

A1

Leeming to Barton improvement scheme

Archaeological discoveries



2018



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Throughout this project we have been working alongside archaeologists as we make this major improvement to one of the UK's most historic roads. It is fascinating to discover that nearly 2,000 years ago the Romans were using the A1 route as a major road of strategic importance and using the very latest technological innovations from that period to construct the original road – the very same thing that Highways England has done through its A1 Leeming to Barton improvement scheme.

Thomas Howard, Senior Project Manager

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Introduction

The A1 Leeming to Barton improvement scheme was opened in 2018 and has created 12 miles of new motorway-standard road along this strategic route. During the 4 year construction period extensive archaeological excavations were carried out, uncovering an extraordinary level of prehistoric and historical finds. This booklet provides an overview of some of the key archaeological discoveries and what they tell us about how people used the landscape over the past 12,000 years.

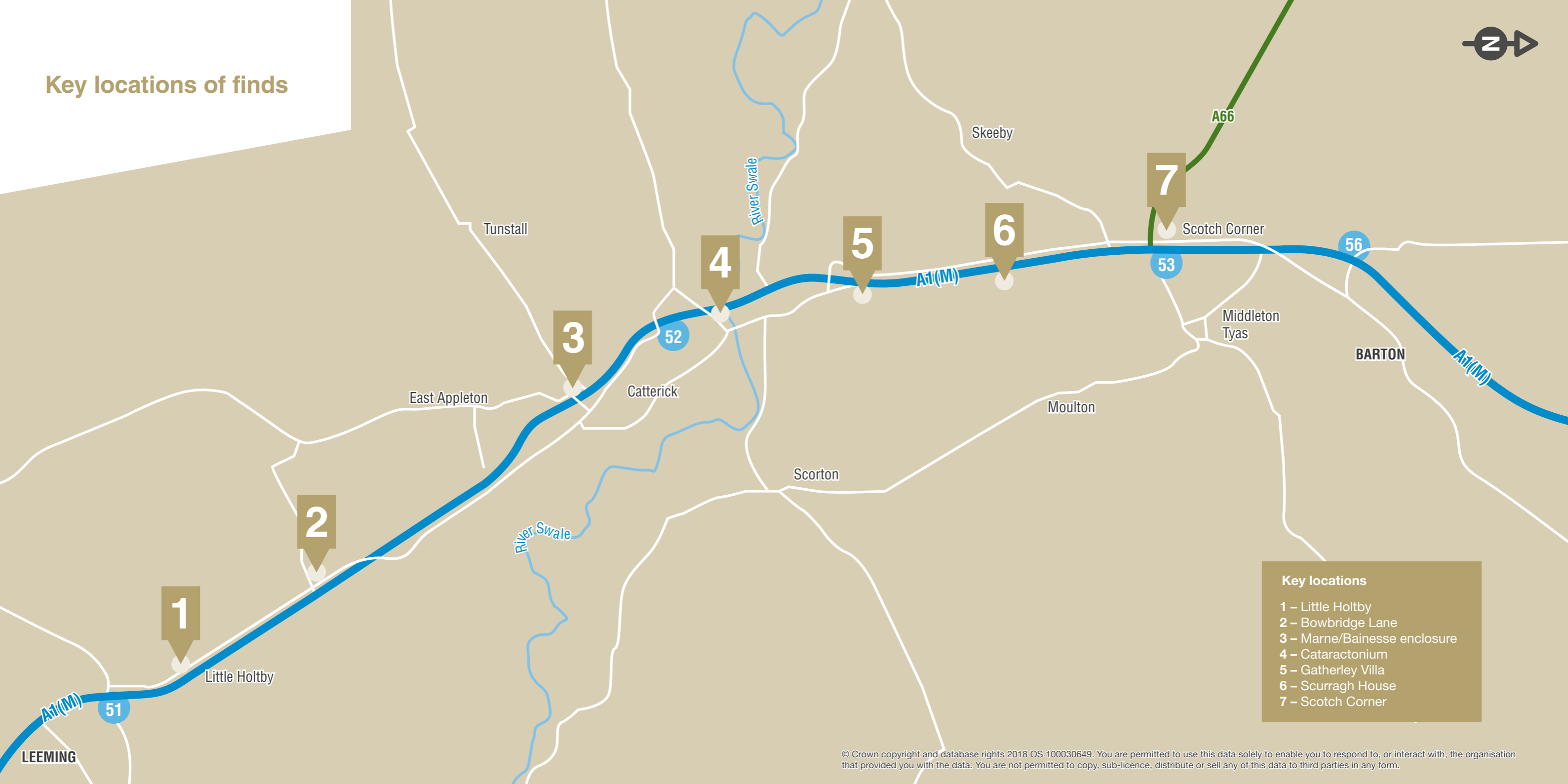
The modern A1 perpetuates an ancient routeway that has been used by individuals for thousands of years. Although largely formalised in the Roman period, archaeological works along its length have discovered a multitude of sites suggesting it was the focus of activity long before the arrival of the Romans, and that its course has its origins in a much earlier period.

Improvements carried out in the mid-twentieth century saw the course of the A1 altered to by-pass many of the key settlements it used to serve and improve the road for the user, as well as improve the life of the communities living along the road. This work was followed by subsequent schemes which have upgraded the A1 from single to dual carriageway, and then from dual carriageway to 3-lane motorway to improve this important piece of infrastructure. In some areas this has resulted in the new route bypassing the settlements it once connected to ease congestion, while in other areas it has followed its ancient alignment.

