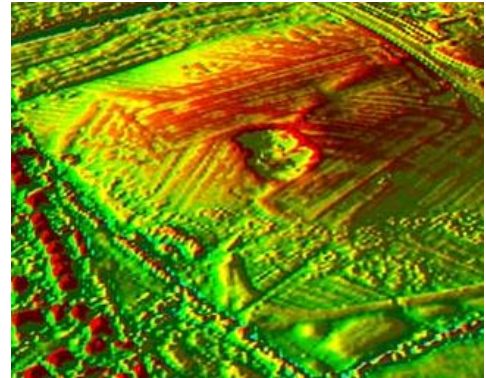




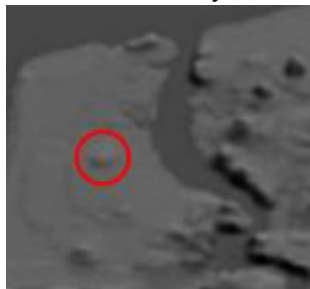
**BOURNE HILL, THORNTON
WYRE ARCHAEOLOGY
EXCAVATIONS
2005/8 – 2014**



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1 BACKGROUND

Bourne Hill, just outside Thornton is probably an outlier of the NW Lancashire Drumlin Field, a group of low round hills left behind after the retreat of the glaciers about 12,500 years ago. It is now, at around 15metres above Ordnance Datum, a



(Image: Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey.) on the Wyre Peninsula and formerly, before land reclamation in the early and mid-20th century, lay close to the south bank of the River Wyre, surrounded by marsh and bog. In prehistoric times it was even closer as sea levels were higher. It enjoys views in all directions; north to the Lakeland Fells, west towards the sea, east towards the central fells and south across the Fylde Peninsula.

2 HISTORY



August 1929 Caption "Road Improvements. View on the new Thornton to Fleetwood Road. The hill on the left has been cut through." (Unattributed photo, discovered by Ted Lightbown)

In the photo above, workmen are widening the Thornton to Fleetwood road close to Bourne (or Burn) Hall, an ancient manor/farm dating back to at least the 14th Century. Now demolished, its location is shown circled on this 2002 Google Earth image (Right). Bourne Hill occupies most of the area in the photo.



On this later photograph (Below right) looking East, taken by our own aerial archaeologist, Frank Smith, a new road junction occupies this area and Bourne Hill fills most of the picture and its 'lumps and bumps' and large sandpit stand out clearly. Towards the bottom of the picture, nearer to the houses but not visible, is a boggy area, marked on old OS maps as a drain that runs around the western and southern edges of the hill, turning eastwards towards the River Wyre. The name 'Bourne' probably derives from Old English 'burn' meaning stream or spring.



The hill certainly has a lot of interesting features: ridge and furrow, mounds and a prominent rectangular enclosure to the left of the sandpit. It appeared to be an ideal spot for an early settlement and the obvious earthworks reinforced this idea. There were also other factors that encouraged this belief. These took the form of local legends: a Roman road led to a ford of the River at Min End, passing close to Bourne Hill; an ancient harbour, Ptolemy's Setantiorum Portus, was synonymous with Wyre Water; Bourne Hill was the site of the 937AD Battle of Brunanburh (the fort/hill of the spring. Michelle Harris WA's Vice-Chairperson first suggested that the hill might be the site of an Iron Age settlement and from 2005 to 2007 Michelle, Chairperson Neil Thompson, and Michelle's partner, member and historian Brian Hughes, accompanied by the then very small band of WA members began a series of excavations to investigate the site.

WYRE ARCHAEOLOGY

Historians' hope for 'Atlantis' of the coast

RESEARCHERS MAY HAVE LOCATED ROMAN PORT AND LINK TO IRON AGE TRAIL

Researchers uncover possible roman port and link to iron age
A CENTURIES-LONG search for Fleetwood's 'Atlantis' could be over.

An iron age settlement has been found at Bourne Hall just over the boundary into Thornton – and researchers believe it could be Portus Setantiorum, a Roman port mentioned in ancient Greek writings, but never identified.

For years historians have argued about the location of Portus Setantiorum, but now the theories may have to be rewritten.

Local archaeologists who have been working on the site say the port could have been on the River Wyre rather than out in Morecambe Bay as previously thought.

Blackpool Gazette / 21st Nov 2007

As WA membership grew, so did interest in Bourne Hill and the conviction that 'something was there' which led to a series of excavations that occupied many weekends for Wyre Archaeology members over a further period of seven years.

Harris and Hughes published accounts of the early excavations in 'Wyre

Archaeology Excavation Reports Supplemental, 2005 – 2007. These will not be revisited here in detail, however, since the main focus of this report is the excavations that took place from 2009 to 2014. These later excavations did, however, in some respects re-examine some of the earlier findings and conclusions. This is not a technical archaeological report but is intended, through photographs, to illustrate how the Bourne Hill excavations progressed; neither is it a blow by blow account!

3 EXCAVATION

The excavations took place from 2005 onwards under the assumption, even conviction, that Bourne Hill was an Iron Age hillfort. Of this there was no substantial doubt; excavation on the level summit of the hill had revealed odd assemblages of stones, and the visible substantial earthworks, banks and ditches reinforced this view. When the site had been visited by the LCC County Archaeologist he also was of the opinion that they were comparable to those of known Iron Age sites in the Lune Valley and suggested that the hill might have had as many as ten roundhouses on its summit. From 2007, therefore, Wyre Archaeology undertook further excavations to prove this hypothesis.

