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Wath Quarry
Hovingham
North Yorkshire

Archaeological Excavation

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MAP

**Wath Quarry
Hovingham
North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Excavation

Contents	Page
Figure List	2
Plate List	2
Non-technical Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Site Description	4
3. Geology	4
4. Archaeological and Historical Background	5
5. Aims and Objectives	6
6. Methodology	6
6.1 Evaluation	
6.2 On-Site Recording	
6.3 Plans and Sections	
6.4 Photographic Record	
6.5 Finds	
7. Results	7
8. Discussion	10
9. Conclusions	13
10. Bibliography	14
Appendices	
1. Context List	23
2. Finds Catalogue	25
3. Assessment of Biological Remains	28
4. Report on the Human Skeletal Remains	35
5. Flint Artefact Catalogue	44
6. Pottery Catalogue	46
7. Report on Radio-carbon Dating	48

Figure List	Page
1. Site Location.	15
2. Pre-excavation Plan.	16
3. Excavated Features Plan.	17
4. Plan of Grave and Burial.	17
5. Sections.	18
6. Sections.	19

Plate List

1. Ring Ditch before excavation. Facing east.	20
2. Ring Ditch partly excavated. Facing south-west.	20
3. Ditch Segment 1004. Facing south-west.	21
4. Ditch Segment 1011. Facing south.	21
5. Human Skeleton 1034. Facing west.	22
6. Pit 1084. Facing north.	22

**Wath Quarry,
Hovingham
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Archaeological Excavation

Non-technical Summary

An Archaeological Watching Brief on an extension to a limestone quarry at Wath, near Hovingham, North Yorkshire revealed a circular ditched feature, the obvious importance of which led to a full excavation. This was carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd in September and October 2000, with the full co-operation of the quarry operators, Lafarge Redland, and the farmer, Bruce Harrison.

The feature was not a conventional 'ring ditch' or round barrow because it was composed of six discontinuous ditch segments, rather than an uninterrupted ditch. The ditch segments varied greatly in length, depth and width, being more substantial on the south-west side. Excavation of the ditch recovered pottery and flint tools and flakes, mainly from the upper fills, the finds assemblage dating mainly to the late 4th to the late 3rd millennia BC.

A central grave contained the skeleton of an adult male, who had been buried in a crouched position on his right side. There were no grave-goods or other dating material within the grave.

Three shallow pits were located outside the western circuit of the ring-ditch. These contained quantities of pottery, worked flints and animal bone, and were 'domestic' in character.

The form of the site, with its interrupted rather than continuous ditches, suggested that it was a hengiform monument of Neolithic date, and this appeared to have been modified in the early Bronze Age when the central grave was dug.

**Wath Quarry,
Hovingham, North Yorkshire**

Archaeological Excavation

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an Archaeological Excavation carried out by MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. on a southward extension to Wath Quarry, Wath parish, North Yorkshire (Fig. 1 - SE 6785 7447), over six weeks in September-October 2000.
- 1.2 The excavation was carried out on behalf of, and funded by, Lafarge Redland Ltd to satisfy an archaeological condition attached to a planning consent for limestone extraction at Wath Quarry.
- 1.3 An initial Watching Brief at the site revealed the northern part of a circular ditched feature, representing the remains of a suspected round barrow with a diameter of c. 21m, which extended southwards into an arable field forming the future extraction area. With the co-operation of the farmer, Bruce Harrison, the excavation area was extended so that the site could be excavated as a whole.
- 1.4 The work was funded by Lafarge Redland Ltd.
- 1.5 All maps within this report have been produced from the Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 50453A.

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The area of the present Watching Brief comprised c. 1 hectare, forming an arable field directly to the south of the present quarry workings, bounded by fencing on the south side, and soil bunds to the west and east. This location forms a relatively level area at the crest of a north-facing escarpment, the westernmost part reaching an elevation of c. 80m AOD.
- 2.2 The quarry itself lies immediately south the B1257 Helmsley to Malton road, on the southern side of western part of the Vale of Pickering.