Extensive archaeological remains dating from the Early Mesolithic period through to the Anglo-Saxon period have been discovered during works that took place between 2014 and 2017, and these highly important excavations will be the focus of a series of detailed publications between 2018 and 2020.



Key locations of finds



- Key locations**
- 1 – Little Holtby
 - 2 – Bowbridge Lane
 - 3 – Marne/Bainesse enclosure
 - 4 – Cataractonium
 - 5 – Gatherley Villa
 - 6 – Scurragh House
 - 7 – Scotch Corner

Prehistoric Origins – the Mesolithic site at Little Holtby

Although many people imagine the A1 as a Roman construct known as Dere Street, the road likely had a much earlier origin as a routeway in the prehistoric period. Works undertaken as part of the A1 widening have uncovered remains of prehistoric date throughout the scheme. The most significant, and earliest, have been identified at the southern end of the scheme near Little Holtby. Excavations in this area have provided evidence for some of the earliest inhabitants in this part of North Yorkshire.

The identification of sites dating to the Early Mesolithic is often difficult due to the transient nature of the population during this period. The population at this time were hunter-gatherers travelling through the landscape to exploit seasonal resources such as fish, wildfowl and mammals, as well as plants, fruits and berries. They only stayed in a single place for a relatively short period of time. The temporary nature of these camps means that they are often very difficult to identify, with the small holes that may have held posts for shelters destroyed by later agricultural activity such as ploughing. As a result, in most cases we only see evidence for these people through the flint tools they left behind.

At Little Holtby, rare evidence of Mesolithic activity was recorded under the footprint of the new Local Access Road (LAR). An extremely large assemblage of flint tools, as well as the waste from tool manufacturing, was excavated as part of the scheme with over 7,000 tools or waste flakes recovered. These

included tools such as scrapers, blades, and awls, all of which would have formed part of the vital toolkit required for the hunting, and the subsequent processing, of animals. Many of the tools were extremely small and are known as microliths.

Although the extremely large assemblage of Early Mesolithic material recovered from Little Holtby is very important in our understanding of the period, of greater significance is the rare evidence for possible structures also identified during the excavations.

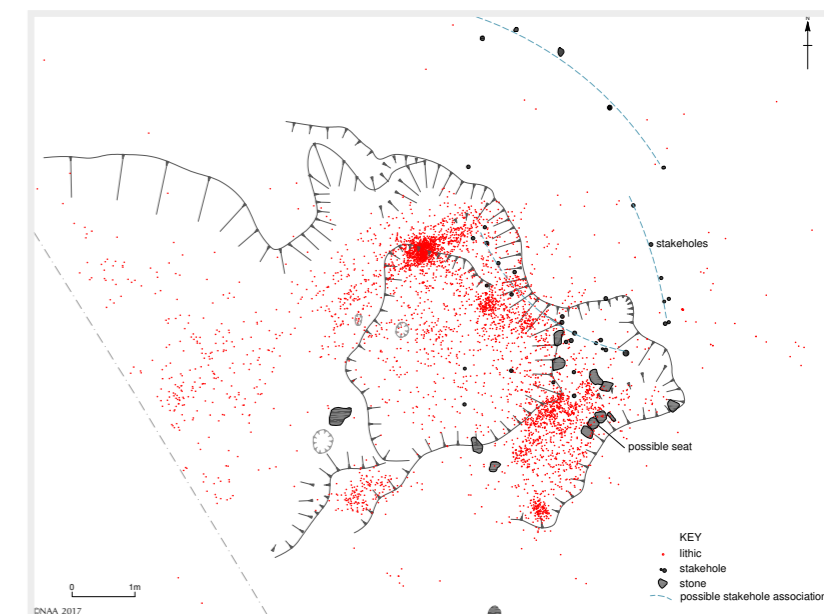
46 stake-holes were identified, with a number in groups, and some in a slightly arching linear pattern. It is likely that the structure represented by the stake-holes could have acted as a windbreak or part of a tent, providing shelter for the people exploiting this area. Analysis of the distribution and deposition of the flint alongside the structures has suggested that the site may have been used as a temporary camp for people hunting in the area on more than one occasion. The site is located on a ridge overlooking a former lake. This would have been an ideal location for hunter-gatherers to make their tools while keeping an eye out for prey in the valley below.



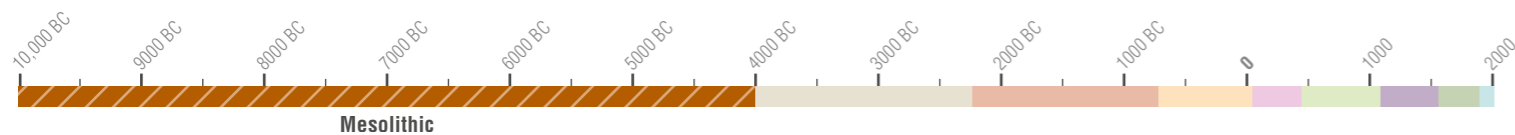
The Mesolithic site at Little Holtby during excavation.



A fine flint tool discovered during excavations.



A plan of the Little Holtby site after excavation. Red dots mark the location of flint recovered, while the black dots represent the stakeholders from a possible structure.



