

'We were always chasing time.' Papers presented to Keith Blood.
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Forgetting *Gefrin*: Elements of the Past in the Past at Yeavinger.

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'Few places in Northumberland have attracted more attention than Yeavinger Bell...Its old written history, beginning with the Venerable Bede, and its older unwritten history, as seen in its great stone walls, its hut circles and mounds have given rise to much speculation among antiquaries. Every tourist too and pleasure-seeker, who rambles along the Borders, must climb to its summit, pore over its mysterious monuments and enjoy the extensive and rich view it commands.'

George Tate (1862, 431).

Introduction

George Tate's splendid paper, published nearly a century and a half ago, should have provided the basis for much subsequent archaeological work at Yeavinger. However, Brian Hope-Taylor's extraordinary ten-year excavation project (1952-62) centred on the Anglian palace site, and Anthony Harding's investigation of the Yeavinger henge as part of his Milfield Basin project in the 1970s, represent the only recorded excavations here since Tate concluded his investigations. More recently, two RCHME surveys have been undertaken in association with the Northumberland National Park Authority. The first of these was completed in November 1986 and produced a small scale survey of the hillfort within its landscape setting (RCHME 1986). The second was a detailed survey of the hillfort undertaken by Keith Blood and Trevor Pearson in the 'summer' of 1998. Those who were active in the field during this summer will recall that it was one of the most miserable on record, and I hesitate to remind Keith of his 'melted cheese' on the deceptively hot day of our initial recce of the site: I have little doubt that at that time he was dreaming of long lazy lunch breaks on top of the Bell throughout the four or five weeks that the survey was scheduled to take. Sadly, the hillfort was lost in the clouds throughout much of the survey period, so much so that work had to be abandoned on a number of occasions. It says much of Keith's (and, indeed, Trevor's) commitment to the cause that the work was completed on schedule, enabling the Northumberland National Park Authority and the landowner, Lord Anthony Hill, to develop a comprehensive management agreement and interpretive proposals for the

Yeavinger Estate.

This paper is loosely based on a presentation (given jointly by the writer and Deborah Anderson) to a session of the 1998 Theoretical Archaeology Group conference entitled 'The Past in the Past'. It differs from all others in this volume in that its main purpose is to set the scene for research that it is hoped to undertake in years to come, rather than to report on work that has been completed. Nevertheless, I sincerely hope that the ideas presented are of interest to Keith and anyone else who cares to read them.

Yeavinger: a special landscape

Recently, I led a day-long guided walk around Yeavinger for thirty individuals including schoolteachers, a retired GP, a Tyneside docker, farm workers and archaeology students. Some of these people live locally while others had travelled considerable distances to take part in the walk. The weather was perfect with a covering of crisp snow on the ground and bright sunshine all day. Having taken many guided walks to wonderful archaeological sites throughout the Cheviots over the years, I was quite taken aback by the reaction of these individuals to Yeavinger. They were all spellbound by the place, and one couple even described the day as one of the best of their lives. A recent survey of visitors to the nearby town of Wooler established that 95% of them would like to visit Yeavinger if it could be opened to the public, even though most knew very little about it. Put simply, there is something very special about Yeavinger that, while hard to define, is felt by most visitors. This something is bound

up with the beauty of the place and the wonderful views to be gained from the hillfort, coupled with the sense of awe that is generated by the awareness of what has gone on here in the past. People in that past must also have reacted strongly to this sense of place, and it is their reactions that resulted in, and are now reflected in, the changes in the landscape that we seek to explain today.

It is important to stress that the real potential value of Yeavinger to archaeologist lies in the landscape as a whole, rather than in quantity and quality of its individual 'sites'. But what exactly do we mean by 'landscape'? In the past archaeologists may have defined the landscape as the 'backdrop against which archaeological remains are plotted' (Knapp and Ashmore 1999, 1), but today 'the most prominent notions of landscape emphasize its socio-symbolic dimensions: landscape is an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, and contextualized by people' (*ibid.*). Many recent accounts (eg. those in Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995) have stressed the intimate relationships between non-western societies and the landscape, often highlighting an element of 'sacredness' which seems to apply to elements of the landscape, if not to the land as a whole, in such societies (Carmichael *et al.* 1994). It can be difficult for the western mind to grasp some of these concepts, even when they are explained in depth by, for example, an Australian Aborigine or a native American. It might be thought a hopeless task, therefore, to seek to explain the possible significance of the Yeavinger landscape to its former inhabitants. However, as Christopher Tilley (1994) has shown with his work in Wessex and South Wales, phenomenological approaches have considerable value in helping us to understand how people *may* have experienced and understood their world. I firmly believe that this kind of approach, borrowing ideas from recent landscape theory and from potentially relevant ethnographic case-studies, has immense potential at Yeavinger.

A brief introduction to the archaeology of Yeavinger

I should stress straight away that when I talk of Yeavinger I am referring to an area that includes both the Bell with its hillfort and the much smaller 'whaleback hill' immediately to the north which contains the site of the Anglian 'palace' *Ad Gefrin* (Plate 1). This area represents what by any standards has to be one of the most impressive archaeological landscapes in England.

I would venture to suggest that the Bell, by nature of its unusual form and impressive location at the very edge of the Cheviot massif, must have been a place of some significance to people from the earliest times. Flints provide evidence that the whaleback was occupied during the Mesolithic, and Gill Ferrell (1990) has summarised the ceramic evidence for activity on this hill during the early and late Neolithic, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. However, the nature of occupation in the area throughout prehistory, and the extent to which this occupation may have been

continuous, remain poorly understood. A small henge monument, one of several in the Milfield Basin, was constructed here during the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, and an early Bronze Age cremation cemetery is focussed on an unusual monument which Hope-Taylor interprets as a stone circle. Numerous burial mounds, presumably from this same late Neolithic/early Bronze Age horizon, have been recorded on the higher ground at and around Yeavinger, including one on top of the Bell itself.

Hope-Taylor (1977, 335) records two cremations of Romano-British date from the whaleback, and it is possible that many of the other (apparently unaccompanied) cremations recorded from this site may date from the same period. However, the emphasis in the visible archaeological record turns away from overtly 'ritual' monuments to settlements and fields as the Bronze Age progresses. Several unenclosed settlements of round houses, many of which probably date from the middle to late Bronze Age, survive in the hills around Yeavinger, often in association with field systems which can extend over several hectares.

The hillfort on Yeavinger Bell is usually thought to date from the latter half of the first millennium BC, although it certainly could be earlier and a late Bronze Age origin much closer to 1000 BC is not improbable. During the later Iron Age and/or Romano-British period parts of the lower slopes of the Bell became littered with enclosed settlements and associated field systems, but without further investigation in the field it is simply impossible to know how these sites relate chronologically to the hillfort. Although the issue of Iron Age burial in the Cheviots is rarely discussed, a couple of cremations from the whaleback do appear to date from the Romano-British period, suggesting that the area may have continued to attract later prehistoric burials and associated ritual long after its Bronze Age cemeteries had become redundant.

