the present Mill Cottage is shown on OS maps for the first time (SMR 11571).
- 3.5.2 A Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was built in 1840, which is virtually unaltered externally (SMR 19569).

4 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 The work was undertaken in a two stages: Stage 1 comprised a desk-based assessment. Stage 2 comprised a watching brief.

4.2 DESK BASED ASSESSMENT

4.2.1 The rapid desk-based assessment involved the consultation of the County Sites and Monuments Record in Kendal in the first instance and also the County Records Office, Carlisle. This included the assessment of all readily available primary and secondary documentary and cartographic material and all available aerial photographs. This was in order to achieve a full understanding of the nature of the existing resource regarding the geographical, topographical, archaeological and historical context of the site.

4.2.2 The Desk Based Assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk Based Assessments* (IFA 1994)

4.3 WATCHING BRIEF

4.3.1 The principal objective of the watching brief was to allow, within available resources, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or be established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development (Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1994).

4.3.2 This work involved the close monitoring of all groundworks, including the excavation of foundations and service trenches. Where archaeological features were observed the watching archaeologist was allocated sufficient time in order to record the said structures and/or deposits.

4.3.3 This process culminated in the production of this client report, following the guidance set out in the *Management of Archaeological Projects* (2nd Edition, 1991), which included:

- A site location plan, related to the national grid.
- The dates on which the project was undertaken.
- A concise, non-technical summary of the results
- A description of the methodology employed, work undertaken and results obtained.
- Plans and sections at an appropriate scale showing the position of deposits.
- A list of, and spot dates for, any finds recovered and a description and interpretation of the deposits identified.
- A description of any environmental or any other specialist work undertaken and the results obtained.
- Recommendations for further analysis if applicable.

