

**UNIVERSITY OF YORK - YORKSHIRE WOLDS PROJECT in conjunction with VASLE (Viking and Anglo-Saxon Landscape & Economy)**

# **BURDALE ANGLIAN SETTLEMENT**

## **PROJECT OUTLINE AND RESEARCH DESIGN 2006**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The site at Burdale provides a happy conjunction of the early medieval research aims of the Department of Archaeology's Yorkshire Wolds Project (<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/Wolds/new/index.html>) with those of the AHRC -funded Viking and Anglo-Saxon Landscape & Economy project (<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/vasle/index.html>). VASLE is using the evidence from portable antiquities and coins to understand society and economy from 700-1000 AD, through (a) national mapping of finds distributions; (b) the definition of assemblage "fingerprints" to distinguish specific categories of "productive sites"; and (c) "ground-truthing" of metal-detected material from a small sample of northern "productive sites", using a range of non-destructive techniques combined with limited excavation. Burdale is a Yorkshire Wolds valley-bottom site where Anglian settlement features are identifiable from a rich palimpsest of crop marks, but it is also a productive site which has been intensively night-hawked for up to 10 years.

### **1.1 Research Framework**

The Yorkshire Wolds Project identified the Anglian / Anglo-Scandinavian settlement transition as a key area for examination:

"discussion has been dominated by questions of numbers of successive waves of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian settlers, and their impact on landholding patterns, generally inspired by historical or linguistic models. With the re-emergence of urban and high status secular and ecclesiastical centres the questions of town-hinterland relations and economic models for trading patterns also become central to the study of landscape continuity." (YWP 2003).

By building on previous work at Wharram Percy, Cottam A and B and Cowlam, and linking with related work by Dominic Powlesland in the Vale of Pickering, the central aim is to:

"Understand the development of economic and societal complexity in the early medieval period - specifically the transition from lordship to feudalism, the development of a market economy, and agricultural and industrial intensification."

Three specific objectives were identified:

- (1) **Visibility:** Investigation of new crop mark forms e.g. conjoined curvilinear complexes, and correlation with metal-detector derived evidence for so-called “productive” sites, developing archaeological “fingerprints” for settlement types. This aim is being pursued on a national level under the auspices of the AHRC-funded VASLE project, but with a focus on Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.
- (2) **Settlement evolution:** Further mapping of Wolds landscape development, 7th-10th centuries, at the micro-level e.g. Cottam A/B, Cowlam (to compare with Vale evidence) and its socio-economic interpretation. Looking at transitions and settlement nucleation within the early medieval period but also considering the transition from late R-B and early Anglo-Saxon (Elmswell, Crossgates, West Heslerton) at the start of the period, and to post Norman Conquest (Wharram etc) at the end.
- (3) **Economic:** Collection of rural faunal and artefactual assemblages for 7th-10th centuries (to compare with York and West Heslerton) and of environmental evidence for agricultural intensification for the Wolds.

In addition, other strands of the Wolds project are seeking to enhance understanding of the Yorkshire Wolds landscape and aspects of landuse and intensity by the study of dry valley colluvium (Walsh/ Neal). Burdale also provides an opportunity to examine valley sedimentation.

## **1.2 Previous Work**

Early medieval settlement in Yorkshire has been the subject of two major excavations: at West Heslerton (Powlesland in prep) and Wharram Percy (Milne and Richards 1992; Stamper and Croft 2000). Both sites have thrown important light on chronology, settlement organisation and continuity, and emphasised the importance of further work.

During the 1990s intensive prospection by metal detectorists led to the discovery of many new foci of Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian settlements. These sites were often described as “productive” (Naylor 2004; Pestell and Ulmschneider 2003) but it has been questioned as to whether they are really a discrete class (Richards 1999). To date three of these sites: Cottam A, Cottam B and Cowlam, have been investigated by excavation (Richards et al 1999; 2001, in prep; Hummler 2003).

