

# THE 2021 EXCAVATION AT CASTLE HILL BROMPTON

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SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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# THE 2021 EXCAVATION AT CASTLE HILL, BROMPTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE.

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*Brompton Castle: '.... we know nothing of its birth, use or destruction and must wait on the gentle shovelling of the archaeologist to see what lays beneath the scanty surface remains' (Rushton 1961, 14)*

## *Summary*

*The third season of excavation within the Scheduled area of Castle Hill, Brompton resulted in the discovery of a significant part of a medieval masonry building situated on the south edge of the hill overlooking the Vale of Pickering. The investigation of the building was limited to five small areas which nevertheless produced important evidence for its plan and architectural detailing. Part of a more lightly-constructed building with well-preserved floor surfaces adjoined to the north. Underlying the main building were traces of an earlier structure on a different alignment while a radiocarbon date (the first from a medieval manorial site in this area) established that the stratigraphic sequence recorded in 2021 probably starts in the early to middle 12th century.*

Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society.

Report 56

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# 1. Introduction

The village of Brompton is situated seven miles inland from Scarborough on the north side of the Vale of Pickering. Between the 10th - 19th of September 2021 the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society (SAHS) completed a third season of excavation on the Scheduled Monument at Castle Hill on the east side of the village. The previous excavations in 2018 and 2019 along with earlier geophysical and earthwork surveys established that the pasture field preserves the remains of a fortified medieval residential complex, probably connected with one of the manors documented in the village in the Middle Ages. The site was abandoned around the middle of the 14th century and later the area was sub-divided into several small embanked closes identifiable as earthworks.

Reports on the earlier work by SAHS on Castle Hill are available for download from the the SAHS website. The previous work aimed to evaluate the archaeology of the site, and while this established that there was a good level of preservation and identified that the site had been occupied by a series of medieval structures, the areas investigated were small, limiting the amount of evidence obtained. It was therefore decided in 2021 to focus efforts on one part of the site to recover as much evidence as possible about a medieval building identified by an earthwork on the south side of the hill. It was anticipated that learning as much as we could about a single building would widen our understanding of Castle Hill and better enable us to relate our discoveries to other medieval sites of comparable status in the area.

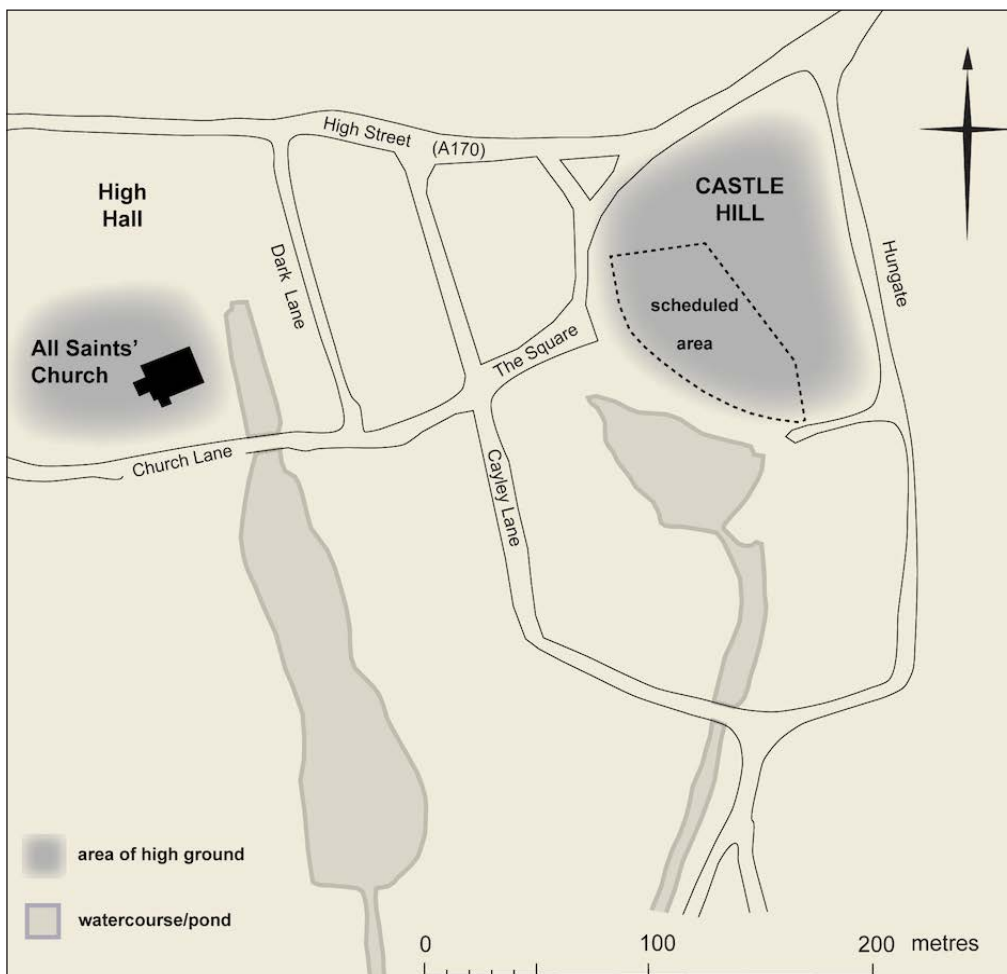


Figure 1. Simplified plan of Brompton village centre showing the location of the site.

Castle Hill is on the east side of the village and is now mostly covered by houses and gardens while the scheduled field is on the south-west of the hill top and is the only large area of open ground on the summit (Figure 1). The ground falls away steeply to the west and south while a more gentle slope down to Hungate marks the east side of the hill. On the north side the hill merges into the more general slope of the Tabular Hills rising northwards to a high escarpment overlooking Troutsdale.

Permission for the 2021 excavation was granted by the owners, the Cayley Settled Estate and by the tenant farmer, Ashley Mudd. Historic England gave Scheduled Monument Consent for the excavation following the submission of a project design detailing the aims and objectives of the fieldwork. The 2021 excavation uncovered the north, east and south sides of a rectangular masonry building below a thick deposit of stone rubble resulting from its collapse and eventual demolition. For the purposes of description in the rest of this report this structure is referred to as Building 2. The excavation also discovered evidence for two further buildings, one which was earlier than Building 2 and on a different alignment (hereafter referred to as Building 1) and the second which was broadly contemporary (hereafter referred to as Building 3).

## 2. Archaeological and Historical Background

Brompton is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 with one of the highest values of any of the villages on the north side of the Vale of Pickering indicating it was prospering at that period (Faull and Stinson 1986, 8N6). By the late 13th century Brompton was divided between two main estates held by the Mowbrays and the Bigods as well as a lesser holding in the hands of the Crown which later passed to the Earl of Lancaster. The tenurial history of these estates is complicated and described in more detail elsewhere (Rushton 1963 & 1964; Evans 1992). Each of these holdings may have had a manor house at Brompton though there is scant documentary evidence for this. One possible medieval manor site is at High Hall to the north of the high ground occupied by All Saints' Church. Another is at Low Hall on the south-west of the village where there is medieval fabric at the core of the present house (RCHME 1987, 20). The local historian John Rushton suggested the Vescy family might have built on Castle Hill. Though powerful and wealthy in their own right, by the end of the 13th century the Vescys held large parts of Brompton as tenants of the other three estates (Rushton 1964, 24). The possible Vescy connection with Castle Hill was discussed in the 2019 excavation report (Pearson et al. 2020) which noted in particular that the open area called The Square immediately to the west of Castle Hill could have been laid out to accommodate the market granted to William de Vescy in 1253 by Henry III (Calendar of Charter Rolls 1226-57, 434).

The Scarborough historian Thomas Hinderwell was the first to draw attention to the archaeology of Castle Hill at the end of the 18th century noting that 'ancient foundations' were visible (Hinderwell 1798, 303). William I'Anson included Castle Hill in his pioneering survey of castles in the North Riding stating 'here we have what would certainly appear to be a mutilated motte, and signs of the presence of masonry foundations; but until the site is excavated it is impossible to say anything definite' (I'Anson 1913, 332). The Scheduled Monument entry updated in 2004 identifies the site as a 'fortified residence' and drew attention to the earthwork remains of the medieval building that is the subject of the present report.

The current programme of archaeological investigation on Castle Hill was initiated by the Brompton Local History Society (BLHS) in 2014 and carried forward by the SAHS as follows:

- April 2014 Magnetometer Survey

James Lyall of Geofizz.biz undertook a magnetometer survey on behalf of the BLHS following a grant from the SAHS (Lyall 2014). The survey covered most of the Scheduled area and parts of two adjacent gardens to the north and east. The survey indicated the survival of a possible boundary curving around the crest of slope on the west side of the hill with a rectilinear arrangement of possible structures across the east half of the site — most of which equate to surviving earthworks. The survey recorded nothing of any note in the two gardens.

- April 2016 Earthwork Survey

SAHS undertook an analytical earthwork survey to record and interpret the visible remains in the Scheduled area (Evans et al. 2016). The survey concluded that the remains were those of one, or possibly two, agricultural structures and associated closes or yards of no great age.

