

Talk on Aerial Archaeology by Tony Hunt
13th October 2021

The use and development of drone technology was described in detail by Tony Hunt who is at present doing a part MA in crop mark formation in archaeology at Hull University. He explained that although drones have been used since the mid 1990s, advances in the technology have led to new discoveries.

The drones work in a grid pattern, taking images every two seconds. The 3D images can be rotated, and used to show sections of elevations. Since 2015, over 600 sites have been recorded, including the henges at Thornborough, the medieval village at Wharram Percy, a moated site at Leconfield which revealed fishponds, and closer to Wakefield, the deserted village of Lead on Towton Moor, and the Ferrybridge henge.

Tony explained how crop marks are formed - a key indicator in archaeological research. Plant growth is greatest where the topsoil is deeper, so ancient ditches are revealed by greater growth. Plant growth is stilted where the soil is not so deep, for instance where there are ancient walls or banks.

Tony described how infrared and thermal imaging have been developed to make new discoveries at Kipling House Farm, at Cawood, and at Darrington amongst other sites.

Yorkshire Aerial Archaeology also work with local groups, and are able to offer funding for the research. Tony mentioned Sandal Castle as a possible site for investigation.

Tony's talk reminded us that archaeology is no longer just digging trenches on a known site, and that aerial archaeology is vital to discover sites that may be lost to development in the future and to find more information about previously recorded sites.

<http://www.yaamapping.co.uk/home.html>