



RAINCLIFFE WOODS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

December 2015 - April 2016
Interim Report

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1. Introduction

Between December 2015 and April 2016 the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society began a project to make a basic record of archaeological features in Raincliffe, Forge Valley and Row Brow Woods on the west edge of the town. The project began after local farmer, Chris Wilson showed features of archaeological interest surviving in the woodland to several members of the Society during a visit in the autumn of 2015. Almost nothing has been recorded about the archaeology of the woods and it was decided after the initial visit to attempt to create a basic record of the visible archaeology by systematic reconnaissance of the woodland. Working at intervals until the middle of April 2016 a small team from the Society recorded remains in a 2.3km (1.4 mile) length of woodland beginning at the north end of Forge Valley Woods in the west continuing eastwards through Raincliffe Woods and ending at 'The Meadow' at approximately the point where Row Brow Woods start. The regrowth of vegetation brought an end to fieldwork over the summer and this report summarises what has been discovered so far.

The woods occupy a series of steep slopes; in the west both valley sides formed by the cutting of the glacial overflow channel now known as Forge Valley; on the north and east the escarpment formed by the beds of limestone and sandstone rocks of the Upper Jurassic period which define the east end of the Tabular Hills. Recorded in the thirteenth century as Ravencliffe, Raincliffe was part of the Royal forest of Pickering in the medieval period (Martin 1911, 181) while further east Row Brow was within the boundary of the medieval borough of Scarborough (Rimington 1961, 8). In the nineteenth century Raincliffe Woods were owned by the Denison family who were elevated to the peerage in 1850 when the head of the family, Albert Denison was created Lord Londesborough. His son William Henry Forester Denison 2nd Lord Londesborough and first Earl of Londesborough created several rides and a carriage drive in Raincliffe, naming them after his wife, youngest daughter and daughter in-law (Binns 2002, 189; Brierley 1928, 9-10). The woods passed to Scarborough Borough Council in 1926 (Missin 1992, 21) and in 2015 the council handed responsibility for the management of Forge Valley, Raincliffe and Row Brow Woods to the Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise.

2. Survey Methodology

Six days were spent in the field at intervals during the period December 2015 - April 2016 by a team of up to five members of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society. The survey work began at the north end of Forge Valley and proceeded eastwards by dividing the woodland into successive blocks, each extending from the crest of the escarpment as far as Lady Edith's Drive towards the foot of the slope. Each block was reconnoitred in a day and by the end of the survey in April, the team had examined approximately 100ha (245 acres) of woodland.

Features of potential archaeological and historical interest encountered during the fieldwork and which were not already recorded on Ordnance Survey maps were surveyed at 1:10,000 scale using a Trimble Juno 5B GPS receiver. This device is capable of locating a position within the woods to an accuracy within Ordnance Survey National Grid of around 2-4m in real-time using navigation signals broadcast by the American GPS satellite constellation. Digital versions of historic Ordnance Survey maps (Ordnance Survey 1854; 1928) and 3D maps of the ground surface derived from 1m resolution Lidar were also loaded on to the Trimble Juno for visual reference during the reconnaissance. Features were mapped as points, lines or polygons and a basic textual description of each feature surveyed was entered into a linked database on the Trimble Juno using K-mobile software. At the end of each day's fieldwork, the survey and database was downloaded to a PC to build a map of the discoveries using QGIS Geographical Information System software.

3. Survey Results

The fieldwork has located a wide range of previously unrecorded features of archaeological interest potentially ranging in date from the prehistoric period to the last century. For the purposes of the present report the features are divided for description into broad categories on the understanding that our interpretation of the evidence may change as more areas are investigated and more detailed work is undertaken on the discoveries already made. Nevertheless, it is clear from what has been discovered so far that the woods are much richer in archaeological remains than was previously recognised.

3.1 Boundary Earthworks

Description

At three separate locations within the survey area short lengths of parallel banks and ditches survive at the escarpment edge. Each of these represents the north end of three separate linear earthworks that extended southwards away from the escarpment edge across what is now Irton Moor. Similar boundaries exist further to the east on Seamer Moor and are widespread along the Tabular Hills (Spratt 1989a).