- May 2017 Excavation at Castle Hill House

SAHS excavated two trenches in the garden of Castle Hill House which borders the Scheduled area to the east (Pearson and Woods, 2017). The larger of the two trenches exposed medieval wall foundations and an adjacent cobbled surface while the second trench encountered a rubble deposit.

- September 2018 Castle Hill Excavation - Trenches 1 - 4

SAHS received Scheduled Monument Consent to excavate four trenches to assess the survival of medieval remains comparable to those uncovered in the garden of Castle Hill House the previous year (Pearson et al. 2018). The discoveries overturned the conclusion of the 2016 earthwork survey that the site solely comprised a post-medieval agricultural landscape. Trench 2 on the south-western edge of the hill exposed a 1.4m wide and 1.4m deep strong stone wall dating to the medieval period with a build-up of deposits on either side, including stone rubble on the uphill side of the wall which may be from demolition of structures nearby. Trench 3 towards the south edge of the hill was positioned across a prominent linear bank which preserved lengths of several stone walls incorporating reused medieval architectural fragments. In contrast, Trench 1 in the north-east corner of the field contained a rubble spread and Trench 4 on the west edge of the hill had no significant archaeological features.

- September 2019 Castle Hill Excavation Trenches 5 - 8

SAHS received Scheduled Monument Consent to excavate four trenches to resolve questions that emerged from the 2018 excavation and to investigate further areas of the site (Pearson et al. 2020). Trench 5 discovered that that the strong wall on the south-west side of the hill continued further southwards following the curving crest of the hill, indicating it is more likely to be a free-standing boundary wall than part of a building. Trench 6 towards the east edge of the site uncovered a boundary wall on the south side of the hill which was much narrower compared to that on the west. Trench 7 towards the centre of the site uncovered the stone foundations of a multi-roomed medieval building, while Trench 8 further to the north encountered the foundations of a post-medieval building overlying a medieval hearth and wall on a different alignment. The post-medieval building is visible as a rectangular earthwork and is probably contemporary with the arrangement of small closes that also survive as earthworks.

- Other work

Up to the end of 2021 archaeological work in response to planning conditions has taken place in the grounds of two private properties on the east side of Castle Hill outside the Scheduled area. In 2018 MAP Archaeological Practice Ltd. undertook an archeological evaluation of land at the Forge Tea Rooms on the north-east side of the hill without uncovering any significant archaeological deposits (Stodart 2018). In 2021 Heritage Adventures undertook a watching brief at the rear of Number 45 Hungate which observed the top of a short length of masonry wall aligned north-east to south-west close to the east boundary of the Scheduled area (Woods 2021, Figure 9).

### 3. The 2021 Excavation

#### Introduction

The area selected for investigation in 2021 was in the southern half of the field where the 2016 earthwork survey and the results from Trench 3 in 2018 indicated the site of a building first noted in the Scheduled Monument description (Figure 2). The earthwork is L-shaped and was thought likely to represent the north and east sides of a rectangular building aligned east - west along the crest of the hill looking out over the vale. Trench 9 measured 10m x 10m and was positioned immediately to the east of (and slightly oblique to) Trench 3. The results from Trench 3 will be described again in this report where they are relevant to the 2021 excavation.

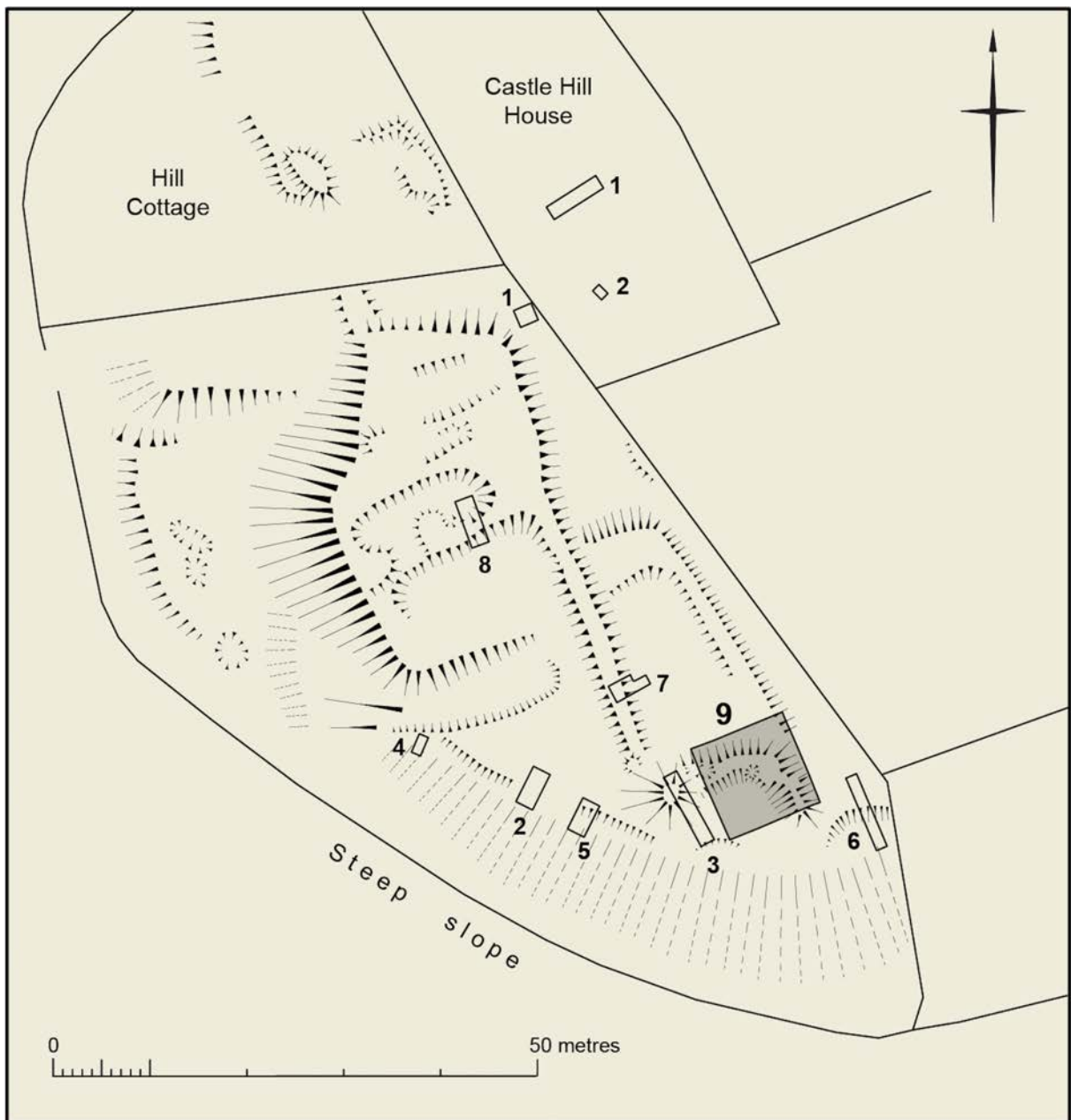


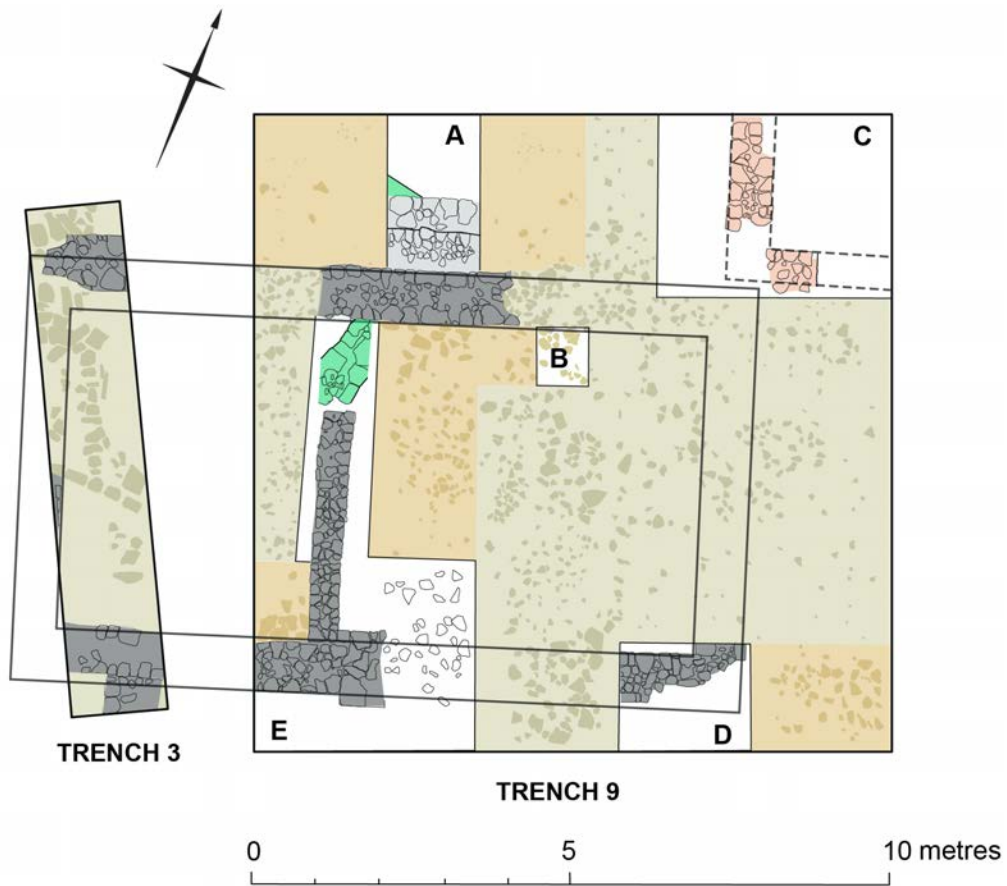
Figure 2. The layout of the site showing the location of the 2021 excavation (Trench 9 - coloured grey); the trenches from 2017 at Castle Hill House; the 2018 and 2019 trenches in the Scheduled area and earthworks mapped in 2016.

