NORTH OF THE WALL
TYNEDALE ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP

Newsletter 7
January 2023

Inside this issue:

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We are a local voluntary group exploring the hidden aspects of our rich heritage spanning thousands of years.

BEYOND THE WALL

Welcome to our seventh Newsletter. It has been some time since the last one was produced so many apologies. Thanks to all those whose have provided articles in particular Martin Green, Phil Bowyer & Malc McCallum.

Wishing you all a very happy New Year and looking forward to a more productive season in 2023 and beyond.

Andy Curtis

Membership

Membership for the coming year runs from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. Subject to changes at our AGM in the New Year our subscription rates are: £10 single, £15 couple, £5 students or on benefits.

All our subscriptions go to the cause of furthering our commitment to community archaeology.

Notice of AGM: Wednesday 5th April, Hexham Community Centre, 7pm, followed by an illustrated talk at 7:30pm by Andy Curtis. All welcome whether a current member of not.

Stan Beckensall teaching his stone-rubbing technique, Ravensheugh Crags

Abstractions Based on Circles: Papers on prehistoric rock art presented to Stan Beckensall on his 90th birthday

Edited by Paul Frodsham, Kate Sharpe

Full text and figures of this book can be downloaded for free from Archaeopress
192 pages, 155 figures (colour throughout), Published Sep 2022

Introduction to Chapter 15
An inspiration for community archaeology volunteers by Phil Bowyer and Andy Curtis

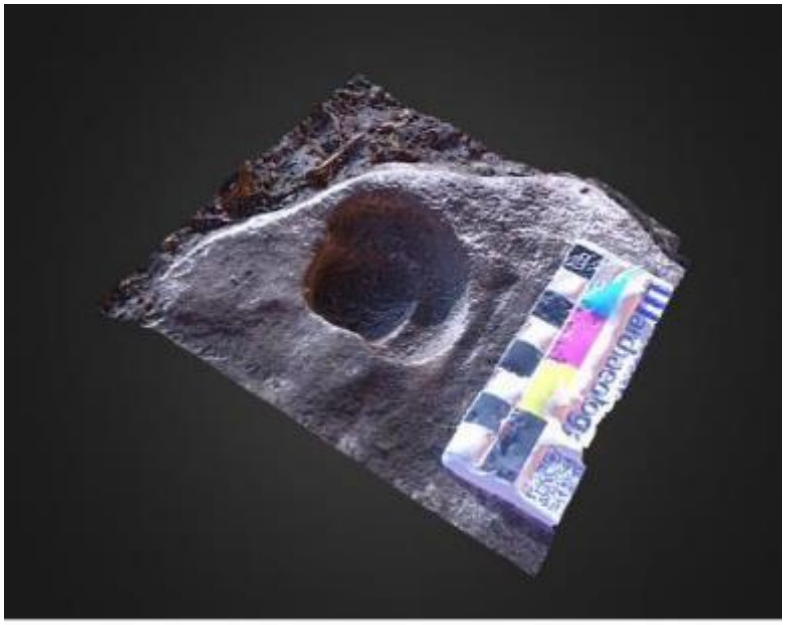
One of the most important of all Stan Beckensall's contributions over the years has been his extraordinary role in inspiring and facilitating community engagement in archaeology and local history. We are just two of what must be many hundreds, possibly thousands, of individuals who have been prompted by Stan's work to wander the wilds of Northumberland searching out ancient sites with one of his books in hand. Although his work has been published since 1974, it was his two locally printed handbooks, Prehistoric Rock Motifs of Northumberland, Volumes 1 and 2 (Beckensall 1991, 1992), that many amateur enthusiasts carried around the county as their guide and reference. In his foreword to Volume 2 Richard Bradley says: "*In writing this book, he [Stan] has made a considerable contribution to our knowledge of prehistoric Britain. More important, his work conveys the excitement of discovery and his feeling for the carvings and those who made them. This is not the prerogative of those who practice archaeology as a career. He shares his work with a much wider public, and this is what makes this book so attractive. Like the carvings themselves, it is for everyone.*" In this paper we are sure that we speak for the countless individuals who have been inspired by his work to engage with their local heritage and themselves help to bring this alive in the present day. Through his books, his talks, and his long-serving community involvement, Stan is a familiar figure to so many who are grateful for the experience of knowing him. In the limited space available we will focus on the following aspects: Personal accounts of the experience of encountering Stan's work, an outline of just one example of his longstanding engagement in the development of community archaeology, as President of Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group for the past decade, a selective summary of some recent rock art discoveries made as a result of his inspiration, guidance and support, the need to improve digital access to rock art information and for protection of rock art sites.

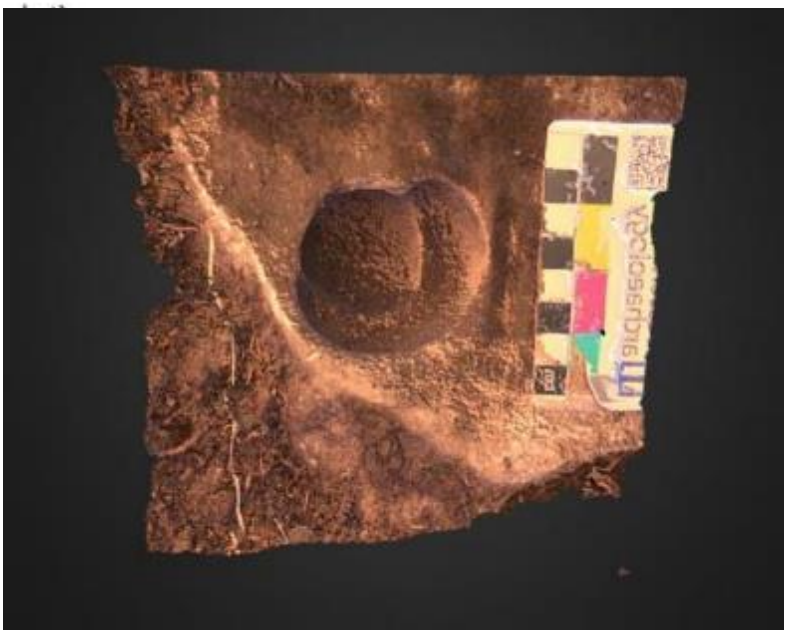
Aron Mazel, Stan and his daughter, Rachel at Hexham Abbey, September 2022.

Strange new find at Rattenraw

Is it man-made, vegetable or mineral? Is it a cast of a fossilised shell or a natural concretion?
I am not sure what the stone was? The scale card is 8cm long.
Answers on a postcard please.

See 3D model on Sketchfab here: **https://skfb.ly/oyzol**





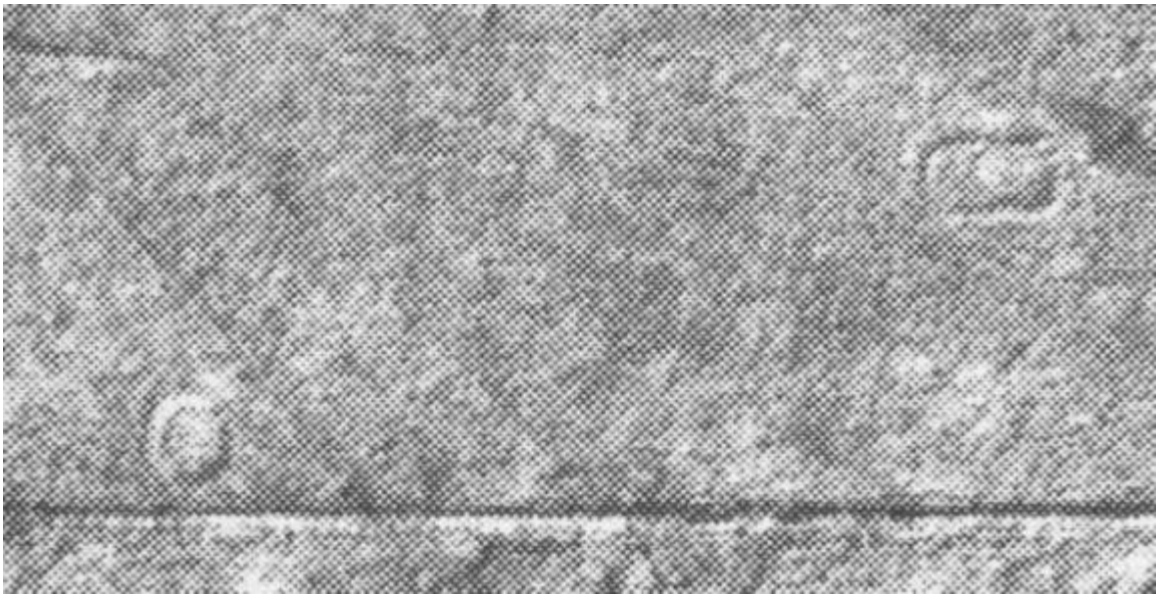
Using the Model Inspector menu (bottom right) allows you to turn off the textured surface by selecting Matcap. The solid model looks just as strange.

Sewingshields Stack Stands Excavation

Preliminary Report by Phil Bowyer (13/6/22)

As the full excavation report will take some time to prepare this short preliminary report is intended to give a summary of main outcomes for participants. The excavation, carried out between June 6th and 10th, received financial support from Northumberland National Park for which we are very grateful. We also appreciate the permission to excavate from the Straker Trust and the Murrays at Sewingshields Farm. The excavation was led by Jon Welsh of Border Reivers Archaeological Unit.

