

COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY

GROUP 4 - YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE

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YORKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

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NEWSLETTER 1982-3

EDITORIAL

1982 has been a year of events the consequence of which we may take some time to appreciate, whether they be for good or for ill. Local happenings have included the departure of the West Yorkshire County Archaeologist. Nationally, the frightening effects of financial stringencies continue to make their dismal mark on what archaeologists are able to do to counter the continuing destruction of our past.

On a national scale, however, moves are well advanced to introduce an entire new structure for the administration and execution of archaeological projects in Britain - the National Heritage Bill is now well into its Committee stages, and the new Agency which is proposed is likely to be with us soon. Opinion within the archaeological community remains divided upon the issue; some see it as our only hope of salvation, and envisage a dynamic new entrepreneurial spirit running all of those aspects of archaeology hitherto the concern of central government. Others among us regard the proposals with scepticism, and feel that the Bill adds up to little more than an extension, into an entirely inappropriate area, of government economic dogma. Time will tell, but it is devoutly to be hoped that a major result of new arrangements might be an improvement of the condition of the North. For too long we have been accustomed to receiving what seems to be the scraps of budget and resources left over after apportionment to more favoured parts of the country. There is a growing awareness of the anomaly of this situation: now more than ever before is the time for the north, and one might say the CBA 4 area in particular, to assert what should be its position in British archaeology. We have an incredible archaeological wealth in our area, most of it still unknown and much of it in the sort of conditions of preservation which are scarcely believable to visitors from the south. Now at last, we hope, the voices of northern archaeologists are beginning to be heard as representative not just of a peripheral and marginal area but of the very heart of Britain, of which the archaeological resources are a primary and priceless national asset. We hope that whoever is running our archaeology in the coming times will at once recognise the urgent necessity of continuing and accelerating the acknowledgement of the north's resources, and of giving us the funds and levels of manpower which we need to realise our extraordinary resources.

PERCIVAL TURNBULL

Honorary Secretary's Report

Towards the end of last year, our Secretary, Chris Arnold, left Leeds and his post with the University, to take up a new post with the extra-mural Department of University College, Aberystwyth. This left the position of Honorary Secretary vacant, a job which fell to me to fill, until the AGM can vote in a new Secretary.

Much of our time over the last year has been spent on discussion concerning the way Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings are administered, prior to the reorganisation of the functions into a new agency. Opinions expressed by members of the Group have ranged from being in favour to being strongly disapproving. Many outside explanations and opinions have been sought and with the publishing of "The Way Forward" local MPs have been canvassed with the aim of presenting the Group's views.

Also over the year Part II of the Archaeological Areas Act came into operation, with at least one, York, in the CBA 4 area being proposed. This has led to discussion about the role of amateur archaeologists within these areas, and worries about the neglect of rural areas, which at the moment will not be included under the initial implementation of the Act.

To this end it was decided that CBA 4 should try to inform mineral operators in Yorkshire and Humberside about threats to archaeology on their land. It is hoped we will distribute copies of the CBI Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation to all mineral operators within our area.

Worry has been expressed throughout the year about the Group's relationship with Central CBA. Many ideas have been put forward about ways of improving the flow of information between local groups and the CBA. The Secretary has been asked to produce a paper for the next Annual Groups Meeting in February 1983 with proposals and ideas for the reorganisation of the CBA.

Publicising CBA 4 has been taken care of by the production of a Poster which will soon be proclaiming CBA 4's presence as well as advertising future events.

A programme of day schools in conjunction with the medieval section of the YAS has proved popular throughout the year. A day school in Ancient Metallurgy was held in October 1982 which explained current views on metalworking in the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Attendance at Management Committee meetings has proved to be variable, and does appear to be influenced by the location chosen. It would perhaps be opportune to point out that Institutional members of CBA 4 who send representatives, should ensure that those people are free to attend and if possible provide travelling expenses as an aid to regular attendance. Generally the figure of attendances averages about 8 for each meeting, not very good when you consider that there are 60 Institutional members of CBA 4 who could each send a representative.

