

## Yorkshire

### Mark Newman

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVISER

NORTH YORKSHIRE

#### Bransdale & Upper Wharfedale

##### - the real value & uses of survey Mp

As was reported in The National Trust Archaeological Review, last year, a major survey of the secluded and idyllic Bransdale estate in the North York Moors was completed for the National Trust by Ed Dennison Archaeological Services in 2000. In the early months of 2001 the accompanying report was completed and the full SMR record of some 1700 sites was transferred into the main National Trust Sites & Monuments Record (NTSMR). With the complete digitisation of the pre-existing Vernacular Buildings Survey, this created a very powerful and detailed management tool for the historic environment.

No sooner was the work complete than it was in "action". The National Trust is currently engaged with the development of Whole Farm Plans for its agricultural tenants, aimed at maximising farm incomes while also improving environmental quality. The Trust definition of environment very much includes the historic dimension, and the survey immediately provided detailed information on features of the landscape worthy of consideration as the plans developed. This was not only restricted to the identification of "archaeological sites" as separate features of the landscape. The survey also described other features such as walls and farm buildings, the relative significance of which was also included. The result was complex and holistic planning, which took account of the historic environment to the greatest possible degree.

There is not, yet, a parallel survey for the Malham Tarn estate in the Yorkshire Dales, although a desk top study of its archaeology was completed in 1997, and this is included on NTSMR along with the digitised Vernacular Buildings Survey (VBS). This basic record came to have an unanticipated value in the summer of 2001, when culling associated with the Foot and Mouth crisis effected four tenancies on the estate.

Needless to say, at times of such crisis, the historic environment is not at the top of anyone's list of priorities on the effected farms. However, especially as the clean up went into operation,



*Fountains Mill the finest surviving example of a monastic water mill 800 years old. West front showing mill race.*

ANDREW BUTLER/NTPL

the Trust could be confident that thanks to the VBS there was a pre-intervention record of the effected buildings. Moreover, the region benefited from the expertise of a Vernacular Buildings Surveyor, Jim Hill, who together with the Property Manager, Martin Davies, was able to negotiate a minimally damaging clean up - in part because of the recognised, documented, importance of the building stock. It was also possible to provide advice about the siting of features such as run-off lagoons for cleaning agents remotely from the office, without having to visit the infected areas.

#### Fountains Abbey Estate

##### - excavations at Fountains Mill

M Mp  

Fountains Mill is, in origin, one of the country's few twelfth-century mills, first constructed by the monks of Fountains Abbey in around 1160. Excavations here continued through the winter and spring of 2001, conducted for the National Trust by On Site Archaeology.

As preparation of the interior of the building for opening to the public progressed, the archaeological emphasis shifted to more outlying areas of the project. The most significant of these was the inflow to the mill leat, some 160m west of the mill. The current form of the inlet was

thought (and indeed was) nineteenth century in origin, dating from the renovation of the mill and pond in around 1848. However, water had been abstracted from the Skell at this point since the twelfth century, and it was felt likely that traces of earlier arrangements would survive.

This indeed proved to be the case. Several phases of inlet, on a slightly different alignment, were exposed by the works, and removed by archaeological means. The latest of these was a stone channel floor, which included a very fine fragment of twelfth-century stonework. It was not, however, medieval work, but instead seems to have been the work of William Aislabe, carried out after his acquisition of the Fountains estate late in 1767. Aislabe's excavations in the abbey provided a plentiful supply of "building material", which has previously been found in several other pieces of eighteenth-century building on the estate.

The eighteenth-century stonework was sited on top of a complex of driven piles, some of which may have been somewhat earlier in date. It also included timber strapping, which appeared to have been reused, and once held upright shuttering, presumably to divert water flow.

As is often the way in large excavations, the best discoveries came right at the end! As work began on laying new surfaces and footways to the



*The ruins of the east Guest House with the Tower of Fountains Abbey behind it. The guest houses are part of the twelfth-century Cistercian abbey estate.*

ANDREW BUTLER/NTPL

east of the mill, the footings of a substantial, previously unknown, building running perpendicular to the mill were exposed. The footings, and an associated roofline scar on the mill wall, suggested that this building extended up to 12m from the mill, was c.6m wide and two storeys high. Modifications to the new surfacing preserved almost all of the surviving structure *in situ*.

On site, it was assumed that this was a medieval building, not least because the shallow pitch of the roof scar matched replacement roofs in the abbey dating from the fifteenth-century. Moreover, one tends to assume that the post-Dissolution phase saw a reduction in activity and not an increase. However, post-excavation analysis showed that the only associated pottery indicated construction in the mid-sixteenth century. Thus the tenancy operated by the post-Dissolution owners, which included the mill, seems to have been a prosperous one, requiring additional building. This is a new insight into a little documented period of the site's history.