3. Geology

- 3.1 The solid geology at the site consists of Jurassic, Corallian limestone, with overlying soils of the Elnton 2 Association (Mackney *et al.* 1983).

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The site lies within an area whose soils are conducive to the formation of cropmarks, and much of the information on the background to prehistoric sites in the vicinity derives from this source.
- 4.2 A number of presumed prehistoric cropmark sites exist both adjacent to and within the quarry extension. Within the extension area a series of north-west to south-east aligned linear features apparently represent the ditches of a field system. There is also a reference to a ring ditch within the extension area (SMR ref: 2.147.483.647 - SE 678745), presumably the excavated feature. To the east of the quarry, over the parish boundary into Fryton, the cropmarks of a triple system of ditches probably representing a major boundary, merge with a multiple ditch system just south of, and parallel to, the Malton-Hovingham road. Ring ditches are recorded north-east of the point where these boundary ditches merge, and also in the field immediately east of the quarry.
- 4.3 The cropmark ring ditches are the remains of ploughed-out round barrows, Canon Greenwell excavating a number of such sites in Slingsby parish (Kinnes and Longworth 1985, nos. 138-50). The closest of these to the site, c. 3 km distant in the south-west part of Slingsby parish, yielded Collared Urns and Food Vessels of the Middle Bronze Age.
- 4.4 A possible Roman Marching Camp has been identified at Diana Hill c. 400m west of the site (Welfare and Swan 1995, 145). Cropmarks show a rectangular system of ditches, with slightly rounded corners, enclosing an area of 4.9 ha.
- 4.5 The parish and settlement name 'Wath' is derived from the Old Scandinavian word for 'ford', presumably referring to the point where the supposed Roman road running from Malton to Hovingham crosses Wath Beck.
- 4.6 At the time of the Domesday Survey Wath was a berewick (manorial subdivision) of Hovingham, in the possession of Hugh, son of Baldric. The Stapleton family later became the owners, Roger de Stapleton holding Wath in the reign of Henry III, and Nicholas de Stapleton obtaining rights of free warren in 1272. Wath later joined the Mowbray fee, the manor passing to Sir Charles Cavendish in 1629, and eventually to the Earl of Carlisle.
- 4.7 The medieval settlement at Wath was abandoned, the only surviving habitation being Wath Farm. Substantial earthworks exist in the field to the west of the quarry, representing traces of the deserted village and manor house. Indeed, the site of Wath Hall is marked on the First Edition County Series map, and human burials found in this area suggest that a chapel also existed there.

5. Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The basic objective of the excavation was to fully excavate the site (given that the entirety would be destroyed by the quarry extension), but within that broad framework there was the opportunity to address specific questions:
- 5.2 To establish the presence or absence of burials either within the area enclosed by the ditch segments or existing as 'satellites' outside their perimeter.
- 5.3 To establish the presence or absence of secondary burials within the ditch segments.
- 5.4 To seek to establish a date for the foundation of the monument by the excavation of primary ditch fills.
- 5.5 To provide an 'environmental sequence' through the ditch by the collection of bulk samples from the fills.
- 5.6 To examine the features present to the west of the ring ditch and seek to understand how they related to it.
- 5.7 To establish the status of the site in relation to similar sites in the region.

6. Methodology

6.1 *Excavation*

- 6.1.1 The area where features were revealed by the Watching Brief was hand-cleaned to clarify the position and extent of the features. This involved the trowelling of approximately 900 square metres.
- 6.1.2 Sections were placed through the ditch segments to provide representative profiles of the deposits within them.
- 6.1.4 Pits: these were half-sectioned to determine function and record their form, and then fully excavated to recover the maximum number of artefacts and environmental information.
- 6.1.5 All work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct (IFA 1999).
- 6.1.6 All artefacts were retained for specialist analysis.
- 6.1.7 Bulk samples were recovered from representative contexts to ensure the recovery of environmental information.

6.2 *On-site Recording*

- 6.2.1 All archaeological deposits were recorded according to correct principles of stratigraphic excavation on MAP's *pro forma* context sheets which are compatible with the MoLAS recording system.