The Neolithic and Bronze Age

The Neolithic period marks the point at which people started to become more sedentary, and move away from the transitory lifestyle characteristic of the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic.

This change to permanent settlement, and the development of cereal cultivation and pottery production in the Neolithic period, is also seen with the introduction of large monuments in the landscape used for the burial of the dead and ritual/ceremonial processes. A number of such monuments have been recorded in the landscape outside of the A1 scheme, with a concentration around the River Swale near Catterick and Scorton. Although evidence for the Neolithic population within the scheme is limited, a number of isolated finds and sites were identified during the current works. The most significant of these was the circular enclosure located on high ground above Bainesse Farm, where a substantial circular ditch enclosed a platform of land. Although similar in form to Neolithic burial mounds encountered elsewhere, no traces of a burial were recorded from the central platform.

Other remains dating to the Neolithic period include a number of dispersed pits containing burnt material and flint scattered throughout the landscape between Goskins Wood and Marne Barracks, as well as a small enclosure and series of pits to the north of Bainesse Farm.

These latter pits contained a number of large sherds of forms of pottery known as Impressed Ware and Grooved Ware. All of this evidence suggests that the landscape around Marne Barracks was a centre of activity during the Neolithic, although the activities taking place are not well understood.

The Bronze Age marked the dawn of metal working in Britain, with the arrival of copper and then bronze in the archaeological record. Although the population remained largely agrarian in nature, changes are evident in the styles of pottery produced as well as the monuments being constructed.

Although stray finds have been found throughout the scheme, key evidence for Bronze Age activity is largely limited to funerary remains, with a number of cremations recorded along the route of the road. Isolated Early to Middle Bronze Age cremations were identified at Killerby balancing pond and Scotch Corner, as well as near Catterick racecourse. A more complex site was recorded at Bowbridge Lane, where excavation of an area of high ground revealed a number of pits containing cremated human remains. Analysis has suggested that this site represents an area used for cremating the dead, as well as burying the cremated remains sorted from the pyre. Radiocarbon dates from the burnt bones have dated this complex to the Late Bronze Age.



A polished stone axe dating to the Neolithic period excavated north of Goskins Wood.

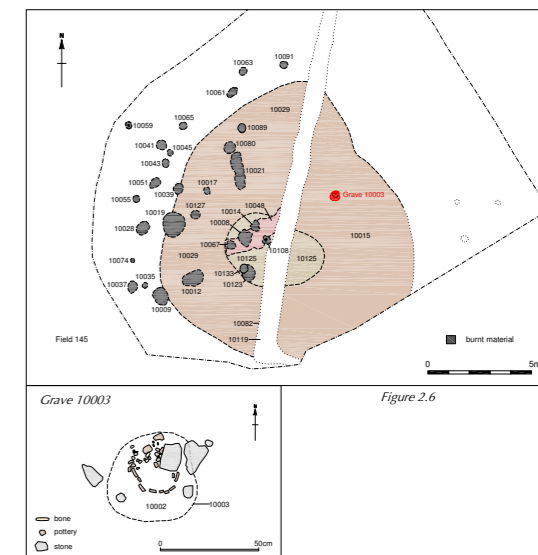


Figure 2.6

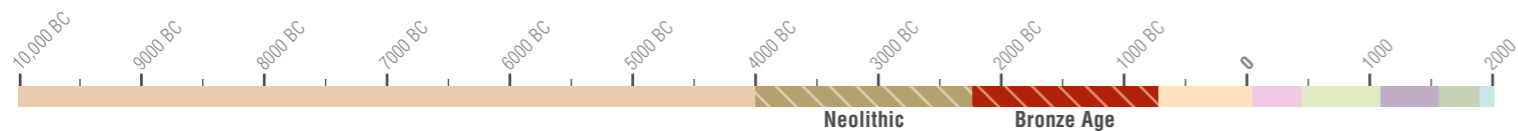
Plan of the Bronze Age and Iron Age site at Bowbridge Lane.



A large piece of Neolithic pottery recovered from a pit near Bainesse.



The Neolithic enclosure west of Bainesse Farm under excavation.



The Iron Age evidence

Evidence from the Bowbridge Lane site also suggests that this site, a prominent location in the landscape, was used during the Iron Age. The Iron Age is marked by the development of iron working, while settlements are often observed as distinctive clusters of roundhouses representing extended family groups living together. Excavations at Bowbridge Lane recorded an Early Iron Age ditch running across the site which would have held a palisade fence. Although only a section of this ditch was observed, it is assumed to have been part of a larger enclosure that would have occupied the high ground.

Iron Age settlement activity was also recorded in a number of locations on the A1 improvement scheme. This included a concentration of eight roundhouses at Gatherley Villa, and an individual roundhouse with associated enclosure north of Scurragh House. However, the most significant evidence for Iron Age material came from the Scotch Corner area where extensive settlement and industrial remains were discovered.



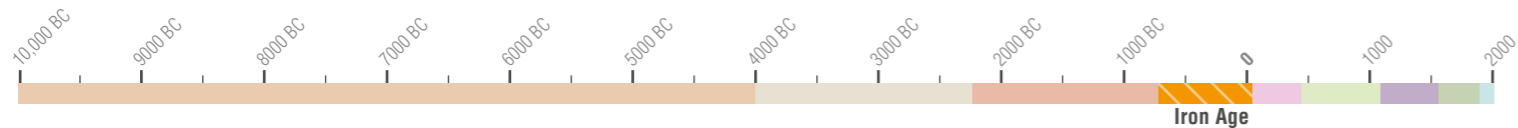
Aerial photograph of the Iron Age roundhouse and associated enclosure excavated north of Scurragh House.



