

PEELING BACK THE LAYERS A COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT AT UNDER WHITLE, SHEEN

A report on the excavations from 20th June 2016 to 9th July 2016
on behalf of The Tudor Farming Interpretation Group for Peeling Back the Layers
Community Archaeology Project

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1.0 SUMMARY

1.1

An archaeological excavation was commissioned by the Tudor Farming Interpretation Group (TFIG) to explore the archaeology of Under Whitle and provide an opportunity for local people to gain training and participatory experience in a community based project. The project, entitled 'Peeling Back the Layers', of which the excavation was a part, is funded by a number of agencies, which included the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Mick Aston Archaeology Fund supported by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and English Heritage (EH), and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA). The work was undertaken between the 20th June and the 9th July 2016. One of the aims of the project as a whole is to engage a wide range of people to take an active role in investigating the history and archaeology of Whitle, Sheen and the surrounding landscape. Among these have been interest and support groups, individuals, local schools, Young Archaeologists (Peak District YAC), and other local history enthusiasts in the exploration of their local heritage.

1.2

The aims of the excavation were to recover dating evidence from the archaeological features highlighted as suitable for excavation by earlier site surveys, find out what various features are, how they were used, how this use may have changed through time, and whether some of the features could be identified with properties and peoples identified through the historical research. It was also hoped that aims of both the East Midlands and West Midlands Heritage strategies could be addressed, including the medieval and post-medieval ceramics industries and add to our understanding of the development of manorial estates and the nature of rural settlements.

1.3

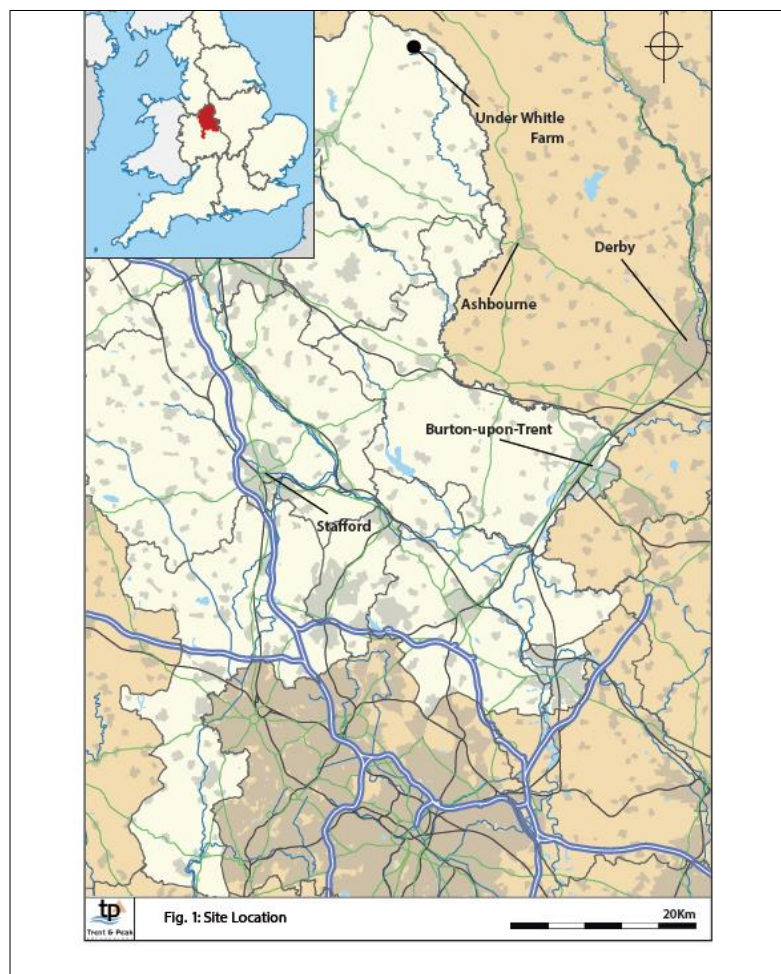
In light of the difficulty in establishing the presence of a house in Trench 3 on the 'house platform', a further excavation should be undertaken to ascertain if such a structure exists.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Site Location

The project is based at Under Whittle Farm, which lies in the valley of the River Dove between the villages of Sheen and Longnor, Staffordshire, centred on NGR SK 10772 64001 at a height of c. 260m OD (Fig. 2.1). The site is located on deposits of Bowland Shale Formation (Mudstone, Siltstone, and Sandstone) and this sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 313–335 million years ago in the Carboniferous period. No superficial deposits are recorded on the valley slopes (British Geological Survey). Topographically the site lays immediately to the northeast of the current farmhouse and northwest of the Dove Valley Activity Centre. The property displays significant topographical variation across the area of c.2.5ha and within this area four areas were initially targeted for excavation as the result of various archaeological surveys including a geophysical surveys carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) and documentary evidence, as these demonstrated the presence of a number of potential buried archaeological features.

Fig. 2.1 Location of Under Whittle Farm (courtesy of Trent & Peak Archaeology).



2.2 Site History

In 2004, as a requirement of the process toward achieving Natural England's 'Higher Level Stewardship' by the landowners, an archaeological survey was undertaken by the Peak District National Park Authority (Rylatt 2005). This identified a number of possible medieval or post-medieval features at Under Whitle Farm, which seemed to be supported by documentary evidence investigated by TFIG. For example, the name 'Whittell' is first recorded in 1407 when part of this area of Sheen lay within Alstonefield Manor, of which it was still part in 1680 and the TFIG took its name from a number of wills and documents discovered relating to the Tudor period. In fact, at present, of 21 records designated as Medieval held by Staffordshire HER for the parish of Sheen, 15 pertain to Under Whitle Farm. Therefore, before the project began, the majority of what was known about medieval and early post-medieval Sheen rested with, as then unsubstantiated knowledge of, a single property in the parish.

2.3 Historical resources

2.3.1 Maps

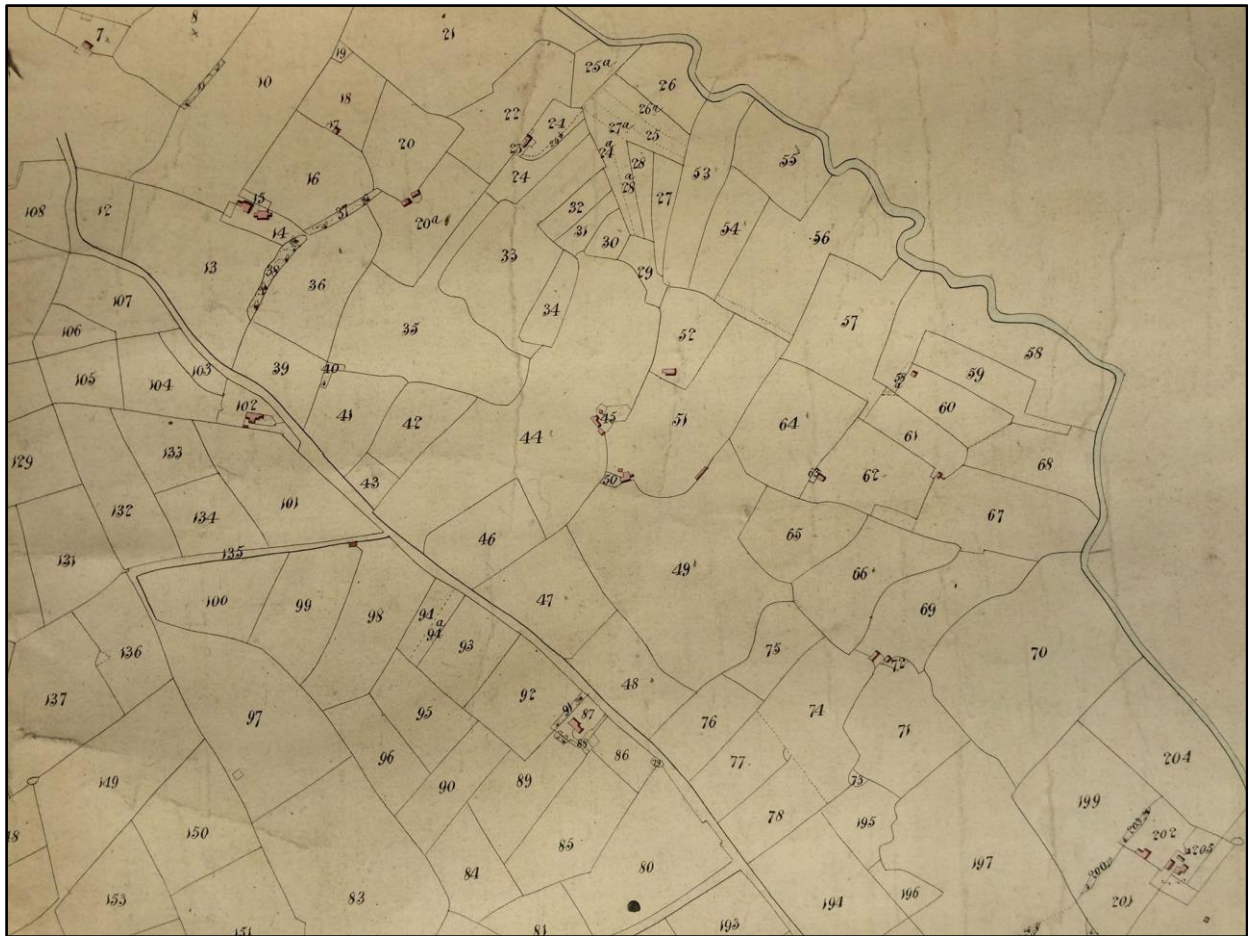
The TFIG and volunteers, under the guidance of project historian Dr Simon Harris have, over the course of the project, discovered a great deal about the history of the property. Details can be found in Dr Harris's report on their findings. Suffice to say here, some of the sources uncovered deal with legal disputes and rulings and offer scant information on the archaeology of Under Whitle, but others such as burials records, wills and inventories offer more information. Of those which describe potential archaeology, one of the first references pointing to the layout and agricultural practices used at Under Whitle is a 1632 survey undertaken by William Senior who identifies "White bank in Sheene parish". Senior names fields and acreage, and the extent of enclosure and arable or pasture land use at the time. Another key resource used in understanding the post-medieval development of Under Whitle has been the 1845 tithe map (Fig 2.2) and associated records, which represent the layout of the then extant field systems and agricultural practice at that time. Table 1 below shows the field name and its number on the tithe map as well as its usage. It is interesting to note that by 1845 just a single field was devoted to