It may have been during the late Iron Age that the so-called 'Great Enclosure' was erected on the whaleback. This has been interpreted as a great stock enclosure, presumably of both functional and ceremonial significance. It was maintained throughout much of the life of the Anglian palace which was erected immediately adjacent to it at some point during the latter half of the sixth century AD. The 'palace' (which some authorities prefer, perhaps more correctly, to term a 'villa' or 'estate centre') incorporated several large buildings, most notable of which were the great hall and a unique 'theatre' (see Fig. 2b). It provided short term accommodation for the king, who would probably have stayed here once or twice a year, no doubt hunting in the hills during the daytime and feasting in the great hall long into the nights. The king and his retinue would have moved around the kingdom staying at a number of different such settlements, of which Sprowston and Thirlings may be other local examples, each year. However, *Ad Gefrin* seems to have been of particular importance, and apparently became the centre of Bishop Paulinus' mission in Bernicia. Bede tells us that Paulinus came to *Ad Gefrin* to preach the Christian faith in the presence of King Edwin, and that he baptised the local people in the adjacent River Glen:

'So great is said to have been the fervour of the faith of the



Plate 1. Air photograph by Tim Gates, looking northwards over Yeavinger Bell hillfort. Several of the fort's 125 recorded hut platforms are visible here, as is the ditched enclosure around the Bell's eastern summit. The 'Old Palace' is visible just beneath the cottages towards the top left-hand corner. Ad Gefrin, the Anglian palace complex, was sited to the north-east of these cottages, in the field immediately to the north of the road in which an abandoned quarry is clearly visible. The henge is in the field to the east of the cottages, and the 'Battle Stone' is one field further to the east. Agricultural terraces are visible in the foreground, and the earthworks of two undated enclosures (usually thought to be Romano-British settlements) can be seen between the hillfort and the Anglian palace site. The River Glen winds its way eastwards across the top of this view. (Note: the boundary of the Northumberland National Park follows the road to the south of Ad Gefrin, so the bulk of the palace site is actually just outside the National Park, and consequently not covered by the Yeavinger Estate management agreement.) Copyright Tim Gates.

Northumbrians and their longing for the washing of salvation, that once when Paulinus came to the king and queen in their royal palace at Yeavinger, he spent thirty-six days there occupied in the task of catechizing and baptizing. During these days, from morning till evening, he did nothing else but instruct the crowds who flocked to him from every village and district in the teaching of Christ. When they had received instruction he washed them in the waters of regeneration in the river Glen, which was close at hand.

(Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 189).

(This event is usually assumed to have taken place in 627, though in fact Bede is unclear as to the exact date and it could conceivably have occurred at any time between 627 and 633: Iain Hedley pers. comm.).

Following a complex history lasting a century or so, during which it seems to have been attacked, destroyed by fire and rebuilt on two separate occasions, *Ad Gefrin* was finally abandoned, probably by 685, apparently in favour of a new site at *Maelmin* (Milfield) a couple of miles away.

Although the visible remains of the great hillfort, and various other prehistoric structures, survived in the hills throughout medieval times, nothing survived for long on the site of *Ad Gefrin* to identify it as anything other than an ordinary patch of ground. Occasional surviving references from the late 13th century onwards (Vickers 1922, 241-243) suggest that the area was unremarkable agricultural land throughout the medieval and post-medieval period. There was apparently a small medieval hamlet or village in the area now known as 'Old Yeavinger', between *Ad Gefrin* and the Bell, where the ruined structure somewhat confusingly known as the 'Old Palace' stands adjacent to two cottages which provide the only currently occupied dwellings in the area. A few shielings litter the hills, and George Tate found glazed pottery (which he states could be medieval, though he considers it probably Romano-British; Tate 1862, 447) in some of the native fortlets he investigated around the Bell. However, there is nothing of medieval date to imply that the area continued to enjoy special status of any kind.

Census returns (listed in Vickers 1922, 241) suggest that in excess of fifty people lived in Yeavinger township throughout most of the 19th century, although by 1901 the population had dropped to five. One cannot help but wonder what, if anything, all these residents of Yeavinger (and, indeed, their medieval predecessors) knew, or thought they knew, of their local history. It was in 1949 that the true location of the palace site was revealed through air photography, and Brian Hope-Taylor's subsequent excavations have ensured that it will never again be forgotten.

It is the issue of continuity, and in particular the relationship between the prehistoric hillfort and the Anglian Palace, that has most intrigued students of Yeavinger. However, the relationship between hillfort and palace, while extremely interesting, is but one element of the story of Yeavinger. Gill Ferrell (1990, 41), in a consideration of the prehistoric pottery from Hope-Taylor's excavations, observes that throughout prehistory Yeavinger appears to

have been 'a dynamic site capable of adapting to change and surviving', and that 'it is the continuity at Yeavinger that is significant and any interruptions in this seem to be fairly minor episodes in its long history'. In an important contribution to this debate, Richard Bradley (1987) questions the degree of actual continuity of activity at Yeavinger and introduces the idea of the 'creation of continuity', whereby social elites attempt to legitimise their positions through reference to the past. In effect, ancient monuments are appropriated by the elite in order to 'create' direct links with the ancestral past. This system is directly analogous to the creation of fictitious genealogies whereby individuals trace their origins back to a prestigious and perhaps mythical past. Bradley is surely correct in stressing the 'strategic use of monuments surviving from the distant past and their incorporation in a different cultural landscape'. Indeed, I would argue with some confidence that this process has been going on at Yeavinger, to varying degrees, throughout much of the past five millennia, with natural features such as the Bell itself playing a role no less important than any artificially constructed ancient monument.

The future of Yeavinger's past: some suggestions for further work

So what can we offer to this debate about the past in the past at Yeavinger? I think it is highly likely that Bradley's creation of continuity went hand in hand with a very large element of actual continuity here. While periods of abandonment could have contributed to the power of the place, enabling the incorporation of more 'made up' elements into the 'continuity' that was created when one or more old sites were later reoccupied, it is not necessary to have periods of abandonment in order to create a fictitious continuity. Yeavinger is a complex landscape and various elements of it were selectively abandoned or appropriated at various points in its history. Let us briefly analyse, in no particular order, a number of themes that might repay more detailed study and which it is hoped to develop further in due course.

What's in a name: 'Yeavinger'?

We will begin this discussion by briefly considering the continuity implicit in the retention of the old British name, *Gefrin*, or in its present incarnation Yeavinger. (Note: throughout this paper *Gefrin* is assumed to have been the British name for the hill (and hillfort) we now call Yeavinger Bell, the name *Ad Gefrin* is used specifically for the palace site, and the modern place name Yeavinger is used when referring to the general area including both hillfort and palace sites). George Tate, writing in the middle of the 19th century, was unsure about the origins of the name. He noted that 'Antiquaries of a past generation threw by their speculations a mysterious sacredness over Yeavinger Bell' (Tate 1862, 434), noting past references to sun temples, fire-worship, Druid altars and Academies of the Druids. Support for these old suggestions was provided by the place-name

'evidence': Yeavinger Bell had been translated via a rather tenuous route into 'Bel-ad-gebrin' or 'Mount of the Sun'. Tate himself acknowledged that 'these etymologies are forced and exceedingly improbable', before concluding that 'of the old name Ad-gefrin, I can offer no probable explanation' (*ibid.*). It is a shame that Tate was unable to establish the true origins of the name, as he would doubtless have provided some interesting discussion of it. We now know that *Gefrin* translates as 'Hill of the Goats', and *Ad Gefrin* (as Bede refers to the Anglian palace site) as 'at the Hill of the Goats'.

It is an interesting co-incidence that Yeavinger Bell is one of the few places in Northumberland that still supports a herd of wild goats, but we should avoid reading too much into this as these goats are apparently descended from a herd introduced in the 19th century rather than from any prehistoric goats that may once have lived here. Regardless of this, it seems inconceivable that a site as important as Yeavinger would be named after a few goats that happened to live on the hill, and it is surely more likely that the choice of name was linked in some way with Celtic mythology: could the goat even have been a totemic beast for the local population? The goat is rarely considered as a major mythological player in comparison to, for example, the horse, bull, stag or boar, but it does occur regularly, often in very important roles. Pan is well known to students of classical mythology, and in Scandinavia Thor's chariot is drawn across the sky by two goats (Ellis Davidson 1969, 67). In Celtic mythology the goat appears to represent fertility, 'the horns reflect both virility and aggression' (Green 1992, 106).

