

FOORD WATER RACES ON THE BRANSDALE MOORS

Report for Helmsley Archaeological and Historical Society (HAHS) AGM 19/4/13

Some members may be aware that Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) have been commissioned by the North York Moors National Park Authority to produce a management plan for those sections of the Foord water races which lie within the Bransdale Moors ESS partnership. Within this area, the total length of the water races is around 28km, which represents some 30% of the overall network, but it does include some of the better preserved sections.

The plan was required to collate and present the previous 2008-2011 survey work of the HAHS and, using their condition assessments and other data, prepare a strategy for the future management and any appropriate archaeological conservation of the races. The existing HAHS data was kindly made available to EDAS by Tony Wright, who previously coordinated the HAHS survey work.

In the event, it transpired that the HAHS had not yet surveyed a number of the races within the management plan area (specifically some sections of the Rievaulx, Carlton, Nawton, Pockley, Starfits, Harland and Ankness races), and there was no data for any of the Oak House, Hill End and Gillamoor water races. In addition, much of the HAHS data was collected between November 2007 and April 2008 (although there was some later data from June 2009 and March-August 2010), and occasional site visits showed that in some cases the condition assessments were now out-of-date. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time or resources to organise any new survey work with the HAHS, although Tony Wright kindly made a couple of site visits for EDAS.

Since then, EDAS have been able to survey or re-survey the Ankness race (c.600m), Starfitts race (c.1.8km), Gillamoor race (c.4.2km), Harland race (1.2km) and parts of the Rievaulx race (c.2km). It is hoped to be able to survey the Carlton race (2.7km) in the next few weeks, and visit some areas of concern or interest which will require special mention in the management plan.

It would be useful to know whether anyone from the HAHS is still undertaking survey work on the water races, particularly within the Bransdale Moors area which is covered by the EDAS management plan, and also who might be taking over the coordination of the HAHS project now that Tony Wright has 'retired'.

EDAS would obviously like to maintain contact with the HAHS regarding this project, to ensure that survey work or resources are not duplicated. EDAS would also be happy to invite comments on their draft report (as and when it is finished), and would welcome some feedback on proposed management works. If a new HAHS coordinator has been appointed, perhaps they could get in touch with Ed Dennison so that appropriate liaison can be maintained.

Members might also be pleased to know that, as part of the same project, the remains of the stone-built aqueduct carrying the Nawton race over the Bonfield Gill was subject to a new archaeological survey. This was then used as the basis for a programme of consolidation and repair, which has just been completed - hopefully the structure will stand up to the next 50 years of floods and erosion.

In the meantime, Ed Dennison can be contacted on 01482 870723 or edarchserv@aol.com if anyone wishes to discuss any aspect of the project.

Ed Dennison, EDAS 17th April 2013