

**An Archaeological Survey of an Earthwork at Aldby Park,  
Buttercrambe,  
North Yorkshire**



Elaine Jamieson and Trevor Pearson

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## Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological survey of a prominent garden earthwork situated in the grounds of Aldby Park, Buttercrambe in North Yorkshire. The work was carried out for the Yorkshire Gardens Trust in April 2021 to inform a new programme of research on the history of the park and gardens. The earthwork takes the form of a massive flat-topped bank with mounds at opposing ends, and barely features in the archaeological literature of the area. It was first documented by the Tudor antiquarian William Camden who associated it with Edwin, the first Christian King of Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. This report therefore provides the first detailed archaeological description and analysis of the earthwork. The survey concludes that the garden feature was created by the Darley family in the later 16th or early 17th century by appropriating the remains of a Norman motte-and-bailey castle, the feature forming part of a more extensive post-medieval designed landscape. The report also considers the possible relationship of the site to several areas of settlement preserved as earthworks within Aldby Park that await detailed investigation.

As part of the fieldwork, the opportunity was taken to survey a prominent mound on the opposite side of the river valley in the parish of Skirpenbeck. This feature had previously been interpreted as a castle motte and has now been shown definitively to represent a prehistoric burial mound (see Appendix 1)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the survey

In late April 2021 the authors of this report undertook an analytical survey of an earthwork in the garden of Aldby Park in North Yorkshire. Aldby Park is a private residence and estate about 9 miles north-east of York on the north side of the village of Buttercrambe and west of the river Derwent [Figure 1]. The estate has been the home of the Darley family since 1557 when William Darley of Wistow, near Selby bought the manor of Buttercrambe from the Earl of Rutland and his wife Margaret. The house dates to 1726 and sits in a 36ha park maintained as pasture with clumps of mature trees and a more formal garden laid out in the 1740s to the south and east of the main house. The house, stables and entrance lodge along with several garden sculptures have statutory protection as listed buildings while in 1984 the park was registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 for its special historic interest (List Entry 1001055).

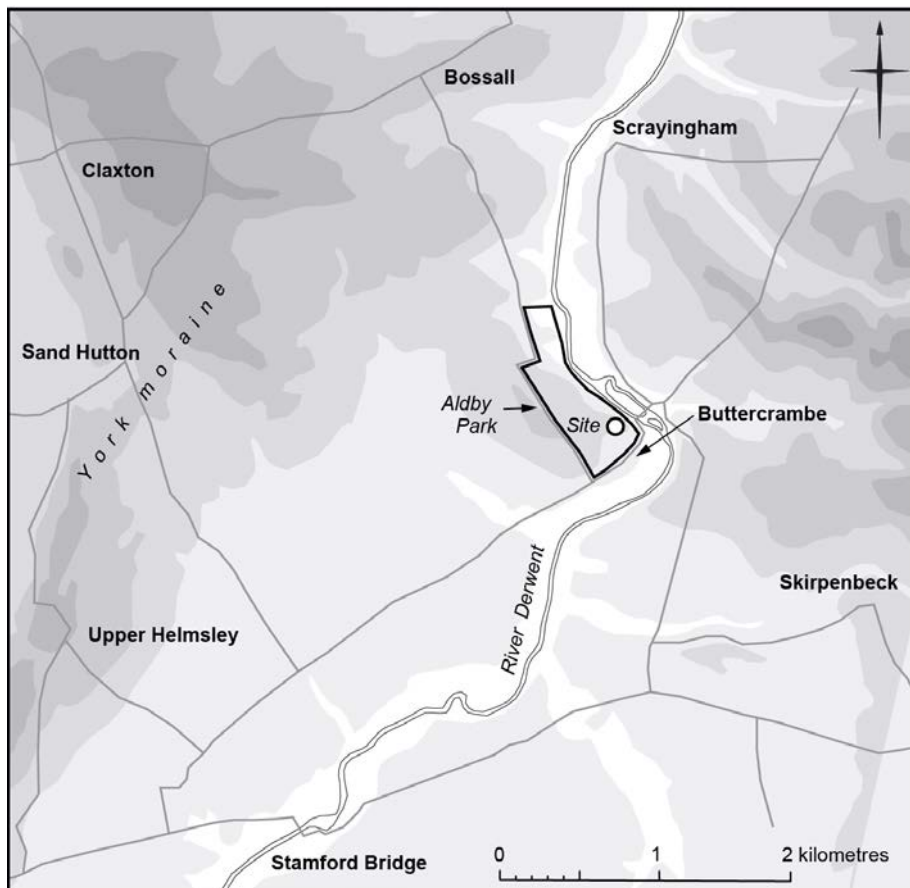


Figure 1.  
The location of  
Aldby Park.

The focus of this survey report is a prominent earthwork in the formal gardens 80m to the south-east of the house (Historic England Monument No. 1148991). Partly fringed by a wide, flat-bottomed dry ditch, the earthwork (hereafter referred to as the monument) occupies the top of a steep slope overlooking the river Derwent at NGR SE 73365 58388. It is an elongated mound about 80m long with rounded peaks at either end while a series of garden terraces step down the valley side to the river below. The monument is planted with trees and ornamental bushes which largely obscure it from view and include several yews that from their girth must be a couple of hundred years old [Figure 2]. The monument has been part of the gardens for nearly 400 years as it appears on the earliest map of the estate of 1633 with very much the same arrangement of paths and walkways that it has today (Osborne 1633).



*Figure 2.  
(above) view of the mound and ditch at the north-west end of the monument  
(left) view from the north-east of the terraced valley side overlooking the Derwent  
(photograph P. Goodchild).*

The monument has never been investigated as an archaeological site and before the 2021 survey the most detailed published plan was the 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey county series map from the late 19th century (Ordnance Survey 1893). Despite the lack of previous archaeological work, there is a tradition that King Edwin of Northumbria who died around 633 resided at Aldby and that the monument marks the site of his 'palace'. While this story is often repeated, scholarly opinion now favours the idea that the monument is the remnant of a Norman earthwork castle.

The work also provided an opportunity to consider the landscape setting of the monument by bringing together some of the archaeological and historical evidence from the surrounding area. This included making a survey of a second possibly related earthwork on the opposite side of the river to Aldby Park in the parish of Skirpenbeck which has been interpreted as a castle motte (hereafter referred to as the Skirpenbeck mound - see Appendix 1). The 2021 survey followed on from an initial visit in March 2020 to view both the monument at Aldby Park and the Skirpenbeck mound after which a desk-based report was compiled assessing the archaeological and historical evidence for both sites (Pearson and Gates 2020). The 2020 visit and the 2021 survey were undertaken with the kind permission of the owners, Mr and Mrs Winn-Darley and with the support of Peter Goodchild, Vice-President of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, who is researching the history of the park on behalf of that group. Unless otherwise stated the illustrations in this report are by the authors.

## 1.2 Geology and topography

Aldby Park and Buttercrambe are founded on glacial sands and gravels which a mile or so further to the west form a distinct ridge known as the York moraine (see Figure 1 above). Along with the Escrick moraine further south these two ridges provide natural east-west routes across the Vale of York elevated slightly above the formerly marshy lowlands of the central vale. The Derwent itself may have been passable to small boats up to and beyond Buttercrambe. A Roman pottery industry several miles upriver from Buttercrambe is thought to have made use of the water-borne link offered by the Derwent to the Humber estuary and the network of other rivers feeding into it (Wood 2016, 86). Commercial use of the river as far as Malton developed in the 18th century after an Act was passed in Parliament in 1702 to create a navigation (Hudleston 1962, 137).

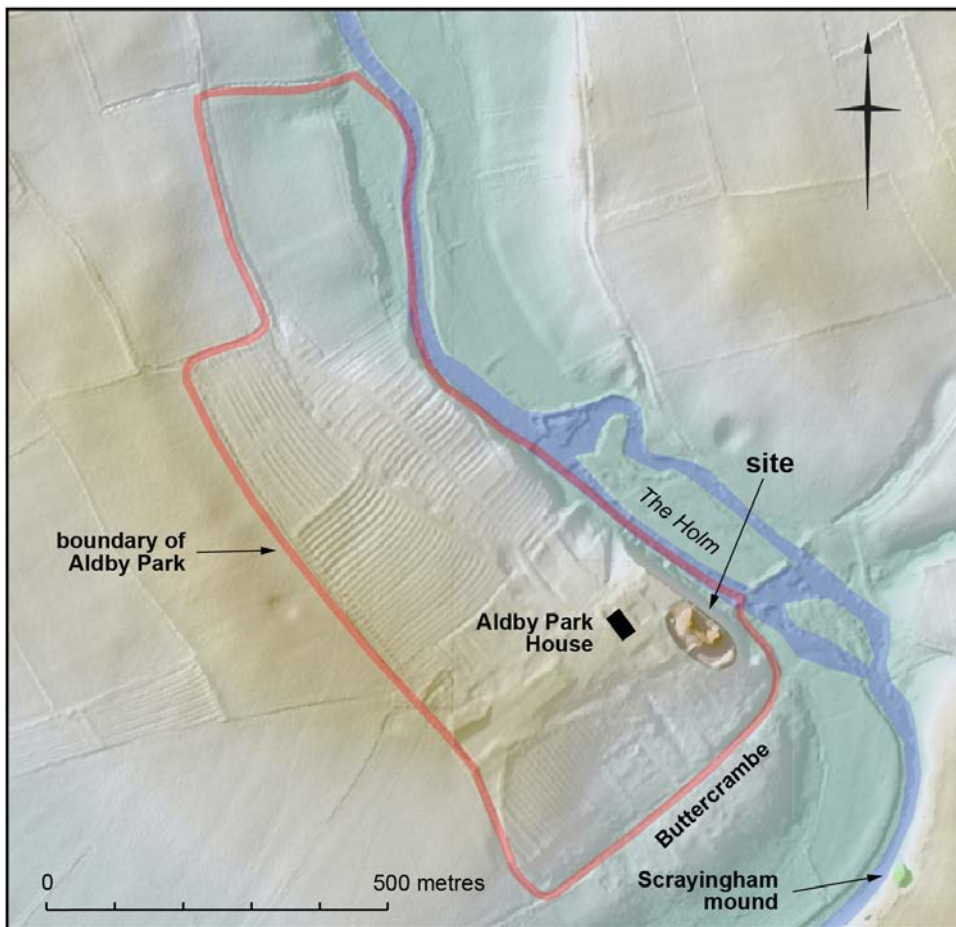


Figure 3. Digital terrain model of Aldby Park based on Environment Agency lidar data (Map contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.)

The monument is prominently sited on a spur of high ground forming the west side of the valley of the river Derwent [Figure 3]. Along this stretch of the Derwent, the river divides forming an island called The Holms. This is probably the water meadow called 'Harholvemilne' mentioned in the early 13th century and described as a holme (meaning island) where 'the water descends on either side' (Burton 2004, 392). When the island came into being is presently unknown and it can disappear altogether when the Derwent is in heavy flood. The Holms is the site of an 18th century mill, now a private house, and also carries the road between Buttercrambe and Malton with narrow bridges spanning each arm of the Derwent connected by a short length of causeway. Downstream from The Holms is a second, smaller island after which the two river channels unite and flow around a broad bend to the south-west. The valley declines in height after the bend, the north-west side rising gently to Buttercrambe village.



