



Report of an Archaeological Investigation and Recording at;

Yearsley Moor Wood, Yearsley, North Yorkshire



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February 2012

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Site: Yearsley Moor Wood, Park Wood, Yearsley, North Yorkshire

Site Codes: YMAP 11

County: North York Moors National Park

NGR: Site1; SE 59789 76086
Site2; SE 58923 76112

SMR/HER HER No 947600

Field work staff: Gigi Signorelli, Geoffrey Snowdon, Judy Bradfield, Catherine Thorn, Kimberli Werner, Gudrun Gaudian, Nicholas Lishman and Elizabeth Sanderson

Date of Issue: 23/02/ 2012

Site Dates: 2nd December 2011–12th January 2012

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Summary

A program of archaeological investigation and recording at two sites in the Yearsley Moor Wood, North Yorkshire was undertaken under the umbrella of the North York Moors National Park's 'Lime and Ice' initiative. A group of volunteers whose intent has been to trace the remaining evidence of past human activity in the area, has identified two features of particular interest, a prominent linear feature (ditch and bank) that extends for about 300m, and the remains of a stone built structure.

Introduction



Figure 1: Site location (copy from Google Earth).

LS Archaeology was commissioned by the North York Moors National Park, to assist and direct the Yearsley Moor Archaeological Project (YMAP) group during the archaeological program of investigation and recording of two sites located in the Yearsley Moor Wood (Site 1; SE 59789 76086, Site 2; SE 58923 76112).

The fieldwork took place between December 2011 and January 2012 and was jointly undertaken by LS Archaeology and YMAP. Two areas were identified as having potential for an archaeological investigation.

Site 1 consisted of a single north to south trench measuring 10.50m in length and 2m in width, positioned in order to determine the date and use of a prominent linear feature, identified on the ground as a ditch and bank extending for 300m in length and encompassing most of the high ridge of the 'Temple Hill' (Figure 1), located at the far end of the avenue that leads from Gilling Castle in a west-wards direction.

Site 2, located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park (Figure 1), covers an area of nearly 100m², occupied by the remains of a stone built structure, this corresponds to HER Monument No 947600 describing it as of Medieval or later in date but offers no explanation for its use.

The culmination of this limited archaeological investigation, proved that this structure had two phases of construction, where with the recovery of several 'green glazed' sherds of pottery, it has been possible to credit it to the Medieval period (between the 14th to the 16th centuries).

Site Location

Archaeological investigation and recording was undertaken at Yearsley Moor Wood. This was formerly an area of heathland, only planted with conifers in the 1950s.

Site 1 is located along the south facing ridge of Park Wood west of Gilling Castle, Site 2 is positioned on a wooded ridge looking south towards the lake in the heart of the Yearsley Moor plantation (Figure 2).

The geology of the area consists of; Lower Calcareous Grit Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 154 to 159 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. The local environment was previously dominated by shallow seas (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>)

