Understanding British/Anglo-Saxon continuity at Gefrin: Brian Hope-Taylor's excavations on Yeavering Bell

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-SUMMARY

In 1958 Brian Hope-Taylor opened thirteen trenches within the hillfort on Yeavering Bell, convinced this would provide information fundamental to the reasons for founding the Anglo-Saxon royal township at its foot. Disappointed in his quest for discovering 'an administrative centre for native affairs' on the Bell, he was subsequently forced to look for this within the 'Great Enclosure', arguing for a lengthy chronology which would drive that structure's origins back to the fourth century AD, and thus connect with what he believed to be the latest occupation on the hill above. He was the first to demonstrate that the enclosure at the eastern end of Yeavering Bell was a palisade, but in the climate of thought at the time he believed it to be pre-Roman. By the late 1970s, following his work at Doon Hill, he had become convinced that this palisade was post-Roman. Because of its difficult publication history, this change of mind could not be recorded in his major excavation report. His decline in health, and challenges to his Brittonic dating for the phase I building at Doon Hill, then forced him to put the issue to one side. This paper attempts to recover something of his unpublished archaeological excavation on Yeavering Bell and to place it within the evolution of Hope-Taylor's wider thinking about native and Anglo-Saxon in Bernicia between 1953 and 1999.

INTRODUCTION

Brian Hope-Taylor's book, *Yeavering, An Anglo-British Centre of Early Northumbria* (1977) is widely regarded as embodying one of the best executed and presented analyses of the personality of an archaeological site undertaken in the twentieth century. Its appearance in 1979 also cast into prominence the troubled life of its uniquely gifted excavator.[1] Whilst time has inevitably occasioned some re-appraisal of the book's conclusions and provoked changes in perspective, a fascination with the relationship between the site and its excavator remains undimmed, to the point where narrative and narrator today coalesce.

The excavation of what was to emerge as the royal township of *Ad Gefrin*, at the foot of Yeavering Bell, began in 1953, and continued for several months each year until 1957 when work on the central part of the site 'was prohibited by various factors' (1977, 5).[2] The 1956 season had in fact marked a period of the most intensive and prolonged endeavour.[3] By the end of that year (and within just three years of having commenced work) Hope-Taylor's collection of his data was all but complete. In a terse, yet comprehensive statement of the site's significance that appeared in the first volume of *Medieval Archaeology* (Hope-Taylor 1957, 148–9) he brilliantly demonstrated not only his grasp of the archaeological sequence, but also presented his case for what he regarded as the two fundamental themes to which it could make an important contribution – namely, to the architectural evolution of building styles and settlement layout, and to the cultural inter-relationships that these might express. By 1957 he considered his work at the site finished.[4] Thereafter it required only those 'supplementary

excavations around the eastern edge of the quarry' which he undertook between 1958 and 1962, to provide answers to unresolved questions without which he felt unable to complete both his thesis on the site and the final report on the excavations for publication. The former was to earn him his Ph.D. from Cambridge in 1961, while the latter, notwithstanding a publication date of 1977 on the reverse of its title page, eventually appeared in 1979 to public acclaim (Frodsham and O'Brien 2005, 9).

It is this timescale that gives shape to three little-known excavations which he carried out in the locality between 1955 and 1958. Though overshadowed by his later work in Bernicia[5] they not only offer insight into the drift of his thinking at those particular points in time, but also demonstrate a more extended curiosity as to the place of Yeavering within its wider setting. Two of the interventions were minor in scale and all three have remained unpublished; though the information is scanty, they are worth placing on record.

'KING EDWIN'S PALACE' AND GALEWOOD

Since at least as early as the seventeenth century Bede's lost township of *Ad Gefrin* was believed to lie at Yeavering in Glendale.[6] Not surprisingly, the early antiquaries sought something tangible for this claim and they believed they had found it in a solitary building of undoubted antiquity standing at the foot of Yeavering Bell (NGR NT 924 302); by the twentieth century this had become known locally as 'King Edwin's Palace'. Whether this stout-walled building had begun its long life as a sixteenth-century fortified dwelling or as a more modest domestic structure is of less moment than the reason why Hope-Taylor should have been drawn to open a trench just within the entrance in 1955.[7] The reason he gave to Richard Bailey (pers. comm.) was that it was done to prove that it was not an early medieval structure but a piece of false antiquarianism; however it is equally explicable in terms of its potential for providing some chronological context to *Gefrin*, a settlement which Bede relates had been abandoned sometime in the seventh century. 'King Edwin's Palace' is thought to overlie the site of the medieval village of *Yverine* (Fraser 1968, 118), and the value to Hope-Taylor of a cutting down through the post-medieval structure and its underlying medieval layers can only have lain in its potential to provide information on the period between the abandonment of Anglo-Saxon Yeavering and the foundation of the later medieval settlement. In the event he could record that his small cutting, had 'produced 17th century pottery from the basal layer underlying deposits 3' deep', adding somewhat weakly that 'a medieval origin is not impossible.' (1977, 14). As a postscript, the position of his trench within the building was relocated during an excavation undertaken by Richard Carlton in June 2012. The cutting measured 5 ft 6 in (1.6 m) by 4 ft (1.2 m) and 4 ft 6 in (1.3 m) in depth.

Two photographs (YB_6_2–3) in the Hope-Taylor Archive held by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS; see the introduction to the Notes, below) constitute the only record of his attempt, in July 1958, to establish some context for a sixth- or seventh-century inhumation, accompanied by Anglo-Saxon grave-goods, which was discovered in the farmyard at Galewood, near Milfield, around 1852 (Maclauchlan 1867, 26; Keeney 1935, 15–17). The excavation — undertaken as a one-day break from work on the Bell — was of a slight mound in the farmyard suggestive to Hope-Taylor of a barrow. It was, as Richard Bailey recalls, '… just farmyard muck' (pers. comm.). This excavation, like those undertaken by the writer in 1973 and 1975 at the site (Miket 1980, 294; O'Brien and Miket 1991, 91), proved unfruitful.

YEAVERING BELL

The decision to open trenches on the summit of the hill that rises high above and to the south of the Anglo-Saxon settlement was a more planned affair. As he makes plain, Hope-Taylor saw this very much as both an extension to his work on the palace site and as an integral part of its story. Its mainspring lay in his evolving thought regarding cultural identities and assimilation generally, which led him to seek out evidence for a 'vigorous hybrid culture' of native Briton and Anglo-Saxon (1977, 267), and to excavate at Yeavering for tangible evidence that might demonstrate a bridge between native Britons and Anglo-Saxons. Working constantly in the physical shadow of the most dominant expression of native activity in the region, one can only imagine the many times he must have raised his eyes to the fort on the summit to ponder on the nature of its influence on the site with which he was engaged. It was to be five years before he would begin his investigations there, during which time the questions he would ask were shaping in his mind. As these would determine his excavation strategy on the Bell and inform his interpretation, their influence justifies a preliminary outline of their context.

Once Hope-Taylor had confirmed to his satisfaction in 1953 that the structures that J. K. St Joseph had recorded from the air some four years earlier were indeed the physical manifestation of Bede's *Ad Gefrin*, he was free to enlarge upon his aims, and develop his methodology. High on his list of questions to be asked was how the site might illuminate any relationship between British and the Anglo-Saxons. He expressed the problem succinctly: 'Why did this Anglo-Saxon royal township, like its successor, have a Celtic name?' (Hope-Taylor, HT/39/2)

There were two strands to the approach that he adopted to examine this issue. The first lay in determining if the township site might provide evidence for native British activity *before* the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons; any such discoveries might then be understood as traditions uninfluenced by the immigrants. However, this approach depended in part on acceptance of an Anglo-Saxon settlement chronology — and here he adhered, largely uncritically, to the prevailing orthodox view provided by the historical sources for what at best can only be viewed as a record of a political event — the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom under Ida and his sons in the mid-sixth century.[8] The second strand arose out from the first, and this was to identify any survival of these traditions amongst the Anglo-Saxons. In this case it was necessary to recognise the native and Anglo-Saxon identities in the archaeological record. This presented little difficulty with the Anglo-Saxons; their remains were sufficiently distinctive. But this was far from true of the British material.

By the close of 1956 Hope-Taylor believed that he could marshal a strong case for an answer to his second question — the case for continuity of a British tradition amidst Anglo-Saxons at Yeavering beyond that of its Celtic name. He had now substantial amounts of native pottery from contexts associated with buildings of patently Anglo-Saxon type (1977, 172–6). In addition, there was also the succession of rectangular post-built structures (A5–7, 8? and D6) inaugurating the township which he saw as structurally atypical of the Anglo-Saxon forms that were to follow, but he remained unsure as to whether they were, 'wholly native buildings whose rectangularity derives directly or indirectly from a Roman or Romano-British model' (1977, 268).[9] Finally there were the burials he encountered, particularly those in the earlier, Western, cemetery, that, through their method of interment and slight accompaniment he was to regard as principally representative of native British traditions.[10] Ever at

the back of his mind was Building E, that extraordinary wooden 'grandstand' that had been raised for large public assemblies in the late sixth or early seventh century (1977, 161, 169) — assemblies that he believed to be largely composed of members of the indigenous population, the descendants of the former inhabitants of the hillfort.

In practice, he was denied an answer to his first question in not being able to prove that any of these features had existed on the site before the arrival of Anglo-Saxons in the mid-sixth century AD. He had only the linear features that he could observe on St Joseph's aerial photographs and the 'shallow, diffuse gullies with fillings of loamy sand' that he encountered stratigraphically below the timber buildings of the settlement, and which post-dated the Bronze Age cemetery (1977, 21–2, 46, 204, fig. 73). These he interpreted as 'Celtic fields', for which he saw two possible contexts; the first associated them with the hillfort, which he did not believe could have outlasted the first century AD, whilst the second lay in regarding them as a response to a 'Roman encouragement to native food production' (1977, 204). Here he cited, in support, the small segmented glass bead of probable Roman date from one of five small pits cut through the filling of a 'field gully' which he interpreted as an insertion into the pre-existent field (GL1; 1977, 193–4, 244). This brings us to the nub of Hope-Taylor's dilemma. Where were the archaeological horizons that would fill the gap between the demise of the hillfort and the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon settlement? By the close of 1957 he was convinced that these were to be found on the summit of Yeavering Bell.