An Iron Age roundhouse under excavation near Gatherley Villa. The photo shows traces of two concentric gullies forming the structure.



An Iron Age ditch during excavation at Bowbridge Lane. This feature cut through an area used for cremating the dead during the Bronze Age.



The Contact Period – Scotch Corner

Covering a corridor over 1km long, the Scotch Corner archaeological site represents an important Late Iron Age settlement with distinctive areas used for industrial activities. The most significant area was situated towards the northern end of the settlement where a series of large ditches were encountered containing quantities of ceramic pellet mould trays. This is the first time evidence for the production of the pellets, thought to be used in coin manufacture, has been recorded in the north of England, and it seems highly likely that the settlement was closely linked to the Late Iron Age site at Stanwick, the capital of the Brigantes, located 5km to the north-west.

The importance of this site is not only linked to the possible coin production. Excavation of the settlement has revealed extensive remains of very early Roman date, and the earliest evidence for significant Roman activity in the north of England. This period of transition from the Late Iron Age into Roman Period, known as the Contact Period, is often difficult to identify in the archaeological record, but at Scotch Corner excavations have revealed extensive remains pushing back the Roman presence in the north by about 15 years.



One of the main ditches at Scotch Corner under excavation. Large quantities of pottery are visible in the base.



The ditch complex where the majority of the ceramic pellet mould was recovered under excavation.



A well preserved section of Roman road at Scotch Corner surviving below the medieval ridge and furrow earthworks.

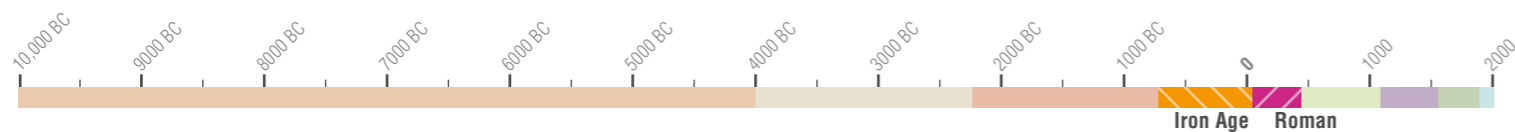


Samian Ware being recovered from a ditch during excavations.

Although the date is crucial in understanding the importance of the site, the material recovered during excavations also make the site stand out as something exceptional in the north of England, as well as the British Isles. Roman material recovered to date has not only been extremely early in date, but it has also been of exceptionally high quality. Glass and pottery imported from the continent has been accompanied by fine objects including carved amber, gaming pieces, small boxes to house seals, and a miniature gladius (a type of sword). Many of these items were found in large pits that had been cut into the bedrock by the Late Iron Age population to store grain. Other concentrations of pottery were recovered from a series of pits and enclosure ditches, while an additional extensive system of deep pits seemed to represent a water management system.

The large quantities of fine items, alongside the very early Roman date for the site, has led some to suggest that this may be the site where the Romans met Cartimandua, and paid tribute to her to win her support and allegiance.

The Contact Period also seems to mark the point in time at which Scotch Corner became a key junction between Dere Street, running north to south on roughly the same alignment as the modern A1; and the Stainmore Pass, running east to west on approximately the same alignment as the A66. Although both of these roads clearly had their origins in the prehistoric period, they were formalised by the Romans, and as part of this process Scotch Corner became a key junction on the road network.





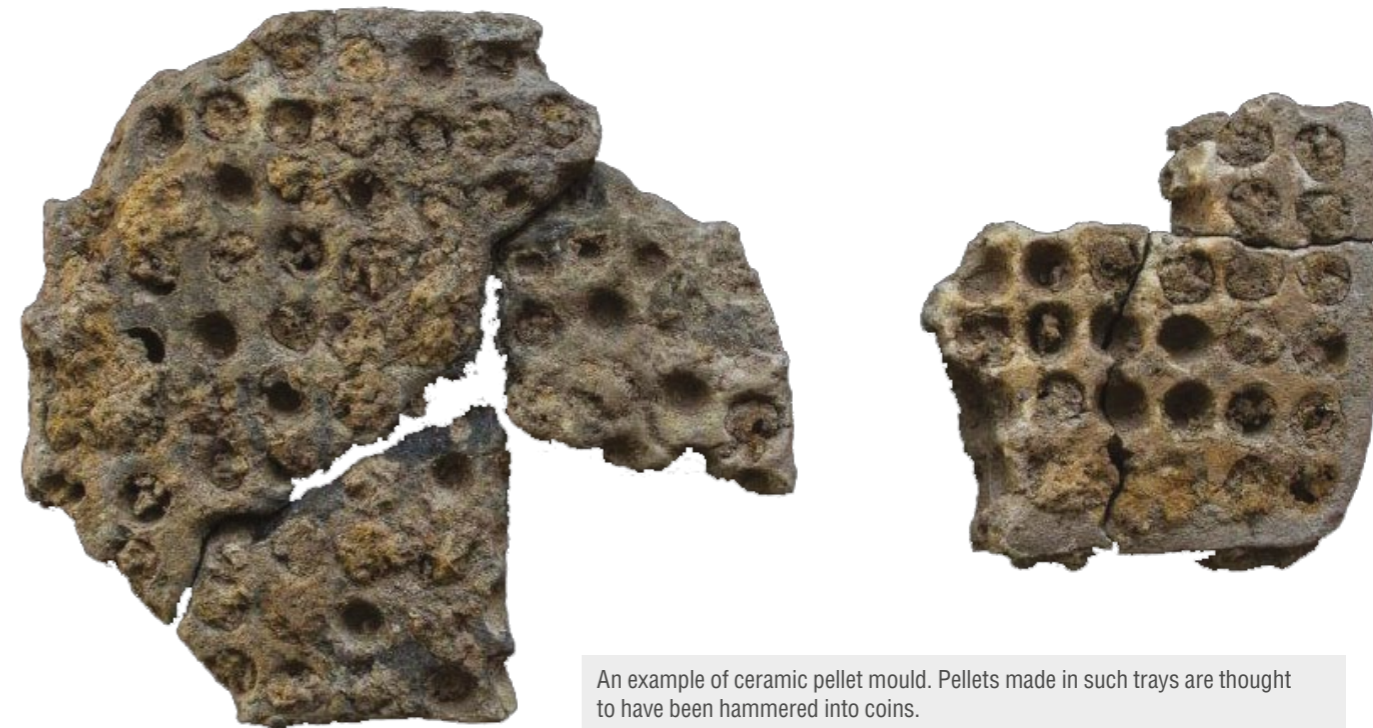
Fragment of an amber figurine, believed to represent an actor, recovered from Scotch Corner.