Permission was also given in the Scheduled Monument Consent for a second trench (Trench 10) measuring up to 5m x 2m to investigate the possible entrance into the site identified by a hollow way on the west side of the hill. However, in the event it was decided to commit the available resources to Trench 9 and Trench 10 was not started. However the opportunity was taken to survey a series of slight earthworks in the garden of Hill Cottage on the north of the Scheduled area shown on Figure 2. They may be recent garden features or a continuation of the post-medieval embanked closes visible as earthworks in the Scheduled area.

The strategy adopted for the excavation and set out in the project design aimed to minimise damage to deposits by removing as little material as necessary to determine the character of the layers and features revealed and their inter-relationships. The excavation began by stripping the turf and topsoil by hand from the entire 100 square metres of the trench (layer 9001). This revealed a spread of stone rubble containing mostly small fragments of angular stone along with several discrete areas of larger stones, more densely packed. It also revealed the top of an east-west wall alignment towards the north side of the trench in line with the top of the earthwork bank (Figure 3). The rubble was then selectively removed to expose the north and south sides of the building indicated by the earthwork (Building 2). The east side was not observed at this stage and the west side lay outside the confines of the trench. Guided by the stated aim of minimising the destruction of archaeological deposits, the investigation of Building 2 proceeded through the excavation of five discrete areas or sondages located to recover the widest range of information about the structure. For the purposes of description these sondages are labelled A-E and were positioned as shown on Figure 4.



Figure 3. Excavating the rubble spread revealed after the removal of the topsoil. (Photograph N. Clarke)











- |   |  |   |                              |
|---|--|---|------------------------------|
|  | <b>Building 1</b> - excavated walls    |  | Building 2 - projected walls |
|  | <b>Building 2</b> - excavated walls    |  | Building 2 - plinth          |
|  | <b>Building 3</b> - excavated walls    |  | Building 3 - projected walls |
|  | Exposed areas of collapse rubble       |   |                              |
|  | Unexcavated areas of demolition rubble |   |                              |



Figure 4.  
 (above) plan of Trench 9 showing the five sondages labelled A-E and the main features excavated with  
 (below) overhead view of the completed excavation. (Plan based on digital data created by E. Jamieson)

## Phase 1 - Open ground

The earliest deposit consisted of a dark organic soil 0.6m deep excavated as three contexts of equal thickness in Sondage A, with 9042 the lowest overlain by 9036 and 9033. The full depth of this soil deposit could not be determined due to the limited space available to excavate. A small quantity of pottery and bone was recovered from layers 9033 and 9036 and charcoal was present throughout (Figure 5).

In Sondage C the walls of Building 3 described below were found to rest on a dark soil layer (9038) which could conceivably be the same deposit recorded in Sondage A. No finds were recovered from this deposit.

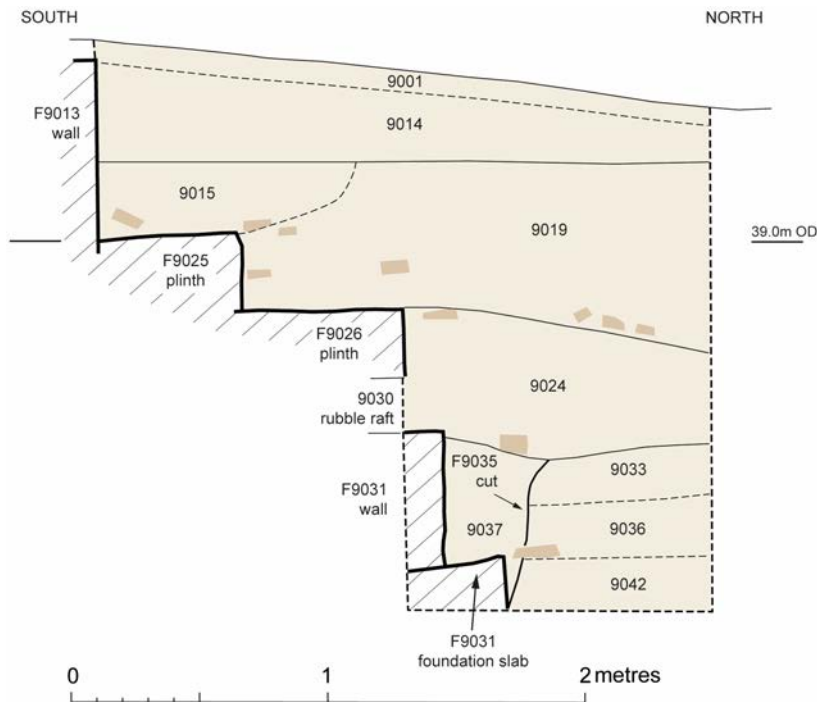


Figure 5.  
East facing section of Sondage A.  
(Field drawing by D. Haida and  
M. Franklin)

### Interpretation

The deposit of dark soil in Sondage A (and possibly Sondage C) probably accumulated in open ground, perhaps through cultivation of the hill top though occupation may also have occurred nearby indicated by the small quantity of pottery and animal bone. A charcoal sample from the earliest context excavated (layer 9042) gave a radiocarbon date of cal AD 1033-1165 (95% probability), indicating a terminus post quem for the build-up of soil of AD 1165 (see Appendix 1). The pottery is mainly Staxton Ware cooking pots including three rim sherds (Figure 6). Several sherds with thick bodies and external pinched and thumb-applied strips could be from a fire cover or curfew which the Staxton kilns are known to have produced (Brewster and Hayfield 1992, 61 and Figure 8).

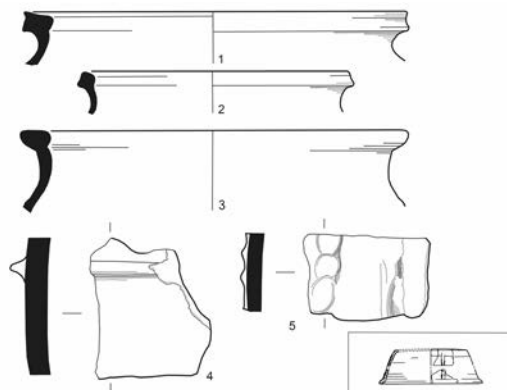


Figure 6.  
Staxton Ware pottery from layers 9033 and 9036 at 1:4  
scale. 1-3 cooking pot rims; 4-5 body sherds, possibly from  
a curfew. Inset shows a drawing of a Staxton Ware curfew  
(Brewster and Hayfield 1992, Figure 8).

## Phase 2 - Building 1

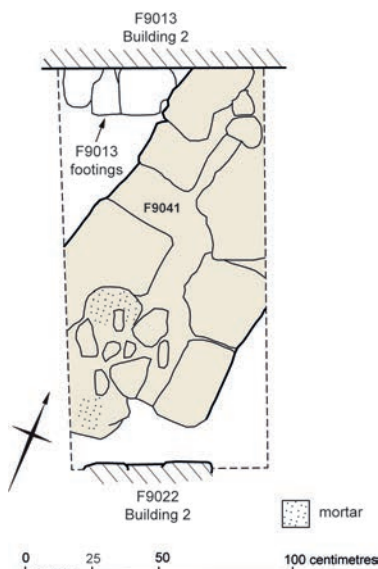
The organic soil in Sondage A was cut by two arms of a narrow, shallow slot (F9035) observed at the south edge of the sondage filled with a loose sandy deposit (9037). Upon excavation the east arm was very shallow while the west arm was the cut for a stone wall standing three courses high (F9031). Only a short length of one face of the wall was exposed in the corner of the sondage with the base course projecting slightly but this was sufficient to indicate that the wall was at 45 degrees to the overlying foundations of Building 2 (Figure 7). The top of a second short length of wall aligned at right angles to F9031 was uncovered at the same level in Sondage E (F9041) (Figure 8). This wall was directly overlain by the north wall of Building 2. It is likely that walls F9031 and F9041 belong to the same structure indicating the existence of a building (Building 1) predating the construction of Building 2 and on a markedly different alignment.

### Interpretation

As so little of Building 1 was exposed it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to its likely plan, date or function other than it appears from the short lengths of excavated wall that it faced south-west aligned on the curve of the hillside. As will be described below, Building 2 that replaced it has a more southerly aspect facing over the vale indicating a change in layout occurred in this part of the site between Phases Two and Three. The date of construction of Building 1 can be tentatively assigned to the mid - late 12th century as the wall in Sondage A cut the organic soil deposit of probable early - mid 12th century date described above. The demolition of Building 1 was probably soon followed by the construction of Building 2 given that the north wall of the later building rested directly on the remains of the earlier wall F9041 in Sondage E.