Having already written the above paragraph, and wondering whether I was being somewhat over-fanciful, I was pleased to note that Hope-Taylor had been thinking along similar lines while working at Yeavinger: 'More probably...what is represented here is a form of totemism involving zoomorphic emblems. The known self-identification of certain Celtic tribes with animals...provides some warrant for this conjecture; and, viewed in that speculative light, the implications of the place-name *Gefrin* and its remarkable survival appear possibly to transcend mere reference to original natural fauna' (Hope-Taylor 1977, 260).

Evidently, *Gefrin* was never forgotten sufficiently for its name to have been lost, and it is quite possible that we still refer to it today by a version of a name first applied to it some 2500 or more years ago. This doesn't of course imply any continuity in the type of activity going on here, but does suggest that the site was continually of such importance that its old name was retained through the ages: thus, for example, the Anglian palace retained a Celtic name. It may or may not be significant in this context that Hope Taylor found a goat's skull (*ibid.* 69) and a 'ceremonial staff' decorated with what may have been a goat motif (*ibid.* 200-203) in what was apparently one of the most significant Anglian period burials at *Ad Gefrin*. The potential significance of the goat in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon mythology might well be worthy of further investigation, especially with regard to issues of continuity at Yeavinger.

Magicians and metal workers? A possible 'afterlife' for the Yeavinger henge

The henge at Yeavinger was investigated by Anthony Harding (1981) in what he describes as 'far from ideal circumstances' during the excessively hot and dry conditions of July 1976, when rain fell on only one day (Keith Blood will no doubt sympathise with these difficulties, having spent the aforementioned 'summer' of 1998 surveying in the clouds on the top of the Bell). Harding's investigations at Yeavinger were part of a wider project studying the henges of the Milfield Plain, and he concluded that these sites were interlinked in some way, with the different orientations of the henge entrances 'connected with the desire to view different parts of the horizon from each one' (*ibid.* 132). In particular, the eastern entrance of the Yeavinger henge was aligned towards the distinctive profile of Ross Castle, and the Milfield North henge was aligned on Yeavinger Bell. These alignments may well relate to places that were imbued with spiritual significance long before the construction of the henges, and the recovery of Mesolithic and Early Neolithic material from the site of *Ad Gefrin* suggests that this particular place may have been integrated within such a network of special places from a very early period.

Unlike several other henges in Northumberland and elsewhere, this site was not used for early medieval burials, and became instead the apparent focus of an industrial, metalworking site within the Anglian palace complex (Tinniswood and Harding 1991). Its excavator suggests that the henge may have become invisible by Anglo-Saxon times, and that the subsequent metalworking activity may have been located here by co-incidence. However, although the field evidence is admittedly flimsy, it must surely be possible that a metalworker could have been attracted to such an enigmatic ancient monument (conceivably with its surrounding bank still clearly visible) as a powerful site on which to produce exotic metalwork for a royal patron. Richard Hingley has recently considered the symbolic associations of metalworking in Iron Age Britain, noting that 'many ethnographic and historical accounts suggest that ironworking was considered a mystical process during which rocks were converted into powerful cultural artefacts' (Hingley 1997, 9). He suggests that associations may have existed between the process of ironworking and the agricultural cycle, and between the life-cycles of iron objects and of people. Although Hingley is specifically concerned with Iron Age ironworking, early Irish historical sources record the special status accorded to the smith in later times, and it would seem reasonable to assume that such status could have been bestowed upon the craftsmen responsible for the production of metal objects at a royal palace site such as *Ad Gefrin*. Where better to engage in the magical processes of metalworking than on the site of the ancient temple of the ancestors, especially when the site is to the south-east of the settlement in a relative position which Hingley suggests may have been of ritual significance to ironworking at many Iron Age sites?

Burials and the Battle Stone: some aspects of Paganism and Christianity

A discussion of religion at Yeavinger could easily fill a volume of this size on its own. Here we will restrict ourselves to a few observations relating to the standing stone between the Palace site and the Bell, and to burial practice through the ages. By way of introduction, it is worth recalling Richard Bradley's warnings relating to time and apparent continuity of ritual in the archaeological record. Bradley notes that 'ritual time' is often divorced from 'everyday time' and that consequently it is 'difficult to discuss ritual continuity in the same terms as continuity of land use or domestic settlement' (1987, 3). He also notes that 'proponents of ritual continuity are forced to make imaginative leaps across impossibly long periods of prehistoric time...in order to support a model which is difficult to sustain as archaeological theory' (*ibid.* 15). Bradley interprets the juxtaposition of prehistoric and early medieval monuments as attempts by a social elite to legitimise their position through reference to the past, rather than as evidence for any actual continuity in ritual practice. Undoubtedly there has been an element of this at Yeavinger, but it is legitimate to ask to what extent such 'creation of continuity' may, on occasions, have gone hand in hand with some degree of actual continuity of occupation and activity.

We are not over endowed with megaliths in Northumberland, but those that we do have are invariably in rather pleasant settings and often have their own local legends accounting for their origin. Cornelius Holtorf (eg. 1997) has recently done much fascinating work on 'the afterlife of megaliths', showing that many were treated by the Christian Church in one of two ways, they were either transformed into 'good sites' (eg. by carving them into crosses) or became associated with the devil and witchcraft and were in many cases destroyed. In this context it is interesting to note that the little standing stone at Yeavinger (Plate 2), despite the area's Christian heritage, has no such associations at all. Instead it is known as the Battle Stone, and is thought by local folklore (reinforced by modern Ordnance Survey maps) to have been erected in honour of the Battle of Geteryne, fought in this area between the English and the Scots in 1415. At what point, we have to wonder, was this ancient standing stone (which seems originally to have been associated with the henge and which presumably stood throughout the life of the Anglian palace) ascribed its new identity? The history of this single, visually rather uninspiring stone certainly accords with Holtorf's (1997, 80) observation that 'megaliths, together with the landscapes as part of which they were received, have continuously been reconstructed, cognitively'. What, we may wonder, did King Edwin, or Paulinus, make of this stone several centuries before the occurrence of the battle it is now said to commemorate?

On the subject of battles it is also worth noting that the area around Yeavinger witnessed many confrontations of varying intensity throughout Anglo-Saxon and medieval times, and a number of other local standing stones are also thought to commemorate battles. Indeed, our hazy knowledge of these ancient battles adds still further to the

sense of history in the landscape, whether or not we chose to believe the legend that the British King Arthur won one of his most heroic battles right here in Glendale. (Tales of King Arthur may be fact or fiction, or a combination of both, but the region's most recent claim to fame, as the inspiration for the landscape of *Postman Pat* (whose creator, I am reliably informed, used to live here) clearly owes little to local history. Worryingly, in these days of marketing led 'heritage', it may only be a question of time before some bright young tourism officer dreams up the banner '*come to Postman Pat country*'. Such 'fictional' banners are used to varying degrees of effectiveness throughout Britain, and in some ways *Postman Pat* might be considered an appropriately trivial contribution from today's society towards the development of Yeavinger's historic landscape: it would certainly say something about our attitude towards the past. However, it would also be a very great shame, and warrants no further comment here.)

The number and diversity of human burials at Yeavinger are astonishing. Ranging in date from the apparent Neolithic burial adjacent to the henge (Harding 1991, 122) to the final stages of *Ad Gefrin's* existence in the late seventh century AD, these burials provide an enthralling resource for the archaeologist to play with. They include 'text book' examples such as Bronze Age cremations, and unique cases such as the inhumation with goat skull at the threshold to the Anglian great hall. Attempts to categorise these burials into standard forms inevitably result in confusion: some are prehistoric and others historic, some are cremations while most are inhumations, most are 'native' while a few may be 'Germanic', and most are pagan while many are apparently Christian. Monuments associated with these burials include round barrows, a pagan temple containing numerous ox-skulls which Hope Taylor (1977, 278) suggests may have been re-consecrated as a Christian site by Paulinus, several large timber (presumably decorated) upright posts, and what was apparently a Christian church with a churchyard heaving with inhumations. Hope Taylor (*ibid.* chapters 5 and 6) has valiantly attempted to link this burial sequence to historical developments and to place the various phases within a wider spatial context: much, however, remains to be done in this field.

