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PARISH 1020
ENY 4388
SNY 12348

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

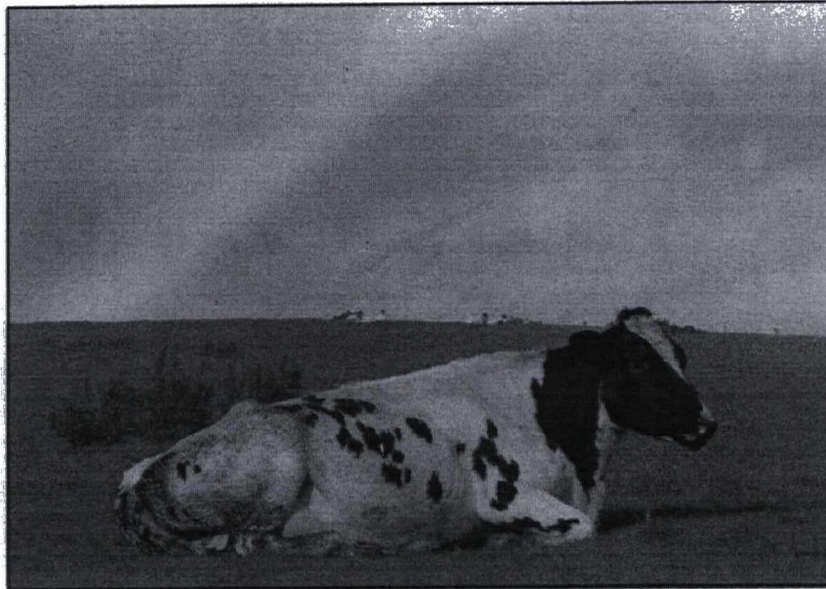


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SNY	12348
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CNY	
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Rec'd	2008

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION of
LAND in EASBY PARK, near RICHMOND,
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

(Site centred NZ 1887 0052)

A report to Prism Planning and Randall Orchard Construction Ltd



16th October 2008

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

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(RICHMONDSHIRE DISTRICT)
NORTH YORKSHIRE***

(Site centred NZ 1887 0052)

A report to Prism Planning and Randall Orchard Construction Ltd

Fieldwork by Percival Turnbull & Deborah Walsh

Report by Percival Turnbull

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION of
LAND in EASBY PARK, near RICHMOND,
NORTH YORKSHIRE
(Site centred NZ 1887 0052)**

EPITOME

On instructions from Prism Planning, representing Randall Orchard Construction Ltd, an archaeological evaluation has been carried out on land within Easby Park, Richmond, North Yorkshire. This work was required in support of a future planning application for development of the site as a holiday campsite.

A total of seven trenches was excavated, each trench measuring 5 metres x 1.8 metres. The trenches were positioned in order to sample all parts of the proposed development.

Results were archaeologically negative: no deposit, feature, structure or object of archaeological interest was identified. A consideration of the mediaeval landscape is given, and an explanation of the archaeological sterility of the site is offered.

It is recommended that no further archaeological intervention is necessary in this case.

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION of
LAND in EASBY PARK, near RICHMOND,
NORTH YORKSHIRE
(Site centred NZ 1887 0052)*

INTRODUCTION

1. On instructions from Prism Planning, representing Randall Orchard Construction Ltd, an archaeological evaluation has been carried out on land within Easby Park, Richmond, North Yorkshire. This work was required in support of a future planning application for development of the site as a holiday campsite comprising twelve log cabins, with associated parking areas and access roads. Some new planting is intended as part of the scheme, and a small sewage treatment plant will also be needed. The proposals involve light strip foundations for the cabins themselves, with the road and other hard standings laid directly onto the subsoil after stripping of turf.

2. The evaluation was carried out after discussions with Miss Lucie Hawkins, of North Yorkshire County Council, and according to a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by this Practice. Part of the W.S.I was subsequently amended to reflect comments by the regional Scientific Advisory Officer.