6.3 *Plans and Sections*

- 6.3.1 The full extent of archaeological deposits were recorded in plan at a scale of 1:20 on drawing film. Sections of features and individual layers were drawn at 1:10, also on drawing film, and included an OD height.

- 6.3.2 A Total Station was used to precisely locate the position of the planned features to adjacent permanent boundaries.

6.4 *Photographic Record*

- 6.4.1 The photographic record comprised monochrome and colour prints, and colour transparencies, to record all archaeological features encountered.

- 6.4.2 A mechanical hoist was used to obtain overhead photographs at crucial stages of the excavation.

6.5 *Finds*

- 6.5.1 The finds were processed in accordance with English Heritage Guidelines (EH 1995). All finds were cleaned, identified, assessed, dated (where possible), marked (where appropriate), and properly packed and stored according to national guidelines.

7. **Results**

7.1 *Ring Ditch* (Figs. 3, 5 & 6 : Pis. 1, 2, 3 & 4)

- 7.1.1 The ring ditch was not represented by a continuous trench, but formed a series of six discrete segments (1004, 1005, 1007, 1011, 1013 and 1015) separated from each other by causeways of varying breadths. The segments themselves were of varying widths, depths and lengths. In addition, segment 1015 was divided into three parts based on separate 'pits' along its length. No inter-cutting was present among any of the ditch segments, which are described immediately below.

- 7.1.2 *Ditch 1004* (Pl. 3) ran for a distance of c. 17.5 m, forming the south-western part of the ring-ditch. From the appearance of the upper fill (1003) it was clear that this was the most substantial of the elements comprising the ring, reaching its greatest extent in the centre. Here the width was around 4m, and the depth 1.55m; elsewhere the base of the ditch rose up in a series of rock-cut steps to give a depth of 0.8m at the rounded terminals. The profile varied from U-shaped at the terminals to a flat-based V in the central part of the ditch. For the purposes of excavation Ditch 1004 was divided into five separate segments, the fills of which were generally consistent. The primary fills were silty sand deposits (1028, 1033, 1036, 1046, 1058, 1061 and 1062). Possible recuts were represented by layers of packed limestone (1027, 1032, 1035, 1042 and 1060). Lying above the possible recuts, occupying the central parts of the

excavated segments were layers of more gravelly material (1024, 1026, 1031, 1038, 1041, 1057 and 1058). The uppermost layers were generally brown silty loams (1003, 1023, 1025, 1030 and 1037). A deposit of charcoal-rich silty clay (1062) was located near the base of the inner side of the central part of the ditch. A number of Peterborough Ware sherds were found in contexts 1024 and 1025 (Appendix 6).

- 7.1.3 *Ditch 1005* was separated from the eastern terminal of Ditch 1004 by a 2m wide causeway. Aligned roughly east-west, Ditch 1005 formed a U-profiled oval cut 3.7m in length, 1.60m in width and with a maximum depth, in the centre, of 0.82m. The base of the ditch was filled by a pale silty material with large limestone blocks (1020). The subsequent layer was a distinct limestone gravel (1019) which had entered the ditch from the southern side (i.e. from the outside of the ring), overlain by a less gravelly fill (1018) that had come into the ditch from the opposite side. In the eastern part of the ditch, a largely stone-free brown clay silt (1017) formed the next layer, the whole of the upper part of the ditch being filled by a gravelly brown clay silt (1006).
- 7.1.4 *Ditch 1007* lay 6m to the north-west of Ditch 1005, this distance forming the largest gap between any of the individual ditches. Aligned south-west to north-east, Ditch 1007 was 2.90m long and 1.40m wide; the U-shaped profile was 0.55m deep. Excavated in two separate segments, the fills were consistent throughout. A pale silty sandy material formed the basal layer (1045/1056), followed by a deposit of tightly-packed angular limestones (1044/1055). The upper parts of the ditch were filled with less gravelly brown soils (1054/1043 overlain by 1008/1053). Context 1008 contained flint flakes of Peterborough type (Appendix 5).
- 7.1.5 *Ditch 1011/1093* (Pl. 4) was a north to south-aligned feature separated from Ditch 1007 to the south by a 1.4m wide causeway. The length was 8.80m, and the width 1.60m; the profile was a variable U-shape, at 0.65m deepest towards the centre. The basal fill was a pale silty clay with limestone fragments (1063), present only in the central part of the ditch; the subsequent fill consisted of tightly-packed limestone fragments (1048/1050/1093), the uppermost fill being a brown clay silt (1047/1049/1092). Context 1048 contained two Food Vessel sherds, and sherds of Peterborough/Fengate Ware were found in context 1049. Context 1047 contained a flint blade of Grooved Ware type (Appendices 5 and 6).
- 7.1.6 *Ditch 1013* lay to the north-west of Ditch 1011/1091, separated from it by a 4m wide causeway. This ditch was 3m long and 1.6m wide, the trough-shaped profile reaching a depth of 0.4m. The basal fill was the familiar pale silty material (1040), the remainder of the ditch being filled by a stony brown clay silt (1014).
- 7.1.7 The final element of the ring-ditch, forming the north-west part of the circuit, appeared to form a continuous feature at the surface. However, during the removal of the upper fill (1016, subsequently divided into 1051, 1064 and

