TEESSIDE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN

2025, No. 29

UNCOVER THE HIDDEN HERITAGE OF NORTH EAST ENGLAND

About the Teesside Archaeological Society …

Established in 1961, we're an enthusiastic, friendly, group who share a passion for the rich, distinctive, heritage of the Tees Valley and Cleveland, with more than 10,000 years of archaeology – evidence for past human activity – on our doorstep.

Our rich heritage extends back at least to the Mesolithic – the ninth millennium BC – with a distinctively northeast 'take' on every way marker since those distant post-glacial hunter-gatherers. Our journey spans the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age. We have Roman villas, Saxon royalty and Viking hogbacks, medieval towns, deserted villages, castles, monastic places, and pre-industrial heritage: right up to our more recent past, including unique WWI and WWII remains.

We welcome everybody who shares an interest, no matter what level of experience or expertise. We offer monthly lectures, regular NEWSFLASH e-news, the annual BULLETIN journal – and the chance to find out more about the latest discoveries, fieldwork, volunteering opportunities, educational events and community activities across our broader region.

UNCOVER THE HIDDEN HERITAGE OF NORTH-EAST ENGLAND

- *HELP* *protect our fragile heritage*
- *ENJOY* *the outdoors and get involved*
- *PROMOTE* *our region far and wide*

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Logo: *Gold and garnet pendant, found in an Anglo-Saxon burial site, Loftus: uncovered by Steve Sherlock and members of Teesside Archaeological Society in a 109-grave site at Street House, Loftus, in 2005-2007, dating back nearly 1400 years.*

Teesside Archaeological Society Bulletin *No. 29, 2025*

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Cover picture:

Aerial photograph of site 21, excavated at Street House in the Summer of 2024
Photo: Stephen Sherlock

Editorial

Bruce Webb-Ireland

Welcome to the 2025 edition of the annual TAS Bulletin. Slightly later than usual however hopefully well worth the wait.

First an announcement: After several years at the helm, Maureen has decided to step down from editing the TAS bulletin. Her dedication, attention to detail, and passion for archaeology have left an indelible mark on this publication. I only hope that I can continue the legacy that Maureen has so diligently upheld.

The 2025 edition can be broadly viewed as a bulletin of two halves. We begin with six articles concerning archaeological research that includes excavation, geophysics and aerial survey, all from within the wider Tees region. The second half of the bulletin marks a slight departure from the past in that all articles are the work of TAS members. Maureen reports on the recent TAS Coach Trip to The Devils Arrows, Thornburgh Henges and Ripon Cathedral while Kenda provides a novel approach to understanding the history of Marske by the Sea. Finally, "Our Region in View" is a new section in which TAS members are invited to send in photographs of archaeological subjects that they have taken in our region. This year we begin with three photographs by Melanie Dalton.

I hope you enjoy reading this year's edition.

Bruce

Bruce Webb-Ireland (editor)

Information for Authors: Submission of Articles to the TAS Bulletin

Submissions are invited for the 2026 TAS (Teesside Archaeological Society) Bulletin.

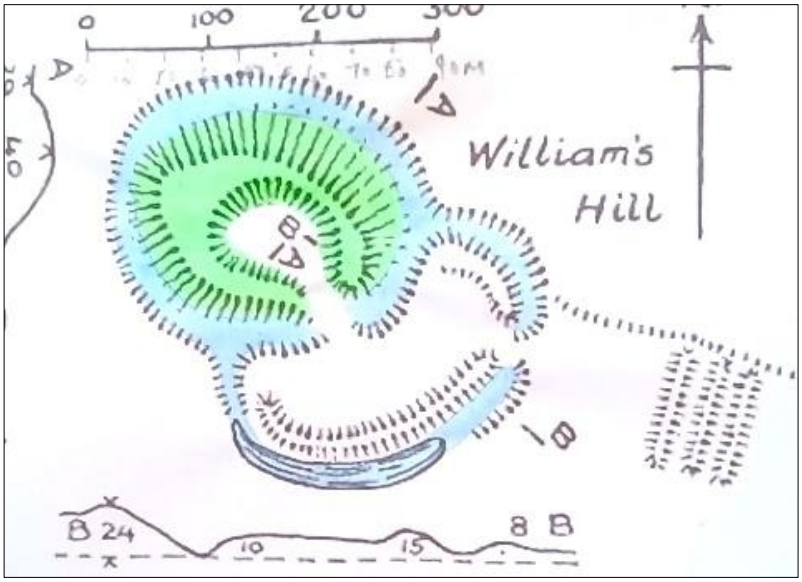
- Word count 750 - 3000 words, including references.
- Contents: anything relevant to the Society (e.g. fieldwork, comments, reviews, round-ups, etc).
- Deadline for 2026 Bulletin: 6 February 2023. Later submissions are not guaranteed to be included.
- By making a submission, you are declaring:
  - The work is that of the named author/s, and
  - Authors own the copyright of images/ pictures/ diagrams, and/or have permission of the copyright holder to submit them, and
  - Any identifiable individuals in photos have given their permission to include them.
- We cannot guarantee to return originals, so please make/keep copies of submissions.
- Include author's name/s, and any desired background (e.g. work title/address if relevant)
- Contact details (phone/ email) essential! (we may need to contact the author with queries).
  - We cannot accept submissions without a valid email address and/or phone number.
- Electronic submissions:
  - Send by email to bwebbireland@gmail.com
  - Send text, and images/ photographs/diagrams, in SEPARATE files.
  - These can be sent in as many or as few units as needed. Just let us know where the photos/diagrams/ images should be located in the article.
  - Text as a WORD file - **.docx**
  - Photographs:
    - **jpeg or .png**
    - high quality strongly preferred (can be compressed at our end)
  - Diagrams – scanned and saved images: **.pdf** or **.jpeg** or **.png**
  - If diagrams have been photo-copied/ photographed/ scanned, ensure they are fully legible
- Paper submissions: send to the following address:
  - By post, to the Editor, TAS Bulletin, 8 Abbey Close, Stockton on Tees, TS19 7SP
  - Diagrams, if hand drawn, on **plain white (i.e. unlined) paper** and in **black ink**
- If your submission is not acknowledged (by email or phone), please contact the editor to ensure it has been received (unfortunately email and postal glitches may occasionally occur).

For any queries, contact bwebbireland@gmail.com (mark email 'for the attention of the editor')

Easby Motte: An enigma from start to finish

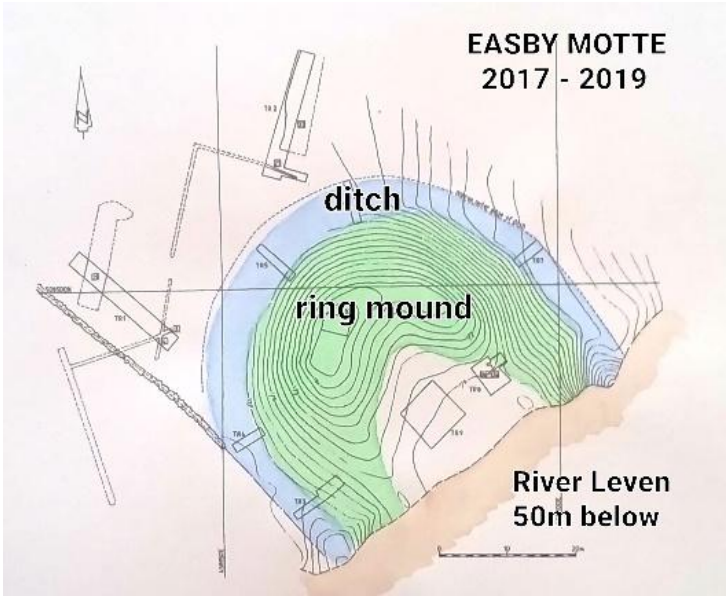
Roger Inman

What is a motte? According to the dictionary, the word comes from the Old French for a mound. This is certainly the case at Pickering Castle, Bishopton Motte and Middleham Castle all of which have been destinations for coach trips in 2018, 2024 and 2017 respectively.



Pickering and Bishopton, and many others around the country, all have the classic frustrum shape (or an upturned flower pot!) whereas Middleham has a ring mound with a hollow centre measuring about 20m by 25m.

Easby Motte is similar to the Middleham Motte as it also has a ring mound up to 3m high, though much smaller with outer limits measuring 40-45m across as opposed to 60-65m at Middleham, with the inner area also measuring 20 by 25m. The dip in the mound on the north-eastern side indicates a probable entrance.



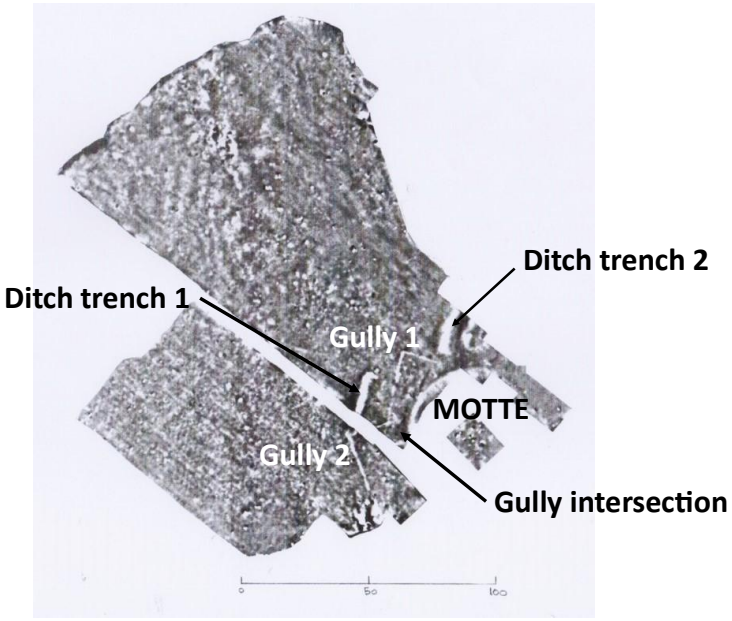
Easby Motte is situated on a pronounced spur on the northern side of the western entrance to Kildale which is a dead-end valley. Today it has trees on the mound and around the top of the spur but without the trees the view to the Pennines, the Vale of Mowbray and all Kildale would have been without obstruction.

The south-western and south-eastern flanks of the spur are very steep with the River Leven about 50m below on the south-eastern side. On the north-western side the land is relatively flat but with a steep bank to the north-east. The access to the Motte must have been from the north-west and therefore the weakest side for defence hence the highest part of the ring-mound.

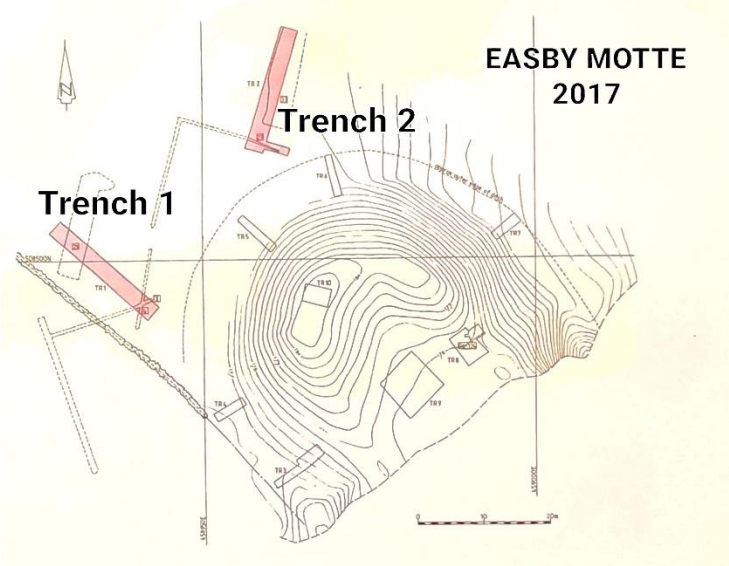
The North-West Part of the Mound

After an initial visit to the Motte in October 2016, a magnetometer survey was carried out in early December 2016 (below) and a topographical survey undertaken in late December of the same year. (All further site plans will use the topographical survey).

The magnetometer survey revealed two ditches and two intersecting gullies in front of the Motte. No other features were found in the fields including any sign of an access trackway.



Magnetometry Survey



The excavations commenced in 2017 with the opening of Trenches 1 and 2.

Trench 1 was placed across the north-western ditch and the intersection of the gullies.

Trench 2 was placed along the northern ditch and across part of gully 1.

Both trenches measured 20m long and about 3m wide.

There was a small extension at the end of Trench 2 to find the end of gully 1.

TRENCH 1.

The ditch in Trench 1 (photo left) measured about 4m across and about 0.7m deep and was full of various types of sand. Four pieces of Tees Valley Ware type A were found in the fill at various levels.

At the natural level, it was observed that the south-western gully (gully 2) (photo right) cut the fill of the north-western gully (gully 1), therefore phases 2 and 1 respectively. The profile of the phase 1 gully was box-shaped and measured about 0.5m wide and about 0.35m deep. The profile of the phase 2 gully was more irregular, measuring about 0.8m wide and about 0.2m deep. The only find was a lump of rusty slag in the phase 2 gully.

Trench 1

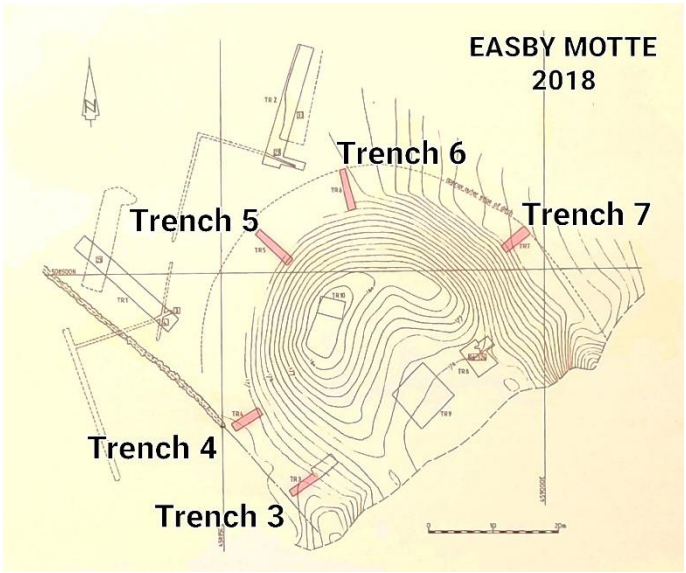
TRENCH 2.

The ditch in Trench 2 (photo left) measured about 3.5m wide by about 1m deep and was filled entirely with a sand and gravel mix.

8 pieces of Northern Gritty Ware were found including one 'box' shaped rim. Although the pottery was spread out across the ditch, they were all at the same level suggesting a 'ghost' layer inside what was a homogeneous fill.

When the phase 1 gully (photo right) was emptied, it was found to consist of a series of 8 post-holes, about 0.15m wide at the base but much wider at the top implying that when the stakes were removed, they were rotated in order to loosen them.

Trench 2



After gaining permission from English Heritage (the Motte itself is scheduled), the 2018 season was dedicated to investigating the ditch surrounding the Motte.

Except for a slight hollow, the ditch was level with the surrounding ground. The only places where the ditch was visible were very close to the precipitous bank down to the river.

Five trenches were excavated across the ditch. The profiles of the ditch were all different.

Trench 3 had a very stony internal bank and a flat clayey bottom.

Trench 4 had a relatively flat bottom for the full width of the trench and ditch.

Trench 5 had a stony internal bank with a very broad bottom.

Trench 6 had an even broader bottom width.

Trench 7 was only 1.5m wide at the bottom but much deeper that all the other profiles.

Except for trench 7, the outer limits of the ditch were not reached because they impinged on the adjacent fields.

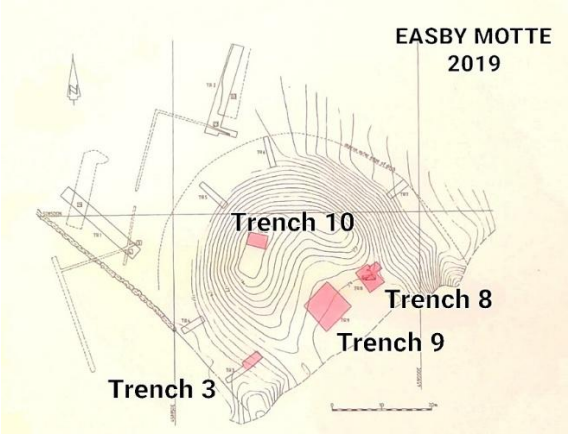
Except for one piece of Tees Valley Ware type A strap handle found in Trench 6, there were no other finds from the trenches. They were all barren except for that one piece!

Trench 3

Trench 4

Trench 6

Trench 7



The 2019 season investigated the inside and entrance of the Motte.

Trench 3 was extended to find the extent of the area of stones on the inner face of the ditch found in the previous year. The stones petered out about 6m from the bottom of the ditch.

It is just possible that they could represent a paved ramp into the Motte but it is more likely that they were either a natural deposition or man-made revetment because the stones were at different angles and very uneven.

Trench 9 measured about 10m square on the relatively flat area inside the Motte. It was hoped that this trench would produce evidence of some sort of timber or stone structure.

However, nothing was found, including pottery or small finds, except for a few small 'stake holes' which proved to have no real depth when sectioned. To test whether natural had been reached, a small area of the trench was dug down to about 0.6m so confirmed.

Trench 10 measured about 4m by 3m and was placed across the top of the highest part of the north-western mound to try find evidence of any timber palisade. No post or stake holes were found and no pottery or small finds.

Trench 8

Trench 9

Trench 10

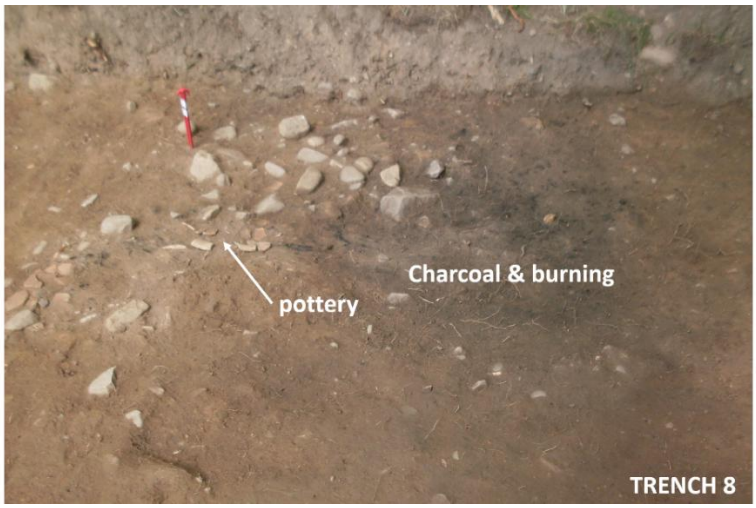
TRENCH 8.

As in the previous years, a mechanical excavator was used to strip off the topsoil from all the trenches and this was the case for Trench 8.

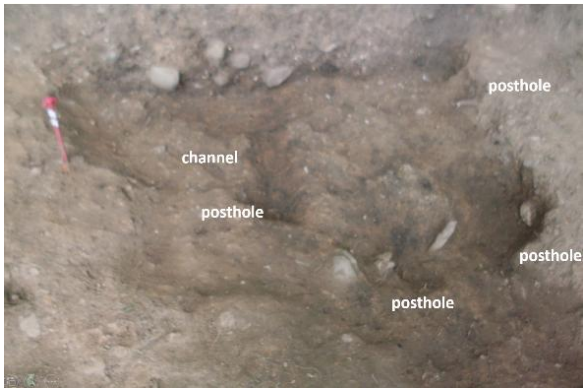
When the driver was asked to remove a little more soil, a great cry went up because he had brought up a very rare sight on this site – pottery!

167 pieces of pottery were eventually found all within just over a meter square. Just under half were disturbed by the machine and the remaining in-situ pottery was found in groups.

The trench originally measured 3.5m by 3.5m but was extended north-west by 1.5m with another later extension to the north-east which measured about 1.5m by 1.5m. Both extensions were excavated to determine the extent of the pottery scatter and associated features.

