

North Yorkshire

Earthwork sites

Castle Hill, Wentbridge

SE 4995 1725

Here, earthworks of possible later prehistoric date were recorded on the 1st edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of the area, but subsequently seem to have been destroyed by quarrying activity. Aerial photographs have revealed smaller cropmark enclosures in the general area.

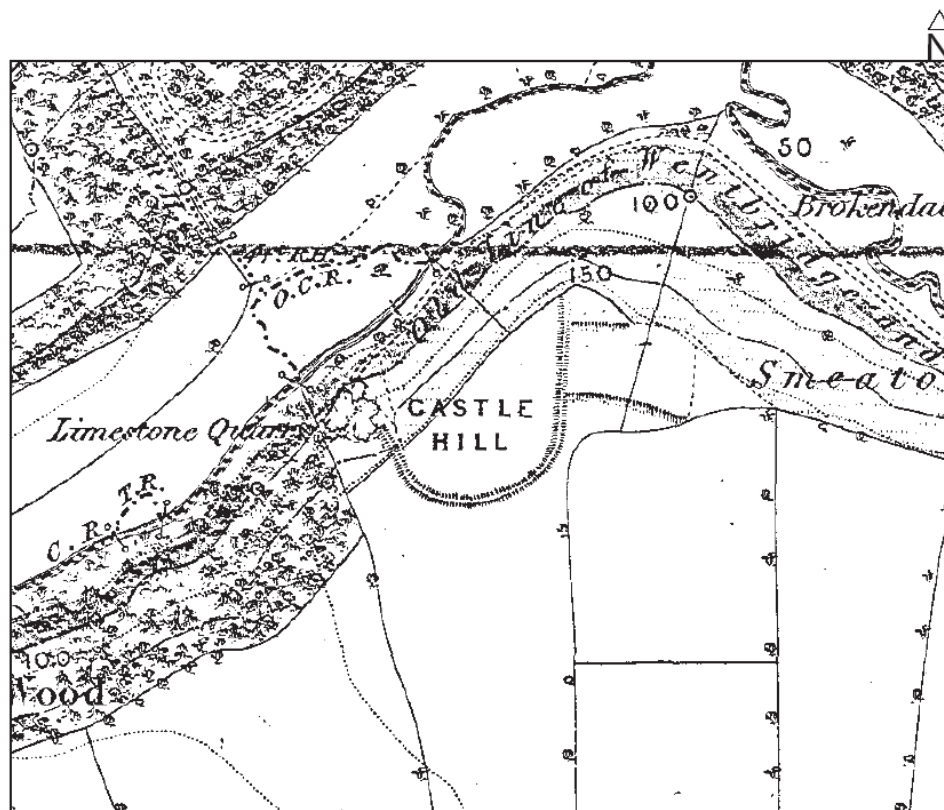


Figure G.01. Castle Hill, Wentbridge, as shown on the 1st Edition O.S. Survey map. (Source: © Ordnance Survey.)

References: Keighley 1981: 117.

*Cropmark/geophysical survey sites***Barnsdale Bar, Norton/Kirk Smeaton****SE 5150 1450**

Part of this area of investigation lies within North Yorkshire, but other areas just over the modern county boundaries in South and West Yorkshire, and it has been grouped together with the rest of the sites within South Yorkshire for convenience. Please see the South Yorkshire section of this Gazetteer, therefore, for further details of the archaeology.

