



APPLEBY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP



## ***THE ROMANS IN THE EDEN VALLEY***

Appleby Grammar School, Appleby-in-Westmorland

9.30 – 3.30

**Saturday, 17 September 2005**

Programme:

- 9.30 - 10.00 Arrival and Registration.
- 10.00 – 10.10 Opening and Introductions.
- 10.10 -11.00. The Romans in Cumbria - David Shotter, Emeritus Professor of Roman Imperial History at Lancaster University. The background, arrival, activity in the Eden Valley, departure and legacy.
- 10.50 -11.15. Coffee.
- 11.15-12.05 The Roman Sites of the Eden Valley – Richard Newman, County Archaeologist for Cumbria. From Stainmore to Old Penrith – a gazetteer of the sites – forts, signal system, roads and farmsteads; what is known.
- 12.05 -13.15 Lunch.
- 13.15 -14.05 Pyromania - The Roman Cemetery at Brougham, Tony Wilmot, Senior Archaeologist, English Heritage – Results from the Excavations of 1967/68.
- 14.05 -14.30 Coffee.
- 14.30 - 15.20 Roman Carlisle and its Environs – Frank Giecco, North Pennines Archaeology.
- 15.20 - 15.30 Any Further Questions and Discussion, Summary and End.

## Appleby Archaeology

Appleby Archaeology Group's first archaeology conference (and the first of its kind in Appleby) held at the Appleby Grammar School on September 17th, was highly successful.

Four speakers provided the group with an enjoyable day exploring the evidence for the Romans in the Eden Valley and Cumbria. Seventy people attended the event from all parts of the county.

Prof. David Shotter was chairman for the day and also the first speaker. With his usual easy style he discussed the background, arrival and legacy of the Romans in Cumbria. The last 30 years have seen an increase in discovery in the north west, and with it ideas about the Roman North have evolved and changed. He suggested that trade with the Roman world may well have preceded the establishment of a Roman military presence in Cumbria. This was undertaken via two routes, one from Lancaster via the Lune Valley, the other over Stainmoor. He cited the marching camp at Rey Cross and a network of signal stations, which mark this campaign. Early forts were established at strategic locations including Low Borrow Bridge, Brougham and Carlisle. He explained how later forts attracted civilian settlements of as many as 3-4000 people. These in turn would have had a substantial effect on the surrounding landscape.

The second speaker, Richard Newman, County Archaeologist for Cumbria, focused on Roman sites in the Eden Valley. He explained the concentrations of Roman finds, recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER), are clustered around Brough, Appleby, Kirkby Thore and Brougham. Three of these sites have Roman forts which were later occupied by Norman castles. Where is the Roman fort at Appleby? Surely there should be one?

Richard went on to discuss archaeological work carried out in the Eden Valley over the last 15 years at Roman sites. This has mainly consisted of archaeological evaluations in response to road and housing developments. Most significantly these have identified the presence of a Roman civilian settlement south of Kirkby Thore Roman Fort, following the route of the A66 eastwards. Work at French Fields near Brougham has identified what appears to be a Roman industrial settlement, perhaps providing goods to the nearby garrison. He bemoaned the lack of publication of many commercial archaeology projects. However the recent publication of excavations at Low Borrow Bridge and Brougham have proved highly informative. He suggested that there was high potential for further discovery along the route of the A66 and that proposed developments there could only add to our knowledge of the Roman presence in the Eden Valley.

Tony Wilmot, Senior Archaeologist, English Heritage presented the results of the 1967-68 excavations of the Roman cemetery at Brougham, which have recently been

published. This was originally a 'rescue' dig, but is the largest area of cemetery ever excavated in the North. Evidence for 293 funerary features was recovered including two decorated monuments. Many of these features were not understood at the time of the excavation, but modern scientific and statistical techniques have shed light on Roman funerary practices there. These consisted of the construction of funerary pyres onto which clothed and decorated bodies were placed. Prestigious goods and food offerings were provided. The presence of whole horse carcasses suggests that cavalry men and possibly women were being cremated there. They probably originated in central Europe. The cremated remains were often placed in funerary urns and deposited within a pit or stone-lined cist. However pyre debris was also placed directly into the ground. The original excavators saw this as evidence for grave-robbing but this theory has now been discarded.

The final speaker, Frank Giecco, North Pennines Heritage Trust, talked about Roman Carlisle and presented us with much information which had not previously been made public. He began by describing some of the little-known rural settlements located around the periphery of Carlisle and the Romano-British settlement at the site of Carlisle Infirmary. The re-development of Botchergate in the 1990's, provided the opportunity to excavate some important Roman archaeology including a possible aqueduct, a cemetery, military ditch road and part of a planned Roman vicus settlement. This consisted of eight building plots which appeared to be occupied by industrial workshops which were later cleared around the time that Carlisle became a civitas capital in the early third century. No definite monumental buildings have been identified from this phase but it is possible that they exist in the area around Carlisle Cathedral.

The speakers were warmly thanked and the chairman congratulated the group on organising such a rewarding and informative day.

Martin Railton