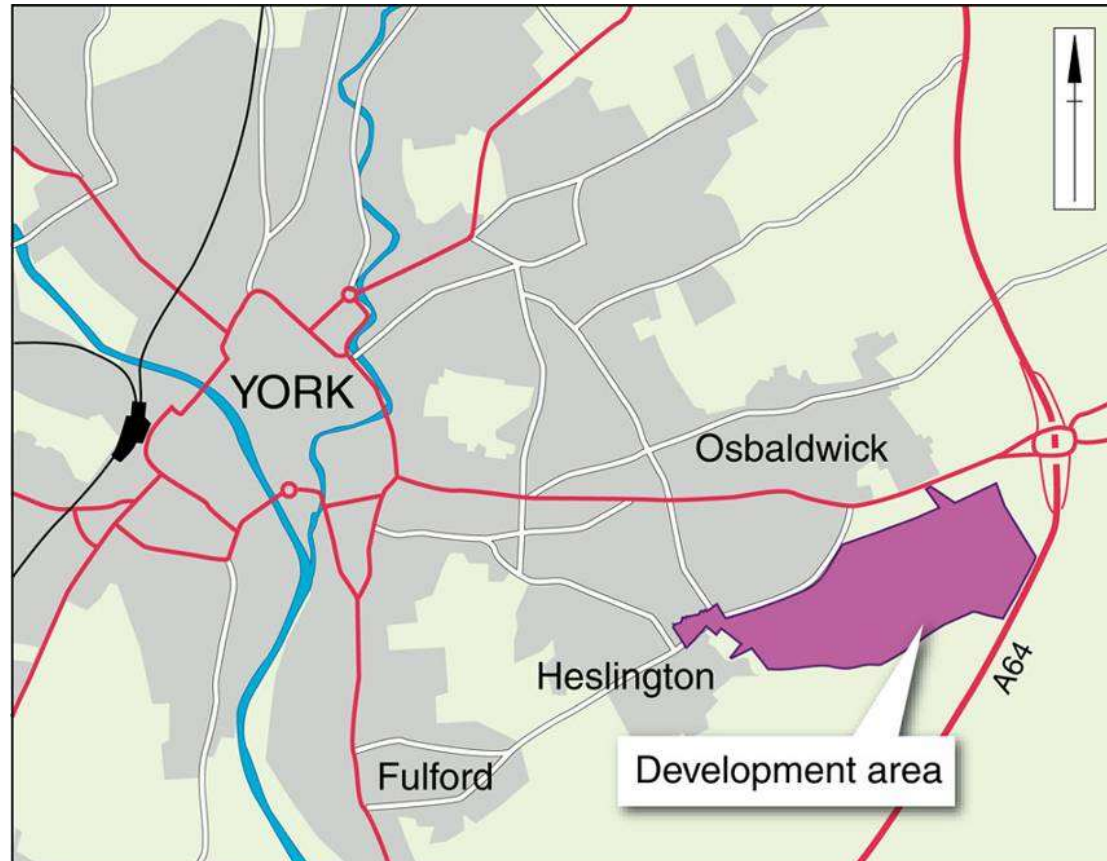


Prehistoric to Roman transitions at Heslington East: water, burials and landscape development