A late trench on 11 August 2007 was a return to Trench 17 of the 2005 digs. The trench had previously revealed an assemblage of stones arranged in a 3-sided rectangle, laid on orange/reddish-coloured clay (Top left. Image: Harris & Hughes). Curiously, the new trench showed a different arrangement (Bottom left. Image: D

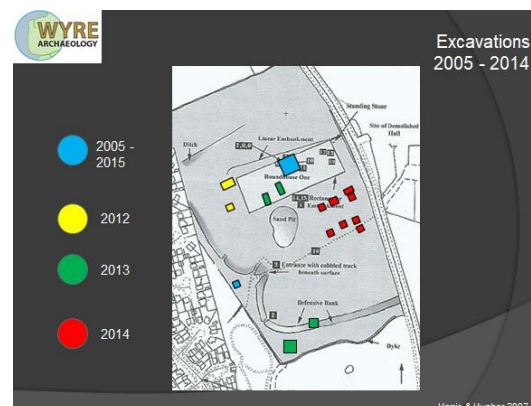


Hampson) but no explanation was offered for this change. However, in an extension of the trench, a fragment of pottery was unearthed that later that year was identified by Oxford Archaeology North as the rim of a Roman mortarium (See 4 Finds).



The orange/red-coloured clay reported in this trench became a significant factor in subsequent digs. It had also previously been noted in earlier excavations, that in at least one trench, the red clay had been deposited on top of brick earth in what was apparently a deliberate act, rather than as a result of glacial action. Again no explanation was offered.

After a brief pause at Bourne Hill due to other projects, the photographic records begin again from March 2009. The illustration (Right) gives an impression of the activities over the whole excavation period, with most of the focus on the large blue-coloured square area which, from a fairly early stage, was considered to be the probable site of an Iron Age roundhouse.



However, as a prelude to excavation, during March 2009, the opportunity was taken to survey the whole site; the following photographs give some idea of the terrain.

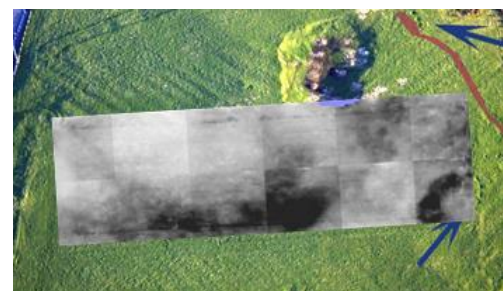


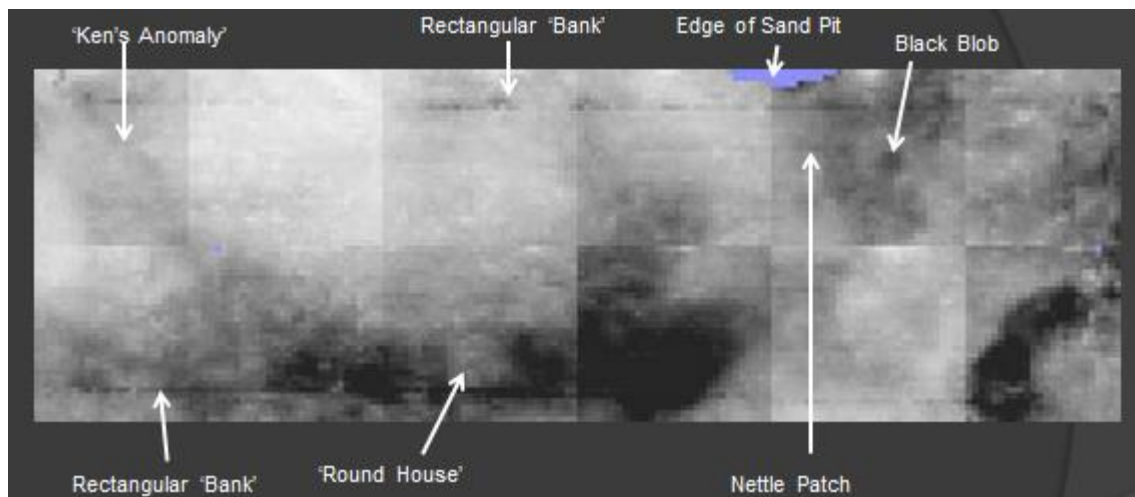
On 19 April 2009 the first trench of the new excavation season was opened (*left*) but with no obvious sign of archaeology. Undeterred, the investigations continued. WA member Frank Smith, a holder of a private pilot's licence was able to take a number of aerial photographs of Bourne Hill which revealed more intriguing features not obvious at ground level. In this photograph looking west (*below right*) taken in 2009, the signs of landfill may be seen at the far right, the sand pit in the centre and, circled, an elliptical mound that raised suggestions that it might conceal an ancient burial.



This photograph (*left*) looking south shows additional features labelled '*V-shaped entrance, banks and ditches and "teeth marks"*'.

Also in 2009 we were able to enlist support from UCLan's Archaeology students to undertake a geophysical survey of an obvious feature on the hill; a rectangular 'enclosure' to the north of the sandpit extending across almost the entire summit. On the ground this took the form of a raised bank, about 5cm to 8 cm in height that was much firmer than the ground on either side.





