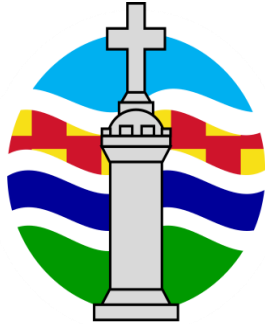


The Excavations at Hunting Hall in 2025



LHG
Archaeology

REPORT OF THE EXCAVATIONS AT HUNTING HALL, LOWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND

Issue: May 2026

This document is a report on the 2025 dig and associated activities.

It is available on the Lowick Heritage Group website.

www.lowickheritagegroup.org

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Acknowledgements

Our acknowledgement of the support of the Barmoor Wind Farm Community Fund and Community Foundation comes with wholehearted thanks: their continued input has enabled the involvement of scores of volunteers and visitors along with hundreds of followers of the dig on social media. Thanks to this commitment, we continue to contribute to the growing body of evidence defining the origins of Lowick whilst locating the relevance of the Hunting Hall site within a broader archaeological framework.



Figure 1 Professionals consider the evidence.

As our site attracts wider interest and visits from many archaeologists, we were delighted to receive the input of Dave Heslop, who has a specialist research interest in quern stones. He is a Visiting Lecturer at Newcastle University and was formerly the Tyne and Wear County Archaeologist and Monuments Manager at Newcastle City Council. He and Adam Welfare, a retired archaeologist formerly with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, (now Historic Environment Scotland), along with Edward Peglar,

geologist with a special interest in sedimentary geology and Stephanie Lewis, a geology graduate made an appraisal of the two quern stones which have been recovered from the site. The appraisal was undertaken at an event organised through the TiIVAS archaeology group at Ford Forge, Heatherslaw and we gratefully acknowledge the invitation to the event and the contribution of all involved.

Also visiting Hunting Hall and in attendance at Heatherslaw, were Richard Carlton, Consultant Archaeologist and John Nolan Research Archaeologist. Both Richard and John have a specialist interest in ceramics, and they generously provided a separate day for our group to appraise our ceramic assemblage. This made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the finds for which we acknowledge and sincerely thank them.

Within the ceramic assemblage, John and Richard recognised a misidentified piece of a glass-bangle likely from the 1st/2nd century AD. A review of this unexpected find along with other undetermined glass was provided by John Nolan. Subsequently, Matt Jobbling and Brian Jones at the National Glass Centre, Sunderland, made an exemplar of the type of bangle our find might typify and Lindsay Allason-Jones, retired archaeologist, (formerly with Newcastle University and the Museum of Antiquities of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who has



Figure 2 Puzzling over the options.

written extensively on the subject of the material culture of Roman Britain), provided comment for which we extend our thanks and gratitude.

Lastly, we gratefully thank Tom and Karen Burns who farm Hunting Hall and accommodate our activities with great support and enthusiasm throughout the year. None of this is possible without them!



Figure 3 Volunteers in the Trenches

The Dig

Introduction

This year the Dig ran from 02 June 2025 until 29 June 2025 – a shorter season than we have previously enjoyed and a consequence of the busy schedule of our resident professional archaeologist, Kristian Pedersen who once again led and supported us in all our archaeological endeavours. Happily, with the turf removal having been mechanically completed in previous days, we were able to commence cleaning and trowelling on Day 1.

Two trenches were opened:

Trench 8 – an expansion of the Trench opened in 2024.

The primary objective was to expose the basal deposits to ascertain whether the rich faunal deposits noted last year on the North facing side of the Trench resolve as a continuous feature or alternatively as a discrete deposit/s.

Trench 10 – on a North/South orientation, this Trench partially overlapped and extended West from the earlier Trench 3 and Trench 5. The overlap was made to facilitate and ensure accurate integration with the previous plans and drawings.

The principle objectives were:

to examine whether proposed industrial activity was taking place further to the retrieval of slag and charcoal in the original Trench 3;

to examine the large circular feature previously posited to have had a Bronze Age profile but which when excavated as Trench 5 provided little evidence for this;

to examine the area around the ‘large stones’ uncovered in Trench 3 which may fall into the arc of the palisade.

Trench 8

Using the evidence gathered in 2024, Trench 8 was opened to a depth known to hold the Victorian drain. Cleaning back to expose the drain revealed an unexpected parallel linear stone feature recognisable as a rumbling drain and of possible medieval origin.

On the eastern margin of the ditch, a line of large boulders emerged. It appeared possible that this may have represented a revetment with the apparent discontinuity in the stone-line being the possible result of robbing to create the rumbling drain.

As excavation proceeded it became apparent that these stones were embedded in the clay rather than being emplaced within a deliberate retaining cut and the most logical explanation is that this alignment represents a deliberate arrangement to secure the clay which had been piled up to form the bank of the ditch. As trowelling proceeded into the deeper levels of the ditch in a westward direction, more large boulders emerged, which were most likely tumble from the higher line of boulders described. At this level, the interface between the yellow clay and a dark, rich organic deposit became obvious

and it was noted that some of the large boulders had come to rest within that organic deposit beyond the clay margin.



