

BUCK WOOD: Summary of Ancient Monument

The monument encompasses a prehistoric enclosure, five earth-fast gritstone rocks carved in the cup-and-ring tradition, and an orthostat wall.

Reasons for Designation

The prehistoric enclosure, carved rocks and orthostat wall, Buck Wood are scheduled for the following principal reasons:

- * **Rarity:** this prehistoric monument is a very rare survival within a relatively low lying and urbanised area, complementing the survival of more upland prehistoric sites surviving across West Yorkshire's moorlands;
- * **Diversity/Period:** the monument includes a wide range of features ranging from Bronze Age rock art through to remains of late prehistoric occupation;
- * **Survival/Potential:** small scale sample excavation has demonstrated the survival of prehistoric structural remains and the positive archaeological potential of the monument.

History

Buck Wood is situated on the north-western flank of a spur of land that projects out to form a promontory, within a loop of the River Aire. Map evidence indicates that the size and shape of the wood has changed little for almost 200 years and it is possible that this pattern could be of considerably greater antiquity. The lack of cultivation has preserved prehistoric archaeological features, interpreted as dating from the Bronze and Iron Ages, with possible continued occupation into the Roman period; these features include an oval prehistoric enclosure, gritstone rocks carved in the cup-and-ring tradition, and a series of land boundaries, including orthostatic walling. The date of the monument is unclear; the ovoid plan of the enclosure has been interpreted as being Bronze Age and archaeological finds have included a flint, a late Iron Age/early Roman period bee-hive quern, a much corroded copper coin, and large numbers of pot boiler stones, suggesting a potentially lengthy period of occupancy.

Prehistoric rock carving is found on rock outcrops in several parts of upland Britain with some of the densest concentrations on Rombalds Moor, Ilkley Moor, and Baildon Moor, on the opposite side of the River Aire, to the north-west of Buck Wood. It is considered that the features found in the wood were part of this broader prehistoric landscape. Nine cup-carved stones have been identified by fieldwork within the wood. The most common form of decoration is the 'cup and ring' mark in which expanses of small cup-like hollows, which may be surrounded by one or more 'rings', are pecked into the surface of the rock. Other shapes and patterns, including some dominated by grooves or lines, are also known. Carvings may occur singly or in small groups, or may cover

extensive areas of rock surface. They are believed to date to the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age periods (c2800-500 BC) and provide one of our most important insights into prehistoric 'art'. The exact meaning of the designs remains unknown, but they have been interpreted as sacred or religious symbols. Frequently they are found close to contemporary burial monuments, and enclosures.

The establishment of Buck Mill on the banks of the River Aire towards the end of the C16, increased the number of tracks through the wood, and these continued in use until the late C19. The exploitation of the wood and resources within it has had an impact on the landscape, evidenced by small quarries, tracks, and a possible waggonway. In 1908, the Thackley Open Air School was built on the southern edge of Buck Wood, close to the site of the prehistoric enclosure. The Friends of Buck Wood undertook an archaeological excavation of the ovoid prehistoric enclosure in 2009 with funding from HLF, as part of the 'A Breath of Fresh Aire' archaeological project. A total of eleven trenches were opened on the site of the enclosure, four across the enclosure bank, six within the central area of the feature and one across the orthostat wall. Buck Wood is a public amenity area cared for by the Friends of Buck Wood.

Details

Principal elements: Upstanding earthworks and associated buried deposits of a prehistoric enclosure, an orthostatic wall, and a group of carved rocks.

Prehistoric Enclosure The enclosure is situated in woodland (2016); it occupies a natural terrace close to the crest of the valley side, facing south-west and was considered to be domestic in nature. It takes the form of a roughly north-west to south-east aligned oval, measuring 82m along the long axis and 78m across the short axis. The enclosure is bounded by a single rampart with a maximum height of 0.5m and a spread width of between 3m and 5m. Excavation in 2009 showed that the rampart consisted of a 2.2m wide wall, built with an outer and inner face of carefully laid dry-stone sandstone slabs, with a packed central infill of sandstone rubble. Possibly due to a collapse, the rampart on the north-western side of the enclosure was built in two phases; the earlier phase was built up from the base of the slope, whereas, the later phase follows the crest of the slope and incorporated part of the earlier phase in its construction. Apart from an earth-fast boulder, much of the eastern side of the rampart has been robbed, possibly to supply stone for the construction for near-by modern dry-stone walls.

