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A1(M) REDHOUSE - FERRYBRIDGE IMPROVEMENT

**HISTORICAL ECOLOGY SURVEY
OF THE WENT VALLEY**

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DRAFT

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HISTORICAL ECOLOGY STUDY OF THE WENT VALLEY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 1994, Anthony Walker and Partners were commissioned by Owen Williams Consulting Engineers, on behalf of the Highways Agency, to undertake a combined historical and ecological study of a part of the central Went valley, between Wentbridge in West Yorkshire and Kirk Smeaton in North Yorkshire.
- 1.2 The aims of the study were to provide a better understanding of the various woodlands in the survey area through a knowledge of the landscape history and past management regimes and, if possible, attempt to refine the ecological and/or historic interest of the woodland parcels. It has built upon the detailed study of the Went valley's vegetation undertaken last year by Anthony Walker and Partners and has endeavoured to relate the findings to the proposed threats to the valley resulting from the proposed A1(M) Redhouse to Ferrybridge Improvement.
- 1.3 There is a strong correlation between the age of a wood and its value for nature conservation. Woods which are "ancient" (ie. possessing a continuous history of tree cover since at least 1600 AD) and "semi-natural" (ie. bearing stands of native trees which have not obviously been planted) are generally the most important. Such woodlands have been singled out for particular attention by the Nature Conservancy Council's (now English Nature) Inventories of Ancient Woodland and the best examples are included within schedules of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 1.4 The work mainly comprised a search through the readily available published documentary and cartographic evidence. The fact that the study area is presently split between two counties means that the source material is scattered and so information held at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (YAS) in Leeds, the North Yorkshire County Council Sites and Monuments Record (NYCC SMR), the North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO) in Northallerton, the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service Sites and Monuments Record (WYAS SMR), the West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) in Wakefield, the John Goodchild Collection (JGC) in Wakefield, and the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (BIHR) in York was consulted. Further local information was provided by Mr A O'Vastar of Norton (Chairman of the Brockadale Nature Reserve Management Committee, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) and Mr H Robinson of Kirk Smeaton. Additional data was obtained through a detailed site inspection and discussions with local landowners.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This part of the Went valley has a considerable archaeological heritage. It is possible that there may have been some palaeolithic (pre-8,500 BC)

occupation of the area and there have been occasional isolated finds of prehistoric flints on the plateaux (NYCC and WYAS SMRs). More significantly, a possible Bronze Age (2,000-700 BC) inhumation burial was discovered in 1950 in Little Smeaton quarry (NGR SE523169). These, and other finds in and around the locality, suggest that there was some occupation of the area in the later prehistoric period.

- 2.2 However, it is the identification of cropmarks which suggests that this area was intensively settled and farmed during the Iron Age and Romano-British periods (700 BC-AD 450). Cropmarks are caused by differential growth over buried archaeological features and aerial photographs held as part of the NYCC and WYAS SMRs reveal numerous linear and curvilinear ditches representing enclosures and farmsteads within a system of fields, roads and trackways, all adjacent to the Great North Road, a major Roman road running from Doncaster to York via Thorpe Audlin. On the north bank of the River Went there is a large complex on Smeaton Leys (NGR SE512175) either side of Leys Lane, and other smaller groups to the south-west of Castle Hill Wood (NGR SE512182) and on Jackson's Hill (NGR SE495177). Additional complexes have been identified on the south bank of the river in Went Edge Field (NGR SE502165), east of Castle Hill (NGR SE501171), and north-west of Pinfold Cross, near Kirk Smeaton (NGR SE515165). Many of the features making up these complexes have a similar alignment, suggesting that they are all part of the same system, although they may not have all been in use or occupied at the same time.
- 2.3 Some limited archaeological work has been done on these sites. Roofing tiles, a quern stone used for grinding corn and Roman pottery of the mid 2nd to 4th centuries, all indicative of occupation, have been recovered by members of the Pontefract Archaeological Society (Radley 1971, 117; Baines 1972 & 1974; Moorhouse 1973, 202). Small-scale excavations were carried out near the Swiss Cottage Hotel in 1968 and these produced additional evidence of Romano-British occupation (Morris 1969).
- 2.4 In addition to these now buried features, some earthworks at Castle Hill (NGR SE498172) are likely to represent the remains of one of these Iron Age/Romano-British farmsteads (Faull & Moorhouse 1981, 117). The fact that the earthworks formed an oval enclosure, together with its strategic position on the top of the escarpment overlooking the river valley, led to the suggestion that it was a promontory fort (Page 1912, 5). This is now generally discounted, particularly as the Ordnance Survey 1853 6" map depicts two adjoining linear banks which probably formed an ancillary enclosure. However, neither theory can be definitely proved as the majority of the site has since been destroyed by the active Castle Hill Quarry.
- 2.5 Evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation or activity in the area is, like most other districts, inferred rather than actual. The extent of Anglian occupation can be seen, for example, through place-name elements where suffixes such as *-ham* (meaning a village, homestead or manor), *-ton* (farmstead) and *-wic* (a village or dairy farm) are characteristic. The 11th century Domesday Book records that there were already settlements at Smeaton, stemming from