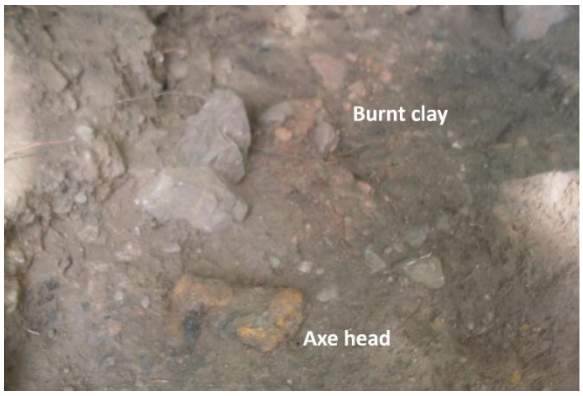


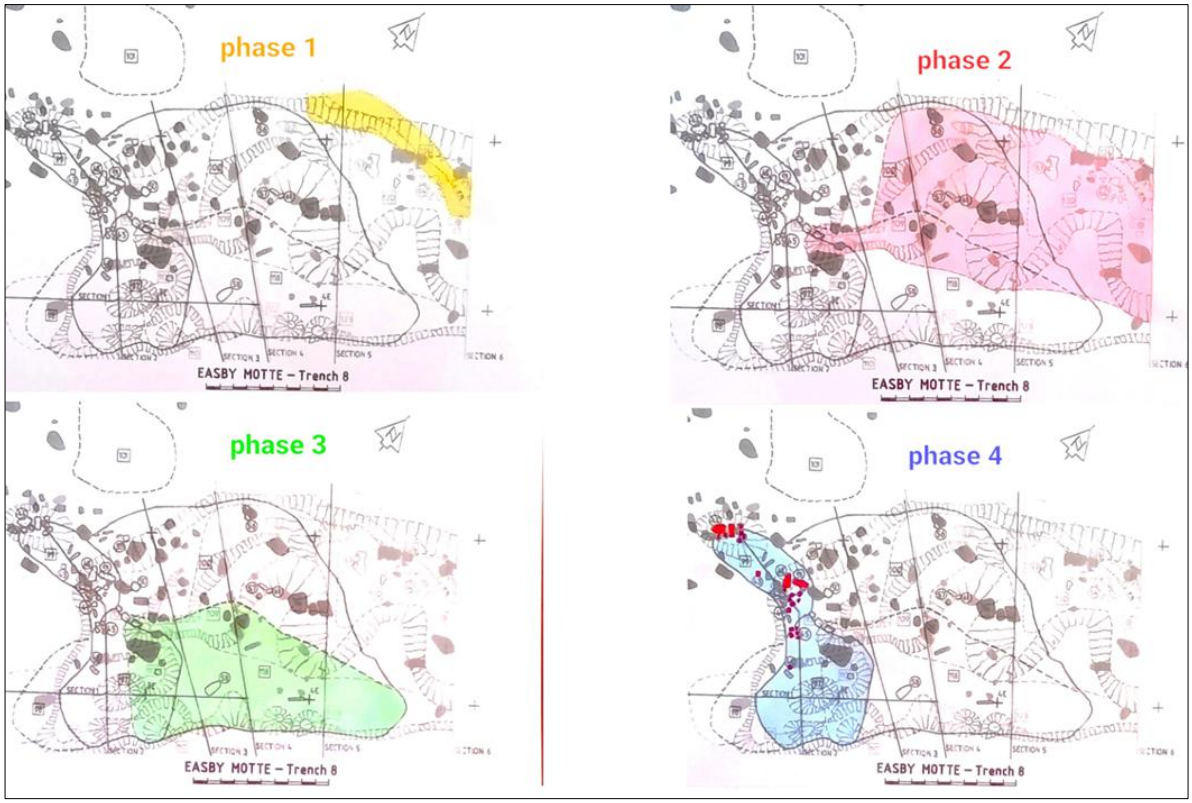
Adjacent to a grouping of 90 pieces of pottery was a large area of charcoal and burnt wood measuring about 0.35m by 0.4m. There were no other features in the trench except for a piece of Tees Valley Ware type A strap handle about 1m north-west of the main scatter and similar to that found in Trench 6.
It was found that the burning was in a shallow depression, about 0.1m deep, with four associated post-holes and a channel (phase 4). It appears that the depression had cut into an earlier deposit of even more distinct pieces of burnt wood and charcoal (phase 3) (below right).



This deposit of burnt wood continued into the north-eastern extension and it was found that it too had cut into another shallow depression filled with burnt wood, charcoal, burnt clay and some rusty metalwork including an axe head (phase 2) (below left). Below this depression was a channel, about 0.5m wide by 01.m deep, filled with charcoal (phase 1) (below right). Although the features continued beyond the extension, it was impossible to extend further because of a mesh of tree roots.

Four samples of the burnt wood were taken from the four phases of depositions, two were used for Carbon 14 dating. No pottery was found associated with the first three phases.





POTTERY.

Although the pottery from Trench 8 was all Northern Gritty Ware (except for the strap handle) there are two distinct types – Type 1 has a cream to light pink fabric, thin wall, external rilling and was well-made though with much grit in the fabric and on the surface.

Type 2 has dark brick red faces with a black core, roughly finished, thicker walls and much fabric and surface grit. Only one rim (in Type 1) was found in Trench 8 with an internal diameter of 100mm. It was simply folded with a pronounced neck and it was found in nine pieces.

One base, in 3 pieces, was found in Type 1 with a diameter of 90mm.

There were 7 pieces of Type 2 bases found forming 4 stuck-together sections all with 100mm diameters.

As noted above, just under half the 167 pieces of pottery found in Trench 8 were disturbed. It was hoped that the pottery found in the in-situ groups would have consisted of one pottery type per group. This was true for four groups (3 of Type 1 & 1 of Type 2) but two groups were mixed.

So, although the two pottery types probably represent two different vessels, the fact that some of the groups were mixed would indicate that they were deposited in a random fashion and just thrown in a heap.

DATES AND DISCUSSION.

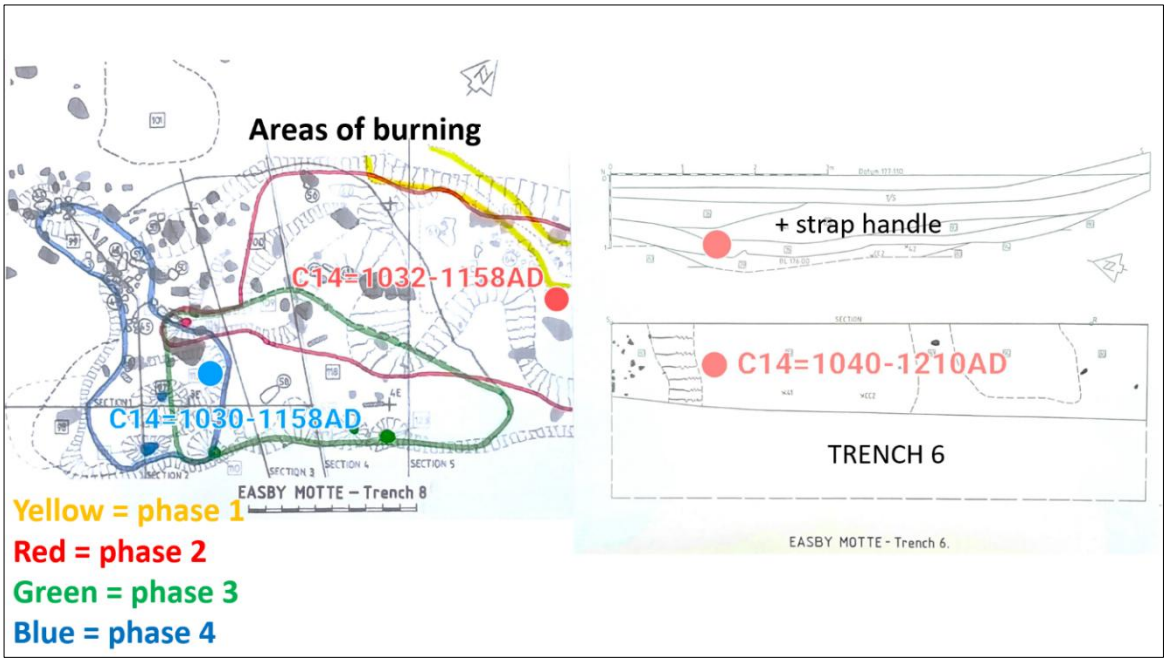
The Tees Valley Ware type A from Trench 1 and the strap handles from Trenches 6 and 8 are all generally dated to the 12thcentury.

The Northern Gritty Ware from Trench 2 and Trench 8 is generally thought to be late 11th century to early 12th century.

Four charcoal/burnt wood samples were sent off to be Carbon 14 dated, generously funded by PLACE and Archaeological Research Services.

From the plans below, the two dates from the burning hollows in Trench 8 are identical and the one from Trench

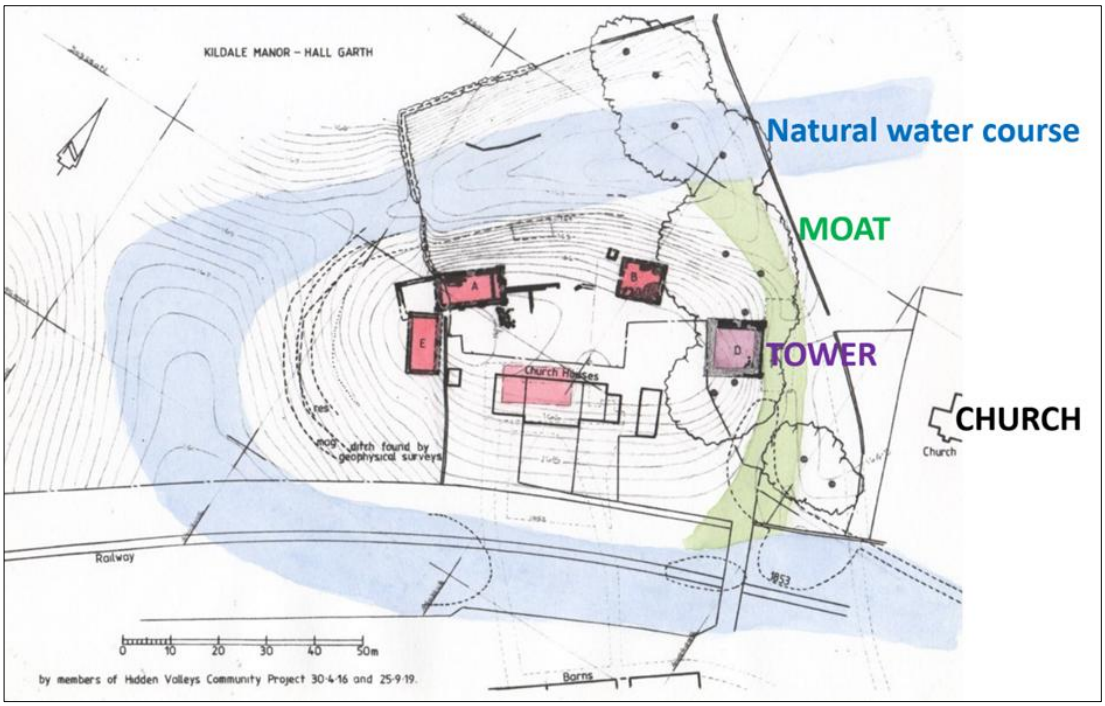
6, although showing a much wider date span, still fall within the same time frame.



The Motte is in the Parish of Easby, the boundary being the River Leven. Pre-conquest the manor of Easby was held by Haward but it is listed in the Domesday Book as Terra Regis (land held by the King). Kildale was held by a Saxon called Ligulf until his death in 1040. At the time of the Domesday Book, the lord of the manor was a Scandinavian called Orme. It is probable that Arnald de Percy took over the Manor in about 1100.

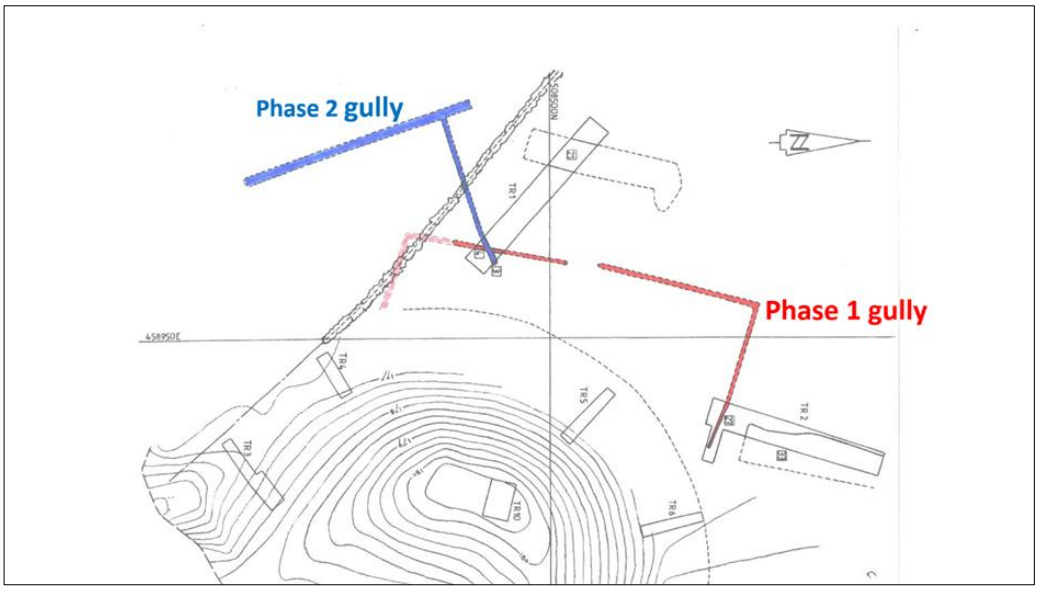
Kildale Manor was excavated between 1957 and 1976 from which they recovered 6950 pieces of pottery which were assessed by Anne Jenner, a Medieval pottery expert. Anne produced a time-line graph illustrating the highs and lows of the occupation of the Manor House. The main peak of activity was between 1250 and 1300 with a smaller peak in about 1150 but relatively little pottery around 1100.

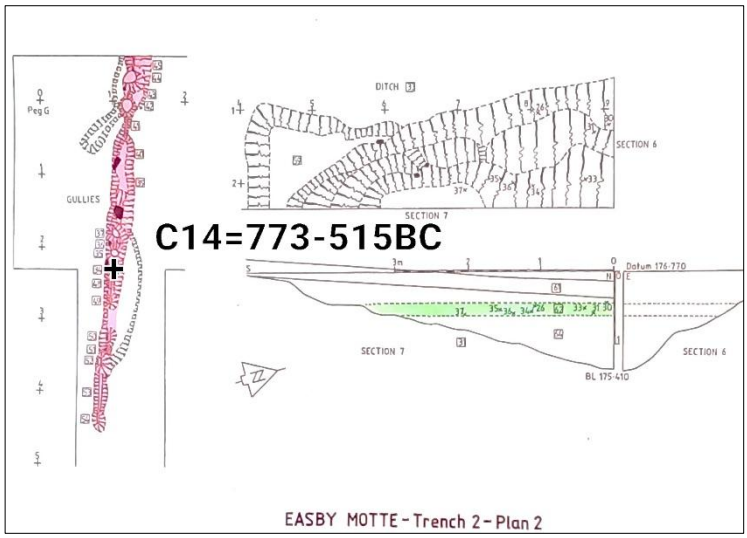
It is probable that the first Norman building on the natural mound was the tower with a defensive moat across the unprotected land towards the church. Later a suite of residential buildings was constructed and much later there is evidence that the tower was dismantled.



Combining the Motte pottery dates and the Carbon 14 dates from the burning hollows and the ditch, an occupation at the beginning of the 12th century could be surmised with little evidence that it lasted long after that. As noted above, there is little evidence of occupation at the Manor House at that time, suggesting that the Motte could pre-date the Manor House. If that is correct, then the Motte could have been the first installation that Arnald de Percy had built on his arrival in Kildale but soon afterwards decided it was too exposed and that the site of the Manor House was a much better choice! This might explain the lack of pottery from anywhere else on the Motte except for the entrance. How the post-holes and burning hollows fit in with this early abandonment is unclear. Perhaps they got as far as building the gatehouse and decided to burn it down and throw away any unwanted jars when the change of site took place.

One Carbon 14 sample has yet to be explained. This was found in one of the post-holes of the line of post-holes in gully 1 found in Trench 2 in 2017. From the lower plan, it can be seen that it pre-dates the Medieval activity on the motte by 1600 years!





This date together with a piece of rusty iron slag from gully 2 in Trench 1 from 2016, clearly indicate an occupation on the site during the early Iron Age when they seem to have erected a stake palisade, which was later replaced, across the end of the spur.

There is no doubt that outer ditches (ditch Trench 1 and ditch trench 2) and probably the outer perimeter ditch of the Motte were dug during the Medieval period (evidenced by the C14 and pottery).

From the upper plan, the gullies appear to terminate well short of the Motte's outer ditch. This could mean one of two things. Either both the Motte and the gullies are Iron Age and the gullies were a palisade screen in front of a small hillfort, or there was no Motte and the gullies were a stand-alone palisade, in two different phases, giving a rather ineffectual partial screen across the spur. The geophysical survey showed no features immediately inside the palisade such as ring ditches.

Another anomaly is that the gully in Trench 2 consists of stake-holes whereas the gully in Trench 1 has a box section profile without any signs of stakes. It is possible that the stakes were packed by stones or sat on a horizontal beam. Perhaps there were two different teams working on either side of the entrance gap! There are some examples of palisade enclosures from other parts of the country but usually associated with stock control (e.g. West Perry, Cambridgeshire).

Yet another anomaly to consider is that the volume of the ring mound exceeds the volume of the material produced by the excavation of the perimeter ditch. Is it possible that there was some sort of natural mound at the end of the spur which was reshaped by people in either the Iron Age or early Medieval periods. If the Motte was originally built during the Iron Age and re-occupied in the Medieval period, then some Iron Age pottery should have been found somewhere either in the outer ditch or inside the ring-mound but none was found.

Unfortunately, the excavation has thrown up more questions than answers which is often the case!

This paper is dedicated to all those members of the Hidden Valleys Community Project who gave their time and so much effort into trying to solve the riddle of the Motte.

Our thanks go to David and Helen Hurren of Borough Farm who readily gave us permission to excavate and helped us throughout.

Our thanks also to the North York Moors National Park Authority who funded the geophysical survey and to the North Yorkshire County Council.

Streethouse Archaeological Prospection Surveys 2024-25

By James Lawton

Archaeological geophysical surveys have continued at the Street House excavations undertaken by Dr Steve Sherlock. The surveys in late 2024 and early 2025 were concentrated on the new excavation of an almost circular stone monument, described as site 2.

Introduction and Background to the 2024-25 geophysics surveys

An earlier Magnetometry survey identified very little that resembled the almost circular monument during the early part of 2024; see below greyscale image.

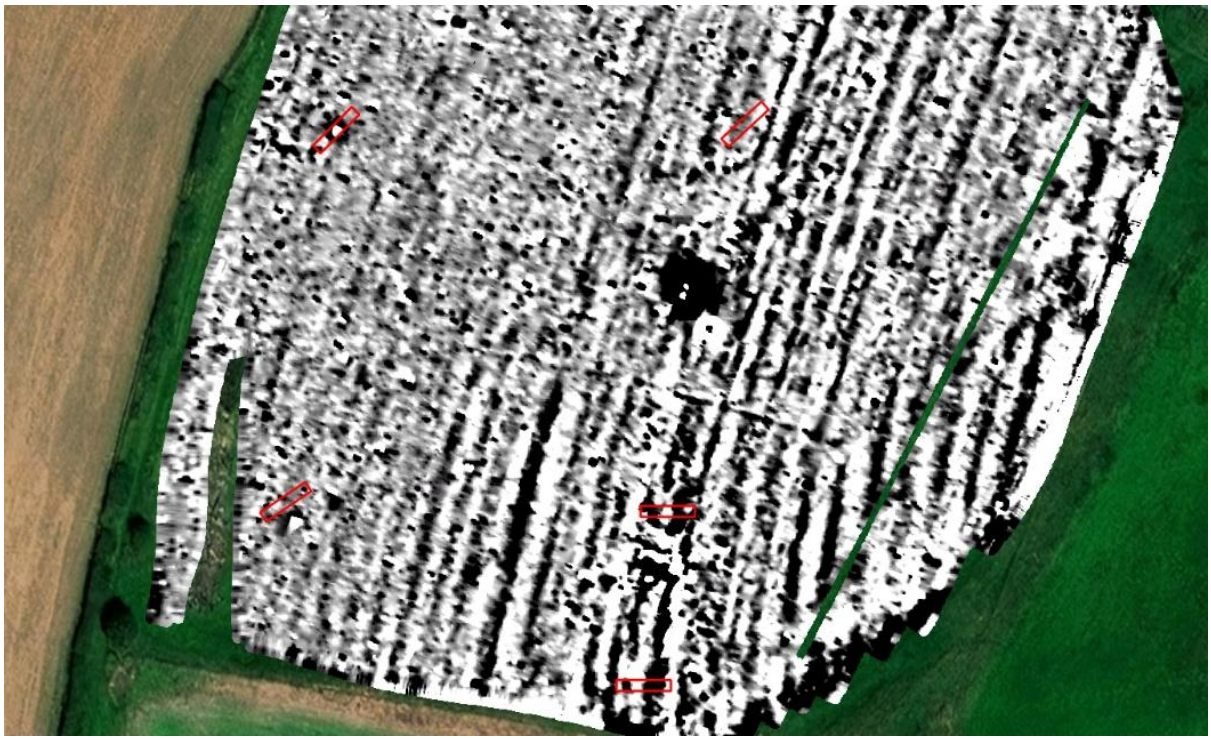


Figure 1 showing gradiometer survey of the area, with no clear circular feature of site 2 visible (directional north to the top of image).