It would be interesting to analyse the burial record, and in particular the changing early medieval attitude to prehistoric monuments at Yeavinger, in the light of Sarah Semple's (1998, 118) observation that the prehistoric burial mound may 'have been perceived in the early Anglo-Saxon period as the home of spirits, ancestors or gods and was a focus of pagan spiritual activity', while the specific *fear* of barrows (encapsulated within texts such as *Beowulf*) may have developed only following the adoption of Christianity. However, regardless of our ability to recognise trends and isolate specific events in the record, it can surely be stated with some certainty that the site of *Ad Gefrin*, largely as a result of its own history, acted as a powerful magnet for burials and ritual activity over an immensely long period of time. This makes it all the more puzzling that it should have been so completely abandoned by the Christian church - a quandary to which we will return.

A recent paper by Stephen Driscoll (1998) is of



Plate 2. The 'Battle Stone' at Yeavinger. This was re-erected and set in concrete in 1925, but is not thought to be far from its original position. It is aligned with the entrances of the henge, 122 metres to the west.



Plate 3. Part of the ancient and possibly multi-phase field system to the south-east of the hillfort. These remains are currently undated: a major campaign of fieldwork will be necessary before a relationship between these fields and the (also undated) hillfort can be postulated with any degree of confidence.

particular relevance to the discussion of Christianity at *Ad Gefrin*. Driscoll examines the development of royal centres in early medieval Scotland and Ireland, noting that the location of many such centres exploited already ancient monuments for political advantage and suggesting that 'Northumbria, the northernmost Anglo-Saxon kingdom appears to follow the Celtic pattern' (1998, 143). The ancient monuments 'with their associated lore can be seen as the building blocks of the royal centres, analogous to the fragments of myth and legend which were drawn upon in the contemporary construction of the Celtic literary corpus' (*ibid.* 144). Driscoll goes on to suggest that the value of ancient monuments at this time was linked to a large extent to the development of a linear concept of time, adopted along with literacy and Christianity rather later here than had been the case in those areas of Britain that had been firmly within the bounds of the Roman Empire. This is an interesting idea, but the situation is somewhat complicated at *Ad Gefrin* by the numerous Pagan burials and the clear Germanic influence which owe nothing to either literacy or Christianity. We should also bear in mind that the appropriation of ancient monuments had a considerable history at Yeavinger long before early medieval times, as it did at many of the Irish and Scottish sites cited by Driscoll. Was the advent of Christianity really very different from the dawn of many other 'new ages' that must have been witnessed by the ancient monuments at these special places over the centuries?

Throughout England, early medieval burials were added to all sorts of ancient monuments, ranging from Neolithic henges to Roman bathhouses (Williams 1998), so on the face of it the reuse of Bronze Age burial sites at *Ad Gefrin* need not be regarded as anything particularly special. However, the burial sequence here is unique, and is certainly worthy of further study. In his discussion of the Scottish evidence, Stephen Driscoll believes that the use of prehistoric sites for early medieval burials 'can be seen as an attempt to establish a physical relationship between recently dead kin and an ancestral past, thereby establishing a claim of descent' (1998, 155). This is a sound argument which undoubtedly holds true at a number of sites, but at *Ad Gefrin* we do not have a single demonstrably 'Anglian' burial that might have been seeking to claim ownership in this way. Rather, what we appear to have is a sequence of largely undated 'native' burials with no need to 'invent' such links with the local past. Driscoll goes on to observe that 'In situating royal activities at these sites a sense of political ownership and historical legitimacy was claimed, which sought to develop exclusive access to positions of authority and secure popular support' (*ibid.*). This, I have no doubt, was a fundamental issue behind the location of *Ad Gefrin*, although the question of the extent to which any new authority was imposed from afar over the surrounding natives remains open to debate. Clearly, much interpretive work remains to be done with regard to the Yeavinger cemeteries, and the dead laid to rest therein may yet have much to tell us.

Defence or Display? The Hillfort

Yeavinger Bell is by far the largest hillfort in the Cheviots, and clearly played a different role to the dozens of smaller forts which litter the hills on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border. Attention has recently been focussed on the Yeavinger Bell fort through the Northumberland National Park Authority's three year, £0.7 million *Discovering our Hillfort Heritage* project (Frodsham 1999). This is a National Lottery and European funded initiative which aims to complete much research, survey, conservation and interpretation work relating to hillforts and prehistoric landscapes. The recent RCHME survey by Keith Blood and Trevor Pearson was undertaken as part of the *Discovering our Hillfort Heritage* project, and the comprehensive report of this survey (RCHME 1998) includes a discussion of previous work at the fort which it is unnecessary to repeat here in any detail. Other than the work by Tate (1862) and Hope-Taylor (1977), the only other contributions of note are the surveys by MacLauchlan (1858) and Jobey (1965), both of which were valuable contributions for their time but have now been largely superseded by the RCHME survey.

Yeavinger Bell rises dramatically from Glendale, forming a dramatic link between the low-lying Milfield Plain and the rugged uplands of the Cheviots. As has already been noted, it must have been of some significance to people in the area long before the hillfort ramparts were constructed. This is perhaps borne out by the apparent alignment of the Milfield North henge upon the Bell in about 2000BC, and the existence of a large burial cairn on the Bell's eastern and highest peak. If we accept the case for the communal, and presumably sacred, importance of the Bell, we cannot help but wonder about the circumstances which led to the construction of the hillfort ramparts around its summit? Ramparts which, incidentally, were originally built of bright pink andesite, quarried from within the hill itself.

The recent RCHME survey (RCHME 1998, Fig. 1a), showing for the first time the relative locations, sizes, and orientations of all 125 visible hut platforms on the site, provides the opportunity for endless speculation into the origin, use, and eventual abandonment, of the fort. There must be a substantial amount of symbolism built into the structure of the monument, both in relation to its form and in terms of its landscape setting (eg. the dramatic form of Hedgehope Hill due south of the fort's main entrance, and the contrast in views from the fort over the flat, fertile Milfield Plain to the north and into the dramatic heart of the Cheviot Hills to the south). The new survey should also prove instrumental in exploring this particular avenue of research.

The artist's reconstruction of Yeavinger Bell shown here as Fig. 1b is based on the RCHME survey. It doesn't include the large ditched enclosure around the Bell's eastern summit, as the survey concluded that this is later than the hut platforms which surround it, and therefore by implication was not present during the phase represented by the reconstruction. In the past this had been interpreted as a pre-fort palisade, something it clearly is not. It may belong in a Dark Age context, perhaps linked in some way with the palace site which it overlooks. Fig. 1b also shows the outer enclosures to the east and west of the fort as robbed out