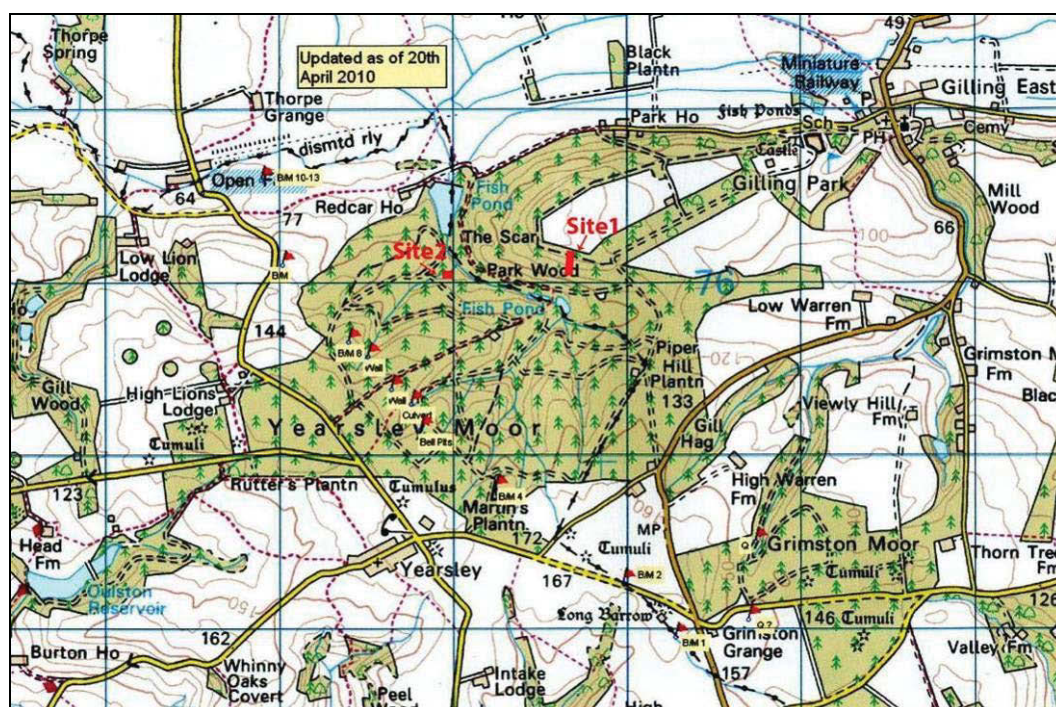


Figure 2: Site location in red

Archaeological Background

The earliest evidence of human activity in the area is the large number of Bronze Age burial mounds. These features have been recorded on the Yearsley Moor ridge, from Gilling to Oulton for a total of twenty-six. The most prominent group are the three barrows known as Coney Hill located between Yearsley and Gilling.

Although no Iron Age settlements, have been found within the area, aerial photographs taken by T. Placito revealed evidence of enclosed areas. It is also known that from about 500BC to the Roman period, the East Riding of Yorkshire and part of North Yorkshire were occupied by the Parisi, a tribe which had allegedly migrated from the area north of Paris and was characterized by their custom of burials in chariot graves under square barrows.

Little evidence of the Roman and Saxon occupation has been found in the area. It has been suggested (with no archaeological evidence to support it) that a Roman road from Malton (Derwentio) to Alborough (Isurium) passed through Gilling. The only evidence of Saxon activity comes from a stone cross found in the graveyard at Gilling, which may date to the late Saxon or early Norman period.

The medieval period is well documented, with Norman families settling in the area. In the 12th century the land was in possession of the Mowbrays and the Stuteville families. From the late 12th century to the early 15th century the estate change ownership and passed to the Etton family. In 1378 King Edward the Third granted them the right to enclose an area of the Moor to create a deer park for hunting. The remains of the 'pale' (a ditch and bank probably topped by a wooden fence) that was created to encircle the park still survive in the woodland around Gilling castle.

At the end of the 15th century the Gilling castle and estate was claimed by the Fairfax family, the claimant being Thomas Fairfax of Walton, 5th descendant from Elizabeth de Etton who married Thomas Fairfax in 1349. The estate remained in the ownership of the Fairfax family until the end of the 18th century.

By the 18th century, a time when rich landowners were developing their estates as a sign of their wealth and status, the ninth and final Viscount Charles Gregory Fairfax, set about re-landscaping the park with the erection of two 'temples', one located on the hill overlooking Ampleforth with an avenue connecting it them with Gilling castle, the other to the east of the high ground on Temple Hill looking towards Hovingham.. In the valley below a series of five ponds were created; three of these ponds still exist.

With the death of Anne Fairfax, the last surviving child of the ninth Viscount Fairfax in 1793, the estate had passed to the Pigott-Fairfax family by the und of the 18th century and in 1796 they embarked on clarifying the boundaries with the neighboring Newburgh estate, by erecting marker stones at strategic points, with a letter G marked on one side and an N on the other. Some stones have been found marked with a cross design which could suggest these are early boundary marks.

The last descendant of the Fairfax family, Hugh Charles Fairfax Cholmely sold the estate in 1895 to Mr George Wilson ending the Fairfax connection with Gilling castle after 406 years.

Volunteers have recorded the remains of at least ninety 'bell pits' scattered within the Yearsley Moor Wood, testimony of a thriving industry which started from the medieval times and lasted to the 18th - 19th Centuries. The scale of this industry is indicated by a deed of 1648 in which the coal mining rights were leased for an annual fee of £50, a considerable sum at the time.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation were:

- to determine the presence / absence, date, nature, depth, function, quality of survival, stratigraphic complexity and importance of any archaeological features and deposits within the site;
- to provide an assessment of the potential and significance of any identified archaeological deposits and features in a local, regional and (if necessary) national context.

The archaeological evaluation strategy of both sites consisted of;

- Site 1; excavating a single trench measuring 2.0m wide and 10.50m long, with a total investigated area of 20m².
- Site 2; exposing and planning at a scale all the surviving structure, identifying any possible features related to the use of the building (e.g.. door-way, flooring, post holes)

All the topsoil turf and rubble turf were hand excavated by volunteers in a controlled stratigraphic manner, under direct archaeological supervision.

