

PENDLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

A summary report of two excavations at Burholme near Dunsop Bridge.

In 1985 and 1988-9 two excavations were carried out at Burholme by the Pendle Heritage Centre Archaeological Group the forerunners of PAG. The first was to locate and verify the site of the former chapel and the second of an unknown feature. This research was initiated by John Dixon of the Whalley and District Historical and Archaeological Society who also took part.

Historical background

It is possible that the site is of pre-conquest date in which case the name, like so many in the area, is of Norse origin: BUR-BURG being a fort or town or BUR-BEORG being a hill or mound. The second element HOLME-HOLMR meaning flat land by a river. In other words the hill above the river.

At the time of the Domesday Survey Burholme was held by Roger de Poitou, Lord of the Honor of Clitheroe. He forfeited his lands in the early twelfth century and they were given to Robert de Lacy, who formerly held the lands under Roger. Robert de Lang forfeited the lands though siding with the King's enemies and they were given to Hugo de Laval in 1114. In 1135 the lands came into the possession of Ilbert de Lacy eventually passing to the House of Lancaster and then to the Crown. Burholme was first mentioned in the accounts of John De Radcliffe of Clitheroe Castle 1341-42 when it was then a vaccary (cow pasture).

The woodmote court was held at Burholme and later at Whitewell. The court existing to preserve the rights of the lord of the Manor and to punish acts of theft, poaching and trespass. The Halmote or Chief Court of Bolland was held at Slaidburn. The Court rolls are kept at Slaidburn and there is a complete series from 1521 onwards.

On entering the farmyard at Burholme there is a barn to the right. One stone bears the date 1619 with the initials T. S. (Thomas Swindlehurst). Below this stone is a faded inscription which reads "I Jane love for true to w—an- faithful I will be. It is interesting to speculate that the Jane in the inscription is one of the Janes mentioned above.

There is evidence for a chapel at Burholme. Whittaker in his History of Whalley refers to vestiges of another and more ancient place of worship not far from Burholme Bridge – more ancient than the Chapel at Whitewell. This is borne out by local tradition. There is an old stone front at St. Hubert's Chapel at Dunsop Bridge bearing a metal plate stating that it was found at Burholme. It is suggested that the chapel at Burholme (possibly a Cistercian chapel of ease), was moved to Whitewell around 1422 at a time

when extensive alterations were carried out to the manor and chapel at Whitewell. From this it can be seen that in the fourteenth century Burholme was more than a vaccary. It was a hamlet comprising many farmsteads, a woodmote court and almost certainly a chapel. Furthermore it was situated on the ancient direct routes and must have been a place of some importance.

There is evidence of many house platforms in the field to the south of the present farmhouse and also to the north and north east. There is also a hollow way passing to the east of the barn leading up the fell to Newton. The ancient route through the Trough of Bowland passed through Higher Burholme.

In former times the River Hodder followed its course at the foot of the bank below the farm. It is not known when the course of the river changed although it is shown in its present position on the Yates map of 1786.

East of the farm to the south of Fielding Clough there is evidence of shallow mine workings although there is no record of past mining. There is evidence of mining throughout Bolland as far back as the early part of the Roman occupation. The result of a survey by students from Edinburgh University in 1985 showed that there were silver, lead and zinc deposits in Fielding Clough.

Previous Excavation

An excavation was carried out on 10th September 1948 by Father White, priest of St. Huberts Church, Dunsop Bridge to endeavour to find the site of the Burholme Chapel. The site excavated was confirmed by a Mr. Alfred Hazelwood who visited Burholme on 12th September 1986. The site was on a bluff just below the field boundary leading onto the fell. A metalled track ran to the south. A record of excavation is given below¹:-

After several attempts in heaps of sand, a line of stones of large size and roughly shaped, revealed the foundations of a wall.

This wall was calculated to face west so that this might have been the wall of a building that was `orientated` or built to face east like the old church and chapels.

Later the outlines of other walls were traced suggesting a building about 28 ft. x 18ft. In the middle of the eastern wall there appeared the foundations of some projecting part about 7 ft. long x 1½ ft. wide.

A red floor of an ancient pattern similar to some that may be seen in Whalley Abbey, was found on this projection, also parts of others which seemed to prove that whatever this old building was it had been given an expensive type of flooring.

