FOSS BANK, TATHAM
LANCASHIRE

EXCAVATION REPORT



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Foss Bank Tatham, Lancashire

Summary
As a result of research undertaken by a member of the Tatham Historical Society into seventeenth-century farm deeds in Tatham, references were located in the Lancashire Record Office (DDX/32) dated 1651 and 1655, which mentioned the existence of a kiln situated in a field owned by Foss Bank in Tatham. The documents did not indicate what the kiln was used for, but it did name the seller 'Thomas Clapham' of 'Forsbanke' and the buyer 'John Myres' in a 'Bargain and Sale for £98' in 1651. Furthermore, the deed mentioned that together with various land and buildings, John Myres would also have 'halfe one kilne'. By 1655 John Bond was also residing at Foss Bank, and in 'Articles of Agreement' between the two men to divide land at 'Forsbank', part of the agreement stated: 'At any time hereafter that ye Kilne be removed, that then the one shall suffer the other to carry away his pte thereof without stop or hinderance'.
A search of seventeenth century maps failed to locate this kiln, however, following extensive field walking a feature was located in a field at Foss Bank called Brownhill to the south of Crossdale Beck. The only other building in the immediate vicinity is a derelict stone building on the edge of a field to the north of Crossdale Beck, which was used as a hen house in living memory. Further investigation of the feature revealed the top of a man-made wall, associated with a natural stone outcrop. The size and shape of the depression in the ground led the researcher to speculate about the possibility of having discovered the location of the kiln mentioned in the above deeds. However, seventeenth and eighteenth Manor Court Records show that kilns are usually built close to a working Mill. During this time, there was a Mill at what is now Mill Bridge approximately half a mile west of Brownhill field, which would have been accessible by footpath from the potential site of the kiln, and within easy reach from a number of farms.

Permission to excavate was granted by the owners of Foss Bank, and excavation was carried out over an eight-day period in September 2014. It revealed a deep almost oval shaped hollow pit, enclosed by four walls, with an inner wall forming a division between two distinct floor levels. Three different floor materials were exposed, which included sandstone slabs, natural bedrock and natural yellow clay. A mixture of silty-sand and clay soil, together with a large quantity of irregular shaped sandstone blocks were removed, indicating historical wall collapse. A small assemblage of artefacts was recovered from the secondary deposit.

Acknowledgements
The team would like to thank Mr and Mrs Hatton for granting permission for us to carry out this excavation on their land. We also extend our thanks to David Johnson for his valuable help and advice, and for drawing the plans.

John Wilson carried out research in the Lancashire Record Office, and he was also instrumental in locating the site of the feature. The fieldwork was undertaken by Lyn Hitch, Graham Hitch, John Wilson, David Johnson, Anne Wilson, and Richard Wilson. Chris Howard-Davies from Oxford Archaeology North assessed the finds, and Lyn Hitch compiled the report.

Site Location - Topography and Geology
The feature is located in a field called Brownhill, which is owned by Foss Bank. The field is situated to the south of Crossdale Beck and can be accessed from Lane Foot Brow, off Ringstones Lane (SD 662651). The excavation site lies to the north of the field, midway along a natural stone outcrop at grid reference (SD 6618 6515) altitude 200m. A disused track crosses the field to the south of the site, leading from Lane Foot Brow to Brackenbottom.

The surrounding terrain is rough pasture, comprising gorse bushes and reeds. The ground is predominantly boggy, un-drained and used for grazing sheep and cattle. An area of mature woodland extends along the southern bank of Crossdale Beck. The main bedrock encountered was sandstone of Carboniferous age, with some siltstone and mudstone.

Reasons for Excavation
The feature had been monitored for a few years, and its gradual decay noted. It was considered expedient to carry out the excavation before further erosion or damage occurred. Furthermore, the team wanted to establish whether this feature was the kiln mentioned in the Lancashire Record Office documents, and if it was, to determine its use, and whether any reasons could be found for its construction in such an isolated locality.

Aims and Objectives
The aim of the excavation was to identify how much of the man-made wall had survived, and how it was incorporated into the bedrock. Also to examine whether there were any further man-made structures associated with this feature. It was intended to provide a detailed plan of the feature, recording its shape and size. If the structure was identified as the kiln mentioned in the deeds above, then an attempt would be made to establish how the kiln was operated, what is was used for and how long it continued in use before abandonment.

Historical Context

The parish of Tatham is approximately 12 miles north east of Lancaster, and lies mainly to the south of the River Wenning, bounded by the River Hindburn to the west and the Yorkshire border to the east. Most of the land lies within the Forest of Bowland, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with a pleasant undulating landscape. Tatham is a rural community, thinly populated with no main village. The only significant areas of population are Lowgill and Ivah situated in Higher Tatham, and Millhouses in Lower Tatham, with scattered farms and homesteads occupying the remainder of the area. Sheep and cattle farming is the predominant occupation in the area.