3. It is intended that the project archive will be deposited with the North Yorkshire County Records Office.

4. This project is represented by file no BAP364 of this Practice. The OASIS number is thebriga1_49956.

5. The North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record was consulted in the early stages of this evaluation.

THE SITE

6. The development site lies to the north-east of the village of Easby and comprises an area of pasture land, rather undulating and generally dropping in height to the south and east (that is to say, towards the River Swale). The area is currently divided into two fields, but the division is marked by a wire fence and is probably not old.

7. The development site may be considered as two areas. One of these comprises the entire site (as shown in Fig. 1), most of which is to be left as grassland, with some extra planting, habitat enhancement etc. The core area of the development is much smaller, and confined to the areas to be affected by the construction of cabins and roads: it is within this area that the evaluation trenches were targeted.

8. On three sides the site is bounded by motor roads, with a belt of well-established trees between the road and the pasture. On the western side the boundary is a sunken track, flanked by a hedgerow which contains a large number of mature

standard trees. This is clearly of some antiquity; the track is aligned almost exactly on the gatehouse of the Abbey, and most probably represents a formal approach to the Abbey complex. This is strongly reminiscent of the situation at Easby's daughter house of Egglestone, established between 1195 and 1198 and possibly using the same masons as had built Easby (Turnbull & Walsh, forthcoming). At Egglestone, the gatehouse (discovered and excavated in 1999) gave on to a walled and sunken approach track, which led past a series of enclosures and structures which seem to have had an agricultural purpose, as part of the Abbey's demesne farm, represented also by a large complex of sinuous rigg-and-furrow cultivation of an unmistakeably mediaeval type: it is likely that the same situation obtained at Easby.

HISTORICAL and ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

9. The history of the parish of Easby has been ably epitomised by the V.C.H. (pp. 51-64), from which the following may be abstracted:

Asebi (xi cent.); Essebi (xii cent.); Esebi (xiii-xv cent.).

This parish is composed of the townships of Aske, Brompton-on-Swale, Easby and Skeeby, of which Brompton is in the wapentake of Gilling East. ... The subsoil is Yoredale Rocks with recent alluvium in the valley of the Swale where the pasture lies. There were stone quarries at Aske 'near Ruchedic,' the tithes of which Nysan son of Other granted in 1135 to St. Agatha's Abbey. In the same century Torphin son of Robert (de Manfield) granted to the abbey the quarry at Easby. There were also old quarries at Skeeby, where stone is still occasionally worked.

The parish is partially bounded on the east by Watling Street, which crosses the Swale south of Easby and goes north towards Scotch Corner, and part of the way on the west by the Scots Dike, a portion of an ancient earthwork which started south of Easby and ran parallel to the Roman road as far as Barforth on Tees. The southern boundary is formed by the Swale, on the bank of which are the ruins of St. Agatha's Abbey...

There is practically no village at Easby, and the hall, the ruins of the abbey, the vicarage and the church are surrounded by park land. Easby House, the residence of Mr. Leonard Jaques, J.P., stands at the top of the grass slope above the river a short distance south-east of the church. Here is preserved a portion of the shaft of an early cross, having on one face a figure of our Lord seated with an angel on either hand, on the back a bird and an animal in a frame of interlacing ornament, and cable-moulded angles with knotwork patterns on the sides. It is perhaps the 'Houthelos Cross in the territory of Easby' mentioned in the abbey chartulary. William at the Cross had land in Brompton in 1286-7. In the garden are several fragments of bases, shafts, &c., which have been brought from the abbey.

10. The village of Easby is still little more than a hamlet, consisting mostly of the Hall and its various offices and a row of former alms houses. The Parish church, dedicated to St Agatha, stands to the south of the village opposite the Abbey gatehouse.

