

Romans on the Don Classroom Exercise 1

Living in a Round House at Brodsworth

Brodsworth was excavated in 1985 and revealed a lot of evidence of occupation and use through the late Iron Age into at least the 3rd century AD.

The site comprises two round houses, a lane known as a droveway next to a rectangular compound and field ditches.

The droveway, compound and field ditches all match crop marks on aerial photographs.

The compound had an eastern entrance and contained lots of pieces of bone and a piece of Roman Greyware pottery. From the bottom of a ditch came two nearly complete Iron Age pots ([Exercise 1 Picture 1.jpg](#)) and part of a rotary quern. Also found in the field ditches were sherds of at least eight Romano-British pots and a Roman coin of Emperor Valerian (AD 257). The compound may have enclosed a group of houses, though any evidence had been destroyed by earlier quarrying. The droveway would have been used to move cows and sheep between different fields.

The round houses did not show up on aerial photographs. One house was 12 metres in diameter. It had walls built in foundations cut into the ground and a south-east facing door. The walls were probably made of clay plastered onto a wicker frame (wattle and daub). Timber posts would have supported the roof which was probably thatched with straw. This is typical of Iron Age and Romano-British round houses ([Exercise 1 Picture 2.jpg](#), [Exercise 1 Picture 3.jpg](#)). The other house was similar but slightly smaller at 9.0 metres diameter.

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Exercise 1. Living in a Round House at Brodsworth.

Ask the pupils what they thought it would have been like to live in a round house?

One of the houses is 12 metres in diameter. Let the pupils form a circle of this size to represent the house.

Ask if they think it is a large house and how many people might have lived in it.

Do they think that it would have had rooms inside and if so how would inside walls have been created?

If not how would they feel living in a house without separate rooms?

Who else may live in the house with them (eg grandparents)?

Would they like this?

What problems might it create (e.g. arguments about who makes decisions)?

What advantages might it have (look after elderly people; benefit from experience of elderly; more people to help with work; childminding; teaching lore/tradition)?

Would they prefer to live in a round house or one with straight walls and corners? What sort of furniture would they have and what would be the shapes of such things as tables and beds?

Ask pupils to draw a plan of a round house on a sheet of paper by drawing a circular line with a gap for the door.

Ask them to draw what they think would be in the house. Where would they put a fire, a bed, a table, etc? Where would the people be?

Usually a round house had a hearth in the centre with beds against the wall opposite the door. Craft work was usually undertaken near the door for natural light. Equipment was stored against the wall – including looms and agricultural tools.

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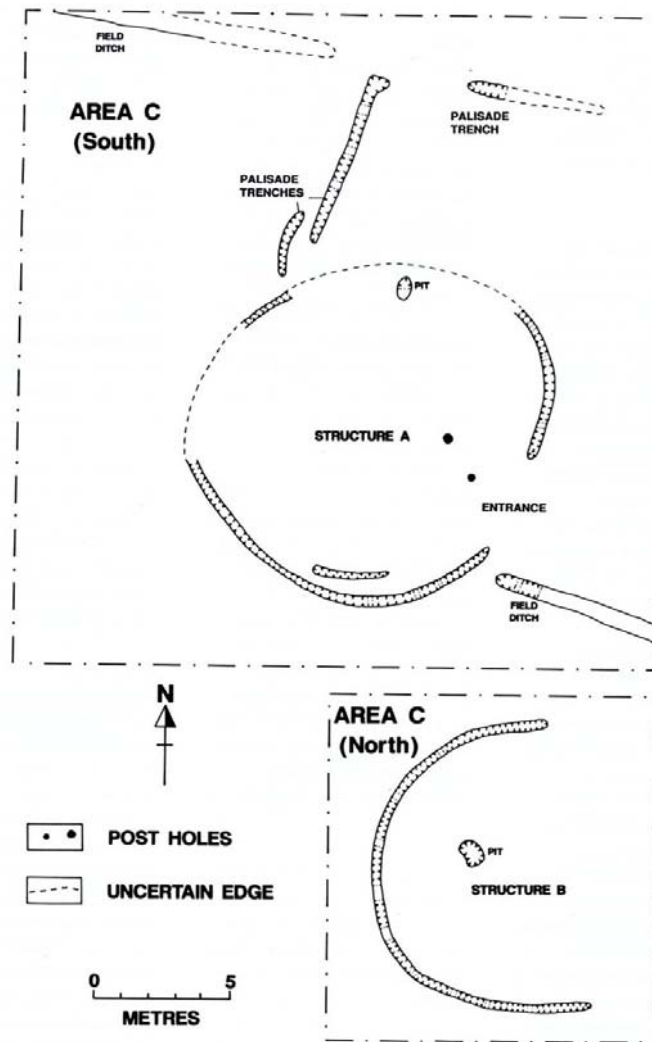


Exercise 1, Picture 1. Iron Age pot found in a ditch at Brodsworth



Exercise 1, Picture 2. Iron Age round houses similar to the ones at Brodsworth.

Romans on the Don Classroom Exercise 1



Exercise 1, Picture 3. This is the archaeological plan of the houses excavated at Brodsworth from which the reconstruction drawing was made. The plan of 'structure A' is a useful model for asking pupils to draw the outline of a round house