

# AN INTERIM REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION OF A SITE AT BADSWORTH.

**John McIlwaine, Dept. Arch. Sciences, Bradford University.**



The site is a circular enclosure in the parish of Badsworth which has a strong link with the Society, as Eric Houlder discovered it whilst taking aerial photographs with the late Derrick Riley in 1979. In the winter of 1980, Barbara Lowe (now a Committee Member) in association with a number of enthusiasts of the South Elmsall Archaeological Group, with some assistance from the West Yorkshire Unit, carried out a small excavation on the southern portion of the ditch in order to obtain a profile. The excavation produced a number of artefacts which included flint, animal bones, Roman pottery and a polished Langdale axe.

The site was exceptionally well-drained with a sandy thin soil overlying sandstone bedrock and was at this time under cultivation. The aim of the current excavation was to establish exactly how much damage had been done by the ploughing and to attempt to determine a date for the monument.

Prior to excavation, **Geophysical Surveys** of Bradford were approached, and kindly agreed to undertake a magnetometer survey of the site. It is most heartening that the country's leading commercial archaeological geophysics company was so willing to assist an amateur society in its work, and comes as a marked contrast to some professional units who seem to regard amateurs as a source of irritation rather than a much under-utilised resource. The outline of the ditch was clearly visible on the survey. Several points of interest were also readily apparent with distinct 'zones' perceptible inside the circle, and a possible second (northerly) entrance, close to which were a number of strong ferrous responses. It was decided to investigate this area.

The high stone content of the topsoil had caused the farmer to abandon attempts at cultivation in previous years, with the field now being used for grass. The excavation began in late October 1994 and continued on Sundays, weather permitting, until March 1995. The de-turfing soon bore out the farmer's view, with a topsoil which was

thin and contained a large amount of stone. The turf was removed, and the remainder of the topsoil by trowel, in an attempt to discover whether any artefacts had retained a position in the soil which might have been a feature. A number of sherds of pottery were recovered but these did not seem to form any significant pattern. Below the topsoil there was considerable variation in the subsoil; areas of large stones, some patches of solid rock and patches of decayed sandstone and soil, some of which appeared to have been heat-affected. At this level a number of sherds of Roman pottery were recovered with a particular cluster occurring in the south east corner of the excavation area. Directly to the south of this was discovered a line of clay and stone. This line may be some sort of footing for a wall and it was interesting that a large piece of Roman roof tile was also recovered from this area. Unfortunately, due to the clay line's proximity to the edge of the trench it was extremely difficult to make much sense out of it, but it together with the presence of the roof tile and the pottery may suggest the possibility of a structure close to the edge of the ditch.

The position of the ditch was clearly visible after de-turfing, as a band of soil which contained very few stones and was easily discernible to the eye; this was in marked contrast to the previous excavation which had extreme difficulty in identifying the upper levels, as it was indistinguishable from the very stony soil which surrounded it. The ditch contained four fills; the basal being a mixture of sand and some quite large stone, while above it was a darker brown layer which contained considerably more stone. The upper fills contained a mixture of soil, sand and stones. The ditch produced Roman pottery and animal bone similar to that produced on the previous excavation, but nothing in the way of Prehistoric material. Based upon the artefact evidence it would therefore be logical to date the monument to the Roman period. However, the dating of ditches by their sediments is a notoriously difficult task and we may just as plausibly be looking at a Prehistoric site which is being re-used in the Roman period.

The site was back-filled in March and post-excavation work is under way. The landowner has expressed the desire to see the work continue next winter, and so this is very much an interim statement.

## **Acknowledgments**

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