



Romans in Eden Conference

17th September 2005

Our first archaeology conference (and the first of its kind in Appleby) was highly successful. Four speakers provided us 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 our 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 consisting of as many as 3-4000 people. These in turn would have had a substantial effect on the surrounding landscape.

Our 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), which 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 carried out 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. Also, 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 has 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, and 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.

Our 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 Roman cemetery, military ditch, Roman road and part of a planned Roman *vicus* settlement. This consisted of eight building plots which appeared to be occupied by industrial workshops. These were 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.

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

Martin Railton

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Summer Outings

Four Stones Hill, Hawswater 22 May 2005

The excursion to the Standing Stones on Bampton Common, the first outing of this year's summer programme, was extremely well-attended. It was also, for once, blessed with delightful weather. The walk took us through the fields above the village and then out onto the open fell. At Four Stones Hill the little tarn was dry, but the cairn and the standing stones were still where they ought to have been, framing a startling view of the head of Haweswater.

Following the instructions provided by Stan Beckenstall at our February lecture, the stones were carefully examined for examples rock art. None was located. Clearly conditions were not quite right.

On the way down to the waterfalls of Measand Beck, however, much excitement was created by the discovery of a proliferation of linear features and crumbling rectangular structures on the fellside. Informed by our recent attendance at the Landscape Archaeology weekend we tried – and failed – to interpret these. Harry has their coordinates however, courtesy of his new GPS, so no doubt they will shortly be marshalled into some sort of order.

A car, cunningly left at Burnbanks, ferried drivers back to Bampton in order to save the

tedious road-walk back to civilisation and everybody was home in time for tea. The general feeling was that we should try to do this more often!

Martin Joyce

Stanwick Earthworks, Yorkshire 19 June 2005 AM

Six members of Appleby Archaeology visited this site on a fine, sunny day. The chairman led the field trip, which then continued to Thornborough Henge. We felt that the scale of the work at Stanwick was awesome, and the people creating it must have had an impressive community organisation to invest so much work in these earthworks.

Stanwick is a key site for the late Iron Age in Northern England. Lying between the rivers Tees and Swale, there are 300 hectares of earthworks, which including 8 km of ramparts up to 5 metres from ditch to crest.

It is an undulating landscape, 8 km from the Pennine foothills and lies on glacial drift producing excellent farmland which is still some of the best agricultural land in NE England today. Stanwick is situated between the populated vale of York and the iron and lead ores of the NW (copper was mined locally).

During the Iron Age, the Brigantes were the dominant people and this may have been their

main site. About 1845, whilst digging land drains, a hoard was discovered which is now kept in the British Museum. There were 5 incomplete sets of chariot fittings and horse harness, a sword (in a scabbard) and a dagger all made of bronze. The weapons have been dated to the first century AD. It is known that Queen Cartimandua was the local Brigantes "client ruler" for the Romans. Her consort Venutius expelled her in AD 69 and he was subsequently defeated by the Romans.

It seems the area is one which archaeologists have barely begun to understand. This fertile area has a complex history with medieval villages (Forcett and Stanwick) and recent buildings constructed by the landed gentry complicate the situation. Lord Prudhoe was the most influential person, surveying the site for his estate maps in the mid 19th century. Before he moved to Alnwick Castle, his lordship lived at Stanwick Hall and had a keen interest in Archaeology, being a trustee of the British Museum.

Sir Mortimer Wheeler excavated Stanwick in the 1950s and decided that it was a fortress. He retrieved a human skull, an oak bowl, basketwork and a late iron age sword in its ashwood scabbard. However, his work has been challenged by later work, including that of the RCHME (Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England).

Subsequent work has shown that before the site was fortified and near the current rampart entrance, there was a well established roadway with wheel ruts. This road runs NW and is some distance from the nearest settlement area. Some parts of the ramparts are of turf, others stone;

The lines chosen for the earthworks were dictated by the topography and gave a good outlook over the immediate countryside (except for Henah hill). The settlement was well established by the time the Romans began to import pottery.

The RCHME report concludes with the following statement

" Why it was all thought to be necessary we shall probably never know."

Chris Lyon

The Thornborough Henges

19 June 2005 PM

After lunching atop the central barrow next to a country lane we set out to reconnoitre the three henges at Thornborough, a little off the A1, 24 km south of Scotch Corner.

To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, "to have one henge may be regarded as fortunate, to have two is curious but to have three is clearly excessive!" This is the only site in Britain to have three henges of approximately the same age in close proximity and is the largest prehistoric site north of the Thames and the fifth largest in all Britain.