smio and *tun* meaning "the smith's farmstead" (Smith 1961, 51), as well as at Darrington and Stapleton (Faull & Stinson 1986). Unfortunately, the Domesday Book contains only one reference to "Smedetone", although the fact that there are two entries may suggest that both Kirk and Little Smeaton are recorded. There were also churches and mills at Kirk Smeaton and Darrington in the 11th century.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 By the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, the complex pattern of manors, vills, parishes and townships that characterise the medieval period was already in existence, held either as extensive ancient lordships or as newer smaller holdings. Administratively, Kirk Smeaton was a township within the larger parish of the same name, while Little Smeaton was a township of Womersley parish. Darrington and Stapleton were separate townships in Darrington parish.
- 3.2 The history of land ownership throughout the medieval and early post-medieval periods is beyond the scope of this study, although that for Kirk Smeaton, Darrington and Wentbridge has been covered elsewhere (Robinson 1984; Faull & Moorhouse 1981, 357-8 & 539-40). The numerous documentary references show that the villages were fairly typical both in their size and prosperity. They were essentially agricultural communities, although the reference of smiths in Smeaton implies that iron working was also important; it is not known to what extent the limestone in the river valley was quarried during the medieval and early post-medieval periods, although some small-scale exploitation is likely. As the name implies, Wentbridge grew up as a crossing point and it remained an important resting place for travellers throughout the medieval period.
- 3.3 Not all the medieval villages or hamlets have, however, survived. Although the cause for the disappearance of Stapleton village (probably NGR SE5071904), which had a chapel in the 12th century and 43 poll-tax payers in 1379, is not documented, it may have been due to the creation of Stapleton Park (Beresford 1953, 237). Barnsdale village (NGR SE510147) has disappeared more recently although the name is retained by Barnsdale Bar and Barnsdale Warren House (H Robinson, pers comm).
- 3.4 Recent research has suggested that the area around and to the south of Barnsdale and Wentbridge is associated with Robin Hood (Dobson & Taylor 1976, 20-25; Holt 1982). Specifically, a 14th century ballad "Robin Hood and the Potter" mentions *Went breg*, *Bernysdale*, *Watlinge Strete*, and *the Saylis* (partly identified with Sayle's Plantation, see below), while the site of "Robin Hood's Well" and "Little John's Well" lie to the south. These, as well as other documentary, historical and topographical references, all point to the fact that Barnsdale was the centre of a lawless area associated with the leader of a highway gang who levied a kind of blackmail on travellers passing along the Great North Road.

- 3.5 Elements of the medieval and early post-medieval landscape can still be seen in the area. The first edition Ordnance Survey maps depict a pattern of curving field boundaries which fossilise the medieval strips into which the large open fields were divided, for example around Little Smeaton, Kirk Smeaton and Darrington, and the surviving names of Dale Field, West Field and Middle Field, amongst others, reflect this former usage. A small field of ridge and furrow earthworks remains on the north side of the Went Edge Road, adjacent to a track leading down to the river (NGR SE50751700). The former alignment of the main road north from Wentbridge can be traced through Jackson's Hill Plantation while the course of the former road from Little Smeaton to Wentbridge on the north side of the river is preserved in Leys Lane and Jackson's Lane.