## 2. Historical Background

### 2.1 The Early Medieval period

A number of finds from the 7th and 8th centuries have been made by metal detectorists in the surrounding area including a coin hoard deposited around 715 (Naylor 2015, 291). It is possible that these finds indicate settlement in the vicinity of Buttercrambe in the early medieval period or perhaps they represent losses at a market or similar outdoor assembly focused on the river crossing. The church at Scrayingham on the east side of the Derwent contains stonework of pre-9th century date suggesting that the building is a rare example of a stone church dating to the first couple of centuries after the conversion of the Northumbrians to Christianity (Ryder 2010). At this early period churches were often constructed as private chapels by individuals of royal or lordly status hinting at the existence of an early medieval estate in this area most likely centered at Scrayingham rather than on the Buttercrambe side of the river.

### 2.2 The Medieval period

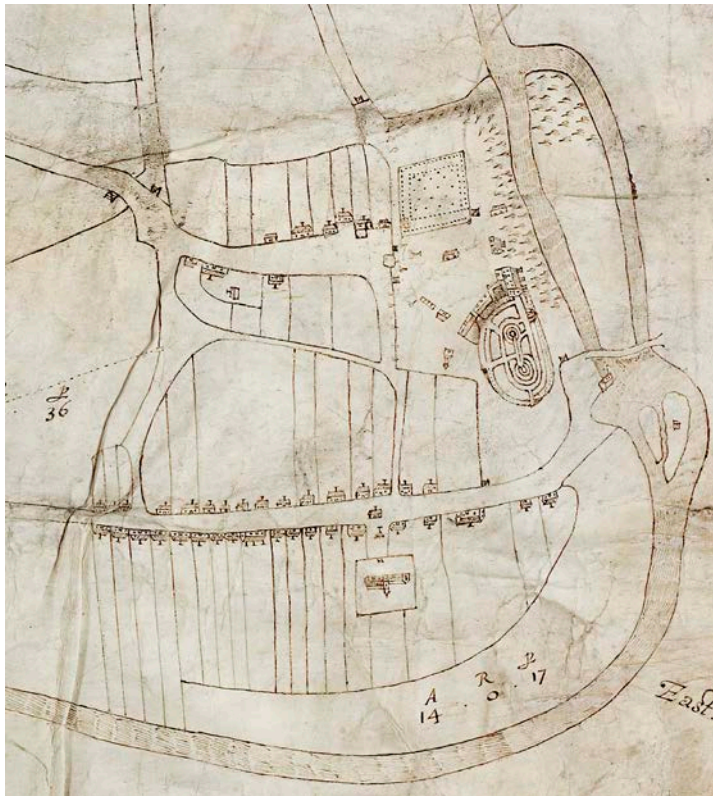
The earliest mention of Buttercrambe is in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The name is thought to be Anglo-Saxon in origin and mean ‘the rich piece of land in the bend of the river’ which accords with the topographic setting of the village overlooking riverside meadows to the south-east (Smith 1928, 36, 38). The Survey records that Buttercrambe was divided between three different estates which included the nearby villages of Scrayingham, Bossall, and Flaxton. The three estates had different owners in 1066 but by 1086 they belonged to the Norman knight, Hugh Fitz Baldric (Faull and Stinson 1986, 23N29; 23N31-33). William the Conqueror appointed Fitz Baldric Sheriff of York in late 1069 at a time when Norman rule in the north of England hung in the balance and so he played a key part in the imposition of Norman rule in Yorkshire (Dalton 1994, 34-8). The Domesday Survey also mentions a church in one of the three estates and a mill in another. The 18th century mill at The Holms could be on the site of the 1086 mill while the 1086 church is possibly the church at Scrayingham mentioned above. Bossall is another possibility because of its later importance as the parish church for the townships of Buttercrambe, Harton, Claxton, Sand Hutton and Flaxton. The earliest part of the church at Buttercrambe dates to the 13th century when it was a chapel dependent upon the parish church at Bossall. However, there is a reference to ‘Normanno, the priest of Buttercrambe’ in the 1150s suggesting there may have been a church at Buttercrambe by the middle of the 12th century (Farrer 1916, 171-2).

Soon after the Domesday Survey, but before the death of William the Conqueror in 1087, the lands of Hugh Fitz Baldric passed to Robert of Stuteville who then lost his estates to the crown after rebelling in 1106. However, after the middle of the 12th century king Henry II restored many of these lands to the Stutevilles including Buttercrambe (Clay 1952, 22). In 1200 King John made William of Stuteville Sheriff of Yorkshire and that same year granted him the right to hold a weekly market and yearly fair at Buttercrambe (Clay 1952, 113). The following year King John licensed William of Stuteville to enclose and fortify his houses at Cottingham (on the outskirts of Hull) and Buttercrambe (Clay 1952, 113-4). At Buttercrambe, this could be the building that in 1281-2 was described as a ‘well-built capital messuage of diverse houses and a garden together valued at 20s’ (Brown 1892, 245). Buttercrambe eventually passed to the Earls of Kent and in the early 15th century to the Nevilles, the Earls of Westmorland. The Nevilles were a powerful and wealthy dynasty active at court and in the political life of the nation throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. What impact they had on Buttercrambe is presently impossible to assess, but in Yorkshire their principal seats were the fortress at Sheriff Hutton begun in 1382 and Middleham Castle in the Yorkshire Dales. In 1536 Margaret Neville, daughter of the fourth Earl of Westmorland married Henry Manners, 2nd Earl of Rutland and it was they who in 1557 sold the manor of Buttercrambe to William Darley. A record of the sale in 1557 states ‘William Darley, Gent from Henry, Earl of Rutland and Margaret his wife Manor of Buttercrambe als. Buttercram

and 40 messuages, 20 cottages, 2 watermills, a fulling mill, free fishing in the water of the Darwent, and free warren for conies in the same and in Skrayngham als. Screyngham and Awdeby.’ (Collins 1887, 203).

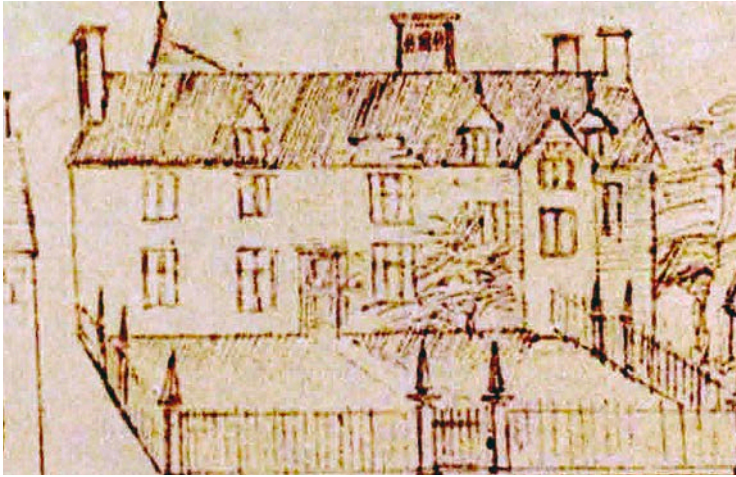
### 2.3 16th and 17th centuries

The Darley family gradually transformed the landscape around Buttercrambe during the two centuries following their arrival in 1557. The process is partially captured in a series of estate maps in the Darley family archives of which the earliest, from 1633, has already been mentioned (Osborne 1633). The map covers the entire estate and is a key piece of evidence for understanding the layout of the landscape several generations after the arrival of the Darley family. The map shows details of house plots and boundaries that are traceable on the ground as earthworks confirming that it is a remarkably accurate portrayal of the landscape and therefore we can be confident of the position of other features that no longer exist. It depicts the main residence on a different site to the present house, much nearer to the edge of the Derwent valley and close to the north-west end of the monument. At this date the earthwork was already in use as a garden feature [Figure 4]. The map depicts a network of paths that start from the house, cross the ditch in three different locations and circle around the mounds at either end of the monument. The map shows a section of ditch at the north-west end next to the house which no longer exists, and which may have been filled in



*Figure 4.*  
*(left) Extract of 1633 map of the Aldby estate with (above) inset showing the main house and adjacent garden incorporating the monument (North Yorkshire County Record Office ZDA MP1).*

when the house was demolished, and the lawn terraces created in the 18th century. The house and adjacent garden occupied part of a now-vanished courtyard that also included several smaller buildings and an enclosed orchard. Beyond the courtyard the map shows fields and two distinct areas of settlement to the west and south-west with about 45 houses in total set within large closes interspersed with several unoccupied plots. The settlement to the west is now deserted but still recognisable on the ground as a series of earthworks that broadly match the layout shown on the 1633 map, though some elements have disappeared. The settlement to the south-west has shrunk from two rows of house plots on either side of the road leading to Buttercrambe bridge to the single row that makes up the present village.



*Figure 5.*  
*Samuel Buck's sketch of the*  
*Darley residence at Aldby from*  
*around 1720 (Johansen 2009*  
*plate 143).*

Buttercrambe was marginally involved in the Civil Wars of the 1640s. The royalists had a 'strong fort' here that was captured by parliamentary forces as part of their operations in May and June 1644 to secure the entrapment of the royalist garrison holding York (Wenham 1970, 21). Shortly after the capture of Buttercrambe, Henry Darley, the son of the owner and a parliamentary commissioner to the Scots then fighting around York, was staying at the family home when he was captured in a daring overnight raid on 3 June 1644 by 60 horsemen from the royalist garrison at Scarborough. One account attributes the raid's success to the fact that the drawbridge over the Derwent had not been raised that night (Wenham 1970, 21). The 1633 map gives no hint that either of the bridges over the Derwent was anything but a permanently fixed structure, so it is possible that a drawbridge was built in place of one of the bridges to make the crossing more secure at the outbreak of the war.

The house, though suffering fire damage in the Civil War, survived into the 1720s when it was drawn by the topographic artist Samuel Buck during his tour of Yorkshire in 1719-20 [Figure 5] (Wakefield Historical Society 1979, 32; Johansen 2009, plate 143). By that date the Darleys had gained fame as horse breeders after Thomas Darley purchased a fine Arab stallion in Aleppo, Syria in 1704. He shipped the horse back to the family home where the 'Darley Arabian' went on to become the most important sire in the history of English thoroughbred racehorses (McGrath 2016, 9-26).

#### **2.4 The 18th century house and park**

Soon after the Buck sketch the then owners, Jane Darley and her husband John Brewster began work in 1726 to construct the present house on a new site further to the west of the old house which was demolished leaving no visible remains. Twenty years later John Brewster Darley commissioned Thomas Knowlton, a noted botanist and antiquarian and for many years the gardener to the Earl of Burlington at nearby Londesborough Park to lay out his grounds at Aldby marking the beginning of the present park. The bill for the works in September 1746 included 'direction in making, levelling and forming his gardens and planting the same' and levelling and setting out slopes and lawns (Historic England List Entry 1001055). Two maps survive from this period. One is considered to be the design for a garden that was never implemented and though unattributed and undated is probably contemporary with Thomas Knowlton (Knowlton n.d.; Johansen 2009, 91). The second map is a detailed survey of the entire estate (Bewlay 1746). It depicts woodland to the south and east of the house through which wind several paths leading to the monument depicted as two adjacent mounds [Figure 6]. On the north side of the house there is, as today, a more open parkland landscape (labelled as The Park) stretching westwards and northwards and crossed by an avenue of trees aligned on the house. The park was later extended a short distance further to the north possibly around 1777 when the Darley business accounts mention expenditure on fencing the Deer Park (Historic England List Entry 1001055).