The west of the three boundary earthworks has been recorded as a cropmark (Spratt 1989a, 60) but the survey discovered that a short section of three parallel ditches survive as an earthwork on the edge of the escarpment 170m west of the Skell Dykes. Cropmark evidence indicates that the feature continued southwards away from the edge of the escarpment to join to the Skell Dykes, which it may pre-date (Spratt 1989a, 61).

The middle of the three is the termination of the Skell Dykes which survive as a series of parallel banks and ditches for some considerable distance north from the escarpment edge where one of the ditches was later utilised as the start of a route down the escarpment (Route 4). The Ordnance Survey (Ordnance Survey 1928) depicts the full extent of the earthworks on the edge of the escarpment and indeed they are included as part of the Scheduled Monument for that feature (National Heritage List for England List entry no 1021238). Therefore these earthworks were not mapped again as part of the fieldwork.

The most easterly of the three (called the Moor Dike or the Irton Moor Dike) survived as an earthwork across the moor at least until 1854 when it was mapped by the Ordnance Survey and formed part of the the boundary between East Ayton and Irton parishes (Spratt 1989a, 60). It seems to have been levelled soon after that apart from the short section of ditches and banks surviving on the edge of the escarpment which has not been mapped by the Ordnance Survey.

Discussion

There is no excavation evidence to firmly date these features but they are generally considered to be territorial boundaries dating to the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age around 2500-3000 years old. An excavation in 2012 of a section of similar earthwork on Seamer Moor established that the ditch previously recorded as an earthwork began as an alignment of individual pits probably in the Late Bronze Age (Pearson and Hall 2013).

3.2 Tracks and Hollow Ways

Description

Towards the base of the escarpment the survey recorded a number of tracks slightly worn into the ground surface but on the steeper slopes the same routes survive as hollow ways - that is narrow ditch-like features eroded over time by the passage of people and animals and sometimes by water flowing down them at times of heavy rain. Several sections of hollow way are well over head height in depth and though they are very obvious to even the most casual observer, and indeed several are still footpaths, the survey was the first time they have been systematically mapped. This clearly shows that most tracks and hollow ways exist in distinct groups, running close to each

