



Aerial view shows Walkington sites.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Prehistoric find in Yorkshire

Search for a Roman outpost reveals remains of Bronze and Iron Age civilizations

by F. C. Livingstone



Oxford Univ.

East Yorkshire (arrow) and Roman Britain.

East Yorkshire is one of the least explored areas in England so far as Roman remains are concerned, although on its western extremity lies the great city of Eburacum (now York) the Roman's northern headquarters for 400 years and the place where Constantine was declared Caesar early in the 4th century.

The Romans had come to Britain as conquerors, aiming to extract the maximum profit from the territories they overran. That is why they concentrated their attention on areas which would provide that profit. East Yorkshire was not one of those.

Between York and the coast, at least 40 miles away, the Romans built only forts to guard their route to their ports at Scarborough and Bridlington. They left the native tribes in the hills to their own devices, because they were harmless and had nothing that appeared to be worth taking.

So the 12,000 square miles of East Yorkshire offer little in the shape of Roman remains of the type that abound in richer parts of the country.

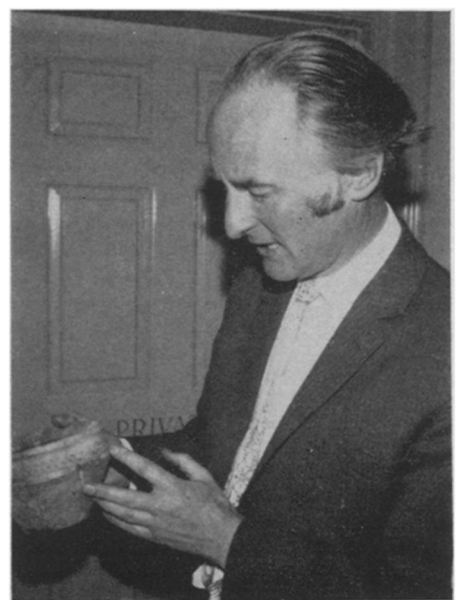
And, since they have been unpromising sites of Roman ruins, the easiest

kind of archaeology to do in Britain, they have not been well searched for whatever else of early Britain they might hold.

But, argues James Bartlett, director of the Kingston-upon-Hull Museums, there should be traces of their occupation apart from those in the crossroads forts at Delgovicia (now Millington) and Derventio (Malton). Those forts would call for outposts or watchtowers at strategic points and, although the Parisi, the local Celts, had arrived 500 years before as peaceful immigrants fleeing stronger tribes in northern Europe, there was the ever-present fear of invasion by Norsemen, Jutes, Angles and Saxons.

Bartlett started an intensive survey of the area between his own city, which had been unknown to the Romans, and the nearest fort at Millington. He knew, of course, that the Romans had had a road from York to North Ferriby, where there was a ferry across the wide Humber to the Lincolnshire coast and eastern England, which might also have its watching posts.

At Walkington, north of North Ferriby and some eight miles from



Bartlett: Shards from Parisi settlement.

Hull, Bartlett found traces of a long-forgotten road running across what is now rich farmland. With permission from the landowner, he assembled a volunteer team and started an archaeo-

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... Pre-Roman

logical dig on the site.

He found traces of the Romans very quickly. Over 750 Roman coins were uncovered. Then he also found eleven skeletons in a group, all decapitated, with their skulls thrown a distance away. They were all Roman legionnaires, who had probably been taken unaware by Angle invaders in the 400's A.D. Deeper on the same site came earlier relics of the Romans, back to their first years in Britain.

But Bartlett was not satisfied. He calculated that the Romans, since there was nothing for them to take from the area, had not spent money on building but had made use of what they found there. The district had been populated by the Parisi and even earlier tribes for centuries before. He knew that there had been a prehistoric causeway from North Ferriby, which had been the northern Humber ferry point for half a millennium before the Romans came, and that the prehistoric tribes had found gold nearby, at what the Romans later called Petuaria.

Digging deeper into the Roman outpost, he found Bronze Age artifacts in profusion, including a gold bracelet. There were weapons and prehistoric pottery shards. It was a Bronze Age barrow.

At that point last season's dig had to stop because the farmer wanted his land back for this year's crops. But the harvest will be in by October, when Bartlett will start again. As a result of fieldwork and scrutiny of air photographs by Dr. D. P. Brachi, a new site for a dig has been found nearby. Surface collecting has produced a quantity of prehistoric pottery. The ware is of coarse fabric, heavily gritted. It is likely to prove to be either of Late Neolithic or of Early Bronze Age date.

A trial cutting confirmed the existence of an Iron Age earthwork about 300 feet to the north. More finds of prehistoric pottery were found preserved under the slump of the bank and with them, in the same old land surface, was the upper part of the blade of a Middle Bronze Age dirk, dating from between 1,400 and 1,000 B.C.

About 100 feet from the first barrow to be uncovered another has been found, complete with burial urns—the custom then was to cremate the dead and inter the ashes in food pots. Further east, there are traces of a long barrow.

The spread of pottery, together with the barrows and the earthwork suggests the existence of a prehistoric settlement. When the dig restarts this fall, it is expected that much more will be learned of what was going on in East Yorkshire 1,000 or 1,500 years before the Romans came. ◇