

**Ryedale Vernacular Building Materials Research Group**  
**Report 4/04**  
**Report of Field Meeting held at Sheriff Hutton on Saturday 20 November 2004**

**1.0. Aims for the Day.**

- Search for evidence of industrial activity associated with the building of the Castle
- Record flint scatters
- Search for Bloomery sites
- Record local quarries referenced by Fox-Strangways
- To visit Bulmer Beck Spillway

**2.0. Sheriff Hutton Castle and Village.**

A brave party set out to the Castle to further our knowledge of the rock types used in its construction and to hear reports on local history research and reconstruction models of the Castle. (Dennison 2003)

**2.1. Castle Building Stones.**

As usual the building stones threw up more questions than answers but the following conclusions may be drawn from the ongoing work and which require the original report to be amended (Myerscough 2004)

- The red-brown iron rich shelly limestone within the ashlar wall can traced to Mowthorpe Quarries
- The fossil content is similar to that in the Whitwell Oolite including the bryozoa? Haploecia SP. But the presence of echinoid spines seems to suggest the Dogger from Bilsdale (Fox-Strangways 1892)
- The rock however is unlike Whitwell Oolite and so is assumed to be a Facies within the Dogger
- The iron rich sandstones found as quoins on walls and around windows and doorways may also be Dogger in age as John Ford (BGS) is of the opinion that many of the Mid Jurassic deltaic sandstones found locally may actually be marine (compared with those outcropping on the North Yorkshire Moors)
- New Mid Jurassic sandstone localities can now be added to our reference list as: Snargate Quarry **NGR** (Kent 1980. Plate 14) and Brandsby **NGR** (Fox-Strangways 1881)
- A number of Erratics were found within the ashlar wall and these are still to be identified and provenanced. They are most likely to have come from the Devensian Till that underlies the Castle as well as fragments of Early Jurassic Mudstones (Lias) found within the southern wall and towers
- The presence of High Status building Stones such as Birdsall Calcareous Grit and Hildenley Limestone with latter being recorded in the wall of a local cottage and also at the Church
- The materials for the Castle roof were discussed and a fragment of Brandsby 'slate' appears to have been found in the Castle ditch but as yet has not been identified. It is hoped that other examples will be brought to the 'expert day' on Sunday 13 February

**2.2. The Church.**

Once again much discussion over the main building stones (many from the Castle?) which were identified as:

- Hildenley Limestone (Myerscough 2004)
- The limestones of the Dogger
- Dogger Sandstones
- Other Mid Jurassic Deltaic sandstones
- Birdsall Calcareous Grit
- Shelly Hildenley Limestone or equivalent Malton Oolite Facies (Myerscough 2004)
- 'Millstone Grit type' sandstones in later extensions

- Occasional erratic cobbles

However Caen Limestone has been proposed as a possible contender to the Hildenley Limestone and the sample sent by Professor Windsor is certainly very similar in colour and texture to Hildenley especially Gravestones.

A carving within the Church is known to be made of Caen Limestone and a broken fragment certainly matched our sample but also matched Hildenley Limestone. Samples of both rocks are with John Wright and a result of his work is awaited.

### **3.0. High Stittenham. NGR. 679676**

Following lunch the party set out for High Stittenham either on foot or by car. Both parties were able to undertake landscape studies and collect samples from which the following comments can be made:

- Flint scatters – only a small number of low grade Wolds flint were collected by Geoff Wilson and did not compare with Mesolithic blades from Mowthorpe
- Ironstone nodules were found by Jon Ford at an exposure of the Middle Lias indicating the presence of The Cleveland Ironstone Formation (Rawson and Wright 2000 Table 1) This could be one source for the iron of the bloomeries recorded in the area, as well as the iron rich Dogger
- No pottery or evidence of bloomeries were found
- The ‘limestone’ quarry **NGR 684678** exposed a metre or so of medium grained iron rich sandstone containing an abundance of unidentifiable shell fragments that reacted with acid. The rock was identified as Dogger, but contrasts with the shelly limestones at Mowthorpe NGR and the iron rich unfossiliferous sandstones from Terrington Bank (Fox-Strangways 1881). **NGR 655709**. The houses and buildings at High Stittenham were built of this same rock and the large number of pits and mounds alongside the footpath indicated past quarrying activities
- The Dogger exposed down slope cambering over the underlying Whitby Mudstone Formation (Upper Lias) and following the Centenary Way footpath down the slope a number of springs were observed which made the path muddy and wet. In a field **NGR 685684** alongside the footpath several sets of rotational slips were observed between the Dogger and Whitby Mudstone and between the sandy beds of the Staithes Sandstones (Middle Lias) and the Redcar Mudstone Formation (Lower Lias). It would appear that these slips had been active for many years resulting in the abandonment of the field by the local farmer. There was no evidence of any workings and the features are the result of rotational slippage and not human activity.
- Similar slip features could be observed in a field on the opposite slope above Ings Beck on Hollin Hill **NGR 681689** and are assumed to be of the same origin. Likewise the studied slippage can be observed from Mowthorpe Farm and although they may appear as human in origin the slippage features are natural.
- Although the group did not manage to enter the Bulmer Beck spillway its impact on the landscape was very obvious at Bulmer Bridge **NGR 692675**. As was the East – West fault which cuts out the Early Jurassic along the northern edge of Ox Pasture Wood **NGR 694687** where the prominent ledge formed by the Staithes Sandstone (Middle Lias) is truncated by the fault (Fox-Strangways 1881)

### **4.0. Further Research.**

- Continue with landscape studies on the clay slopes below the Dogger
- Map the exposures either side of Mowthorpe to record Facies change within the Dogger
- Field Walking to collect and record flint scatters and Bloomery sites
- To identify Caen Limestone at Sheriff Hutton Church and other Hildenley Limestone sites?
- To identify Brandsby ‘slates’ from the Castle site

## **5.0. Thanks.**

- Robin Wardell and Tony Wright of Helmsley Archaeological and Historical Society for their historical input and reference material
- Jon Ford of The British Geological Survey for his input and interest in our work
- Geoff Wilson of East Riding Archaeological Society for his flint report
- Derek Gobbett of East Yorkshire RIGS and Hull Geological Society for assistance and interest
- Stephen Gibson and other landowners who allow us to survey on their land
- Dr R. Howarth of Sheriff Hutton Castle for granting access to survey the building stones
- Professor Ian Windsor for supplying Caen Limestone sample
- Dr John Wright for forthcoming analysis of Caen and Hildenley Limestones

## **6.0. References - A full list can be found in the following reports:**

Myerscough, R. D. 2004. Sheriff Hutton Castle and Source Quarries. Report 1/03 (revised 2004). *Ryedale Vernacular Building Materials Research Group*

2004. Hildenley Quarries and Slingsby Castle. Report 2/03 (revised 2004). *Ryedale Vernacular Building Materials Research Group*.

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