Since the area of Yorkshire and Humberside is well served by many local societies, many of the functions of other groups within the CBA are not necessary in our zone. This inevitably leads to some isolation of local groups from CBA endeavours. The CBA through its regional groups seeks to stimulate an informed interest in the past and these groups can only work with the interest and dedication of their members.

It is hoped that in the following year members of CBA 4 will see the group as having a real function to play in both the local and national archaeological scene, and will continue and increase their active support and participation.

MARTIN STOCKWELL
Acting Hon Secretary

EARLY LAND DIVISION ON SWALEDALE IN THE VICINITY OF MARSKE AND REETH, PART 2

The first part of this article, CBA 4 Newsletter 1981 pages 8-12, outlined the wide ranging systems of parallel land division (reaves) which have survived in the form of substantial banks of rocks of considerable individual length (up to 2km) on open moorland above the highest intake walls above Fremington Edge and on Skelton Moor above Marske.

In this the second part of the article I propose to describe the evidence for early land use and land division which has survived on the upper, south facing slopes of Calver and Cringley Hill West of Reeth.

Similar evidence recently discovered on Army Ranges on Ellerton Moor, South of the Swale and the surviving evidence for early settlement and land use on Harkerside Moor, will be outlined in the third and final part - hopefully in the next News Bulletin.

First, however, I must refer to certain additional evidence omitted from my earlier report on Fremington Edge:-

FREMINGTON EDGE, COPPERTHWAITE ALLOTMENT (Continued from CBA 4 1981 Newsletter pages 9 and 10).

At NZ 0375 (1475', 450m O.D.) a circle of small rocks which protrude through thin turf on the very edge of the steep escarpment forming the Eastern slopes of Arkengarthdale above Castle Farm marks the foundation of an isolated round house. This large (12m) circular house was situated with no regard for shelter as though, on aesthetic grounds, to enjoy a view which is most dramatic - only the summit of Calver opposite and the higher fells at the head of Swaledale being on the same level.

Small fields survive now as stone-free areas with irregular banks of clearance stones close to the house. These fields point to the cultivation of cereals or other crops in addition to the more probable pastoral basis of the economy of this very high settlement of early date.

I have now established that the system of parallel boundaries (reaves) on Copperthwaite Allotment whose centre seems to be the large circular house structure attached to a main reave at SE 057997 (1415', 430m, O.D.) extends to the West Bank of Raygill. The most westerly reave of this system found so far as is at NZ 047 007. This reave runs NNE from the small linear earthwork (bank) which may or may not be part of the Grinton-Fremington cross valley dyke system.

No connection can yet be shown to exist between the house and small field system just described and the parallel reaves on Copperthwaite Allotment however they may well be contemporary and the occupation of the high land above Fremington Edge by two separate social groups could then be demonstrated. Each settlement possessed small arable fields close to the main habitation area. Each settlement possessed pastured ranges of great extent, those of Copperthwaite being defined and controlled in strips by parallel ranch boundaries. The grazing areas available to the settlement above Castle Farm being unlimited in extent and accordingly undefined except on the Eastern shared boundary with Copperthwaite - at Raygill.

D. CALVER AND CRINGLEY HILL

A large number of rock cairns or clearance heaps (no distinction has been demonstrated for the origins of these cairns, they are both clearance in origins and do conceal burials in some instances) have survived often undisturbed on the wide terrace below Cringley Hill and below the Western summit of Calver. Grid reference NZ 001 003 (Centre).

A circular enclosure with five large cairns within and one round house foundation is situated at the base of a steep slope at Grid Reference 000 003.

Banks of rock and clearance stones, originally fences, divide the whole Southern flank of Calver into wide strips, presumably to control stock.