Figure 6. Extract from Bewley's 1746 map of the estate showing the two mounds (North Yorkshire County Record Office ZDA MP-88).



Figure 7. Late 19th century view of the gardens looking towards the mound at the north-west end of the monument (photograph courtesy of Mr and Mrs Winn-Darley).

## 2.5 19th and 20th centuries

The architect Henry Wyatt remodelled the interior of the house in the 1840s and laid out new gardens immediately to the south. The 1844 map accompanying the title apportionment of that year shows the estate in some detail labelling the area of the monument as 'plantations and pleasure grounds' covering an area of just over 6 acres with an orchard to the south-east extending as far as the carriage drive to the house (Ware 1844). Parts of the monument are in several photographs of the gardens dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries in family albums at Aldby Park. In these images, the ditch bottom and sides are filled with plant beds set among carefully managed grass while more mature planting of bushes and trees cover the remainder of the earthwork [Figure 7]. The house fell into neglect during the Second World War when it was used by the military but was restored in the 1960s since when it has reverted to a private residence.

## 3. Past Research

### 3.1 Early references

The third edition of Camden's *Britannia* from 1590 contains a reference to ancient remains surviving at 'a little town named Aldby' on the Derwent which later writers accepted as the first published reference to the monument in the garden at Aldby Park. In particular, Camden notes the ruins of an ancient fortification on a high hill next to the river which matches the topographic setting of the monument though not its present form (Camden 1590, 576). Camden adds that he had heard from Robert Marshall, a resident of Bickerton near Wetherby (Camden 1590, 563), that Aldby was the site of King Edwin's residence by the river Derwent referred to by the 8th century historian Bede (Shirley-Price 1976, 116). There is no mention of Aldby in Bede's history so it is a matter for conjecture why Marshall concluded that Edwin had a residence here. Camden does not mention Aldby in the first or second editions of *Britannia* published in 1586 and 1587 so he must have received the information from Marshall sometime between the publication of the second and third editions (1587-90).

### 3.2 Antiquarian writings in the 18th and 19th centuries

The continuing popularity of Camden's *Britannia* which went through thirteen editions up to 1806 kept the interest in Aldby alive. However, the many references to Aldby in topographical works published in the 18th and 19th centuries did little to advance understanding, instead perpetuating the idea that this was the location of Edwin's palace and exaggerating the importance of the site at other periods based on no particular evidence. Thomas Gale writing in the early 18th century identified Aldby as the site of the Roman town of Derwentio (Gale 1709, 25). Drake disputed that identification preferring Stamford Bridge as Derwentio but nevertheless thought a 'Roman palace, or mansion' had stood at Aldby which he agreed was probably also the palace where 'the Saxon King Edwin resided' (Drake 1736, 33-4). Referring to Aldby, the 18th century topographer Nathaniel Spencer mentions the discovery of Roman coins at 'the ruins of an old castle near the river' (Kitson Clark 1935, 61). Other writers embroidered the story of the royal residence, imagining that Aldby had played a part in the events preceding the famous battle fought nearby at Stamford Bridge in 1066. We read that local hostages were handed over to the invading army of King Harald Hardrada of Norway at Aldby prior to the battle (Clark 1874, 237) and that the Norwegian forces came upon the royal treasury here which they proceeded to plunder (York Herald 1900, 12). The story of King Edwin's palace still persists with one recent academic work on historic gardens noting that at Aldby Park are 'the earthwork remains of two mounds and a dry moat of King Edwin's early medieval castle' (Johansen 2009 vol. 2, 119).

### 3.3 The Ordnance Survey and later authorities

The monument is depicted somewhat schematically on the first edition 1:10560 Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1851 (Ordnance Survey 1854). The 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map published in 1893 shows much more detail and followed the traditional interpretation labelling the earthwork 'supposed site of Palace' [Figure 8]. The map shows two more antiquities nearby. The area north of the earthwork and corresponding to the lower lawned terrace and the approximate site of the pre-1726 house is labelled 'The Keep (Site of)'. A second location to the north of the present house, an area where there is no evidence of there having been a major building, carries the label 'hall (site of)' (Ordnance Survey 1893). As with their identification of the palace site, the surveyors probably followed local tradition in picking these locations out for annotation on the map.

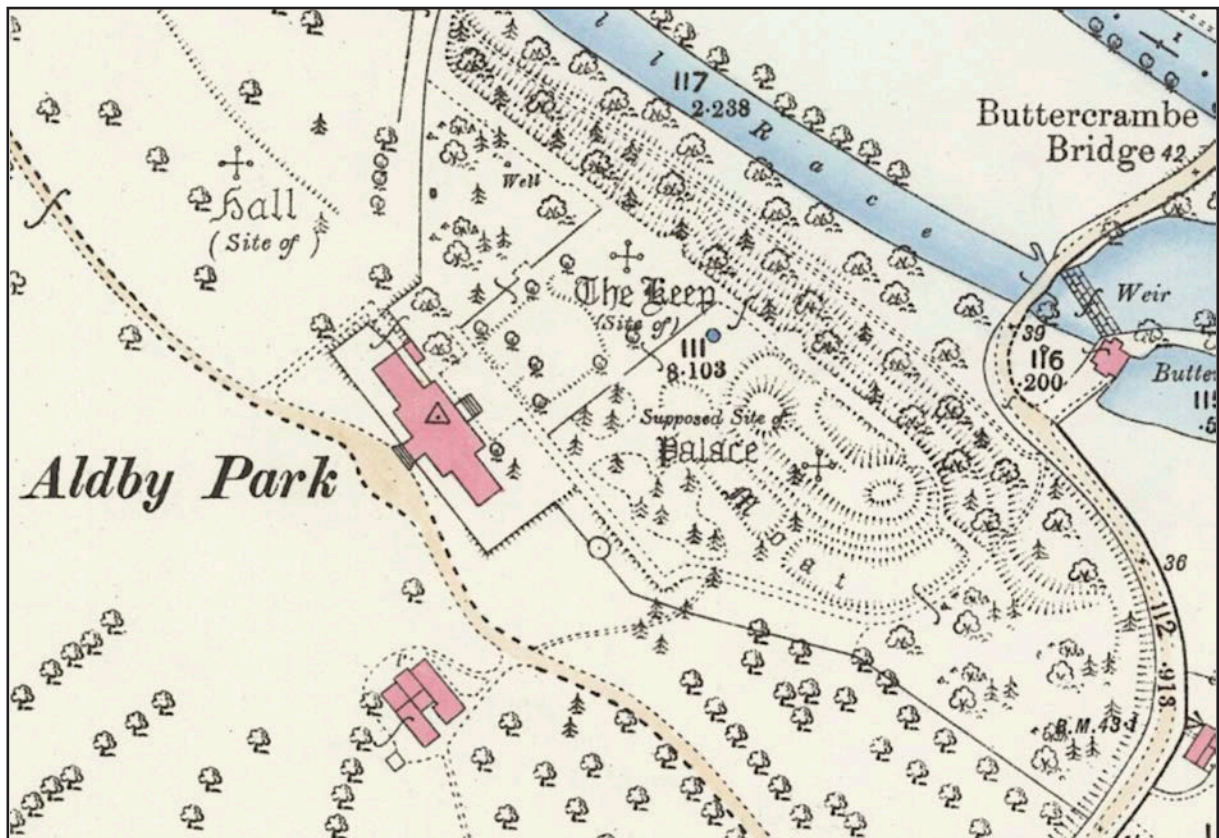


Figure 8. Reduced scale extract of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale map showing the monument (labelled as supposed site of palace) and the immediate environs of the site (Ordnance Survey 1893; Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland).

A more considered interpretation of the earthwork was put forward by William I'Anson (1913) in his pioneering survey of Yorkshire castles. Making no mention of the palace tradition, he recognised that the site had 'considerable strategic importance' and concluded that the earthwork was the mutilated remains of a castle bailey. He suggested the castle was begun by Robert of Stuteville as a timber fortification around the year 1090 which was replaced by a stone castle in 1200 by William of Stuteville (I'Anson 1913, 332-3). Although little else has been written about the earthwork since I'Anson, his idea that it is the remains of a castle has entered the record and been repeated by authorities such as D. Smith from the Ordnance Survey archaeology division (Smith 1967) and by the architectural historian Niklaus Pevsner (Pevsner 1966, 94). The noted castles expert Oliver Creighton does not mention Buttercrambe in his thesis on the castles of Yorkshire and the East Midlands, but mistakenly refers to possible castle remains at the nearby hamlet of Bossall as being in Aldby Park, thereby conflating some details of the two sites (Creighton 1998, 582). In a popular work on castles of North Yorkshire, which largely follows I'Anson's account, Michael Jackson reports the discovery in 1848 of 'a number of skeletons' while excavating the ditch at the southern end of the bailey which were reburied in the north-east corner of the village churchyard (Jackson 2001, 7). Jackson does not provide a source for this account, but several skeletons were also reportedly found in the ditch in the early 1960s and were also reburied in the churchyard (G. Winn-Darley pers. comm). On both occasions the burials were dated to 1066 presumably on the assumption that they were casualties from the battle of Stamford Bridge.

## 4. Description and analysis of the earthworks

The upstanding earthwork, which is around 80m in length and a maximum of 40m in width, rises to 6.5m above the modern ground surface at its north-west and south-east ends [Figure 9]. The feature is aligned parallel to the top of the river cliff above the Derwent, sited at 23m above OD with the natural ground surface dropping approximately 2m towards the south-east. To its north-east, the ground falls sharply for around 12m in a series of constructed terraces which would appear to have been in place, in some form, by 1633 (Osborne 1633). The earthwork is now covered in relatively dense vegetation and supports a number of mature trees and shrubs, with the lower slopes on its south-western side utilised as garden planting beds. To its south and west the earthwork is flanked by a grass-covered, flat-bottomed ditch crossed approximately midway along its length by a short section of causeway. The following description breaks the monument down into its four main component parts: the large round mound at the north-west end; the flat-topped bank; the smaller oval mound at the south-east end and the outer ditch.

