

# Before Bedale

Archaeological excavations along the route of the Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar Bypass



John Shepherd

with James and Sally Gerrard, Jennifer Proctor, Kevin Rielly, Berni Sudds

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Above: Bronze nummus of Constantine I, struck at Arles in AD327.

Front cover: Reconstruction of the Bedale enclosure overlain on aerial photo of the site during excavation.

Back cover: Bone weaving comb; muddy PCA staff during the excavations!

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*Repeating pattern taken from a military apron mount with inlaid decoration found at the Bedale enclosure.*



# Foreword

History is written in every moment. That's a self-evident truth, but when presented with the ancient and modern side by side – as in the Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar relief road and the discoveries unearthed alongside it – we're reminded and helped to reflect on our connection to the places we know and love and our role in their story.

In the Iron Age enclosure at Bedale, the Roman villa at Aiskew, the ancient routeway and the three miles of the modern road, we see a story unfolding over centuries. And despite the many and varied changes over that time, what we see most are connections.

Although separated by 2,000 years, the engineers behind the ancient route and those who built the relief road – more commonly known locally as the bypass – were linked by the knowhow that led both to choose the higher, well-drained land for their endeavours.

But more than that, in all these things we see people striving to do the best for themselves and those around them, to move forward and to take their communities into the future. That urge drove the Iron Age natives and the Romans and us, here and now, in the creation of the bypass.

The road is there to ease congestion through Bedale, Leeming Bar and Aiskew; to reduce environmental impact, to improve road safety, improve access to the A1(M) and to Leeming Bar industrial estate. In short, it is there to improve life now and in the future for those who live and work in the area and those who visit.

We congratulate everyone involved in the project, which was completed early and under budget, and thank the Department for Transport, which provided the lion's share of the funding for the road.

The fact that the relief road project opened up an opportunity to explore the surrounding archaeology was a tremendous bonus. That excavation helped us to reinforce those connections between past, present and future. Still, much remains to be uncovered. Only about five per cent of the villa was excavated. One day, this fantastic archaeological resource might give up the rest of its secrets to future researchers.



So potential from the past remains to be uncovered, just as there is no doubt further potential to be released in the opportunities afforded by the bypass, the most recent major development in this landscape.

**Cllr Carl Les** (left), Leader of North Yorkshire County Council

**Cllr John Weighell** (right), North Yorkshire County Council member for Bedale and Leader at the time of the bypass funding bid

# Glossary

**Box flue and voussoir tiles** Hollow tiles used as part of a Roman heating system (hypocaust -see page 37). Hot air would have passed through the tiles, heating the inside of the room. Box flue tiles are rectangular and were embedded within the wall, whilst voussoir tiles are wedge shaped and could be placed within a curved vaulted ceiling to complete the circulation of air.

**Clerestory windows** Windows set high in the wall, above eye level.

**Crop marks** Areas of differential growth within planted crops due to sub-surface features such as walls or ditches. Buried walls frequently stunt the growth of plants above while ditches trap water, encouraging plant growth. These changes within crops, particularly when captured in aerial photographs, can be used by archaeologists to help identify buried features.

**Drip gully** A gully or shallow ditch which forms around the outside of a building beneath the eaves as a result of water run-off.

**Hypocaust** – A Roman central heating system which channelled hot air beneath the floors of buildings and up through flues in the walls (see page 37). The word derives from the Ancient Greek, '*hypo*', meaning under and '*caust*', meaning burnt.

**Ordnance Datum (O.D.)** The height of mean sea level, which in Britain is taken from a point in Newlyn, Cornwall, and against which relative height above sea level can be measured. Contour maps show heights above Ordnance Datum.

**Metalled surface** An area covered with a layer of compacted stone or another hard substance, laid to create a hard and durable surface.

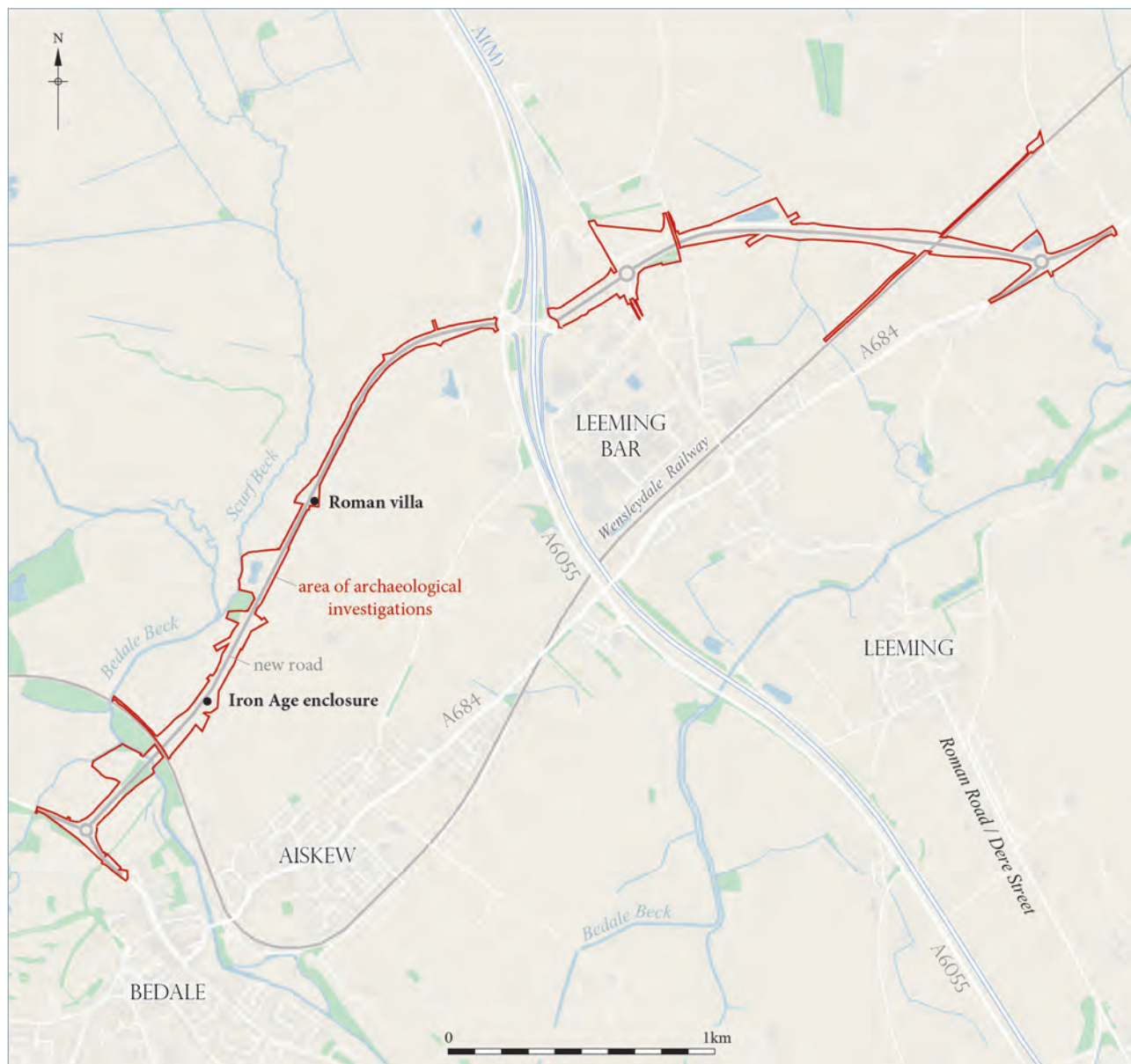
**Posthole** A hole cut into the soil to hold a post for a structure such as a building or fence.

**Radiocarbon dating** Also known as carbon dating or Carbon - 14 dating, this is a technique which determines the age of an object by measuring the amount of radioactive carbon isotopes ( $^{14}\text{C}$ ) in organic material. The technique is based upon the principal that  $^{14}\text{C}$  is absorbed by plants via photosynthesis during life (and hence by animals who consume those plants) but that this begins to decay once the plant or animal dies. The dates provided are usually presented to an established degree of accuracy as a date range, within which the death of the plant or animal happened.

**Revetment** A facing layer of material, such as stone, laid to support or protect a rampart or bank.

**Tegula and imbrex** (Plural tegulae and imbrices) Roof tiles comprising alternating flat tiles (with shallow flanges running down the sides) and curved tiles with semicircular profiles, which were used to form a ridged roof, the design of which assisted with drainage and water run-off.

**Tessellated** A pattern of repeated shapes that fit together closely, often used to describe a tessellated pavement or mosaic.



Location plan showing the outline of the route of the new Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar bypass and the location of the Iron Age enclosure and Roman Villa sites.

# Introduction

In the months and years before the construction of the Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar bypass began, archaeologists and other heritage specialists had the opportunity to survey the length of the road's site for possible archaeological remains and to conduct a series of excavations along the line of the route. Two important sites were uncovered: an Iron Age ditched enclosure at Bedale and a Roman villa at Aiskew. Both were located on the same higher and well-drained ground alongside the Bedale and Scurf Becks and, while the enclosure was expected (as its shape had been seen from the air as marks in the crops), the villa was a complete surprise of which there had been no hint, prior to the archaeological investigations.

But there was a third interesting discovery that not only physically connected the two ancient sites but also connected them to the present. It was a routeway that ran along the same higher and well-drained land. Once again, this routeway was expected as it was seen in the same crop marks that revealed the ditched enclosure. However, excavation funded by North Yorkshire County Council and undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology (PCA), allowed it to be understood so much better. This routeway, established over 2000 years ago, is a remarkable precursor of the bypass constructed in 2015. The location of the modern bypass was obviously chosen to avoid the main areas of habitation which was, after all, its purpose. But both the builders of the ancient and the modern routes chose that higher, well-drained land alongside the becks. While the modern road now connects Bedale with Leeming Bar, the ancient routeway allowed the earliest communities in the area to connect to their neighbours both to the east and to the west.

This book presents these discoveries: the ditched enclosure, the villa and the routeway, and paints a picture of how successive communities lived in and used these places and made use of the resources in the land that is now around Bedale and Aiskew. To begin, we examine how it was that these sites came to be excavated and reflect on what archaeologists look for in order to reconstruct the stories of such past communities. The results of the investigations give a remarkable insight into how people lived in this area from around 2500 years ago onwards.



# The archaeological process

## Beginning

There is potential for an archaeological site to be found anywhere in the country. People in the past were living and working in places that, for a variety of reasons, never grew into the villages, towns and cities in which we now live. These places disappeared from memory and became lost beneath our modern countryside. Our landscape has evolved quickly over the last 250 years, as agricultural techniques have improved and mechanised farming has transformed the surface of our rural areas. While some archaeological features may survive as partial ruins or could still be visible as low 'lumps and bumps' in the fields, most have been lost from view. They are now hidden underground and only reveal themselves when the surface of the ground is broken.



In this Google Earth image of the area, the ditched enclosure and trackway can be seen clearly as darker areas of vegetation.





Recording villa remains at Aiskew: photographs, written records and plans all contribute to the record. Here archaeologists are taking levels to record the exact height of all remains above ordnance datum. In conjunction with a scaled plan, this helps to produce a 3-dimensional record of everything we find.

Normally, buried archaeological remains are protected in the ground from modern disturbance by the topsoil in which the roots of the crops above grow. However, when a development (such as a new road or housing estate) needs to take place, much care is taken to make sure that the archaeology beneath the soil is considered. While archaeologists are trained to excavate, record and interpret the remains in the ground, their role is also to make sure that only that which falls in the path of development, and will therefore be disturbed, is excavated. To this end, a discussion between the parties involved in a development takes place before any archaeological fieldwork can be carried out, in order to decide upon the best approach to be used.

Archaeologists study evidence of the past, but their normal preference is to preserve. In most cases, archaeological remains are usually best left undisturbed in the ground where, when the land is used as pasture, they gain protection from the soil and roots above. When archaeological remains are anticipated, a developer will consider the options, with the help of archaeologists. Where remains are expected to be of regional or national importance, this can be a long process. If the development can be moved, the remains are left in the ground for future generations to manage. This can often be the preference, and the long debate about how to bypass Stonehenge without affecting the rich archaeological landscape around it is a well-known example. Where the development can't be moved, remains are excavated. That is what happened at the Aiskew Villa; whilst an area of the villa which lay directly in the path of the new bypass was excavated, most of the villa would not have been touched by the road and is still preserved in the ground.

Excavation means that the remains are carefully exposed and recorded. This way the information in them is converted into paper and digital records. These become the permanent record of the site. Full analysis of what was found at the site takes place afterwards, once the excavation is complete. And when all the analytical work is finished, we usually have much more information than before.

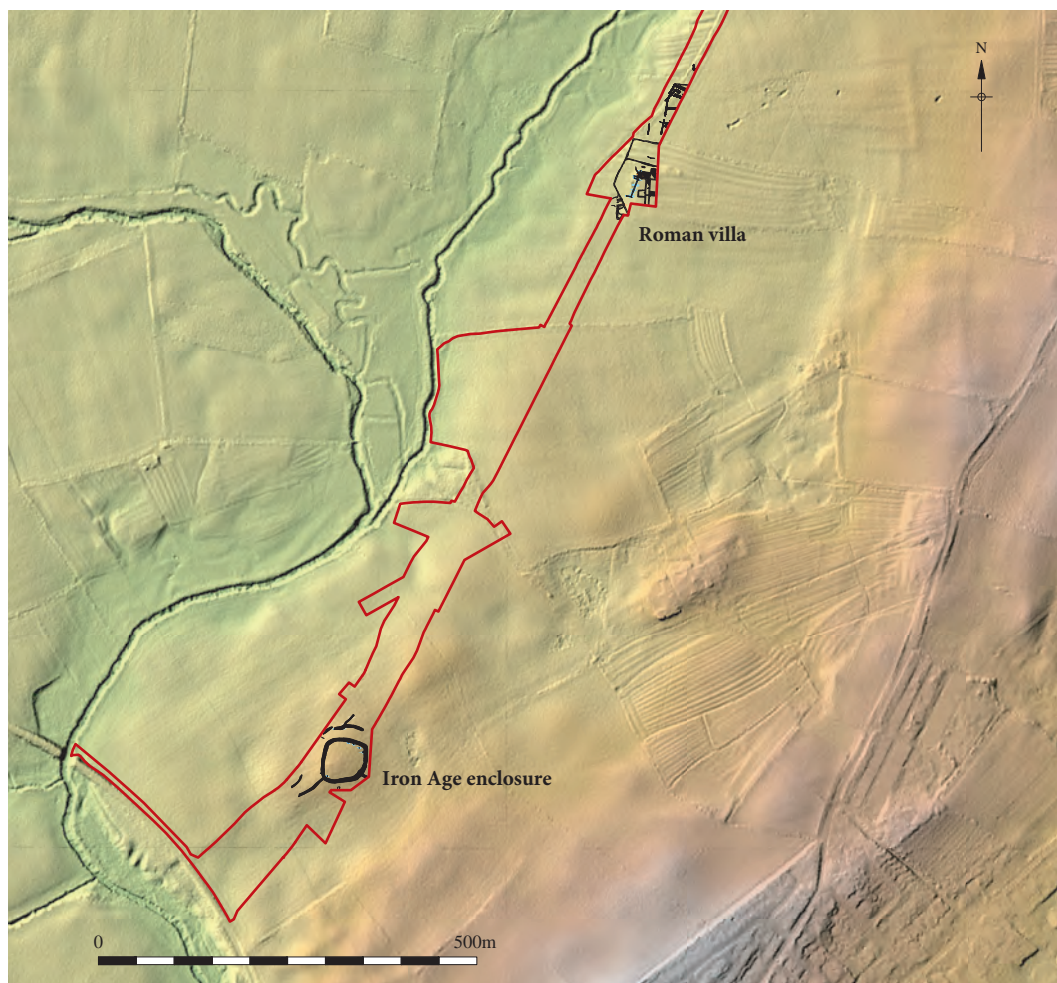
## Finding the sites

So, with the new bypass, first we needed to discover if there was any archaeology along its route. The first step in determining this is generally to see what has been found in the vicinity in past years. This information is contained in what is called a Historic Environment Record (HER), a local database, usually held by a local government authority, which contains records of past discoveries in that area. The relevant one for this project is the North Yorkshire County Council HER. Examination of the data held within an HER allows an archaeologist to assess the potential for new discoveries in a particular place, thereby giving an indication of the impact of a development on any archaeology that might be present. An additional tool is map regression analysis. This is the study of old maps to see how they reflect changes in structures and landscapes over time. This is an extremely useful and informative process especially for possible remains dating to the last few centuries.



