



APPLEBY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP



***PEOPLE AND THE LAND:
Settlement in the Eden Valley, Cumbria, Pre-History to the Present Day***

APPLEBY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

SATURDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2007
9.00 – 4.00

Chairman for the day: Angus Winchester, Senior Lecturer in History, Lancaster University

- 9.00 – 9.30 Registration
- 9.30 – 9.45 Introduction and Context:
Angus Winchester
- 9.45 – 10.30 Prehistoric farmers? -
Evidence for Early Settlement in the Eden Valley
Martin Railton, North Pennines Archaeology
- 10.30 - 11.15 The Locals and Rome: a Prehistorian's Perspective on the Arrival of the Roman Empire
Andrew Hoen
- 11.15 – 11.45 Coffee
- 11.45 – 12.30 Who was Here in the Dark Ages?
Rachel Newman, Oxford Archaeology North
- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 – 14.15 People and Medieval Planning: The Development of Villages
Brian Roberts, Emeritus Professor, Durham University
- 14.15 – 15.00 Revolution! Agricultural Improvement
Ian Whyte, Professor of Historical Geography, Lancaster University
- 15.00 – 15.20 Tea
- 15.20 – 15.50 Living Under Fiends' Fell: Recent Work at Kirkland
Appleby Archaeology Group
- 15.50 -16.00 Conclusions and Depart.

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How people of the past shaped the Eden Valley landscape ...

APPLEBY Archaeology Group held its second one-day conference, entitled "People and the Land" at Appleby Grammar School, and more than 70 people, one from far away as Somerset, gathered to hear leading experts on archaeology and land use in northern England tell how the peoples of the past shaped the landscape of the Eden Valley.

Richard Stevens, chairman of Appleby Archaeology Group, welcomed everyone to the conference and introduced Angus Winchester, of Lancaster University, who had kindly agreed to act as co-ordinator for the day.

Setting the theme of the conference, people and how they used the resources of the land, Mr. Winchester described how people probably first arrived in the Eden Valley at the end of the Ice Age and over the centuries successive waves of settlers came into the valley, using and shaping the landscape into the forms that we know today.

The subject of the early settlers was taken up by Martin Railton, of North Pennines Archaeology, and the founder of the group. He spoke about his research into prehistoric farmers in the valley, summarising what is known about their presence with a variety of maps showing known sites of settlement and artefact finds.

Of particular interest are the numerous settlements around the head of the Lyvennet Valley at Crosby Ravensworth and on the limestone uplands of Orton Fell and Crosby Garrett.

No recent work has been done on any of these sites and current interpretations of the complex remains are based on excavations carried out in the early 20th Century when modern techniques of dating were not available.

The next group of arrivals, the Romans, marked a significant change in land use, and Ian Caruana, who stood in at very short notice for the advertised speaker, described the Roman presence in the valley but said we could only guess at how the local people regarded them.

The military sites, such as the marching camp at Rere Cross on Stainmore and the forts at Brough, Kirkby Thore, Brougham and Old Penrith, are well-known and the major lasting legacy of the Romans in the valley is the road from Scotch Corner to Carlisle which today is followed by the A66.

As with the prehistoric settlements, little recent work has been done to dis-

cover how the indigenous population of the valley lived in the Roman period. At Roman forts elsewhere in the county, interest has turned to the civilian settlement outside the fort, known as the vicus, and recent geophysical surveys at Maryport and Birdoswald have revealed extensive settlements with a main street and houses set with their gable ends at right angles to the street.

Excavation of these civilian settlements could tell us more about how the local indigenous people reacted to the Roman presence. However, work in 1966-67 at Brougham uncovered a cemetery containing cremation burials dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD and recent analysis of the finds showed that the people buried were not "local" but came from distant lands in the Empire.

The question was then asked, "Who was here in the Dark Ages?", the period following the withdrawal of Rome administration and before the arrival of the Normans. Rachel Newman, of Oxford Archaeology North, who has spent most of her archaeological career working in the North West, attempted to answer this question by summarising the latest discoveries against the very sparse documentary record.

The Saxons seem to have made little impression on Cumbria, although for a time the area was under the rule of the kingdom of Northumbria. Excavations at Dacre revealed a possible monastic site which may have followed the form of Bede's home at Jarrow.

Documentary evidence suggests that for a time Cumbria was in the bishopric of Glasgow and part of the British kingdom of Strathclyde, while the discovery in 2005 of rich Viking burials at Cumwhitton suggests that later in the 9th and 10th centuries there might have been a Scandinavian elite who had emigrated from Ireland.

These results, together with the place-name evidence, suggest that the people of the Eden Valley were a mixed lot pursuing a largely pastoral economy under successive incoming overlords.

The theme of settlement was taken into the Middle Ages by Professor Brian Roberts, who drew upon his research into village plans in County Durham. Prof. Roberts suggested that many of the villages of the Eden Valley such as Melmerby, Milburn, Dufton, Knock, Hilton and Crosby

Ravensworth did not grow, but were planned by an administration with a strong interest in maximising the rent yield of the land.

Some time before 1200AD, the villages were laid out with houses in regular rows facing the main street and with tofts up to 800 metres long extending from the back. The inhabitants probably came from the earlier settlement sites on the limestone uplands which were then abandoned.

Professor Ian Whyte, of Lancaster University, then took the theme into the modern era, describing how the modern landscape of enclosed fields emerged from a medieval landscape of planned villages surrounded by open waste.

The driving force of this change was agricultural improvement and this was achieved by widespread enclosure of the waste, by voluntary agreement between landowners in the 17th and 18th centuries and by Act of Parliament in the 19th Century. Contrary to the situation in the Midlands, where enclosure of open fields deprived many poor people of access to land and means of livelihood, enclosure of the waste of Westmorland generated little controversy and large areas around Appleby and the head of the Eden Valley were enclosed without major dissent.

The last speaker, Harry Hawkins, of Appleby Archaeology Group, drew together some of the themes of the day by describing a study the group had carried out on a small area of rough fell land near Kirkland. Here successive peoples had made their impact on the landscape, small in scale but accumulating over time to create a complex of dykes, banks, piles of stones, pits and enclosures.

Some of the features suggest a prehistoric presence, others perhaps a medieval attempt at enclosure, and yet others more modern with the burning of bracken for potash, lodgings for passing drovers and a water supply to the village.

Summing up, Mr. Winchester stressed the importance of field observation and advocated working backwards through time from the present to the distant past, stripping away the layers of history to get a sequence of how people managed and shaped the land. In thanking the speakers and the group for organising the conference, he said such events were important in bringing together experts and members of local communities to exchange ideas and experiences.

There was still much to learn about the history of the landscape of the Eden Valley and he was sure members of the audience would go away inspired to find out more.

Article by Harry Hawkins - Cumberland & Westmorland
on Conference of 6/10/07 Herald