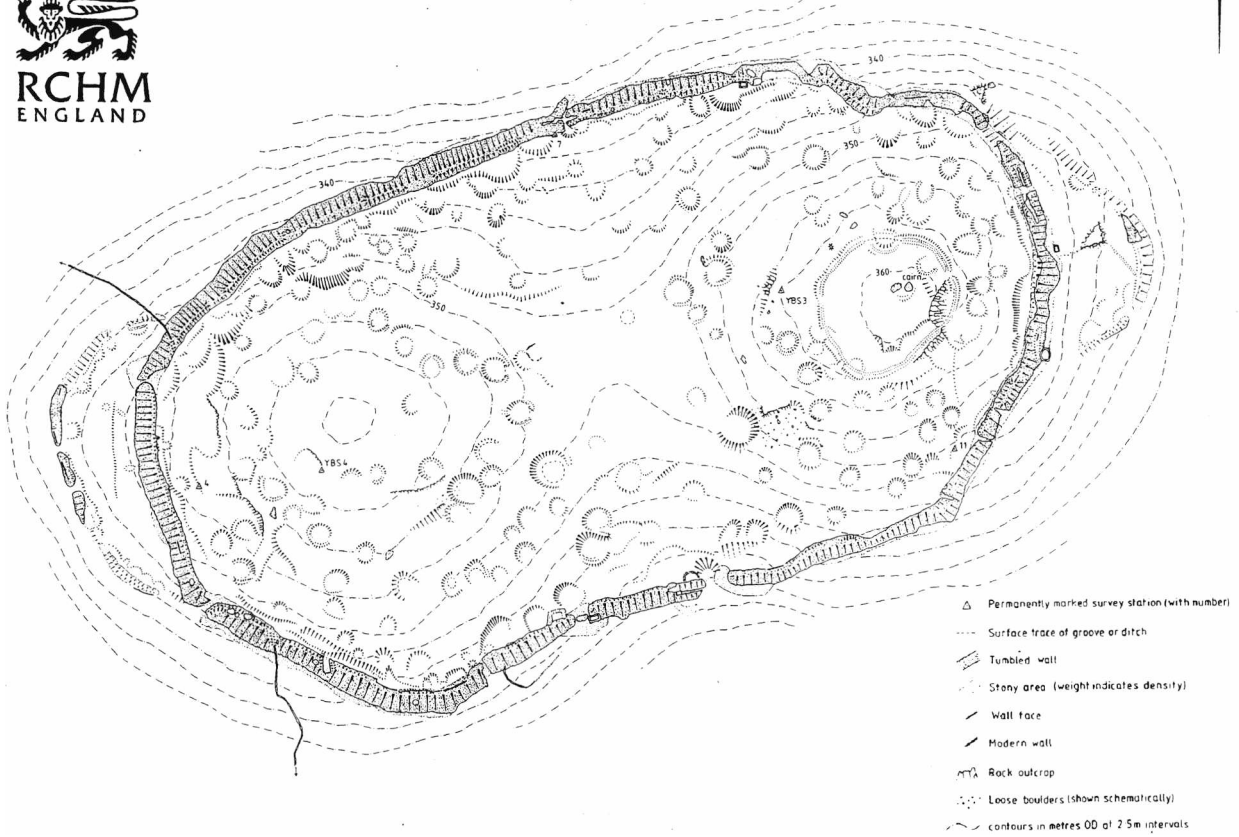


Fig. 1a. The RCHME survey of Yeavinger Bell hillfort by Keith Blood and Trevor Pearson. (Copyright RCHME).



Fig. 1b. Conjectural reconstruction of Yeavinger Bell hillfort in around 300BC, by Eric Dale. The original (in full colour) was specially commissioned by the Northumberland National Park Authority (1998) for its 'City in the hills' interpretive leaflet which includes a self-guided trail to the hillfort. (Copyright Eric Dale).

ruins, something that might seem odd to anyone familiar with the conventional view that these were cattle enclosures which were crucial to the function of the fort. In fact, casual observation in advance of the RCHME survey suggested to me that these ramparts belonged to an earlier phase of activity on the hill, and that the fort had been remodelled at some point: a suggestion which was reinforced by the survey (*ibid.* 1998, 26). Unfortunately, the dating of this remodelling remains open to conjecture, as indeed does the dating of the entire fort sequence. Recent work in Scotland (Rideout, Owen and Halpin, 1992) suggests that a defended settlement was already present on Eildon Hill North (which, incidentally, is clearly visible from Yeavinger Bell) by the late Bronze Age, and that the site may have been abandoned during much of the Iron Age before being re-occupied in Roman times. The same pattern of abandonment has been suggested for Traprain Law. What does this say about our use of the term 'Iron Age hillfort'? Of course, there are a multitude of different types of site lumped together under the term 'hillfort' and many were certainly occupied during the Iron Age, but the extent to which some of our large forts, such as Yeavinger, Eildon and Traprain, may differ from the majority in terms of function, form and chronology is an important issue that can only be resolved through excavation at these sites and others.

A further issue relating to the hillfort is that of the possible relationship between its occupants and the Roman military. It seems odd that we claim to know so much about the Roman occupation, yet are totally unable to discuss the impact of Rome throughout the Cheviots. Hope-Taylor (1977, 267) observes that the fort's 'presently exceptionally ruinous condition might be witness to Roman slighting late in the first century', but in fact we have no basis on which to attempt to draw links between Yeavinger and the Romans. Indeed, we do not even know whether the fort was occupied on the occasions that Roman troops pushed northwards into Scotland. However, it is hard to imagine that no Roman soldiers ever visited the area, and Mike Ritchie's conjectural reconstruction shown here as Fig. 2a. may well bear some resemblance to scenes enacted here during the late first century AD. Clearly, the hillfort could have served a defensive purpose if required, but its form may have owed more to the perceived prestige of its occupants than to the need to provide a defensive barrier for its resident population (or that of the surrounding area) to hide behind.

Nearly 150 years have passed since George Tate observed that 'Sometimes indeed some object of peculiar significance may turn up; but it is more by the accumulation of facts made known by the extensive and systematic application of the pick-axe and spade, that we can hope to arrive at sound general views respecting the military and domestic arrangements, and the habits and character of pre-historic times' (Tate 1862, 433). Tate's investigations at Yeavinger were, in fact, a commendable early attempt at what we would today term 'landscape archaeology': he dug within the hillfort and also in a number of surrounding monuments in the attempt to place the hillfort within a landscape context. It is a shame that no-one since Tate has opted to undertake further excavation at these sites, and his observations regarding the use of pick-axe and spade

remain as valid today as they were when he made them. Much new fieldwork, coupled with the development of new ways of thinking about the available evidence, will be required if we are ever to reach an understanding of the issues behind the building of Yeavinger Bell and the multitude of smaller hillforts which litter the Cheviot Hills.

The abandonment of the hillfort is another issue which demands further attention. Hope-Taylor's investigations within the fort recovered 'some scraps of samian ware and two late-Roman coins' which he interprets evidence of 'no more than desultory, small-scale use or occupation of its interior during the second, third and fourth centuries' (Hope-Taylor 1977, 267). However, it is significant that occupation of some kind was present within the fort during the Roman period, and future investigations may suggest that this was on a greater scale than is suggested by Hope-Taylor's limited investigations. Regardless of what went on during Roman times, though, it is hard to argue with Hope-Taylor's contention that 'during or soon after the Roman Iron Age, some part of the function earlier associated with the oppidum had been transferred to the lowland site which emerges historically in the seventh century bearing its name' (*ibid.*). The nature of this transfer, and the role played at the time by the Great Enclosure (see below), is a key issue yet to be resolved in the story of Yeavinger.

The extensive use of timber for the construction and maintenance of so many houses within the fort, as well as for fuel and other uses, suggests that abundant mature woodland was available in the vicinity of Yeavinger throughout the fort's occupation. Several centuries later, further vast quantities of mature timber were available for the construction (and when necessary the rebuilding) of the Anglian palace complex. The construction of both the fort and the palace complex must have had major impacts on the local landscape, and the past exploitation and management of woodland within this landscape could make a fascinating fieldwork project for a palaeobotanist. Clearly, as with everything else at Yeavinger, the hillfort should not be studied in isolation.

Farms and Fields as Ritual Monuments?

It is important to note that the Iron Age field system which supposedly existed on the site of the whaleback hill's Bronze Age and Dark Age cemeteries, interpreted by some as possibly marking a break in the sanctity of this site, has now been recognised as the result of natural periglacial activity (Tim Gates, pers. comm.). It is most unfortunate that the unaccompanied cremations from Hope-Taylor's excavations, which may have enabled us to state the extent to which the cemetery was in use between the Bronze Age and early medieval period, do not survive for radio-carbon dating. However, the two cremations with glass beads (Hope-Taylor 1977, 335) do raise the possibility that many other burials could have been deposited here throughout the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. This possibility has important implications for questions of continuity at Yeavinger, but it may only be resolved if further cremations can be recovered from the site.