Early 19th-century map of the Bedale area showing land belonging to the Bedale Hall Estate (coloured) and the route of the new bypass. (Ref: ZMI 14 held by North Yorkshire County Council).

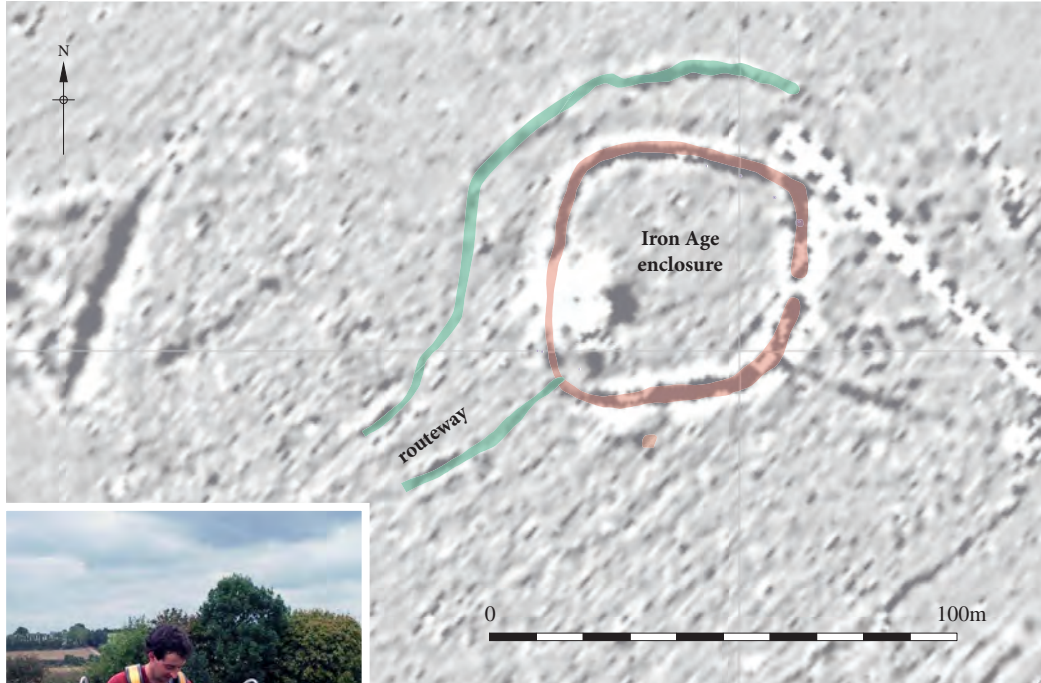
Lidar (light detection and ranging) picks up subtle variations in height, enabling us to see old boundaries, buildings and contours in a landscape in fine detail. Here the route of the bypass is outlined in red and the locations of the enclosure and villa are marked in black.



A variety of techniques may be employed to assess what might be beneath the surface of an archaeological site without digging. A recently-developed and very useful tool is Lidar survey; this utilises laser scan survey data of the surface of the land. Lidar can reveal quite subtle changes in the ground's surface levels. Minor variations show where old field boundaries or buildings had existed, their traces surviving as slight changes in ground height. Such traces are often imperceptible to anyone viewing the landscape from the ground. Even much older features such as prehistoric ditches can be found this way. The Lidar survey of Aiskew captured the extensive pattern of medieval ridge and furrow (see page 50) that extended across the area around the site. Comparison of the survey data with 18th and 19th century maps also helped to identify field boundaries that no longer exist.



One of the most effective tools for seeing beneath the soil without digging is geophysical survey. There are a number of different methods, but magnetometry was the technique used on the bypass project. The ground naturally has a fixed magnetic field, variations in which can be measured and recorded using a machine called a magnetometer. So if the ground has been disturbed by, say, ditch digging, or the construction of a building, then the magnetometer will detect the magnetic variations present within the soil because of this activity. On our project both the enclosure ditch at Bedale and the villa at Aiskew were studied in this fashion. In fact, at Aiskew, evidence discovered during initial surveys was followed up by additional work revealing the hitherto unknown Roman villa.



Magnetometer plot of the enclosure which shows possible archaeological features appearing as darker areas, shown with excavated features (coloured).



A magnetometer survey underway.

## Digging the sites

Once all the necessary surveys and research have been conducted and a better understanding is available of the archaeological potential of a site, decisions need to be made about what to do next and where to excavate.

As the survey work at Aiskew indicated the potential for a Roman villa on the site, it was decided that an exploratory (trial) trench would be excavated there to confirm the presence of a Roman building and assess its level of preservation. The trial trench revealed an area of the villa where the walls had been robbed, the stone of the walls having been a valuable resource for later generations (see page 53). As this part of the villa had been badly disturbed, it was determined that the road could be sited here and the villa excavated and recorded. To better understand this villa, a wider area beyond the road corridor was opened during the excavation phase. When topsoil was removed from this area it was discovered that the villa was in a remarkable state of preservation with floor surfaces intact. It was therefore decided to only excavate the part of the villa that was to be destroyed by the road.

A similar exploratory exercise was conducted at the enclosure site at Bedale. Trial trenches were excavated through the enclosure ditch prior to the main excavation. This exposed the entire circuit of the enclosure ditch which was then subject to sample excavation. The latest recut of the ditch was fully excavated as its fills contained significant amounts of material such as animal bone, metalwork, pottery and other items.

Once we start digging, archaeologists remove individual layers of soil that can be identified through their colour and the kinds of material that they are made from. Archaeological layers build up over time; sometimes these accumulate naturally, as vegetation grows and dies, or soil is moved around the landscape, or they can form through erosion or natural events such as flooding.



Excavation usually begins with careful stripping of the topsoil from the site, using a mechanical excavator.



We always excavate from the latest layers first, digging our way back in time, and keep a thorough record of what we find as we do. As we dig, we keep anything that would not naturally be in the soil, such as pottery, tile fragments and animal bones (artefacts) and will also often take samples of the soil itself for further analysis (environmental sampling). The artefacts are cleaned, bagged and examined and the soil from the environmental samples is washed through sieves to recover further evidence. This might include small remains of plants, remnants of food, tiny bones and even insect remains. Once the excavation has been completed the site records, the artefacts and the information derived from the environmental sampling are brought together and analysed to develop a complete understanding of activity on the site over time.



Different events can be distinguished through changes in soil colour, as can be seen in the section being worked on in this photo.

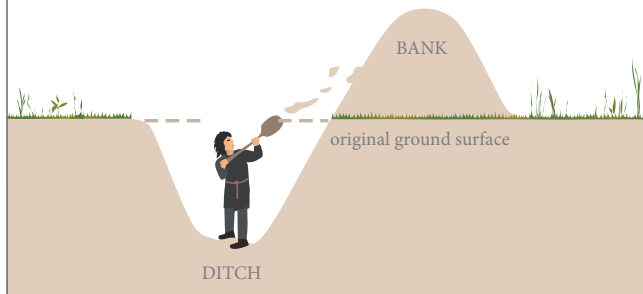
The results are published in academic works to add to the sum of knowledge about our past and disseminated in books such as this, giving an account of what was found. Importantly, the records, artefacts and environmental remains are also kept for future study; those from this project will be preserved at the Yorkshire Museum in York.



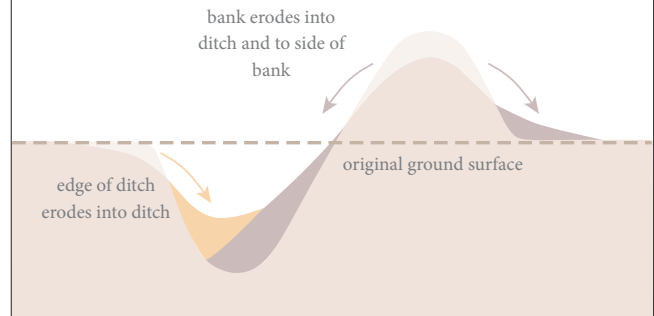
Finds are bagged up and carefully labelled and soil samples (for environmental remains) are collected in buckets for processing and further analysis.

## The story of a ditch

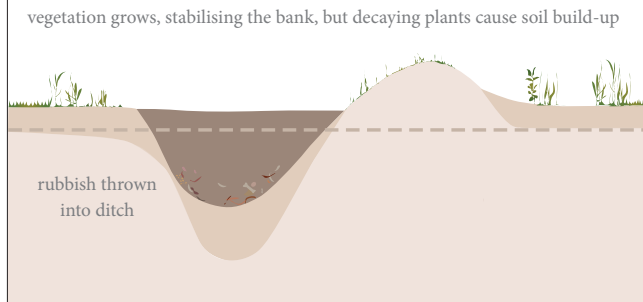
**1** As the enclosure was created a large ditch was dug. Soil thrown up onto the side of the ditch created a bank, a high barrier around the inside of the enclosure.



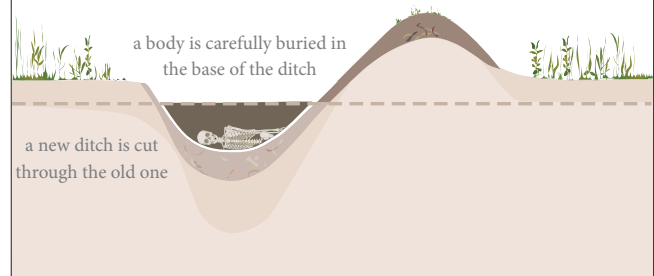
**2** While the bank and ditch were freshly dug soil eroded from the sides, filling the ditch. Rain and frost would have encouraged this, but at times the bank could have been strengthened with stone or timber supports, slowing down the process.



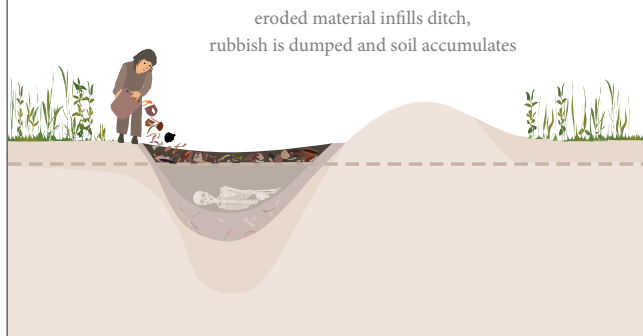
**3** Gradually plants take hold, strengthening the sides of the bank and ditch, but erosion continues, the ditch silts up and rubbish is thrown in; broken pots, metal-working waste and bones which survive, or other food waste which doesn't.



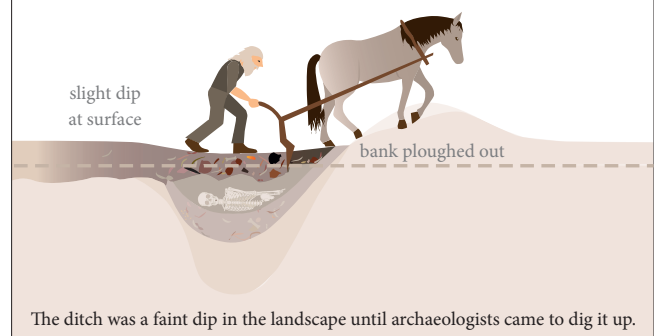
**4** Over time the ditch becomes clogged up and the bank worn down and the ditch needs to be recut and the bank rebuilt. At Bedale this happened many times. After the final recutting two bodies were carefully buried in the base of ditch.



**5** The ditch continued to fill in with further rubbish dumping, erosion and silting. The enclosure was abandoned and only shallow bumps remained in the ground.



**6** Much later, the land was turned over to agriculture and ploughed. This levelled the area, turning over the top of the soil and obliterating the bank and ditch.



## Survival and truncation

The study of both the villa and the enclosure revealed important information, not only about the archaeology that was there but also about what had been lost. Understanding how the archaeological remains on a site have been disturbed over the centuries is important when it comes to interpreting exactly what has been found. Studying archaeological remains is somewhat like trying to put together a giant 3-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, whilst never knowing what the picture is or how many pieces there should be. However, if we can identify how archaeological remains have been changed or damaged by subsequent activity on a site we have a better chance of understanding the story of that place.

At Bedale it became clear that the ditch of the enclosure was all that had survived of the monument. Any other traces of archaeological evidence (such as postholes and gullies which might have formed the outlines of houses) had long since disappeared. Whereas the villa buildings at Aiskew may have endured in the landscape for many years, probably becoming known locally as a good source of building materials, the Bedale enclosure was probably quickly forgotten, and the earthworks and internal structures left to slowly erode away. By the time of our excavation the height of the original ground level had been reduced by centuries of ploughing and the slow creep of soil off the slightly higher ground towards the lower levels to the south and north. However, these changes do not make the site any less important, as we can make comparisons with other sites in the region to help complete our jigsaw puzzle.

So, let us look at what was found and what we believe it all to mean. But before we begin, one thing is very important to understand, something that drives the entire archaeological process. Although the next couple of sections in this book will be looking at the archaeological remains - immovable things like the enclosure and villa and movable things like pottery, animal bone, industrial waste and building materials – it is the people who built, lived in, worked on and, in at least two cases, probably died at these sites who are at the core of our story. And it is also the land on and around the sites, which they farmed and managed, which links them to our present time.

The excavations revealed the layout of much of the villa, but the building was considered to be so important that it was decided to only dig the part that would eventually be underneath the road.



# A bit of background

Our story begins around 20,000 years ago. While images of wild horses and cattle were being painted on the walls in what is now Lascaux, France, massive ice sheets were slowly melting and moving northwards in our part of the British Isles. As the ice slowly retreated, it left behind a worn, undulating landscape of flint-rich clay ridges and shallow valleys carved out by the streams that carried the melt water and rainfall down from the hills around. In time, when the ice had fully retreated, these small streams would continue to flow; the becks of today are their descendants. Whilst these watercourses are usually effective at draining the area of surface rainwater, they are prone to inundation when the runoff from the heavy clay and flint subsoil is too heavy. The tendency for the local rivers and watercourses to flood was probably one important reason why the builders of both the enclosure and the villa chose their sites in high up, and therefore drier, locations. It is no coincidence that this land was also chosen as the route for the new road, avoiding the lower flood-prone land to the north.

The first people to move into this region, in the period known as the late Upper Palaeolithic, arrived in around 10,000 to 8000 BC. At that time the climate here was sub-arctic and the first inhabitants would have survived by hunting, following prey that included reindeer, woolly mammoth and woolly rhinoceros, and gathering food from vegetation. There was still a land connection between what is now the east of England and northern Europe, and people could have moved easily from one area to the other. Whilst a small number of potential cave shelters (perhaps used by hunters) have been revealed in the Pennines, we do not have a proper understanding of the extent of human presence in the region immediately around our sites during this time. Few artefacts made during this period have been found locally, although a single flint tool was found at Nosterfield, and a flint blade and flakes from the manufacture of tools have been recovered from Nab End in Middle Wensleydale.