Further clearance cairns, a single isolated circular enclosure and rock banks are to be seen on the rough Moorland below and the East of the small group of fields known as Cleasby. Grid Reference NZ 004 001. On the upper slopes of Cringley Hill, at Grid Reference NY 996 005 O.D. small enclosures one an ellipse formed of rock orthostat walling occupy a narrow South facing terrace just below the landrover track. Clearance heaps, stone free areas and hut sites indicate settlement with a limited arable and more general stock raising economy here also.

The large sub-circular enclosure previously noted ¹ at Grid Reference NZ 003 005 does not seem to be directly associated with settlement and may be an isolated stock pound.

All the above evidence indicates initial limited early settlement of Cringley Hill and the Western slopes of Calver based upon a mixed arable and stock raising economy. The long parallel banks running up the Southern slopes are part of larger, more comprehensive systems of early land division which is best preserved on the Eastern slopes of Calver, on Riddings Rigg. Here, at Grid Reference SE 020 998, an isolated circular ditched and embanked pound has been robbed clear to provide rock for one of a series of parallel land divisions running due North-South ie up and across the Rigg. This North-South series is in turn crossed by unrelated diagonal banks of rocks of great length which trend South East-North West.

These diagonal reaves which trend South East-North West terminate on a contour reave at 1250 'OD which also provides the terminal of a series of long reaves which run up the Eastern slopes of Calver from Black Hill above the Landthwaite - Reeth Road. The reaves are very substantial - up to 4m in width - generally in the form of simple banks of clearance stones but sometimes revetted with larger rocks. Clearance cairns are not numerous on Riddings Rigg but are generally distributed over the whole area including Black Hill.

Thus, on Riddings Rigg three superimposed systems of early land division can be recognised. The earliest in date is clearly the circular pound.

The North-South trending reaves are not robbed by and do not rob the South East-North West reaves which they cross. This fact is interesting since the lapse of a long period of time between construction of these two systems may be indicated: the earlier having been covered by build up of humus or peat, forgotten and not exploited to provide material for the construction of the later system.

The parallel land divisions, reaves or ranch boundaries on Skelton Moor and on Copperthwaite Allotment above Fremington Edge which were described in the preceding Newsletter together with those on Calver described above, are evidence for the organised management of very extensive areas of high ground (above 300m OD) North of the Swale.

Similar evidence to be described in a future article exists South of the Swale.

The concept of parallel land division (reaves) has been shown, on Dartmoor², to date to the 2nd millenium. It is considered that the systems of reaves here described are comparable in scale and conception to those on Dartmoor.

The conclusion can therefore be reached that the population of the Swale Valley at the commencement of the Iron Age was much greater than hitherto suspected.

The great earthwork cross valley defensive dykes known as the Grinton-Fremington Dyke System may have been the response of this population to offensive threats from the East or they may have been thrown up to fulfil the status requirements of a local chieftain.

The Brigantian/Roman context for these earthworks is no longer the only context in which they should be considered.

NOTES

1. Y.A.J. Arch. Register 1967, 6 - Oval enclosure, 240' x 211' between Cringley Hill and Calver Hill at 1400' O.D.
2. A Fleming and J Collis, Proceedings of the Devon Arch. Soc. 31 (1973), 1-21. J M Coles and A F Harding, The Bronze Age in Europe 1979, page 251.

A Fleming 1978 'The Prehistoric Landscape of Dartmoor'.
Part 1: South Dartmoor, P.P.S. 44. 97-123.

K Smith, J Coppen, G S Wainwright and S Beckett. 'The Shaugh Moor Project: Third Report'. P.P.S., 47, 1981, pp 205-273.

T C Laurie
Barningham
Co. Durham

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THORPE THEWLES, GRINDON (NZ 3963 2432)

The Nature of the site and summary of results

The excavation has examined a late Iron Age Settlement threatened by agricultural erosion on the boulder clay foot-hills of the south Durham plateau between Sedgefield and Stockton and represents the first large scale area excavation on a boulder clay lowland site in the Northern Region.

