



LS

Archaeology

Report of an Archaeological Evaluation, at;
Yearsley Moor Wood, Yearsley, North Yorkshire



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Site Codes: YMAP 12

County: North York Moors National Park

NGR: Site3; SE 488883 476028
Site4; SE 488822 476129

SMR/HER HER No 947600

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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) interpreted as the park pale, which extends for about 300m, and the remains of a stone built structure believed to be associated with a water mill.

Introduction



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

L S Archaeology was commissioned by the North York Moors National Park, as following up from the investigation carried out in 2011 (LSArch. 2011), to assist and direct the Yearsley Moor Archaeological Project (YMAP) group during the archaeological program of investigation and recording of two new sites located in the Yearsley Moor Wood (Site 3; SE 488883 476028, Site 4; SE 488822 476129).

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

Site 3; located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park (Figure 1), covers an area of nearly 200m², occupied by the remains of a stone built structure.

The evidence from this limited archaeological investigation proved that this structure belongs to a building used as a water mill. With the recovery of several 'green glazed' sherds of pottery, it has been possible to place it in the Medieval period (between the 14th to the 16th centuries).

Site 4 consisted of two trenches. The first, a single north-west to south-east trench measuring 7.10m in length and 2m in width, was 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 most of the old Gilling Castle boundaries and thought to be part of the Park Pale. The trench was located approximately 200m north-west from site 3 (Figure 1). An additional small trench measuring 1.80m by 1m, located at the north west end of trench 1, was excavated in order to test the presence or absence of a wall associated with the park pale.

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 3 is positioned on a wooded ridge looking south towards the lake in the heart of the Yearsley Moor plantation. Site 4 is located on the hill side facing site 3, (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>)