PRELIMINARIES

In January 1958 Hope-Taylor wrote to J. C. R. Hamilton, Inspector of Ancient Monuments at the Ministry of Works, laying before him the case for funding an excavation on the Bell. In February he wrote again, this time describing more fully his reasons for the application.

> The key factor is the need to publish a full account of the Anglo-Saxon royal township at Yeavering as soon as possible. No adequate report can be assembled until the limited excavations have been carried out on Yeavering Bell. The interpretation and presentation of the whole site rests at present on the assumption that the hill-fort on the top of the Bell was occupied until at least the sixth century. I do not deny for a moment that this assumption is a very probable one; but I submit most seriously that we cannot put forward what purports to be an authoritative account of the site's significance with an untested assumption as the lynch-pin of its evidential structure.
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> To make the position clear, let me first summarise the basic evidence and the present interpretation of it, and then show how fundamental is the need for reliable evidence from the Yeavering Bell hill-fort.
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> We have recovered a series of major, and unique, Anglo-Saxon timber buildings, and have established their sequential order. Five main phases have been recognised, but there is specific dating evidence only for the last (about 680). Thus, only one end of our chronology is, so to speak, tied down reliably. The dating of the other phases has been provisionally assessed by correlation with the scanty historical evidence bearing on this region and period: the dating of the first phase, in particular, is vague and tentative, resting as it does on the presumption that the Anglo-Saxons reached Yeavering within a generation or two of the landing at Bamburgh in 547 (an event attested, so far as date is concerned, by no more that legend). So we say the Anglo-Saxons probably came to Yeavering by the end of the sixth century, and proceed to attribute the subsequent phases accordingly: the first to Aethelfrith, the second to Edwin, the third to Oswald and so on. Events within those phases do in fact support the attributions, but at present we cannot show precisely when the settlement started; nor, without the assumption in question, can we attempt to say why Yeavering

should have been chosen for the site of an important township, nor again why it persisted so long despite two total destructions by fire.

This difficulty is accentuated by the most remarkable single structure on the site: the great timber assembly-building or 'grandstand'. We have to explain its purpose and its presence on this particular site. If we can confirm our assessment of the dating of the phases to which it belongs, we can demonstrate it was not a heathen religious structure by showing that it was kept in repair long after the conversion to Christianity; but to do this convincingly we must date Phase I effectively. Similarly, if we seek to identify it (as so far all the evidence suggests we should) as a moot, or place of administrative assembly, we must be prepared to show that there are solid grounds for believing a need for such large assemblies to have existed at that time and that seemingly unlikely place.

Here we turn to the great fort on the top of Yeavering Bell, the dominant feature of the landscape. It is the largest hill-fort in Northumberland, and its size derives significantly from the quite extraordinary concentration of lesser native sites in the surrounding area. There can be little doubt that it was the native tribal capital of the region in its time, but only excavation can show how long that time was. Let us, at all events, make the assumption that now concerns us: that the hill-fort, lying as it did outside the northern wall of the Roman Britain, continued to be occupied up to the time of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the area. Now all the separate threads interweave together. This would be the centre of native resistance to the invaders, and one which had to be brought under control before the region could be settled securely. Once subdued, it would demand prolonged supervision lest it serve as a rallying-place for native rebellion. Moreover, in a district with so dense a native population, the Anglo-Saxons would find it necessary to take over the administrative reins. Their way of life was concerned with the fertile plain below, not the barren hills, so it was natural that they should establish their own administrative centre in the valley immediately below the hill-fort. Thus one can answer the question why Yeavering of all places was chosen as the site for an important town. Indeed one can go further, for here, too, is the reason for the presence of the great moot. If one regards Yeavering as an administrative centre for native affairs, all its features drop into place: but the lynch-pin of the argument is missing — where it should be, there is a mere assumption. Tangible evidence lies in the stone-built huts of the hill-fort, and a small amount of excavation will serve to show whether or not the occupation of the fort did indeed extend into the post-Roman period. If it did, there is a reasonable chance that the first phase of the township could be more precisely dated.

In short, the fort on Yeavering Bell appears to have been the prime cause of the township's very existence, and the nature and state of the township in its early phases cannot be considered except in relation to the fort.

We have been dealing with a uniquely important site that opens up a new department of British archaeology: our treatment of it, in the field and in print, will be subjected to most concentrated and critical review by scholars both at home and abroad. Neglect to secure the remaining evidence which is required will be conspicuous and might be uncharitably interpreted. The need for this small investigation to take place has already been remarked in public by two senior archaeologists, and I should find my position acutely embarrassing if approval for it were withheld.

With the best will in the world I do not see how I can begin to prepare the material for publication until the remaining evidence is available to set the whole into reliable perspective. I am extremely anxious to proceed with the preparation of the definitive account, and intend to devote myself entirely to the task as soon as all the material is in my hands.[11]

The letter allows us to follow the thread of his thinking, a year before his more developed summary was to appear in *Medieval Archaeology*. He leaves us in no doubt that he firmly believed that the crucial information would be discovered amidst the round-houses on the summit of Yeavering Bell, where the natives would have been in residence throughout the Roman period and up to the eve of the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons on the plain below in the

later sixth century. In supporting this proposal, both J. C. R. Hamilton and J. G. Hurst, Assistant Inspector, proved staunch allies; not only was Hope-Taylor's application for a £100 grant, (later increased to £150) approved on Hurst's recommendation, but the Ministry undertook to produce a detailed survey of the hillfort at a scale of 1:500. It was not long however, before the financial projections began to unravel. The provision of a contingency of £100 and an estimated £150 for backfilling combined to raise considerably the Ministry's projected cost of the excavation. It is a depressing insight into governmental workings that it is the numerous vapid and fretful internal memos that flew between the various Ministry offices over these sums that so fattens the Ministry of Works file on this excavation. Later in the year this dissatisfaction would be hugely compounded through what was regarded internally as Hope-Taylor's outrageous claim for £4 4s 0d to cover a rail fare; it was only assuaged by a long explanation from him, with which one can only have sympathy. In the event the total cost of the excavation was to come to no more than £198.

In working at Yeavering, Hope-Taylor had been assisted by workmen brought in by van from Alnwick, but plans to source two labourers, initially from Alnwick, and then through the local landowner, John Purvis, came to nothing. It was left to Hope-Taylor himself to bring in people who had worked with him on the settlement at Old Windsor (1953–8); one, a young man, was Paul Savage, whom he clearly trusted sufficiently to appoint as his assistant director. By March 1958 Hope-Taylor had drafted an appeal for the six volunteers he felt would be sufficient to assist in the work planned to take place between the 7 July and the 4 August. Volunteers were expected to bring their own tents, bedding, cooking and eating equipment, and whilst milk and water was available, 'Other supplies will be brought by car from Wooler, on request, on three or four days of the week.' As an additional incentive to a commitment, 'Volunteers who will undertake to spend at least two weeks at the site will be eligible for a subsistence allowance of 5/- [25p] per day and their fares will be paid up to a maximum of £2' (Hope-Taylor Archive HT/37/6).

Shortly before the excavation began, Hope-Taylor approached Selby 'Bunt' Morton of Bendor, near Ewart, to ask if he might be able to get his DC8 tracked caterpillar to the top of the Bell.[12] Bunt had previously been engaged between 1955–7 in removing topsoil at Yeavering and, after a preliminary foray up the hill on foot, on the morning of 7 July his caterpillar wound its way from Yeavering Farm up the eastern flank and onto the crest of the Bell, pulling a sledge on which sat Hope-Taylor, several volunteers and a quantity of tools and equipment. The line of its tracks (visible on the aerial photographs) show it negotiated the eastern entrance, where some preliminary removal of stone was necessary to effect passage (RCHME 1999, 13). Once at the top, Bunt was instructed to clear the trench areas of any gorse, and then remove the grass. This was achieved both methodically and deftly simply by using the bucket to roll up lengths of turf rather like a 'Swiss-roll', stacking them neatly by the side of the trench (e.g. H-T Archive photograph YB_6_6).

POSITIONING AND DIMENSIONS OF THE TRENCHES

Hope-Taylor's strategy is reflected in the positioning of his trenches, and about these we have five sources of information. The most comprehensive and informative of these sources is the group of twelve aerial photographs taken by J. K. St Joseph of the University of Cambridge on 16 July 1958 (CUCAP XG 35–47) (fig. 1). In view of the long-standing friendship that existed between Hope-Taylor and St Joseph, the latter would undoubtedly have been aware

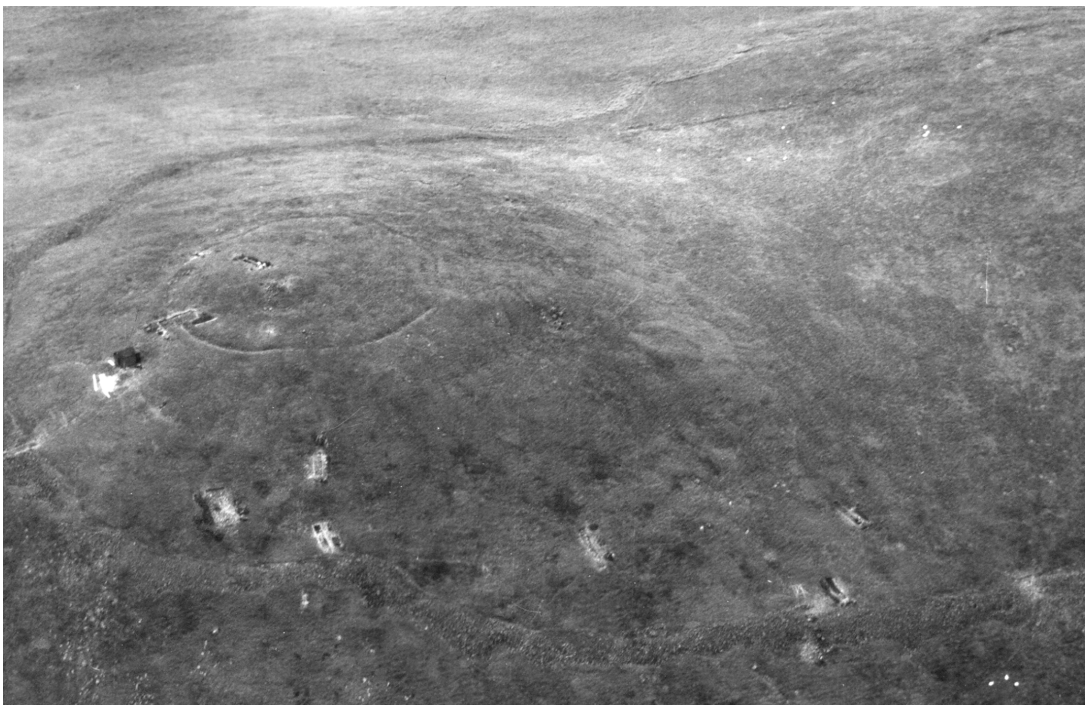

Fig. 1 Aerial Photograph taken by J. K. St Joseph in June 1958 showing the disposition of Hope-Taylor's trenches on the northern side of the Bell. (Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs, photo No. XG43).