Two years of continuous excavation have pointed to the existence of phases both before and after the currency of the large (0.7 hectare) bank and ditched enclosure with a central circular structure, which generated the cropmark by which the site was discovered in 1976. As a lowland cropmark site, Thorpe Thewles is exceptional in the degree of survival of horizontal stratigraphy, which covers perhaps 30% of the 6,000 square metres excavated. Fortuitously, crucial areas like the central circular structure, and the eastern ditch length, (where a superimposition of features provide excellent site phasing information) possess surviving stratigraphy.

The Pre Settlement Phase

Landscape elements preceding the intensive use of the site have been identified. These take the form of field boundaries, running against the alignment of the later Iron Age features. These are undated but probably late Iron Age.

Early Settlement

A series of ditches and at least one circular structure preceded the construction of the bank and ditch enclosure.

The Bank and Ditch Enclosure

This phase is typical of the class of Iron Age sub-rectangular enclosures found across the North. A total of 105 are known from Durham, and 10 from Cleveland. The site occupies the summit of a gentle hill and dates from the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC. A large central house is probably contemporary. This was surrounded by a massive drainage ditch, 18.95m in diameter and over 1.5m wide, which was recut at least twice; this had an entrance break in the south-east. The threshold was coarsely cobbled, and the door-posts (3 successive pairs) were housed in substantial post-pits. The roof was supported by a ring of internal posts (each recut at least once) surrounding an open hearth of oxidized clay. The wall of the earliest phase consisted of upright stakes, probably interwoven with wattle and covered with daub. During rebuilding, this wall was dismantled and the replacement contained no timber element, being merely a mixed clay with vegetable matter cob-wall, set on the ground surface. This and the preceding wall enclosed a floor-space some 14.5m in diameter.

The Later Phase

The 1st century BC and the 1st century AD saw an acceleration in activity resulting in the levelling of the bank and ditched enclosure and subsequent expansion beyond the perimeter confines. The interior appears to have become congested as the population expanded, requiring provision for further expansion. A further 14 circular ring-ditch structures have been totally examined, a further three probable structures continue beyond the excavation area. A variety of construction techniques were apparent, reflecting either specialisation or chronological development. At least two are probable houses, although plough damage has removed the hearth settings. The later settlement was organised by linear boundaries which also served as drainage ditches, and track-ways across the filled-in enclosure ditch and into the settlement can be isolated.

The substantial change in the character of the settlement is reflected by a change in the material culture, with the introduction of imported products, not only from within the region but from the continent, presumably via markets in the south. In its final phase, the artifactual assemblage is most closely paralleled by finds from Stanwick, North Yorkshire.

Unfortunately a sizeable proportion of the later features exist as subsoil disturbances, and cannot be linked into the site phasing.

Blaise Vyner
Cleveland County Council

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION

Sites and Monuments Record

The main project undertaken by the Archaeology Section of North Yorkshire County Council during 1982 has been the development of the County Sites and Monuments Record. This computer-based intensive record system which consists of a basic record supported by aerial photographic, bibliographic and archive files has been designed to facilitate manipulation and rapid retrieval of archaeological data at various degrees of classification. By the end of 1982 data for the western parts of the North York Moors, Vale of Pickering and North Yorkshire Wolds had been transferred from card indexes to the computerised system, a total of c 13,000 records. The record system, which incorporates automatic validation of 34 of the 49 data fields in the basic record, was designed by North Yorkshire County Council Computer Services; manipulative programs have been developed by Archaeology Section members.

Two subsidiary computer files have also been developed.

Excavation Index

A revised and updated version of the Excavation Index for North Yorkshire, initially compiled by the National Monuments Board, is now on computer and currently records data on 1066 excavations. Consideration is being given to joint dissemination of the information.