4 MORE RECENT HISTORY

- 4.1 In the later post-medieval period, ie. the 18th and 19th centuries, improved agricultural techniques and increased industrial activity brought significant changes to the landscape of the area. The former open fields were enclosed, for example Little Smeaton in 1787, Kirk Smeaton in 1810-11 (NYCRO I(PC/HMK)) and Darrington Common in 1812, and agriculture remained the main local industry. While the majority of the land on the upper plateaux would have been given over to arable cultivation, it is likely that the valley floor, which was always liable to flooding, remained as open grazing land. The name of Smeaton Pasture is indicative of this usage and an 1859 map of the Sayle Estate (JGC) notes the field between Sayle's Plantation and the river as being "low marsh or long grass". The 1848 Geology Survey map (sheet 250) also depicts "Brokendale Farm" on the north side of the valley (NGR SE50221740), near the existing White Cottage; only a few earthworks now remain on this site.
- 4.2 The fact that small-scale quarrying had been taking place in the later post-medieval period is shown by a "stone quarry" on the 1810 Kirk Smeaton enclosure map, located between Sayle's Planation and the Went Edge Road (NGR SE49451695). The 1848 Geological Survey map (sheet 250) depicts numerous small "limestone quarries" either side of the river (see figure 1). Henry Dance had been buying land on the south side of the River Went for quarrying and in 1825 he and Dixon Holmes formed the Smeaton Stone Company, who then leased 71 acres on Brokendale (now Brockadale) Crag. The main problem to commercial quarrying was the inability to transport the stone to its markets via the canal system. However, this was resolved in 1826 when Dance instigated the Heck Bridge and Wentbridge Railway scheme; it was in fact the last of five unsuccessful attempts to build a mineral line railway through the valley (Boyes 1973). Although partially operational, the railway was never completed and in 1829 the money ran out and the stone company was liquidated without selling a stone; all the stone that was quarried was used in building the railway infrastructure.
- 4.3 Evidence of the former railway bed can still be seen and its course is marked as "Old Railway" on the 1890 Ordnance Survey 6" map (sheet 250NE) (see figure 1). From Little Smeaton, it ran along the north side of the valley

before crossing to the south; the bridge has now gone but a stone-faced terrace remains in Smeaton Pasture. The 1906 Ordnance Survey 25" map (sheet 250(14)) shows that the line terminated at the east end of Sayle's Plantation, below the present Castle Hill Quarry (NGR SE498173), although a trackbed was prepared all the way to Wentbridge (Boyes 1978, 30). A single-span bridge also carried the Brokendale Branch back across the river to two loading bays situated below the main quarry near the present White Cottage (NGR SE503173).

- 4.4 Although it is shown on Jeffrey's 1772 map of Yorkshire (WYAS), it is unclear when Stapleton Park was created. It may have been associated with the original Stapleton Hall, which was located to the north-east of the present Stud Farm, and for which no firm date has been found. Alternatively and, given its appearance as a post-medieval landscape park, it is more likely to date from the end of the 18th century when the second house (now demolished) was built by Edward Lascelles (White 1838). In 1861 it is described as being "well wooded" and comprising 500 acres (Kelly 1861).
- 4.5 Jeffrey's 1772 map shows that the park was circled by a belt of woodland; most of this remains today although there are now gaps between Sod Wall Plantation and Castle Hill Wood, and between the northern part of Brockadale Plantation and Kirkdike Plantation. Maps of 1826 (JGC) and 1832 (NYCRO ZXF M1/5/1) show that the area to the south of Sod Wall and Brockadale Plantations had been planted, to form the full extent of the present Brockadale Plantation. Possible evidence for the remodelling of the landscape can also be seen from the 18th century maps, with the straight "New Road", forming the eastern boundary of the park, replacing an earlier route running northwest-southeast through the park. Presumably the original course of the Little Smeaton to Wentbridge road (see above) was also stopped up at this time.

5 THE WOODLANDS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 It is notoriously difficult to try and establish any form of specific chronology for particular areas or individual land parcels without very detailed documentary research, particularly for the period before the 17th century. It is possible, and even likely, that there are specific references to particular land holdings in unpublished and untranslated medieval documents, held either locally and nationally, but such work is beyond the scope of this study. However, some work has been done and it is possible to draw some inferences from the readily available published sources. For the later post-medieval period, the various cartographic sources do provide some information, although it should be noted that there are not the usual range of commonly available maps for this particular study area.

5.1.2 The Domesday survey often refers to woodland in one form or another when describing the components of a manor or vill. In the

case of Smeaton, for example, "underwood in places" is recorded (Faull & Stinson 1986) although, as noted above, there is no distinction between Kirk and Little Smeaton. The underwood is not included in the entry which refers to the church and so it is possible that it is Little Smeaton which is being referred to. However, it is not possible to locate the areas of woodland within the manorial boundaries.

- 5.1.3 The earliest map of a sufficiently large scale consulted for this study was Jeffrey's 1772 map of Yorkshire (WYAS). This does not show any woodland in the Went valley, although the perimeter woods around Stapleton Park are already established. Whilst this cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that no woodland existed in the valley, it does seem likely that it was then neither particularly dense or extensive.

