

ART. I – *Recent Archaeological Fieldwork in the Howgill Fells by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England*

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THE Howgill Fells, with Dentdale and part of Barbondale, was identified as an area requiring rapid identification survey by the RCHME because of the relative poverty of archaeological records for the region in the National Monuments Record (NMR). This area has seen comparatively little fieldwork and very little excavation. Two sections across a Roman road near Fairmile Gate (NMR No. SD 69 NW 11 (RR7c); Macadam 1964), four seasons of work on some late-medieval remains at Underbank and Hall Garth near Sedbergh (SD 69 SE 8 and 4; Addyman *et al.* 1963), and an excavation at Millhouse (SD 68 NW 6; Lowndes 1967) are recorded; the Project area also includes the excavated remains of the Gilbertine Cell at Ravenstonedale (NY 70 SW 6; Turnbull and Walsh 1992) and the Roman fort at Low Borrow Bridge (NY 60 SW 1) where excavations have taken place; the North Western Ethylene Pipeline (Shell Chemicals UK Ltd 1993) also crosses the area. A brief aerial survey of the upper Lune valley was undertaken in 1978 (Higham 1979), and members of the Sedbergh and District History Society have been active in the field.

The area was surveyed by staff from RCHME's Newcastle office between May 1993 and February 1994. Archaeological information for a large part of the area had been transcribed from air photographs in 1992 by the RCHME's Air Photography Unit (APU) at York, as part of the Yorkshire Dales Project. The air photo transcriptions were enlarged from 1:10,560 to 1:10,000, in order to overlay them on current maps so that they could be used as field documents. In the northern area (in Ordnance Survey grid square NY) where no transcription was available, field staff checked the available photographic cover. On completion of the rapid survey (Phase 1 of the Project) in August 1993 about a dozen sites were identified for more detailed survey (Phase 2) and this was undertaken over the autumn and winter.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the principal results of the survey and to provide an indication of the material that has been deposited in the NMR. Sites are identified by their NMR number; in the case of sites which are new to the Record the number is followed by the letter T, indicating that this is a temporary number assigned during the Project, which may differ from the permanent NMR number.

The project area, covered by nineteen 1:10,000 map sheets (475 sq km, of which 375 sq km were covered by the APU transcription), extends over the varied geological and topographical area from the Lune Valley in the north and west over the Dent fault into the limestone dales. The only modern settlements of any size within the area are Tebay, Ravenstonedale, Sedbergh and Dent; apart from these there is a dispersed pattern of farms spread along the lower valley slopes of the Lune, the Rawthey and the Eden, and in Uldale, Garsdale, Grisedale, Dentdale and Barbondale. In terms of modern landuse the area can be broadly divided into meadow, in the valley bottoms, pasture on the lower slopes, and rough grazing on the fells. Much of the meadowland is designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas

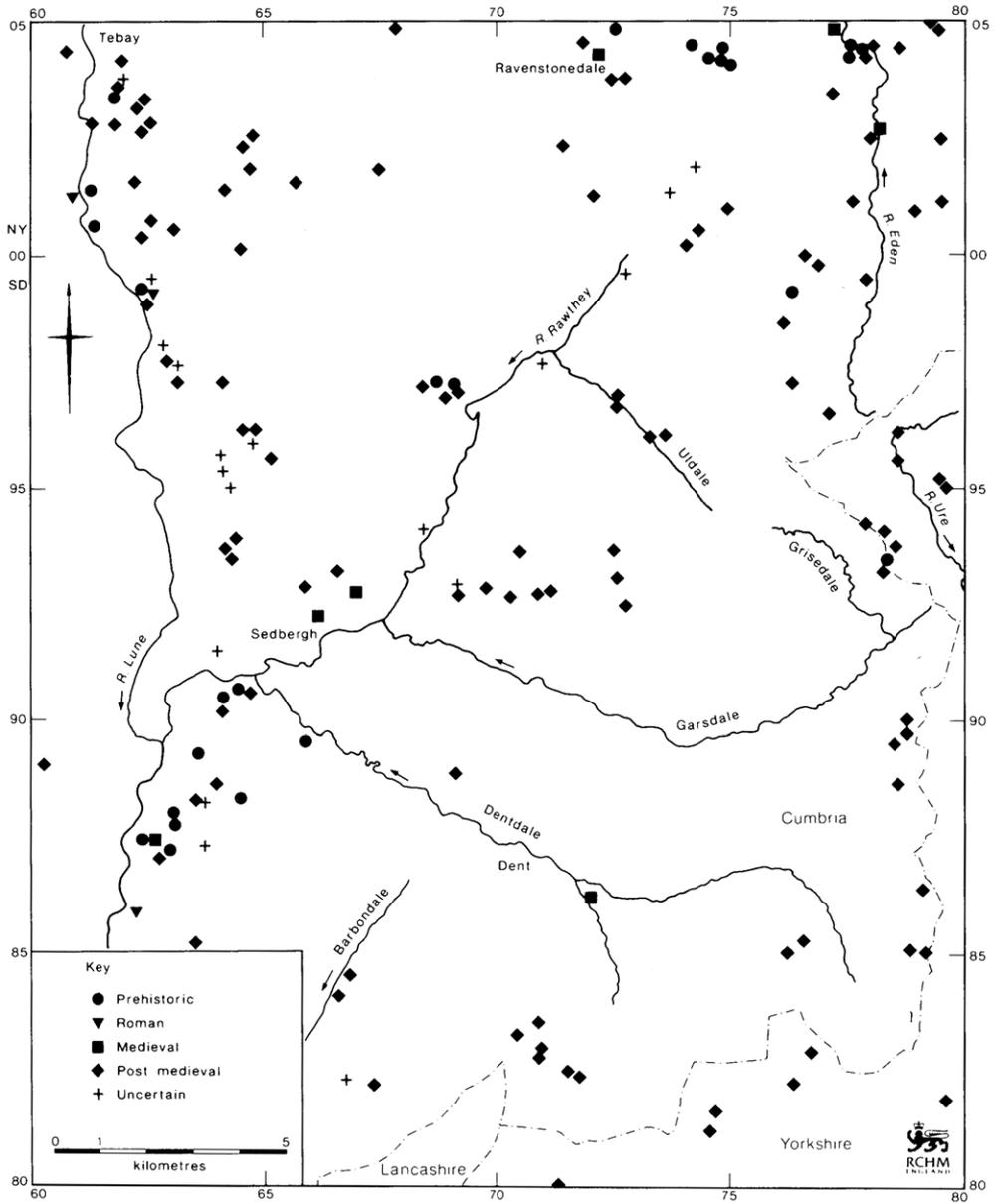


FIG. 1. The survey area; no air photograph transcriptions were available for the area north of the 00 northing line.

(ESAs) and one of the principal aims of the project was to look at the survival of archaeology within these areas; in the event, with the exception of some ridge-and-furrow, very few archaeological remains were found on this lower-lying ground.

Fig. 1 shows the area covered by the survey and the distribution of sites visited in the field, broken down by period. Fig. 2 is an extract from one of the 1:10,000 map overlays (SD 68 NW) resulting from the first phase of the project. The hard lines represent the earthworks of settlements and field systems; the dotted lines show the extent, and the arrows the alignment, of fields of ridge-and-furrow cultivation.

## Results

### *Prehistoric and Roman*

The project has confirmed that there is a paucity of surviving prehistoric and Roman remains in much of this area. The reasons for this are not known but one strong possibility is that farms in the scattered settlement pattern of the present day may be occupying the locations of earlier sites; typically these farms lie on terraces low on the valley sides, adjacent to water sources and avoiding north-facing situations. Unfortunately many prehistoric settlement sites in the Howgills look like shallow surface quarries, which has resulted in them being unrecognised in the past and only tentatively identified now: two sites on Holme Fell (SD 69 SW 6 and 14T) are classic examples. Very few unequivocal examples of hut circles were found. There is, however, a relatively dense concentration of prehistoric settlements on the east side of the Lune valley, particularly on Middleton Fell where there are up to five settlements on one map sheet (SD 68 NW).