Aerial Photograph Index

Plotting of aerial photographs and work on the Aerial Photograph Index, has continued (see The North Yorkshire Archaeological Aerial Photograph Index, CBA Group 4 Newsletter 1981, 16). The previously suggested figure of 20,000 archaeological aerial photographs has been shown to be an underestimate: the figure is now expected to be in excess of 28,000. The majority of aerial photographers active in the county have been contacted but anybody who knows of archaeological aerial photographs which have not yet been consulted is requested to contact Robert White on Northallerton 3123, extension 331. The Section's aerial photograph collection, which is stored by NGR, now consists of some 5,000 photographs.

Excavation Support

The Section has continued to provide administrative and other support facilities, including computer processing for the Heselton Parish Project and Seamer Carr excavations reported elsewhere in this Newsletter. Computerised excavation records are stored in a derivative of the main SMR system and will be accessible through the Sites and Monuments Record.

Education

Attention has also been paid to developing links with schools and other educational institutions. An exhibition mounted for a local studies resources seminar stimulated much interest in the educational potential of local archaeology which has been fostered by further seminars and field walking projects. One consequent development is the use of data, generated by the Sites and Monuments Record, by schools on their own computer terminals.

An important Press Release has been received from the North York Moors National Park:

Purchase of Cawthorn Moor by National Park Committee

Terms have been agreed for the purchase of 103 acres of Cawthorn Moor near Cropton by the North York Moors National Park Committee, assisted by grant aid from the Countryside Commission and the Ancient Monuments Secretariat of the Department of the Environment. The agreed price is £25,000 but, in addition, the Committee has undertaken to fence the land.

The National Park Committee has been interested in the future of Cawthorn Moor for many years primarily because of the four Roman earthworks, or camps, sited at the edge of Cawthorn Bank. These are believed to have been unique in the Roman Empire and are in an unusually fine state of preservation. The Roman Camps are therefore a monument of international significance. Also of archaeological value are a number of features including Bronze Age and Iron Age Barrows.

The vegetation over much of the area is naturally regenerated Birch and Scots Pine, which is visually attractive and supports a wide variety of wildlife.

There are no public paths on the area but visitors have long been attracted not only because of the Roman Camps, but also because of the magnificent views across the moor and to Elleron Lake.

In the past the Park Committee has discussed the management of the area with the Ancient Monuments Secretariat and the owners. Indeed, some of the most urgent work needed to safeguard the monument was carried out by the National Park Department in 1982. However, the owners felt that it was more practicable for the National Park Committee to bring the area into public ownership and offered to sell the Roman Camps and surrounding land to the Committee.

The Committee's future plans for the area will be the subject of a detailed management plan, which will be prepared shortly. While details are obviously not available, it is clear that a priority will be the protection of the Ancient Monument by removal of the trees and control of the bracken. This will also enable the visiting public to view the earthworks without hindrance and the National Park Committee to interpret them effectively.

If further information is required please contact:

Mr M Webster
North York Moors National Park
The Old Vicarage
Helmsley
(Tel. 0439 70657)

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The work of the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York

The EAU, set up in 1975, exists to examine animal and plant remains from archaeological deposits in order to reconstruct past environments and human activity. The Unit owes its origin to a small group of biologists working with the York Archaeological Trust in the early 1970s. Today the full-time staff of 7, 4 funded by the Department of the Environment and 3 on Science and Research Council projects, study most of the different animal and plant remains

which are preserved in the thick, highly organic deposits underlying much of the heart of the city of York. Since 1979 a number of new members of staff have been appointed to supplement the original team, which specialised in the analysis of insect remains, pollen, seeds, wood, soils, fish bones and parasite eggs. An archaeozoologist now examines mammal bones and mollusc shells, a small team is completing its researches into the history of cattle and pigs and a second botanist has recently begun to examine vegetative plant remains, for example leaves, stems and bud scales. A large number of students and volunteers regularly visit the laboratory and undertake a variety of tasks. Their help is particularly necessary for sorting the washed residues of large soil samples, which are sieved to 1mm in order to recover small bones, artefacts and other finds.

