

# Bonsall

Conservation Area Appraisal

## 3. Archaeological Significance



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

There is some evidence of early settlers in the vicinity of Bonsall from the pre-historic era. A few microliths of the Mesolithic period (8500- 4000 BC) have been found in the parish. From the Neolithic period (4000-2500 BC) a little more evidence survives primarily in the form of tumuli or burial mounds. The closest tumuli to Bonsall, and within the parish boundary, is a bowl barrow on Masson Hill (Scheduled Ancient Monument 23293). This dates from circa. 2400-1500 BC. and indicates that early man was living in the area. Occasional damaged or broken polished axes, scrapers, arrows and knives have been turned up within the parish. Near Bonsall Lane Farm a putative Neolithic rock shelter survives.

Moving forward into the Roman period there are the remains of a Romano-British farmstead at Bonsall Wood comprising lynchets, walled field boundaries and a farmstead complex. A Roman brooch has been found near the old schoolhouse and some Roman pottery has also been found in Ball Eye Quarry. Derbyshire was exploited by the Romans for the production of lead, an industry which continued in the area for the next 1500 years or so. Roman pigs of lead have been found in the Wirksworth area.

It was in the Anglo-Saxon period and into the Norman period that the settlement of Bonsall ('Bunteshale') came into being. This early settlement perhaps consisting of a grouping of timber houses in and around the vicinity of the present church formed the nucleus of the village with the land around it being farmed. All visible evidence of houses of this period is gone but archaeological remains may lie under the later stone built houses.



*Extract from the Bonsall Tithe Map – 1848 – see Figure 5*

As the village evolved its surrounding field pattern was established. The earliest field enclosures were located close to the village itself. The randomly shaped fields to the east of the village may be the fossilized remains of an early field system. The field system, prior to 1776, of greater size, appears from the map evidence to have been developed to the north, west and southwest of the village. This is evident in a large number of remaining narrow field plots with a diagnostic inverted 'S'. Little evidence of medieval ridge and furrow has survived within the parish (a small area remains between Abel Lane & Uppertown Lane). To the west of the earlier field system lies Bonsall Moor and its late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosures made evident by their larger field size in squarish and logical layout (served by a network of narrow access lanes). On the basis of this 'reading' of the landscape, the existing field boundaries provide strong, physical, archaeological, remains of the historical evolution of the landscape surrounding Bonsall village.

The current road & lane layout/system of the settlement has early origins and relates to the topography of the area. As a fossilized network this has some archaeological, and historical, importance to the character and appearance of the village.

Bonsall Moor, to the west of the village, was exploited for lead mining from an early period (see Figure 9). The physical evidence of this mining remain and reveal a landscape peppered with small, and large, mining activity. Seven areas within the parish have been identified as being of regionally and nationally important lead mining sites.



*Former lead mining activity on Bonsall Moor*

Within the village framework there is a reasonable expectation that archaeological deposits and evidence relating to the medieval and post-medieval periods survive below ground. Such evidence may be brought to light during excavation work for new services or new dwellings/extensions.