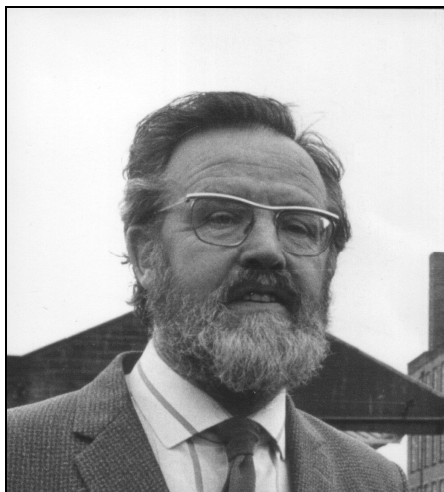


Feather Database



Stuart Wharton Feather (1927-2002)

Biography

Stuart Wharton Feather was born in Keighley, West Yorkshire, on 27 August 1927 and lived there for the whole of his life, apart from the five years he was at boarding school and his two years compulsory National Service. He attended the local primary school at Ingrow until the age of eleven, when he became a pupil at Woodhouse Grove School, Apperley Bridge, near Bradford. He was an only child and, sadly, his mother died when he was only nine years old.

Feather always claimed that it was his grandfather, Holmes Feather, who had encouraged him in his early interest in archaeology and collecting, and when he was a schoolboy he had a small museum of assorted exhibits in a bedroom at his home, complete with a visitors' book.

He left Woodhouse Grove School with very good School Certificate results and for a short time worked at Keighley Laboratories. Then he joined his mother's family's building contracting business, established in the 1890s, from where he was called up for National Service in the RAF. He was posted to India and later fortunately to Egypt, where his underlying interest in archaeology was inevitably rekindled with visits to many of the famous antiquities, including sites in the Valley of the Kings.

On return to the UK after National Service, Feather worked part-time during the 1950s for the Ordnance Survey as an unpaid recorder, plotting onto 6 inch to the mile maps every archaeological or historical site and find-spot for miles in and around the Keighley area. Typically, Feather was immensely thorough in the task, recording sites and finds ranging from Mesolithic flint workshops, Neolithic axes, Late Neolithic carved rocks, Bronze Age burial cairns and Iron Age quern stones, to Roman coins, medieval boundary stones, disused kilns and quarries, deserted farmsteads and windmill bases – maps which still provide a rich and invaluable source of information for anyone wishing to make a serious study of any period in the area.

In 1958, he published the results of his research into 'Weecher circle', believed by Raistrick to have been an authentic Bronze Age stone circle on the south-eastern flank of Rombalds Moor first recorded by the antiquarians, Preston and Speight in 1891 and destroyed when Weecher reservoir was built to supply water to the nearby town of Baildon the following year. Feather's work confirmed its former existence in the fields to the south of the reservoir

but the state of the monument even in Preston's time was insufficient to tell whether it had been a genuine circle or an example of a typical Early Bronze Age Pennine ring cairn.

Meanwhile, Feather had returned to the family business but his heart was not really in it and when the opportunity arose in 1965 to work as Assistant Keeper under Sidney Jackson at Cartwright Memorial Hall Museum in Bradford, he jumped at the chance. Feather had been a member of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society from the late 1940s and had joined the Cartwright Memorial Hall Archaeology Group in the early 1950s where he was first introduced to Jackson, the Keeper of the Museum. Jackson used to take summer rambles with the group and in 1956 Feather went on one of these rambles to see cup-and-ring-marked rocks for the first time on Baildon Moor, from when his great interest in the subject began. He subsequently went on to search large areas of the north of England, discovering many previously unknown cup-and-ring-marked rocks on the uplands of the Wharfe and Aire Valleys, in County Durham, and was the first to recognise their presence on the North York Moors. Many of his findings were published in either the *Bradford Cartwright Memorial Hall Archaeology Group Bulletin* (edited by Jackson) or in the (now defunct) *Yorkshire Archaeological Register* of the time. Further, he kept an extensive photographic record of sites running to over 2000, which, after careful cataloguing by the current author, has now been deposited along with much of his other personal archaeological archive at the Manor House Museum in Ilkley. Both Boughey and Vickerman and later, Brown and Chappell, in their publications on the prehistoric rock art of the former West Riding and the North Yorks Moors respectively began by making clear their considerable debt to his earlier research, and he was also acknowledged as an important source of local knowledge by Beckensall and Laurie in their work on the prehistoric rock art of County Durham.