Aerial view of the central area of the Scotch Corner site.



Large sections of a Samian Ware bowl recovered from a ditch at Scotch Corner.



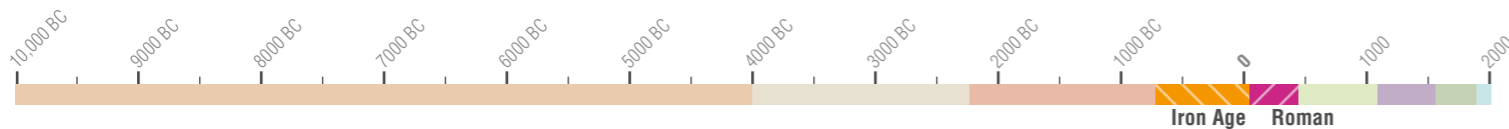
An example of ceramic pellet mould. Pellets made in such trays are thought to have been hammered into coins.



A fine glass head which would have originally been positioned at the base of the jug handle.



Ceramic pellet mould under excavation. Pellets made in such trays are thought to have been hammered into coins.



A Roman town – Cataractonium

If the archaeology of Scotch Corner represents the earliest evidence of Roman activity on the A1 scheme, then the fort and town of Cataractonium represent some of the most important and well-preserved Roman deposits.

The site of the Roman fort and town, at the point at which the modern A1 crosses the River Swale between Catterick and Brompton, has been known for some time, and excavations during construction of the Catterick Bypass in the 1950s revealed a number of structures including a bath house. Excavations undertaken as part of the A1 road improvement scheme, however, represent the most extensive investigation of the site to take place. They employed modern excavation methods as well as scientific dating techniques, and have involved excavating several different areas of the town.



Pillars, known as pilae, forming part of the underfloor heating system known as a hypocaust system excavated in the Fort Bridge area of Cataractonium.

Investigations in the main town south of the River Swale focused on three areas where the road upgrade and its associated drainage and utilities were going to result in an impact on archaeological remains. Two large areas of the suburbs north of the River Swale were also examined. These excavations provided archaeologists with the opportunity to examine a slice through the town and investigate the history and development of the settlement from its earliest origins to its ultimate abandonment.

Key discoveries have included two stages of fortification of the town. During the 2nd century AD the settlement on both sides of the river was enclosed by ditch and rampart defences, which were partially replaced by a substantial town wall in the 3rd century AD. The town wall was only constructed on the south side of the river, which left the northern suburb undefended. However, the suburb continued to flourish, as it expanded further to the north along the line of Dere Street.

Although a Roman bridge across the River Swale was not identified during the excavations, Dere Street was observed rising and widening near the river suggesting a bridgehead leading to a bridge. A large stone with a phallic carving, similar to carvings found on other Roman bridges, was also discovered during works further suggesting a bridge in the area.

At Fort Bridge work undertaken to replace the road bridge carrying the A6316 Catterick Road exposed a number of large pits containing waterlogged deposits. This area appeared to have been a focus for leatherworking early in the use of the town, with large quantities of well-preserved leather recovered. Items recovered included shoes as well as offcuts from clothes and tents.

Although the post-excitation stage, where all of the material excavated is analysed by specialists, is still at a very early stage, it is clear that the establishment, development and ultimate abandonment of the town was complex. A number of phases of construction, demolition and redevelopment have been identified as part of the excavations. Some of the latest buildings were of high status, with underfloor heating and painted plasterwork, and it appears that areas that were used for industrial processes in the early years of the site were later used as residential areas.