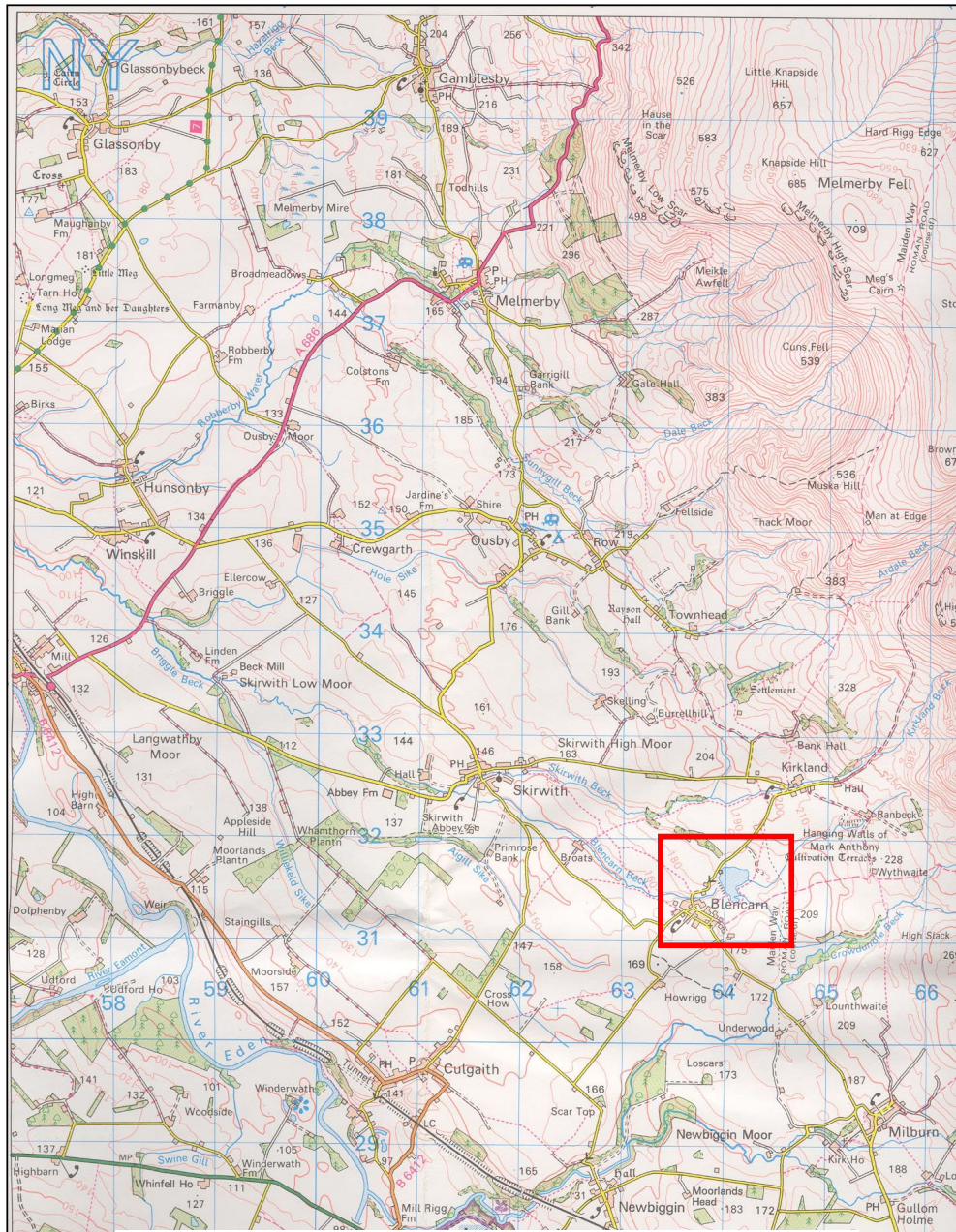


Figure 1: Site Location

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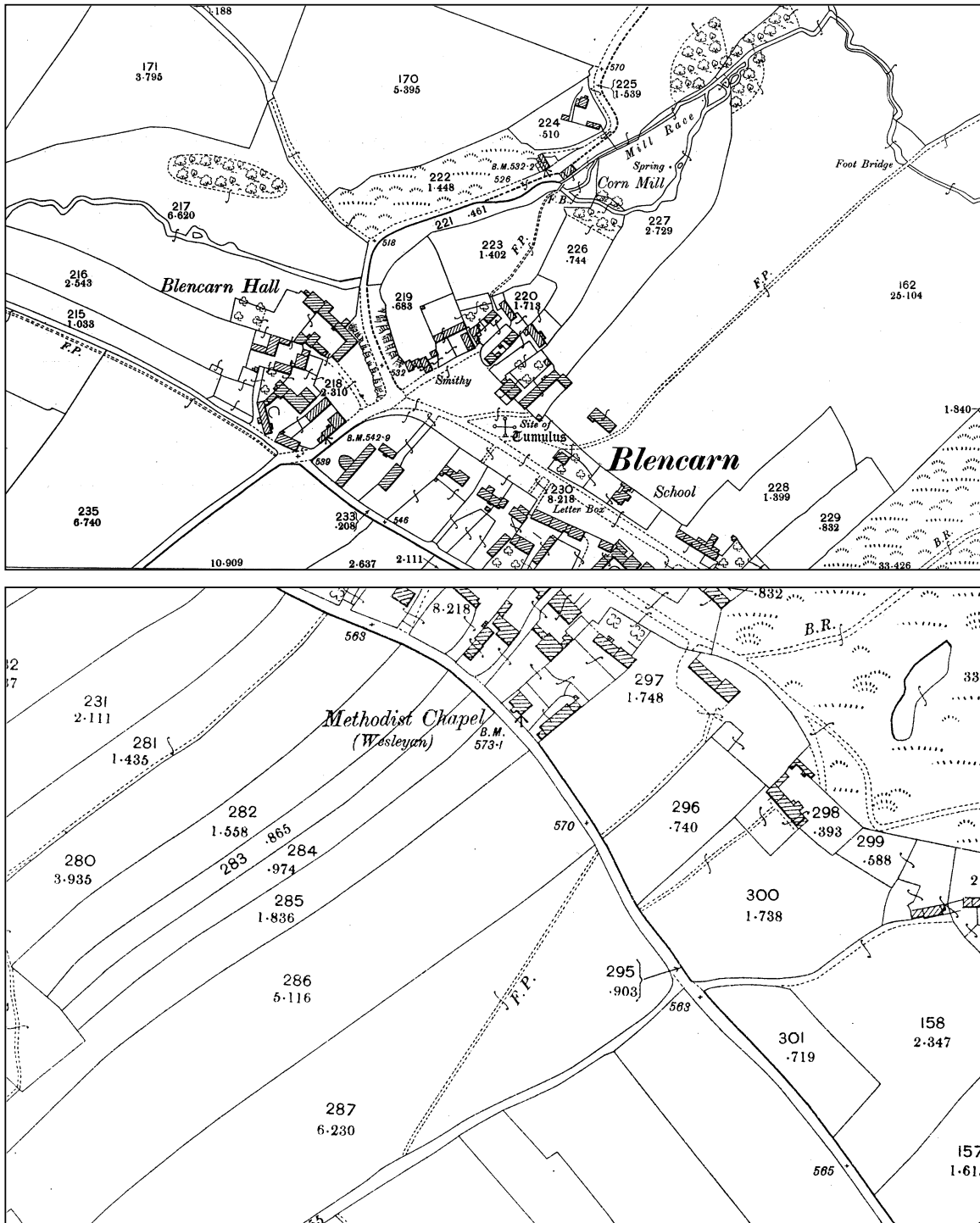