The work was undertaken between December 2011 and January 2012.



Figure 3: Site 1, looking east, with the metric scales positioned on the bank



Figure 4: YMAP team preparing to remove the vegetation at site2

Results

The survey carried out by YMAP within the Yearsley Moor Wood identified two particular features worthy of an archaeological investigation, with the allocation of two sites.

A prominent linear feature, which extends for about 300m encompassing the hill-top west of Gilling castle was covered by site 1, whereas site 2 was the site of the remains of a stone built structure located within the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park, south of the large pond (Figure 2).

Site 1;

The site lies at approximately 126m above Ordnance Datum. A single trench measuring 10.50m in length and 2.00m in width was positioned perpendicular to the linear feature in order to evaluate and create a through profile of the ditch and bank.

The area chosen for this operation was located on the upper part of Park Wood hillside facing south and approximately 500m south east from the temple site located at the western end of the avenue that leads westwards from Gilling castle (Figure 1, Figure 2).



Figure 5: Site 1, group of volunteers above trench 1, and the exposed track way, looking north

The topsoil of site 1, (context100) consisted of a dark brown organic material measuring 0.15m in depth overlaying a hill wash of grey brown silty clay material (101).

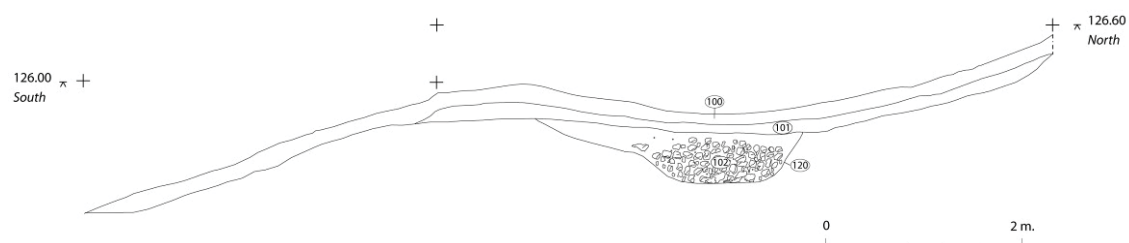


Figure 6: Site 1, east facing section of the track way

The removal of context 101 revealed the presence of a cobbled surface (102). Measuring 2.73m in width, and exposed for the length of 2.00m, context 102 appeared to be a mixture of large and small angular sandstone fragments bonded with a grey brown silty clay material, infilling a cut (120), to a depth of 0.51m.

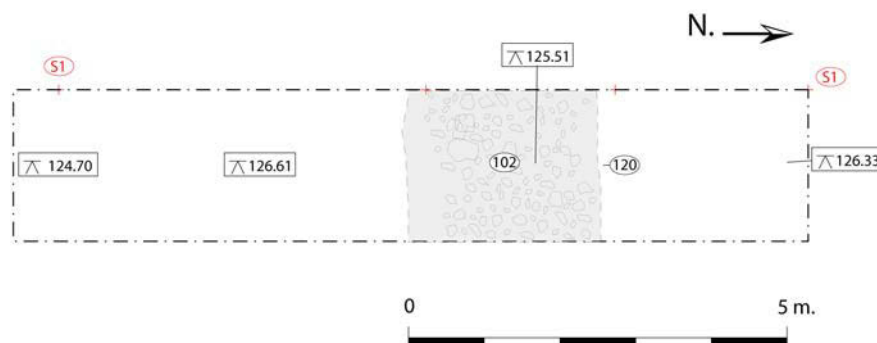


Figure 7: Site 1, plan of track way 102

Context 120 interpreted as the cut for the foundation of a track way or a large drain system, has an irregular profile. The shallow south edge which cuts the natural at 30 degree angle, a flat base, and the north edge set at about 45 degree angle, does not resemble any similarity with the ditch and bank that you may expect to find in the Roman or earlier period.

Discussion

There is a possibility that feature 120 was created as a large drain in order to improve the permeability of the woodland, and only in a second phase was used as track way. Filled with stones, it works as a solid surface for the traffic of heavy loads and also as good drainage.

Although no dating material was recovered from the sampling of this ditch and bank. It is our impression that this feature is to be associated with the land improvements of the 17th century, probably constructed as a 'French Drain' to intercept and divert the surface water draining down the hillside, therefore increasing the productivity of the woodland pasture on the slope beneath. At a later stage, it may have functioned as a track way, although no much evidence where found to support this theory.



