

Prehistoric Bordley: Ladders and Factories

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Introduction

Bordley Township is located between Threshfield and Malhamdale in the east and west, Arncliffe in the north and Hetton to the south (Fig 1). The township is a quiet backwater with no road running through and there are five farms, all in the south. Evidence for prehistoric land use is primarily in the north, and consists of enclosures, field systems and hut circles with lithic scatter, all of which have been located during field walking and walkover surveys.

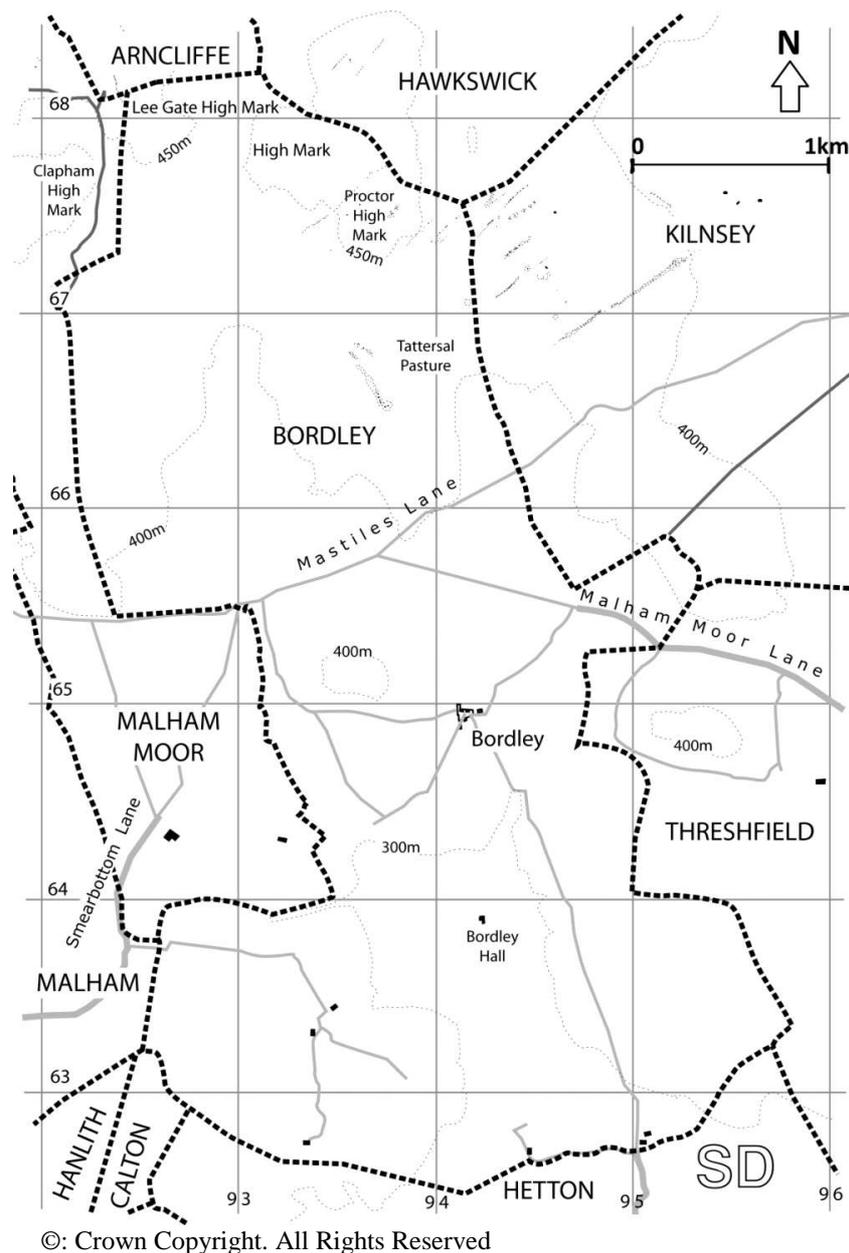


Fig 1: Bordley Township, modern boundaries (after Heward 2010, 17)

The Geology of Bordley Township

The majority of settlements are in the north of the township on a contour of between 420m and 500m; the lowest is one in the south at 250m. The bedrock geology is limestone of the Wensleydale group in the north and grits in the south, divided by the Craven faults. In some cases limestone outcrops and pavements in the north provide a setting for the enclosures and dwellings, making them difficult to define.

Evidence of fossilised plant material is abundant in the north including brachiopods, coral and tree bark. To the south are the Pendlegrit formations with thicker soils and peat deposits on higher ground. Although water is scarce in the north, a spring line provides water along the 460m contour centred on NGR: SD 93493 67952 to the normally dry limestone landscape.

