

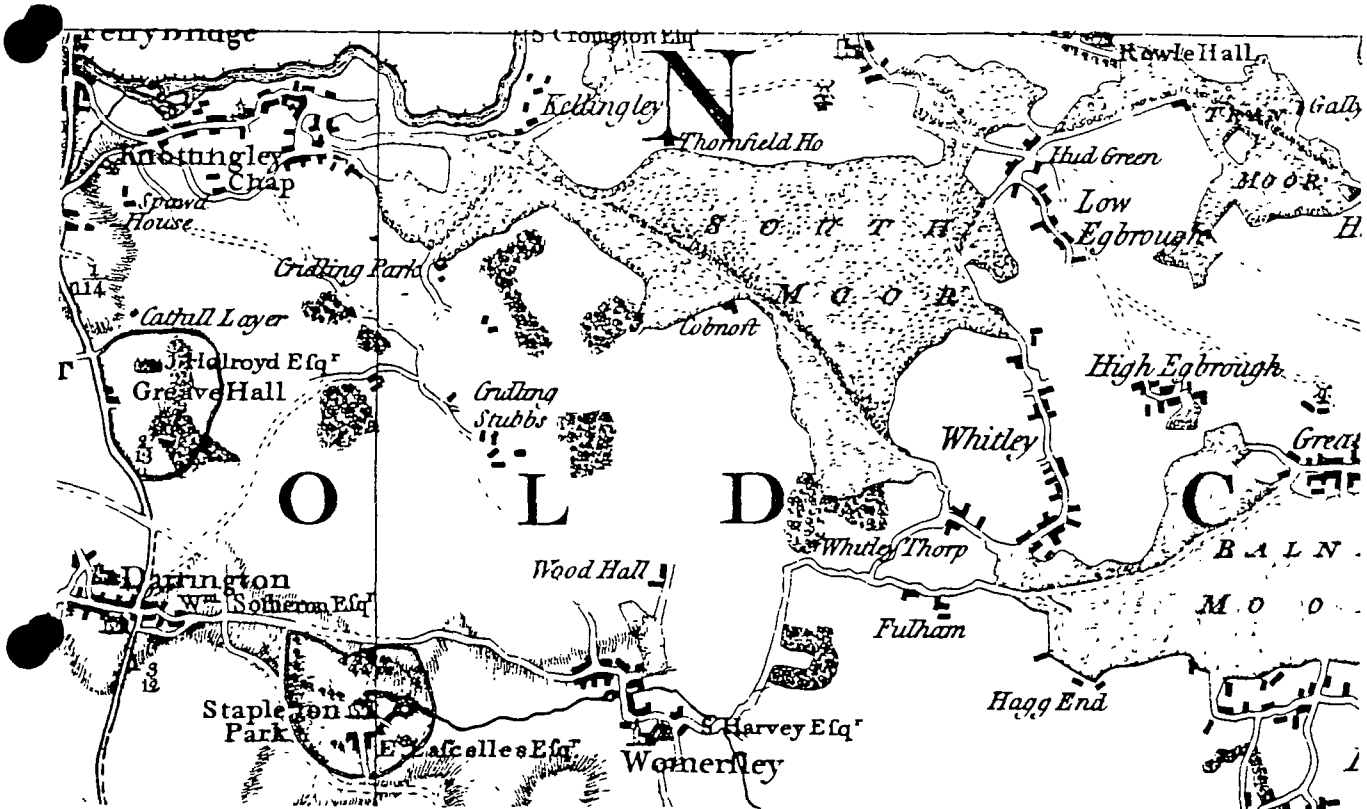
NYCC HER	
SNY	9395
ENY	492
CNY	1903
Parish	8041
Rec'd	?1992