arable agriculture. The historic records showed a rather more complicated picture than first expected at the time the excavation was undertaken, and one of the aims of this was to identify potential residences for tenants of Under Whitle. The earliest map of the area noted by Rylatt (2005) was one produced by Yates (1775) which shows three structures or possible farmsteads along the edge of the Dove Valley, but the scale used does not assist identification of a more exact location.

Table 1. Data from 1845 tithe records (courtesy of TFIG).

Field names	Field Number on tithe map	Acreage
Little sitch (meadow)	31	0-2-12
Sitch (meadow)	32	0-2-5
Bye Sitch (pasture)	33	2-2-12
Barnfield (pasture)	52	2-0-11
Longlands (pasture)	53	6-0-37
Longlands (arable)	54	1-2-36
Holme Bank (pasture)	55	2-3-11
Shorts&? Halnce Bank (pasture)	56	6-0-37
Castle Flatt (pasture)	60	
Little Breachlands, (pasture)	61	1-2-21
Mare Dole (meadow)	66	4-0-2
Breachlands (pasture)	67	4-3-8
Mare Dole (meadow)	69	4-0-4

Fig. 2.2 Detail from 1845 tithe map



2.3.2 The Tithe Map

The tithe map of 1845 (Fig.2.2) features a number of representations that, in the absence of a key and the fact that the current farmhouse and former barns now used as the Dove Valley Centre (DVC) are also indicated, were interpreted as buildings, either residential or vernacular farm buildings. Of particular interest to TFIG was the location of houses or living quarters of some of the families associated with the property. As such, fields 45, 51 and 52 were a focus of attention as it was thought that the map illustrated the buildings then extant at Under Whitle. In field 45 for example there is the suggestion of 3 structures and the field is divided into 3 areas, though what form these divisions take is unclear. The largest of these is oriented NNE-SSW and the two smaller ones are difficult to see clearly enough to judge. In field 51 on the southern edge of the field are the barns that now form the DVC and

the current farmhouse is on the southwestern edge, although the current outbuildings are not. These then are clearly of post-1845 construction. In field 52 is a structure thought to be a barn, oriented on a broadly east-west alignment, identified to be such prior to excavations largely due to the name of the field in which it is located – Barnfield . Although in field 52 on the tithe map, later field boundary changes saw this field subsumed into a larger modern one. This too does not appear on later maps. There are no other built structures evident on the tithe map.

2.3.3 Ordnance Survey Maps

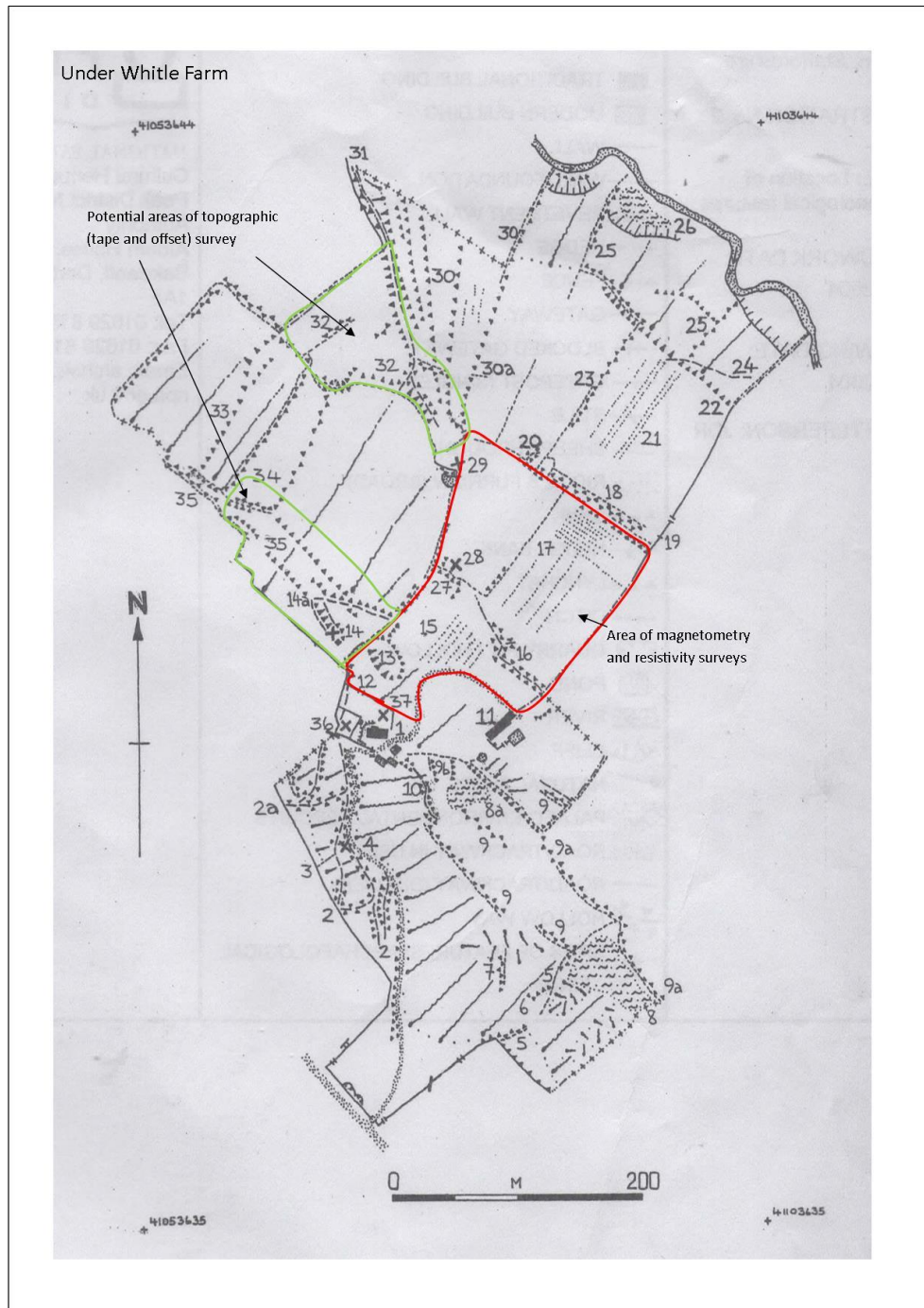
A review of maps produced by the Ordnance Survey (OS) from the present day to the first map OS of 1837, a technique known as map regression (see English Heritage, 2007), illustrated field boundary and trackway changes but the question of the location of any built structures of interest to the project proved impossible to answer as no such structures appeared on any OS maps, suggesting that they had been demolished prior 1879 when the OS survey was carried out. It should also be noted that the curved track or driveway between the current farmhouse and the Dove Valley Centre is not present on the tithe map. Indeed, this does not appear on OS maps until the 1960s.