A site in the Cautley valley (SD 69 NE 1; Fig. 3) may be taken as typical. An oval embanked enclosure about 60m across, with an "annex" to the north, has been overlain by a stone-walled rectangular enclosure, probably a sheepfold, which has within it some slight features which may mark the positions of pens. The interior of the oval enclosure is divided into a number of terraces by scarps of substantial proportions. On one of these, towards the north-east side of the site, is a probable hut circle with an entrance facing south-east. The considerable amount of bare stone exposed on these terraces and on the encircling bank increases the site's superficial resemblance to a surface quarry. The "annex" is a rectangular area surrounded by a stony bank. This bank appears to be integral with the main enclosure bank and may be contemporary with it; there is evidence, however, in the form of an isolated length of earthen bank, that the main enclosure was originally complete on the north and north-west side. Beyond the northern corner of the "annex" is a row of four small cairns of bare stone but their relationship to the enclosure, if any, is unknown. Although there are a number of gaps in the boundaries forming the enclosure no original entrances can be identified with certainty; the entrance on the western side of the main enclosure is a good candidate, however. A well defined trackway leads westward from this site up the valley, heading almost directly towards Cautley Spout. The enclosure is intervisible with a large round cairn (SD 69 NE 2) further up the valley and also commands a striking view of the Spout itself which, reinforced by the existence of the trackway, invites speculation as to the influence that this remarkable natural feature may have had on the location of the enclosure.

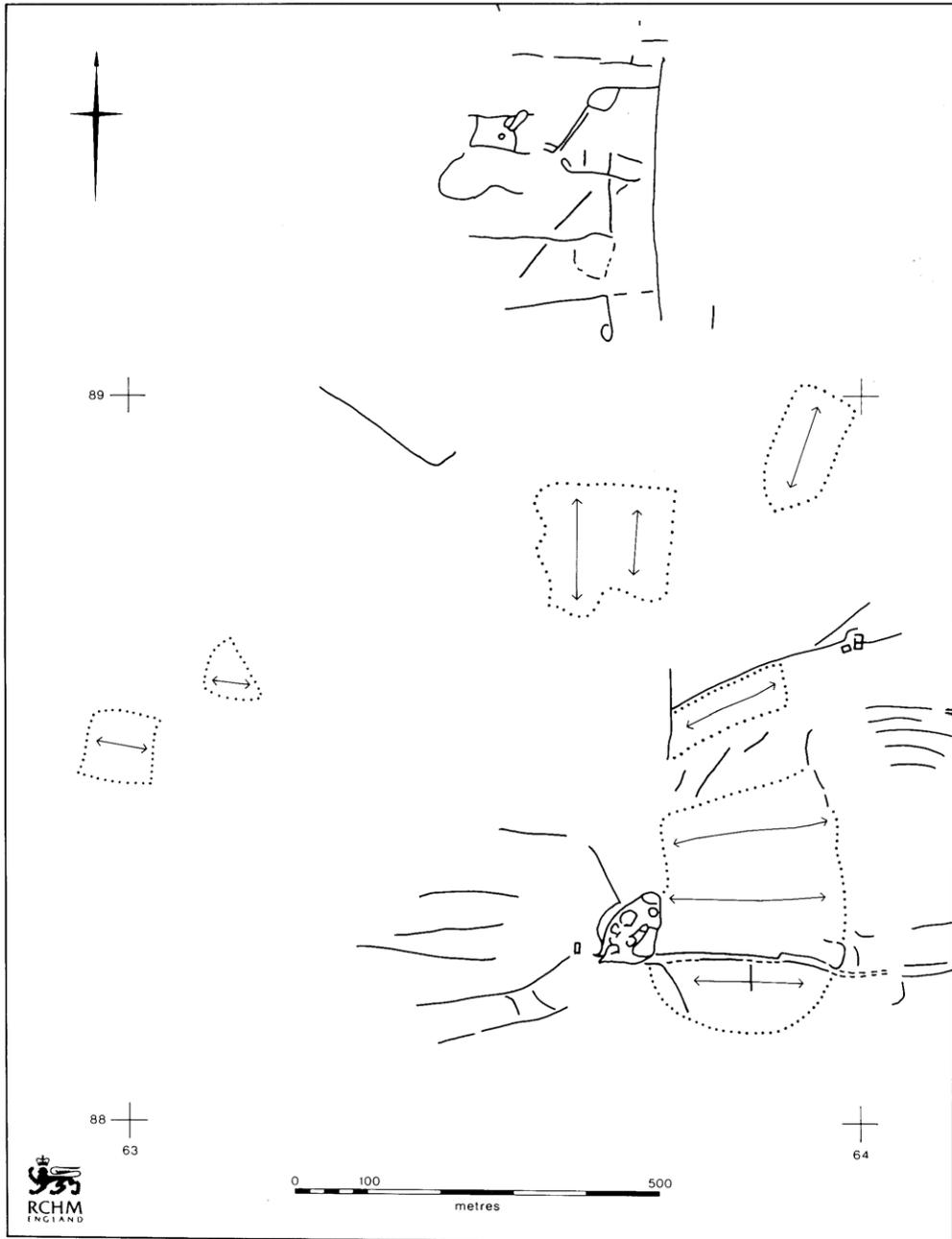


FIG. 2. Part of 1:10,000 map overlay SD 68 NW.

