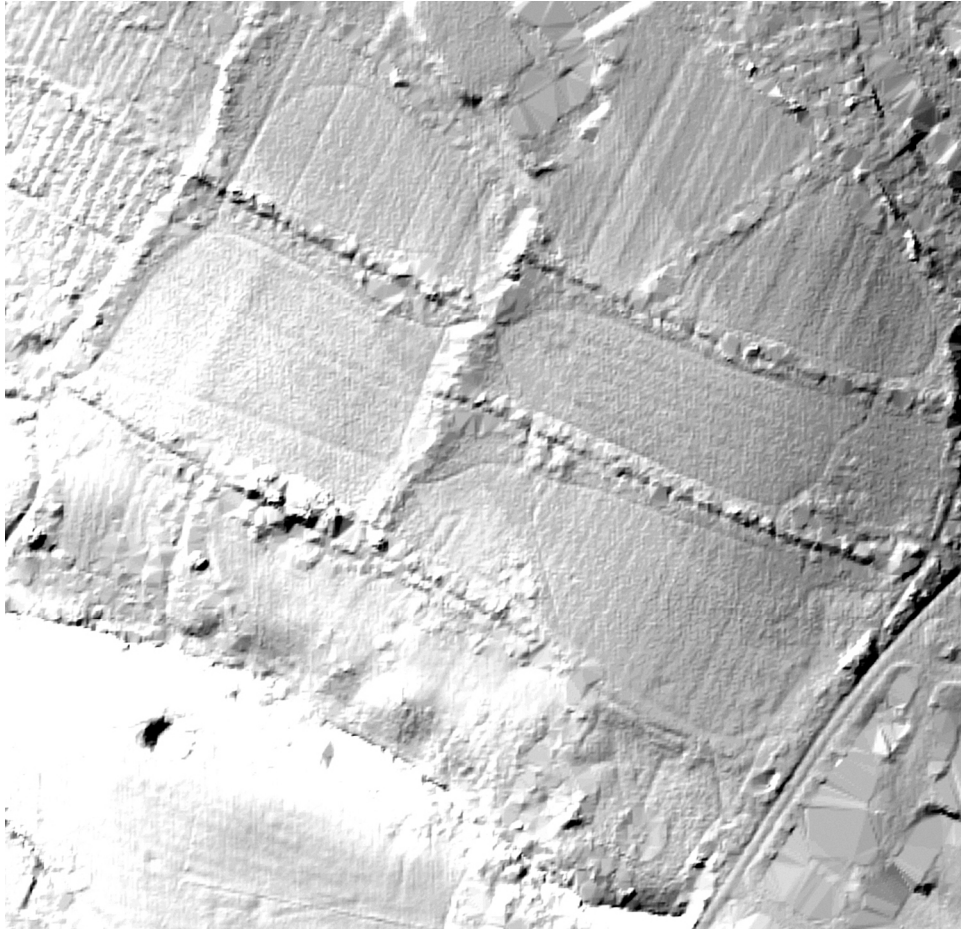


A note on land use at Brislington Meadows

Ken Taylor (2023)

A recent LiDAR survey (lidarfinder.com) shows a variety of parallel linear features distributed among the five large open fields at the heart of the proposed Brislington Meadows housing development. Of particular historical interest in the image below is the long narrow rectangular field in the middle of the right-hand side (in the 1846 tithe map illustrated below, it's numbered 504). This field currently encloses Ordnance Survey reference ST 62727107.



Screenshot from LiDARFinder <https://lidarfinder.com>.

© Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2015. All rights reserved.

Allowing for some spread of soil at both the higher and lower boundary of this lynchet field, the LiDAR image shows eight linear features that are each composed of a light and dark strip. These features are roughly parallel and slightly curved (bending in approximate conformity with the contours of the hill). The width of this narrow rectangular field has been estimated using aerial photographs of 1946 (<https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp>), before the hedgerows were allowed to sprawl, and is around 64m, making each linear feature approximately 8m (26 feet) wide.

These features run approximately along contour lines (so cannot be drains), and the banks and troughs have the appearance of ridge and furrow ploughing. The lynchet risers are clearly defined in the landscape and have been estimated at around 0.5m high, which supports the idea