Figure 8: Site 1, east facing section of track way 120

Site 2;

Site 2 located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park, south of the large pond, is the location of the remains of a stone building that seems to correspond to HER Monument No 947600, and lies at approximately 80m above Ordnance Datum (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Figure 9: Site 2, after the removal of overgrown vegetation, exposing the rubble (context 105), looking southeast



The removal of top soil (context 104) a mixture of organic material and dark brown clay, revealed an accumulation of rubble material (context 105 and 106) extending over an area of circa 100m² (also see [Figure 11](#), [Figure 12](#)).

While cleaning the area and removing part of the rubble, the remains of four wall structures came to light, revealing the presence of a former rectangular building orientated on a southeast to northwest direction, with the internal space measuring 7.70m in length and 3.05m in width.

A former phase of this building was discovered while excavating at the northeast corner of the site, where the presence of a larger wall foundation was discovered, giving the width of the earlier building to 4.80m.

Due to restriction of time and resources it was not possible to establish the length of the early phase of the building.



Figure 10: Site 2, view of the building, looking southeast

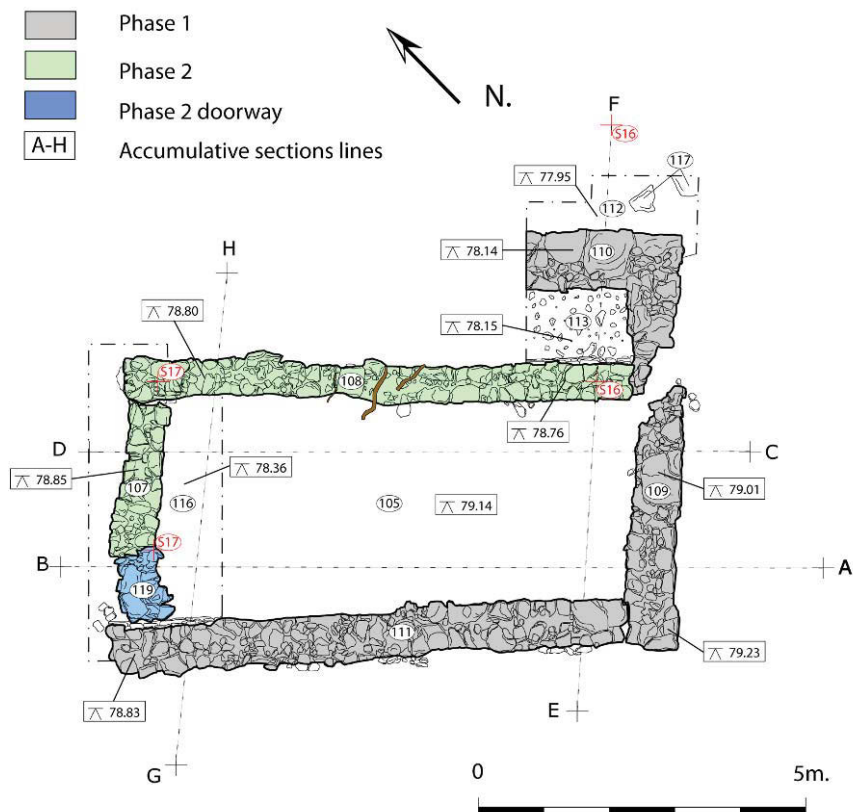


Figure 11: Site 2, plan of the structure

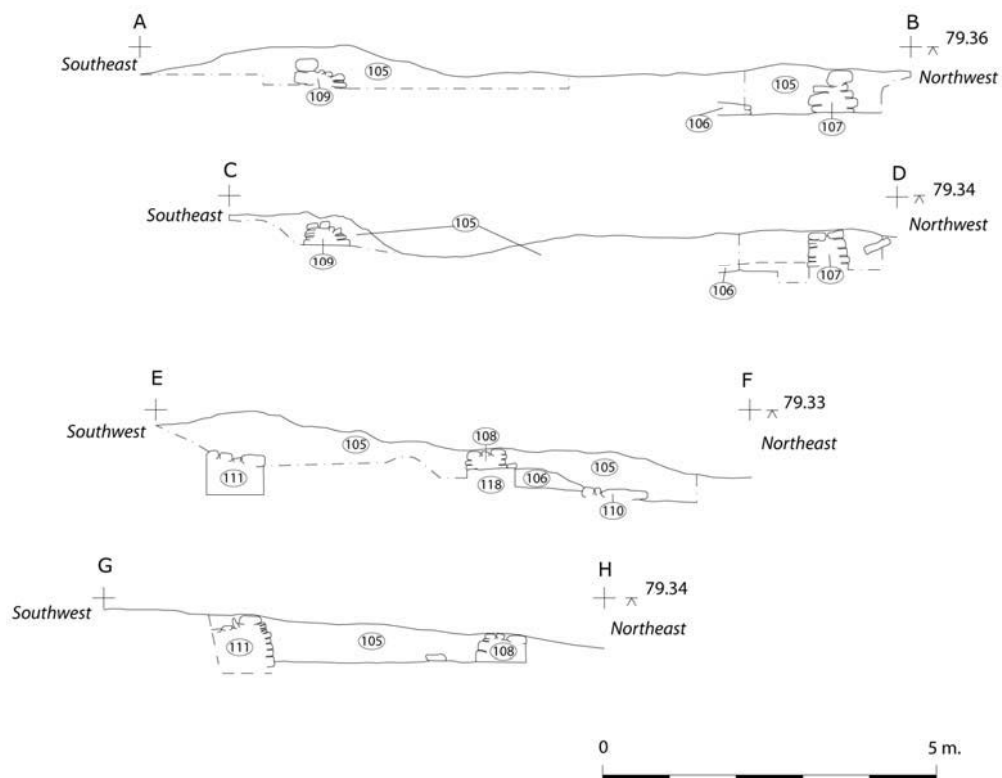


Figure 12: Site 2, accumulative sections

Wall 107

Forming the northwest front of the building, wall 107, is orientated on a northeast to southwest direction, and made of large sandstone slabs. It measures 2.20m in length 0.60m in width and 0.60m in depth. The entrance to the building (context 119) is located at the southwest end of wall 107, abutting wall 111, whereas at its opposite end feature 107 abuts wall 108 (Figure 11).



Figure 13: Site 2, showing wall 107 abutting wall 108, looking northwest

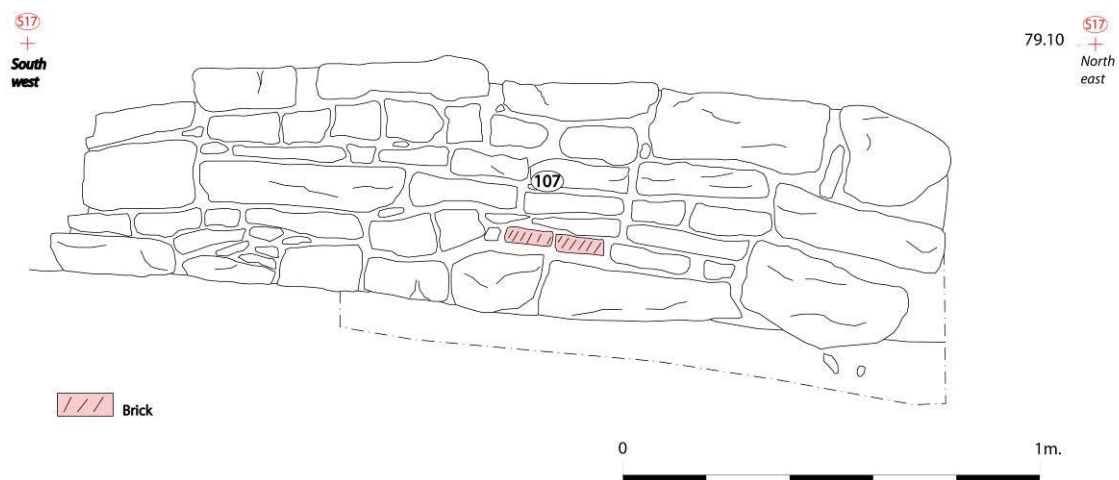


Figure 14: Site 2, wall 107, southeast facing section

Wall 108

Orientated on a southeast to northwest direction, measuring 7.70m in length, 0.60m in width and 0.60m in depth, wall 108 appeared to have been constructed with the same technique and using similar material as wall 107 (Figure 11). This feature is uncharacteristically leaning gently outwards, as is wall 111.



Figure 15: Site 2, showing the northwest end of wall 108, abutted by wall 107. Looking southeast

Wall 109

Measuring 6.60m in length, 0.60m in width and exposed to a depth of 0.40m, wall 109 is orientated in a northeast to southwest direction, and was built using small and large orange brown sandstone slabs, which at the northeast end bond with the foundation wall 110.