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1865. North (above) and South (below)

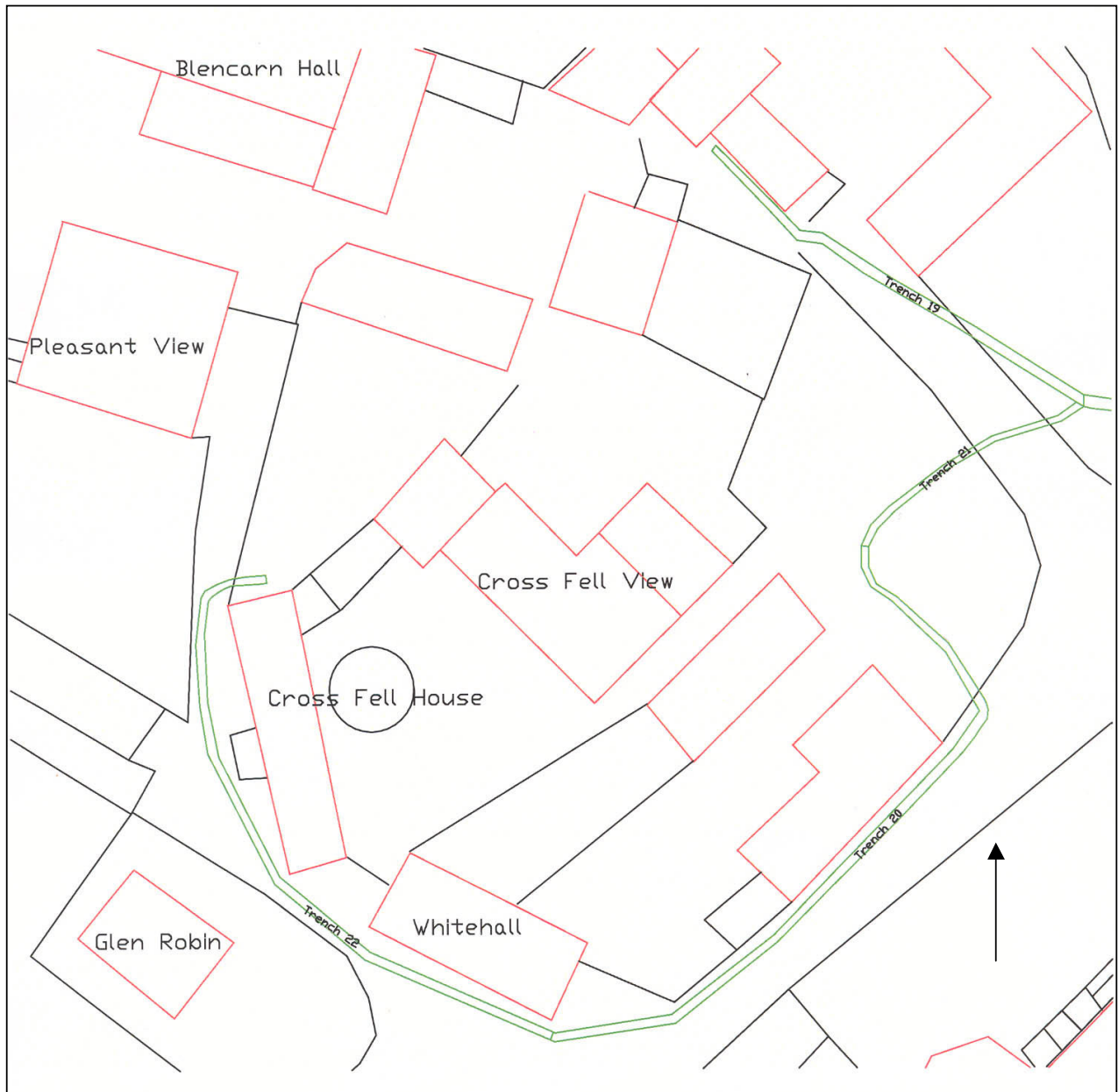


Figure 3. Trench Location Plan
North-West corner of the village, showing trenches 19-22.
Scale 1:500 @A4