As seen above the greyscale was particularly void of clear magnetically enhanced features. Where potential magnetic enhancements were detected these when investigated appeared to be void of archaeological origins and most likely agricultural or geological in origin.

That said the area of the circular feature/monument when viewed as on XY trace plot as shown below does highlight a very irregular set of anomalies forming the circle as excavated. Interestingly the geophysics team wouldn't have identified this without the knowledge of the excavation. It highlights that the circular feature lacks clear magnetic enhancement.

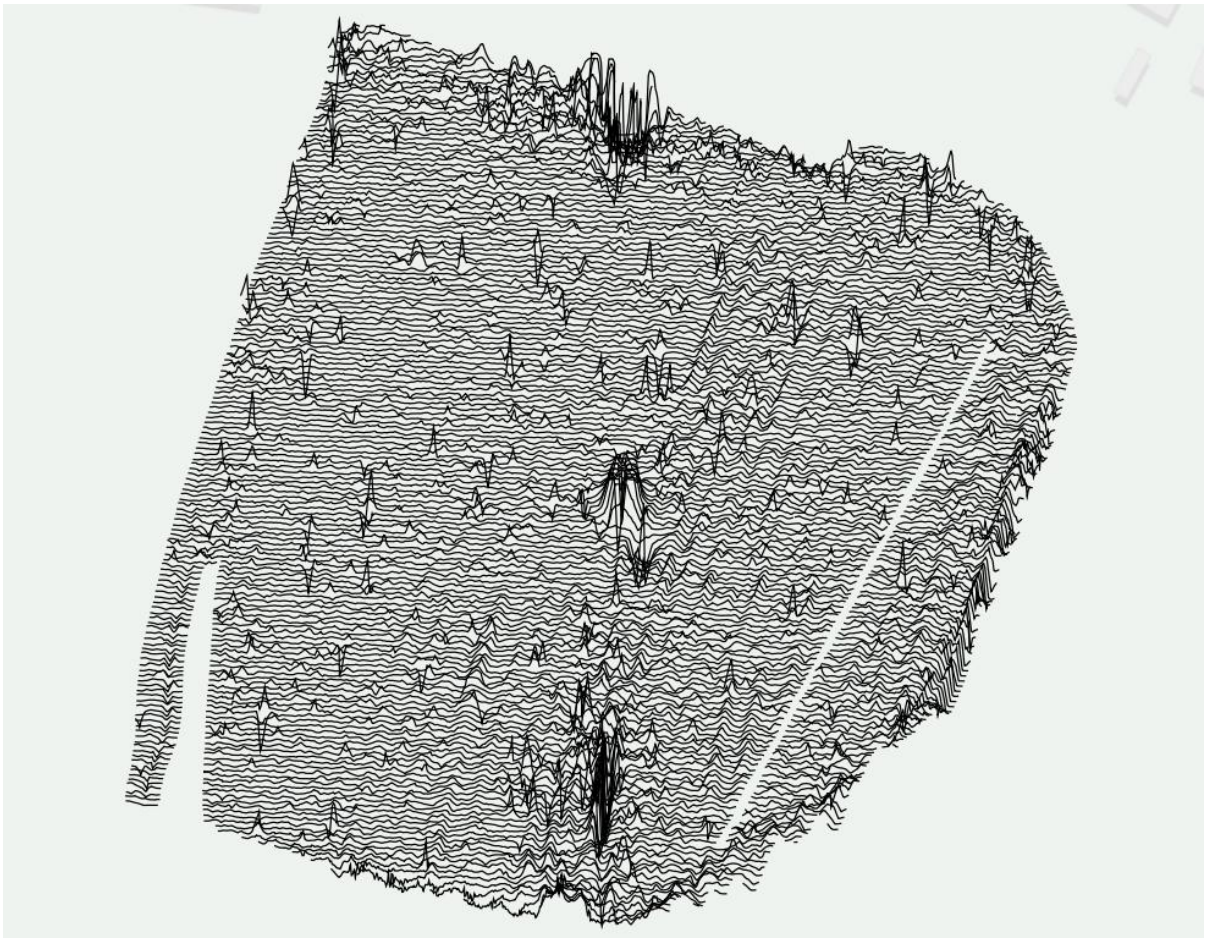


Figure 2 X-Y Trace plot showing the site on the west side of the field (directional north to the top of image).

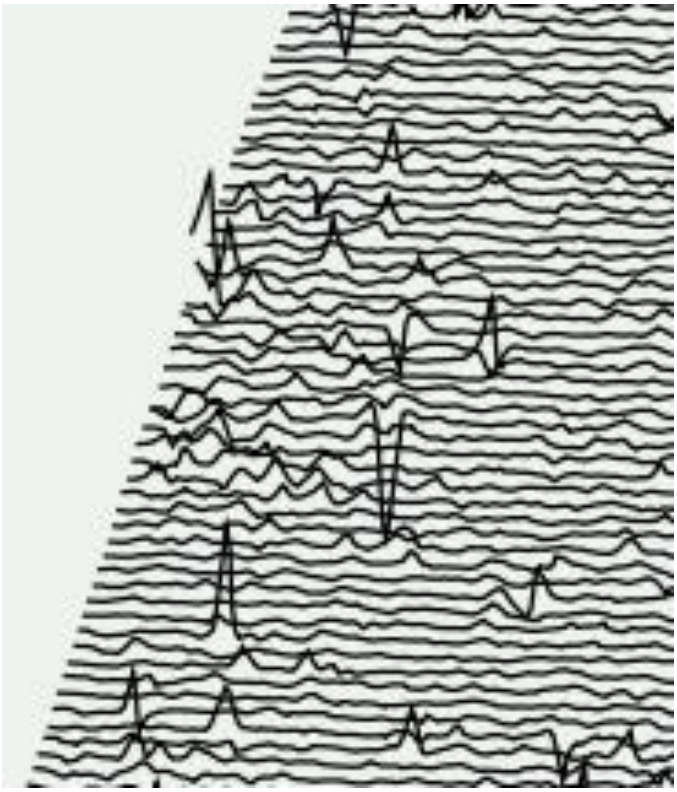


Figure 3 zoomed in X-Y Trace plot of image on site 2, showing concentric arc defining the circle.

Aims of the 2024-25 surveys

The aim of the 2024-25 surveys was to attempt to use alternative survey methods to see if the circular monument would be detectable using other survey types, Electro Magnetic, Earth Resistance and Radar.

As suggested earlier, the monument is almost circular, however the western part hasn't been fully excavated due to a public footpath. Using these alternative methods, we hope to also answer the question of whether the monument is a perfect full circle or has alternatively got an entrance to the west.

Finally, it would be interesting to understand if any further archaeological monuments could be detected in the nearby vicinity.

Results

The results of the surveys were successful, although not all the aims were fully answered through these alternative techniques.

EM Survey

The results of this technique were mixed; the conductivity would coincide with the area of the circular monument; see below.

Figure 4 EM plot showing area of the enclosure with hint of the circle and site 2.

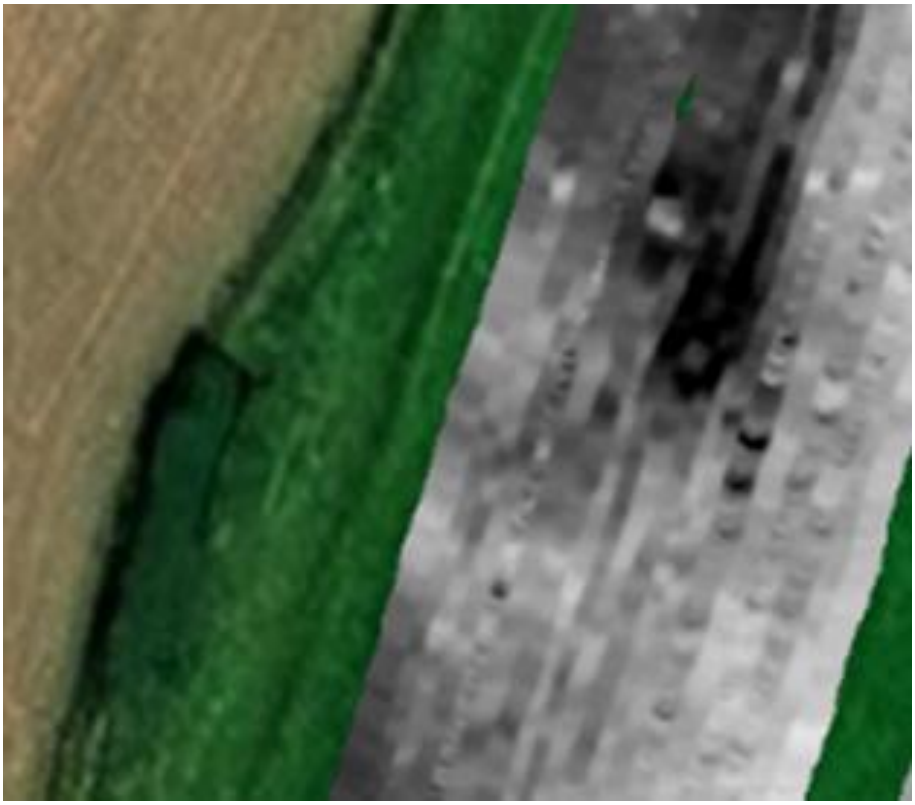


Figure 5 EM plot zoomed in on the area of site 2.

However, this technique is dependent upon soil moisture and ground make up. Given the excavation was backfilled and the weather subsequently was incredibly wet the area of the excavation would likely show as high conductivity and the stone circular causeway as low conductivity as tentatively shown in the results.

The results partly suggest a full circle but it's not clear enough to say with any certainty.

Unfortunately, no other features nearby were located, however this means that we are uncertain as to if this technique is detected the monument remains due to the backfill material being wet and conductive or because the monument form is causing this response.

Earth Resistance Survey

The Earth Resistance Survey was as clear as the EM but also was very similar to the result (fig. 6).

The circular feature is visible again with no other nearby features detected. Unlike the EM it shows clearly as a high resistance anomaly, most likely as a result of the back filled material.

The area to the west didn't detect the western part of the circle clearly, although tentatively it did suggest a full circle. The reason for this is the footpath running down the western part of field and where the excavation stopped in naturally more compacted. This is due to the footfall and the compaction of the footpath over time and therefore made the contact with the ground less favorable for survey.

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Figure 6 shows Earth Resistance survey, black being high resistance,

white being low.

Radar Survey

The Radar Survey was the most successful of the surveys undertaken. The below image shows the radar in the west half alongside the earth resistance in the east half. The results of the radar suggest two possible post holes of pits or large pieces of stone in the northwest.

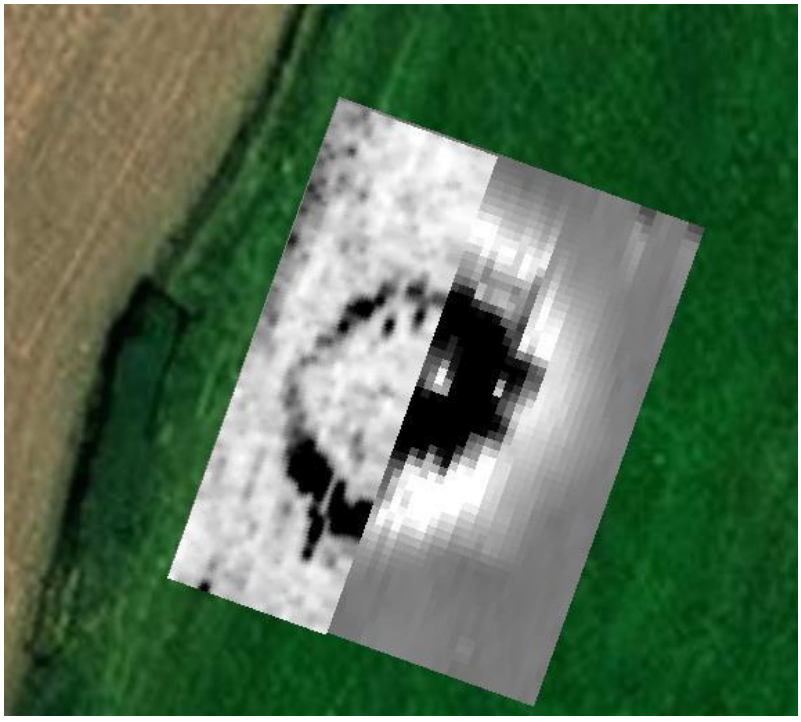
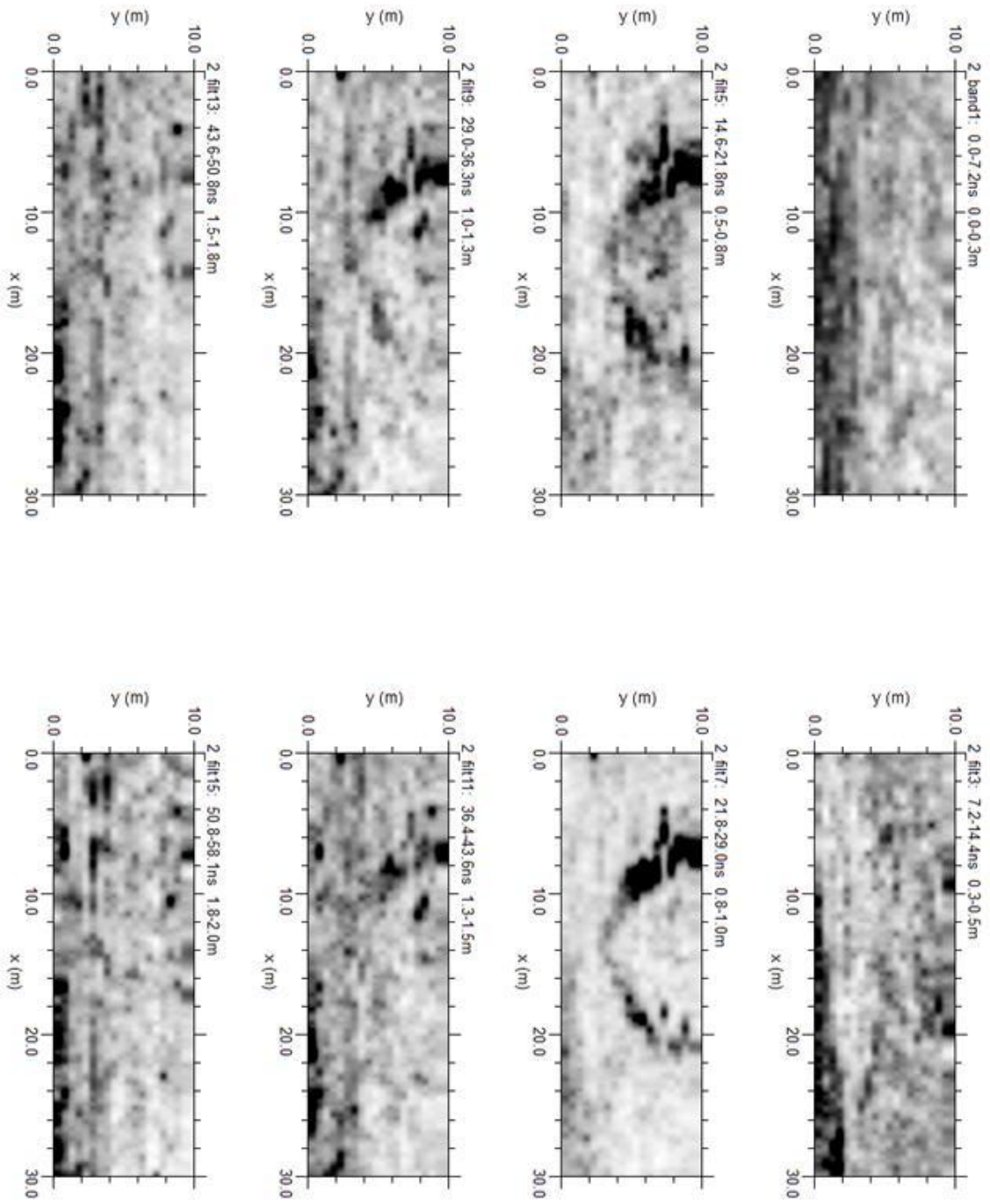


Figure 7 showing Radar survey on the western portion of the image and the Earth Resistance on the east.

It showed clearly the stone line and it suggested that the monument is a full circle in the west below the foot path; see below radargrams.



Furthermore, there is a suggestion of other features within the inner part of the monument at 0.8 - 1.0m depth. These could be large stones or pits with different concentrated backfills.

No other monuments were detected using the radar in the area and given the results it's likely that this technique would have detected further monuments if present.

Conclusion and Future Surveys

The conclusion is that alternative survey techniques have been useful, some better than others. In particular the radar was very informative and useful and going forward further radar might be beneficial. That said it is uncertain if this technique could be used as a general prospection method but more of a detailed technique to look at specific questions such as depth and located potential anomalies for excavation.

Ultimately, the results of these surveys are likely to be only concluded once further excavation has taken place.

One further prospecting technique that could be worth experimentation is XRF / Geochemical techniques. These might be useful at suggesting usage within the monument but also might be able to be used in the wider area.

Finally, I would like to thank AOC Archaeology for the loan of the equipment, and all the staff who helped to undertake the survey work on site, as well as the volunteers who accompanied the team. Special thanks in particular go to Alistair Galt who helped lead the on-site work on this occasion.