A number of stack stands had been identified on Sewingshields Farm by Tim Gates in his Air Photographic Survey of the Hadrian's Wall Landscape from Chesters to Greenhead and surveyed on the ground in 2014 by NOWTAG in conjunction with Altogether Archaeology and Northumberland National Park. Stack stands are thought to be agricultural drying structures and exhibit a variety of shapes and sizes. Tim Gates had noticed that some appeared to have indications of small pits within a surrounding ditch, and had suggested to NOWTAG that we seek to excavate two contrasting stack stands, including one with 'pits'. The image below from Tim's report shows the two stack stands selected, one sub-rectangular and ditched, one sub-circular and banked.



Tim Gates aerial photograph of the two stack stands

A 25% quadrant of each stack stand was excavated in a series of 100mm levels down to their sub-soil 'natural' surfaces and samples collected from each level. In this short preliminary report we will merely present an illustrated summary of the final outcomes. Any interpretations discussed must be regarded as provisional, or even speculative. Interpretation of features revealed in the eastern sub-rectangular ditched stack stand is particularly challenging, and some of the features were surprising.

The visual presentation below is particularly enhanced by use of screenshots taken from the 3D photogrammetric models prepared by Andy Curtis. I recommend that you view the models themselves and double-click on Andy's annotations to access detailed views of notable features.

Links for the3D models:
W stack stand, day 5: https://skfb.ly/ovqzO
E stack stand, day 5: https://skfb.ly/ovqKF
Grooved & cup-marked stone in E trench: https://skfb.ly/ovqqW

West Stack Stand

This sub-circular structure was revealed to have an upcast bank around its centre with an external ditch that had been cut into the sub-soil, as illustrated in the two images below.

South section of West Stack Stand

Notice the dark band of peat above the sub-soil and beneath the upcast bank, and the dark band of peatiness above the bank.

Model of Trench at West Stack Stand looking south
Screenshot from https://skfb.ly/ovqzO

Annotated features:1 and 3 External ditch section , 2 and 4 Upcast bank section
5 Excavated surface of external ditch

East Stack Stand

Excavation of this sub-rectangular ditched structure has provided us with some surprises and as yet unsolved puzzles.

Model of East Stack Stand Trench - screenshot from https://skfb.ly/ovqKF

At the outset we had thought that the depressions in the surrounding ditch may indicate the presence of post-holes. The outcome of excavation was to reveal no sign of the ditch having been cut into the sub-soil, suggesting that any ditch had just been cut into the existing layer of peat. The peatiness of present day top soil of course makes it extremely difficult to identify any ditch cut. The first main surprise when we reached the sub-soil level was the size and shape of the features indicated by the shallow peaty infills.

East Stack Stand trench with half-sectioned peaty infilled features

These are clearly too large to have been formed by vertical posts. They are equidistantly distributed around the route of the ditch visible on the surface and all have a similar sub-rectangular/oval shape tapering slightly at their inward facing end. 4 of these features were half-sectioned and samples of the infills were collected.

The presence of a number of stones at the eastern end of the trench provoked discussion as to whether this was a random natural occurrence or an indication of further structure. In order to investigate a small extension was dug immediately north of a cluster of stones. This contained no further stones or indication of structure. Annotation 7 below.

As the stones were cleaned back a major surprise was revealed … a stone (annotation 6) bearing a probable cup-mark and adjacent groove. Although it is difficult to establish with certainty that these markings are artificial rather than natural the markings are characteristic of features usually described as late-Neolithic/ early Bronze Age rock art. The absence of visible peck marks suggests that the stone had lain exposed for some time before being covered by peat formation. Andy's 3D model of the stone can be viewed at https://skfb.ly/ovqqW

Eastern end of East Stack Stand trench

A sondage, annotation 5, was dug to check for any indication of a ditch cut. No indication was revealed. View the trench model at https://skfb.ly/ovqKF for detail. The image above also shows 3 further shallow infill features, with annotation 4 marking another half-section.

There has already been much discussion of possible explanations of the nature of the infill features and the absence of a ditch cut or post-holes into the sub-soil, but rather than speculate here I will leave you to have your own thoughts. All suggestions will be welcomed and we shall await the final report with great interest.

Here's a picture of the marked stone, but best look at the 3D model. The groove to the left of the cup-mark looks artificial too but what does it represent.

Assessment of biological remains from sediment samples recovered from two stack stands and associated features investigated at Sewingshields Farm, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland.

by

John Carrott, Palaeoecology Research Services Ltd, Hull - 30 November 2022

Summary

Six sediment samples, from deposits encountered during an investigation of stack stands and associated features at Sewingshields Farm, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland, were submitted for an assessment of their bioarchaeological potential. Two of the samples were from the upper and lower fills of a ditch associated with Stack Stand 44, and two were from spits 1 and 3 collected from the centre of Stack Stand 45 with the final two from the fills of an associated post-hole/post-pad.

Although all of the deposits assessed were highly organic to visual inspection this content proved to consist largely of fully humified material reduced to indeterminate detritus. More substantial plant remains from all of the samples were predominantly of rootlet with those from Context 100 (spit 1; Stack Stand 45) also including some more 'woody' root fragments and appreciable quantities of 'fresh vegetative matter' in the form of grass (and other plant) leaves and moss 'stems and leaves', macrofossil records for tormentil and bog myrtle, and pollen/spores of these taxa and also

(?yellow) iris, (?Cross-leaved) heath and ferns. Overall, the range of plant taxa recorded from Context 100 was entirely in-keeping with the present day wet moor/heathland vegetation of the site. The dearth of macrofossil remains from the other five samples precluded any comparison with Context 100 but the microfossil assemblages were a little more informative indicating that the vegetation of the area has remained essentially the same throughout the time period represented by the deposits.

The only macrofossil records of note from deposits other than Context 100 were trace levels of fine charcoal from the lower ditch fill and one of the fills of the post-hole/post-pad. These seem most likely to represent fuel waste from human activity (given their presence within archaeological feature) but the possibility of incorporation of charred material resulting from natural fires during the cutting of the ditch and post-hole/post-pad cannot be entirely discounted. In any case, the tiny, 'background level', quantities of almost entirely indeterminate fragments were insufficient to be of any further interpretative value. No mollusc or vertebrate remains were recovered, no artefacts were present, and there were no remains considered suitable for submission for radiocarbon dating of the deposits.

Detailed analysis of the microfossils present would almost certainly identify additional plant taxa but, on the current evidence, it seems unlikely that this would provide anything more than a refinement of the interpretations of this assessment and a confirmation of a continuous, relatively unchanged, environmental history characterised by wet moor/heathland.

An interesting find in this report (at least from a botanical perspective) are the finding of macrofossils (leaves and fruits) of Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*). The current and known historical distributions of this low shrub in Northumberland, for reasons not fully understood, are somewhat limited (even where the boggy terrain appears suitable). It is restricted to the north of the County; the nearest location in Coquetdale.

It was historically a useful plant (e.g. providing a flavour to beer before hops became popular), possibly over-exploited and more widespread in the past.

Stack Stands – what was being stacked (peat, hay or other)?

Tim Gates wrote the following in his aerial survey report of 2004:

Stack stands are some of the commonest of the small field monuments that are likely to be met with in moorland districts of Northumberland, yet they have been little investigated and not much is known for certain about their chronology or even about their precise purpose. To date only one example has been excavated in Northumberland, at Kennel Hall Knowe in North Tynedale (NY 667 897), and this yielded no finds other than a fragment of clay pipe stem — "*probably 18th century in date*" — which came from the bottom of the silted ditch (Charlton & Day, 1977, p. 87).

In their published volume on *'Shielings and Bastles*' the Royal Commission devoted a chapter to these all but totally neglected earthworks which were defined as follows: "*in its*

standard form [a stackstand] is a small, circular platform surrounded by a low bank and external ditch" whose purpose, it was proposed, was "*to provide a fairly level, dry platform on which to pile a stack of winter fodder and to afford protection for the latter from animals by means of a surrounding bank and ditch*" (Ramm et al, 1970, p. 54).

122 such sites were documented in NE Cumberland and adjacent parts of Northumberland, predominantly in the area of Wark Forest, Spadeadam Forest and the Bewcastle Fells, most being circular in shape with overall diameters in the range of 23' to 52' (7-16m), though oval, rectangular, square and D-shaped examples were also recorded in smaller numbers.

In later years, a further 22 stack stands were added by the Rev. T. Heyes in the course of his survey of Wark Forest, of which 13 were located in the vicinity of Greenlee Lough (nos. 59-71), 3 near Calfstone Sike (77-79), and 7 on the banks of the River Irthing (80-85) (Heyes, 1976, pp. 247-251). With the passage of time other discoveries followed and by the early 1990's the number of stack stands within the survey area had reached a total of around 50 sites. Now, largely as a result of recent aerial reconnaissance, this figure has increased fivefold and currently stands close to 250 individual monuments.

Most of these newly identified sites conform to the definition given by the Royal Commission in having a (usually circular) bank and external ditch. However, there is a sizeable minority of 76 which are morphologically distinct which have nevertheless been included under the same general heading in the belief that they will prove to be no more than variants of the standard type, and to have served the same basic purpose. **Members of this second group lack the usual perimeter bank whose place is taken either by a shallow trench or ditch, or else by a line of near-contiguous pits or scoops. On plan they are almost invariably rectangular or playing card shaped rather than curvilinear, quite often with the short sides bowed slightly outwards, and with dimensions of the order of 5.0m long by 2.5m wide.** A very few square or circular examples have also been found, all of which are much smaller in size with maximum dimensions not exceeding 3m across, together with one or two that are rectangular in shape but more or less exactly double the length of the others of the same form.