Context of fieldwork

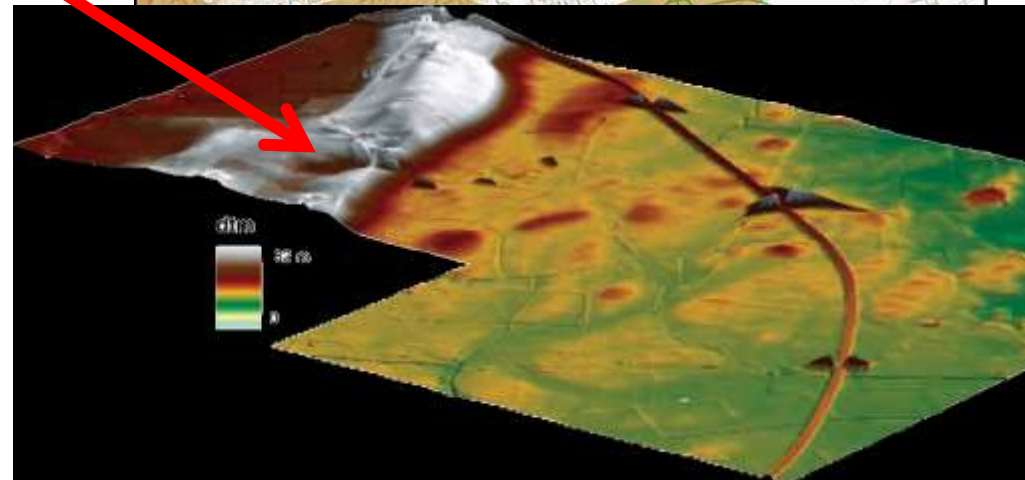
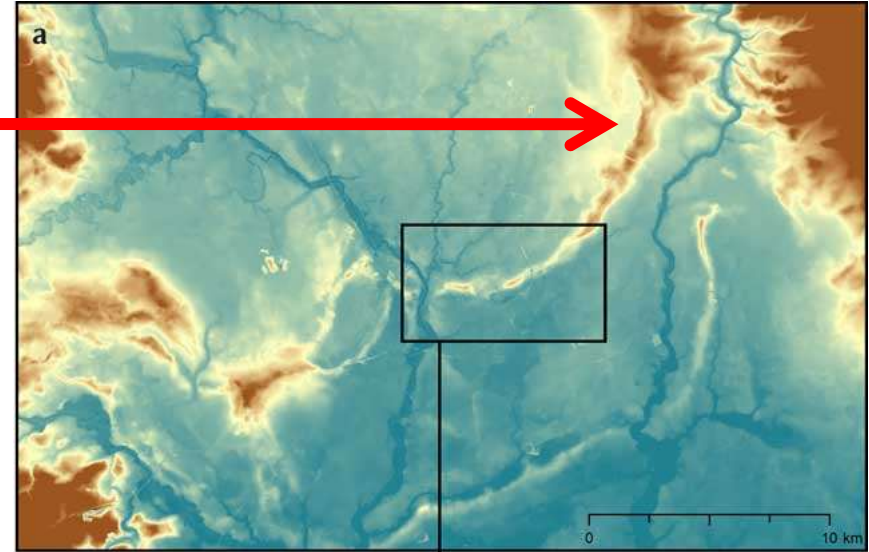
- Development on Green Belt): reconnaissance/evaluation and then strategic excavation (YAT, Onsite Archaeology, and DoA with (students/local community)
- Now 'educational' facilities



Geological Background

from 12/11K BCE glacial moraine facilitates E-W movement across The Vale):

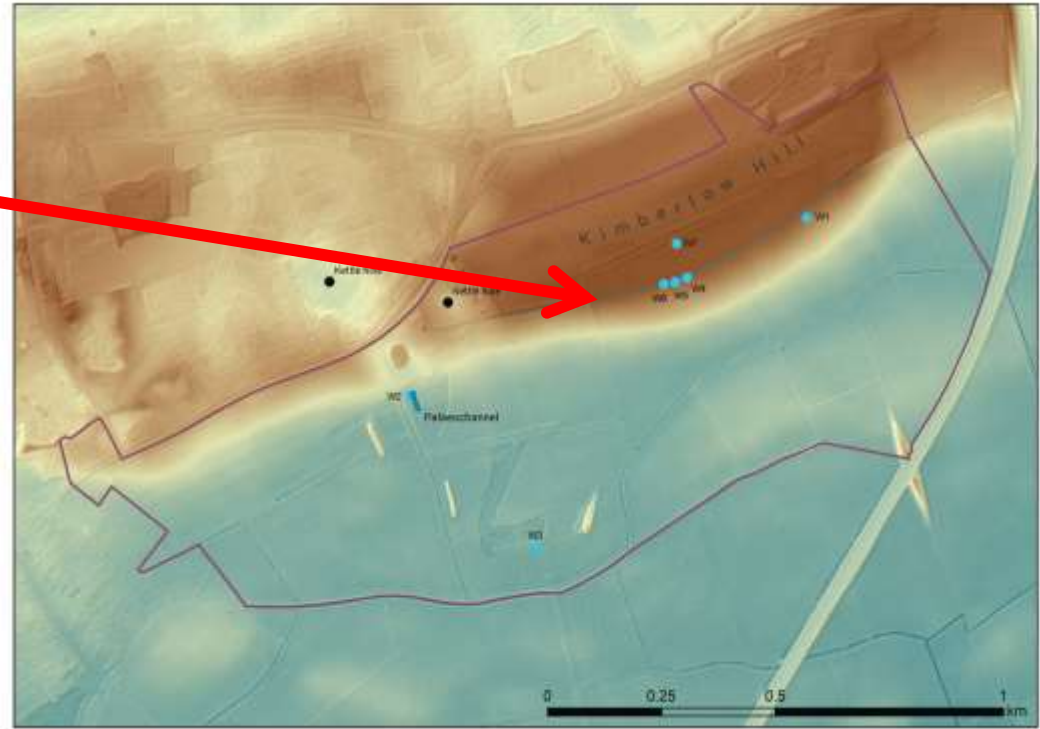
- Forms northern boundary of development zone (purple)
- Cut by kettleholes
- Created diverse ecological zones and resources. Flints suggest hunting and hide processing by mobile communities from ?Mesolithic and clearly from Early Neolithic onwards