of the dates of the forthcoming excavation and clearly had agreed to provide a record if conditions permitted. Ideally an excavator might wish such a record to be made nearer to the conclusion of the work when this would capture the excavation at its most extensive and complete. However, the timing for aerial photography is usually dictated by local weather conditions. As the photographs were taken only ten days after the excavation began, this may be a reflection of St Joseph's judgement in the light of a July that had begun cool and unsettled, but which became drier and sunnier in the second week before regressing once more into cooler conditions. Accordingly the photographs cannot be used to account for all the trenches that were laid out, and indeed, over the next nineteen days at least two more (L and M) were to be opened. In 1998, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) quarried these photographs for their report on Yeavering Bell, producing a transcription of ten trenches, all positioned within the north-eastern quadrant of the site, (RCHME 1999, 23, fig. 7). Though they were aware of the trench Hope-Taylor opened over a rectangular building to the west of the southern entrance, they omitted this from their transcription, possibly because it had been opened after St Joseph's aerial sortie (RCHME 1999, 21). Their transcription also omitted a small cutting across the southern circuit of the enclosure around the eastern summit, which is faintly visible in CUCAP photograph BX 41. This trench is shown on Hope-Taylor's plan drawings in the H-T Archive (H-T/37/4). The aerial photographs also record the position of the wooden site-hut, with an annexe at its rear, which was prominently sited on the eastern shoulder of the east summit.

A second source of information is RCHME'S analytical field survey of the hillfort, in the report of which they noted those places within the fortifications where they believed they could identify archaeological trenching (RCHME 1999, 10, 12, 23) (fig. 2). Some of these correlate with those shown on their transcript, and thereby pinpoint a number of those that result from Hope-Taylor's work. Another source is the memory of the volunteers who were with Hope-Taylor at the time. One of these was Richard Bailey, who had taken part in the excavation as a young student and who was able to add numerous points of detail to the archival record.

A fourth source of information is found in the eighty-six black and white photographs and two colour slides which are preserved in the Hope-Taylor Archive, (RCAHMS: YB_1–8 and HT43). In addition to the details they provide as to what lay within some of the trenches, they confirm that two further cuttings were opened up after St Joseph's aerial sortie. One was Trench L, a large area excavation against the northern rampart and to the west of the northern gateway (fig. 8). Although this trench had not been opened when the aerial photographs were taken, close scrutiny of its location on CUCAP XG38 and XG40 reveals not only a figure standing precisely on this spot, but also what appears to be lines marking out its boundary. This suggests that work on it was underway or imminent. The photographs also add detail about the trench opened to the west of the south gateway (Trench M) and the evidence of these images will prove critical in the later discussion of the structures encountered.[13]

Finally, there is a set of scaled plans of seven trenches in Hope-Taylor's distinctive hand, preserved in the H-T Archive HT/37/4; trenches captioned C, D, E, F, G, 'H', and 'L'). Co-ordinating their dimensions with the trenches visible on both groups of photographs, it is possible tentatively to correlate the two sources. From the alphabetic sequence assigned to each plan by Hope-Taylor we can also test for any logic in the sequence between alphabetical enumeration and the location of trenches on the ground. Aided by a small sketch which shows Hope-Taylor designated the three trenches on the eastern summit as A to C, the starting point and direction of his sequence can be established and it is thereafter possible both to recover his alphabetic coding for trenches A to H and surmise that those further to the west in this northern circuit progressed through I, J and K (the latter being that over the northern gateway). If this is accepted, the large trench opened a little further to the west must then have been 'L', while the latest trench some 60 m to the west of the south gateway, will have been 'M'.

Taken together, the last two sources allow some precision in establishing the dimensions of Hope-Taylor's trenches. However, each is a record only of one moment in time, for it is clear from comparison between all the different sources that while the dimensions of some trenches remained static throughout the excavation, others were later extended. Thirteen trenches were eventually opened, all but two within the first week (fig. 2). Three were designed to investigate the eastern enclosure (A–C). That in its interior [A] was doubtless positioned to pick up on the central 'enclosure' noted here by Tate, with the other two [B and C] focused upon the 'ditch'; B was a very small affair, but C was more extensive and designed to inform on both 'ditch' and causeway. No less than eight trenches targeted houses within the hillfort [D–G, I, J, L and M]. The majority lay within the north-east quadrant. The first six of these were laid across house-platforms, but two relatively large trenches, beyond the northern and southern entrances [L and M], were set across rectangular houses. Trench M in particular, was positioned next to a house-circle in which Roman pottery had previously been discovered (Tate 1862, 437). Finally, two trenches were designed to investigate the perimeter wall: one [H]

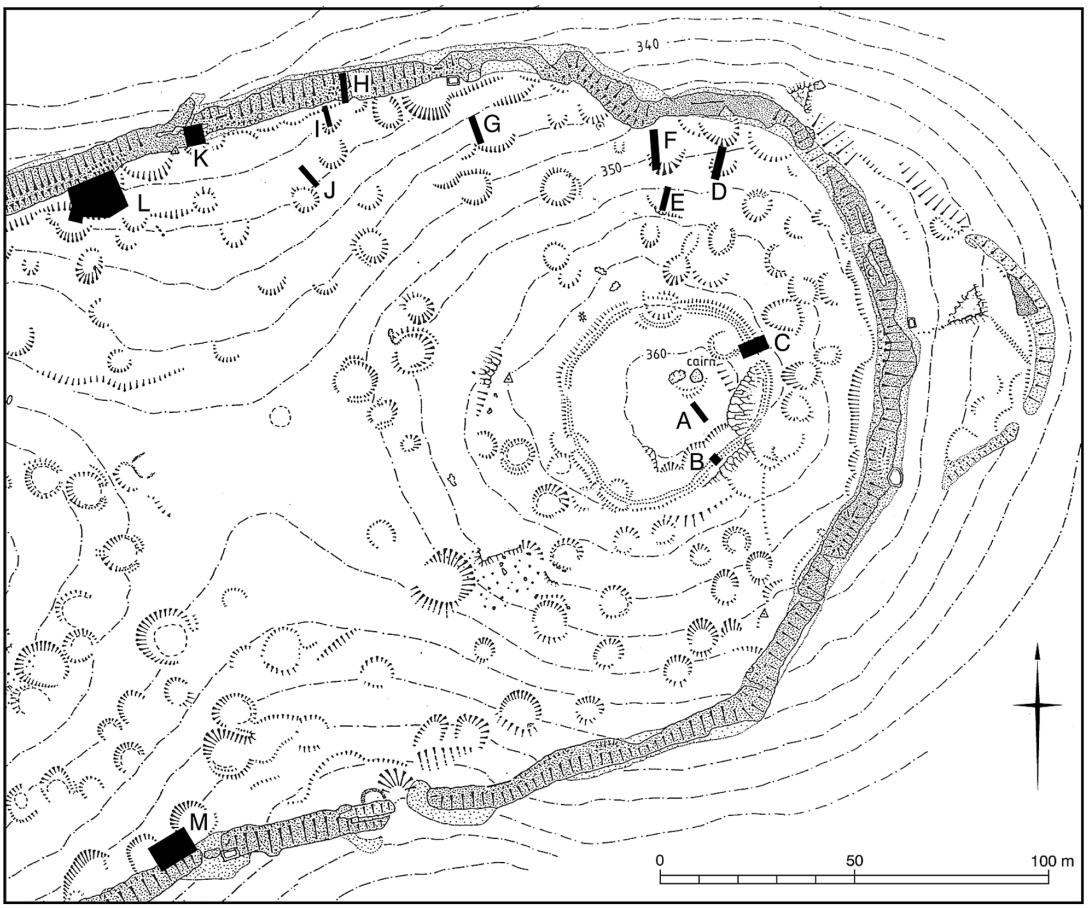

Fig. 2 The location of the 1958 excavation trenches A–M, superimposed on the RCHME (1998) plan, updated by Trevor Pearson in 2012 to include the positions of cuttings B, L and M. © English Heritage.

was a narrow trench across the north wall, and the second [K] was a more extensive cutting across the northern gateway. Cumulatively they mark: those places where he hoped to find evidence of fifth- or sixth-century activity; the circular houses that might demonstrate evidence of Roman date, as suggested from Tate's finds; the hillfort defences that might reveal evidence of an unrecognised 'historic' phase; the rectangular houses that might be of fifth-century date — as it was believed Jobey had shown to be the case at Huckhoe (Jobey 1958, 232). In addition, there was the 'ditch' enclosure on the eastern summit that Hope-Taylor thought in all likelihood to be prehistoric, but which was so prominently situated that it might contain something of a later age.

THE INDIVIDUAL TRENCHES

Fig 2 shows the maximum extent of all the trenches that were opened by Hope-Taylor, assigning to each what we can now assume to have been its alphabetical label. Descriptions

Fig. 3 Trench C: the palisade from the south. (YB_5_2).
© RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection).

