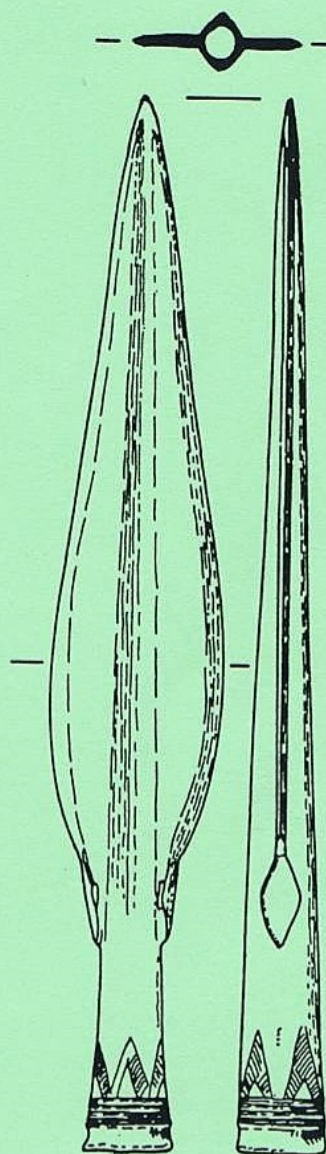


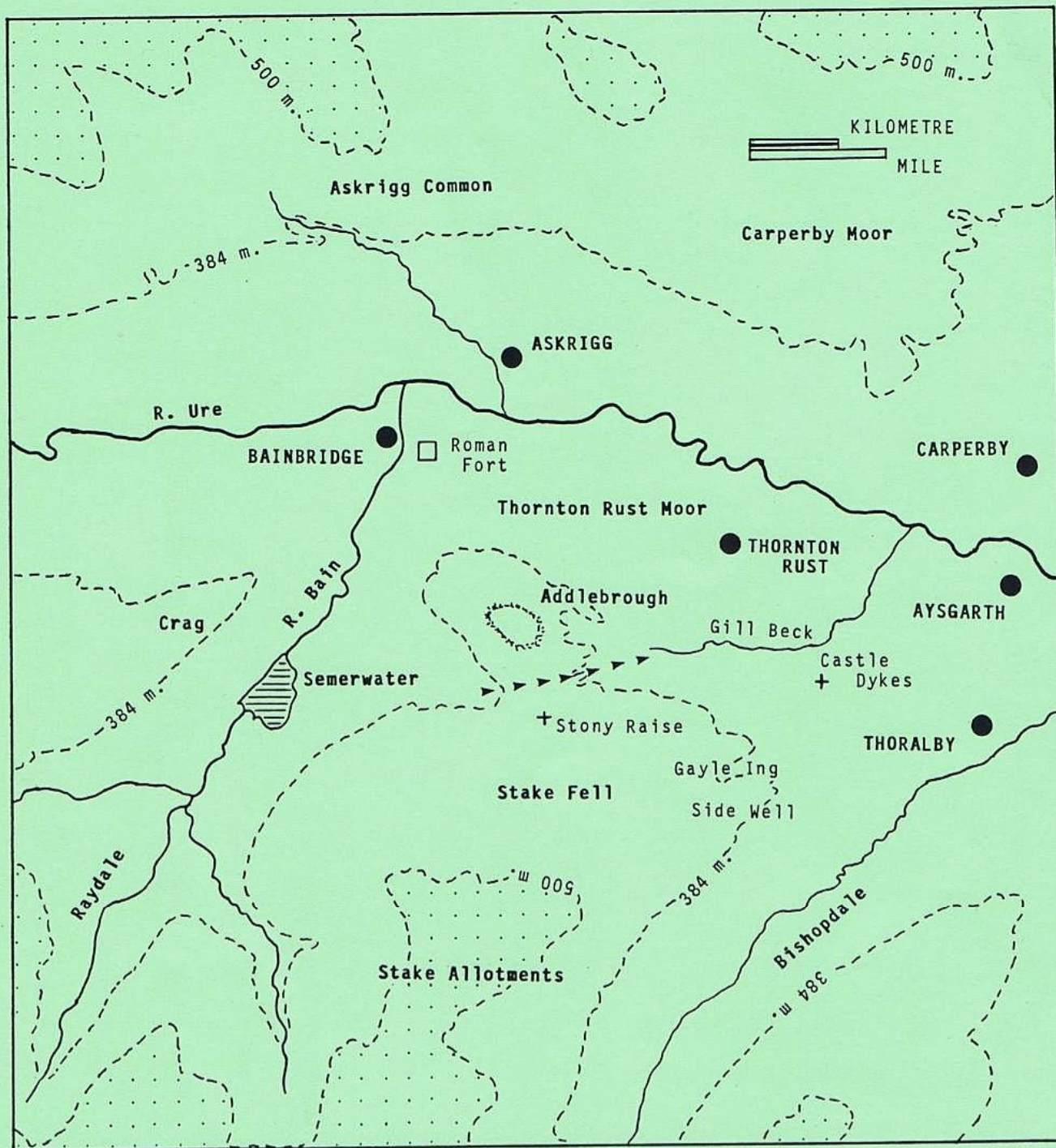
WENSLEYDALE

by

T. Laurie & R. Minnitt

Extract from the
WESTERN YORKSHIRE Handbook
of the PREHISTORIC SOCIETY
1993 Summer Meeting at Ripon





Location of Study Area; Wensleydale and the country between the River Bain and Bishopdale. Modern villages marked.

▶▶▶ Glacial overflow channel

WENSLEYDALE:

T. Laurie & R. Minnitt

An Archaeology Survey of Semerwater, Addlebrough and the Stake Road**Introduction**

While no comprehensive study of the prehistoric archaeology of Wensleydale has yet been published the locations of many sites are indicated on the 1:25,000 O.S. Outdoor Leisure Map, sheet 30. Detailed maps have been prepared of earthwork features using aerial photographic cover, these can be inspected at the offices of the authorities concerned with the landscape conservation management of the area - North Yorkshire County Council, the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England). Recently a start has been made on enhancing these plots by ground survey, beginning with the group of hut circles and small paddocks at Penhill (NGR. 031/861).