accessing water

earliest activity may be concentrated at wells on contact springs along 22m line, ranging from:

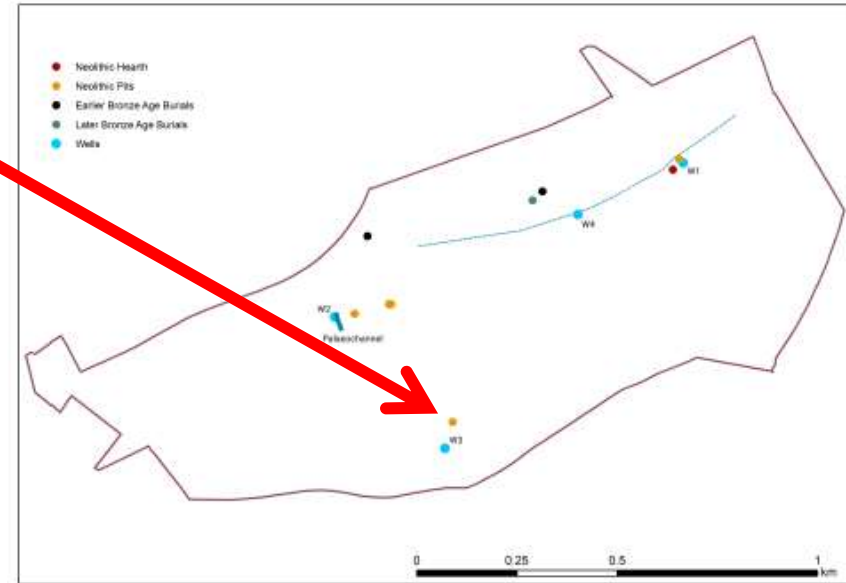
- Informal pits
- much greater investment



More regular contact from late Neolithic

3,000 BCE:

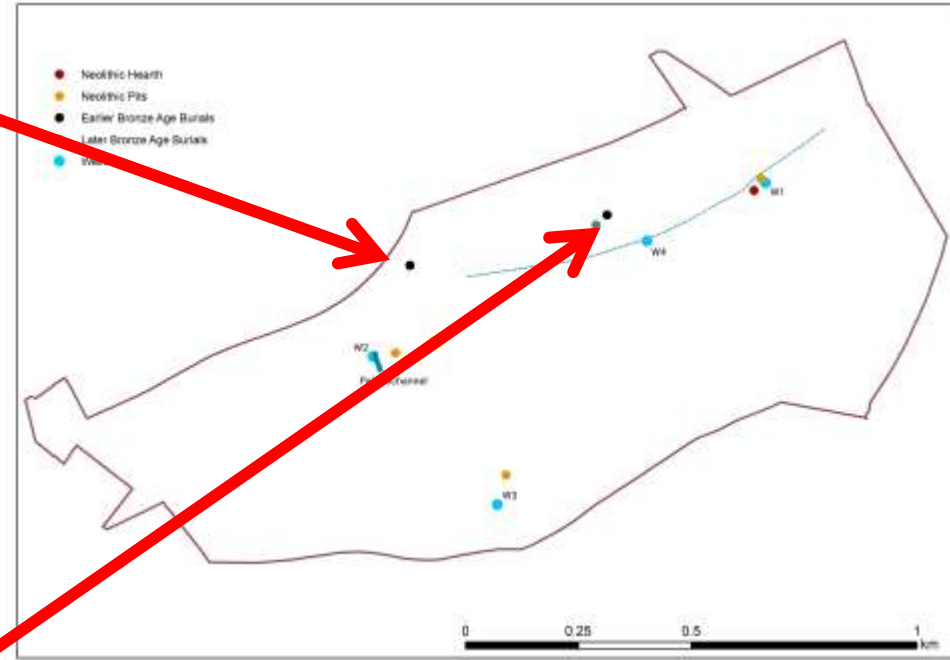
- Circular pit containing blade of a broken polished stone axe made of Greywacke (sandstone from S. Scotland: not really a practical tool).
- in Yorkshire such pits cluster near Neolithic monuments and/or places favourable to settlement containing *either* profuse flint debitage/pottery or a few prestigious items/human bone)
- new forms of landscape engagement, creating 'ancestral geographies'