2.4 Archaeological Surveys

2.4.1 Walkover survey

As has already been mentioned, Under Whittle was the subject of an archaeological walkover survey in 2004, and this will now be discussed, with particular emphasis on the areas identified as fields 45, 51 and 52 on the 1845 tithe map. The numerical identification of features will follow that used by Rylatt. Rylatt noted that there were a series of field boundary banks, ditches and lynchets (e.g. 9), holloways (e.g. 2), platforms (e.g. 11) and tracks (e.g.10). The features which were the focus of this project were those which were thought most likely to shed information on housing/residence, dating and material culture of the people who lived at Under Whittle in the past, and so features 13, 14, 16 and 28 were identified as offering the best prospects for this. These features were respectively, a possible house platform, buildings, an earthwork of unknown date and the site of another building.

Fig. 2.3 Map of the landholding, Under White Farm, showing the archaeological features and areas considered for the topographic tape and offset survey and geophysical survey. The current house is close to #1 and the Dove Valley Centre is at #11. After Rylatt, 2005, p21.



Taking these in turn, 13 is a relatively level platform thought to be of medieval or post-medieval date. It is approximately 30m x 8m with the long axis running along the northwest-southeast contour. The rear, or western edge, is clear and cut into the

original ground surface, while the front, or eastern edge, is approximately 50cm above the original ground surface. Rylatt thought it possible that the northwestern end may have been truncated by a later ditch of a modern field boundary. None of the early maps such as the tithe map show a structure at this location suggesting that if it was used as a site for a house it was certainly earlier than 1845.

14 is the site of what is familiarly known as 'the cellar'. A building of some substance and a smaller one close by are shown on the 1845 tithe map. The larger one was probably an L-shaped farmhouse which Rylatt thought was built before 1837 and demolished before 1880 (p. 9). There are some suggestions of the extent of the building, as the platform on which it sits has a number of earthworks and raised areas evident. The cellar is of substantial gritstone construction with a partially vaulted ceiling and walls some 60cm thick (p. 9). The void is open and as a result there is a great deal of modern domestic refuse in-situ.

16 is a series of earthworks and ditches that run in largely northeast-southwest. Rylatt suggests they could be field boundaries that could delineate either a block of ridge and furrow or a post-medieval field. However, there is a pronounced dog-leg which does not suggest any ease of use by farm vehicles or plough teams. They do not appear on the 1845 map and this points to an earlier date for construction and/or use.

The final feature of interest is 28, the probable site of a building on the 1845 map. Oriented on an east-west alignment, it is thought by Rylatt to have a footprint similar to the present farmhouse, although he also notes this does not suggest a similar construction date. The tithe map shows a rectangular shape, with a possible outbuilding on the western end (Rylatt, 2005: 13). Again, this structure does not appear on later maps, so offering a demolition date of pre-1880.

2.4.2 LiDAR survey

In the spring of 2016, TFIG commissioned a LiDAR survey centred upon the property of Under Whittle, but also incorporating some of the surrounding area. The use and potential of this technique is discussed elsewhere (e.g. Historic England, 2010). This survey showed the archaeological features described by Rylatt (2005) as well as

features on land formerly part of the property. In Fig 2.4 it is clear that the LiDAR survey has revealed both known and unknown features at Under Whitle and the neighbouring properties.

In Fig. 2.5, the current extent of the property is highlighted and in terms of the known features for example, the LiDAR survey clearly highlights the extant remnants of ridge and furrow cultivation and lynchets recorded by Rylatt (2005). Also clear is the earthwork feature identified by Rylatt, though the detail shown in this survey shows a more composite make-up than suggested in 2005. TPA combined the data of both the tithe map and LiDAR and the result is shown in Fig. 2.6 below.

Fig. 2.4 LiDAR survey results - Under Whitle and proximity (image courtesy of TPA).

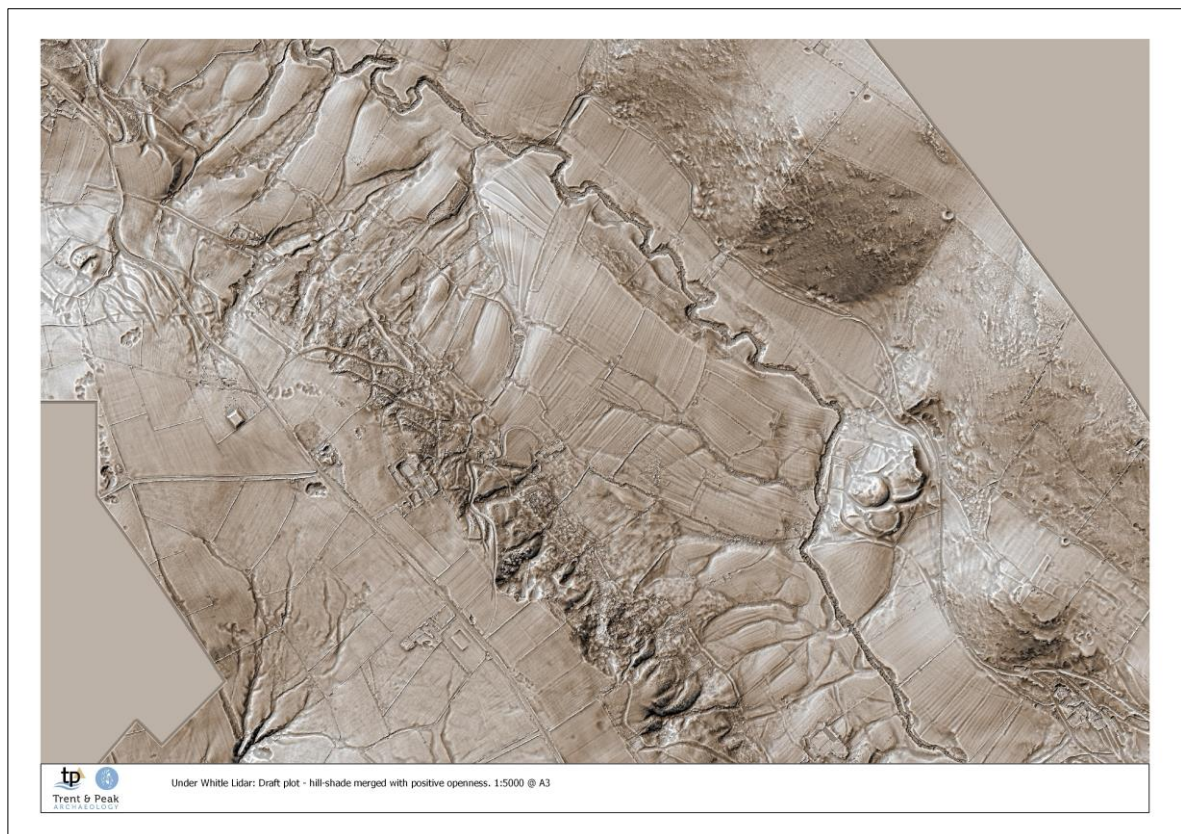


Fig. 2.5 LiDAR survey results – with Under White defined (image courtesy of TPA).