There is currently no evidence for human settlement during the prehistoric or Bronze Age periods in Tatham. However, there are examples of potential Iron Age settlement enclosures in other parts of the Lune Valley (English Heritage 1966), and earth-work circles, which could be interpreted as enclosures of some kind, have been located in Tatham Park by local historians. Evidence for Roman activity can be seen in nearby Burrow and Leck (Shotter 1997), but the only indication of their presence in Tatham is the line of a Roman road, which can be seen at Fairheath Head (SD 648666).

The entry for Tatham in the Victorian County History for Lancashire (1914), states that Tatham Manor was mentioned in the 1086 Doomsday Book as being one of four manors held by Chetel with Bentham. By the fourteenth century the manor was held by John de Tatham, who alienated it to Edmund de Dacre from whom it eventually passed to the Harringtons and became part of Hornby Castle Estate. Many properties in Tatham continued to be under the control of Hornby Castle until the estate was auctioned piecemeal in 1938.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century Manor Court Records and Tatham Parish Registers, show the population of Tatham being a mainly farming community, with associated trades such as blacksmiths, carpenters and weavers. Place name evidence such as Tenter Hill Wood, suggest land being set aside for cloth. making

By the nineteenth century, census returns indicate that some small-scale rural industry had been established alongside farming, including coal mining and stone quarrying. Tatham Colliery or School Colliery has been comprehensively documented by Tatham Historical Society, and was in operation from the eighteenth century. Clintsfield Colliery, which is now a national scheduled monument, was in production from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. Remains of colliery buildings and the engine house can still be seen. The pits at Smear Hall were an important resource for Hornby Castle Estate, and were worked from the 1780s until they closed down in 1882 (Hudson 2000). Several stone quarries have been located within Tatham. These were worked until at least the end of the nineteenth century, and produced stone for local houses and field walls (Mike Kelly 2014).

Corn Mills at Lowgill and Millhouses, had been in operation since at least the sixteenth century. Wheat and oats were grown in the area for local consumption. Some barley may have been grown in Tatham, and used by the maltster at Guy Hill (Mike Kelly, Mike Winstanley & Edward Huddleston 2014). By the nineteenth century the Corn Mills had become Bobbin Mills, and employed a number of local people.

A sample of the Tatham Manor Court Records at Hornby Castle, transcribed by Emmeline Garnett in 1995, give us an intriguing insight into the activities of people in Tatham during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Specific court presentments provide us with evidence of customary practice concerning the maintenance and operation of Corn Mills and kilns. Fines could be imposed on people if 'the way to the Mill was out of repaire', or if customary tenants were 'goeing with their corne from the Lords Milne', and in 1648 William Smith was ordered to 'thatch his part of the kilne at the Mill Houses before Martimas next'. These obligations also reached Foss Bank, when in 1662 John Bond and John Myres were ordered to 'repair the way at Force Bank leading to the Lords Mill and maintain it' (Tatham Court Books Vol.I, 1584-1664).

During the early part of the seventeenth century Foss Bank Farm was leased to the Claphams, a local family of yeoman farmers. Chippindall's sixteenth century survey of the Estates of Hornby Castle, describes Foss Bank as having one tenement with 13 bays and 8 outsetts, together with 30 acres of arable and meadow, with woods and skarre banks. Following the 'Articles of Agreement' in 1655, the farm stayed in the possession of John Bond and John Myres until it was sold by licence in 1674 to John Longstroth, and passed through the Longstroth heirs until Richard Wilcock, a corn merchant of Bentham, purchased the farm in 1884. By the time of the National Farm Survey in 1941, Foss Bank was still a relatively prosperous farm. Foss Bank changed ownership several times during the latter half of the twentieth century, and along the way ceased to be a working farm.

METHODOLOGY

Excavation

The excavation in Brownhill field took place in September 2014 by members of THS, with assistance and mentoring by David Johnson, who has experience in kiln excavation. The site was cleared of gorse bushes and the vegetation cut back to expose the outline of the feature. Excavation work was carried out manually using mattocks, spades and trowels. The site was situated midway up a steep bank, and it was considered safer to locate the spoil heap at the base of the slope on the river-bank. Therefore a rotation system was put in place for digging and tipping spoil. The site was protected from roving cattle each evening by canvas sheeting securely pegged down.

Recording
The feature was recorded using context record sheets, object proforma sheets, and a photographic record of digital images was completed. A final plan of the feature was compiled on completion of the excavation and an east-west section drawn, together with a profile of the rear wall of the feature. All finds and artefacts recovered were cleaned, bagged, labelled and stored appropriately for processing and assessment.