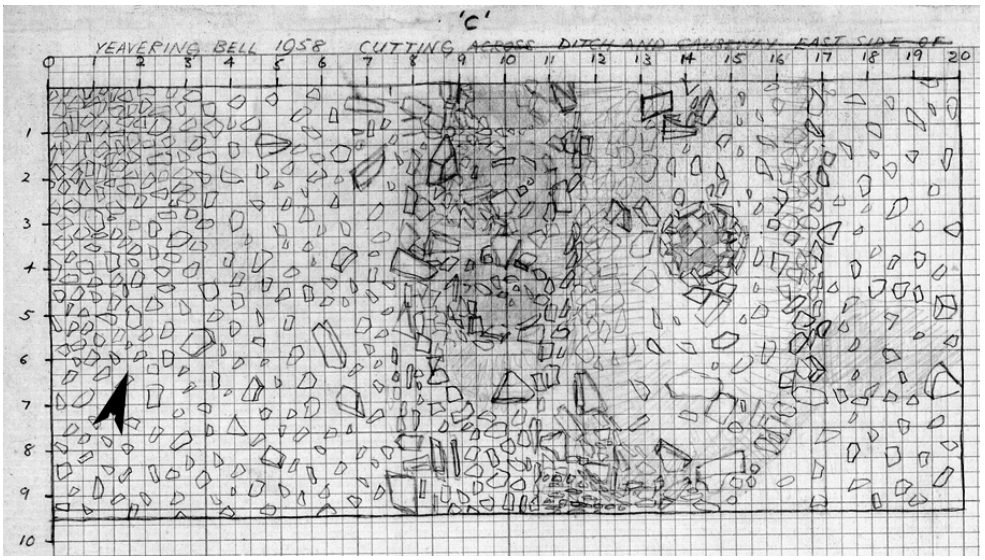

Fig. 4 Trench C, a plan drawn at an early stage of excavation, showing the palisade (centre) with its putative post-holes and packing-stones, outer bank with post-holes and revetment, and the edge of the causeway below both. (Hope Taylor Archive HT/37/4 and DC 56539. © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection). (North arrow added.)

of the trenches opened — as reconstructed from the scant evidence available — have been deposited with the archive in RCAHMS. The drawings and the photographs seem to show the initial clearance of each trench rather than a fully comprehensible picture. These are scrappy excavation records, showing only work in progress, before the excavation of each trench was completed. They would have been superseded by fuller excavation records, but these have not survived.

TRENCH A. The reason for its position is unclear; and the only information as to what was discovered within it is that one of the aerial photographs (CUCAP XG41) shows stonework at the mid-point of the trench.

TRENCH B. The smallest cutting that Hope-Taylor made on the Bell, set out over the southern limit of the palisade ditch. No information has survived.

TRENCH C. (figs. 3 and 4). Positioned to straddle what appeared to be an eastern causeway across the palisade ditch on the eastern summit. There is a notable concentration of stone along the line of the causeway, and on the outer crest of the bank to the east of the cutting. The ditch cut to take the palisade is estimated at a little over 6 ft (1.8 m) in width and no greater than 2 ft (0.6 m) in depth; it was of an even width with a rounded terminal in its upper level, but there was considerable irregularity in its shape lower down. Scrutiny of the section in YB_5_2 shows an upper lens of dark soil below the turf-line and a central feature within the fill at a lower level. YB_6_9 shows this cutting in greater detail and suggests that there were three voids along its length within the stone filling. This is *contra* the in-line posts indicated in his trench plan which indicates the stone packing of an oval post-hole, 2 ft (0.6 m) by 1 ft 8 ins (0.5 m) in diameter, just within the terminal of the ditch, no more than 2 ft (0.6 m)

Fig. 5 Trench D from the south (YB_6_7). © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection)

from the causeway. A second possible post-hole of similar dimensions lies immediately adjacent to the north, with a third beyond disappearing into the section.

The bank, some 5 ft 6 ins (1.65 m) to the east of the outer edge of the cutting, and running largely parallel with it, is an alignment of closely packed stonework with its more regular edge to the east. This bends inwards at the causeway. Within the line of the bank there appears to be one, or possibly two, post-holes, both of which are of a size commensurate with those in the ditch.

TRENCH D (fig. 5; YB_6_6 to _8) was positioned across a house platform. Its floor was littered with stone, some in dense concentrations, but other areas were relatively bare. Three large stones towards the north-eastern corner of the trench appears to have been part of a more extensive banked feature. Hope-Taylor's drawing of this trench is clearly incomplete — and there are discrepancies between it and the photographs — but shows a large circular 'platform' of stones, its perimeter carefully defined by stone edging. It is 11 ft (3.3 m) in diameter.

TRENCH E was positioned across a house platform. There are no photographs of this cutting, but in a scaled drawing differing densities of stonework across its floor are shown, and larger stonework forming possible structural elements. To the north there may have been a very ragged wall.

TRENCH F (fig. 6) provided a section across another circular house platform. The plan indicates, towards the southern end, three circular features, possibly post-holes. The earliest is the northernmost of the cluster. It is defined by an edging of stonework 2 ft (0.6 m) in diameter. Immediately to the south and just impinging upon it is a second of similar size; overlying the southern third of this is part of a larger circle — 3 ft 6 ins (1.05 m) in diameter and packed with stone — partly lost under the eastern edge of the trench. A small rectangular cutting at the centre of the trench and against the west section would indicate further stonework at a lower level in the trench.

TRENCH G. This trench was set out across the back of a house platform. Hope-Taylor's unfinished sketch-plan shows a scattering of larger stones at its southern end but there is nothing more.

TRENCH H lay across the stone tumble marking the northern defences. The photographs (YB_1_4 to 10; YB_5_4 to 10; YB_8_3 to 4; YB_9_1–2) record the full length of this cutting, and show that at its northern end the external 'face' of the wall is positioned lower down the slope than the internal 'face'. At both points the photographs record substantial blocks, that to the

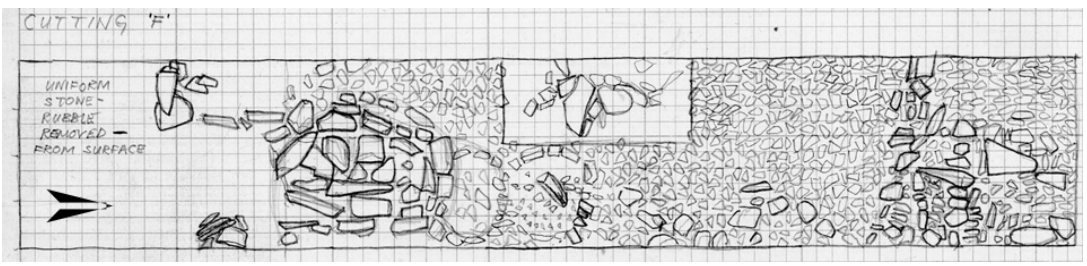

Fig. 6 Trench F, planned at an early stage. (Hope Taylor Archive HT/37/4 and DC 56541. © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection). (North arrow added.)

south offering a more convincing face-line than that to the north. Photographs of the central section of the trench show a dense core of smaller stones, whilst YB_1_4 to 10 are largely a record of a reconstructed section of the rampart wall built by Richard Bailey and others towards the end of the excavation in order to determine the defensive possibilities of the rampart. Hope-Taylor's plan is incomplete but emphasised what were believed to be the approximate lines of the internal and external wall faces. Hope-Taylor was plainly more convinced by the stones on the interior than by those on the exterior which were drawn as if he considered them to be only tumble. A line of large stones was set within the core running parallel with the outer face.

TRENCH I lay just inside the north wall of the rampart, but apart from this, nothing else is known.

TRENCH J was set out across an elevated house platform overlooking the north rampart. The photographs (YB_8_6 and 7: YB_8_9) show two linear concentrations of large stones crossing the trench from east to west, presumably representing the southern and northern walls of the house. A possible break in the southern wall (by the western edge of the trench) may indicate an entrance. The house had an estimated diameter of about 12 ft (3.6 m).

TRENCH K (fig. 7) was set out over what had long been regarded as a northern entrance to the hillfort, Photographs (YB_2_1; YB_2_7; YB_3_4 to 8, and two colour slides HT43) show a 'passage' *c.* 6 ft (2 m) in width through the rampart wall. Its southern edge is more clearly delineated than the northern one, and its eastern terminal is well defined by a line of large stones.

Hope-Taylor later made a smaller square extension of this trench to the south, where the rampart approaches the gateway from the east. This work may have been undertaken to resolve the nature of the ragged linear mound of stonework that extends south from the rampart at this point.

TRENCH L (fig. 8; photographs YB_2_2 to 5; YB_7_1 to 6; YB_9_9 to 11). The extent of this trench is unclear, although it was one of the largest that Hope-Taylor opened on the Bell and one he felt to be sufficiently informative as to justify erecting his photographic tower alongside it. The trench was set just within the inner edge of the northern perimeter, and the photographs show that it was extended several times. In its western half lay what appears as the western half of a rectangular stone structure oriented E-W. Its walls are low and so roughly built that estimates of their original dimensions are impossible. To the north of this, and backing onto the inner face of the hillfort wall, was a circular building about 7 to 8 ft (2.1–2.4 m) in diameter, marked only by a circle of large stones; a flat stone on the eastern side possibly formed a threshold. Running eastwards from it, parallel to the inner line of the fort wall, was what looks very like the line of a drain.

It is possible that a second, larger, circular structure underlies the rectangular one. In photograph YB_2_5 in particular, there is a hint of a dark foundation trench within the curve of the southern edge of the trench. (This may have been the reason for the shape of the latter). To the north the ground level appears to have been made up and bounded by a curve of larger stones, with the whole forming the characteristic scooped profile of a house-platform. Hope-Taylor has left us a partial plan of the trench (H-T/37/4), recording the stonework at the north-western edge of the cutting and the possible drain.