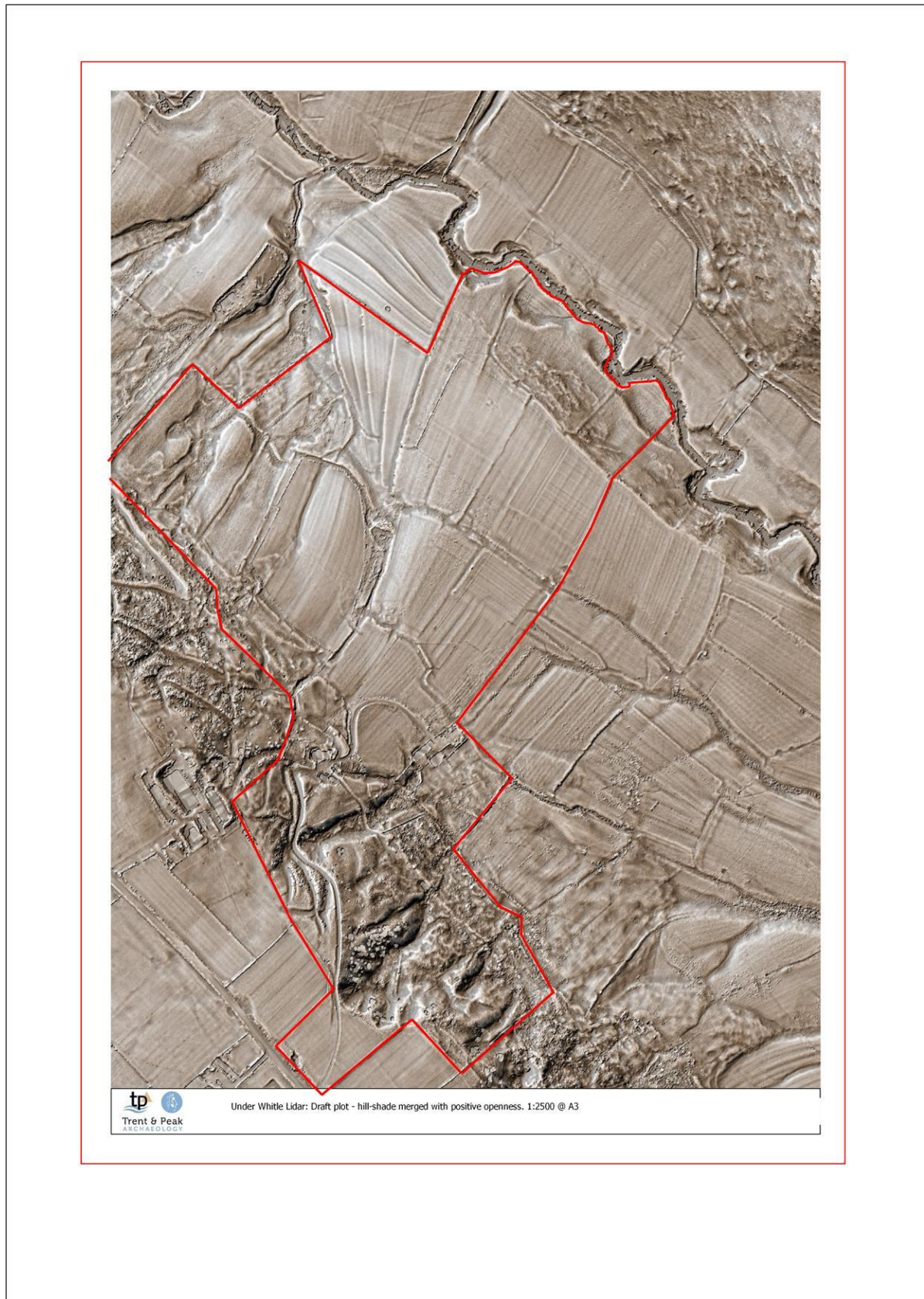
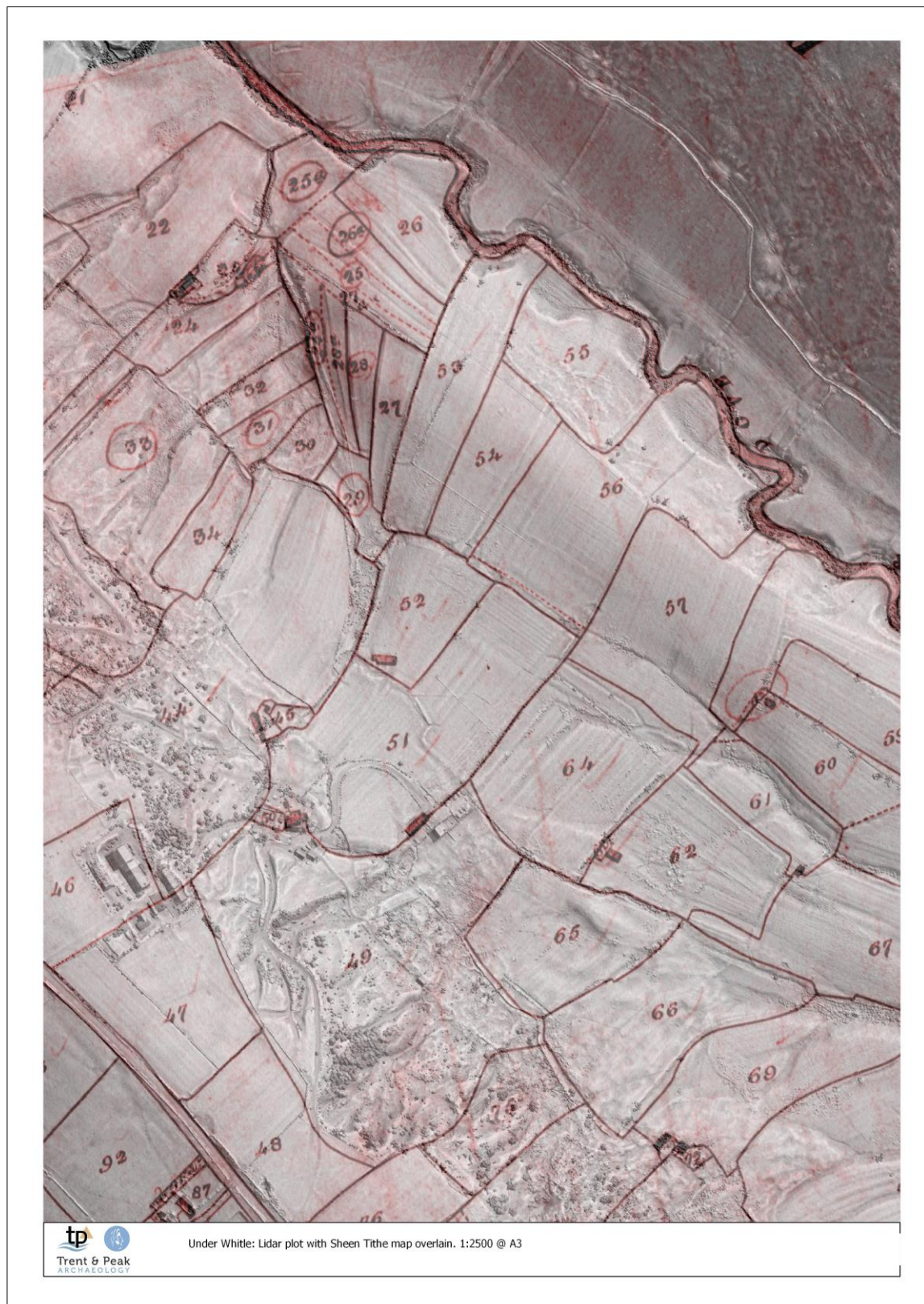


Fig. 2.6 Combination of 1845 tithe map and Lidar survey results (courtesy of TPA).



2.4.3 Geophysical surveys.

In March 2016, at the request of TFIG, geophysical surveys and a tape and offset survey were carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology and the author respectively (Trent & Peak Archaeology, 2016). These further confirmed the archaeological potential of this area. Archaeological features encountered in the geophysical surveys comprised of examples related to medieval and post-medieval/modern periods. There were probable archaeological features relating to settlement activity, land divisions or boundaries, remains relating to the use of ridge and furrow cultivation, settlement activities and of a “small-scale, stratigraphically-negative feature such as a small livestock or domestic enclosure” (Trent & Peak Archaeology, 2016:3, 15). There was mixed results in terms of the concordance between Rylatt's walkover survey and the geophysical surveys. Both agreed on the probability of the presence of archaeology related to settlement in the area of the platform (Rylatt – 13; TPA 2016, Figs 4 and 6), but not to the presence of a building noted by Rylatt (feature 28). The representation of the results can be found in Appendix 2.

2.4.4 Tape & Offset survey.

The author was commissioned to undertake a tape & offset survey in the field containing the extant cellar of the presumed farmhouse. In addition to the house platform a number of other significant features were recorded. In the extreme southwest corner of the field there was a low, sub-circular feature, the maximum dimensions of which are approximately 5m x 7m. There appeared to be a number of pieces of worked stone tipping out of the edge of this feature. To the north of this is the most obvious feature of the field - the 'cellar' which is presumed to have been part of a more substantial building, possibly a farmhouse. Currently sitting in an area some 4m x 7m fenced off from the rest of the field for safety reasons. The fenced area is slightly smaller than a very low rectangular feature with a well-defined edge. The construction of the cellar structure showed that each end is different. The southern end has a corbelled vaulting and steps, while the northern end has a simple stone lintel, albeit large. Due to vegetation and the potentially hazardous state of the structure itself, the survey was limited to the elements that could be observed at a safe distance.