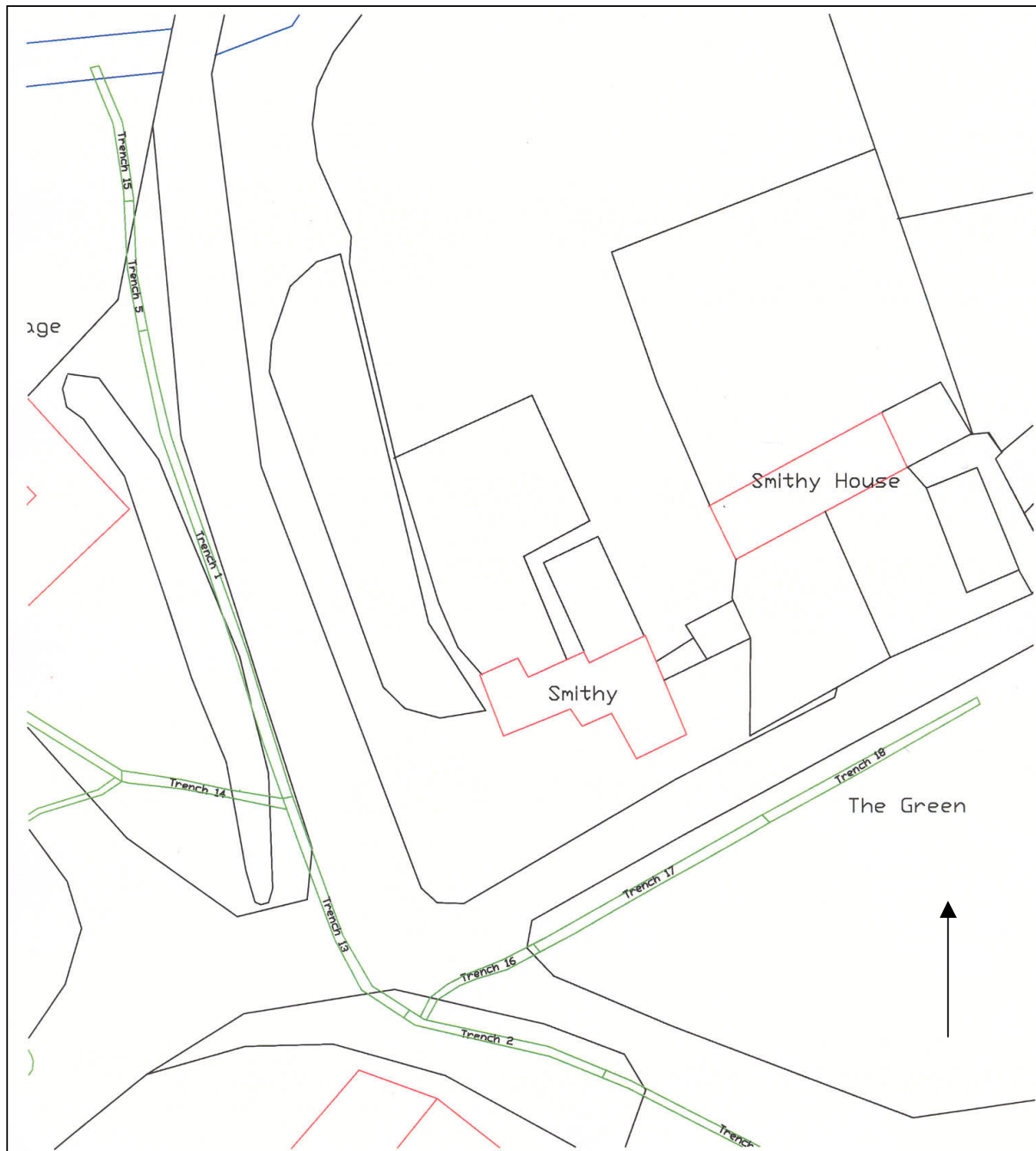


Figure 4: Trench Location Plan.
North-Central part of the village, showing trenches 1,2,13-18.
Scale. 1:500 @A4