This aspect of the field evidence [the distribution of stack stands is not convincingly associated with the presence of permanently occupied settlements or shielings] is problematic if, as has generally been supposed, stack stands were platforms for storing winter fodder since farmsteads themselves would be far more appropriate as places for overwintering stock as opposed to those inhospitable and often remote moorland areas where stack stands are commonly found. **On the other hand, the difficulty disappears if stack stands were not in fact used for stacking hay but for another purpose altogether, namely for drying peat or turf. This, it is suggested, would probably be cut in the summer months and taken away later in the year to the homesteads and villages for use as a domestic fuel.** Until such time as it can be tested by excavation and documentary research, this alternative explanation of stack stands and their function can be no more than a hypothesis which relies for corroboration on circumstantial evidence and inference from what is known to have taken place in other parts of upland Britain.

One may, for example, point to an imperfect but nevertheless suggestive correlation between the distribution of stack stands and the occurrence of raw peat soils in Northumberland where the latter have been defined by the Soil Survey as 'fibrous or semi-fibrous peat, more than 40cms. deep' (see scale map of Soils of the Northumberland Hill Farming Project Area, 1978). **Following the same line of argument, one is reminded of an observation made by the Royal Commission when they drew attention to two sites in Cumberland (nos. 11 and 50) and one in Northumberland (no. 62) where stack stands were discovered apparently with remains of the original stack still in place.**

Although not commented on further at the time, the organic material involved was in every case said to be 'fibrous' in texture (Ramm et al, 1970, p. 55). Where, as is not unusual, stack stands are found in groups, they are generally separated from their nearest neighbour by a minimum distance of not less than 10m., a situation which could be explained if only one or two stands, say, were in use at any one time, and by the constant necessity of shifting ground from year to year as successive areas of turf were stripped and left exhausted. Over time, such a practice would inevitably lead to the multiplication of drying stands since it would be easier and more convenient to construct a new one every year rather than to carry the still wet turf further than was absolutely necessary.

The cutting of peat for fuel is a practice that is widely attested from documents in many upland parts of Britain during the historic period, though in so far as specifically archaeological evidence is concerned Bodmin Moor currently offers the closest parallels for the picture that is now emerging in Northumberland. For information about peat cutting on Bodmin, I am indebted to Mr Peter Herring, Senior Archaeologist with the Cornwall Archaeological Unit, who has kindly let me read his chapter on 'Turf' to be published in a forthcoming RCHNfE/EH volume.

On Bodmin, peat, or turf as it generally referred to, was either skimmed off the land surface or, in the case of bogs and deeper deposits, dug out of vertical sided pits. In either case, cutting normally took place in spring or early summer, before the harvest, and the resulting turves were laid out in the open air until they were dry, and light enough to be transported off the moor. In certain circumstances, for example, in expectation of wet weather of if labour was short, a temporary rick or 'stead' might be constructed near the drying ground so as to save the year's crop until a more convenient time came to take it away. Such temporary ricks were built of stacked layers of turf, with thatched tops and outward leaning walls designed to shed water most effectively. Finally, to assist in keeping the rick dry, a shallow ditch was dug around the base, the upcast being disposed in the form of an external bank. Later, when the rick was dismantled, all that remained was a platform, usually shaped like a playing card though occasionally circular, together with the surrounding ditch, which typically measured c. 5.0m by 3.5m, and the outer bank c. 1.2m wide and 0.3m high. Except for the bank, these Bodmin steads are identical with the small trench-defined earthworks which have been documented in the course of this survey and which, it is proposed, likewise served as platforms for drying stacks of turf. On Bodmin Moor almost 1,200 such platforms have been discovered to date, mostly as it happens by means of aerial photography, and it is believed that the majority date between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Notes from Andy Curtis

Angus Lunn MBE (peat-land conservationist and vice-president of the Northumberland Wildlife) happens to live in my village so I asked him what he thought. His reply is below:

Why do you think the stands were for peat? I thought they were normally for hay. In particular much of the acidic grassland in the general area is dominated by Molinia (purple moor grass). This is Britain's only deciduous grass, blowing around in winter (it's also called flying bent). In early summer, however, it is quite nourishing and was widely conserved for hay on the open fell. I can remember in the 1950s finding small stacks of Molinia way out on the fells, protected by temporary wire fences. Your site is among Molinia grassland, typically found on shallow peat.

Incidentally in spring the dead Molinia is a huge fire risk to Forest Enterprise. Your cup-and-ring looks a bit phallic to me!

The relevant section in Angus Lunn's book, **Northumberland** (The New Naturalist, Collins, 2004) p127-8.

A century ago, the moors west of North Tynedale, and stretching away to Spadeadam Waste in Cumbria, consisted of the raised and intermediate bogs described above and otherwise mainly of enormous tracts of a prairie-like grassland dominated by purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Purpleness came both the grass inflorescence and from the tips of older leaves. Locally Molinia is 'flying bent' on account of its deciduous habit and the propensity dead leaves to blow in the wind and collect in drifts in winter. The Molinia grassland occupied the dip slopes of the cuestas north of Hadrian's Wall and the lower slopes of the rounded hills further north, where it merged upwards into blanket bog through a transitional zone characterised by the Molinia—hare's-tail cotton-grass community. The grassland occurred on stagnohumic gley soils, which are particularly widespread on the heavy tills in this part of west Northumberland, and was climatically restricted to moorland lying below about 400 metres a.s.l. Molinia sprouts in late spring from food reserves stored in the roots and a stem base. It then grows rapidly, so that by August it forms a knee-deep greenish-purple sward — sometimes tussocky and very difficult to walk through. In winter Molinia grassland appeared as a cream-coloured, straw-like litter. Normally also present in the grassland were sweet vernal-grass, wavy hair-grass, heath bedstraw, and tormentil. Mosses included Dicranum scoparium and Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus. Heath spotted-orchid was common.

The preceding paragraphs have been couched in the past tense because much of the Molinia prairie has gone. It was at the heart of the vast territory acquired in the mid-twentieth century by the Forestry Commission, which soon learned that these comparatively low-altitude stagnohumic gleys suited Norway spruce rather well. Much of the lower part of Kielder Forest was planted on Molinia ground. **Outside of the forest, however, there are still a few hill farms with extensive Molinia grassland, and until well into the twentieth century the grass was cut for hay and stacked on the moor. The late-medieval/early modern stack-steads identified by archaeologists in this area would be partly for Molinia hay. Molinia is tolerant of fire, and the litter was commonly burnt in spring, in the expectation that its removal, and the release of nutrients in ash, would increase both availability and palatability.**

So were our stack-stands peat-stacks, hay-stacks or something else-stacks? What was the purpose or cause of the deeper pits within the rectangular stand ditch? Why do the stands take different forms? We did get some evidence of fire though from the layers of fine charcoal found both at the bottom of the ditch of the western stand and in the post-holes of the eastern stand.

During discussion with Tim Gates during the drafting of our excavation report by Jon Welsh, Tim sent part of a report published in Cornish Archaeology No. 26 (1987) recording the excavation of four 'turf stands' in 1941-42 before wartime airfield construction on Davidstow Moor, a northern part of Bodmin Moor in Cornwall.

Similar stands from The Lizard had been described as:
Diminutive circular or sub-rectangular earthworks outlines in the moorland turf were and are considered to mark spots where peat fuel had been stacked, and the stacks ditched round, within the last few centuries. The first three examples were stripped in order to obtain direct evidence, and especially because it was suggested that on another Cornish site . . . a large assemblage of such remains had been mistaken for the ruins of a prehistoric village.

The four stands from Davidstow Moor are described as
Site XI: round, 7 ft diameter; Site XII: sub-rectangular, 14 ft by 10 ft; Site XIII: sub-rectangular, 14 ft by 10 ft 9 in; Site XIV: sub-rectangular, similar.
These four sites are asserted to have marked the remains of stacks of turf fuel, each protected against the animals which were formerly set to common pasture by a surrounding ditch with exterior bank. The dimensions given in each case are those of the enclosed 'table', or plot of undisturbed ground, occupied by the stack: extreme measurements across bank and ditch would double the above figures.

Miniature earthworks of this kind . . . occur in several parts of the Cornish moorlands. Among visiting antiquaries and townsmen they have, at different times, given rise to a good deal of speculation and discussion. To native moormen, however, the little ditched-and-banked enclosures are no mystery. The practice of stacking fuel on the open moor after drying, to be carried home at a more convenient season, is doubtless some centuries old and may be still maintained in a few remote spots, as I was informed by two of my labourers at Davidstow, one of whom has made and ditched such stacks …

The ditch was always an open ditch, silting up gradually under natural influences . . . On each 'table' there was discernible, above the original turf and under the living vegetation, an irregular layer of brown peat, representing the normal debris from a stack of the kind described.

… the earthwork was not prepared in advance, but that the ditch was dug after the stack was complete, 'in order to keep the bullocks from the stack' and that 'as additional defence a big thorn was sometimes cut and planted against the corners to keep the beasts at bay'.

… stacks of this kind were still being built in the early 1940s.