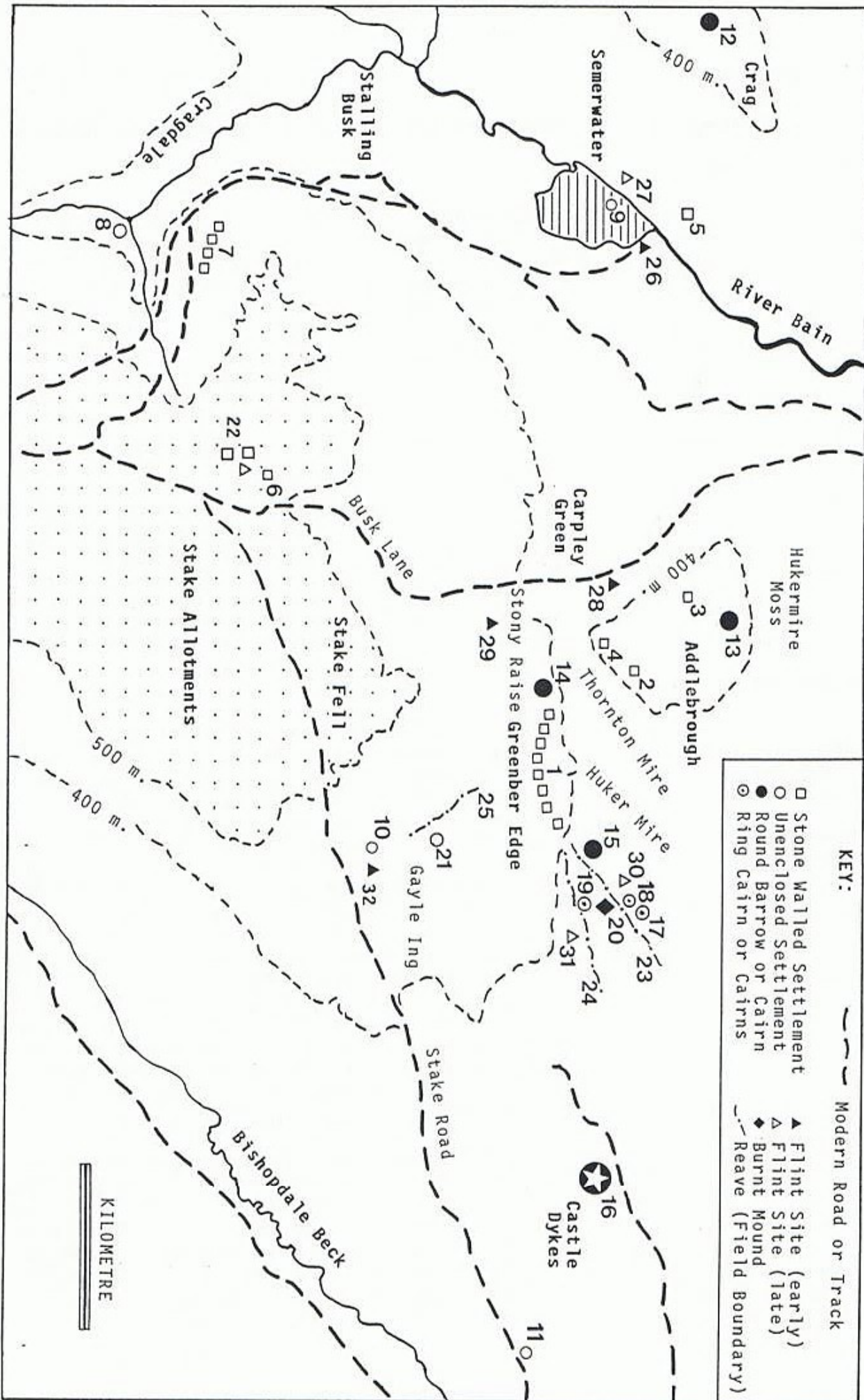
A large 'vernacular' data base exists relating to the prehistoric and later archaeological settlement features in Wensleydale to complement the aerial surveys. The potential for settlement research by the correlation of the aerial survey evidence with local history and casual finds data, that is followed up by an intensive field survey, is the subject of this study. The area to be visited will be discussed in the wider context of Wensleydale archaeology and a gazetteer of the survey area sites and finds provided.

Landscape

The area studied comprises the tributary valley of the River Bain and the flanking uplands south of Wensleydale, including the upland watershed between the rivers Ure and Wharfe and between the Bain and Bishopdale Beck. Wensleydale is a wide glaciated valley, it cuts through the alternating limestones, shales and sandstones of the Lower Carboniferous Yoredale series capped by Millstone Grit rocks on the highest ground (Kendall & Wroot 1924). To this alternation of the rock strata Wensleydale owes its twin characteristics of terraced hillsides and abundant waterfalls (Phillips 1836).

The floor and lower slopes of Wensleydale have a covering of debris left by the retreat of the Devensian glacier that filled the dale (Raistrick 1926). Characteristic landscape features are the morainic ridges with associated lakebeds, and drumlins such as that east of Bainbridge village that is crown by the earthworks (Frere & St. Joseph 1978, 113-115) of a Roman fort and vicus. The fort probably known as Virosidum, has been extensively excavated by B.R. Hartley, University of Leeds (Report in preparation).

The whole of the lower dale sides have been intensively farmed throughout recorded history as well developed strip lynchets systems indicate and surviving prehistoric earthworks in the form of field boundary systems and settlements are not prominent in Wensleydale at lower elevations for this reason. This is in contrast to Wharfedale and Swaledale, where the observer can detect the presence of early field and settlements except where obliterated by medieval strip lynchets, for example immediately west of Reeth.



On the upper slopes and rock terraces of Wensleydale prehistoric earthworks have survived the later field clearances and early stone walled field systems have been located in several areas notably above Carperby and Woodhall on the northern side of the dale. Surprisingly in view of their frequency elsewhere, only two real cairnfields have been found in Wensleydale, both are in Bolton West Park.

Semerwater is the remnant of a once great glacial lake, dammed by the Devensian glacier filling Wensleydale. This meltwater lake found an overflow channel at 1250 ft. (390 m.) O.D. eastwards along the southern flank of Wensleydale through a spillway now occupied by Hukermire (NGR. SD 954/874). A legendary curse of a witch or warlock, has Semerwater rising overnight to drown a 'town' (Site 9.). A dredging of the outfall channel of Semerwater, to lower its waterlevel, exposed on the northern shore masses of animal bones, some worked, and a bronze basal looped spearhead. More recently erosion has exposed flint scatters near the outfall, including late mesolithic microliths forms and Neolithic arrowheads. There is great potential for linking the faunal and palaeo-environmental associations of the Semerwater basin to cultural assemblages. This has a special significance for the early settlement associations as only three other localities in the whole of Wensleydale have produced Mesolithic flint implement scatters (Nab End, Preston Moor and Stake Fell).

The past vegetational history of the area has been studied at two locations, namely Hukermire Moss and nearby Thornton Mire. The unpublished Hukermire diagram was compiled by the Wensleydale WEA in 1989, and the Thornton Mire sequence has been radiocarbon dated (Honeyman 1985). The base of the Thornton Mire diagram is dated to 8480±90 BP. and it records high pine levels until 4550±50 BP. when birch, alder, hazel woodland developed with some elm, lime, and willow. There was a marked decrease in birch/alder/hazel woodland around 2650±50 BP., and the local landscape has remained open since then.