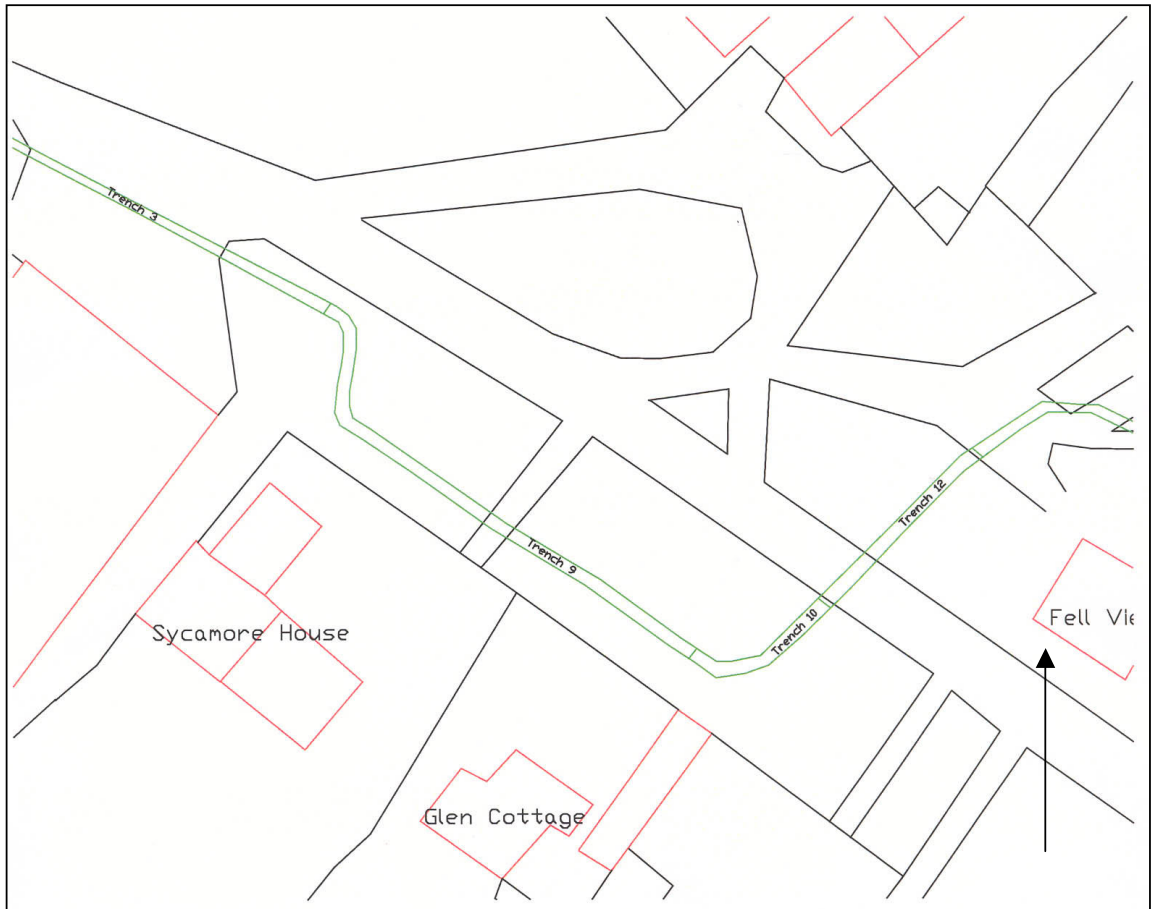


Figure 5: Trench Location Plan.
Centre of the village, showing trenches 3,9,10,10.
Scale. 1:500 @A4