11. The area is of course dominated by the great complex of the Premonstratensian Abbey of Easby, founded in 1152. This was an establishment of no little magnificence, supporting in its heyday thirty canons and a hospital for twenty-two poor men. The buildings are well-preserved and of interest in being of rather unorthodox layout: it should be remembered, however, that the physical influence of the monastery may be expected to have extended without the immediate claustral community. A Grange controlled by the Abbey existed at St Trinian's, immediately to the north-east of the site; it seems overwhelmingly probable that this economic arm of the Abbey, manned by lay brothers, would have farmed the land between the Grange house and the Abbey itself; this would have included the whole of the proposed development site.

12. No archaeological site or findspot has been recorded within the boundaries of the site itself.

THE EVALUATION

13. A walk-over survey of the site revealed no trace of rigg-and-furrow or of any other relief feature of archaeological interest. Vestiges of an old field boundary in the eastern half of the site are of late 18th/19th century type (as described by Bailey and Culley, 1794). With the exception of the western boundary, discussed above, none of the boundaries of the site exhibits any feature of interest. An examination was made of all rabbit-scrapes and other casual patches of erosion and disturbance; no flint, sherd or other object of interest was found.

14. A total of seven trenches were excavated, each trench measuring 5 metres x 1.8 metres; the width was chosen to coincide with the width of the edentulate ditching bucket used. The trenches (Fig. 2) were positioned in order to sample all parts of the proposed development:

Trench 1 to sample the area of cabin units 1-5 and 12-11

Trench 2 to sample the area of cabin units 6, 9 and 10

Trench 3 to sample the area of cabin units 7 and 8

Trench 4 to sample the area of the projected sewage disposal plant

Trenches 5-7 to sample the route of the proposed access track

15. All trenches were surveyed-in by tape using a 1:500 plan supplied by the client. The central point of each trench was then established using a hand-held G.P.S. instrument.

16. Turf and topsoil were stripped from each trench by a back-acting J.C.B fitted with a ditching bucket. Surfaces were then cleaned with hand tool (trowel and shovel) for the identification of any possible archaeological features and for recording.

17. The undisturbed natural subsurface was in each case a distinctly sandy clay, orange-yellow in colour and containing small pockets of sand and gravel and the occasional cobble-sized stone.

18. Results were as follow (Figs 3-9):

Trench 1	NZ 18900 00406	Turf & topsoil 22 cms.	Height of natural
	106.80 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 2	NZ 18924 00400	Turf & topsoil 30 cms.	Height of natural
	105.70 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 3	NZ 18933 00424	Turf & topsoil 30 cms.	Height of natural
	104.47 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 4	NZ 19038 00446	Turf & topsoil 32 cms.	Height of natural
	102.50 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 5	NZ 18886 00370	Turf & topsoil 28 cms.	Height of natural
	106.04 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 6	NZ 18874 00352	Turf & topsoil 35 cms.	Height of natural
	107.34 m.a.O.D.		
Trench 7	NZ18964 00258	Turf & topsoil 35 cms	Height of natural
	106.88 m.a.O.D.		

The topsoil in trench 7 contained a few sherds of late 19th or 20th century pottery, all white and blue-and-white tableware. This appears to have been material casually dumped in this area, the closest part of the site to the public road. Apart from this, no object of archaeological interest was recovered from the entire site, and no archaeological feature or structure was encountered.

CONCLUSIONS

19. The results of this evaluation have been emphatically negative. In terms of the mediaeval landscape (and of the landscape since the Dissolution of the Abbey) this is not difficult to account for; the whole of the proposed development site lies outside the precinct boundary of the Abbey, and is located within the agricultural landscape. It was almost certainly a field or group of fields farmed on behalf of the Abbey community by the lay brothers of the Grange at St Trinian's.