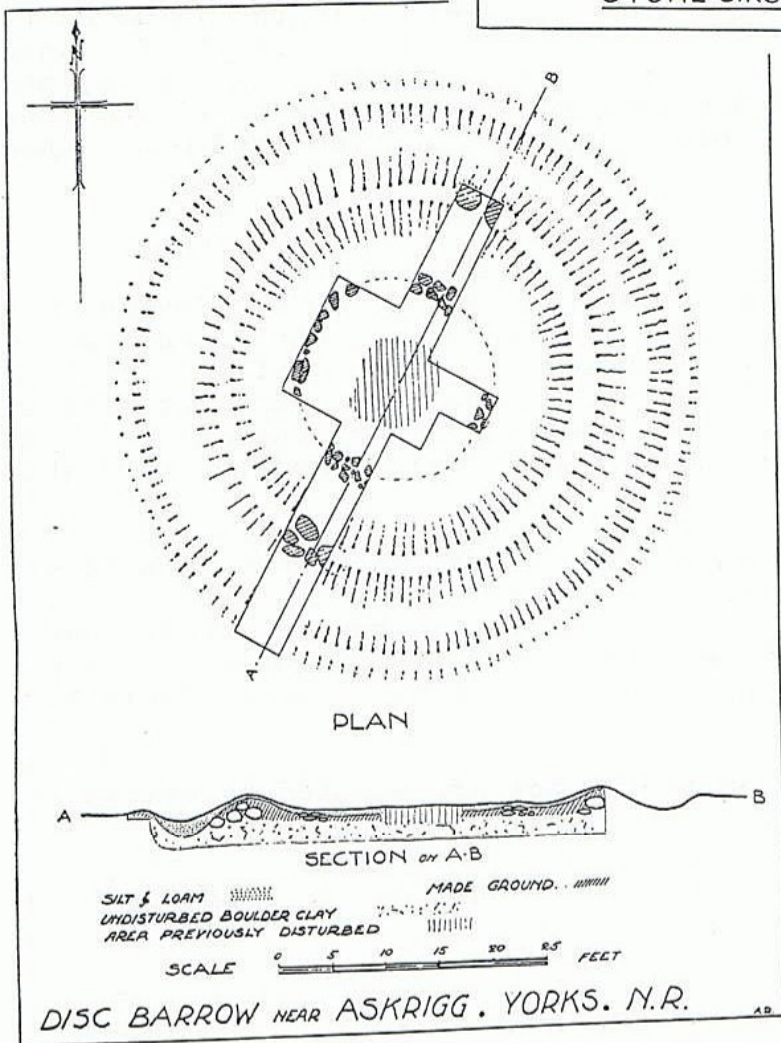
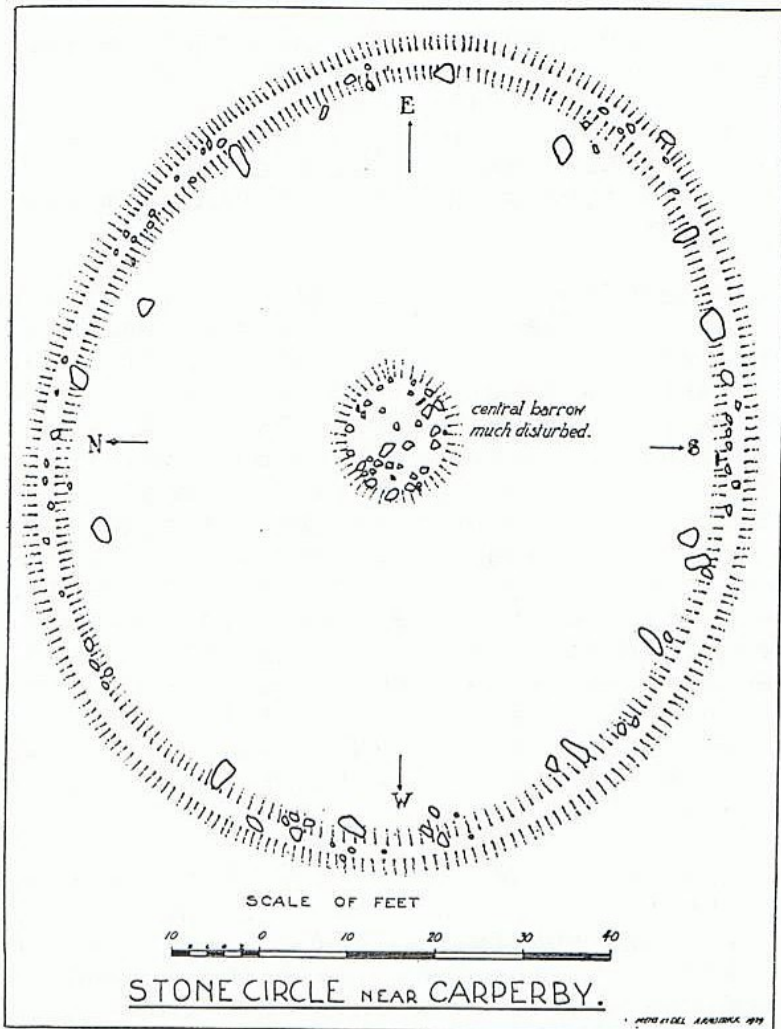
Sites

The summit of Addlebrough (1564 ft.- 476 m. OD.) provides one of the most spectacular landscape viewpoints in the Pennines. It summit has the ruin of a once considerable rock cairn, that has cupmarked rocks in its construction; the only rock art site in Wensleydale, it lies between the concentration of cup and ring art in lower Wharfedale and that on the Swaledale-Teesdale watershed (Morris 1989. 55-56).

The two most important prehistoric ritual monuments in Wensleydale are situated in the area of the survey (Sites 16 & 14) - the Castle Dykes henge and Stony Raise cairn. There are a fair number of cairns and possible round barrows throughout the dale, only one of these at Askrigg has been excavated in modern times (Raistrick 1929).

The widespread stone walled enclosures are undated by excavation. The large enclosure above Kidstones Scar, Bishopdale (NGR. 944/810) is a potential candidate to be a neolithic settlement - there is a structured cairn close by. This site is comparable to a similar

Carperby, Ox Close.
Embanked stone circle
(From Raistrick 1929.
p. 354, Fig. 1)



Askrigg, Foss Ing.
Disc Barrow, excavated 1928
(From Raistrick 1929.
p. 363, Fig. 9)

cairn and enclosure on Holwick Fell in Teesdale, that has produced stone axes (D. Coggins, pers comm.).

Recent fieldwork has identified several stone dump bank ring-works at various locations in Wensleydale and these may be bases of unenclosed round houses or ring cairns. There is a 'stone circle' below Ivy Scar, Carperby, it has an orthostat revetted stone ring bank with a central cairn and appears to be a mortuary enclosure (Raistrick 1929).

There are no defended settlements, or hillforts, in Wensleydale and the settlements on Addlebrough, Greenber Edge (Stony Raise), and that above West Burton on Penhill (Riley 1988. 29), are all undated by excavation, however these 'village' type settlements, on morphological grounds, are likely to be prehistoric in age with occupation extending through into the Roman Iron Age in the case of the Greenber Edge site (Site 1) to judge from the presence of wall passages (Raistrick 1937; White 1988) and the reported finds of Romano-British/Iron Age pottery sherds there.

