

There is a vast number of books on the geology, geography, archaeology and natural history of North Yorkshire and the North York Moors. This is without considering the explosion of books of walking routes, which sometimes include historical notes. Those listed here are the more significant works.

The Rivers, Mountains and Seacoast of Yorkshire, with essays on the Climate, Scenery and Ancient Inhabitants of the County

John Phillips M.A., F.R.S.

John Murray, London, 1853, Second edition, 1855

Extremely rare, but available as new print-on-demand or on the internet at:

<http://www.geology.19thcenturyscience.org/books/1855-Phillips-Yorkshire/htm/doc.html>

John Phillips (1800-1874) was one of the foremost geologists of the nineteenth century, although he did not accept Darwin's theory and its implication that the earth was far older than the accepted, theological, view.

He mentions Rosebury Topping, giving its height from the Ordnance Survey as 1022 feet, and the River Leven, "a stream of some importance, enters the Tees at Yarm". Of greatest interest are his views on the Roseberry pits (these presumably refer to the double circle near the summit). In Chapter VIII, The Brigantes, he describes their circular huts. A circular pit, between 6 and 18 feet in diameter, was excavated up to a depth of 5 feet, and covered with a conical roof of tree branches. There would be a fire in the centre, as evidenced by the charred stones found at sites such as Eston Moor. He states that there are sites with many such dwellings, suggesting a village, such as the sites at Roseberry Topping and on Danby Moor.

The Moorlands of North-Eastern Yorkshire, their natural history and origin

Frank Elgee, F.G.S.

A. Brown & Sons, London, 1912

Frank Elgee (1880-1944) conquered ill-health and adversity to become the greatest authority of the natural history of the North York Moors. There are some references to the moors above Great Ayton, and they are quoted here.

Page 24 "On Great Ayton Moor, there are numerous tumuli, mostly of small size, and some appear to be arranged in the form of the Great Bear, but others are arranged indiscriminately. That this arrangement was intentional I think there can be no doubt."

Page 45 "Some swiddens on Great Ayton Moor have become almost covered with Lichens chiefly of the genus *Cladonia* (to which the Reindeer Moss belongs)" A swidden is an area of moorland where the old vegetation has been burned to encourage the growth of new heather.

Page 68 "Great Ayton Moor is an excellent example of the heath of North-Eastern Yorkshire" He goes on to describe the soils and vegetation: heather and bilberry, lichens, rushes and mosses.

Page 72 "On Cockshaw Hill above Great Ayton, Gorse and Heather in varying proportions form an easily distinguishable plant association."

The Chambered Cairn and adjacent monuments on Great Ayton Moor, North-East Yorkshire

R.H. Hayes

Scarborough and District Archaeological Society, Research Report No.7, 1967

The definitive work, by Raymond Hayes, on the chambered cairn with maps, cross-section drawings, photographs and descriptions of finds.

The Archaeology of Cleveland

Editor D. A. Spratt

Middlesbrough Borough Council, 1979

Brief mention of the Neolithic Ayton Moor chambered cairn, the Roseberry Bronze Age hoard, the Iron Age Percy Cross Rigg hut circles and the walled enclosure on Ayton Moor. On page 19 is a sketch of Roman pottery found in Lonsdale. Only two fragments of Saxon stone crosses at All Saints' are included for Great Ayton.

A Man of the Moors, extracts from the Diaries and Letters of Frank Elgee

Edited by Harriet Elgee

Roseberry Publications, Middlesbrough, 1991

A collection of writings assembled by Frank Elgee's wife, Harriet, in 1957 but not published until 34 years later. There are references to the countryside around Great Ayton, some reproduced here. The most interesting diary entry in the book is on the last page, and concerns the Chapel Well.

12 November 1904. At the quarry on Cockshaw Hill "Along the edge of the cliff above the quarry runs a slight embankment somewhat resembling an old earth work."

18 February 1905. "On the slopes of Cockshaw Hill the broad tracks made by cutting down the bracken, and the intervening squares where it had been left standing, presented an appearance like a green and brown chess-board." He goes on to describe the vegetation in Lonsdale, which he divides into three regions: the upper parts (this would be the Gribdale Gate end) heather and swampy land, the central cultivation and the lower portion, towards Kildale, which was a grassy waste land, although rig and furrow proved its former cultivation.