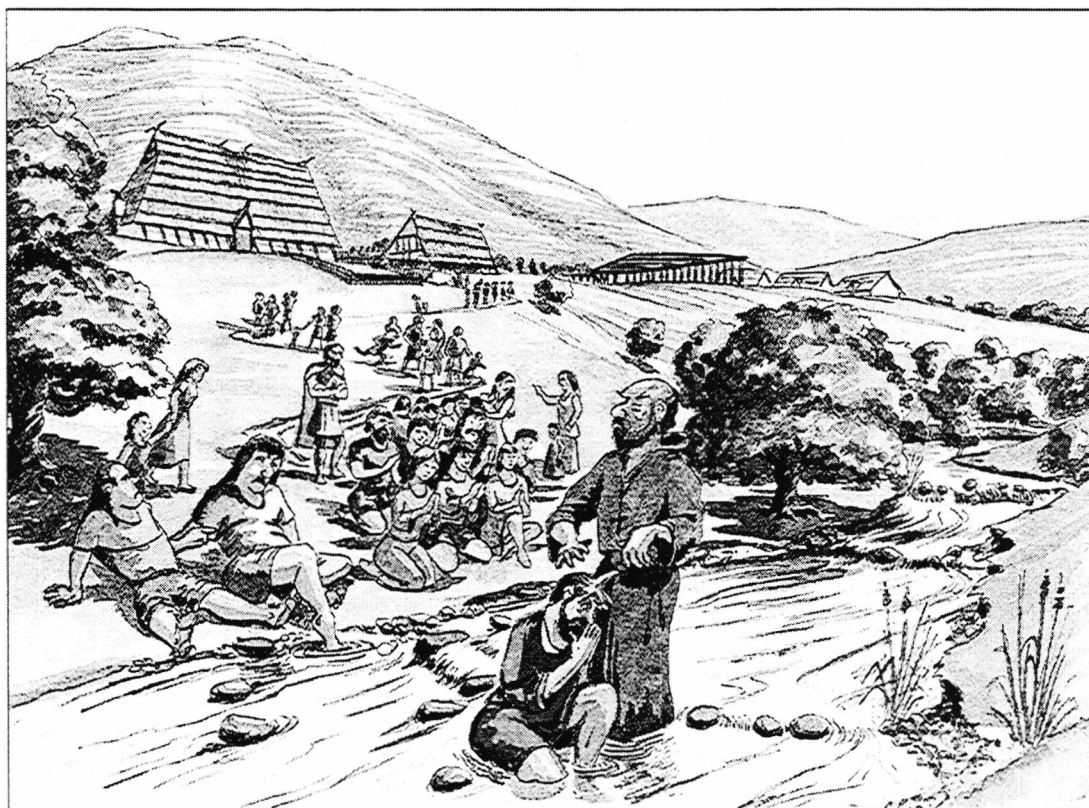


Fig. 2. Two conjectural reconstructions of significant events in Yeaveering's history by Mike Ritchie. These are taken from a full colour booklet entitled 'The Lost Palace', part of a Northumberland National Park Authority education pack for 7-11 year olds which tells the story of Yeaveering from the Neolithic through until the present day. While the archaeological accuracy of some of the details could legitimately be questioned, and some may consider the style of the illustrations inappropriate to Yeaveering, this pack is proving extremely popular with local schools. It can be seen in full on the National Park website: www.nnpa.org.uk.

Fig. 2a. (left) shows an imaginary scene in which a Roman is negotiating with the local chief at Yeaveering. There is, of course, no archaeological evidence for this, but it is considered more appropriate than the perhaps more conventional alternative of a bloody battle fought out between Romans and natives on the top of the Bell.

Fig. 2b. (below) shows Paulinus baptising locals in the River Glen, with Ad Gefrin behind and the ruins of the old hillfort visible in the background.

(Copyright Mike Ritchie).



Of course, it may well be that Iron Age bodies were disposed of in some way that leaves no archaeological trace, but there may also be another possibility. A large number of so-called 'Romano-British' settlements and field systems are scattered around the flanks of Yeavinger Bell (Plate 3). As already noted, their chronology is poorly understood, but they must date in general terms from the Iron Age/Romano-British period, a period from which we have little evidence of burials (other than the possible use of the whaleback cemetery, discussed above) or associated ceremonial monuments. Could it be that the reason for this lack of ceremonial monuments is simply that the fields were now playing this role? After all, the fields were effectively the constructs of the ancestors, and if cremations were deposited within them then the archaeologist searching for contemporary burial monuments will continue to fail in his quest (Frodsham, in press). Perhaps, one day, we might find burials in field walls to support this suggestion, but whatever the processes by which the Iron Age dead were disposed of, they appear (assuming that the whaleback cemetery was not in continuous use) to represent a major break with earlier tradition.

John Barrett has argued for just such a break with long established tradition at about this time. While stressing that monuments of earlier periods (eg. Bronze Age burial mounds) must have still retained considerable significance in the Iron Age, he believes that for Iron Age people 'the mythical past stood apart from the present' (Barrett 1999, 262). He contrasts the 'sacred' landscapes of the Neolithic in which 'social practices reworked...the presence of a general order which was one of creation and origins but remained vital and ever present' with an Iron Age in which 'the past was displaced...linked to the present by a trajectory of legitimate inheritance' which grew out of the tradition of single burial practised throughout much of the Bronze Age (*ibid.* 263). These are ideas which it will be fascinating to explore at Yeavinger, but regardless of the extent to which the Iron Age landscape may have incorporated references to older structures and stories, there can be no doubt that such structures, and especially burial mounds, were of immense significance to the people of Yeavinger during the succeeding Dark Ages.

***Ad Gefrin* and *Beowulf*: the Anglo-Saxon palace complex**

The origins of *Ad Gefrin* are far from clear. Brian Hope-Taylor favours the development of a native British settlement of rectangular timber structures, in association with the Great Enclosure, prior to the development of the palace complex in the later sixth century. More recently, Christopher Scull (1991), drawing on evidence of excavations elsewhere that was unavailable to Hope-Taylor, has suggested that the earliest rectangular buildings are probably those of a modest Anglian agricultural settlement of the mid sixth century 'which was transformed in the later 6th century by the establishment of the site as a major centre' (*ibid.*, 60). Both arguments have their merits, but both suffer from a major misinterpretation of the field evidence relating to the so-called 'Celtic fields' on the site. As noted above, these

'fields' are now thought to be natural features resulting from periglacial activity, so clearly cannot be used to deny the possibility of an Iron Age origin for the Great Enclosure, or, indeed, for some of the other 'early' structures recorded by Hope-Taylor. Regardless of the origins of the site, however, it is clear that *Ad Gefrin* had become a very special place by the late sixth century.

It is impossible to consider the *Ad Gefrin* great hall without conjuring up some of the graphic yet haunting imagery presented to us in the epic story of *Beowulf*. This was apparently composed in England, perhaps as long ago as the mid seventh century. Seamus Heaney, in a brilliant new translation (Heaney 1999, xii), notes that *Beowulf* 'possesses a mythic potency...it arrives from somewhere beyond the known bourne of our experience, and having fulfilled its purpose...it passes once more into the beyond'. He further observes that the 'opening and closing scenes retain a haunting presence in the mind; they are set pieces but they have the life-marking power of certain dreams'.

The archaeological remains of the great hall at *Ad Gefrin* are brought stunningly to life by the descriptions of activities at *Heorot* offered to us by the *Beowulf* poet:

*'...and we took our places at the banquet table.
There was singing and excitement: an old reciter,
a carrier of stories, recalled the early days.
At times some hero made the timbered harp
tremble with sweetness, or related true
and tragic happenings; at times the king
gave the proper turn to some fantastic tale,
or a battle-scarred veteran, bowed with age,
would begin to remember the martial deeds
of his youth and prime and be overcome
as the past welled up in his wintry heart.'*

(Heaney 1999, 67).