5.2 Woods on the north side of the valley

Brockadale Plantation

- 5.2.1 As noted above, Brockadale Plantation is not present on Jeffrey's 1772 map. It is now represented by two areas of woodland but the 1826 and 1832 maps show that they were previously both were joined together. This area of woodland was originally called Brokendale, probably stemming from *brocen* and *dæl* meaning "broken valley" (Smith 1961, 53), although it has also been postulated that "Brock" refers to "badger" (Field 1972, 30). Brockadale Plantation formed an extension of the boundary planting associated with Stapleton Park; it is quite noticeable how it forms a "tongue" of planting extending beyond the otherwise curvilinear park boundary. The planting evidently took place after 1772 and before 1826. This may be when sycamore and beech were introduced into the valley.
- 5.2.2 The 1832 map shows that the south-western part of the plantation (ie. that within Stapleton parish) was composed of several smaller wooded enclosures. The valley side is identified as a single linear enclosure, but the others are rectilinear suggesting the planting of originally farmed and enclosed land. This is in marked contrast to the eastern side (ie. that in Little Smeaton parish) which is a large single rectangular block. The former field boundaries do not appear on the later 1848 Geological Survey map and the 1890 Ordnance Survey 6" map, which instead depict a pattern of rides and tracks. The woodland boundaries are shown on figure 1. Some remains of sod walls have also been seen in the wooded area, a name which is perpetuated in Sod Wall Plantation to the north. These presumably represent either some form of compartmentalisation for management purposes, or earlier field boundaries and/or tracks.

- 5.2.3 A map of 1826 (JGC) and subsequent maps depict Brokendale Houses which, it is believed, were built by the Stapleton Estate to serve as estate cottages (A O'Vastar, pers comm); these do not now survive. The buildings are not shown on an earlier enclosure map of 1788 (NYCRO I(PC/SMT)) and it may be that their construction between these dates is associated with a period of new planting, management and/or organisation.
- 5.2.4 The southern part of the woodland also contains the large limestone quarry mined by the Smeaton Stone Company in the 1820's (see above) and there are numerous overgrown spoil heaps with cut limestone blocks scattered about. On the southern boundary of the plantation, the woodland has encroached over the remains of the Brockadale Branch of the Heck Bridge to Wentbridge Railway and the associated loading bays.
- 5.2.5 Documentary evidence from the Forestry Commission at York, who acquired the wood in the 1960's, shows that the steep valley side of Brockadale Plantation was planted with ash and sycamore in 1905. Some thinning has evidently taken place since then, as much younger regrowth is present. The area immediately around the exposed rock face was not planted and it has been kept clear of encroaching trees and shrubs by the current owners, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, to preserve the valuable limestone flora.
- 5.2.6 The western end of this valley side, closest to the existing A1, may also have been planted early this century, but it is in different ownership and no records have been found. Some thinning, mainly the removal of dead wood, has been carried out in recent years by the current owner, Mr Jackson.
- 5.2.7 There is no clear evidence that any of the woodland in Brockadale Plantation is ancient, and there is only a scattering of woodland flora considered to be reliable ancient woodland indicators. No wood anemone was found on the north side of the valley, although some yellow archangel is present. However, woodland ground flora on these south-facing slopes might be more prone to desiccation and may not have been able to persist during any periods when tree cover was absent (see 5.3.3 below for a comparison with the north-facing slope). The Vegetation Survey of the West Valley, carried out in 1994 by Anthony Walker and Partners, drew out surprising similarities between Sayle's Plantation and the main part of Brockadale, in that both fell into the same woodland type (Type A) (see figure 2). It is possible that both pieces of woodland suffered a sufficiently short period of clearance in the 18th century, so that their character was largely able to re-establish itself once grazing animals were excluded.
- 5.2.8 Comparing figures 1 and 2 also shows that there may be a distinction in the vegetation between parts of Brockadale Plantation

which have developed on disturbed ground, as a result of quarrying last century and possibly before. The distinction is not pronounced, however, and it is likely that it would continue to decline with time.

- 5.2.9 The section of woodland bisected by the existing A1 does not fall into the same woodland type and may either have been open for a longer period or been managed so differently that its character has since been lost. On balance, the former hypothesis seems probable, but neither is supported by any available evidence so far gathered.

Long Crag

- 5.2.10 The valley side between Brockadale Plantation and Little Smeaton is not shown as being wooded on any of the older maps. Occasional trees may have survived in the vicinity of Long Crag, a natural limestone outcrop, and any such remnant woodland may have formed the nucleus from which the current woodland/scrub under the crag has developed. The land below Long Crag now has a well-established woodland character which includes species with poor powers of dispersal such as dog's mercury. The grassland on both valley side and floor has gradually fallen out of use during this century, although the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust is restoring several areas here. It seems likely that the current habitat spread once grazing ceased along this stretch of the valley early in this century.