*Figure 7. View looking south of Sondage A showing the wall of Building 1 (F9031) in the right hand corner of the trench cutting the dark organic soil 9042. Note the raft of stone rubble below the coursed stonework of the plinth (F9026).*



*Figure 8. (left) plan of F9041 of Building 1 in Sondage E and (right) view of the same feature looking north. (Field drawing by E. Jamieson and C. Hall)*

### Phase 3 - Building 2

The remains of Building 2 were covered by a spread of rubble of varying thickness which had created the prominent L-shaped earthwork noted above. The building was only partially exposed during the excavation in the five sondages A-E. Three of these intersected surviving sections of the outer wall (A, D & E) while Sondage E extended into the interior.

#### Possible stone raft underlying Building 2

Evidence from Sondages A, D and E collectively indicate that the walls of Building 2 were constructed on top of a spread of rubble. This material could have come from the demolition of Building 1 with the stones then relaid and compacted to create a stone raft. It is not yet known if this layer underlies the whole of Building 2 or only underpins the main walls. In Sondage A on the north side a 0.4m thick deposit of compacted rubble (layer 9030) representing the suggested stone raft (see Figure 7) gave way to an orange brown clay (9024) on the exterior of the building. Within this deposit were further pockets of rubble loosely set in the clay which again could have been from the demolition of Building 1 but had escaped being used in the raft. The portion of the suggested raft underlying the south wall of Building 2 in Sondages D and E (layer 9040) consisted of a packing of irregular slabs with an even top surface (Figure 9). Unlike on the north side, these stones continued beyond the south wall of the building up to the south edge of Trench 9.



Figure 9.  
(left) view of the stone rubble raft 9040 in Sondage E and  
(right) in Sondage D towards the bottom of the photograph,  
underlying the robbed foundations of the wall.



*Figure 10. The north face of the north wall of Building 2 wall (F9013) before the excavation of Sondage A. Note the damage to the wall on the left and right hand sides.*

#### Building 2 - north wall

Stone rubble was cleared to expose a 4.8m length of the north wall (F9013) though only the central 3.2m was intact as the rest had been disturbed by stone robbing. The wall was 0.8m wide and constructed of small roughly rectangular stone blocks to a maximum of five courses high with evidence for mortar bonding surviving (Figure 10).



Sondage A revealed two stone steps constructed against the north face of the wall creating a plinth (Figure 11). The lower step (F9026) was 0.4m high and 0.5m wide constructed of roughly coursed stonework resting on top of the stone raft 9030 described above. The upper step (F9025) was also 0.5m wide and constructed from three courses of rough stonework attaining a maximum height of 0.3m. The inner edge of the upper step abutted the main wall of the building (F9013) while the stonework of the lower step went part way below the upper step but ended before it reached the main wall, the resulting space being filled with a deposit of clay containing stone chippings. The two steps appeared to have been built in one phase and were probably contemporary with the north wall of Building 2.

*Figure 11. View looking south of the stepped plinth in Sondage A.*

### Building 2 - south and east walls

The south wall of the building had been more severely robbed so that the only section of standing wall exposed was in the south-west corner of the trench in Sondage E. Here the wall survived for a distance of 2m from the west edge of the trench after which it had been robbed to its foundations (Figure 12). It consisted of a well-built wall (F9021) 0.85m wide and standing 1m above the level of the stone raft 9040 described above. Five courses survived with fair inner and outer faces and a rubble core bonded with mortar that had decayed to a powdery consistency. To the east, the wall incorporated fine ashlar in a hard mid-brown sandstone which stood three courses high and projected some 0.5m from the outer face of the wall (Figure 13). There was a 0.1m wide chamfer on the west and south sides of the base course of the ashlar. The feature was damaged by stone robbing to the east, presumably to recover more of the ashlar for re-use, and therefore its interpretation is uncertain. It also projected into the interior of the building in poorer quality masonry indicating the feature was constructed to be visible both internally and externally.



*Figure 12. View looking west of south wall of Building 2 showing the ashlar plinth. (Photograph S. Gandolfi)*

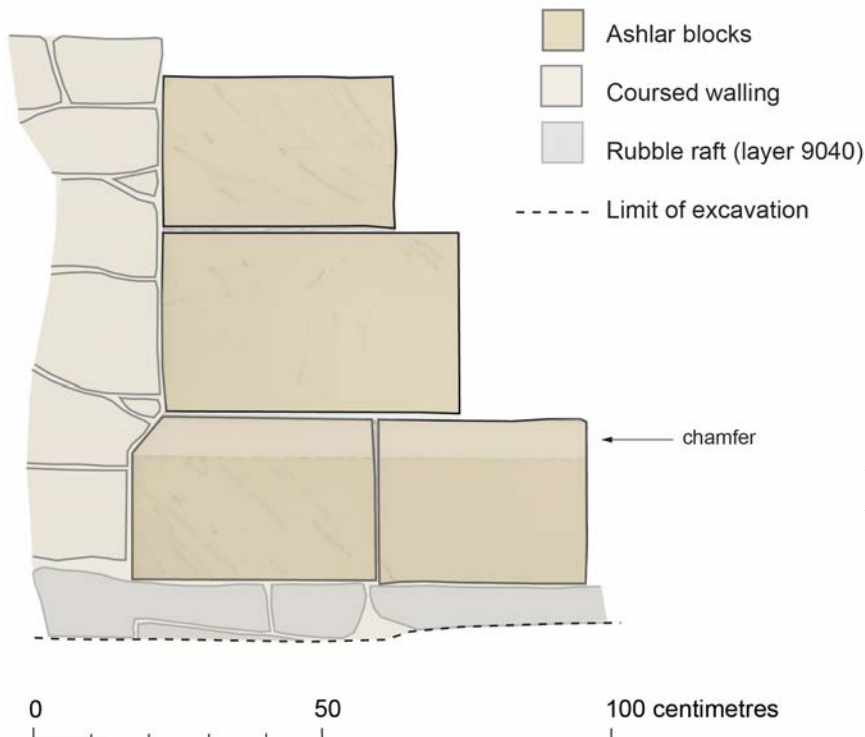


Figure 13.  
 Drawing of the south face of the ashlar plinth in Sondage E.  
 (Field drawing by C. Frankiss and C. Hall)

Sondage D located the partially robbed foundations of the south-east corner of Building 2 below a metre of collapse and demolition rubble. Only the base of the south wall survived (F9039) while most of the outer facing of the wall and some of the core had been removed exposing the underlying raft 9040 (Figures 9 and 14). The corner of the building was represented by external and internal facing stones defining the start of the east wall which therefore established how far the building extended to the east. With this discovery it was clear that Sondage C should have encountered the north-east corner of Building 2 but a pile of loose stones at its estimated position testified to it having been severely robbed. The extensive damage to these two corners may indicate that the external angles of the building utilised good quality ashlar that was prized by later stone robbers.

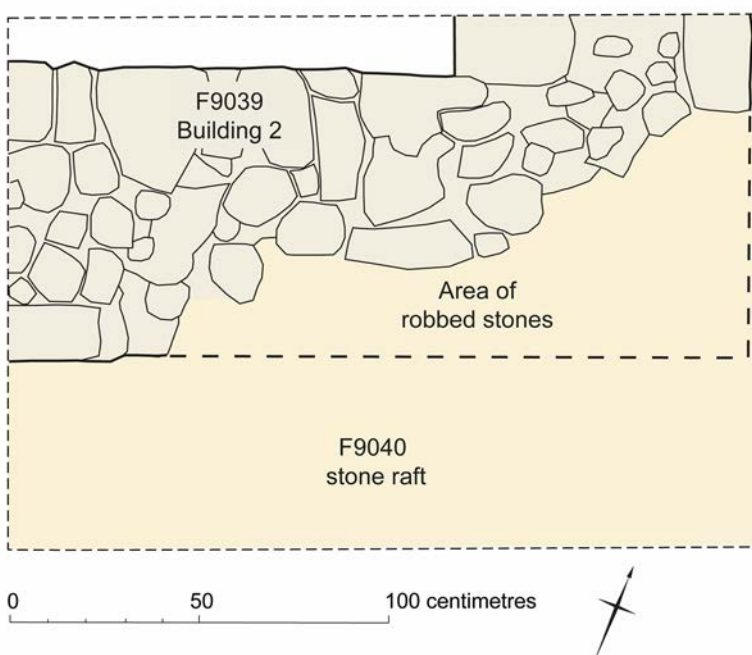


Figure 14.  
 Plan of the south-east corner of Building 2 in Sondage D.  
 (Field drawing by J. Ryan and M. Bland)



#### Building 2 - internal features

Sondage E exposed an internal north-south wall (F9022) around 0.5m wide constructed of neatly coursed masonry to a height of 0.6m (Figure 15). Demolition rubble spread down both sides of the wall so the full height was only exposed at the north and south ends where the rubble was excavated to the base of the wall. At the north end F9022 terminated some 1.4m short of the inner face of the north wall of Building 2. That this was an original opening and not the result of later stone robbing was clear from the neatly finished north end of F9022. The footings of Building 1 (F9041) described above were revealed in this opening. At its south end, wall F9022 butted up against the inside of the south wall of Building 2 indicating that it was a secondary feature constructed to sub-divide the interior of the building.