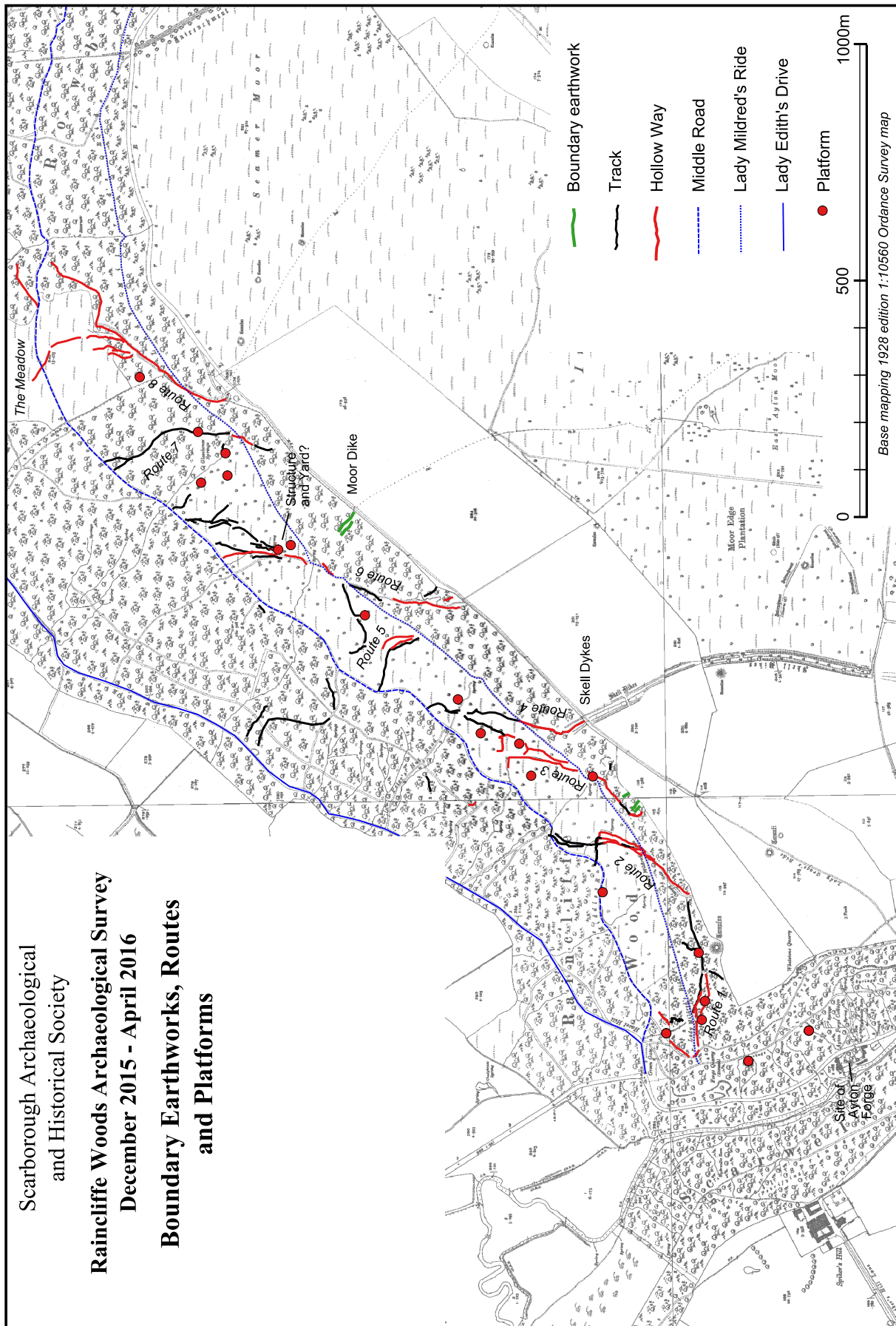


Figure 1. Map of Boundary Earthworks, Routes and Platforms

other on broadly the same alignments indicating the shifting of that particular route over time. Rather than describe individual tracks and hollow ways, for the purposes of the present report they are grouped together into routes. It is worth pointing out that almost without exception the routes recorded in the survey all end on the north at around the line of the Middle Road. This track, which is still in use today, follows a comparatively level course near the foot of the escarpment, where the slope starts to level off. The track is named on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps from the middle of the nineteenth century but presumably is much older than that (Ordnance Survey 1854). No route systems were recorded in the north part of Forge Valley.

Route 1

This route begins at the crest of the escarpment at the same point as Route 2, their junction forming a distinct hollow resembling a small quarry cutting the top of the slope. The route is marked on Ordnance Survey mapping as a single footpath but on the ground it is much more complex with several deep hollow ways parallel to the existing track, all heading in a westerly direction diagonally down the steepest part of the slope, taking a 'line least resistance' before turning sharply to the north. Two platforms were recorded in the base of one of the hollow ways and indicating re-use of this particular section after it had fallen out of use as a route.

Route 2

This route begins at the crest of the escarpment and is formed by a series of deep hollow ways on a northerly alignment which intersect in several places indicating movement of the route over time. The latest alignment is shown as a track on Ordnance Survey mapping and is named 'Cunsey Gate' which could well be the 'Cuntosti' mentioned in the 13th century as part of the route leading from Hackness to Seamer (Martin 1911, 141-2).

Route 3

This route begins on the crest of the escarpment immediately adjacent to the ditches forming the last visible section of the western of the three boundary earthworks discussed above and it is possible that the route utilises one of the ditches of this feature. Two main hollow ways descend the escarpment on a northerly alignment and both turn sharply to the west just before they terminate at the base of the steepest part of the slope. A track perpetuates the northerly alignment of one of the hollow ways and appears to merge with Route 4.

