

# Chapel House Wood Landscape Project Interim Report 2009

## Aims

In 2008 two ends of a curving passage-like feature had been exposed on the western side of building platform DF (Fig. 1). Our aim in 2009 was to see if the ends joined up, and if the rest of the 'passage' contained as many animal bones as were found last year. The south-eastern side of DF was extended to investigate the apparently 'open' side of the site, next to a large mound of stones. A new area (DJ) was laid out at the foot of the slope on the eastern side of the settlement. This will be used to determine whether material from the site has rolled down the steep slope and collected at the bottom; DJ is a 20m x 4m rectangle which will be sampled in one metre squares as and when manpower permits.

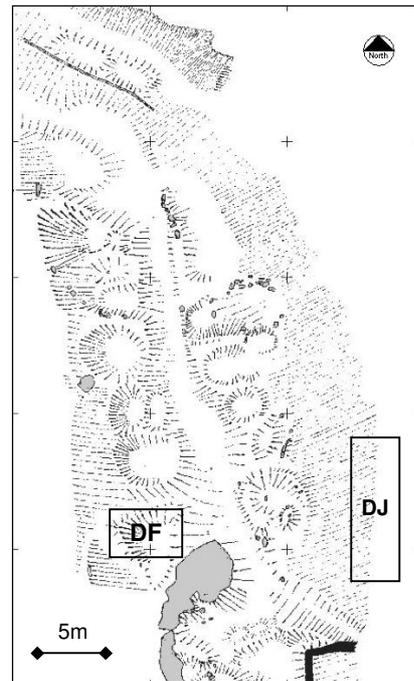


Fig. 1 Location of 2009 excavation

## Methods

The ends of the 'passage' revealed in 2008 were filled mainly with stone intermixed with large quantities of animal bone (contexts 36 and 40, representing the northern and southern ends respectively). It was not clear at that stage whether the two contexts linked up, so this year the excavation was extended westwards with a 6m x 1m strip continuing up the hillside to examine the deposits higher up. Excavation by hand was supplemented by dry-sieving; the new area was recorded by vertical photography coupled with measured surveys of significant features, and the eastern extension was recorded using planning frames.

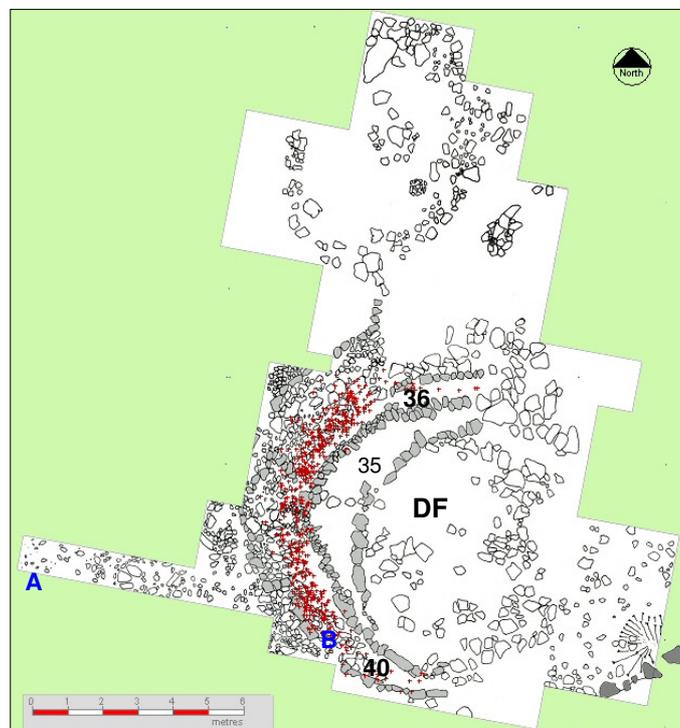
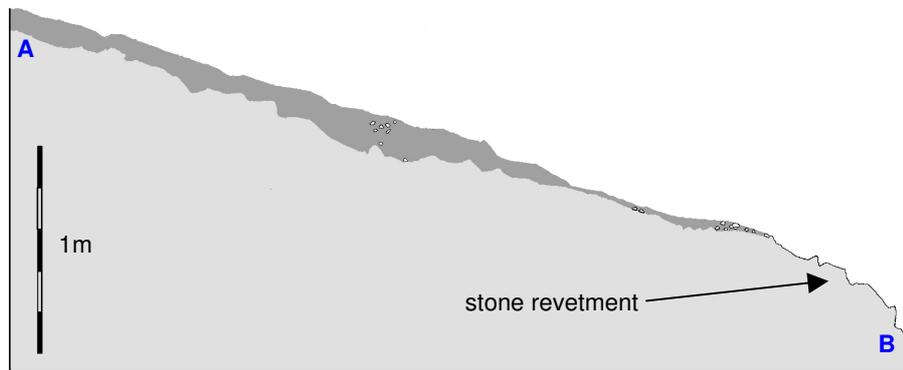


Fig. 2 Site plan at the end of the 2009 excavation, with findspots of bone in context 36/40. Kerbing and revetment stones are indicated by shading. A-B: line of profile in Fig. 3



*Fig. 3 West – East profile showing hill-slope and revetment; see Fig. 2 for location*

## Results

Contexts 36 and 40 do indeed link up, and continued to produce large quantities of animal bone (around 500 individual pieces this year, bringing the overall total to around 1000). The 'passage' effect is created by a rough stone facing at least 0.6m high defining the outside of the bank of stones context 35 (shown on Fig. 2). Separated from this by a gap of around 0.5m is a revetment of the natural hillside (Fig. 3); this is more carefully constructed in the southern portion (defining context 40) than in the northern arc, and there has clearly been slippage from this into the 'passage' at various points.

Further revetment was indicated by lines of larger boulders slightly higher up the hillside. These remain to be investigated in more detail next year, but they appear to enclose a specific arrangement of stones at the apex of the curving 'passage'. At the time of excavation this particular area appeared noticeably damper than the rest of the site.

The eastern extension did not reveal any substantial features to indicate that the curving lines of stones originally continued in a full circuit; the end of a shallow ditch against the outside of the stone mound did not contain any noticeably different deposits.

Apart from the large quantity of animal bones, finds this year included a small iron ring and a flat bone fragment decorated with incised lines and cross-hatching. Animal bone was also recovered from sample pits in area DJ, indicating that there may be an accumulation of material at the foot of the slope below the settlement.

## Conclusions

The work this year has raised new and exciting questions that require further investigation. The concentration of bones in 36/40 could have arisen from a number of different processes, and we need to investigate, for example, whether they have just collected there by accident or if they were deliberately placed. The dampness at the apex of the 'passage' could be a natural consequence of drainage down the hillside, but this feature may originally have provided access to a water supply; similarly, the shallow ditch on the eastern side of DF may be related to drainage. Preliminary inspection of the animal bones has again revealed signs of butchery and working; the decorated fragment is very similar to a piece of knife-handle found in the Roman fort at Ilkley. The overall plan suggests a D-shaped structure with a straight, possibly open, side facing east, and further structures or revetment may exist on the western side. So far it has not been possible to identify comparable structures on other Romano-British upland sites.

Further updates will be posted on the Trust's website [www.ydlrt.co.uk](http://www.ydlrt.co.uk) under 'Chapel House Wood Project' as post-excavation work continues through the winter.

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26.8.2009