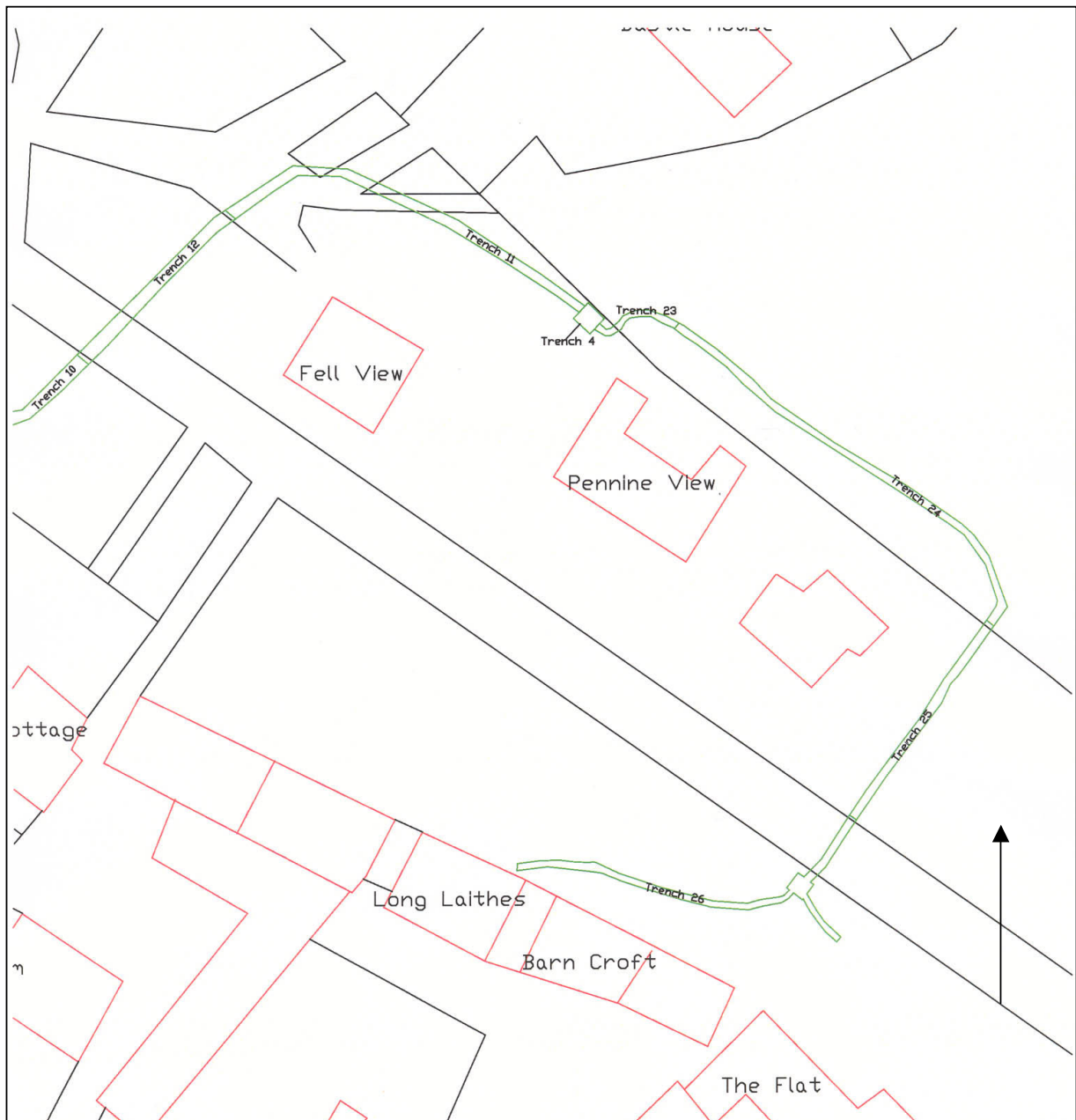


Figure 6: Trench Location Plan.
East of the village, showing trenches 4,10-12, 23-26.
Scale: 1:500 @A4

5 RESULTS

- 5.1 The work was undertaken by Ken Denham BA, Trish Crompton BA and Frank Giecco BA, Dip Arch, AIFA.
- 5.2 The work was undertaken between March and August 2004.
- 5.3 All references to cardinal directions refer to site grid north.
- 5.4 TRENCH 1**
(see figure 4)
- 5.4.1 Trench 1 was situated at the north-west of the village, aligned north-south and measured 45m x 1.5m. Natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.80m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100) sealed by topsoil (101). Some fragments of 19th century pottery and a possible worked flint were recovered from the topsoil.
- 5.4.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.
- 5.5 TRENCH 2**
(see figure 4)
- 5.5.1 Trench 2 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned east-west and measured 20m x 0.60m. Natural substrate was observed at a depth of 1m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100) sealed by a layer of subsoil (102). Context 102 was overlain by what appeared to be two distinct layers of colluvium (104) and (105). Context 105 was sealed by topsoil (101). Contexts 104 and 105 appeared to be abutted by a layer of small boulders and large cobbles, possibly indicating the remains of a wall foundation, although no cut could be observed.
- 5.6 TRENCH 3**
(see figure 5)
- 5.6.1 Trench 3 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north-west – south-east and measured 25m x 0.60m. Natural substrate was observed at a depth of 1m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), which was sealed by a layer of colluvium (105). Context 105 was sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.6.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.
- 5.7 TRENCH 4**
(see figure 6)
- 5.7.1 Trench 4 was situated at the east of the village and measured 2m². Natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.70m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100) sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.7.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.
- 5.8 TRENCH 5**
(see figure 6)

5.8.1 Trench 5 was situated at the north-west part of the village, aligned north-south and measured 13m x 0.50m. Natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.90m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100) sealed by topsoil (101).

5.8.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.9 TRENCH 6
(figure 4)

5.9.1 Trench 6 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north-south and measured 28m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.80m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100) sealed by topsoil (101).