Last to be turned up were a door socket in a heavy stone and a rather massive stone of unusual shape but carved simply by skilled hand. By its shape and design it gave the impression of having served at the top of a pillar or arch as a beam-support or corbel. Unfortunately no more could be excavated.

The objects found by digging show that there was an unusual type of building on this site in the Middle Ages and with the font at St. Huberts, they point to the site of an ancient chapel and to the projection from the eastern wall as the place of an altar.

Site 1. An excavation of the site of the former chapel

An excavation took place in September 1985 (dwg. B85.1). The purpose of this excavation was to re-examine and record the site of Burholme Chapel previously excavated by Father White in 1948. No traces of the former excavation were seen. The site is situated at the easternmost end of a spur of land situated between Fielding Clough and the holloway leading from Burholme to Newton. The building was sited on a clearly defined platform to the south of a field boundary. A short distance to the east the spur was supported by a stone wall, at the bottom of which was a stream. There was a level portion of land forming the tip of the platform to the south east. The area to the south is described as `the orchard` and has been for many generations. There are several platforms in this area. A former metalled track ran to the south of the site. This terminated at the building and ran to the west.

An area of approximately 6 by 8 metres was opened up and traces of former buildings were seen below a thin layer of soil.

An area of stone paving set on clay, approximately 2 by 3 metres was seen near the north wall. Many of the paving stones were water worn. The paving had been laid on the axis of the side walls of the building and this was evident in the direction of the joints.

A fragment of assumed west wall was seen 650mm wide. No mortar was evident in the stonework. The section of walling was set near to the edge of the platform on which the building was sited. This was the only section of external wall seen. A spread of pebbles to the north of the paving could represent the foundations of the north wall, now wholly robbed.

The `ghost` of a wall to the west and south was seen when the surface was freshly trowelled. This shadowing only lasted a matter of minutes until the surface dried out and would be seen as the foundation to the wall. The shadowing was lighter to the inside of the building. An extension trench was opened up at the centre of the east side of the site. Traces of stone set in clay were seen which could indicate the foundation of the east wall. The sub floor at this point was made up of clay and small pebbles which contrasted with the sub floor elsewhere. The floor surface at the east of the site was approximately 300mm below present ground level.

A further excavation on the site was carried out between 21st and 28th September 1986 (dwg. B86.1). A trench 7m by 10m was cut at the east of the site.

The east wall of the building was located and seen to have been constructed of good masonry approximately 600mm wide; there was no evidence of mortar, which could have leached out. The external leaf of facing stones had been robbed out. The south-west corner of the external walling could be identified and a doorway seen at the corner where a two piece threshold with mortices for the jambs was identified. The threshold was heavily worn at its centre. No other remains of the north and south walls remained as they had been completely robbed out.

At the centre point of the inner face of the eastern walls was an area of projecting masonry approximately 1100mm by 400 mm which could relate to the altar identified by Fr. White. However, this was described by him as being in a recess and projecting out from the east wall.

There was no evidence of lime mortar in the stonework but fragments of lime mortar were seen in the surrounding contexts. The interior of the building was made up of the remains of rough stone paving which was largely robbed out and set on yellow brown clay. An area at the north of the trench appeared to have been excavated in recent times.

A spread of river worn cobbles was seen to the south-east corner of the building and to the east approximately 2 m away from the building. The cobbles were laid on a yellow brown clay. A draining channel could be seen approximately 4 m to the north of the building. A morticed stone, possibly a boskin, was seen in the cobbles along the line of the south wall. Adjacent to this was an area of cobbles laid in a circular formation. This was identified as a possible barn although no evidence of external walling was seen.

Finds

Finds recorded on site were minimal. Tipping had taken place in the past in the vicinity. Modern pottery and miscellaneous modern items were seen in the top soil. A few pieces of natural stone roofing slates were also seen together with fragments of coal and some chert.

