

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Castle Steads slight univallate hillfort and associated outwork

PARISH: GAYLES

DISTRICT: RICHMONDSHIRE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 24483

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): NZ11130741
NZ11000696

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes Castle Steads hillfort and an associated outwork. It lies in two separate areas. The univallate hillfort is situated on a spur overlooking the steep valley of Dalton Beck to the west and north west. The hillfort measures 230m from north to south by a maximum of 130m transversely. It survives as a much mutilated stone walled fort with outer ditch and counterscarp bank. The east, west and north sides are defended by steep natural slopes. On the south side is a well defined rampart and ditch. The walls survive in the main as a concentrated rubble spread averaging 2.2m in width and 0.6m high but both inner and outer in-situ facing stones are still visible in places. It has been severely eroded on the north and west sides by land slips. Similarly the ditch and counterscarp bank are no longer visible on the north and west sides and only visible intermittently on the east. Across the neck of the spur the defences survive with a smooth regular profile, very little evidence of surface stone and no exposed wall in its construction leaving a basic but fragmentary earthen rampart. The ditch to the south is somewhat silted and marshy and has been incorporated into a more recent pattern of field drainage.

Apart from the eroded sections there are a total of five breaks in the defences. The main entrance to the fort is to the south, formed by a gap in the inner defence 4.5m wide with traces of a slight inturn on either side, a causeway across the ditch and a further break in the outer bank about 7m wide. A second original entrance on the north side of the fort consists of a gap 2m wide and a causeway over the ditch 4m wide. This allows access to the flat area at the northern extremity of the spur. Other breaks are less convincing as original features. No structures which were deemed to be contemporary with the fort can be recognised as upstanding earthworks in the interior although remains will exist beneath the present ground surface.

About 400m to the south of the fort are the remains of a substantial earthwork, comprising a bank and ditch which cross the ridge from east to west. The bank has a width of 6.5m and a height of 1.5m. The ditch has a width of 10m and a depth of 1m and retains a considerable depth of peaty deposits. A 100m section of the bank and ditch have been ploughed out during the 19th century, however, the line of the ditch is still visible and the ditch deposits will have survived. The earthwork includes a 6.5m wide causewayed entrance near its eastern end. This is included in the scheduling.

Excluded from the scheduling are Ministry of Defence telegraph equipment, star posts and bunkers, although the ground beneath all these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Slight univallate hillforts are defined as enclosures of various shapes, generally between 1ha and 10ha in size, situated on or close to hilltops and defined by a single line of earthworks, the scale of which is relatively small. They date to between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (eighth - fifth centuries BC), the majority being used for 150 to 200 years prior to their abandonment or reconstruction. Slight univallate hillforts have generally been interpreted as stock enclosures, redistribution centres, places of refuge and permanent settlements. The earthworks generally include a rampart, narrow level berm, external ditch and counterscarp bank, while access to the interior is usually provided by two entrances comprising either simple gaps in the earthwork or an inturned rampart. Postholes revealed by excavation indicate the occasional presence of portal gateways while more elaborate features like overlapping ramparts and outworks are limited to only a few examples. Internal features included timber or stone round houses; large storage pits and hearths; scattered postholes, stakeholes and gullies; and square or rectangular buildings supported by four to six posts, often represented by postholes, and interpreted as raised granaries. Slight univallate hillforts are rare with around 150 examples recorded nationally. Although on a national scale the number is low, in Devon they comprise one of the major classes of hillfort. In other areas where the distribution is relatively dense, for example, Wessex, Sussex, the Cotswolds and the Chilterns, hillforts belonging to a number of different classes occur within the same region. Examples are also recorded in eastern England, the Welsh Marches, central and southern England. In view of the rarity of slight univallate hillforts and their importance in understanding the transition between Bronze Age and Iron Age communities, all examples which survive comparatively well and have potential for the recovery of further archaeological remains are believed to be of national importance.

Castle Steads is a well defined example of this rare monument type.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 17th January 1935 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Yorkshire 220

NAME: Castle Steads camp

Scheduling amended on 1st April 1974 to:

COUNTY/NUMBER: North Yorkshire 220

NAME: Castle Steads camp

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 24483

NAME: Castle Steads slight univallate hillfort and associated outwork

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 11th January 1995