

Fishergate, Fulford and Heslington. Local History Society.

# **FOOD AND FARMING IN EARLY HESLINGTON**

**A CONFERENCE FOR THE YORK FESTIVAL OF IDEAS 2023**



**SATURDAY 10 JUNE 2023**

Working from the Heslington East Project, and using archaeological, documentary, and pictorial evidence, this conference explores the production, processing and consumption of food in the prehistoric, Roman and early medieval periods. Topics include landscape, settlement, water supplies, raising livestock, growing food crops and milling grain; and the changes over time.

**PROGRAMME BROCHURE**

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**COVER IMAGE:** Reconstruction drawing by Ed Clark of an iron-age/early Roman period roundhouse settlement, viewed from the current Heslington East lake looking north-east over Kimberlow Hill. [pg 10, *The Past Beneath our Feet*]

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**MAPS AND PLATS** have been provided by Steve Roskams

On pages 6 and 7 Louise Wheatley has provided quotations:

- 1 Roskams and Neal, *The Past Beneath our Feet*: note 2 (p 4), note 3 (p 23), note 4 (p 5), note 5 (pg8), note 6 (p 10), note 7 (p 7)
- 2 Roskams and Neal, *Landscape and Settlement in the Vale of York*: note 1 (p ix), note 8 (p 36)

There are also some other **HANDOUTS** compiled by Louise Wheatley:

- **A FEW ANGLO-SAXON RIDDLES** to entertain you
- **THE SONG OF GROTTI** to accompany Paul Toy's presentation
- **FOOD AND FARMING IN THE PAST:** a resource booklet providing Glimpses of Life in an Agrarian Society from Literature and Manuscript illuminations

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- Oswald, A and Pollington, M, 'Commonplace activities: Walmgate Stray, an urban common in York' in *Landscapes* 12 (2), 2012, pp 45-74.
- Ottaway, P, *Archaeology in the Environs of Roman York: excavations 1976-2005* YAT fascicule 6/2, (2011).
- Pryor, Francis, *Farmers in Prehistoric Britain* (The History Press, 1998/2006/2011).
- Rackham, Oliver, *The Illustrated History of the Countryside* (Duncan Baird Publishers, London, 1986/1988/1994)
- Reynolds, Peter J, *Ancient Farming* (Shire Archaeology, 1987, 2011)
- Rippon, Stephen, *Historic Landscape Analysis* (Practical Handbooks in Archaeology, 16, 2004, reprinted 2008, revised 2012). CBA.
- Roskams, S, Neal, C, Richardson, J and Leary, R, 'A late Roman Well at Heslington East, York: ritual or routine practices? – *Internet Archaeology*, 34, 2013 - online
- Roskams, Steve and Neal, Cath, *Landscape and Settlement in the Vale of York. Archaeological Investigations at Heslington East, York, 2003-13* (Research Report of the Society of Antiquaries of London, no 82, 2020)
- Roskams, S, 'The post-excavation analysis and archiving of outputs from complex multi-period landscape investigations: the example of Heslington East, York', *Internet Archaeology*, 2020.
- Spall, C and Toop, N, 'Before Eoforwic: new light on York in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Centuries, *Medieval Archaeology*, 52 (1), 2008), pp. 1-25; also online
- Taylor, Christopher, *Fields in the English Landscape* (Alan Sutton, 1987/2000).
- Thurnham, J, 'Description of an ancient tumular cemetery, probably of the Anglo-Saxon period, at Lamel Hill, York (*Archaeological Journal*, 6, 1849), ppl 27-39
- Vyner, B, 'The prehistory of York', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 90 (1), 2018, pp 13-28 available online
- Walton Rogers, P, *Cloth and Clothing in Early Anglo-Saxon England, AD450-700* (CBA, Res Rep 145, CBA, York 2007)
- Wellbeloved, C, *Eburacum, or York under the Romans* (Longmans, York, 1842)
- Wilson, C Anne, *Food and Drink in Britain. From the Stone Age to recent times* (Penguin Books, 1973/1984)
- Wyman, M and Howard, A. *Archaeology and Landscape in the Vale of York* (YAT, York, 2005).