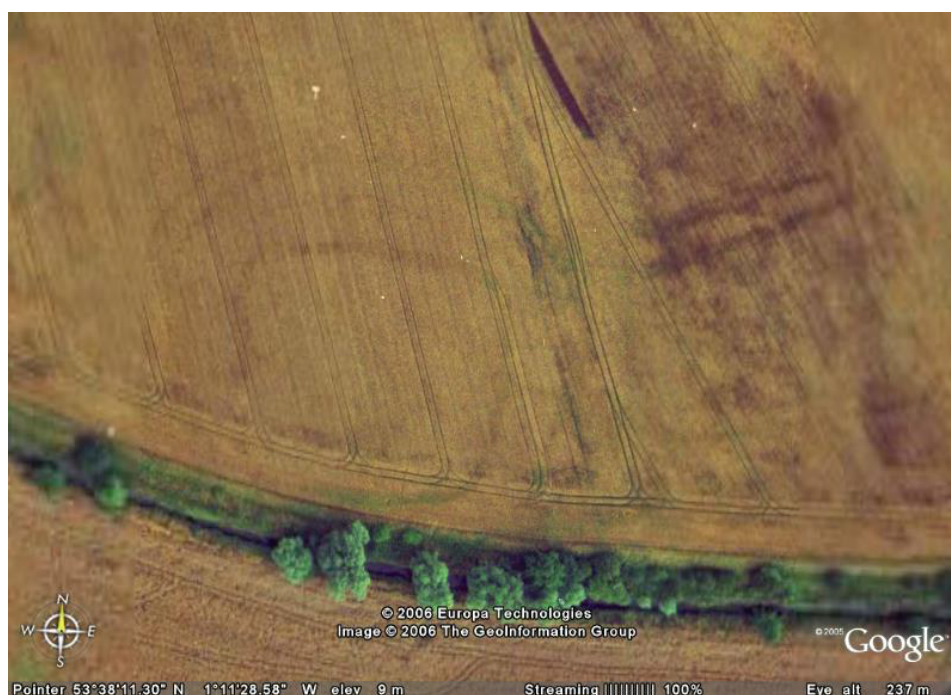
Little Smeaton**SE 5360 1585**

Figure G.02. *Cropmarks of the multi-vallate enclosure at Little Smeaton, N. Yorks. The ditches show up as darker lines on the left side of the image, and the possible east-facing entrance is just visible. (Source: © Google Earth).*

The multi-vallate enclosure site at Little Smeaton is situated on low-lying ground around 10m AOD on the floodplain of the River Went, just over the county boundary from South Yorkshire in North Yorkshire, but only some 4.6km to the north-west of Sutton Common, and 3km from the cropmark complex at Barnsdale Bar. It had an east-facing entrance, and was defined by at least four circuits of ditches, although it is not known if these were all contemporary with one another. Nevertheless, the shape of the entranceway does tend to suggest that at least the third and fourth outermost ditch circuits were added at some point after the initial construction, changing the entrance to face south-east. This entranceway appears quite complex in construction, and anyone seeking to enter the enclosure would have had to take an indirect route through a series of entrances and thresholds.

Other cropmarks around the enclosure including external boundary ditches and a possible pit alignment or segmented ditch are also visible in some aerial photographs (see below). A line of parallel ditches leading towards the enclosure may be a trackway, or a much later feature. Between four to six possible ring gullies have also been identified through more recent aerial photograph rectification (Deegan 2007, fig. 6.15) (Fig. G.05), along with a possible smaller, northern entrance. Intriguingly, only one of these ring gullies seems to have been situated within the innermost ditch circuit of the enclosure, which does not have much evidence for many other internal features, although some darker patches are visible on some aerial photographs (see G.03 below). Two larger examples of ring gullies, including one built within the entranceway, do seem to have been roundhouses, as they have apparent entranceways, and

two or three are completely external to the enclosure. Two square structures seem to have formed part of the ditch circuits, one by the possible northern entrance, and another to the east.



Figure G.03. *The Little Smeaton enclosure photographed in 1979 by Derrick Riley. Only hints of possible internal features can be seen. (Source: Manby 1988b: 26).*

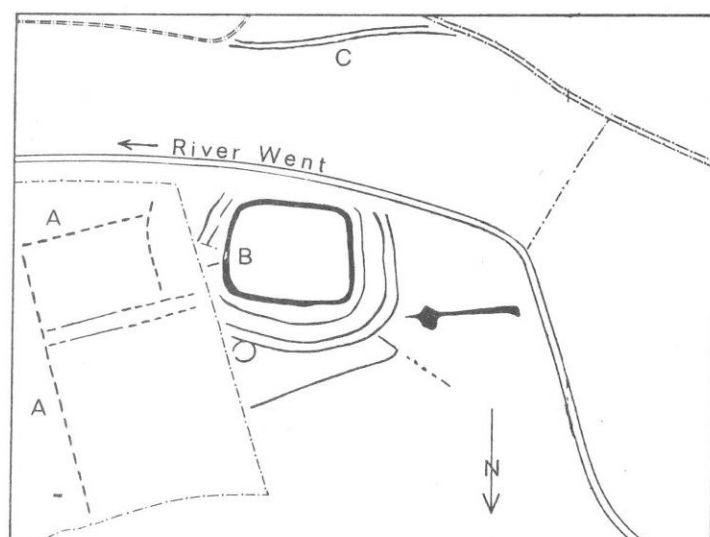


Figure G.04. (left). *A rather basic interpretative drawing (not a scaled plot) of the aerial photograph above. The possible entrance is at B, a former road at C, and other cropmarks of unknown date at A. (Source: Manby 1988b: 26).*

