ROMANO-BRITISH AND PREHISTORIC DISCOVERIES FROM TEST-PITTING AT LEES BOTTOM, TADDINGTON

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INTRODUCTION

The Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) propose to encourage woodland regeneration on land adjacent to the White Lodge public car park, at Lees Bottom, Taddington, alongside the A6 in the valley of the River Wye (SK 17057053). This land, currently under pasture, lies downslope of an area that has yielded artefacts and is known for its earthworks. Consequently, Ken Smith, the Archaeology Services Manager of PDNPA, commissioned Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust to undertake evaluation of this area in order to ascertain whether any archaeological remains might be affected by the proposed woodland regeneration. This paper is an abridged version of a full report lodged with the both PDNPA in Bakewell (together with the archive) and the Derbyshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) at Matlock. The artefacts have been deposited at Sheffield City Museum.

The specification provided by PDNPA required that the field should be evaluated by the excavation of 1m × 1m test-pits spaced at 10m intervals, and it was agreed that this could be achieved with eleven test-pits numbered and set out as in Fig. 1c. In the event, test-pit 02 was extended to become a 4m × 1m trench, as explained below. The fieldwork was conducted in July 1997; the test-pitting under the supervision of SM, the field-survey by DG, with staff from the Trust and volunteers from ARTEAMUS.

There is much evidence for past activity in the area, ranging from Mesolithic flintwork and Neolithic stone axes (SK 169702; SMR 12407, 12408), through Bronze Age burials (SK 17017024; SMR 12454; Barnatt 1996, 192), to the presumed Iron Age hill-fort at Fin Cop (750m to the north-west; SMR 419) and the probable Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Dimin Dale (some 400m to the south-west (Fig. 1a): investigated by Bramwell in 1908, when it was called Demon's Dale [Storrs Fox 1911, 124] and Major Harris in the 1920s [SK 16857025; SMR 12424], and noted by Challis & Harding [1975, 88]). The latter site forms part of a wider suite of remains known as 'Horsborough' and 'Taddington Wood' recorded by L.H. Butcher (Beswick & Merrills 1983, fig. 21, redrawn as Fig. 1a here), who regarded it as the stony banks of an extensive 'Celtic field' system spreading along the south-west side of the dale (Beswick & Merrills 1983, 39). This plan has been updated by Makepeace (1998, fig. 12), who includes 'two large fields' (Makepeace 1998, 120), which are almost certainly some of the earthworks recorded during the fieldwork reported below.

FIELD-SURVEY

The field evaluated by test-pitting lies at the base of the steep slope of the dale-side, the western upslope part being steeper, and shallowing to a flattish terrace above the River

