

## EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Cairnfield and field systems on Saltergate Moor, immediately north of Nab Farm

PARISH: LOCKTON

DISTRICT: RYEDALE

COUNTY: NORTH YORKSHIRE

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 35904

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): SE86279562

### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes the extensive earthwork and buried remains of a cairnfield and a regular aggregate field system which are situated on gentle south and south west facing slopes on the southern fringe of the North York Moors. Also included are a stone alignment and elements of a post-medieval field system. The monument lies on sandstone moorland, at the foot of the northern escarpment of the Tabular Hills.

The cairnfield consists of at least 58 cairns, largely distributed in several concentrations between the 230m and 250m contours, with a few outliers at the extreme southern and eastern edges of the monument. Most of the cairns are well-defined sub-circular mounds constructed from small and medium sized stones, although some are more elongated in shape, or constructed from larger stones and small boulders. They vary in size from 2m to 5m in diameter, with most at the smaller end of the range, and they stand between 0.3m and 0.5m high, with the larger cairns up to 0.7m high. The majority are field clearance cairns which are the result of clearing the ground to prepare for agriculture, but some of the larger cairns are thought to have been used as burial mounds. Interspersed between the cairns there are fragments of ditches, walling and field banks. These vary from shallow depressions 0.8m-1m wide and 0.2m-0.4m deep to lines of tumbled stone and banks of earth and stone, which are up to 2m wide and 0.3m high. They are interpreted as part of the field systems which were in use with the clearance cairns. Some of the banks and wall lines contain orthostats, or earthfast stones, and there are at least four single isolated orthostats within the cairnfield. These stand up to 0.6m high. At the south eastern edge of the cairnfield, some of the cairns and banks were modified during the post-medieval period by the addition of larger stones and boulders which now cover the prehistoric features; in this area there are also a number of irregular banks and heaps of boulders which originated with post-medieval clearance.

Associated with the cairnfield, at its north eastern edge, there is a stone alignment. It is visible as three earthfast sandstone boulders set in a straight line oriented SSW-NNE. The northern stone stands 0.8m high and measures 1m by 0.25m in section, tapering to 0.4m wide at the top. It has its long axis oriented east-west and is leaning to the south. The

central stone lies 19m away and leans to the east. It is 0.8m high and measures 0.8m by 0.25m in section with its long axis oriented in the direction of the alignment. The southern stone is situated 52m from the central stone with its long axis oriented north west-south east. It is 1m high and measures 1.5m by 0.3m in section, tapering to 0.5m wide at the top. Each of the stones has a cluster of smaller stones set into the ground surface around the base. Associated with the three stones are two cairns, to the west of the northern stone and to the east of the central stone, and a fourth stone which lies 20m to the south east of the southern stone. The fourth stone is 0.8m high and measures 1.2m by 0.2m in section with its long axis oriented east-west. The regular aggregate field system lies to the north of the cairnfield. It survives as a series of earth and stone banks which are generally oriented north west-south east along the contours. The banks are 2m-3m wide and stand up to 0.6m high, and most have ditches alongside them, 1.5m-2m wide and up to 0.6m deep. Some of the banks at the western edge of the field system incorporate small field clearance cairns. The banks define the southern and western edges of sub-rectangular fields or enclosures measuring 40m-50m across, which have rounded corners at the south; the northern and eastern edges of the fields are not visible amongst the dense vegetation, but will survive as low earthworks and buried features. There are also a number of boundaries within the field system which consist of a ditch with no visible bank alongside it. These run largely down the slope in an approximate north east - south west direction and measure 1m-1.5m across and are 0.2m-0.4m deep. The difference in character of the boundaries across the field system is interpreted as an indication that the field system developed over time as a product of several phases of use.

Fragments of a post-medieval field system are superimposed upon the prehistoric field system and cairnfield, and incorporate some elements of the earlier features. These include an irregular boundary which curves in an approximate east-west direction at the southern edge of the prehistoric cairnfield, and marks the northern limit of post-medieval agricultural clearance associated with the Nab Farm farmstead to the south. This boundary is visible as a shallow ditch which has intermittent banks on either side, constructed partly from prehistoric bank and cairn fragments. To the north of this boundary, a number of fragmentary shallow ditches follow a straight course in approximate north-south or east-west alignments and these are considered to be the partial layout of post-medieval fields which were never fully enclosed and brought into use. Over the years both the cairnfield and the field systems have become embedded in blanket peat. This has partly masked some of the earthworks, making them less pronounced, and has buried other features which will survive between the visible remains.