Figure 16: Site 2, showing wall 109, looking south

Wall 110

The foundation wall 110, orientated on a northwest to southeast alignment, is made of few very large orange brown sandstone flagstones measuring 0.80m in width and 0.10m thick, this feature was only exposed for the length of 2.30m.

To the northeast of the foundation wall 110, evidence for a possible floor structure in the form of few orange brown sandstone flagstones (context 112) was recorded extending beyond the northeast edge of the excavation trench (Figure 11).

Figure 17: Site 2, showing the foundation 110 and wall 109, also visible part of wall 108 abutting wall 109

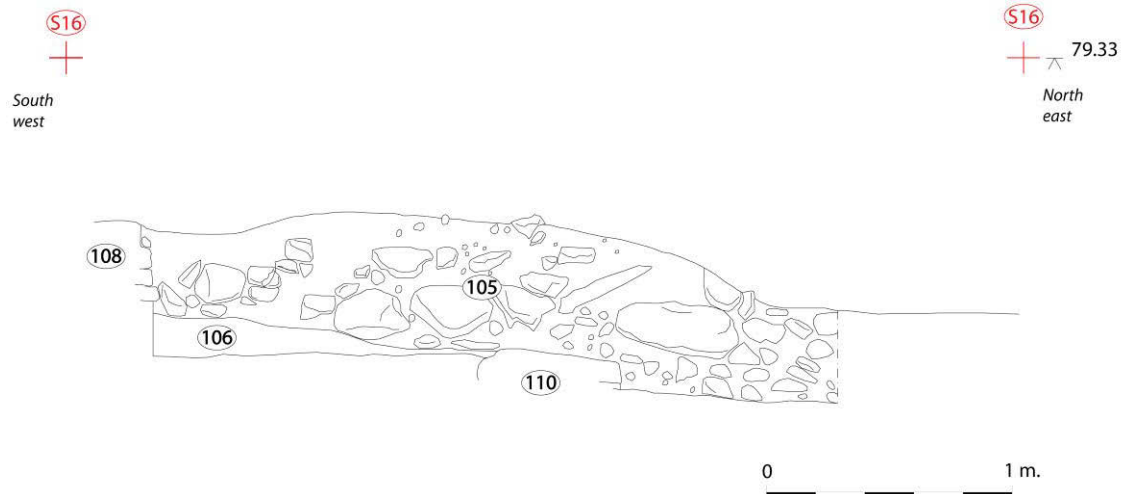


Figure 18: Site 2, south east facing section of rubble 105, above walls 108 and 110

Wall 111

Orientated on a southeast to northwest direction, measuring 8.50m in length, 0.65m in width and 0.65m in depth, wall 111 appeared to have been constructed with the same technique and material as wall 109 (Figure 11). This feature was recorded as gently leaning outwards.

Figure 19: Site 2, showing wall 111, looking southeast



The doorway

The doorway of the last phase of the building measuring 1.06m in width was located to the south west corner. This feature appeared to have been deliberately blocked by the use of large stones (context 119)(Figure 11).



Figure 20: Site 2, showing the doorway blocking (119) abutting walls 107 and 111, looking southeast

Discussions

Due to the restricted time and resources it was not possible to establish the nature and use of this building. However, it has been discovered that the building underwent two phases of construction.

The building of the first phase which consisted of walls 109, 110 and 111 (Figure 11) measured 4.75m in width and approximately 7.90m in length (internal measurements). Unfortunately it has not been possible to establish the full dimensions of this earlier structure.

The later building was smaller, only measuring 3.05m in width and 7.20m in length. This was achieved by erecting a new wall (108) between wall 110 (now out of use) and wall 111. At the northeast end wall 108 abutted wall 109, whereas at the opposite end it was abutted by a new western wall (107). An entrance was also placed to the southern end of wall 107 (Figure 11).

Although no evidence has been found that may help to understand the reason why the first building was abandoned and later rebuilt at a smaller size, clues can be seen within walls 108 and 111 which provide evidence for the collapse of the later building. Both walls have been recorded as leaning outwards, suggesting that the roof above was not built with tie beams; as a consequence, the weight of the roof rather than pushing downwards on the walls was pushing down and outwards forcing the walls to fall in an outwards direction.

During the excavation some fragments of medieval pottery, and bricks were found within the rubble deposit 105 and the foundation trench of wall 111. Bricks and pottery appears to date between the 14th and 16th centuries (Appendix B:), giving an approximately life span of the buildings to two hundred years.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion the small investigation of the ditch and bank located on the upper part of Park Wood hillside facing south-wards, revealed that the characteristics of this feature do not resemble any field boundaries or enclosure ditches of the Romano British period. However it was our understanding that this feature is of a much later date, most probably late medieval.