Bronze Age Barrows

2,000 BCE (Early Bronze Age)

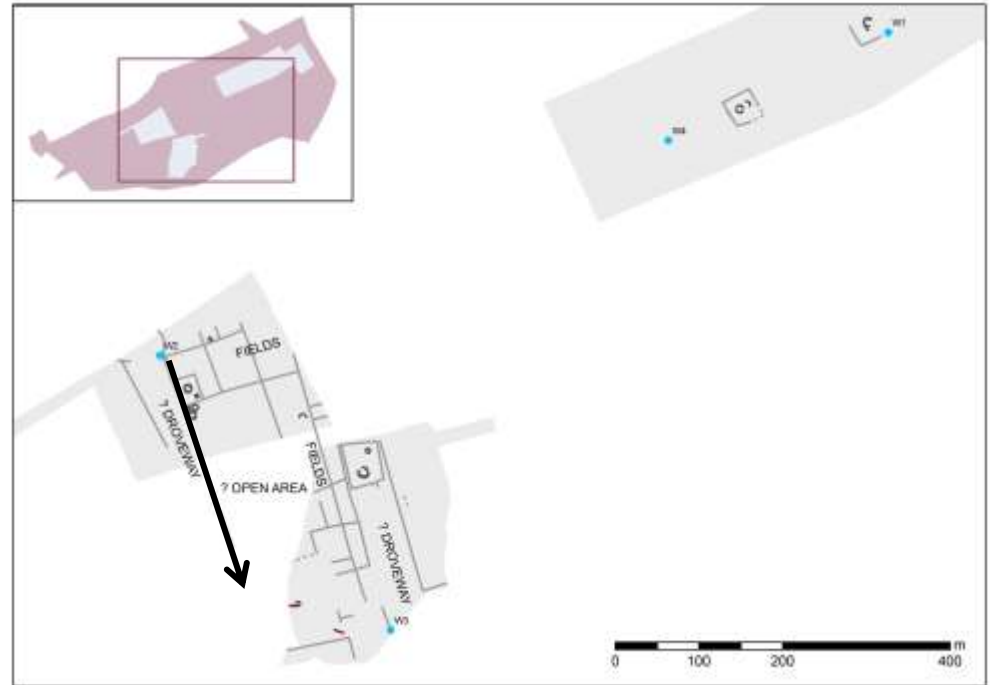
- To north of site, cremation in a decorated urn. Barrow?
- prestigious polished broken battle axe, placed in pit: (Dolerite from ?Whin Sill - Northumberland): labour-intensive object , elsewhere found in prominent barrows ?marking route along the moraine (as Wolds)



Iron Age linear landscape divisions

During Iron Age (800BCE+), western zone develops increasingly complex field systems

- Articulated between long-lived wells (W2 and W3)
- North-south ditch implies differential access to water from Well 2 – herds distinguished?