The *geophys* survey (*above*), coupled with conclusions drawn from the earlier excavations, appeared to support the consensus that we were dealing with an enclosed Iron-Age settlement potentially of several round-houses. A number of targets were identified for future investigation but, meanwhile, attention was focused on the 'round-house' feature, which was to occupy many weekends and 'big digs' over the next two years.



An immediate observation, once the topsoil had been removed, was that the underlying material was of an extremely hard sandstone-like substance, orangey-red in colour. In places it appeared to be made up of blocks, sometimes level and at others tilted. A professional geologist consulted by the team gave his opinion that these were, in fact, sandstone paving slabs that had been quarried and imported from north of the River Wyre, since no such deposits

were known in the Thornton area. The photograph above shows apparent hollows shaped in the stone but no obvious purpose could be suggested and there were no related finds.

Also significant was the absence of any trace of drip-gullies, normally an indication of the existence of round-houses, where rain water has run off the roof to form a gully below or where a drainage gully has been dug around the external wall. The round-house area was, however, far from featureless. In addition to the peculiar hollows noted above, there were regularly spaced post or stake holes, some 100mm in diameter and 150mm-200mm in depth and, in one spot a strange 'corrugated' patch in the surface, on which was found a small sherd of pot, later identified as Roman!



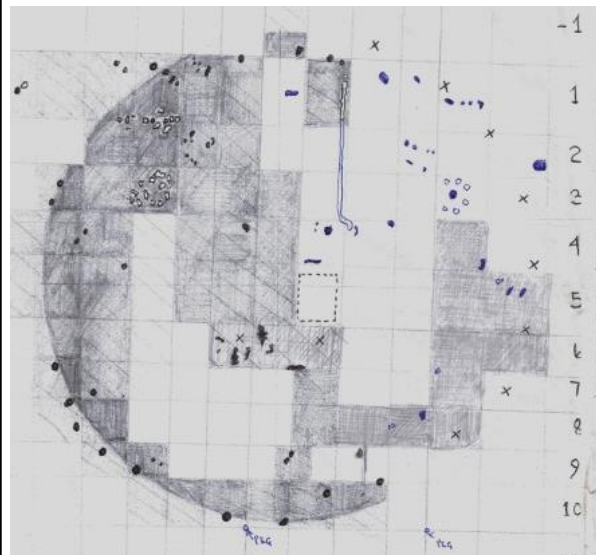
As the round-house area was excavated more stake holes were uncovered, although there also appeared to be animal burrows that confused the picture. Another feature exposed was an assembly of large stones in a roughly circular

formation. This was set into the presumed natural surface but it wasn't central to the arrangement of stake holes so the suggestion that it may have been a post pad support for a central pillar was discounted.

Nevertheless when the distribution of stake holes and other features were plotted in a diagram, it did seem to support the idea that the area did represent a round-house or at least a circular paddock.



The stake hole plot was extrapolated in an attempt to identify a location for a hearth, since this might confirm the existence of the round-house (*below*).



However, excavation on and around the identified spot proved fruitless.

In addition to the small shard mentioned above, a few other shards were recovered as were small chunks of daub. Over the entire area flakes of charcoal were evident and occasional pieces of 'cannel coal', a type of shale that was often used for light as well as heat even into the 19th century.

Time was also spent in investigating one of the 'teeth-marks' observed in the aerial photographs. There were three such features located at the north-, west- and easterly points around the lower hill slopes. An early theory was that these may have been supports for lookout posts protecting the hill-top settlement. This was possibly not far from the truth!

Metal detector survey of the western feature indicated the significant presence of metal. Enthusiastic digging soon revealed a large sheet of corrugated iron set

vertically against the western section of the trench. Also in the trench were a number of spent .303 calibre rifle cartridges and, surprisingly, a lady's lipstick! The conclusion reached was that possibly these features were either WWII practice trenches or actual defensive positions, since Bourne Hill overlooked the large ICI Chemical works now demolished. The lipstick suggested the trenches may also have been used for 'recreational purposes'.

The excavations reached a climax in 2013 with a four-day 'big dig' in which students from Blackpool Sixth Form College and pupils of Millfield High School joined WA members and other volunteers in excavating all the targets previously identified on UCLan's 2009 *geophys* survey. Additional targets for investigation were the oval mound at the south-west edge of the hill and the apparent bank and ditch in the same area. As a prelude, on the day preceding the big dig, the various targets were

marked out by Site Manager, Chris Clayton, Dave Berry and Dave Hampson and the turf was stripped using a hired mini-digger. Although this undoubtedly reduced the effort for the dig teams, it demonstrated the expertise of Time Team's digger operators who could strip off millimetres of overburden without achieving the corrugated effect that was generally the result of our efforts. Here (left), Chris demonstrates his skill.



Top left: Millfield High School pupils digging in Trench Black Blob.

Above: Blackpool Sixth Form students at the Oval Mound.

Left: Chris and Ed Shone examining find in front of Trench Nettle Patch.

Over the four days, the entire site was surveyed using metal detectors. By far the most frequent finds were spent .303 rifle cartridges and some unspent 'blanks', reinforcing the view that the hill had been used for army practices of some kind.