5.9.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.10 Trench 7
(figure 4)

5.10.1 Trench 7 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north-south and measured 60m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 1.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a thin layer of topsoil (101).

5.10.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.11 TRENCH 8
(figure 4)

5.11.1 Trench 8 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north-south and measured 103m x 0.50m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.25m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.11.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.12 TRENCH 9
(figure 5)

5.12.1 Trench 9 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north-south and measured 35m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by colluvium (105), which was in turn sealed by topsoil (101).

5.12.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.13 TRENCH 10
(figure 5+6)

5.13.1 Trench 10 was situated at the centre of the village, with a varied orientation and measured 20m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a layer of modern concrete (106).

5.13.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.14 TRENCH 11
(figure 6)

5.14.1 Trench 11 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northeast – southwest and measured 40m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.60m and consisted of boulder clay (107), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.14.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.15 TRENCH 12
(figure 5+6)

5.15.1 Trench 12 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northeast – southwest and measured 5m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.25m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a layer of modern hard standing (109), which was in turn sealed by topsoil (101).

5.15.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.16 Trench 13
(figure 4)

5.16.1 Trench 13 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north – south and measured 8m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a layer of modern road surfacing (110).

5.16.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.17 TRENCH 14
(figure 4)

5.17.1 Trench 14 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northwest – southeast and measured 6m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.17.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.18 TRENCH 15
(figure 4)

5.18.1 Trench 15 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north – south and measured 12m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a layer topsoil (101).

5.18.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.19 TRENCH 16
(figure 6)

5.19.1 Trench 16 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northeast – southwest and measured 10m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.19.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.20 TRENCH 17
(figure 4)

5.20.1 Trench 17 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned west – east and measured 22m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.20.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.21 TRENCH 18
(figure 4)

5.21.1 Trench 18 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northeast – southwest and measured 23m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.21.2 A stone capped culvert was observed within this trench, aligned east – west and measured 0.20m wide x 1.0m in length (Plate 2).

5.22 Trench 19
(figure 3)

5.22.1 Trench 19 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned north – south and measured 40m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.22.2 A stone capped culvert was observed within this trench, aligned east – west and measured 0.20m wide x 1.0m in length (Plate 1).

5.23 TRENCH 20
(figure 3)

5.23.1 Trench 20 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned east - west and measured 80m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).

5.23.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.24 TRENCH 21
(figure 3)

- 5.24.1 Trench 21 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northeast – southwest and measured 20m x 0.40m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.25m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.24.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.25 TRENCH 22
(figure 3)

- 5.25.1 Trench 22 was situated at the centre of the village, aligned northwest – southeast and measured 20m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.26m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.25.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.26 TRENCH 23
(figure 6)

- 5.26.1 Trench 23 was situated at the east end of the village, aligned north – south and measured 20m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of red sandstone bedrock (100), sealed by a cobble layer consisting of a single course of rounded cobbles 0.07m in diameter, which were in turn sealed by a thin layer of topsoil (101).

5.27 TRENCH 24
(figure 3)

- 5.27.1 Trench 24 was situated at the east end of the village, aligned north – south and measured 35m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of boulder clay (107) sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.27.2 A possible stone foundation was observed consisting of small-medium unworked boulders within a cut (125) filled by a dark brown loam (133). A less well defined possible stone foundation was observed within a slightly concave cut (120) filled by small tumbled rounded stones. Neither foundation could be dated.

5.28 TRENCH 25
(figure 6)

- 5.28.1 Trench 25 was situated at the east end of the village, aligned east – west and measured 20m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of boulder clay (107) sealed by topsoil (101).
- 5.28.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench.

5.29 TRENCH 26 (figure 6)

- 5.29.1 Trench 26 was situated at the east end of the village, aligned east – west and measured 34m x 0.60m. The natural substrate was observed at a depth of 0.60m and consisted of boulder clay (107) sealed by a layer of mid brown sandy loam subsoil (102), which was in turn sealed by topsoil (101). The subsoil (102) produced 11 sherds of medieval pottery, although no features were recorded this concentration of pottery could point to some nearby medieval activity.
- 5.29.2 No archaeological features or deposits were observed within this trench, however, a number of sherds of medieval pottery and 19th century ironwork were recovered from within subsoil layer (102).