Figure 4 The emerging drains

Complementing the linear boulder arrangement, the appearance of a surviving wooden stake and an arrangement of possible postholes was a cause of excitement. Carefully excavated to optimise the artefact's integrity and conservation, observation to ascertain whether an incision, cut or posthole was present led to the conclusion that in the absence of a corresponding cut this wooden post was most likely driven into the clay without any posthole for support or drainage.

Subsequently, supposed postholes appeared between the bank and the lower margins of the ditch which had unusually 'linear' sides such as a modern fencepost would. However, their depth beneath the topsoil ruled out any likelihood of these being modern features. Without other evidence these remain a conundrum. However, a further wooden stake was revealed in the northern wall and as the trowelling continued, further stake-holes and the vestiges of wood were discovered.

Many Iron Age and Romano-British sites with enclosure ditches are presumed to have had fences such as wattling provides and this could have been for defence, animal containment or even to reinforce a boundary but there are few examples of this in practice. Therefore, our recording and preservation of these finds may go some way towards proving a point of speculation.



Figure 5 A wood post

In the western half of the ditch a further conundrum

materialised: the emergence of a beehive quern stone surrounded by, (though not on top of), broken pottery of a type thought to be medieval but possibly Romano British.



Figure 6 Beehive quern stone and pottery emerge.

With what was regarded as a medieval drain coupled with the subsequent appearance of possible medieval pottery,

the question was: 'what is an Iron Age quern doing in a medieval context'? Simply put, the answer is most likely a testimony to the longevity of quern stones. However, if the pottery can be conclusively



Figure 7 Sherds of pottery

identified as either medieval (10th-12th Century) or Romano British (1st/ 2nd Century) then we have scope to more accurately discuss the rumbling drain, the quern stone and the stratigraphy of the upper layers of the ditch.

The condition of the quern stone suggests it was not only well used but had finally been abandoned in a damaged state. It may have been used purposefully as a stone within the drain whether in medieval or late Iron Age times, or it may have, more prosaically, been simply tossed aside as having no further utility. There is no evidence to suggest a ritual deposition despite initial consideration of this. The proximity to the broken pottery was one consideration and the possibility of a separate context another. However, the initially perceived context, a 'dark patch' evident on discovery, did not in fact resolve into a discrete context and the possibility of ritual deposition was put aside.

The colour and fabric of the quern stone made it stand out from the remainder of the large stones and boulders within the ditch so when on the eastern side of the trench a similar piece of stone was found, it too, was given a find number and removed for further assessment. This piece, without the appearance of having been worked, was found at a similar depth to the quern at the outside margin of the large, dark organic area. The deposition of quern stones is discussed further (p12 and p18)

As said, the principle aim in expanding Trench 8 was to ascertain whether the faunal deposits noted last year on the North facing side of the Trench resolved as a continuous feature or alternatively as discrete deposit/s. In 2024 a narrow sondage had been excavated to elicit information on the stratigraphy of the ditch and in doing so, the wealth of faunal material was discovered in the basal layers. However, the very narrowness of the sondage made it impossible to predict what an expansion through the width of the ditch would reveal. The stratigraphy, including the cut for the Victorian drain had been obvious in the 2024 excavation and we hoped for a similar visual simplicity on the south facing side to support the excavation as we moved to the basal layers across the entirety of the ditch.



Figure 8 Coring the black basal layer.

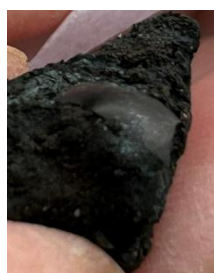


Figure 9 Beetle carapace from basal layer



Figure 10 Limpet shell from basal layer



Figure 11 Bones from the basal layer

On cleaning the trench, we exposed a dark organic material which was disturbed by the two drains. The extent of this organic layer was proposed to be delineated by either a deliberate 'stepping' to facilitate the digging and management of the ditch or that it represented a natural level of water pooling.

The interface between the clay and the organic deposit was stark. A further thin layer of sterile clay was assumed -but not definitively stated - to be a deposit formed by fluvial action.

Finds of wood and small amounts of bone were made in these upper layers along with the linear boulder features, wooden stakes, stake holes, the quern, pottery and the drains.

The recording and removal of the drains then permitted descent to the basal layers. During that cleaning phase we sought to assess the veracity of the many putative features and contexts we had posited. In doing so we determined that many of the features and contexts identified were in fact 'organic stains' in the necrotic clay that lay immediately beneath the homogenous and sterile clay which had been identified previously. Immediately beneath this layer was context (8037) the anticipated rich organic deposit, jet black in colour and correlating to the basal context from last year's dig. Below that, was context (8038) and from these two contexts we once again drew copious amounts of organic material ranging from wood, bone, limpet shell, snail shell, beetle carapace, tooth and charcoal.