5.3 Woods on the south side of the valley

Sayle's Plantation

- 5.3.1 The name of Sayle's is considered to stem from *salh* meaning "willow" (Smith 1961, 52). The 14th century ballad of Robin Hood (see above) makes frequent reference to *the Saylis*. This is considered to represent a localised area rather than a specific land-parcel but an "acre in the Sailes" listed in a 1688 glebe terrier of Kirk Smeaton can be correlated with "Sailes Close" named in later terriers of 1745 and 1857 (Dobson & Taylor 1979, 22). Further documentary research has identified Sailes Close with a 1346-47 tenancy, when it was owned by Richard, son of Adam de Sayles and in 1577 Thomas de Brayton held approximately 4 acres of land in the Sayles (H Robinson, pers comm). The 1810 Kirk Smeaton enclosure map records that Thomas Sayle owned several fields in this area. It is interesting to note that the 1846 Geological Survey map names the present Sayle's Plantation as "Smeaton Pasture Wood" but it is not named on a map of 1826. It is, however, called "Sayle's Plantation" in Thomas Sayle's sale plan of 1859, comprising some 14 acres, and on the Ordnance Survey 6" map of 1890.

- 5.3.2 It seems fairly certain that the present Sayle's Plantation represents part, but not all, of the 14th century "Sailes". However, it is unclear whether the documentary sources specifically refer to woodland; no woodland is shown in this area on Jeffrey's 1772 map. The first definite depiction of woodland occurs in 1826, although the fact that the boundaries are the same on the 1810 enclosure map implies that the area has the same land use. Along with most of the land in the Went valley, the 1810 enclosure award records this as being "Common and Pasture". It is possible that what is now known as Sayle's Plantation was grazed periodically until the early 19th century, but that some elements of a woodland flora were able to survive in the shade of a steep north-facing slope and perhaps an occasional flush of scrub when the grazing pressure was relaxed.
- 5.3.3 This seems to be the only reasonable hypothesis to correlate the abundance of wood anemone, considered to be a "good" ancient woodland indicator (Peterken 1974), with the apparent lack of woodland in 1772. Further details of the vegetation of Sayle's Plantation can be found in the Vegetation Survey of the Went Valley (Anthony Walker and Partners 1994). As shown on figure 2, the vegetation in this wood is quite distinct from the rest of the valley side.
- 5.3.4 A track/footpath runs in a southeast-northwest direction through Sayle's Plantation, from the Went Edge Road under the existing A1 viaduct and into Wentbridge. The 1810 enclosure map shows an earlier but parallel alignment, named as "Wentbridge Foot Road" running along the southern boundary of the wood. This track probably represents a short-cut and/or a means of carrying stone from the adjacent quarry to Wentbridge.

Smeaton Crag and Smeaton Pasture

- 5.3.5 Historical references for the woods other than Sayle's Plantation are, without further more detailed research, restricted to cartographic evidence. As can be seen in figure 1, Smeaton Crag and Smeaton Pasture possessed very little woodland in 1848, although rather more was present by 1906. None is shown on Jeffrey's 1772 map.
- 5.3.6 The Vegetation Survey of the Went Valley (Anthony Walker and Partners 1994) clearly distinguishes Sayle's Plantation from the woodland further east and it seems reasonable to assume that woodland age has contributed to this distinction. This assumption is supported, although not quite as clearly, by the distribution of woodland types either side of Smeaton Crag. Figure 1 suggests that pre-1906 woodland possesses vegetation which is distinct from post-1906 woodland/scrub. The match is not perfect, as can be seen by comparing figures 1 and 2, but it is reasonable.

6 THE VALLEY FLOOR

- 6.1 Cartographic evidence shows that, in historic times, the valley woodlands have always been open. References to Sayle's, Saylis or Sailes, possibly referring to willows, suggest that willow carr may have been present east of Wentbridge in medieval times, but it seems clear that this land has been used for hay and/or summer grazing for several hundred years. Local residents (eg. H Thompson of Kirk Smeaton) consider that most of the valley floor was grazed up to the Second World War. Thereafter, several stretches were abandoned, some 40-60 years ago, but some more recently, such as Mr Jackson's land either side of the existing A1 viaduct. This was grazed by horses fairly regularly until about 10 years ago. Some parts are still grazed, although winter rains can flood extensive areas of the valley.
- 6.2 River valley grasslands, traditionally managed by a late summer hay cut and aftermath grazing, often possess a characteristic assemblage of plant species which is now becoming very rare, as a result of abandonment of management, agricultural improvement or development. Remaining meadows and pastures often have a high value for nature conservation and their restoration is considered worthwhile. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust has undertaken such a project recently on a section of the valley floor. Areas where grazing has ceased relatively recently can be restored to their traditional use without much difficulty. The process is more difficult and lengthy where abandonment took place earlier, and its value might be more questionable.