Worked flints of Mesolithic date have been found in the interior, probably reflecting much earlier occupation of a wetland 'island' in a similar manner to such early evidence at Sutton Common. A first century AD bronze brooch was found during dredging of the River Went nearby. It is possible that, like Sutton Common and perhaps Potteric Carr, Moorhouse Farm and Croft Road, Finningley; this might have represented a communal focus for people during the earlier Iron Age. Like them, it should also

probably not be considered a so-called ‘marsh fort’. One of the roundhouses seems to have been in a ‘guarding’ position by the gate, and the square structures could be interpreted as additional protection for gateways, or even as towers or bastions of some form. Such restrictions and controls on movement might equally apply to a ‘ritual’ site, however. The external roundhouses, if contemporary, would also render a purely defensive interpretation of the site rather untenable. In any case, the site was overlooked from the low ridge on the opposite side of the River Went (albeit some 200m away).

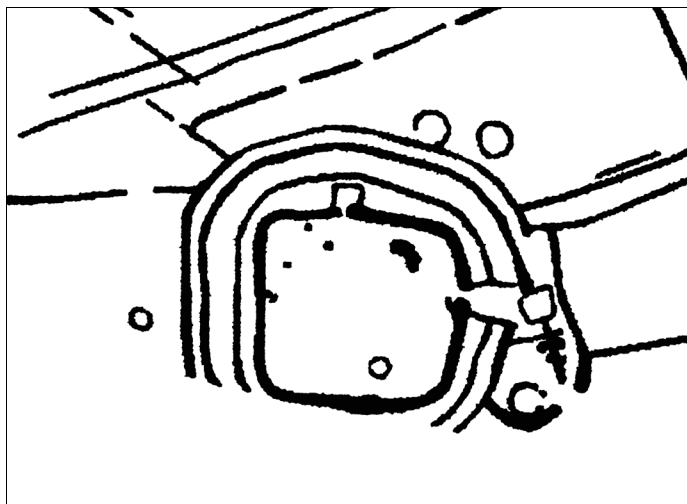


Fig. G.05. (left). *More recent and more detailed transcription of the AP evidence by Alison Deegan, showing ring gullies/roundhouses, the elaborate entranceway, and the possible northern entrance too. (Source: Deegan 2007, fig. 6.15).*

The landscape location of this enclosure between the undulating limestone uplands to the west and the low-lying floodplain extending eastwards may have been significant. The enclosure may also have been near the headwaters of the main channel that was navigable in small boats, and/or close to a ford across the river. It may have served as a focus for specialised seasonal social activities including communal gatherings and celebrations, in a roughly analogous manner to at least some of the practices seen at Sutton Common. Perhaps people gathered here in spring after successful births amongst livestock prior to taking the animals down onto the floodplain for summer grazing, and/or this might have happened at the end of the autumn.

Clearly, this site urgently requires further research, and this should include detailed geophysical survey, magnetic susceptibility testing and targeted excavation. Due to the possibility of waterlogged deposits surviving in parts of the site, perhaps in the bases of the larger ditches, some considerable thought should be given to assessing and monitoring desiccation in the area in the future, and to putting in place rewetting or other mediation schemes if necessary, following on from an evaluation of the site. Any further ploughing of it should be prevented.

References: Deegan 2007; Manby 1988b.