Iron Age decapitation

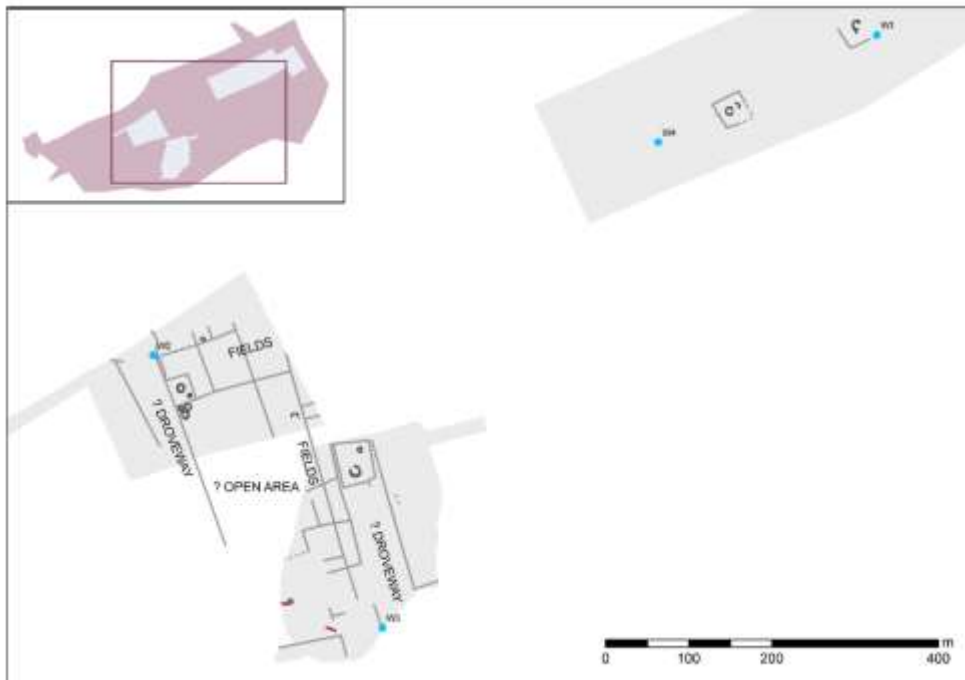
New form of organisation defined initially by a ditch with terminal containing decapitated human skull (519bc±34):

- Male, 30 years, killed by long-drop hanging (quick) then head carefully removed
- Brain survived –as immediately deposited in watery ditch (decapitation restricts bacteria moving from spinal cord). Killed nearby: tree? Well superstructure?
- acknowledges significance of first linear boundary



Iron Age enclosures

•Landscape increasingly enclosed, different sizes of roundhouses, some controlling working of jet and prestigious metal, with individual enclosed roundhouses to east along springline. Little change to overall landholding after the arrival of Rome (tenacity as per Wolds).



Impact of Rome: ceramic supplies

- C.100CE: imported Samian bowls and dishes
- c.150CE: local rusticated Ebor wares jars (food containers for 'military' needs)
- c.200CE: intra-provincial mortaria (food preparation)
- c.250CE: intra-provincial cups
- 300CE: local Calcite-gritted jars, plus Crambeck wares.
- In sum: military supply, food serving *then* preparation: moves to regional then more local sources before returning to storage



Licence CC BY-SA 4.0



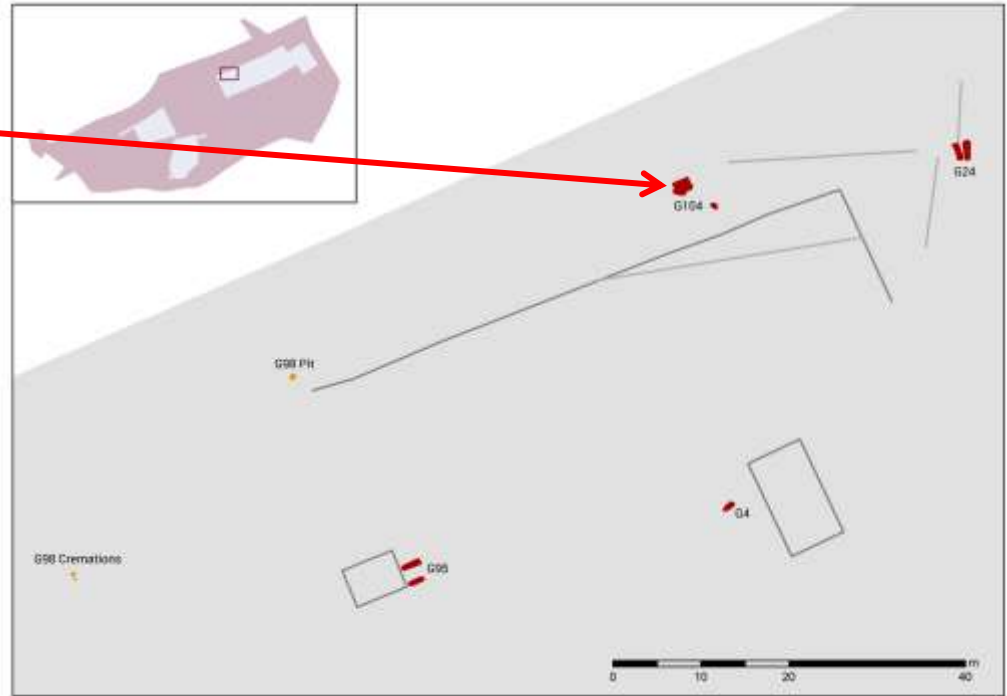
Well 'reused'