The monument is surrounded by many more remains from the prehistoric period, which include a number of similar field systems and cairnfields as well as ritual and funerary monuments.

The modern boundary fences at the edges of the monument are not included in the scheduling.

## ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Cairnfields are concentrations of cairns sited in close proximity to one another. They often consist largely of clearance cairns, built with stone cleared from the surrounding landsurface to improve its use for agriculture, and on occasion their distribution pattern can be seen to define field plots. However, funerary cairns are also frequently incorporated, although without

excavation it may be impossible to determine which cairns contain burials. Clearance cairns were constructed from the Neolithic period (from c.3400 BC), although the majority of examples appear to be the result of field clearance which began during the earlier Bronze Age and continued into the later Bronze Age (2000-700 BC). The considerable longevity and variation in the size, content and associations of cairnfields provide important information on the development of land use and agricultural practices. Cairnfields also retain information on the diversity of beliefs and social organisation during the prehistoric period.

Regular aggregate field systems date from the Bronze Age (2000-700 BC) to the end of the fifth century AD. They usually cover areas of up to 100ha and comprise a discrete block of fields orientated in roughly the same direction, with the field boundaries laid out along two axes set at right angles to one another. Individual fields generally fall within the 0.1ha-3.2ha range and can be square, rectangular, long and narrow, triangular or polygonal in shape. The field boundaries can take various forms (including drystone walls or reaves, orthostats, earth and rubble banks, pit alignments, ditches, fences and lynchets) and follow straight or sinuous courses. Component features common to most systems include entrances and trackways, and the settlements or farmsteads from which people utilised the fields over the years have been identified in some cases. These are usually situated close to or within the field system.

The development of field systems is seen as a response to the competition for land which began during the later prehistoric period. The majority are thought to have been used mainly for crop production, evidenced by the common occurrence of lynchets resulting from frequent ploughing, although rotation may also have been practised in a mixed farming economy. Regular aggregate field systems occur widely and have been recorded in south western and south eastern England, East Anglia, Cheshire, Cumbria, Nottinghamshire, North and South Yorkshire and Durham. They represent a coherent economic unit often utilised for long periods of time and can thus provide important information about developments in agricultural practices in a particular location and broader patterns of social, cultural and environmental change over several centuries. Those which survive well and/or which can be positively linked to associated settlements are considered to merit protection.

Stone alignments or stone rows consist of upright stones set in a single line, or in two or more parallel lines, up to several hundred metres in length. They are often sited close to prehistoric burial monuments, such as small cairns and cists, and to ritual monuments, such as stone circles, and are therefore considered to have had an important ceremonial function. Stone alignments were being constructed and used from the Late Neolithic period to the Middle Bronze Age (c.2500-1000 BC) and provide rare evidence of ceremonial and ritual practices during these periods. Due to their rarity and longevity as a monument type, all examples that are not extensively damaged will be considered worthy of protection.

The North York Moors is an area which has an abundance of prehistoric remains particularly within moorland landscapes where they have not been disturbed by more recent agricultural activity. These are evidence for the widespread exploitation of these uplands throughout prehistory. Saltergate Moor is one such landscape which has remains dating to the Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as evidence for the later, post-medieval re-use of the prehistoric features. The cairnfield and field systems on Saltergate Moor, immediately north of Nab Farm, are in a good state of preservation. Significant information about their date and form will survive. Valuable evidence for the nature of Bronze and Iron Age agriculture, the

contemporary environment and earlier land use will be preserved between and beneath the cairns and field banks, and within the lowest ditch fills. The relationships between components of different date will add greatly to our understanding of the sequence of development and change, and continuity of land use during the prehistoric period. The association with the stone alignment will provide evidence for the relationship between agricultural and ritual practice.

The monument is situated close to a number of other field systems and cairnfields, including the much more extensive concentration of sites on Levisham Moor 4.5km to the south west. Associations such as this contribute to our understanding of prehistoric landscape exploitation and the distribution of prehistoric activity across the landscape.

MONUMENT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEDULE ON 15th April 2004