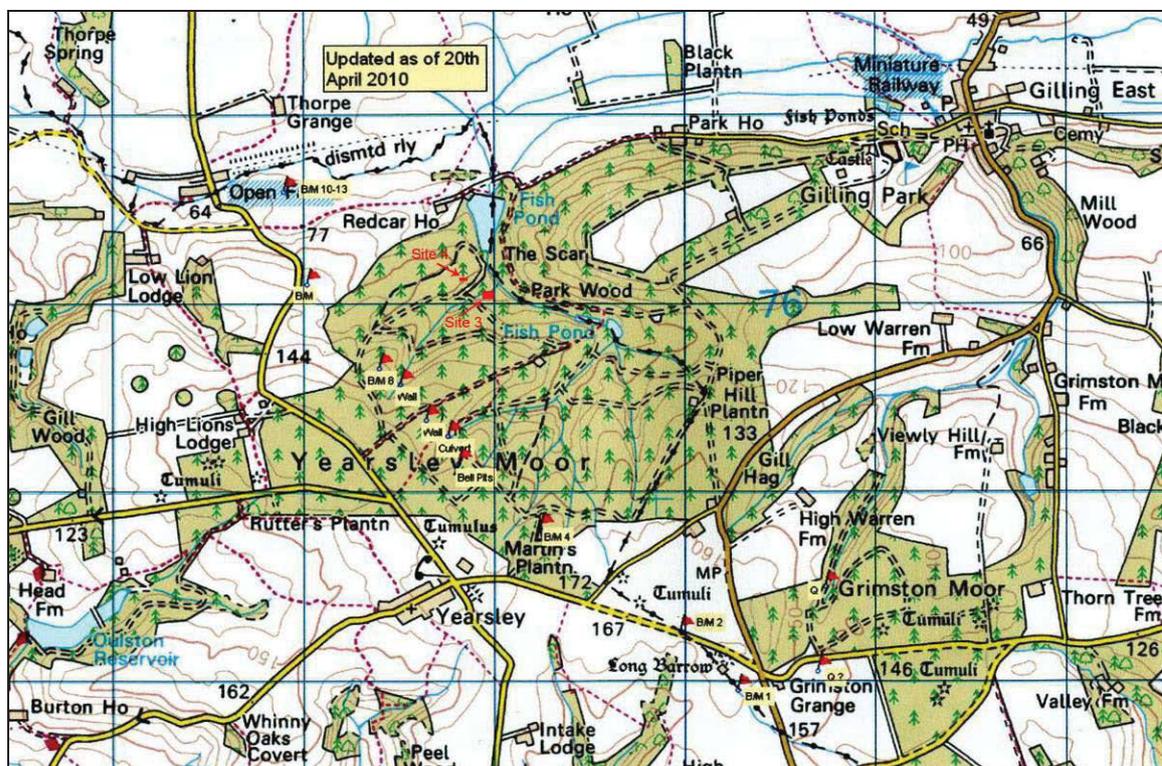


Figure 2: Site location in red

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, and total 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. Placitto 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 de Etton family. In 1374 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 and stone wall) 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 with Gilling Castle, the other to the east of the high ground on Temple Hill looking towards Hovingham. In the valley below the first temple, 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. In 1796 they clarified 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.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation were:

- to determine the presence / absence and date of the park pale boundary structure.
- to provide an assessment of the possible presence of a water mill located within the old park boundaries.

The archaeological evaluation strategy of both sites consisted of;

- Site 3; excavating a single trench measuring 3.0m wide and 12.50m long, with a total investigated area of 38m².
- Site 4; exposing and planning at a scale all the surviving structure, identifying any possible features related to the use of the park pale.

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 November and December 2012.



Figure 3: YMAP team preparing to remove the vegetation at site 3



Figure 4: Site 4, looking east, with the metric scales positioned on the bank

Results

A survey carried out by YMAP within the Yearsley Moor Wood identified several potential areas worthy of an archaeological investigation. Four sites in total were chosen to be explored. Two sites were investigated between 2011 and 2012. These were Site 1 and Site 2 (Signorelli 2012). One of these two sites (Site 2) produced evidence of a small dwelling dating to the medieval period.

Following the investigation of Site 2, an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching was carried out in the immediate vicinity of Site 2 between November and December 2012. As a result it became clear that Site 3 was the location of the remains of a stone built structure identified as a mill.

Due to restrictions on time and resources, no section drawings were produced for Site 3, and further investigation is required in order to complete the full understanding of the use of the mill area.

An area located on the northern site of the hill facing Site 3 was chosen as the best spot for an archaeological investigation given that this was the area where a ditch and related bank best survived. At Site 4 a single trench measuring 2.0m in width and 7.5m in length was excavated with the aim of clarifying the nature of the Park pale structure.

Due to the dense wood plantation, in order to locate the presence or absence of a wall related to the ditch and bank a further 1m by 1m trench was excavated to the west of the ditch (Figure 1).

Site 3;

Site 3, located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park, south of the large pond, and north of site 2 (area investigated in 2011), is the location of the remains of a stone building that seems to correspond to a mill, and lies at approximately 80m above Ordnance Datum (Figure 1, Figure 2).



Figure 5: Site 3, view of the mill house, looking southeast

The removal of top soil (context 1), a mixture of organic material and dark brown clay, revealed an accumulation of rubble material (context 16) extending over an area of approximately 200m² (Figure 8).

While cleaning the area, the remains of four wall structures came to light, revealing the presence of a former rectangular building orientated on a southeast to northwest alignment, with the internal space divided by two small partition walls. A stream crossed the building in a northeast to southwest direction. Although part of the walls were only recorded in plan, a trench measuring 11.00m by 3.00m was positioned to the west of the building, with the intent of establishing the date and use of this dwelling.



Figure 6: Rubble context 16, looking southwest

The removal of the rubble deposit (16) revealed the presence of a large mill stone (context 17), and what it appears to be the mill wheel pit, located at the north side of the building.

To the west of the mill stone along wall 2, a gap measuring 1.0m in width suggested this to be the site of a possible access to the building.

It appears that prior to erecting the mill, the site was cleared down to the natural bedrock deposit, which was then used as the foundation for all the structures.