Cultural Material

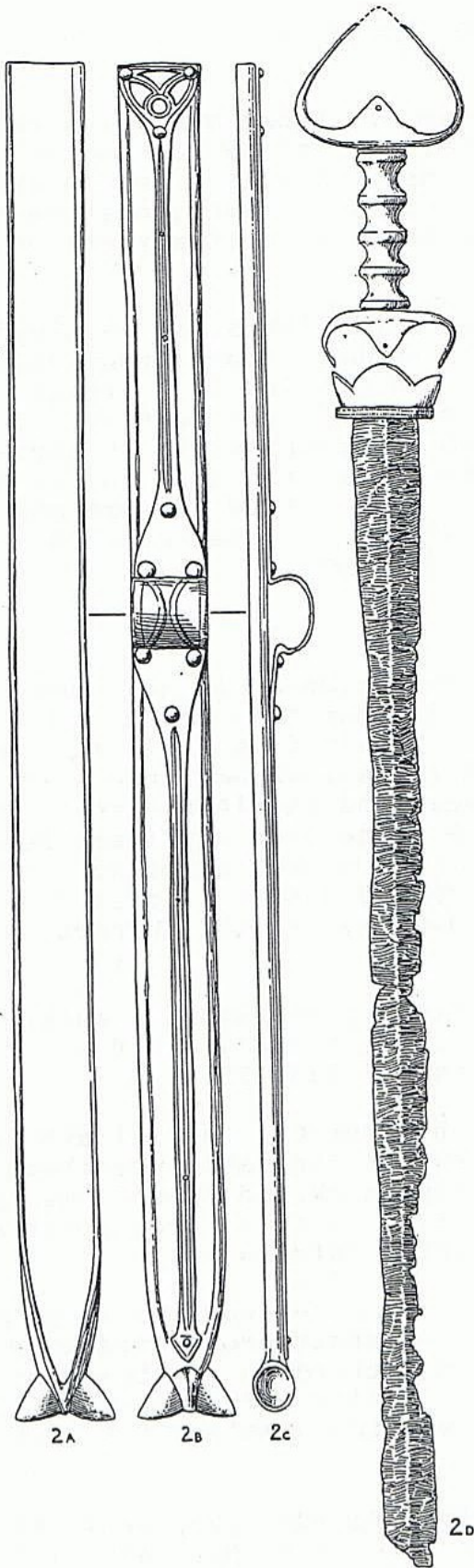
The grassland farming economy of Wensleydale is not ideal for the recovery of casual artefacts. Erosion patches, moles hills and occasional commercial excavations have provided a small scattered of stone axes finds along the dale, flint arrowheads and scrapers occur in quantity from limestone terraces and moorland sites. During the late 19th Century William Horne assembled a private museum at his home in Leyburn; much of his collection was acquired for the museum at Bolton Castle where it suffered dissipation over recent. There is now a small archaeological display in the Upper Dales Folk Museum at Hawes.

A single Early Bronze Age burial find is represent a surviving accessory cup, from an urn burial in a cist, found in 1910 at Crake Close Farm (SE 00/88 area), Aysgarth (Manby 1988. 95).

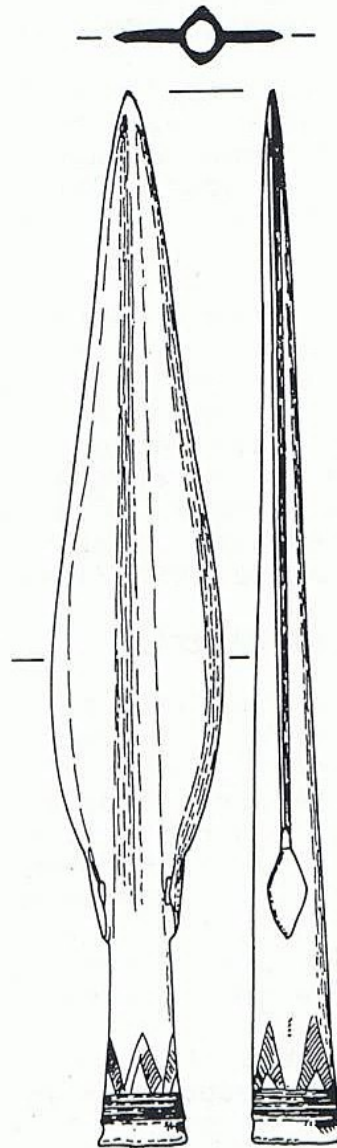
Bronze implement finds have not been numerous; a flat axe from Preston-under-Scar quarry, the Semerwater decorated spearhead of the Hotham Carr Industry. Yorkshire type socketed axes come from Hutton Hang and Middleham, the latter found with a large spearhead with lunate-opening in the blade (Schmidt & Burgess 1981).

The most spectacular find from Wensleydale was the long iron sword with its bronze hilt fittings, in a sheet bronze scabbard of "Brigantian" type, found on moorland in Cotterdale to the west of Hawes (Piggott 1950). The details of this discovery are few, "it lay about one foot under ground", and was found at sometime before 1870 (Franks 1880, 251, Pl. XVI. 1-2.).

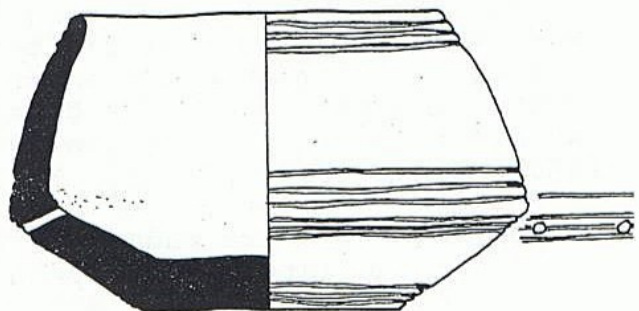
Acknowledgements are made for information provided over many years from the late R.M. Chapman and the late David Hall especially for the Semerwater discoveries. Our thanks are also recorded to Mrs Hannah Dinsdale for knowledge of the discoveries made by the late George Musgrove of stone rings and flints found on Thornton Rust Moor.



Cotterdale; Iron sword and its
bronze scabbard. Scale 1:3.
British Museum
(Piggott 1950. Fig.9.2)