Although *Beowulf* is clearly set in Scandinavia, John Marsden (1992, 209) makes a fascinating comparison between the Cheviot landscape of *Ad Gefrin* and the 'uncharted territory - wolf-infested hillsides, windy crags and the perilous waterways' surrounding *Heorot*. Marsden notes that 'The lines describing the dark uplands patrolled by Grendel and his mother would correspond to the landscape suggested by the Cheviot range...to the Old English imagination', and that 'The mead-hall of *Heorot* lying below the monster-haunted fells must have stood on fields alike to those where once the timber halls of *Ad Gefrin* stood below the former hillfort of the Britons on Yeavinger Bell'. Perhaps, when tales such as *Beowulf* were told at *Ad Gefrin*, it was these very fells that were haunted by Gendel and others. Indeed, it is tempting to imagine references to the wild yet beautiful Cheviot Hills being woven into numerous wonderful tales, including many which must have been told at Yeavinger long before any Anglo-Saxon set foot on the earth.

It is not possible to include a detailed discussion of the palace complex here. However, a few basic points are central to the question of 'the past in the past' at Yeavinger. *Ad Gefrin* was constructed on a site which had been occupied in some form for thousands of years, although the

extent to which there may have been actual continuity of occupation here throughout this period remains unresolved. The palace complex was clearly designed to accommodate elements of the earlier landscape, notably two burial monuments and the Great Enclosure, and is sited immediately beneath the towering presence of the Bell with its great hillfort.

The Great Enclosure, presumably a stock enclosure of considerable functional and ceremonial significance, may have been a key element of the site from the Iron Age through into the seventh century. Hope-Taylor (1977, 268) regards this structure as the 'vital link between the 'sub-Romano-British' and 'Anglo-Saxon' chapters of Yeavinger's history', noting that in all its early forms it is 'completely in harmony with the palisade works that are accepted as one of the characteristic features of the pre-Roman, native world' (*ibid.*). He suggests that the initial construction of the Great Enclosure occurred during the fourth or fifth century, but this is presumably based largely on the presence of the non-existent 'Celtic fields' referred to above: now that this problem has been eradicated his observation that 'the possibility of a still earlier origin is not by any means to be dismissed' (*ibid.*) gains considerably greater relevance. It is also important to note that under Scull's suggested chronology for Phase I at *Ad Gefrin* 'the structural phases of the Great Enclosure would be free to float independently' (Scull 1991, 58). Clearly, the Great Enclosure, most of which still survives uninvestigated on the site, offers vast potential for the refinement of the prehistoric and Anglian dating sequence at Yeavinger. It must feature prominently in any future fieldwork planned for the region.

The Great Enclosure's prime function is usually thought to have been as a kraal for cattle brought to the site at particular times of the year, perhaps as some form of taxation to be consumed during the feasting which no doubt continued throughout each of the king's visits. This suggestion is lent support by David Hinton's (1990, 9) observation that 'the high proportion of young calf bones suggest a profligate disregard for the need to maintain breeding herds' at *Ad Gefrin*. However, it is perhaps equally likely that the Great Enclosure's main purpose related to horses. This is suggested by the discovery of 'enormous quantities of horse-bones' (apparently complete skeletons) found outside the enclosure's main entrance during the construction of the adjacent railway in 1885-86 (Hope-Taylor 1977, 13-14). Why should the remains of so many (admittedly undated) horses have been found here? Perhaps Leslie Alcock's (1981, 180) suggestion that 'the Bernician Angles inherited from the Britons a major military technique: the use of cavalry' offers an explanation. If horses were used in this way by the Votadini, and subsequently by the Bernicians, then the breeding and training of horses would have been a major, long-term undertaking, presumably including much ritual, which may have continued largely unaltered throughout later prehistory through into the seventh century. Could not the Great Enclosure be associated with this activity in some way, thus accounting for its origin and subsequent maintenance over such a long period of time? Why the structure should have been dismantled, and a church and cemetery built on its site, after

Edwin's hall and the grandstand had been destroyed is open to conjecture. What must be beyond question, however, is that removal of the Great Enclosure, after centuries of apparently continuous use, must signal a major change in some of *Ad Gefrin*'s functions at this time.

As already noted, King Edwin's great hall at *Ad Gefrin* surely bore comparison with *Heorot*, 'the greatest of hall buildings...magnificent and a gleam with gold' as described by the *Beowulf* poet, and the references to ancient burial mounds within this great epic and other sources provide further evidence of the continuing importance of ancient monuments to the people of the time. This importance of the past is dramatically illustrated by the remains at Yeavinger, and it was to this supremely important site, already steeped in history, that Paulinus came, probably in 627, to preach the Christian message and baptise the pagan natives (many of whom may still have resided in the so-called 'Romano-British' villages of round houses which litter the adjacent hills) in the nearby River Glen (Fig. 2b).

Following the abandonment of *Ad Gefrin*, some of its religious mystique may eventually have been appropriated by the nearby church and village of Kirknewton, although why a settlement of some kind did not develop on the actual palace site itself remains something of a mystery.

'The Old Palace'

Nestling beneath Yeavinger Bell's northern face is a ruinous old cottage known, rather grandly, as 'the Old Palace' (it was actually labeled 'King Edwin's Palace' on the old OS 6 inch map). This structure may have begun life as a rare form of defensible house or 'pele' in about 1550 (Ryder 1991), although the nearby earthworks which appear to have formed a dam just upstream suggest that it may at one time have functioned as a mill. Regardless of its actual history, it is of considerable significance to this paper by virtue of its name. I quote from Hope-Taylor (1977, 14): 'there can be no hesitation in dismissing its local name, or rather nickname, as the lingering result of a belated and fanciful christening, probably performed by a local 18th or 19th century parson who knew his Bede. Doubtless the name was attached to this particular structure because it was the only building in the area whose origin was unknown to history and beyond memory'. This provides a lovely example of a process that must have been going on at Yeavinger for millennia, and one cannot help but wonder exactly when and under what circumstances the Palace label was first attached to this structure.

Did a hazy yet persistent memory of Yeavinger's grand past survive in the area throughout medieval times? Or was that memory locked away within the pages of Bede's manuscripts, accessible only to a privileged elite, many of whom probably had no particular interest in the true location of *Ad Gefrin*? In the first half of the seventeenth century, William Camden (1637, 815), was apparently in no doubt that Yeavinger was the site of Bede's *Ad Gefrin*. Hope-Taylor excavated within the Old Palace in 1955, and recovered seventeenth century pottery from beneath three feet of later deposits. It is perhaps interesting to note, in this context, an early seventeenth century graveslab built into

the floor of Kirknewton Church. This slab is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it appears to commemorate 'Fergus Storey of Yeaving', and we know from documentary sources that the Storey family was effectively in charge of Yeaving at this time. Could it be that Fergus Storey actually lived in the Old Palace? Whether he did or not, he must have been familiar with the building, and one wonders what he knew of the history of his neighbourhood, and whether this building was old enough by this time to have become associated in any way with the more distant past. Many documents remain to be consulted, and there is clearly much fascinating research still to be done into the nature of medieval and post-medieval life at Yeaving.

Conclusion: remembering and forgetting *Gefrin*

'Ritually, as politically, the history of Yeaving is meaningless unless the place survived as the stronghold of its own native past: a horse (or a goat?) that could by persuasion be led to new waters, but could not be forced to drink.'

(Hope-Taylor 1987, 266).