7 ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This study has confirmed the findings and assessments made in the Vegetation Survey of the Went Valley (Anthony Walker and Partners 1994) and has enabled further refinements of this work.
- 7.2 Whilst no incontrovertible evidence has been found to show that any of the woodland in the Went valley is ancient, Sayle's Plantation seems to present the best case. The strong population of wood anemone backs up the ambiguous documentary evidence.
- 7.3 No early references to Brockadale Plantation could be found, but the eastern two-thirds of this woodland falls into the same woodland type as Sayle's Plantation (Type A in the Vegetation Survey), which at least suggests a similar past. This is the more remarkable for the woods being on opposite sides of the valley and (so far as can be told) always in different ownerships. The apparent distinction between woodland around the old quarries and "undisturbed" woodland may also be telling.
- 7.4 The western portion of Brockadale Plantation, ie. that section which is bisected by the existing A1, appears from the cartographic evidence to be of about the same age as the woodland further east (see figure 1). However, it falls into a completely different woodland type (Type C) identified by the Vegetation Survey. Unfortunately, this study has not been

able to discover the reasons for this; whether because of some historical factor such as more prolonged grazing or a more recent silvicultural treatment.

- 7.5 The woods east of Sayle's Plantation, either side of Smeaton Craggs, have little claim to ancient status and some sections have only developed into woodland this century. Perhaps, as has been postulated for Sayle's, fragments of woodland flora always remained on this valley side and were able to spread once grazing ceased. Wood anemone is present in some parts of this woodland and it is difficult to see how else it could have survived, since it produces little fertile seed. The very steep slopes and craggy nature of the terrain might have rendered it unattractive to grazing animals.
- 7.6 The vegetation type in the Smeaton Craggs area (Type B in the Vegetation Survey) distinguishes it clearly from woodland elsewhere in the valley and also appears to separate older from younger woodland. Unlike Brockadale Plantation, however, it was not possible to pick out quarried areas by their different vegetation. Further study might reveal whether the northerly aspect could influence the woodland's ability to recover from this type of disturbance.
- 7.7 The woods on Smeaton Pasture and under Long Crag have also appeared within the last 150 years. They have fewer features of long-established woods, although wood anemone is locally present in the ground flora.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The land around the Went valley has been intensively used by man for thousands of years. The easily worked soil, the presence of the Great North Road and other communication routes, together with the importance of Wentbridge and Kirk/Little Smeaton as crossing points, have ensured that the valley has been close to areas of considerable human activity since prehistoric times. Under these circumstances, woodland would have been valued and protected where it occurred, and evidence should be present on the ground or in historical documents. The lack of any clear evidence leads to the conclusion that stock would have been pastured all along the valley sides for at least some periods of the valley's history.
- 8.2 However, the steepest slopes would not have supported productive grassland, and so it possible that grazing was never sufficiently intense to eliminate all traces of woodland flora. When tree-planting came into fashion here in the early 19th century, the valley recovered the shady conditions which enabled the woodland ground flora to spread once more.
- 8.3 A combination of cartographic and botanical evidence suggests that Sayle's Plantation and the eastern part of Brockadale Plantation were either never completely open, or were grazed only lightly, or for a relatively short period of time. The rest of the valley's woods seem to be more recent and have retained or acquired less woodland character.

8.4 The valley floor has always been grazed, or cut for hay, at least in historic times, and the current neglect of some stretches is less than 50 years old.

9 THE PROPOSED SCHEME

9.1 The implications of the above study for the proposed scheme for the A1 are that:

- the value of Sayle's Plantation is reinforced, confirming the recommendation that any new viaduct should be located as far as possible over the skirts of the old one;
- no evidence has been found to corroborate the lower botanical value ascribed to the western part of Brockadale Plantation;
- Sayle's Plantation and the eastern part of Brockadale Plantation are still considered to be of equivalent value, but the area around Smeaton Craggs may not be quite as valuable as a woodland habitat;
- Smeaton Pasture and Long Crag woodlands are of lower value;
- the valley floor habitats are also of lower value, although their potential for restoration is also recognised.