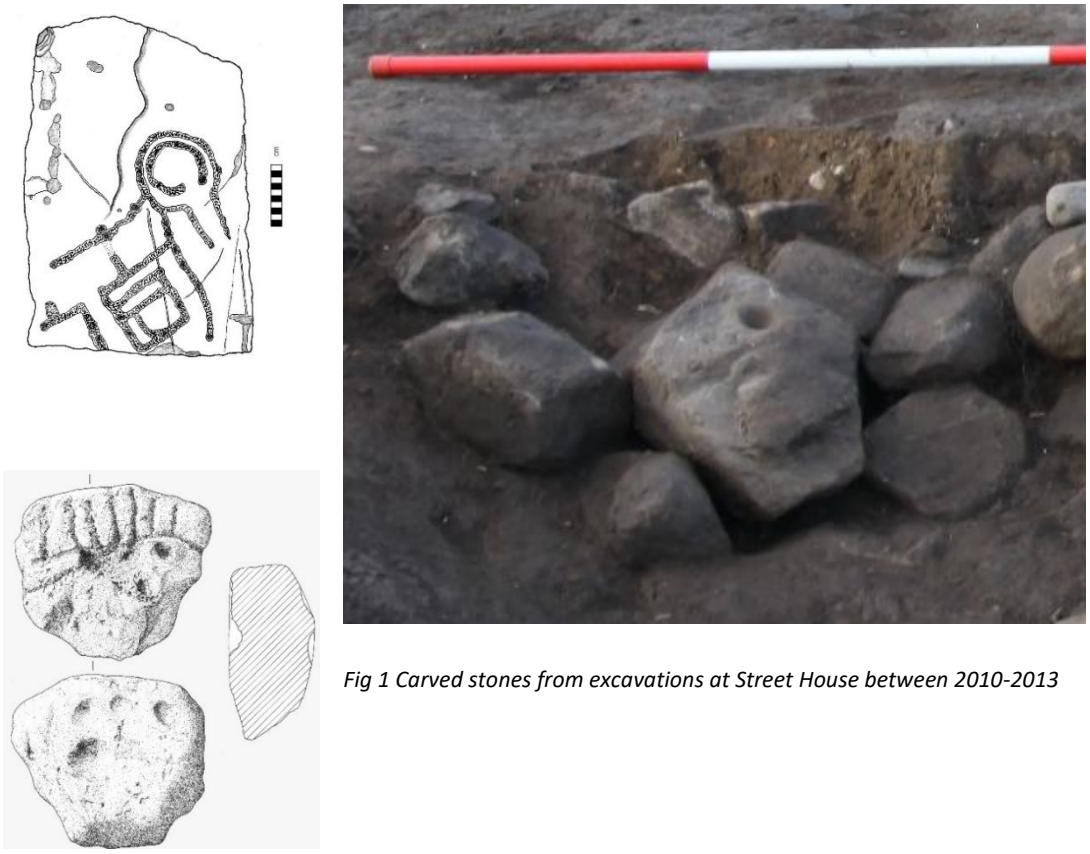


Fig 1 Carved stones from excavations at Street House between 2010-2013

Fig 2. Photograph of four portable cup-marked stones from Street House

Excavations since 2010 at Street House, near Loftus, have found over twenty examples of prehistoric rock art (figs. 1&2). Rock Art is argued to date from the Later Neolithic period to the Early Bronze Age (c.2.300 – 1500BC). This "art" is created by carving or pecking with a hard stone upon a softer sandstone. There can be earth fast rocks or "portable" boulders within monuments such as cairns and burial mounds. The sites have been suggested to form territorial boundaries (fig.3). Rock art is not unique to Street House and the carvings and various difference motifs have been found across sites in certain parts of Britain and abroad.

Rock Art is not found at UK sites that are earlier than this date, although it is known to be earlier on the Continent and some scholars argue for it to be earlier in Britain. Meanwhile, at least one example from Street House is from a later period having been re-used in the paving of a roman house. Examples of this proliferation of carved stones and the range of designs and patterns can be seen in the images on the top of this page. Illustrated are examples of prehistoric rock art excavated from a fourth century roman building in 2012 (top row left) within a bronze age (c.2000 BC) wall in 2011 (upper centre) and in an infilled Iron age ditch (AD50) in 2010 (right).

Whilst these carved stones are "occasionally" found during excavations on prehistoric sites such as burial mounds, a large number were found during the excavation on the coast near Street House in 2024 (figs. 3, 4 & 5).The significant number of finds from Street House should not be seen in isolation though, there are concentrations of rock art on Fylingdales Moor where there are now known to be 200 carved panels and cup marked stones found during a survey in 2004. Also on the coast at Hinderwell 150 cup marked stones were found by William Hornsby on an excavation at Hinderwell beacon c. 5 miles south of Street House

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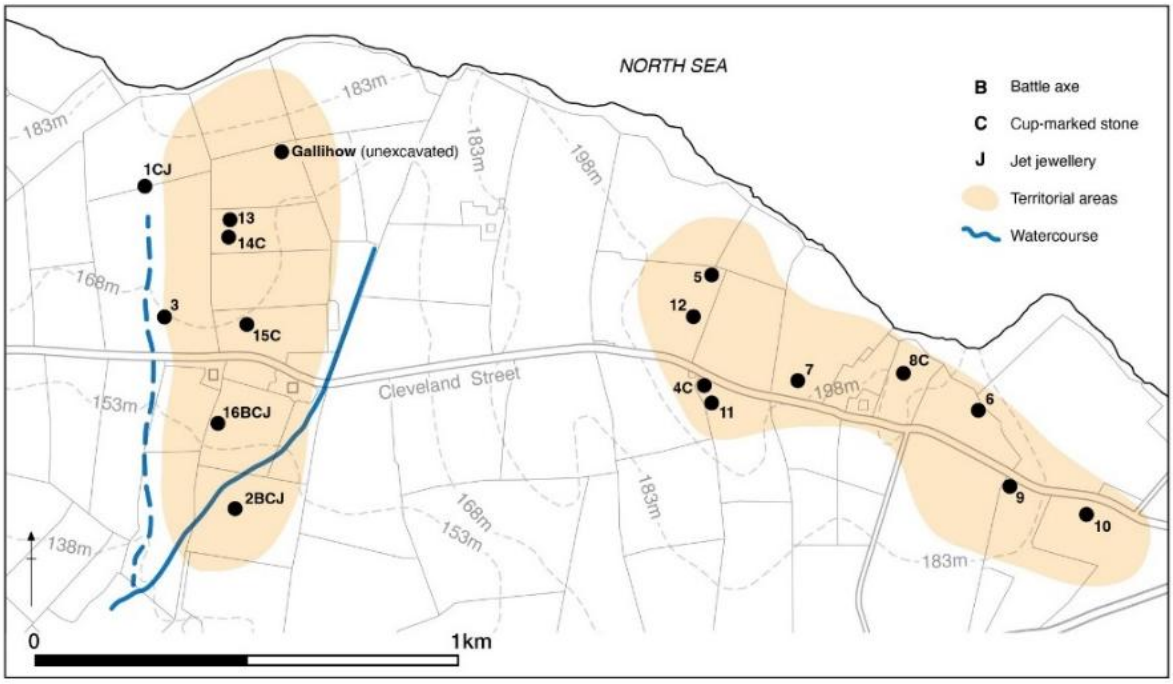

Fig. 3 Drawing showing the location of rock art, jet items and axes at Street House & Boulby

Fig 4. Photograph of site 21, excavated at Street House in the Summer of 2024

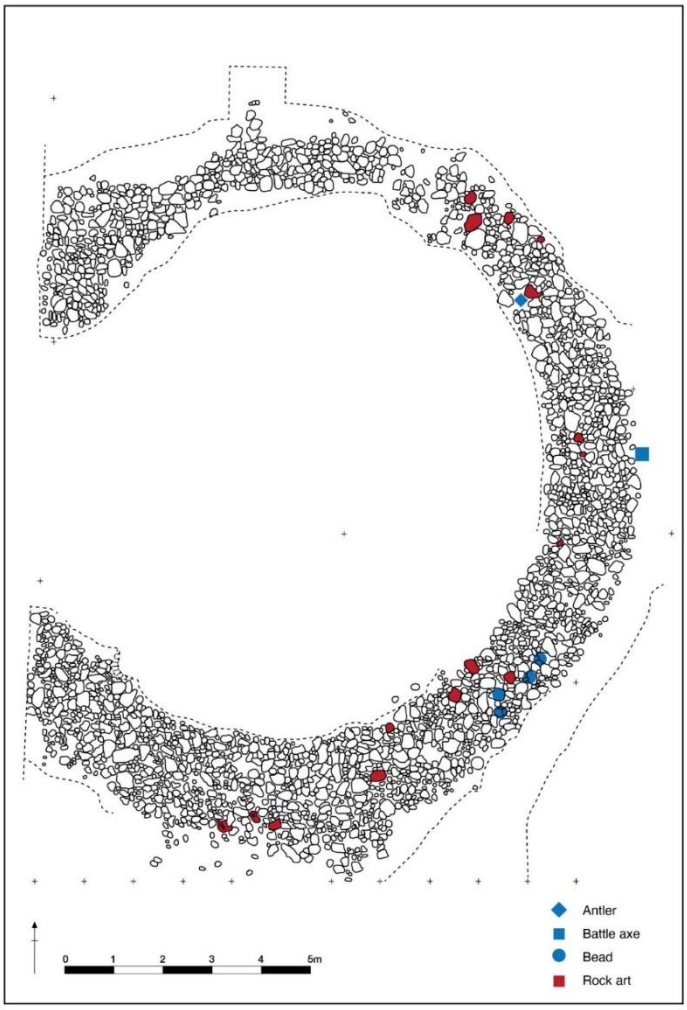

Fig. 5 Plan to show the location of the rock art at the Street House site

This note is prepared as a description of some of the finds from the excavations in 2024. Other finds included an axe head, a fragment of an antler horn used as a pick to dig the ring ditch of site 21, six jet beads and one made of glass. Whilst most of these finds will help to date the site it is thought the glass bead is later. There are several intriguing questions about this site including its date, form, function and the question Why here? Most of the finds date to c. 2,000BC and we have been able to get some organic material to provide a radiocarbon date, by the Spring of 2025. In terms of its shape and form it is reminiscent of stone circles and ring cairns, these are sometimes found in pairs rather than as isolated monuments. As we do not have the full site exposed, we do not know if there is a causeway forming an entrance to the structure, or if it is perhaps ceremonial. We took soil samples for dating, but no seeds or grasses were found in what is essentially the upper horizons. We propose to fully expose and excavate the site in the Summer of 2025 and resolve these outstanding questions, as part of a programme involving schools, local people and Waterloo University in Canada.

Fig 6. A selection of six of the sixteen cup-marked stones found in the stone ring circle.

A later Roman and early medieval settlement at Dalton Piercy

Rebekah Walsh, Archaeological Services Durham University

With contributions from Alex Croom, Dr Helen Drinkall, Lorne Elliott, Dr Louisa Gidney and Dr Charlotte O'Brien

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Introduction

Between 2015 and 2024 several phases of work were undertaken on land to the north of Dalton Piercy in advance of the construction of a new housing estate. This identified a large Romano-British enclosure system, with evidence for its continued use into the early medieval period. Evidence of transient earlier prehistoric activity was also recorded.

Previous archaeological works (Figure 1)

An initial desk-based assessment (Archaeological Services 2015) was conducted ahead of the first phase of development, followed by a geophysical survey (Archaeological Services 2016); this identified a potential prehistoric or Roman enclosure system. A subsequent archaeological evaluation (Archaeological Services 2017) on the site confirmed the presence of ditches and postholes. A small pottery assemblage suggested the features were likely to date from the later prehistoric period and this was supported by the paleoenvironmental evidence. There were also indications of early medieval activity on the site.

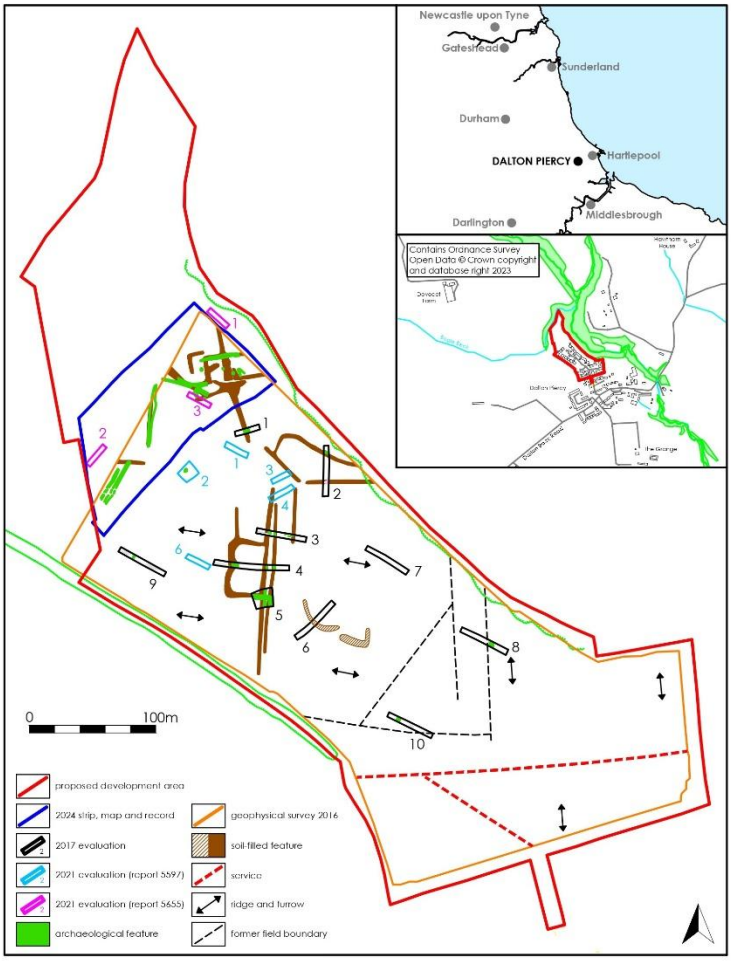

Figure 1 Previous Archaeological Works

A scheme for archaeological excavation was agreed but not implemented prior to the development taking place. To mitigate for this omission, further trenches were excavated in 2021 (Archaeological Services 2021a), in areas of the development that were still available. However, modern groundworks had removed much of the archaeological resource, though one pit was recorded.

A further desk-based assessment (Archaeological Services 2021b) was undertaken on the northern part of the site, affirming the results of the works outlined above. This led to another scheme of archaeological evaluation (Archaeological Services 2021c) though the area available was again limited due to the presence of an existing site compound and large spoil heaps. A single ditch pertaining to the enclosures identified during previous works was recorded. A final phase of excavation was undertaken in 2024 (Archaeological Services 2024a) over a larger area, which again recorded ditches and pits relating to a later prehistoric / Romano-British enclosed settlement. This article is based on the results of the final overarching analysis report (Archaeological Services 2024b).

The Excavation (Figure 2)

Five broad phases of activity were identified across the site, comprising:

- Phase 1 – prehistoric
- Phase 2 – Roman
- Phase 3 – early medieval
- Phase 4 – medieval to post-medieval
- Phase 5 – modern

Some additional features could not be phased due to a lack of diagnostic materials within the fills, no spatial or stratigraphic relationships with other features, and/or unreliable radiocarbon results. However, it was assumed that they were associated with the earlier archaeological occupation on site rather than the Phase 4/5 activity, though this cannot be confirmed.

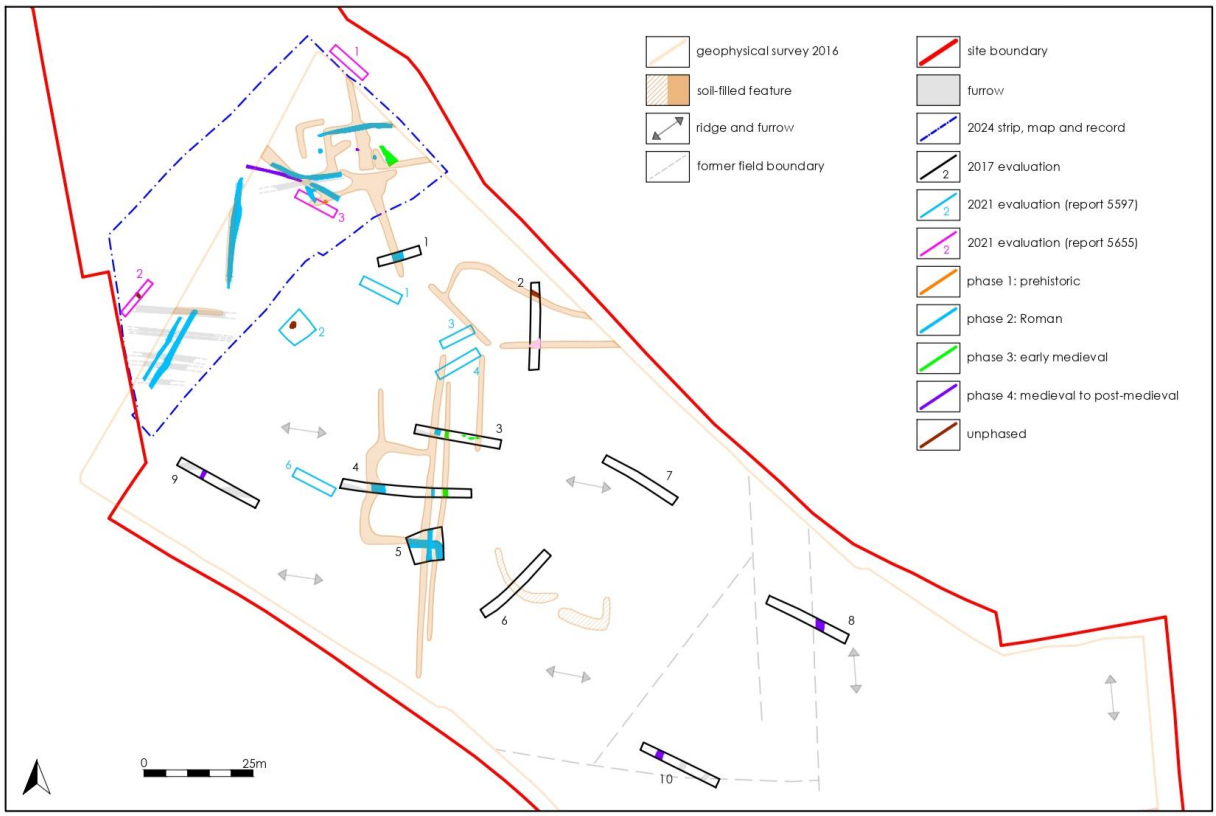

Figure 2 The Excavation

Phase 1 – Prehistoric

Evidence of transient early prehistoric activity comprised a small pit in the northern part of the site (Figure 3) which was radiocarbon dated to between 2670 and 2280 BC, and two flints, one of which was found within the pit. The second flint was unstratified and of probable Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date. Palaeoenvironmental data from the pit is suggestive of a wooded landscape, with oak particularly prevalent, and the resources provided by the woodland and the Dalton Beck to the north would have been utilised by the early prehistoric inhabitants of the area.

Phase 2 – Roman

There was an extensive enclosure system recorded on the site, concentrated in two main areas – one in the centre of the site and one in the northern corner. It is probable that they were part of a single larger field system. The enclosure to the north had been more heavily truncated, while those to the south were excavated less completely. However, valuable information was still recovered from the features.

Three sides of a large enclosure were recorded in the north, with three smaller ditches within it, probably the remnants of sub-enclosures. Several small pits were also present. A small rectangular enclosure was identified in the centre of the site, with a longer ditch along the eastern edge; these features were only intermittently excavated in evaluation trenches (Figure 4). The ditches corresponded closely to the enclosure layout suggested by the geophysical survey. The enclosure was found to have several recuts and realignments, indicative of use over a long period of time. Two parallel ditches identified in the west of the site may form a narrow droveway. No traces of habitation such as roundhouses or hearths were identified on the site, meaning that the settlement that would have utilised this field system lay beyond the site boundary.

Figure 3: Evidence of transient early prehistoric activity

The palaeoenvironmental assemblage from the enclosures and their associated pits and postholes indicated that they were Iron Age/Romano-British in date. There was a focus on the cultivation of spelt wheat and barley, and the presence of livestock farming and grassland was also suggested. This is a stark contrast to the wooded environment of the previous phase, meaning other types of fuels had to be found; the decrease in woodland led to the exploitation of heathland for turf fuel and small-scale domestic use of coal.

Figure 4 Evaluation trench

The artefacts and radiocarbon dates from the enclosure system enabled the features to be more closely dated. Charcoal and charred grains from several features provided radiocarbon dates spanning AD 210-430, and this was supported by the pottery assemblage, which mainly dated to the 4th century AD. The types of pottery found, namely a high proportion of jars with few amphorae or beakers, is typical of late Roman rural sites, where preparation of food was the main function of the pottery.

Phase 3 – Early Medieval

Further ditches, pits and postholes were recorded in both the focal areas of the enclosure system (Figure 5), and in some cases truncating it, and postholes possibly representing the remains of a circular timber structure were also identified. These features dated to the early medieval period, more specifically to the post-Roman period in the 5th and 6th centuries. Radiocarbon dates spanning AD 420-590 were retrieved from charcoal fragments in several features, and the paleoenvironmental data indicated a prevalence of barley cultivation, with an abrupt shift away from spelt wheat and indications of a change to rye. This assemblage follows regional patterns for this period. The use of seaweed and tentative evidence of woodland regeneration was also recorded. The early post-Roman dates for these features indicate that the Romano-British site probably continued in use into this period.

Figure 5

Phase 4/5 – Medieval to Modern

Medieval and post-medieval furrows and field boundaries were recorded across the site, cutting the earlier enclosure system. Some of the field boundaries corresponded to those marked on historic mapping. The site remained in use as agricultural land until its modern development as housing.

The artefacts

The majority of the pottery assemblage was late Roman in date, with one sherd and a few scraps of local traditional ware (dating anywhere from the late Bronze Age to the early medieval period). There were only four post-Roman sherds of pottery, two from the medieval period and two *c.*18th-century sherds.