18 July 1936. "This evening we took the bus to Langbaugh Quarries to examine the site an ancient Chapel and its sacred Well, which are close by." The site of the Chapel, at the western end of Cliff Rigg, was just grass land, while the Chapel Well was reduced to "a spring flowing out of an iron pipe to meet a pool muddied by the feet of cattle". He had hoped to find fragments of the garments hung over the pool, in past times, as charms against disease, but was disappointed. He then walked along the Cliff Rigg path to the Rye Hill sand pit, where he found numerous broken shells among the sand and gravel "proof that these sands were scraped off the bed of the North Sea during the last Ice Age.

The North York Moors Landscape Heritage

Edited by D.A. Spratt & B.J.D. Harrison

David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1989

An excellent introduction to the North York Moors. Again, given the scope of the book, Great Ayton only appears on occasions. The chambered cairn on Ayton Moor is said to be perhaps the most interesting barrow to visit on the moors, being unusual with its stone chamber, rare in Yorkshire, and its long stone tail. The cairn continued in use until the Bronze Age, when cremated bones and pottery were buried in adjacent stone circles. The Iron Age circular stone house foundations on Percy Cross Rigg and the square enclosure on Ayton Moor "can be visited on an afternoon's walk in one of the most interesting prehistoric areas close to Teesside."

The great whinstone wall of the Cleveland Dyke, at its thickest near Great Ayton, is covered on pages 165-6. The book states that there were 16 whinstone quarries at Great Ayton in the mid-1850s, with the last quarry, Langbaugh, ceasing operations in 1964. Although their sites are shown on maps alongside the text, neither the alum works or the three ironstone mines are mentioned, however there is a brief mention of jet mining.

Elsewhere in the book, the name "Aireyholme" is derived from Norse for hill pasture and All Saints' Church is described as "a remarkably humble structure".

The Pottery of Iron Age Tradition from the Rectilinear Enclosure Site on Great Ayton Moor, North York Moors

Steven Willis

Durham Archaeological Journal 13, 1997

The excavations on Ayton Moor enclosure in the 1950s and early 1960s yielded a small sample of Iron Age pottery. There were 216 sherds, generally less than 10 grams each, with two larger pieces. One was clearly identifiable as the rim of a pot. This paper re-examines the sample, and compares it with other Iron Age pottery found in the region. It is seen as typical of such pottery, and dates from around 100BC.

Historical Atlas of North Yorkshire

Edited by Robin Butlin

Westbury Publishing, Otley, 2003

A large, well-illustrated volume giving a good overview of the geography and history of the region, but let down by the lack of an index. Given the wide scope of the book, there are a few references to Great Ayton.

On page 37 there is an aerial photograph of the Iron Age enclosure on Ayton Moor (incorrectly captioned as the chambered cairn) and on page 44 the Percy Cross Rigg hut circle is mentioned. The map of medieval markets and fairs on page 103 includes Great Ayton as having a market and fair recorded after 1200. On page 135, a map of poor law houses shows Great Ayton as opening in 1785. The village is included in examples of centres of flax spinning and linen mills around 1800, on page 187.

The Archaeology of Yorkshire, an assessment at the beginning of the 21st century

Edited by T.G. Manby, Stephen Moorhouse and Patrick Ottaway

Yorkshire Archaeological Society Occasional Paper No.3

Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Leeds, 2003

In spite of the name "occasional paper" this is a comprehensive (453 pages) and somewhat academic study of the county's archaeology by three professional archaeologists.

The Ayton Moor Neolithic sites are well covered. References are made to the complex of three Neolithic elements on Ayton Moor: the oval chambered cairn, its tail, and an enclosure (the latter not to be confused with the Iron Age rectangular enclosure). There are two publications quoted for the cairn excavations, Raymond Hayes in 1967 (see books on Ayton) and Ian Kinnes in 1979 (just part of a British Museum paper on round barrows and ring ditches in the British Isles). Blaise Vyner believes that the Neolithic enclosure may be a mortuary enclosure. The ring cairns beside the chambered cairn are said to be the most informative examples in the county. Both had internal pits containing cremations, some accompanied by collared urns. One urn was dated to be around 3000 years ago. There are also clearance cairns in the area, distinguishable from burial cairns by their smaller size, 1.5m to 5m in diameter compared with burial mounds which are usually in excess of 6m diameter.

The Iron Age banked and ditched enclosure on Ayton Moor was excavated by Tinkler and Spratt in 1978.

The Bronze Age Roseberry Hoard is briefly described.