A small number of late mediaeval coins were also found and close to the oval mound, was found a fairly well-preserved penny dated 1794. No other finds were recovered from the mound.

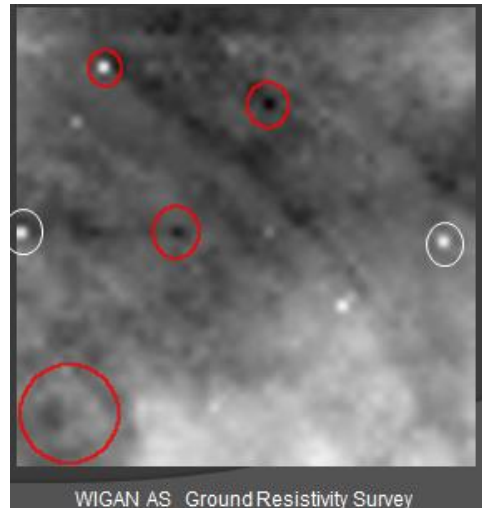


As noted above, the 'defensive bank and ditch' was also investigated. This photograph (*top left*), looking west towards the Pheasants' Wood housing estate shows the low bank and, importantly, to the right i.e. *towards the top of the hill*, its ditch. A section cut through the bank (*centre*) close to the mound indicated that the bank was man-made and less than 0.75 m high. There were no finds in the section but the presence of vertical brown stripes in the section (*bottom left*) suggested that the bank had been built up around a heavily reeded area; the stripes being left as the reeds decayed. Investigation of the associated ditch also revealed what appeared to be a sump/soak away. These, together with the 18th C penny led to a provisional conclusion that the *bank and ditch were not defensive in character since the ditch would have had to be on the outside of the bank*, but had probably originated as a flood defence or water management feature possibly dating from the time of the Napoleonic Wars when previously unused land was put to agricultural use. There were no finds associated with the bank and ditch.

In terms of finds, however, some of the other trenches were more productive, with small shards of pot and one or two more interesting finds. These are discussed in Section 4 below.

Discussion among diggers at this point was moving towards the view that the hillfort hypothesis was fairly doubtful, although, in view of some of the finds, there was reluctance to accept this and so in 2014, it was decided to hold another big dig in June with the aim of investigating the remaining targets on UCLan's geophys plot and the so-called 'plateau' that lies just on the eastern side of the hill top where it was thought it might be more sheltered from the prevailing westerly winds and therefore possibly more suitable for habitation. In preparation, Wigan Archaeological Society was recruited to conduct a geophys survey of the plateau and the big dig took place over the weekend of 26th to 30th June.

Wigan AS's ground resistivity survey (GRS) suggested a number of target 'hot spots' (*right*) that were quickly investigated by small sondages. None of these, however, proved to be of interest generally being poor signals or small pieces of agricultural debris.



'Ken's Anomaly' on the UCLan plot proved to be a band of dense clay and a trench opened over the expected location of a hearth in the 'round-house' area (*below*) was devoid of any significant archaeology.



As the final photograph illustrates, this was a somewhat depressing end to what had been a lengthy but at times quite exciting excavation.

4 FINDS



Over the several years of excavation, the finds have been many and varied. Earlier finds lists include many references to 'stone' (of various sizes), 'brick', 'charcoal' and 'cannel coal'. This last is a rendering of 'candle coal', a type of shale that burns with a bright flame and heat. Since prehistoric times it was also carved to make jewellery. 'CBM' (Ceramic Building Material, or clay) was also found in small quantities usually, as in this photo (*top right*), having been subject to heat. This reinforced a view that structures of wattle and daub had existed on the hill and, at some point, had been destroyed by fire. Substantial evidence of this was not discovered, however. One peculiar find (*bottom right*) was a fairly large sub-cuboid shaped object, greyish brown in colour that, given its size, should have weighed 3 to 4 kilos but in fact weighed less than 1.



As mentioned above, a find in 2007 was a piece of what probably had been a mortarium (*left*). Mortaria (*inset*) were the forerunners of food processors, used for grinding and mixing of cooking ingredients

and were predominantly Roman artefacts although their use may in time have spread to the native population.

The Lancashire County Archaeologist, who examined the piece, said that he believed that the complete mortarium would have been too small for household use but may have been part of a Roman military kit. The fragment was sent to Oxford Archaeology North at Lancaster University where it has sadly now been mislaid.

In 2010, another probable mortarium fragment was found (*right*). Of a different fabric this unfortunately was discovered in the spoil heap of the roundhouse trench therefore without any context.



Finds from digs in May 2013 (*above*) produced a collection of cannel coal, Victorian pot, CBM (ceramic building material/daub) but also (*ringed*) various pot sherds. The big dig in the same year also produced more interesting finds (*below*) from the roundhouse trench and that were later shared with the Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) of the Portable Antiquities Scheme based at Preston Museum.



The FLO identified these as probable sherds of Nene Valley ware (*on right*) and Black Burnished ware (*2nd from right*) both of which have links with Roman military and dating to around the 1st to 2nd Century AD/CE.. The photograph also shows an unidentified pot with signs of red slip, possibly Samian.

Burnished ware (*2nd from right*) both of which have links with Roman military and dating to around the 1st to 2nd Century AD/CE.. The photograph also shows an unidentified pot with signs of red slip, possibly Samian.