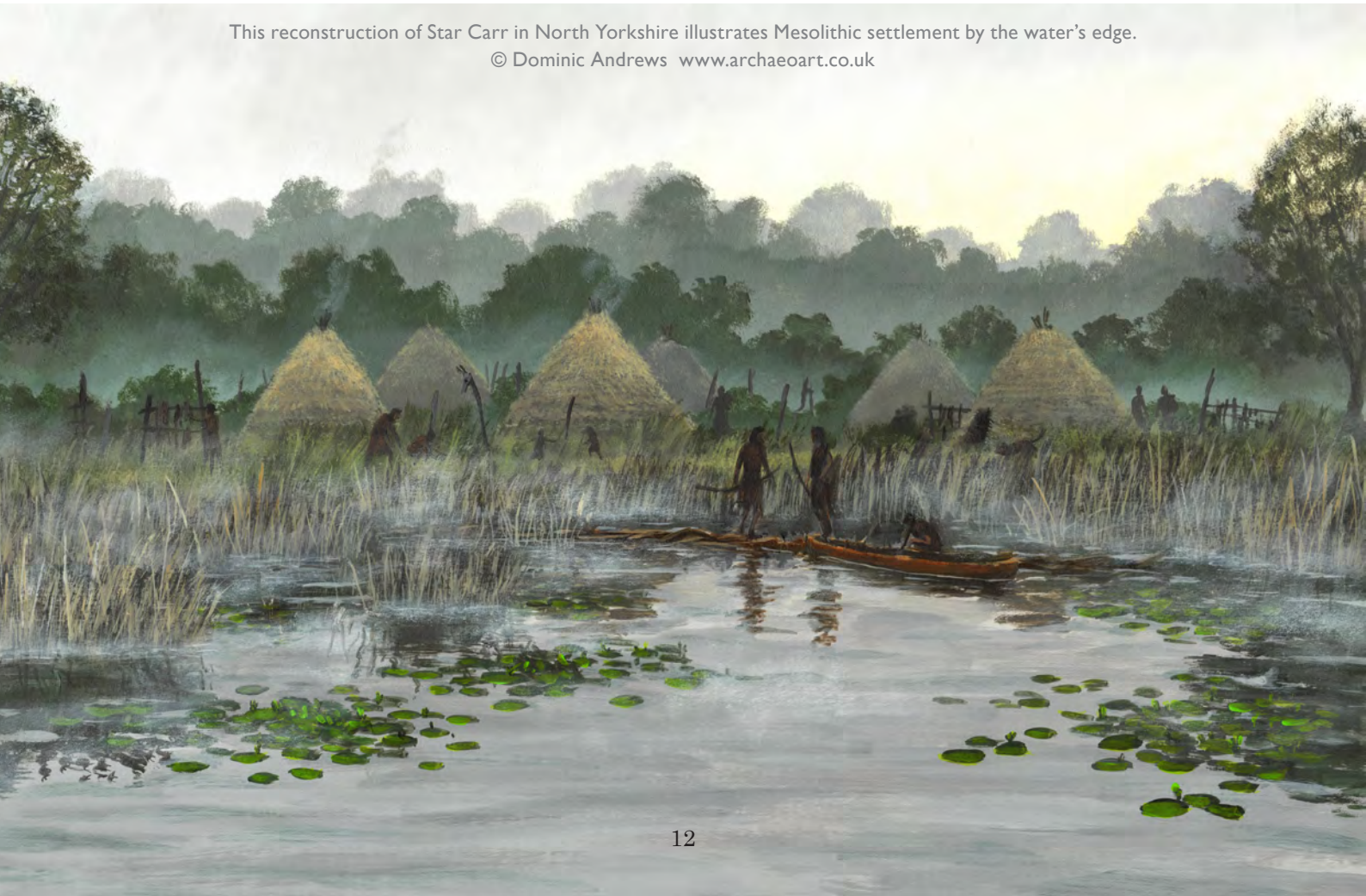
Between 10,000 and 8000 BC reindeer and woolly mammoths would have been among the animals who wandered across this landscape.



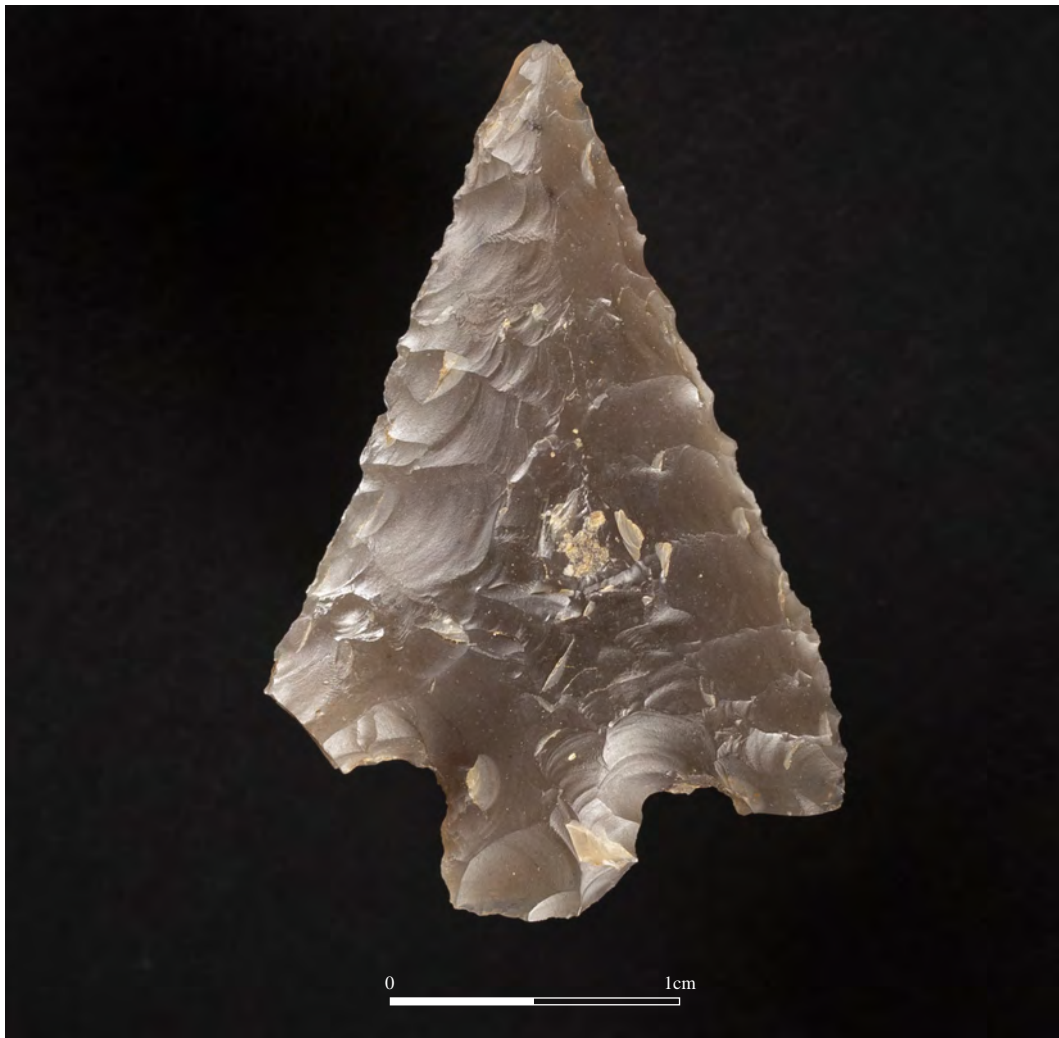
As the climate became warmer during the Mesolithic period (8000-4000 BC), rising sea levels separated Britain from mainland Europe. This period saw a rich and diverse natural vegetation begin to cover the land, including birch, elm, hazel, pine and oak trees. Archaeologically this period is typified by a more evolved stone tool making technology, with a larger repertoire of tools being produced than before. Hunting and gathering was still the primary manner of human subsistence but the people of this time were becoming increasingly more efficient at making tools for fishing, hunting, warfare and for making clothing from hides. Finds of this date have been made in a number of places in the region, especially from water channels. This is significant, as encampments were probably made alongside rivers and streams. It is likely that much more evidence is concealed beneath the flood plains of the numerous streams throughout the region. Some flints of this date were found during fieldwalking around Lower Holtby, 1.1km to the north of our sites. The nature of these suggests human presence there from the Mesolithic into the next period, the early and middle Neolithic (4000–3000 BC).

This reconstruction of Star Carr in North Yorkshire illustrates Mesolithic settlement by the water's edge.

© Dominic Andrews [www.archaeoart.co.uk](http://www.archaeoart.co.uk)







This early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead, broadly dated to 2300BC–1500BC, may well have been lost during a hunting expedition.

Three prehistoric worked flints came from our excavation, although all these items were recovered from soil layers dating to the Roman period. They were probably dropped nearby during the Mesolithic, early Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods. These flint fragments may then have been dug up and reburied during the Roman era, thereby finding their way into soil deposits of this date.

From around 4000 BC, in the early Neolithic period, farming and the domestication of animals was introduced to Yorkshire. As people settled and communities became established, these cultures began burying their dead in a ceremonial way. In the wider landscape of the Vale of Mowbray, the early to middle Neolithic is represented by evidence for monument building, reflecting this community and collective effort. The Thornborough Cursus, a site for formal ceremonial purposes, dates to this period: as the crow flies, this nationally important monument is located less than 8km to the south of modern Bedale.

There is a great deal of evidence for ceremonial activity during the later Neolithic and Bronze Age (3000–700 BC) throughout the Vale of Mowbray. Circular ditched enclosures known as henges were built across Britain during the 3rd millennium BC. Three of the most impressive examples of this type of monument are to be found at Thornborough, where they were constructed on top of the early Neolithic cursus, creating a ritual landscape on a par with that of Salisbury Plain (the site of Stonehenge). A number of fields with the name ‘Standing Stone Field’ appear in the immediate vicinity of the Bedale enclosure on post-medieval maps of the area. This name was probably given to fields with upstanding stone monuments, including those of later Neolithic date. Although none of these monuments survive today, the closest of these fields is situated just 610m to the north-east of the Bedale enclosure site.

The early Bronze Age (2500–1500 BC) saw major changes in burial rites, with bodies being buried beneath circular mounds of earth. These structures, known as ‘round barrows’, are found across Britain. Whilst no definite examples have been identified along the line of the bypass, an area just 240m north-east of the Bedale enclosure and labelled on local maps dating to as early as 1595 as “Hunger Barrows”, may have been the location of such monuments.

By about the start of the Iron Age (from 700 BC), several of the small settlements of the region had grown, many becoming fortified. To the south, in East Yorkshire, distinctive burial rites begin to appear around 500 BC, during the middle Iron Age. The deceased were buried within a small square ditched enclosure accompanied by grave goods, including in some cases carts or chariots.

Now our archaeological story at Bedale and Aiskew begins, as the first cut of the ditch of the enclosure was made during the 5th century BC.



Extract from a map of 1769, showing references to Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments: standing stones and Hunger Barrows (Ref: ZBA 26-1-2 held by North Yorkshire County Council).

# Bedale in the Iron Age

## Brigantes and Parisi

The Bedale enclosure is located within the southern part of an area that has traditionally been seen as forming part of the territory of the Brigantes tribe. The Parisi tribe were located to the south, in the East Yorkshire region. The Parisi probably had contact with the continent, where their burial rite has some parallels. The names of the Parisi and Brigantes tribes come to us from Roman writers of the 2nd century AD who were writing about Britain in the 1st century AD, once it was part of the Roman Empire. One writer, Ptolemy, writing between AD 120 and 160, says that the territory of the Brigantes stretched from sea to sea. The historian Tacitus, writing in the early 2nd century AD, says that the Brigantes were the most numerous of the 'states' in Britain.

There has been much debate in recent times about the Brigantes: who they were and where their territory actually was. It had been said that their territory occupied the area from the Rivers Humber and Trent northwards to the Solway and Tyne.



In recent years, however, it has been proposed that their territory was centred only in the eastern Pennines and the Vale of York, possibly around a tribal capital at Aldbrough, some 32km south of Bedale. In contrast, there is a theory that Roman authors may sometimes have used the name Brigantes generally to refer to the Britons of the north and even of the Midlands. But whoever or whatever the Brigantes were, they proved to be formidable opponents for the Romans, their former allies, with the final conquest of the north apparently taking many decades to complete.

Map showing tribal territories in Britain; the exact extent of the territories of the Brigantes and Parisi remains debateable.



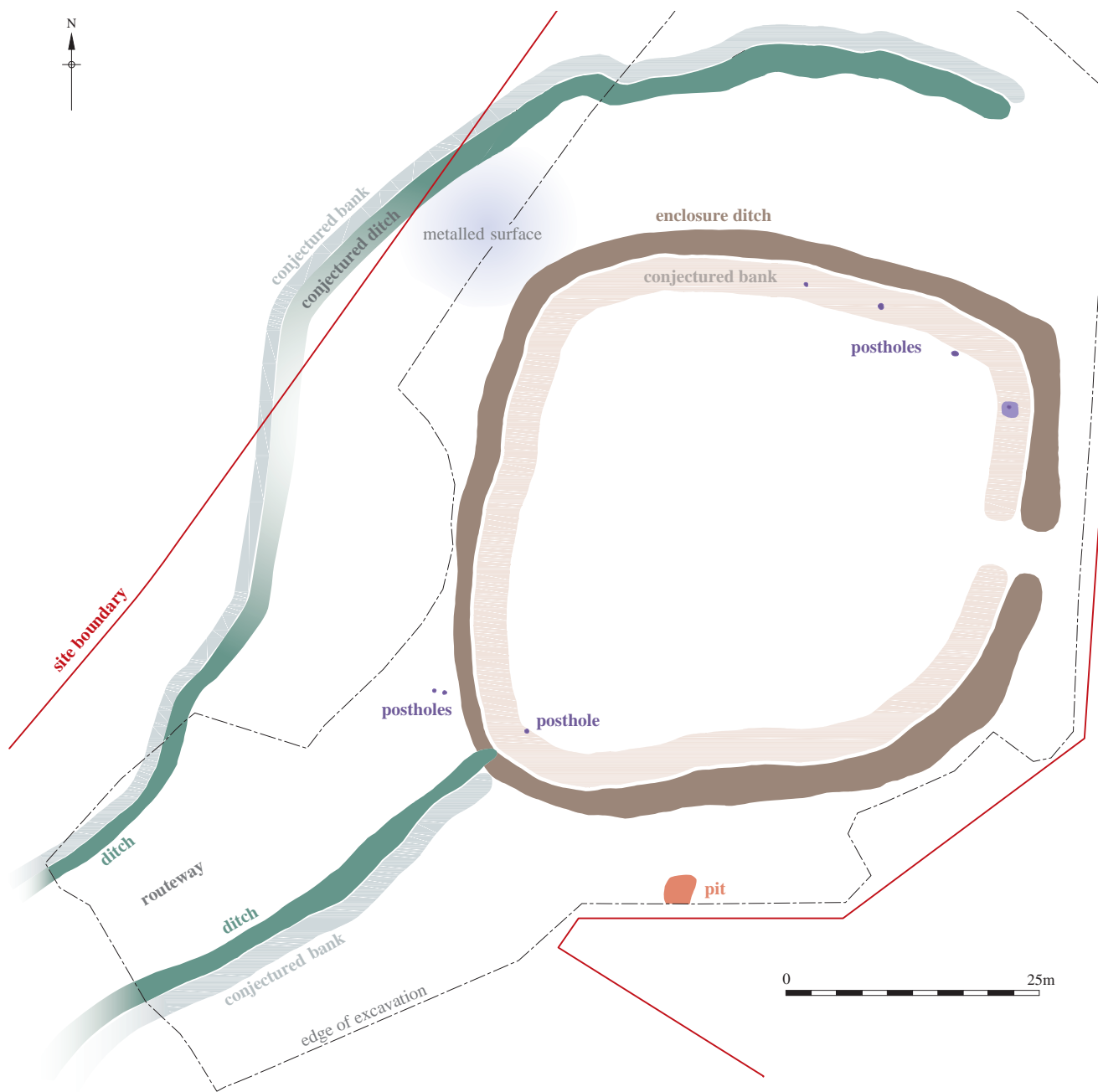
## The Iron Age enclosure

The enclosure at Bedale, which was roughly square in shape and measured 50m across, belongs to a well-recognised Iron Age and early Roman settlement type found across the region. We know, from the radiocarbon dating of bone fragments found in soil deposits from the earliest ditch cut, that the enclosure was in existence from as early as the 5th century BC. A ditch up to 3m wide and, in places, almost 2m deep, was cut into the natural clay ground, and the upcast was thrown on the inside of the enclosure to create a bank that would probably have been well over 1m tall. As a result, the height from the top of the bank to the bottom of the ditch would be over 3m, presenting a formidable obstacle to anyone attempting to enter. The bank and the deep ditch would also have helped to keep animals penned safely inside. The enclosure ditch was not continuous as a narrow gap was left on the east side to allow access to the interior.