20. There is no evidence of prehistoric or Romano-British activity within or near to the site.

21. It is recommended that no further archaeological intervention is necessary in this case.

NOTE: SCULPTURED STONE

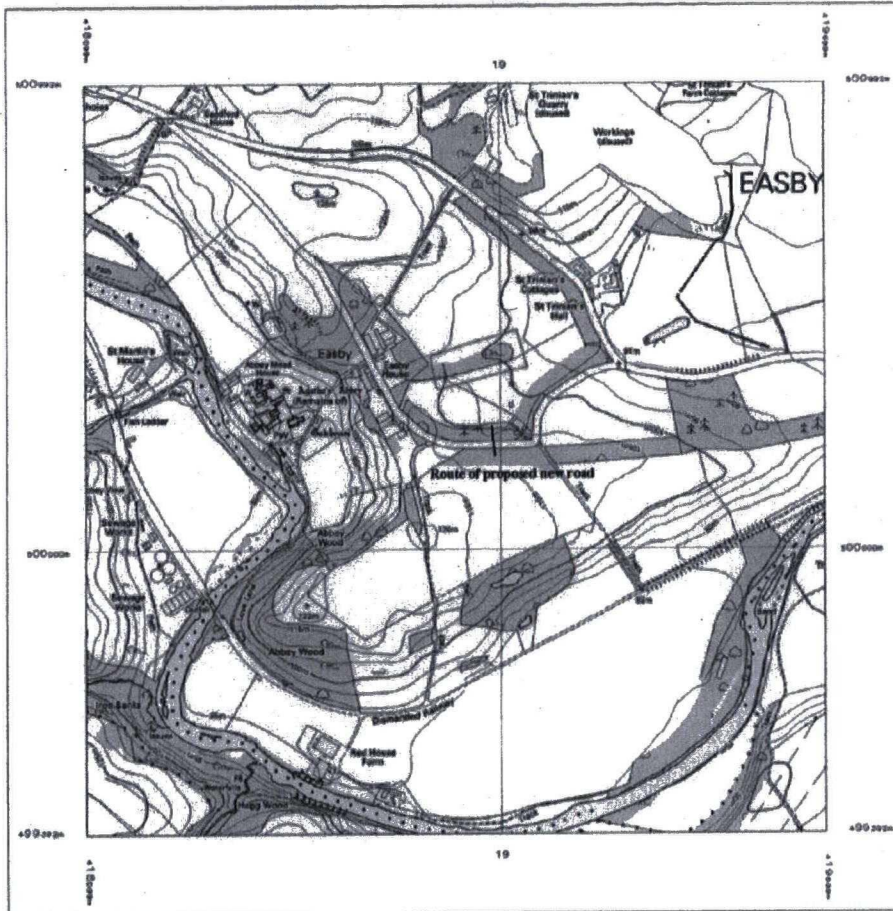
22. During the course of fieldwork, an apparently sculptured stone was found as part of a small number of stones propping up a metal trough near the westernmost end of the wire fence which bisects the site (Fig. 10). It is a piece of sandstone, and is very badly eroded; nonetheless, it seems certainly to have been deliberately worked. It resembles a finial of some sort, but does not appear to be of a Gothic or mediaeval form (and therefore probably not from the Abbey) but rather of a later, perhaps Baroque, type. It has probably come from Easby House or from one of the buildings associated with it.