Feather corresponded with Ronald Morris, the retired Scottish solicitor and archaeologist who was the first amateur researcher in the modern period to revive interest in prehistoric rock art in the UK, and in the early 1960s took him onto Ilkley Moor to see some of the cup-and-ring-marked rocks there. He was also in contact with Eric Cowling of Otley, the author of *Rombalds Way: a Prehistory of Mid-Wharfedale*. Another of his interests was in the remains of the Yorkshire lead-mining industry, particularly in Wharfedale and Swaledale, recorded through a series of several hundred photographs as well as notes in his personal diaries, and he was a close friend of Robert T. Clough, author of a major book on the history of lead mining in the Dales (Clough 1962). He made an extensive collection of black and white photographs of derelict lead workings.

Feather also made an impressive collection of Neolithic stone axe rough-outs from most of the major axe-factories in the British Isles: Langdale in Cumbria, Mynydd Rhiw and Gareg Fawr in N. Wales, and Tievebullagh in N. Ireland. With help, advice and interpretation from Vin Davis of the IPG (Implement Petrology Group) these have now been dispersed to their respective local or national museums for the proper curation. He was also an avid and long-term collector of prehistoric lithic tools and waste, much of it from the local moors around his home in Keighley, in particular on Oxenhope Moor, where he recognised several new Mesolithic sites or 'workshops'. Even more impressively, he collected huge quantities of Mesolithic flint tools, flakes and waste off the Carrs S of Scarborough (weighing some 188kg in all), including from around the famous Mesolithic site of Star Carr, and alone gathered together the largest single collection of Mesolithic flint axes (13 axes in all, mostly of the characteristic *tranchet* type) to have been found in the area.

In 1970, he published a joint paper with Terry Manby on the Neolithic chambered tombs of the Pennines, including a reference to the long barrow on Black Hill above Bradley, the main excavation details of which were first published by Raistrick and later described by Cowling.

Throughout his life Feather was a very keen walker – on the mountains and in the countryside, usually incorporating something archaeological along the way. Other interests were photography and railways, and in 1955 he took a three-year W.E.A. course in Geology under Professor Versey of Leeds University.

After he started work at Cartwright Memorial Hall Museum, he sat the Museums Association examinations and became an Associate Member with Speciality in Archaeology. He was invited to speak on the subject of archaeology at the meetings of various societies and was tutor at three 'Archaeology Week Holidays' organised by Cartwright Memorial Hall, two at Barton-on-Sea on the south coast and one at Barmouth in Wales, when visits were made to famous archaeological sites in their respective areas. He was also tutor at evening classes in Bingley and Bradford, and worked on the identification and conservation of flints at Bradford University.

In 1970, when Bradford Metropolitan District Council decided they should have an Industrial Museum, the disused Moorside Mill at Eccleshill was purchased and Feather was put in charge of setting-up the Museum totally from scratch. Industrial archaeology was a new challenge for him and he typically set about the task with great energy and enthusiasm, going to mill sales, and visiting firms and people who gifted items for the Museum. The Museum officially opened on 14 December 1974 with Feather as its first Curator and now stands as a well-established and fitting record of Bradford's rich and unique industrial heritage in textiles and light engineering. Feather remained Curator until his early retirement due to ill health in December 1985. Fortunately, he retired at the right time and after a period of recuperation his health improved and he was able to enjoy a happy and well-earned retirement. He died on 29 August 2002 after a short illness, leaving behind a considerable archaeological legacy based on a lifetime's collecting and recording.

Introduction

The present database is based on the records that Feather made during his time as Recording Officer for the Ordnance Survey during the later 1950s. This comes from two separate but closely related sources. The first is a set of 1956 series 6in to the mile Ordnance Survey maps, annotated by Feather himself on which he plotted most (though not all) of the sites and locations of finds in the database. The second is a card index of the same compiled by Feather at the same time. Together, they comprise a database with 974 individual entries of sites/finds up to the time of its compilation, which ran from 17 August 1956 to 30 October 1958.