Figure 7: Site 3, view of the mill-stone (context 17), looking southwest

A substantial amount of late medieval pottery was recovered during the cleaning operation (removing context 1) and the removal of the rubble context 16. Among these finds two small fragments of floor perforated tiles were also recovered.

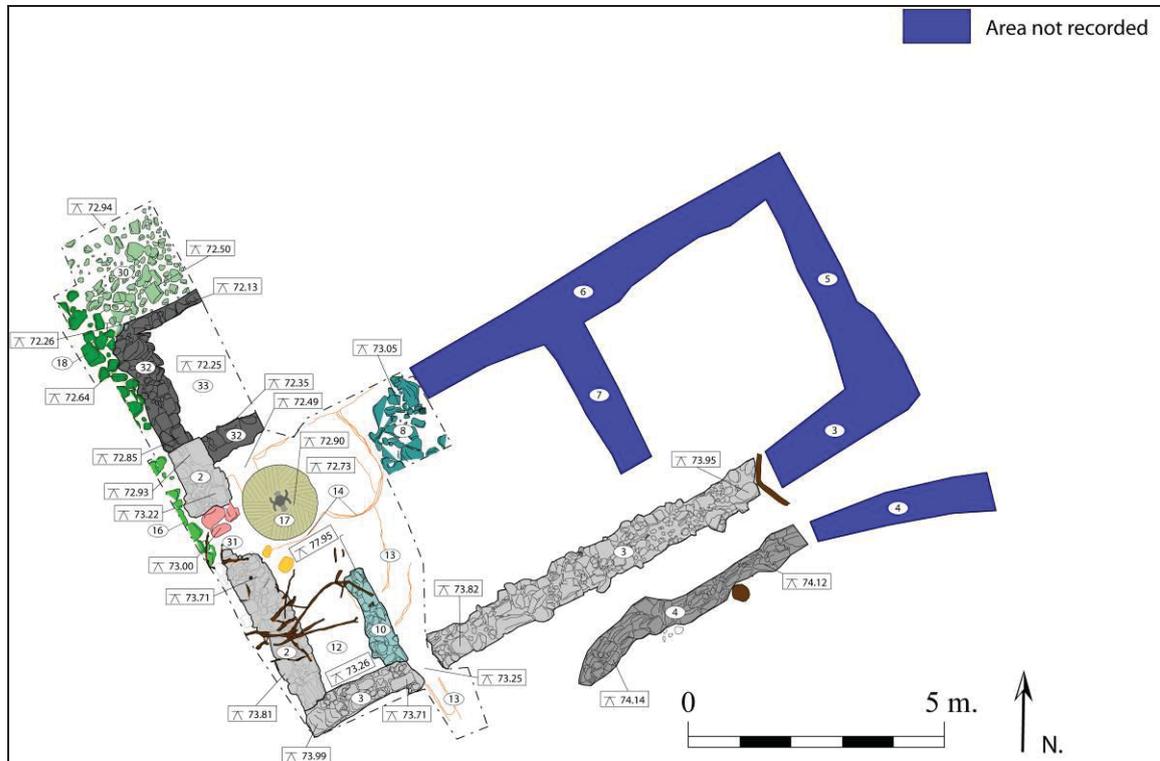


Figure 8: Site 3, plan of the structures

Wall 2

Forming the southwest side of the building, wall 2, orientated on a northwest to southeast alignment and made of large sandstone blocks, was recorded as measuring 5.75m in length and 0.75m in width. At the southwest corner of the building, where it bonds with wall 3, it survives to a height of 0.60m. After the removal of rubble 16, a gap within wall 2 measuring 1.10m in width was found which appeared to be the location of the entrance to the building (context 31). This is located at 3.30m northwest along wall 2 and adjacent to the mill stone (context 17) (Figure 8).