Drone image of the enclosure during excavation; a series of 'slots' were cut across the line of the ditch during the excavations, leaving ditch fills between for future archaeologists to investigate. This demonstrated that the ditch was cut to varying depths around its circuit.





Plan of the enclosure, showing the probable position of an internal bank.


Some of the internal features within the Bedale enclosure had been removed by later agricultural activity (such as ploughing), which had scoured the top of the higher ground in that area. However, an enclosure of similar dimensions (though later in date) was found at Selgarth Farm, approximately 17km north-west of the Bedale site. As with Bedale, the Selgarth Farm enclosure was located on slightly higher land and close to a watercourse. The traces of an Iron Age roundhouse lay inside the enclosure; these remains included a 'drip gully' (a shallow circular ditch measuring over 12m in diameter, which ran beneath the edge of its sloping roof) and a circular ditch measuring 9.5m in diameter (which marked the line of the house wall). This illustrates well the kind of building that would have been located inside the Bedale enclosure.

Enclosures of a similar size (i.e. around 0.25 hectares in area) are also known at nearby Scotch Corner, Rock Castle, Melsonby and Stanwick. Studies of this kind of settlement suggest that most enclosures of this type are larger than the Bedale example, usually enclosing from 0.3 to 0.5 hectares. The smaller enclosures might have been a local variation of the type, used by smaller communities; their size perhaps reflecting the need to accommodate fewer animals (see page 31).



Plan of Selgarth Farm enclosure, with internal roundhouse, illustrating how the Bedale enclosure may have been used.





A reconstruction of the enclosure in the landscape looking northwards; the routeway can be seen on the left of the image and the ditch circuit is being re-dug. The internal area within the enclosure had been removed by later ploughing and the roundhouse shown here is based on an example from Selgarth Farm, near Richmond.  
© Chris Mitchell (c.mitchell02@btinternet.com)







The enclosure was still in use in some form over 500 years later, in the Roman period, but of course the first ditch would not have survived that long. Without the removal of vegetation that would grow in the ditch and on its sides and the silts that naturally accumulated in its bottom, the ditch would soon fill up. Numerous cleaning episodes can be identified in the ditch and among them there were at least four major attempts to recut and so redefine the circuit of the enclosure. The length of survival of such a settlement, without obvious expansion of any kind, does suggest that the number of inhabitants never increased. Could this be indicative of intermittent, perhaps seasonal use? Perhaps only a specific number of people ever used the enclosure? Its location, close to the becks and their lush flood plains, might indicate its purpose—namely that small herds were brought from elsewhere to this, and other, places for winter grazing. This would imply the seasonal moving of herds of cattle, probably from the Pennines to the west down to areas like Bedale. Although the routeway found at Bedale was Roman in date it is likely that an earlier routeway existed, functioning as a drove way for these herds. It is very interesting to see that the enclosure at Selgarth Farm was also located alongside a ditched routeway which was in existence in the 5th century BC.

A concerted effort was made to improve the defensive features of the enclosure; according to radiocarbon dating this happened in the 3rd century BC. The ditch was recut with a steep V-shaped profile and extended right across the position of the entrance way providing an unbroken defensive circuit. Even the bank appears to have been fortified with stones because, once the threat had subsided and the enclosure defences were neglected, stones had tumbled into the V-shaped ditch from the internal side of the enclosure. These stones would have strengthened the face of the revetment, probably to present an upright 'wall' with the bank behind it, offering an even steeper and more formidable obstacle. This suggests that at some point during the middle Iron Age the occupants of the enclosure were in conflict with someone, but exactly who the enemy was, or how long the conflict continued, we will never know.



Slot through the enclosure ditch showing the stones that had tumbled from the bank into the ditch. Above this the different fills of the ditch can clearly be seen.

Whilst we know from the types of animal bone found here that the inhabitants worked with cattle, there were few other items recovered that can tell us about the earliest occupants. There are no contemporary written sources describing the people of this period and how they lived. This leaves us to rely entirely on physical remains to build our picture of people's lives at this time. However, this changes as we approach the time of the Roman arrival in Britain. Historical sources from this time onwards provide another level of detail, including written accounts describing the people of the British Isles. These provide a framework in which we can view our archaeological findings.



## The Roman Invasion of Britain

Historical records inform us that the Romans invaded Britain in AD 43 and, by AD 47, we know that the Roman Governor of the province, Publius Ostorius Scapula, was campaigning in north Wales against the tribes there. However, he had to abandon his advance because some amongst the Brigantes, whose leaders at that time had been allied to Rome, were becoming rebellious. Tacitus tells us what happened next:

*"The Brigantian rising, it is true, subsided on the execution of a handful of men, who were beginning hostilities, and the pardon of the rest."*

This would have been a serious setback for the advancing Romans and was a forecast of more discontent to come. Caractacus, the leader of the forces resisting the Roman invasion, had been defeated in AD 51. He tried to seek shelter with the Brigantian Queen, Cartimandua, who was married to a man called Venutius. She was loyal to the Romans and handed Caractacus over to his enemies. Again, Tacitus tells us what happened next among between the Brigantian Queen and her husband:

*"Since the capture of Caractacus, however, the Briton with the best knowledge of the art of war was Venutius...He had long been loyal, and had received the protection of the Roman arms during his married life with Queen Cartimandua: then had come a divorce, followed by immediate war, and he had extended his hostility to ourselves. At first, however, the struggle was confined to the pair; and Cartimandua adroitly entrapped the brother and family connections of Venutius. Incensed at her act, and smarting at the ignominious prospect of submitting to the sway of a woman, the enemy – a powerful body of young and picked warriors – invaded her kingdom. That event had been foreseen by us, and the cohorts sent to the rescue fought a sharp engagement, with dubious results at the outset but a more cheerful conclusion."*

The result, then, was that Roman arms had defended Cartimandua and Venutius was defeated, although he escaped with his life because he reappears at the head of yet another rebellion eighteen years later in AD 69, at a time when Rome was engaged in a year of civil war. Again, Tacitus tells us the story:

*"Inspired by these differences between the Roman forces and by the many rumours of civil war that reached them, the Britons plucked up courage under the leadership of Venutius, who, in addition to his natural spirit and hatred of the Roman name, was fired by his personal resentment toward Queen Cartimandua. She was ruler over the Brigantes, having the influence that belongs to high birth, and she had later strengthened her power when she was credited with having captured King Caractacus by treachery and so furnished an adornment for the triumph of Claudius Caesar. From this came her wealth and the wanton spirit which success breeds. She grew to despise her husband Venutius, and took as her consort his squire Vellacatus, whom she admitted to share the throne with her. Her house was at once shaken by this scandalous act. Her husband was favoured by the sentiments of all the citizens; the adulterer was supported by the queen's passion for him and by her savage spirit. So Venutius, calling in aid from outside and at the same time assisted by a revolt of the Brigantes themselves, put Cartimandua into an extremely dangerous position. Then she asked the Romans for protection, and in fact some companies of our foot and horse, after meeting with indifferent success in a number of engagements, finally succeeded in rescuing the queen from danger. The throne was left to Venutius; the war to us."*

That war took many years to reach a conclusion. With Vespasian (the successful general in the civil war) now emperor, a new governor named Quintus Petillius Cerialis was despatched in AD 71 to deal with the Brigantes. His work was not entirely completed because the governor Gnaeus Julius Agricola was still having to deal with Brigantian discontent between AD 78 and 84.



# The arrival of the Romans

Ancient written sources depict the region as an area beset by conflict – a civil war among the Brigantes in the middle of the 1st century AD was, it seems, followed by direct conflict with Rome. It is difficult to imagine that this violence wouldn't have had an impact upon local communities within the region, who must have held allegiance to the local tribal elders or noblemen within the area and relied upon the tribal structure for security. A major settlement at Stanwick, just 30km to the north of Bedale, was a stronghold of the Brigantes.

A key feature of the local landscape during the Roman period, and almost certainly during the preceding Iron Age, was the main north–south road known as Dere Street. The line of this ancient route has now been succeeded by the A1(M). The road would have seen a lot of military traffic during the period of conflict. Depending on the loyalties of the inhabitants of the enclosure at this time, these forces would either have been a threat or potential clients for any goods and services they were providing.



18th-century map showing Roman Dere Street and other contemporary routes.



## The end of the enclosure, burials and other finds

More evidence from the enclosure gives us a fascinating insight into the lives of local people at the very end of the Iron Age and the decades around the time of the Roman invasion. This is in the form of two skeletons buried within shallow graves in the fill of the ditch. The first burial, which was laid in a curled up or “crouched” position, on its side, was found on the north side of the enclosure, with large stones placed close to his head. This person, a middle aged man, had probably endured a life of physical labour with bouts of trauma or disease. He had suffered a broken forearm, probably as a result of a fall. Radiocarbon dating suggests he died between 166 BC and AD 3, placing him among the generations of local inhabitants that lived prior to the Roman invasion.

The other burial, which was also laid in a crouched position, was found in the south side of the enclosure ditch. This person was relatively young at the time of their death, either a young adult or an adolescent; because of this, we cannot tell what sex they were. The condition of their bones and teeth suggests that they had experienced disease or nutritional deficiency in childhood. In this case radiocarbon dating indicates a date of death between 42 BC and AD 70, a date overlapping the period of conflict with Rome.

The feet of the second burial had been placed upon a large stone. This detail, and the precise arrangement of both the burials, indicates that the bodies had been carefully handled rather than simply dumped. These people were evidently treated with some respect by those who buried them. The open ditches were used for the disposal of rubbish at some point after the bodies were interred. However, it is likely that the burials had long since been forgotten by that time, with the waste thrown on top of what were most probably, by then at least, unmarked graves.



Crouched burial found in the northern section of the enclosure ditch.



Crouched burial found in the southern section of the enclosure ditch.

The quantity and range of material discarded into the ditch, especially on the north side, was large. Finds include objects that we can think of as 'indigenous' and 'Roman'. The 'indigenous' objects, items made by the Iron Age population before and after the Roman invasion, include a variety of bone tools that were probably used in craft working. A number of weaving combs suggest that the occupants of the site were also engaged in textile working. A small collection of 'Roman' objects points to contact with the Roman Empire. At this early date we might expect some of that contact to be with soldiers and there are a few small fittings from Roman armour, which are considered likely to have been brought to the site to be melted down and recycled. Iron hobnails suggest the use of Roman footwear and a bronze finger-ring suggests the wearing of Roman jewellery.

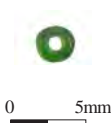
These bone artefacts, a weaving comb and spindle whorl associated with textile working and a serrated rib bone used in craft working, would all be considered 'indigenous' objects, and demonstrate the reuse of waste bone to manufacture tools.







*This decorated antler fragment probably formed part of a horse's bridle.*



*A tiny translucent green glass bead.*



*This Roman bronze finger ring would have held an intaglio, a small stone with a design carved into it much like a signet ring, which could have been used to leave a mark on a wax seal.*



*A 'Colchester' type brooch- the spring has six coils and is held by short, thin undecorated wings.*



*A military apron mount with inlaid decoration: four repeating panels of a vegetal motif formed of three petals above a horizontal line.*



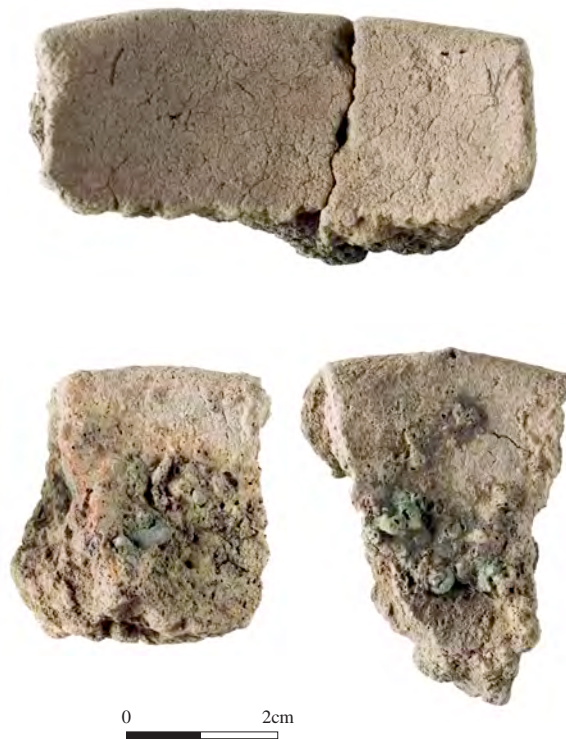
There is also much evidence for bone and antler working as well as copper-alloy metal working in the latest phases of occupation on the site. Our understanding and interpretation of the nature of the contact between the inhabitants and Roman culture is complicated by the fact that this working took place within the enclosure. It is possible that some of the Roman metal objects found here travelled to the site as grubby scrap, to be recycled and reworked into whatever the metalsmiths were making here, rather than being personal items which were used and lost or discarded in the vicinity of the enclosure.

## Metalworking

Amongst the numerous artefacts found in the upper fills of the enclosure ditch were many small pieces of heavily burnt ceramic vessels, as well as scraps and melted pieces of copper alloy. These are evidence that amongst those who lived in and around the Bedale enclosure at the end of the 1st and in the 2nd century AD there were people with the skills and knowledge to work, and perhaps even make, copper alloys. Chemical analysis of the ceramic pieces shows that some of these were from crucibles (small pots used to heat the metal ready for working). Within this group there were pieces of bronze, that is copper with varying quantities of tin included; the lower the tin content, the softer the bronze produced. The examples from the enclosure included some that were soft, which would have been suitable for making items for cutting and engraving with decoration, and others which were very hard, which would have been ideal for making items intended for polishing. Fragments of brass, another alloy of copper, but made with zinc, were also identified; brass which is known to have been used from the period just before the arrival of the Romans onwards

No copper, tin or zinc ore were found, although both copper and zinc ores occur naturally in the region. This doesn't mean that those working at the Bedale enclosure did not use such natural materials to directly make the alloys from, but we found no direct evidence for this at the site. What we did find are fragments of metal that had been discarded by the metalworkers. Then, as now, any usable (and therefore valuable) pieces would be retained and reused wherever possible. Where copper-alloy metal working fragments are found alongside broken copper-alloy objects, we must consider the possibility that the damaged objects are the remnants of scrap that has escaped the melting pot. Recycling was not a 'green' issue in the past but was often an economic necessity. Metal, glass and even leather and textiles could all be put to good use time and time again.

What were they making here, and for whom? This question is difficult to answer. A few of the burnt ceramic pieces appear to be fragments of mould (shaped clay items into which the molten metal would have been poured to create new objects) for small items such as brooches, probably intended for the local market. The fragments of harder copper alloy, which could be polished to a high shine, may have been used to produce decorative fittings for furniture and boxes, supplying local woodworkers engaged in making such things. What these finds do show is the presence of a group of metalworkers probably making use of local ores but certainly gathering scrap metal from the local area for reworking. Their products would then be circulated in the local markets. As this material was found in many places in the enclosure ditch it was evidently a craft that was carried out often there. It seems likely that generations of metalworkers would have worked within the enclosure, using their knowledge of melting and working the metal to contribute to the income and means of survival of the inhabitants during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.



Fragments of crucibles used in metalworking.

## Pottery production, cooking and eating

All of the pottery found came from the uppermost soil layers (fills) of the enclosure, and was dated to the later Iron Age and early Roman period. Most of these fragments came from crude handmade jars with thick sides, formed in lumpy and coarse clay materials. This type of pottery is very difficult to date precisely as pots of this type (which were made in an Iron Age fashion) continued to be made and used in this area well into the Roman period. Visual and scientific analysis of these pieces allows us to determine that these vessels were made from different types of clays from Yorkshire and the north-east of England. This suggests that the occupants of the enclosure had links with a variety of pottery-producing communities across the region. The majority of these pots were used for cooking and food preparation as they are mainly utilitarian jars, some of which show evidence of sooting and burning.