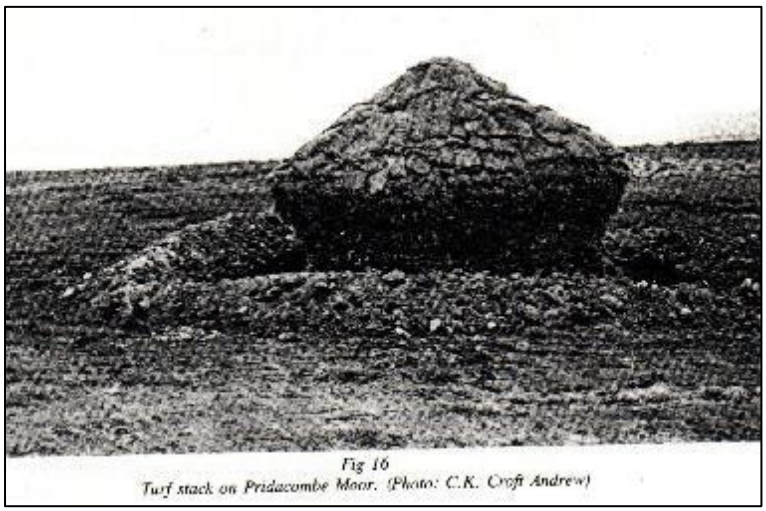
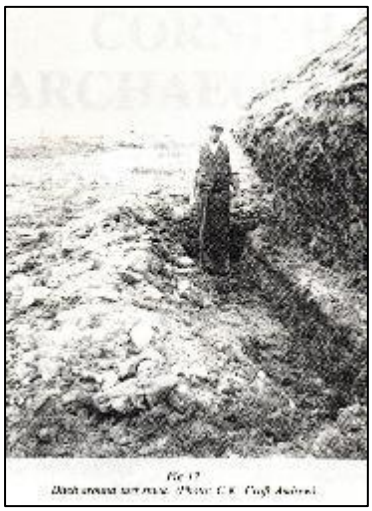


Fig 16
Turf stack on Pridacombe Moor. (Photo: C.K. Croft Andrew)



https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/08/No.26_1987.pdf

An earlier report by N. Quinnell (1984) about similar stands on The Lizard (originally interpreted as prehistoric round-houses):
All the platforms occur where official charters were issued to cut turfs (rights of turbary) but are not confined to the Lizard; several hundred occur on Bodmin Moor and a much smaller number on Dartmoor (Fig 5). The typical platform is, in plan, of playing card shape, some 6m by 4m, enclosed by a ditch c. 0.5m wide and 0.3.m deep, with an outer bank of upcast up to 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep. The platform itself represents an existing land surface, or peat level, often raised because of external digging.

On the Lizard there is often a randomly positioned gap in the bank, c. 0.4m wide, which corresponds with a 'causeway' across the ditch (previously interpreted as a hut entrance). There are wide variations in size and plan and on the Lizard circular platforms are common - 4m to 8m in diameter, occasionally conjoined and even of trefoil pattern. On Bodmin Moor circular patterns are rare - probably about 4% of the total while on Dartmoor they are even less. On both Bodmin Moor and Dartmoor the 'entrance gaps' are very rare - probably about 3%. While the Lizard platforms are often isolated by their elevation as with those of Dartmoor, the Bodmin Moor platforms are not — c. 50% of the interiors are perhaps 5 cms above the surrounding level, another 50% are at the present ground level but none are below. The enormous number of platforms on Bodmin Moor occur on peat and what were peat levels, even on hilltops. There is no obvious sign of peat cutting as evidenced on Dartmoor in the nineteenth century by the 'headlands' of the peat faces. One can only assume that on Bodmin Moor the method was different, the thinness of the cuts left no evidence or more significantly that the total stripping of the area as the reserves were worked out had not left any unfinished headlands. There are some indications of shallow headlands on Goonhilly, however, not far from the excavated platform (Fig 1).

That peaty turf exists today, only 5 cms thick, in these areas is irrelevant as it is a subsequent growth. Just as the use of the platforms does not feature in the written historical record, present day cutters do not recognise their function. An 80 year old peat cutter at Bolventor, Bodmin Moor, in 1970 had no idea what the platforms were and was dubious of the suggested interpretation as turf drying platforms . . . 'we don't cut or dry peat that way'. The vast number of platforms indicates an industrial rather than domestic origin.
https://cornisharchaeology.org.uk/app/uploads/2022/08/No.23_1984.pdf

The Greyside excavation…. extreme digging

By Martin Green

What led members of NOWTAG to spend some cold (and often damp) March days digging on an exposed moor? Well, it wasn't to get an early start on our suntans for the year, or to benefit from the exfoliating power of Northumberland weather. We were there because there were questions which surveying wasn't going to answer: only excavation would reveal what on earth had been going on at top of this isolated hill.

The saga started with a 2018 landscape survey carried out by members on Greyside farm, about 1.5km south of Brocolitia (a fort on Hadrian's Wall). The land here is a 2km x 1km stretch of undivided wet pasture, quite high in places, used for rough grazing. Our survey confirmed the presence of a probable Iron Age settlement and found plenty of evidence of medieval farming: both livestock enclosures and strip arable fields. But on a low hill in the north-east corner of the survey area, well away from any other features, was a 40m wide enclosure, curved on one side and formed of a low earthen bank. Its south side was straight; rather than a bank, it was a line of rectangular structures.

We weren't the first to note it: it is apparent on aerial photography and lidar images, and is on the Historic Environment Record as N29269 (Monument 1445647). The record described the structures along the south side as possible pens for livestock……but this didn't seem correct since where the low ruins of the walls poked

out of the turf, the stonework seem substantial and there was lime mortar bonding. The HER record was derived from aerial photography (as is often the case in the wild areas that NOWTAG loves), rather than direct on-the-ground examination, so this mis-interpretation wasn't surprising.

In 2019 we went back to investigate further with a detailed survey, a look at molehills to see what finds they contained, and we also dug three small test-pits. The results confirmed that this wasn't simply a line of animal pens: there was paving, fragments of brick, substantial mortared walls, and (among the finds) coal, glass, clay pipe stems, and pottery sherds from the 18th and 19th century. But this still left open the question of what each of the rectangular structures was: byre? house? barn? pen? Was it just used in the summer or was it a permanent farmstead? A more extensive excavation seemed the only way to find out.

And so it was that we spent four days in March 2020, then another four in March 2022, on a windy, cold, and sometimes wet, hill. It had to be March, not to interfere with the grazing (cattle would be a safety risk and liable to trample any excavation). Fortunately, being on top of a hill, the site wasn't waterlogged, though a few trees for shelter would have been welcome. Access was a major problem: the track approaching from the south stopped a km short of the site, so all gear had to be carried over difficult terrain. Unfortunately, February 2022 was the wettest on record. Even with four-wheel drive the final hill on the access track was undriveable, so we had to resort to parking at Brocolita and walking the 1.5km from there with all gear. Fortunately, the rain let up for the days of the dig that year, though it was still cold and windy.

Animal stalls in the byre

Between the two years of excavation (with the epidemic year off in between) we dug a little over 50 sq.m. of trenches, to look at each of the three cells of the building (though none of the cells was completely exposed). In particular, the trenches were placed to look at the floor surface of each building, and several wall junctions (with the hope of seeing if it was all one phase of construction or built in stages).

The results were fascinating with a surprisingly clear answer to our questions. The eastern of the three cells was the first to be built. It had a floor of large irregular flagstones with small stones filling the gap. There was a large fireplace in the gable wall between it and the middle cell: wing walls at each side of the fire probably supported a hood; they contained stones which looked suspiciously Roman in shape, so probably taken from Brocolitia. At some time, the fireplace had been narrowed from 1.7m to only 0.3m, by crude infilling with bricks and stones. It contained cinders, ash and coal. Clearly this was a 10m long farmhouse, substantial enough to be permanently occupied rather than just a shieling hut. The narrowing of the fireplace may have been done when coal became easily and cheaply enough available to be the only fuel. There were small collieries only a few km away.

The middle cell of the building was butted against the farmhouse, to give the typical upland longhouse farm plan. Most of it seems to have been a byre, with livestock pens which had worn cobbled floors, separated by a slurry drain. Its eastern end had a fragmentary flagged floor, over the top of a layer of cinders and coal, which itself was on top of an older, lower flagged surface, with more coal and cinders underneath. This part was probably a store, with evidence of changes of use over time. The southern wall of this middle cell was un-mortared and crude, so it may have been added late on to fill in an open front to at least part of that side of the byre.

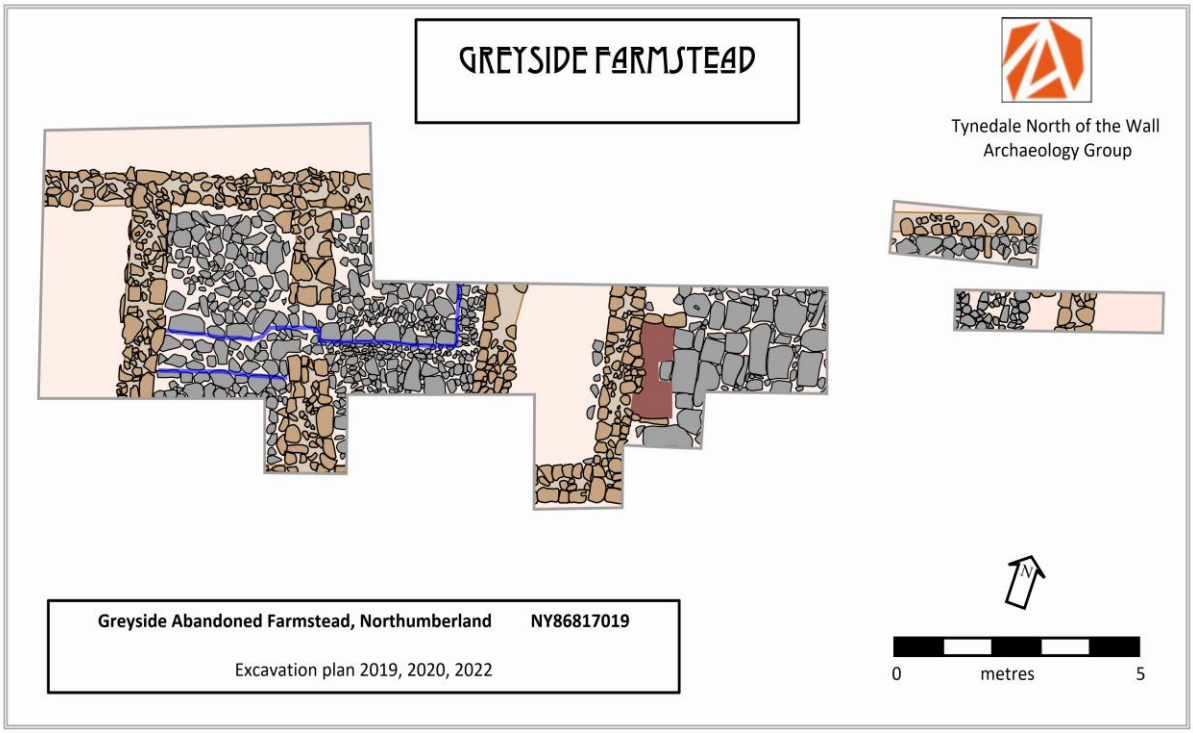
The western cell turned out to have no floor under the collapse rubble. It abutted the middle cell, so was added on after the middle cell was built. It has a wide (2.5m) entrance on its south side. It may have been a barn, though not enough was excavated to exclude the possibility that it was an unroofed garth.