Figure 9: Site 3, showing wall 2 abutting wall 3, looking southwest

Wall 3

Orientated on a northeast to southwest alignment, measuring 13.70m in length, 0.60m in width and 0.60m in depth (only recorded in plan for 10.0m of the length), wall 3 forms the south side of the mill. It was recorded as bonding with wall 2 and it appeared to have been constructed with the same technique and similar material (Figure 8). This feature has also been cut through by a small stream (context 13, wall 10) which runs in a northwest to southeast direction.

Wall 3 has been excavated only length of 2.3m as part of the investigation which aimed to establish the nature of this building on site 3.



Figure 10: Site 3, showing wall 3 and wall 4, from the northeast corner. Looking southwest

Wall 4

Measuring 9.0m in length and 0.50m in width, (only recorded in plan for a length of 5.20m) wall 4 is orientated in a northeast to southwest direction, running parallel to wall 3. A gap of approximately 1.0m separates the two walls and towards the north end wall 4 appears to gently curve toward east (Figure 8, Figure 10).

Although it was not excavated, while exposing this feature it became clear that wall 4 must have been a dry stone wall built with flat sandstone slabs, and it could have functioned as a boundary wall, enclosing an area intended for keeping livestock or small orchard.

Walls 5, 6 and 7

Due to restricted resources only the outlines of these walls were recorded in plan. Wall 5, forming the west outer wall of the mill, measured approximately 4.6m in length. Wall 6, running in a northeast to southwest direction and forming the north side of the mill, measured 7.2m in length. Wall 7, an internal partition wall running from wall 6 in a southeast direction, measured 3.0m in length (Figure 8).



Figure 11; archaeologists planning the outline of walls 5, 6 and 7, looking southwest

Wall 8

This context number was allocated to the southwest end area of wall 6, where it was thought the wall might turn at a right angle forming another internal partition wall (Figure 8). Both these features extended beyond the 2012 excavation limits; therefore there was neither time nor resources to investigate any further.



Figure 12; southwest end of wall 6, and possible wall 8

Wall 10 and the stream channel

This structure, running parallel to wall 2 in a northwest to southeast direction, survives for a length of 2.0m, and to a height of 0.10m, measuring an average of 0.50m in width. It has been built with large cobbles and sandstone blocks, bonded with what appears to be clay material.



Figure 13; the remains of wall 10, looking southwest

At the northern end of wall 10 the bedrock showed evidence of a straight linear cut, no deeper than 0.03m, following the same alignment as the wall in a northwest direction, for a length of 0.70m. It is possible that this cut was made during the construction of wall 10 to function as a base line, which would then bring the total length for this feature to approximately 3.00m (Figure 8).



Wall 10 was built as part of the stream channel (west side), which crosses the mill on a northwest to southeast alignment. The stream also runs alongside the evaluation trench but due to lack of resources it was not possible to extend this trench in order to verify the presence or absence of the opposite stream wall. Further excavation is required in order to establish the function of this stream channel.

Figure 14; the stream channel with wall 10 to the left, looking northwest

Some of the voids within the stream bed were filled by a silty, sandy, grey material (context 9) which also contained fragments of early and middle medieval pottery.

The doorway and the mill-stone

Measuring 1.10m in width and located along wall 2 with some flat sandstone slabs surviving at the base, structure 31 was recorded, after the removal of rubble 16, as the doorway leading to the mill engine room (Figure 8, Figure 9).

At some point during the life of the mill a nearly intact mill stone (context 17) measuring 1.5m in diameter and 0.10m in thickness was laid adjacent to the doorway face up (not in its original position) on the bedrock surface. In order to position it on the level, a cut was made in the bedrock the same size as the wheel. To the east of wheel 17 the bed rock showed sign of another circular cut, possibly made in order to host another wheel (Figure 15).



Figure 15; wheel 17 and, to the left, the circular cuts into the bedrock, looking southeast

The wheel pit

This feature was only partially investigated, due to limited resources and adverse weather conditions. Measuring 2.30m in width, the wheel pit (context 33) was exposed for a length of 1.20m. Due to the high water table level, pit 33 was only excavated to a depth of 0.50m. Three of the four walls of this feature were exposed, all measuring on average 0.50m in width. The southern wall appeared to have been built directly on top of the bedrock. A large quantity of pottery and fragments of glass was recovered during the excavation of this pit.