Abutting the northern edge of this were a number of probable worked stones and these sat adjacent to another low, sub-circular feature with stone showing in the edge. This latter element is approximately 4m x 2m at its maximum extent. Whilst there are at present no upstanding walls, these traces of worked stone in close proximity to the area strongly suggested the remains of structures. The 1845 tithe map identified two buildings in this corner of the field, and it was possible that these features may have been demolition debris from one or more of these. This flat area extended for a further 17 metres in a north-west direction and varied in width between approximately 4m-6m, and was interpreted as being a house platform, due in no small part to the presence of the 'cellar'. Beyond these features the field was crossed by a number of trackways, most thought suitable for use by horse drawn carts. There was also an earthwork or lynchet (35) of unknown date, but it was thought by Rylatt (2005: 15) to possibly be evidence of a small field created to serve the farmhouse (14) in the same field.

2.5 Summary

As a result of the walkover survey (Rylatt, 2005), LiDAR survey and the geophysical surveys (Trent & Peak 2016) no prehistoric or Romano-British features were identified on the site. Therefore the medieval and post-medieval features identified in these surveys formed the basis of the proposed excavations.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1

The first objective for the excavations was to confirm and/or establish what various features were, how they were used and how this use may have changed through time and if they could be associated with evidence gleaned from the historical research taking place concurrently

3.2

To recover dating evidence for the archaeological features highlighted as suitable for excavation by the assessment and surveys, primarily the probable farmhouse (14), house platform (13) and building/barn (28).

3.3

To recover evidence that could address aims of both the East and West Midlands Heritage strategies including the medieval and post-medieval ceramics industries, an understanding of the development of manorial estates, the morphology of vernacular buildings and the nature of rural settlements.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1

The findings of the assessment and surveys were presented and discussed with the TFIG in relation to the proposed fieldwork. It was agreed that fieldwork should comprise of 4 trenches of varied dimensions to meet the project's objectives and these were agreed in negotiation with both TFIG and Natural England. It was agreed to place trenches to locate features identified by Rylatt as 13, 14, 16 and 28 (Rylatt, 2005), and all references below relate to this.

4.2

All trenches were set out on OS National Grid (NGR) co-ordinates using a Sokkia Set 4 total station.

4.3

All trenches were de-turfed and excavated by hand in accordance with the agreement reached with Natural England. All excavation was undertaken under archaeological supervision to the top of the first significant archaeological horizon or the natural substrate, whichever was encountered first.

4.4

All artefacts recovered were processed in accordance with Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2014).

4.5

Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner, the artefacts will be deposited with the Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain and be forwarded to the ADS in appropriate electronic format.

4.6

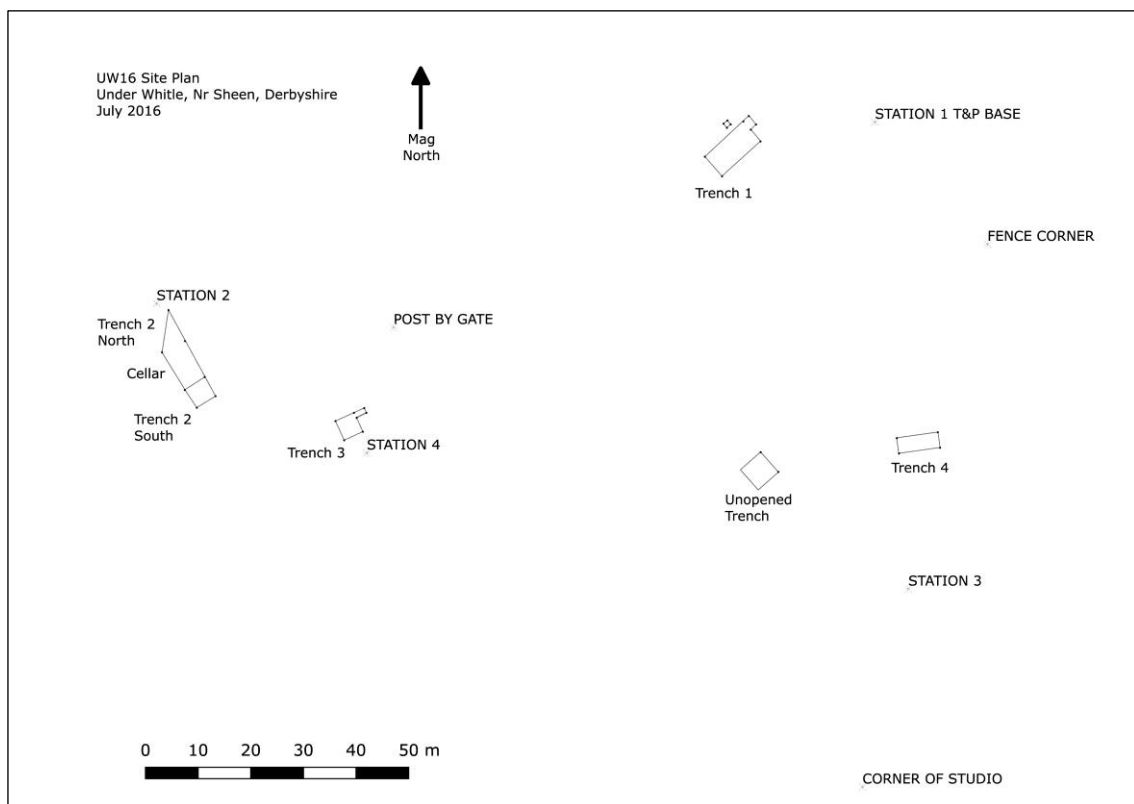
All elements of the excavation were recorded. Each context or feature was given a unique identifying number and associated record. All photographic recording was made using digital cameras and in colour.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Fieldwork

The work was undertaken over a three week period from 20th June to 9th July 2016. Overall the conditions were good, with approximately two days lost to rain, although other fieldwork such as planning was delayed due to wet conditions. The turf topsoil was regular across the site ranging from 8cm to 15cm in depth with a mid-brown sandy clay natural encountered below this, and this was between 3cm and 15cm deep. This section presents a summary of the excavation results. Further details can be found in Appendix 1 in this report, from separate specialist reports on pottery (Jon Goodwin), animal bones and metalwork, the report on Trench 2 by Trent and Peak Archaeology (TPA), and the digital database available online through the Integrated Archaeological Database (IADB) hosted by York Archaeological Trust (YAT) of which TPA is a part. Following the excavation, Trenches 1, 3 and 4 were re-instated using excavated spoil and re-turfed by hand. Trench 2 was left open whilst options for interpretation and presentation to the public are under discussion.

Fig. 5.1 Location of trenches.



5.1.1 Trench dimensions

Trench 1 targeted the probable building shown in tithe map field 52 (feature 28) and measured 10m in length and 5m in width. Trench 3 targeted the platform (feature 13) and measured 4m x 4m. Trench 4 was placed over a break in the earthwork (feature 16) and measured 8m in length and 2m in width. Trench 1 was later extended by 1.5m on its eastern edge in order to further explore the extent of a cobbled feature and a metre square test pit was excavated on the northern edge to establish the existence of a returning wall. The location of the probable farmhouse (feature 14) was more certain and the aim of excavating here was to explore the presumed remains of the farmhouse and other possible structures in relation to the known 'cellar'. Therefore Trench 2 was divided into two sections – one to the northern end of the feature known as 'the cellar' and one to the southern end. The northern section was triangular and measured 5m wide at its base and the eastern edge being 6.5m and the western 8m long. The southern section measured 4.5m in length by 3.8m in width. TPA was commissioned to undertake archaeological investigation of the cellar and details and the results of this can be found in their report.

5.2 Trench 1

5.2.1

As noted above, Trench 1 was initially opened as a rectangular trench (10m x 5m) but was later extended to aid investigation of a cobbled area. The first deposit encountered after the removal of the turf and topsoil was the subsoil (002) which extended to the full dimensions of the trench. This deposit produced the majority of the finds (see Appendix 3). The removal of the subsoil revealed a number of larger, sub-angular stones without any discernible organisation and an area toward the northwest end of the trench (003) which was characterised by a poorly sorted matrix with angular stones up to 10cm diameter. The deposit tipped from east to west, and finds here included pottery and a horse tooth. The most significant find however was the presence of lenses of mortar, with some clumps being up to c10cm diameter. Almost all mortar from this trench came from this deposit.