The FLO also identified in the whole assemblage waste pieces of chert, a hard rock often used in the Neolithic through to the Iron Age as a substitute for flint but not normally found in our area. The fourth item in the photograph (*2nd from left*) was identified as worked flint. This was interesting in itself, since the nearest source

would be from the beach at Rossall and there was some discussion about how such a 'stone-age' tool could also be associated with Iron-Age pottery. However, the FLO revealed that the flint exhibited a 'hinge fracture' that was characteristic of flint that has been shaped by striking with a metal tool. He explained that as in modern times old technology is not necessarily dispensed with when new tech comes along. Also, during the big dig from the Nettle Patch trench emerged another piece of worked flint (*right*) and a lead artefact (*below*).



The initial opinion was that this was probably a spindle-whorl, used in antiquity in weaving cloth and associated with settlements. After further consideration however, it was thought more likely to have been a weight from a wild-fowling net.

As mentioned earlier, a number of coins were found in the surrounding areas by metal detectorists.

A few metres away from the Nettle-Patch trench, a detectorist unearthed this 13th C hammered silver penny. While the team gathered to admire this find, he moved a half metre away and found another signal. This time there was more excitement as he retrieved another coin: a gold half noble from the reign of Edward III (1312-1377). Sadly, the detectorist who was not a member of WA retained the coins and did not respond to later communications from the Society.



Although this find was in itself fascinating: the question of how and why such a valuable coin ended up on a bleak hill in the Wyre marshes is even more puzzling. Its 14th C value was around 3 shillings and 4 pence (40 old pence) or about 1/6th of one pound; in the mid-14th C this would have been about two weeks' pay for a carpenter and 9 weeks' pay for a manservant. In terms of the Bourne Hill excavations, however, it added nothing to our understanding.



The final big dig in 2014 turned up just one more find; another potsherd. This was of a coarse fabric possibly made locally and again appeared to be of a similar Iron Age date, although no accurate context was recorded so this is unconfirmed.

All the potsherds, however, shared one common factor. They were all small pieces, the largest around 30mm at its widest the others mainly 20mm or less at their widest points

and all were significantly abraded. The FLO's opinion was that this indicated that they had not been found in their original place of deposition but had originated elsewhere and had been exposed to weathering and movement. One thought was that perhaps they had found their way to the hilltop in 'night soil' from privies, or in midden rubbish, spread as fertiliser on the field, a practice common in agricultural communities even up to the early 20thC..

If this were the case, it begs the question where was the community to which the privies or middens belonged, after all it would need to be fairly close-by.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Lessons Learned

The Bourne Hill excavations were no doubt the most extensive in terms of area covered, the costliest in terms of time and human resources (though not money) and possibly the most frustrating. Nevertheless, a lot of lessons were learned that have been adopted in other projects at least in part if not wholly. It's necessary to bear in mind that most, if not all, of the projects we take on are those that have not attracted the interest of professional archaeologists, have not received external funding and have relied on availability and willingness of a relatively small group of self-taught diggers.

In hindsight, perhaps the most important lesson was that digs shouldn't be led by expectations. From the outset there was a strong assumption that Bourne Hill was without much doubt the site of a hillfort or settlement. The visible earthworks supported this assumption, and the excavations were aimed at verifying it. There was a good deal of circumstantial evidence such as its topography, the post/stake holes and even expert testimony, as in the case of the geologist in whose opinion the hard surface in the round-house trench was imported sandstone blocks. The first two are open to interpretation but the last of these was disproved by some research, which was also confirmed after on-site examination by a respected local amateur geologist and Chairperson of the local Geographic Society, that the material was a form of haematite, a deposit rich in iron that gave it the characteristic red colour. A test-pit near the base of the sand pit also demonstrated that the 'hard surface' existed several metres below the round-house floor. This deposit appeared to be widespread across the western part of the hilltop.

Perhaps because the excavations from 2005 onwards were expectation-led, actual digging especially in the earlier stages tended to short cut through sound archaeological methods. There was an acceptance that any archaeology would be on the hard surface/floor, which was then dug down to, and so items such as the mortarium sherd found its way into the spoil and out of context. However, it's fair to stress that over most of the site the overburden was only a few centimetres deep and had obviously been ploughed and grazed so it's unlikely that any contextual archaeology had in fact been lost. Later digs with effective site management improved this process.

Also recovered during Big Dig detecting, were a number of .303 cartridge cases, many of which were spent but some were unspent i.e., live 'blanks'. Although they did not contain bullets, the end being crimped closed, they may have still contained powder and detonator caps and therefore could be considered dangerous. A number of these were taken off site by some of the secondary school pupils. A few days later when photographs of the dig were being examined, it was noticed that pupils were holding these and it necessitated an urgent phone call to the school to apologise and request that the cartridges be recovered and disposed of.

A final major lesson was learned from the metal detecting activities on site, especially in the 2013 Big Dig. In the course of this as noted above a detectorist who was not a member of WA recovered two coins, one of which was a relatively valuable gold coin. At the end of the dig the detectorist and the coins disappeared and efforts to contact the individual were unsuccessful. It is not known whether he reported the finds to the FLO as would have been expected.

The Society has since adopted a Code of Conduct for Excavation and Metal Detecting that all participants on site must accept and which addresses issues such as these. It's also worth noting that Bourne Hill was and is owned by Wyre Borough Council and any recovered artefacts would have been the property of the Council.