'The tangible past is in constant flux, altering, ageing, renewing, and always interacting with the present' (Lowenthal 1985, 248). Clearly this has been the case at Yeaving for thousands of years. Archaeological monuments here cannot be placed into chronological boxes and ignored when studying later periods. This is because they would have retained significance long after the circumstances leading to their initial construction and use had passed; a concept which Richard Bradley (1993, chapter 6) eloquently labels 'the afterlife of monuments'. Without doubt, the significance of particular elements of the landscape will have changed considerably through time, but it would appear that Yeaving as a place retained a peculiar degree of importance, albeit perhaps intermittently, over a vast amount of time. Without doubt, many stories would have become intimately associated with the place, and these would have reinforced its importance. Some of these stories may have been rooted in fact, others may have been largely constructs of the imagination, fuelled by a desire to explain what may have happened at Yeaving in the distant past. Simon Schama (1995, 61) has noted that 'Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood, water and rock...but it should also be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery.' At Yeaving, these ideas, regardless of their origin, undoubtedly influenced the future. Indeed, much of what is happening here today (management agreement, interpretive and educational material, this paper) is firmly rooted in stories of and about the past.

These links between landscapes, myths and visions can be complex, and indeed can underlie and sustain many aspects of society. 'Embedded in the collective memory of a community and in the individual memories of its members are mythical or cosmological concepts, as well as folk memories of burial grounds, meeting places, valleys, mountains, and more, all situated in a specific temporal and historical context. Such concepts or memories are not simply reflections of landscape, but also often the means of organizing, using, and living in the landscape' (Ashmore and Knapp 1999, 14). Clearly, future studies of the archaeological landscape at places such as Yeaving have much more potential to inform us about the people who lived in and contributed to the history of the landscape than conventional studies of particular sites or periods.

It is important to bear in mind that many of the themes discussed above are by no means unique to Yeaving. It is becoming increasingly obvious from a large number of regional studies that once a place has gained a particular degree of significance then that significance is often maintained and enhanced through subsequent developments. Such sequences can be seen on a number of different timescales, and in many cases can be traced back to the Neolithic and earlier (as seems to have been the case at Yeaving). It certainly seems to be true that 'Memory stresses continuity in the landscape, often through re-use, reinterpretation or restoration, and reconstruction' (Ashmore and Knapp 1999, 14). If we accept this observation, however, we are bound to ask why so many previously important places were abandoned. In many ways this is a more difficult issue to address than why an important place should have retained its significance through time. How could such an important site as *Ad Gefrin* be forgotten? No church, no visible monument of any kind: without Bede there would not even have been a memory.

What can we say about the abandonment and 'forgetting' of *Ad Gefrin* and its complex symbolic landscape? Bede informs us that *Ad Gefrin* was abandoned in favour of *Maelmin*, and Hope-Taylor places the abandonment at no later than 685AD. The site may have been gradually forgotten following its abandonment, perhaps disappearing from collective memory within a few generations. The references held within the wider Yeaving landscape could also have been forgotten through a gradual and passive process. However, there may be an alternative explanation. If the juxtaposition of monuments and burials from different times at Yeaving results from the fact that 'a local elite was making a considered effort to strengthen its position through reference to the past', and that 'the selective reconstruction of important monuments was really equivalent to the composition of prestigious but fictitious genealogies' (Bradley 1987, 10), then could the abandonment and forgetting of the site be equivalent to the wiping of an individual from such a genealogy? There are numerous historical references to the erasing of individuals from genealogies, denying them a place within the society to which they once belonged. Could it be that *Ad Gefrin* was removed from collective memory in a similar way? Perhaps it held bad or inappropriate memories which were better completely forgotten than merely suppressed through the

building of new structures at this once prestigious location.

Or was the forgetting of sites like Yeavinger simply the norm? Several abandoned early medieval settlements are known in this part of Northumberland, and many more have been recorded throughout the whole of Britain. Richard Muir (1982, 21) has noted that 'through the Dark Ages and Roman periods and deeply into the prehistoric era, we find that the great majority of places which once supported a village or a hamlet are now deserted'. The desertion of Dark Age settlements, according to Muir, was the norm rather than the exception, although 'no obvious explanation for their desertion has been found' (*ibid.*).

In discussing individual life experiences, David Lowenthal tells us that 'only forgetting enables us to classify and bring chaos into order...The most vividly remembered scenes and events are often those which were for a time forgotten' (Lowenthal 1985, 205). Lowenthal quotes Roger Shattuck (interpreting Proust): 'If an image or a sensation out of the past is to be truly recognised...it must be summoned back...after a period of absence. The original experience must have been forgotten, completely forgotten...True memory or recognition surges into being out of its opposite: *oubli*' (*ibid.*). Are these thoughts of any relevance to society's forgetting, and subsequent rediscovery, of *Ad Gefrin*? It may well have required an element of forgetting to enable the creation of a special place on a number of different occasions at Yeavinger. Was it the mystery of what may have happened here over the centuries that gave the place much of its power, enabling people, whether in the Dark Ages or earlier, to put their own interpretations on what may have gone on before? Interpretations which would have been based partly on long-forgotten but conveniently recalled 'facts', and which would have acted as society's 'memory' of its distant past. Today, we can subject the Yeavinger landscape to the vigorous scientific techniques of modern archaeology, yet on a personal level our experiences of the place may not be very different from those of our Dark Age ancestors. Every new archaeological discovery may lead us to think that we are 'remembering' elements of the forgotten past, but in truth that past will remain largely forgotten.

We must accept that we will never be able to tell anything approaching the full story of Yeavinger. However, thirteen centuries after the abandonment of *Ad Gefrin* we probably possess more 'facts' about it than the people who lived and died in the region during the 8th century, within a few decades of its abandonment. We also possess 'facts' about the prehistory of the region that the residents of *Ad Gefrin* would have found quite extraordinary. Despite this, however, we will be unable to make much further progress in our understanding of the place without a campaign of fieldwork to answer to some of the basic questions relating to the form and chronology of the hillfort and other elements of the landscape. Many papers in this volume successfully demonstrate the importance to archaeological research of high quality survey, but when justified we must not be afraid to take our fieldwork a stage further (Frodsham 1995). Indeed, there is a clear case for a large scale excavation project at Yeavinger, and those who claim to occupy the moral high ground in English archaeology

by campaigning against such investigations in the name of 'conservation' do neither their subject nor the general public any favours by making such fieldwork virtually impossible.

As David Lowenthal eloquently informs us, 'The past remains integral to us all, individually and collectively. We must concede the ancients their place...But their place is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country; it is assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present' (Lowenthal 1985, 412). As the archaeologist currently entrusted with the management of Yeavinger, I feel a responsibility to encourage its assimilation and resurrection into our 'ever-changing present'. I also feel a sense of duty to George Tate and Brian Hope-Taylor (as well as to future generations) to continue to progress the understanding of our past through the cautious yet vigorous use of the trowel. The unacceptable alternative is that we simply carry on forgetting *Gefrin*.

Acknowledgements

I had not intended to publish a paper on Yeavinger prior to completing a great deal more research, but the opportunity to present these (often preliminary) thoughts to Keith following our discussions on top of the Bell was one that I could not resist. As noted in the text, this paper does little more than set the scene for future work, but if it helps in any way to stimulate further interest in this most magnificent of archaeological sites then it will have been more than worthwhile.

My work at Yeavinger has brought me into stimulating contact with a large number of individuals, all of whom have helped in some way with the development of the ideas presented here. I would particularly like to thank Neil Diment and Iain Hedley for commenting on a draft of my text, and Deborah Anderson for providing the original inspiration behind it. Grateful thanks are also due to Brian Hope-Taylor, Anthony Hill, Tim Gates, Mike Ritchie, Eric Dale, Andy Wilson, Trevor Pearson and (of course) Keith Blood, along with all the people who have joined me on my guided walks around Yeavinger and elsewhere in the Cheviots over the past decade.

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