1066) it became clear that the ditch was formed by three separate adjoining features (1015, 1073 and 1079), described individually below.

7.1.8 *Ditch 1079* included the eastern terminal of this segment of the ring-ditch, extending westwards for a length of 8m, with a sharp change of alignment from east-west to north-east - south-east half-way along its length; it had a maximum width of 1.30m. The vertically-sided, flat-based profile gave a depth of 0.35m. The basal fill ran along the whole length of the ditch, and was a pale, stony, silty material (1065). The upper part of the ditch was filled by a gravelly brown clay silt (1064), which contained a Peterborough Ware sherd (Appendix 6).

7.1.9 *Ditch 1073* formed a discrete oval cut 2.1m long and 1.4m wide, separated from Ditch 1079 to the north-east and Ditch 1015 to the south-west by shoulders of bedrock. The U-shaped profile was 0.65m deep. A silty basal fill (1074) was overlain by a layer of tightly-packed limestone (1067), with a brown gravelly soil (1066) at the top of the ditch. Context 1067 contained a Peterborough Ware sherd, and context 1066 a Beaker sherd (Appendix 6).

7.1.10 *Ditch 1015* ran for a distance of 4m south-westwards from Ditch 1073 before ending in a wider, rounded terminal at its southern end, where the U-shaped profile had a width of 1.9m and a depth of 0.55m. The now familiar pale brown silty material (1080) filled the ditch's base, followed by tightly-packed limestones (1052). In the central area of the ditch, a lens of dark brown silty clay (1039 to the south of the section line, 1051 to the north) contained a concentration of Peterborough sherds (Appendix 6), worked flints of the same date (Appendix 5) and cattle and pig bone fragments (Appendix 3). The top of the ditch was filled by a deposit of brown clay silt (1016).

7.2. **Grave** (Fig. 4)

7.2.1 Roughly central to the ring-ditch, *Grave 1021* was excavated as an east to west aligned oval cut, 2.30m long, 1.6m wide and 0.50m deep.

7.2.2 The grave contained the 'crouched' skeleton of an adult male (1034 : Pl. 5), lying on his right side and facing south (Appendix 4). The hands were close together under the chin, with the legs folded and knees drawn up to the waist. There were no associated grave-goods.

7.2.3 The stony grave fill (1022) contained an unused flint piercer of Beaker date and a simple flint flake, along with bovine bone fragments (Appendices 5 and 6). Also present were bone fragments from at least one other individual (Appendix 4).

7.3 **Other Internal Features** (Fig. 3)

7.3.1 *Pit 1009* was an oval feature aligned east to west adjacent to the south-west edge of Ditch 1011. The length was 2.00m, the width 1.30m and the depth 0.17m. The nature of the brown, moderately stony fill (1010) suggests that it was the result of human activity, but there were no finds.

