

English



Heritage

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission For England

EXCAVATIONS AT
EAST GILLING LONG BARROW

BY P R WILSON

 3049

CENTRAL EXCAVATION UNIT

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ENY	6334
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Parish	3049
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East Gilling Long Barrow, North Yorkshire, (SE 60187417) (Fig. 1 a and b) lies 1.5km east of Yearsley village at 169m O.D. on the south-western slope of Black Hill just below its summit. The barrow, which is on an area of Great and Inferior Oolite bedrock (1), is also known as Yearsley (2), or Black Hill Long Barrow (3), and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (4). The mound is orientated south-east to north-west (5) and is \approx 42m long and \approx 26m wide at its south-eastern end. In plan it appears 'pear-shaped' and narrows to \approx 15m at its north-western end. Side ditches are not visible on the surface, nor were they revealed in the contour survey of the site that was undertaken at the same time as the work described below (Fig. 1b). At the south-eastern end the mound survives to a height of \approx 2.50m.

The site 'was examined very thoroughly' by William Greenwell in 1867; disturbances that presumably represent his trenches can still be seen on the surviving monument. Greenwell did not find a primary burial (6) although he did locate a secondary Bronze Age burial in a stone cist close to the southern end of the mound (7).

The creation of a 'schooling ring' cut into the south-western slope of Black Hill, as part of the expansion programme of Dale Plantation Stud, removed large areas as close as 8m to the south-eastern end of the mound. The threat (8) posed by further works in the area between the 'schooling ring' and the eastern edge of

the scheduled area required the prior investigation of two limited areas by the Historic Buildings And Monuments Commission's Central Excavation Unit. These areas lay to the south and south-west of the upstanding monument, site sub-divisions 1 and 2 respectively (Fig. 1b).

Site sub-division 2 was devoid of archaeological features, indicating that if a ditch existed on the south-western side of the mound it must have terminated to the north-east of the threatened area. Site sub-division 1 contained a number of small features, the majority of which were cut directly into the subsoil (Fig. 2). Of the five possible small pits or post-holes in the southern half of the trench, at least two (features 17 and 21) and perhaps a third (feature 15), were of doubtful origin, all contained evidence of root penetration and may represent natural occurrences. At the northern end of the trench, pit 4 may have been cut directly into the subsoil, although it had an uncertain relationship with the filling of a shallow depression that ran across the trench on an approximately north-south line (feature 8). Pit 4 also had an uncertain relationship with a small pit or post-hole (feature 12) which was undoubtedly cut into the fill of feature 8 and consequently it is possible that pit 4 was cut into feature 8 as well. The northern third of the trench was sealed by a layer of dark brown loam which may have been part of a ploughsoil (layer 2). There was some suggestion of an undulation in the surface of the subsoil which might indicate that layer 2 represented part of a system of ridge and furrow. If this were the case it is possible that feature 8 may have

represented the remains of a furrow and therefore feature 12, at least, could not be associated with the mound. Vestiges of a much disturbed system of ridge and furrow appear to survive in the field immediately to the east of site sub-division 1. The northernmost feature recorded in site sub-division 1 (pit 9) appeared to be the remnant of a deeper pit, as stones within its fill protruded above the surface of the surrounding subsoil. A sample of carbon taken from pit 4 was too mixed with modern root material etc. to submit for Carbon 14 dating and neither of the site sub-divisions produced any finds; therefore none of the features recorded can be associated with any of the known phases of activity on the site. (9).

Footnotes

1. North Yorkshire County Sites and Monuments Record number 00346.00000
2. ibid (Yearsley Moor in Manby, T.G., 'Long Barrows of Northern England; Structural and Dating Evidence', Scottish Archaeological Forum 2 (1970), pp. 1-27).
3. Kinnes, I.A., and Longworth, I.H., Catalogue of the excavated Prehistoric and Romano-British material in the Greenwell Collection (1985), no. 233; p. 110.
4. County Scheduled Monument Number 430. Ancient Monuments File Number AA11191/2.

5. Greenwell though the mound to be aligned 'nearly due north and south', Greenwell, W., British Barrows (1877), no. CCXXXIII; p. 551.
6. It should be noted that Ashbee has suggested 'funerary use may not have been a primary function' of all Neolithic long barrows. The Earthen Long Barrow in Britain 2nd edn (1984), pp. xxiii.
7. Greenwell, op. cit. pp. 550-3.
8. Threat identified by the Field Monument Warden responsible for the area, Mr. A.L. Pacitto.
9. The archive from the site will be deposited in the Yorkshire Museum.