## READING LIST

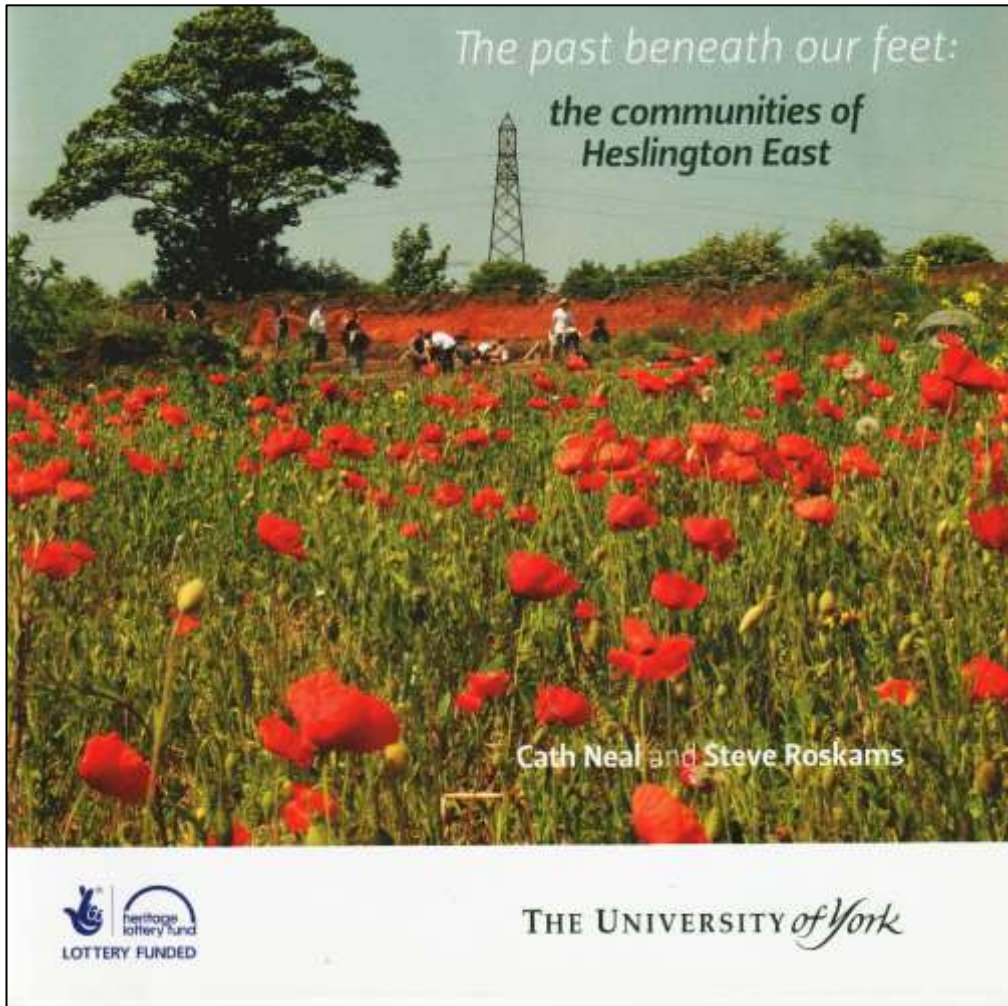
A few of many publications which shed light on food and farming in the past