Figure 12 Photogrammetry of south facing section stratigraphy of Trench 8

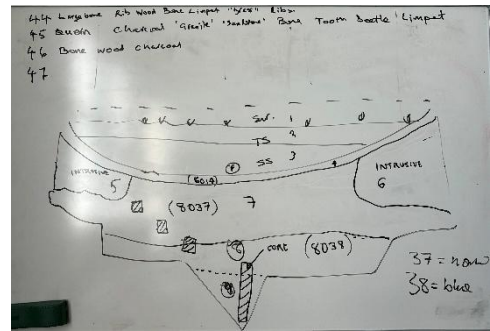


Figure 13 Drawing of South facing section stratigraphy of Trench 8 showing 'steps' soil micromorphology samples and core slot.

However, being limited by safety considerations as to how deep we could excavate, a makeshift coring apparatus was employed to allow deeper examination. This demonstrated that the basal layers descended beyond three meters, but the cultural layers did not go to nearly the same depth. This would suggest that the ditch was cut into an older deposit of probable natural origin such as a kettle hole or infilled riverbed. Along with the core, three sediment collections were taken from the transitional zones of interest within the stratigraphy. These will be saved for analysis using Soil Micromorphology techniques to identify and understand the sequence of activities (natural or anthropogenic) which characterise the ditch. Additionally, forty litres of material from (8038) has been collected and sealed for future generic examination.

Lastly, one 'outlier' collection of rib bone was revealed away from the main area of retrieved ecofacts though still within the basal layers. It was found at a depth of 44.74m – the lowest of any find and this was given a singular context number (8041). Being the deepest and therefore most likely oldest retrieval, these bones have been sent for

Carbon 14 dating so a comparison can be made with the bones retrieved from the 2024 basal layer which provided a date of between 10AD – 133AD.

This year, all our finds and contexts have been digitally recorded using the OSGB36/ODN. (*see explanatory note on final page) This provides information using X, Y and Z axis coordinates expressed as Eastings, Northings and Heights. This facilitates a greater degree of speed in recording the site than traditional methods of hand measurement and drawing. Outcomes are instantly available for analysis and can be mapped onto images. The digital material also provides an accessible and portable resource for future investigations but equally, immediate relationships and comparisons to be made.



Figure 14 Traditional planning.



Figure 15 Tech planning.

For example, comparing the two substantial contexts (8037) and (8038) we find that:



Figure 16 Our largest ever intact find - wood from basal layer.

(8037) occurs at a 'depth' of 45.49m to 45.01m and of the 13 sub-assemblages found therein, 8 were bone, 3 were wood, 1 was limpet and 1 was tooth;

(8038) occurs at a 'depth' of 45.15m to 44.74m and of the 22 sub-assemblages, 7 were bone, 5 were wood, 2 were twig, 2 were charcoal, 2 were limpet, 1 was snail, 1 was tooth and 2 were beetle.

Thus, at the upper context (8037), 61.5% of assemblages were bone whilst in the lower (8038), 31.8% were bone. Beetle comprises 0% in (8037) but 9.1% in (8038). A significant number of snail shells were found in (8038) but none in (8037). However, limpet shells were found in both contexts.

Consequently, in respect of our objectives, this year successfully demonstrated the continuity of the basal layers and associated artefacts and ecofacts whilst the upper levels point to continuity from the Iron Age through to the Medieval period.

Trench 10

Measuring 25m x 4m, the turf and topsoil was removed from Trench 10 exposing the previously seen features from the trenches numbered 3 and 5 excavated in 2019 and 2021.

Pursuing affirmation of industrial activity originally suspected in Trench 3 we found, central within the new Trench 10, embedded cobbles of regular size with the appearance of two curvilinear arcs (or 'paths' as they initially appeared). These were in an area where previously scatters of slag and charcoal had been in evidence. As this feature emerged it resolved on the more south-eastern curve as a cobble-rich ditch whereas the deposit conforming to its curve on the north-western side presented as a gritty surface with a burnt-orange colour suggestive of burning and high temperatures. As trowelling progressed a divergence in the conformity of the two arcs was observed with the 'eastern' portion showing evidence of separate cuts and the 'western' revealing a later, intruding post-hole. Ultimately, the cuts appear to demonstrate that the cobble-filled ditches have been recut on several occasions suggesting multiple phases of occupation. Excitingly, slag was recovered from beneath the cobbled area suggesting that industrial activity was occurring before the cobbled surface was laid. The presence of Iron Age pot allows us to tentatively propose that a period of industry and a

subsequent period of, perhaps, non-industrial



Figure 17 Emerging arcs burnt and cobbled.



Figure 18 Slag recovered from beneath the cobbles.



Figure 19 Pottery from one of the cuts abutting the ring.

activity was occurring on this part of the site during the late Iron Age. The excavation of the industrial area impinged on the nominal Bronze Age ring on its Northern curve. This revealed in section what was not visible in plan: a series of three separate cuts, the most recent of which contained Iron Age pot and two of which contained bone providing dating material to assess the temporal differences in the cuts through radiocarbon dating.

Prior to excavation in 2019, most academics shown the geophysical images were of the opinion the ring most likely represented a Bronze Age construction.