Fig. 1

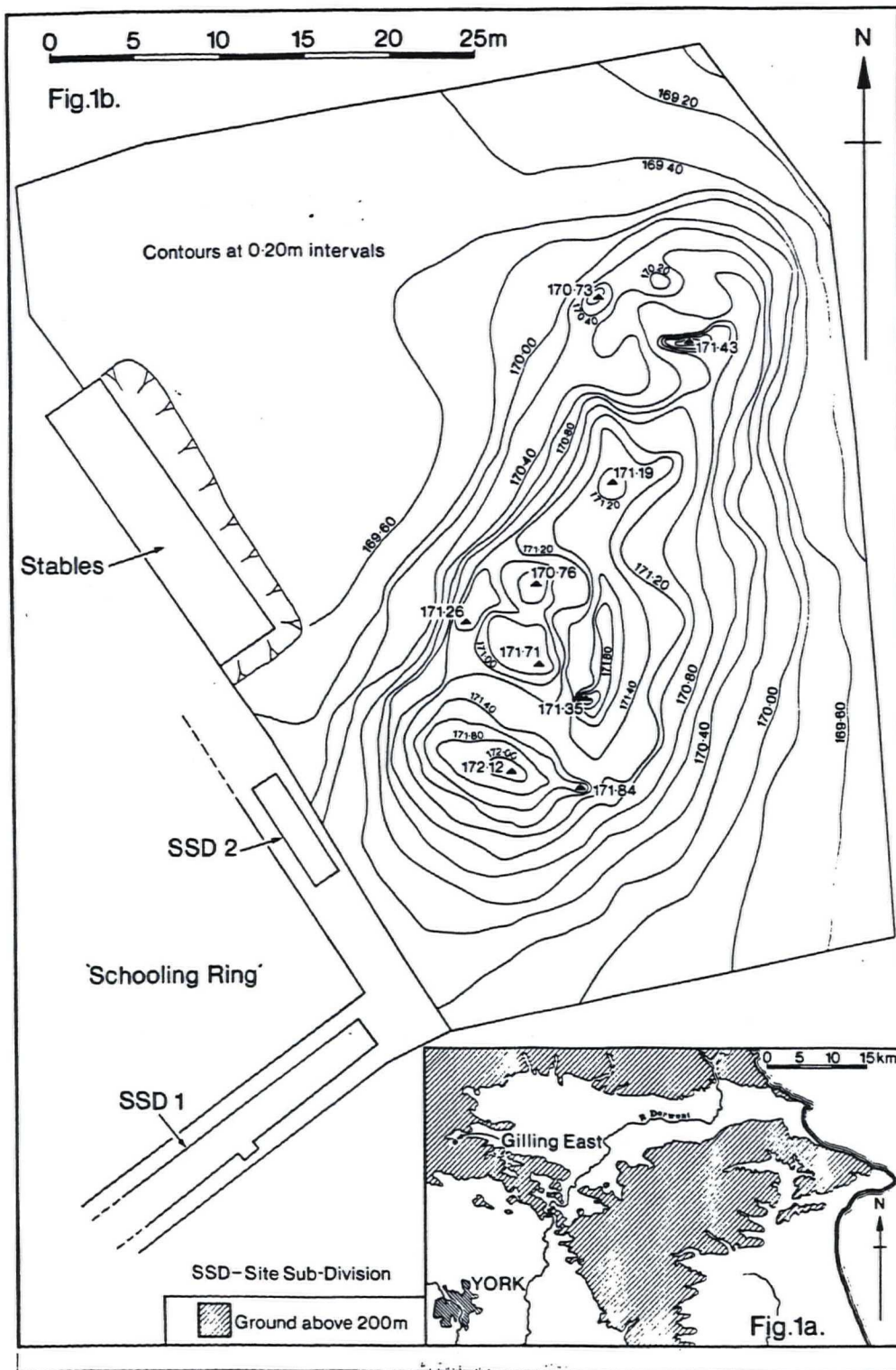
a - Location map.

b - General site plan incorporating the contour survey of the mound.

Fig. 2

Site sub-division 1 excavation plan.

E.G.



E.G.