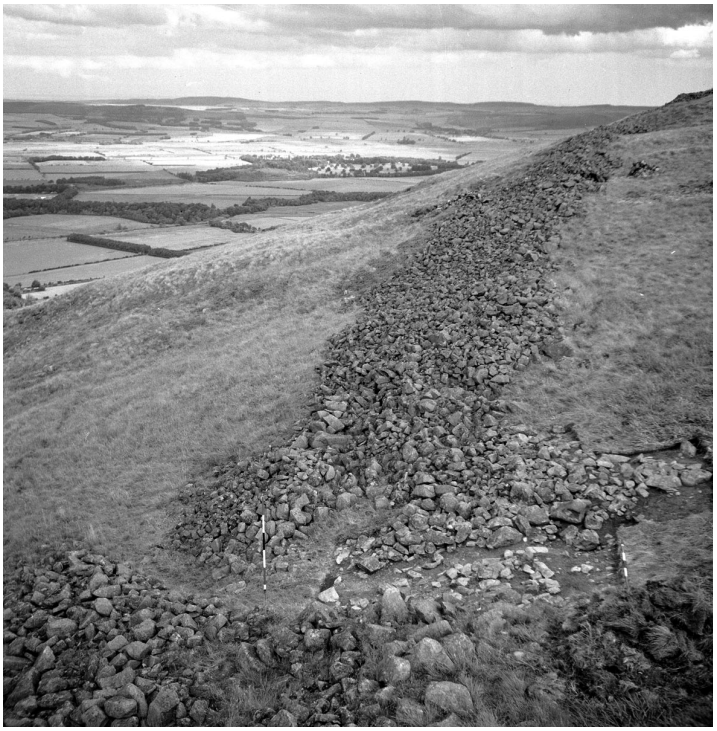

Fig. 7 Trench K from the west (detail from YB_3_8). © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection)

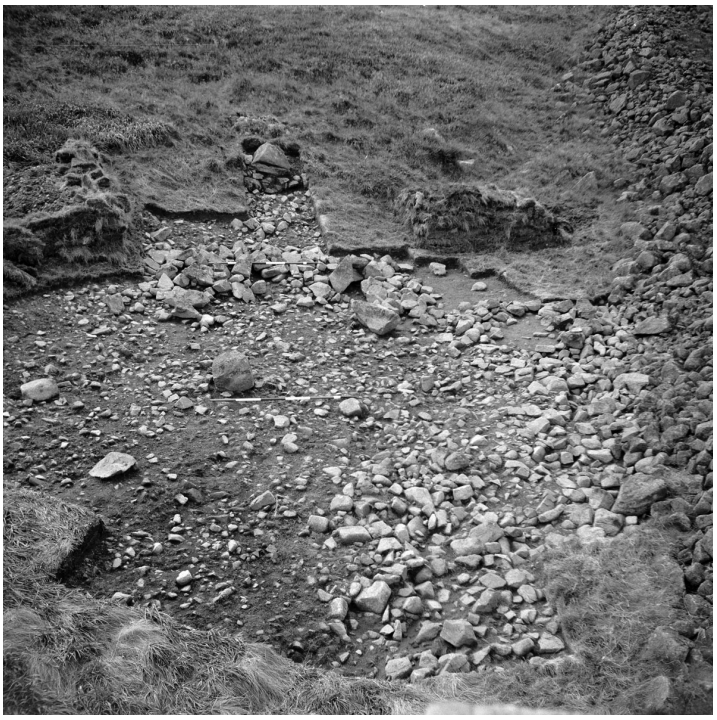

Fig. 8 Trench L from the east. The perimeter wall of the hillfort lies on the right. (YB_2_4). © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection)

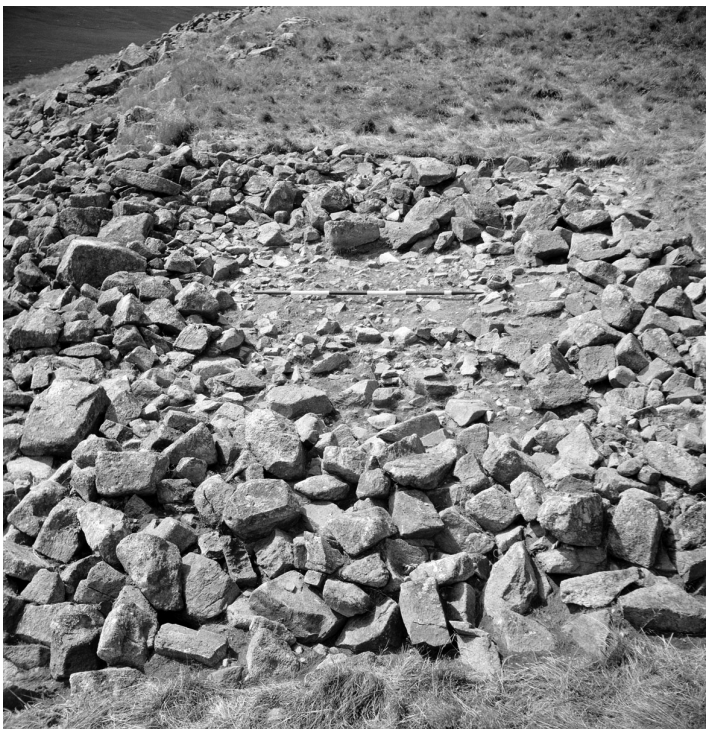

Fig. 9 Trench M from the east, with the perimeter wall of the hillfort to the left. (YB_4_1). © RCAHMS (Brian Hope-Taylor Collection)

TRENCH M. (fig. 9; YB_4_1 to 4; YB_9_6 to 8). This trench was set out over the tumbled southern perimeter wall of the hillfort, to the west of the southern entrance. The photographs, which form the only record, show a rough square structure partly overlying the tumble from the fort wall.

HOPE-TAYLOR'S SUMMARY ACCOUNTS

Despite Hope-Taylor's professed intention to produce a, 'definitive report in Arch. Ael[iana]' (1977, 358, fn 11) the work on the Bell was never written up. He did, however, leave three extended accounts of what he considered to be the salient elements of his work there. They were written between 1958 and the time of his death in 2001 and each would appear to be separated from the other two by an interval of twenty years, As such, they are perhaps as important for what they reveal of the excavator's thinking at that particular moment as for the detail they collectively proffer. There are differences in these accounts of what was found, and where, and — in the case of the relationship of the eastern summit enclosure to the hillfort — a startling and momentous change of thought is revealed (see below and Table 1).

The first account is an Interim Report, produced by December 1958 for the Ministry of Works, summarizing the results of his work. It exists in two forms, a hand-written draft with revisions (HT/37/11) and a typed account (HT/37/6). They differ in arrangement and there is some additional text to the latter. What follows here is an edited amalgamation of the two. He gave as his reason for the excavation the idea that the fort was the native capital of the region and that its continued occupation in the sixth century was the prime stimulus for the special Anglo-Saxon settlement at the bottom of the hill.

Numerous circular house sites were partially or wholly excavated. (Those excavated gave little indication of their former structural details.) It was found that very little remained of their former structures, probably because their walls were built of turf and stones easily disintegrated by centuries of severe erosion. A corresponding paucity of occupation material is almost certainly due to the same cause.

However, in addition to a small quantity of native pottery of indeterminate date, the crucial evidence was provided by the discovery of two late-Roman coins and two sherds of Samian ware. The coins, buried in a stone-lined hole in a house floor, appear to be the remnants from a hoard. Minted in the fourth century they are likely to have spent some time in circulation before being buried. Thus, there is evidence of native occupation during the Roman period up to the fifth century at least [and there can now be little doubt that the Anglo-Saxon invaders found it to be a centre of native activity in the next century], and the small gap which remains between this time and the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in this region is not significant. The latest occupation of the fort is represented by two rectangular stone houses, discovered during the excavation one built over a circular house-foundation of the earlier type and both built of stone robbed from the fort's defences. The defences were therefore investigated and it was found that the tumbled stone rubble visible today masks the remains of a massive thick (dry-built) stone wall which originally stood at least 6 feet high.

The second account occurs within his final published report on Yeavering (1977, 6):

Some of its houses were crudely excavated in the middle of the nineteenth century [he cites Tate 1862, 431–54] and yielded small finds referable at latest to the 1st century AD. Further excavations, carried out by the writer in 1958 (Plate 112) produced two late Roman *minimi* from a small pit in the floor of one circular house, and three abraded sherds of true 'Samian' ware from two other circular house-sites; besides establishing that in two cases circular houses were overlaid by rectangular drystone structures (e.g. Plate 11), with which small fragments of crude 'native' pottery were associated.

The eastern part of Yeavering Bell carries the remains of a small palisaded enclosure which *presumably pre-dates the oppidum* [my emphasis]. It seems reasonably clear that the oppidum itself was built at the end of the first millennium BC and that its heyday came to an end in or by the first century after Christ. The meagre handful of later relics show that part of the site was occasionally used thereafter, but there is no reason to suppose that the old stronghold still served as a major defensible centre. Indeed, the remains of its great stone wall are so completely flattened as to suggest that all may have been deliberately overthrown, and it is conceivable that this, like some other hill-forts, was slighted as a suppressive measure during the Roman occupation of the its territory.

His final word on the site was contained within his reply to a letter from Paul Frodsham, then the archaeologist within the Northumberland National Park Authority, in connection with the 'Discovering our Hillfort Heritage' project. In answer to Frodsham's questions he wrote that he had been unable to locate George Tate's archive, and that his own had been destroyed in a flood and the finds lost. He recalled, however, that the Samian ware and the two *minimi* had been found within houses on the north-facing side of the Bell, close to its lateral saddle. He believed the evidence for extensive burning over the eastern enclosure to have derived from a hearth or beacon, and crucially, 'certainly regarded the palisade-enclosure as a very late (if not final) feature of the Bell's structural history.' (Hope-Taylor Archive, HT/37/24; see also Frodsham and O'Brien 2005, 235–6.)

In Table 1 the salient elements drawn from the separate accounts are correlated, to reveal both amplifications and discrepancies in the record over time.

SUMMARY FROM A DISTANCE, 2012

The hillfort perimeter wall and northern entrance

The perimeter wall was examined in trenches H and K. In neither does the wall thickness seem to have been established with any precision. Trench H shows the wall to have had a thickness of *c.* 6 feet (1.8 m); In Trench K it appears from the photographs to have been as much as 11 feet (3.3 m) thick, although this is at the northern entrance. However, Oswald and Pearson (2005, 112) do not accept that this entrance is original, pointing to the continuation of the inner wall-line across the 'passageway' in the photograph that was published in the Yeavering report (1977, pl. 12; YB_3_7) as indicative of an entrance, 'created or remodelled in the Roman Iron Age'. The rubble mound extending southwards from the eastern 'terminal' may have resulted from the clearance necessary to provide this opening.