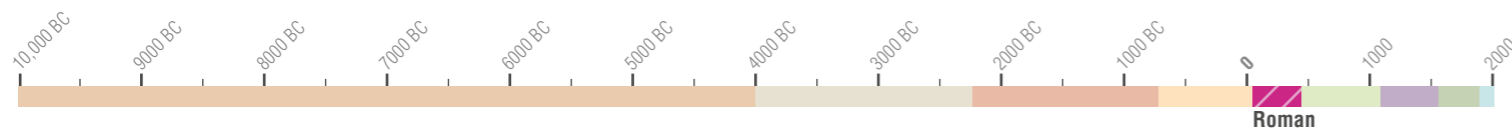


A Roman leather shoe well preserved in waterlogged deposits at Fort Bridge area of Cataractonium.

The areas excavated at Cataractonium have all revealed large numbers of finds ranging from everyday items such as pottery, to complex and rare items such as incense burners. A total of over 62,000 items have been recovered from the town, along with 2.8 tonnes of animal bone and 2.5 tonnes of pottery. These finds also represent the civilian and military components of the town, and the analysis of these items, along with the deposits from which they were recovered, will be used to tell the story of this important town on Dere Street.



One of the large outer defensive ditches on the north side of the River Swale at Cataractonium under excavation.

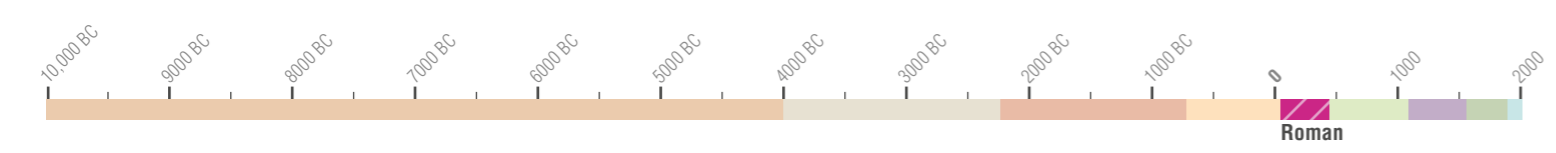




Excavations of the Roman town of Cataractonium underway on the south side of the River Swale, with the defences clearly visible at the crest of the slope.



An extremely rare Roman wicker basket recovered from the waterlogged base of a well some 8m below the current ground surface level.



Bainesse Roman cemetery

While the excavations at Cataractonium have provided detailed information about the development of the Roman town, excavations of the new stretch of the A1 near Brough Beck at Bainesse Farm have provided crucial information about the Roman population.

Like Cataractonium, the presence of a Roman settlement near Marne Barracks and Bainesse Farm has long been known. A geophysical survey undertaken in this area revealed the remains of a complex roadside settlement surviving along the line of the old A1 which follows Dere Street, and as a result the new road alignment was designed to avoid the archaeology and run to the west of the settlement. However, excavations near Brough Beck revealed a hitherto unknown extensive cemetery site.

A total of 249 Roman burials were identified as part of the excavations in this area, along with several cremations. Many of the graves contained grave goods including pottery vessels, jet beads, bracelets and coins, while there was also evidence of some individuals being buried in their shoes. Interestingly, early analysis of the soil that filled the graves at Cataractonium has also suggested that at least some were possibly buried with flowers, with sweetscented bedstraw seeds being recovered from one grave, and bog bean seeds from another.

Although the survival of bone varied in the graves, enough material has survived in a large number of graves to undertake an extensive programme of radiocarbon dating. This study has revealed that the cemetery was in use from the 1st century AD through to the 5th century AD.



Bainesse Roman cemetery during excavations. The site now lies under the south bound carriageway of the A1 near Brough Beck.



A collection of Roman pots recovered from graves at Bainesse cemetery.



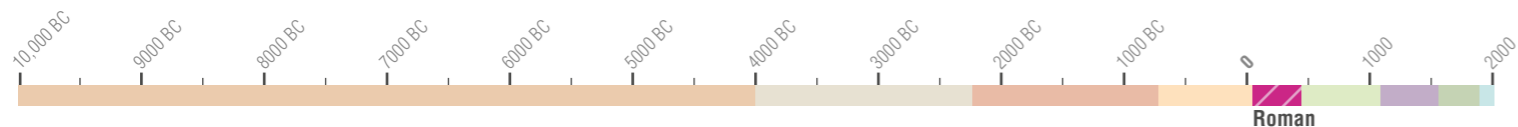
The burial of a child excavated at Bainesse. Grave goods included a number of carved jet beads, as well as two copper bracelets.



Grave goods, including two pottery vessels placed near the skull of an individual, excavated at Bainesse.



A collection of rusted metal nails representing the hobnails from a pair of Roman sandals.



Romans in the landscape – Scurragh House

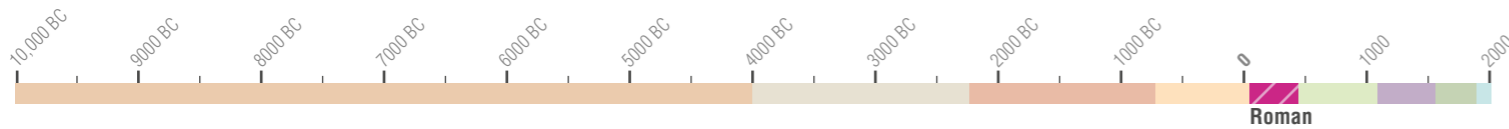
While the Roman settlements of Cataractonium and Bainesse were known about prior to work on the A1 improvement scheme commencing, a complex Roman ritual site near Scurragh House was completely unexpected. Stripping for the road widening revealed a number of enclosures, some of which contained cremations and burials, which had not been revealed by the geophysical surveys. At least one of the individuals buried here had been adorned with a necklace of fine jet and glass beads, while the cremations were also unusual as the position of a number of them had been marked with wooden stakes. Small-scale cemeteries of this kind often represented a distinct group of individuals. The arrangement of stake-holes found around some of the graves here is a feature not seen elsewhere in this area, which further suggests that this small cemetery was reserved for a group with their own traditions of burial.