- Addyman, P and Black, V (eds), *Archaeological Papers from York presented to M W Barley* (YAT, 1984)
- Atherden, Margaret A and Butlin, Robin A (eds), *Woodland in the Landscape: Past and Future Perspectives* (PLACE, Univ College of Ripon and St John)
- Banham, Debby, *Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon England* (Tempus Books, 2004)
- Banham, Debby and Faith, Rosamond, *Anglo Saxon Farms and Farming* (Oxford, 2014)
- Carson, R and Kent, J, 'A hoard of Roman 4<sup>th</sup> century bronze coins from Heslington, Yorks' in *Numismatic Chronical 11, 1971*, pp; 207-25
- Cunliffe, Barry, *Britain Begins* (Oxford, 2012)
- Elsy, Brian *North Duffield: Archaeology and the Local Community* (North Duffield Conservation and Local History Society, 2015)
- Fleming, Robin, *Britain after Rome. The Fall and Rise 400 to 1070* (Penguin, 2001).
- Hagen, Ann, *A Second Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink* (Anglo Saxon Books, 1995/1999)
- Helsop, D and Cruse, J, 'Querns' in J Richardson (ed) *Iron Age and Roman settlement Activity at Newbridge quarry, Pickering, N Yorks*, (WYAS Publ 12, WYAS, Leeds 2012), pp. 54-6
- Kenny, Jon, 'Community Archaeology in Greater York' in *Hunting for History. Community Archaeology in Greater York 2005-2010* (YAT, 2010). Also see his other articles.
- Larrington, Carolyn, *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford, 1996/2014)
- Martin, L, Richardson J and Roberts, I (eds), *Iron Age and Roman Settlements at Wattle Syke: archaeological investigations during the A1 Branham to Wetherby upgrading scheme' Yorkshire Archaeology 11, 2013.*
- Neal, C and Roskams, S, 'Authority and community: reflections on archaeological practice at Heslington East, *York Historic Environment: Policy and Practice 4 (2), 2013*, pp. 139-155.
- Neal, Cath and Roskams, Steve, *The Past Beneath our Feet: the communities of Heslington East* (University of York, 2013)
- O'Connor, S, Esam, A, Al-Sabah, S, Anwar, D et al, 'Exceptional preservation of a prehistoric human brain from Heslington, Yorkshire, UK', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 38 (7), 2011 – also online

## THE PROGRAMME

- 10.00-10.15 **John Oxley** - Introduction and welcome
- 10.15-10.45 **Steve Roskams** - Prehistoric into Roman Transitions at Heslington East
- 10.45-11.15 **Jon Kenny** – Corresponding transitions beyond Heslington
- 11.15–11.30 Break
- 11.30-12.00 **Clare Rainsford** - the pastoral economy: a perspective from the animal bones
- 12.00-12.30 **Dave Helsop** - the agricultural economy: a perspective from the querns
- 12.30–13.30 Lunch Break with Sourdough demonstration & exhibition, and a chance to look inside the church
- 13.30-2.00 **Paul Toy** – the Song of the Grotti (the old Norse Song of the Grinding Slaves)
- 2.00-2.30 **Malin Holst** – Peopling the Heslington landscape: human skeletal analyses.
- 2.30-2.45 Break
- 2.45 – 3.15 **Steve Roskams** – Cultural transitions within and beyond the Roman period at Heslington: ceramic perspectives
- 3.15-3.45 **Cecily Spall** – Life in Heslington into the post-Roman period
- 3.45-4.00 **Further questions and open discussion with the speakers, chaired by John Oxley**

## THE HESLINGTON EAST PROJECT



A copy of this 2013 booklet is included in the Conference Pack

The longer analysis has recently been published and is on display:

Steve Roskams and Cath Neal, *LANDSCAPE AND SETTLEMENT IN THE VALE OF YORK. Archaeological investigations at Heslington East, York 2003-13* (Research Report of the Society of Antiquaries of London, No. 82, 2020)

## A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF ANGLO-SAXON BREAD

From Debby Banham, *Food and Drink in Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 2004), pp 17-18.

“For us, bread is a convenience food. It is easier to buy a loaf (or even a ready-made sandwich) than cook potatoes, pasta, or any other cereal. In many cases we don’t even have to slice it. For the Anglo-Saxons, the situation was quite different: **grinding** the flour for bread was a huge amount of labour, before one could even begin to bake it. Mechanical mills only came in around the middle of the Anglo-Saxon period. Before that, all flour had to be ground by hand in a **quern**. [The author’s own experience and experiments suggest] “that the average modern person would not last half an hour at such work, and would have produced enough flour for [only] a couple of rolls. King Aethelberht of Kent had a whole class of **female slaves** (the middle one of three in terms of status) identified by their task of grinding flour. Since this was such hard work, it was probably carried out by slaves in all establishments that had them, but in most **peasant households**, grinding will have been the task of the female members of the family...Even by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, when there were over 5,000 mills, mostly watermills, in England, they were not accessible to everyone. Very few of them were in the north or west of England, and where they existed, they were expensive to use. Even for prosperous landlords, a mill was a considerable investment, and to recoup that investment it was expected to make a substantial profit...there must have been many people for whom the cost of mechanical milling was prohibitive, who...had to do their own grinding...So **bread** would not be eaten by everybody at every meal...and was therefore a **prestigious food**, suitable for demonstrating wealth and power, or for feasting, if one was less wealthy and powerful.”