Background



Fig 2: ripples flaked transverse arrowhead

Fig 3: leaf-shaped arrowhead

Despite a lack of systematic field walking exercises looking for lithics, many have been found in the township. These include a rare example of a fragment of a ripple flaked, hollow base, transverse arrowhead dated between 2500 to 2100 BC (Fig 2) (Dodsworth 2012). The ripple pattern, which is very low relief, has possibly been worked using a bronze tip at the end of an antler point. Amongst other finds are a leaf-shaped arrowhead (Fig 3), a fragment of a knife and a double-hinged, reworked chert burin located on a likely ‘factory’ site in the north-west part of the township plus a great deal of flint scrapers (Evans. pers. comm. 2011). The leaf-shaped arrowhead was

located close to one of two sites in the east of the township below Mastiles Lane and close to a hut circle with several smaller associated enclosures surrounded by a larger enclosure at an elevation of 390m. Other enclosures which may or may not be contemporary with this site are scattered at a higher 400m elevation centred on SD 95293 65752.

Enclosures and settlements

One of the sites in the north of the township is full of irregular shaped enclosures including a guidance arm which terminates in a hut circle high on the slopes of the hillside and adjacent to a plateau which holds a complex sub-circular enclosure surrounding several sub-divisions – pens/folds, leading in to a double-walled feature – potentially a ‘wall passage’ (Raistrick and Holmes). To the north of these enclosures and high on the valley side, a walled terrace contains several possible pens/huts seen as tumbled earthworks (Fig 4).

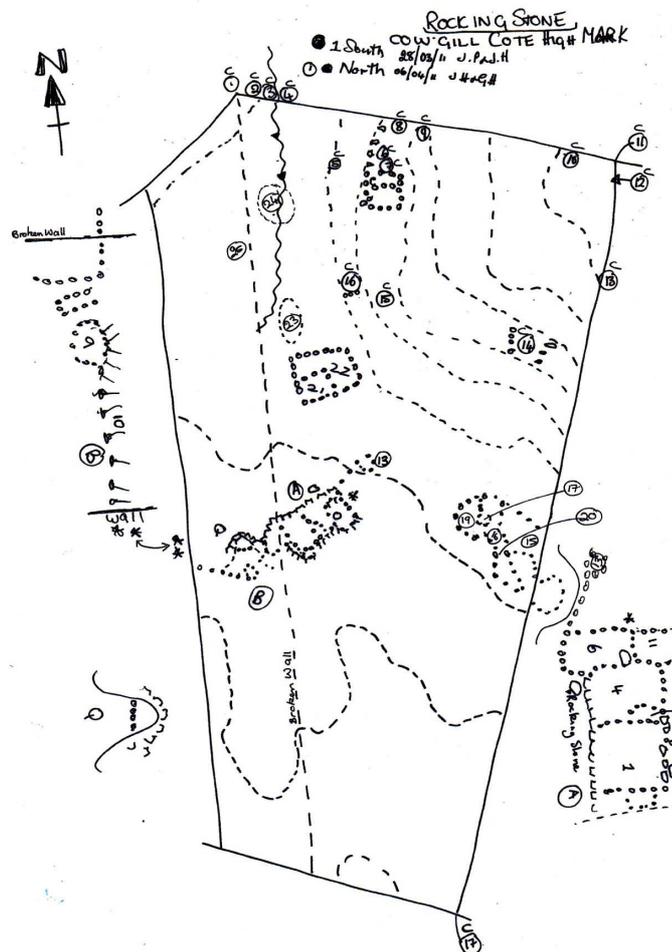


Fig 4: Cow Gill High Mark walk-over survey data showing prehistoric enclosures

Tattersal Pasture, in the north-east of the township holds many secrets! The field contains a multitude of enclosures and features (Fig 5). At an elevation of 430m a series of several irregular shaped enclosures lie on a steep hillside on a 45° slope on a southern alignment. Tucked in to the base of the hill and adjoining the former are several smaller sub-circular enclosures/dwellings.



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Fig 5: enclosures in Tattersal Pasture

There are three potential barrows within the township. All stand proud on high ground, in the north of the township. One in particular is tucked into the rear of a natural bend in the rocky outcrop which circumnavigates Proctor High Brow. Rows of stones enclose the barrow whilst allowing other prominent hill top features to be seen from this site in the landscape to the south.

There is also evidence in some areas of the township of earthworks which suggests ladder enclosures, drove ways and large livestock holding areas similar to those found on the Yorkshire Wolds (Derych 2012). The ladder enclosures are situated in the base of steep sided valleys, enclosures which stretch up the steep high sides seemingly almost too steep for livestock!

Future work

Further exploration in the form of geophysical and topographical survey will hopefully help us to understand the settlements more. It is hoped to follow this work up with a series of excavations in the future.

Bibliography

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