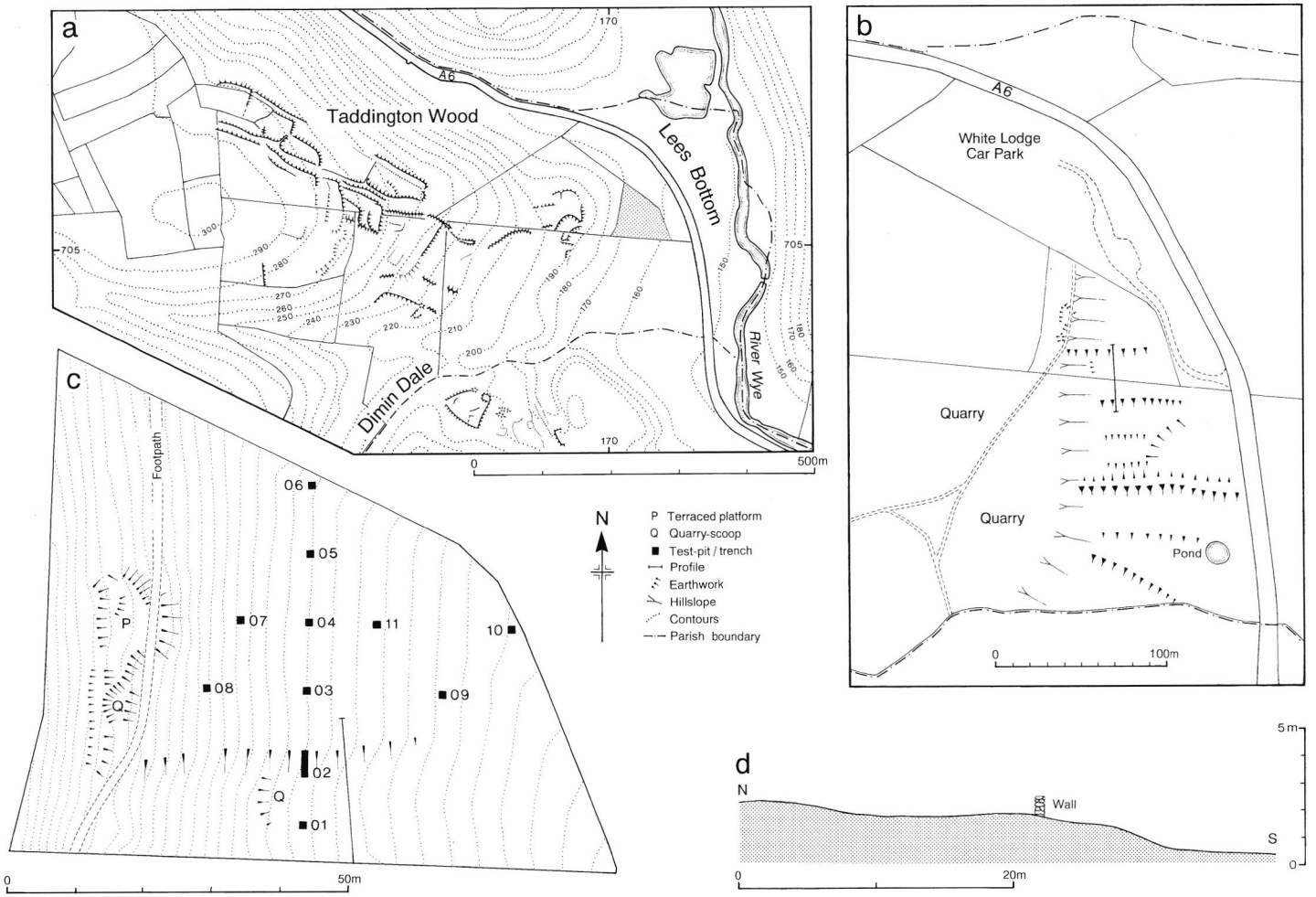

Fig. 1a: Earthworks of field-systems and settlements in Taddington Wood and Dimin Dale on the slopes above the area investigated by test-pitting (toned); redrawn from L. Butcher's surveys, as published by Beswick and Merrills 1983, fig. 21; contours at 10m intervals, scale 1:10,000. 1b: Plan showing relation of test-pitted field to lynchets and lynchet/causeway, and sinuous parish boundaries; scale 1:4000. 1c: Survey results and test-pit locations; contours show natural slopes (at arbitrary 0.5m intervals), hachures denote earthworks; scale 1:1000. 1d: Profile across the two northernmost lynchets located in Fig. 1b; horizontal scale 1:500 with vertical exaggeration $\times 2$. The location of the site is no. 18 in the map on page 278 of this volume.

Wye (Fig. 1a). It contained a number of earthworks which were recorded by EDM survey and included a lynchet, a terraced platform, at least two small quarry-scoops and some slight and narrow terraced tracks. In the present context, it is the lynchet that is of interest, so only it is described below, though the other earthworks are shown in Fig. 1c. The lynchet runs approximately perpendicular to the slope, has an asymmetrical profile, standing to a maximum of 0.4m high, with the scarp-edge facing south (Fig. 1d). It could not be traced on either the steepest, western, part of the slope, nor on the flattest, eastern part (Fig. 1c). Roughly parallel lynchets are also visible in the field to the south (Fig. 1b: sketched only). The adjacent lynchet is of similar proportions but curves slightly to the south at its western end, while two slighter lynchets lie beyond, both disturbed at their eastern end. Another lynchet south of these is sinuous in form and much larger than any others; stone has been added along its length, converting it into a bank or causeway. Since these fields are known to have been allocated at Enclosure in 1795 (Derbyshire Record Office 1795 Taddington Enclosure Award Q/RI 95, D1339L/PZ) for building new roads (including the current A6), it seems likely that the stone was added then to create an access route to the quarries which lie just to the west (Fig. 1b). To the south of the sinuous lynchet lie two more lynchets; a slight one like those immediately to the north, and a larger one which runs at an angle to the others to join the line of the southern field-wall, where it peters out. All of the lynchets stop at the base of the steeper dale-side on the west, but only the largest lynchet, subsequently made into a causeway, could be traced as far east as the road, and there is no sign of any continuation of these earthworks onto the floodplain of the River Wye, beyond the A6. On different series of aerial photographs inspected at PDNPA and DCC, the line of the sinuous lynchet is clearly echoed by the field-wall lying *c.* 70m to the south (Fig. 1b). This field-wall is on the line of the parish boundary, and is obviously of very different character from most of the other field-boundaries nearby, for they are straight and presumed to be of the Enclosure period. No earthworks were observed within the long grass of the field to the south of the parish boundary on three occasions in 1997 and 1998.