There is a possibility that the ditch and bank were created as a large drain in order to improve the permeability of the woodland, and only in a second phase was used as track way. Filled with stones, it works as a solid surface for the traffic of heavy loads and also as a good drainage.

The archaeological investigation at the site 2, located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park, south of the large pond, confirmed the presence of a medieval building dating from the 14th to the 16th century, which underwent two phases of construction.

Due to restricted time and resources it was not possible to establish the full size of the early dwelling, nor its use or reason for abandonment. Nevertheless, it is evident that not long after the first building went out of use a second one had been erected using part of the former structure.

There is still a need to understand the reason why the former building was reduced in size, and what was the actual purpose for this dwelling? Had it a function as part of the medieval park? Was it the house for the game keeper, or was it part of a small hamlet?

It is our suggestion that further work should be carried out in order to answer all these fundamental questions, which will help to bring light to a part of history unrecorded and forgotten.

Luigi Signorelli

February 2012

Acknowledgement

LS Archaeology would like to thank Jenny Smith and Nicholas Lishman from the North York Moors National Park Authority, for allowing this project to materialise through the founding of the 'Lime and Ice Project', the Ampleforth Abbey, the Forestry Commission for granting the permission to work on their property, and North Yorkshire County Council Country Services. And to Susan Harrison of English Heritage Archaeology Store in Helmsley, for her time spent with the team helping with identification and advise during the process of dating the pottery found on site.

And last but not least, a very particular thank you is directed to the YMAP team; Geoffrey Snowdon, Judy Bradfield, Catherine Thorn, Kimberli Werner, Gudrun Gaudian, and Elizabeth Sanderson for their hard work and dedication; without their efforts working in challenging weather conditions, in a very cold and wet winter this project would not have come to life.

I finally would like to express my gratitude to Kimberli Werner and Judy Bradfield for editing this document.

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www.magic.gov.uk

www.hambleton.gov.uk

www.ryedale.gov.uk

www.heritagegateway.org.uk

Appendix A:

Contents of the Site Archive;

The archive consists of several digital photographs, paper records, sections and plans drawings (9, A3 permatrace sheets), four fragments of medieval pottery, and few fragments of bricks.

Contest No - Area	Description	Length m.	Width m.	Depth m.	Finds	Date
100 – Site1	Top soil,	N.A.	N.A.	0.15	None	Modern
101 – Site1	Subsoil,	N.A.	N.A.	0.11	None	Unknown
102 – Site1	Cobbled surface	N.A.	N.A.	0.52	None	Unknown
103 – Site1	Natural	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	None	Unknown
104 – Site2	Top soil	N.A.	N.A.	0.15	None	Unknown
105 – Site2	Upper rubble	N.A.	N.A.	0.50	Pot + Metal	Medieval
106 – Site2	Lower rubble	N.A.	N.A.	0.10	None	Medieval
107 – Site2	West wall	2.20	0.60	0.60	None	Medieval
108 – Site2	North wall	7.70	0.60	0.60	None	Medieval
109 – Site2	East wall	6.60	0.60	0.40	None	Medieval
110 – Site2	North east wall	2.30	0.80	0.10	None	Medieval
111 – Site2	South wall	8.50	0.65	0.70	None	Medieval
112 – Site2	Surface outside north east wall110	2.30	0.90	Not exc.	None	Medieval
113 – Site2	Surface inside north east wall 110	1.40 exposed	1.10 exposed	Not exc.	None	Medieval
114 – Site2	Fill of foundation for south wall 111	0.60	0.70	0.20	Pot	Medieval
115 – Site2	Cut for foundation of wall 111	0.60	0.70	0.20	None	Medieval
116 – Site2	Surface area inside structure (phase 2)	4.00 exposed	1.00 exposed	Not exc.	None	Medieval
117 – Site2	Sand stone slabs north of wall 109	N.A.	N.A.	0.10	None	Medieval
118 – Site2	Clay deposit foundation of walls 107 and 108	1.40 exposed	1.10 exposed	0.25	None	Medieval
119 – Site2	Door way	1.06	0.68	0.64	None	Medieval
120 – Site1	Cut for track way fill by 102	2.00 exposed	2.73	0.51	none	Unknown

Table 1: List of contexts

Appendix B:

Finds Analysis

Yearsley Moor - YMAP11 – Site 2 – Pottery Research

Visit 1 to the English Heritage Archaeology Store in Helmsley – present: Geoff Snowden, Elizabeth Sanderson, Judy Bradfield, and Kimberli Werner, on 3 Feb 2012.