Wood Hall Moated Manor Project

I Excavations 1989-92

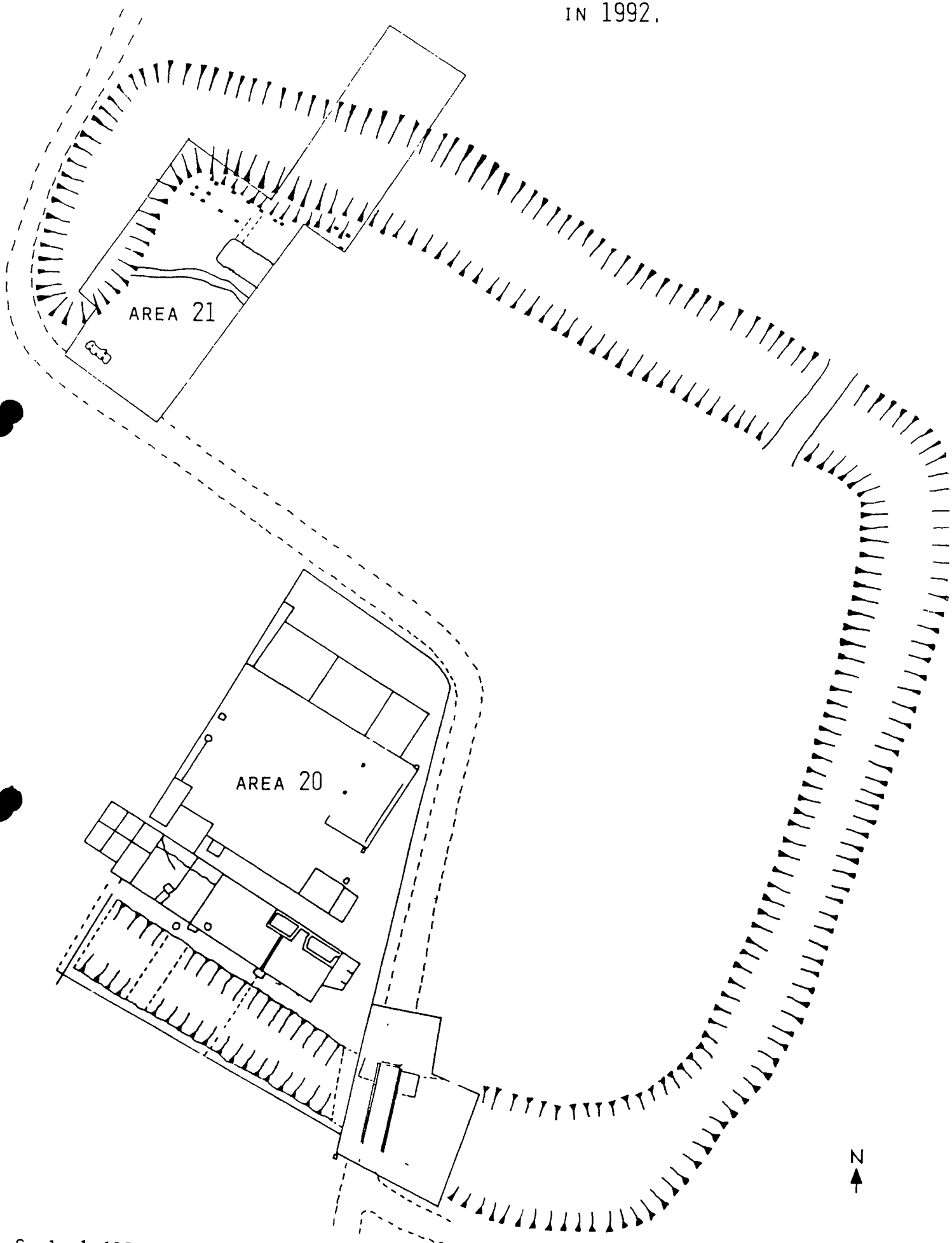
Vivienne M. Metcalf

The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project, reported on in *Sciart Presentes* no.17 for 1988 as the Wood Hall Moated Farm Project, completed its fifth season of excavations in 1992. The results of the preliminary two years assessment work, undertaken by David Heslop, were of such significance that the project was expanded. The landowners and developers, National Power, initially agreed to sponsor the project for a further three year period, extended recently (November 1992) by four years to March 1997. The project is run by North Yorkshire County Council.