Now that the work is complete, and the mill open to the public, it is possible to complete the assessment of the project's impact. Thanks to careful planning and negotiation, less than two cubic metres of medieval archaeology has been removed, from a total of 48 interventions in and around the building. In exchange for this modest loss, knowledge of the building's development has been significantly advanced and the public now has access to a long hidden, but fascinating, facet of the Fountains Estate.

#### WEST YORKSHIRE

##### **East Riddlesden Hall, Keighley - under floor remains reflect social convention and daily living...**

In 2000, the floorboards of the Dining Room at East Riddlesden Hall (a fine typical West Yorkshire seventeenth-century hall house) were lifted for refitting. As this involved cleaning out the voids between the joists, the work was done archaeologically and was rewarded with an unexpectedly complex assemblage of items reflecting 400 years of daily life. The distribution of this material also proved to be a fascinating fossil of daily life, with sewing items mainly under the window seat, and clay pipe fragments in an arc around the fire.

So when floor repairs were planned for the Drawing Room in November 2001, archaeological investigation was enthusiastically included in the programme. The results were, if anything, even more spectacular.

In the region of 1000 objects were recovered. Many of these were too large to have slipped between floorboards, and the voids were much more deeply "infilled" than had been the case in the Dining Room. The conclusion drawn was that they were deliberately filled (probably in the later 1860s, judging from the six worn

pennies or halfpennys dating from 1861 or 1862 that were recovered) perhaps as a method of dealing with draughts or rats. Most of the animal bone recovered was extensively rat-gnawed. While the boards were up, quite a lot of domestic rubbish was "lost" in the spaces exposed.

There was also a large collection of smaller objects, which obviously had dropped between the boards. These differed in quality quite considerably from the Dining Room finds. The pottery tended to be very much finer, and food waste rarer. There were many more dress items, such as buttons or beads, and ornamental fragments from fine furnishings. Sewing items were numerous, including scissors, thimbles, pins, cotton reels (including one with cotton still on it) and a braiding frame. Notably absent were numerous clay tobacco pipe fragments; the room names clearly matched the social convention - the ladies withdrew here, while the men stayed in the Dining Room to smoke.

Most evocative, though, was the large number of toys. These included twenty marbles, and pewter toys including doll's house furnishings and a model flintlock pistol. No doubt there were many cases of tears before bedtime when the *pater familias* refused to lift the boards again to recover a favourite plaything!

*East Riddlesden Hall, exterior view. A fine, typical West Yorkshire sixteenth-century hall house.*

MATTHEW ANTROBUS/NTPL





*East Riddlesden Hall, Starkie Wing. Only the exterior wall is left standing*

MATTHEW ANTROBUS/NTPL

#### OTHER PROJECTS

(CLEVELAND)

##### **Ormesby Hall**

Watching Brief during repairs to north Ha-Ha.

(M.Newman/NT in house).

(NORTH YORKSHIRE)

##### **Beningbrough Hall**

Watching Brief during excavation of slurry

lagoon, Beningbrough Home Farm

(M.Newman/NT in house).

##### **Coastal Estate**

Initial archaeological evaluation, prior to potential

acquisitions (M.Newman/NT in house).

##### **Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal**

Revision of Archaeological Property Survey

(M.Newman/NT in house).

Watching Brief, repairs to De Grey Walk

(M.Newman/NT in house).

Watching Brief during excavations to lay

drainage, S of Fountains Hall (M.Newman/NT

in house).

Archaeological advice/overview, repairs to

Precinct Boundary Wall (M.Newman/NT in

house).

Watching Brief during repairs to Orchard Bridge

(M.Newman/NT in house).

(WEST YORKSHIRE)

##### **East Riddlesden Hall**

Advisory visit/watching brief during building of

children's playground (M.Newman/NT in

house).

##### **Hardcastle Crag**

Watching brief during repairs to bridge-side

structure, Gibson Mill (.Newman, NT in house).

Compilation of Conservation Plan for Gibson

Mill (Scott Wilson under contract from NT).

Advisory visits, Peckett Well Clough, landfill

project (M.Newman/NT in house).

##### **Nostell Priory**

Completion of Archaeological Property Survey &

SMR (Northern Archaeological Associates/Ed

Dennison Archaeological Services; under contract

for NT & Nostell Estate).

Watching brief during installation of Fire

Hydrant (West Yorkshire Archaeological Service;

under contract for NT).