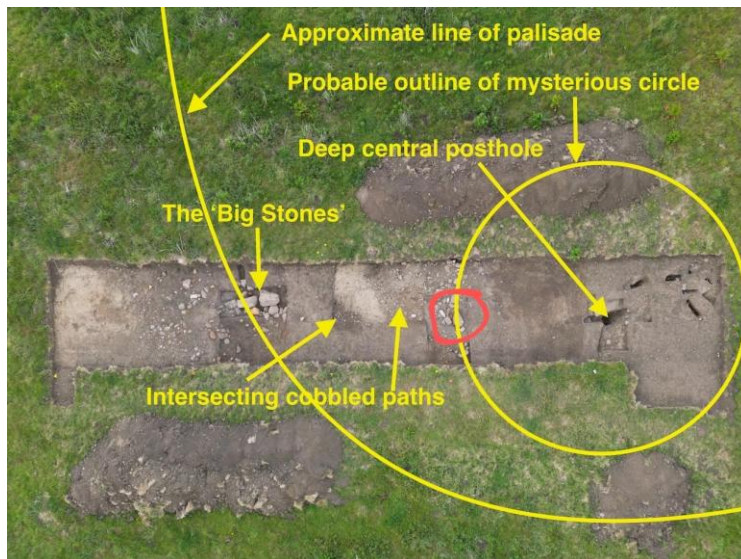


Figure 20 Trench 10

However, our excavations at that time provided radiocarbon dating evidence for the period 1BC – 122AD. Since 2019, developments in archaeology would suggest our feature is perfectly consistent with an Iron Age roundhouse and that, particularly further north, a diameter of 15m is not uncommon. With the discovery of Iron Age pot, we can more firmly suggest that in

keeping with the rest of the site thus far excavated we have another example of an Iron Age building.

That said, one of the peculiarities of this ‘roundhouse’ is the lack of internal features. The large, central posthole excavated in 2021 would certainly be sufficient to hold a solid central post for the roof, but only one potential associated posthole, (on the internal edge of the ‘eastern arc’), has been discovered during this year’s dig. During the 2021 investigations a small number of pits in the south-east quarter of the floor produced the dating evidence mentioned and also a purposely placed piece of haematite (originating from Cumbria). However, this year, no further pits were identified. In an effort to better understand this, a thorough re-examination of the 2021 pit containing haematite was made but despite this, no further evidence was forthcoming. The elusive nature of this ring and the large internal posthole remains unresolved thus we determined to re-visit it at our next dig to examine the as yet unexplored western half.



Figure 21 Identifying the intersecting cuts.

We turn now to our palisade ditch and the 'large stones' last encountered in 2021.



The geophysical evidence shows these stones lined up across the width of the palisade but their relationship to the feature is unknown.

Figure 22 The palisade and 'big stones'.

The stones were found on a consolidated organic surface. To the eastern side, two separate deposits were encountered, the deeper of the two containing bone and carbonised wood. On the western side, two similar deposits emerged with the lower being characteristically cobble rich and curvilinear in form. The northern margin of the palisade was well defined by stones purposefully arrayed in a sloping manner defining the bank wall and although the southern margin was less well defined there emerged symmetrical postholes on the north and south sides, close to the east facing trench wall. Unexpectedly, this area of the palisade resolved itself into a robustly constructed posthole lined with large stones sufficient to support an exceptionally large vertical post. Abutting this, a further adjacent stone lined hole of equivalent size containing a



Figure 23 The jaw emerging.

number of bones including a jawbone with teeth believed to be a broken cattle mandible was encountered.



Figure 24 The jawbone after removal.

The section through the palisade suggested further cuts but what these represent in terms of intrusive features is unclear. However, the close proximity of two small post holes, a large post-hole, a further pit or posthole and the juxtaposition of the 'large stones' do not conform readily to a typical palisade profile particularly when we already know there are bones beneath the stones which have been

left in situ. The very busyness of this small area suggests these many features are unlikely to be contemporaneous and more likely to be evidence of re-use perhaps long before or after the palisade was constructed. Additionally, our evidence from Trench 9, where the palisade was excavated on the southern side of the site in 2024, shows a strikingly different profile – the palisade being a simple, relatively narrow construction suggestive of a possible bank with stone footing or reinforcement. A comparison of radiocarbon dates from the organic material found in Trench 10 beneath the stones and from the postholes and pits offers a means of obtaining comparative data to understand the temporal relationship between these features. This in turn can be compared with data from Trench 9 to build a clearer picture of the palisade and the relevance of the ‘large stones.’

Quern stones

Thus far at Hunting Hall, two quern stones have been retrieved from two quite separate contexts and within contrasting areas of the site. Their presence is evidence of food processing on our site and if our floatation process reveals cereals, we can confidently add arable farming to the list of activities so far discovered on this Iron Age homestead.

Quern stones, appear in substantial numbers from the earliest dates of the Neolithic period and coincide with the adoption of agrarian lifestyles during the transition from Mesolithic hunting and gathering.

This early technology is characterised by a simple device whereby a stationary stone with a concave upper face is used as a grinding surface whilst a handheld stone is moved back and forth across that surface, to de-husk and grind grains. Named saddle-querns, these artefacts are found not only in a European and Middle Eastern context but have a presence the world over, even into the 20th century.