Wood Hall is north of Womersley (from Jefferys, *Survey of the County of York* 1775)

Excavation work in 1989 and 1990 continued on a fairly small scale, concentrating on an area associated with the most recent farm buildings, close to the entrance to the site, and on an area at the north-west corner of the moated platform. In 1991 and 1992 these areas were expanded and re-numbered 20 and 21 respectively. The results of these four seasons of excavation are summarised below.



1) Area 20

Excavation on the southern area (20) has concentrated on the investigation, recording and removal of the Georgian farm complex, together with the excavation and recording of a 30m length of the moat, and the investigation of the entrance to the site.

The Georgian Farm Complex

It now appears that the core of the final farm at Wood Hall, the stone-built house and barns that were demolished in 1982, was typical of a 'model farm' design that was repeated at several farms within the parish, possibly all belonging to the Womersley estate, in the last years of the eighteenth century. The buildings are grouped around a central square farmyard, with the house facing away from the working buildings at the rear.

Whether the farmhouse was a remodelling of an existing building or a new construct may never be known, since the final demolition removed most of the walls and foundations, which were in any case very shallow. Only at the extreme western end of the building did any walls survive above three courses, and these belonged to a later extension. At the eastern end of the building three sunken-floored rooms, probably dairies, also had walls preserved. The dairies had functioned consecutively, each being filled in as its successor came into use. The final, twentieth century dairy was within an eastern extension to the main house.

The foundations for the barns were cut into a brown soil that appears to have been part of formal gardens during the late medieval/Tudor period. These soils had actually been removed for the insertion of the farmyard, so the true extent southwards of the gardens may never be known. They do not appear to have extended as far south as the later farmhouse.

Several fragments of stonework from earlier building(s) were recovered from the walls of the farmhouse and barns. Among these were two joining halves of a medieval fireplace architrave. All these fragments, together with the broken mid-fifteenth century chimney-cap recovered from the 1991 excavations, indicate the presence of an important medieval building or buildings at Wood Hall.

Finds from the rubble, following the removal of the concrete foldyard, included a World War II German Army belt, which had presumably belonged to a P.O.W. from a camp near Selby assigned to a local farm.

The Moat

At the south of the site, excavation of the moat concentrated on the 30m length opened in 1991. As expected, a large quantity of high-quality finds was once again recovered, dating from two main periods of deposition - early seventeenth century and late eighteenth century. In contrast, a section

across the moat at the north-west of the site, where the moat had remained open throughout its life, contained almost no finds except twentieth century scrap.

The southern section of the moat under investigation lies adjacent to the site entrance, and has been affected by the various phases of activity associated with this. When the moat was first dug in the early thirteenth century (see below Area 21), its clean, gently flowing waters were crossed at the south of the site by a timber bridge (not yet excavated). The moat itself was maintained in a clean condition. In the mid/late fifteenth century, possibly motivated by a change in status brought about by (e.g.) marriage or advancement, the owners of Wood Hall decided to upgrade the entrance to their property. Two stone towers or plinths were built out into the moat, forming the foundations for a substantial gatehouse, probably timber-framed, which may have been fronted by a drawbridge. This was designed to impress the approaching visitor. The stone plinths, however, formed an impediment to the free flow of the moat, causing silts and sands to be deposited upstream to the west of the gatehouse, and the eventual formation of peat. These peats were colonised and consolidated by bulrushes. A fishing platform was constructed through the peats, where some luckless fisherman lost his eel-fork, probably in the early sixteenth century. Other finds accumulated within the peats at this period, including pottery, leather, glass and a large quantity of deer bones.

The footings of the gatehouse, though massive, were constructed within the moat and appear eventually to have become unstable. The building shifted, causing its collapse or necessitating its demolition. Some stone was undoubtedly saved for re-use, but massive quantities of rubble and debris were pushed forward over the bridge into the moat, forming a solid causeway which preserved, almost intact, the late medieval bridge which had preceded it. That this was a deliberate act is indicated by the fact that the bridge decking was removed, and a corduroy of silver birch branches, of a uniform size and cut to length, was laid down over part of the bridge to form a firm basis for the rubble causeway.