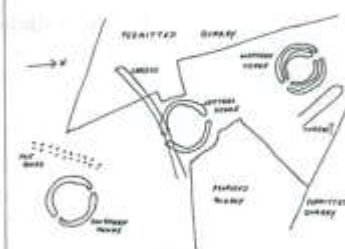
Each henge is of impressive proportions measuring approximately 240 metres across and is separated from the others by about 700 meters of open ground. The three lie in near alignment about 700 meters apart. The central and most accessible henge consists of a circular bank, perhaps five meters in height, apparently of river worn stones, possibly brought from the River Ure more than a kilo-meter away. Despite breaches this remains an impressive structure. The southern henge is less well preserved and may have been of earth. The northern henge is shrouded by woodland but is possibly the best preserved. Here, inside the bank is a circular ditch 20 meters wide, the two separated by a berm or ledge about 12 meters wide. Ditches originally ran round the outside of the henges as well as on the inside, but of these little remains. It seems likely that breaks in both banks and ditches may originally have existed on the sides corresponding to their approximate alignment.

The henges are believed to date from the early Bronze Age but were pre-dated by a Neolithic cursus crossing the site of the central henge. Part of a second cursus probably lies just outside the northern henge. Close to the southern henge a double row of post holes have been discovered as well as ten round barrows and an oval enclosure in the immediate vicinity. Worked stone pieces have been found typical of the late Neolithic or early Bronze age as well as some pottery fragments giving a date of 1800-1600 B.C. by radio carbon dating.

Aerial mapping suggests that the principal features correlate with Orion's belt. Whatever interpretation one draws from this much remains to be learned about the Thornborough henges and their surroundings. For us, probably the most stunning aspect of our visit was to reflect upon the sheer effort of constructing these henges without shovel or wheelbarrow let alone the machinery associated with motorway construction.

Sadly, quarrying has eaten into the countryside to the immediate south and west of the henges and Tarmac have planning proposals for quarrying on the north and east sides. Eventually the henges could become islands in man-made lakes which will destroy both the archaeology and atmosphere of what English Heritage describes as "the most important ancient site between Stonehenge and The Orkneys." If you would like to lobby for the preservation of this remarkable site please go to:- www.timewatch.org.

Chizzer Childs



Sketch plan of the Thornborough henges

The Asby Winderwath 'Hoard' 17 July 2005

Inevitably the hot dry weather of early July had faded away and by the evening when we set off to explore the find spot of the Pre-Conquest ironwork so vividly described by Ben Edwards in his talk to us in December 2004 (*Newsletter: Spring 2005, Vol 8 Issue 1, CW2:2002*), it was cool, overcast with low cloud and wet.

The hoard of 115 objects was discovered in 1993 by a metal detectorist in the corner of a field on Winderwath Common some 500 metres south of Copper Mine Lane (the copper mine with its well preserved entrance arch itself needs further investigation – why is copper there?). Also within the field is a settlement site, probably prehistoric, with upstanding slabs of limestone forming small enclosures. Wet footed we tried to make out the extent of the enclosures and then having decided that the rain had stopped (how wrong!) pushed on through soaking bracken to the find site. Here despite the knee high bracken and another brief but hard shower of rain it was possible to make out the outline of a rectangular building nestling in a small hollow in the limestone pavement – a possible Viking long house did someone ask? The modern field walls give shelter to the corner from the north easterlies but when the iron-work was buried the landscape would have been open and exposed. The question we were unable to answer was where did the people who lived there get their water? And why hide the

iron-work there? There are no streams, no natural water gathering holes and as far as we knew no man-made ponds either and yet the area is rich in archaeology left behind by prehistoric settlers, shepherds on the medieval sheep ranges of Byland Abbey and St Peter's Hospital, York and the workers in the copper mine. As for the person who hid the hoard, was the owner being pursued or did he work nearby? The site is 500m off a well used and probably ancient trackway from Orton to Great Asby, it is sheltered and there may have been a structure when the hoard was deposited, or was it just dropped in haste and covered by natural generation of soil and vegetation?

To ponder these questions we retired to the pub at Great Asby to discover we had few answers but much speculation.

*Margery Campion and
Harry Hawkins*



In the Hands of the Shades Roman Death in Cumbria Penrith Museum

Members may be interested to know that Penrith Museum are exhibiting a display about Roman funerary practices, including items from the Brougham cemetery, until the end of November. Admission is Free!
Tel. 01768 212228

Autumn Talks

Recent work at Long Meg and Her Daughters

Tues 11th October 2005
7.30 Appleby Market Hall
The first talk of the autumn season will be given by Tom Clare who will be talking to the group about his recent survey work at this impressive stone circle.

Dalston Castle and Priory

Tuesday 8th November
7.30 Appleby Market Hall
Gareth Davies and Tricia Crompton will be talking to the group about this site.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme

Tuesday 13th December
7.30 Appleby Market Hall
Tonight's theme is "treasure" and the Portable Antiquities Scheme explained by Dorothy Brums who is the PA Officer for the North West and Cumbria. Bring any treasure you have found to have it identified by the expert!

AGM and Members Evening

Tues 10th January 2006
7.00 Appleby Market Hall
Our Annual General Meeting will be followed at 7.30pm by short talks by members of the group. This year Tricia Crompton will be telling us about recent excavations in Slovakia, and Anne Bell will be talking about Hadrian's Wall.



SENDER:

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