Archive
A site archive has been compiled using all available documentation. Artefacts have been photographed and then assessed by Oxford Archaeology North. They will be deposited with the landowners if they wish to retain them, or otherwise lodged with an appropriate organisation.

Fieldwork
Pre-excavation clearance of the vegetation showed a sunken track to the south of the site leading from the eastern corner of Brownhill field, and continuing downhill to the west. This track appears on the 1848 Tithe Map, and on a recently acquired Ordnance Survey (OS) Site Map (2011), but it is not marked on the OS (1891) map or later OS maps investigated. Once cleared the shape of the feature was almost circular in appearance and approximately 3m in diameter. The top three courses of a clearly defined wall could be seen to the north with an entry point into the feature on the lower east side. A base line of 12m was laid out down the centre of the newly uncovered track, and offsets taken to plot track and feature to produce an earthwork survey.
Turf and sandy soil removed from the top of the north wall, revealed an uneven layer of rubble with no distinct edge measuring 4.7m in length *(101)*. A small irregular cavity was exposed at the base of the north-east end of the rubble layer. Clearing moss, lichen and debris from the top courses of the north wall, revealed an arch shape wall tightly curved at the west end, with a radius of approximately 1.20m. The wall had been constructed using evenly placed grey/brown sandstone of irregular shapes with no mortar *(102)*.

Further clearance of vegetation to the south side of the feature revealed evidence of large worked pieces of sandstone bedrock, which eventually formed the southern wall *(103)*. Initially the east and west ends of this wall seemed to curve slightly downwards, but subsequent excavation showed this was due to wall collapse.



Plate 1: View of site looking north west



Plate 2: View of north wall *(102)* looking north west

Attention was then transferred to the curve at the west end of the north wall where it abutted the bedrock. It was here that the west end of the feature had collapsed inwards, and we proceeded to remove a deposit of yellow/brown silty-sand, which contained a quantity of angular weathered sandstone *(104)*. Excavation of (104) uncovered an area of unevenly worked sandstone bedrock, forming the west wall of the feature *(112)*, and changing in colour to a dark yellow in the south west corner. This wall was 1.38m in length. No finds were recovered from this deposit.



Plate 3: Detail of emerging south wall *(103)* and west wall *(112)* looking west

As work continued to expose the southern side of the sandstone outcrop it became apparent that the top of this wall had also collapsed contributing to the spread of stone which already covered the inside of the feature. This southern wall *(103)* comprised large irregular worked sandstone, and measured 2.90m in length at this point.

Following removal of all remaining loose sandstone blocks, excavation continued downwards to locate the floor. As this deposit was being removed *(110)* various finds were recovered 90cm below top. From a curve at the base of the north wall 95cm below top, pottery emerged sealed by a tree root, together with one find located 90cm down from the top of the south wall (see finds report). A natural stone step or ledge was exposed *(111)* at the base of the south-west corner of the west wall, having a man made right angle edge to it. The ledge measured 1.13m in length, 28cm wide and 22cm in height. Another deliberately positioned sandstone block protruding inwards from the east was located *(114)*, and initially thought to be part of the as yet unidentified east wall. It measured 31cm in length, 20cm wide and 20cm in depth.

The floor when it was revealed comprised evenly laid angular sandstone slabs, together with some fine grain mudstone pieces, placed over light coloured clay *(113)*. The floor measured 2.20m north to south and 1.90m west to east. The stone slabs fitted tightly together and abutted all three main walls. A small amount of water ingress showed that the floor sloped away from the south wall levelling out where it meets the north wall. The floor also sloped slightly away from the south-west corner. A large tree root had grown across the floor at the base of the north wall, and this was left in situ.



Plate 4: Detail of south wall *(103)* and floor with ledge, looking south

When the remainder of (110) was removed from the east end of the north wall a stone return was exposed extending north-south *(115)*. This comprised two pieces of worked sandstone blocks with a gap between the top two stones, which abutted (114). To the south-east of (114) a deep cavity with a possible cap-stone appeared to extend underneath a layer of stone and turf running east and giving the impression of a flue opening. With the removal of deposit *(116)* the top of the stone return was exposed *(117)*, and this was considered to be what remained of the base of an inner wall comprising two layers of worked sandstone blocks with rubble infill measuring 90cm in length, 40cm in height, and with a width of approximately 53cm. Excavation of (116) was continued eastwards from the inner wall until we reached a large feature piece of sandstone, which had been observed rising out of the ground at the eastern edge of the feature when the ground was initially cleared on day one of the excavation *(123)*.

