

## Recent Work by Boston Spa and District Community Archaeology Group

### Malcolm Barnes, 2005

In 1999 the group discovered a multi-period prehistoric site by carefully recording scatters of flint tools and concentrations of waste from their manufacture over an area of 25 hectares at Boston Spa in a large loop of the River Wharfe. Over the next four years further fieldwalking doubled the area surveyed. A decrease in the percentage of manufacture waste and an increase in artefacts was found in the flint assemblage as the survey moved further away from the main flint knapping area. The worked pieces were looked at in consultation with Don Henson at the CBA and it appears that all stages of knapping are represented and there is a full range of diagnostic tools from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, suggesting hunting, camping and settlement. The flint comes mainly from the east coast. Furthermore, a large quantity of burnt flint was found spread across the site, as well as concentrated in certain areas. A Yorkshire Archaeological Society grant helped us to thermoluminescence-date the burning of one nodule to prehistoric times and another to the medieval period. A late-Neolithic scraper, burnt post-manufacture, was subsequently given a medieval date. This suggests that, although some of the burnt flint comes from prehistoric activity, some may result from land clearance in later periods.

Other work has included archaeobotanical surveying, as there are remnants of ancient hedges and woodland on the site, which have contributed to our understanding of its development. One remnant hides an unusual earthwork, which became the subject of an on-going excavation from which we have concluded that one phase of use was as a 17<sup>th</sup> century 'sheepwash' using a mixture of spring water and clay with fulling properties, both of which for geological reasons coincide at that spot.

The coincidence of geology and human activity was again seen in our most recent excavations. A Local Heritage Initiative grant had enabled us to commission aerial photograph and geophysical surveys. Using these we targeted a line of prehistoric pits aligned on a central feature with more pits set into it. The latter seemed to have begun as a natural feature and had probably been adapted by the people who dug the pits. The separate pits were free of environmental remains or settlement waste and each had an arrangement of stones visible in its top layer, whereas the pits dug into the central feature had stones, including rubbing stones and two Neolithic carved rocks, buried in them, the latter face down in separate pits, perhaps as some kind of ceremonial deposition, maybe on closure of the site.

Annual re-enactment events have given us useful insights into flint-knapping, burnt flint, prehistoric cooking with pot-boilers and rock carving.

