

Fieldwalking Surveys of Sweep Farm Conducted by Malcolm Barnes

(Map Ref SE 402 467)

Preliminary Report January 1999

Introduction

Sweep Farm is in West Yorkshire immediately south of Wetherby and forms a triangle of land, largely under crops, between the A1, A58 and Wattle Syke (A659), 1½ kms north of the Roman villa of Dalton Parlours and the Domesday Book vill of Compton, and 5 kms west of the Roman road and fort at Newton Kyme. The land is at a height of 30 to 54 metres on the magnesium limestone ridge that runs north and south for many miles, cut through by a loop of the River Wharfe to the west, north and north-east of the farm. At its highest in the south it overlooks the Wharfe valley to the west and the Vale of York to the east, dipping towards the centre where the farm buildings occupy the site of an old quarry, and rising again to its northerly limits at the edge of the market town of Wetherby. It is crossed in the south by a public footpath and cut into in the south-east by the line of the old A1, now a metalled farm track.

Permission for fieldwalking was obtained in September 1998 from the manager Geoff Clarkson, who indicated that several fields, including Fields 4 and 2 on the map, may have had settlements from his observation of crop-marks and quern fragments ploughed up.

Also there had been an excavation in Field 4 at SE 408 458 by the West Yorkshire Archaeological Service in 1990 prior to the widening of the A1 sliproad. This had revealed an enclosure from the Roman period superimposed on Iron Age systems, the latter with evidence of habitation. The small amount of Roman pottery found may suggest the site was then used for stock, rather than occupation.

Aerial photographs reveal crop-marks of similar enclosures throughout Field 4 extending south across Wattle Syke into adjacent fields. Crop-marks in Field 1 may reveal structures at SE 400 472. Field 3 reveals three concentric semicircular rings approximately 50 metres across north of an east-west axis at SE 401 473.

Fieldwalking

This summary covers the three months from September 1998, mainly in Fields 1 and 4 which had been ploughed, raked and then washed by two weeks of rain in September. As a result these yielded most finds, the other fields, apart from a brief look, being left for later work. Field 1 is at the north-west of the farm, SE 400 474, Field 4 the south-east at SE 407 459. Both fields were looked at generally and approximately a third of each field in detail. After a few weeks fieldwalking in Field 4 was confined to a quarter of its area as the crop was showing through by then on the rest. Finds were fairly evenly distributed, apart from the flints and the sherds of Roman pottery. The positions of such clusters have been noted in case more turn up. All finds were collected from the surface. The results shown are for fragments found in each field. Percentages of total finds are shown for the more important types to aid comparison.

Finds table

	Field 1	Field 4		Field 1	Field 4
Tile (undated)	6+ (6.5%)	10+ (7%)	Pottery: Roman	0	5 (3.5%)
Plaster (undated)	0	5 (3.5%)	14th c. Medieval	1	0
Slag (untested)	2	5 (3.5%)	15th c. Late medieval 'Ryedale' ware	0	1
Glass (undated)	4+ (5%)	11+ (7%)	Late-medieval redware	3 (4%)	2
Oystershell	9+ (12%)	4+ (3%)	Post-medieval red earthenware	11 (14.6%)	17 (12%)
Charcoal	0	3+	Post-medieval 'Blackware'	12 (16%)	24 (16.5%)
Flint blade (undated)	1	0	English stoneware	10 (13%)	17 (12%)
Flint scrap	0	4 (3%)	Late 17th c. to 18th c. non-local feathered slipware	0	4 (3.5%)
Clay pipe stem	7+ (9%)	10+ (7%)	Victorian or modern	4+ (5%)	18+ (12%)
Clay pipe bowl	1	0	Misc. (eg brick/ drain/ bone/ coal)	4+	5+
			Total	75 (100%)	145 (100%)

Discussion

Pottery (Field 1 = 55% of finds, Field 4 = 61.5% of finds)

One small area in Field 4 produced four pieces of Roman 'greyware' and one from the base and side of a 'mortarium' in a cream fabric, with a fine black gritty inner surface to aid grinding, made possibly at Cranbeck, East Yorks, AD 290 to 360. (See para.3 of Introduction)

No Iron Age or Anglo-Saxon pottery has been found, though this does not mean there isn't any. The small

number of medieval compared with a great deal of post-medieval and modern potsherds point to the results of manuring.

Post-medieval 'Blackware' (stemming from the late-medieval 'cistercian ware' tradition) seems to crop up most frequently in all fields with its shiny purple-brown black glazes, as do red earthenware and stoneware with hard-fired speckly brown glazes.

Several fragments of stoneware beer flagons stamped with 'Bramham' appeared in Field 1. One unglazed oatmeal-coloured stamped *?ANSTEAD BRAMHAM*, another glazed form stamped ---*HANT* ---*HAM* (perhaps --- *MERCHANT BRAMHAM*).