Gradual removal of deposit *(118)* showed this material was the result of the collapsed eastern end of the south wall. Large pieces of shaped sandstone were removed, and the soil became sticky, smooth consolidated clay, but no further evidence was found for a flue passage. It transpired that a tumble of fallen stones had given the impression of a flue opening. When the area was finally cleared two stone steps were exposed *(119)* abutting the inner wall. A third step abutting the southern wall was removed before its significance had been identified. The steps lead from the main paved floor to an upper level comprising a muddy clay floor *(120)*. Further clearance of this area led to the emergence of a stone paved floor of bright yellow sandstone *(121)* measuring 1.56m in length, and 58cm at its widest point. This floor was eventually shown to slope down towards the un-excavated north-east slopping path. Once the south-east corner was completely excavated, it revealed the final section of the quarried south wall, which ended in a sharp return to the quarried bright yellow sandstone of the east wall *(122)*. The south wall now measured 3.66m in length. After cleaning, the east wall resembled a triangular shape sloping north-east and terminating at the large piece of structural sandstone.

All four walls were now clearly defined, together with two floor levels, and three different floor materials. A cluster of stones between the inner wall and the bright yellow sandstone floor remained un-excavated.



Plate 5: View of feature, looking west



Plate 6: View of feature, looking east

Finds

A small scattered assemblage of finds were recovered from *(110)* as follows:

Ceremic	Metal	Leather/Bonded Material	Animal Bone	Glass	Enamel
24	4	3	16	1	1

All the pottery recovered comprised broken pieces of a domestic glazed earthenware jug, decorated with a floral pattern, which is thought to date from the nineteenth century (pers. comm. Chris Howard-Davies). Pottery of this type was common among rural communities. The most complete metal object was identified as a rim of a vessel. All the other artefacts represent modern discarded material. The bone could possibly be from a young lamb. None of these finds could be used to date when this structure was built, or when it was finally abandoned. However, given their distribution within (110) it might be assumed that whatever this structure was used for, it remained open for some time after it was no longer in use, for these items to be deposited at the depth they were found.

DISCUSSION and INTERPRETATION

Structure

Excavation of the site located in Brownhill field exposed an almost oval-shaped stone structure, comprising a man-made north wall of irregular shaped sandstone blocks with no mortar, and three natural sandstone walls, which had been quarried out of the natural bedrock. At the base of the south-west corner of the west wall a ledge had been hewn from the natural sandstone. Another worked sandstone block had been positioned pointing inwards from a possible inner wall. The purpose of these stones has not been determined. The enclosed floor comprised cut and shaped sandstone slabs, laid on clay with the occasional piece of fine grain mudstone. Steps led from this floor to another level of muddy clay floor, which joined a stone paved floor of bright yellow sandstone, which mirrored the colour of the east wall.

What appears to be an inner man-made wall between the two floor levels, might on further investigation prove to have another function, if any evidence can be found for the positioning of roof supports, which might indicate that the south west half of the structure was covered. Considering the large quantity of stone excavated from inside, it would appear that all the walls had collapsed inwards either by accident or design after abandonment.

Dating

No conclusive evidence was found to help us accurately date this feature. If we had recovered evidence, which enabled us to identify it as the kiln mentioned in the seventeenth century deeds above, then a construction date prior to 1651 might be tentatively suggested. The small pottery assemblage recovered provides us with information as to when this structure was no longer in use. Most of the artefacts date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and were discarded after abandonment. However, it is not possible to determine exactly when this event occurred, and map evidence is inconclusive.

Conclusions

The initial objectives of this excavation were to identify the extent of the man-made wall of this feature, to investigate its association with the natural bedrock, and locate any further man-made features. These aims were achieved, after excavation showed the full extent and construction of this feature.

The primary aim of this project was to establish whether the kiln mentioned in the deeds deposited in the Lancashire Record Office (DDX/32) dated 1651 and 1655, was in fact the feature, which had been located in Brownhill field at Foss Bank in Tatham. Our optimism for this aim has been difficult to fulfil. We were aware from Manor Court Records that kilns for drying grain in Tatham were usually built in association with Corn Mills. So the isolated location of the structure we were dealing with caused us some concern from the beginning of the project. Although field names such as 'Kilne Cloase' indicate that kilns, may have been built in isolated places for certain purposes. However, once the excavation got underway a shape began to appear that showed a resemblance to that of a drying kiln. Furthermore, after the final deposit was removed and the bright yellow sandstone exposed in the south-east corner, it was suggested this might be the location of the fire pit.