During the last twelve months, much effort has concentrated on examining material collected from the excavations at 16-22 Coppergate. An attempt is made to keep in step with the archaeologists preparing the site for publication, and so material deposited during the Viking period now has the highest priority. The first batch of material examined has been the deposits from within some of the tenth century plank-built workshops. Insect remains and the eggs of intestinal parasites are providing evidence of the conditions within these buildings, and of the contrast between the internal and external environments. Currently, material collected from substantial pits dug into the natural sub-soil is being examined. These features usually contain evidence that at some time they received human faeces, although their upper fills often include large amounts of mammal bone. Pits therefore provide an ideal opportunity to investigate the diet of the Anglo-Scandinavian occupants of York, and also reveal something of the fauna of the town as animals which fell into them often failed to climb out to safety. Much of the faecal material consists of cereal bran, together with remains of other food plants such as apple, blackberry and sloe. The eggs of two kinds of intestinal parasite are also frequently recorded suggesting the widespread occurrence of 'worms' in Viking York.

Considerable effort has been made to identify the many thousands of wood samples. Timbers need identification before conservation so that the most suitable treatment can be selected. Many pieces of large timbers judged unworthy of conservation also require identification. In addition, many hundreds of wattle samples have been collected in order that we may learn something of coppicing practices in the Viking period.

The analysis of samples excavated from 6-8 Pavement, a site which produced abundant evidence of leather working, has finally been completed and the text of the report is in press. A report on animal bones from excavations on Walmgate and Skeldergate is nearing completion. Roman samples from within the Fortress have almost been completed, giving evidence of the environment and climate in Roman and immediately post-Roman times. A large group of medieval cess-pits from the Bedern site are currently being investigated. Members of the laboratory continue to visit the archaeological sites of York as they are excavated and offer advice on sampling and recovering material.

The laboratory has recently taken on the responsibility for examining the soil samples and animal bones from excavation at the Lurk Lane site at Beverley and the analysis of insect assemblages from waterlogged Roman material excavated in Carlisle. Small groups of material from a number of other sites, usually excavated on behalf of the Department of the Environment, have been analysed and material from other sources is occasionally examined.

Dr A David
University of York

The Heslerton Parish Project - a Summary

Recent excavations at Heslerton, North Yorkshire, sponsored by the DOE through NYCC, have shown that extensive deposits of aeolian sands along the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering have preserved detailed evidence of man's activity from the Mesolithic to the Anglo-Saxon periods. Occupation, beginning in the Late Mesolithic and indicated by an extensive flint assemblage along the banks of the relict stream channels on Site 1, is followed by agricultural, domestic and ritual activities in the Neolithic. At least two phases have been identified for the Neolithic period, the first being represented by a series of ditches and gullies, the second by 'grooved ware' pit pairs and two rows of large post-pits which may be interpreted as part of an avenue, perhaps related to a ritual monument as yet undiscovered.

The establishment of two barrow cemeteries during the Early Bronze Age would suggest that the Vale of Pickering was at least as important as the Wolds to the south and the North York Moors at this time. Three barrows in group 1, protected by the overlying deposits of aeolian sand, have been examined in some detail and have revealed important structural sequences. There is also limited evidence for contemporary settlement in the form of a small ring gully together with lithic and ceramic material.

The cutting of a major boundary, in the form of a pit alignment which runs across the site from east to west, marks the first phase in a sequence of land divisions extending across the Vale and onto the Wolds. Associated with the pit alignment boundary, a large open linear settlement is first established during the Late Bronze Age at about 800 BC, in contrast to the palisaded enclosures of Staple Howe and Devil's Hill on the Wold scarp to the south. Structural remains in the form of post-holes, deriving from a large number and variety of timber-framed structures, were widely distributed over a large area of Site 1 and included both roundhouses and four post structures. A number of minor boundaries associated with the settlement and defining fields and trackways, were also examined. Occupation of the settlement appears to have been interrupted during the later Iron Age, when it is possible that a similar linear settlement is established 500m to the North. The major landscape boundary continues to function throughout the Roman period, during which a number of trackways crossed the site. A series of ditches and gullies in the southern part of Site 1 may be related to the Roman precursor of the present trunk road, the A64.