Other probable prehistoric settlements in the area share traits with this one: small numbers of hut circles; strongly marked internal scarps, in some cases forming "sunken yards"; large quantities of bare stone on the banks and in the interiors. Some of the sites overlooking the Lune valley, such as those on Holme Fell (SD 69 SW 6 and 14T), appear to be associated with field systems.

A number of potential prehistoric burial cairns had been recorded in the area before the Project began. Four more possible cairns and three cairnfields have been added to the Record in the course of fieldwork.

Four supposed Roman roads cross the area but none of these are securely dated and one, on Leck Fell (Linear RRX25), must be regarded as a misidentification. On the other hand, the road up the Lune valley (Linear RR7c), which survives as an earthwork to the north of Fairmile Gate (SD 69 NW 11), is part of the well-established route from Lancaster to the fort at Low Borrow Bridge.

### *Medieval and post-medieval*

Few settlement remains exist in earthwork form. Again the conclusion must be that the present settlement pattern to a large extent echoes the medieval pattern. One exception to this is the shieling, a site type which has its origins in the medieval period. Four possible shieling groups lie within the area; one of them was already in the NMR (SD 69 NE 3) and another has been described previously (Cleasby 1991; SD 69 NW 17T); the RCHME plan of a third has been published (Bowden 1993, fig. 1; SD 78 NE 42T). There are also about ten isolated structures which may have had the same function.

A good example is the Cautley Crag site (SD 69 NE 3; Fig 4), which consists of the tumbled remains of five sub-rectangular stone-built structures, each about 10m long by 3-4m wide. There are also two or three larger enclosures, up to 15m across. There is some evidence of chronological depth, with one of the shieling huts apparently overlying an earlier enclosure. The whole group is tucked onto an east-facing terrace at the foot of the Crag, and adjacent to a spring. The other groups have similar characteristics though in the case of the more easterly examples (e.g. High Green, SD 78 NE 42T) there is more emphasis on large enclosures, which are not normally associated with shieling sites.

There are three castles within the survey area. Castlehaw Tower (SD 69 SE 1) at Sedbergh is a small but fine and well-preserved motte-and-bailey, positioned on a shoulder of high ground with a dramatic drop to the south. It is sited to overlook the crossing points of the River Rawthey at Millthrop and New Bridge. It also commands extensive views up the Rawthey valley and Garsdale, and over the town to the Lune valley. Lammerside and Pendragon Castles are both stone-built but are surrounded by, and perhaps overlie, substantial earthworks. At Lammerside (NY 70 SE 1) these mark the positions of further buildings, enclosures and trackways. At Pendragon (NY 70 SE 2; Fig. 5) there are, in addition, large ponds (Fig. 5, a, a), perhaps ornamental as much as functional or defensive, and an enigmatic feature on the river bank opposite the castle itself; this is a small platform projecting forward from the line of the river-cliff and backed by a substantial ditch (Fig. 5, b). Its height relative to the castle tower, only 70m away, would render it a poor position for a

