

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: How Hill large univallate hillfort

PARISH: DOWNHOLME

DISTRICT: RICHMONDSHIRE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 24500

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE10839799

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

This large univallate hillfort is situated in a prominent position, on an isolated hill, controlling access to upper Swaledale and also overlooking the break in the hills through which leads the route south to the Vale of York. The rampart and ditch of the fort can be seen on the western and northern sides of the hill. The rampart is 2.5m wide and stands 0.3m above the ground surface. A shallow ditch formed largely by the natural slope is 5.8m wide. Beyond this is a counterscarp bank, 1.9m across and 0.5m above the ditch. Much of the eastern and southern part of the rampart was demolished in the Middle Ages when the whole of the broad summit of the hill together with the southern and eastern slopes were ploughed. Air photography, however, reveals that the summit was once fully enclosed, the now infilled ditch being visible and the rig and furrow following the former extent of the rampart circuit. On the western and northern perimeters of the hill the steepness of the slope has deterred later cultivation and therefore a substantial length of rampart and ditch have survived as upstanding earthworks. Modern field walls are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Large univallate hillforts are defined as fortified enclosures of varying shape, ranging in size between 1ha and 10ha, located on hilltops and surrounded by a single boundary comprising earthworks of massive proportions. They date to the Iron Age period, most having been constructed and used between the fourth century BC and the first century AD, although evidence for earlier use is present at most sites. The size of the earthworks reflects the ability of certain social groups to mobilise the labour necessary for works on such a monumental scale, and their function may have had as much to do with display as defence. Large univallate hillforts are also seen as centres of redistribution, both for subsistence products and items produced by craftsmen. The ramparts are of massive proportions except in locations where steepness of slope precludes easy access. They can vary between 6m and 20m wide and may survive to a height of 6m. The ditches can measure between 6m and 13m wide and between 3m and 5m deep. Access to the interior is generally provided by one or two entrances which often take the form of long passages formed by inturned ramparts and originally closed by a gate located towards the inner end of the passageway. The entrance may be flanked by guardrooms and/or accompanied by

outworks. 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. Large univallate hillforts are rare with between 50 and 100 examples recorded nationally. Most are located within southern England where they occur on the chalklands of Wessex, Sussex and Kent. The western edge of the distribution is marked by scattered examples in north Somerset and east Devon, while further examples occur in central and western England and outliers further north. Within this distribution considerable regional variation is apparent, both in their size, rampart structure and the presence or absence of individual components. In view of the rarity of large univallate hillforts and their importance in understanding the organisation and regional structure of Iron Age society, all examples with surviving archaeological remains are believed to be of national importance.

Although sections of the monument have been overlaid and demolished during the medieval period, large stretches of rampart and ditch survive as upstanding monuments. Aerial photographs have identified the full extent of the site and confirm that other remains of the fort survive beneath the present ground surface.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 04th July 1995