Comparison with material from Helmsley Castle.

Box # 81003039.3 – Examined two green glazed fragments (Yearsley Moor (YM) 3 & 4). Contains similar forms and colour of glaze (although YM is not spotted), and finger impressions.

YM 3& 4 has more inclusions in the fabric, is finer, and not so heavy as Helmsley Castle material.

Most likely from a chafing dish. (See Figure 8.6 from “A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms”, Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper No.1. Published 1998 by Medieval Pottery Research Group.)

Box # 81003024 – Less similar than box 81003039.3 above.

Visit 2 to the English Heritage Archaeology Store in Helmsley – present: Judy Bradfield and Kimberli Werner, on 9 March 2012.

More comparison with material from Helmsley Castle.

Box # 88067000-11 – In particular, examined bag marked 88067003. Found a piece of pottery similar in glazing styles to YMAP 12 piece. We bagged it separately inside that bag for future reference for YMAP 12 new site.

Box # 81003022 – Much of the pottery in this box was similarly glazed like the YMAP 11, Site 2 pieces.

By consulting with staff at the Archaeology Store (Susan Harrison) it was determined that the pottery sherds found at Helmsley Castle do bear a resemblance to the ones found at Yearsley Moor, both in glaze colours and composite materials, which would indicate late medieval pottery, 14th – 16th century, c. 1300-1500.

References:

1. “A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms”, Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper No.1. Published 1998 by Medieval Pottery Research Group.
2. “Medieval Pottery in Britain AD900 – 1600” by Michael R McCarthy and Catherine m Brooks. Published by Leicester University Press 1988, p.393.

3. "Medieval Pottery in the Yorkshire Museum" by Sarah Jennings. Published by the Yorkshire Museum, 1992.

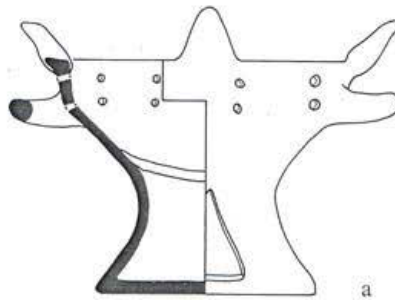
A Guide to the
Classification of
Medieval Ceramic Forms
by Medieval Pottery Research Group
Occasional Paper 1

8.6 CHAFING DISH

Defining characteristics: A BOWL or DISH surmounting a *hollow pedestal base* (open or closed), with equally spaced vertical *rim supports* (of various shapes) projecting upwards from the rim. There may be one or more *handles* on the sides of the bowl. Profiles vary, and should be classified in the same way as BOWLS (see 5.1.1-5.1.7).

The *rim supports* may be in the form of *crenellation* (a regular cutting away) of the rim. Examples are known with a *tripod base* as an alternative to the pedestal base.

The *pedestal base* may have in the side one or more *vents* or *cut-outs* of varying shapes and sizes to encourage air flow. The sides and/or base of the bowl may also be pierced with vents of various shapes.



Appendix C:

OASIS ID;

OASIS ID: lsarchae1-121192

Project details

Project name	Yearsley Moor Archaeological investigation
Short description of the project	A program of archaeological investigation and recording at two sites in the Yearsley Moor Wood, North Yorkshire was undertaken under the umbrella of the North York Moors National Park's 'Lime and Ice' initiative. A group of volunteers whose intent has been to trace the remaining evidence of past human activity in the area, has identified two features of particular interest, a prominent linear feature (ditch and bank) that extends for about 300m, and the remains of a stone built structure.
Project dates	Start: 12-12-2011 End: 12-01-2012
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	947600 - HER event no.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Woodland 2 - Deciduous introduced
Significant Finds	POTTERY Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Not recorded
Prompt	Voluntary/self-interest
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORTH YORKSHIRE RYEDALE AMPLEFORTH YMAP11

Study area 100.00 Square metres

Site coordinates 59789 76086 59789 00 00 N 76086 00 00 E Point

Site coordinates 58923 76112 58923 00 00 N 76112 00 00 E Point

Lat/Long Datum Unknown

Project archives

Physical Contents 'Ceramics'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet','Drawing','Plan','Report'

Entered by Gigi signorelli (gigi.signorelli@hotmail.co.uk)

Entered on 16 March 2012

OASIS:

Please e-mail [English Heritage](#) for OASIS help and advice

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