During the Bronze Age and particularly the Iron Age, the technology developed significantly with the emergence of the rotary-quern, adopted in the North around 400BC. Presenting initially as the commonly seen Iron Age Beehive style, an evolving, flatter iteration known as a disc quern appears during the period of Roman occupation in Britain.

Rotary querns consist of an upper grinding stone placed on a fixed lower stone. A slot in the upper stone provides a socket for a handle to turn the stone.

Grain is fed into the upper stone through a hole or ‘hopper’ with the ground grain spilling out between the lower and upper surfaces of the two stones.

The rotary quern represents a significant increase in functionality and productivity: saddle querns can produce roughly 0.6 KG of ground grain per hour, but a rotary quern can grind 3-4 KG per hour freeing up time and energy for other pursuits.

Quern stones in Britain are most usually manufactured from locally available stone and require to be durable and abrasive but resistant to surface wear which would contaminate the grain. Granite, Schist and Millstone Grit are good examples of locally available stone in Britain. Most stones are deliberately quarried rather than being

collected from field or beach environments. However, examples fashioned from glacial erratics or river boulders are not unknown. Famous English quern quarries include Wharnccliffe Crags in Yorkshire, a massive gritstone escarpment, which contains the remains of unfinished Iron Age beehive querns.

Archaeology suggests that beyond their primary function many quern stones may well have been repurposed or ritually deposited even when still serviceable as we have considered in our appraisal of Crock Cleuch (p.18) Others may have been simply abandoned having been broken or having no further use as considered in Trench 8 (p.5)

The development of mechanical mills and millstones in the medieval period witnessed a decline in quern stone use but not a cessation as the value of this technology



Figure 25 Quern stone 027 in situ showing unfinished hopper and large fracture.

persisted in the domestic sphere well into the modern period - a testament to design virtuosity and longevity.

Hunting Hall's first excavated quern was Small Find 027 from Trench 6 in 2022; the second was Small Find 8017 in Trench 8 in 2025. Both artefacts were appraised by D. Heslop, A. Welfare, E. Pegler and S. Lewis (see *acknowledgements* p. 1).



Figure 26 Excavated quern Stone 027

Quern 027 was judged to be a rough-out from an unidentified production site. It appears to have been started but not completed. The lithologic description is of a medium dark, fine-grained sandstone of a type found widely throughout the North of England. It is shaped, showing course hammering to create a dome-shaped surface and has fine tooled hammering on the base whilst the central hopper has been started but not finished.

The diameter at widest points varies between 440mm and 500mm placing it in the Large category when compared with the assemblage accrued at Whitely Castle Roman Fort in Northumberland. However, had hammering and shaping continued, the measurement would likely have been smaller. The hopper diameter at widest point measured 58mm. Hunting Hall has provided evidence of trade in other goods, so it is possible to conceive of this rough out being traded from a distance rather than hewn from local rock for which there is no evidence at the present time.

The diameter at widest points varies between



Figure 27 Find 8020 Andesite lava from the Cheviot Hills

Quern 8017 was accompanied for assessment along with a large block of similarly coloured and composed rock which had been excavated

approximately 4m east. This was recorded as Small Find 8020 and was described as originating in the Cheviot Hills. It had not been worked or altered in any way. However, it had been deliberately moved as there is no natural route for it to have taken from the hills to Hunting Hall. It is composed of andesitic lava with felspar phenocryst (which appear as white bobbly pieces in the matrix) and whilst someone made the effort to collect it, the piece was never subjected to any industry.

8017 on the other hand, was most definitely assessed as the upper stone of an Iron Age Beehive Quern with a clear and complete, though damaged, hopper and a socket for a handle.

Lithologically, despite superficial appearances it is quite different from 8020. The quern 8017 is Cheviot Granite which (and this is without recourse to thin section or other geological magnification) shows a pink, coarse grained porphyritic appearance. Again, this material could not have arrived at Hunting Hall naturally and was undoubtedly brought from the Cheviots by human agency.



Figure 28 Find 8017 Granite Beehive quern stone.

8017 is in poorer condition than 027 and its original dimensions cannot be estimated. However, in its current condition it is, at its widest points 250mm x 200mm with a height of 180mm. The base, as it is, measures 187mm x 142mm at its widest points. At the narrowest point, the base is 70mm.

The interior of the hopper measures 11mm and the opening of the hopper measures 29mm. The handle slot at widest point is 54mm. The overall condition of this upper stone is poor with significant loss of fabric and shape, but it remains unmistakably an upper stone of a beehive quern.

Ceramics and Glass

Ceramics

Over the seasons at Hunting Hall a large collection of ceramic has been assembled. It has been chiefly characterised by Iron Age pottery, generally thought to be for domestic storage and cooking purposes. Finds have most commonly been found as individual sherds though occasionally as two items, for example, two harmonious parts of the same pot.

This year, in Trench 8 we were delighted to find a body of 153 fine, grey sherds representing possibly two or more separate pots of an as yet undetermined period, (Small Find 8019). This is quite unique to the site and is the subject of intense post-excavation scrutiny.