## **2.0 BURDALE**

The site at Burdale (SE 875623) is situated on the valley floor at 99m OD, along the main Thixendale-Fimber valley. The area comprises a long narrow level field approximately 1000 metres in a north-west to south-east orientation with an average width of 120 metres. The Thixendale-Fimber road runs down the southern edge of the valley, alongside the 19<sup>th</sup>-century embankment for

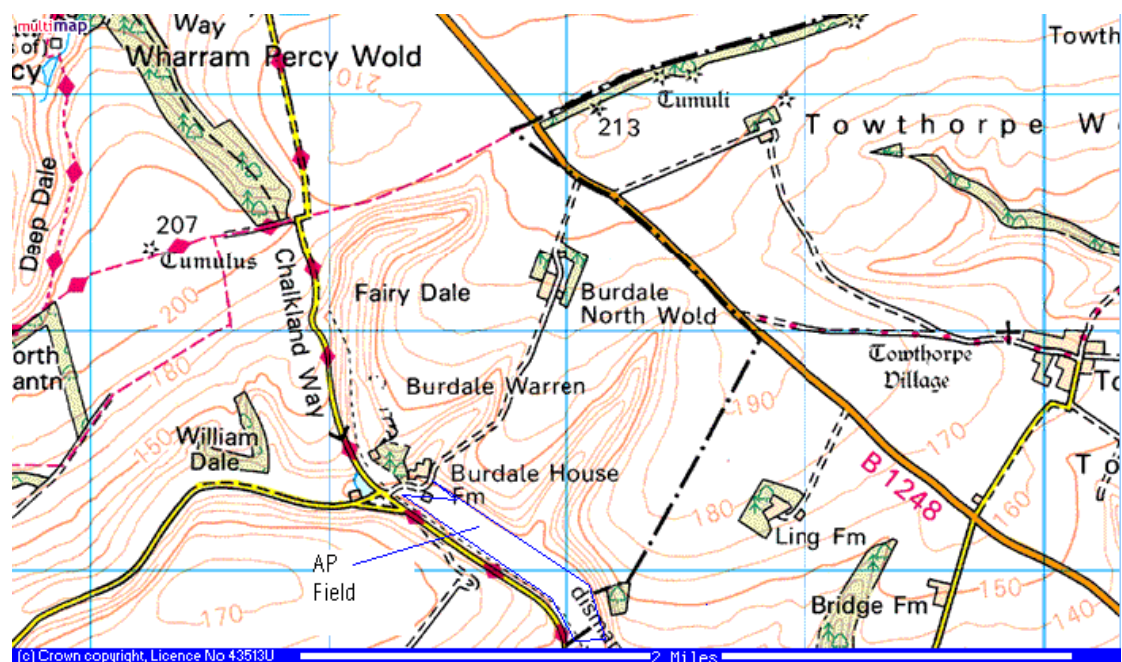
the Malton/Driffield railway. The valley is now farmed by Mr Lester Bell, tenant farmer for the Birdsall Estate.

## 2.1 Geology and Soils

The area comprises chalk of the Cretaceous era (Gaunt and Buckland 2003). As with other valleys in the Yorkshire Wolds, a subsurface stream runs towards Fimber from a spring to the north (Hayfield 1987). The soils are predominantly thin light calcareous silty loams (Gaunt and Buckland 2003).

## 2.2 Topography

The study area is in the bottom of the valley. Steep sides (approx. 50 metres high) rise upwards from the field boundaries. The north-east end is not far from the convergence of Fairy Dale and Middle Dale while the north end of the survey area is contiguous and perpendicular with Whay Dale. The valley bottom has a very slight upwards slope away from the Fimber boundary towards Burdale farm. There is a natural spring located approximately 250 meters away from the north-west edge of the field above the Burdale Crossroads site.



## 2.3 Vegetation and Land Use

This area appears to have been used for farming purposes from at least 1910 to present day. Sometime between 1893 and 1910 the usage of the land changed to its current state of agricultural use (based on Ordnance Survey maps from 1893 and 1910). The field had previously been truncated in the

south-east by a boundary which happens to correspond with visible cropmarks. Based on Ordnance Survey maps, this boundary was changed to the current set up sometime between 1952 and 1977. Prior to the current use, it is presumed that the field was used for pasture based on the presence of a drainage ditch running through the field and a sheep wash on the boundary.