7.3.2 *Pit 1085* was an irregularly-shaped feature situated c. 4m west of the grave. The fills (1086, 1087, 1088 and 1089) were generally reddish brown clays with varying concentrations of angular limestones. The character of the fills, along with the irregular form of the pit point to a natural origin for this feature, which probably originated as a solution hollow.

7.3.3 *Pit 1075* was a rectangular feature on a north-west to south-east alignment, located c. 2m north-west of Grave 1021. The length was 3m, the width 1.2m and the depth 0.3m. The three fills (contexts 1076, 1077 and 1078) were silty in consistency with variable clay and limestone rubble components; there were no finds. The character of the fills and the absence of any finds suggest that this pit was of natural origin, perhaps the result of a 'tree-blow'.

7.4 *External Features* (Figs. 3 & 6 : Pl. 6)

7.4.1 A group of three features (*Pit 1069*, and *Postholes 1071* and *1084*) were identified 9m to the west of *Ditch 1015*.

7.4.2 *Pit 1069* was oval in shape and aligned south-west to north-east. The length was 1.70m, the width 1.00m and the depth 0.25m. The single brown stony clay silt fill (1068) contained animal bone fragments, including pig, pottery sherds of Peterborough/Fengate style and worked flint flakes (Appendices 3, 5 and 6).

7.4.3 *Posthole 1071* lay within 0.5m of *Pit 1069*'s south-west edge. It was roughly circular, with a diameter of 0.75m and a depth of 0.20m. The sole brown clay silt fill (1070) contained quantities of bone fragments from cattle, deer and pig, sherds of Peterborough/Fengate style and worked flint flakes (Appendices 3, 5 and 6).

7.4.4 *Posthole 1084* was located 3m north of the other two external features. Another roughly circular feature, it had a diameter of 0.85m and a depth of 0.25m. The single fill (1083) was also a brown clay silt, and once again this contained animal bone, Peterborough type sherds and worked flints, albeit in greater amounts than the other two external features (Appendices 5 and 6). The animal bone assemblage comprised over half the total number from the entire site, with pig comprising the majority of the identified fragments. Caprovids, cattle, roe deer, red deer and vole were also represented, as were rarities in the form of beaver and bear (Appendix 3). The majority of the worked flints were flakes representing primary knapping debitage, and included a flake from arrowhead manufacture.

8. Discussion

8.1 There are three main elements to be discussed: the form of the ring-ditch, with its discontinuous ditches, and the implications this has for the dating and function of the site; the central burial; and the activity outside the ring-ditch represented by the pit and two postholes.

- 8.2 Before addressing these questions it will be of benefit to review the dating evidence provided by the site's finds assemblage.
- 8.3 The pottery recovered from the site ranges in date from Middle Neolithic (Peterborough Ware - late 4th to early third millennium BC), through the Late Neolithic (Beaker - late third to early 2nd millennium BC) to Bronze Age (Food Vessel - middle 2nd millennium BC). As far as dating the ditch is concerned, the greater part of the assemblage is of little more than general use as it came from the uppermost fills. The only pottery in a primary position was from Ditch 1011, where both Beaker and Food Vessel sherds were recovered from one of the lowest fills (1048). Peterborough Ware was found in the secondary fill of Ditch 1073, this being the lowest ditch fill to contain Neolithic material. There are therefore contradictory messages from the ceramic evidence, with Bronze Age pottery deeper within the ditch than Neolithic material. The implications of the positions where the assemblage was found are discussed below (8.19).
- 8.4 The flint assemblage comprises material of Grooved, Peterborough and Beaker Wares, i.e. dating from the early Neolithic through to a date no later than Early Bronze Age. There are pieces of very high quality including a superb flint saw and a polished axe flake. The presence of large quantities of primary knapping waste from the external pits, and the fact that much of the flint is burnt, suggest that this is an assemblage derived from occupation activity. The unrolled nature of the flint also suggests that it represents primary deposition, having moved only a short distance from where it was used or manufactured.
- 8.5 To return to the first question posed above: does the Wath Quarry monument represent a henge, as suggested by its discontinuous ditches, or a round barrow as implied by the central burial?
- 8.6 Henges have been defined as circular areas enclosed by a bank or ditch, the bank usually being external to the ditch, and broken by one or more entrances. Two classes of henge have also been defined: Class I with a single entrance, and Class II with two or more. Class I henges tend to be smaller, with an average diameter of c. 75m; the average diameter of a Class II henge exceeds 300m. Both classes are usually situated in low-lying locations close to water.
- 8.7 On size grounds the Wath Quarry ring-ditch would therefore not appear to be a henge as its diameter of only 20m makes it too small for this type of monument, particularly when one bears in mind that Class II henges with similar multiple entranced form to Wath are on average over fifteen times its size. Also, unlike most other Yorkshire henges, such as the examples at Thomborough and Maiden's Grave (Burton Fleming), the Wath site is in an elevated position away from either springs or running water (although this is a location shared with the Paddock Hill henge). It is difficult to judge whether the Wath Quarry ring-ditch had an external bank as the entire site has been flattened by ploughing, as the ditch sections give no clues to the position of a