Regarding the Roman assemblage, there were only two fragments of grey ware cooking pots that could be 2nd or 3rd century in date, while the rest of the material could all belong to the 4th century. There were no amphorae or fine wares, with most of the identifiable sherds coming from cooking pots or jars. One Lower Nene Valley mortarium and a parchment ware bowl/mortarium were also present. This kind of assemblage is typical of late Roman rural sites where the use of pottery seems to have been restricted to basic food preparation (Evans 2001).

Two flint artefacts were recovered; one of these was non-diagnostic and the other was an unstratified notched blade of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date. The scarcity of lithic artefacts on the site suggests that any prehistoric occupation of the site was limited and ephemeral in nature.

Conditions on the site were not conducive to the preservation of animal bone, with few identifiable fragments recovered. The remaining artefactual assemblage comprised small fragments of fired clay and glass and a stone probably used for grinding, sharpening and smoothing in unspecified craft or domestic activities.

Paleoenvironmental evidence

The archaeological fieldwork produced 33 samples for charcoal and plant macrofossil analysis. Most samples were from Romano-British features, with occupation continuing into the early medieval period. An isolated prehistoric pit was also sampled.

The prehistoric pit produced two charcoal-rich fills typical of the Neolithic/Bronze Age transition (Elliott 2023). Oak stemwood was dominant in both assemblages with smaller amounts of hazel and Maloideae branchwood, the latter being either hawthorn or apple. Unfortunately, the absence of charred plant macrofossils hindered interpretations of the pit. With oak being the most representative material but having the possibility of producing an 'old wood effect', two radiocarbon dates were obtained for a more secure chronology. Oak sapwood gave a date of 2670-2470 cal BC, whereas Maloideae branchwood provided a slightly later date of 2470-2280 cal BC. Considering several streams meet at Dalton Piercy, it is not unreasonable to assume this transient activity was located close to a fording point, where it was convenient to exploit woodland resources alongside Dalton Beck. An additional prehistoric date of 1220-1010 cal BC came from alder charcoal in a nearby gully. Regardless of whether this was residual to the feature, it is further evidence of exploiting resources next to Dalton Beck, bearing in mind alder is a moisture-loving tree found along river margins.

Features assigned to the late Roman period or radiocarbon-dated to cal AD 210-430 incorporated scatters of domestic waste typical of the wider region. Cereal remains were characterised by low numbers of spelt wheat and barley, with rare instances of small oats, although the latter may be wild rather than cultivated oats. Wild species indicative of arable, pasture and heathy grassland included stinking chamomile, ribwort plantain, heath-grass and sedges in limited numbers, which is also consistent with regional evidence for the Roman period. Probably of more significance was the regular occurrence of charred heather, as these small rootwood twigs are thought to be the remnants of burnt heathland turves. Similar evidence dating from the 3rd century BC to the end of the Roman period is noted throughout the region (Walsh 2024), so the heather radiocarbon dates from Dalton Piercy add to the spatial and chronological evidence of this former practice.

In contrast, several features, some of which were radiocarbon-dated to cal AD 420-590, produced modest amounts of well-preserved charcoal. Good condition and limited post-depositional affects suggest these were less likely to be residual or intrusive remains, and greater species diversity, including hazel, ash, oak, birch, elm, Maloideae, blackthorn, cf. wild plum, and Salicaceae (willow) shows fuelwood consisted of a wider range of woody taxa, compared with previous phases. Furthermore, abrupt growth ring changes seen in some of the hazel charcoal, including series of narrow and wide rings, is noteworthy as similar evidence is linked with coppicing or hedge maintenance. Although charred plant macrofossils were again limited, there was a noticeable change from spelt wheat to more barley and rye, the latter normally having a post-Roman presence in this region. In addition to this, two deposits produced charred seaweed, adding to the increasing evidence of this coastal resource at early medieval sites, even including inland sites. If contemporary with the 5th- to 6th-century radiocarbon dates, they also represent early examples for the region. In the past, uses for seaweed have included fuel, fertiliser, and food preservative (Mooney 2021), as well as fodder and human consumption. Had this detailed palaeoenvironmental evidence not been identified at an early stage prior to selecting radiocarbon material, this early medieval activity could easily have been overlooked, especially in the absence of dateable artefactual evidence.

In summary, the palaeoenvironmental evidence has shown distinct changes in the local landscape and how that is reflected in the natural resources exploited, over several millennia. The late Neolithic is characterised by oak/hazel woodland, whereas wet woodland resources are observed for the late Bronze Age. A much more open landscape of heathy grassland for livestock and small-scale arable farming is noted for the Roman period, as is the need for sourcing alternative fuels such as turf. Woodland resources are increasingly seen for the early medieval period, perhaps due to woodland regeneration or even as managed growth, such as hedges. Overall, however, the evidence is consistent with the regional picture.

Regional Context

Enclosures of this type have been excavated and recorded across the region (Figure 6). However, the later Roman and early post-Roman date of the features at Dalton Piercy makes it slightly more unusual, with most sites of this type originating in the Iron Age. For example, a settlement at Newton Bewley, *c.*4.6km to the south-south-west, was established in the Iron Age and is considered likely to have been occupied beyond the Roman period, with further reoccupation in the 8th century (Platell & Johns 2001).

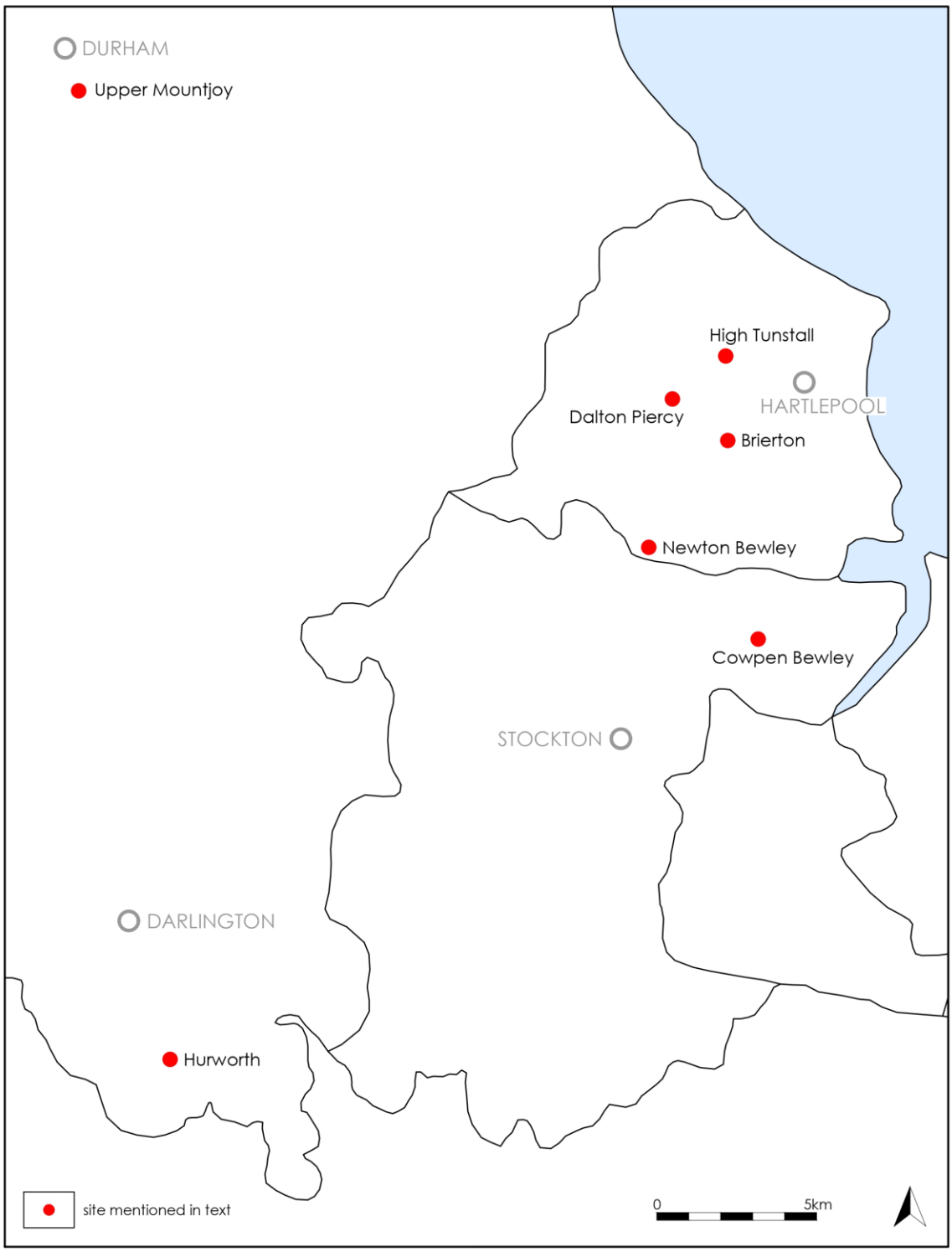

Figure 6

The nearest comparable site of confirmed date to Dalton Piercy is at Cowpen Bewley, approximately 8km to the south (Archaeological Services 2020). Here, there was a series of rectilinear ditched enclosures, within which a range of pits, corn driers and an infant burial were recorded. These features dated from the later 2nd century AD into the 4th century, and there was little evidence of earlier activity present. As with Dalton Piercy, the settlement at Cowpen Bewley was primarily agricultural in nature, principally focused on spelt wheat and barley production, together with cattle and sheep. No evidence of domestic dwellings was present.

Just over 2km to the south-east at Brierton, a complex arrangement of enclosures was identified through geophysical survey. The data suggests the presence of enclosure ditches, trackways and probable roundhouses

reflecting a multi-phased settlement of Iron Age/Romano-British date. This site has not been excavated, but two 4th-century coins have been found in the same field (Archaeological Services 2014), which could support a similar date for this site as at Dalton Piercy.

Approximately 2.3km to the north-east of the site another agricultural settlement was excavated at High Tunstall, Hartlepool (Archaeological Services 2023). This comprised a series of enclosures that had been in use for a long period of time, with associated pits, postholes and kilns. Paleoenvironmental data also indicated earlier prehistoric and post-Roman activity. As no radiocarbon dates have yet been obtained for this site, it is not clear whether this settlement was occupied from the Iron Age period onwards or was established later.

Further afield, Roman enclosure systems have been recorded at Hurworth, 26km to the south-west (Archaeological Services 2022a) and at Upper Mountjoy, Durham, 21km to the north-west (Archaeological Services 2022b). Although there were Iron Age settlements at both of these sites, the Roman features clearly replaced them, rather than being a seamless continuation of the earlier occupation. At Hurworth, the 2nd-century AD ditches may have been repurposed Iron Age ditches, but a significant reorganisation of the settlement was undertaken in the late 3rd/early 4th century and occupied until the early 5th century. This restructure was interpreted as an expansion in order to provide for more people in the wider community, or alternatively as indicative of greater Roman influence in the area. At Upper Mountjoy, there was a clear period of abandonment between the Iron Age and late 2nd or early 3rd century, when the Roman enclosure system was set out. This was then recut over a long period, until the site fell out of use in the late 4th century. These two sites, although at some distance from Dalton Piercy, demonstrate that agricultural settlements were being established across the region at roughly the same time as those at Dalton Piercy and Cowpen Bewley.

Conclusions

The enclosures and associated features at Dalton Piercy have provided a wealth of information about the agrarian economy and landscape in Roman and early post-Roman Hartlepool. Despite the piecemeal nature of the excavations, the chronology of the site could be established thanks to the artefacts recovered and the use of radiocarbon dating. Comparison with other sites in the vicinity has highlighted Dalton Piercy's place within a regional pattern of settlement, focused on agriculture. The lack of domestic features on the site suggests that the settlement associated with the field system recorded during these works lies beneath the later village or could even yet be awaiting discovery beneath nearby farmland.

Sources

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Archaeological Services 2015 *College Farm, Dalton Piercy, Hartlepool: archaeological desk-based assessment.* Report 3871, Archaeological Services Durham University

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Archaeological Services 2021a *Land off Dalton Heights, Dalton Piercy, Hartlepool: archaeological evaluation*. Report 5597, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2021b *College Farm (Phase 2), Dalton Piercy, Hartlepool: archaeological desk-based assessment.* Report 5557, Archaeological Services Durham University

Archaeological Services 2021c *Dalton Heights Extension, Dalton Piercy, Hartlepool: archaeological evaluation*. Report 5655, Archaeological Services Durham University

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Picturing the Iron Age settlement of the lower Tees Valley

Blaise Vyner

By contrast with the arable areas of the Tees Valley there are few putative Iron Age settlement enclosures on the North York Moors, and none has been excavated on any scale. Crown End, Westerdale, is one of these little-investigated sites, although it has been said that Elgee once 'put a spade' into the site. The expression was much favoured by Don Spratt, who was known sometimes to carry a spade in the boot of his car when visiting the moors.

Elgee and his predecessors had hardly been aware of Iron Age settlement on the clay lands of the lower Tees valley, the Vale of Mowbray and the Vale of York or, indeed, on the uplands where Iron Age settlement was evidenced by only a very few earthworks. Within the region the Iron Age fortification at Stanwick, some 13 miles west of Cleveland's western boundary, was well known and, indeed, had been excavated by Mortimer Wheeler in a rare expedition to the north of England as part of the celebrations of the 1951 Festival of Britain (Wheeler 1954). At the time there was little sign of the settlements of a local population in the surrounding lowlands.

Illus. 1. Crown End, Westerdale, enclosure and field system with 'clearance' cairns under snow

The Tees lowlands have been under intensive agriculture since at least the middle Iron Age and standing monuments, even of Medieval date, are not common while earlier ones are generally absent. Unsurprisingly, given his interest in archaeological methods, in the dry summer of 1977 Spratt had cajoled a couple of flights in light aircraft based at Teesside Airport and had noted a few cropmarks of sub-rectangular enclosures, thought likely to be the plough-reduced lowland equivalent of the surviving earthwork enclosure on Crown End, Westerdale (Illus. 1). The baton of air photography was picked up by Marilyn Brown, my predecessor County Archaeologist, and, much more enthusiastically, by Leslie Still, Cleveland County Librarian, who visited my office to enlist my support soon after I arrived in Middlesbrough.

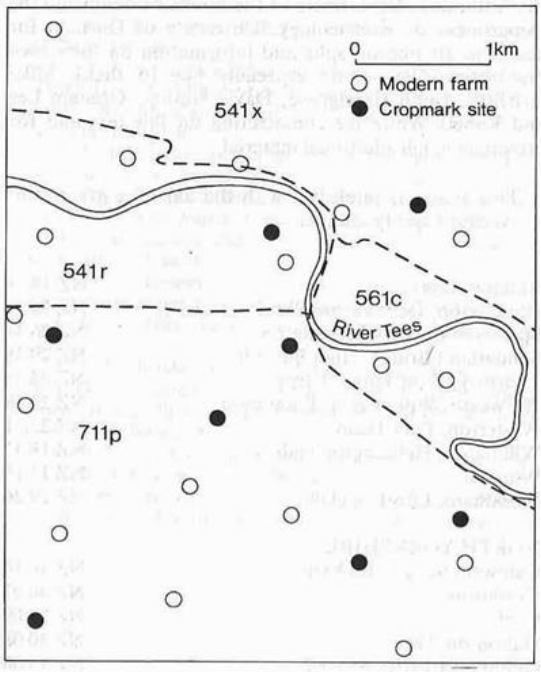
Illus. 2a Changing views, Street House: fugitive cropmark of an Iron Age enclosure first noticed by Roger Inman on Meridian Air Survey photographs, and later excavated by Steve Sherlock:

Illus. 2b same site, same flight, similar scales, different sun angles

I had undertaken a few air photographic forays while I was in South Wales, but initially I was not a particularly relaxed passenger, unlike Leslie, who would have been happy as a fighter pilot. He would survey the ground below us eagerly while I tried to fight travel sickness by focusing on the horizon. 'One below us' shouted above the noise of the engine was the sign Leslie had seen a cropmark: 'turn her round now, Alec, tight as you like!'. Alec Glover, part owner of a radio shop in Richmond, would put the power on and pull the rudder back: as we assumed a near vertical angle, I would swallow hard and hope not to be sick.

After my first few flights I realized that I was enjoying the flying. Regular air survey by Leslie and me following our beginning in 1979 identified a large number of Iron Age sub-rectangular cropmark enclosures in the lower Tees valley. The area we covered extended from Saltburn to Hartlepool along the north-east coast and then inland to the west, until the Vale of York gives way to the pasture of the Pennine uplands.

We published a selection of photographs of the cropmarks with a note on the developing understanding of the pattern of Iron Age settlement on the lowlands of north-east Yorkshire. We observed that in areas of gravel, where cropmarks were most readily generated, the density of Iron Age enclosed farmsteads compared very closely with that of 19th century farms (Illus. 3; Still and Vyner 1986).



Illus. 3. Enclosure cropmarks and 19th-century farms on gravel around Piercebridge

With continued air survey the number of lowland cropmarks increased but their variety did not –there were occasional discoveries of ditches and gullies which suggested that a wider range of sites was present, or which provided a glimpse of a vanished landscape, but they did not always generate clear cropmarks. The river gravels of the Tees valley in the Piercebridge area have consistently been a good hunting ground for cropmarks which can be seen within the airfield control zone (Illus. 4), whereas the boulder clays which mantle the valley downstream are much less responsive. In fact there have been times when the aircraft has barely lifted from the runway before it becomes clear that it is going to be a poor year for seeing 'new' sites.

Illus. 4 Holme House, Manfield, Co Durham; the cropmark of a double ditched trackway. At the left side of the photo a ditched rectangular settlement enclosure sites against the track.

After the 1990s air photography became more difficult for a variety of reasons – pilots and high-wing aircraft became hard to find, the regulatory flying environment discouraged casual access to light aircraft, while there was a succession of summers with unsuitable weather. With the end of the 1990s my air photographic forays diminished in frequency, although I continued flying until my pilot retired in 2016.

Our second pilot, Bill Wall, with me and Leslie Still and Cessna 172 Alpha Zulu, c.1984. The aircraft was ultimately impounded after being caught in a drug running operation…

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An Archaeological Evaluation at the 'Courthouse', Liverton 1997

Robin Daniels

Introduction

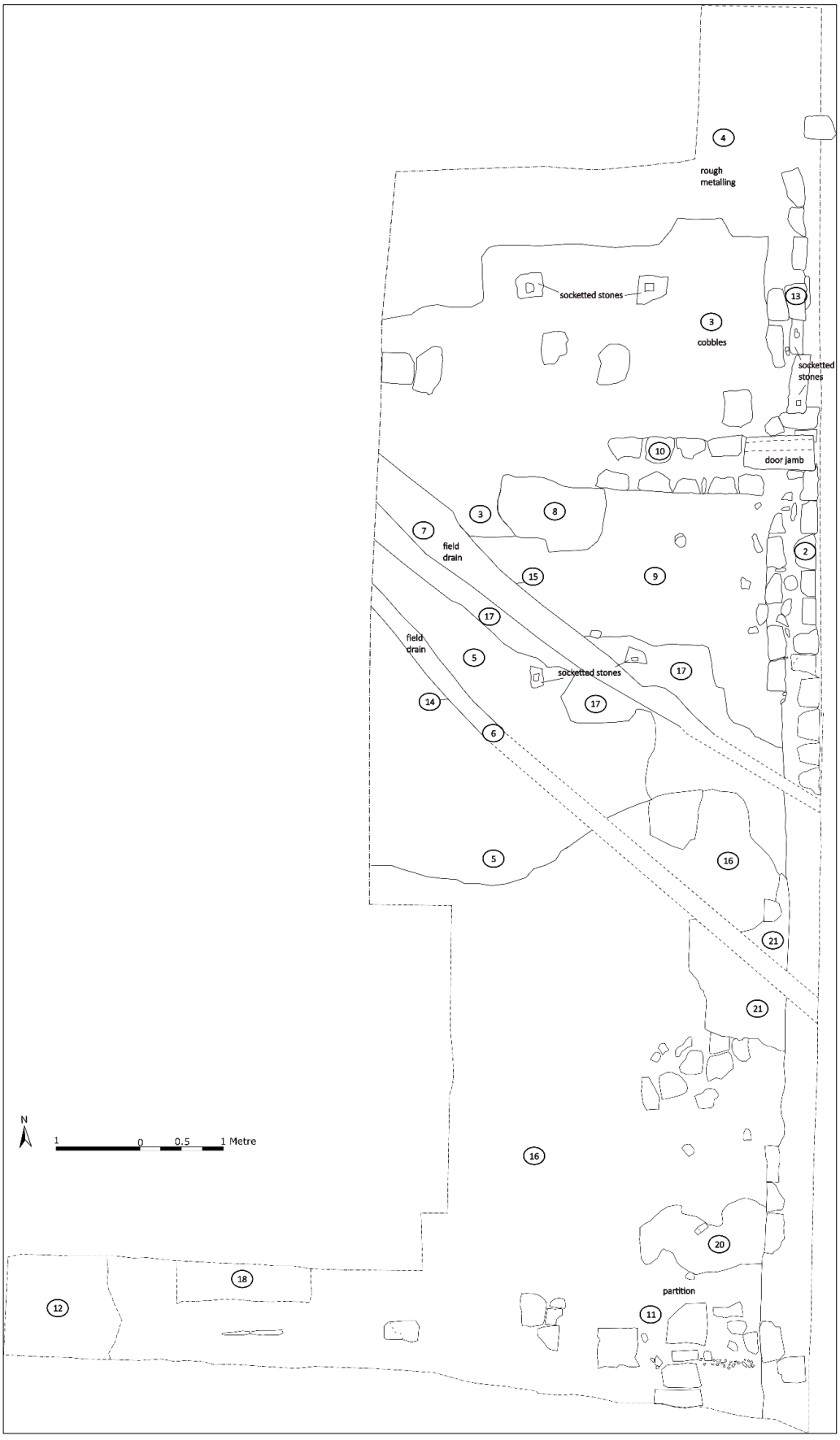
In August 1997 Tees Archaeology were asked to help explain some large, dressed stones ploughed up at Liverton. The site lies just to the north of the current 'Waterwheel Inn' and prior to its enclosure in the early 19th century it would have sat on the village green (NZ 7127 1578).