## **2.4 Documentary evidence**

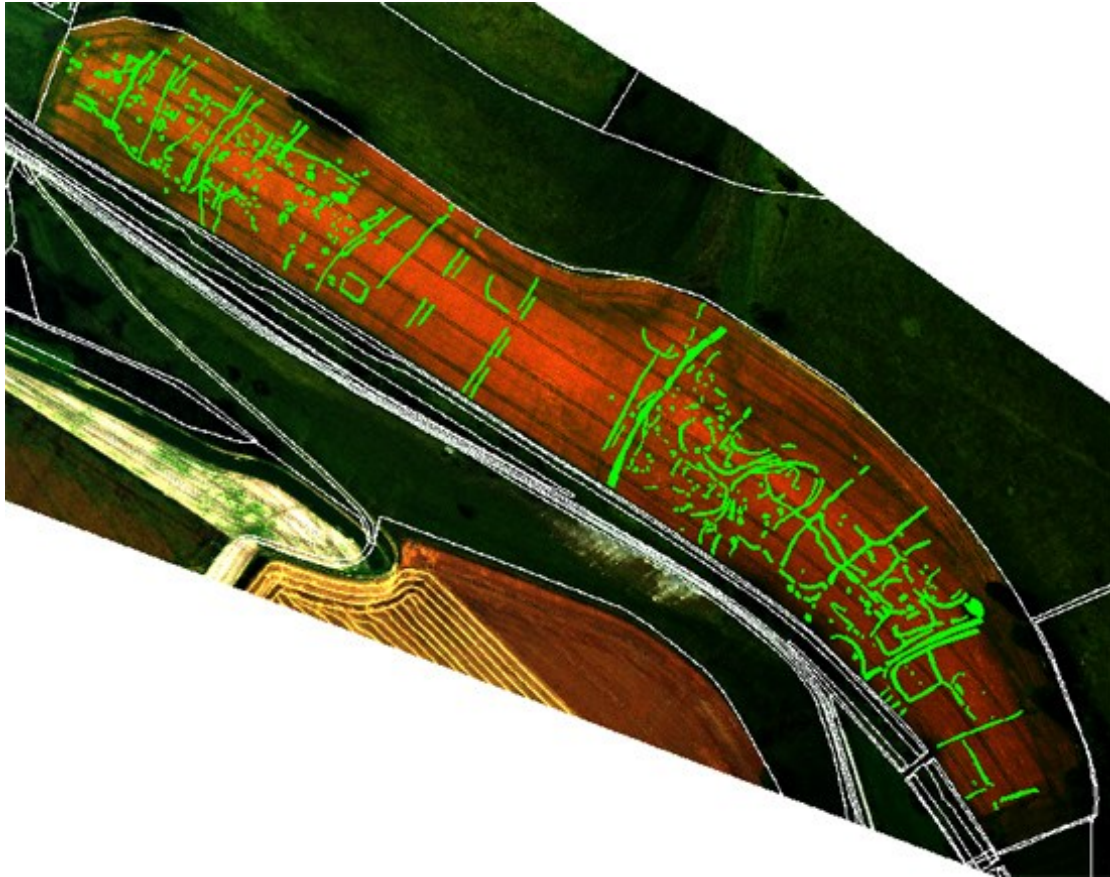
A settlement in Burdale is mentioned in the Lay Subsidy rolls of 1334 as comprising 10 bovates taxable with land for 4 oxen. By 1650 the population was so small that the Parliamentary Survey suggested that living should be annexed by Fimber.

## **2.5 Previous fieldwork**

The valley was included within Colin Hayfield's Wharham parish survey, and two sites were identified (Hayfield 1987, 132-44). The first (B17: Burdale Crossroads – SE872623) was investigated on the triangular green formed from the road intersection at Burdale. An unbroken sequence of pottery from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD suggest this is a preferred settlement location. A Roman and Anglian site became the location of the medieval vill which, following its desertion in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, became the site of a large post-medieval farm, Burdale House Farm. The majority of this site is overlain by the railway embankment and present day farm buildings.

Hayfield's second site (B18: Burdale/Fimber Boundary farmstead - SE 881618) is at the other end of the valley. Crop marks appeared here in 1976 and were photographed by Tony Pacitto. Hayfield recovered predominantly Roman sherds and concluded that this was another Romano-British farmstead site. Given its location, 950m from the Burdale crossroads site, he observed that it would comply with the general 1km spacing of Romano-British settlements in the Wharham area.

The RCHME National Mapping Programme Yorkshire Wolds survey (Stoertz 1997) indicates a linear feature crossing the eastern end of the valley floor and also plots a small number of poorly defined features. The linear feature may mark the line of the Burdale/ Fimber township boundary. No other crop mark features were known at the time of Stoertz's survey, but a subsequent English Heritage sortie by David Macleod revealed a palimpsest of rectilinear and curvilinear features, including rectangular and 'Butterwick-type' enclosures, trackways, and negative features. These may be interpreted as traces of the Romano-British farmstead (at the eastern end of the valley), with two Anglian settlement enclosures with sunken-featured buildings (one at the western end; the second east of Whay Dale).