Route 4

This route starts on the edge of the escarpment as a continuation of one of the ditches forming the Skell Dykes. It then descends the slope obliquely on a north alignment starting as a hollow way which becomes a less well-pronounced track as it reaches the Middle Road.

Route 5

This route comprises several lengths of track and two short lengths of hollow way which begin some distance below Route 6 and continue down the slope on a curving, north-easterly alignment, continuing almost to Lady Edith's Drive though its route is cut by a small quarry at the edge of the road which therefore must be later. It is possible that this route originally led from Route 6 but any connection between the two is no longer recognisable on the surface.

Route 6

This route starts at the crest of the escarpment immediately adjacent to a small disused quarry. The same quarry cuts across the line of a short length of track at the crest of the escarpment which presumably was the original starting point of this route before it descended the escarpment. This indicates that the route predates the digging of the quarry. The route descends the escarpment obliquely in a northerly direction forming a deep hollow way. It is marked as a track on Ordnance Survey mapping indicating it has been it is still in use at the date of the survey. Where the ground starts to level off the route divides into a number of minor tracks perpetuating the northerly



Figure 2. Parallel hollow ways forming part of Route 6.

alignment. These tracks start on the north adjacent to a pair of platforms with which they could be contemporary. It is suggested below these two platforms may indicate the site of a structure and an adjacent yard.

Route 7

This route starts at the crest of the escarpment and heads northwards down the slope. As it approaches the Middle Road it divides and almost immediately after disappears as a surface feature.

Route 8

This route starts towards the crest of the escarpment as a track following a more easterly direction than Route 7. This route starts at the crest of the escarpment as a hollow way heading north-east obliquely down the escarpment. It is marked as a route on Ordnance Survey mapping indicating it was in use at the date of the survey (Ordnance Survey 1928). Where the gradient of the natural slope lessens, several short stretches of hollow way head more directly north away from the main alignment, several of which cross into the open ground of The Meadow.

Lady Mildred's Ride

In the late nineteenth century the then owner of the woods, the first Earl of Londesborough created a number of 'rides' named after female relatives and which are shown on historic Ordnance survey mapping (Brierley 1928, 9-10). Lady Grace's Ride and Lady Edith's Drive were at the top and bottom of the escarpment respectively and largely outside the woods. Lady Mildred's Ride started at the north end of Forge Valley and continued eastwards through the woods just below the crest of the escarpment, continuing into Row Brow Woods as far as the grandstand of the former racecourse on Seamer Moor. It now mainly survives only as a narrow ledge cut into the hillside about 20m below the crest of the escarpment but in places short lengths are incorporated in current footpaths. It was not surveyed as part of the fieldwork as it is accurately depicted on



Figure 3. Junction of Lady Mildred's Ride (left) with Route 1 descending the slope.

historic mapping but evidence was noted in several places where the ride had been built up in order to create a level route on steeply sloping ground.

Discussion

The large number of tracks and hollow ways mapped along the escarpment indicates a great deal of movement in the past between the low ground to the north and what is now Irton and Seamer Moor to the south. With eight routes descending the escarpment over a distance of 2km (1.2 miles), it seems unlikely that all were in use at the same time but individual routes may have been in use over a prolonged period accounting for the series of parallel hollow ways and tracks noted by the survey in several locations. Water erosion has undoubtedly played a part in deepening the hollow ways since they act as drains for water seeping down the escarpment. The narrowness and steep sides of many of the hollow ways suggests they were created by erosion from foot traffic, both animals and people, though it is possible some were deliberately engineered to move heavy items like timber or stone down the slope. However, as a group they bear witness to a period, perhaps extending over many centuries, when there was regular movement of livestock, pack-animals and people up and down the escarpment.

There is no firm evidence as to the date of the routes. The observation that Route 4 begins as one of the ditches of the Skell Dykes indicates it post-dates the construction of the earthwork so the route must be later than the presumed late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date for this boundary. The discovery of several platforms in the base of one of the hollow ways forming Route 1 indicates activity after this section of the route had fallen into disuse. As will be discussed below, these two features may be charcoal burning platforms from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. On the archaeological evidence recorded so far, it is impossible to date any of the routes more closely than that they fall sometime between late prehistory and early modern times.