*Figure 15.*  
*View looking south of the internal wall of Building 2 (F9022).*

#### Building 2 - evidence from 2018 Trench 3

Trench 3 excavated in 2018 was at a slight angle 2-3m west of Trench 9. Reassessment of the results indicates that Trench 3 intersected elements of Building 2, although these were not recognised as belonging to the same structure at the time of the excavation.

The inside face of the west wall of Building 2 may be represented in Trench 3 by the short length of masonry four courses high (F3008) exposed in the west section of the trench. It is possible that this is an internal wall, and that the end wall lies further west although in this direction the edge of the hill restricts the space available.

The south wall of Building 2 was recorded at the south end of Trench 3 as F3005. A second wall at right-angles (F3006) abutted the south face of F3005 but rather than indicating part of another building as was thought at the time, it is possible that this feature is the foundation of a buttress reinforcing the exterior wall of Building 2 close to what we now understand must be the junction of the south and west sides of the building.

The north wall of Building 2 is probably represented by the length of stone wall F3011 at the north end of Trench 3. However this is about 0.5m north of the line of the north wall projected west from Trench 9. The stone rubble below F3011 is not a second wall at right angles as interpreted in 2018, but is more likely part of the stone raft we now know underpins the north wall of Building 2. Significantly, two pieces of window tracery came from this part of the rubble raft which means they probably formed part of the demolished earlier structure - Building 1.

## Interpretation

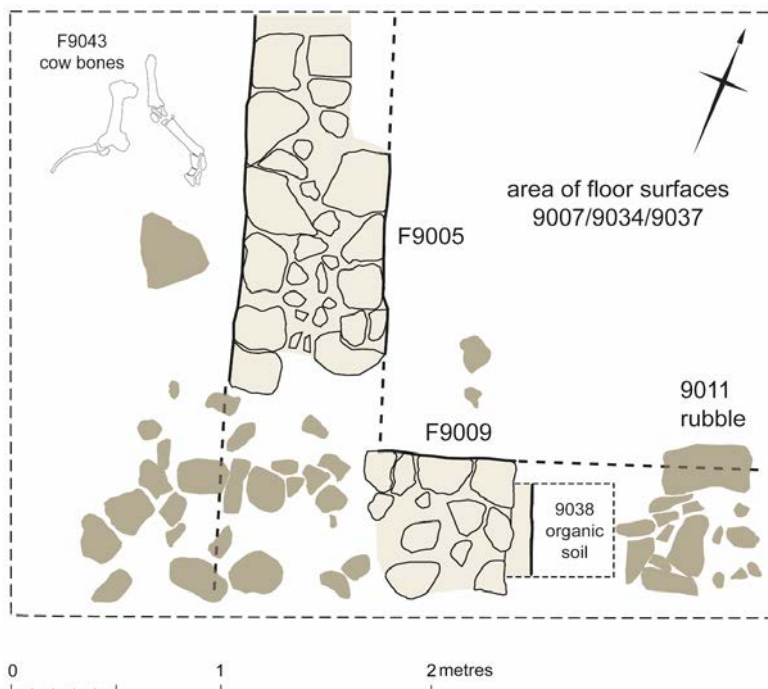
The evidence from Trench 9 and Trench 3 allow us to infer that Building 2 most probably had a total internal width of 5m and length of 10m - suggesting it was laid out deliberately with proportions of 2:1. We shall never know for certain how tall the building stood though the thickness of the walls could have supported a second storey, with the upper floor perhaps supported with internal stone piers or wooden posts. Constructional details such as these may still be preserved below the rubble deposits in the interior of the building. Though a later insertion, the internal north-south wall F9022 could also have contributed support to an upper floor.

The section of fine ashlar on the south wall may have been the base of a pilaster, potentially one of a series spaced along the south side of the building to make an architecturally impressive facade looking out over the vale. It might also have been the external expression of an internal feature such as a chimney. The extensive robbing of the south-east and north-east corners might also indicate that the building had ashlar quoins.

The stepped masonry plinth on the outside of the north wall exposed in Sondage A is difficult to interpret and of uncertain length as it was only partially exposed in the sondage. No evidence of the plinth was noted in Sondage C to the west or at the north end of Trench 3 in 2018. However it is possible that in some way we have yet to understand, the feature is connected with the offset in the alignment of the north wall of Building 2 between Trenches 3 and 9. The upper step abutted the lower course of the north wall so the plinth could well have been added some time after Building 2 was erected. However, like the north and south walls of Building 2, the lower step rested on stone rubble suggesting the steps were part of the original construction and founded on the same stone raft that underpins the main walls. The plinth could have been an architectural embellishment as well as strengthening the base of the north wall. Alternatively the plinth may have been part of an external feature now lost such as steps to an upper floor or a chimney. Insufficient pottery was recovered from deposits associated with Building 2 to establish a date for construction. However, if Building 1 existed in the second half of the 12th century then it is conceivable that Building 2 was constructed sometime in the late 12th century or first half of the 13th century, but more secure dating evidence is needed.

### Phase 4 - Building 3

The remains of this building were confined to Sondage C at the north-east corner of the trench. They consisted of two lengths of stone wall at right angles to each other divided by a 0.5m wide gap (Figure 16). It is possible that the two walls originally joined and that the corner was destroyed when the building was demolished. A floor surface occupied the space between the two walls indicating that they defined the corner of a room. The north-south wall (F9005) was 0.65m wide and constructed with roughly-shaped facing stones and a rubble core. No evidence of bonding material was noted though mortar still adhered to the face of several stones on the west side indicating the face had been rendered. There was also no evidence of any floor on the west side of F9005 suggesting Building 3 did not extend any further to the west and that F9005 was a rendered exterior wall. The east-west wall (F9009) was similarly quite roughly constructed but only the internal face lay within the trench. F9009 terminated on the east with a neatly constructed wall face indicating that there may have been an opening here possibly leading outside the building or into another room to the south. It was established by a small exploratory excavation that at this point five courses of the wall survived to a depth of 0.4m with the bottom course resting on the dark soil deposit noted above (layer 9038). There was an area of stone rubble further east (9011) on the line of F9009 but this was not a continuation of the wall and is most likely where stone rubble had accumulated within the putative entrance when Building 3 was demolished.



The floor surface between the two walls comprised shale fragments along with several much larger tile-like pieces in a grey soil matrix (9007). A spread of powdery mortar (9034) below the shaley layer had probably acted as the foundation for a floor made of thin slabs of shale. Below 9034 was another floor surface consisting of a hard compact layer of small pebbles in a mortary matrix with some large fragments of shale (9037). This was not excavated.



Figure 16. (above plan of Building 3 and (below) view south with shale pieces used as flooring visible in the foreground.

### Interpretation

Building 3 was more lightly constructed than Building 2 as it had narrower walls and poorer quality masonry construction. In all probability the stone walls were not carried up to roof height and the superstructure was instead constructed of timber. The small amount of rubble overburden compared to that across Building 2 supports this interpretation. The sequence of floor surfaces recorded between the two walls suggests that it was a fairly long-lived structure especially as more surfaces undoubtedly exist below the lowest one excavated.

Due to the destruction of the north-east corner of Building 2, no direct relationship was observed between Buildings 2 and 3. The east-west wall of Building 3 (F9009) was built on soil and contrasts with Building 2 whose walls were founded on a stone rubble raft. This difference suggests the two buildings were not contemporary although they follow the same alignment. Although not certain, in all likelihood Building 3 is the later of the two.

Evidence that the north-south wall F9005 formed the west side of Building 3 means that it did not extend west in front of Building 2. It may have extended south along the east end of Building 2 and possibly north to where very similar walls to Building 3 were found in Trench 7 in 2019. Not only were the walls similar in construction but there was evidence for shale roof tiles being reused for flooring. While it is possible that these remains formed one building, though 11m apart, it is more likely that there was a range of structures of similar construction extending northwards from Building 2.

It seems likely that the damage observed to Building 3 where it abutted the north-east corner of Building 2 was caused when the latter building was demolished and its corner stones, possibly of fine ashlar, were robbed. This implies that Building 3 was no longer in use when Building 2 was levelled and that both buildings had been abandoned.

## Phase 5 - Abandonment and Demolition

A deposit of stone rubble revealed after the removal of topsoil was almost wholly confined to the footprint of Building 2. There was little rubble in Sondage A on the exterior of the north wall or in Sondage C overlying the foundations of Building 3. The rubble was thickest over the south side of Building 2 in Sondages D and E and it is likely that the deposit continues for a few more metres to the south towards the crest of the hill. The excavation determined that the rubble had accumulated in two episodes beginning with collapse and followed by demolition giving rise to distinctly different deposits as described below. The same two rubble deposits were noted in Trench 3 in 2018 but the significance of the difference was not understood at that time.