Interestingly, an assumption was that this ammunition was a relic dating from the 1940s, but the .303 has been used in various *marks* since 1899, so exact dating is problematic. The circumstantial evidence of the slit trenches hint at a WWII context but a detectorist member somewhat later discovered on the hill the hilt of a type of sword used by some army and militia officers in the late 19th C. It's worth noting that the North Euston Hotel in nearby



Fleetwood was owned by the War Department from 1861 to 1898, firstly as a School of Musketry and later as Euston Barracks. Photo (*above right*) shows officers at ease outside Euston Barracks in 1861. Further military accommodation was built close to Rossall point, with a rifle range, and the military association with Fleetwood continued into the 20th C, as this WWI photograph of gunners at Rossall illustrates.



Discussion

In many ways the jury is still out on whether Bourne Hill was or wasn't an Iron Age settlement or hillfort. The latter seems unlikely as there was no evidence that the banks and ditches were any older than the late 18thC, despite there being a number of defended sites (4 in Preston!) listed on Oxford University's online *Atlas of Hillforts in Britain & Ireland*.



The 'V-shaped entrance', as may be seen on this LCC MARIO aerial photograph from the 1960s, is clearly a result of farm vehicles from two neighbouring fields accessing a track across the field to a gate on Fleetwood Road. This is also visible on the MARIO 1940s aerial photo.

The MARIO aerial photo also explains the rectangular enclosure that was initially believed to surround an Iron Age settlement and some of the other features visible in our aerial photos. They were probably a fenced off areas for a particular crop and the bank was a result of a build-up of soil, wind-blown debris and mowings over many years.

However, there is other evidence - some direct:

the strange assemblages of stones set into a land surface that was probably laid down as the glaciers retreated some 12,500 years ago;

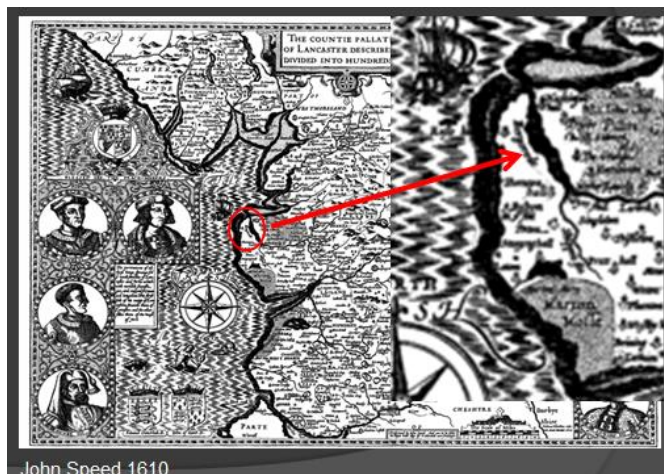
the post/stake holes that outline a circular feature;

the spread of cannel coal and charcoal across the site;

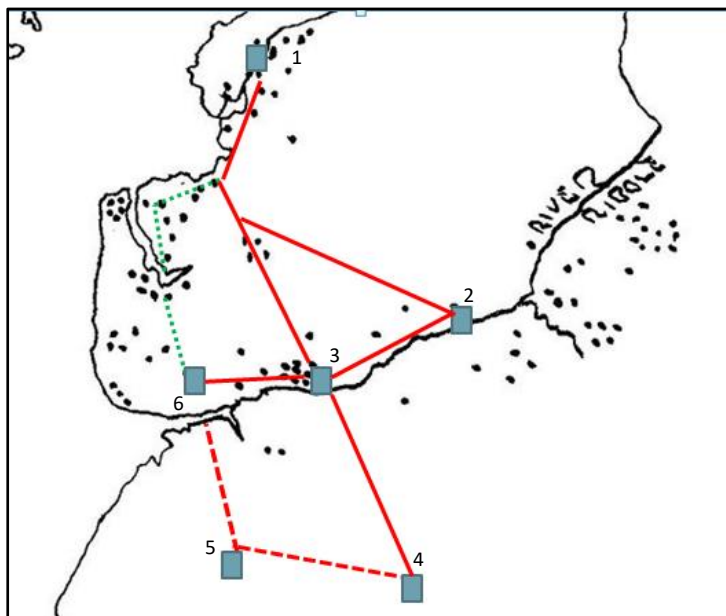
and not least the collection of finds that include Roman Mortaria sherds, potsherds specifically linked to the Roman military, locally made pot of probable Iron Age date, worked flint tools again of probable Bronze/Iron Age date and waste chert, a known flint substitute.

and some circumstantial:

Bourne Hill is within a few hundred metres of what in the Iron Age would have been a safe landing place for shallow-draft ships. The name of this part of the River Wyre recorded on Speed's map of 1610 was 'Bergerode', from Old English meaning 'safe riding/anchorage' and there is a local saying 'as safe as Wyre Water'. Not only would this natural harbour have been beneficial to the indigenous population, thought to be the Setantii a subgroup of the Brigantes, but it may have suited the Roman Army as it conquered and subjugated the west coast.



