

ROYSTONE GRANGE: EXCAVATIONS OF THE CISTERCIAN GRANGE 1980-87

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INTRODUCTION

The excavations of the medieval grange at Roystone Grange began in 1980 and continued for eight three-week seasons. They formed part of the Roystone Grange Project (Hodges *et al.*, 1982; Hodges, 1991). In this second interim report we describe the sequence of buildings found at the grange. Comprehensive report on the Roystone Grange Project will be published in the near future.

THE SITE

In the first report on the grange, Margaret Poulter outlined the little we know of the history of the estate (Hodges *et al.*, 1982). The grange was owned by Garendon Abbey, a Cistercian house in Leicestershire, and was one of three that they possessed in the White Peak. (The other two were Biggin and Heathcote — Hart, 1981: 155). The Abbey came into possession of Roystone ("Revestones") probably in the later-twelfth or early-thirteenth century, as the result of a grant made by Richard de Herthill. In the following three hundred years Roystone was run as a sheep-walk; and by the early-seventeenth century a record of a court-case indicates that it had over seven hundred sheep (Hodges *et al.*, 1982: 90). From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, apart from disputes and suits regarding adjacent land, little is recorded about the post-medieval farm. It is clear, however, that both the farm's late-medieval lessees and its subsequent owners were men of some substance.

THE EXCAVATIONS (Fig. 1, Plate 1)

In the first report on the excavations of the grange, three buildings were described, all from Trench XXV: Building A, which was completely exposed and partially excavated; Building B, which was observed in the south section of the trench; and Building C, which was clipped at the northern end of the trench. In 1983, the excavation of Building A was completed, and its earliest phases established. In 1984-87, Building B was investigated within a new trench, Trench L; and a cutting (Trench LX) was made between the west edge of Trench XXV and the dew pond on the upslope side of Building A. The sequence of buildings forming the medieval grange is now much clearer. In addition, the chronology of the site has been given greater precision by Catherine Coutts' study of the pottery. Her results will be published in full in the final report, but we have made use of her provisional dates in the description of the sequence of farming-complexes which follows.

Phase 1

Late in the twelfth or early in the thirteenth centuries, a terrace revetted by dolomite boulders was created a little downslope from the pre-existing Roman-period dew-pond. A bank at least a metre across (located in Trench LX), again revetted by boulders, separated the terrace from the pond itself. Building A was constructed upon this terrace. Little remains of the original