The collapse of Building 2 left a rubble deposit of angular stones in a compacted orange/brown clayey soil tending to a sandy consistency in places (9029). A large number of complete and broken stone roof tiles were recovered from this deposit in Sondages D and E. In Sondage E layer 9029 overlay the broken edge of the projecting architectural feature on the south side of Building 2 indicating it had been robbed before the building started to collapse. Two blocks of moulded ashlar found in Sondage E on the exterior of the building at the base of the south wall had probably been discarded as not suitable for reuse during this same phase of robbing. Both these stones had traces of whitewash adhering to them (Figure 17). On the north side of Building 2 several deposits of collapse debris were recorded beyond the north wall in Sondage A. These comprised several layers of mid-brown coloured soil (9014 and 9019) with a distinct horizon of yellow sandy soil abutting the wall itself (layer 9015). The stone content of these deposits was far less compared to the collapse debris 9029 covering the interior of the building.



*Figure 17. Photographs of the two whitewashed ashlar pieces found on the south side of Building 2 in Sondage E. (Photographs N. Clarke)*

The collapse deposit 9029 was overlain by a further deposit of rubble that extended across the entire area of Building 2 (layer 9016). It comprised angular rocks of various sizes in a loose grey soil (Figure 18). In places the stone was jumbled so randomly as to create voids which was particularly the case in Sondage B abutting the inside of the north wall. The layer probably resulted from the smashing up, selective robbing and final levelling of the last upstanding remains of Building 2 which may have occurred long after the initial collapse, explaining the different character of the two rubble deposits.



*Figure 18.*  
*View looking east of the stone demolition rubble 9016 against the north wall of Building 2 (F9013).*

### **Phase 6 - Later activity**

The final levelling of Building 2 created the distinct mound that is the earthwork that survives on the site today and which was restored after Trench 9 was backfilled at the end of the 2021 excavation. A deposit of topsoil around 0.2m thick accumulated over the rubble mound (layer 9001) and over the remains of Building 3 in Sondage C (layer 9008 overlain by layer 9004). The 2016 earthwork survey noted a sub-rectangular depression on the north edge of the mound on the line of what we now know is the north wall of Building 2. The feature was interpreted in 2016 as an unrecorded archaeological excavation. The east half of this feature lay within Trench 9 (F9003) and was found to be a vertical-sided pit containing a 0.3m thick deposit of mid-brown loam (layer 9002) almost indistinguishable from the topsoil layer 9001 through which the feature cut (Figure 19). It was positioned almost exactly on the line of the south wall of Building 2 (F9013) and had disturbed the stonework suggesting the feature was an attempt to locate blocks for reuse rather than an archaeological excavation.



The leg bones of a cow were found in a shallow cut (F9043) at the northwest corner of Sondage C. This appeared to be a recent burial and the bones were left in-situ.

*Figure 19. View looking east of pit F9003 on line of the north wall of Building 2.*

## 4. Discussion

The size and construction of Building 2 incorporating elements of fine architectural detailing firmly establishes the high status of the Castle Hill site in the medieval period, thereby confirming what was already suspected from the 2018 and 2019 excavations. After the 2021 excavation we can now be more confident that Castle Hill was the site of a medieval residence of manorial rank.

### **Date range**

The 2021 excavation did not find any evidence of occupation from before the medieval period apart from several pieces of prehistoric flint and a sherd of probable Iron Age pottery from the Building 2 collapse layer (9029).

The radiocarbon date establishes that there was medieval activity on the hill top in the first half of the 12th century and possibly even as early as the late 11th century. Represented by a thick deposit of organic soil that predates Building 1, the character of occupation at this period has yet to be determined. The small collection of Staxton Ware pottery from this deposit is early for that industry as the start of production has been dated to the late 12th century (Brewster and Hayfield 1992, 78). The sequence continues with the construction of Building 1, possibly in the second half of the 12th century, and its replacement by Building 2 perhaps in the first half of the following century. Building 3 was constructed after Building 2.

A preliminary assessment of the pottery finds from all three years of excavation suggests that occupation did not continue beyond the middle of the 14th century. Pottery later than this period such as some Humber Wares, Cistercian Ware and continental stonewares (Jennings 1992, fig. 5) are largely absent with earlier Staxton Ware and Scarborough Ware forming the bulk of the pottery from stratified deposits in all three seasons of excavation. Among the few medieval records referring to Brompton is that of a property belonging to the late William de Vescy which was worth nothing in 1314 because the dovecote was dilapidated and the house with its land lay waste (Turton 1897, 203). It was clearly a property of some status given the Vescy connection and the fact that it included a dovecote and it is just possible that this one short reference bears witness to the passing of the Castle Hill site.

Subsequent use of the site for agriculture included the laying out of a series of small embanked closes visible as earthworks across the hill top. These closes are on the same alignment as Buildings 2 and 3 suggesting they were laid out when the remains of these and other levelled buildings coaxial to them were more prominent on the surface than they are today.

## The character of Building 2

With an internal length of possibly no more than 10m, Building 2 is smaller than other excavated medieval manorial buildings of comparable date in the local area (Figure 20). However, despite its size, other features emphasise its importance as a structure. The discovery of the base of a projecting plinth in fine ashlar in Sondage E is evidence that the south facade of the building incorporated fine architectural detailing (Figure 21). The detailing might also have included ashlar quoins explaining why the south-east corner in Sondage D had been so thoroughly robbed. The ashlar is likely to have come from the coast at Cloughton and Hayburn Wyke while the stone used in the rest of the construction is from local sources.

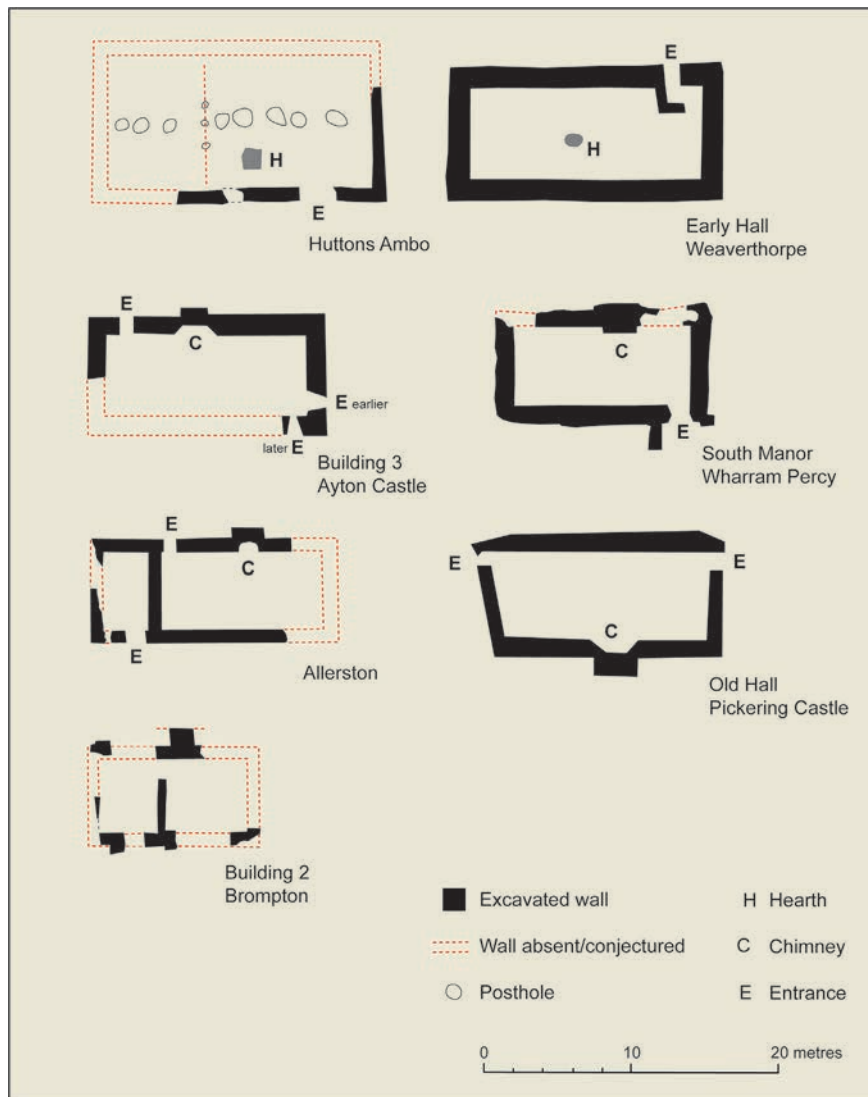


Figure 20.  
*Comparative plans of excavated manorial stone buildings from the local area broadly contemporary with Building 2.*

The two whitewashed pieces of moulded stone found within the demolition rubble in Sondage E on the south side of the building add more information about the architectural detailing of the south facade. One block is coved on two sides at right angles to each other. This suggests that it is the cap to a projecting feature such as a pilaster while the moulding of the second block is confined to one face suggesting it may be from a string course, perhaps below the roof level. The whitewash on these two pieces may mean some elements of the facade were picked out in white for emphasis, although more likely is that the whole exterior was whitewashed but has not survived.



*Figure 21.  
Reconstruction of Building 2 viewed from  
the south. The image was produced for the  
Brompton Heritage Weekend.  
(Image G. Davies)*

The building was probably roofed with limestone tiles at the time of its abandonment given the large quantities of tiles, many of them complete, that were recovered from the collapse debris. Stone roof tiles were used widely in the area in the Middle Ages with outcrops of rocks that could be easily split to make the tiles found in the valleys along the base of the Tabular Hills. Other buildings on the site were probably roofed in a similar fashion accounting for the limestone roof tiles found in previous trenches some distance from Building 2.