bank, with the exception of Ditch 1005 which apparently filled up from the outside.

- 8.8 Clearly then, in terms of its topography and size, the Wath Quarry ring-ditch should not be classified as a henge. The presence of the burial establishes at least one phase of the site as a barrow, albeit with the unusual characteristic of having a discontinuous ditch, in places of massive construction, crossed by bedrock causeways.
- 8.9 A review of Neolithic barrows (Manby 1970) listed nine Neolithic round barrows in Yorkshire, six in the East Riding and three in the North Riding. The closest of these to Wath are at Whitegrounds, Burythorpe (Brewster 1984), and a less scientifically examined example north of Pickering, which was 12m in diameter and associated with a beaker burial (Smith 1994, NYM 102). Manby pointed out the difficulties in dating, with some sites being of an early Neolithic date, and others dating to the Beaker period.
- 8.10 A recent review of round barrows on the nearby Yorkshire Wolds (Stoertz 1997) recorded clusters of barrows over the entirety of the area, in all topographic locations from the Wold tops to the valley floors. A great many of the Wold barrows have been reduced to cropmark ring-ditches by ploughing. The mounds appear to have been generally of turf, which accounts for the usual narrowness of the ditches, which were concerned more with delineation rather than acting as quarnes. Often there are two stages to the barrow construction, shown by concentric ditches. The average diameter for Wolds barrows is in the region of 30m.
- 8.11 A study of the two hundred and ten excavated round barrows in North-east Yorkshire (Cleveland and the North York Moors : Spratt 1982), showed that one hundred and seventy-five (c. 65%) produced evidence of Bronze Age origin. The barrows varied in size from 5.5m to 30.0m in diameter. Of the Bronze Age barrows, thirty-one had inhumations, and ten suspected inhumations; most of the others were associated with cremations. It follows that around a third of those studied were Neolithic/Early Bronze Age or Iron Age rather than Middle/Late Bronze Age in date.
- 8.12 As stated above, Greenwell partly excavated thirteen round barrows in Slingsby parish, plus other examples in the Howardian Hills at Kilburn (Kinnes and Longworth 1985, Nos. 129-131) and Gilling (*ibid.*, Nos. 132-138). There are other local examples in Hildenley and Hovingham parishes, and near Terrington, showing round barrows to be widely distributed in the area.
- 8.13 However, the Wath Quarry ring-ditch remains anomalous from the general run of round barrows because of its discontinuous ditch, and because the massiveness of Ditch 1004 suggests that it was a quarry. The dating evidence also suggests that activity at the site had its origins in the Neolithic period rather than the Bronze Age. The Wath site can therefore be seen to share some of the characteristics of both henges and round barrows, without comfortably

fitting into either category. Sites of this form can be termed 'hengiform barrows'.