6 THE FINDS

BLE-A		Med pot	19-20 th century pot	Glass	Building Material	Fe	Slag	Worked stone	Flint	Bone	Total
Trench	Context										
1	101								1		1
6	101		5								5
9	101		31	2		3		1		5	42
16	101				1	3		1			5
18	101						1				1
19	101		4								4
24	118		2								2
24	113		2								2
26	102	11	26	2	2	3					44
26	101		6	2	1	4					13
Total		11	76	6	4	14	1	2	1	5	

TABLE 1: FINDS BY CONTEXT

- 6.1 The finds assemblage consisted of a broad range of artefact types dating from the prehistoric to the modern. The majority of the pottery dated to the 19th and 20th centuries, however, a small percentage (11 sherds) of this consisted of medieval pottery in the form of later medieval green glazed, partially reduced greyware.
- 6.2 The assemblage also included 1 piece of worked, cortical flint. This took the form of a scraper with evidence of pressure flaking with a serpentine edge. The flint has been imported to the area and is possibly of Neolithic origin.
- 6.3 The flint has been pressure flaked along the right hand margin of the dorsal face and proximal end, with evidence of retouch along the same margins. The ventral face has had flakes removed on the left hand margin at the proximal end, possibly to reduce the thickness of the tool for ease of handling. The bulb of percussion has been removed at this point by a sharp, obliquely struck blow.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The only archaeological remains of any significance which were observed during the watching brief consisted of a possible 19th century or later stone wall foundations within trench 24 and two stone capped culverts observed within trenches 18 and 19. Both the single flint scraper from trench 1 and the medieval pottery from trench 26 were found in isolation within the mixed subsoil and could not be linked to any features or deposits.

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APPENDIX 1

List of Archaeological Sites Monuments and Listed Buildings

	SITE NAME	LOCATION	PERIOD	SMR NO.	DESIGNATION
1	Blencarn Barrow, Culgaith	NY3637 5313	Prehistoric	994	
2	Skirwith Moor Rune Stone	NY3630 5320	Unknown	1004	
3	Maiden Way Roman Road, Culgaith	NY3677 5415	Roman	3600	Scheduled AM 25040
4	Blencarn Forge	NY3630 5310	Post Medieval	4646	
5	Unclassified Cropmarks, Blencarn	NY3629 5310	Unknown	6083	
6	Unclassified Cropmarks, Blencarn	NY3631 5310	Unknown	6084	
7	Blencarn Medieval Village	NY 3637 5312	Medieval	6792	
8	Kirkland Beck, S Field Boundary	NY3636 5321	Unknown	8217	
9	Mill Cottage/Blencarn Watermill	NY3638 5315	Post Medieval	11571	
10	Blencarn sub-rectangular Enclosure	NY3644 5309	Unknown	13792	
11	Ellicar Hill Settlement Site, Blencarn	NY3643 5314	Unknown	15502	
12	Stubmire Moor Ridge and Furrow	NY3646 5313	Medieval	15507	
13	Blencarn Hollow Way	NY3632 5314	Medieval	16730	
14	Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Blencarn	NY3638 5311	Post Medieval	19569	
15	Blencarn, possible settlement site	NY3641 5309	Medieval	19913	
16	Cairnfield, Pillow Mounds & Earthworks north of Stubmire Moor	NY3642 5315	Unknown	19914	
17	Sub-circular enclosure cropmark	NY3638 5303	Unknown	40266	

TABLE 2: BLENCARN SITES, MONUMENTS AND FINDS



Plate 1: Trench 19: Sandstone capped culvert (Photo: K Denham)



Plate 2: Trench 18: Sandstone Culvert (Photo: P Crompton)



Plate 3: Natural substrate overlain by modern overburden within an archaeologically sterile trench (Photo: K Denham)

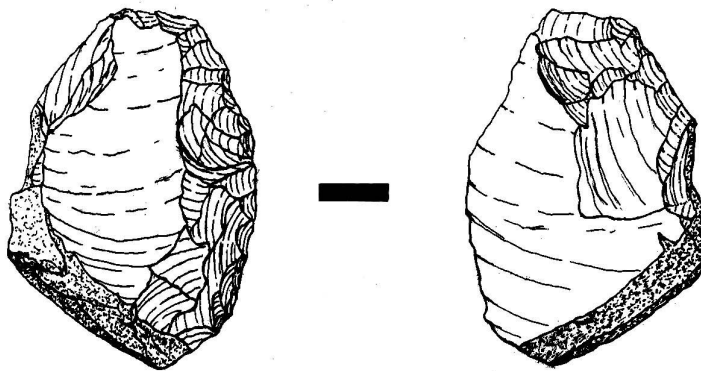


Figure 4: Flint scraper recovered from trench 1 (100)
Scale 1:1