WA Member Gary Thornton, in 2016, plotted the known and recorded find spots of all Roman coins in the North-west Lancashire area which reveal an interesting distribution. This becomes more interesting when the known Roman forts or stations and the known, fairly certain and postulated Roman roads are added:

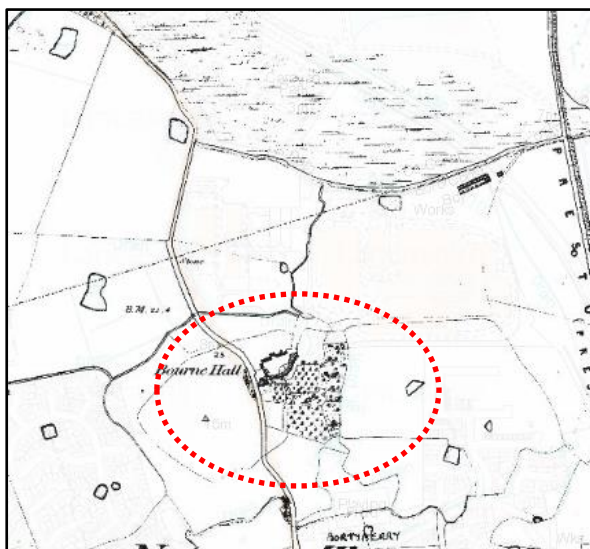


- 1 Lancaster
- 2 Ribchester
- 3 Walton-le-Dale
- 4 Wigan
- 5 Burscough
- 6 Kirkham

- Known roads
- Probable roads
- Possible roads

The routes of known and probable Roman roads are taken from David Ratledge's www.twithr.co.uk Roman

Roads in Lancashire. Postulated Roman roads have not been proven, although there is some much-disputed historical anecdotal evidence of a road to the north of Kirkham. Wyre Archaeology did excavate a suspected Roman road at High Gate Lane, Stalmine in 2008. Although no definitive evidence has yet been found it is more than likely that a coastal route linking river crossings and possible army bridgeheads did exist.



The proximity of Bourne Hill to the River Wyre and in particular to the part known as the safe 'Wyre Water' (now reclaimed but seen here on LCC's MARIO 1840s OS Map), possibly explains how Roman pottery – especially that associated with the Roman Army - found its way to the hilltop in night soil. Quite possibly MARIO also has the answer to where the night soil originated. Bourne Hall, long since demolished, was situated on the lee slopes of the hill, closer to the river, which likely was even nearer in Roman times. Perhaps the settlement wasn't on the hill top at all but lies buried where Bourne Hall once stood.

Wyre Archaeology would be keen to investigate there should the opportunity arise!
A final word from a previous inhabitant:

‘It is worth remembering that for centuries the people who came (*sic*) the Hall knew it only as a lonely outpost in the marshes often surrounded by the sea’.

Mrs E (Emily) Edmondson: 15 January 1975
The Edmondson family farmed at Burn Hall/Burn Farm between 1946 and 1975.

7 DIG TEAM

At various times, over the excavation period of eight and a half years, the dig team and other contributors to the project included all the following plus many others whose names are not recorded.

John Allen	Ted Lightbown
Paul Ashworth	Richard Phillips
Tracy Barnes	Carlo Ricco
Dave Berry	Hilary Ricco
Fiona Birchall	Brian Rigby
George Birchall	David Seeley-Jones
Chris Clayton	Mike Shaw
Barbara Culshaw-Phillips	Ed Shone
Mike Edwards	Colin Sills
Ken Emery	Frank Smith
Pat Emery	David Thompson
Dave Hammond	Neil Thompson
Andrew Hampson	Gary Thornton
Dave Hampson	Pupils of Millfield High School
Michelle Harris	Students of Blackpool VIth Form College
Brian Hughes	Students of UCLan Dept Archaeology
Clare Jackson-Slater	Bill Aldridge & Colleagues of Wigan A.S.
Davinia Jackson	

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wyre Archaeology Excavation Reports 2005-2007: Harris & Hughes:

Photographs: Harris & Hughes (*Wyre Archaeology Excavation Reports Supplemental, 2005 – 2007*);
D W Hampson; C Clayton; Aerial photos: Frank Smith

Roman Roads in Lancashire www.twithr.co.uk: D Ratledge

Distribution of Roman Coins in NW Lancashire: G Thornton

Professional Guidance & Information: Peter Iles, LCC County Archaeologist;
Stuart Noon, Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme

Maps: LCC Maps and Related Information Online; Google Earth

Related Links: Dave Berry, WA Webmaster:

<http://wyresearchology.org.uk/index.php/resources/photographs>

<http://wyresearchology.org.uk/index.php/areas-of-interest/burn-hall-farm>

8 APPENDIX: UPDATE NOVEMBER 2023

In June 2022 the hill's owners, Wyre Borough Council, sold it off for house building. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; first published 2012 but latest update September 2023) Lancashire County Council's Planning Directorate (PD) approved the decision subject to certain conditions*.