A tiny number of fine, wheelmade Roman sherds were found in addition to the crude Iron Age type pottery fragments mentioned above. These came exclusively from soil deposits at the very top of the ditch. Fragments of this type include two pieces of fine, glossy red samian ware from Gaul (roughly equivalent to modern France) and some pieces from locally made Romano-British vessels, perhaps produced in the Catterick area. These fragments are tantalising evidence of connections between two technologies and styles of pottery production and, perhaps more importantly, of interaction between native and Roman lifestyles.



These heavy and thick pottery sherds were used for cooking and storing foods during the late Iron Age and early Roman period. Scientific analysis of the clay indicates that these were made fairly locally to the site.



Lidar image of the area showing the projected routeway running between the sites.

The picture we see, then, is of a small artisanal community engaged in craft production; working bone, antler and metal as well as making textiles. Cattle were slaughtered here and the quantities involved suggest that some of the meat was prepared and sent elsewhere for consumption, whilst horses may also have been bred here. The inhabitants were most probably natives of the region, who survived by supplying the needs of others.

This seems to have been a pattern of existence that continued for several generations, from the later Iron Age into the 2nd century AD. As before, the settlement did not expand, suggesting that the community did not grow in number. In fact, whilst it was presumably still visible and in use in some way, the enclosure ditch itself appears to have become redundant as a defensive circuit by this time. Even so, it must still have been apparent in the landscape when the latest manifestation of the routeway was constructed, its southernmost ditch cutting into the latest fills of the south-west side of the enclosure. The presence of this routeway is evidence of the need to travel across this region. One can imagine herds of animals being driven along the route towards winter grazing and markets in the east, or up towards summer grazing sites in Wensleydale. Whilst the Bedale enclosure is unquestionably a native British type of settlement, it is of significance that a new type of habitation was also built alongside this same route: the Aiskew villa, a building that is distinctly Roman in style. There is a dramatic contrast between the native, subsistence lifestyle of those who lived within the enclosure at Bedale and the comfortable Roman lifestyle of the inhabitants of the villa.



## The animal bones

Several large concentrations of animal bone were recovered from the trackway and the ditch of the Bedale enclosure, clearly demonstrating consumption by a reasonably sized local population. Most of the bones were identified as cattle, followed by sheep and then pig, all including a general array of skeletal parts which represent butchers' as well as table waste. All three species were ultimately culled for their meat, however, most of the cattle had been taken from dairy herds. The sheep comprise mainly third/fourth year wethers (castrated males) which had obviously supplied a few clips of wool before slaughter, while the pigs were generally mature (up to three years old), thus having reached their optimum size and weight, especially for the production of bacon. Bones from very young calves, lambs and piglets show that most of the animals consumed were locally bred as well as slaughtered here.

A good proportion of horse bone was also recovered with butchery marks which shows that these were on the menu. 'Dropped' antler from red deer were most probably kept to be used for craft-working processes. A diverse array of smaller game was present, especially wetland species: ducks, geese, swan, heron and crane, although given the quantity of bones from larger animals present, it would seem that these contributed very little to the meat diet of the inhabitants. Dogs were present too, including animals in a range of sizes (from about 40 to 80cm at the shoulder, in modern terms from a Cockapoo to an English mastiff); these were perhaps used as hunting or guard animals. Interestingly there are also a few chicken bones present, which may be evidence of Roman style consumption. These domestic birds entered Britain in the 2nd or more likely the 1st century BC and were not part of the native British diet prior to the Roman invasion. Julius Caesar, speaking of the Ancient Britons, said: "Hares, fowl and geese they think it unlawful to eat, but rear them for pleasure and amusement".

The animal bones from the Aiskew villa show both similarities and differences to those from the enclosure. Whilst the villa was again largely supplied with dairy cows for meat, sheep and especially pig were far better represented than in the enclosure's bone assemblage. These differences clearly suggest that the inhabitants of the villa had a more Romanised diet, as would be expected within such a prestigious rural household. This is particularly shown by the high proportion of pig bones found. The villa's residents were perhaps emulating the typical pig-dominated diet seen elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Other high-status indicators include an abundance of chicken, game animals and birds, as well as a small but significant collection of fish bones. Within the bones from the villa, the larger game is almost entirely composed of red deer meat waste, whilst remains from game birds include wetland species, including geese, duck, swan and crane, as well as those favouring woodland or open ground, including woodcock, plover, pigeon and thrush.

The villa also produced bones from a raven (probably a local scavenger or pet), a kestrel and a goshawk. These two birds of prey may well have been used to hunt birds, although not by falconers, but more likely as decoys. The method here was to use such falcons/hawks to alarm smaller birds (such as thrushes), chasing them towards certain trees where bird traps had already been placed. The fish included some plaice and flounder (both possibly caught in the Tees estuary) as well as salmon, grayling and pike (freshwater fish perhaps fished from the Tees or Swale).

The 'life' of this villa clearly did not end with its abandonment in the later 4th century AD. A large quantity of common frog bones was recovered from levels within the hypocausted room (see page 36), which presumably had flooded at some point. In addition, these levels contained a plethora of small mammals, including rat, water voles, field voles, house mouse and shrew, as well as the partial remains of a weasel and two adult barn owls. A large proportion of these small mammal bones (perhaps including the weasel but especially the shrew, which is a particular favourite of the barn owl) probably represents decayed owl pellets. The bird bones recovered suggest that at least owls were roosting within the abandoned villa, perhaps occasionally swooping down to capture one or more of the multitude of frogs which were so enticingly available.



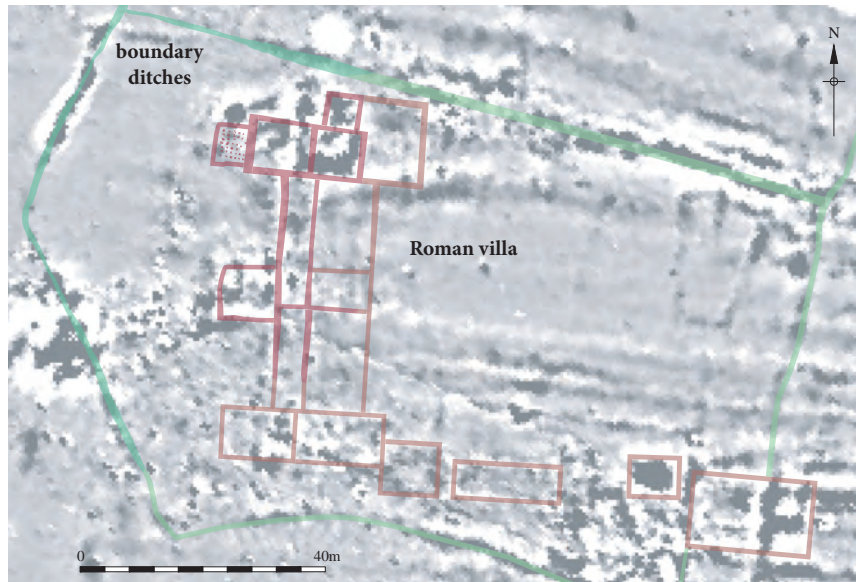
Large quantities of bone were found in the later fills of the enclosure ditch.

# The late Roman villa

## Finding the villa

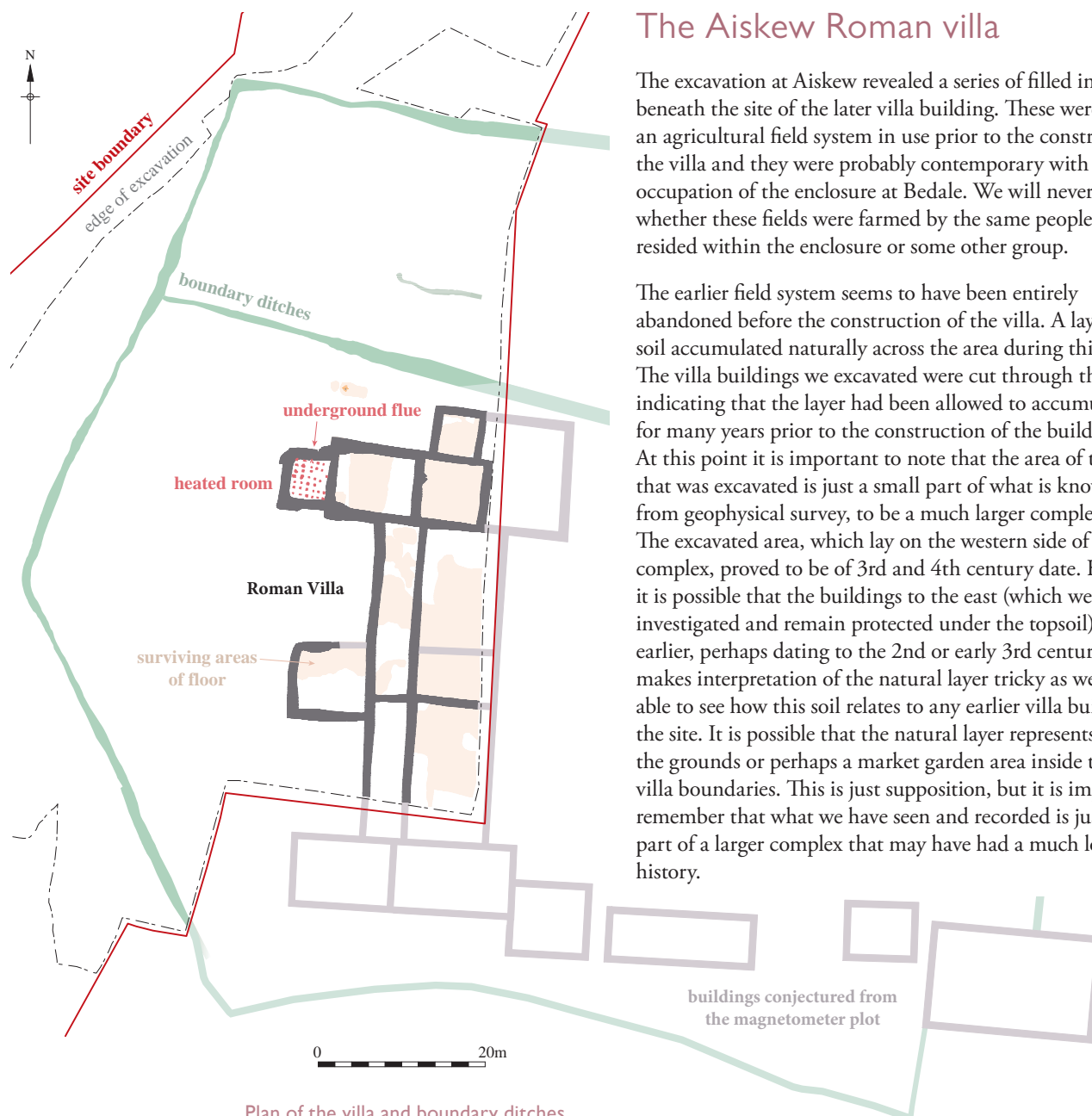
The discovery through geophysical survey of a group of buildings buried in the fields to the north of Aiskew was a complete surprise. There was no evidence that there had been a farm there in recent centuries, and the sheer size of the building complex found precluded this being a small medieval farmstead. The site was covered in medieval plough furrows (ridge and furrow), indicating that it had been used as agricultural land for hundreds of years, at least since the medieval period. Even so, a prior study of the local field names of the area did turn up the interesting name of 'grey stones' for the main field in which these remains were discovered, and this should perhaps have been a clue. Things are always clear in hindsight of course, and it seems likely that this colourful field name was probably given to the field because of the rubble (not a common sight in the area) that was strewn around the surface.

The scale and layout of this complex of rectangular buildings lead to thoughts that this might be a Roman villa. The term 'villa' might conjure up images of lavish country houses built to satisfy the lifestyle of a wealthy owner and their family. But the majority of such complexes were primarily large working farms with, of course, a comfortable main house for the owner and their family.



The geophysical survey also revealed a network of ditches around the buildings, which formed a boundary enclosing the villa complex. The estate would have extended far beyond these ditches, probably incorporating large areas around the modern settlements of Bedale and Aiskew. Further ditches excavated just to the north of the villa defined fields which were probably part of this large estate.

Magnetometer plot of the villa, with interpretation of features. The known and supposed villa buildings are shown in red, whilst a series of boundary ditches thought to have enclosed the villa complex are traced in green.



Plan of the villa and boundary ditches.

## The Aiskew Roman villa

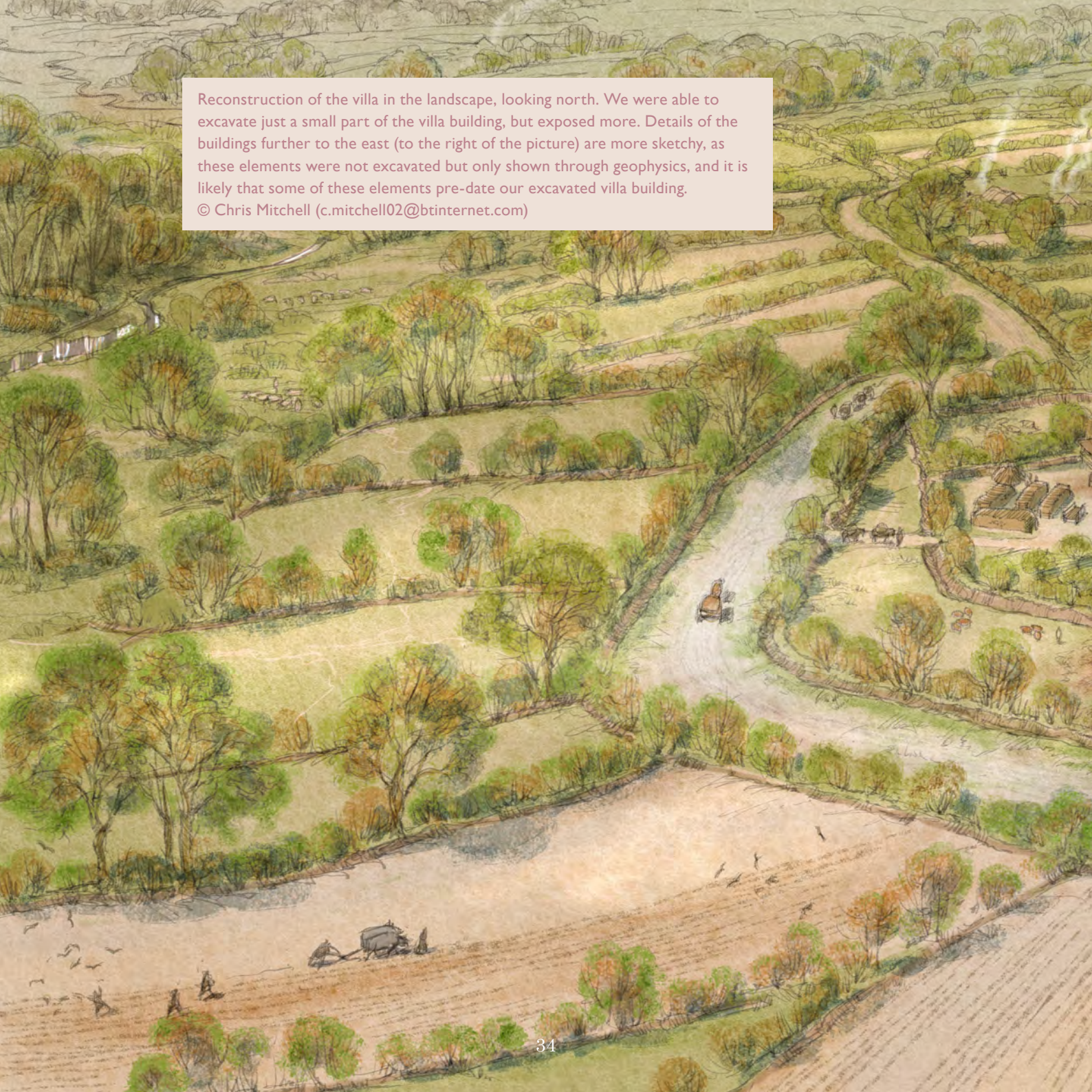
The excavation at Aiskew revealed a series of filled in ditches beneath the site of the later villa building. These were part of an agricultural field system in use prior to the construction of the villa and they were probably contemporary with the latest occupation of the enclosure at Bedale. We will never know whether these fields were farmed by the same people who resided within the enclosure or some other group.