From enquires it has become apparent that the valley has been subject to metal-detecting over a number of years. With the cooperation of the finders Gary Parkin and David Wayper of the Dunelme MD Club and the owner Lord Middleton of Birdsall Estate, Neil Campling deposited a number of items, including Romano-British and Anglian artefacts, with the Yorkshire Museum in 2000 (YORYM: E2214). However, most of the metal detecting has been illegal night-hawking, focussed on the eastern end of the valley away from Burdale House Farm. It is understood that this has produced material from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD to the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, including large numbers of sceatta. There are also thought to be some burials, particularly inhumations. A limited metal detector survey in Sept-Oct 2005 (Bambrook 2005) produced an Anglian pin and strap end.

### 2.3 Site Objectives

The objectives of the field investigations at Burdale are:

- To establish the depth, extent and survival of archaeological deposits on the site
- To explore the nature of sedimentation in the dry valley
- To identify the extent of the eighth and ninth century activity and to determine the development of the site
- To establish the relationship of the metalwork finds and the features

- To collect environmental and artefactual samples
- To determine the nature of the eighth and ninth century activity on the site
- To help protect the site from further illegal metal-detecting

### **3.0 METHODS STATEMENT**

#### **3.1 Anticipated data, methodology for data gathering and processing**

In order to address the project aims a range of investigative techniques will be employed. (Areas of responsibility are shown in brackets)

- Digitised and rectified plot of the crop marks, and input of coordinates of all metal detector finds into project GIS (Michael Charno, MSc AIS)
- Magnetometry and resistivity survey (Ben Gourley/ MA in Field Archaeology)
- Metal-detector survey (Mark Ainsley & Geoff Bambrook)
- Field-walking (Steve Dobson/ Ben Gourley)
- Radar survey across a valley transect (and GPR model of valley sub-surface) (Steve Dobson/ Cath Neal/ Phil Murphy)
- Augur survey, partial valley section and geoarchaeological sondage (Cath Neal) – subject to separate research proposal
- Excavation – area excavation of c.1200m<sup>2</sup> – 20m x 60m – in eastern settlement concentration (Steve Roskams (site director), Madeleine Hummler (recording supervisor), Ben Gourley (spatial recording), plus c.2 x c.10m machine trench to evaluate depth of deposits in western settlement concentration)
- Full processing, conservation and analysis of artefact assemblages will be undertaken (MRH and first year field school; YAT Conservation Laboratory)
- Faunal, molluscan and macrobotanical assemblages derived from the excavated areas will be examined and processed, and the potential survival of palaeoenvironmental material will be evaluated (TPOC, HKK and ARH and first year field school)
- Archive the descriptive, stratigraphic and spatial record (MRH & first year field school)
- Production of full stratigraphic and structural report (SPR)

- Processing of image data using SVG (Holly Wright)
- Production of artefact report (John Naylor)
- Production of interim reports (JDR/SPR)
- Production of synthetic report and publication (JDR)

### **3.2 Staffing and equipment**

The main excavation element of the evaluation will be conducted over three weeks in May 2006. The excavations will have a training brief. Steve Roskams will be site director and training coordinator; Madeleine Hummler will be recording supervisor, and Julian Richards will be research director.

The landowners, Birdsall Estate, and the tenant farmer, Mr Lester Bell, have agreed that York University shall have access to an area adjacent to Burdale House Farm cottages in order to conduct some limited evaluation by excavation. Following the excavation the subsoil and topsoil will be reinstated and the land returned to agriculture.

Topsoil will be removed by machine, after which excavation will utilise appropriate equipment. Contexts will, as appropriate, be sampled for palaeo-environmental analysis; where possible contexts will be sieved to maximise artefact recovery. Metal detectors will be used on site to screen overburden and cleared areas.

Temporary tool stores and toilet accommodation will need to be established adjacent to the site; primary records and archive will not be left on site; records will be duplicated regularly. The site supervisors will be aware of health and safety requirements and a Risk Assessment will be undertaken.

### **3.3 Publication and presentation**

A full report of the evaluation will be drawn up and placed in archive, with synthetic and summary articles placed in county and national journals as appropriate. A copy will be provided to the North Yorkshire HER.

The full results will also be fed into the work of the Yorkshire Wolds and the VASLE projects, and will feature in more general works of synthesis resulting from both projects. Results will also be entered into the web site developed for the Wolds Project.

The potential for display and publicity while the project is ongoing is limited due to the rural location and current agricultural practice; it is also undesirable given the continued threat from unauthorised metal detector users.

### 3.4 Archive deposition

It is proposed that all finds resulting from this evaluation shall be retained for study by the Yorkshire Wolds and VASLE Projects for a period of up to two years; thereafter they are to be deposited with the Yorkshire Museum. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service.

### Acknowledgements

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Prof Julian D Richards  
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