- 8.14 A similar site, Grindale Barrow I, was excavated in 1972 in Grindale parish, on the Yorkshire Wolds (Manby 1980). Grindale Barrow I was a two-stage feature, the second stage ditch being crossed by two causeways, and enclosing an oval area 26m x 24m. There were striking variations in the dimensions of the ditch along its course, which varied from 5m wide and 1.5m deep in the east, to c. 1m wide and under 1m deep in the west. A central pit of irregular outline was present, but it lacked any indications of having been a grave.
- 8.15 Another example of a round barrow, NYM 32 on the North York Moors (Smith 1994, 9), may also have early origins, Hayes considering that this site began as a circular banked enclosure similar to a nearby 'henge type circle' at Robin Hood's Butts.
- 8.16 Smith (*ibid.*) in a short review of barrows with 'causewayed ditches' considered that spaces delineated by ditches could "have remained as open space for some considerable time", the causeways allowing access to the interior, much in the same way that similar features acted for henges.
- 8.17 The Wath Quarry site had a central inhumation, for which a Radiocarbon date has been obtained that gives with 68% probability a date between 1880 and 1780 BC, and with 95% probability a date between 1920 and 1610 BC. Additionally, an unused flint piercer of Beaker date was found in the grave fill. Radiocarbon dating therefore strongly suggests that burial dates to the Late Beaker period or the overlapping Food Vessel period.
- 8.18 Unfortunately, the absence of a mound makes it impossible to establish a stratigraphic connection between the burial and the construction of the hengiform ditch; in stratigraphic terms it could have been earlier, contemporary or later.
- 8.19 Judging from the ditch profiles, which show a possible recut, the monument had two stages, with the ditch being partly cleaned out after it had silted up to around half its depth. It is tempting to say that the monument was originally created in the Peterborough period of the Neolithic, and link the recut with a remodelling in the Beaker/Food Vessel overlap associated with the burial, but this cannot be categorically stated. Indeed, as Beaker and Food Vessel sherds were found in a primary position in one of the ditch fills, the strong possibility is that the entire monument was Bronze Age in date.
- 8.20 Interestingly, the fragmentary remains of at least one more individual were found with central inhumation. It is tempting to interpret these as the disturbed remains of an earlier burial, perhaps even one relating to the primary phase of the monument, but this must remain unproven.
- 8.21 The external features on the ring-ditch's west side were confidently dated to the Neolithic because of the Peterborough Ware that they contained. As has

been stated previously the large animal bone, pottery and flint assemblage from the pits and postholes would appear to be the result of 'occupation' activity, and although other origins cannot be ruled out, including 'ritual feasting', there seems no need to introduce such speculation. It is likely that the relatively finds-rich upper fills of the ditch, such as context 1051 (one of the upper fills of Ditch 1015), represent silting created by the truncation of deposits related to the external pits and features.

8.22 Information from the assessment of biological remains, particularly the land snails, suggests that the monument existed in a dry calcareous grassland, with some woodland/scrub habitat.

8.22 Therefore, the possibility remains that the ring-ditch was of Neolithic origin, and its hengiform structure also supports a date early in the sequence of round barrow construction. Neolithic 'occupation' activity is illustrated by the external features. However, Bronze Age sherds were found in a primary context of the ditch, making it perhaps more likely that the monument's origins lay in that period. If that was the case, then the presence of Neolithic sherds and worked flints within the ditch could be explained by the truncation of Neolithic deposits, and the subsequent silting of finds into the ditch. The recutting of the ditch implies that the monument was perhaps remodelled to accompany a burial of Late Beaker/Food Vessel date, for which radiocarbon dating has provided secure dating evidence.

9. Conclusions

9.1 As a 'hengiform barrow' the Wath Quarry site is one of a relatively small number of such sites in the region. The site is closely paralleled with another excavated example at Grindale in the East Riding.

9.2 The importance of the site is increased due to the presence of associated Neolithic pits on the western side of the ring-ditch. These features represent essentially domestic activity rather than funerary or 'ritual' concerns.

9.3 The central inhumation, although buried without grave goods, was clearly of a significant individual, the sky-line location of whose grave emphasised the importance of his position. No secondary burials were located in the ditch, and if any had been present within the mound, these were presumably obliterated by ploughing long ago.

9.4 As yet unique in the Howardian Hills, the Wath Quarry site is a significant addition to the corpus of hengiform barrows in Yorkshire and the north of England.

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