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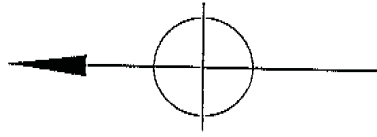
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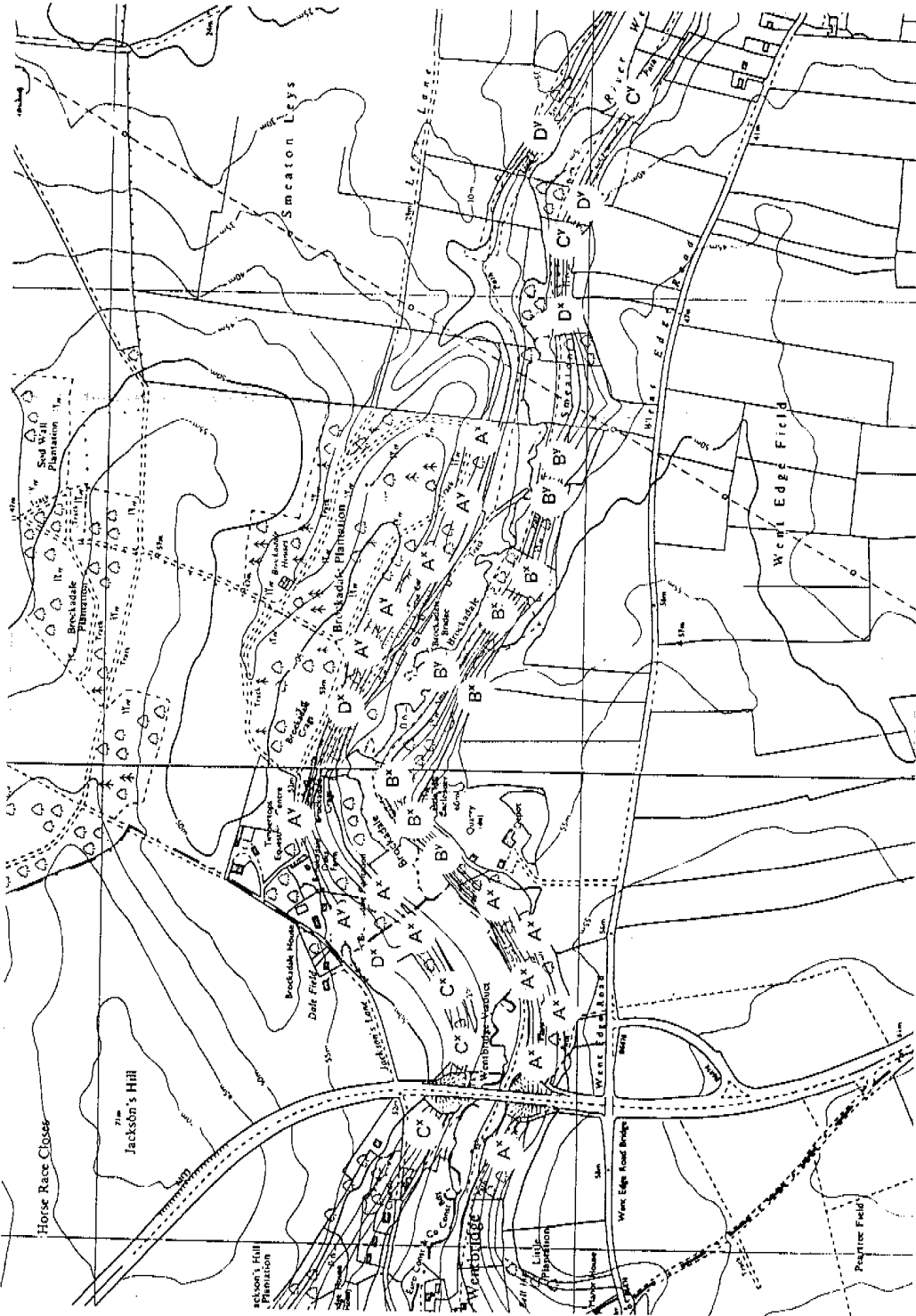
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**CORRELATION WITH GROUPINGS
IN THE VEGETATION SURVEY OF
THE WENT VALLEY (TABLE 1)**

A^x = I
 A^v = J
 B^x = G
 B^v = H
 C^x = C1
 C^v = F
 D^x = B1
 D^v = A1



A POSSIBLY ANCIENT, MORE OR LESS SEMI-NATURAL CHARACTER
 A^x No significant ground disturbance
 A^v Quarrying in early 19th century

B WOODLAND ON STEEP, PARTLY QUARRIED SLOPES, SMEATON CRAGS AREA, SEMI-NATURAL CHARACTER
 B^x Relatively recent woodland (since 1906)
 B^v Long-established woodland (before 1906)

C WOODLAND WITH PLANTATION CHARACTER
 C^x Long-established (possibly ancient) woodland, towards Wentbridge
 C^v Long-established woodland, towards Kirk Smeaton

D WOODLAND WITH SCRUBBY CHARACTER
 D^x Long-established woodland
 D^v Relatively recent woodland/scrub