Much household rubbish was disposed of in the same operation, including large quantities of Cistercian and Humber Ware pottery. The finds suggest an early-mid seventeenth century date for the demolition of the gatehouse and the construction of the causeway.

The causeway completely blocked the flow of the moat, which must as a consequence have silted up very quickly - and probably become very smelly! One 're-cut' or vigorous cleaning appears to have taken place, possibly in the early-mid eighteenth century, leaving the channel half its original width. After this the moat was again allowed to silt up, and rushes to grow, until at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and presumably contemporarily with the building of the Georgian farmhouse, a final tipping of domestic, farm and general refuse took place before soil was imported to level up for the farmhouse garden.

Finds from the moat have been of high quality, and have included leather (shoes, part of a fine decorated glove, and an arrow spacer similar to those recovered from the 'Mary Rose') and wood, including fragments from a number of lathe-turned bowls. Lathe cores have also been recovered from the moat, indicating that at least some of the bowls were made at Wood Hall. Other finds include vessel and window glass, and quantities of pottery including a complete Cistercian ware bung-hole vessel.

2. Area 21

At the end of the 1991 season of excavations Area 21, at the north-west corner of the moated platform, had revealed a pre-moat ground surface buried by the upcast from the moat construction, and a number of substantial post-holes from a timber building which had been dismantled to make way for the moat construction. Other features were also known to pre-date the moat. It was therefore decided to extend area 21 by 5 metres eastward, and at the same time to push a five metre wide section across the moat to the north and into the pasture annexe, in order to investigate the extent of the pre-moat occupation east and north; to section the moat and bank to the north; and to link the moated platform and the annexe, so that further work in this area could be tied in with the whole site.

The first phase of the excavation on area 21 included the removal of a number of animal burials - mostly 19th/20th century pig burials, though two adult horse burials located close to the moat in the north of the site may well be eighteenth century in date. Following this the upcast was carefully removed to reveal a brown layer apparently overlying the buried ground surface. This layer, which contained large quantities of pottery, animal bone and limestone blocks and fragments as well as the remains of a hearth, appears to have been associated with a building or shelter used during the construction of the moat. Such a temporary building would have been ephemeral in nature and has left little trace in the archaeological record. The large group of pottery associated with this phase comes from a number of vessels, including Hallgate type, Yorkshire Gritty wares and some Shelly ware, of late twelfth/early thirteenth century date. This pottery appears to be associated with the construction of the moat.

The removal of the upcast and further investigation of the buried ground surface south of the moat has so far revealed a total of eighteen post-holes, possibly forming two buildings, which pre-date the moat. Other pre-moat features include two small ditches, one of which contained most of the base of a pottery vessel made of a white fabric which is paralleled from the pre-timber castle levels at Sandal Castle, Wakefield, with a date in the early twelfth century. This could have implications for the early occupation of Wood Hall and, by extension, the clearance and draining of this area of lowland Yorkshire.

The buried ground surface continues in the annexe to the north, surviving where the bank formed by periodic moat cleanings has preserved

it, but has so far revealed no trace of occupation in this area.

Evidence of pre-medieval activity continues to occur at Wood Hall. This includes Mesolithic and Neolithic flints and a fragment of Neolithic saddle-quern, all residual in later disturbances; sherds from two vessels of Iron Age pottery, stratified in the fill of the second (earlier) small ditch on area 21; and three sherds of Romano-British pottery and a coin of the House of Constantine, all residual in later contexts.

Looking Ahead

Excavations in 1993 are concentrating on the completion of areas 20 and 21, including the excavation of the timber bridge, and the examination of an area at the north of the moated platform where the late medieval manor house is believed to lie.

During the excavation season visitors are welcome on any day except Saturday, when the site is closed. The Open Weekend is on September 11th and 12th this year, though that may have passed and the season ended before this article appears.

II An Education and Training Facility

Brian Minhinnick

The early years of the Wood Hall Project witnessed the evolution of an informal training environment for novice archaeologists and attracted the attentions of schools and colleges in the area and, further afield, institutes of further and higher education. The value of these developments for the site, archaeology and education and training became apparent during the '90 and '91 excavation seasons. This growing awareness encouraged an examination of the potential for these twin fields at Wood Hall.