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archaeological investigations undertaken within the PDA by **Wyre Archaeology Group** have found significant evidence for an Iron Age settlement in the central eastern area of the PDA. Most notable is the excavation of 'Roundhouse One', evidenced by a series of post holes organized so as to suggest part of a circular feature measuring c.10-11m in diameter (**Harris & Hughes 2008: 31**) further earthwork evidence was found during the work done by Wyre Archaeology, interpreted as a series of defensive structures, a triangular enclosure and other potential roundhouses, some of these are still visible (ARS 6 and 7).

of the PDA, although this is minimal and lacking in context (Adams 2001). The excavations done by **Wyre Archaeology** within the PDA add to this narrative with finds including potsherds (PRN35788; **Watts 2009: 11**) have been dated as Romano-British. This suggests the continued use of the Iron Age hillfort into the early Roman period sitting within a wider landscape of Roman settlement, albeit it dispersed. It is most likely that evidence of this activity is ephemeral in nature, with the majority of farmsteads occupying unclosed land making detection very difficult.




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1.1.5 Previous investigations have been undertaken at the site. Geophysical survey and test pit excavation by the **Wyre Archaeology Group (WAG)** between 2005-2009 was undertaken in order to determine whether Bourne Hill was part of an Iron Age hillfort (**Hampson and Clayton 2021**). There was no substantive evidence for a hillfort, but a circular arrangement of undated postholes was interpreted as a post-built roundhouse. Other test pits recovered finds that included Roman roof tile, mortaria and pottery sherds including both locally-made pottery of probable Iron Age date and Black-burnished wares of Roman date.

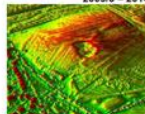
1.4.4 Excavations and geophysical surveys were undertaken by WAG between 2005 and 2009 (Hampson and Clayton 2021). Several fragments of pottery (PRN35796; PRN35788) were previously, together with possible burned daub (PRN35798) of Iron Age date. Flint debitage was also recovered, although it was impossible to date this more specifically.

The PD's Archaeological specialists were aware of Wyre Archaeology's excavations from 2005 to 2014 (above) and in consequence of our reports the developers were required to commission, initially, a desk-based assessment of the likely heritage factors, followed by a field archaeological evaluation. Both carried out by Archaeological Research Services Ltd., the evaluation trenches (below) confirmed the existence of archaeological features and artefacts, and pointed to the need for a




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Archaeological Research Services July 2022: Evaluation Trenches

Period	Features	Trench locations
Prehistoric (undated)	marshland spread deposits, waterlogged pond-like features	3, 6, 8, 12
Roman	Ditches, pits, gullies	3, 5, 6, 7, 10
Medieval	Plough furrows	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 14
Post-medieval	Ceramic land drains	3, 4, 10, 13, 14, 16
Modern	Demolished farm buildings	1, 9

fuller investigation, as this image (below) from the ARS Draft Report illustrates:

6.7.3 Evidence of occupation of any kind for the Roman period (or earlier) is uncommon in the north-west of England and as such the remains are definitely of local importance with potential to be of regional importance. Archaeological investigation and recording would contribute to a number of regional research priorities.

The developers, Eccleston Homes, were again required to fund this investigation and invited tenders from archaeological companies to carry it out. In this case, Oxford Archaeology North (OAN) were successful. This company had also carried out the important excavation along the line of the A585 Windy Harbour – Skippool Road Improvement Scheme with quite significant results.

OAN employed the established archaeological method for large sites of ‘strip, map and record’ where the overburden of plough soil is stripped by mechanical digger while archaeologists monitor for tell-tale changes in the colour of the underlying strata that might indicate archaeological features that can then be excavated.

The funding agreed in the contract between developer and archaeologists has to cover the cost of the excavation but also that of the vital post-excavation analysis. Although the Bourne Hill site proved to be of greater significance than initially suspected and because the dig had been extended (and costs increased) because of poor weather, the developer was unwilling or unable to increase funding beyond the agreed sum, and so the excavation was closed somewhat earlier than OAN had wished.

OAN are now engaged in the post-ex analysis which involves examination of hundreds of buckets of soil samples that have to be painstakingly sieved to extract vital evidence. We are informed that the process may take several years to complete. While that time elapses before a final report is published, we understand that the planning conditions have been discharged and that the development can proceed.

Wyre Borough Council issued the following statement on 22 September 2023:

“We’re aware of the public interest in the archaeological findings at the Bourne Hill site in Thornton. We would like to reassure the public that all work has proceeded in accordance with the standard process for managing archaeological sites in the planning process.

“Throughout this, the council has relied, as it always does, on the expertise of a specialist archaeology planning officer from Lancashire County Council’s Historic Environment Team. We’re working closely with Lancashire County Council to understand the significance of the archaeological finds and what happens to them.

“Oxford Archaeology North (OAN) have been commissioned by the developer to conduct an archaeological survey which is a condition we would ask for before granting planning permission in this instance. To date the site appears to be that of a late Iron Age through to Romano-British settlement, estimated to date between 200 BC – 200 AD with findings being unearthed that show evidence of round house

dwellings, burials of cremated individuals, fragments of probable late Iron Age pottery and an unusual 'quern stone,' which was a hand mill for grinding flour, featuring two holes in the top rather than the usual one hole.

"Officers from the council have visited the site today to confirm the scale and nature of the works currently taking place. It has been confirmed that the archaeological works are now complete and the team from OAN will be leaving the site this week. OAN will then work on the post excavation assessment report of these excavated finds and the environmental samples from the site.

"The report, once finalised, will be made available to the public. It will provide valuable insight into these discoveries and will outline what will be preserved and how."

*NPPF Section 16 sets out the planning conditions in respect of 'conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.

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November 2023