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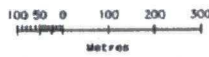
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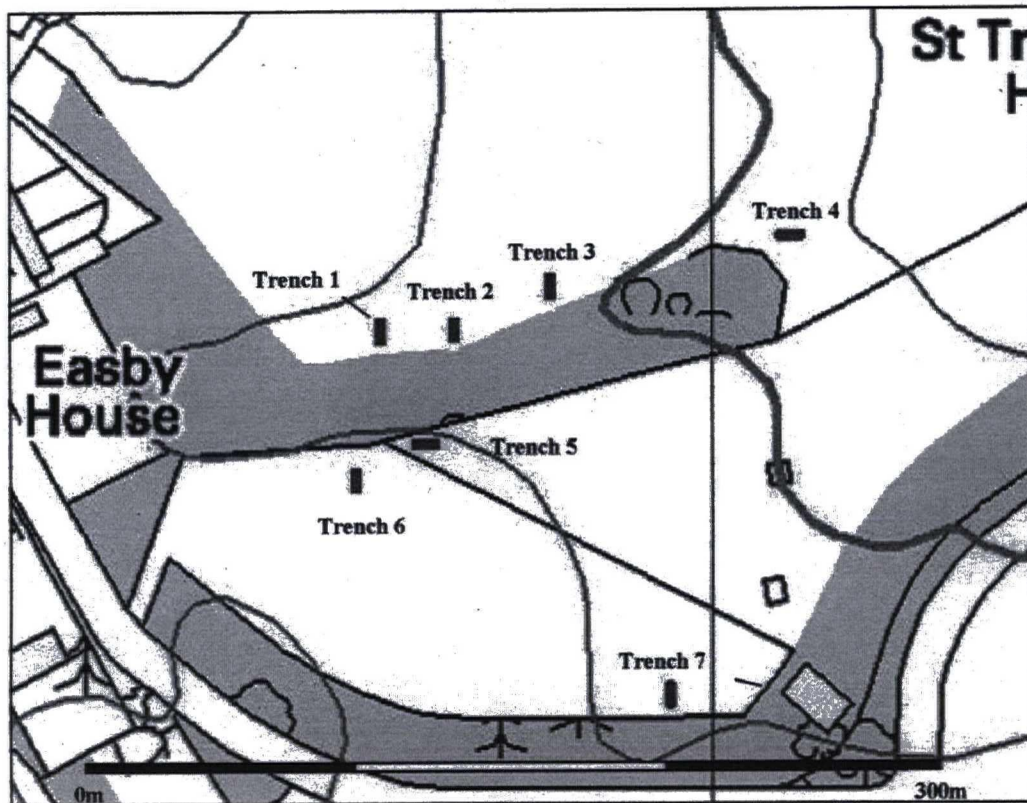
Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 1

Location map.
(Proposed development area outlined in green, core development area outlined in blue)



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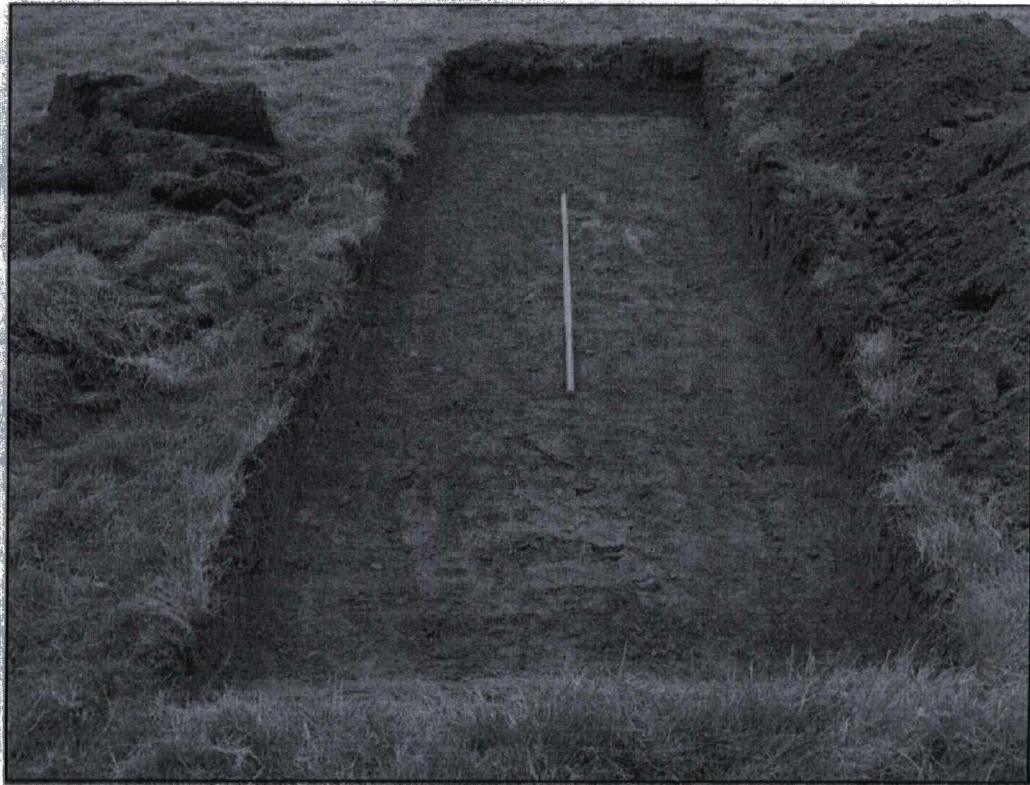
Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 2