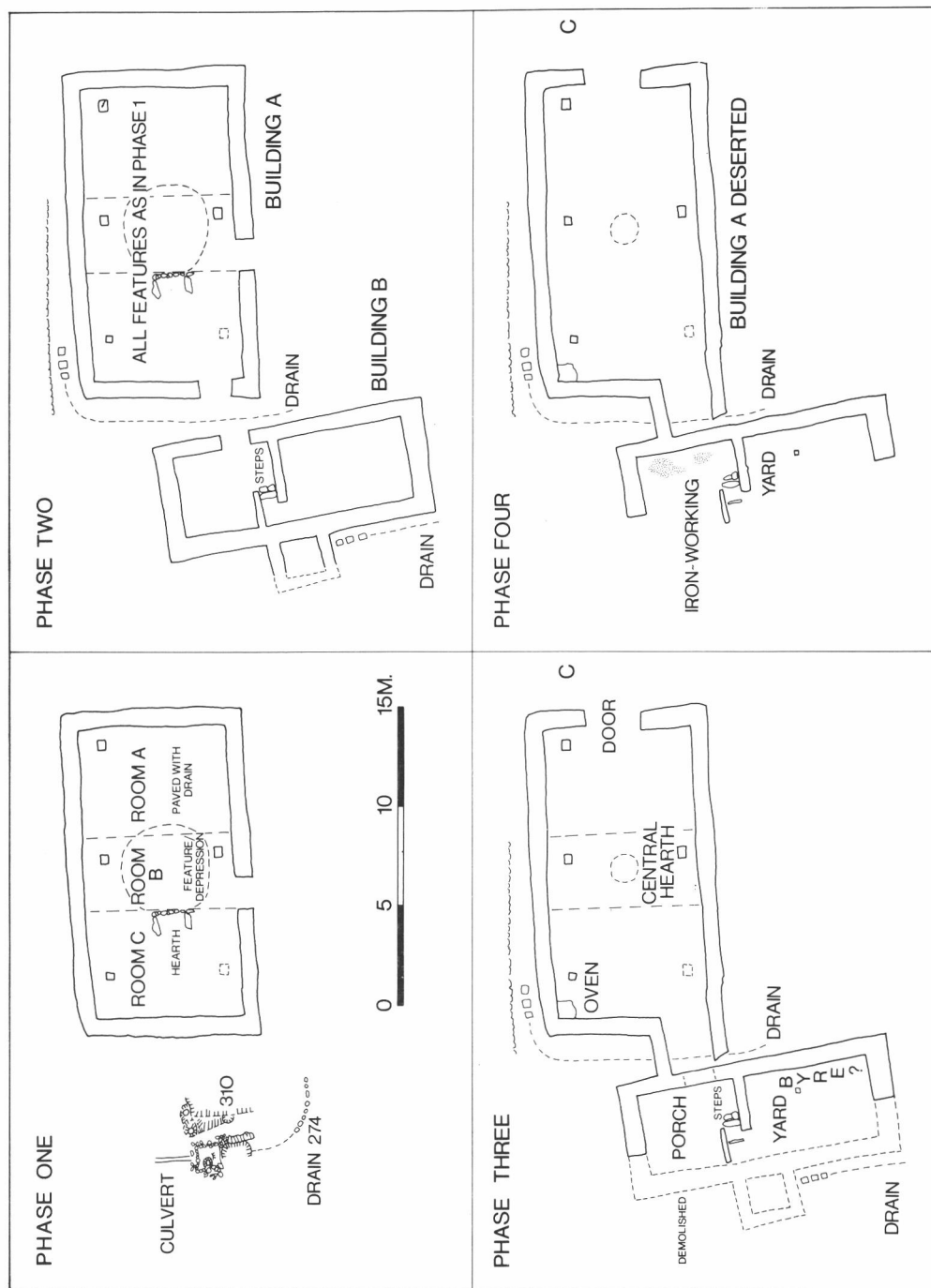


Fig. 1 Roystone Grange 1980-87: the sequence of farms.



Plate 1 Roystone Grange 1980-87: view of Building B looking westwards, showing the remains of the Phase 2 walls. (Building A is situated on the right-hand side of the picture.)

construction of this building. However, contemporary structures found elsewhere in the excavations suggest that it is highly likely to have had simple dry-stone walls made of local carboniferous limestone. Internally, two rows of finely cut stylobate post-pads indicate that Building A was an aisled building resembling, for example, the Romano-British farm excavated in 1978-79 at Roystone (Hodges and Wildgoose, 1981), as well as the twelfth-century woolhouse at Fountains Abbey (Coppack, 1986). The building was divided into three bays. The south bay contained a hooded fireplace, deducible from the scatter of small nails around the surviving hearth. The central bay was dominated by a deep hollow that was ultimately filled in with packed rubble. The north bay was flagged with limestone paving, which was dissected by a simple drain running downslope from west to east.

South of Building A, traces of several structures were discovered that pre-dated the construction of Building B. Close to the south wall of Building A was a deep and sharply defined pit (Trench L, 310), within which were two substantial post-holes. Next to this pit was a tank, served by a simple culvert cut into the natural clay. The walls of the tank were made of simple dry-stone, bonded together with a bright, heavy yellow clay. Remains of a drain (274: one fragment, beneath the later Building B, was especially well-preserved) curved away downslope. Both pit and tank may have been associated with the production of wool (cf. Coppack, 1986). In the far southern corner of Trench L, a small section of dry-stone walling (204) was found, resembling that used to make the tank. Whether this is all that remains of a building, or is a perimeter wall, will be resolved only by further excavation.

It is tempting to assume that Building C, the northernmost of the trio of structures, also existed at this time. It sat on a well-defined terrace of the kind constructed to accommodate Building A. The features on the terrace suggest that a building occupied its southern half, separated by a hollow from a simple trapezoidal-shaped yard or pen at the northern end.