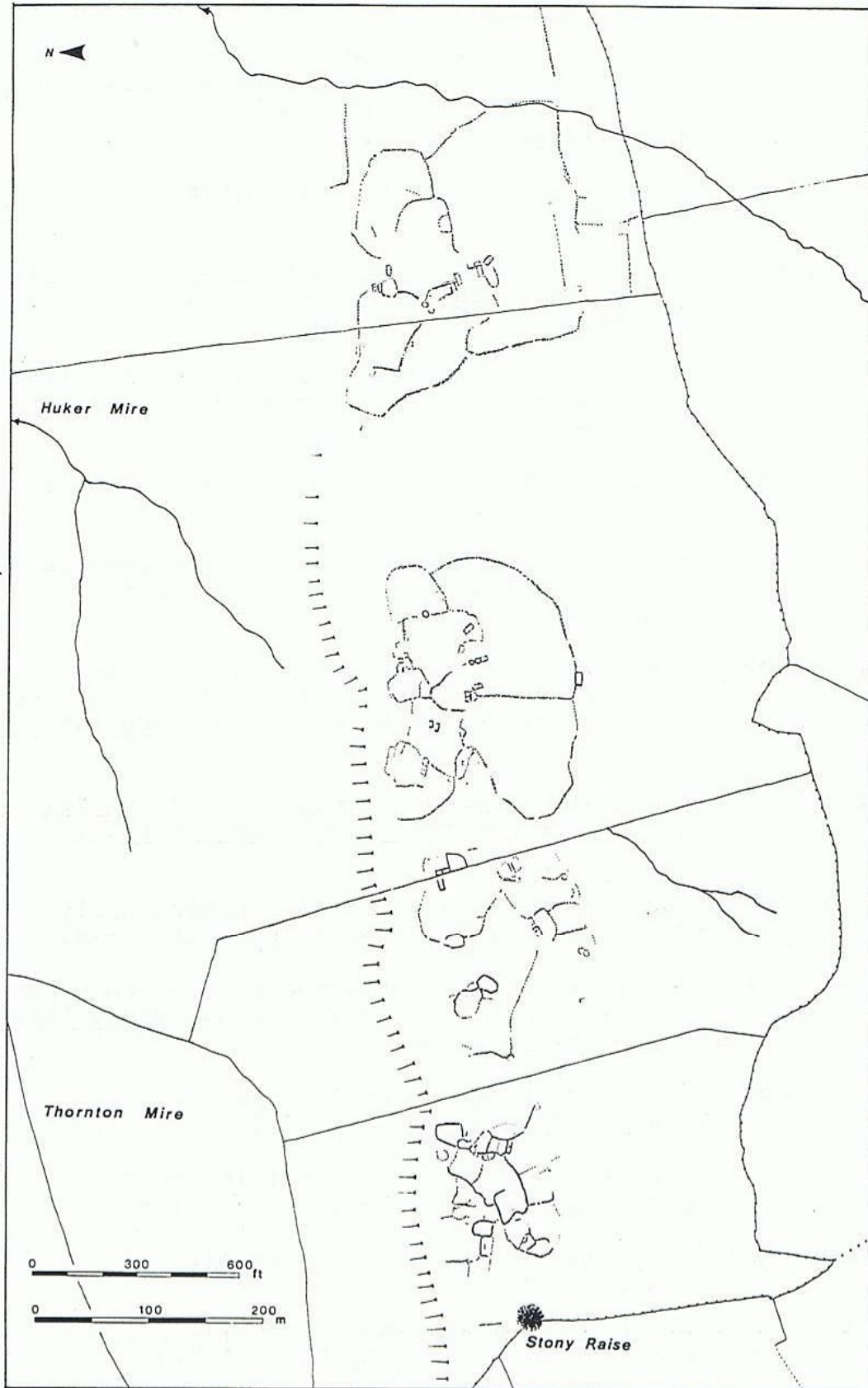
Semerwater; Decorated bronze basal-
looped spearhead. Scale 1:2.
Upper Dales Museum, Hawes
(Manby 1986. Fig. 7.)



Crake Close Farm, Aysgarth; Accessory
Cup accompanying urned cremation.
Yorkshire Museum, York.
Scale 3:4

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Greenber Edge; Stony Raise cairn and the settlement complex.
 (From White 1988. Fig.13.6. Based on a plot by P. Chadwick)

SCHEDULE: SITES & FINDS
A. Settlement sites

1. GREENBER EDGE

420 m. OD.

SD 955/870

Stone walled settlements comprising circular and rectangular building bases with associated paddocks forming four separate nuclei. The whole complex extends over a distance of 1 km. east from Stony Raise Cairn (Site 14).

Well defined 'wall passages' are visible at several locations (Raistrick 1937. 121). The large circular dump house enclosures are earlier than the stone walled settlements. In one instance the entrance of a circular house is effectively blocked by a later enclosure wall. One of a group of three circular stone walled (not stone dump) houses was excavated by B.R. Hartley in the 1970's. There were no small finds, it had a flagged floor and a central hearth, its wall construction is very similar to a house at Healaugh, Swaledale, dated by excavation to the 1st. Century AD.

The settlement seems to have been wholly pastoral as no evidence for arable cultivation can be detected, there are no lynchets or stone clearance heaps in the vicinity.



Air photograph of Greenber Edge showing enclosures and Stony Raise cairn in the angle of the modern field wall- top left hand corner.
 (Air Photograph; D.N.Riley)

The well defined hollow way tracks on rising ground above the marsh at Floss (NGR. SD 963/874), together with two long field banks that converge on the eastern end of this settlement complex, may indicate use of pastures at the lower elevations near the Gill Beck were used by the settlements. There are no trackways leading to these settlements from the west or from settlements on the higher ground to the south.

2. ADDLEBROUGH (east) 420 m. OD. SD 949/875

Stone walled settlements comprising circular building bases with associated paddocks on the terrace above the fell sandstone scarp on the south-eastern slope of Addlebrough. A trackway leads down to Thornton Mire, a field boundary system is visible on the slopes above Hukermire.

3. ADDLEBROUGH (west) 440 m. OD. SD 945/878

Stone walled settlements similar to Site 1 on a terrace on the western slope of Addlebrough. Rectangular buildings and wall passages here.

4. ADDLEBROUGH (south) 400 m. OD. SD 948/873

Possible settlement comprising ill-defined building bases with associated enclosures, situated at the base of a scarp slope.

This site is not well defined and is obscured by quarry hollows. In Teesdale (on Holwick Fell) early medieval long houses occupy similar situations, one end of the buildings being recessed into the hill slope as though for extra protection or stability for the roof timbers.

5. SEMERWATER HOUSE 280 m. OD. SD 925/885

Grass covered stone banks and lynchet slopes define ancient fields on the hill sides west and east of the River Bain and are particularly well preserved below Holly House and Semerwater House. Other settlement nuclei west of the Bain can be identified in low sunshine at Countersett and above Marsett. A further settlement with associated fields is centred on the earthwork enclosure at SD 932/898.

These fragmentary remains with lynchet slopes indicate that extensive settlement of the lower dale slopes may be expected.

6. STAKE ALLOTMENTS 525 m. OD. SD 937/852

A small 'homestead' settlement comprising sub-rectangular building bases with associated enclosed 'yards'. No surface finds to indicate date - these sites seem to be aceramic. A direct connection cannot be established between this settlement and the stone banked fields at SD 935/848 (Site 22).