Trench location plan



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Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 3

Trench 1



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Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 4

Trench 2



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Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 5

Trench 3



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Easby Park, Richmond

Fig. 6

Trench 4



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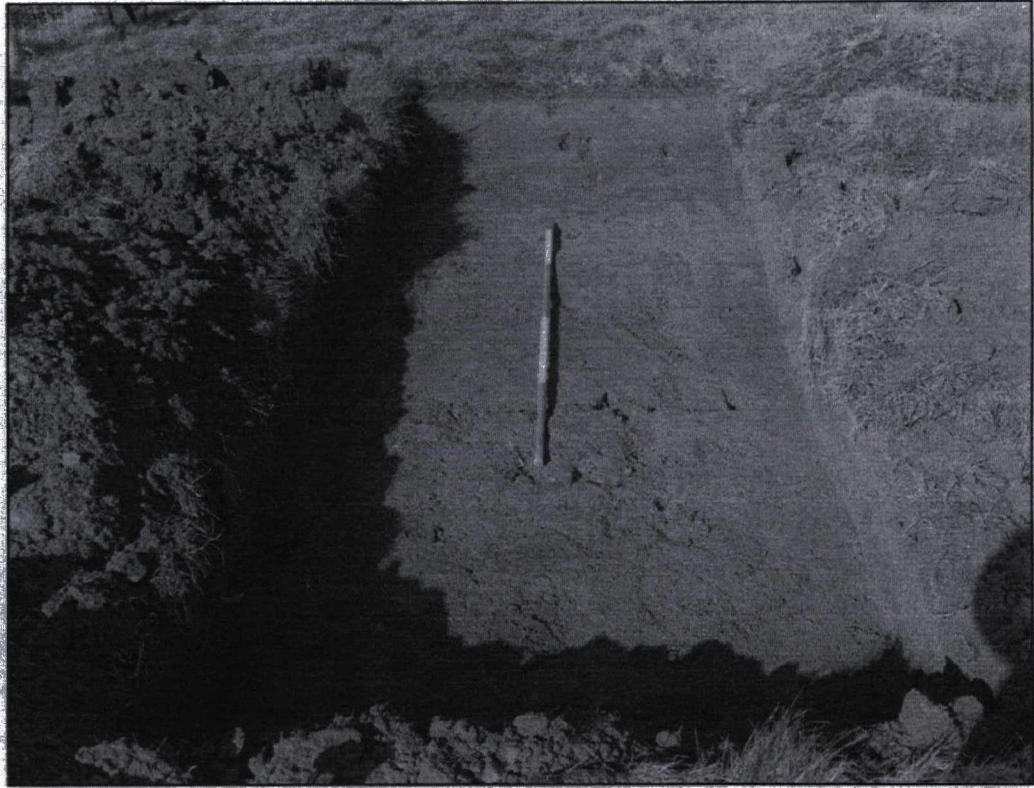
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Fig. 7

Trench 5



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Fig. 8

Trench 6



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Fig. 9

Trench 7



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Fig. 10

Carved stone



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