The earlier field system seems to have been entirely abandoned before the construction of the villa. A layer of soil accumulated naturally across the area during this time. The villa buildings we excavated were cut through this soil, indicating that the layer had been allowed to accumulate for many years prior to the construction of the buildings. At this point it is important to note that the area of the villa that was excavated is just a small part of what is known, from geophysical survey, to be a much larger complex. The excavated area, which lay on the western side of the complex, proved to be of 3rd and 4th century date. However, it is possible that the buildings to the east (which were not investigated and remain protected under the topsoil) are earlier, perhaps dating to the 2nd or early 3rd centuries. This makes interpretation of the natural layer tricky as we are not able to see how this soil relates to any earlier villa buildings on the site. It is possible that the natural layer represents traces of the grounds or perhaps a market garden area inside the earlier villa boundaries. This is just supposition, but it is important to remember that what we have seen and recorded is just a small part of a larger complex that may have had a much longer history.



Reconstruction of the villa in the landscape, looking north. We were able to excavate just a small part of the villa building, but exposed more. Details of the buildings further to the east (to the right of the picture) are more sketchy, as these elements were not excavated but only shown through geophysics, and it is likely that some of these elements pre-date our excavated villa building.

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The villa building uncovered at Aiskew is known as a 'winged-corridor' type, and had a long, wide corridor connecting to two 'wings', one at each end. At Aiskew, the main access to the building would have been from the east through the main open yard, which would have been lined with other buildings of the villa complex. Nine rooms were examined during the excavation, some of which still retained traces of plain mosaic flooring. One room at the north-east end of the building had a floor made of a special kind of waterproof concrete (opus signinum), covered with a large quantity of painted wall plaster that had collapsed from the walls.

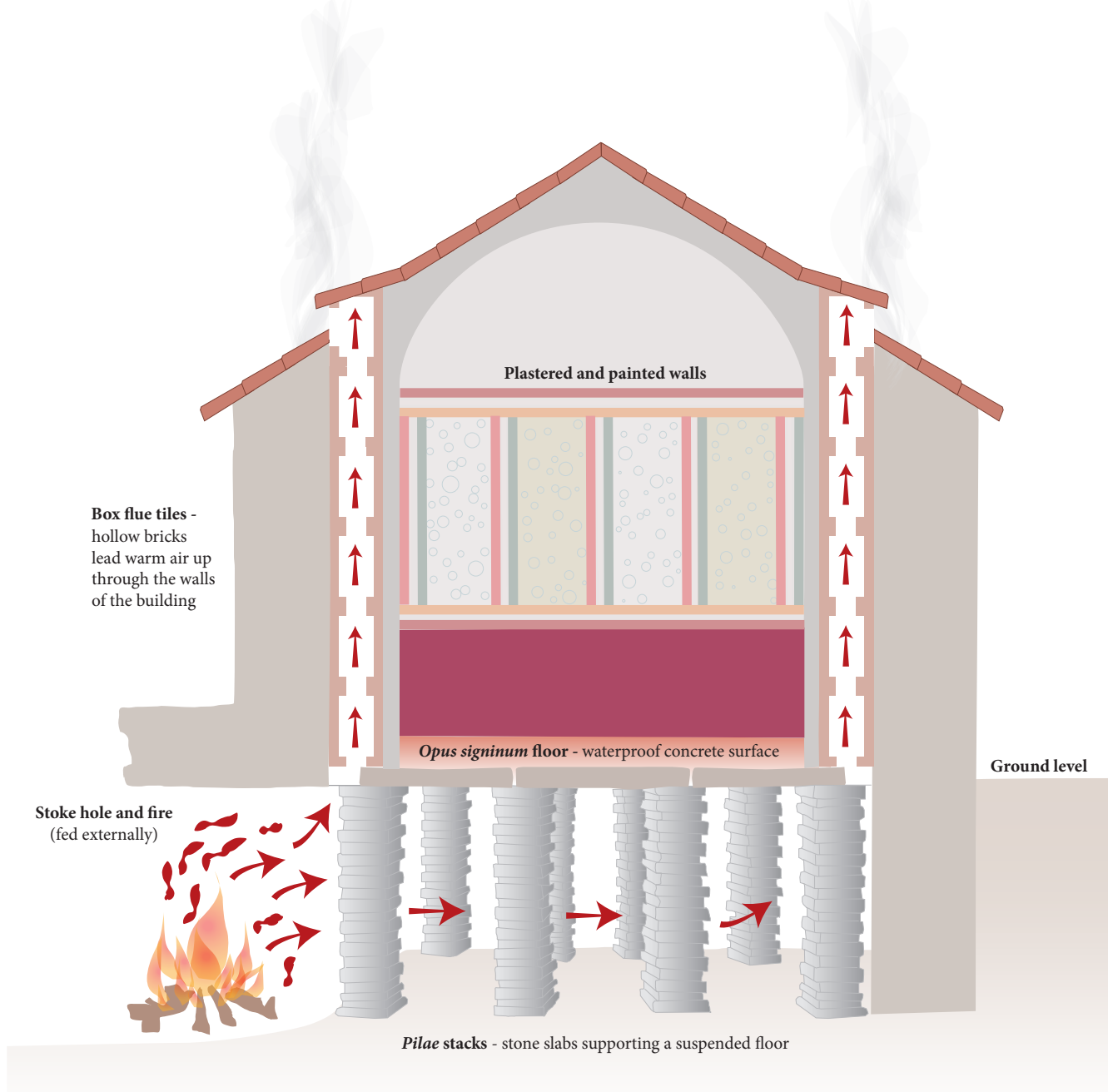
At some point, a heated room measuring about 4m square was added to the north wing of the villa, probably forming part of a bath suite. This room was fitted with a hypocaust central heating system and also provided with waterproof concrete flooring. Special hollow box-flue tiles lined the walls of this room, and a combination of lightweight tufa (a type of limestone) blocks and ribs of hollow voussoir tiles formed a high vaulted roof through which hot air was channelled up and around the walls and roof space. The room was also furnished with glazed windows: possibly with lower windows fitted with cylinder blown translucent glass and high-level clerestory panes glazed with thicker recycled cast green-blue glass. These additions would have made it a very comfortable and convivial space in which to bathe and entertain guests.



The concrete floor can be seen towards the bottom right of this image of the villa before excavation.

The heated room during excavation. The pilae stacks which would have supported the suspended floor would originally have been much higher than this. An area of burning can be seen in the top right, showing the location of the furnace that heated this room.





Cross section through a hypocausted room illustrating how hot air is carried beneath the floor of the building and up through the walls.



We can't be certain what the heated room was used for, but the design of the floor mouldings used in a room close by, evidence for high windows and vaulted roofing as well as the underfloor heating suggests that this part of the villa is more likely to have been built and utilised as a bathhouse. In fact, it is entirely possible that the heated room was built as an improvement to an existing bathhouse located on this side of the building. Even so, whether the room was intended for bathing or some other function, it would have been a pleasant place in which to relax, even in the depths of the North Yorkshire winter.



Reconstruction of a small heated room at Faverdale, Darlington, approximately 30km north of Aiskew – heated rooms such as this may have had a variety of uses and could have been used for entertaining as well as bathing. © Jake Lunt Davies

## *The villa building: appearance and decoration*

The Aiskew villa complex would have been a prominent and impressive feature in the local landscape, visible from some distance away. Villa buildings were marvels of Roman civil engineering, whose construction took both careful planning and considerable logistical and technical expertise. Large quantities of building material had to be sourced and transported to the site, while brick and roof tile may have been made specifically for the villa on the estate. Internal fixtures also had to be procured, including ironmongery, window glass and lead for plumbing, as did the services of a range of skilled craftsmen, all of which would have come at considerable expense.

The main villa building was of a 'winged-corridor' plan with a central suite of rooms, projecting wings at either end, and a corridor connecting the spaces. Possibly extended more than once, the building was probably a two-storey structure measuring almost 60m in length, with at least 11 rooms on the ground floor alone. Built out of stone, brick and tile, the villa would have had foundations of large round cobblestones and compacted clay. The walls, which would have been over 1m thick, had a stone rubble core; these would have been faced with roughly hewn blocks of red sandstone and yellow and pinkish-white Magnesian limestone. The stone facings may not have been visible though, as it is likely the walls were covered externally with a lime and sand render, something which appears to have been standard practice in Roman Britain. The roof was constructed of reddish-orange ceramic tile, which would have included rows of flat tiles with flanged edges, known as tegulae, the joins between which would have been covered by thin curved tiles known as imbrices. Similar roofs can still be seen in Mediterranean Europe today, although the Roman versions were somewhat larger and heavier. Later additions to the villa appear to have been roofed with split olive-green Elland flag stone.

Internally, colourful wall paintings are known to have adorned many of the rooms, and patterned mosaics would have covered the floors in the spaces most often frequented by visitors. The wall plaster would have been decorated with multi-coloured panel-based patterns (schemes) on a white background, a type of design which is typical of the later Roman period. Images may have included figures, but the evidence from Aiskew mostly seems to show flowers and foliage, with some architectural schemes. One of the rooms was adorned with an exceptional, highly complex three-dimensional polychrome scheme using a broad range of pigments.

The villa's corridor was laid with a tessellated (mosaic) pavement comprising thousands of tiny square fragments of stone or ceramic block (tesserae) laid in a simple but decorative pattern. The design is difficult to work out from the surviving fragments, but it certainly included green Elland flag tesserae within a background of 'blonde' sandstone; a few pieces of cream-yellow Magnesian limestone and cut red tile tesserae were also used, possibly forming a border, as is frequently the case. Another room to the east of this had a more decorative and detailed mosaic pavement, made of much finer, softer limestone materials, including local white-cream dolomite and Blue Lias tesserae. This may have been the villa's main dining room.

To modern tastes the overall effect of the colourful patterned floors, walls and potentially even ceilings might seem gaudy, perhaps even gauche, but in fact it represented the optimum of Roman taste. Mosaics and painted wall plaster offered the perfect medium for displaying wealth and status, but also provided a way to express the identity, connections and aspirations of those living there. At Aiskew, some rooms had been redecorated, indicating that the owners, or subsequent generations within the family, continued to be invested in the appearance of their home, and wished to remain up to date with current developments in wall decor.

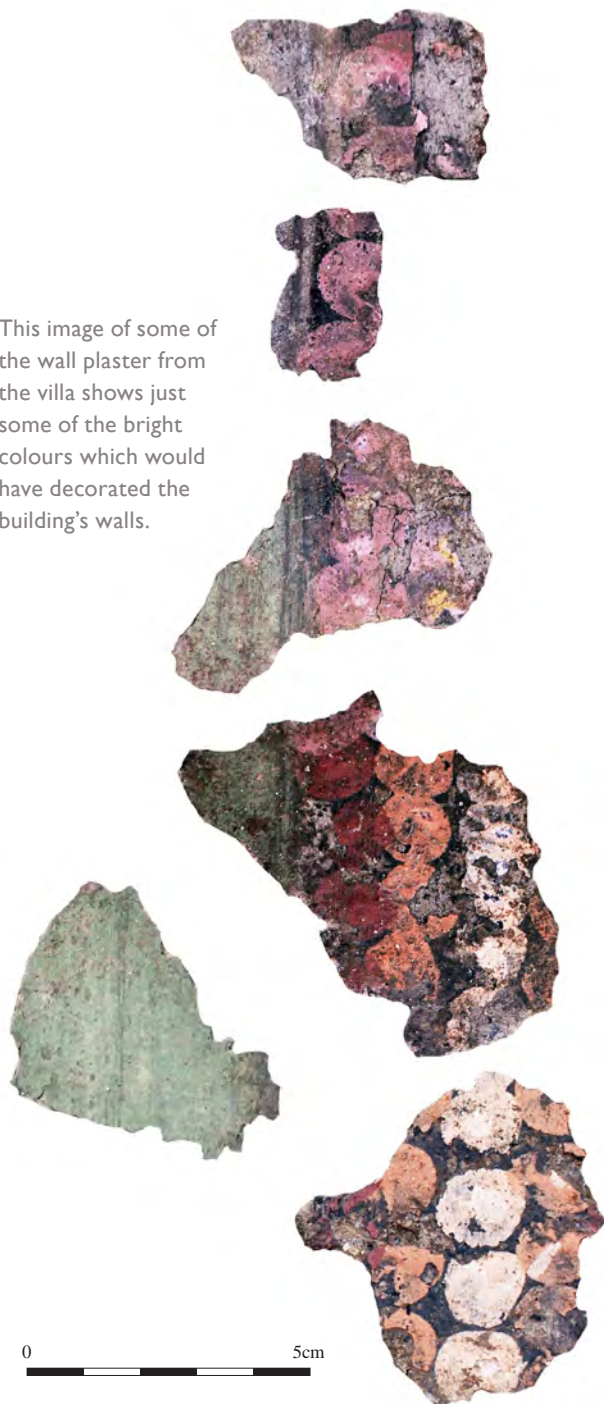
Fine white dolomite and Blue Lias tesserae may well have formed a detailed bi-chrome pavement or banded border, as seen in examples from Well, which lies a mere 4km south of Bedale.



This 3rd or 4th-century wall painting from Catterick illustrates how many of the villa's walls would be divided into panels using colourful borders.



This image of some of the wall plaster from the villa shows just some of the bright colours which would have decorated the building's walls.



Tegula and imbrex in a reconstructed roof, Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii.



0 20cm

Roman box flue tiles.

## Finds from the villa

After 1700 years, a collection of objects is all that survives of the everyday items used by the villa's occupants. Many of these objects are personal items and it is these pieces which have the greatest human connection. There are bone hairpins used to arrange a woman's hair in a fashionable style, fragments of bracelets that once graced an arm and tiny beads from necklaces. Other objects are more mundane: iron knives, structural fittings and spindle whorls for spinning wool speak of more workaday activities. A broken linchpin, used for securing a cartwheel to the axle, reminds us of the fields around the villa and the produce that needed to be moved to market. A stylus, inlaid with silver, would have been used to make notes on a wax tablet. Were these notes 'to do' lists? Records of crop yields? Reminders to the cook that it was the mistress's cousin's birthday on Saturday and a special celebratory meal was needed? We will never know the personal stories connected to these items, but it is true to say that this collection of broken objects is all that survives of the things people used in everyday life.

We do have a good idea of what the occupants of the villa ate, and the objects used at meals. Pottery vessels were used for the storage, preparation, cooking and serving of food during the Roman period, as well as for display. The fragments of these vessels often survive well in the soil and we have a good quantity of these pieces from the site. Grey and black coloured vessels were used at Aiskew for the storage, cooking and serving of everyday foods. Some of the vessels came from manufacturers in East Yorkshire, and others from as far away as Dorset. Fine beakers (including examples made at pottery workshops in Cambridgeshire) were used for the consumption of beverages, probably including beer or watered wine. Whilst there is no direct evidence of wine consumption at the site, this does not mean that this was not drunk here; rather, it suggests that the containers that held it have not survived for us to find. We know, for example, that wine from the Rhineland was transported in wooden barrels, all evidence of which would have long since rotted away. Many of the fine tableware vessels recovered from the villa, especially dishes and bowls, were made of samian ware; these items were produced in Gaul (areas of France and western Germany).



A group of perforated discs made from pottery sherds. These probably functioned as whorls and were used for spinning wool. This was an activity typically carried out by women.

Some of these vessels were heavily worn, indicating that they had been much used, probably for the mixing of foods as well as for use during dining. It seems that at least some of these finely made exotic pottery imports were carefully kept as heirlooms or antiques, perhaps seeing many decades of use before eventual disposal. The late Roman inhabitants of the villa also had access to some exotic foodstuffs, and fragments of amphora (a type of large clay jar used to transport perishable goods) point to long-distance trade links. The amphorae brought to Aiskew probably carried olive oil from Spain and fish sauce from Tunisia. The variety of animal bone types recovered from the site shows that those who lived here had a rich and varied diet. Cattle, sheep, goat and pigs were all consumed. Interestingly, cattle seem to have been a much less important part of the diet for the villa inhabitants than for those who lived within the Bedale enclosure. Pork and pig products appear to have had a greater importance at Aiskew. Game species are also in abundance within the range of bones from the villa site, as are fish bones and seafood remains in the form of mussel and oyster shell. Such a diet indicates a degree of affluence which, taken with the other attributes of this well-decorated and managed villa, suggest a high degree of Roman influence. Which leads us to the question –who lived here?