The interior of the enclosure is relatively flat apart from a raised ovoid platform demarcated by a buried low rubble wall. The platform contains the collapsed remains of two or possibly more closely sited circular or crescent shaped features. Excavation showed that the circular features had dry-laid stone walls that survive up to 0.55m in height. One of the platforms has a stone slab floor with stone walls, which included a re-used gritstone rock with cup and groove marking on its upper surface (Ilkley Archaeology Group (IAG) reference 10a,

NGR - SE 17442 39101). It is likely that further traces of contemporary buildings, pits and associated remains will survive here in the form of below ground archaeological features that have not been investigated or excavated.

Orthostat Wall The orthostat wall has been interpreted as part of an Iron Age field system. It is about 1m high, and gently curves in a north-easterly direction for approximately 56m from the northern edge of the enclosure, to where a modern dry-stone wall field boundary runs up against it. It is built of un-worked, dry-laid, local stone blocks, most of which are set on edge, laid on a rubble base, forming a low retaining wall. Neither the course nor the full extent of the orthostat wall has been fully determined beyond the modern dry-stone boundary wall; however, it is known that it continues intermittently north-westwards into the woodland. It is thought that the southern end of the orthostat wall once butted up against the enclosure wall, but this has been lost due to the presence of a modern footpath. One of the larger gritstone rocks used in the construction of the orthostat wall (IAG9c, NGR - SE 17418 39163) has cup carvings and other features incised into its upper surface.

Carved Rocks Five earth-fast gritstone cup carved rocks are located within or close to the enclosure; one within the oval enclosure (IAG10a, NGR - SE 17442 39101), three immediately to the north-east (IAG10b, NGR - SE 17456 39155, IAG10c, NGR - SE 17456 39162, IAG10d, NGR - SE 17465 39156) of the enclosure rampart, and one re-used within the adjacent orthostat wall (IAG9c, NGR - SE 17418 39163). The number of exposed cup marks varies from rock to rock, ranging from one to nine cups, with further carved detail possibly concealed below ground. The cup marks vary in diameter, approximately 2-4cm and are carved on the upper surfaces of the stones; in addition, some of the stones also have grooves cut into their surfaces, with some of the grooves linking with or encompassing the cup marks.

Extent of Scheduling The scheduled area is 'tear-drop' in shape as indicated on the map and it measures a maximum length of 162m on the north-east to south-west axis, by 98m on the north-west to south-east axis. This area includes the full known extent of the prehistoric enclosure, five earth-fast carved rocks, and an orthostat wall which extends for 56m from the enclosure. Further carved stones that are not earth-fast have been identified in the wider woodland, but these are no longer in their original locations and have not been included.

Exclusions The two posts of an information panel adjacent to the prehistoric enclosure, the dry-stone wall which abuts the eastern boundary of the scheduled area, a modern carved stone that is laid against the dry-stone wall, and the modern spiral stone setting are all excluded from the scheduling.

Selected Sources

Websites

A Breath of Ancient Aire - The archaeological project in Buck Wood, Thackley, 2009, accessed 24th December 2015

from www.friendsofbuckwood.org.uk/uploads/2/1/4/4/21442888/breath_of_an_ancient_ire_leaflet.pdf

Buck Wood, Bradford - Archaeological Survey Report 2006, accessed 24 Dec 2015

from www.friendsofbuckwood.org.uk/uploads/2/1/4/4/21442888/breath_of_fresh_ire_archaeological_reort_2006.pdf

Other

Buck Wood, Bradford. Geophysical Survey, Contractors Report No. 1934 for Friends of Buck Wood

Prehistoric Rock Art of the West Riding, Cup-and-ring-marked rocks of the valleys of the Aire, Wharfe, Washburn and Nidd, Boughey K J S and Vickerman E A, 2009

The Archaeology of Buck Wood, Thackley, West Yorkshire, JB Archaeological Services, November 2009

National Grid Reference: SE1742939128

Map



© Crown Copyright and database right 2016. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

© British Crown and SeaZone Solutions Limited 2016. All rights reserved. Licence number 102006.006.

Use of this data is subject to [Terms and Conditions](#).