



Location: North Yorkshire (SE 880 669)

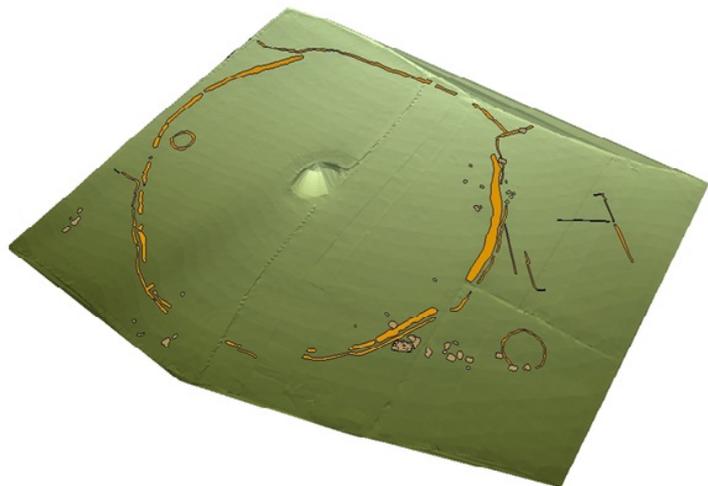
Main period: Neolithic

Access & ownership: Duggleby Howe lies on private land but can be easily viewed from the road.



The large round barrow at **Duggleby Howe** lies on the south bank, and near to the source, of the Gypsy Race stream that flows through the Great Wold Valley. It lies on a gentle north-facing slope.

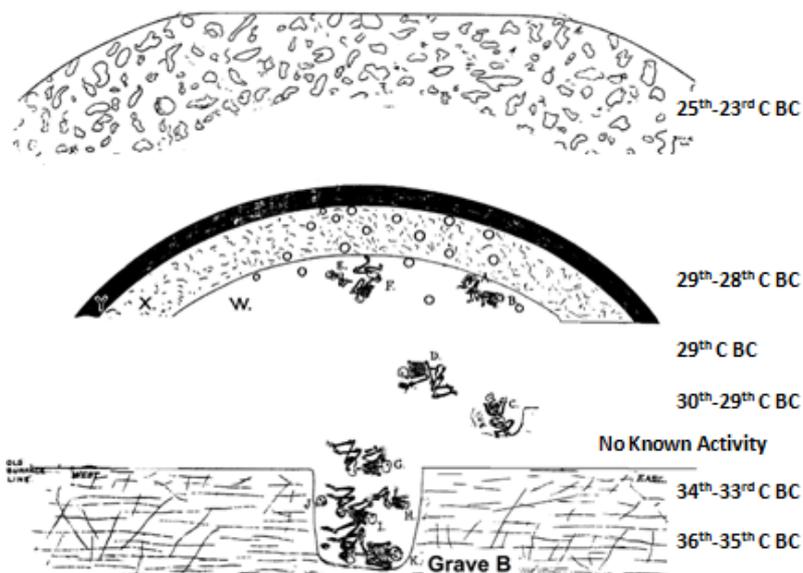
Today the Howe measures some 38 m in diameter at its base and stands 6.25 m high. The mound is flat-topped though this may be the result of earlier excavations, most notably by Mortimer in 1890 when a complex sequence of cremation and inhumation burials was revealed. In 1971, aerial photography by Derek Riley discovered that the Howe was central to a large encircling causewayed ditch some 370 m in diameter enclosing some 10.5 hectares. The ditch is not complete but rather is penannular and open to the south. Mortimer excavated over the centre of the mound and discovered at its base, a large pit containing inhumation burials. Further burials were found in a secondary grave, on the old ground surface, and within the primary mound which was composed of turf and topsoil and then capped by a layer of chalk grit below a layer of clay. Within the primary mound and chalk capping were over 30 deposits of cremated human bone and the inhumations of at least 6 children. Some of these burials were associated with prestige artefacts including an edge-polished adze, an antler macehead, transverse arrowheads, a polished flint knife, boars' tusks, and bone 'skewer' pins. Burial I, in the fill of the primary shaft grave, seems to have been associated with a trophy skull: perimortem blunt force trauma to both sides of the head may suggest an execution or ritual killing.



Between 2006 and 2009 researchers from Bradford University, in collaboration with the University of Vienna and funded by English Heritage, undertook topographical and geophysical survey

over the mound and its enclosure. The burials that survived in Hull Museum were re-analysed and dated by radiocarbon. A small excavation was made over the encircling ditch and as a result of this research the mound can now be seen to have had a complex history and what we see today was not raised until some 1000 years after burials began at the site.

The sequence of burial can now be demonstrated to have started in the shaft grave in the 36th/35th C BC and that the fourth and final burial was placed in the top of the pit in the 34th/33rd C BC. There therefore appears to have been as much as 200–300 years of episodic burial activity in this pit. There then appears to have been a period of inactivity at the site or at least a period where activities left no archaeological trace in the excavated areas. Burial in Grave A recommenced in the 30th and 29th C BC and it is only now, 500–600 years after burial began,



that the primary mound is constructed. Burials in the mound material date to the 29th–28th C BC. Unfortunately the cremation deposits could not be located and no radiocarbon dates are available but the association of bone ‘skewer’ pins with three of them suggest that these too date to the turn of the 4th and 3rd millennium. Isotope analysis of the human bone suggests that none of those buried at Duggleby Howe were local.

Excavation at the encircling ditch in 2009 was able to demonstrate that this varied between 7.75 m and 5.25 m wide. In the excavated section, it was 2.75 m deep. The ditch had silted naturally and evenly and had no evidence for an associated bank. It seems likely that the chalk from the excavated ditch was used to construct the upper mound and indeed the estimated volumes for the ditch and the mound are closely comparable. Radiocarbon dates from hazelnut shells and antler picks date the ditch to around the 24th C BC some 1200 years after burial began.



References

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