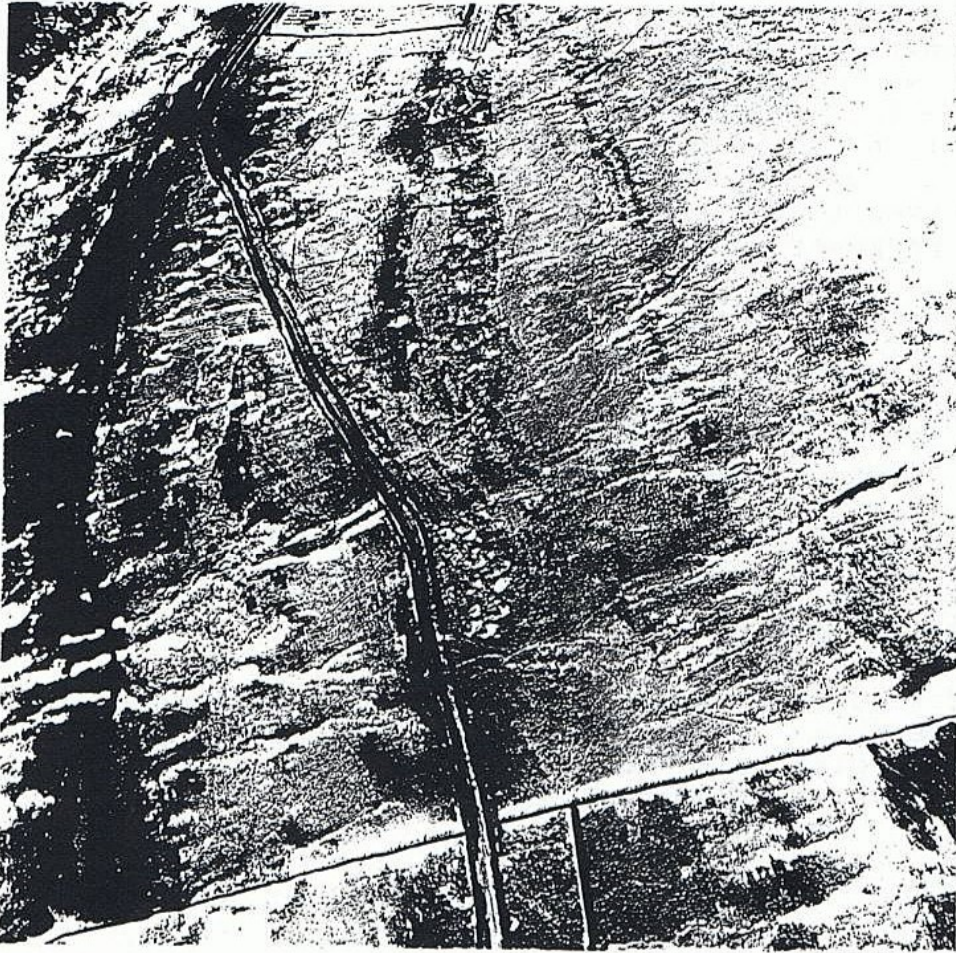
7. CRAGDALE

450 m. OD.

SD 922/847

Stone walled settlements comprising substantial levelled house platforms roughly circular in form with some circular building bases and stone walled enclosures (paddocks). Stone field banks lead down slope towards the settlement situated at the confluence of Cragdale Water and Shaw Gate Gill Beck far below (Site 8). However, these field banks cannot be traced below High Lane, although in at least one instance the field banks above and below the lane are on the same alignment.

This settlement is well preserved over a distance of 500 m. above a fell sandstone outcrop and may represent a pastoral settlement situated to exploit high level grazing during the summer months.



Cragdale: Linear enclosures and hut platform settlement under light snow cover. (Air photograph ; R. White)

8. CRAGDALE WATER 350 m. OD. SD 920/842

An unenclosed settlement of three large sub-circular platforms situated on the south-east bank of Cragdale Water at its junction with Shaw Gate Gill. On the north bank, ie. on the south facing slopes above Shaw Gill Beck, a well preserved field system may be related to the previous settlement high above. Further house platforms are situated within the fields.

Taken together Sites 7 and 8, provide an almost complete transect from dale bottom to high moor edge.

9. SEMERWATER 250 m. OD. SD 918/875

Possible crannog. On the northern margin of SemerWater the contemporary newspaper reports record the discovery of 'a six foot wide causeway leading into the lake, flat stones used in its construction having been placed in position parallel with the lake margin.' This discovery was made after dredging operations at the lake outlet intended to lower the waterlevel in the 1950's. During the course of this dredging, a remarkable collection animal bones of all sizes and shapes, including *Bos primigenius*, was recovered. A bronze basal-looped spearhead was discovered under a stone near the causeway. R.M. Chapman observed that "there was a break of several feet in length in the causeway indicating a removable plank bridge for security".

10. STAKE FELL 450 m. OD. SD 961/857

An unenclosed settlement of at least twelve round houses marked by ring banks of stone clearance sited on or near a spring line at the base of an east-facing scarp slope. There are several house sites on pronounced platforms, others near barely visible in the turf (information R. Bewley). The stone field banks suggest a pastoral settlement, there is no evidence of lynchetting or stone clearance heaps.

11. THORALBY HAW SD 993/868

Settlements and field systems on the south-facing slopes above Thoralby village. This is a complex of celtic type field, platforms and co-axial fields very similar to those on Calverside, east of Healaugh, Swaledale.

Barrows & Cairns

12. COUNTERSETT CRAG 500 m. OD. SD 903/877

Round barrow. First recognised by Mrs Elizabeth Wright, who found fragments of prehistoric pottery on the mound in rabbit hole earth.

13. ADDLEBROUGH 476 m. OD. SD 946/882

Round cairn on the summit, robbed mound with at least three cup marked rocks exposed. The limits of the cairn lies well beyond these carved rocks which have been incorporated into