Phase 2

This phase was notable for the construction of Building B, a structure more typical of a monastery than an upland farm. The Phase 1 features—Pit 310 and the walled tank—were filled in; the south end of the original terrace was demolished; and the new building was constructed. Building B was placed at right angles to Building A, running down the slope, presumably with a view to constructing two floors in its eastern half. The building was rectangular, and constructed on a plinth with walls about 80 cms wide. The masons carefully selected the stone and trimmed the pieces to shape as they erected the walls, leaving chippings alongside. Building B was 13.5 metres long and 6.0 metres wide, with two rooms divided by an inner wall. A stairway, of which two steps survive, linked the western, upper, room to the ground floor eastern room. Traces of a small room or annexe on the south side suggest that there was probably an external garderobe serving the first floor. A drain was built alongside the south wall, while a similar drain, starting on the west side of Building A, led around and alongside the north wall of Building B.

The finely cut stones of the ashlar doorway, as well as the quoining, leave no doubt that this was an elegant hall. Parallels from Lincoln (the Jew's House), Norwich (the Music House) and Southampton (Canute's Palace) provide an impression of the importance of this building. Similarly, the East and West Guesthouses at Fountains Abbey were designed on the same scale and were barely more elegant. However, Building B, unlike these other halls, was almost certainly roofed with thatch or shingles rather than tiles.

Quite what happened to Building A when B was built is a matter of conjecture. In our opinion, however, it is more likely that Buildings A and C remained largely unaltered in this phase. The major alterations to Building A belong either to this period or to Phase 3. We have opted to place them in Phase 3. It was in Phase 2, however, that the bank separating the west (back) wall of Building A from the dew-pond was enlarged and revetted by a fine dry-stone wall. Much of the earth required for this bank was probably found when Building B was constructed.

Phase 3

Building B was used for a very short time only. In all likelihood, the ground floor was repeatedly flooded by water pouring down the slope from the spring beside the dew-pond. Indeed, as the earlier tanks demonstrated, this site was a natural reservoir. It appears that, as a result, the southern half of Building B was demolished, and much of the stone employed to re-build the walls of Building A. In addition, it seems that the southern half of Building B was turned into a yard, leading to the steps that had once been inside the building. These steps now gave access to Building A through a newly-made porch to the old north door of Building B (Fig. 1).

Building A was substantially altered too. The floor level was raised; a small oven was built in the south bay; and a central fireplace was situated where the earlier through-passage had been. The flagged north end, however, survived. A north door provided access to Building C, replacing an earlier door in the centre of the east wall, which was blocked. A small annexe was tucked between Building A and all that remained of Building B to the north of the improvised corridor. This arrangement, however, spanned only a brief period, and by the later-thirteenth century it appears that the entire complex was effectively abandoned as a farm.

Phase 4

Soon after the abandonment of the site, the upper room (the Porch) within Building B was used for some light iron-smelting. Remains of a post-pad suggest that the lower room was also used

for some temporary purpose, perhaps as a stable. To the south of the stable, a small field wall was found, overlying the largely robbed remains of the hall. The construction of the field wall certainly pre-dates the post-medieval wall-types identified elsewhere within the valley, and may belong to either the fourteenth or the fifteenth centuries.

Phase 5

The entire area was deserted, and a layer of stones formed over the site.

Phase 6

Amongst the few recent activities noted in the excavations was the burial of a horse in the centre of Building B. Associated with this burial were a small bell and a stoneware jug. According to Mr C. Edge, of Ballidon Grange Farm, the animal was buried in 1928.

FUTURE WORK

In the first interim report we proposed that the medieval grange farm was moved from the site just described to a paddock situated a little to the north (Hodges *et al.*, 1982: 91-92, fig. 1). We have since obtained no further evidence either to confirm or deny this hypothesis. Moreover, we have yet to make a record of the present farm to discover when it was first built. During a preliminary examination of the structure, it has become clear that remains of a pre-nineteenth century building constitute the nucleus of the house itself, and that the main barn attached to it appears to overlie an earlier terrace. A re-used door jamb and lintel, not dissimilar to original elements of Building B, survive in this barn.

Roystone, it seems, has had a grange farm since the later twelfth or thirteenth century. The sequence of farms varies quite considerably in form and style over the subsequent period, and when we have completed our analysis of the surviving field walls and systems (cf. Wildgoose, 1987), it should provide a model for a Peakland hill-farm in the second millennium A.D.

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