TEST-PITTING

The turf was removed as thinly as possible from each of the test-pits and topsoil was then excavated by trowel to the top of the underlying subsoil. The subsoil was inspected for features and then excavated in *c.* 50mm spits to a minimum depth of 50mm below its interface with the overlying topsoil, or to 50mm below the base of the lowest artefact recovered. In two cases (03 and 10), the test-pits were excavated to greater depth in order to investigate the nature of the subsoil. Excavated topsoil and subsoil was passed through a sieve with a 7mm mesh. Augering was conducted at the base of each test-pit in order to establish the depth of the bedrock across the site. The Geological Survey (Sheet SK 17, 1:25000) maps the site as partly on an outcrop of basalt, the Lees Bottom Lava, and partly on limestone, the Monsal Dale Limestone. No bedrock was retrieved in the auger samples, so the Geological Survey mapping could not be confirmed, though the deep subsoils encountered are typical of those developed on basaltic lavas (Johnson 1971, 31–36; Simpson 1982, 9).

Topsoil varied from 0.12m to 0.22m in thickness, consisting of a uniform, mid-brown, sandy loam, including few stones (small angular pieces of chert and occasional rounded

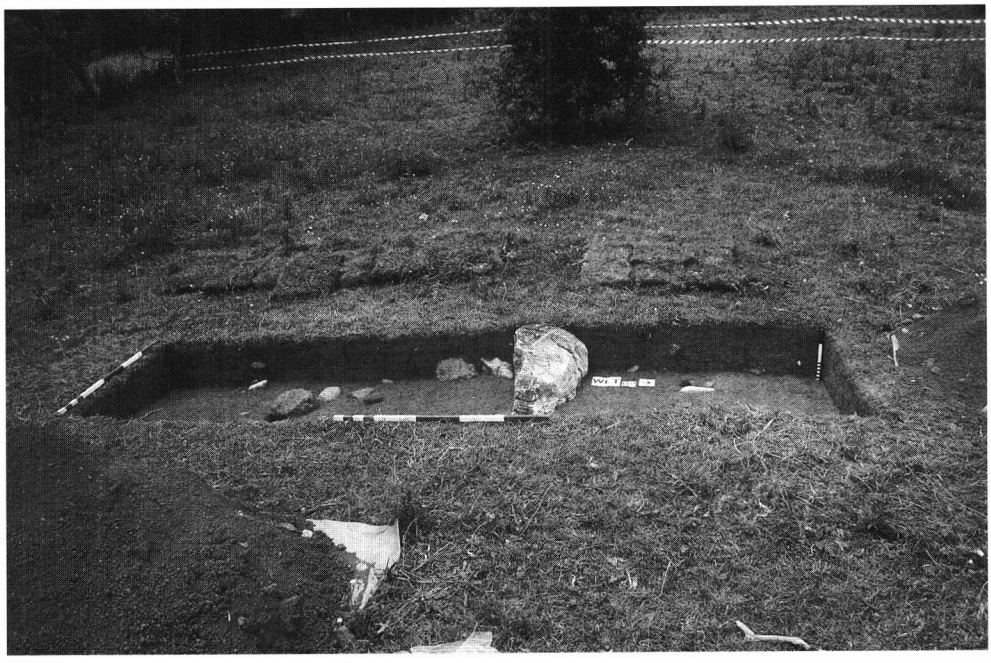

Plate 1: View of trench 02 looking upslope (west) along the lynchet.