Within the topsoil and subsoil of every trench we have excavated, modern items ranging from drainpipe, clay smoking pipes, stoneware, earthenware and china from all manner of domestic environments are recovered. These common finds represent the detritus of

historical waste management practice such as the spreading of midden heaps as fertilizer or the use of waste as hardcore or paving. These pieces provide information regarding broader aspects of modern populations which can be readily compared with the historical record to promote understanding of societal activity.

At Hunting Hall, our greater interest lies in those objects



Figure 4 Pottery from Trench 10

found within secure contexts within our trenches which support our understanding of site activity and dating evidence.



Figure 30 Pottery from Trench 10

The assessment of pottery is made with consideration of fabric, production-method, decoration, location and shape (form). Each division is subsequently broken down to further sub-divisions, for example, production method can include wheel-turning, coiling, moulding or modelling and firing technique. This permits scientific distinction and enables archaeologists and others to agreeably distinguish finds, for example, clearly identifying the quite different characteristics distinguishing indigenous Romano British cooking vessels from items of Samian Ware from Gaul.

In assessing our Iron Age assemblage, consideration of fabric is not straightforward. As noted below, the sites at both Hunting Hall and Crock Cleuch lend themselves to pottery manufacture due to the boulder clay each site is situated on. However, fabric identification is complicated by local geology, as glacial activity has produced an admixture of clays in the region. There is scope for an assessment of inclusions to support distinctions and our intention in post-excavation work is to seek a geology opinion on both inclusions and clay composition to understand how much of our assemblage is locally made and how much perhaps originates elsewhere. One specific area of interest which Archaeologist Richard Carlton has undertaken on our behalf is to discuss with colleagues whether beach sand is one of the inclusions noted in some of the more robust, 'harder' Iron Age pieces.

The pottery Find 8019, excavated in Trench 8 during 2025, was found in association with an Iron Age Beehive quern stone. Richard Carlton and John Nolan both had misgivings when it came to stating definitively if what we have is medieval Scottish White Gritty Ware or Roman Grey Ware or indeed, less well documented types such as Bamburgh Ware known locally from the on-going investigations at Bamburgh Castle. There are 153 separate sherds of a predominantly mid-grey colour with evidence of blackening and some pieces with a paler hue. The fabric is of fine grit and is showing evidence of being wheel spun on a kick-wheel, with knife trimming prior to low-fired kiln manufacture. The round or "saggy" bottom suggests manufacture on sand/ash, possibly directly through

the firing process. There is no apparent glazing on any part; decoration is confined to pronounced internal rilling and overall form cannot currently be stated. There are base sherds which indicate the presence of two pots with base circumferences of 18cm and 14 cm. There are no rim sherds or handles, spouts, or other form of identifiers. Many of the sherds are blackened suggesting carbonisation from cooking of foodstuffs although some blackening may be related to manufacture. A reconstruction of the pots will help this analysis. Meanwhile, post-excavation work has begun on cleaning and assembling the sherds with the rilling being a useful gauge of fit. Archaeologist John Nolan is conducting further enquiries on our behalf.



Figure 31 153 sherds of pottery of possibly two or more vessels.



Figure 5 Reconstructing the vessels.

Several other ceramic pieces are testament to the continuing use of the site in the middle and late medieval period with the presence of 13th century Green Glaze pottery from a secure context in the upper layers of Trench 8 along with sherds retrieved from the topsoil dating to the 14th century and one 15th century piece from Germany.

Glass



Figure 33 The original glass fragment lies atop an exemplar made by the National Glass Centre, Sunderland.

Among the assemblage was one misidentified piece of glass which had been recorded as part of a ceramic handle. This fragment was identified by John Nolan as a portion of a Roman glass bangle or bracelet. Glass bracelets became widespread across the Forth-Tyne territory in the late 1st century AD and are commonly found on excavated Romano-British sites in the region. Made with recycled glass, our example is a fragment of Kilbride-Jones Type 3A bracelet, usually dateable to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD which accords with other dating evidence from Hunting Hall including previous isolated finds of Roman pottery and metalwork. The piece is translucent and milky-white in appearance and the photograph above shows an

exemplar made by the National Glass Centre, Sunderland with the original fragment of approximately 29mm placed on top.

Hunting Hall has otherwise provided only a few examples of glass artefacts and these have been largely topsoil finds of identifiable modern bottles. However, we now have confirmation of sherds which are of either bottle or other vessel dating from the 18th-19th centuries and one piece of post 1850s thin window glass.

Other Finds

Of the artefacts discovered this year, one in particular reinforces the extraordinary timespan of human activity on the site and that is a Mesolithic agate core, found in Trench 10. The same trench provided a coin viz a mid-16th to late 17th century coin minted in Scotland named a Bawbee (worth six pennies, Scots). Within the parameters of our dig, we have artefacts from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages; the Iron Age, Roman period and Early Medieval period; the High and Late Medieval periods and the Early Modern and Modern periods. People have been here forever!



Figure 34 Worked flint



Figure 6 Copper alloy strap end



Figure 36 Bawbee.