**ANTHONY
 WALKER
 AND PARTNERS**

SCALE
 1:10,000

PROJECT
 HISTORICAL ECOLOGY STUDY
 OF THE WENT VALLEY

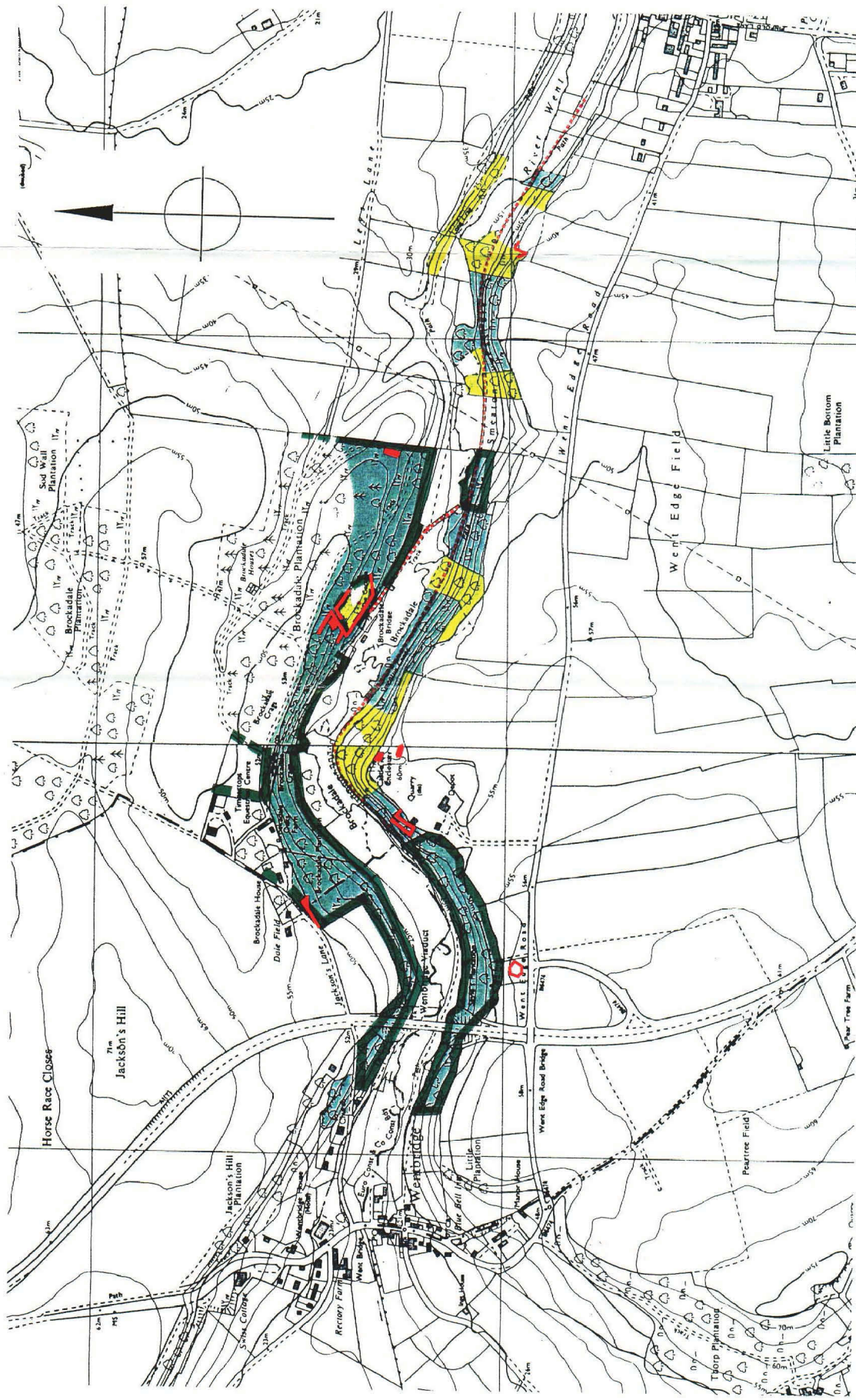
FIGURE
 WOODLAND TYPES

DRAWN
 STR

CHECKED
 RC

DATE
 30.3.95

NUMBER
 2



LEGEND

- WOODED IN 1848-1849**
- WOODED AFTER 1906**
- WOODED IN 1906**
- RAILWAY**
- QUARRIES**

ANTHONY WALKER AND PARTNERS		HISTORICAL ECOLOGY STUDY OF THE WENT VALLEY	
SCALE 1:10,000	DRAWN STR	CHECKED RC	DATE 30.3.95
FIGURE HISTORICAL DISTRIBUTION OF WOODLAND		NUMBER 1	