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University of Kent

This volume is the first of two examining the archaeology of the Waithe valley as it passes through the central Lincolnshire Wolds. This initial volume concentrates on fieldwork and finds at the eastern edge of the Wolds just before the Waithe progresses to the Marshland. The study was undertaken as part of the Central Lincolnshire Wolds Research Project which is examining a landscape little explored archaeologically but which holds important evidence and potential.

The volume begins by documenting the development of the human presence and use of the valley and its tributary systems, noting the known archaeological and historical evidence from prehistory to recent times in its various forms. The attention then focuses on the archaeological evidence from Hatcliffe Top and surrounding area, on the eastern Wolds margin. The archaeological site at Hatcliffe Top itself lies in North East Lincolnshire in a cultivated arable landscape. Here geophysical survey, fieldwalking and targeted excavations between 2005 and 2016 revealed an intensively used complex of the later Roman era. The site lies immediately above the north-south access route known as Barton Street, which runs parallel with the eastern edge of the Wolds, as it crosses the Waithe Beck. Now designated the A18, Barton Street is, by convention, believed to have been an ancient route-way. Following fieldwalking, a trial trench and assessments of the collected finds, six excavation trenches were opened and entirely hand-dug as a research and training exercise. The fieldwork was a joint undertaking combining teams from the University of Kent and The North-East Lincolnshire Archaeology and Local History Society (NELALHS) directed by Steven Willis and David Robinson. Research and training were key aspects of an initiative that combined experienced fieldworkers, those enhancing their skills, students, volunteers and beginners. The work revealed comparatively well-preserved remains spanning the mid- to Late Roman period with a range of artefactual evidence for the use of the site in the Anglo-Saxon period. The main evidence dates to the fourth century, especially the later fourth century, an era when the site would, by conventional narratives, have been on the front line of the Roman Empire, facing barbarian incursions from the North Sea.

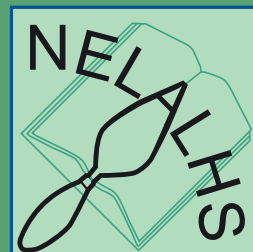
Geophysics showed a palimpsest of anomalies indicating the developing morphology of the site. The investigative work led to the mapping of a coherent Late Roman settlement and field system with associated enclosures. The evidence included a series of ovens, some of which at least were associated with corn-drying and deposits rich in archaeobotanical carbonized remains. Faunal remains indicate livestock raising, with a likely focus upon cattle and probably horses. Examination of these various assemblages provides an understanding of the landscape and economy of this later Roman farming complex and something of the wider 'commercial' regime. Systematic metal detecting across the site assisted in the recovery of over one hundred and eighty coins, the large majority of Roman date. These, plus other metalwork, are reported, together with stratified pottery sequences.

Two nearby locations with further evidence of Roman date are also reported. Overall, the discoveries are discussed, while their interpretation is set against the broader historical and archaeological context. A new picture emerges of an archaeological landscape hitherto largely unrecognized.

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I. The Archaeology of the Valley and Excavation and Survey in the Hatcliffe Area



The Central Lincolnshire Wolds Research Project

Volume 2

Steven Willis

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Front cover: Excavation in progress at Trench C, looking south-west.

Back cover: top - view looking north-east from the plateau at Hatcliffe Top; second - excavation in progress at Trench D, looking east; third - excavation in progress at Trench E, looking north-east; fourth - Georgia at Trench C after rain; fifth - SEM image of part of the headplate of the cruciform Anglo-Saxon brooch (Item 64 RF 2072) including circular piercing (prepared by Dr Victoria Mason).

The Waithe Valley Through Time

I. The Archaeology of the Valley and Excavation and Survey in the Hatcliffe Area

The Central Lincolnshire Wolds Research Project

Volume 2

Steven Willis

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