A weeklong evaluation of the site took place led by Richard Annis with the assistance of Fiona MacDonald and Gary Green of Tees Archaeology and volunteers Margaret Bruce, Jane Farley, Peter Johnson, Jenny Parker, and Jean Wylie. Following the evaluation a summary account was produced but not a full report
.
In 2023 the author, newly retired, was invited to join the Liverton History Group and was asked about the excavation. It was clear that there was considerable interest in the site and it was decided to produce as full a report as possible. This has now been completed and copies provided to the history group, Tees Archaeology and Kirkleatham Museum (who hold the finds).

The Building.

Only the northernmost part of the building was uncovered, the area seen measuring 13.4m north to south and 7.6m east to west, the building lay parallel to the property frontages. While it would appear to be stone built, there was no trace of mortar. Only the final phases of the building could be discerned, its earlier history would have required a longer programme of excavation.

The site looking south; the cobbled extension is in the foreground



Plan of the excavated area

Penultimate Phase

This may have seen the building at its most important. The excavated portion measured 10.2m north to south and 7.6m east to west and comprised two ground floor rooms. The northern room had a mortar floor and the walls had been plastered. It was separated from the southern room by a partition sat on a timber sleeper beam. Only a small portion of the southern room was seen and this had a paved floor in marked contrast to the northern room.

Last Phase

The last phase of the building witnessed both an extension to the building and a decline in status. A wall was added extending the northern end of the building by 3.2m, at the same time the western end of the north wall was demolished creating a wide opening and this new opening was cobbled as was the extension to the north.

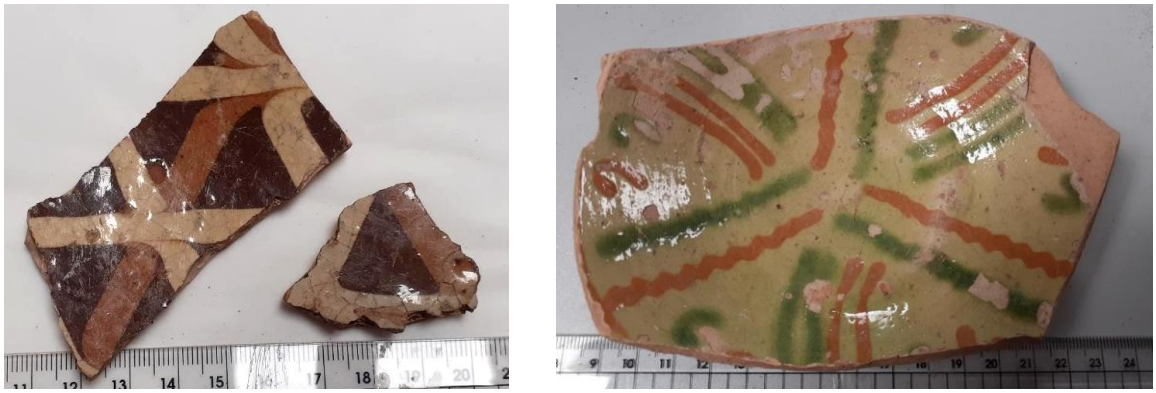
At the same time socketed stones were introduced into the northern end of the building and the area of the extension. It is believed that these supported joists which may have previously been set in the north wall and in the case of the extension they allowed the creation of a sheltering roof.

These alterations were characterised by the introduction of re-used architectural stonework from Handale Abbey and have all the hallmarks of a conversion to a building with more agricultural functions.

The Finds

There were a wide range of finds, the pottery provided a date range from the late medieval period (15th century) to the 19th century and this probably represents the full date span of the building. Of particular note were two piece of Weser or Werra ware, which originated in northern Germany in the 17th century, and their presence is indicative of status.

Window and bottle glass was present and the latter included three handmade bottles of 17th or 18th century date. The metalwork included square section iron nails, a late medieval square iron buckle and a cannon ball! The latter are surprisingly ubiquitous, in the same way one piece of Samian ware inevitable turns up on a site, one cannon ball tends to turn up as well. This one would have been fired by a late 17th century falconet cannon. The ironwork is complemented by a pewter spoon of 18th or 19th century date and a penny of George III, dated 1807. The most interesting find was however a heavily damaged coin, the monarch and date are indecipherable, but it has the appearance of a Georgian penny. It significance lies in the fact that both faces have been deliberately rendered indecipherable, and the monarch's head has had cut marks incised into it.



Weser / Werra ware

Deliberately defaced coin

This defacement of coins has been seen elsewhere and was a deliberate political act, one that was treasonable. Elsewhere this has been equated with republicanism and was in fact a tactic used by the suffragettes in the early part of the 20th century. The motivation in this case is of course unknown and given the political turmoil of the 18th and early 19th centuries any number of suggestions could be made.

Conclusion

The title of this note includes the word 'Courthouse'. The Tithe Schedule of 1840 describes the site as 'Courthouse, Shop, Garth and Green', in the tenancy of the Robinson family. This does suggest a communal use for the building and the estate map of 1776 shows this area as 'Dennison Garth' while manorial records between 1735 and 1748 say that the manorial court was held 'at the house of John Dennison'.

This then ties in to a relatively high-status building, this was probably the farmhouse of the Dennison family which was sufficiently distinguished and contained a sufficiently large space to function as a courthouse when required.

The function of the building as a courthouse makes the find of the defaced penny even more significant, was it a mislaid piece of evidence against somebody, was somebody displeased at the outcome of a hearing and took it out on the first thing to hand. We shall never know but we can speculate!

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Janice Adams for drawing the site plan and Nicole Dicicco at Kirkleatham Hall Museum for providing access to the finds and Liverton History Group for drawing my attention to the Tithe Plan and Schedule, an 18th century estate map of the area and providing additional background information.

TAS Coach trip 17 May 2025: Part One. The Devils Arrows, Boroughbridge and the Thornborough Henges.

Maureen Norrie (TAS)

On Saturday 17 May, members of TAS joined with members of other groups for a full-day coach trip organised by Roger Inman. Starting and finishing in Stokesley, the trip went to the Devils Arrows (Boroughbridge), led by Emma Watson; Ripon Cathedral, led by Maureen Norrie; and the Thornborough Henges, led by Emma Watson. The weather smiled. A little overcast in the morning, the sun shone warmly in the afternoon.

Devils Arrows:

The first stop was the Devil's Arrows, just outside Boroughbridge: a 174-metre-long NNW-SSE alignment of three standing stones. Two of these are located inside a cultivated field, with a pathway (or gap between crops) leading to them from the nearby roadside: the tallest lies just to the south, across the minor road (Figures 1, 2). Scheduled in 1923, the alignment – likely part of a much wider, complex, landscape - comprises three Millstone Grit standing stones (18feet; 22 feet; and 22 feet 6 inches tall), the lightest of which is estimated as over 25 tons, and all possibly from the Plumpton Rocks over seven miles away. The tops are narrower than the somewhat-rectangular bases; and all have deep vertical grooves from weathering (Figure 3).

A fourth stone once stood a few feet northwest of the central stone; and a possible fifth stone was previously noted by antiquarians. Leyland (1530s) described four stones: thirty years later Camden wrote of seeing

> *'foure huge stones, of pyramidall forme, but very rudely wrought, set as it were in a straight and direct line … whereof one was lately pulled downe by some that hoped, though in vaine, to find treasure'.*

By 1725, only three stones remained. It is said that one of the other stones was broken up and its lower part used to form part of a bridge a few hundred yards away, over the River Tutt in Boroughbridge. Large pieces of the same Millstone Grit have been found in gardens situated within a hundred yards of so of the alignment.

In one early excavation of one of the stones (by a Mr Gale, possibly in 1709) the foundation of the stone was said to be 5 feet under the ground. The Historic England listing adds:

> *'that it had a flat bottom standing squarely … further excavations around the bases of the northern and southern stones in 1876 and 1881 revealed the stone holes to be 1.4m and 1.8m deep respectively'.*[1]

Why the name?

Over recent centuries, the stones have been known by various names: among these, The Devil's Bolts, The Three Greyhounds, The Three Sisters, the Arrows, and the Devil's Arrows. Various stories suggest differing reasons for the names. However, 'Arrows' may ultimately derive from their individual pyramidal shapes (tapering to the top), or from the linear orientation. The 'Devil' connotation may reflect unease of the unknown: Christian vicars, perhaps concerned about the obviously phallic structure, or perhaps wondering if they had had some earlier 'pagan' associations, desiring to 'warn off' the local population from them.

(The three) Thornborough Henges, c.3500-2500 BC

The coach next went to Ripon – a separate article describes this – and, after a (brief) lunch break, on to the Thornborough Henges: by now, the sun was out and the weather very much warmer (Figure 4).

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[1] Quoted in Devils Arrows, written by Borrowbridge Town Council.
https://www.boroughbridge.org.uk/Devils_Arrows_43427.aspx

These are well described in the handout prepared by Emma Watson:

> *… with 3 colossal henges, a cursus, a double pit alignment, numerous barrows and pits, an oval enclosure, flint scatters etc, this is a hugely important and significant landscape. The henges are located on a plateau, approximately 750m-1km from the River Ure. The North circle is 750m from the central henge to its SW; and the S circle is 750m to the SW of the central henge. The earthworks are thought to have been part of a 'ritual landscape' and are probably the most important single ancient site between Stonehenge and the Orkney Islands.*
> (Emma Watson, trip handout)

Each of these henges is around 250m diameter. Together, this represents a huge earth working episode, creating not only these three henges but also several others not far away; and all in what would have been land of prime agricultural potential (even if farming was then difficult and the area largely wooded). Their original purpose is not fully known; although in the north henge (on which trees were later planted by a local farmer, it is said in order to protect it from future ploughing), the henge banks were found during an excavation by Jan Harding to have been likely coated in gypsum which would have made them a striking, brilliant, white.

Today, all are under the care of Historic England. The central and south henges are accessed from a minor road with roadside parking: the group spent some time here. Currently, the banks of the central henge are fenced off, and the reason clearly seen – the vegetation on it is sparse with many earth patches: there are notices in situ referring to ongoing measures to conserve it through planting turf and wildflowers (Figure 5). There is as yet no direct pedestrian access from these to the northern henge (although this is being planned), so the group next travelled by coach to the carpark at the nearby Nosterfield Nature Reserve, then walked up the ten-minute path to cross the road near the north end of the wooded Northern Henge, and spent time walking around it (Figure 6).

Whatever the original purpose of these henges, they are not forgotten.

Whilst the group was there, other people arrived in separate cars: mostly young women in their 20s and 30s, a few accompanied by older children, with blankets/rugs on which to sit and some with what looked like picnic carriers … in total, around 100 people, who settled together inside the middle henge. This was for a 'sound therapy' (aka 'sound healing magic') event, organised from Ripon.

The Henges are still 'in use'.

Further reading:

Devil's Arrows:

Walker, Ronald (of Boroughbridge Historical Society), n/d: *Devil's Arrows,* in Boroughbridge Town Council website
https://www.boroughbridge.org.uk/Devils_Arrows_43427.aspx
(the webpage also lists other links for further information)

Thornborough Henges:

Harding, Jan; 2013, *Cult Religion and Pilgrimage – Archaeological investigations at the Neolithic and Bronze Age Monument Complex at Thornborough, North Yorkshire*; UK Council for British Archaeology Research Report.

> Note: the book is currently almost unavailable – an abstract is available online in the Archaeology Data Service website at
> https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/issue.xhtml?recordId=1181583
> and a fuller book review is available as downloadable PDF in Research Gate
> https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281761941_Jan_Harding_Cult_Religion_and_Pilgrimage_Archaeological_Investigations_at_the_Neolithic_and_Bronze_Age_Monument_Complex_of_Thornborough_North_Yorkshire_with_contributions_by_Lindsay_Allason-Jones_Arno

Images: Devil's Arrows

Fig. 1. Southern stone, beside road

Fig. 2. The two northern stones, in field

Fig. 3.

Detail of top of middle stone, showing

vertical grooves caused by weathering

Images: Thornborough Henges:

Figure 4: English Heritage display at entrance to North Henge, showing layout of all three Henges

Figure 5: Entrance (looking north) to Central Henge. Note the banks are currently fenced off to protect them

Figure 6: inside the wooded North Henge

TAS Coach trip 17 May 2025: Part Two. A trip to Ripon Cathedral (previously Minster)

Maureen Norrie (TAS)

On 17 May 2025, a visit to Ripon Cathedral was included in a coach trip organised by Roger Inman, for members of TAS and other groups.

Set on top of a hill, the full name of Ripon Cathedral is the **Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Wilfrid.** The first church on this site was dedicated to St Peter, and was built by St Wilfrid – hence, both names were given to the current church on this site. Despite its size, the present church was built as a parish church. It was designated as a Minster until 1836, when it became a Cathedral in the newly formed Diocese of Ripon (renamed Diocese of Ripon and Leeds in 1999, and from 2014 part of the larger Diocese of Leeds).

Figure 1: Ripon Cathedral, West end

First church:

The earliest church on this site was built in 672AD, as the church of a Benedictine monastery. This was around the time of tensions between Celtic Christianity, spreading into England from the north, from Iona and Lindisfarne; and Roman Christianity, spreading northwards from Canterbury. These met and clashed in what is now northern

Britain. The matter was settled in the Synod of Whitby in 664 AD, when it was decided that, henceforth, the church in England would follow Roman Christianity.

A few years earlier, c.655-660AD, a local king (Ahlfrith) had given land for the foundation of a monastery at Ripon, between the rivers Skell and Ure, and invited Celtic Christian monks from Melrose in Scotland to form the first monastic community. Their number included Cuthbert, later 'the' St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, whose tomb is now in Durham Cathedral. After only a few years, however, Alhfrith changed his confession to Roman Christianity. The Celtic Christian monks were given the choice to change also to Roman Christianity, or to leave. They chose to leave. Ahlfrith then invited a group of Roman Christian (Benedictine) monks, to be led by St Wilfrid, to take their place.

Wilfrid was an adamant supporter of Roman Christianity (and argued the case in favour of Roman Christianity strongly at the Synod of Whitby); and the monastic church he built here in 672 AD was designed to emphasise links with Rome. The church consisted of an above-ground structure in the form of a Roman basilica, and an underground crypt (*confessio*) with chamber and passages: the crypt still exists and is under the crossing of the present church. The church was situated on top of a hill and, at a time when most buildings were of wood, built of dressed stone. As there was no local experience of building in stone, Wilfrid imported masons and skilled workmen from the Continent to build it. There is a description of Wilfrid's church by his biographer, Eddius Stephanus:

> *'In Ripon, Saint Wilfrid built and completed, from the foundations to the roof, a church of dressed stone, supported by various columns and side-aisles to a great height and many windows, arched vaults and a winding cloister'.*[2]

Wilfrid's church survived the Viking incursions and settlements; but was destroyed by a Saxon king in an act of war in 948 AD (some sources state 950 AD). This was some decades after the formation of the Danelaw, and the Saxon kings now wanted to assert their own authority as overlords in the local area.

The former king of Northumbria (north of the Humber) had recently died. In his place was invited one Eric Bloodaxe, a one-time short-reigned king of Norway; supported by the Archbishop of York. The Saxon king Eadred took this as an act of rebellion. He brought his forces north, devastated the area between York and Ripon (some sources claim this included massacres) and terrified neighbouring areas into submission. Probably because of close connections between Ripon and the Archbishop of York, Wilfrid's impressive church may have been deliberately targeted – in any event, it was completely destroyed apart from its crypt. The Archbishop of York was first imprisoned, then 'exiled' to Doncaster where he later died. Eric Bloodaxe was killed a few years later on Stainmoor (in Teesdale). Some reports say he died in battle; others that he was treacherously murdered – most likely, these are different 'slants' used to describe the same event.

Next – within a couple of years of the initial destruction, the Archbishop of Canterbury removed Wilfrid's body from the crypt. This can be considered as adding insult to injury: he was a supporter of the Saxon king Eadred who had destroyed the building. Except – the remaining monks (and later Archbishops of York) said that he had not done so: that the bones taken to Canterbury were not those of Wilfrid, but rather those of a completely different (and later) monk. The matter was never resolved. For the next 600 years, up until the Reformation, there were effectively 'two' St Wilfrid's, with Canterbury and Ripon each claiming that the bones they each possessed were the 'real' St Wilfrid. In Ripon, when the present church was built, the bones of the 'Ripon' St Wilfrid were re-interred in a shrine close to the High Altar. During Reformation attacks on relics, his shrine was destroyed, and his bones disappeared – it is not known whether they too had been 'destroyed' or removed to a forgotten location for safekeeping.

Following this, it has been claimed that two further churches were later built on the same site - a Saxon one, and an early Norman one – before construction of the present church began.

[2] National Churches Trust, Oldest churches; online

Second church:

The monastic community survived the destruction of the church in 948 AD; and for a while in 995 AD welcomed the body of St Cuthbert, recently removed from Chester-le-Street before its eventual internment in Durham. At some point in the next hundred years or less (exact date unknown), the monastic community ceased to exist. In its place was founded a College of Secular Canons – essentially, a group of priests who acted as parish priests to the surrounding areas, and who were responsible for the spiritual welfare of the lay inhabitants thereof.

It is generally stated that the (Saxon, later) church of this monastic community and/or College of Secular Canons existed on the same site as St Wilfrid's earlier church, and that it was later presumably destroyed – possibly, during the Harrowing of the North in 1069-1070. However, whether it was destroyed or not depends rather on what exactly is meant by 'on this site'.

What does 'on this site' mean?

No trace of a later Saxon church has been found on the foundations of Wilfrid's old church. However, a monastic Saxon church is known to have existed about one hundred yards away, on what is today a road called St Marygate: the Ladykirk, which, as the name suggests, may have been a secondary church for the monastic community. Hence, 'on this site' may mean on the site of the old monastery, rather than the exact site of the foundations of Wilfrid's church.

A 1507 description describes this Saxon church as *'an old church in Stamersgate [St Mary's Gate] which of ancient time was a house of Religion'* (Werronen, p.106). There was only one 'house of religion' in this area – that founded by St Wilfrid. The Ladykirk remained active as a church or chapel through at least the mid-1400s, and its grounds contained a graveyard. In the early 1500s, it was sold to Abbot Huby of Fountains Abbey – possibly to help fund necessary building work in the Ripon Minster – and was in ruins in the 1600s.