5.2.2

At the western end of the trench, two deposits (005) and (008) of orange-brown clay were in proximity to each other but are interpreted as two episode of heating/burning. (005) was sub-circular and (008) ovoid in shape, although (008) was approximately 110cm in length and maximum 80cm wide, almost twice the size of (005) at 60cm x 60cm. The southern edge of (008) was defined by small-medium angular pieces of local sandstone, but this did not continue beyond approximately half of the deposit. (008) was half sectioned and revealed to be only a maximum of 6cm deep. Both contained >5% small stones and occasional flecks of charcoal/burnt material.

Fig. 5.2 Context (005) (scale 20cm)



5.2.3

A sub-rectangular feature (009) identified by the arrangement of pieces of local sandstone was sectioned and the fill of this feature (015) was a light grey, soft silt 10cm in depth. The cut (023) was broadly U-shaped in profile. Interpretation of this is

difficult; at first sight it suggests a possible post-hole, but the final dimensions tend not to support this. It may well have been the base of a smaller, less substantial architectural or agricultural feature. There were no finds made in the feature.

Fig. 5.3 Context (008) (scale 20cm)



Fig. 5.4 Context (009) (scale 20cm)



5.2.4

There was some evidence of stone robbing indicated by two contexts – (010) and (027). The former can be seen in Fig. 5.3 above (to the right of (009/015) with an edge of a vertical cut through (016), a deposit of mottled, light grey, soft clay visible and small stone fragments forming the fill. The feature is not part of either the main structure, nor of any outbuilding as it is on a slightly different alignment to both, and is less than 1m in length. The latter probably represents the robbing out of one of the main structural walls of the barn/building as it is on the same alignment as context (025) which is identified as one of the main walls of the building.

Fig. 5.5 Context (010) (scale 20cm)



5.2.5

An arrangement of angular local sandstone (011) lay immediately beneath (002) and suggested a possible floor. However, on further excavation it became apparent that represented a single slab of sandstone that had been subjected to a degree of force resulting in extensive fracturing. It may have been used as a base for standing large heavy objects.

5.2.6

Evidence of a possible external cobbled courtyard area was exposed in the north-east corner of the trench with an area of rounded, earth-set cobbles in-situ (012). The area extended to 2m x 1m and it is likely this area extended beyond the full extent of the excavation. The cobbles were set on edge and were stratigraphically directly below (001) with no subsoil. The topsoil itself was thin across the cobbles, with some of the larger ones being no more than 1cm beneath the surface as can be seen in Fig. 5.6 below. All the finds here were modern ceramics.

Fig. 5.6 (027) representing stone robbing activity. (scale 1m)¹



1 In images without north arrow the red section of the scale is north.

Fig. 5.7 Context (011) (scale 20cm)



Fig. 5.8 Cobbled surface area (012) top right of picture and (026) in foreground (scale 1m)



5.2.7

Toward the southeast end of the trench a deposit of hard light-mid brown clay (013) sat beneath the subsoil. Very compact and with around 10% small (<5cm) and 5% medium (5-10cm) size stones in the matrix, the deposit was broadly triangular with well rounded edges. Its maximum length was 2.1m and width was 1.6m. No finds were made in this deposit.

5.2.8

There was further evidence of burning/heat in the western half of the trench seen in (014). This area of hard, compacted light brown clay was characterised by a poorly sorted matrix of inclusions such as small pieces of coal, up to 2cm diameter and flecks of charcoal and a small amount of pea gravel (<5%). (014) abutted and was smeared over a section of (008) but showed less evidence of heating/burning and is therefore probably a discrete, separate incident.

5.2.9

One of the key finds in Trench 1 was the line of angular/sub-angular and occasional rounded pieces of local sandstone approximately 2.4m in length and 30cm wide. The stones showed a significant degree of variation in size, from small pebbles to large angular examples 30cm x 10cm. Aligned on a broadly northeast-southwest heading (017) has been interpreted as being the remains of a wall, probably of an outbuilding or lean-to referred to by Rylatt (2005:13) as there is no return wall at either end of the feature.

Fig. 5.9 Context (014) (scale is 20cm).



Fig. 5.10 Probable wall of outbuilding (017) (scale is 1m).



5.2.10

The largest deposit in the trench was (020) with maximum dimensions of 6m x 5.5m. (020) abutted the feature (017) and spread across the central area of the trench, forming a central ridge before tipping slightly toward the eastern edge and feature (027). Comprising a hard, mid-brown clay for the most part, there were flecks of orange-brown and grey within the matrix and there was approximately 10% of sub-angular stones 5-10cm in diameter sitting within the clay. (020) was bounded by contexts (008), (013), (014), (017), (018), (019), (025) and (027). Three of these, (017) (025 and (027), are either walls or evidence of stone robbing. Given this, (020) is interpreted as a probable floor of a building.

5.2.11

As was noted above, there was no evidence of a returning wall in relation to (017). This was established after a small extension was excavated where it was thought (017) would meet another structure (025). (025) comprised of a mix of large sub-rounded cobbles and angular stones up to a maximum of 60cm length. As can be seen in Fig. 5.10 below, (025) was the fill of a cut (029) which had an almost rectangular profile. There was a degree of robbing from (025) and some evidence of slumping, with larger stones forming (028) abutting (025) and slipping down to (018) a deposit of very dark brown sandy loam with lenses of mortar within it.

Fig. 5.11 Feature (025) (028) (scale 1m)



5.2.12

The cobbled area (012) also showed some evidence of disturbance with (021) being an area of possible robbing out of cobbles. This was bounded (026) a deposit of orange-brown clay and (020) the presumed floor.

Fig. 5.12 (021) and (026) (scale is 1m).



5.3 Trench 2

5.3.1

Trench 2 had two elements to it as was noted above. TPA were commissioned to undertake archaeological investigation of the cellar and details can be found in their report. However, this report will detail some of the results of the excavation of the southern section.

5.3.2

Excavation of the southern section revealed little to add to the story of the farmhouse. Removal of the turf and topsoil (101) saw the exposure of two distinct areas and a large number of finds, mostly ceramic material. The northern side of the trench was almost entirely natural with just a few large, redeposited boulder size stones present. These were large enough to intrude into and through the topsoil as can be seen below.

Fig. 5.13 Trench 2 southern section with turf removed. (scale is 1m).



5.3.3

The southern side of the trench was characterised by two main contexts, an area of redeposited stone running along the southern edge of the trench and an irregular line

of large, flat stones running west-east down the slope (125). The redeposited material is likely to have come from either the farmhouse to the north, or the structure noted in the 1845 tithe map cited earlier. The flat stones (125) show signs of wear and are interpreted here as the remains of a garden path which ran behind the now demolished farmhouse, possibly between the demolished structure mentioned here, and the trackway or path recorded by both Rylatt (2005) and this author (Parker Heath, 2016).

Fig. 5.14 Trench 2 southern section showing detail of pathway. (scales are 1m).



5.4 Trench 3

5.4.1

Trench 3 was opened on the platform recorded by Rylatt (2005) and thought to be the site of a dwelling, possibly dating to the medieval period. The trench was 4m x 4m and located in the northern end of the platform where the geophysical surveys carried out by TPA suggested the stronger likelihood of archaeology being found. The results here were disappointing with only occasional finds and only four deposits being recorded.

5.4.2

The topsoil (201) was relatively rich in finds, with 71 being recorded, and had occasional flecks of charcoal. This lay over the subsoil (202) which was slightly more compacted and had a higher density of small stones (<20%) than the topsoil. The excavation strategy then changed, given the lack of evidence of archaeology, and focused on the eastern half of the trench, and a small extension with a *sondage* were excavated in an attempt to find evidence of settlement. Unfortunately, no archaeology was found as both the contexts within the extension were sterile. Given the position of the platform someway down the valley-side, this may be an unintended consequence of a conservative approach to excavating the feature to avoid missing what would probably be ephemeral evidence of a vernacular medieval structure, and excavating further may have proved worthwhile.

5.5 Trench 4

5.5.1

Trench 4 was opened to explore the composite earthwork feature 16 in Rylatt's walkover survey, which was particularly well represented in the LiDAR and geomagnetic survey (see Appendix 2). The limited excavation revealed that the bank had at least 3 layers to it. The surface topsoil and subsoil, (301) and (303) respectively, were relatively thin in places, being at little as 3cm deep. Elsewhere along the section it was much thicker, as much as 14cm. Beneath this, a band of orange-brown sandy loam (303) formed much of the body of the bank and was on average between 40-50cm in depth. There was some disturbance due to bioturbation in the form of roots and a disused animal burrow in the north facing section. In the south facing section, there was a small feature some 40cm square and 10cm deep. This was thought to be a gate post, but a firmer idea would be gained by further excavation. The western end of the trench was filled with a very dark brown, wet loamy soil which marks the mire recorded by Rylatt, or could be interpreted as the fill of a ditch excavated during the creation of the earthwork.