During the early part of the sixth century an Anglian settlement was established around a stream which now surfaces at the foot of the wolds. Both timber-framed and sunken-featured structures were located together with large quantities of domestic refuse. An associated cemetery 300m to the north-east of the settlement and divided by the A64 trunk road, has been examined extensively on Site 1, while only sample trenches have been examined on Site 2. This is the only inhumation cemetery of the period in the North to be examined extensively using modern techniques. Most of the graves were accompanied, and an important body of textile evidence has been gathered. A cruciform brooch from one of the grave groups had a runic inscription, thought to be a personal name, scratched on the reverse. A further interesting feature of the cemetery was the clearly ritual burial of a decapitated horse. The final phase of the major landscape boundary is marked by a small gully which appears to define the limit of an area of Anglian fields situated over 200m to the north of the cemetery. These fields, like those established in the prehistoric period, follow the general East-West axis of the landscape.

This marks the end of the first phase of the Heslerton Parish Project. As soon as the current post-excavation work has been completed, it is hoped that excavation will resume in 1984 and the Anglian settlement examined in some detail.

Dominic Powlesland
Yedingham
Nr. Malton

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Excavations at Seamer Carr, near Scarborough, 1982 Season

The excavations at Seamer Carr lasted the whole of August 1982. The aim of this year's programme firstly was to continue the sampling operation of 2 x 2 sq metre sampling trenches along the (subterranean) 26 metre OD contour, in an attempt to locate evidence for early Mesolithic occupation. 52 2x2m squares were excavated, often as deep as 2m into peat, and over half produce quantities of worked flint, as well as some animal bone, came from the muddy sand deposits. As a result of this work it was possible to indicate an area of at least 25x25 sq. m. which seems likely to have a high potential for producing intensive early Mesolithic activity - two of the 2x2m squares contained densities of struck and retouched flint exceeding 50 per square metre, and also several pieces of bone. In addition this potential site seems to have been on the edge of a small occasional pond fed by the Black Dike, and thus represent a different microenvironment to that found at Site C on the Eastern side of the area under excavation.

The second aim of the excavation was to investigate the extent of an area of flint knapping on West Island which had been originally noted in 1979. This area proved to be restricted in size and seems to represent an isolated incident of flint knapping in the early Mesolithic.

The third aim was to investigate the nature of the activity in the area of Rabbit Island, where early and late Mesolithic material had been recovered in 1980 and 1981. Small trenches here showed conclusively that there was no indication of extensive early Mesolithic activity off the peat-margins, although some early Bronze Age pottery was recovered from these section.

Finally work continued on Site C on the margins of East Island; once again horse teeth were recovered from the muddy sands; this year three groups were found. More importantly the lower jaw of a pig was recovered, associated with extensive Scatters of worked flint. The area excavated this year produced struck and retouched flint reaching densities of well over 100 per square metre, and included cores and microliths. There is still no sign of a Western limit to this site which has now produced over 10,000 recorded pieces of flint scattered in varying densities over an area of c. 250 square metres.

The results of this year have underlined the conclusions of previous seasons (a) that much of the 25m OD area over a distance of approximately 1 mile has been intermittently occupied during the early Mesolithic period, and that a variety of densities of material makes it dangerous to assume that we should think in terms of compact sites during this period; (b) that the level of organic preservation is extremely high throughout the site area; (c) that there are two areas of extensive and intensive activity - Site C which remains to be completed and the new site on the edge of the causeway, adjacent to a pond.

The sampling approach over such a great distance has been extremely useful in underlining that only through this type of approach can one begin to establish the real pattern of early Mesolithic activity.