Fireplace with byre beyond

None of the finds from any part of the site were medieval or earlier. We found more pipe stems to add to those found in molehills. Smoking only became popular from the middle of the 17th century, and the stems found had narrow bores, suggesting that they were later than 1750 (though that is not certain). Some of glass fragments were thick green and curved, typical of the “onion” bottles common from the late 17th century.

So, the excavations were a great success, with clear answers to our questions. But it still leaves the greatest mystery: why does this farm not appear on any maps: there’s no trace of it on the earliest Ordnance Survey map (of 1862), not even a ruin. Nor are there any access tracks, enclosures or fields marked to show there had ever been a farm. The area is just a complete blank. Did the Ordnance Survey surveyor just have a bad day and never properly look at this remote area? Earlier maps are less accurate, but no more informative. Thus, we don’t even know the name of the farm, making it difficult to look for information about it. The only way forward seems to be to search the archives for information; maybe there is an estate map that will reveal all. Or maybe this isolated farmstead will stay strangely enigmatic. At least we know now that whoever lived there had a warm coal fire to get them through the long winter.

A report of the excavation (with plenty of photos and plans) is on our website at https://tynedalearchaeology.org.uk/reports.html



Greyside farmstead 2020 & 2022 excavation plans detail

Greyside excavation in March 2022

Andy Curtis

3D model on Sketchfab (https://skfb.ly/ottxH) made from 40 photos to record final state of main excavation trench in 2nd season archaeology dig in March 2022 at

Greyside near Warden, Northumberland. A model from the first season dig (2020) can be seen here: https://skfb.ly/6QVoy

In 2022 a 2m (N-S) x 10m (E-W) trench was excavated along the axis of the farmstead eastwards (with a small overlap) from the 2020 trench which focussed on the western part of the central compartment shown to be a byre. It crossed the wall between the central compartment, entering the eastern compartment. Later it was extended southwards each side of this wall, reaching the south wall of the farmstead. A second small trench 0.8m (N-S) x 3.5m (E-W) was dug across the east wall of the farmstead, to examine the floor in the east end of the eastern compartment.

Howden Hill Level 1 Surveys of a multi-period occupied Landscape

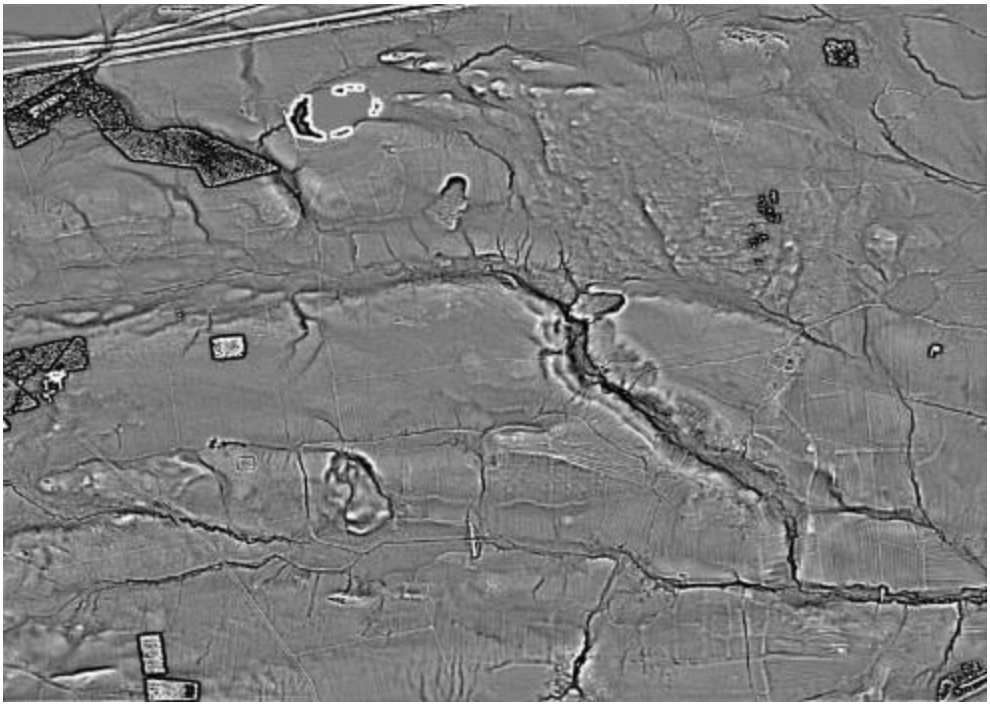
by Malc McCallum

Two Level 1 surveys were carried out by NOWTAG members in February 2020 and February 2022 in what could, at times, best be described as challenging conditions. This is a brief summary of what was found, the two full survey reports, completed by Andy Curtis, Phil Bowyer, and Martin Green, can be found on the NOWTAG website. They are entitled Howden Hill Level 1 Archaeological Landscape Survey February 2020 and the second is the same title but for February 2022.

You can download the reports here: https://tynedalearchaeology.org.uk/reports.html

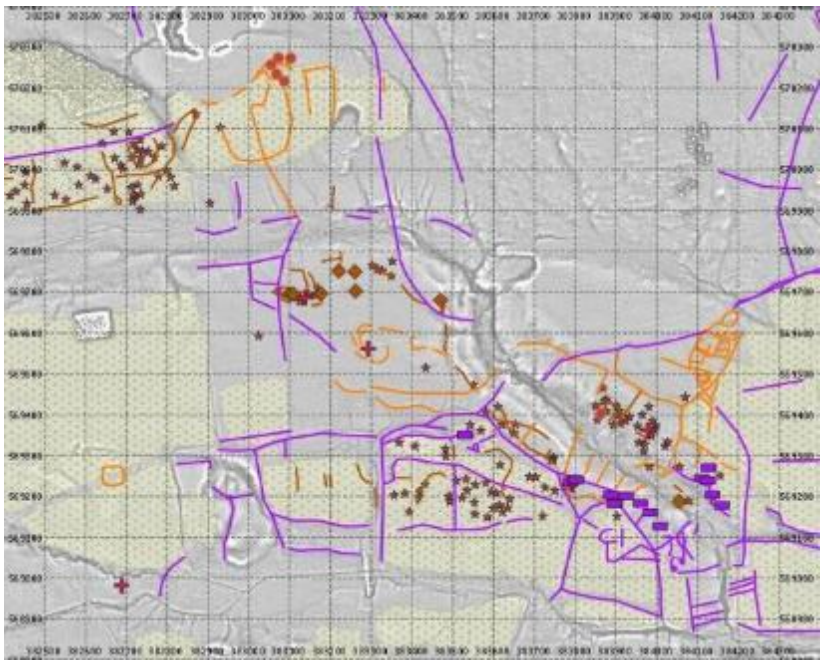
The Howden Hill surveyed area lies between Grindon in the west and Middle House in the east, south of the B6318 (military road) and Hadrian's Wall with Cowey Sike forming the southern boundary. Settlingstones Burn runs diagonally NW to SE and is joined by Cowey Sike in the SE corner of the area surveyed.

Although this area is all now rough grassland used for grazing sheep and cattle, large areas of broad ridge and furrow and smaller patches of cord rig, identified on aerial photos (Google Earth, Bing and Tim Gates photography) indicate that parts were under arable cultivation in the past. The 2022 Report also had access to more up to date Lidar images (produced by the Environment Agency and further processed by Martin Green). I have shown an example of what Lidar shows below.



SLRM (Simple Local Relief Model) Lidar image centred on survey area (P4 2022 Report)

As indicated in the title of this Summary, this area has seen multi-period occupation and use, ranging from the Bronze Age, through the Iron Age, the Roman period, the medieval period through to more modern C19th industrial (lead mining) and current agricultural use. The illustrated map below shows this very well, although you may find it useful to zoom in on it. North is the left-hand side of this.



Summary by Era. Bronze Age: Brown; Iron Age: Orange; Medieval: Purple. Rock Art: crosses; Roundhouses: circles; Buildings: rectangles; Cairns: Stars; Funerary Monuments: Diamonds. (P25 2022 Report).

Although a number of features on Howden Hill have been previously identified and recorded on the Heritage Environment Record (HER) and on the English Heritage and Keys to the Past websites, our survey discovered many new features.

Several Bronze Age cairns and cup marked boulders were already known but the survey found two more with a possible third. This picture shows what these cup marked boulders look like.

Photo of Scheduled Rock Art (P14 2020 Report)

We also identified a further three probable Bronze Age burial monuments such as cists, a ring cairn and a possible kerbed cairn. Numbers of other cairns were identified, some of which may have been related to burials or to field clearance. The picture below shows one of the probable cist burials found.