Fig. 5.15 North facing section Trench 4. (scale is 1m).



5.5.2

There were few finds made in this trench and these are noted in the following section.

5.6. Artefacts

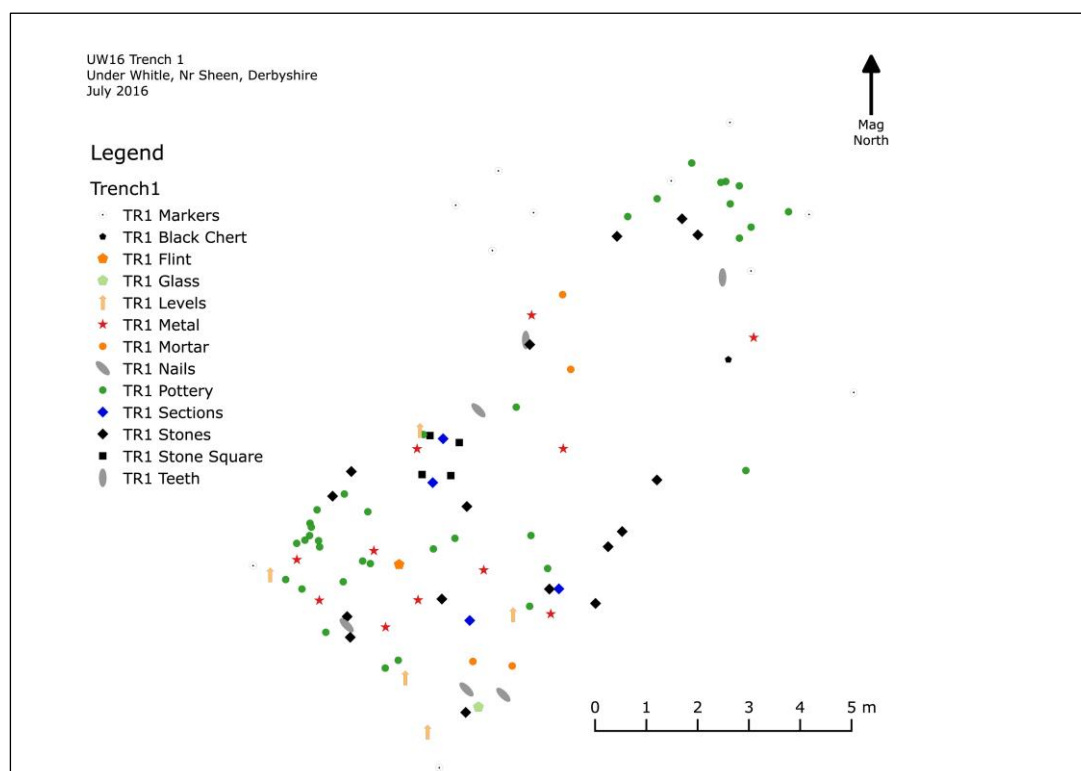
5.6.1 Summary

The majority of artefacts found during the excavation were ceramic material, and whilst the specialist report on the pottery will give details about this, a few general things can be said here. The date range for ceramics is from the latter half of the 17th century to the early decades of the 20th century (J. Goodwin, *pers. comm.*), and are in keeping with other dating evidence from the project, particularly the demolished farmhouse in Trench 2. The next few paragraphs will briefly detail some of the finds from the trenches. In addition to the detailed specialist report on the ceramic material by John Goodwin, a full, searchable, on-line database of all finds made during the excavations will soon be available.

5.6.2 Trench 1

Finds from Trench 1 largely came from the upper layers ((001) and (002)). Fig. 5.15 shows the spatial distribution of the finds by type. As will be seen, the majority of the finds were ceramics, but there were also a number of hand-made nails which account for most of the metal finds. There were a number of exceptions to this, such as a corroded piece of ironwork, probably a tool blade, a possible horse bit, and a Swiss Army Knife! A separate report on the metal finds will be produced by project volunteers. Two animal teeth were found, only one of which was readily identifiable – a horse tooth. What is noticeable about the distribution of finds in this trench is the relative empty area in the centre, within the probable walls of the building. It was also noticed during the excavation that the ceramics were not entirely in keeping with the presumed character of the building – a barn. Much of the material appeared to be of better quality, tableware rather than more 'rustic' earthenwares for example. The presence of mortar alludes to the presence of a built structure, although given the lack of a coherent structure at present, it can only remain a conjectural possibility, but rather stronger than before the excavation.

Fig. 5.16 Distribution of finds in Trench 1



5.6.3 Trench 2

The finds in Trench 2 were varied, but again there was a strong presence of ceramics as might be expected. There was also metalwork, mortar and various items including an 'Etch-a-Sketch'. Further details of the finds from the northern section of Trench 2 will be included in the pottery report. In the south section, ceramic material was embedded within the topsoil (201) and so very close to the surface. It was noticeable that more finds came from the western, or uphill half of the trench. Again details can be found in the report on the pottery, but included a wide range of domestic and table wares as well as a significant amount of coarse earthenware as would be expected in a rural situation.

5.6.4 Trench 3

Artefact recovery in Trench 3 was relatively straightforward and most were found within (301) and (302), the top and subsoil respectively. Again, ceramic material was the dominant category of artefact and again most pieces could be dated to the 19th

and 20th centuries with a few pieces possibly belonging to the late 17th and 18th. Again details can be found in the report on the pottery.

5.6.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 produced the smallest number of artefacts (5). There were four sherds of ceramic material and a single metal rod, which was undiagnostic. The low number of finds in this trench is not surprising given its location and probable use in the past.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

On the whole, the excavations have been a great success, but as with many such projects, there are always further questions raised as a result. What follows here are some conclusions as to the findings taking each trench in turn, before a short summary on the fieldwork as a whole.

6.2 Trench 1

Trench 1 produced some interesting results. There was evidence that a built structure stood here in the past, and it is largely in the area indicated on the 1845 tithe map. However, this is based on finding two walls which were not directly related to each other. One of them is clearly substantial enough to support a significant structure as the material in-situ is similar to that used in extant buildings on the property. There is evidence of demolition, and it would appear on that found so far, that this occurred in a single event. There were no complex layers, and no great depth to the contexts. There are signs that material from the building was taken to be re-used, and that accessible material such as the cobbled area, was left behind. The pattern of deposition suggests that much of the finds material comes from outside the building (see Fig. 5.15 above). Does this mean that people were throwing their 'rubbish' away outside? Very likely is the answer.

6.2.1

Dating Trench 1 to specific dates is difficult in the absence of specialist information at this time. However, some tentative conclusions can be reached. Most of the ceramic material appeared to be from the late 18th-mid 19th centuries, with a few pieces (Mottled Ware) from the late 17th-early 18th centuries. There were some pieces from the early 20th century also, but it is likely these are not related to the lifetime of the structure given it was probably demolished some time shortly before 1879. Therefore these would be more likely to have been dropped or dumped more recently. There was also a Swiss Army Knife, likely to have been accidentally lost recently too as these were first produced in 1891. Metalwork finds were mostly hand-made nails with a generally square profile, typical of the 19th century. A separate report on the

metalwork will be produced by some of the project volunteers. Most of the finds then would generally place the structure and use of the area in the 19th century.

6.3 Trench 2

As noted elsewhere, a detailed report on Trench 2 is provided by the TPA, but a few notes here are appropriate. The site visit from Matt Hurford of TPA was of great value in helping us understand the structure found in Trench 2. He confirmed that the building was a farmhouse and dated it to the latter half of the 17th century. He also confirmed that the cellar was indeed a cellar, but that several significant changes had occurred over time. The cellar was at one time covered by a floor and was an internal feature of the farmhouse, but that at some point this floor collapsed (along with the rest of the house?) and was replaced with a vaulted ceiling possibly to be reused for the storage of root vegetables. The steps down to the cellar entrance revealed by the excavation showed that the first step had been replaced and the large lintel was probably placed here at this point. On the western side of the structure there was paved flooring which suggested an internal passage, probably leading to stairs to the upper floor. There was also an ash pit and part of the fireplace in-situ which suggested that the farmhouse was fairly substantial and of a significant build quality. It is tentatively suggested here that this may be the house built by (?) and inhabited by a Mr John Harrison in the late 17th Century, which from the hearth tax records, we know had three hearths. There has been some discussion as to whether this house could indeed have had three hearths. We know for certain that it has one, as this has been uncovered, but whether or not a second could have been over the cellar (albeit on a stone footing) and a third upstairs is inconclusive. We also know that Mr Harrison was in debt at this time. Could this be because he had borrowed to build a house that was really beyond his means?