Turning to more recent times, the creation of the several 'rides' by Lord Londesborough in the late nineteenth century is little understood. He constructed Lady Edith's Drive as a carriageway and opened it to public use in 1864 (Brierley 1928, 9) though visitors were warned 'not to stray too far into the Wood, as the game is strictly preserved here by Lord Londesborough' (Shaw 1874, 37). From what survives of Lady Mildred's Ride it is difficult to imagine it being used as anything other than a footpath. The narrowness of the track and the steep slopes below would seem to preclude its use by horse riders and so the name 'ride' is rather misleading.

3.3 Platforms

Description

From the north end of Forge Valley to The Meadow in Raincliffe Woods, the survey recorded 19 platforms sharing roughly the same morphology as sub-circular areas of levelled ground measuring between about 5-10m in diameter. Several may be natural features but others showed clear evidence of a cut into the uphill side and a bank raised on the downhill side to create a level platform on the natural slope. None of the platforms showed any evidence of structures but several have tracks leading to them suggesting they were actively used. As was noted above, several platforms are sited in a hollow way (Route 1), presumably using the cutting for shelter as well as possibly for access.



*Figure 4.
A platform situated in the base of
one of the hollow ways forming
Route 1.*

Discussion

The platforms are generally quite slight features so that they have survived at all suggests they might not be that old, perhaps no more than a couple of centuries. With no visible evidence to help explain the function of the platforms the most likely interpretation is that they are connected with management of the woodland and one possibility is that they are for charcoal burning. Charcoal burning platforms are commonly found in historic woodland where iron working has taken place since regular supplies of charcoal were needed for the smelting process. The charcoal was obtained by burning coppiced wood slowly in large bonfires situated on level ground which often necessitated creating artificial platforms.

Tuke tells us that in 1800 "At Ayton.....are furnaces and forges for casting and working run and malleable iron" (Tuke 1800, 313) These must have consumed large quantities of charcoal for fuel and it is therefore tempting to suggest some of the features in Raincliffe Woods are contemporary with this iron-working industry. The forge was situated towards the north end of Forge Valley in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The regular spacing of the platforms suggest each charcoal burning platform had a block of woodland allocated to it while they are all situated close to the long-established track called the Middle Road which could have been used to transport the charcoal to the forge. Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows a spur from the Middle Road down to the site of the forge (Ordnance Survey 1928). The forge seems to have gone out of use by 1817 (Young 1817, 819).

The two platforms situated at the north end of Route 6 are less straight forwardly charcoal burning platforms since they sit close together though at slightly different heights some distance uphill from the Middle Road. The lower of the pair of platforms has a distinct hollowed appearance much like the erosion that occurs where animals have been kept for a prolonged period in a confined area, like a livestock pen. A number of tracks lead away from this feature, more than from any of the other platforms (part of Route 3). It is just possible that the higher of the pair of platforms supported some form of shelter and this is the site of a small holding with an associated yard, and therefore perhaps much older than the other platforms so far recorded in Raincliffe Woods. An adjacent spring would have provided water.