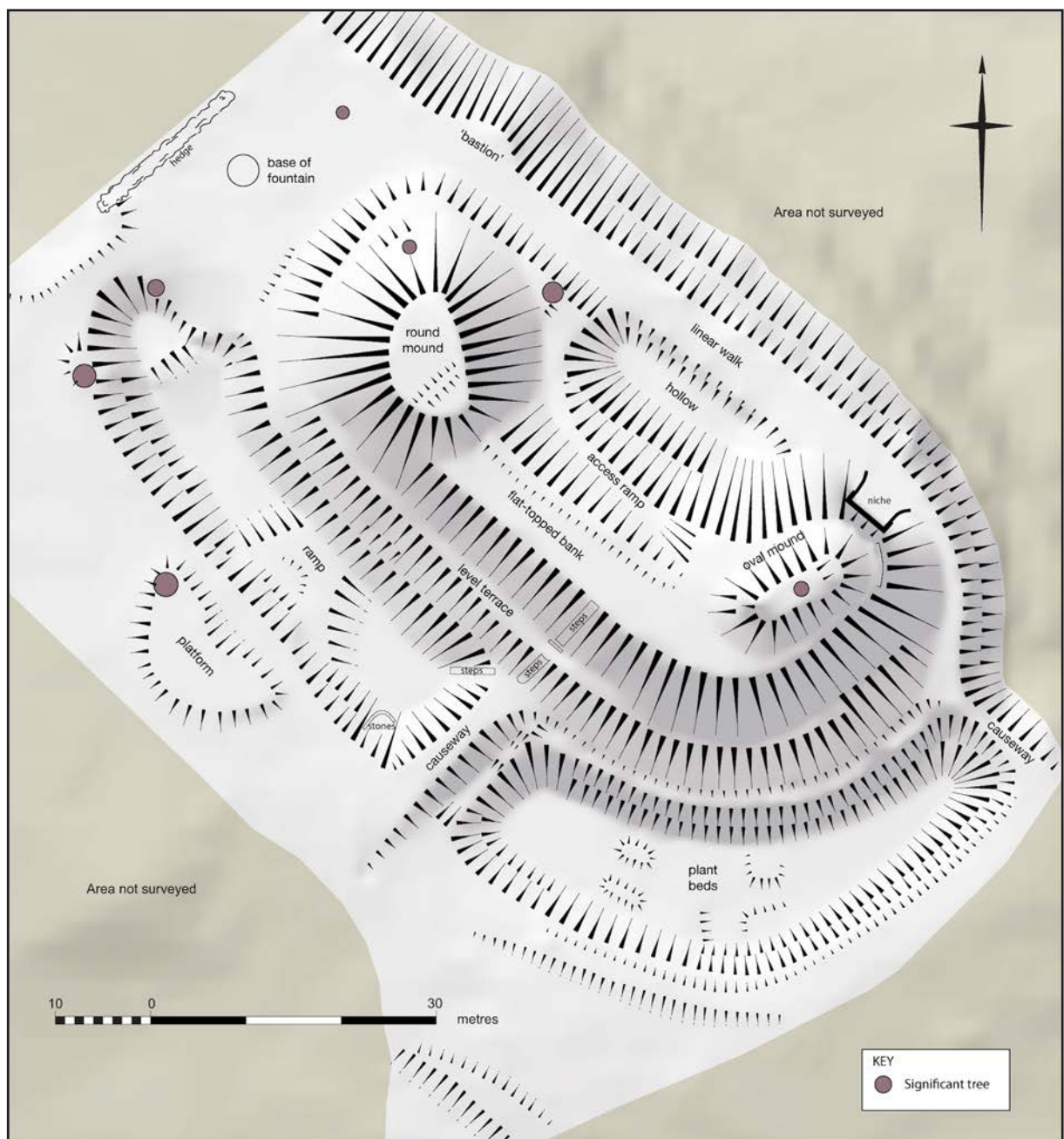


Figure 9. Annotated copy of the 2021 survey plan of the monument reduced from 1:500 scale original.

#### **4.1 The round mound**

The earliest identifiable phase of the earthwork is a steep-sided round mound, standing a maximum of 6.2m high above the current ground surface and 7.5m above the bottom of the outer ditch on its western side. The maximum basal diameter of the mound is around 38m, but the earthwork has been truncated on its north-eastern side by the creation of a linear walk along the river-cliff edge. The path has clearly been terraced into the bottom of the mound, and it is therefore conceivable that the lower section of the mound originally extended as far as the top of the river escarpment. Although it is evident from the earthworks that the construction of the round mound pre-dates the creation of the linear walk, by how long remains unclear.

The flat summit of the mound measures 12.9m north-south by 8m east-west and may originally have been circular, later cut back to form the D-shape it takes today. A short section of linear bank a maximum of 0.3m high was identified running north-east to south-west across the southern end of the mound-top and possibly represents the footings of a modest structure. That said, there is little visible archaeological evidence to suggest a substantial building ever occupied the summit of the mound. However, it is possible the mound's truncated eastern side is the consequence of an earlier structural arrangement giving access to its summit. Alternatively, the mound may have been deliberately sculpted on this side as part of the later alterations and additions to the earthwork, with the mound cut back when the access route leading up onto the flat-topped bank was created (see below). Nevertheless, it can be argued that the earthwork evidence appears to suggest that the mound was modified before the addition of the flat-topped bank, which seems to partly overlie its flattened south-eastern flank.

Approximately 1.5m above the base of the mound the intermittent remains of a level terrace were recorded encircling its northern and western flanks. This terrace is badly denuded in places, largely a result of later gardening activity and slumping from the mound. Nevertheless, the coherent nature of this terrace, which could be followed around almost the entirety of the monument (see below), suggests it was created after the addition of the flat-topped bank and is therefore not a primary feature of the round mound. The estate map of 1746 (Bewlay 1746) would appear to indicate that by the mid-18th century trees had been planted on this terrace, and a number of mature trees are depicted planted across the monument at the time of the 1844 title map (Ware 1844). A substantial yew tree was recorded occupying the north-eastern side of the terrace during survey work, the girth of the tree suggesting it could feasibly be a relic of the 18th century planting scheme.

#### **4.2 The flat-topped bank**

Adjoining the mound on its south-eastern side is a flat-topped bank in the form of a reversed J-shape. The substantial bank stands between 4.4m and 4.6m above the current ground surface and can be seen running up onto the round mound's southern flank, and therefore clearly post-dates it. The bank ranges from 6.6m to 13.3m in width on its summit and up to 33m at its base, with the summit of the round mound now accessed by way of a short flight of steps which rise 1.5m from the north-western end of the bank [Figure 10]. Cartographic evidence indicates that the flat-topped bank was added to the round mound some time before 1633, effectively creating a raised terrace walk which may have been intended as a vantage point for looking down over the wider gardens. A slight linear earthwork recorded on the bank top running parallel to its long south-western edge possibly represents the course of a former wall, balustrade, or hedge; this feature effectively separated the level terrace from the broad, curving access ramp which ascends the bank's north-eastern side.

The access ramp is up to 2m wide and rises from the linear walk along the river-cliff edge, curving southwards as it climbs. Although the ramp appears to cut through the terrace encircling the round mound (which





*Figure 10. The summit of the flat-topped bank looking towards the north-west round mound.*

steps down where it meets the ramp), the coherent nature of the bank and ramp suggest the latter was an original component of the feature, with cartographic evidence indicating it was in place by 1633. The 1633 map also suggests the bank top was accessed from the south-west, where two flights of stone steps still scale the earthwork today. The lower of these flights has been created from reused millstones and forms part of a 20th-century garden feature, although it would appear likely it perpetuates a much older arrangement.

A level terrace, surviving as either a break-of-slope or linear berm, can be traced around much of the flat-topped bank and is a continuation of the feature noted above encircling the round mound. The terrace is located approximately 3.5m below the bank's summit and is perhaps best preserved along its south-western and southern sides



*Figure 11. The brick niche.*

where it survives up to 2.2m in width. Although now much denuded, photographs dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries indicate it was once a relatively sharp and well-defined feature. The terrace may have originated as a raised walk or broad garden terrace, and to some extent is comparable to, and possibly intended as a visual continuation of, the flight of terraces which ascend the river cliff to the north-east.

Notably, there is no earthwork evidence for the terrace on the rounded, south-eastern end of the bank. This area has clearly been remodelled, however, with a brick niche or blind arch cut into the fabric of the bank. The feature is not depicted on the 1633 map and its style and fabric suggest the niche is probably 18th century in date [Figure 11]. As such, it may have been constructed around the same time as the new mansion house in the 1720s, or possibly represents a component of Thomas Knowlton's remodelling of the grounds in the 1740s. What appears clear, however, is that a structure in this location is evident on the 18th century estate maps, indicating it was in place no later than 1746 (Knowlton n.d. & Bewlay 1746).

Although known in family tradition as the 'ice-house', there is no architectural or archaeological evidence to suggest the niche represents the entrance to such a structure. Indeed, its location, directly in line with the bridge crossing the River Derwent, may indicate it was primarily envisaged as an eye-catcher designed to be seen by wayfarers crossing the river at Buttercrambe. It may have functioned as a seat on the linear walk or been used to accommodate a classical statue or urn as it does today. There has clearly been some slippage of bank material around the feature with the structure heightened and extended in the mid-20th century, almost certainly to help stabilise the bank material above.

#### 4.3 The oval mound



*Figure 12.*  
*The summit of the flat-topped bank looking towards the south-east oval mound.*

The oval mound, which occupies the south-eastern end of the flat-topped bank, is 18m in length and 10m in width at its base [Figure 12]. The feature rises to a maximum of 1.8m above the summit of the flat-topped bank and is roughly comparable in overall height to the round mound. As it appears to sit on top of the flat-topped bank this would indicate it post-dates it, although both features may have been constructed in quick succession, with the oval mound always intended as an integral component of the overall design. The earthwork is orientated north-east to south-west and it can be argued that its alignment, to some extent, mirrors the truncated form of the round mound and may suggest a conscious response to an existing structure.

A small break-of-slope or berm at the western end of the oval mound could represent the vestiges of an access route up onto its summit; alternatively, it may simply be a consequence of the large shrub/tree which now

occupies this end of the mound. Although Thomas Knowlton's undated 18th-century map has a somewhat schematic depiction of the monument, it may be worthy of note that it shows a ramp or steps leading up onto the summit of the mound in this approximate location. A substantial tree now occupies the centre of the oval mound, to the north-east of which the earthwork drops in height by around 0.4m creating a small, terraced platform. It is again unclear whether this is an intended feature or simply the result of later slumping and disturbance; if the former, the platform could have accommodated a seat or small arbour for viewing and appreciating the wider landscape.

A level terrace, a maximum of 1.5m in width, can be traced encircling the oval mound. This would appear to represent a further terraced walkway, providing a series of vantage points from where to look out over the gardens, the River Derwent, and beyond to the Wolds. Slumping has resulted in this terrace being somewhat narrowed on its south-eastern side, and a short section of stone-built retaining wall was identified around the top lip of the flat-topped bank, constructed to either stabilise the earthwork or define the edge of the terrace.

#### 4.4 The outer ditch



*Figure 13.  
View looking south-east  
along the ditch.*



*Figure 14.  
View of the south-east  
side of the causeway  
(photograph P.  
Goodchild).*

A broad flat-bottomed ditch, up to 17m in width and 2.2m in depth, extends from the lip of the river cliff, running south-westwards before turning to the north-east and closely following the shape of the upstanding monument [Figure 13]. Flanking ditches are often seen as little more than quarries for associated earthwork features, but whether this was the primary purpose here remains unclear. The disturbed nature of the northern terminus of the ditch indicates that it originally continued around the north-eastern side of the round mound, although this section of ditch has been infilled and is no longer visible as an earthwork. However, the 1633 map reveals the course of the ditch while the infilling occurred sometime before the earliest Ordnance Survey 1:10560 scale map published in 1854. This was probably in the middle decades of the 18th century when the gardens were redesigned and a new house built.

There was also a clear break-in-slope identified in the cut of the ditch which could be traced along much of its length. Whether this represents the height of the original ground surface, or reflects a re-cutting of the ditch, remains unclear. Historic photographs reveal the extent to which planting beds were created both in and around the edge of the ditch in the 19th century and later, and it is therefore possible that the break-in-slope is associated with these later planting schemes. Indeed, a number of sub-rectangular planting beds were identified in the base of the ditch during the survey work surviving as low, grass-covered earthworks.

While giving the appearance of uniformity, there is a marked change in level in the outer ditch which corresponds closely with the earthen causeway located roughly centrally along its length. To the south of the causeway the bottom of the ditch is 1.5m lower than to the north, clearly the change in height designed to accommodate the variation in the natural ground level which drops from north-west to south-east. A narrow, scooped berm between the southern side of the causeway and the lower section of ditch likely represents the remnants of the cut of the higher-level ditch, which suggests the causeway was inserted after the two sections of outer ditch were created [Figure 14].