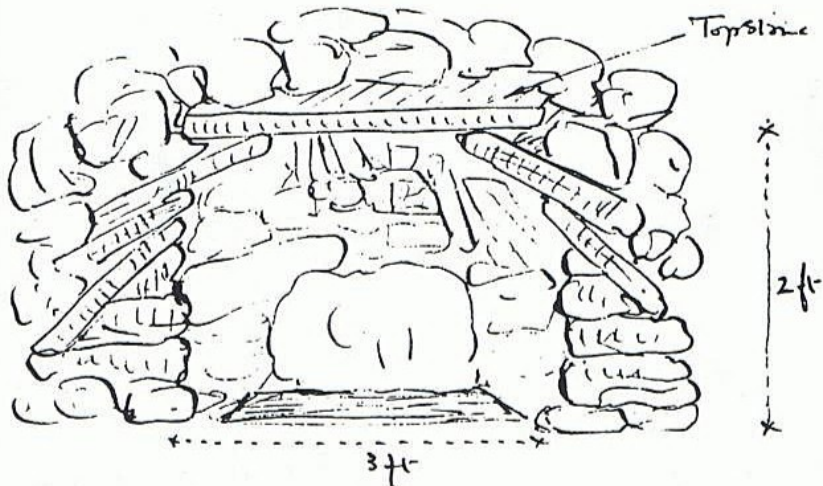
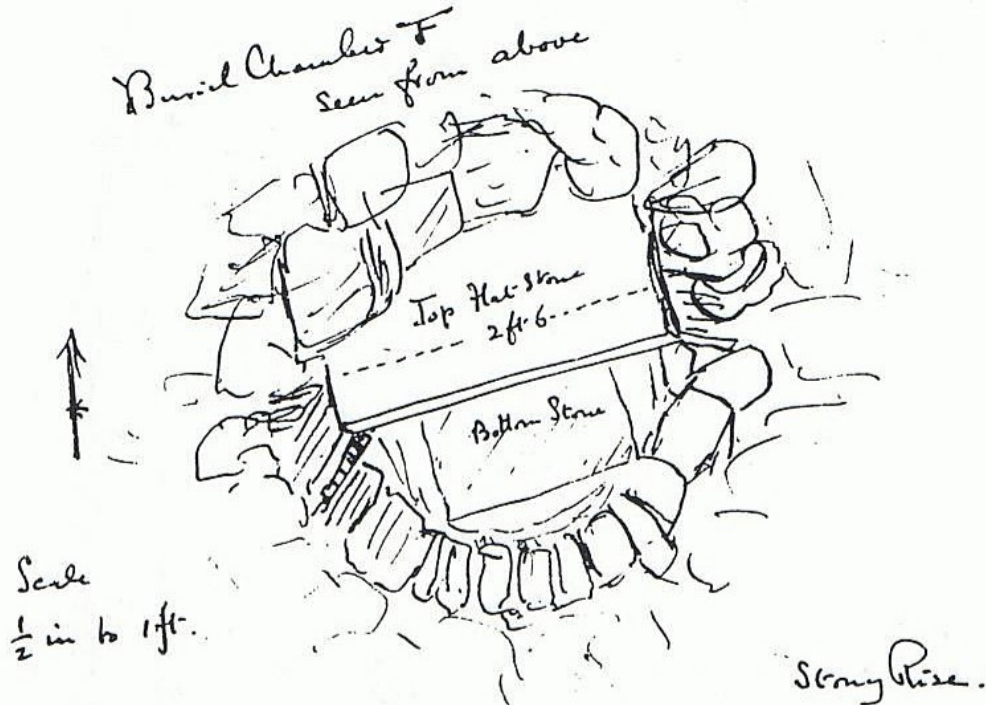
the mound structure.

14. GREENBER EDGE

425 m. OD.

SD 951/869

Massive cairn known as Stony Raise - oval rather than circular with its axis 38 m. and 28 m. Heavily robbed to build adjacent wall. The diary of Charles Fothergill (Yorks. Archaeol. Soc. Record Series) records for 1805 many hundreds of loads of stone removed from this cairn. Small stone built beehive chambers are recorded in the heavily disturbed mound early in the present century by W.T. Wylie.



Section of Burial Chamber F.
Looking North

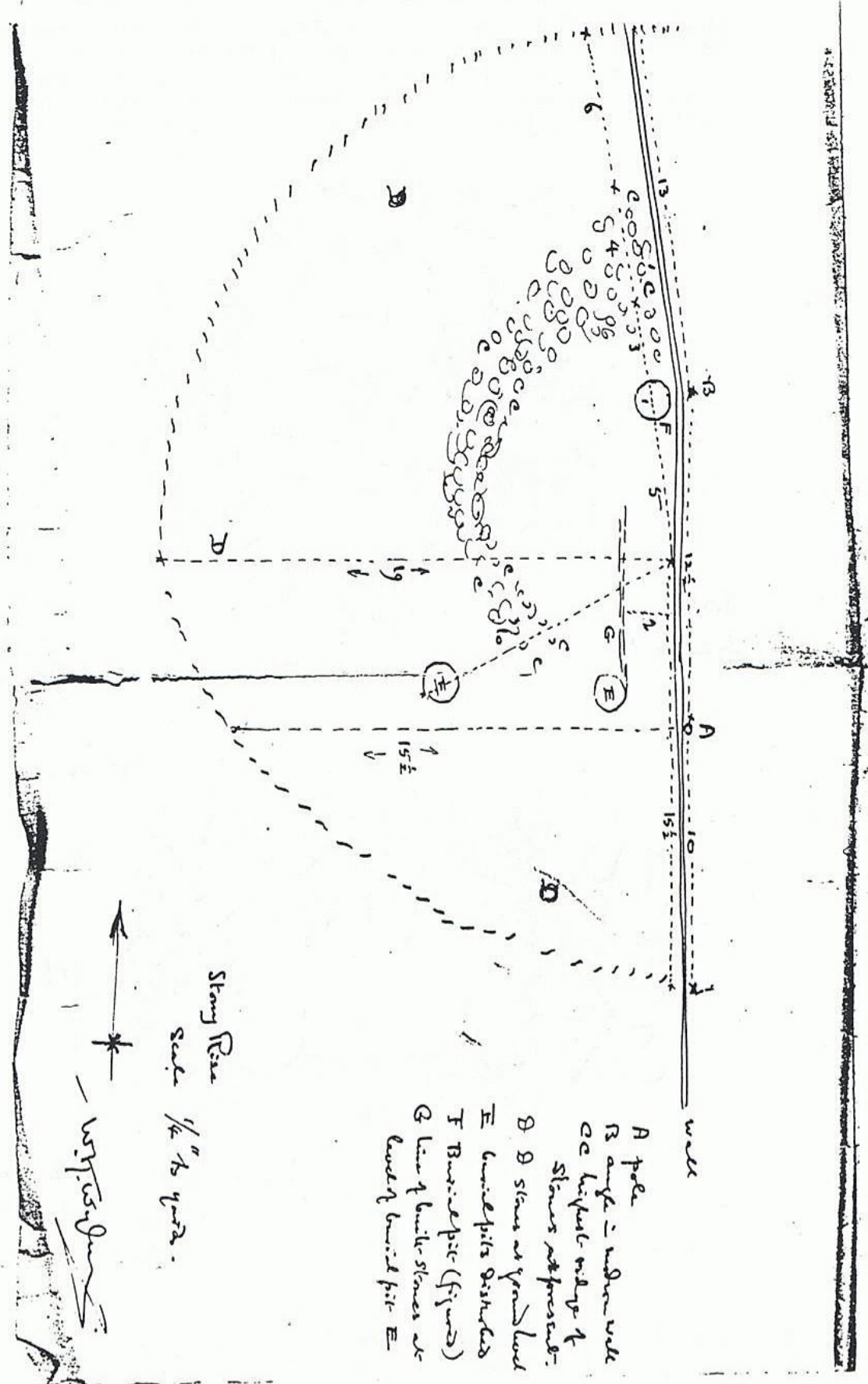
Drawings of a beehive-shaped chamber/cist made by W.T. Wylie
in the Stony Raise Cairn (reduced scale)

15. GREENBER EDGE (east)

380 m. OD.

SD 960/872

Round barrow of rock construction on a small drumlin.



- A pole
- B angle = surface water
- C highest ridge of stones at present
- D stones as found
- E burial pits (disturbed)
- F Burial pit (found)
- G line of smaller stones at lower burial pit E

Stony Raise
Scale 1/4" to yard.