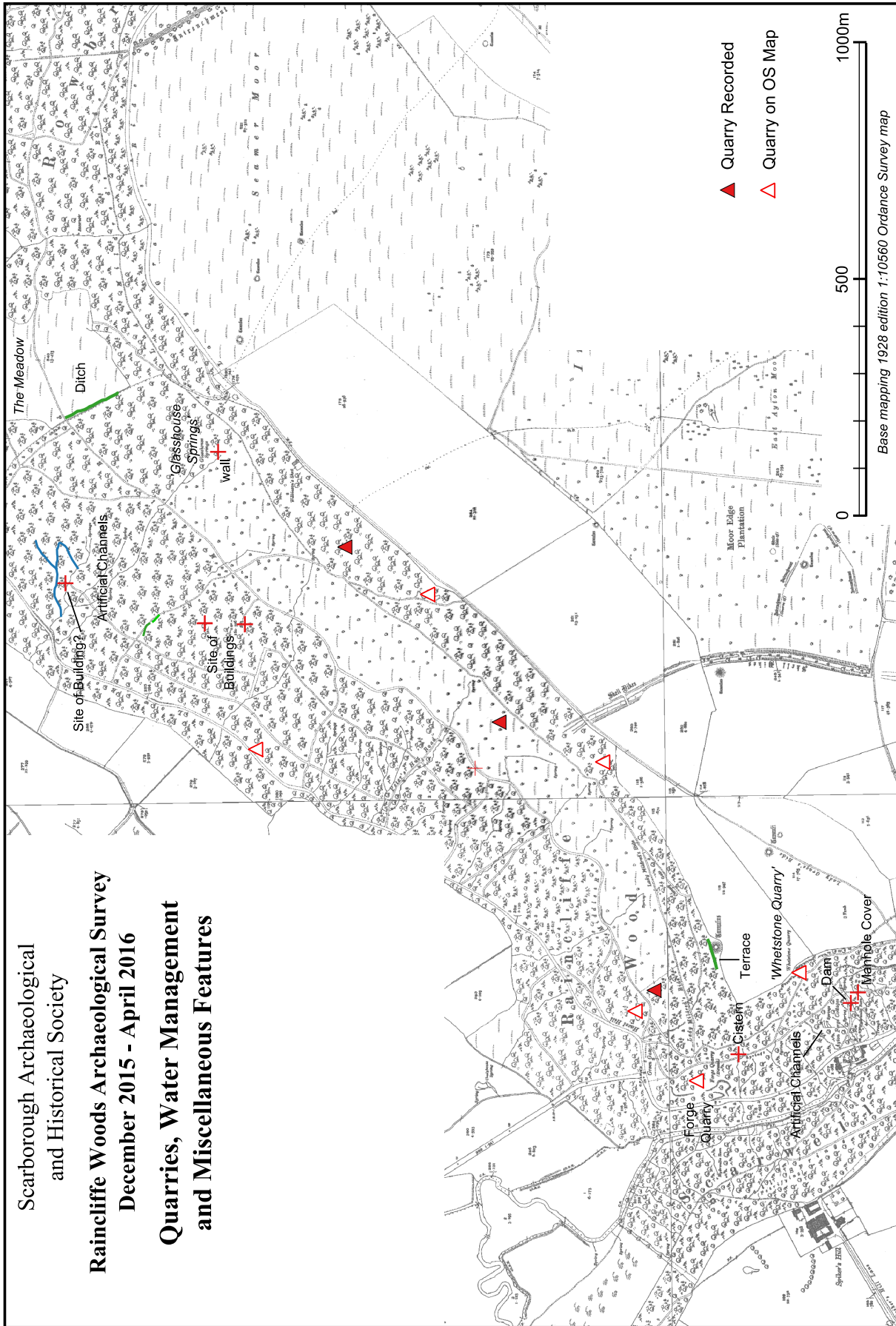


Figure 5. Map of Quarries, Water Management and Miscellaneous Features.



Figure 6. The terrace above Route 1.

3.4 Quarries

Description

The so-called Whetstone quarry toward the north end of Forge Valley is the largest in the survey area with a vertical face that extends for 130m along the top of the valley side but it was not investigated as part of the fieldwork as it is clearly depicted on historic Ordnance Survey mapping. Similarly Forge Quarry is shown on historic mapping above the valley floor at the north end of Forge Valley where it now borders the edge of the road.

Historic Ordnance Survey mapping also shows a scatter of much smaller quarries in Raincliffe Woods. These sites were checked as part of the reconnaissance work and three additional quarries not shown on the mapping were recorded. Judging from their size none have been worked for a very long period of time. A 60m long terrace carved out of the slope just below the crest of the escarpment just above Route 1 may be a former quarry. At one point it cuts into the outer edge of a Bronze Age burial mound at the top of the slope. The regularity of the terrace and the absence of any obvious route to it means that its interpretation as a former quarry is not certain.