House platforms

Eight of the thirteen trenches were set out across house platforms (fig. 2; D–G, I–J, L and M), and it is plain that it was here where Hope-Taylor felt that the questions he had posed regarding native survival into the fifth and sixth centuries AD might best find an answer. The majority of these trenches consisted of narrow cuttings extending from the front to the rear of each platform. The photographs show how close to the surface the remains were found to lie, and that there was little depth to the stratigraphy. Trench D appears to have contained clear indications of at least two structures, one of which was circular, and appears to have been *c.* 12 feet (3.5 m) in diameter. This appears to be roughly equivalent to the diameter of a similar structure visible in trench J. However, it is unclear from the photograph if the second structure in the NE quadrant of trench D was circular or sub-rectangular. Yet in no instance does the wall of a house appear to be more than a rickle of stones and earth.

It is unclear which two buildings produced the abraded samian fragments, but the fact that they lay near the saddle on the north side of the Bell points to their having been discovered in trenches I, J or L. Hope-Taylor's records are also vague as to the number of sherds found, for although he initially reports finding two sherds, this is later increased to three (Table 1). These were not the first fragments of this ware to have been found on Yeavering Bell, for Tate describes a fragment, '…of fine clay and (it) is of a bright red colour but soft and decomposing…', which he had been informed probably originated in France (Tate 1862, 9, 19).

The two *minimi* came from within a different structure, and were found in a stone-lined pit, possibly a post-hole (Richard Bailey, pers. comm.). Hope-Taylor was filming off-site at the time of their discovery, but his recollection that the house in which they were found lay near to the saddle on the northern side of the Bell, is confirmed by Bailey. Hope-Taylor believed these to have been the residue of a hoard, although his reasoning for this is not explained. Photographs YB_7_8, YB_7_10 and YB_7_12 are of a pit lying within a narrow trench which unfortunately cannot be identified; however, given its size, these coins may have been discovered in either cutting I or J. Two of the photographs, (YB_7_8 and YB_7_10) show what appear to be modern coins at two different positions within this pit. They are too large to have been the *minimi*, but it seems entirely plausible that Hope-Taylor placed these here for this photograph to record the findspot. As the *minimi* are now lost they can be dated no more closely than to the late third/ or fourth century AD.

Hope-Taylor's discoveries are remarkable as they demonstrated that whatever the condition of the perimeter defences at this time, there was activity — presumably settlement — on

the Bell in the second or third centuries AD which continued into the fourth century AD. The association of Roman pottery and coins with the remains of platforms for timber houses was significant, as the orthodoxy of the time held that timber round-houses were pre-Roman, only being replaced in stone during the Roman period. Subsequently, the results of the excavation at Broxmouth, in East Lothian, pushed the construction of stone round houses back to before the second century BC (Hill 1982, 175), whilst work at Eildon Hill North, in Roxburghshire, revealed timber round houses dating to the second to third centuries AD (Owen 1992, 69; Oswald and Pearson 2005, 115). But by 1958 Hope-Taylor had already shown that the occupation of round houses continued into the seventh century AD; he had discovered just such a building, containing native pottery, overlying one of the seventh-century rectangular Anglo-Saxon halls at Yeavering (1977, 104–5, fig. 47). The post-holes of this large round house, some 25 feet (7.5 m) in diameter, survived only within the latter's floor deposits, their survival being due entirely to the fact that this building had a sunken floor. It seems worthwhile to draw attention to this circumstance of preservation, for it is possible that other lightly founded circular houses once existed elsewhere on the site.

The round houses on Yeavering Bell and at the palace site belong to a small group, including those at Huckhoe (Jobey 1959), and Crock Cleuch, Roxburghshire (Steer and Keeney 1949, 138–57) that attest to continuity of settlement and house type in the region beyond the third century AD (Hodgson *et al*. 2013, 213–16). As with those at Eildon Hill North and Traprain Law (Jobey 1976, 198–203; Hunter 2013, 6), those on Yeavering Bell indicate that settlement persisted within the earlier hill-top defences in late to Post-Roman times. Whilst the evidence was insufficiently plentiful to encourage Hope-Taylor to propose a large-scale settlement of the hill-top at this time it did at least offer yet another context for settlement variation and continuity during these centuries.

The rectangular houses

The account that Hope-Taylor sent to the Ministry of Works, and his brief note in the Yeavering report, reveal that he had excavated two rectangular structures within the defences. He was clear that both were constructed of stone robbed from the fort-wall, and that in one (unidentified) instance there was absolutely no doubt that the rectangular building overlay a round house. The rectangular structure in Trench M, 60 m to the west of the southern entrance, appeared to overlie the tumble of the fort wall. From both structures he recovered small fragments of 'native' pottery, though the date of this and its association with these buildings remain uncertain. RCHME noted several rectangular and sub-rectangular structures during their survey that they were inclined assign to the medieval or post-medieval period (RCHME 1999, 21–2), as indeed has seemed to be the case for dated rectangular structures in prehistoric earthworks elsewhere (cf. Miket forthcoming)

The enclosure on the eastern summit

Hope-Taylor was not the first to turn the soil within this eastern enclosure in the hopes of discovering some clue as to its purpose, In summarizing previous investigations, Oswald and Pearson interpret a sequence beginning with a robbed Bronze Age ring-cairn, identified by Horsley, which was first excavated by Hutchinson in 1776, and then again by Tate in 1862 (Oswald and Pearson 2005, 105). Evidence of considerable burning was found, possibly relating to the cairn, or perhaps to a beacon, before the introduction of an Ordnance Survey

triangulation station in the mid-nineteenth century (Oswald and Pearson 2005, 105). Hope-Taylor's Trench A was so positioned to recover information on what was happening within this enclosure, and most probably it was in this trench that he found the, '…interstitial patches of reddened clay…', charcoal and evidence of extensive burning that led him to suggest this as the site of a beacon.

Trenches B and C were specifically directed towards the resolution of the character of the enclosure's perimeter. Its appearance left early antiquaries in little doubt that this had been a ditch. Tate's excavation established its dimensions as 5 feet (1.5 m) in depth, 5 feet (1.5 m) in width at the berm, narrowing to 2 feet (0.6 m) in width where it was reduced to a slot, partly rock-cut, at its base. Notwithstanding the discovery of charred wood at this point, Tate (1862, 8) did not believe that this was, '…in sufficient quantity or size to prove that there had been a stockade around the entrenchment'. Tate was able to add detail on the low mound around the outer lip of the ditch, and rejected previous traditions referring to a paved approach to an eastern causeway noted by Hutchinson (1776) as precisely 9 feet (2.7 m) in width. It is probable that Hope-Taylor's trench C included part of the area that Tate had excavated a century earlier.

In the light of the transition from palisades to hillforts that had emerged through research in Roxburghshire and Northumberland in the 1950s, George Jobey (1966, 97–8) came to regard this ditch on the eastern summit of the Bell as the trench of a palisade. Moreover, he believed it was earlier than the house-platforms. As a great admirer of the 'incomparable Jobey', Hope-Taylor allowed himself to follow this interpretation and, as a result, failed to open a trench over one of the four possible intersections between the perimeter and a house-platform that might have demonstrated their relationship. The most recent and most detailed scrutiny of the relationship of this perimeter to the house platforms confirms that the former cuts the latter and therefore post-dates the houses, whilst also crossing the floor of a small quarry interpreted as dating to the construction of the hillfort (RCHME 1999, 20–21; Oswald and Pearson 2005, 117). Notwithstanding his failure to establish such sequential relationships, it was Hope-Taylor's decisive identification of this perimeter as a palisade that was to be, in retrospect, one of the most significant achievements of this excavation. His plan (fig. 4) clearly shows the post-holes and packing-stones that supported a stockade of substantial upright timbers, each some 2 feet (0.6 m) in diameter, closely set along the bottom of the cutting. Furthermore, this palisade appears to have been free-standing: had an internal revetment bank existed this would have masked the adjacent house-platforms. However, its relationship to the low outer mound is unclear. Possible explanations might have it as a bank resulting from the excess soil displaced by the inserted timbers (with the posts in this bank perhaps indicating some external buttressing?), or alternatively, as upcast arising from their removal.

GEFRIN, THE BELL AND DOON HILL: CHANGING INTERPRETATIONS, 1958–2012

In view of the pivotal role that the discovery of the site at Doon Hill, in East Lothian, was to play in the development of Hope-Taylor's thinking, the question inevitably arises as to why, as late as 1979, he still appeared to hold to the belief that the palisade was earlier than the hillfort, yet twenty years later he was equally firm in his conviction that it was later? In the Yeavering monograph he described it as '…a small palisaded enclosure which presumably

pre-dates the oppidum' (1977, 6). However this can be shown to have been a text of an earlier age which was not representative of his beliefs at this time. The clues lie both in his Preface, dated to 1969, and within a footnote where he reports that '…as this book goes to press, the writer's excavations of Doon Hill, Dunbar have disclosed…' (1977, 367, fn 257). Doon Hill had been excavated by Hope-Taylor between 1964 and 1966, while he was finalizing the text of his Yeavering report. It was delivered to his printer in sections, and the final part was in their hands by February 1969 (H-T/37/14). The excavations at Doon Hill had revealed a polygonal palisaded enclosure of two phases enclosing two successive structures. The earlier he was to interpret as a British hall, whilst he envisaged its successor to have been built in the Anglo-Saxon tradition (1966, 175). In this context it is remarkable that he did not draw upon this information in his Yeavering report to admit the possibility that the palisade on the eastern summit of the Bell might be the very native administrative centre he so desperately sought to fill his fifth- and sixth-century vacuum. It begs the question as to why he did not? It may be that if he did not feel impelled to revise the Yeavering text at the time he was excavating Doon Hill, it expressed a mindset unmodified by what he was finding at this second site. It is certainly the case that within the short note that Hope-Taylor (1966, 175) contributed to *Medieval Archaeology* he only mentioned in passing the encircling polygonal palisade that he had found there. But then again, the belief that palisades were a prehistoric feature which usually preceded hillfort construction was the current orthodoxy in the mid-1960s; and whilst Hope-Taylor was undoubtedly familiar with the evidence for timber palisades in early medieval contexts[14] and was prepared to step beyond that orthodoxy in the case of both his Great Enclosure and the Doon Hill palisade, he may have felt less comfortable about doing so at Yeavering Bell where the palisade lay in such direct relationship to a hillfort (1977, 205). It was surely this that had led him in the first place to accept uncritically that the palisade on the eastern summit was earlier than the stone wall, and it was surely also why at no point in his argument to the Ministry on his grand idea had he considered proposing that this enclosure on its eastern summit might indeed be the vital link.