Although there was as yet no indication of a flue, the slope leading from the north-east corner was left un-excavated, so this area might possibly be the location of the flue.
Following thorough cleaning, no discolouration of the stone that would indicate burning could be found within the south-east corner, or elsewhere. After consultation with other experienced field archaeologists, it was concluded that the structure did not conform in shape to a drying kiln for grain, and as no evidence could be found for burning, and it was located in an isolated position not associated with a Mill, it was an unlikely candidate for a drying kiln. A kiln for the extraction of potash was considered, but again the shape did not meet the required dimensions. Another possibility might have been a chop wood kiln, but research shows these structures to be larger than the feature excavated, and often a layer of burning can be identified.
When fully excavated the structure measured 4.03m long, 2.49m wide and approximately 1.80m deep at its highest point. Its height would originally have been larger before the walls collapsed. The structure was quarried out of the natural sandstone bedrock, a difficult and lengthy task with the tools that would have been available. A degree of organisation and determination of effort would have been required. Furthermore, following careful examination of the sandstone floor, which demonstrated expert workmanship, the team are of the opinion that whoever built this structure intended it to be used for a specific purpose, and probably envisaged it continuing in use for some considerable length of time.
Bearing this in mind, and taking into consideration the two references to a kiln on land at Foss Bank mentioned in the Lancashire Record Office DDX/32 documents, there are certain points to be considered. First, it seems reasonable to assume that a kiln did exist somewhere at Foss Bank in the seventeenth century with legitimised use, otherwise it would not have been mentioned in legal documents. One possibility is that this kiln was located elsewhere, but the structure excavated was in some way associated with it. Alternatively, the structure could have been the original site of the kiln, which was removed and carried away as directed by the 'Articles of Agreement' in 1655. The vacant site might subsequently have been rebuilt by adapting the original shape of the feature, thereby obliterating all signs of burning. The structure as excavated could then have been used for some other purpose.
Further investigation of the un-excavated areas of the site, might establish the reason for the construction of this feature and its purpose. Also further research will be carried out to see whether another location can be identified for the kiln mentioned in the Lancashire Record Office DDX/32 documents.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 1: Location Map

Figure 2: Location Map: Tatham Parish

Figure 3: Detail of Tithe Map (1848)

Figure 4: Site Location: at Foss Bank (Ordnance Survey 1891)

Figure 5: Site Location: Brownhill field (Ordnance Survey 2011)

Figure 6: Final Plan of excavated feature

PLATES

Plate 1: View of site looking north west

Plate 2: View of north wall *(102)* looking north west

Plate 3: Detail of emerging south wall *(103)* and west wall *(112)* looking west

Plate 4: Detail of south wall *(103)* and floor with ledge, looking south

Plate 5: Final view of feature, looking west

Plate 6: Final view of feature, looking east

Appendix No:1 Summary Context List

Context No:	Category	Description	Date range of finds
101	Structure	Top North Wall	—
102	Structure	North Wall	—
103	Structure	South Wall	—
104	Layer	Upper deposit	—
105	Layer	Lense deposit	—
106	Layer	Silty/sand soil	—
107	Layer	Clay soil	—
108	Layer	Organic soil	—
109	Layer	Sandy clay soil	—
110	Layer	Lower deposit	Late Nineteenth/early Twentieth century
111	Structure	Sandstone ledge	—

Context No:	Category	Description	Date range of finds
112	Structure	West Wall	—
113	Structure	Sandstone floor	—
114	Structure	Protruding Sandstone	—
115	Structure	Face inner wall	—
116	Layer	Deposit over *117*	—
117	Structure	Top inner wall	—
118	Layer	Collapsed deposit	—
119	Structure	Sandstone steps	—
120	Structure	Clay floor	—
121	Structure	Bedrock floor	—
122	Structure	East wall	—
123	Structure	Feature sandstone	—
124	Layer	Rubble deposit	—

Appendix 2: Summary Finds List

Context No:	Material	Category	Quantity	Description	Date range of finds
110	Ceramic	Vessel	24	Large body fragment with rim, base, and handle and smaller fragments including spout, of buff-glazed earthenware jug, with floral transfer pattern.	Late nineteenth century
110	Iron	Vessel	1	Large round corroded rim of vessel.	Late nineteenth/ early twentieth century
110	Iron	Unidentified	3	Irregular shaped corroded pieces.	Late nineteenth/ early twentieth century
110	Leather/ bonded material	Undiagnostic fragments	3	Irregular shaped decomposing pieces of material.	Not closely datable
110	Bone	Animal	16	Seven pieces of leg bone, and four pieces of foot bone, three rib and two vertebrae. Maybe lamb.	Late nineteenth/ early twentieth century
110	Glass	Unidentified	1	Small triangular piece of clear glass.	Twentieth century
110	Enamel	Vessel	1	Broken baking dish.	Twentieth century



Figure 1: Location Map.