FIGURE 2

There is a modern plaque on the wall in St Marygate, alongside an arch leading to some private houses (1 – 4 Old Deanery Close), identifying the site of the Ladykirk. The plaque reads *'Abbot Huby's wall / built by Abbot of Fountains Abbey / Site of the Saxon Ladykirk'.* Archaeological dating of the site was carried out in 1955. This concluded that the church pre-dated the 11th century and might be as old as into the 8th Century: that is, this Saxon church dates from the 800s-900s, perhaps just into the late 700s. Thus, the dating of this church includes the date of destruction (948 AD) of Wilfrid's church – it may have already existed some time before this destruction or have been built in its aftermath.

Either way, one must consider what the remaining monastic community would have done. Their main, impressive, church had just been destroyed by the Saxon king Eadred in an act of war; and the remains of their now-patron saint had, literally, been whisked away from under their feet. To rebuild exactly on the same site, on the same foundations, could well have been considered as further provoking a king who had just devastated the area. On the other hand, the community could have simply moved its worship one hundred yards downhill, within the monastic site, to a secondary chapel. In any case, there has been no trace of a 'second' Saxon church built on top of the remains of the first church.

Figure 2: Inside the circle: site of Ladykirk in relation to location of Ripon Cathedral – now private housing, with plaque at side of archway onto St Marygate. From Google Maps

Third church:

It has long been said there was a third church on this site – an early Norman one c.1080 – the remnants of which include the Chapter House and Vestry, a crypt beneath these, and an apse-like structure (containing a garderobe) at one (east) end. More recently, doubts have been cast on this.

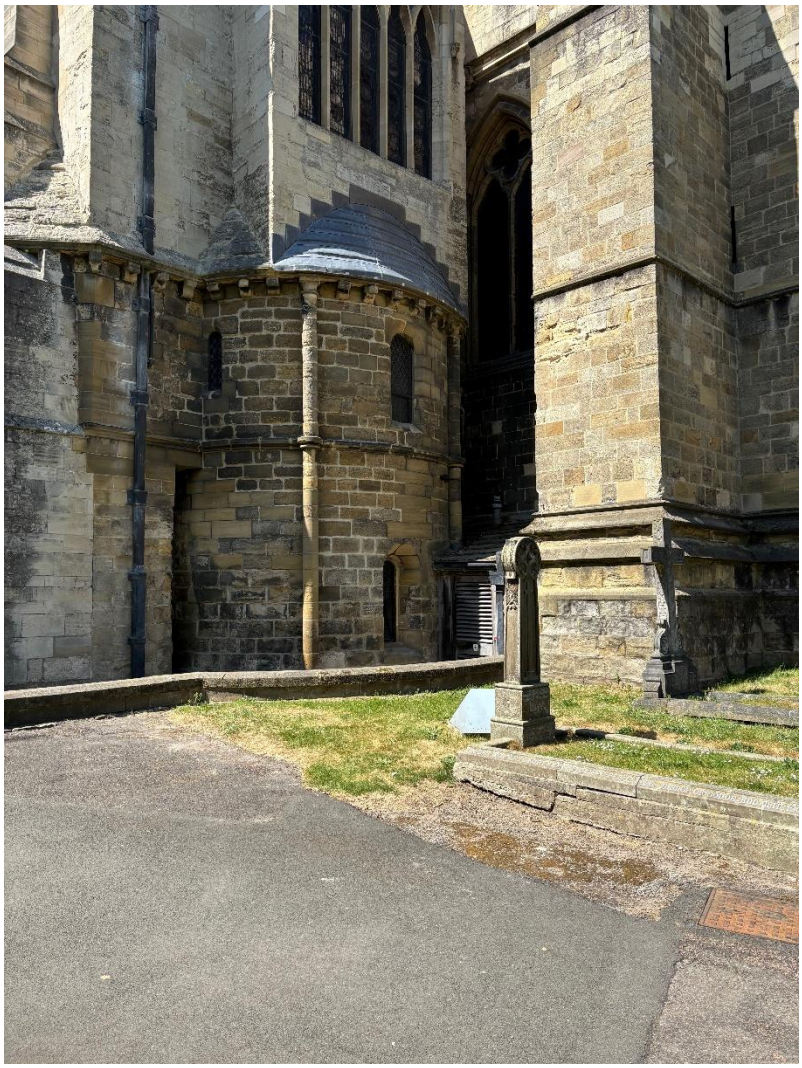

Figure 3: Apse-like structure south side of church, close to east end. The Vestry, Chapter House, and their crypt, start here and continue behind it (to the left of the picture). The floor above the apse is a later addition: 14th century Lady Loft, now the Library.

In construction, these features do look Norman. They are also situated just outside the main cruciform structure of the present church, nestled in the corner of the (eastern side of the) south transept and the east end of the church, and with a door now between the Chapter House and south choir aisle.

Hallett, writing in 1901, repeats the belief these features represent an older (early Norman) church, but appears less than completely certain about it. In one place he says much of this work belongs to a Norman church pre-dating the present one (p.118), however he also says a few pages later 'it is difficult to resist the conclusion' that the piers inside the Chapter House itself are 'the south choir buttresses in disguise' (Hallett, p.123).[3] Harrison and Barker, writing in 1999, went further, pointing out that the buttress of the south choir aisle extends inside the Chapter House crypt (Harrison and Barker, discussed in Werronen, pp 35-36; also Abstract 1999); thus, these structures did not pre-date the present church.[4]

The structures appear, however, to have been incorporated – perhaps as an afterthought – into the main building as the present church (of Archbishop Roger) was being built. If so, then it is likely they were intended for use as Chapter House and Vestry.

[3] Hallett C, 1901, *The Cathedral Church of Ripon*, London, George Bell and Sons, pp.118, 123.

[4] Werrenon S, 2013: *Ripon Minster in its Social Context*, pp. 35-36, in White Rose eTheses online, also Abstract, in Archaeology Data Service (of Harrison S A, Barker P, 1999: Ripon Minster, in Journal of British Archaeology Ass 152, Vol 152, pp 49-78)

The present church

Building began on the present church around 1180, under Archbishop Roger de Pont l'Eveque – commonly referred to as Archbishop Roger – who contributed £1000 to its construction: an enormous sum. The last parts of the original church to be completed were its western towers, 1220s. In 1224, St Wilfrid's remains were re-interred in a shrine near the High Altar[5], and this is generally assumed to be the date of consecration of the church. The material of the church at this stage was Gritstone, with white limestone used in alterations from c.1310 onwards. The original church was cruciform in shape, representing Christ's cross. The orientation of the main axis was East-West, with the shorter Eastern end (the head of the cross) pointing East to the rising sun and to Jerusalem.

However, the term 'my grandfather's axe' is not inappropriate. The metaphor involves a family heirloom – my grandfather's axe. Quite some time ago, its head was replaced. At a later date, the shaft was replaced …

Since the church's construction, there have been two major periods of rebuilding: c.1286 (east end) and 1503-1530s (west end) – together, involving rebuilding over half the original church; and two major periods of thoroughgoing refurbishments of the entire church, 1450-1530s and 1862-1872. These have been interspersed with, and followed by, several other phases of refurbishment and lesser-but-significant periods of structural repairs.

The site had been carefully chosen: the exact site of Wilfrid's original church, with the crossing of the new church located directly above the original crypt. This in turn determined the positioning of the remainder of the church's layout. It was a Minster, and a parish church serving a wide area: and designed to be impressive - big and tall, in keeping with the incoming Cathedrals. In all this, Archbishop Roger succeeded.

East end replacement:

Problems quickly arose. The earliest Cathedral builders had little experience of such tall buildings: common mistakes include foundations not deep enough, walls too thin, no (or insufficient) awareness of wind force.

More specifically, in Ripon, the underlying bedrock is Gypsum: water-soluble. Whilst it is water-soluble over geological time, issues such as subsidence and landslips can occur on flat areas. Here, Wilfrid's original church had not been built on flat ground, but on top of a hill. Although there is some evidence the ground had been levelled somewhat (especially just east of the church), there are still significant slopes in all directions in the immediately surrounding ground.

Figure 4: East end of church. Note the strong buttressing

[5] Werrenon (op cit), p. 27

Within a matter of decades, severe subsidence meant that most of the eastern end of the church was taken down and rebuilt in 1286: as it stands today, it is strongly buttressed. At this stage, the central tower was also reduced in height by about half. The relatively flat area just beyond the east end may date from then, or from the date of the original east end.

Crisis to opportunity

The second period of major alterations began in 1450, when the central tower fell down at its southeast corner. This has been attributed – in 1450 and at present – to problems arising from the original construction (and/or the 1286 repairs), causing its weight to settle unevenly. Records of the time cite bad weather (storms) as the immediate cause of its collapse.

This could have been a major disaster; but the Canons turned it into an opportunity. They set out, not simply to patch up and repair, but to turn the church into the best building it could possibly be. To do so, they used the best materials and best workmen possible, paying their skilled workmen well over the legal rates for the time. And, they succeeded. The central tower collapse kick-started what became an 80-year programme of building and refurbishments, ending at the Reformation.[6]

First, there were immediately necessary repairs: removal of rubble, making the building weatherproof. This took between 3 and 7 years, during which time services moved temporarily into the nearby Ladykirk – the old Saxon monastic chapel a hundred yards away. Next: structural repairs on the tower and on parts of the choir and south transept. Today, one can see different faces on the tower – the old structure on its west and north faces, and the new structure on its south and east faces.

Figure 5: Central tower, contrasting the south face which was replaced after the 1450 tower collapse (right), with the west face which was not replaced (left).

[6] Werrenon (op cit), pp. 120-178

Then: the interior of the church. The old rood screen at the crossing was removed, and the present one installed – the suggested date for this is 1480s/1490s. Most rood screens had openings through which the faithful could see, into the choir area. This new screen is of stone, has an archway into the choir and two passages (one to Wilfrid's crypt, the other to the organ) and is strong enough to bear the weight of an organ; but no unnecessary openings.

Figure 6: Rood screen 1480s/1490s. The statues were created and added in 1947, and are the work of sculptor Esmond Burton, of London

After this, in the late 1480s into the 1490s, a complete thorough refurbishment took place of the east end of the church including the choir. New choir furniture was installed, including choir seats with canopies and misericords (finished 1494), these misericords still justly considered the best of their kind in England.

The west end

By now, there were serious concerns about the structural stability of the nave. Still turning crisis into opportunity, the entire nave (apart from the west front) was taken down between 1503 and c.1530, and the present one – twice the width of the original – built in its place. Work began on today's south aisle (1503-1511), then moved onto the north aisle, then the central (old) nave was taken down.

The building programme went over time, and over budget. Although, throughout, donations went a long way to fund the building works, the Canons also provided funds from their private pockets to start the project. They sold the Ladykirk chapel about this time. Next, they used part of the Minster's financial reserves, then more of the financial reserves – ultimately using these up completely by 1524.[7] The financial impact on the building can be seen better from within the building. On the south aisle, constructed when funds were relatively plentiful, the details are distinctly more ornate than on the north aisle, constructed when funds were much tighter.

[7] Werrenon (op cit), p.150

Towards the end of the new nave building programme, final work was done on the choir, and a new High Altar installed. By the time all this completed, it was the Reformation: and the remaining work – altering the two earlier sides of the tower – was never completed.

Figure 7: 16th century nave, external south wall. Note the buttresses: they extend out 8 feet on this side, and 5 feet on the north side.

Later

As a parish church, the Minster (later, Cathedral) escaped any significant damage in the Reformation. However, during the Civil War, Cromwellian soldiers removed the lead from the nave roof and broke all the stained glass windows. In 1660 the central spire fell down (some years after the central tower being struck by lightning) damaging the choir furnishings; and a decision was taken not to replace it.

In 1664, a further decision was taken on safety grounds, to also remove the spires atop the two western towers. A story tells of a workman at this time, who had been hoisted via a pulley onto one of the western spires, held there in place by fellow-workmen who were tightly holding the other end of the rope. Something on the ground took his attention – generally said to be coursing, with dogs straining on the leash – and he shouted down to those he saw 'let go, let go'. Upon which his fellow workmen let go the rope (his fate is unknown, the stories vary).[8]

The western wall and towers

In the mid-1800s, serious concerns arose about the structural stability of the west end of the church. Large cracks had arisen in the western towers, big enough for a man's hand to pass through them. Again, the canons turned crisis into opportunity. A 'Gothic revival architect', Sir Gilbert Scott, was hired. Between 1862-1872, he saved and

[8] Hallett (op cit), p.38, footnote 30

underpinned the towers, made various other structural repairs, and undertook another thorough refurbishment of the entire church. At this stage, new floors and ceilings were installed (incorporating, in the choir, some medieval bosses). Older 'repairs' not in keeping with the church were removed and replaced with ones identical to the original designs (where known), or as much in keeping with the original church as possible.

Right site, wrong site

Over centuries, local inhabitants have contributed greatly to the care, upkeep, and repairs of the church. The workmanship has generally been excellent, by workmen passionate about what they did.

However, the original problems still exist. The church was built on the 'right' site, fulfilling a desire to continue a church on the site of Wilfrid's original church. It was also completely the 'wrong' site for a church of this size and weight: on top of a hill, where the bedrock is gypsum. Over the past hundred years alone, there have been periods of refurbishment and substantial structural repairs at intervals of 25-30 years, including ten years ago when it was said 'these' repairs would likely last around 25 years. The old issue – subsidence – remains a danger.

Parts of the church:

Wilfrid's crypt.

For many, the most important part of the church is Wilfrid's crypt, the place where his body was originally interned (it is believed, in one of the passageways). During the Reformation, the Minster authorities resisted calls, arising from attacks on relics, to deface the crypt. Finally, Elizabeth I issued a direct order: block the crypt up. The crypt has two entrances (one believed original, the other believed added when the present church was built): the Minster authorities duly blocked up one of these. the other entrance was, then, through a trapdoor. This ensured the crypt was kept open and used with entry and exit through the remaining opening: the 'blocked' entrance was finally unblocked in the early 1900s.[9]

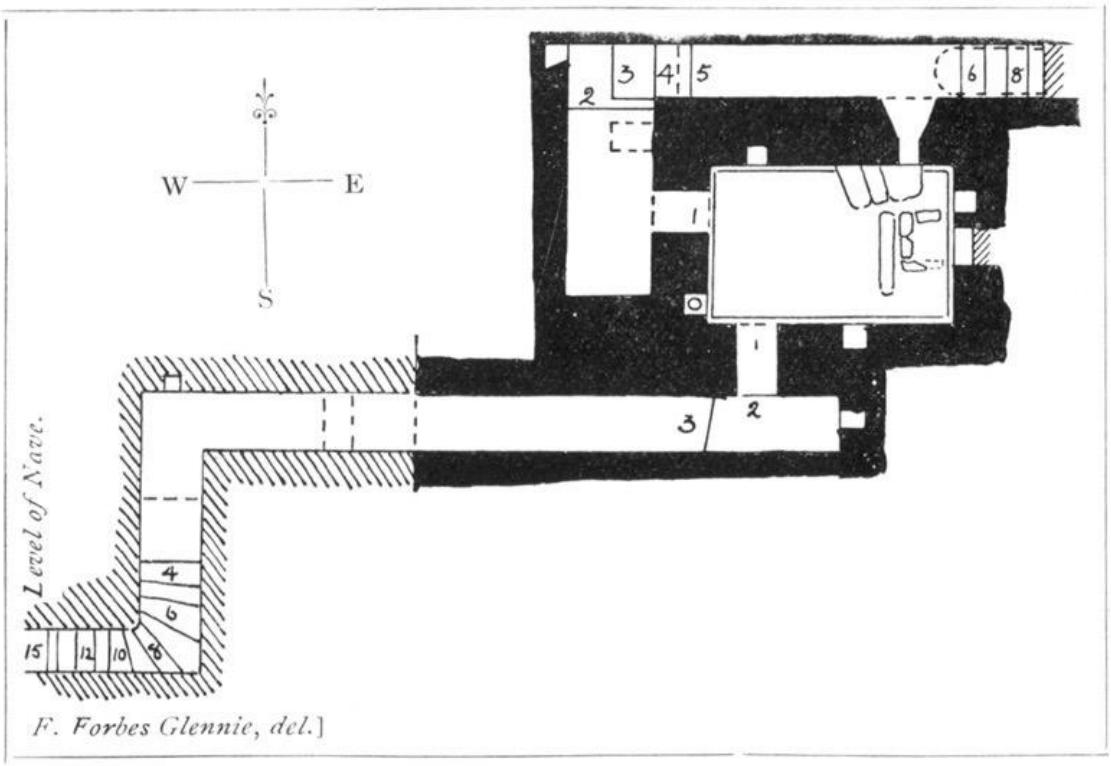

Figure 9: 19th century plan of Wilfrid's crypt, taken from Hallett (1901). The current 'entrance' is on the bottom left (beside the SW corner of the crossing) and the 'exit' on the top right (beside the NE corner of the crossing). The shaded passageway at the 'entrance' is believed to have been added as the present church was being built; the 'exit' is believed to be the original Saxon entrance and exit.

[9] It was still blocked when it was described in Hallett (1901) (op cit), p.75

Nowadays, the crypt is generally used in a one-way system, with entry near the south-west corner of the crossing and exit at the north side of the archway into the Choir (under the organ). On the TAS coach tour, however, musical equipment set up for a concert that evening blocked the usual entrance (talking to Cathedral staff and volunteers, this seems to have taken them by surprise); so, entry and exit was through the normal 'exit'. This made it more difficult to access, but most of the group chose to enter.

The crypt is now used as a small chapel (Chapel of the Resurrection). On one wall is an opening, around 12 by 18 inches, into a passageway: beneath it are some slabs arranged as steps. In medieval times, this was known as St Wilfrid's Needle. One story is that this was a 'test of chastity' for women: only chaste women could pass through it. Another story is that young girls would climb through it, hoping this would bring about their marriage within a year – it is said that 'not all were disappointed'. On the adjacent wall, over the present altar, is a small alabaster sculpture depicting Jesus stepping out of the tomb on His Resurrection – this is said to be 14th or early 15th, found during one of the Cathedral's renovations, stored initially in the Chapter House, and subsequently placed here.

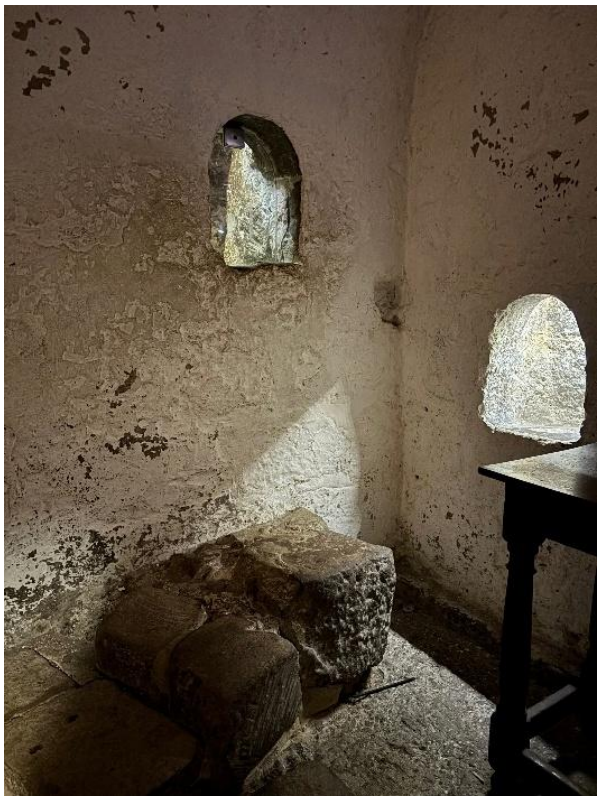

Figure 9. Inside Ripon Crypt

During the early 1900s, the crypt was generally cleaned; and limited excavations made. At this time, some bones were found in a 'pit', and were thought to have been 'relics'. However, not all were human: some were from an ox, sheep, birds, and some unidentified. These were removed to, and stored in, the Cathedral library.

The bone house

The 'other' crypt – underneath the Chapter House – was once the bone pit of the Minster / Cathedral. By the 1400s, the parish had grown to an area of around 85 square miles, stretching from Pateley Bridge to Boroughbridge. Although there were around twenty-four subsidiary chapels within the parish, these were mainly places of prayer open 24/7, with only occasional services. Importantly, only some of these had consecrated burial grounds – with Ripon Minster being considered desirable for burials.