The causeway, which is 3.2m wide and up to 1.4m high on its downslope side, may have been sited in this location to deliberately camouflage the drop in level between the two sections of ditch. As such, the location of the access onto the top of the flat-topped bank, which is directly in line with the causeway, could also have been influenced by the topographic constraints of the outer ditch. Moreover, it is possible the earthen causeway was intended to function as both a crossing point and a dam, although to date there is little to suggest that the outer ditch ever held water. It is worthy of note, however, that there is a second causeway at the eastern end of the outer ditch which could again have functioned as a dam, effectively creating two curving ponds. Further archaeological investigations of the ditch-fills would be required to resolve whether this was indeed the case, or if the outer ditch always remained dry.

What is clear is that both causeways gave direct access over the ditch to a terraced walkway which surrounded the bank and mound. To the north of the central causeway a break-in-slope between the ditch and the base of the bank is the only visible remains of this terrace, which appears to be an early component of the monument and is depicted on maps dating from the 17th century onwards. It is also visible in historic photographs of the gardens, the feature now denuded due to the creation of modern planting beds. To the south of the central causeway the terrace has also been incorporated into planting beds though a further terrace has been cut below it, evidenced by a sharp scarp around the base of the flat-topped bank and by the steep-sided nature of the upper cut of the ditch. This additional terrace is first depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale map published in 1893 and now forms the main path linking the two causeways. Metalling, including brick, was noted eroding out of the ditch-sides and indicates made-up ground for the pathway.

Later modifications also include a ramp located around 15m north of the central causeway on the western side of the ditch, the feature giving access to the ditch bottom. The grass-covered ramp is approximately 8m wide and is associated with a broad spread bank which spans the base of the ditch. This feature is again evident on historic photographs, which show an associated ramp on the eastern side of the ditch, though this no longer survives as an earthwork. It is also worthy of note that a semi-circular earthwork platform was recorded directly opposite the ramp, its long straight side running parallel to the outer lip of the ditch. There is earthwork evidence for a ramp or short flight of steps on the platform's north-eastern side which align with the access ramp down into the ditch, suggesting these features may have been contemporary.

#### **4.5 Other earthwork features**

A sub-circular platform was recorded on the eastern side of the linear walk, the feature projecting out 3m from the pathway and measuring around 10m in width. It represents one of two or possibly three earthwork 'bastions' regularly spaced along the terracing on the river cliff, the features positioned approximately 48m apart. These projections can be seen reflected as earthworks on all levels of the terracing and would therefore appear integral to their setting out. The terracing below the monument is clearly depicted on the 1633 map as is the subcircular projection which would appear to support a small structure. This may have been a garden building or timber arbour positioned to give views towards the garden and house, as well as down to the river and bridge and out over the wider landscape.

A final earthwork recorded during the survey work was a sub-rectangular hollow or depression on the north-eastern side of the flat-topped bank. This feature is a maximum of 26m long and 10m wide and is defined on its north-eastern side by the linear walk, its long edge running parallel to the river-cliff edge. The bottom of the depression sits 0.7m below the linear walk, the feature defined to the south-west by the base of the flat-topped bank and to the north-west by the access ramp leading up on to its summit. Although the purpose of this hollow is unclear, a berm was identified in the top river-cliff terrace during survey work that roughly corresponds with the hollow. This would indicate that the terrace slope was created by both cutting into the natural escarpment, and by dumping material above it. What now appears a sub-rectangular depression may therefore represent the height of the old ground surface before the surrounding area was re-sculpted to create the gardens. It is also possible this hollow was intended to contain an ornamental pond, designed as an aesthetic garden feature to complement the two larger ponds on the western side of the garden monument.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The earthwork survey of the monument in Aldby Park has enhanced our understanding of the site and provided valuable new information regarding its origins and main stages of development. Importantly, it has confirmed that the earliest upstanding component of the monument was a large round mound which was added to and enhanced during the post-medieval period. This section presents the possible origins of the round mound, before going on to discuss the later development of the site and wider landscape.

### 5.1 The round mound

There is a strong mound-building tradition in Yorkshire producing a variety of scenarios in which the round mound at Aldby may have been constructed. Given its form and landscape position, one possibility is that the mound has its origins in the prehistoric period. Round barrows are a common feature of East Yorkshire with some surviving as upstanding earthworks and many more recorded as ring ditches visible on aerial photographs. Radiocarbon dating of round barrows in the Great Wold Valley suggests their construction began around 2300 cal. BC, with the tradition continuing in the region for more than 600 years (Gibson & Bayliss 2010). In her aerial photographic assessment of the Yorkshire Wolds, Catherine Stoertz notes that round barrows can be found in all types of terrain with earthwork examples appearing to have an average diameter of around 30m (1997, 33). This corresponds well with the barrow at Skirpenbeck surveyed as part of this new research (see Appendix 1), which represents a relatively rare survival of a well-preserved Bronze Age barrow in a landscape subjected to intensive agricultural exploitation. That there were once further round barrows in the immediate vicinity is clear from the Vale of York aerial photographic transcription, which has identified numerous ring ditches along the Derwent valley. These include a comparable site lying around 1km to the south of the Skirpenbeck barrow, adjacent to the confluence of the Derwent and the Skirpen Beck (Historic England Monument Number 1148031). While the Aldby mound occupies a strikingly similar topographic position to these barrows, the new survey work has served to emphasise the difference in scale between the monuments. The mound at Aldby is considerably larger in stature than the Skirpenbeck barrow, standing more than twice its height, and as such, it can be argued that its dimensions make it unlikely as an Early Bronze Age barrow.

Nevertheless, large prehistoric round mounds are not unknown from the region. The celebrated Neolithic round barrows of Duggleby Howe, Willie Howe and Wold Newton are located along the Great Wold Valley some 17km to the north-east of Aldby (Gibson & Bayliss 2010). Indeed, Duggleby Howe is very similar in form and scale to the feature at Aldby, with the flat-topped mound measuring 38.1m in basal diameter and standing 6.25m high; the mound also has a truncated eastern side which has been attributed to disturbance from antiquarian excavations (Gibson et al. 2011, 36; Gibson et al. 2009, 43). Recent radiocarbon dating on material recovered from the barrow indicates it represents a multi-phase monument, with the earliest burials dating from around the mid-fourth millennium cal. BC and the final enlargement of the mound occurring in the latter half of the third millennium cal. BC (Gibson & Bayliss 2010; Gibson et al. 2011). Large round mounds raised in this period are also known from Wiltshire, including Silbury Hill, the Hatfield Barrow and the Marlborough Mound (Leary et al. 2013a; Leary et al. 2013b; Leary and Marshall 2012). What all these mounds arguably have in common is their association with water: Duggleby Howe is positioned overlooking the Gypsy Race, near to the stream's source; the Hatfield barrow sits close to the headwaters of the River Avon; and Silbury Hill and the Marlborough Mound are located along the River Kennet. The topographic position of the mound at Aldby, in a lowland setting overlooking the River Derwent, could therefore be seen as broadly comparable to these known later Neolithic mounds. However, monumental mounds of the later Neolithic period are also frequently associated with wider ceremonial landscapes, and

sites such as Silbury Hill and the Hatfield Barrow are set within a backdrop of both earlier and contemporary or near contemporary monuments (Leary et al. 2013b). A similar association is harder to discern at Aldby, although ‘hengeform’ monuments are recorded in the parishes of Skirpenbeck and Kexby, and a possible later Neolithic henge has also been noted from High Catton (Historic England Research Records No: 1148315; Humberside HER No: 3300).

Mound building has a long history in England and the scale and landscape position of the Aldby round mound also supports the premise first put forward by I’Anson (1913) that at the core of the monument lies a medieval motte castle. The correlation between castles and strategic positions along key routes of communication has been the subject of much scholarly debate, with the site at Aldby well positioned to monitor both road movement east out of York and north-south river travel along the Derwent. As such, the site offers advantages for defence, surveillance, and conspicuous display, and topographically bears some resemblance to other Yorkshire castles, such as the great motte of Clifford’s Tower in York. The size of the mound can also be compared to rural mottes in the region, including Driffield, on the eastern side of the Wolds, where the motte has a basal diameter of around 40m and stands up to 4.5m high, although now much disturbed and possibly reduced in height (Eddy 1983). The castle at Cropton, in North Yorkshire, has a motte measuring 45m at its base and standing up to 6.5m high, again making it comparable in stature to the mound at Aldby. Other strands of evidence highlighted by this study add weight to the argument that the site represents a medieval motte castle. These include the truncated nature of the mound’s eastern side and the D-shaped form of its summit, elements which are common to other medieval mottes. The detailed survey of the castle at Cropton, for instance, highlights the motte’s flattened eastern side, with Clifford Hill, Northamptonshire, an example of a large castle motte with a D-shaped summit (Historic England Ref: AF0662006). These physical characteristics may be indicative of a tower or stair arrangement giving access to the top of the mound. At Snodhill castle, Herefordshire, for example, the entrance front to the late 12th century keep can be seen to correspond with the truncated western side of the earthen motte (Bowden et al. 2017); and at Launceston castle, Cornwall, excavations revealed stone steps and a barbican dating from the late 12th or early 13th century ascending the south side of the motte (Saunders 2006, 64-8).

Recent research has also emphasised how cultural markers from the past could be purposefully sought out by Norman castle-builders and incorporated into their new structures of authority (Jamieson 2019). That prehistoric mounds were integrated into castle projects has been demonstrated through recent radiocarbon dating at Marlborough, Wiltshire, which revealed the castle motte as having its origins in the later Neolithic period (Leary et al. 2013a). Similarly, radiocarbon dating at Skipsea in East Yorkshire returned a Middle Iron Age date for a large mound that was reused as a castle motte, probably by the lords of Holderness in the 11th century (Jamieson et al. 2019). The new research presented here also identified phasing in the construction of the Skirpenbeck barrow, reflecting a well-established regional tradition of monument reuse that can be seen perpetuated in the garden feature (Giles 2012, 68; Williams 1997, 14). It can be argued that the appropriation of the site at Skipsea illustrates the value attached locally to prehistoric mounds in the post-Conquest period. As such, we cannot rule out the possibility that the incoming Norman elite reworked a much older monument at Aldby, perhaps as a means of legitimising their new vision of power and identity.