Figure 37 Mesolithic agate core

Crock Cleuch

EXCAVATIONS IN TWO HOMESTEADS AT CROCK CLEUCH. 145

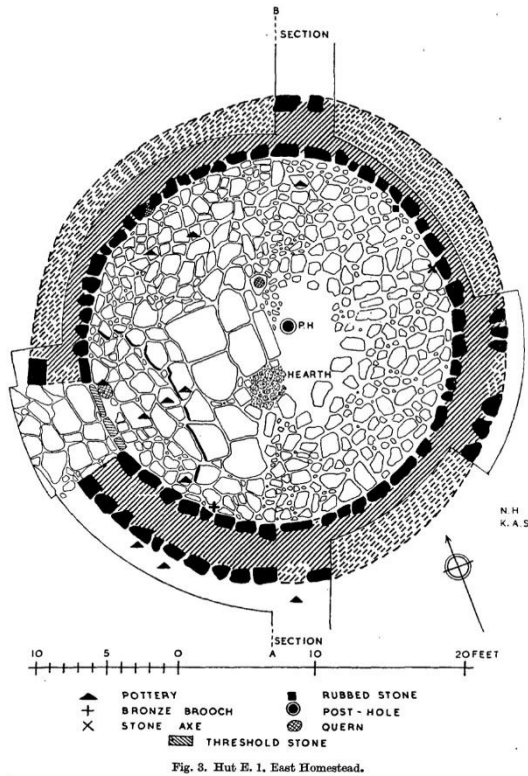


Figure 38 Hut E1 East Homestead from Steer and Keeny, *Proceedings 81*, p. 145 Reproduced with kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

As our finds illustrate, each year of excavation has built a body of evidence which allows theories and hypotheses to be generated, modified or abandoned. The entire site is under continuous review but increasingly demonstrates an emphasis on the late Iron Age/Romano British period.

Pioneered by George Jobey in the 1960s, there is now a substantial body of work investigating the indigenous enclosed farmsteads of Northumberland and the recent work undertaken at Pegswood Moor is an excellent example for study.

Closer to home is Crock Cleuch homestead in modern Roxburghshire. Lying twenty miles South-West of Hunting

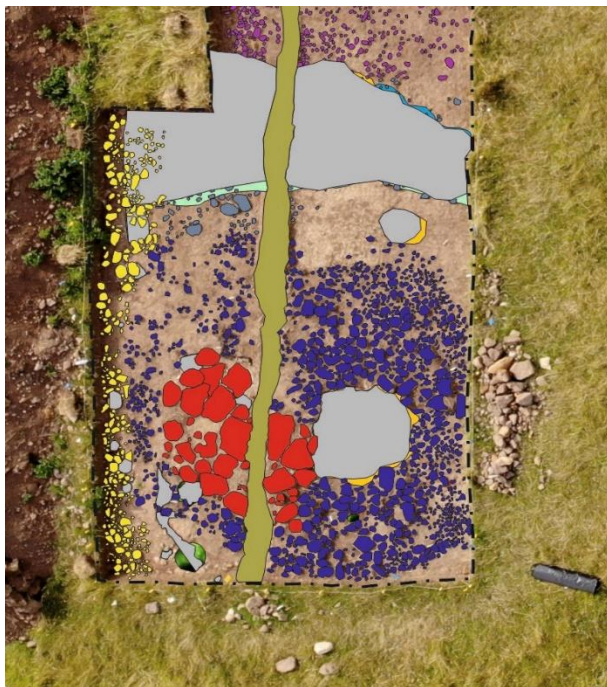


Figure 39 Hunting Hall Roundhouse Trench 6

Hall as the crow flies, this site provides us with many comparable details. It is a great example of older archaeology. (*Excavations in Two Homesteads at Crock Cleuch, Roxburghshire by Kenneth A Steer and G S Keeny. Volume 81 (1949) of The Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, pp138 – 157*) As Hunting Hall sits atop The Low, Crock Cleuch sits on the edge of a gully through which an unnamed tributary of the Calroust Burn runs. Similarly, both sites sit on boulder clay suitable for ceramic manufacture and while Hunting Hall was enclosed by ditches and banks, Crock Cleuch used a stone wall to define its enclosed area.

However, a stone wall has been excavated at Hunting Hall on the escarpment edge but as yet we have not identified the extent of it, nor the time period it belongs to.

The images of the excavation plan of Crock Cleuch, (above), and Hunting Hall Trench 6 Roundhouse with Features 4, 6, 9 and 11 (above) are shown for comparison.

Visually the comparisons are striking with the large flagstones being contained in one quarter of the floor. This would suggest something more than coincidence and that there must be some utility or function in a plan which confines substantially larger flags to only one area of the roundhouse. The positioning of a quern stone in each roundhouse, placed on the margins of the flagstones in both instances, may attest to deliberate deposition rather than utility although this is not the opinion of the Crock Cleuch report which focuses on the fractured nature of the stone rendering it unusable and by inference of prosaic use only. Here it is worth noting the Hunting Hall quern was also fractured and never completed. A further quern stone placed at the entrance of the Crock Cleuch roundhouse is also dismissed as a practical rather than ritual emplacement. The ritual or deliberate deposition of objects such as quern stones is a widely studied activity in contemporary archaeology so, in this, a review of conclusions would undoubtedly be something of interest to the author 80 years on.