Discussion

The small quarries within the area surveyed probably date between the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries and were probably to provide material for minor works like constructing or repairing field walls and for road surfacing. Because of their much larger size, Forge Quarry and Whetstone Quarry may have been for much larger scale construction projects perhaps in the nearby villages of Ayton and Hackness.

3.5 Water management

Description

Historic Ordnance Survey mapping shows a complex drainage pattern with numerous small streams flowing from springs along the escarpment into Forge Valley on the west and the low ground to the north of Raincliffe Woods. Much of this drainage is managed to an extent through the maintenance of channels and the construction of pipes to take the water under the paths and

tracks in current use. The survey did not record these features as they are already adequately mapped by the Ordnance Survey and additionally show up clearly on the relief map derived from Lidar. However particular note was made of two small management systems. In Forge Valley there is clear evidence surviving of a series of artificial channels cut into the valley side immediately above the site of the former forge as depicted on historic Ordnance Survey mapping. These could have originated to provide additional supply to power the water wheel at the forge but they may be work undertaken by the Ayton Waterworks to improve the supply of spring water. A manhole with the company name is nearby and a small dam across one of the stream channels is further evidence for close management of the drainage in this particular area. The survey also recorded a cistern fed by spring water in the vicinity.

The second evidence of water management is close to Lady Edith's Drive comprising two artificial channels. The longer of the two appears designed to take water off a small stream and to reintroduce it lower down the slope following an angular route between these two points. The second channel joins to this first one from the east. The most likely explanation is that these channels were dug to take overflow to relieve pressure on the stream and lessen the chance of it flooding on to Lady Edith's Drive. The survey also noted an area of disturbed ground next to the longer channel which may be evidence for the site of a building.

3.6 Miscellaneous features

Two slight rubble mounds about 80m apart were recorded in a level area to the west of the Middle Road and probably indicate the sites of small buildings. The southerly of the two mounds is shown on historic Ordnance Survey mapping as a small roofed building with a 50m length of track leading to it from the Middle Road (Ordnance Survey 1928). No surface traces of the track survive. The function of the buildings is unknown but were presumably connected with the management of the woodland, perhaps housing sawpits.

At a location marked on historic Ordnance Survey mapping as 'Glasshouse Springs' (Ordnance Survey 1854) the survey recorded a short length of drystone wall immediately above one of the two springs shown on the map. The site is on a steep slope and just down hill from the drystone wall are traces of a platform. A narrow track leads uphill from the wall to Lady Mildred's Ride but the track has been modified to create jumps for mountain bikes. Because of the name the site is recorded in the local Historic Environment Record as a possible site where glass was manufactured (Pastscape [Monument No. 1569352](#)) but there is no sign of any workings here or elsewhere along the stream that issues from the two springs. The location marked as Glasshouse Springs is almost certainly too restricted for it to have supported any form of industrial activity leaving the origin of the name something of a mystery.

4. Summary and Recommendations

The fieldwork has demonstrated the archaeological potential of Raincliffe Woods recording many features for the first time. It is premature to draw firm conclusions about the development of the landscape based on the sample area investigated so far, however several ideas are emerging.

The survey has concluded that routes found along the escarpment developed over time through the passage of livestock, pack-animals and people moving between what is now Irton and Seamer Moors to the south and the two valleys to the north; the one heading east towards Scalby and the other north towards Hackness. To cause the amount of erosion witnessed along several of the deepest hollow ways suggests there may have been periods when great numbers of livestock were moved up and down the escarpment to take advantage of the waterside pastures available in both valleys adjacent to the River Derwent and its minor tributary, the 'Tilabec', which was roughly on the line of the modern Sea Cut. However, the survey found little evidence for routes continuing to the valley bottom as the majority of the recorded hollow ways and tracks end at the Middle Road so the possibility exists that livestock were pastured here or taken east or west along the Middle Road rather than straight to the valley bottom. Cunsey Gate (Route 2) may be the medieval