The use of shale tiles for roofing is uncommon. Though only small fragments were recovered from the collapse and demolition deposits of Building 2, complete examples with peg holes for fastening to wooden rafters were found re-used as flooring material in Building 3 (see Figure 16b) and in association with the building in Trench 7 in 2019. The shale has been identified by local geologist Prof. Peter Rawson as Kimmeridge Clay which outcrops on the coast at Reighton Sands and is present on the north of the Vale of Pickering including near Brompton. When freshly quarried it would have been a dark grey colour verging on black so would have made a striking impression when used as roofing material, particularly in combination with whitewashed masonry.

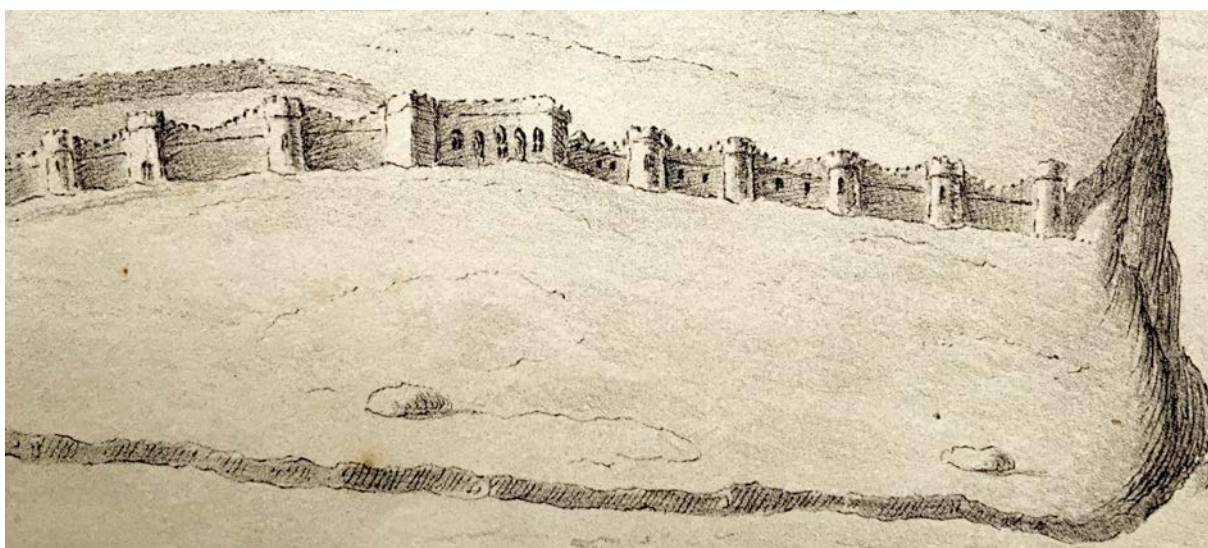
It is uncertain if Building 2 was entirely of stone or if it had a timber superstructure. The ‘Old Hall’ at Pickering Castle is thought to have had a timber superstructure because of the ‘thinness of the foundations’ (Thompson 1958, 20) but at Brompton the north and south walls of Building 2 were probably strong enough to have supported a full height stone wall (Figure 25). The amount of rubble is also a strong indication of a stone-built structure. Less certain is if the building had a second floor or if it was open to the rafters. The early hall at Weaverthorpe (Brewster 1972) and the 13th century stone hall excavated in the 1950s at Huttons Ambo (Thompson and Smith, 1957) both had central hearths implying that there was no intermediate floor between the ground floor and the roof. Also at Huttons Ambo a line of postholes down the presumed central axis of the building probably carried wooden posts supporting the roof structure. In contrast the halls at Pickering Castle, the 13th century hall (Building 3) at Ayton Castle (Rimington and Rutter 1967, 41-3), the manor at Allerston (Rimington 1966) and the undercroft at Wharram Percy South Manor (Milne 1979) all had an external stone setting or plinth to support a chimney stack in the side wall implying there may have been both ground and first floors to heat. Either the plinth of stones on the exterior of the north wall of Building 2 at Brompton or the projecting ashlar on the south wall might have been the external expression of an internal chimney.

The ground floor of Building 2 was divided by a cross-wall 5.5m from the east end of the building (so just slightly beyond the mid point) with the two spaces connected by an opening at the north end. At the

13th-century Allerston manor a stone wall similarly divided the interior of the building (assumed to be the manorial hall) into two rooms. One room was at least half the size of the other and was thought to have been the solar providing private quarters separate from the distinctly larger space which might have been used for communal dining and gatherings. Evidence for a possible solar was also found inside the 18m long hall at Huttons Ambo where a timber screen indicated by a line of small postholes divided the interior into two unequal spaces (Thompson and Smith 1957, 73-4). However the proportions of the two rooms created by the cross wall in Building 2 at Brompton are sufficiently similar to make it unlikely that one was a solar while the other was communal space. Nevertheless it is possible, (though on existing evidence incapable of proof) that Building 2 was entirely given over to private accommodation, like the solar or camera excavated at the South Manor at Wharram Percy, with communal spaces like a manorial hall situated elsewhere on the site.

Building 2 was not a simple replacement of Building 1 as there is a marked difference in alignment (see Figure 4). So little was found of Building 1 that it is impossible to say much about it other than it was probably orientated to the south-west. In contrast Building 2 faced south, looking squarely over the vale, giving it much greater visual impact. Changes in layout, though not always of alignment, were common at manorial sites. At Huttons Ambo traces of a timber hall were found on the same alignment below the much longer stone hall while at Pickering Castle and Weaverthorpe new halls were erected adjacent to their predecessors. At Ayton Castle a more radical change occurred when the existing tower was inserted into a complex of much earlier and more lightly-constructed manorial buildings in the early 15th century.

With the perimeter wall probably abutting, rather than running in front of the building and with white-washed walls and stone tiled roof, Building 2 would have been a prominent feature of the landscape intended to advertise the status of the occupants. It is interesting to speculate that the construction of the new building on the line of a perimeter wall could have been inspired by the royal chamber block at Scarborough Castle on the line of the curtain wall overlooking the town and harbour (Figure 22). This dates to the early 13th century so around the time that Building 2 was possibly constructed (Clark 1997, 247).



*Figure 22. Antiquarian depiction of the royal chamber block at Scarborough Castle on the line of the castle curtain wall. It is possible that Building 2 at Castle Hill was similarly located on the line of the perimeter wall to increase its visibility. Illustration based on a manuscript drawing of 1539 (Cole and Wilson 1824).*



Figure 23. The possible layout of the site based on current understanding of the archaeological evidence. The plan includes mapping based on the 2014 geophysical survey (Lyall 2014) and the 2016 earthwork survey (Evans et al. 2016).

### The wider site (Figure 23)

The discovery of Building 3 at the north-east corner of Building 2 was unexpected as it was not evident as an earthwork. Nevertheless it points to the possibility of a range of buildings continuing at least as far as the area of Trench 7 where similar foundations were discovered in 2019. As was noted earlier, Building 3 did not extend beyond the north front of Building 2 whereas the foundations uncovered in Trench 7 sit much further to the west. One possible interpretation of this limited evidence is that this range of buildings was L-shaped in plan defining the east and north sides of a courtyard-like area with Building 2 on the south forming the third side. The addition of structures to a major manorial building also occurred locally at Weaverthorpe Manor where a group of later buildings clustered around three sides of the 13th century ‘Great Hall’ with access into the hall at two points (Brewster 1972, 123-4). At Castle Hill, the most likely interpretation based on the available evidence is that Building 2 was a residence, as was suggested above, and that the adjacent structures may have included a hall and a service range providing store rooms, workshops and kitchen.

The discovery of how closely the overlying mound of demolition rubble matched the footprint of Building 2 directs attention towards the possibility of other building remains beneath the large flat-topped and straight-sided mound towards the north of the field. This has been interpreted as the mutilated remains

of a castle motte (I'Anson 1913, 332) but this does not seem very convincing. More plausible is that, as with Building 2, the earthwork is an extensive spread of rubble that indicates the sites of further masonry buildings. Plausibly these stood adjacent to the northern continuation of the perimeter wall indicated to continue along the mound's west and north-west sides by the 2014 geophysical survey. Added weight is given to the likelihood of building remains in the area of this mound by previous observations and discoveries. The Scheduled Monument description notes traces of stonework along the eastern edge of the mound which is also near to where Trench 1 in 2018 encountered a 0.6m thick deposit of angular stone fragments in an orange-brown clay (layer 1003) similar to the collapse deposit (layer 9029) overlying Building 2. The remains of a medieval building on the south edge of the mound comprising a hearth (F8016) and short length of stone wall (F8012) were found in Trench 8 in 2019.