As a result, the land needed for burials in Ripon Minster outstripped the ground available. Over centuries, older bones were dug up to make room for new burials: these older bones were ultimately deposited in the crypt under the Chapter House.

Figure 10. door to the old bone house. The floor above (with round window and extending to the right) is the Chapter House and Vestry. The top floor is a 14th century addition, now the library

In 1865-1866, these bones were reburied in the Cathedral churchyard – by which time the 'bone house' had already become something of a tourist destination. At that time of their reburial, a contemporary newspaper reported that the skulls were counted – 9912 skulls were counted in one part of the crypt, with at least a similar (uncounted) number in another part of the same crypt. That is, a little short of 20,000 skulls.[10]

Some of the limb bones had signs of old fractures: the same newspaper report remarks that 'surgery was not then at its maximum of perfection'. Among these limb bones (and one of the last to be reburied) was an exceptionally long femur (thigh bone) of 21.5 inches long: from this the height of the person to whom it belonged was estimated at around 7 foot, 2 or 3 inches.[11]

The choir furnishings

The choir stalls and their canopies were completed in 1494: the date is carved on the end of the choir stalls. A further date, 1489, appears on the underside of one of the other choir stalls – although sometimes taken as when work began on the furnishings, it is at least as likely (and indeed more likely) that this could be some sort of commemoration of the 1489 Yorkshire Rebellion (against taxes).

Figure 11. Inside the Choir

[10] *The bone house at Ripon Cathedral*, in Yorkshire Gazette 2 June 1866, p.2, cols 1-2 (in British Newspaper Archives, online)
[11] ibid

The work involved top-quality materials, English oak, and top-quality workmanship: the financial records show the skilled workers involved were paid well over legally set rates for the time. Some damage was later done to the choir canopies when the central spire fell down in 1660 (following a lightning strike to the tower in 1653) and the damaged bits were initially replaced in a different Jacobean style. As part of the 1862-1872 refurbishments, these replacements were themselves replaced by 1800s reproductions of the originals: it is almost impossible now to tell, just by looking, which bits of the canopies are 15th century, and which are 19th century (although the records do so tell us).

On the choir stalls themselves, the lift-up seats each have a ledge on the underside – a *MISERICORD*. This idea dates from the 11th century; the ledges were rests ('mercy seats') upon which the churchmen could rest during long periods of standing in various services. The decorative underside carvings are found mainly in England and in France, and also in various other countries north of the Alps. In many other churches, the carvings are often secular; but the Ripon carvings depict spiritual matters, and major concerns of the pre-Reformation church. Their content is taken from several sources, including well-known allegories, and Old Testament events taken to prefigure New Testament ones: the actual designs often copied from prints in circulation at the time (several 'source' prints have been identified).[12]

Several carvings are arranged in groupings taken loosely, those on the south aisle deal with Salvation (and some warnings about temptation), those on the north aisle are more concerned with major challenges facing the pre-Reformation Church. For example, on the north choir wall is a trio of stalls, depicting the 'fox' (aka devil in disguise) preaching to his favourite prey – the gullible goose and arrogant cock – whom he intends to devour depicting pre-Reformation Christianity's concerns about 'false teachings' aka heresies.

Figure 12: misericord carving, fox (devil in disguise) preaching to his intended prey. Reflecting pre-Reformation Christianity's concerns about 'false teachings' i.e. heresies

[12] Norrie M, 2017, *The Misericords of Ripon Cathedral*

There is an interesting point about one of the carvings: that of a sow playing bagpipes, between dancing piglets (south side of choir). In part, it can easily be taken as a warning to celibate churchmen about the moral dangers of secular music/ dancing, as providing opportunities for illicit male/female encounters. However, there is also a potentially fatal disease of piglets, in which newborn piglets appear to dance – Congenital Tremor. This was first documented as a 'new disease' in Veterinary literature in the early 20th Century. Yet – it seemingly appears here, and in a few other late 15th – early 16th century misericord carvings across northern England; raising the thought that this was an earlier artistic depiction of the same disease.

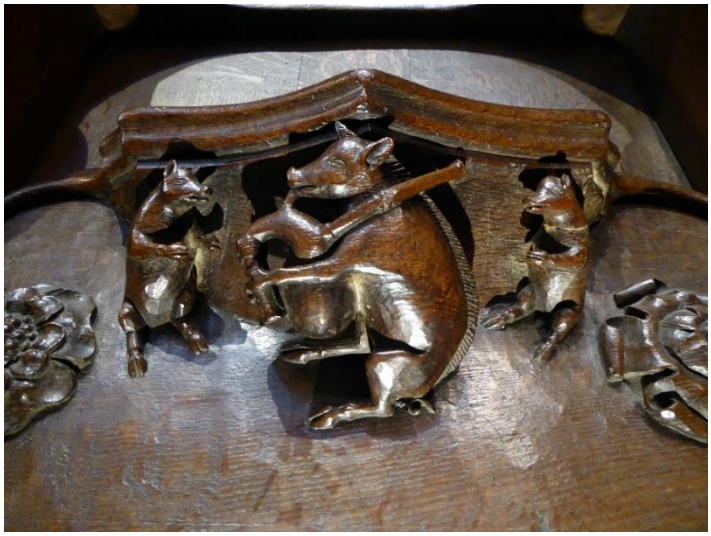

Figure 13. Sow, with dancing piglets

Noticeably, the carvings are in the Northern European style, pre-Renaissance. The Renaissance came to England late, in the time of Henry VIII, who came to the throne in 1507, over a decade after the misericords were carved. These carvings are worth the time exploring. They are accounted the best of their kind in England, perhaps the world, and rightly so.

Conclusion:

Ripon Cathedral continues to feel the effects of having been built on top of a hill, in an area where the bedrock is gypsum. There have been, and no doubt will continue to be, multiple episodes of subsidence threatening its structural stability.

Over the centuries, from when it was first built, it has survived on love. This has been shown by the care and donations from its surrounding population; the willing hands of passionate skilled workmen; and the volunteers who show visitors around.

All this is reflected throughout it – from its overall architecture to every detail of its furnishings.

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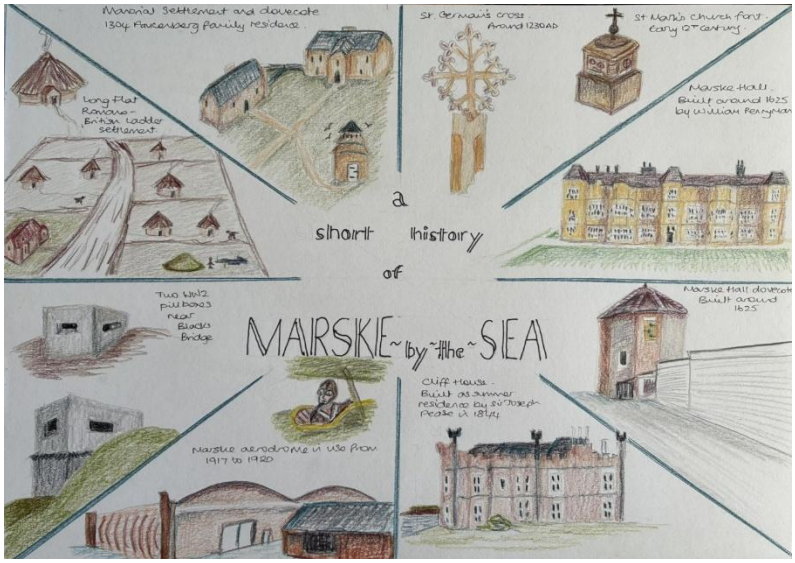
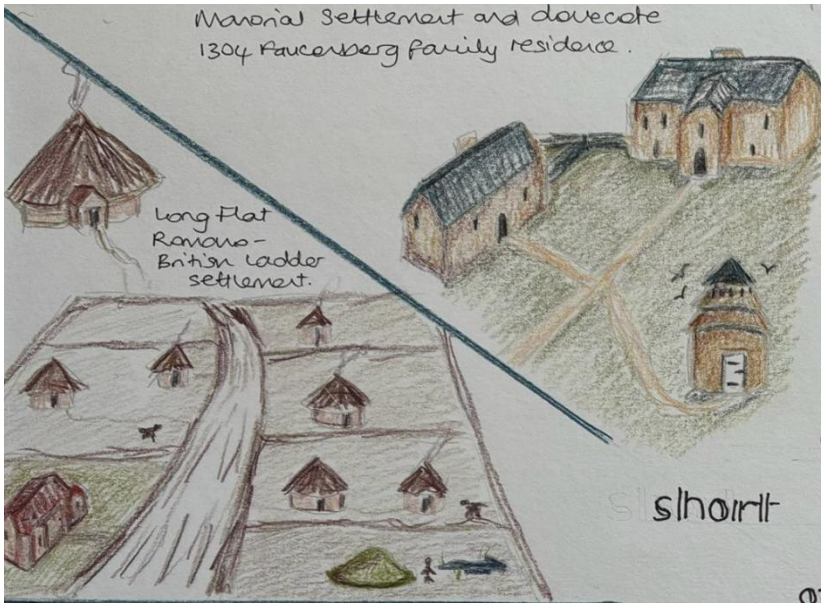
A Short History of Marske by the Sea

Kendra Quinn



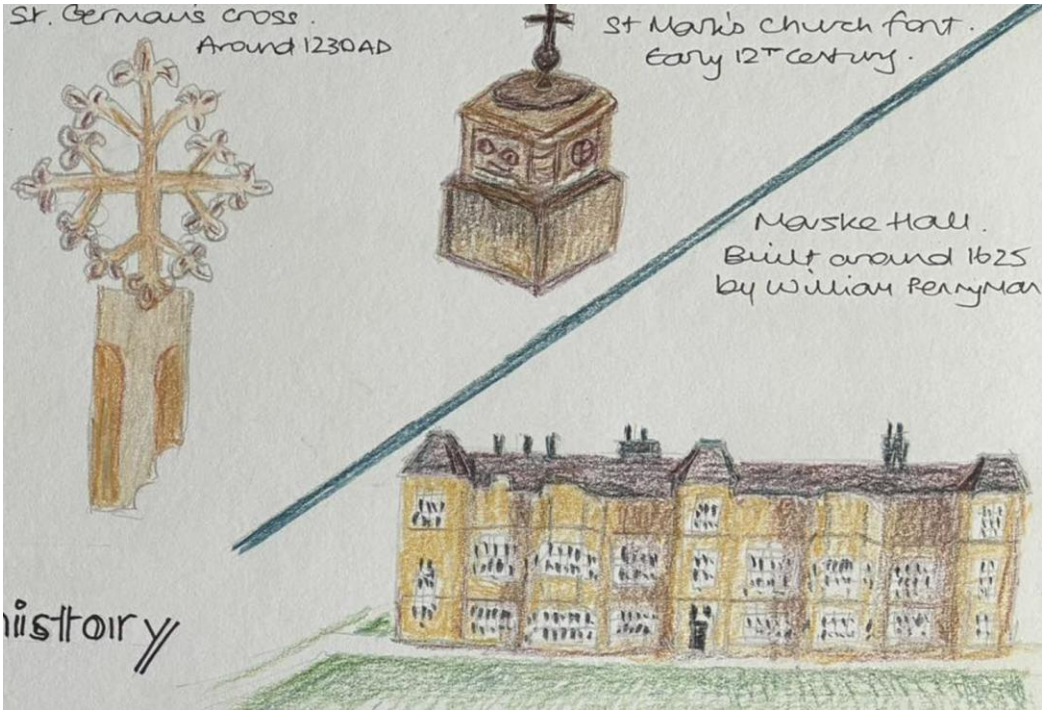
Being a member of our very own Audrey Sanderson's Art Class, "Miss" set us a task of doing a project on something which interests us, to include sketches and some writing. I decided to feature some of the lesser-known aspects of the history of Marske-by-the-Sea. So, I set off with my sketch book and my phone camera and came up with the picture you see, which works chronologically from left to right in a clockwise direction.

To give a little more context on the sites and items I chose to feature, we start with the Long Flat ladder settlement. This is of Romano-British date, and is, as yet, unreported, pending the results of some pre-construct Archaeology. But the magnetometry shows a classic ladder/linear settlement, unusual in the immediate area, and the features and finds reported to date back this up. Alas, a new housing estate is being built on the field now, but we await full results of the Archaeological work. Ladder settlements can often be associated with a nearby fort or villa. Ceramic building materials have been found on site, alongside more traditional roundhouses. So, I have used artistic licence to add a small Marske villa in the left corner, because why not?



We then move on to the Medieval manorial settlement, dovecot and field system, which is Marske's very own Scheduled Ancient Monument. (SAM number 1018948). This is located immediately north of Marske Inn Farm, grid ref NZ627218. This was the Fauconberg family residence with 1304 documentary evidence mentioning the settlement and dovecote as belonging to the family, By 1366, the whole settlement was assigned to Isobel, widow of Walter de Fauconberg.

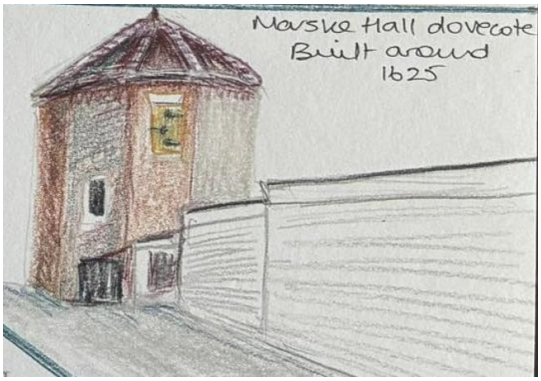
Next, I sneaked into St Mark's Church. The cleaner was in, so I asked if I could pop my head round to see St Germain's Cross. She also looked a bit cross that I was interrupting her hoovering, but I wanted to see the wayside cross at the back of the church, which dates to around 1230 AD and was found in January 1901 buried in sand opposite Cliff House. It marked the route along the beach from Redcar to St Germain's Church on the headland at Marske.



While I was on with the sneaking about in the church, I also looked at the font. The font slab dates from the early 12th century and was found being used as a cattle trough in a local farmyard! It was then pinched back by the vicar to be used s a planter in his garden! Finally, it was rescued and restored to the Church and is used today for its original purpose; the font.

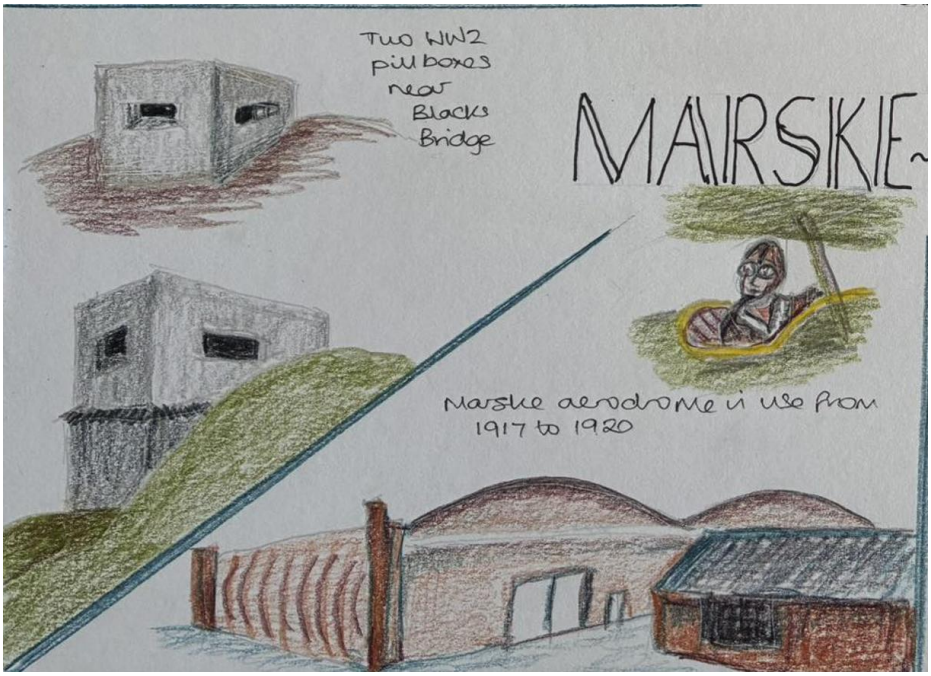
There is apparently also a Green Man in St Mark's Church, but the cleaner was now bearing down on me, and, worried I may be given the job of hoovering the rest of the floor, I escaped before seeing it.

Next stop was the impressive hexagonal dovecote that used to belong to Marske Hall and is now listed (listing number 1387555). It is built of brick with a Welsh slate roof and is currently undergoing some remedial building work. Marske Hall was built around 1625 by William Pennyman, so I am assuming the dovecote dates to around the same period. It is a high structure, so no doubt hosted a good number of doves for the Pennyman table.



Cliff House also had to feature in my project. It is such an imposing building on the cliffs at Marske, visible along the beach from Saltburn and from Redcar. It was built as the summer residence for the family of Sir Joseph Pease in 1844. The family - who lived at Hutton Hall near tropical Guisborough- reportedly found it cold, even in summer. Welcome to our coastline, folks! You need your vest for all but two days of the year, and on those days, you need two vests on!

Marske Aerodrome is next on our timeline. This has also been superseded by a modern housing estate (there is a pattern here….), but I remember the enormous hangers and runways as they were only demolished in the 1980s. The aerodrome was in use between 1917 and 1920 by the Royal Flying Corps, and later by the RAF. Number 2 Flying School, which was based here, was known for training W. E. Johns, author of the Biggles books. Another famous character, Captain Roy Brown, who shot down the Red Baron, was posted here as a flying instructor.



In World War 2, the site was used by the Army. Also in World War 2, pillboxes were built as part of the Defence of Britain programme. Two lovely examples remain at Marske, one either side of Blacks Bridge on the road into the Village from Redcar direction. The one hidden away by the side of the railway lines is of the variant type constructed between 1940 and 1941. It still retains its metal embrasure windows along the side. The other pillbox is in a farm field the other side of the road. It is a type FW3/23 and was constructed between 1940-41.

Both pillboxes are in good condition.

Our Region in View

"Our Region in View" is a new section in which TAS members are invited to send in photographs of archaeological interest that they have taken in our region. The "region" can be anywhere on Teesside, Cleveland or The North Yorkshire Moors or anywhere that you feel would be of interest to our members.

Photographs taken in the past are welcome and some may, in fact be of particular interest when compared to the present day.

If you know of any children or young adults who would like to contribute, please encourage them to do so. A "junior" section would be most welcome.

Archaeology as we know is a wide field encompassing the full span of human activity from the distant past to the present day. The subject matter is huge and varied. Excavations come and go; the revealed archaeology being visible for a fleeting moment whereas archaeological monuments such as John Cross Rigg near Whitby, Eston Nab or the Thornborough Henges seem almost permanent with their imposing presence in the landscape. Buildings survive through the decades and centuries which may be revealed by often subtle structural changes. We do, of course have, in our region a rich and globally important industrial heritage. Even now, industrial landmarks are disappearing to be landscaped or replaced by modern development. The source material is almost endless.

Photographs should be original and labelled. The format should be .jpeg (or variants) or .png and the higher the resolution the better (for ease of formatting).

Please submit photographs to The Editor at bwebbireland@gmail.com.

We begin, this year, with three photographs taken by TAS Member Melanie Dalton:

North Ings Cross-Ridge Dyke. Skelderskew Moor, near Commondale.

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The North Ings cross-ridge dyke extends for 410 meters and incorporates an earlier stone alignment which has been partially encapsulated by the associated bank. The stone alignment extends a further 100 meters to terminate above the bank of North Ings Slack.

Possibly Neolithic to Middle Bronze Age.

Further reading:
Historic England website.
List entry number 101526

Photograph: Melanie Dalton

Hogback Stone Carving, All Saints Church, Crathorne

A 10th Century carved stone or "Hogback" set in a 14th century nave and left in situ during the 1887–8 church restorations.

All Saints Church is blessed with a number of carved Early Medieval stones and is well worth a visit.

Further reading online:
The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture. Volume 6: Northern Yorkshire. Crathorne 04

Photograph: Melanie Dalton

Late Bronze to early Iron Age Hillfort, Eston Nab.

A late evening view of ramparts surrounding the Iron Age Hillfort on Eston Nab set against a 21st Century Teesside landscape in the distance.

Further reading online:

Historic England website. List entry number 1011273

Appears in the Historic England "Heritage at Risk" category.

Photograph: Melanie Dalton