Photo of probable cist burial (P11 2020 report)

There were a number of linear banks associated with come of the cairns, probably the remnants of contemporary field systems.

Previously recorded settlements, both Iron Age and Romano British (or Roman Iron Age if you prefer!), were confirmed in the Middle House area and Shield on the Wall. Evidence too, of several round house sites were found near both settlements as well as probably associated field systems.

Moving on from the Iron Age / Romano British period, near the Middle House settlement, some rectangular enclosures were identified to the north of it. These were thought to most likely be later stock enclosures, possibly medieval.

We also confirmed the stone foundations of a medieval farmstead on Howden Hill itself, centred on a long-house. It had a clearly defined farm-yard, a nearby stock enclosure and extensive terraced arable fields around it. Further east of this farmstead we identified a dispersed group of three rectangular stone building structures beside rigg and furrow fields. Likely to also be medieval, we could not say whether these were farm buildings or houses. In the area around the medieval farmstead and other buildings there are large areas of broad curving rigg and furrow (R&F), most likely for crop growing in the peak medieval period of the 11th to 13th centuries. The picture below shows some of this R&F to the south of the farmstead. On the facing hill in the distance to the south of Cowey Sike, you can just about make out the Grindon Hill Roman period rectangular enclosure of a probable farmstead, which is outside of our survey area.

Photo N-S Ridge & Furrow S. of Howden Hill farmstead (P33 2020 Report)

Later a system of sod cast banks was built overlying some of the area, earlier referred to, dividing the landscape into large components. These demonstrate the move to a largely pastoral economy in the late medieval, early modern period.

Also, from the medieval period a structure called a sheephouse (or sheep-cote) was identified as a sub-rectangular low rubble wall, with two opposed entrances in the long sides. There were two further incomplete examples of this type of structure visible along with a small curvilinear enclosure and stone field boundaries. All these

features lie I the area east of the Bronze Age cairn field and to the north of Settlingstones Burn. The picture below shows this feature. It is thought that these types of sheephouses may have been built more like those recorded in Iceland and the second picture below of one of those gives a good impression of what these ones on Howden Hill may have looked like, although I suggest ours may have been thatched with ling.

Feature identified as a possible sheephouse (P16, 2022 Report)

Old turf sheephouse at Hjarðarhagi, Iceland (P20, 2022 Report)

For a fuller description of sheephouses I recommend you read the 2022 Report.

In the post medieval period, and into the industrial era, Settlingstones Burn provided a water supply for the Settlingstones Lead Mine (itself first recorded in 1690) and there was originally a small dam at its source (shown on the 1st Edition of 6" Ordnance Survey map). A short distance south of that ceramic pipework is exposed which was part of the leat supplying water to the mine. Leaving the burnside the water leat continued as a covered aqueduct, which is clearly visible on Lidar and satellite imagery. This aqueduct follows the contours on the west side of the Burn to cross Cowey Sike further south, then it fed a small reservoir close to the mine

smithy, all of which was out of our survey area. The two pictures below show the pipeline and covered aqueduct.

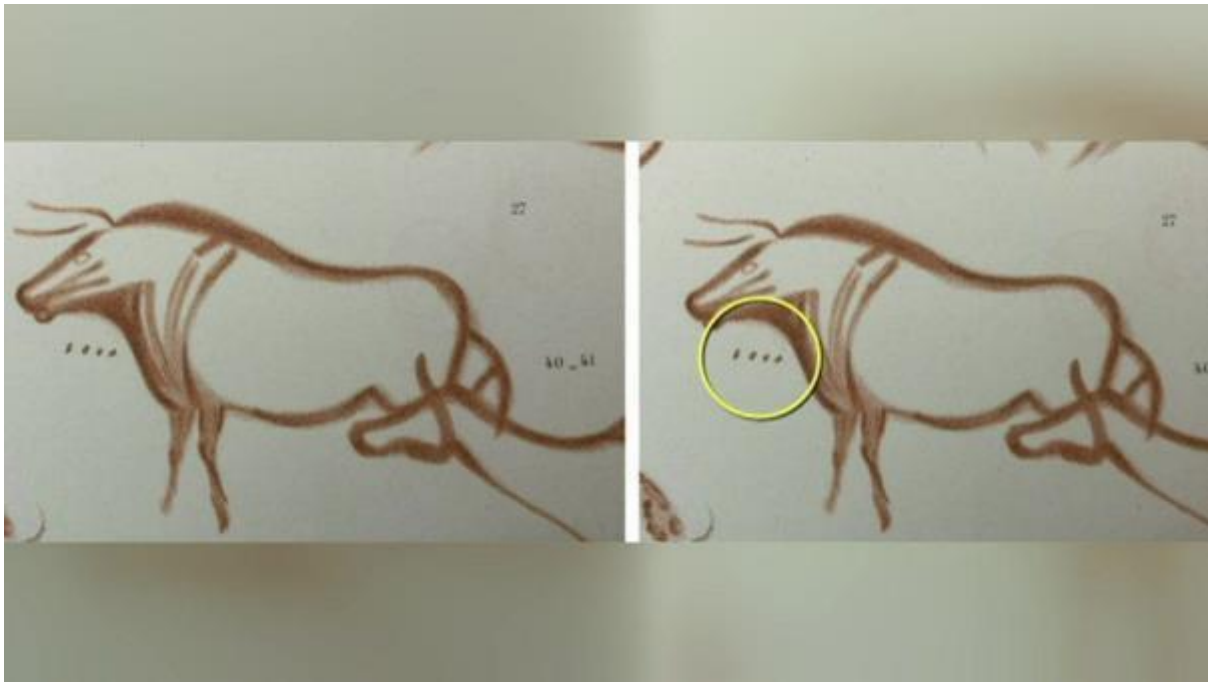
Exposed ceramic pipeline (P20, 2022 Report)

Covered aqueduct (P21, 2022 Report)

Settlingstones mine worked lead ore for many years but from 1873 until closure in 1969 it became the main producer of witherite (barium carbonate) in the world.

For those of you who wish to read more detail of this fascinating area I recommend you to read the two reports and at the end of each is a comprehensive gazetteer containing a wealth of detail.

Amateur archaeologist helps crack Ice Age cave art code



The so-called "proto-writing" system the team uncovered pre-dates others thought to have emerged during the Near Eastern Neolithic by at least 10,000 years.

The marks, found in more than 600 Ice Age images across Europe, reveal a record of information and references to a calendar, rather than recorded speech.

The sequences of dots, shapes and other markings appear alongside depictions of species such as reindeer, wild horses, fish, bison and extinct cattle called aurochs.

Using the birth cycles of equivalent animals today as a reference, the team worked out that the number of marks were a record, by lunar month, of when the animals were breeding.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-64162799
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-64161861

An Upper Palaeolithic Proto-writing System and Phenological Calendar by Bennett Bacon , Azadeh Khatiri, James Palmer, Tony Freeth, Paul Pettitt & Robert Kentridge

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 05 January 2023:
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774322000415

Working with the National Park at Greenlee

By Phil Bowyer

Between March 21st and March 25th members of Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group (NOWTAG) were joined by Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) volunteers in conducting a Level 1 landscape survey on Greenlee and Stonefolds farms. The archaeological survey forms part of a wider environmental project being conducted on Greenlee and Stonefolds by Northumberland National Park. We are grateful to Steven Lipscombe the NNPA Greenlee Project Officer and Chris Jones the NNPA Historic Environment Officer for their assistance in the planning and delivery of the survey. We also appreciate the help of David Richardson the NNPA Volunteer and Apprenticeships Development Officer in organising participation of National Park volunteers. During the months prior to the Level 1 survey, NOWTAG members carried out a programme of desk-based research, covering both existing recorded information on the survey area plus examination of the Tim Gates aerial photographs and LIDAR imagery for the area prepared by Martin Green. Arising from this research Andy Curtis prepared detailed interactive mapping incorporating all HER and NOWTAG desk research data, which proved to be an invaluable tool for use during the ground survey.

Recording a trackway north of Greenlee Lough

The survey area posed a number of challenges, including some lengthy walks to some of the survey locations but, as usual, our volunteers were not deterred. Interpretation of the combination of features recorded also gave us a significant challenge when it came to preparing the survey report. Identifying likely functions and probable age of the numerous small enclosures that we encountered proved to

be quite an exercise. Rather than just saying 'we don't know' Andy, Martin and myself 'bit the bullet' and along with Chris Jones at the Park we had a series of post-survey meetings, revisited Lidar imagery in closer detail and spent a good deal of time and effort 'chewing the fat'. Although this meant that the publication of the report took longer than our usual practice the report, whilst not answering all the questions, does provide a substantive examination of the specific issues related to establishing the chronology and the development of land usage and habitation in the area.

The report is available to download from our website
www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk

We will be continuing our survey on the adjoining Gibbs Hill farm during the week commencing February 20th 2023. Details for this are being sent to members.

Proposal for a Survey

Aerial photogrammetry's the thing,
using some form of infra-red technique.
Stones that have been so fervently described
surely retain some heat. They needn't speak:
the cunning camera ranging in its flight
will chart their higher temperatures as light.

From: ***Proposal for a Survey*** **by Fleur Adcock** (in POEMS 1960-2000, Pub. Bloodaxe Books, 2000)

Redesdale Archaeology Group - Building on Revitalising Redesdale

By Phil Bowyer

Over the past few years many of our members have been travelling a bit further north to participate in the archaeological activities organised by Revitalising Redesdale. With the departure to pastures new of Karen Collins, who did such an excellent job organising the archaeology programme, and the end of the Heritage Lottery funded Project in September a number of us were keen to ensure that community archaeology should remain active in Redesdale.