6.3.1

In the southern section there were three main findings. Firstly, that the farmhouse did not seem to extend beyond the cellar. Although there was an unexcavated area between the south side of the cellar and the excavated area, there was no evidence of a structure revealed. Secondly, there existed a paved pathway behind the farmhouse, part of which was revealed. It is unknown where it begins and ends, but it is possible it led to/from another building to the south of the farmhouse and then

downhill. The third finding was the re-deposited stonework, presumably from the same structure the pathway led from/to.

6.3.2

One aspect of the project and hence the excavation, is to gain an understanding of the life and times of the property and people of Under Whitle, including the end of things. The farmhouse in Trench 2 is no different. The finds from Trench 2 have furnished us with dates from the last quarter of the 17th century through to the mid-19th Century. We know from the census records that people were living here in 1841 but by 1851 it had been abandoned, and by 1879 it was no longer standing (OS 1879). So, an obvious question is why was the farmhouse abandoned and demolished? The excavation revealed that the footings/foundations of the building were very close to the edge of the platform on which it was constructed and some of the stonework shows signs of slippage toward the slope. In light of this, gravity may have played a large part. Again, details can be found in TPA's report on Trench 2.

6.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 produced disappointing results. The aim was to find evidence of settlement, hopefully dating back to the medieval occupation of Whitle. Sadly none was found, and as was suggested earlier, it may simply be that the excavation did not reach medieval levels due to build-up of colluvium over the centuries. The excavation revealed modern activity in the area of the platform, but little else. It would seem appropriate that given this and the degree of interest that TFIG have finding evidence of earlier occupation, that further excavation should be undertaken on the platform at some future date.

6.5 Trench 4

Trench 4 again produced mixed results although, due to the constraint of time, the excavation was curtailed before a full examination could be made. There was confirmation of the nature of the bank being created from several layers, and therefore of multiphasic construction. Work was terminated before a thorough

examination of the lower levels and the relationship to the waterlogged area could be carried out, but it may be that the bank was simply acting as a 'dyke' and preventing further waterlogging in the field. None of the finds were of diagnostic quality which could be used to date construction.

6.6

The excavations have seen the information we know of Under Whittle grow by leaps and bounds. We now have more information about the farmhouse and why it was demolished relatively early. We also confirmed the existence of the building thought to be a barn in field 52 shown on the 1845 tithe map. Alongside the historical research we can attempt to put names to some of these places and understand how they interacted with both the Manor of Sheen and the Manor of Alstonefield. The ceramic assemblage will allow the project to produce a detailed understanding of how the residents of Under Whittle consumed and used material culture. It will also facilitate our understanding of the relationship between a rural settlement and the ceramics industry both locally and further afield. All of these meet the stated aims of the project and excavation.

6.7

There were of course other aims and objectives of the excavation, and these related to increasing participation in heritage. Part of the brief for the excavation was to "give volunteers and participants an opportunity to learn about their local heritage and its relevance; but also about the skills, knowledge and process of archaeology and how to interpret and share knowledge". It cannot escape the attention of all who were and continue to be involved in the project as a whole, and excavation in particular, both professionals and volunteers, that in this aspect the excavation was a tremendous success. The feedback from participants, visitors and of course the members of TFIG, has been resoundingly positive and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for letting me play a part in such a great project. In particular, I would like to thank Richard and Angela Knisely-Marpole for all things surveying, Sue Quick and Paul Burke for work on Trench 3, all the Trench 1 team and Trench 4 team for their

sterling work, the TFIG for inviting me, Catherine Parker Heath for being in charge and of course Elspeth and Paul Walker without whom none of this would have happened.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Contexts by Trench

Table A1.1 Trench 1 Contexts

Trench No	Context No	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth
1	001	layer		Topsoil	Dark brown humic loam	10.0	5.0	15cm
1	002	layer		Subsoil	Mid brown silty loam	10.0	5.0	8cm
1	003	deposit		Demolition material	Sticky dark brown loam with 60% stone inclusions	2.5	1.5	12cm
1	004	void			natural			
1	005	deposit		Burnt clay	Orange brown compacted clay	0.6	0.6	n/a
1	006	void			natural			
1	007	void			natural			
1	008	deposit		Burnt clay	Orange brown compacted clay	1.1	0.8	5cm
1	009	deposit		Sub-rectangular feature	Sub-angular local sandstone forming possible edging to post hole	0.4	0.4	5cm
1	010	cut		Cut of wall	NE-SW oriented with steep sides and flat bottom	1.5	0.5	10cm
1	011	deposit		Fractured sandstone slab	Area of local sandstone forming a discrete slab	1.0	0.5	n/a
1	012	deposit		Cobbled area	Mix of rounded cobbles set on edge	2.0	1.5	n/a
1	013	deposit			Light brown compacted clay c15% stone inclusions	2.1	1.6	n/a
1	014	deposit		Heated clay	Same as 005/008 but more inclusions of burnt material.	1.0	0.7	n/a

Trench No	Context No	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth
1	015	fill	023	Fill of post hole 009	Light grey soft clay	0.30	0.30	15cm
1	016	deposit	010	Residue of robbed wall	Soft light grey clay with 40% stone chippings	1.5	0.5	10cm
1	017	structure		Wall	Linear arrangement of local stone on NE-SW alignment	2.4	0.30	n/a
1	018	deposit		Demolition material	Very dark brown sandy loam with lenses of mortar within it.	0.8	0.6	15cm
1	019	deposit		Demolition material	Stony deposit with c20% brown clay	2.4	1.1	n/a
1	020	deposit		Floor of building	Light-mid brown compacted clay with occ stone inclusion	c5.0	c3.0	n/a
1	021	deposit		Redistributed wall material	Layer of angular stone with 20% topsoil intruding	1.0	0.6	n/a
1	022	fill	023	Lower fill of post hole	Mid grey compacted clay	0.3	0.3	10cm
1	023	Cut		Cut of feature 009	Sub-circular steep sided in profile	0.3	0.3	25cm
1	024	Deposit		Redistributed material	Stony area abutting 017. Sub-triangular shape	0.8	0.6	n/a
1	025	Structure		Wall	Rounded cobbles and sub-angular stones aligned E-W	1.8	0.8	30cm
1	026	Deposit		Foundation material	Orange brown compacted clay	0.9	0.6	n/a
1	027	Cut		Cut of robbed wall foundation	Broad u-shaped profile with flat bottom	c2.5	c0.5	30cm

Table A1.2 Trench 3 Contexts

Trench No	Context No	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth
3	301	Layer		Topsoil	Dark brown humic loam	4.0	4.0	6cm
3	302	Layer		Subsoil	Mid brown sandy loam	4.0	4.0	4cm
3	303	Layer		Colluvium	Orange brown clayey sand	4.0	1.0	10cm
3	304	Layer		Colluvium	Dark orange brown clayey sand	0.4	0.45	6cm

Table A1.3 Trench 4 Contexts

Trench No	Context No	Type	Fill of	Context Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth
4	301	layer		Topsoil	Dark brown silty loam	8	2	Max 30cm
4	302	Layer		Subsoil	Very dark brown silty loam with stone inclusions	1.1	1	10cm
4	303	Layer		Upper layer of earthwork bank	Orangey brown sandy loam	6	2	45cm
4	304	Layer		Layer of bank	Light brown silty loam			
4	305	layer		Lower edge of bank	Mid brown clay			
4	306	layer		Layer of bank	Mid-light brown clayey silt			
4	307	fill		Fill of ditch to E of bank	Black wet loamy silt	2.2	3	15cm
4	308	fill	311	Fill of post hole	Yellowish brown clay	0.40	0.36	0.10
4	309	layer		Lower edge/terminus of	Mid-light brown clay	1.84	0.6	

				bank				
4	310	cut		Cut of ditch on E edge of bank				
4	311	cut		Cut of post hole filled by 308		0.40	0.36	0.10
4	312	Layer			Lens of light/mid brown clay	1.6		12cm

Appendix 2: Geomagnetic Survey Results

Fig A5.1 Vectorised Plan of Geomagnetic Survey Results



Fig A5.2 Archaeological Interpretation plan of geophysical survey results (courtesy of TPA)