- atypical items deposited above Well 2: Iron Age jet earrings (not seen in Roman period) and glass bangles: 'transitional objects'?
- C.4th coin hoard above a wind-blown deposit



Roman perinatal burials

perinatal burials in small scoops (one with iron nails and bracket - confined?), rolled lead object (protective amulet?):

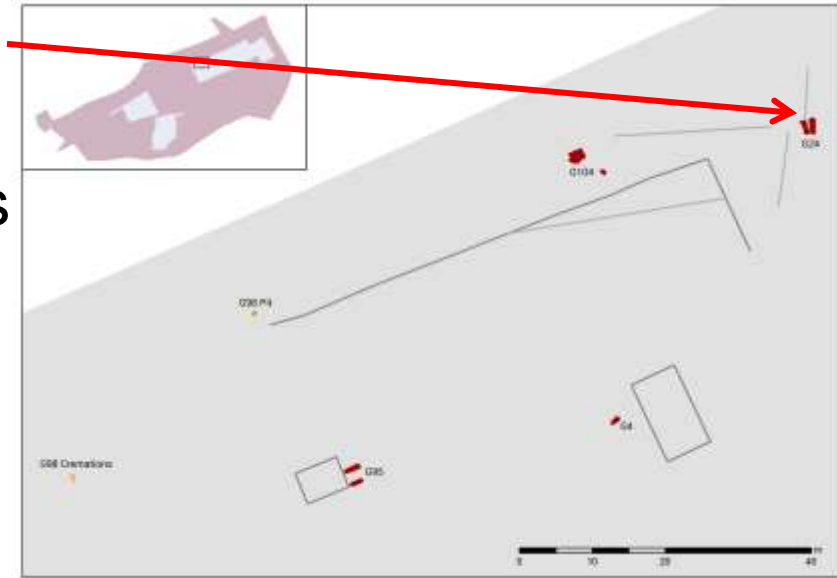


More than opportunistic use of a vacant zone/casual infanticide: 'failure' of reproduction in a rural population was a personal tragedy for the mother but a social tragedy for the community

adult burials and landscape divisions

Two adjacent inhumations 46+years (NB differential survival). Poorly preserved, ?male, with bad teeth; female with ?brucellosis, habitual squatting, stress in childhood

- part of a landscape reorganisation, legitimating new divisions – people not only ‘in’, but ‘of’ the landscape



Summary: from mobility to sedentism to agricultural development

Ritual activity and landscape engagement:

- 3,000 BCE: repeated visits in Neolithic – ‘ancestral geographies’?
- 2,000 BCE: raised Bronze Age barrows – markers for passing communities?
- 1,500 BCE: flat Bronze Age marked urned cremations – households claims?
- 500 BCE: decapitation in ditch terminal - first linear landscape divisions?
- 150 CE: ranked households in roundhouses, mainly agric. but working of jet and precious metals. Transitional objects above disused well – Roman arrival?
- 220s-240s CE: perinatal inhumations – tragedy of child-loss - with adult inhumations reinforcing new boundaries : labour in/of the land
- 300 CE+: Roman monumentalisation (**part 2**) just as ceramic supplies move from imports to provincial to local, regionalisation