NOWTAG members had played a significant role in various aspects of Revitalising Redesdale activities and now some of those members have stepped up to work with Redesdale volunteers to get the new group up and running.

One of the most pleasing aspects of engagement with community archaeology for me is the level of co-operation between the various groups and their members from Teesdale through to north Northumberland. I am confident that NOWTAG and its

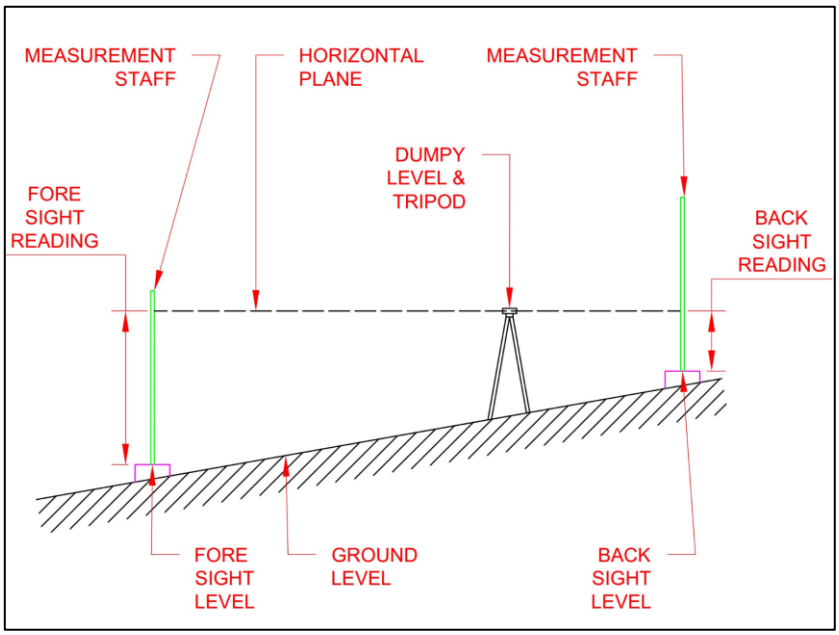
members will be working closely with our colleagues in Redesdale over the coming years.

One of my roles with RAG is to organise the landscape survey programme, and I am hoping that some of our NOWTAG members will be getting involved to share their experience and skills with members of the new group, many of whom may not be as familiar with landscape survey. As many of you will know from (hard-earned) experience the combination of seasonal vegetation growth and the need to avoid the lambing season often sees us out on the fells braving early spring conditions.

Whilst we are asking NOWTAG members to be out surveying at Gibbs Hill February 20th to 23rd, I am inviting RAG volunteers to complete 2 Level 1 surveys during March. These will be at Garretshiels (in the area where eagle-eyed Malcolm spotted a previously unknown deserted medieval village on Lidar) and in the area around the settlement site at Yatesfield that was also first discovered from Lidar and has been the location of two fascinating excavations.

Levelling training day
Heddon on the Wall, 24th April 2023
By Ian Cooper

Ian will be running a levelling training day on the site of Hadrian's Wall in Heddon on the Wall on Monday 24th April.



A dumpy level is a surveying instrument that is used to measure levels or elevations at different points along a horizontal line. It consists of a telescope mounted on a

tripod, with a spirit level and horizontal circle for measuring angles. If you are new to using a dumpy level, it can seem like a complex and intimidating piece of equipment.

However, with a little practice and some basic knowledge, you can learn how to use a dumpy level to accurately measure levels and slopes.

If you want to do a bit of homework before the session:
https://www.ths-concepts.co.uk/how-to-dumpy-level/

Visit to Blue Crags Defended Settlement
by Malc McCallum

On Thursday 2 Feb 2023 Martin Green, Andy Willis and Malcolm McCallum braved the less than accurate weather forecast to walk up from the village of Colwell, Northumberland, to have a good look at the defended settlement at Blue Crags plus the other interesting features at Green Crags, Dunn Crags and the open pasture of Brecken Hills.

Blue Crags itself is an official schedule monument, lying on a wedge-shaped outlier of the Whin Sill at 170 metres OD. As I had been up to it before and Andy and Martin had not, I said on the way there that they had a treat in store and we were not let down.

I have shown below a copy of the 1st. Edition OS map published 1866, “reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland”.

This shows the area well and it is worth noting thtat the surveyors actually show 6 hut circles on Blue Crags whch they do not normally bother to illustrate.

I have reproduced a description of the Blue Crags settlement below from the Oxford Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland On-line version:

"*The enclosure measures 192m NW-SE by 70m transversely. An earth and stone rampart 5m wide and 1m high borders the outcrop on all sides, but has now been lost in the N to quarrying. No ditches. A simple gap entrance lies in the SW angle of the ramparts. Two substantial natural outcrops at the foot of the Crags and in the E and W would have provided additional defence. Internally a double stone wall divided the larger enclosure into two compartments with the one in the NW approximately 0.64ha and in the SE 0.31ha. Within the larger, NW compartment 12 stone founded hut circles 6.5m in diameter survive up to 0.5m high. The SE appears to have been uninhabited and has been interpreted as a stock enclosure (annex). Excavations of nine of the huts in 1924-5 (Ball 1927) produced quernstones, whetstones, a cup marked stone and a piece of medieval pottery. The site is recorded on 1856-65 OS mapping. RCHME field investigations were carried out in 1961 and 1967 and the site is scheduled*."

I also show a picture from Google Earth which clearly shows up the Defended Settlement plus a few other features referred to below.

That description goes on to state that the finds suggested an Iron Age and / or Romano British date for this site whilst the cup marked stone indicates it was of some significance before that. Cup marked stones may be attributed to a period of the Bronze Age which would tie in with the record of a Bronze Age round house below Green Crags on the north side of the modern quarry road leading from the A68 to Swinburne Whinstone Quarry (still in use today). At the north end of Blue Crags there are the remains of a well-built dry-stone wall, probably of C19th date, which was likely to have been built to stop grazing animals falling over the edge of an old quarry face. Interestingly this old quarry must pre-date 1862 because the cut off area at the north end of Blue Crags is shown on that map but it is not described

as a quarry, which would have been the case if it was in use at the date of the OS survey.

As we walked around the site it was noticeable that some of the (well preserved) hut circles were considerably larger than others and on a couple of them there appeared to be small annexes or additions with 'doorways' leading into the main house, Martin suggested that one, at least, could possibly be a corn drying oven. These are the best-preserved hut circles any of us had ever seen.

The defensive ramparts on the west and east side of this settlement are well pronounced.

For anyone who has not visited this settlement it is well worth taking a walk there. But if you look at the Google Earth illustration above, just after passing through the field gate on the public footpath, you can see, about 100 metres to the west along the line of the field wall there is another possible hut circle site. There is certainly the appearance of occupation here and of possibly some smaller defensive banks around it and the rig and furrow ploughing of the main field stops below these. Unfortunately, some of this feature, on its south side, may have been destroyed to the south of the wall line by modern ploughing.

We next walked across the quarry road westwards to the possible hut circle below Green Crags and this too is a scheduled site. Below is the official Historic England description:
"*The monument includes a stone hut circle of Bronze Age date, situated in a sheltered position at the foot of Green Crags. The hut circle is visible as the roughly circular foundations of a building, comprising a bank 1.6m wide and 0.4m high, composed of large stones set on end. The interior of the building measures 4m in diameter. It is not obvious where the original entrance was but this is normally found in the south-eastern corner.*"

After looking at this area we progressed up onto Dunn Crags where there were the remains of old field boundaries are faintly visible on the Google Earth image above. Of greater interest is the remains of a mediaeval settlement or farmstead and I repeat below the Historic England description of it, again it is a scheduled site.

"*The monument includes a well-preserved farmstead of medieval date situated in a sheltered position on a south-facing slope between two hills, now on the edge of a roadstone quarry. A main rectangular enclosure measuring 48m east to west by 43m north to south lies within strong stone and earth banks 4m across and 0.6m high. An entrance leads into the enclosure at the centre of the south wall where there are clear foundations of several rectangular buildings, the most prominent of which measures 10m by 14m. Attached to the south-eastern corner of the large enclosure is a rectangular annexe measuring 26m by 25m with walls of similar proportions to the main enclosure. An entrance lies in the centre of the south wall and within the annexe there are platforms of rectangular buildings. A length of bank 22m long is attached to the south- western corner of the large enclosure. Immediately to the south of the farmstead are two strip lynchets formed by cultivation of the sloping ground.*"

I have shown below the DSM Lidar image which Martin processed.