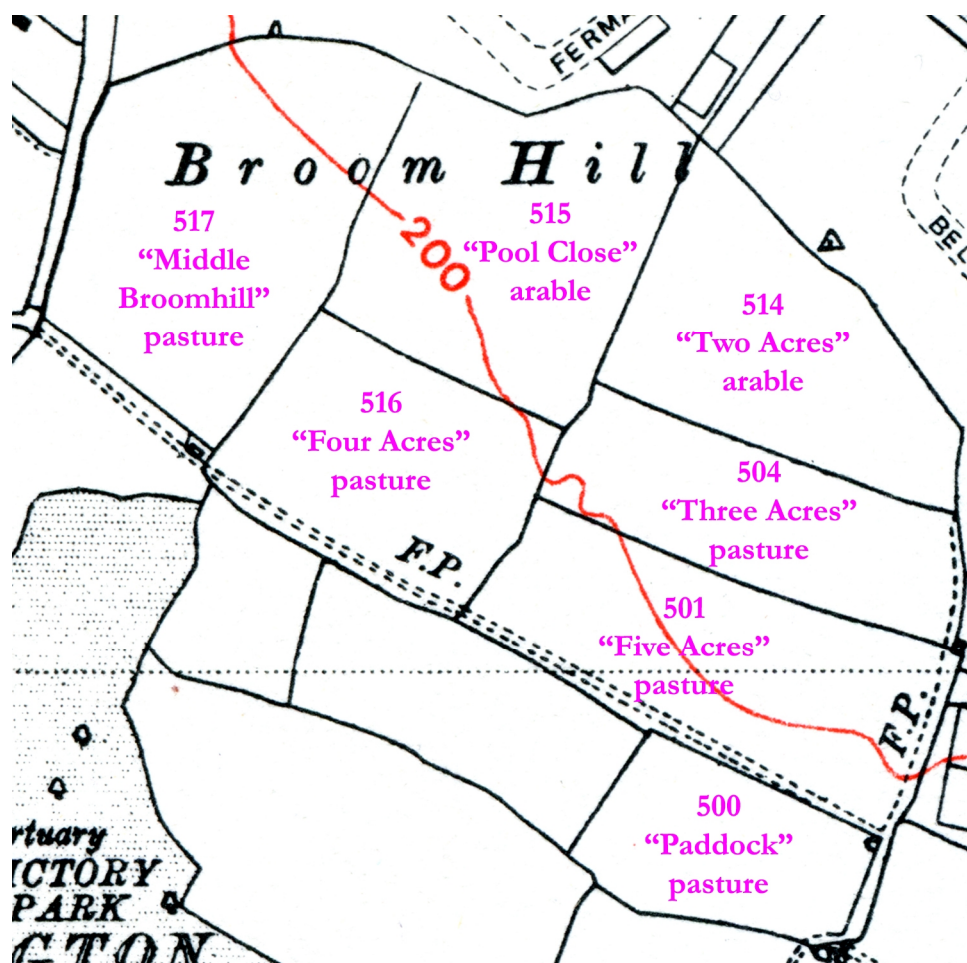
of ploughing. The curve along their length argues against machine ploughing (using steam engines).

The Tithe apportionment (1846) states this field was put to pasture and, so far as is known, this use of the field has been continuous since then. At the time of the local Enclosure Act (1778) the area around the enclosed common was described as "Old Enclosures" but research has yet to determine whether this was previously enclosed common land or an enclosure of open medieval fields. Whether these well-preserved features are post-medieval or medieval, it at least seems certain they're not modern.

1846 Tithe map and apportionment

The LiDAR image above shows linear features in several fields, suggestive of ploughing. The several narrow and widely spaced features, however, running from the top of the hill down to the south-southwest in field 515, Pool Close, are drains. Also, the features in field 517, Middle Broomhill, are allotments. The Brislington tithe map and apportionment (BTM&A 1846) though, shows only two fields were then designated as arable - the rest were used for pasture.

Apart from the southwestern boundary of field 517 (which has migrated a few metres to the north), and the junction of fields at that field's southern-most tip (which simplified slightly) the boundaries shown on the 1846 tithe map are unchanged in the 1938 Ordnance Survey map. The latter has been used here, for convenience (the contour line is 200 feet, 61m).



1938 OS map annotated with field information from the 1846 BTM&A.

With a single exception, all these annotated fields were owned by William Gore Langton, who received the rent charge, and were occupied (farmed) by Robert Harrill (Junr). The exception is field 517, Middle Broomhill, which was owned by John Hurle and occupied by George Williams, with the rent charge payable to Brislington's vicar.

The rent charge on the two arable fields was several times that of the pastures. The least expensive rent charge of these pastures was that paid to the vicar.

Field	Rent charge per acre		Notes
	Shillings	Pence	
500	1	8.7	
501	2	0.1	
504	1	11.2	
514	6	11.9	arable
515	7	0.6	arable
516	1	10.9	
517	1	6.8	paid to vicar

It may be no coincidence that field 515, which has the conspicuous drains in the LiDAR image, is called Pool Close, suggesting a long-standing problem with water-logging. Although the tithe map does routinely show natural pools, there isn't one in this field, which suggests the place-name is a traditional one preserved from a period before 1846 (which further suggests some drains could pre-date the drawing of the tithe map).

It's curious that field 514 is called "Two Acres" because it's actually 4.3 acres in extent - presumably the name commemorates the situation before an earlier partition was removed.

The field to the south of fields 156 and 501 and the larger field immediately south of that were both pasture according to the tithe apportionment, but they both carried the same name: Blackers Wood. This place-name appears to preserve an earlier use of the land, and the proximity of old woodland would explain the bluebells that appear anomalously amongst the meadow plants along the southern edge of field 516 (Four Acres) each spring.

Bibliography

The 1846 Tithe map is available online from Bristol City Council (<https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp>).

BTM&A 1846, *Brislington Tithe Map and Apportionment*, Bristol Record Office, EP/A/32/9.

Ordnance Survey 1938, Provisional Edition, *Somerset Sheet VI NE*, (resized from 1:10560, 6 inches to the mile).