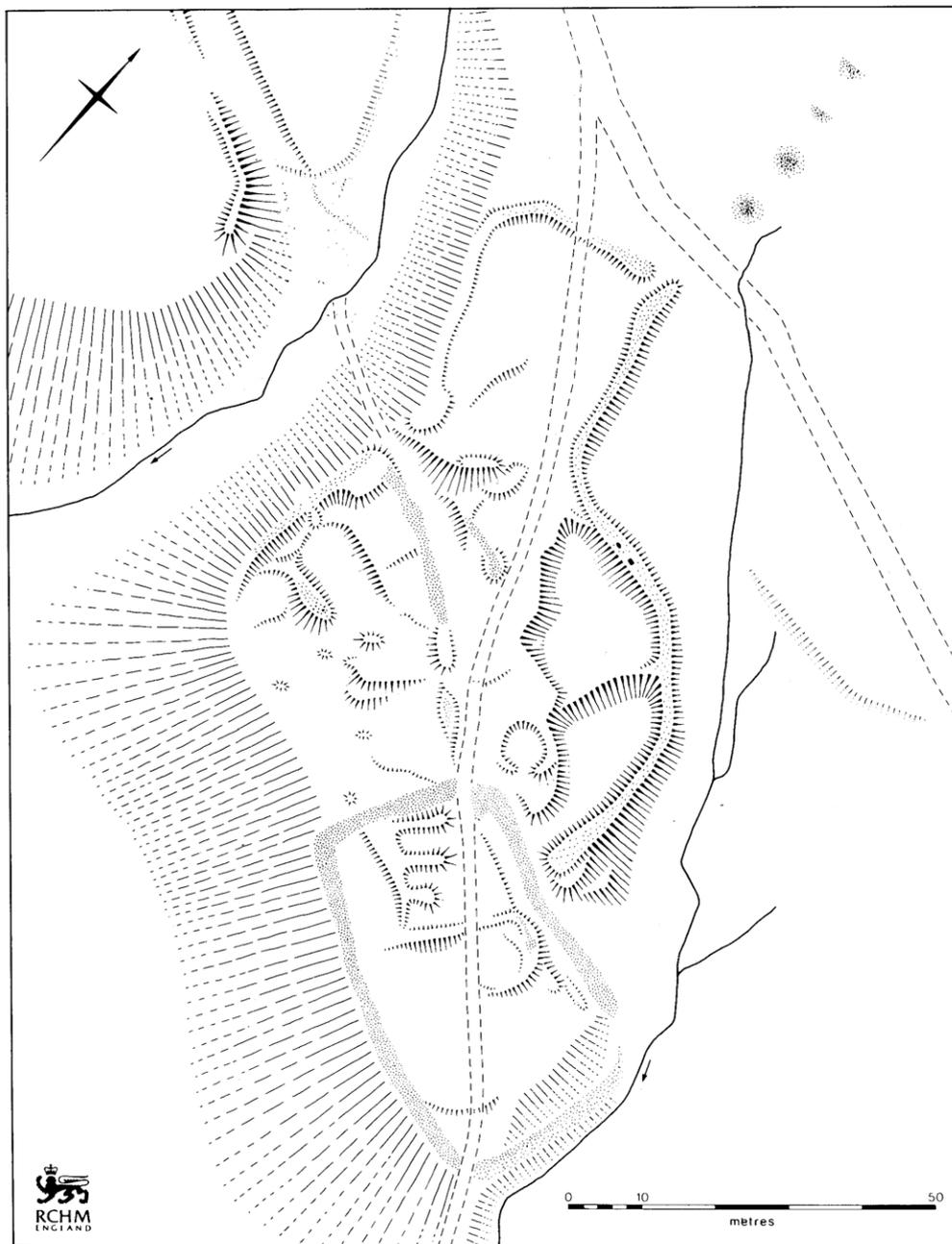


FIG. 3. Cautley valley prehistoric enclosed settlement. 1:1,000.



FIG. 4. Cautley Crag shieling site. 1:1,000.

siegework and again it might be an ornamental or "garden" feature, possibly associated with Lady Anne Clifford's improvements in the 1660s. These improvements included the construction of a range of outbuildings (Fig. 5, c-c), now largely ruinous.

Much ridge-and-furrow cultivation was transcribed from the air photographs and more was noted during field survey. All these cultivation remains have been plotted on the 1:10,000 maps produced by the Project but they have not been individually recorded and described. Most of the ridge-and-furrow can be classified as "narrow" and is therefore probably of relatively late date.

The majority of post-medieval features recorded by the survey are of an industrial nature. Limekilns were noted in passing but not recorded (with a few exceptions which seem to be of more than average interest) as they have been subject to a recent thorough survey by members of the Sedbergh and District History Society (a copy of this report is held by the National Park archaeological conservation officer at Yoredale House, Bainbridge). Washfolds were recorded by the project team but the majority of ordinary sheepfolds and biolds were not, unless apparently associated with shielings. Bridges were not recorded unless they were of exceptional interest. Of quarries, only the larger examples with structural remains have been recorded; an exception to this is a group of small turf-covered quarry pits on Baugh Fell (SD 79 SW 4T) at SD 725938, which are of a different character to, and are possibly older than, the known seventeenth- and eighteenth-century quarries on this Fell.

These post-medieval quarries, coal mines and associated structures on the west flank and summit of Baugh Fell have been described previously (Lancaster 1989) and are now included in the NMR (SD 79 SW 2T-8T). A small lead mine by Far Cote Gill (SD 79 NE 68T) was also recorded during the Project as was the more extensive Great Bell lead mine (NY 70 SE 19T) and mineral workings at High Stennerskeugh (NY 70 SW 35T).