R T Schadla-Hall
Town Docks Museum
Kingston-upon-Hull

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Excavations at the former County Hospital, York

The York Archaeological Trust

The mid-nineteenth century County Hospital in York occupies most of the land between Monkgate and Fossbank, a little way outside the walls of the Roman fortress and of the medieval city. Excavations (which continue) were undertaken in 1982, in advance of the site's redevelopment for J Sainsbury PLC. The site may be considered in three parts: the local authority car park at the corner of St Maurice's Road and Fossbank; the area between Fossbank and the rear of the hospital; and the area between Monkgate and the front of the hospital. Small-scale exploratory work in the car park site, by Patrick J Ottaway, revealed the existence of an inhumation cemetery which it is intended fully to explore during 1983. Excavations in the other two areas were undertaken during the summer and autumn of 1982 under the supervision of Percival Turnbull, with a labour force provided by the Manpower Services Commission.

The area at the rear of the hospital was until lately used as recreational gardens, and had upon it no substantial modern or recent buildings. Over two areas, topsoil was moved by machine and was found to progress in depth from about half a metre at the northern end of the site to two metres at the southern end. This topsoil was an undifferentiated loose, organic 'garden' soil, with post-medieval finds throughout its depth. It appears likely that it is related to the known use of much of the area as orchards during the nineteenth century and earlier, with additional material dumped onto the southern half during landscaping operations connected with the construction of part of the hospital.

Except in small and discrete areas where the bottom part of the medieval soil seemed to have survived, the topsoil directly overlay the natural bedrock, a yellow clay studded with boulders and marbled with veins of sand. There was no trace of medieval occupation or activity apart from a few minor disturbances and the possibility that some of the burials encountered may have been medieval.

Cut into the natural clay was a series of ditches, of Roman date, representing part of a rectilinear system of small plots aligned with the cardinal points. The ditch system appeared to have been in use for a considerable period of time: pottery finds, which await detailed analysis, date from as early as the first and as late as the fourth centuries. The ditches themselves showed two main periods of alignment within which were complex sequences of silting and recutting.

No other Roman features apart from a small group of pits, concentrated at the southern end of the site, nearest to St Maurice's Road. The small number of finds did not suggest even a secondary use as rubbish pits, and there was no reason to associate them with any industrial process. The most likely explanation is as cess pits, perhaps at the extreme rear of properties on St Maurice's Road (where a tessellated pavement was noted in the nineteenth century).

Scattered over the area examined were a total of eight human burials, those associated with dating evidence proving to be Romano-British. Grave goods were virtually non-existent. Three burials had been encoffined, one coffin (of a late-Roman infant) having had a lining of thin lead sheet enclosed within the wooden outer case. Several burials were inserted into the upper fills of ditches; one skeleton, indeed, lay face-downwards in the bottom of a ditch and was covered merely by the ditch-silts. One cremation was found in a coarse grey jar.

It is interesting that a site so close to the fortress should produce so little evidence of settlement. The site is also, however, very close to the River Foss, and drainage is even now bad: it appears that the site has always been regarded as marginal and unsuited to occupation, and has been used instead for small-scale agricultural and horticultural activity carried out in the Roman period within small plots defined by ditches which served both as boundaries and as drains. The ditches were used as casual rubbish-dumps, and the site was sometimes visited for the purpose of digging poverty-stricken graves.

Excavation is also taking place at the Monkgate frontage of the hospital, under the supervision of Amanda Clarke. To date, this work has been concerned mostly with the examination and removal of the foundations of the original, mid-eighteenth century, County Hospital.

Percival Turnbull

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FINDS AND SITES IN THE VALE OF YORK

Bickerton SE 440507

A beehive quern topstone was found with other debris about 20' below ground level in the dyke at the Ainsty Bridge. Base diameter 32cm, height 18cm, unfossiliferous sandstone, fine grained, not millstone grit. Retained by Mr A T Tolhurst, 11 Hall Park, Heslington, York.

Shipton SE 555605

Irregular earthworks lie in the field immediately east of Hall Bank Farm. Apparently a small deserted medieval settlement, possibly the 'Aldeby' mentioned several times in the early 13th century charters of Shipton.

D A and A M Spratt