It seems highly likely that the areas of the enclosures in which the graves are located represent the back plots of larger enclosures that would have fronted onto Dere Street to the west. These plots may have contained structures fronting onto Dere Street similar to those at Bainesse and Cataractonium, although these structures appear to have been lost under the A1.

In addition to the graves, a series of large pits was also identified. These pits, which may have been watering holes, were up to three meters deep and two of them contained rare votive altars. The altars had inscriptions dedicating one to Mars and the other to Mars Condates possibly suggesting a military link, and it has been proposed that a larger, perhaps rectangular, enclosure to the north may have been a temporary Roman military camp.



The two altars after cleaning.



Excavations taking place on one of the large Roman watering holes at the Scurragh House site.



One of the shallow pits that contained the cremated remains of an individual. The four stake holes appear to represent some attempt at marking the grave.



A Roman altar immediately after recovery from the base of a 3m deep pit.

The Anglo-Saxon evidence

Although the majority of the archaeological sites excavated as part of the A1 improvement scheme are Roman in date, evidence of the post-Roman period has also been identified in a number of areas. Anglo-Saxon material has been relatively scarce in the vicinity of the A1, and what happened after the Romans left has been unclear. Recent work at Cataractonium, however, has revealed evidence suggesting that a number of the later Roman buildings were robbed out/demolished in the Anglo-Saxon period, with stone removed to build a new settlement, likely around the modern-day village of Catterick.

Excavations at Fort Bridge also identified a late Roman building potentially being used in the Anglo-Saxon period, at the same time as the building stone was being removed from nearby structures. At least one grave at the Bainesse cemetery site has been dated to the Anglo-Saxon period, further confirming an active population in the area around Catterick village during the post-Roman period.

However, some of the most surprising remains dating to the Anglo-Saxon period were identified at Scotch Corner. Excavation of a well-preserved section of Dere Street (a stretch of the road to the north of the Dere Street/Stainmore Pass junction that was later superseded), identified three graves cut into the edges of the road.

The discovery of the burials suggests that this section of the Roman road had been long abandoned by the Anglo-Saxon period. However, the positioning of the graves on the edge of the road points to the road surviving as an earthwork, with the burials deliberately positioned on the edges of the earthwork.

The positioning of Anglo-Saxon burials on the edges of Roman features was also encountered during excavations at Marne Barracks. Although not on the A1 scheme, excavations undertaken as part of Operation Nightingale at Marne were supported by the Carillion-Morgan Sindall Joint Venture, and revealed a number of Anglo-Saxon graves inserted into an abandoned Roman building. In all cases the bodies had been placed against the walls, suggesting the walls survived as earthworks when the individuals were buried.

The Operation Nightingale project is part of a larger scheme using archaeology to help in the recovery of wounded, injured and sick military personnel, with individuals coming from across to the United Kingdom to take part. Support from the A1 scheme allowed the Operation Nightingale excavations at Marne to take place, and the excavations provided important information about Anglo-Saxon, as well as prehistoric and Roman activity in the area immediately adjacent to the A1.



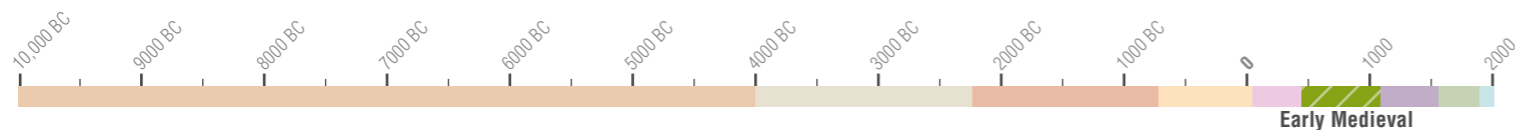
An Anglo-Saxon burial cut into the edge of the Roman Road at Scotch Corner during excavation.



A second Anglo-Saxon grave on the edge of the Roman road under excavation at Scotch Corner. This photo demonstrates the varying levels of preservation encountered.



Debris, including broken stone roof tiles, resulting from the abandonment of Cataractonium and subsequent robbing of material during the Anglo-Saxon period.



Heading towards the present – the medieval and post-medieval period

The archaeological excavations undertaken during the A1 upgrade did not identify any remains dating to the medieval period, and it is believed that the line of Dere Street may have been largely abandoned during this period, with the main route north passing further east through settlements such as Scorton, Moulton and Middleton Tyas.

Some minor archaeological work was undertaken at Kneeton Hall, where remains of a well-preserved deserted medieval village survive. These remains included a number of building plots surviving as rectangular earthworks fronting onto a track that would have formed the main road through the settlement. However, the clearest evidence for the medieval period was the ridge and furrow cultivation that survives as earthworks and cropmarks around Scotch Corner, as well as to the rear of the building plots at Kneeton Hall. These earthworks at Kneeton Hall suggest that the settlement was a relatively large village with extensive arable cultivation taking place in the fields around.