Peat cutting was for centuries a significant part of dales life; a number of peat cuttings and their associated sledways were noted in the course of the survey. The whole area of the Howgill Fells is seamed with old trackways, sledways and paths; it would be impractical to attempt to include all of these in the Record but they have been included where associated with other features, and a further selection has been noted in the project archive.

The Settle-Carlisle railway line, built in the early 1870s, passes through the Project area. Amongst the field remains associated with the construction of this formidable line perhaps the most striking are those associated with the Blea Moor tunnel (SD 78 SE 66T): shaft heads, engine bases, inclined planes, quarries and waste dumps are all remarkably well preserved.

An unusual site type recorded during the Project was the extensive system of aqueducts (SD 69 SE 21T) feeding the reservoir to the north-east of Sedbergh, constructed in the late nineteenth century.

#### *Remains of unknown date and type*

As with all such projects a large number of features recorded cannot be assigned to any period or function. Amongst these mention should be made of a complex of

remains by Hazel Sike on Barbon High Fell (SD 68 SE 5 and 6), a site first commented on by Cherry and Cherry (1991). There are two parts to this site, divided by Hazel Sike itself. To the north-west of the Sike is an irregular stone-built enclosure with, at its centre, what appears to be the remains of a three-roomed sub-rectangular building. Perhaps the most curious feature of this enclosure is the way that its perimeter wall dives into sink holes at four points. On the other side of the Sike, and to the south of a track leading to the coal mines (SD 68 SE 7T) higher on the fell, are some linear clearance banks, possibly the remains of a field system. Within the area defined by these banks is a series of circular features. These are essentially ring banks of loose stone, with no apparent structure, ranging from 5m to 12m in diameter, scattered across the fell. They do not appear to be hut circles; the majority lack entrances, two of them are on very steep slopes and many of them would be unusually large for huts. There are also objections to interpreting them as ring cairns, sheepfolds, sow kilns or walls to protect specimen trees. The most plausible archaeological explanation may be that they are simply clearance cairns, though why they should be rings rather than the usual heaps is unclear. It may be that a geological rather than an archaeological explanation should be sought for some of the features in this area.

## Conclusion

As a result of the fieldwork element of this Project 80 site records already in the NMR have been updated and enhanced, and 115 sites added to the Record; not all of the latter are new discoveries, of course, for many of them were already well known to local archaeologists, but they are new to the *National* Record.

The sites surveyed at larger scale in the second phase of the Project were:

1. High Carlingill prehistoric settlement (NY 60 SW 5); NY 614007; 1:1,000.
2. Park House prehistoric settlement (NY 70 SW 18); NY 72200477; 1:2,500.
3. Ash Fell double prehistoric settlement and enclosures (NY 70 SW 29T and 30T); NY 734041; 1:2,500.
4. Lammerside Castle (NY 70 SE 1); NY 772047; 1:1,000.
5. Pendragon Castle (NY 70 SE 2); NY 781026; 1:1,000.
6. Middleton Hall earthworks (SD 68 NW 7); SD 625874; 1:2,500.
7. High Green and Raismoor prehistoric settlements, field systems and cairnfield (SD 68 NW 13, 14, 16, 17); SD 640880; 1:2,500.
8. Rash Bridge prehistoric settlement (SD 68 NE 5T); SD 659896; 1:500.
9. Hazel Sike, Barbondale or Barbon High Fell (SD 68 SE 5 and 6); SD 665825; 1:2,500.
10. Cautley Valley prehistoric and later enclosures (SD 69 NE 1) and shieling group (SD 69 NE 3); SD 6897; 1:1,000.
11. Holme Fell prehistoric settlements, field system and later enclosures (SD 69 SW 2, 6, 7, 14T); SD 644905; 1:2,500.
12. High Green, Garsdale, medieval or post-medieval shielings, enclosures and coal mines (SD 78 NE 42T); SD 789898; 1:2,500.