Errors

As to be expected, there is a strong correlation between the two sources, but it is not completely correct, as the present database makes clear. Firstly, there are sites/finds recorded on the maps for which there is no existing card entry – these are indicated in the database as **no card**. Secondly, the converse is also true, i.e. there are sites/finds entered on the cards but not recorded on the maps – these are indicated in the database as **card only**. Thirdly, there are sites/finds where the card entry and the map record do not agree – more often than not this is due to a typographic or copying error, e.g. 11 for 1, 3 for 8, etc. These are indicated in the database as **error**. Fourthly, there are possible sites/finds which appear to be missing altogether, neither recorded on the maps nor entered on the cards, suggested wherever the site/find number mysteriously jumps a number, e.g. from 17 to 19. These are indicated in the database as **missing?**

Guide

The entries in the database are arranged in order of (a) Sheet No and (b) Site/location of find number, as they are in the card index. What follows below is a guide to the different columns in the database:

Sheet No.

Identifies the map in the 1956 6in to the mile series, thus:

SE 04 SW, etc.

SF Map

Refers to the identifying letter/s given by Feather to the map on which the site was recorded: A-Z, then AA-EE. The database follows Feather's lettering. The lettering does not appear to follow any particular sequence from W-E or from N-S and may simply have been the purely accidental and random order in which Feather happened to pick up the maps and use them. They run as follows:

A	SE 04 SE
B	SE 03 NE
C	SE 04 NE
D	SE 04 NW
E	SE 04 SW
F	SE 03 NW
G	SE 13 NW
H	SE 14 SW
I	SE 14 NW
J	SD 93 SE
K	SD 93 NE
L	SD 94 SE
M	SD 94 NE
N	SE 03 SW
O	SE 05 SW
P	SE 05 SE
Q	SE 03 SE
R	SE 13 SW
S	SD 94 NW
T	SD 94 SW
U	SE 14 SE
V	SE 15 SE
W	SE 14 NE
X	SE 15 SW
Y	SE 02 NE
Z	SE 02 NW
AA	SE 12 NW
BB	SD 93 NW
CC	SE 13 NE
DD	SE 13 SE
EE	SE 12 NE

SF Reference

This is the number assigned to the site/find location by Feather. Within each map, the sites/find locations are arranged by order of these numbers.

Co-ordinates E

The NGR easting of the site/find location, expressed to 4 figures, i.e. to within 10m W-E

Co-ordinates N

The NGR northing of the site/find location, expressed to 4 figures, i.e. to within 10m N-S

Description

Gives the nature of the site or the find

Find details

Gives further details (where known) of the site/find: who first made the find or discovery and when, by whom and when it was excavated (if at all), who notified or donated the find

to one of the local museums, which museum it was donated to (CMH: the former Cartwright Memorial Hall, Bradford; IM: Manor House Museum, Ilkley; KM: Cliffe Castle Museum, Keighley; SM: Craven Museum, Skipton) and the museum's acquisition number.

Bibliography

Bibliography relating to the site/find

Details

Further details of the site/find, not provided in earlier columns, e.g. when and by who it was first photographed, drawn, etc., for flints/coins – further details of the individual tools (e.g. type)/coins

(metal, denomination, period, inscriptions). Further details of visits, drawings, and photographs made by Feather and/or his associates (particularly F. Maurice Greaves, Sidney Jackson and Joe Davies) are also recorded in his private diaries (also kept and available at the Manor House Museum, Ilkley), comprising 2 hardback volumes from 1956-9 and 1959-64, under the same dates entered into the database.

Prehistoric sites/finds

For convenience and ease of identification, prehistoric sites/finds are identified by database entries in **red text**.

Unprovenanced cards

The database also includes a small set of entries for miscellaneous sites/finds with no coded map provenance from both within and beyond the region, originally gathered together at the back of the card index. These will be found at the very end of the database and the more local ones may well be found on closer analysis to match some of the unprovenanced sites/finds within the main database.

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