Newton Kyme

SE 4560 4540

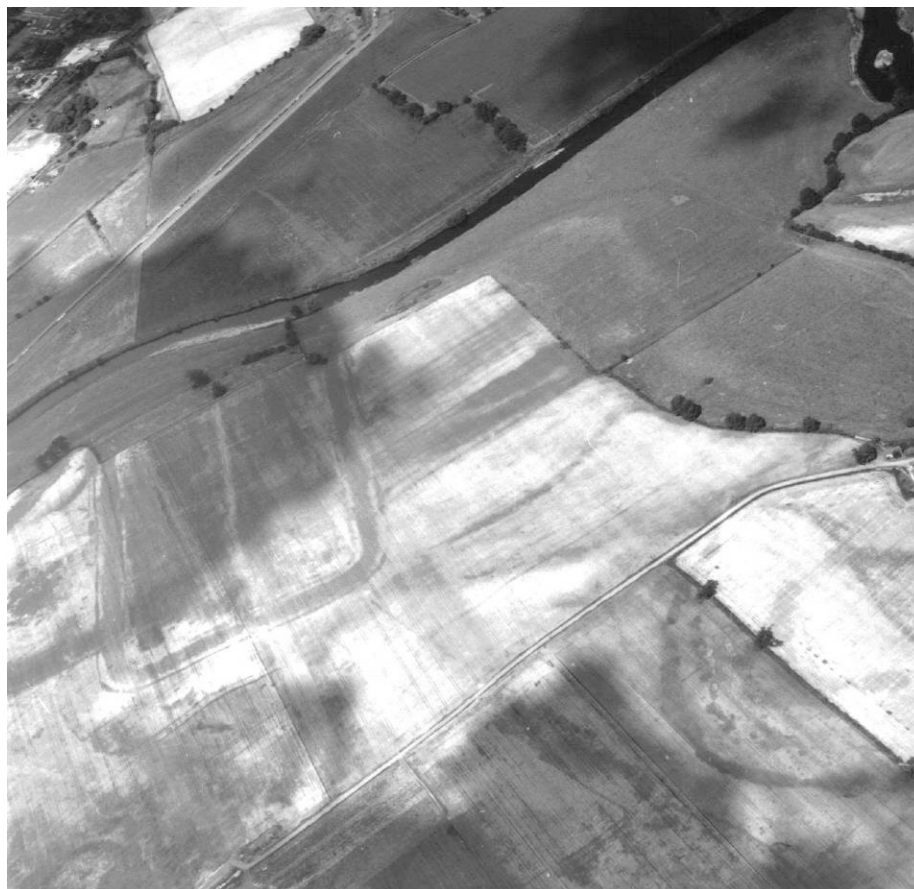


Figure G.06. *The distinctive playing card shape of the Roman fort and associated vicus at Newton Kyme, N. Yorks., close to the River Wharfe which can be seen running behind it to the north on the photograph. In the lower right of the image are the ditches of the Neolithic henge monument. (Source: D. Riley, SLAP 258, SE 458 453).*

The fort at Newton Kyme was located on the south side of the River Wharfe floodplain, perhaps to allow re-supply by river but also to control a river crossing at St Mary's Ford. The fort was sited on a very slight rise in ground at around 16m AOD, but in addition to military considerations, its location close to what would have already been an ancient monument complex may also have been crucial – the late Neolithic henge, Bronze Age ring ditches or round barrows and a pit alignment. These features may have held considerable social and mythological importance to the native people of the area, and this might have been a symbolic appropriation by Rome of a significant locale. A prehistoric pit circle was actually encompassed by the main phase of fort (Ramm 1988: 53).

Excavations in 1956 and 1957 by Herbert Ramm established that there had been a third and fourth century fort defended by three circuits of ditches in addition to a 3m wide inner stone wall (Ramm 1957: 209, 1988: 53). At a later date, two of these ditches had been converted into a single broad *fossa*, whilst at a much later date the stone wall was substantially robbed. There may have been a smaller, earlier first century double-ditched fort on the same location, which is visible on aerial photographs, whilst a third single or double-ditched fort or marching camp has been identified some 150m to the

west (Frere and St Joseph 1983; Ottaway 2003: 131). The wide double-ditched road of Rudgate ran north to the fort from Tadcaster, and on either side of this a civil settlement or *vicus* developed. A subsquare, double-ditched enclosure is also visible at the south-west corner of the fort, either cut by the ditches, or perhaps appended to them. Most of the complex had not been ploughed since medieval times, but from 1968 the area has been subject to intensive cereal cultivation.