Following this Project, recommendations have been made for further, targeted, aerial photographic survey. We would also endorse Cleasby's (1991, 8) comments

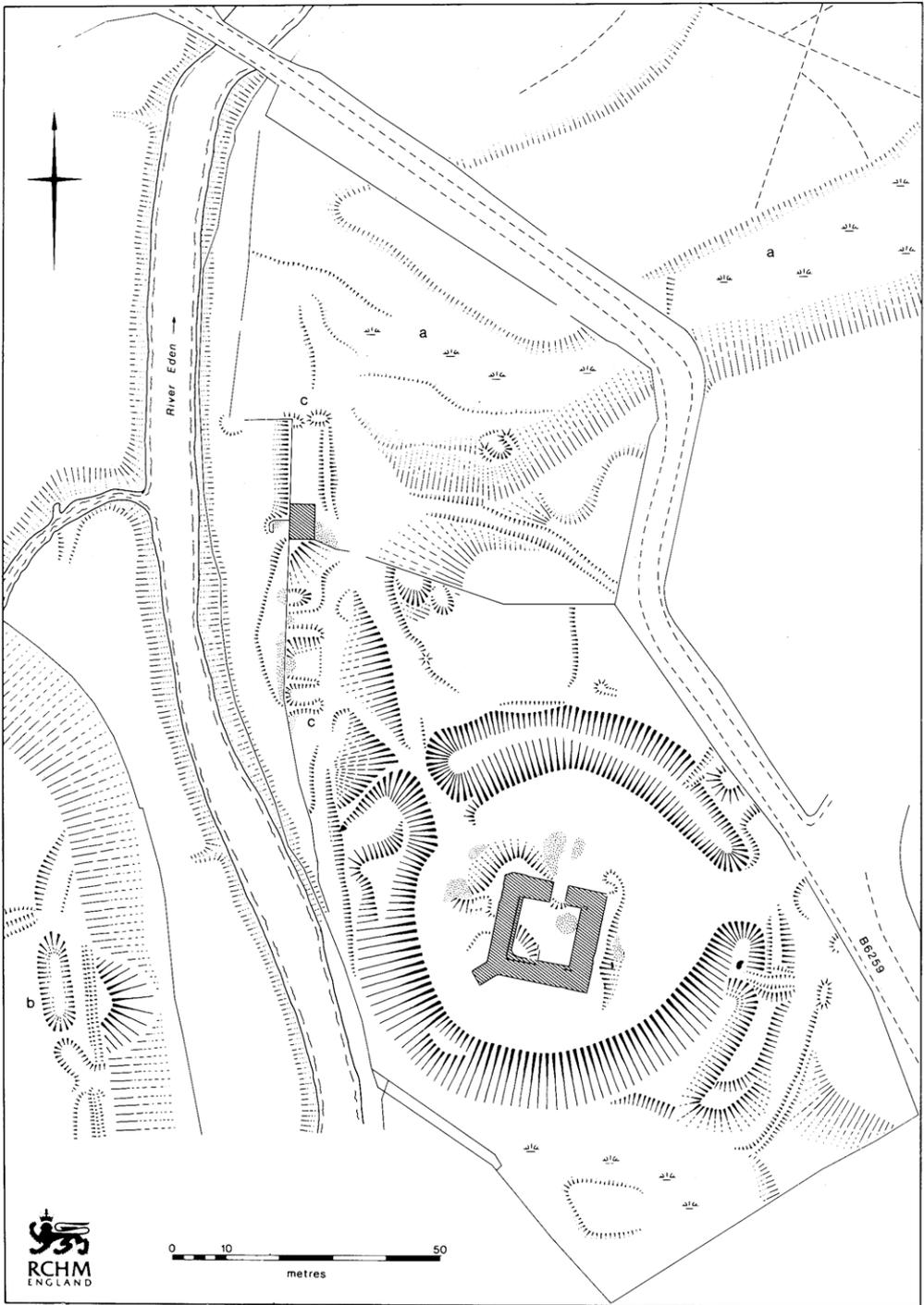


FIG. 5. Pendragon Castle. Reduced from 1:1,000 survey.

on the desirability of research excavation to throw light on the uncertainty surrounding the prehistoric settlement of the area and the presumed shieling sites. In each of these categories excavation would address the primary questions: are these sites what we think they are and, if so, of what date are they? Subsidiary questions would undoubtedly arise regarding environment, social organisation, ritual practices and economy. This region might be a particularly fruitful one in which to study the practice of transhumance, using further survey and excavation as well as documentary and place-name evidence.

### Acknowledgements

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The records generated by the project are available through the National Monuments Record Centre, Kemble Drive, Swindon, SN2 2GZ.

Figs. 1-5 were prepared for publication by Philip Sinton and are Crown copyright: RCHME.

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