Discussion

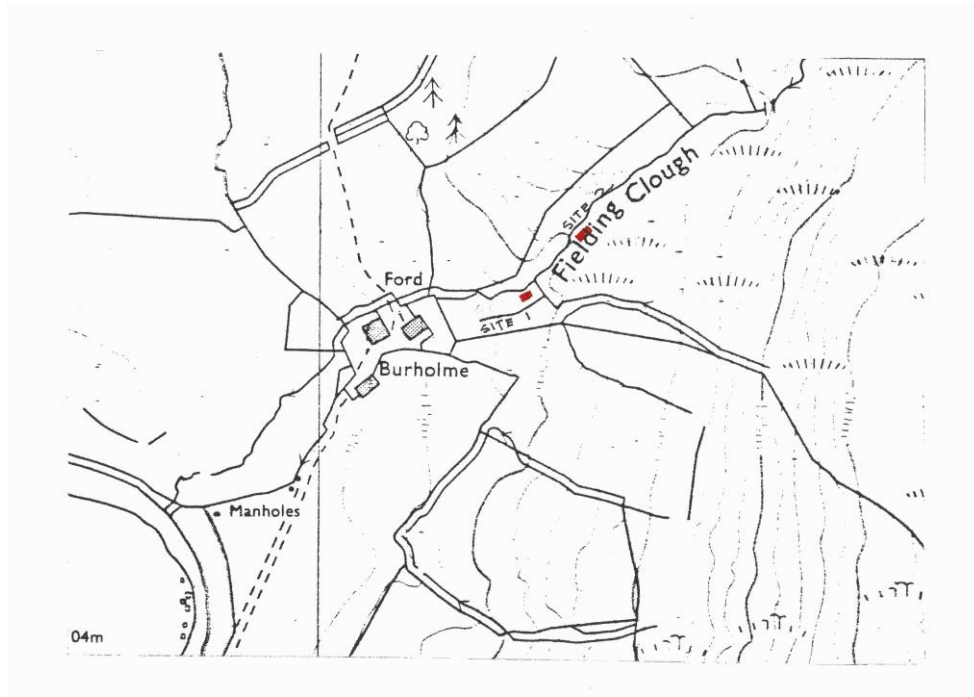
There is no doubt that this was the site excavated by Father White in 1948. The lack of finds on the site would support its use as a chapel. The building has been heavily robbed out with little remaining of the external walls apart from the inner portion of part of the eastern wall. The floor covering of flags has been almost all removed. The roof was constructed with stone roofing slates. It is probable from the span that the roof configuration was that of a close couple or collar roof and not a truss.

From the evidence recorded on site it would appear that the building measured approximately 5.400m by 8.534m (17' 8" by 28'.0") internally. The north-south dimension was taken to the back of the extension trench which is assumed to be the rear wall. The building was orientated on an east-west axis. From the lack of information available on site the building could not be dated. However, from the heavily worn door threshold this could indicate a long period of use.

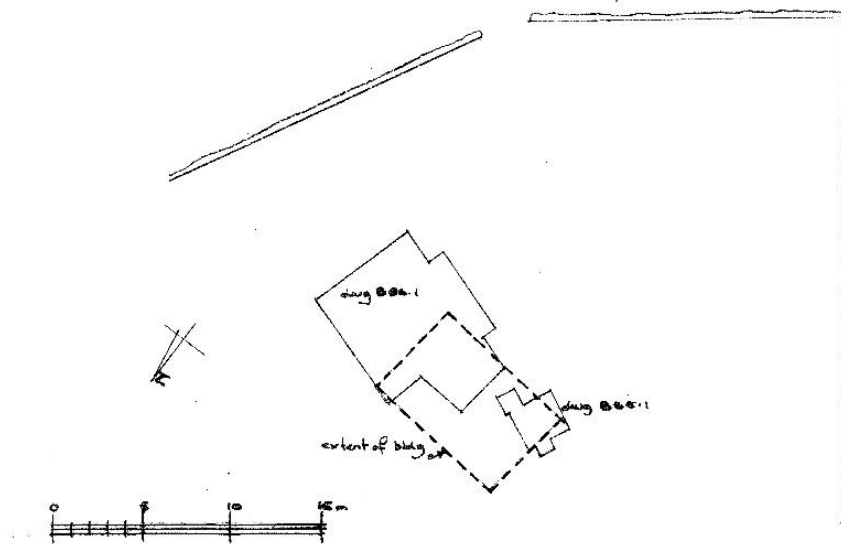
The regular area of cobbles to the east of the site suggests that it related to a former agricultural building with the external walls having been completely robbed out. There was no obvious evidence of any external walling.

Notes

Greenwood, M. and Bolton, C., 1955, *Bolland Forest and the Hodder Valley*.



Site location showing positions of sites 1 and 2.

