

New work at Starr Carr

Excavations have recommenced at the world-famous site of Star Carr, North Yorkshire. This site is about 10,500 years old, and previous excavations have recovered red deer masks, beads, flint, antler and bone tools and a timber platform – the earliest evidence of woodworking in Britain - on which occupation took place.

New work at the site, undertaken by the Universities of Manchester, York and Univeristy College London, recommenced in 2004 with a programme of fieldwalking, which revealed a continuous spread of lithic artefacts over 150m, tripling the known extent of the site. Testpitting and more extensive excavations have followed over the subsequent three seasons which have revealed dense occupation of the dryland areas of the site, with intensive flintknapping and the processing of animal bones.

One of the most important findings of the recent excavations is how much organic preservation has deteriorated in the last 50 years. Bone and antler finds are extremely poorly preserved and need expert conservation to survive. Environmental specialists who have visited the site have estimated there may only be five or ten years before the organic material, which has made the site so justly famous, is gone for ever. It is in this context that future work on the site is urgently needed: We are exploring whether the site can still be saved through conservation measures or whether the only option is to excavate and record the remaining archaeology before it is too late.



Above: In the waterlogged areas timbers have been found at Star Carr, North Yorkshire.

Cayton and Flixton Carrs Wetland Project



*Photo T. Burkinshaw, Star Carr, Aug 2007
One of Grahame Clarke's original trenches re-investigated in 2007.*

The Cayton and Flixton Carrs Wetland Project is working to restore a farmed wetland landscape through Higher Level Stewardship agreements with landowners. Through the scheme farmers can create wet grassland habitat by controlling the water table in their fields. A system of sluices in adjacent ditches results in damp soils, benefitting declining wildlife as well as archaeological preservation. Wet grassland will support breeding wading birds and protect both known historic resource such as Starr car (left) and unexplored historical resources.

Funding Partners: Natural England, the Environment Agency, Scarborough Borough Council, the RSPB, North Yorkshire County Council.

Contact: Tim Burkinshaw, Wetland Project Officer 01723 374079

www.caytonflixtoncarrs.org.uk

Recent National Trust archaeological research at Beningbrough Hall

The archaeological interests and activities of the National Trust are extremely broad and varied, as is admirably demonstrated by recent works at Beningbrough Hall, 10 miles north-west of York.

Best known for its stunning early eighteenth century house (home to the northern outpost of the National Portrait Gallery), the property is set in 100 hectares of parkland. This has recently been the subject of detailed historic landscape survey (conducted by Ed Dennison Archaeological Services) highlighting the extensive remains of pre-existing medieval land management, as well as the physical evidence for the staged expansion of the designed landscape. The survey also noticed the detailed remains of the pre-1710 house – and its associated gardens. These have since been recorded in detail by English Heritage and are to be explored further through geophysical survey, and perhaps trial excavations in due course.

Historical archaeology around the house takes advantage of the various interventions required for modern services. Recent work has concentrated on the east side of the house and east service court, revealing many early yard surfaces and service features. Less expected were the remains of the Malmaison house, a specialist garden building. Its special soil needs were ensured with an impervious subsurface layer. This, surprisingly, was formed of large patent ventilator flue tiles. Also present were land drains to remove excess moisture, while the tile also bore the scars of occasional over forceful forking!

Photo credits,
Mark Newman, National Trust