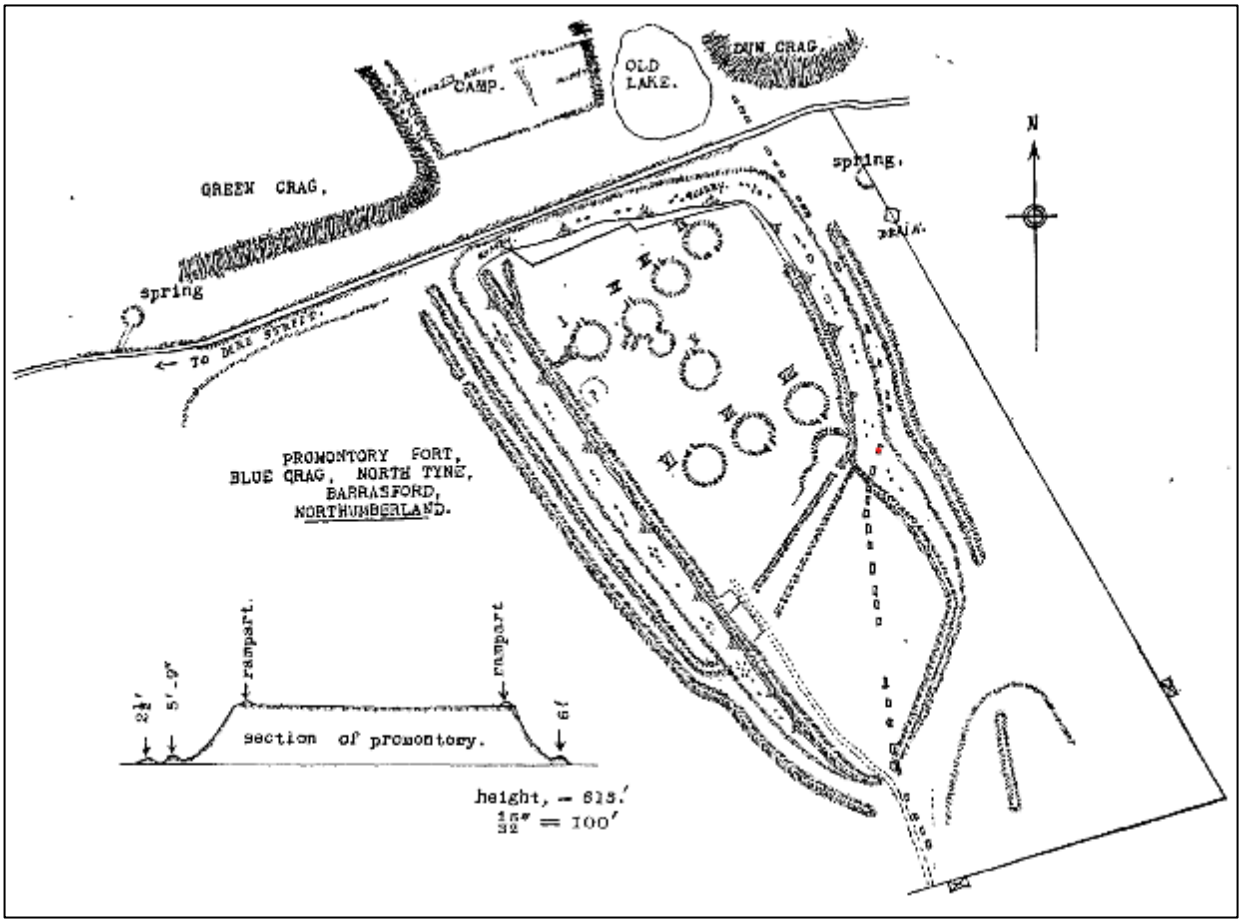
Having explored this with reference to the Lidar images Martin had brought with him we moved up to look at the top of the most easterly hill which lies east of the recorded medieval settlement and east of the more modern farm track. The top of this hill at NY 94674 76277, shows some evidence of occupation with an ancient trackway curving around from its bottom left-hand side and leading upwards to the hilltop. On the top were the remains of a somewhat enigmatic small stone structure no more than a metre wide and perhaps two or so in length. At the eastern end were a couple of not very large stones, whilst the other stones appeared to form a roughly rectangular feature. To hazard a guess if this is a man-made structure it may have been a robbed-out burial mound.

Finally, we headed off back down off this hill and south along a wall line to enter into the pastures called Brecken Hills (shown on the map above). In this field there were a number of cairns dotted about on the sides of raised areas of land with evidence of rig and furrow ploughing alongside of these raised areas which appeared to have occasional bedrock showing through. The Keys to the Past website suggest that these may have been Bronze Age burial cairns (N9203) or clearance cairns and it looked to us to be far more likely that they are field clearance cairns, there were quite a number of them of varying sizes.

After this we headed back to the cars a Colwell and down the A68 to well-deserved cups of coffee and soup or sandwiches at the Errington Coffee House at the Portgate roundabout. A good day out.

Some notes from Andy:

If you want to read more about the 1925 excavation of Blue Crags Defended Settlement:
Thomas Ball (1926). Blue Crag Promontory Fort, Colwell, North Tyne, Northumberland. Proc Soc Antiq Newcastle-on-Tyne 4th ser., Vol.2, p.24-34.
You can download a pdf of the paper here.



Blue Crags hillfort Scheduled Monument (List Entry: 1011403).

Blue Crags hillfort on Geograph.

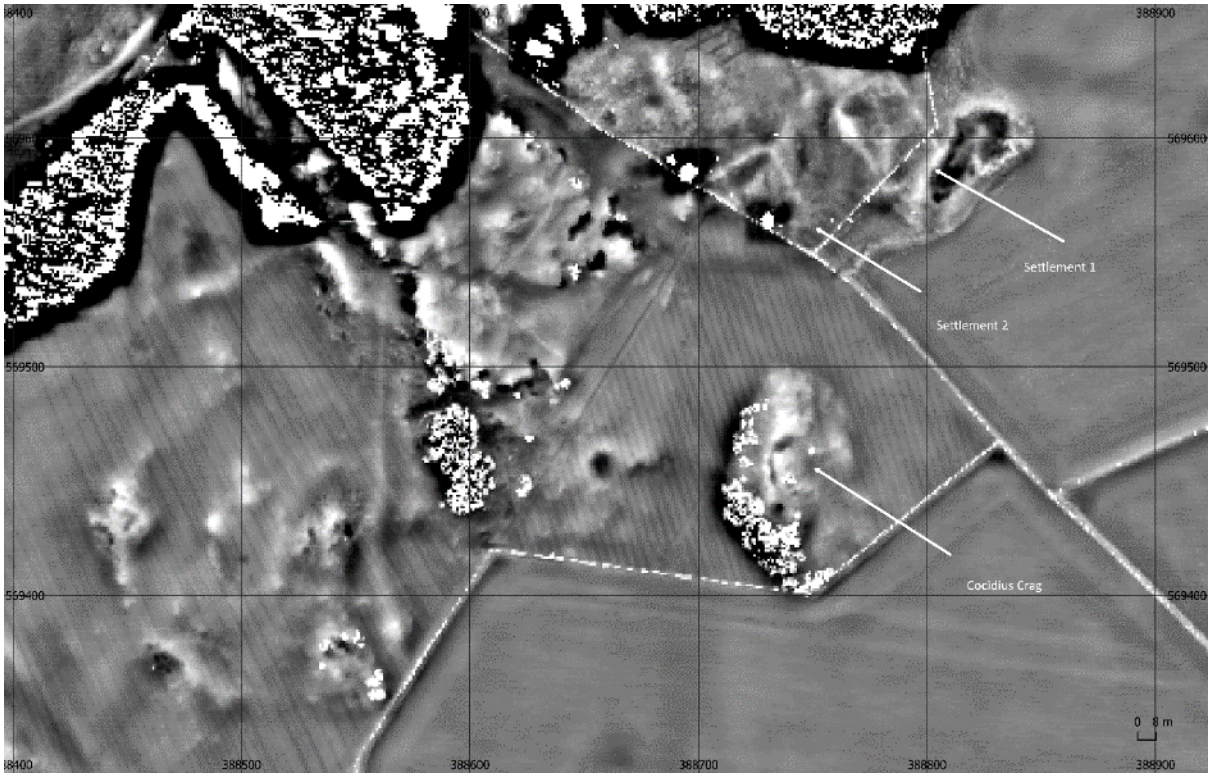
Enclosed settlements near to the Cocidius carving
By Martin Green

Crags outcrop at Carr Edge, about 8km north-west of Hexham. There are several known rock art panels in the area on these small crags, some recorded by Stan Beckensall and more found during the NADRAP project, Members of NOWTAG have

reinvestigated the site more recently, and found there were prehistoric field boundaries crossing it.
Of particular interest is one rock art panel that includes a carved figure, suspected to be Cocidius, a Romano-British god. Carved figures are not normally part of rock art, which is usually considered to be much older than the Iron Age and Roman era.

In summer 2018, members of NOWTAG, supervised by Jon Welsh, investigated further, deturfing (with official permission) more of Cocidius' crag. We found another group of at least two figures carved near to Cocidius: possibly "hooded spirits": carvings of them have also been found at Housesteads Roman fort and at Coventina's Well (adjacent to Brocolita fort), so although "Celtic" rather than "Roman", they were clearly of importance in the Romano-British period.

More recently, lidar data for the area has been improved, and tree-felling in a nearby plantation has opened up more of the ground surface. I was taking a quick look at this new lidar, when I was amazed to see that there is a probable enclosed settlement at NY8878069605, barely more than 100 metres north of Cocidius and his new friends. This farmstead is a rectangular banked enclosure, about 40m x 30m, with internal banks dividing it into compartments, at least one of which has a sunken floor (suggesting it was a livestock pen). There is a central roundhouse. Quarrying has impinged on its extreme south-east corner, but it is surprisingly undamaged otherwise. Overall, it is typical of the many late Iron Age and/or Romano-British farmsteads scattered across the area at intervals of roughly a couple of kilometres.



In the lidar image the Cocidius crag is arrowed and the enclosed settlement labelled as "settlement 1". There is another possible enclosed settlement "settlement 2" rather closer to Cocidius, but its south-west side has been destroyed by ploughing

and the wall of the plantation built across it, so it's not possible to identify it firmly as an enclosed settlement.

I've informed the County Archaeology Service who said they would add it to the Historic Environment Record (though it hasn't yet appeared online at Keys to the Past). The discovery is fascinating in that the figures were carved on the panel of rock art closest to the "native" settlement, whereas those a little further away were left unaltered. Was it an attempt to "modernise" the older carvings, which by the late Iron Age were probably as incomprehensible as they are to us 2000 years later? In any case, the figures were clearly important not just to the Romanised population at Brocolita and Housesteads, but also to the farmers continuing the Iron Age life at Carr Edge.