Debby Banham and Martha Bayliss created the **Early English Bread Project** and their blog can be read online at

<https://earlybread.wordpress.com/about/>.

In this fascinating series, they point out that an important factor in making bread was the household “level of poverty”. This determined the kind of cooking and hearth equipment available and the ingredients. For example, if you were very poor: you used pea and/or bean flour; if moderately poor: oat flour which could be mixed with barley flour; and if a reasonably prosperous yeoman farmer: wholemeal wheat flour which could be mixed with rye flour.

## QUERNSTONES AND MILLING

### THE YORKSHIRE QUERN SURVEY

**DAVID HELSOP AND JOHN CRUSE** are involved in the **Yorkshire Quern Survey** which studies prehistoric, Roman and early medieval equipment used for grinding flour and other materials. **David Heslop** became involved with the Yorkshire Quern Survey and collected quern data throughout the 1990's. In 2008 he published his YAS Monograph on 562 beehive querns from N Yorks and S Durham, setting new standards for quern analysis. Active work on the YQS archive resumed in 2002, when **John Cruse** was appointed YQS Quern co-ordinator. Since then, the scope of the Survey has been extended, its research programme is now investigating the typology, chronology and distribution of the whole range of hand-querns and mechanically powered millstones from early prehistory, through to the early medieval period

For more information about Querns see these publications:

David Peacock: 2013: *The Stone Of Life: Querns, Mills and Flour Production in Europe up to c.AD 500*, Highfield Press

David Heslop: 2008: *Patterns of Quern Production, Acquisition and Deposition: A Corpus of Beehive Querns from Northern Yorkshire and Southern Durham*, YAS Occ Paper No 5, Leeds

RJ Cruse & D Heslop, with G Gaunt: 2013: *Querns, Millstones and Other Stone Artefacts* in L Martin, J Richardson & I Roberts, *IA & Roman Settlement at Wattle Syke: Archaeological Investigations during the A1 Bramham to Wetherby Upgrading Scheme*, WYAS, p165-183

### THE *GRÓTTASÖNGR* OR 'THE SONG OF GROTTI'

Paul Toy will introduce this poem from the *Poetic Edda*, a collection of Old Norse heroic and mythological poetry. It is the work-song of two girls as they grind under orders; and the subject has been described as a revenge plot that centres around a quern stone used for grinding corn. Paul will give a reading of the poem as translated by Carolyne Larrington. A handout with translations from two different editions is available so that you can compare the texts.

### WHY NOT VISIT HOLGATE WINDMILL, ACOMB

There is a leaflet about the mill and some flour is available to purchase.

## THE HESLINGTON EAST PROJECT AND THIS CONFERENCE

### OVERVIEW BY STEVE ROSKAMS

The Vale of York, in North Yorkshire, has been used and shaped by communities since the end of the last Ice Age to the modern day. Its earliest, prehistoric features chart the way in which household groups shifted from mobile to more sedentary forms of occupation over time, culminating in the creation of landscape divisions from the end of the Bronze Age, and then, recognisable field systems during the Iron Age. Throughout all periods, a variety of activity types on the landscape has been evident in the landscape, taking significantly different forms in different contexts: water management; the creation of boundaries; agricultural production; structural development, from domestic houses to larger monuments; exchange and consumption; and mortuary practices plus other ritual activity.

The Conference, 'Food and Farming in Early Heslington' is an interdisciplinary event. Using the major landscape project at Heslington East as a foundation, expert speakers from commercial, academic and community archaeology will use archaeological, documentary, and pictorial evidence to explore the production, processing and consumption of food in the prehistoric, Roman and early medieval periods in this area and beyond.