A range of pottery sherds mainly from vessels used for cooking and serving food. Some of these sherds were made in East Yorkshire, but others came from as far afield as Poole Harbour in Dorset.





A stamped North African amphora rim. This vessel was made near Sousse in modern Tunisia and was probably used for transporting fish-based condiments.



Fragments of 2nd-century samian tableware vessels from Gaul; the heavy wear on these suggests that they were well used.

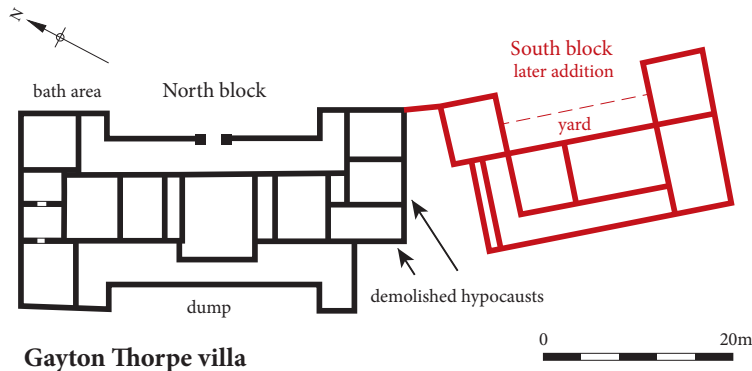


Various 2nd to early 4th-century AD mortaria (grinding bowls) from Mancetter-Hartshill (modern-day Warwickshire), the Lower Nene Valley (near Peterborough), and a more locally-produced vessel from Aldborough in North Yorkshire – the latter stamped by the potter VIATOR, giving a date of AD 100–140.

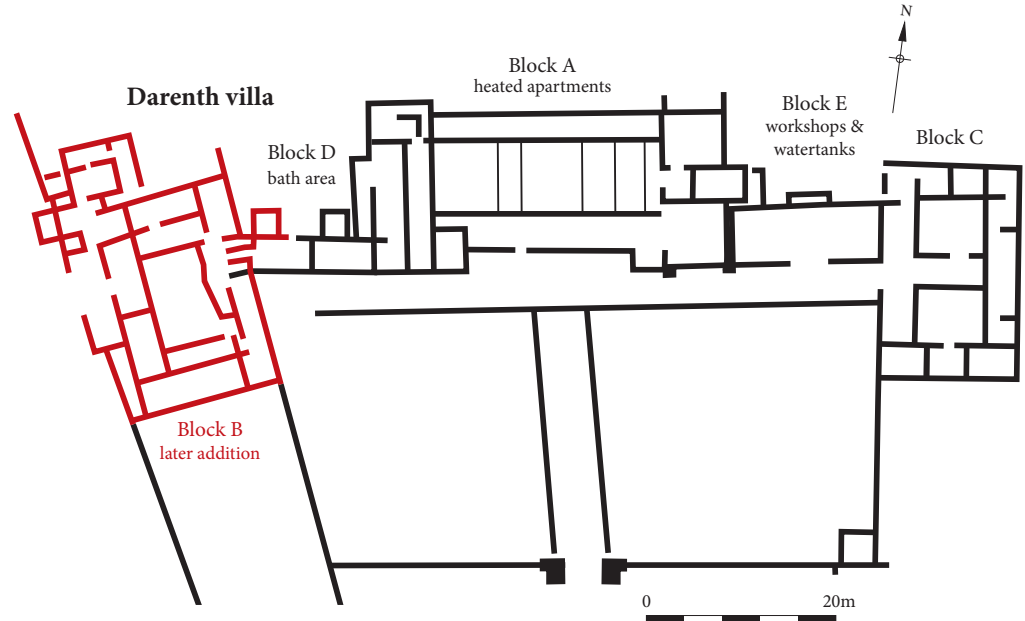
## The villa in the landscape

It is important to remember that villas such as the Aiskew example were large working farms. Others are known in this region, although they are not as common here as they are in the south of England. Whilst this large complex may have been their main residence, the family who owned the villa may have possessed other houses elsewhere. There is some evidence that the wealthy owners of buildings such as this added additional wings over time, perhaps as the size of their families increased from one generation to another, or perhaps simply as a sign of status. At Darenth villa in Kent and Gayton

Thorpe in Norfolk, for example, wings are known to have been added to properties that had already been in existence for several generations.



**Gayton Thorpe villa**



Darenth and Gayton Thorpe villas showing the wings that formed the latest additions to these buildings.



This may be the case here at Aiskew too. And if so, it might suggest that a family owned the villa, increasing the number of residences over time as the household expanded. Another explanation could be that, as a working farm, the villa became more successful over time and extra accommodation was needed for key personnel such as an estate manager (vilicus), necessitating the expansion of the villa complex. The owner may not even have been in regular residence.

In all scenarios the owner is likely to have been a member of the regional elite, probably with good political and business connections in both the neighbouring towns and the military garrisons. The location of the villa, which was close to Dere Street and well placed for access to a number of local settlements, would have been perfect for such a person. We know from the letters of Pliny the Younger, writing in Rome in the late 1st century AD, that the Roman elites often welcomed the opportunity to get away from the hustle and bustle of the big city to their country estates. In a letter to a friend where he describes his villa, on the coast near Ostia, about 17 miles outside Rome, he says:

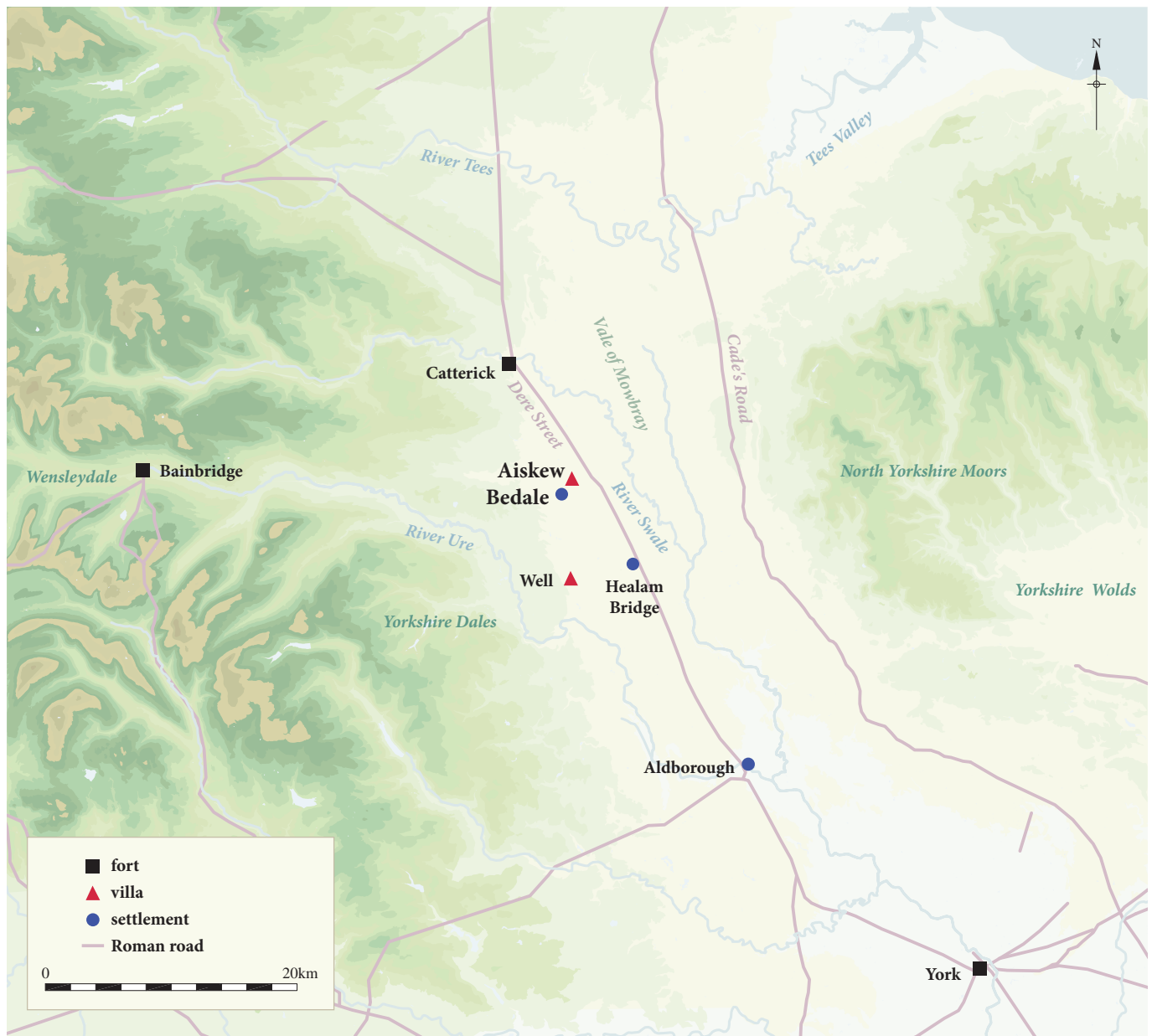


*“...my Laurentine place...is seventeen miles from Rome, so that it is possible to spend the night there after necessary business is done in the City, without having cut short or hurried the day's work, and it can be approached by more than one route: the roads to Laurentum and Ostia both lead in that direction, but you must leave the one at the fourteenth milestone and the other at the eleventh. Whichever way you go, the side road you take is sandy for some distance and rather heavy and slow-going if you drive by carriage, but soft and easily covered on horseback. The view on either side is full of variety, for sometimes the road narrows as it passes through the woods, and then it broadens and opens out through wide meadows where there are many flocks of sheep and herds of horses and cattle driven from the mountains in winter to grow sleek on the pastures in the spring-like climate.”*

There is no reason to suppose that villa owners across the Roman Empire did not act in a similar way. The Aiskew villa is just 32km north of the Roman town at Aldborough, 13km from the major roadside settlement at Catterick and 10km from another known settlement at Healam Bridge. The villa is also 20km from a large Roman military camp at Brough Hill, Bainbridge. This fort was first constructed at the end of the 1st century AD, went out of use for a while in the 2nd century AD but then underwent a major phase of rebuilding and enlarging at the beginning of the 3rd century AD. It housed men of the Sixth Cohort of Nervians, an auxiliary unit raised in the area of modern-day Belgium, and inscriptions which record the new building work give us the name of the senior officer who oversaw the work: Lucius Vinicius Pius. He would have been a very influential person in the region and, with a large body of fighting men at his command, he would have had some considerable authority in local matters. One can imagine the owner of the villa and his successors being acquaintances of him and his successors in the fort. It is supposition, but it is even tempting to imagine that the villa's estate could have supplied the fort with its needs. There is no direct evidence for this but from an economic point of view, it is plausible.



An aerial view of Bainbridge fort in Wensleydale.



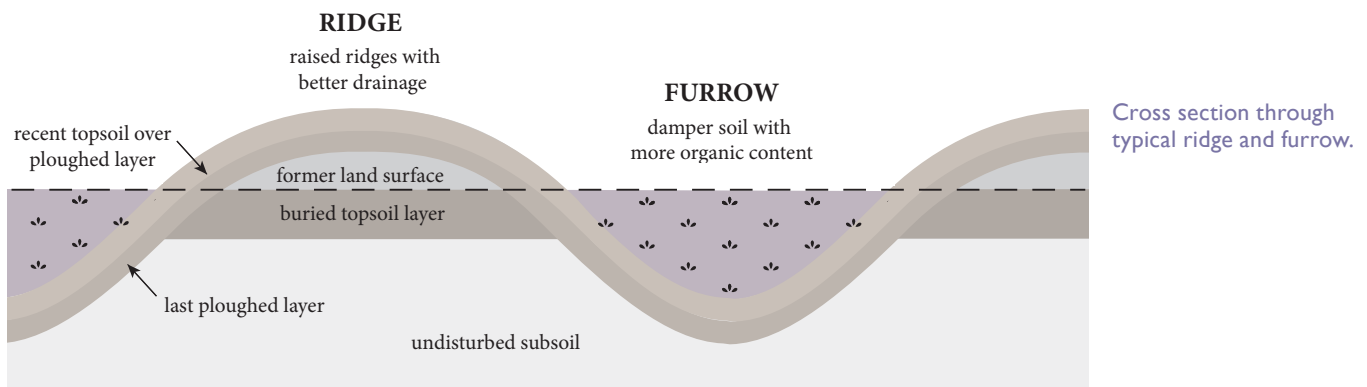
The villa in relation to local sites.



## Ridge and Furrow

The Lidar images for the area around our sites revealed some interesting details of past farming practices. These are in the form of narrow, parallel undulating strips, with a corrugated appearance in the landscape. The higher part of the strip is known as the “ridge”, whilst the lower part is called the “furrow”. They are a distinctive part of the medieval and early post-medieval landscape, formed by ploughing with a single ploughshare (the blade of a plough). A plough team would plough a single furrow along a field, turning the soil over on to the right. Once it had reached the end of the field the team would turn in a clockwise direction and the next pass would turn the soil to the right also, against the first. This would continue until the strip had been fully ploughed. The consequence of this was that in each successive plough season, the soil would be moved from both sides towards a central line, thus creating the ridge. Banks, or headlands, would also form at the end of each row where the plough team was turned.

Ridge and furrow features are evidence for an obsolete type of agriculture known as the ‘open field system’. Within this arrangement large communally managed village fields were worked by many smallholders, each farming a few strips. This system was largely abandoned in Britain with the arrival of land enclosure, especially from the 16th century onwards, which created small square and rectangular-shaped fields. It is interesting to see that some of the ridge and furrow systems at Bedale and Aiskew exist within modern field boundaries, which suggests that the field boundaries here have largely survived from the medieval period.



Ridge and furrow often remains visible in the landscape today, as can be seen running across the middle of this image.

# The villa in ruins

The dependence of the Roman Empire's villa estates on a thriving market for their produce may ultimately have been a major contributory factor in their downfall. It is not necessary to look for a violent cause for the collapse of villa economies throughout Roman Britain, which led to the abandonment of so many farmsteads and villas. Instead, a massive disruption to the system of supply and demand caused by the formal standing down and departure of the Roman garrisons in the province would have had a major economic impact. As today, where the collapse of a large business can have a ripple effect that disrupts the lives of many others involved in supplying that organisation, we can imagine that the disappearance of the Roman military garrisons would have removed the largest market for the products of the estates, and made them economically unviable. Villa estates such as the one at Aiskew would have been too unwieldy to manage. Ultimately, as a result, they would fail and fall into neglect and eventually disuse.