The area named a 'hearth' in Crock Cleugh corresponds to the bloomery identified at Hunting Hall. Similarly positioned in relation to the flagstones the Hunting Hall bloomery was a clay lined, burned feature whereas at Crock Cleuch the construction is of larger and smaller stones, burnt, but with nothing in the report to suggest that the stones were overlain with clay and there is no mention of slag or charcoal being retrieved.

Each site produced multiple examples of broken pottery. At Hunting Hall, it has been categorised as later Iron Age and is complemented by C14 dating of associated organic finds. At Crock Cleuch where there was no recourse to Carbon dating, comparative methods suggest the pottery conforms to Romano-British and early Medieval period types. A direct comparison between the two assemblages would be a worthwhile pursuit to look specifically at style and composition.

The Crock Cleugh site, like ours, also excavated a single piece of Roman glass within the footprint of a round house and this has been reported as a piece of a handle join of a jug. Comparisons are made to a jug found in Turrieff, Aberdeenshire giving a potential date of mid to late 2nd century AD which ties in with the date range for the Hunting Hall Roman Glass, a hint, perhaps that our homestead populations had sufficient wealth and will for this type of trade.

Strikingly, a small annular brooch (with the iron pin having corroded away) identical to the Hunting Hall Small Find 127 (from Feature 14, The Grave, within footprint of Feature 8, a Roundhouse) was unearthed at the flagstone surface of the Crock Cleuch roundhouse raising parallels for consideration. The Crock Cleuch brooch is recognised as a rare and significant object from South-East Scotland being the only pre-8th century

Anglo Saxon brooch of its type known in the area. To have found another only twenty miles away in a remarkably similar setting raises many questions. This 'Type F' copper alloy annular brooch is generally regarded as being in manufacture between 550AD – 650AD in more southern regions of Britain and often found in pairs as clothing clasps being regularly discovered in pagan Anglo-Saxon female inhumations. The Carbon 14 date profile of the Hunting Hall grave gives 724AD to 775AD as the most probable date range for the burial. Thus, until now we have run with the possibility that the brooch may have represented an heirloom. However, knowing this item is not 'high status' despite its value to the holder, and knowing now that other brooches were present in the area well beyond the usual geographical range, we can give consideration to a review of our grave dates: at a lesser probability but still over 68%, the grave may be placed in a date range of 669AD-687AD. This is a much narrower band but possibly given the evidence of the norms of manufacture, fashion and as a 'grave good' it may be that the Hunting Hall burial is 50 – 100 years older than initially conjectured. This may have quite specific implications in our deliberations on the timeline of the development of Lowick village and the historical information regarding the presence of a Christian church within the present-day village.

A final consideration may be the threshold stones recorded in Crock Cleugh roundhouse.

By way of comparison, our 'large stones' investigated this year in Trench 10 were found, indeed, to lie across the arc of the palisade observed in the geophysical image but there was no evidence of their functionality or relationship to the features around them. However, this year as well as in previous excavations in Trench 3, there has been a hint of another potential roundhouse in that part of the site though nothing conclusive has been found. Might it be possible that these 'large stones' with deliberately placed animal bone beneath are in fact the threshold stones of a roundhouse which has so far eluded us?

Through comparative work with Crock Cleugh and elsewhere we will continue to generate, modify and abandon our ideas about Hunting Hall.



Figure 40 Trench 6 Roundhouse and adjacent wall.

Bailey Green Primary School

It is always a fun day when the children and teachers from Bailey Green Primary School pay us their annual visit which this year was in perfect weather!

We hosted twelve children from the after-school History Group all with an interest in the Iron Age and keen to see the Hunting Hall mock Iron Age Roundhouse which has been built on the farm.

The Roundhouse is ideal as a location for demonstrating domestic activities of the time so whilst dressed in typical Iron Age clothing the pupils had the chance to enjoy weaving using a reproduction loom from the period whilst also digging in the trench, metal detecting, learning stone identification and -with keen eyes and magnifying apparatus - looking for tiny fragments of bone and charcoal in the soil samples collected from the trenches.

The site proves a fantastic and fun place for the children to learn and we were heartened this year to have increasing numbers of students and Home Learners come to the site to participate in the activities and learn the skills of archaeology and the story of their local community.



Figure 41 Iron Age Villagers!

- **Explanatory note**

OSGB36 is the UK measurement system set up in 1936 and deals with North, South, East and West positions and is the basis of the maps we use in the UK.

ODN deals with height and was set up in 1921 and represents the difference in height between the point you are surveying and the mean height of sea level in 1921 in Newlyn, Cornwall. The mean height measured across the world is called Geoid. GPS on the other hand bases its measurements on a reference ellipsoid that **Hunting Hall is about 50m below the ODN height**. All the measurements are converted to OSGB36 as that is the archaeological standard.