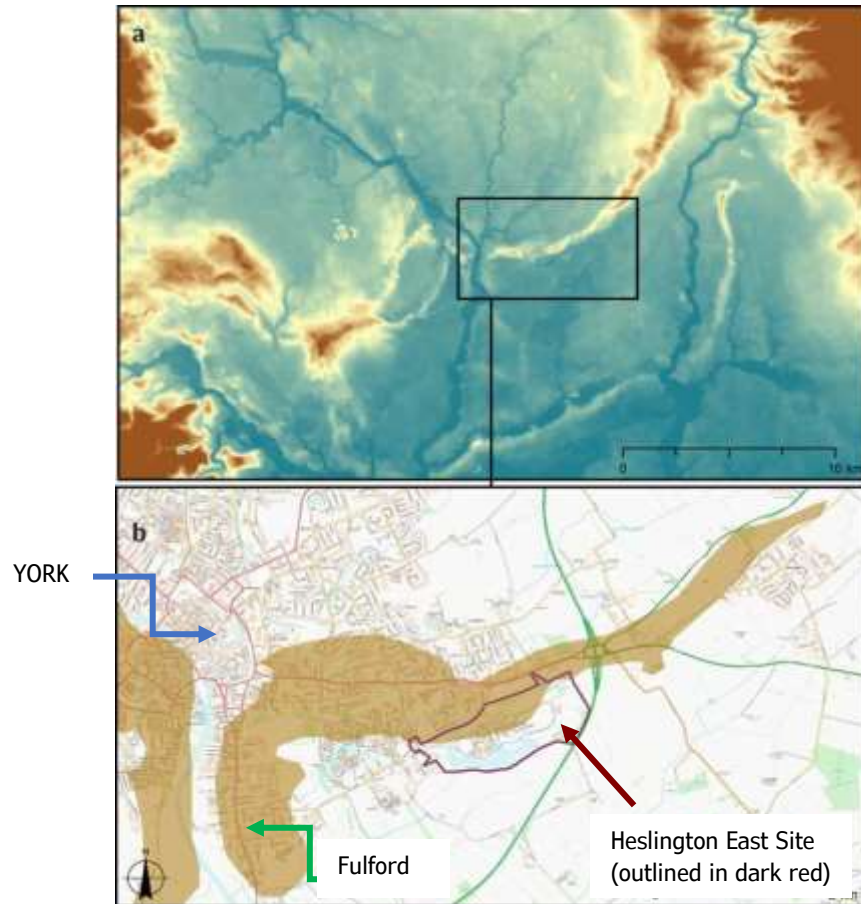
The speakers will consider the changing ways in which humans engaged with landscapes in and around Heslington from the pre-Roman period onwards. Together there will be an attempt to provide answers to the basic question: "What do we know of the people who initially just visited, but then inhabited, these landscapes?"

There will be summaries of investigation on how they lived and what they ate; how they raised their livestock; what crops did they grow and how did they process them; and critically, where did they get their water supply and how did they manage it.

It is only by understanding both continuities and variations in agricultural practices over time, and the wider social implications of each, that we can contextualise what emerged as Heslington today.



## LOCATION OF HESLINGTON EAST RELATIVE TO THE YORK MORAINE



“Heslington lies at the centre of the low-lying Vale of York... that has both shaped, and been shaped by, communities living there since the end of the last Ice Age.”<sup>(1)</sup> “About 14,000 years ago the Vale of York was filled by a glacier moving southwards, producing a large lake of meltwater in the south of the region. When the glacier stopped close to modern-day Escrick it created a distinctive ridge...the Escrick moraine. As the glacier retreated to the north, another moraine was deposited close to the location of modern York. This produced a second ridge of higher land, forming a routeway across the Vale of York during the prehistoric period. Kimberlow Hill, on the Heslington East site, is part of this east-west York moraine, comprising sands, clays and gravels. The interface between these different deposits generated contact springs along the hillside...creating a mosaic of habitats, attracting wildlife as well as people and their domestic animals<sup>(2)</sup>

## OUR SPEAKERS, continued

**PAUL TOY** studied at the Universities of Manchester, York and Durham. He has worked in bookshops, libraries, archives, and museums - chiefly at the York Minster (Old Palace) Library and for the York Archaeological Trust. He has given papers at various academic conferences, and has lectured for the WEA, for PLACE (York St John), and for a variety of local history groups and organisations. Paul also maintains a (lowkey) theatrical career. He trained at the Webber Douglas Academy and has worked for professional companies and as a paid director for community theatre groups. He is a former Artistic Director of the York Wagon Plays.