The 2021 excavation has delivered a new level of understanding about the medieval complex on Castle Hill. The evidence provided by the excavation of Building 2 allows meaningful comparisons to be made between the Castle Hill site and other manorial complexes in the area. The unexpected discovery of Building 1 and deposits pre-dating it emphasise that we have much to learn still about earlier phases of medieval occupation of the hilltop. Building 3 raises questions about the wider layout of the site, including the possibility of a range of buildings contemporary with Building 2 extending to the north. Finally, the siting and architectural detailing of Building 2 indicates the occupants of Castle Hill attached importance to the conspicuous display of their wealth and status - though we may never know for certain who they were.

## 5. Acknowledgements

The landowners and tenant farmer are thanked for giving permission for the excavation and Keith Emerick of Historic England gave advice on the project design and the application process to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent. Chris Evans provided considerable help with the planning of the excavation.

The excavation was directed by Trevor Pearson and supervised by Chris Hall and Elaine Jamieson. The work was undertaken by Marion Adamson, Martin and Jan Bland, Peter Chaplin, Ann and Nigel Clarke, Stephen Clothier, Gareth Davies, Mark Franklin, Camilla Frankiss, Peter French, Stephen Gandolfi, Dawn Haida, Phil Hibbard, Faye and Gill McClean, Dan Normandale, Sue Ogilvy, Mick Panton, Jen Ryan, Robin Siddell, Simon Temlett, Andy Volans and Danny Wilson who are collectively thanked for their hard work and for all that they achieved during those ten autumn days on Castle Hill.

Andy Volans with Phil Hibbard delivered the site tours during the excavation open day on Saturday 18 September. Gareth Davies is thanked for transporting the tools and Mr and Mrs Deehan of Castle Hill House for storing them. Photographs not separately credited were taken by Chris Hall or Trevor Pearson with drone photography by Simon Temlett. The report was written and illustrated by Trevor Pearson and edited by Chris Hall and Elaine Jamieson. Prof. Peter Rawson is thanked for identifying the geological source of some of the building stones and roof tiles while architectural historian Jane Grenville kindly commented on several items of worked stone from the excavation after being sent photographs.

It is a pleasure to record the support for the project from the villagers of Brompton in particular Helen Scott of 'Lizzies Arty Fact & Fiction' coffee shop on the High Street and Dianne Ford and Ann Tidd who organised the Brompton Heritage Weekend held on 18 and 19 September 2021. A brief report on the work appeared in the village newsletter while field team members Gareth Davies, Gill Hodgson and Simon Temlett participated in the heritage weekend demonstrating various aspects of the Society's work at the village hall and talking to visitors about the discoveries on Castle Hill. The Brompton Local History Society kindly paid for the radiocarbon date.



*The 2021 excavation team. Several members were absent when the photograph was taken.*

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## Appendix 1. Radiocarbon dating certificate



Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre

Rankine Avenue, Scottish Enterprise Technology Park, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0QF, Scotland, UK  
Director: Professor F M Stuart Tel: +44 (0)1355 223332 Fax: +44 (0)1355 229898 www.glasgow.ac.uk/suerc



### RADIOCARBON DATING CERTIFICATE

15 December 2021

<b>Laboratory Code</b>	SUERC-101402 (GU59367)
<b>Submitter</b>	Trevor Pearson Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society 4c Dunslow Court Eastfield Scarborough YO11 3XT
<b>Site Reference</b>	Brompton Castle Hill BC21 9042
<b>Context Reference</b>	9042
<b>Sample Reference</b>	BC21 9042
<b>Material</b>	Charcoal
<b><math>\delta^{13}\text{C}</math> relative to VPDB</b>	-25.7 ‰
<b>Radiocarbon Age BP</b>	934 ± 24

**N.B.** The above  $^{14}\text{C}$  age is quoted in conventional years BP (before 1950 AD) and requires calibration to the calendar timescale. The error, expressed at the one sigma level of confidence, includes components from the counting statistics on the sample, modern reference standard and blank and the random machine error.

Samples with a SUERC coding are measured at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre AMS Laboratory and should be quoted as such in any reports within the scientific literature. The laboratory GU coding should also be given in parentheses after the SUERC code.

Detailed descriptions of the methods employed by the SUERC Radiocarbon Laboratory can be found in Dunbar et al. (2016) *Radiocarbon* 58(1) pp.9-23.

For any queries relating to this certificate, the laboratory can be contacted at [suerc-cl4lab@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:suerc-cl4lab@glasgow.ac.uk).

Conventional age and calibration age ranges calculated by :

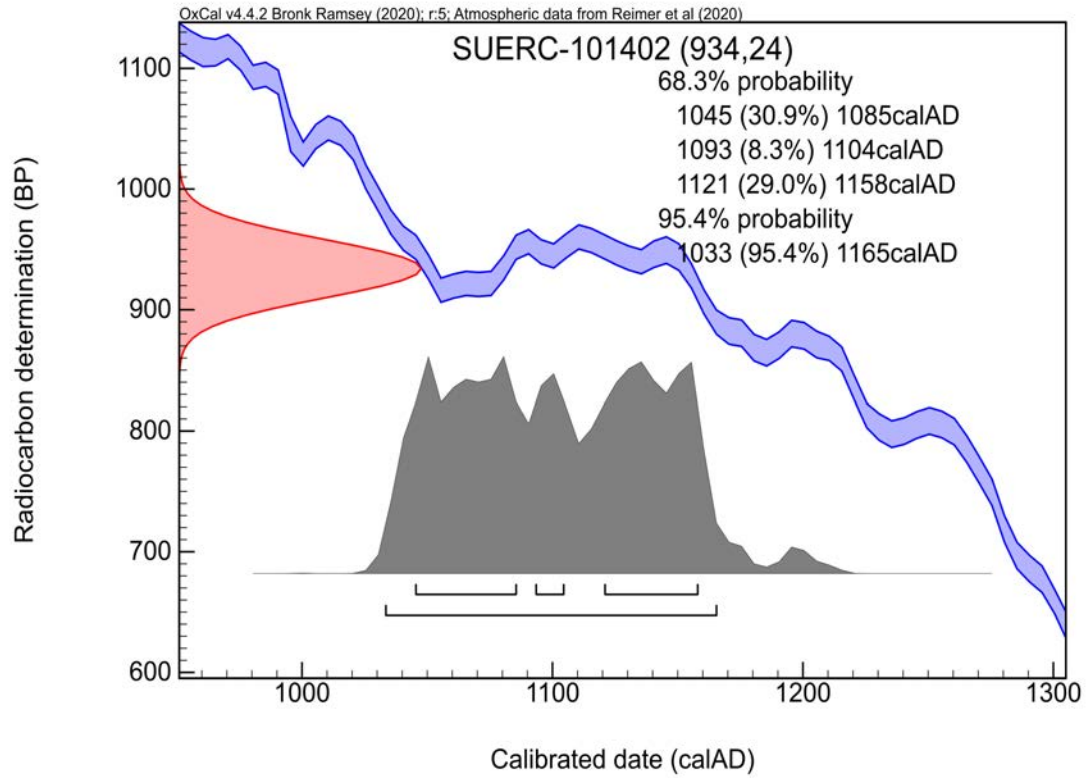
Checked and signed off by :



The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401



The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336



The radiocarbon age given overleaf is calibrated to the calendar timescale using the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit calibration program OxCal 4.\*

The above date ranges have been calibrated using the IntCal20 atmospheric calibration curve†

Please contact the laboratory if you wish to discuss this further.

\* Bronk Ramsey (2009) *Radiocarbon* 51(1) pp.337-60

† Reimer et al. (2020) *Radiocarbon* 62(4) pp.725-57

## Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society Fieldwork Reports

Interim 37	An archaeological evaluation at the lounge site, Harcourt Place	2004
Interim 38	An archaeological evaluation excavation at the site of the former 23 Quay Street, Scarborough	2006
Interim 39	An archaeological excavation at Auborough Street, Scarborough	2010
Report 40	Investigation of a pre-historic square enclosure at Racecourse Road, Seamer Moor	2013
Report 41	An archaeological excavation at 34 Queen St, Scarborough	2013
Report 42	Archaeological Investigation into a Linear Earthwork at Seamer Moor, Scarborough	2013
Report 43	Archaeological excavations at 60-62 Quay St, Scarborough	2020
Report 44	Archaeological investigations on land at Raven Hall Rd, Ravenscar, North Yorkshire	2014
Report 45	Archaeological investigations at Ayton Castle, West Ayton, North Yorkshire	2013
Report 46	An earthwork survey of Castle Hill, Brompton	2016
Report 47	Raincliffe Woods Archaeological Survey: December 2015 - April 2016	2016
Report 48	An excavation at Castle Hill House, Brompton	2018
Report 49	An Archaeological Survey of Forge Valley, Raincliffe and Row Brow Woods, Scarborough, North Yorkshire	2018
Report 50	An Excavation at Castle Hill, Brompton	2018
Report 51	A Survey of the forge, Forge Valley, Scarborough	2019
Report 52	An archaeological excavation at Scarborough Castle	2019
Report 53	The 2019 excavation at Castle Hill, Brompton	2020
Report 54	An archaeological survey of an earthwork at Aldby Park, Buttercrambe, North Yorkshire	2021
Report 55	The 2019 and 2021 Excavations at Sawmill Bank Foot, Raincliffe Woods, Scarborough, North Yorkshire	2021
Report 56	The 2021 Excavation at Castle Hill, Brompton, North Yorkshire	2022