W.F. Wylie

Sketch Plan of Stony Raise Cairn showing the positions of the beehived-shaped chambers/cists. Made by W.F. Wylie (Reduced scale)

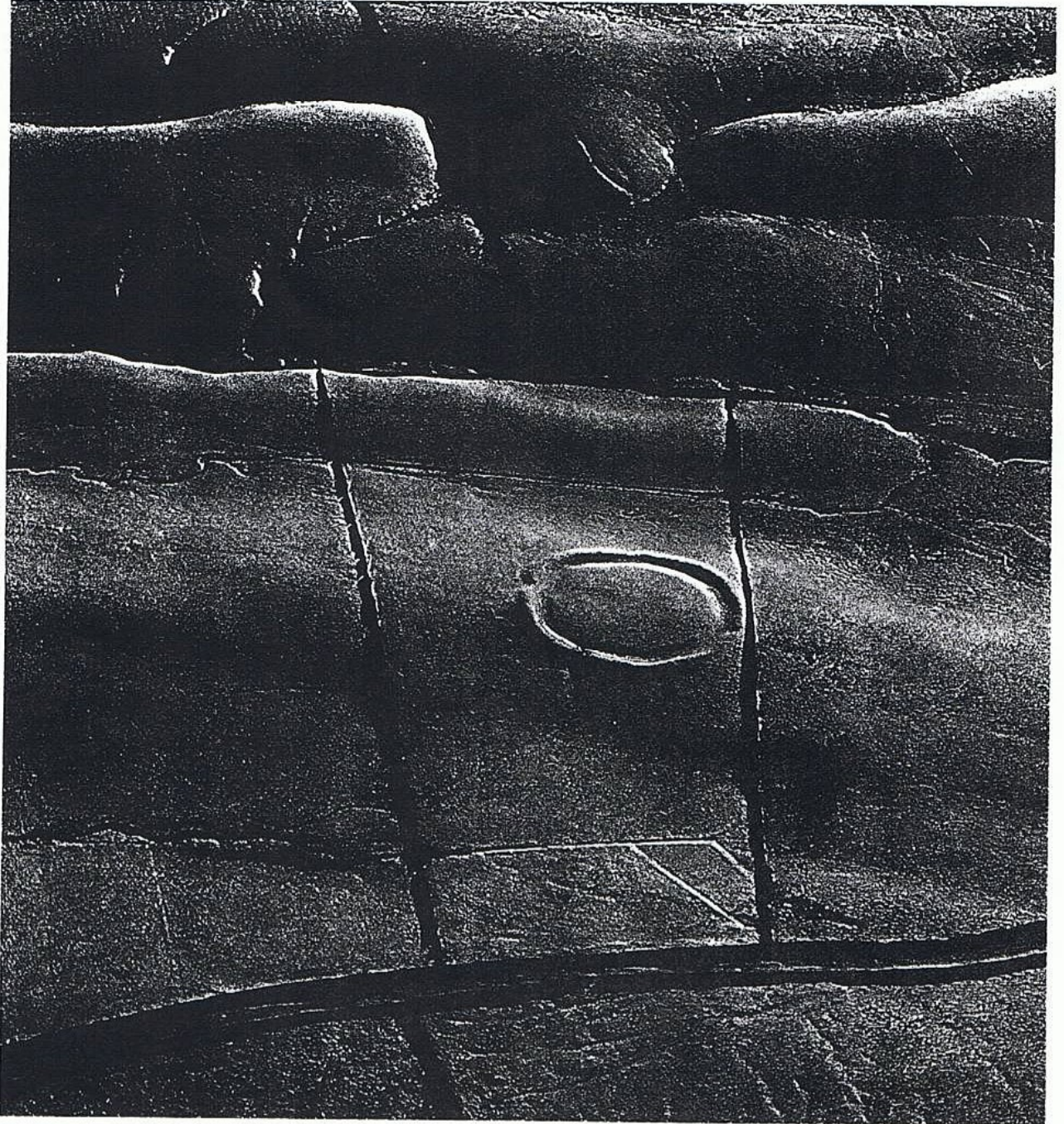
B. Other Monuments

16. CASTLE DYKES, Aysgarth

309 m. OD.

SD 982/873

Class I henge monument, internally 52-55 m. diameter, ditch with external bank, total diameter 80-82 m. Entrance causeway and gap facing east, 4m. wide. Well preserved in pasture land, three depressions the bank may result from stone robbing or drainage. (Harding & Lee 1987. 307, No. 205.



Castle Dykes, Aysgarth: Henge monument from the north in grassland.
(Air photograph; R. White 1980)

17. DOVESTONES 350 m. OD. SD 965/875

A group of six stone rings, 3-6 m. diameter in the rough pasture immediately west of a modern sheepfold. These may be the kerbs of quarried cairns or very small ring cairns.

18. GREENBER EDGE SD 956/875

Stone walled enclosure near a stream.

19. GREENBER EDGE 375 m. OD. SD 964/872

A group of three stone rings situated immediately east of a shooting hut. Same as Site 17.

20. HUKER MIRE 375 m. OD. SD 958/873

A group of four burnt mounds, two of which are horseshoe shaped and two are roughly circular. The largest is approximately 8 m. diameter and the smallest 3 m. across. All are situated on the bank of a permanent spring with substantial flow. These mounds are composed entirely of burned sandstone fragments and have all the characteristics of the Irish 'fulacht fiadh' - ancient cooking places.

This is the first burnt mound site to be recognised in the Yorkshire Pennine region.

21. STAKE FELL 485 m. OD. SD 960/862

An isolated sub-rectangular enclosure, a low terrace on the north-west side may have been for a timber building.

22. STAKE ALLOTMENTS 540 m. OD. SD 935/848

A group of irregular enclosures marked by very substantial banks. Very small buildings attached to the banks. One possible occupation site marked by black soil with flint and bone fragments, converging field banks.

- 23 & 24. GREENBER EDGE area SD 96/87

Field boundaries of 'reave' construction converging on the most easterly settlement of the Greenber Edge complex. These boundaries lead from the settlement towards Gill Beck and are approximately 1 km. in length.

25. STAKE FELL 485 m. OD. Centre SD 958/863

Field boundary. This large prominent bank is considered to be post-medieval on the grounds of a lack of consolidation.

C. Flint Sites.

26. SEMERWATER 250 m. OD. SD 922/876

Flint and chert industry, bone and antler tools found near the outfall of Semerwater. Later Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age.

27. SEMERWATER 250 m. OD. SD 918/874

Various flint industry finds from the slopes above the north shore of Semerwater with 50 m. of the lake edge. Later Mesolithic to Early Bronze Age.

28. CARPLEY GREEN (north)

Isolated find spot. Flint core fragment - possibly mesolith.

29. CARPLEY GREEN (south)

Isolated flint find spot, flakes of indeterminate age.

30. THORNTON RUST MOOR

Very fine flint arrowheads - large hollow based, leaf-shaped and barbed and tanged types. Found on eroding heather moorland south-west of Dovestones by George Musgrove.

31. GREENBER EDGE

Isolated find, very small leaf-shaped arrowhead.

32. STAKE FELL

Flint and chert industry and stone artefacts collected by R. Minnitt and T. Laurie. Types include a large chert flake with retouched to form a tanged point, a small leaf shaped flint arrowhead, flint serrated-edged blade and a chert core.