pieces of limestone). A considerable amount of modern material (iron, nails, glass and other items) was incorporated in the topsoil, together with fragments of slag, coal, shale and burnt limestone, consistent with former liming of the field. Despite the homogeneity of the deposit, no signs of ploughing (either modern or past) were discerned at the interface of the ploughsoil and subsoil, where animal burrowing was clear. The subsoil was an orange-brown, sandy silt-loam, with varying amounts (but generally fairly common) of small-medium, angular to sub-angular, fragments of chert and basalt, and with some rounded pieces of limestone confined to the upper levels. Test-pit 07 was the only one to contain abundant and large (up to 18cm across) limestone blocks within the upper part of the subsoil: its location immediately downslope of the terraced platform (P in Fig. 1c), may suggest a source for this material. The subsoil varied in thickness across the area test-pitted (from 0.70m to greater than 1.36m below the turf), becoming sandy at the bedrock margin.

Test-pit 02 was situated on the northern edge of the lynchet, and this was extended southwards by 3m to investigate its character. The extension was dug by shovel in 0.05m spits, with only visual inspection of spoil for artefacts. A large limestone boulder lay at the crest of the lynchet (Pl. 1), some 0.5m south of test-pit 02; it was flush with the surface, but partly visible before excavation. Given that there was more stone within the subsoil on the downslope side of the lynchet, the boulder appeared suggestive of either clearance or some sort of structure/wall on the line of the lynchet; but there was no sign that the boulder was anything other than earth-fast. The stratigraphy appeared similar to either side of the boulder, with no discernible increase in topsoil or subsoil to the north, where the positive lynchet had developed.

The artefacts from the test-pits consist of ten sherds of pottery, six pieces of worked flint and seven of chert. All bar one, a chert scraper, came from within the top 0.25m below the turf, with a total of fourteen artefacts coming from subsoil.

No more than two pieces of flint or chert came from any single test-pit, and no more than three pieces of flint and chert combined. Only two tools were recovered, both side-and-end scrapers, and both made in chert (black and grey respectively in 03 and 10); their small size, with thick, plain platforms are typical of Later Neolithic and Bronze Age working. A thin flake of chert from 05 would not be out of place within such an assemblage. The other chert pieces include a blade from 05 struck from a partially crested nodule, signifying some controlled core preparation, which is usually taken as a characteristic of earlier technology and may be tentatively suggested as representing some Later Mesolithic activity. It may be significant that this possibly earlier piece, together with two small flakes each with small narrow butts and soft hammer flaking from 03 and 04, are made in a finer-grained, higher quality chert than the putatively later ones. Fragments of flint blades, one probable and one possible from 03 and 02, could belong with this earlier technology. This possible grouping of pieces by period was not reflected by their distribution, since they were scattered across the area test-pitted.

Only test-pits 03 and 07 produced more than a single piece of pottery: three Romano-British sherds were found in 07 (two pieces of Derbyshire Ware, from topsoil, and a small, heavily abraded scrap of Samian, from subsoil); four sherds in 03 (two small undiagnostic scraps and two more sherds of Derbyshire Ware, all from subsoil). Another small and abraded piece of Samian was recovered from test-pit 02, from subsoil. A sherd of possible Romano-British grey ware was found in 05 from subsoil. Diagnostic sherds of other periods were not present.

DISCUSSION

No earth-cut features, nor any stones, were observed to form any structural elements of the lynchet sectioned in trench 02. The position of the lynchet may have been determined by earth-fast boulders like that discovered within the trench, but no others were visible at the surface along the lynchet. Such lynchets are always taken to be undeniable evidence of ploughing, yet there was no indication of ploughing within the soils of the test-pits as they were removed in plan, or viewed in section (the interface between all horizons being diffuse). No score-marks were noted on the earth-fast boulder at the crest of the lynchet. The upper subsoil recorded in trench 02 below the topsoil must have once been moved to form this lynchet, but any evidence of this has been removed by the passage of time. At the time of the Enclosure Award (Derbyshire Record Office 1795 Taddington Enclosure Award Q/RI 95, D1339L/PZ), the area was described as 'cow pasture', but by the time the Tithe map was drawn up (Derbyshire Record Office 1843 Taddington Tithe Award D2360/DL 102 a and b) more field-boundaries had been created and the land is described as 'arable & pasture'. However, the thin topsoil, and diffuse interface between topsoil and subsoil, would seem to argue against arable use so late in its history.