**MALIN HOLST** has worked in British archaeology since 1987, including at Sutton Hoo and at the Towton 1461 mass grave. She obtained her MSc in Osteology, Palaeopathology and Funerary Archaeology from Bradford & Sheffield Universities and founded York Osteoarchaeology Ltd in 2003, a company specialising in the osteological analysis of human remains from commercial archaeological excavations. She has lectured in the Department of Archaeology at the University of York since 2003 and is part of a number of research projects, including ‘The melting pot of Eboracum: exploring diversity and identity through skeletal and burial evidence in Roman York’. Malin has a long list of significant publications, involving osteological analyses, biomolecular and funerary research. In 2013 she received the York University Student Union’s ‘Excellence in Teaching and Supervision Awards’ and the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Award. Malin is a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA) and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (FSA).

**CECILY SPALL** is a senior field archaeologist with over 25 years of experience in archaeological excavation and project management. Cecily studied Archaeology at the University of York (BSc (Hons) 1994-97) and joined FAS Heritage on graduation going on to study part-time towards her Masters in Heritage Management at the University of Birmingham (2000-2001). She was appointed as co-director of the Tarbat Discovery Programme in 1999 by Professor Martin Carver and Director of FAS Heritage in 2005. Cecily specialises in archaeological excavation and publication including legacy archives and has research interests in the medieval period, most particularly in burial practice and material culture.

## OUR SPEAKERS, continued

**CLARE RAINSFORD MA MSc PhD** is a freelance zooarchaeologist working in York, UK, with a particular interest in ritual uses of animals in the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods in Britain. She was an Archaeology and Anthropology undergraduate at the University of Cambridge and applied to the University of York for her MSc because it “runs one of the only dedicated Zooarchaeology Masters’ courses in the country.” She has worked for York Archaeological Trust on the faunal remains from the large-scale multi-period Hungate excavations in York. Clare has been zooarchaeologist for the Teffont Archaeology Project and PAST Landscapes which have excavated Roman sites including two Late Roman shrines and the Deverill villa. Clare’s PhD explored the role of animals in early Anglo-Saxon mortuary practices in eastern England.

**DAVID HELSOP** became involved with the **Yorkshire Quern Society** in the 1990’s. He has been Tyne & Wear County Archaeologist (1997-2016) and is currently co-director of New Visions Heritage Ltd. He has been the cathedral Archaeologist for New Castle and Carlisle and, recently archaeologist on the major HLF scheme at Cathedral of St Nicholas, Newcastle upon Tyne. Other projects are: *The Rome Transformed Project* (ROMETRANS) with the Universities of Newcastle and of Florence and, for Historic England, Production of Research Assessment and Agenda for the late Bronze Age and Iron Age periods of the North-east Regional Research Framework. David is a full member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists; President of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne; and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

**JOHN CRUSE, FSA, FSA Scot.** Following a career in the oil industry, John has been Vice-President of The Prehistoric Society from 2001. He has also been Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (2004-2007) and Trustee of Oxford Archaeology (2006-2019). John has served as the Hon Secretary of the Prehistory Research Section of the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society (YAHS) and, since 2001, co-ordinator of the **Yorkshire Quern Survey (YQS)**. He has contributed quern reports for several publications on the excavations on the A1 upgrades between Healam Bridge and Scotch Corner; for a research excavation at Thwing, East Riding; and, as well as for various development projects, ranging in size from the Heslington Project to a multitude of smaller sites.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER ON THE SITE

“By far the most significant local resource to influence human activity on the site was water. This was true of the earliest period in prehistory, and continued until the most recent landscape development: the...10-hectare lake at the Heslington East campus.”<sup>(3)</sup>

“The use of this resource [water] in the Heslington landscape has varied considerably over time. **Mesolithic**...flints from a pit near a hill-side spring suggest that this spring was first used between 11,500 and 6,000 years ago...Some ‘**new stone age**’ features have been identified on the site but seem to be isolated pits...In the period from 4,300 years ago, a change in technology from stone to metal heralded what we describe as the **Bronze Age**...[and] features at Heslington East suggest more concerted water management of the spring line...starting around 3,500 years ago.”<sup>(4)</sup>

“Across the site during the **Iron Age** and **Roman** periods, the water source was managed in various ways. Some wells dug during the Iron Age appear to have been unlined and perhaps provided access to water for only a limited time.”<sup>(5)</sup> Additionally “a series of field systems, enclosures and roundhouses can be dated to the Iron Age;” and this evidence inspired the reconstruction drawing by Ed Clark which shows a view over Kimberlow Hill during the late Iron Age/Early Roman period.” [see cover].<sup>(6)</sup>

“During the **Roman** period, however, water-flow from the springs was managed through ditch systems and wattle-lined channels, and a number of cobble- and wattle-lined wells were constructed.”<sup>(7)</sup> [Indeed] “the central landscape saw significant development throughout the Roman period;”<sup>(8)</sup> as can be glimpsed on the plat below which shows ditches and enclosures; and suggested zones of activity.