Figure 16; wheel pit 33 and structure 32, looking northwest

The upper fill of this pit (context 11) was a layer of grey silty clay, measuring 0.30m in depth and containing sporadic sandstone fragments and fragmented medieval pottery. Beneath context 11 was a deposit of rubble (context 15) which consisted mainly of small and medium sandstone fragments mixed with a brown, sandy, silty clay and measured 0.50m in depth.

Fragments of medieval pottery and glass were recovered during the excavation of rubble context 15. This deposit was only excavated within the area of the wheel-pit, revealing a dark grey brown, silty clay deposit (not excavated).

Discussions

The archaeological investigation on Site 3 revealed the presence of a rectangular building erected directly on the natural bed rock, measuring 13.50m in length and 5.70m in width, aligned in a north east to south west direction, and a boundary wall running parallel, at a meter distance, to the south east wall of the main building (Figure 8).

A single trench measuring 3.00m in width and 12.00m in length was positioned at the south west end of the building. It exposed the full size of the south west wall (context 2), part of the south east wall (context 3), and evidence of a stream channel in the form of a wall (context 10) crossing the width of the building in a north west direction, running parallel to wall 2 at a distance of about 1.70m towards the wheel pit.

A large 'mill stone' measuring 1.50m in diameter was also discovered, deliberately placed face down on the bedrock, adjacent to the door way located within wall 2, and in the vicinity of the wheel pit.

Due to the high water level on site, the wheel pit located at the north-west end on the building, adjacent to wall 2, was only partially excavated to a depth of 0.50m.

During the cleaning operation to expose most of the mill structure, two fragments of perforated tiles were found among the rubble, suggesting the presence on site of a heated room.

Due to restricted time and resources the archaeological investigation carried out at Site 3 did not establish the full extent of the use of this building. However, it has been possible to prove that the part of the building investigated was definitely associated with milling activity, and the amount of medieval pottery recovered during this archaeological investigation suggests that the building was in use some time between the 14th to the 16th century.

Site 4;

The site lies at approximately 97m above Ordnance Datum. Two trenches were positioned perpendicular to a ditch and bank, on a north east to south west alignment, in order to evaluate the presence and character of the park-pale boundary. The trenches measured respectively; 7.10m in length and 2.00m in width (trench 1), and, 1.80m by 1.00m (trench 2) (Figure 19).



The area chosen for this operation was located on the upper part of Park Wood hillside facing south and approximately 200m north-west from the mill complex site 3. (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Figure 17: Site 4, group of volunteers exposing the bank feature 27, associated with the park pale

The topsoil of Site 4, (context 19) consisted of a dark brown organic material measuring 0.25m in depth, and recorded infilling the ditch (context 22) and overlaying the bank (context 27).

Figure 18; trench 1 south west facing section

Ditch 22, a linear feature measuring 2.40m in width and 0.50m in depth, was recorded as having a shallow concave base, with the western edge cutting the natural at an angle of less than 30°. In contrast, the opposite edge was set at a steeper angle and was formed by the bank (context 27), (Figure 18).

The removal of context 19 over the ditch area revealed the presence of a grey brown clay silt layer (context 28) measuring 0.15m in depth, and containing scattered small sandstone fragments. Beneath context 28, the primary fill (context 29) appeared to be a pale brown sandy silt deposit, measuring 0.06m in depth, and containing occasional small sandstone fragments.

The bank (context 27), a linear feature associated with ditch 22, measured 2.75m in width. It was exposed for a length of 2.00m. In order to determine the sequence of its construction, a 0.80m wide section was placed through it, revealing that a total of three distinct layers of material were used to create this feature.