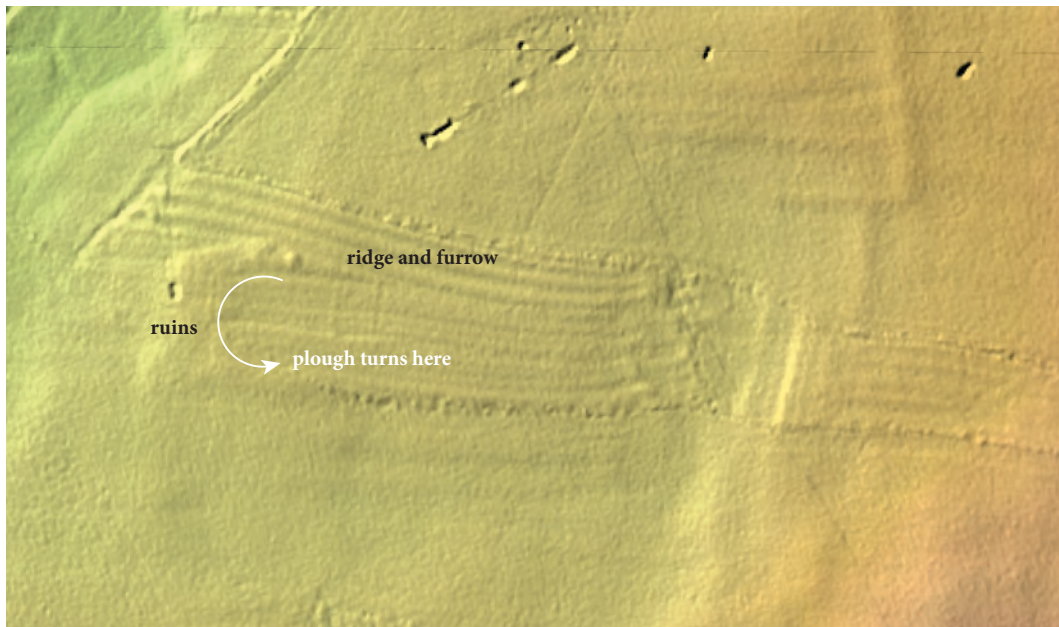
This neglect need not have happened quickly. As the needs of the inhabitants of the buildings in the complex changed, structures would become redundant. After a while, perhaps only a few buildings would continue to be used, so that a smaller part of the estate could be farmed, more for self-sufficiency purposes than for the creation of a massive surplus to trade. One can imagine that a bath house, which was expensive to maintain, would have been one luxury that any owners in straitened times would quickly have allowed to fall into disrepair. Here, once left, rainwater would penetrate the walls, frost would cause expansion, mortar would crumble and the wall plaster would blow and collapse from the walls. Of particular interest are the remains of an owl in the hot room of the bath house, together with what are probably the scattered remnants of pellets, full of small rodent bones. Owls probably took shelter in the ruined building as it was a safe place to shelter from the elements. A large collection of amphibian bones suggests that the damp remains of the hypocaust would have made an ideal home for frogs.

In time, the roofs of the villa's abandoned buildings would have collapsed and the structures would then have stood only as a sad reminder of their former glory. Only those passing by on the routeway would have seen the ruins covered in foliage and undergrowth. For as long as others in the immediate vicinity had no need for building stone, the ruins would continue to decay. It is likely, however, that the final removal of the ruins could be linked to the beginnings of Aiskew and Bedale as small communities.

The name 'Bedale' has its origin in a personal name, meaning Beda's nook of land, while 'Aiskew' is derived from Echesol, the Old Norse for 'Oak Wood'. Both villages were in existence in the late 11th century and are named in the Domesday Book; Bedale has been a market town since 1251. It has been suggested that there was an early medieval church in Bedale, dating to the 9th century AD and lying at the current site of St Gregory's Church.

Recent work there has sadly failed to confirm this, although 9th or 10th century sculptures or architectural fragments, detailed with snakes biting their own tails and a serpent consuming the head of a human, are to be found in the crypt of St Gregory's church. In 2012 the 'Bedale Hoard', a collection of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian metalwork which most probably dates from the later 9th or early 10th century, was found in a pasture a few km to the south of Bedale.

As the local communities grew, building materials would have been required for their development, and there was nowhere better to source these materials than in a neighbouring ruin. Human nature being what it is, one often finds that the nearest and therefore most available ruins get demolished first. It is interesting to note at the Aiskew villa that the ridge and furrow ploughing of the medieval field systems conspicuously avoid the location of the possible bath wing. This might be because of the presence of the 'grey stones' referred to on a map of 1585 that give the field its name; either the stone littered the surface of the field or part of the building was still standing at the end of the 16th century. Whichever is the case, the discovery of fragments of 17th or 18th century pottery within a trench of that date dug to remove stone from the walls suggests that the robbing of these ruins continued well into the post-medieval period. Today, pieces of the Roman villa are likely to be found in many of the old buildings of Aiskew and Bedale.

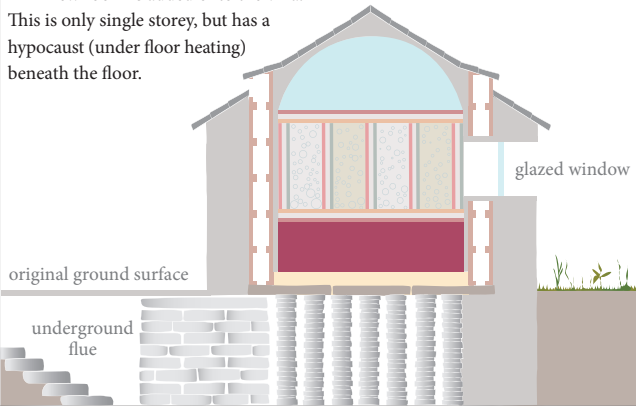


Lidar detail of ridge and furrow avoiding ruins.

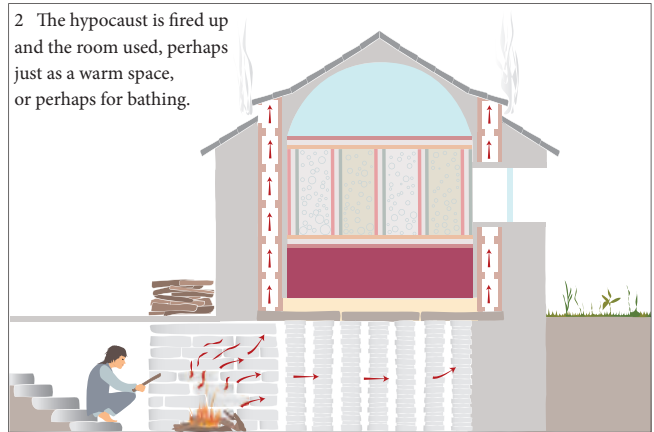


# Construction, use, collapse and robbing of the villa

1 A new room is added onto the villa.  
This is only single storey, but has a  
hypocaust (under floor heating)  
beneath the floor.



2 The hypocaust is fired up  
and the room used, perhaps  
just as a warm space,  
or perhaps for bathing.



3 The villa is abandoned and starts to collapse. Water gets in through the roof  
and the damp hypocaust provides an  
ideal habitat for frogs. Plaster  
collapses from  
walls and ceilings.



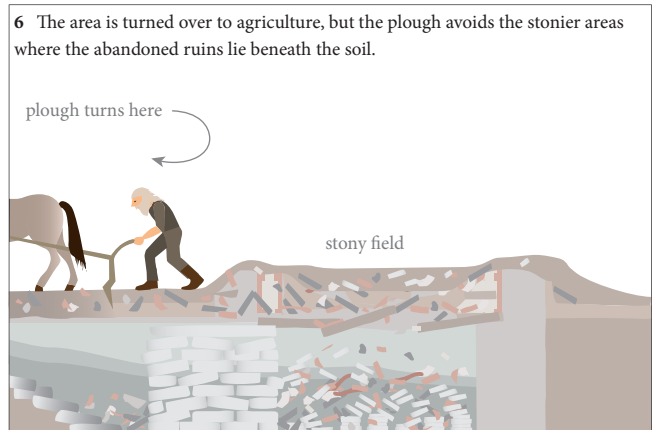
4 The villa lies abandoned for centuries, gradually falling further into ruin.



5 From the early medieval period people begin to use the villa ruins as a  
convenient source of stone to build churches and houses in nearby Bedale and  
Aiskew.



6 The area is turned over to agriculture, but the plough avoids the stonier areas  
where the abandoned ruins lie beneath the soil.



# The villa preserved

The enclosure at Bedale was one of a kind, and of regional significance. Our excavation has allowed us to understand its purpose and its relationship to the local landscape, greatly broadening our understanding of the Iron Age and the early Roman period in this area. Meanwhile the deepest soil layers within the ditch are safely buried beneath the carriageway of the new road.

The villa, on the other hand, is of national importance. In April 2015 the significance of the villa and its immediate hinterland was recognized by its classification as a Scheduled Monument (SM 1426407). This status grants it the highest level of government protection. The Scheduled Monument listing states that the villa is considered to be 'exceptionally large, rich and complex in a northern context' with 'very good preservation of deeply stratified deposits'. It goes on to note that the main building (the one discussed within this book) displayed 'a particularly wide range of features' and was 'set in a large complex including further buildings', within 'an extensive area of enclosures surrounding the villa.' We know about the existence of the Aiskew villa, and were able to investigate and excavate the ancient remains, as a result of the construction of the road. And now this important place is protected in perpetuity for future generations.

It should be emphasised that all of this archaeological work, from beginning to end, and including this book and other more technical reporting, which will also include a more detailed publication, was made possible by funding from North Yorkshire County Council. Our thanks go to the Council for enabling the fascinating story of the past residents at the Bedale enclosure and the Aiskew villa to be brought to light. The new bypass opened in August 2016, two months ahead of schedule, resulting in major improvements to journey times and to traffic flow through the bypassed villages.



Open day and finds display  
at Bedale Hall.

# Community involvement

Community involvement and outreach was a vital and integrated aspect of the archaeological project at Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar from the start of the project. As the two areas of excavation lay within the road construction scheme, health and safety considerations meant that it was not possible to host public open days on site. However, with the assistance of the road construction company, Wills Brothers, we were able to organise a site tour and finds display for pupils of Bedale School. Many other community events were arranged during the work, and involvement continued for several years afterwards, providing a variety of outlets for dissemination.

Poster displays by PCA, highlighting our work on the excavations, formed the backdrop to an opening ceremony and display hosted at Bedale Hall by Wills Brothers in February 2015. In June 2015 an open day with finds display, posters and leaflets at Bedale Hall attracted over 600 people.

Talks and finds displays have been given to a range of audiences, including local and national archaeological societies and regional community groups. These include the Bedale Archaeology and History Society (BAHS), the Northallerton and District Historical Society, the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG), the Kirby, Great Broughton and Ingleby Greenhow Local History Group, the Friends of the Dales Countryside Museum, the Roman Finds Group Conference, the Current Archaeology Conference and the Hadrian's Wall Research Forum.

Volunteers from the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group helped out with finds processing in PCA's Durham offices.





Following the excavations, secondary school pupils from Mowbray School in Bedale enjoyed a talk and finds display as well as an outdoor finds processing session. This latter event highlights arguably the most engaging experiences in an archaeological project: those which enable people to participate hands-on in the processing of finds or the excavation of a site. The SWAAG was able to help with finds processing, assisting with washing the many animal bones, fragments of pottery and other artefacts. Soil excavated from one of the large quarry pits at Aiskew was sieved by members of the BAHS, to recover small artefacts and animal bones.

We were also helped on site during the excavations by students from Newcastle University, who gained valuable excavation experience working on a commercial archaeological project. Ten Year 1 students each completed four days' fieldwork at the Bedale enclosure, while one Year 3 student joined us on site for two weeks.



A Newcastle University archaeology student working at the Bedale enclosure.

# Acknowledgements

PCA would like to thank Nansi Rosenberg of Prospect Archaeology for commissioning the archaeological investigations on behalf of Wills Brothers. The roles of John Stephens, John Tully and Kieran Doona of Wills Brothers are acknowledged. This project was managed for Jacobs by Ed Danaher, Pete Fasham, Rob McNaught, Aisling Mulcahy and Andy Thompson. Members of the Heritage Services, North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), in particular Peter Rowe, Mark Hugill, Gail Falkingham and Lucie Hawkins, provided advice during various stages of the project. The English Heritage Science Advisor for the Yorkshire Region was Andy Hammon. Pete Fasham and Andy Thompson (Jacobs) with Peter Rowe and Mark Hugill (NYCC) have all provided advice and comment during the production of this booklet.

This project was very much designed with community involvement in mind and benefitted greatly from voluntary assistance at both the fieldwork and post-excavation stages (see pages 55 and 56, above). PCA wishes to thank all those students of archaeology at Newcastle University who worked on site in frequently muddy conditions. We would also like to thank Dave Brooks, Jocelyn Campbell, Peter Denison-Edson, Andrea Dixon, Rich Farmery, Shirley Gayle, Rob Nicholson, Sue Nicholson, Ann Russell, Flora Smith and Graham Smith of the SWAAG for their help with the processing of finds. Thanks also to Phil Court and Pandora Thoresby from the BAHS, for their help with sieving material from one of the quarry pits at Aiskew.

Thanks are extended to James Gerrard, Pete Wilson and Professor Martin Millett for their advice and assistance during the excavations. The excavations were managed for PCA by Paul Johnson. Jennifer Proctor, Frank Meddens, Alex Beeby and Victoria Ridgeway all managed various stages of the post-excavation process. This booklet is informed by work undertaken by a range of specialists to analyse and interpret the site records, the finds and the environmental remains and produce a series of reports which will ultimately result in full monograph publication. To all those involved in this process we extend our thanks.

PCA wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Chris Mitchell in producing the reconstructions for this booklet and Dominic Andrews and Jake Lunt Davies for permission to reproduce reconstructions first used elsewhere.

The excavations would not have been possible without the on-site supervision provided by Scott Vance (Bedale Enclosure) and Aaron Goode (Aiskew Villa). Finally, profound thanks are extended to all those colleagues at PCA who worked on site under frequently challenging circumstances: Paul Braham, Ariane Buschmann, Sam Corke, Lesley Dagleish, Graham Dixon, Constance Durgeat, Ciaran Grace, David Green, Mark Jackson, Tanja Karlsen, A Kelly, Tom Lally, Susannah Mansfield, Aaron Mohler, Sam Oates, Danni-Louise Parker, Mike Parsons, Steve Porter, Robert Scott, Donald Sutherland, Chris Tubman and Laura Watson.

# Further information and suggested reading list

The North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) contains information about historic sites and monuments, such as archaeological sites and finds, designated sites, historic landscapes and buildings and other landscape features. It includes a computerised index system, as well as hard copy detailed information on maps, photographs, reports, journals and other files. The information can be used for research, to assess development proposals and to manage and enhance North Yorkshire's historic environment and landscape.

The North Yorkshire HER can be searched on the Heritage Gateway website: <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

Details of how to access other information such as on-line historic maps can be found on the NYCC website: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/accessing-archaeological-and-historic-environment-information>

A broad view of Yorkshire in the Roman period is provided by Patrick Ottaway's book *Roman Yorkshire: People, Culture and Landscape* published in 2013.

Guy de la Bédoyère's book *Roman Villas and the Countryside*, although published in 1993, does provide a useful introduction to rural life throughout the Roman period.

At the time of writing, three books detailing the major excavations carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates ahead of the A1 upgrading scheme along the Vale of Mowbray, to the north and south of Bedale, had been published and were available on-line as free pdfs from the ADS website (with more books in the process of being published).

Contact, Concord and Conquest: Britons and Romans at Scotch Corner [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/scotch\\_a1\\_2021/downloads.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/scotch_a1_2021/downloads.cfm)

Death, Burial and Identity: 3000 years of death in the Vale of Mowbray [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/mowbray\\_he\\_2019/downloads.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/mowbray_he_2019/downloads.cfm)

A Roman Roadside Settlement at Healam Bridge: The Iron Age to Early Medieval Evidence [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/healam\\_ha\\_2017/downloads.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/healam_ha_2017/downloads.cfm)

PCA's publications on nearby Faverdale are available here: [www.pre-construct.com/publications/](http://www.pre-construct.com/publications/)  
The booklet 'Life in the Roman Frontier Zone' is available as a free download, and the monograph 'Faverdale, Darlington: Excavations at a major settlement in the northern frontier zone of Roman Britain' by Jennifer Proctor is available to purchase.





Reverse of the bronze nummus of  
Constantine I, struck at Arles in AD327,  
shown at the beginning of the book.

# PCA

PRE-CONSTRUCT  
ARCHAEOLOGY



The construction of a new road, bypassing Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar, in 2015 provided the opportunity for archaeological excavation of two key sites. The earliest of these was an Iron Age settlement, surrounded by a large enclosure ditch. Later, a Roman villa was constructed around 1km to the north. Both sites are interesting in their own right, but intriguingly there was evidence for a routeway connecting the two – a precursor of the modern bypass constructed in 2015.

This book tells the story of those sites, their discovery and excavation and the archaeological work that has gone into reconstructing the lives of the earlier communities that occupied Bedale and Aiskew.

ISBN 978-1-9996155-7-4



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prospect  
archaeology

# Jacobs



North Yorkshire  
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