

Archaeological Monitoring at Eston Nab

Cleveland



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Archaeological Monitoring at Eston Nab, Cleveland Grid Ref NZ 568183

by Rachel Grahame

The construction of a new footpath skirting Eston Nab necessitated archaeological monitoring. The work took place in December 2007 and was monitored by Rachel Grahame. No archaeological features predating the 19th and 20th centuries were seen throughout the works.

Introduction

Archaeological monitoring took place at Eston Nab (Figure 1) over one day in December 2007. The work was undertaken as a mitigation strategy during the construction of a new footpath on the advice of Peter Rowe of Tees Archaeology.

Eston Nab is located on the northern edge of the Cleveland hills overlooking the valley of the Tees. It is a Late Bronze Age univallate hillfort preceded by a palisaded settlement and associated with activity spanning the Palaeolithic to Iron Age periods (Tees Archaeology Historic Environment Record (HER) 65). The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM number 20870).

The hillfort was used to site a beacon built in 1808 during the Napoleonic Wars (HER 592), and subsequently used as a house. A cottage was built nearby in the mid 19th century to house ironstone workers: the buildings were demolished in 1956. The site has been subject to a series of archaeological investigations throughout the 20th century.

The scope of the works

The works involved the removal of the turf and some topsoil along the route of a new footpath to the east of the hillfort, in order to lay a layer of stone to form the footpath surface. The site code is CEN07.

Observations

The work took place on 3rd December 2007 with the machine work being supervised by the author. The work was carried out using a small 360 degree mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.20m toothless ditching bucket. This was used to remove a strip of turf and topsoil c.2.50m wide and up to 0.15m deep (usually only 0.10m) along the route of the new footpath.

The topsoil [100] was a dark red brown friable sandy silt with root mass, containing occasional sherds of 19th and 20th century pottery (7 sherds) and glass (2 fragments). Below it at a depth of 0.15m was the subsoil [101], a mid to dark brown yellow friable

sandy clay with gravel (25%), varying to a pale grey yellow friable clay sand with gravel patches. This deposit was only exposed intermittently.

Running parallel with the existing footpath and c.1.00m to the east of it was a bank of sandstone rubble comprised of stones up to 0.50m in size [102]. The bank was c.6.00m wide and c.0.50m high, and contained scrap metal, plastics, and 19th and 20th century pottery (5 sherds), glass (1 fragment) and tile. This represented the remains of boundary wall running NW-SE and shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1856 (Yorkshire Sheet 17).



Between the topsoil [100] and the subsoil [101] were occasional shallow patches of black discoloration, probably related to heather burning. To the north of the wall [102] was a modern pipe trench, possibly a field drain, oriented NW-SE [103]. To the north of this was the base of shallow sub-circular pit c.0.80m in diameter, and containing nails, burnt sandstone, charcoal, and brick fragments [104]. Both these features were clearly 20th century and were not excavated.

No artefacts or archaeological features predating the 19th and 20th centuries were found.

Conclusions

Despite its proximity to Eston Nab, the monitoring failed to find any traces of any prehistoric archaeological features. This may be partly due to the shallowness of the excavation. The later features and finds from the topsoil may be explained by the presence of ironstone workers accommodation on the Nab during the later 19th and 20th centuries.

Appendix A

Digital photographs (proceeding from south to north along the route of the path)

Frame	Description	Facing
1	Bank [102]	NE
2	Bank [102]	N
3	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NE
4	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NNE
5	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NNE
6	Pipe trench [103]	N
7	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	N
8	Pit [104]	NNW
9	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NNW
10	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NW
11	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NW
12	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	N
13	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	N
14	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	N
15	General view of excavation showing topsoil [100] and subsoil [101]	NE