The test-pits lay towards the base of the hillslope, so it is pertinent to question how much of the subsoil developed *in situ*, and how much results from hill-creep. The presence of the earthworks, which would not have been visible had colluviation been significant, suggest that in the period since earthwork formation there has been only a minor

contribution of sediment from upslope. Hence, any contemporaneous archaeological deposits or features should be visible immediately below the topsoil or in the upper part of the subsoil. If this pattern is widespread along the bottom of this valley, it may be inferred that the activities within the field-systems and settlements upslope (Fig. 1a) caused little soil erosion while in use.

The terraced platform (P in Fig. 1c) is of unknown date, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that it could be related to the lynchets and other earthworks upslope (Fig. 1a).

The lynchets form part of a field-system at Lees Bottom. The coincidence of the sinuous line of the parish boundary along the stone field-wall, echoing that of the largest lynchet, suggests that they are at least pre-Enclosure in date, and could be of some antiquity. Makepeace (1998, fig. 12) plots two of these lynchets, almost certainly the larger two recorded in the field to the south of the test-pits, as part of a wider landscape of earthworks and stony banks which he attributes to the Romano-British period from pottery and coins from 'house sites', enclosures and limestone shelves (1998, 120–21). The 1st century AD Aucissa brooch plotted by Makepeace within these fields (1998, fig. 12), was actually found to the south of them, according to the eight-figure grid-reference given on the original Sheffield City Museum record, where it is attributed to Sheldon parish i.e. south of the parish boundary in Fig. 1b (SK 16997033 *contra.* Challis & Harding 1975, pt i, 137, pt ii, 40 which gives the location as 'SK17 Area?'). However, its presence does demonstrate a continuation of the scatter of finds within the base of the dale, as finds have otherwise been recovered from amongst the earthworks recorded higher up the dale.

The long, linear shape of the fields formed by these lynchets is not datable typologically, but their location within an area with features from which Romano-British pottery has been recovered has led to the suggestion that they may be contemporary (Makepeace 1998, 120). Makepeace records numerous similar instances of pottery from enclosures apparently associated with field-systems (1998, 113–32; Makepeace 1995, 108, 133), but the only other excavated example in the Peak of Romano-British material being incorporated into the walls/banks marking out the fields is near Roystone Grange (Hodges & Wildgoose 1981, 50). Like the sherds within the walls/banks at Roystone Grange, however, the recovery of at least six sherds of Romano-British pottery from the upper and lower ploughsoils does not date these lynchets, but provides a *terminus post quem* for their development. (The possible contribution of other mechanisms for the transport of artefacts down the soil profile into the lynchets [like worm-sorting: Atkinson 1957, 222], might suggest the possibility of an even earlier origin for the earthworks, though such mechanisms cannot be demonstrated at Lees Bottom). However, it does demonstrate that pot sherds were being removed to some distance outside settlement foci, perhaps as a result of manuring. The deep, basaltic, valley floor soils, would have provided an obvious area for cultivation close to the settlement, and Hart (1981, 100) makes the point that several of the settlements (including Horsborough) are sited so as to avoid the good agricultural land below the outcrops.

The thin scatter of Romano-British material from these small test-pits near the bottom of this valley contrasts with a general lack of such artefacts recovered by fieldwalking of quite extensive areas of the adjacent limestone plateau. Fieldwalking of 33ha within 10 fields of a transect across the limestone plateau, located just to the south of Lees Bottom, produced no Romano-British sherds (J. Barnatt *pers. comm.*), and this is also true of