## **5.2 The Norman castle and its origins**

The overall form of the post-medieval garden feature further strengthens the argument for a motte castle at Aldby [Figure 15]. The research presented here has confirmed that the somewhat curious design of the monument was influenced by a pre-existing arrangement focused on the large round mound. As such, it can be conjectured that an enclosed perimeter or bailey occupied the area to the south-east of the mound,

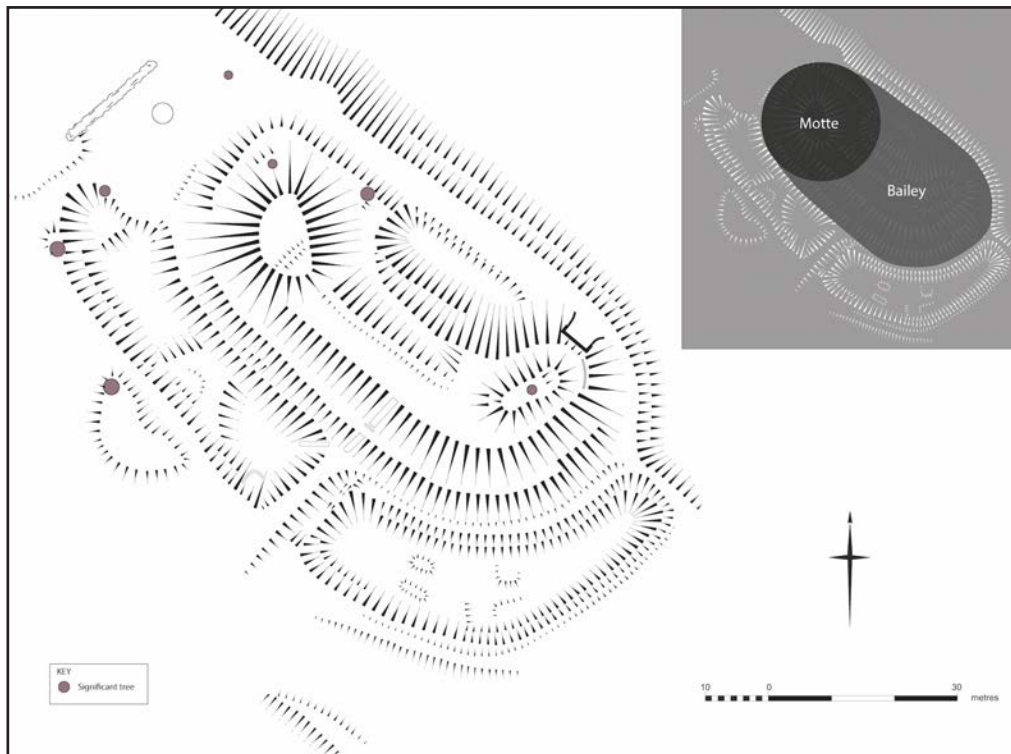


Figure 15. The relationship between the earthworks and the suggested outline of the motte-and-bailey castle.

defined along one edge by the river cliff and possibly around the remainder of its circuit by a rampart and an outer ditch. It is unclear whether the ditch that now surrounds the monument formed an early component of the site, and indeed if the round mound itself was ever completely encircled by a ditch. The broad, flat-bottomed nature of the surviving sections of outer ditch, and their relatively sharp, well-defined upper edges, would indicate they have been recut or remodelled. In addition, the drop in level between the two sections of ditch may suggest that the upper section at least was never significantly deeper than it appears today. However, the references to skeletons recovered from the southern ditch are intriguing, although without further details the implications of these discoveries are hard to assess (Jackson 2001, 7). With almost the entirety of the bailey now buried beneath the massive earthworks of the J-shaped bank, it is impossible to define the arrangement of space within the enclosure, beyond the proposed access to the motte discussed above. Nevertheless, the form of the earthwork suggests that the probable bailey enclosure would have been approximately 50m long and 40m wide. As such, it is comparable to other bailey enclosures in both size and topographic position; at Castle Hills, Catterick, for example, the sub-rectangular bailey measures around 50m across and is defined along its eastern perimeter by a bluff above the River Swale.

It is perhaps notable that the putative access to the mound top from the bailey would have been orientated to face the river crossing, with viewshed analysis confirming that a structure in this location would have been highly visible to travellers crossing the Derwent at Buttercrambe. While there were no masonry remains recorded during the recent survey work it is important to note that castles could be comprehensively robbed of their stonework, a process which could cause considerable disturbance to the earthworks. In addition, when excavated archaeologically what would appear to be wholly earthwork castles have been shown to contain the footings of substantial masonry buildings, a good example being Richard's Castle in Herefordshire (Higham & Barker 1992, 197). The truncated eastern side of the motte may strengthen the argument for a robbed-out masonry component to the castle. The idea of a masonry castle at Aldby may gain some support from Camden's reference to 'the ruins of an ancient fortification', although this could



equally relate to earthwork or later remains and must be considered alongside the caveats put forward for this source (I'Anson 1913, 333; Camden 1590, 576). It should also be borne in mind, however, that some castles were never built in stone, with the best known example being Hen Domen in Montgomery which remained entirely of timber construction until it was abandoned in the late 13th century (Higham & Barker 2000).

While there is compelling physical evidence for a castle at Buttercrambe, assigning a close date to its origin is more problematic. Motte castles are a phenomenon largely (though not exclusively) confined to the hundred years following the Norman Conquest. Although a medieval castle at Aldby or Buttercrambe is unknown to history, it is worth noting that the bulk of motte castles built in the 11th and 12th centuries are wholly undocumented and only recognised through their archaeological remains (Creighton 2018, 220). Given this relatively broad time frame, tenorial history provides us with a range of possibilities for the castle's founder. The origins of the site could be attributed to Hugh Fitz Baldric who was granted the estate by King William following the Norman Conquest, or to the Stuteville family who acquired the manor prior to King William's death in 1087 (Clay 1952, 22). The Stuteville estates were confiscated by the crown following the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106, however, and only returned to the possession of Robert of Stuteville at the time of Henry II's reign (1154-1189) (I'Anson 1913, 333). This adds a further layer of uncertainty to the picture, and while Henry I granted the majority of the forfeited Stuteville estates to Nigel d'Aubigny in c. 1107, there is no mention of Buttercrambe among the published charters of Nigel or his son Roger (Greenway 1972). Moreover, motte castles continued to be constructed in England into the second half of the 12th century, and it is therefore conceivable that the castle at Aldby was the work of the third Robert of Stuteville. If this is indeed the case, then the castle may have been built or remodelled as a marker to reaffirm Robert's Norman identity and re-assert his power and status following the reinstatement of his ancestral holdings.

### **5.3 The 13th-century manor house and medieval landscape**

In 1201 William of Stuteville was granted a licence by King John to enclose and fortify his house at Buttercrambe, though whether this relates to the castle remains unknown. The 13th and 14th centuries saw the progressive abandonment of rural castles across England, the maintenance of which could be costly and demanding (Thompson 1987, 11). A number of factors could lead to this, including punitive demolition, with the castle at Skipsea in Holderness, for example, abandoned by the counts of Aumale soon after it was ordered to be destroyed by King Henry III in 1221, a punishment for rebelling against the king (I'Anson 1917, 260). The fortunes of a castle could therefore be bound up with the history of its owners, and Nicholas of Stuteville also fought against the king at the Second Battle of Lincoln in 1217 where he was taken prisoner. The lack of a male heir following the death of Nicholas of Stuteville in 1233 saw the division of the Stuteville estates between his daughters, a process which may again have had consequences for the castle. The estate was brought back together in the mid-13th century and held by Joan of Stuteville who passed it to her son Baldwin de Wake in 1276 (Page 1914, 511-17). At his death in 1281-2 the principal residence at Aldby was described as a 'well-built capital messuage of diverse houses and a garden', with no reference to a fortified site. As such, it is possible that this high-status residence lay outside the confines of the Norman motte castle. Other strands of evidence hint at the possibility that the late 13th-century house sat beyond the footprint of the earlier fortress. The 1281-2 document refers to a meadow at Buttercrambe called 'Burghenge' and in 1354 a piece of land called 'Burghgarth' is mentioned. It is possible that the first element of both these names relate to the castle site, as 'burgh' can mean an old or abandoned fortification (Brown 1892, 245; Stamp *et al* 1921, 47).

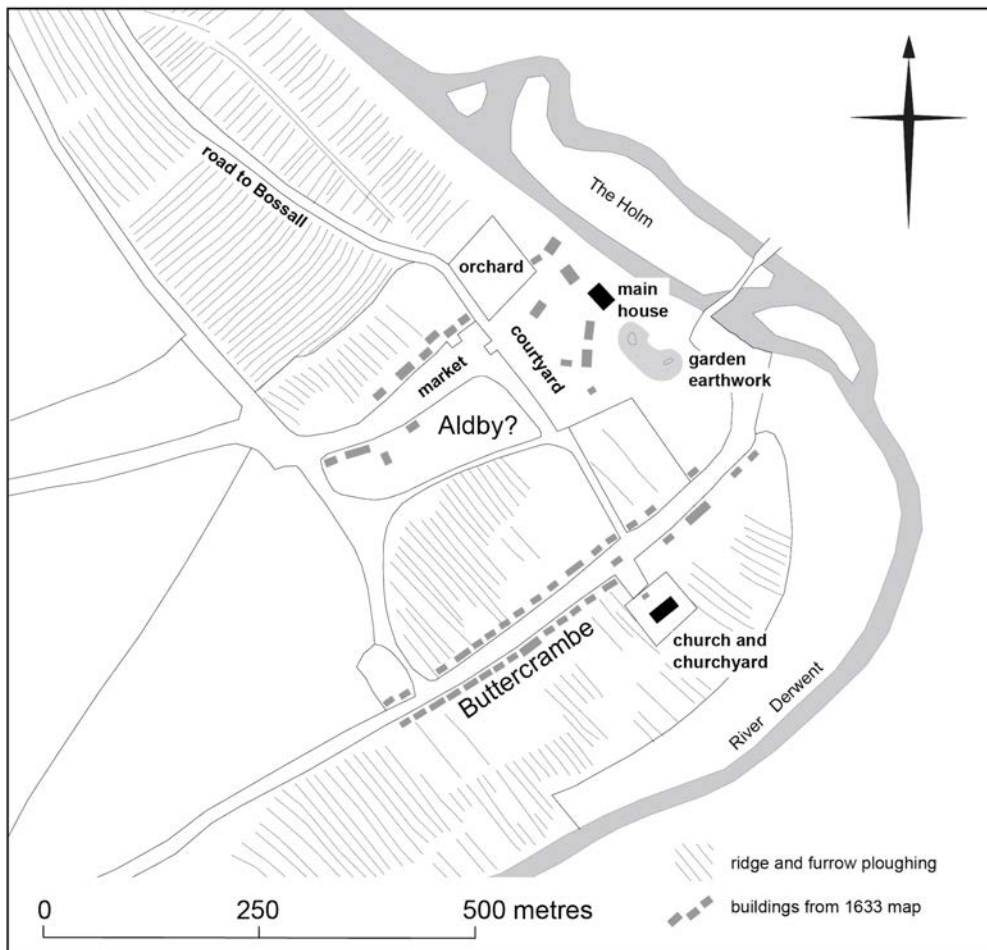


Figure 16. Interpretation of the 1633 estate map.

The earliest cartographic evidence we have for the location of the main residence at Aldby is the map of 1633 which shows the Darley's house located immediately to the north-west of the castle. There are numerous examples locally where new manorial residences were built adjacent to mottes in the later Middle Ages. For example, at the former Stuteville castle in Cropton, on the edge of the North York Moors, the foundations of a 13th or 14th century manor house are still visible as earthworks within the bailey east of the Norman motte, the hall complex possibly the work of John, Lord Wake (I'Anson 2013, 344). In the Vale of York at Topcliffe, a medieval moated manor house belonging to the Percy family is located next to the earthwork remains of an earlier motte castle, the mound subsequently repurposed as a viewing platform for the house's formal gardens (Moorhouse 2003, 200-1). Moated complexes constructed adjacent to the remains of motte castles can also be found at Aughton and Bilton, both in East Yorkshire (Le Patourel 1973, 20). Where juxtapositions like these occur one can surmise that it was ancestral pride that saw new residences built close to the preserved remains of earlier motte castles. In his research on Irish castles, O'Keefe (2001) has discussed the concept of 'refashioning identity', where older castle sites could be remodelled at different stages of the Middle Ages as a means of legitimisation.