Alternatively, it may be that the trajectory resulting from the seemingly negative results of the Bell excavations led him to re-examine more critically what he had already found at its foot. It is clear that, while his discoveries within the hillfort were not without interest, they had not supplied him with the native continuum he craved. The best he could muster in his report to the Ministry of Works was, '…there is evidence of native occupation during the Roman period up to the fifth century at least, [and there can now be little doubt that the Anglo-Saxon invaders found it to be a centre of native activity in the next century] and the small gap which remains between this time and the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in this region is not significant' (RCAHMS HT/37/11). Between 1958 and 1965, when his text for publication was in effect complete, his focus had turned to the 'fort-like' timber structure he called 'the Great Enclosure' at the eastern end of Yeavering in the valley below. This reconsideration was to gradually strengthen into a conviction that it was here that the evidence in support of a claim for 'post-Roman' native 'British' activity at the site was to be found.[15] This would be supported by the extended chronology he was to assign to the complicated structural sequence observed in its architectural evolution, which, he would argue, could surely not have begun any later than AD 500 and quite possibly as early as AD 375 (1977, 211). But then, with parts of the Yeavering report ready for the printer, he encountered the polygonal palisade at Doon Hill. This provided the bridge between the British and Anglo-Saxon worlds he had sought so hard at Yeavering. But in the timing of this discovery he was confronted

with a dilemma. One course of action would require him to place the progress of the Yeavering report on hold and begin a radical rewrite that would jettison his arguments for the Great Enclosure as the link between the native and Anglo-Saxon, in favour of those for the palisade on the Bell in its stead. In this, however, he would also have had to explain how he had been unable to establish either the date of the palisade or its proper sequential relationship to other features on the Bell which would have revealed it to have been late in the sequence. There was no middle way; to argue that the polygonal palisade represented a post-hillfort phase, preceding a Great Enclosure built *c.* AD 375, was chronologically incompatible with the much later dating of Doon Hill's palisade, whilst to argue that there had been two native centres at Yeavering — one on the Bell and one in the valley — in the fifth and sixth century AD might be thought just a little implausible. However, relocating this necessary fifth- or sixth-century native administrative centre to the top of the Bell would indeed have been hugely revisionist and, besides, by this time he might just have felt that he had invested too much in the case for British Celtic origins of the Great Enclosure to make any further revision. He was now extremely busy and the mid-1960s were to see him both at the height of his powers and at his most industrious. He had just completed the text of the Yeavering report; he was engaged in television work with Anglia TV; he was advising the diocese at York in their major conservation programme at the Minster; and his promotion from Assistant Lecturer to a Fellowship at Wolfson College, Cambridge, was imminent. Moreover, progressing the text of Yeavering to its present position had been a protracted, bloody and bitter affair, as the surviving correspondence between Hope-Taylor, the Ministry of Works and HMSO, for the period 1966 to 1978, clearly testifies.[16] In the event he chose to allow the report to proceed through to publication, while conscious that in allowing the simple phrase to stand that the palisade on the Bell '…presumably pre-dates the oppidum' actually promoted a belief he no longer held. He was not to rectify this publicly until twenty years had passed.

Further evidence for Hope-Taylor's evolving thoughts on this problem emerge from exchanges between the author and Hope-Taylor in 1975. By this date Hope-Taylor had resigned his university post and, clearly unwell, had returned to Wooler to recuperate with his friends, Vera and Lionel Rutherford. In correspondence with him at that time, I had suggested that there might be a link between Doon Hill and the literary record of a 'reeve' at Dunbar (in terms of administration), and that not only might the palisade at the top of Yeavering Bell also be a similar construction of post-Roman date, but that this emergent relationship of polygonal enclosures with known Anglo-Saxon settlement could be extended and reaffirmed by the presence of yet another recorded from the air at Milfield (cf. Gates and O'Brien 1988, 1–9). Hope-Taylor's response (pers. comm.) clearly indicated that he fully understood the implications of his work at Doon Hill for his reading of the Yeavering Bell palisade, which he now recognized to be a fifth- or sixth-century construction. Sadly, the subsequent publication of 1979 of the long-delayed Yeavering report could take no account of this major revision in his thinking.

Over the following decades both Hope-Taylor's data and his interpretations at Yeavering have been subjected to critical re-appraisal and revision. Gates has shown his 'Celtic fields' to be a misreading of postglacial frost-cracking of the late Holocene ground surface (Gates 2005, 71–3), and claims for a 'native British' architectural influence on the earliest rectangular buildings at Yeavering have been challenged (Miket 1980, 301–4; Scull 1991). More recently, O'Brien has shown, through a detailed analysis, just how tenuous are any claims for dating the Great

Table 1 The salient elements, drawn from the separate accounts of investigations on the Bell, are correlated, revealing amplifications and discrepancies in the record over time. The arrows indicate chronological uncertainty.

	c. 1861. George Tate's excavation	1958 interim report	1977 Yeavering monograph	1999 letter to Paul Frodsham
MODERN				'I suspected, on insufficient evidence, the possibility of a very large hearth — or even a beacon-site — at the centre of the palisade enclosure.' ↓
LATER MEDIEVAL		↑ Latest occupation represented by two rectangular stone huts. One built over a circular hut, and both built of stone robbed from the fort defences.	↑ In two cases circular huts were overlain by rectangular drystone structures, with which small fragments of crude 'native' pottery were associated.	
6th/7th century AD TIMBER PALISADE?		↓	↓	'I … certainly regarded the palisade enclosure as a very late (if not final) feature of the Bell's structural history.'
2nd–5th century AD UNENCLOSED SETTLEMENT of CIRCULAR HUTS	HUT-CIRCLES. Some were sectioned, some entirely excavated, and found to range from 24 ft (7.2 m) to 30 ft (9 m) in diameter. One was only 18 ft (5.4 m) in diameter. One with an E entrance, one with a flagged stone floor. A hut-circle to the west of the south entrance produced charcoal and pottery 'of a bright red colour' and a wheel-turned rim (Samian and Roman coarseware?) Similar pottery came from a hut-circle in the eastern annexe, together with two 'oak armlets' 10 in (24 cm) and 7½ in (18 cm) in diameter, and part of an upper quernstone. Part of a third oak ring, 11 in (26 cm) in diameter, a jasper ball, 3 in (7 cm) and three flints were found in yet another hut-circle.	Two late-Roman *minimi* found in a stone-lined hole in a hut floor; apparently the remnants of a hoard. Two sherds of Samian ware and native pottery. On basis of proposing these represent long use, the life of the circular huts are then extended into the 5th C.	Two late Roman *minimi* from a pit in the floor of one circular hut, and three abraded sherds of true Samian ware from two other hut sites. 'Meagre handful of relics thereafter show that part of the site was occasionally used, but that there is no reason to suppose that the old stronghold served as a major defensible structure. Indeed, these were possibly suppressed by the Romans.'	'… my one clear memory is that these 5 particular finds [Samian and *minimi*] all came from huts on the north-facing slope of the fortification's interior, on or close to the Bell's "saddle."'

1st century AD ENCLOSED SETTLEMENT ENDS			Hillfort goes out of use sometime in 1st century AD.	
HILLFORT	HILLFORT. Three trenches across the perimeter wall showed it to be 10–12 ft (3–3.6 m) thick, with a batter and not less than 7–8 ft high. All four gateways trenched; the one on the south (12 ft/4 m wide) was believed to have been the main entrance. This had an oval 'guard-chamber ' on its western side, 9 ft (3 m) by 6 ft (2 m). The floor produced charred wood and a lower quern-stone. A small flint blade was found outside this structure. ENCLOSURE AT THE EASTERN SUMMIT. The perimeter of this was interpreted as a ditch, 5 ft (1.5 m) wide, and 5 ft (1.6 m) deep. In parts it was rock-cut, with an outer upcast bank 1 ft (0.3 m) high. Charred wood found at the bottom was considered insufficient evidence to indicate a palisade. A causeway 9 ft (2.7 m) wide on the eastern side. A small internal 'enclosure', sunk into the ground surface and filled with stone and indications of burning. Some 15 in (0.4 m) below its surface, on the bedrock, charcoal and a bronze relic (Roman headstud brooch?) was found.	Tate's finds show circular huts continuing into 1st cent AD, 'at latest'. 'Massive (dry-built) stone wall which originally stood at least 6 feet high.'	Hillfort built at end of 1st milennium BC.	
EARLY IRON AGE TIMBER PALISADE?			'The eastern part of Yeavering Bell carries the remains of a small palisaded enclosure which presumably pre-dates the oppidum.'	

Enclosure earlier than the Anglo-Saxon settlement as a whole (O'Brien 2004, 145–52); but, of course, this was Hope-Taylor's own view until 1961 (see note 15).

Notwithstanding such revisions, no one has shown Hope-Taylor to have been mistaken in his conviction of an interplay between native and Anglo-Saxons, only that the evidence he cites in favour of this is either flawed or ambiguous. These are failings either arising from models of thought prevalent at the time, or a desire to exact more than was justified from the very slight data available. Had he not allowed himself to be swayed by the architects of the Hownam Sequence (Piggott 1950), the section within the Yeavering report addressing the fifth- or early sixth-century prelude to the founding of the royal township would have been cast completely differently, and might have embraced the possibility that the palisade on the Bell was later than the hillfort, as the excavation of Doon Hill, just six years later, would reveal.

Hope-Taylor was both gifted and inspirational, but these were qualities not evident to everyone he met. His quest for perfection, which, as James Graham-Campbell has described, '. . . left him prone to dissatisfaction and unable to glory in his achievements',[17] resulted from a structured and analytical mind ever questing beyond what many would contentedly be bounded by. It was typical of him that even though he had to untangle the riches of Yeavering he would look beyond this and would plan extensive excavation strategies to illuminate neighbouring inter-relationships. Nor was this confined to the purely local. Amongst his papers, held by RCAHMS, is a remarkable eight-page 'memorandum' written in the autumn of 1960, entitled, '*The Archaeology of Bernicia: Problems and Plans*' (HT/37/6) This is his great strategic post-Yeavering vision for addressing what he regarded as the key problems relating to northern Bernicia in the Post-Roman period. Critical to this was the revelation that 'The central item of the writer's long-term programme (is the)...total excavation of Maelmin (over a period of not less than ten years),' with the additional note that, '...Negotiations are still proceeding in this connexion . . .'. Pendent on this was, '...a series of small-scale excavations to assess the content and potential values of the coastal sites [Dunstanburgh and Coldingham are specifically mentioned] and to establish the nature of the Tweed valley forts ...'[18] The excavation at Bamburgh was evidently a key element in this plan and, with the first (1960) season of excavation in the west ward of the castle completed, we see him devising subsidiary forays to investigate the large mound outside the gatehouse of this castle and the adjacent long-cist cemetery. In order to carry out this extensive programme he disclosed at the end how, '...the writer intends shortly to establish a headquarters in north Northumberland and to reside there during the university vacations'.