'Cuntesti' mentioned in the thirteenth century as the route from Hackness to Seamer showing that this route at least was in existence in the middle ages and it could possibly be much earlier. One interpretation of the name is that it derives from 'Cuddy' a reference to the seventh century Northumbrian saint, St Cuthbert and 'stie' meaning an uphill path - hence 'Cuthbert's Path'. Why it acquired this name and at what date is open to speculation but it does hint at the possibility that the route was in use long before the Norman conquest (Rushton 2002, 35). Elsewhere in the North York Moors groups of hollow ways appear to be linked with prehistoric settlements following a pastoral economy and the same could well explain some, if not all of the routes recorded in the present survey (Elgee 1930, 163-4; Spratt 1989b, 35).

The discovery of a number of possible charcoal burning platforms in the woods near to the Middle Road was one of the main results of the survey. On present evidence, the most likely date for this activity is connected with the forge which existed for a short period in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries towards the north end of Forge Valley. However, it is possible that charcoal was being produced at other times for different reasons so there is much still to understand about this aspect of the wood's history. Indeed not all the platforms recorded may have been for charcoal burning with the survey locating one pair of platforms at the north end of Route 2 that could have been the site of a structure with an adjacent yard.

Another aspect of the wood's recent history that requires more investigation is the sale and extent of the network of rides that Lord Londesborough appears to have created in the second half of the nineteenth century. From what survives of Lady Mildred's Ride, it seems that whatever the initial intention, the resulting route was little more than a narrow footpath though the name of this and of Lady Grace's Ride and Lady Edith's Drive might suggest the intention was to create a series of routes primarily for use by his family. Lady Ida's Walk and Lady Lilian's Ride are also mentioned but these do not appear as names on Ordnance Survey mapping (Brierley 1928, 9-10).

Finally, the level terrace just below the escarpment near to Forge Valley has no obvious explanation. It is possible that it represents an abortive attempt to open a large quarry similar in scale to the Whetstone quarry which is in the same geological strata at the crest of the escarpment close by in Forge Valley. Another possibility is that it was created by Lord Londesborough as a terrace from which to enjoy the views and contemporary with his development of the network of rides. However neither Lady Mildred's ride downslope or Lady Grace's Ride above the crest of the escarpment came near to this feature.

To complete this phase of the project it is planned to continue the reconnaissance work to create a basic record for the entire belt of woodland from Race Course Road in the east to West Ayton in the south therefore including Row Brow and Forge Valley woods as well as Raincliffe Woods. In conjunction with this more detailed topographic survey could be undertaken of some of the key features already recorded during this first phase. For example, survey at a scale of 1:500 of the three sections of prehistoric earthworks surviving along the edge of the escarpment could reveal more detail of their construction including if any of the extant sections of ditch are actually pit alignments. The two platforms that could be an occupation site would also repay more detailed survey in order to look for evidence of any structures while a sample section of one of the routes could be surveyed at a larger scale to record the form and inter-relationships between the constituent hollow ways and tracks. The nature and extent of the fragmentary section of drystone wall next to Glasshouse Springs would also repay more detailed study.

Further on in time after the reconnaissance phase of the project is completed, a case could be made for undertaking small-scale test excavations to investigate a number of the platforms to try and confirm if they were for charcoal burning. Other targets for test excavations could be added once the reconnaissance phase is finished.

In parallel with the fieldwork, documentary and cartographic research could be undertaken to try and understand more about the recent history of the woodland particularly the story behind the creation of Lady Edith's Drive and the other rides.

The end result will be to assemble a body of information to help with future management of the woodland so that the presence of archaeological remains can be accounted for in future planning. The new information to emerge from this project could also be disseminated by various means to enhance the enjoyment of the many thousands of visitors who enjoy the woods each year.

5. Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by Martin and Jan Bland, Gareth Davies, Chris Hall and Trevor Pearson. Chris Wilson and Sheila McGeown are thanked for discussing aspects of the fieldwork. Trevor Pearson thanks Historic England for the loan of the Trimble Juno GPS receiver in his professional capacity with that organisation.

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