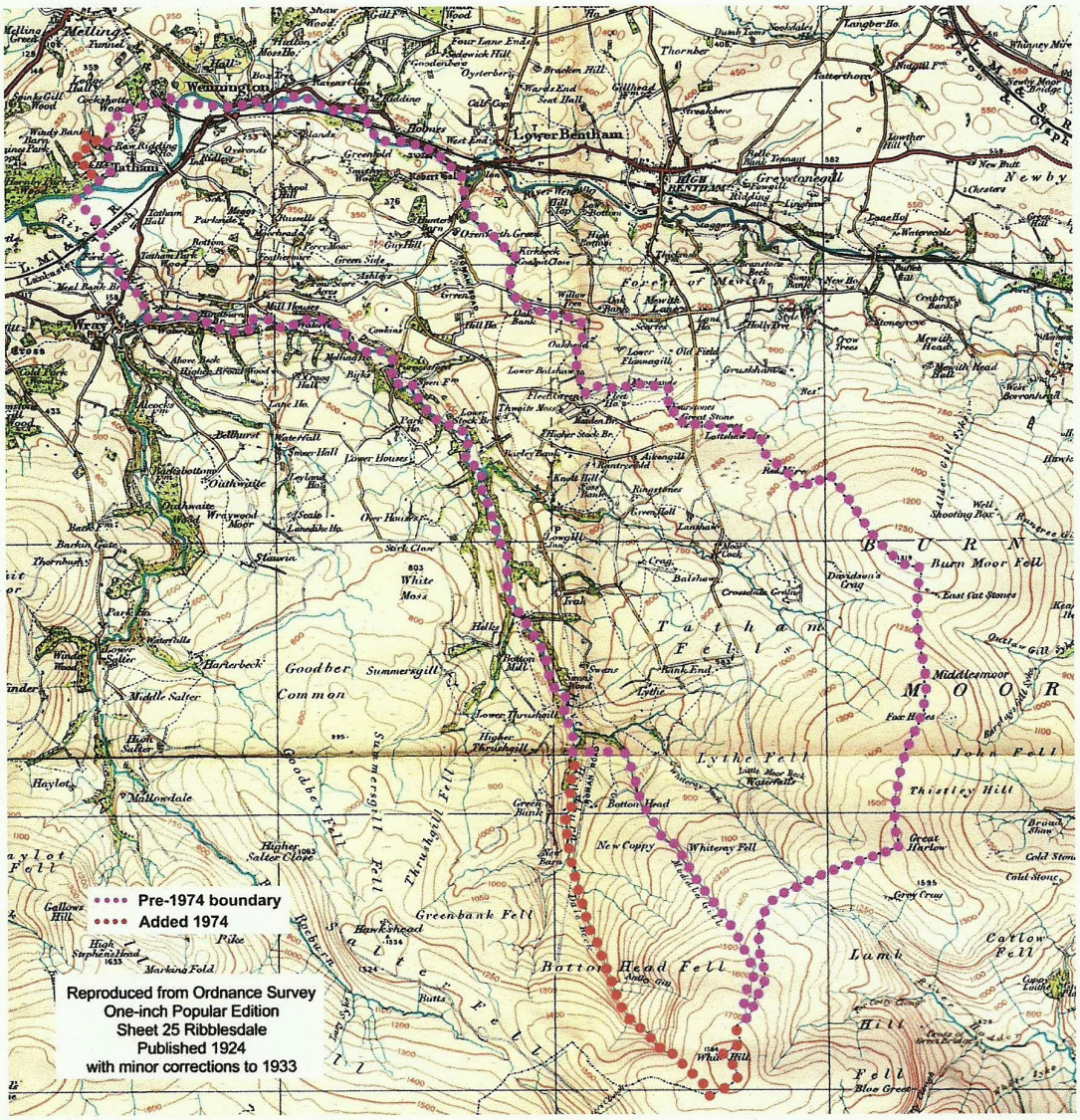


Figure 2: Location Map: Tatham Parish

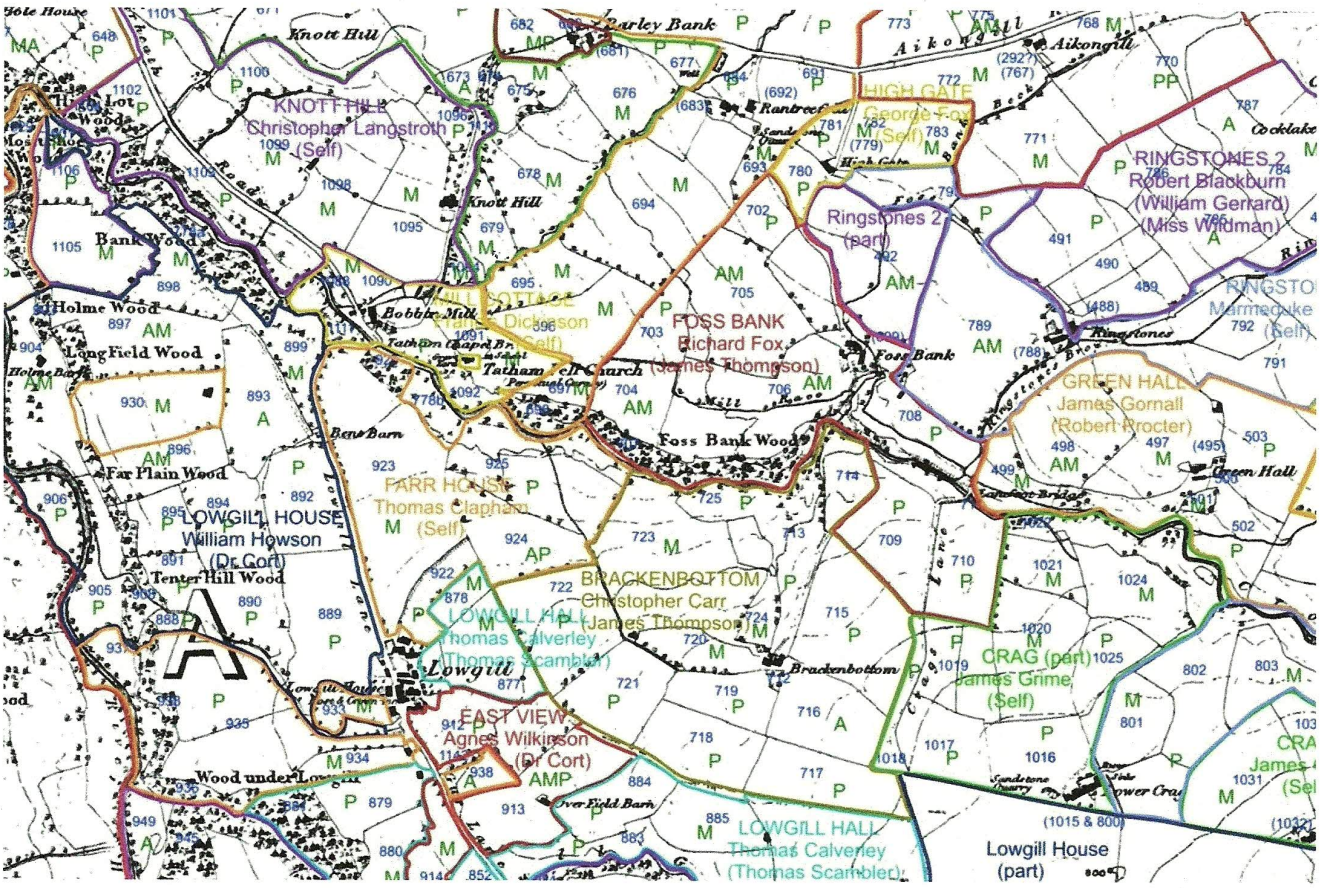


Figure 3: Detail of Tithe Map 1848



Figure 4: Site Location at Foss Bank (Ordnance Survey 1891)