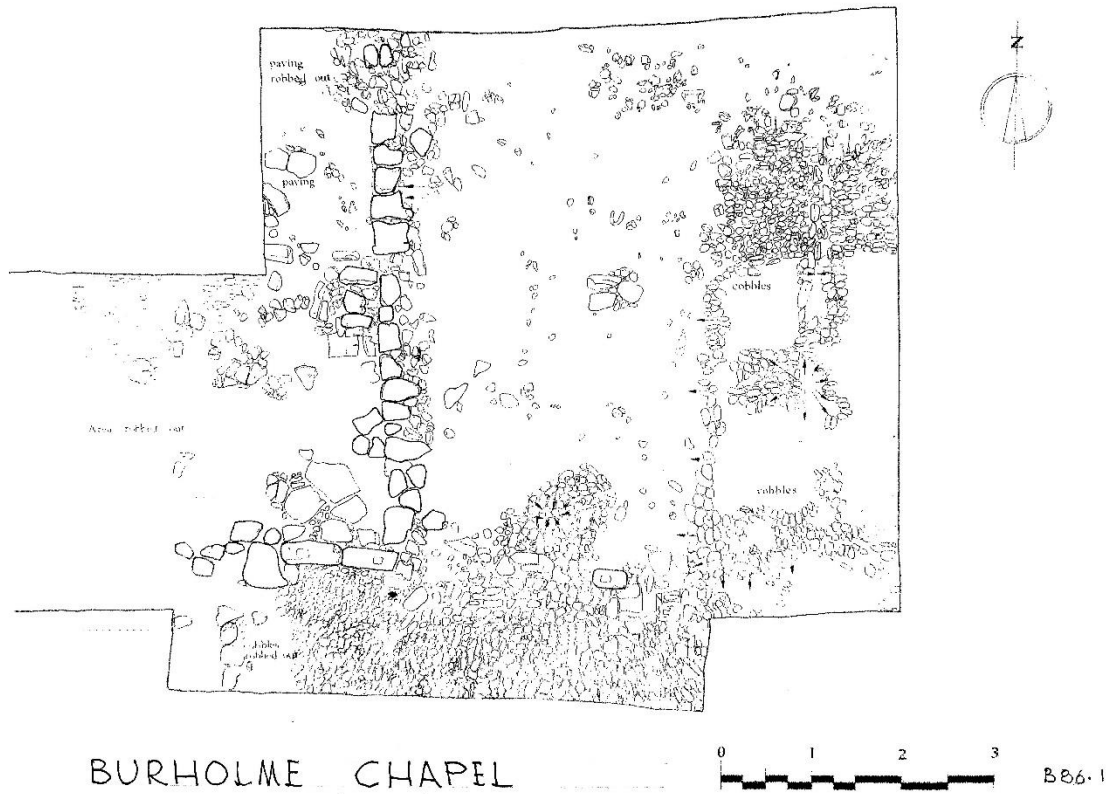


TRENCH PLAN
BURHOLME CHAPEL

Trench plan of site 1



South end of chapel, drawing. B85.1



East end of chapel and barn. Note all the area of cobbles is not drawn, dwg. B86.1



Area of paving to south end of chapel



The east end of the chapel and the area beyond



The cobbled area of the barn at the rear of the site



The threshold to the doorway at the south-east corner from the outside



Cobbles to north of east wall on the line of the south wall

Site 2. The excavation of a probable animal enclosure

The site was identified as an unknown feature situated on a platform in a natural narrow gully to the north-west side of Fielding Clough. Excavations were undertaken during May and August 1988 and May 1989.

Site strip revealed a sub-decagon with a maximum span at its centre of approximately 8m and a length of approximately 10m. The walls were well constructed of stonework some 600mm wide with external and internal facing stones. The lower course only remained with extensive robbing having taken place with some sections having been removed in their entirety, especially to the east and north-east of the site. The stonework was un-mortared but some mortar was seen to the south-west corner

The entrance was positioned at its eastern end where the internal surface was made up of compacted gravel and small pebbles. A large single piece of stone was seen opposite the entrance with a large cross section. This could have been a gate post or possibly a lintol. A pebbled surface was seen to the outside the walling to the south which could extend to an early track way. The ground fell away outside this walling and was revetted. Due to the absence of masonry it was difficult to establish the width of the opening to the east, which could have been around 2m. There was no evidence of any opening at the western end but this could have been robbed out.

The surface within the feature was made up of soft brown/red sandy clay. No occupation level was identified within the feature, which generally was not compacted. Some fragments of lime mortar were seen in the north-west and south-west corners.