Sadly, it all came to nothing, but this one document allows us to place in perspective just what Hope-Taylor did achieve after his work at Yeavering. His excavations at Bamburgh and Lindisfarne, as well as the more minor investigations, of which this note is a record, were plainly not the isolated forays they might otherwise appear to have been. Together they formed part of a brilliantly conceived strategy to extract the information he believed to be required if this difficult and intractable period was to be properly understood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Recapturing the work of this four week excavation of over half a century ago has been but one result of the laudable foray south of the border undertaken by Diana Murray of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and Professor Ian Ralston of the University of Edinburgh, on hearing that Hope-Taylor's archaeological archive was

under imminent threat of being '…taken to the skip' (Murray, 2005, 214). Iain Fraser and Lesley Ferguson of RCAHMS could not have been more kind and helpful in allowing me access to this material. An interval of 55 years is not conducive to recapturing first-hand recollections of work on the site, however, both Richard Bailey and Selby 'Bunt' Morton have shared their many memories with me and I am particularly grateful to them for their kindness. I am greatly indebted to Kate Wilson for sourcing the volumes of correspondence between Brian Hope-Taylor and the Ministry of Works; and also to James Graham-Campbell who was most helpful on a point of detail regarding the late Paul Savage. Lancelot Robson's assistance in identifying trench details from the photographs was invaluable whilst Trevor Pearson, a member of the RCHME survey team who produced the topographic record of the site, has been most generous in giving of his recollections and advice, and in particular for preparing an updated version of the plan shown in fig. 2 to include trenches B, L and M. Finally, I am grateful to Adam Welfare and Richard Bailey for reading this paper in draft and for suggesting many improvements.

NOTES

[1] The more troubled aspects of his life are touched upon by Frodsham and O'Brien (2005, 201–34) and also in his obituaries. See, for example, *The Times*, 2 March 2001, and *The Scotsman*, 13 February 2001.

[2] What these factors were is unclear. Some years earlier, J. D. Hamilton had expressed doubts about the availability of future Ministry of Works funding, as well as alerting Hope-Taylor to the fact that the Ministry had received some complaints as to his uncharacteristic failure to charm visiting landowners. In a letter of 12 November 1955 (H-T/37/9), Hamilton had written: '… especially as there is some doubt about the chances of a season in 1957. I should also like to whisper in your ear the fact that there have been complaints by the local aristocracy that you have been offhand with them when they visited the site. I know how difficult it is with visitors, especially when they do not make themselves known, but if any more come I suggest you act kindly to them as they have a lot of power, writing to the Minister and all that.'

The Ministry file on the Yeavering Bell excavation (National Archives AA 10829/2) certainly reveals a rapidly cooling relationship between Hope-Taylor and themselves, arising largely from costs associated with the excavation. Eventually Hamilton was driven to report to a colleague that 'I am afraid we have had considerable trouble with Mr Hope-Taylor, whose ideas of time are Bohemian but who is a good archaeologist and an extremely conscientious one. It is unlikely that Mr Hope-Taylor will be employed by us for excavation for some considerable time.'

[3] The chronologies attached to the photographic and small-finds archive shows extensive areas under excavation in 1956. In this, his most intensive season of activity to date, he was engaged in the detailed dissection of the central palace buildings (A and B), the pendent *en echelon* buildings (D), the grandstand complex (E), much of Building B, its eastern cemetery and the Great Enclosure and Ring Ditch. The pressure involved in disentangling such a complex array of stratigraphic inter-relationships must have been particularly acute.

[4] Hope-Taylor left little doubt that he considered his work at Yeavering effectively complete by 1957. '…the physical remains of the villam regiam quae uocatur Adgefrin , excavated in 1953–7 ….' (HT/39/2).

[5] Bamburgh (excavated 1959–62 and 1970–4: *University of Durham Gazette*, New Series, 8.2. 1960, 11–12; 1961, 5–7; Hope-Taylor 1977, fn. 339); Lindisfarne (excavated 1963; unpublished notes and interim report in H-T Archive, HT/65/1); Doon Hill (excavated 1964–6; Hope-Taylor 1966).

[6] W. Camden. (ed. Gibson, E) 1695. *Britannia Newly Translated*. Gough 1789

[7] 1977, 14.

[8] 'What is called the Anglo-Saxon period is generally allowed to begin here in AD 547, since Bede tells us that it was in this year that Ida began to reign' ('*The Archaeology of Bernicia, Problems and Plans*' Ms. in H-T/37/6). 'In our new hypothesis Bede's statement that Ida became ruler of Bernicia

in 547 will not be tampered with, but will be accepted as plain truth'. (Hope-Taylor 1977, 296). But of course immigration and political change are two quite different events.

[9] For rectangularity in native house traditions in north Britain, see R. Miket, *Bernicia: archaeological evidence for continuity*, forthcoming.

[10] 'Their bodies, like their pathetic ironmongery, are more likely than not to be 'native' products.' (Hope-Taylor 1977, 296)

[11] This, together with other information relating to Hope-Taylor's correspondence with the Ministry of Works (*infra*) is contained in National Archives AA10829/2. I am most grateful to Kate Wilson for sourcing this and making it available for study.

[12] Selby Morton, *pers. comm*. 16 July 2012. He had first been approached by the Ministry of Works in 1955, who asked if he would remove the topsoil by machine at Gefrin, prior to the cleaning of the subsoil with spades by the workmen brought in from Alnwick (Hope-Taylor 1977, 32). He performed similar tasks until 1957.

[13] A joint project between RCAHMS and the Gefrin Trust has resulted in the catalogue and description of Hope-Taylor's surviving photographic archive of the excavation. Of the 87 photographs, only two groups and a single photograph remain unplaced – *viz Group 1*: YB_1_1 to _3 and YB_9_4 to _5; *Group 2*: YB_7_8, YB_7_10 and YB7_12; Single Photograph:YB_9_3 of a pit/post-hole.

[14] '*Her Ida feng to rice. Þonon norþanhymbra cynecyn onwoc and rixode twelf gear. [He timbrode Bebanburgh. Seo was ærost mid hegg betyned þare æfter mid wealle.]*' 'At this time Ida seized power, from whom the Northumbrian royal family sprang, and ruled for twelve years. [He built Bamburgh. That was formerly enclosed with a palisade, thereafter with a wall/rampart.]'*AS Chronicle Version A*'. The section in [ ] is an interpolation by an eleventh-century hand when the MS was at Canterbury, who transferred into it material relating to Northumbria.

[15] The possibility that the Great Enclosure might have been in existence at a date earlier than the mid sixth century was only to develop in his mind after 1960. This is confirmed in a letter to Kenneth H. Jackson (13 January 1961), in which he reveals that; '. . .the date of the beginning of Yeavering township cannot at present be determined archaeologically and must rest on historical probability. In this, I agree with your view that it must be looked for in the second half of VI. The massive timber fort is the first to appear. It is unparalleled in Britain and on the continent, and thus cannot be dated, even by analogy. . . . On balance I incline to the view that probably the fort and the first phase of the township proper are attributable to Ethelfrith. . . I am suggesting, at all events that it is safest for the present tentatively to regard the fort as belonging sometime to the last two decades of the sixth century. . . .' (H-T/37/12).

As late as 1979, in an article on '*Dark Age Timber Halls*. . .' written with the close advice and guidance of Hope-Taylor and 'use of his unpublished work', Nicholas Reynolds (1980, 47) was still able to write of the Great Enclosure, 'its construction is ascribed to the second half of the sixth century . . .'

[16] 22 January 1968. 'Dear Brian, I am extremely sorry . . . that it would prevent you from handing over the Yeavering, as arranged.' (JCH; HT/37/14); 14 Jan 1969. 'Dear John [Hamilton], Here are both the first and the last words of Yeavering – Appendices' (H-T; HT/37/14). On 31 January 1973 the first set of galleys were sent, with the last by 6 February. In March JCH writes to request their return. By July 1974 JCH is writing 'I trust that with the page-proofs we will have mounted the crest and can coast rapidly to publication' (HT/37/18). Such was not to be. Thereafter, letters in HT/37/16 chronicle a declining relationship between Hope-Taylor, the Ministry of Works and HMSO over the publication. Partly this was owing to drawings lost at the printers which H-T had to redo; elements not yet completed by H-T, changes H-T wished to make that threatened 'to add to delays and jeopardize the production of Yeavering' (JCH 13 March 1972; HT/37/16), and some quite breathtaking incompetence by HMSO. On 12 December 1978, the year after its printed publication date, S. A. Butcher of the Dept. of the Environment was to write, 'When I took over from John Hamilton this year he was expecting Yeavering to appear at any moment. We had a series of promised dates since then but still the book has not appeared. I feel that I should write to you to let you know that at least we have not forgotten about it. I understand the failure to publish in April was due to faulty binding and that all the subsequent delay has been with the binders.' (HT/37/21).

[17] Obituary in '*The Independent*,' 10 February 2001.

[18] In 1960, Hope-Taylor (RCAHMS HT/37/6) was to relate both the Great Enclosure at Yeavering and the double-palisaded enclosure at *Maelmin* to some of the many enclosures that St Joseph was then recording along the margins of the Tweed and its tributaries. In this he was anticipating by more than half a century the possibility of palisades as an historical form, and was actively working to identify the characteristics that might see those of potentially fifth- to seventh-century date disentangled from their prehistoric predecessors (Alcock 2003, 234–8).

DOCUMENTS

HT: The Hope-Taylor (H-T) Archive, deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Edinburgh.

National Archives AA10829/2: Ministry of Works internal records and correspondence relating to the excavation on Yeavering Bell, 1958.

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