In seeking to define target groups and a range of services and facilities to be offered, an underlying philosophy emerged; that we viewed education in a universal sense and that the facilities and services provided be in mutually attractive packages. In terms of targeted groups, the following were defined:-

Upper Primary and Secondary Schools

Examination Groups within the above (e.g. GCSE)

Further and Higher Education

Vocational Education and Training

Research

Clubs, Societies and the General Public at large

To "service" these groups the following services and facilities were prescribed:-

Management and Administration

Liaison Facilities

Education and Training Support Materials

Resource Facilities and Services

Evaluation and Assessment

In seeking to develop the provisions outlined for the defined target groups three questions can be posed; What has been achieved? What developments are in train? What needs to be done?

In the primary and secondary school fields encouraging progress has been achieved. A package involving pre-visit briefings, site visits and follow up activities involving several primary schools has enjoyed considerable success as has a one week novices course for secondary school groups. Further developments including follow up activities and educational support materials are either being pursued or designed. A secondary school GCSE Archaeology group is employing the Wood Hall site each year, an association that is to be enhanced and expanded. The use of Wood Hall as a resource facility for GCE 'A' level studies is currently under development, with three schools/colleges participating.

A particularly encouraging development is in the field of Work Experience for secondary students. In co-operation with local organisations, e.g. Project Trident and the Education/Business Partnership, Wakefield, it is anticipated that some 20 placements will be taken up in the 1993 season.

Students in tertiary, further and higher education form the major part of the Wood Hall excavation team. All benefit from a comprehensive vocational experience which is being underpinned by a developing support structure. Affiliation to a national vocational qualification, or recognition of our own, is being pursued. Colleges and universities are presently being canvassed for specific needs/demands that Wood Hall may be able to satisfy. A pilot group selected to represent the above student range as well as incorporate the wider range of volunteers operated during the 1992 excavation season. As a result of the success of this pilot scheme, a second group will this year (93) be the pilot for a vocational training course eventually leading to a recognised certification.

Wood Hall as a focus for research is at present only in an early stage of

development, and primarily geared to undergraduate and postgraduate needs. As our archaeological resources develop so shall the provision of research facilities and services.

Assessment and evaluation of both individuals and groups is well established for the existing activities, and currently under development for embryonic schemes.

Visits from groups and societies as well as the general public are frequent. Encouragement and promotion of this association is being reviewed with the aim of improving and expanding provision for this area.

At present the attainment of our defined aims and objectives is inhibited by sponsorship levels. An active policy to generate additional sponsorship is being pursued. Amongst the measures being taken to alleviate financial constraints is the exploration of schemes such as Employment Action and YTS. Via these two "agencies" we hope to recruit personnel to fulfil key functions at present proscribed by current sponsorship levels. Local industrial and commercial concerns are also being actively encouraged to assist with the educational developments at Wood Hall.

The '92 excavation season and subsequent developments have encouraged us at Wood Hall to pursue our stated goals in the field of Education and Training. Feed-back from recipients of those services and facilities provided so far has been stimulating and most complimentary. Success to-date has been due in no small measure to the very healthy social environment on site, where people of all ages and from diverse backgrounds become, in effect, a particular peer group.

The success of future developments at Wood Hall has a good base but, as ever, will benefit from advice, assistance and support from without.

Kirkstall Abbey's Iron Bloomery at Hazelwell

A.J. Moyes

A wholly urban river rises on Blackhill in the parish of Adel and as it flows its six and a half mile route to the river Aire in Leeds it is known, in sequence, as Adel Beck, Meanwood Beck and Sheepscar Beck. This river has been connected with manufactures over many centuries.

Casperson¹ systematically pursued the sites and functions of manufacturing or processing plants to be found in the valley of Meanwood Beck. In this book, he mentioned that the site of the farmstead now known as "Valley Farm" (formerly "Smithy Mills") was once an enclave in which iron and iron-artefacts were made: he attributed this to Kirkstall Abbey's