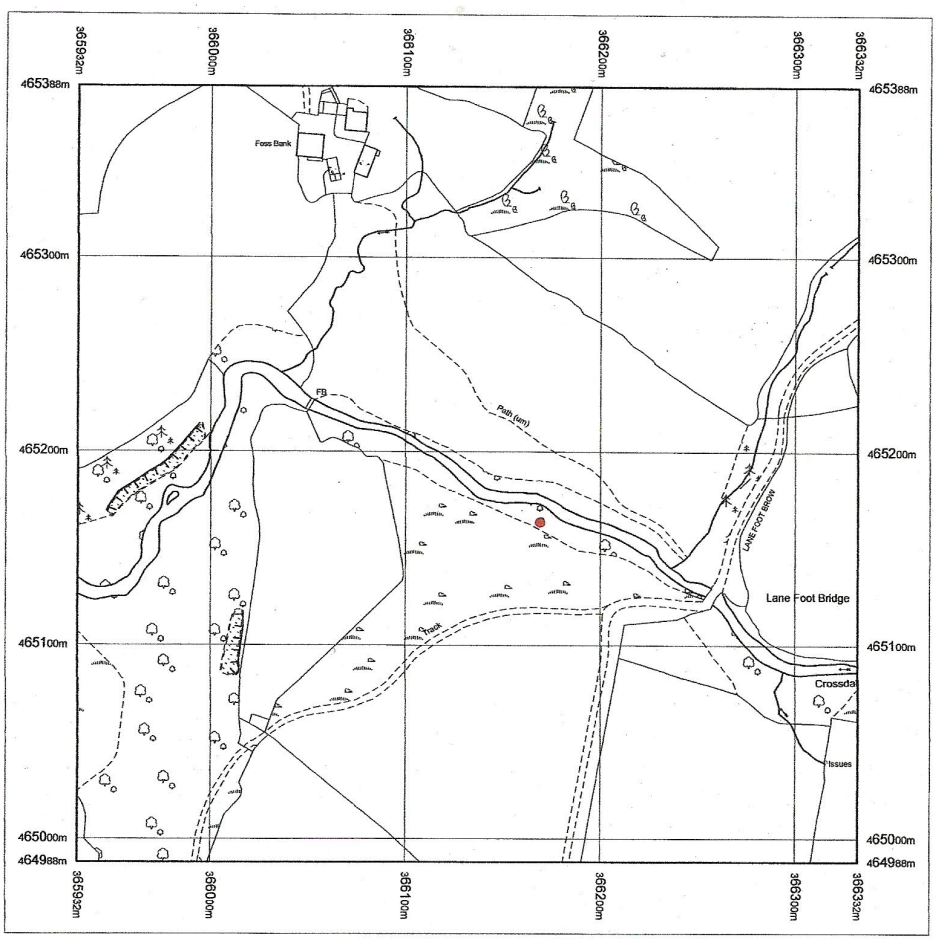


Figure 5: Site Location Brownhill field (Ordnance Survey 2011)

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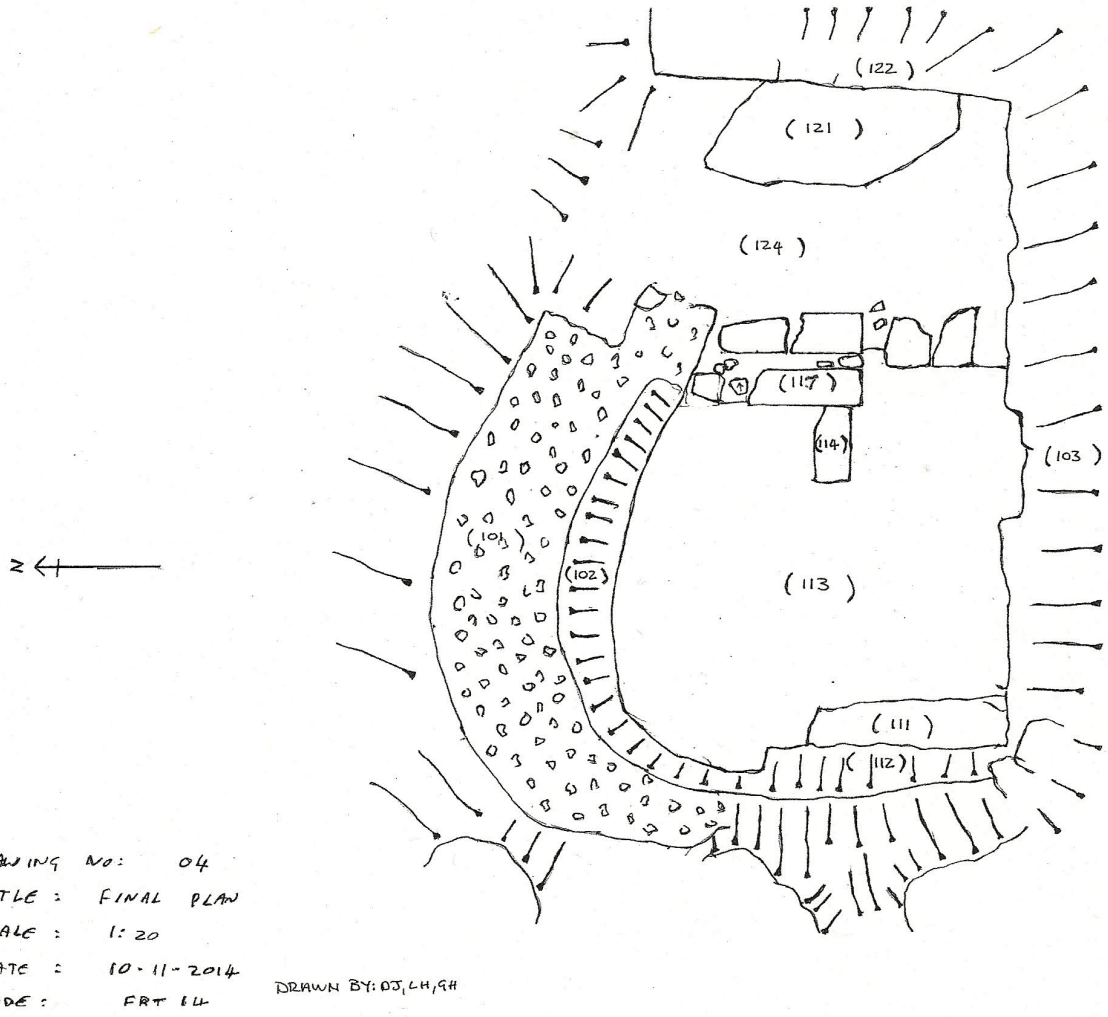


Figure 6: Final Plan of excavated feature