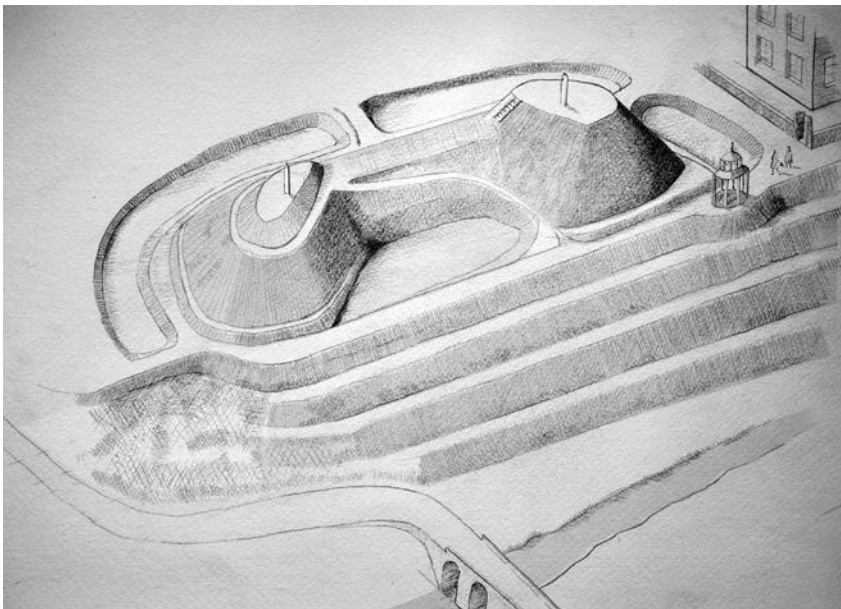
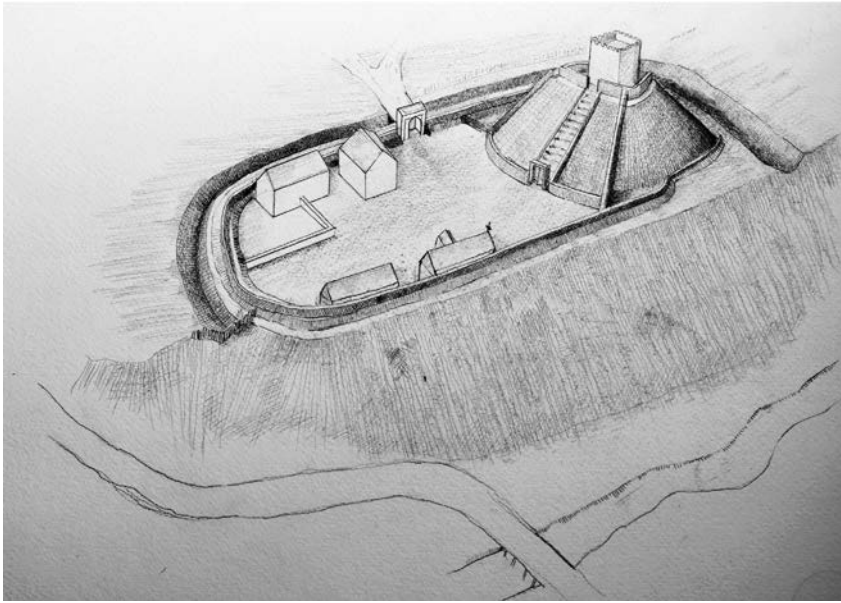
The landscape setting of the castle has yet to be studied in detail, but medieval and later house platforms, enclosures, trackways and field systems survive as earthworks in several areas of the park. Cartographic evidence (Osborne 1633) also indicates additional features that could be medieval in origin: of particular note is the extensive courtyard enclosing the main house and its subsidiary structures [Figure 16]. In addition, a settlement defined by two opposing rows of house plots is shown immediately to the west of the manorial site, the settlement plots separated by a broadly V-shaped green. The wide end of this open or

public space abuts the courtyard with the main north-south route from Bossall passing through it. The green looks very much like a market area and the surviving earthworks of the regular row of house plots to its north can be seen to overlie medieval plough ridges, indicating that the tofts and crofts were laid out across pre-existing fields. This points to planned development and could conceivably be a seigneurial foundation associated with the castle, possibly set out in the period after the third Robert of Stuteville regained the estate. Many such commercial ventures remained undocumented until the late 12th or 13th centuries, and the grant of a market and fair by King John to William of Stuteville in 1200 probably served to make legal what was already in existence (Creighton 2002, 155; Clay 1952, 113). Buttercrambe was not alone in receiving this favour from the Crown, however. Approximately 14 settlements in a broad radius around York acquired market rights after 1180 as a consequence of the increased demand for traded goods created by the expansion of the city (Rees-Jones 2013, 249).

The earliest bridge across the Derwent may also date to this period of economic investment and expansion, as it was first referred to in the early 13th century in the grant of a plot of land at Skirpenbeck to Byland Abbey (Burton 2004, 390-1). The 1633 map shows that the approach to the river crossing from the south-west formed a separate focus of settlement, comprising a double row of house plots strung along either side of the road. The surviving earthwork remains of the northern row indicate at least part of it was laid out over plough ridges, again suggesting a phase of settlement expansion. In addition, the church is set back from the village street and would appear to overlie three of the settlement plots in the southern row. The earliest fabric of the church has been dated to the 13th century, with a priest mentioned at Buttercrambe in the 1150s, possibly suggesting the plots of the southern row were in existence by the early 12th century (Farrer 1916, 171-2). As such, and because of its proximity to the bend in the river which is the origin of the village name, it seems likely that this focus of medieval settlement is the Buttercrambe mentioned in the Domesday Survey. In contrast, however, the name Aldby does not appear in the Survey and hardly occurs in published sources before the 16th century. In the accounts of the exchequer for the 14th and 15th centuries (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/e179/default.asp>), for example, there is only one medieval reference to Aldby (in 1377) whereas Buttercrambe is listed repeatedly (Fenwick 2005, 247). If Buttercrambe was on the road to the river crossing, then it is possible the houses around the market green to its north represented a separate settlement named Aldby, which was abandoned after 1633 leaving only the name behind. The main house is labelled 'Aldby The Seat of Henry Darley esq' on the sketch made by Samuel Buck in 1720 and the park also adopted the Aldby name.

#### **5.4 The post-medieval house and gardens**

The purchase of the Buttercrambe Estate by the Darley family in 1557 was a key event in the development of the modern landscape. Nevertheless, little is known of the Darley's house in the 16th and 17th centuries as the building was swept away in the 1720s to make way for the new mansion house. Cartographic evidence from the early 17th century provides useful information on the spatial arrangement of the house and service buildings, but nothing can be confidently said about the architecture of the building given its somewhat stylised depiction on the map. That said, the depiction in Samuel Buck's Yorkshire Sketchbook (c. 1720) shows the west front of Aldby, a modest gentry house which would appear to display several architectural features of possible late 16th or 17th century date (Wakefield Historical Society 1979, 32). In particular, the mullioned and transomed arrangement of the principal windows, the possible finials over the dormer windows, and the finials on the gate piers and corner pillars of the forecourt are all characteristically late Elizabethan in style (Rebecca Lane pers. comm.). Nevertheless, the house is documented as having been damaged by fire during the English Civil War and elements of the building may therefore have been rebuilt or replaced. The paucity of evidence negates the possibility of saying anything further about the post-medieval house, however.



*Figure 17.  
The site viewed from the east  
giving an impression of how  
the motte-and -bailey castle  
(above) and post-medieval  
gardens (below) may have  
appeared.*

Although newcomers to the area, the Darley's soon cemented their place as one of the landed families of the district. By 1584 William Darley's son, Richard, was a Justice of the Peace for the North Riding, followed by his son, also Richard, in 1603 (Atkinson, 1886, 135); his grandson, Henry, became a member of parliament for the Yorkshire seat of Aldbrough in 1628 (Gooder 1938, 74). The Buck sketch would appear to suggest that the family invested in their house during this time, undoubtedly as a way of displaying their status and position in contemporary society. It is also clear that they created elaborate and fashionable gardens to complement their new or modernised home. While Camden's 1590 description gives the impression of a landscape littered with ruins and debris from the past, by 1633 great changes had occurred with the remains of the earthwork castle, by then probably nearly 500 years old, transformed into the centrepiece of elaborate formal gardens [Figure 17]. If Camden is to be believed, it is therefore conceivable that the setting out of these new gardens was the work of Richard Darley who inherited the estate following his father's death in 1598. Indeed, his pride in the new garden may explain the detailed attention given to recording the precise pattern of paths, ditches and mounds on the 1633 map in contrast to the more generalised depiction of the rest of the estate.

While designed to demonstrate wealth and standing in society, gardens of the 16th and early 17th centuries were also inevitably dictated by practical considerations such as cost and the limitations of the site. At Aldby, Richard Darley transformed the remains of an old motte-and-bailey castle next to his house into a fashionable garden feature. The re-invention of the monument followed principles of garden design that were gaining in popularity among the gentry classes, ostensibly thanks to travel overseas, the proliferation of garden literature, and the availability of new plants imported from abroad. During the 16th and 17th centuries mounds, or ‘mounts’, were a popular feature of fashionable gardens and were created in a variety of shapes and sizes. They could be circular or square, with some, as at Hampton Court, built by raising a mound of bricks and covering it with earth, and others by remodelling pre-existing natural or cultural features (Hyams 1971, 144). At Marlborough, in Wiltshire, an 18m-high medieval motte had been incorporated into elaborate formal gardens by the 17th century, and at Kirby Hall, Northamptonshire, a terraced ‘mount’ was sculpted from natural topography on the site of the former village church (Field & Brown 1999, 5; Worsley 2000, 21). At Aldby, the Darley’s effectively created two mounts linked by a raised terrace and associated with a network of paths which encircled and surmounted the feature. Around 1540 the Tudor topographer Leland described a now lost mound encircled by paths in the garden of Wressle castle, sixteen miles down river from Aldby; and at Topcliffe, in North Yorkshire, a path can still be traced spiralling around the reused castle motte (Richardson & Dennison 2015, 9; Moorhouse 2003, 200-1). At Lyveden New Bield in Northamptonshire, the ‘moated orchard’ created by Sir Thomas Tresham in the late 1590s had truncated terraced-pyramids and spiral mounts at its corners (Brown & Taylor 1972). It is worth noting, however, that there is no evidence to suggest a spiral or ‘snail path’ was created around either of the mounds at Aldby, it would seem their summits were always intended to be accessed from the raised terrace walk via steps or a ramp.

The mounds, terraces and pathways at Aldby fulfilled the appetite expressed in garden manuals for vantage points from where the wider landscape could be enjoyed. This was often from predefined locations formalised by the construction of small wooden pavilions or arbours, as may have stood on the summit of the mounds and along the linear walk at Aldby. Viewpoints were frequently on the edges of a garden to maximise the view across the whole design, which in this period might have included water features and formally arranged planting beds or knot gardens. However, it is not clear that such arrangements existed at Aldby. It is possible that the raised terrace and mounds overlooked a segmented pond, now marked by the shallow sections of dry ditch, with regular planting beds arranged as a knot garden on the level area to their south-west. Evidence that the ditches ever held water has yet to be established, however, as has the existence of any gardens beyond. A modest enclosed area adjacent to, and aligned with, the west side of the house is depicted on the 1633 map, and may represent a formal garden visible from both the windows of the house and the summit of the round mound. In addition, the evidence suggests that the terraces that step down to the Derwent on the north-eastern side of the mounds are surviving elements of the early garden layout, as they are shown, at least in part, on the 1633 map. In keeping with the 16th and 17th century fashion for water features, it is possible that the arm of the Derwent beyond the lowest terrace (labelled on Ordnance Survey maps as a mill race) was widened and straightened at this time to give the impression of a long pond integral to the terracing scheme. For those crossing the bridge at Buttercrambe the terraces would have served to draw the eye upwards, linking the long pond or river with the house and gardens above.