By the 19th century the line of Dere Street was again the main north–south thoroughfare and a number of farms flanked its route. The importance of the route for the long distance traveller was also evident in the coaching inns and public houses that opened along

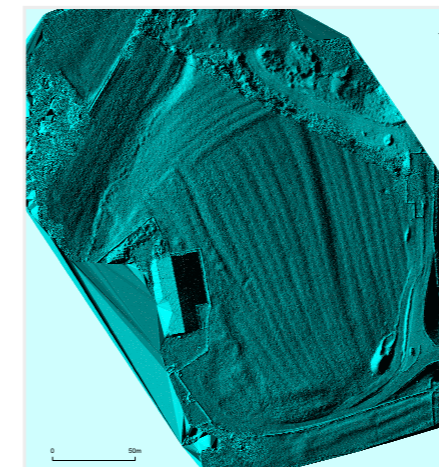
its course. Many of these buildings were constructed immediately adjacent to the Great North Road, as the A1 was known at this time. The road upgrade necessitated the demolition of some of these, but detailed building assessment and recording was undertaken prior to demolition, to ensure a record of their form and construction was preserved.

One of the most significant pieces of building recording was undertaken at Scurragh House. This building may have been constructed on the footprint of a medieval house. While excavations of the foundations did not find any evidence for this, traces of the buildings 17th or 18th-century core were recorded, while a number of timbers used in the structure carried marks suggesting they had been imported from the Baltic.

Documentary evidence suggests that Scurragh Farm also once functioned as an inn or coaching house, exploiting its position on the A1 to serve passing travellers. However, a newspaper article from 1936 also records a tragic accident outside of the farm when road worker William Blackburn was killed by a steam roller. Such incidents are a reminder of the dangers of roads and road construction in the past as well as the present.



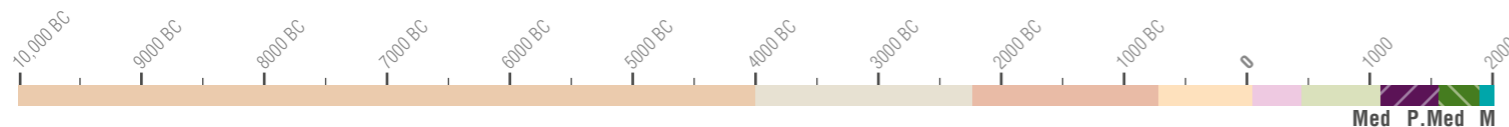
The former byre at Scurragh House during recording after demolition.



Evidence of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing surviving as earthworks at Kneeton Hall.



Marks of timbers removed during the demolition of Scurragh House. Such marks possibly resulting from the wood being imported from the Baltic.



Going forwards and acknowledgements

This booklet has been produced to provide some information about the huge quantities of material excavated as part of the A1 Leeming to Barton improvement scheme. A booklet of this nature can obviously never cover all of the archaeology in detail, and a number of publications will be produced between 2018 and 2020 looking at the sites and finds in more detail. The publications will include a series of detailed monographs answering the key research questions established as part of the archaeological work. They will consist of a volume on death and burial (2018), Scotch Corner and the Contact Period (2019), and Cataractonium (2020).

The successful completion of archaeological excavations on this kind of scale is only possible through collaborative working, and a number of organisations and stakeholders have been crucial to this process. These include Neil Redfern, the Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Yorkshire and Humber at Historic England, who was assisted by Dr. Andy Hammon and Dr. Pete Wilson as Science Advisor and Roman Specialist respectively. Support was also received from Lucie Hawkins and Dr. Peter Rowe at North Yorkshire County Council, as well as the team at the Carillion-Morgan Sindall Joint Venture who were commissioned by Highways England to construct the road.

Works on site were facilitated by Matt Clements, the Joint Venture Archaeology Package Manager, and Dr. Steve Sherlock and Dr. Jonathan Shipley the AECOM Archaeological Clerk of Works. Helen Maclean of AECOM and Blaise Vyner undertook the overall archaeological project management throughout the scheme, and this booklet was written by Dr Jonathan Shipley assisted by Helen Maclean. All archaeological excavations were undertaken by Northern Archaeological Associates, and thanks must be paid to the many archaeologists who worked tirelessly on the scheme in all types of weather.

Final thanks must go to the public, who have shown such keen interest in the archaeology throughout the project. A number of open days were held during the excavations, which attracted over 2,000 visitors, while temporary exhibitions were well attended at the Richmondshire Museum, Bowes Museum and Bedale Museum.

The archaeological excavations undertaken have provided an important window into the people who lived and died along the line of the A1, and the future work and research on the excavated remains will continue to enhance our understanding of the past.



Visitors attending an open day held at Scotch Corner to view the excavation.

Photography copyright information

Dr. J. P. Shipley

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NAA

Pages: 8 (Little Holtby plan), 11 (Bowbridge Lane plan, polished stone axe), 12 (aerial photograph of Iron Age roundhouse), 16 (amber figure), 17 (large photo of pellet mould), 21 (Basket), 22 (collection of Roman pottery), 24 (altars after cleaning) 29 (Kneeton Hall).

Dr. S. Sherlock

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Highways England

Pages: 2 (photo of Thomas Howard) , 3 (photo of completed A1(M) road), 16 (aerial photo of Scotch Corner).

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Highways England creative job number LEE18_0048

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