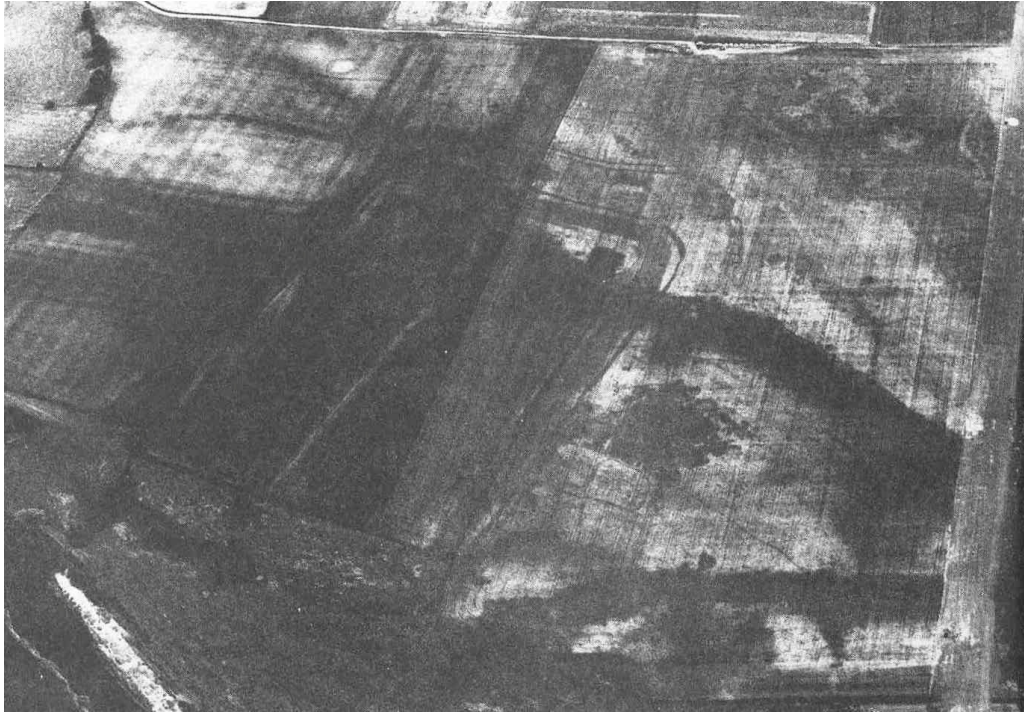


Figure G.07. Another view of the fort and vicus looking south-east. (Source: Ramm 1988: 52).

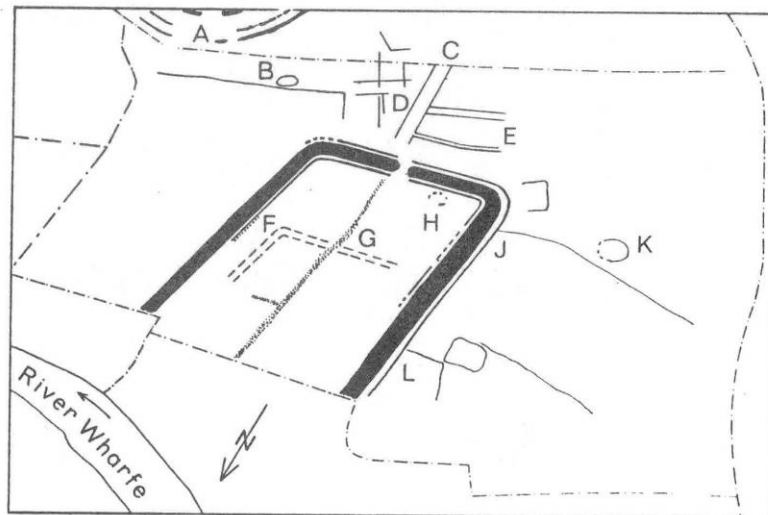


Figure G.08. (left). An interpretative drawing (not a scale plan) of the photo above, showing the early fort at F-G, and roads of the vicus at C and E. H and K are prehistoric monuments. (Source: Ramm 1988: 52).

The *vicus* may have served as an important local market for a while, and the ladder settlement at Wattle Syke and the nucleated enclosure complex and later Roman villa at Dalton Parlours were only *c.* 5km to the west. More recent detailed rectification of aerial photographs reveals a complex series of features, some clearly on different alignments to the main north-south road. In addition, the ditch of a fourth phase of fort or marching camp has also been identified.