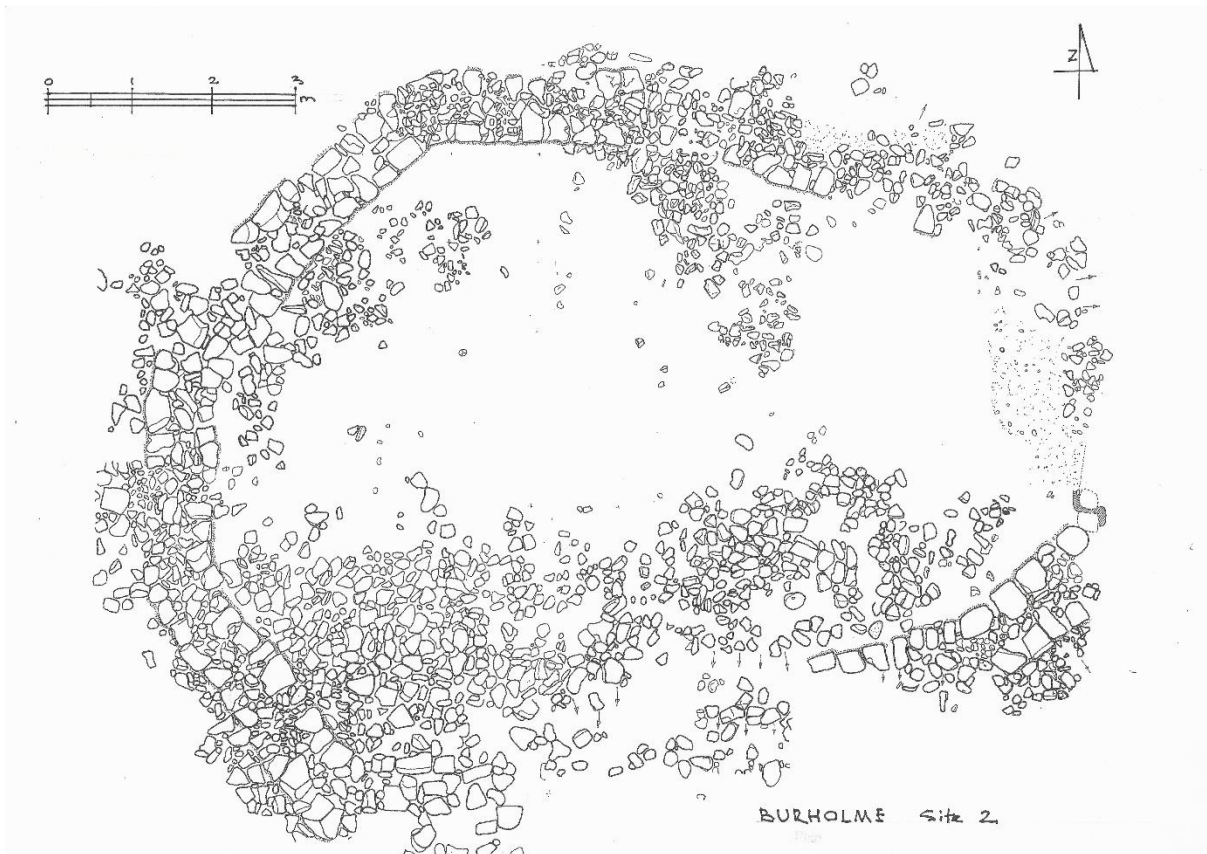
Discussion

Due to its form and position it is almost certain that the feature was an animal enclosure. It is probable that it was used for the collection of sheep prior to dipping in the clough downstream. Access to the feature from the fell was down the south side of the sloping gully where evidence of a trackway could be seen.

The form of the enclosure being a sub-decagon is unusual as is the high quality of the masonry. This could have been mortared due to the presence of mortar on site. The character of the masonry is similar to that of the adjacent chapel, which suggests that they could be contemporary.

From a comparison with a sheepfold on the adjoining fell it was found that the thickness of that walling was c. 600mm and that its quality was much inferior. The entrance was seen to be about 2m.

No finds were seen which supports the proposed use.



Plan of site 2. Animal enclosure



Overview of the site looking to the west



The site looking to the east



Detail of the walling

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks are given to Chris Spence for allowing us unlimited access to the sites and the adjoining land. Acknowledgement is also given to John Dixon for the use of the historical information relating to the site.