The four pieces of feathered slipware may be from Staffordshire. The large number of Victorian and modern pieces could have been higher, but many were eventually ignored.

Flint

At the NE corner of Field 1 a small grey-white flint blade was found, semi-circular, with a 27mm diameter base 6mm thick, a curved serrated edge and a small 9mm triangle of cortex at one end of the base. Unworked cores of similar material, and some possible debitage, have been found in Field 4 at the other end of the farm.

In the same vicinity as the first flint, SE 400 475, but the other side of the modern hedge in Field 2, was a black flint blade, roughly arrow-shaped, but larger and heavier than an arrowhead, with a slightly concave cortex base 28mm wide but damaged at the corners, 9mm thick in the centre, knapped faces and serrated edges 40mm and 30mm long with approx. 10mm of the point missing. The date or source of these flints has not yet been ascertained. An unworked piece of similar black flint has been found in Field 4.

Oystershells

These are quite common in the fields in the area, having been transported inland in barrels of salt water for centuries. Their fairly wide distribution suggests that they might be another result of manuring.

Clay pipes

These were common. Not all pieces were collected. Mainly stems were found, some perhaps 17th century, thick and crudely-made, with the hole down the stem not centrally positioned. Others slimmer and better made date from the 18th to 20th centuries. One incomplete bowl and several stems with the base of a bowl still attached were found which could be dated respectively to late and early 18th century by shape.

Other finds

The slag is difficult to interpret. The tile and glass, a substantial part of the finds, need further study and dating.

Future prospects

Other fields need to be examined when crops and ground conditions allow, as do certain spots in Fields 1 and 4, until a better picture emerges as to what was happening here in the past. The results will hopefully be compared to other fields in the area, such as further south across Wattle Syke towards Bramham and east across the A1 towards Boston Spa.

Sweep Farm Survey: Update of Finds from Field 4

Malcolm Barnes, Feb 2003

Further fieldwalking was carried out in February 2003 This focused particularly but not exclusively on an area roughly coinciding with the intersection of the proposed AI Local Relief Road and the (crop-marked) SW-NE line of a water pipeline trench. The trenching work may have exposed lower deposits which have subsequently been spread by the East-West ploughing. This 'focus* area' a strip between the following four points: **SE 40638 46010 to 40594 45933 to 40471 45969 to 40481 46060**, assuming accuracy from the GPS. The Grid Refs. prefixed by c. below are estimated from the OS 1:25000 Map. Flint finds were looked at by Don Henson, CBA, and pottery by Ailsa Mainmann, YAT.

Grid reference	Find	Period	Description
c. SE 4030 4600	flint blade	Non-diagnostic unless stated	till (East Coast boulder-clay flint); patinated white/blue; distal hinge fracture; 35 x 16mm
	core		till; patinated off-white + mineral stains; undiag; 41x39x16mm
	core		ibid; 30x26x11mm
	scraper		ibid; thumbnail size 21x13x5mm
	debitage		small lump of same material, 21mm
SE 40505 46039	Scraper frag		till or Wolds flint; patinated buff + mineral stains; 34x26x9mm
SE 40638 45805	blade		till; patinated white; 32x16mm, tapering;
SE 40592 45812	debitage		till; patinated buff + mineral stained; 18x18x4mm
SE 40638 45788	debitage or blade frag		till; patinated off-white; 11x7x2mm
SE 40525 45971	debitage		secondary flake; till; patinated blue-grey-white + mineral stains; 53x28x7m
c. SE 4057 4582	arrowhead	Early Bronze Age	barbed & tanged; till; patinated grey & white; later burnt and damaged by ice; 27x18mm
Focus* area	blade		till; patinated white; secondary cortex; parallel; 30x9mm
	end-scraper		till; patinated grey-blue, mottled white; undiag; 38x19x9mm; narrow at proximal end; suitable for hafting
	scraper		till?; frag; patinated chalky white; 38x21x8mm
	scraper		till?; steeply knapped; patinated chalky white; 21x21x13mm
	scraper	Early Bronze Age	till; patinated bluey-white + little staining; thumbnail size; with bulb and stem at proximal end that could be hafted; 12x16x6mm
	potsherd	Iron Age	rim; local hand-made, rough soft body with grit filler; hand-finished; not fired in kiln
	potsherd	Roman	mortarium base frag; cream fabric, fine black gritty inner surface, possibly Cranbeck; AD 290 to 360
	potsherd	Roman	rim; greyware; C2nd – C3rd
	potsherd	Roman	rim; bowl or vase; red earthenware
	potsherd	late Roman	rim; rough gritty grey fabric
	potsherd	late Roman	rim; course grey black gritty fabric
	potsherd	Roman	rough grey gritty fabric
	potsherd	Late Med	C15th Rydale
	potsherd	Late Med	C16th
	potsherd	Post-Med	purple-glaze ware; C16th – C18th