When exploring the Darley family’s motivations in creating the gardens at Aldby, it is important to consider that at the core of the scheme was a widely known antiquity singled out for mention by Camden in the 1590 edition of *Britannia*. As a family who had bought rather than inherited their land, the early generations of the Darley’s may have been motivated, not only by a wish to modernise and bring order to their new

estate, but also by a desire to preserve a sense of antiquity that embedded them in the past. Additionally, it is perhaps worthy of note that the first reference to the site at Aldby as the residence of Edwin, the 7th century king of Northumbria, is also documented by Camden. As such, we can perhaps speculate that layers of meaning may also have been added to the landscape, with real and invented histories used to meet the ambitions of successive generations. The family continued to live next to the reworked ancient monument until the 1720s when changing aspirations created a need for the selective reworking of the landscape. This included the construction of a new and more fashionable house on a different site and the levelling of the old family home. It is interesting to note that the mounded garden feature was never swept away, as happened at Wressle castle, and that the legend of the Saxon palace of King Edwin continued to be endorsed and embellished (Drake 1736, 33-4; Clark 1874, 237). The only substantial change to the garden feature at this time involved the infilling of a section of ditch at its north-western end and the addition of the brick niche at the south-east, both probably occurring around the same time as the gardens were remodelled in the 18th century. Several of the older yew trees which are such a feature of the monument today were probably also planted in the 18th century and were reportedly much admired by Queen Mary during her visit to Aldby Park in 1936 (Yorkshire Post 1936, 10).

## 6. Recommendations for future research

The 2021 analytical earthwork survey concentrated on producing the first detailed plan, description and analysis of the monument in the gardens of Aldby Park. This work has established that the earthwork was almost certainly fashioned out of the remains of an 11th or 12th century motte-and-bailey castle, which itself may have incorporated an earlier prehistoric burial mound. The recent earthwork survey has therefore opened up new lines of inquiry that could be pursued to advance understanding of both the monument, and its wider landscape. This research could be largely undertaken without resorting to the expensive and time-consuming option of archaeological excavation. The key recommendations are as follows:

### 1) Geophysical survey

- a) Over the terraced lawns east of the house, with the aim of locating the pre-1726 residence and its associated structures.
- b) Across the south ditch of the garden monument to try and locate possible grave cuts.
- c) In the park north-west of the house, to test the Ordnance Survey map claim, 'Hall (site of)'.  
'
- d) Over the deserted settlement remains in the park to help further understanding of their form and development.

### 2) Analytical earthwork survey (using an electronic theodolite and GPS equipment)

- a) Across the settlement remains in the park to the west of the house, the proposed site of Aldby, with the aim of further understanding its form, origins and development.
- b) Across the abandoned settlement remains surrounding Buttercrambe village, both in the park and on the south side of the road, with a particular focus on the area around the church.

### 3) Aerial mapping survey (using a drone)

- a) Over the areas of open field ridge and furrow ploughing in the park and on the south side of the village, with the aim of enhancing and contextualising the results of the more detailed ground survey work.

### 4) Hand auger survey

- a) Across the ditches surrounding the garden monument to record their profile and identify fill deposits. This will help to establish if the ditches ever held water.
- b) Across the area of the in-filled section of ditch to securely identify its position and depth.

### 5) Machine coring and radiocarbon dating

- a) Drilling a 10cm diameter borehole through the round mound to examine its make-up deposits and to extract organic material suitable for radiocarbon dating. The aim would be to establish a date for the mound's original construction, as well as any subsequent phases of enlargement.

### 6) Sampling and radiocarbon dating of skeletal remains

- a) To identify and remove samples of bone from the human skeletal remains recovered from the ditch of the monument in Aldby Park and interred in the churchyard at Buttercrambe. The aim would be to radiocarbon date the samples to elucidate their origins and improve understanding of their archaeological significance.

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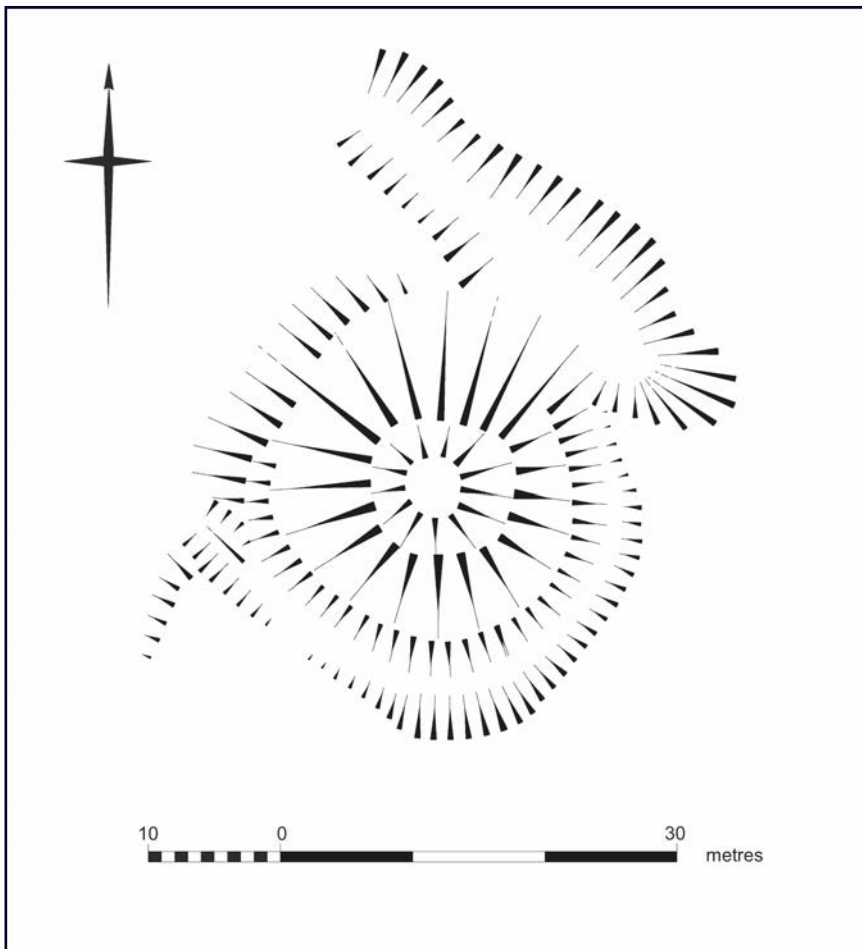
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**Appendix 1: Survey of Scheduled Monument Number 59543 (prehistoric burial mound)**

In May 2021 the authors of this report undertook an analytical earthwork survey of an isolated bowl barrow located towards the western boundary of the parish of Skirpenbeck, 0.3km to the southeast of Buttercrambe [Figure 18]. The barrow sits within a narrow strip of deciduous woodland on the edge of the river cliff above the Derwent, centred on SE 73726 58007.



*Figure 18.  
The north-west side of the  
Skirpenbeck mound.*



*Figure 19.  
2021 survey plan of the  
Skirpenbeck prehistoric  
burial mound reduced from  
1:500 scale original.*

Although the mound has been interpreted in the past as a small castle motte, and is included in King's *Castellarium Anglicanum* (1983), there is no doubt that it in fact represents a prehistoric barrow. The bowl barrow is roughly circular in form, although some mound material has slipped down the steep natural escarpment to the north-west and into the water-worn gully to the northeast [Figure 19]. A shallow ditch

defines the mounds southern, upslope side, the barrow a maximum of 27m in diameter and standing up to 3.6m above the bottom of the outer ditch. A break-in-slope was identified 0.6m below the summit of the mound and could be traced around the entirety of its circumference, suggesting the monument was built in two phases. Lower down the mound a further break-in-slope could be followed around its southern flanks and likely represents the original ground surface. The summit of the mound is around 4.5m in diameter and shows no signs of disturbance, which tallies with there being no documented excavations at the site.

There is a long tradition of mound-building in Yorkshire, and while it can not be assumed that the barrow at Skirpenbeck is not Neolithic in origin, there is a greater likelihood that it was constructed in the Early Bronze Age. Whether it always sat in isolation or formed part of a larger group of burial monuments, remains unknown. Aerial photographic transcription has identified cropmark evidence for a number of ring ditches in the surrounding area that could represent the remains of round barrows. These include a site 1.1km to the southwest, close to where the Skirpen Beck joins the River Derwent, the ditch approximately 27m in diameter and cut by a likely Roman road (Historic England Monument Number 1148031). A group of three possible barrows have also been identified on the northern side of the Skirpen Beck, 0.8km to the southeast of the site. One of these is defined by an outer circular ditch approximately 18m in diameter within which is a second, interrupted concentric ditch and a possible pit (Historic England Monument Number 1148315). This cropmark has been interpreted as a likely Neolithic hengiform feature, and again highlights the possibility of earlier origins for some monuments in the area.

The new survey work has also identified for the first time phasing in the construction of the mound. The earthwork evidence clearly shows that a smaller, later mound was added to the original barrow, heightening the structure. This type of later remodelling and addition to monuments is a long-recognised tradition in prehistory and can include the insertion of secondary burials and important objects. Prehistoric barrows could also prove a draw for communities over the long term, and the reuse of prehistoric barrows as locations for burial in the Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon periods is well documented from East Yorkshire. Exactly when the later mound was added to this barrow remains unclear, but it does indicate a degree of longevity in the monument and signals that the site may have remained an important focus for an extended period of time.

## **Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society Fieldwork Reports**

Interim 37	An archaeological evaluation at the lounge site, Harcourt Place	2004
Interim 38	An archaeological evaluation excavation at the site of the former 23 Quay Street, Scarborough	2006
Interim 39	An archaeological excavation at Auborough Street, Scarborough	2010
Report 40	Investigation of a pre-historic square enclosure at Racecourse Road, Seamer Moor	2013
Report 41	An archaeological excavation at 34 Queen St, Scarborough	2013
Report 42	Archaeological Investigation into a Linear Earthwork at Seamer Moor, Scarborough	2013
Report 43	Archaeological excavations at 60-62 Quay St, Scarborough	2020
Report 44	Archaeological investigations on land at Raven Hall Rd, Ravenscar, North Yorkshire	2014
Report 45	Archaeological investigations at Ayton Castle, West Ayton, North Yorkshire	2013
Report 46	An earthwork survey of Castle Hill, Brompton	2016
Report 47	Raincliffe Woods Archaeological Survey: December 2015 - April 2016	2016
Report 48	An excavation at Castle Hill House, Brompton	2018
Report 49	An Archaeological Survey of Forge Valley, Raincliffe and Row Brow Woods, Scarborough, North Yorkshire	2018
Report 50	An Excavation at Castle Hill, Brompton	2018
Report 51	A Survey of the forge, Forge Valley, Scarborough	2019
Report 52	An archaeological excavation at Scarborough Castle	2019
Report 53	The 2019 excavation at Castle Hill, Brompton	2020
Report 54	An archaeological survey of an earthwork at Aldby Park, Buttercrambe, North Yorkshire	2021