## OUR HOSTS: FFH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Fishergate, Fulford and Heslington Local History Society (FFH for short) was launched in 2011 and fully operational for 2012. Since then, we have organised annual talks, walks, workshops, events, exhibitions and conferences – one of them each year for the University of York’s Festival of Ideas.

Our membership is drawn from the villages and from the greater York area and we aim to cover a wide range of topics from ‘archaeology to zoology’ with history and heritage in between! Indeed, OUR AIM IS TO PROMOTE INTEREST IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF THE FISHERGATE, FULFORD AND HESLINGTON AREA.

Please visit our website: <https://ffhyork.weebly.com> where you will find out how busy we have been (and how active our webmaster is at recording this); and please do not hesitate to contact us by email: [ffhyork.localhistory@gmail.com](mailto:ffhyork.localhistory@gmail.com).

## OUR CHAIR FOR THE CONFERENCE

**JOHN OXLEY MBE FSA**, was the first City Archaeologist for City of York Council, a post he held from 1989 to retiring in 2019. He studied at the University of Liverpool and worked in Southampton for seven years before coming to York. At York, he developed and put into practice an effective model for the management of archaeology in perhaps the most important and sensitive historic city in the UK. He promoted the development of Community Archaeology in York. He initiated two of the largest archaeological research projects ever carried out in York: the Hungate Project and the University of York Campus 3 project. He was responsible for repair and restoration works on York City Walls and the general strategic framework for managing the walls. His research interests include heritage management, urbanism in Roman and post-Roman Europe, and world heritage studies. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 2008. He was awarded an MBE in 2021 for services to heritage.

He is now Co-Director of Big Ideas By The Sea, Scarborough’s Festival of Ideas, and of the Scarborough Big Dig, a unique community archaeology project in Scarborough Old Town. He is also a member of the York World Heritage Steering Group which applied successfully to have York placed on the UK Tentative List of World Heritage Sites in 2023.

## OUR SPEAKERS

**STEVE ROSKAMS** joined the staff of the University of York in 1983 after spending ten years in rescue archaeology. He directed excavations in Carthage, Tunisia and in London, notably the large excavations at Billingsgate; and has worked on other sites in Algeria and Beirut. Latterly he had concentrated his efforts on investigation of a ‘Dark Age’ site at Mothecombe in southwest England and, closer to home, Iron Age and Roman landscapes and settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds and in York’s immediate hinterland.

Steve is interested in all aspects of archaeological fieldwork, both of theory and of practice. The former involves the construction, from a Marxist perspective, of frameworks for understanding landscape change in relation to transitions between the Iron Age and Roman periods, and between the latter and the medieval period. As to practice, this includes the development of excavation methods and analysis to aid the interpretation of complex, deeply-stratified sequences and of extensive shallow sites. Currently Steve has completed the important publication of the Heslington East Project: *Landscape and Settlement in the Vale of York: Archaeological Investigations at Heslington East, York*.

**DR JON KENNY** is an independent community archaeologist specialising in working with communities to understand their historic landscapes. He is a graduate of the University of York and went over the Pennines to obtain his PhD at Lancaster University. After returning to York, he worked at the University before joining York Archaeological Trust as a community archaeologist. He branched out on his own 7 years ago.

**Abstract of his paper:** An Iron Age and Romano British agrarian landscape in the Southern Vale of York. This paper outlines the community work undertaken by community groups in North Duffield and Cawood investigating the landscape around the rivers Ouse and Derwent in the Southern Vale of York, immediately south of Heslington. Drawn by aerial photography to the plethora of Iron Age and Romano British field systems and small settlements in their landscapes these groups have raised funds and undertaken a number of excavations over a 10 year period. The paper will highlight the continuity observed in settlement development through the Iron Age into the Romano British and also suggest a possible reason for the lack of Villas appearing in the landscape between the Ouse and Derwent