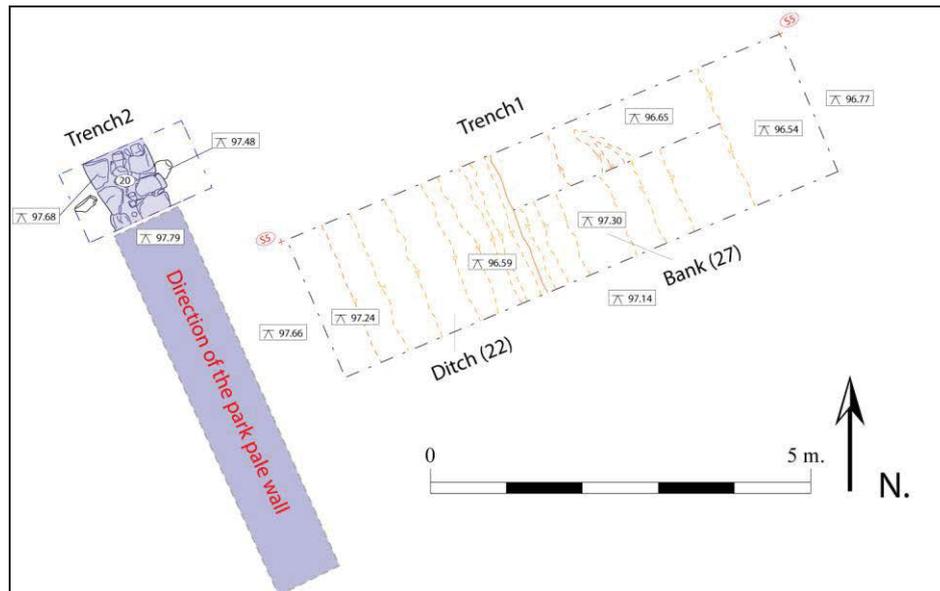


Figure 19; Site 4, plan of trenches 1 and 2

The upper layer (context 21) of bank 27, consisted of a yellow brown sandy material mixed with occasional small sandstone fragments, measuring 0.50m in depth. Beneath context 21, a very firm, 0.24m deep, grey brown clay silt deposit (context 23), measuring 0.24cm in depth and containing scattered small fragments of sandstone, was recorded overlaying a very thin layer of black organic silt material (context 24) measuring 0.04m in depth.

Context 24 has been interpreted as the original organic layer accumulated above the ground surface (context 25), prior the construction of bank 27.



Figure 20; Trench 1, showing the bank 27 and ditch 22, looking south

Due to the dense wood plantation, it was not possible to extend the limits of trench 1 further to the west in order to assess the presence or absence of a park pale wall related to the ditch and bank. Therefore a small trench (trench 2) was excavated a few meters north west of trench 1, measuring 1.80m in width and 1.00m in length (Figure 19).

The removal of topsoil within trench 2 revealed the remains of a stone wall foundation (context 20) measuring 0.90m in width and 0.20m deep. This wall was made of two skins of sandstone and limestone blocks measuring on average 0.35m by 0.30 by 0.15m. In between the two skins of stones a rubble deposit (hearting) was laid. Due to restricted time and resources this wall was only exposed for a length of 1.00m.



Figure 21; Trench 2, the foundation wall 20, looking north-west

All three features - the wall, the ditch and the bank - run on a north west to south east alignment. A gap of circa 2.00m separates the wall (context 20) and the ditch (context 22), whereas the distance between the bank (context 27) and the wall measures on average 5.00m.

No dating material was recovered during the investigation of Site 4.

Discussion

With the investigation carried out on Site 4 it was possible to assert that the ditch and bank, which are still visible on the ground and the exposed wall are part of the park pale boundary system.

It is thought that the way in which the park pale functioned was to have an external boundary wall of a height which a deer could jump over, with an internal ditch and bank constructed few meters away from the wall in order to prevent the animal from escaping once it had entered the park.

