

The Southburn Museum Project.

After a brief period of inactivity the ERAS field studies group has been reformed, to assist with the setting up of a small museum at Southburn farm, located about 5km southwest of Driffield which is farmed by the J. S. R group. The project has been funded by the J.S.R group itself, and by a DEFRA grant obtained by Bill and Margaret Coultard, who also carried out much of the initial groundwork for the project.

The wide range of material in the collection was amassed over a period of approximately 25 years by Brian and Val Hebblewhite, during Brian's day to day agricultural work, fieldwalking and some targeted excavation. The collection has been augmented in more recent years by a wide range of metal artefacts, recovered by metal detectorists from Battleburn field which have also been kindly donated to the project. An account of the gathering of the material in the collection written by Brian himself, complete with a map of the area covered and the main pottery concentrations encountered can be seen in East Riding Archaeologist Vol 7. Many of Brian's pottery concentrations on the original map coincide with features showing as cropmarks, in Stoertz's publication 'The Ancient Landscapes of the Yorkshire Wolds', and on aerial photographs in the Southburn archive. Importantly because of the Hebblewhite's connection with Tony Brewster, including their participation in a number of his excavations including that at Whitegrounds, care was taken to store the Southburn finds separately into the respective fields from where they were recovered.

The collection is made up of artefacts spanning every period from the Neolithic through to relatively modern objects with the bulk consisting of pottery. More notable finds include a Bronze Age battle-axe fragment, an Iron Age chalk warrior figurine and a number of Anglo-Saxon dress fittings, there are also a large number of coins ranging from the Roman period to late pre-decimal issues. All of which reflects the long history of human occupation around the Southburn area, including the archaeologically rich landscape of Garton Slack only 3/4km to the north, a large concentration of field boundaries and track ways to the west where the ground rises to the Yorkshire Wolds, and a number of deserted Medieval villages in the vicinity.

ERAS's involvement in the project will include the cleaning, identification, cataloguing and re-boxing of the material, with the ultimate objective being to have the exhibition ready for July 2008. After an initial general meeting in June, the work started in earnest in July and August, with the processing of two boxes from Big Bustard field and Big Station field, with the pottery being washed and roughly sorted into fabric types, with the majority proving to be Roman in date though some of the calcite gritted wares may prove to be Iron Age. Alongside the pottery in the boxes were part of a spur and a number of worked flints. At the same time as the pot washing, two tins of rather uninspiring metal objects were sorted by a second group that on closer inspection was found to contain fragments of Anglo-Saxon broaches, Roman and medieval artefacts and Victorian toys.

The field studies meetings at Southburn take place at 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of the month, giving a rare opportunity for close access to a wide range of archaeological material, and for members to have an input into how the objects are to be finally displayed, any suggestions for the presentation of the museum as a whole will be gratefully accepted.