28ha fieldwalked on the limestone plateau at Kenslow (partly reported in Garton & Beswick 1983, 9). Nor have most other test-pits on the limestone plateau produced finds of this period, at least those known to the authors: Bradwellmoor Barn (Guilbert *et al.* 1997), Bradwell Moor (Guilbert & Challis 1998), Foxlow, Harpur Hill (Garton 1993), Kenslow (by DG), Minninglow Car Park (McElearney 1992), and Slipper Low (Badcock 1994, Garton & Kennett 1996). The only test-pitting on the plateau thought to have yielded Romano-British material comprised 204 'shovel probes' at Ballidon Quarry, but the identifications are uncertain, as they are classified as three 'Roman/ Medieval ceramic' and one 'terracotta, Roman?' (Donahue 1990, 15). In contrast, fieldwalking of 34ha within the Wye and Derwent Valleys, produced nineteen Romano-British sherds (identified by P. Beswick, J. Barnatt *pers. comm.*). The numbers of these sherds may be small, but it may be surmised that their presence in the test-pits at Lees Bottom in the Wye Valley follows a wider pattern of Romano-British activity. If such scatters of material are interpreted as manuring from settlements, this suggests that the arable was located primarily in and around the dales and valleys, rather than on the plateau. (Romano-British pottery and other artefacts have been reported from the plateau, but primarily from cairns of prehistoric date [e.g. Minninglow, Marsden 1982, 9, 17: Barnatt 1996, 179–263], a context which suggests non agrarian reasons for its location: Hart 1981, 100). In Makepeace's distributions of both settlements and artefacts (1998, figs. 1 and 2), Romano-British material can also be observed to concentrate below the 305m contour, which effectively borders the limestone plateau in much of the White Peak.

For the earlier material, the low densities of lithics from Lees Bottom, numbering 0–3 per test-pit, would suggest no more than a background scatter. In comparison, test-pitting on the limestone plateau has, for the most part, been more productive: e.g. Bradwellmoor Barn, range 0–16 per test-pit (Guilbert *et al.* 1997); Slipper Low, range 0–21 (Garton & Kennett 1996); Foxlow, Harpur Hill, range 0–15 (Garton 1993), Kenslow, range 0–35 (Garton unpublished); Minninglow Car Park (where 1x0.5m test-pits mean that the flint densities of 0–6 artefacts per test-pit need to be doubled to be comparable with those cited above: Myers 1992; 63).

The only other excavations in valley-bottom locations within the White Peak, are at Roystone Grange (Myers 1992) and Peter Dale (Guilbert & Challis 1993, 45). The latter produced little flintwork, but Mesolithic and Early Bronze Age material was recovered at Roystone (Myers 1992, 68, 71, 72), where cherts were also used in both periods (Myers 1992, 72).

It is hoped that opportunities for systematic test-pitting will continue to be taken (Guilbert & Challis 1998, 67), particularly in those areas where pasture predominates, so that prehistoric use of all topographic zones can be assessed in the models that have originated through fieldwalking survey of the arable areas (Bradley & Hart 1983). The results from Lees Bottom illustrate that the results from test-pitting are not just relevant to prehistory, but can also contribute to an understanding of landscape use in the Romano-British period, where the settlement pattern known from earthwork evidence provides a framework for interpretation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Ken Smith of the Peak District National Park Authority for commissioning the work, for help with gathering comparanda and advice. PDNPA also provided a grant to enable the full report to be edited for publication. John Barnatt is thanked for his advice, and for permission to use fieldwalking results from the Peak Transect prior to his own publication. SM was assisted in the field by Cilla Wild, of T&PAT, and Jonathan Chandler, a post-graduate student on placement from Oxford, together with Paul Ash, Pauline Ashmore, Malcolm Clarke, Lillian Deighton, Nick and Liz Landon, Bryan Metcalfe, Liz Palmer, Frank Robinson, Jan Stetka and John Wilson, all volunteers from ARTEAMUS. Ruth Leary identified the Romano-British pottery, Daryl Garton identified the lithics. Jenny Brown did the documentary searches, assisted by a volunteer student, Samantha Ashton. Information was provided by Andy Myers from the Derbyshire SMR and Alison Walster from the Sheffield City Museums archives. Fig. 1 was drawn by Jane Goddard. Graeme Guilbert is thanked for advice on the field interpretation of the lynchets, for vital references and reading the text critically with suggestions for improvement, but any faults and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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The Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Peak District National Park Authority in the publication of this paper.