Although no dating material was recovered from the sampling of this ditch and bank. Documents record states that in 1374 King Edward the Third granted the de Etton family the right to enclose an area of the Moor to create a deer park for hunting.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The limited archaeological investigation at the Site 3, located in the 'Wilderness' area of Gilling Park, south of the large pond, confirmed the presence of a medieval building related to milling activity, dating from the 14th to the 16th century.

Due to restricted time and resources it was not possible to establish the full details of the use of the building, nor the reason for its abandonment. Nevertheless, it is evident that the building functioned as a water mill, with a possible corn drier room.

Questions remain to be answered. How was the wheel powered, was it an overshot or under shot? What was the relationship of this building to the medieval park, and finally what was the relationship between the mill and the building discovered on Site 2 during the 2011 investigation.

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.

The investigation at Site 4 gave conclusive evidence that the park pale boundary structure, with an external wall and internal ditch and bank, was intended to allow deer to enter the park whilst preventing them from leaving.

Although no dating material was recovered during the archaeological investigation of this feature, according to historical record it can be suggested that the park pale was erected towards the end of the 14th century. We do not have evidence to suggest that originally the boundary wall was built of wood and replaced at later date by with the erection of a stone wall.

Luigi Signorelli

February 2013

Acknowledgement

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And last but not least, a very particular thank you is directed to the YMAP team; Geoffrey Snowdon, Elizabeth Sanderson, Kimberli Werner, David Roberts, Lyn and Ken Gilding and the NYMNP Modern Apprentices (south team) with leader Steve Young, 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. Also thanks to John Illingath for providing some of the photos used within this document.

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

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Appendix A:

Contents of the Site Archive;

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

Contest No - Area	Description	Length m.	Width m.	Depth m.	Findings	Date
1 – Site3	Top soil	N.A.	N.A.	0.15	None	Modern
2 – Site3	Structure / Wall	5.77	0.78	0.73		
3 – Site3	Structure / Wall	10.20	0.68	0.73		
4 – Site3	Structure / Wall	5.30	0.65	N.A.		
5 – Site3	Structure / Wall	4.80	0.80	N.A.		
6 – Site3	Structure / Wall	9.00	0.80	N.A.		
7 – Site3	Structure / Wall	3.00	0.75	N.A.		
8 – Site3	Structure / Wall?	1.65	1.30	N.A.		
9 – Site3	Deposit Stream bed	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.		
10 – Site3	Structure / Wall	2.10	0.40	0.10		
11 – Site3	Deposit	N.A.	N.A.	0.30		
12 – Site3	Natural / Bed rock	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
13 – Site3	Feature/Natural?	7.00	0.60	N.A.		
14 – Site3	Structure	N.A.	1.40	0.03	N.A.	
15 – Site3	Deposit	2.50	2.50	0.50		
16 – Site3	Deposit / Rubble	7.00	3.70	0.70		
17 – Site3	Structure /Mill Stone	1.50	1.49	0.10	N.A.	
18 – Site3	Deposit / Rubble	2.65	0.85	0.40		
19 – Site4	Top soil	N.A.	N.A.	0.25		
20 – Site4	Structure / Wall	1.00	0.90	0.20		
21 – Site4	Deposit	2.00	2.20	0.50		
22 – Site4	Cut / Ditch	2.00	2.40	0.50		
23 – Site4	Layer	1.00	2.75	0.24		
24 – Site4	Layer	1.00	2.75	0.04		
25 – Site4	Layer	1.00	2.75	0.20		
26 – Site4	Natural	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
27 – Site4	Structure / Bank	1.00	2.75	0.45		
28 – Site4	Deposit	3.48	2.00	0.15		
29 – Site4	Deposit	0.86	2.00	0.06		
30 – Site3	Deposit	2.27	2.20	N.A.		
31 – Site3	Feature / Doorway?	0.80	0.80	N.A.		
32 – Site3	Structure / Walls	3.20	0.70	N.A.		
33 – Site3	Feature / Wheel Pit	2.30	1.30	N.A.		

Table 1: List of contexts

Appendix B:

Finds Analysis

Yearsley Moor - YMAP12 – Site 3 – Pottery Research