Figure G.09. Detailed aerial photograph transcription with the earlier fort ditches labelled A, B and C. Some boundary ditches and earlier prehistoric monuments appear to have been slighted by Roman features, whilst a possible north-south pit alignment cutting across the henge is also visible. The broad band at E may represent another phase of road or droveway. (Source: Ottawa 2003: 131, fig. 36).

In 1979, construction of a gas pipeline involved excavation of an area close to the north-east corner of the easternmost fort. A curvilinear palisade slot and postholes for upright timbers was found close to one of the ditches of this fort, and this feature contained a human skeleton face down with its arms behind its back, associated with a pig metatarsal. The awful publication drawings (Monaghan 1991: 52, 54, figs. 1-2) cannot indicate whether this palisade structure was associated with the fort, or was an earlier native structure slighted by it, but the possible male individual may have been executed. Splintered pig bone and a jet bead nearby may indicate a ritual deposit.

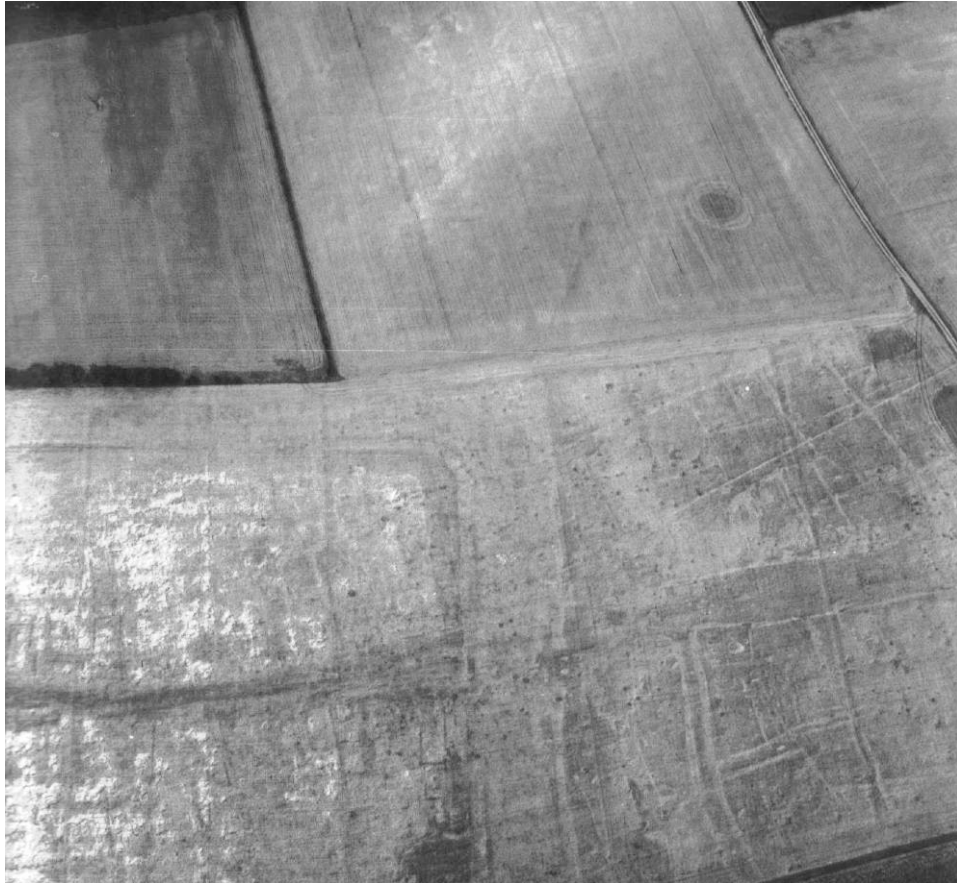


Figure G.10. Detailed aerial photograph of Newton Kyme looking east, showing the defences of the large fort at the lower left quarter of the image, with Rudgate running southwards to the lower right. More irregular minor roads and boundaries can be seen to the right, and the circular mounds to the upper right are prehistoric round barrows. (Source: D. Riley, SLAP 249, SE 455 450).

References: Frere and St Joseph 1983; Monaghan 1991; Ottaway 2003; Ramm 1957, 1988.