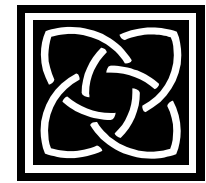


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Summer 2006

Volume 9 Issue 2

Summer Outings

Oddendale Stone Circle:

Despite high winds and threatening skies 12 members turned out to visit the Oddendale stone circle on 18th May. Perhaps Oddendale is not the most impressive Cumbrian stone circle but it occupies a very atmospheric hilltop position with a full 360 degree panoramic view. It is also particularly interesting since it actually consists of two concentric stone rings. The inner ring is thought to be the kerb-stones of an inner cairn, so that only the outer ring can be regarded as a stone circle in the ritual sense. Since the rain didn't seem to be coming too much we walked on a bit further to enjoy the space and solitude offered by the moorland and then returned to have a poke around Oddendale itself.

Members had a good deal of fun trying to guess the age and origins of the barns. Some of these contained remarkable stonework, obviously "borrowed" from elsewhere. On the way home a hard-core of members stopped again to have a look at the two cairns on Iron Hill. One of these still retains its central mound. It's perhaps unfortunate that a field wall bisects this – but I guess the wall will blow down one day!

Martin Joyce



Dilston Castle and Chapel:

Eleven members set off along the Tyne Valley to visit Dilston Hall. Many of us had read about the exploits of the Derwentwater family during the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 and this added an extra romantic touch to the outing. With our multi-skilled chairman at the wheel, we made excellent timing along the Military Road and arrived at our first stop, Ayton castle in time for a leisurely wander in cool but dry conditions.

Ayton Castle is a fine example of an almost unaltered 13thC manor house. From the 18thC until the early 1960's it was used as a farmhouse. Although just a few miles from Hexham, it can only be reached along narrow winding country roads, and this has helped to preserve the fascinating remains which are now in the care of English Heritage.

With a light drizzle threatening to become a steady downpour, a unanimous decision was made to alter the location of our lunchtime picnic to the drier venue of Bywell Church. St Andrew's Bywell, is one of a pair, in another remote location. Once a thriving market town, little now remains but part of the castle, medieval market cross, a hall and two churches. St Andrew's is the older church and some sources say it was founded by St Wilfred in the 7thC but its circular churchyard shows it has even earlier origins. The present tower dates from around 859CE and the upper structures are 10th and 11thC. The main church is mostly 13thC although it was heavily restored by the Victorians in 1871 and contains some fine glass by William Wailes who is buried in the churchyard. The church also contains some fine examples of early medieval grave stones featuring elaborate crosses and emblems denoting the occupant's status; a sword for the right to bear arms, a hunting horn, shears for a housewife and a book. Placed in the outside walls by the Victorians, many have now been moved inside for better preservation. It was

altogether a most fascinating place for anyone with an interest in old churches or the history of the Borders as the church has been there from the coming of Celtic missionaries through Saxon settlement, Viking invasions and the Norman conquest to the present day.

With so much already fitted into the day we still managed to make our prime objective, Dilston Castle, within 5 minutes of our planned arrival time. Here we were joined by Frank Giecco, the archaeologist who oversaw the excavation and Liz Ryan, a local historian who is also the brother of one of our members. Liz was also able to provide us with a high-tech torch for a more detailed examination of the crypt. This had featured in a talk by Tricia Crompton at one of our Appleby meetings, who had been one of the archaeologists involved in the dig and who was also present.

The now demolished Dilston Hall was celebrated in legend and literature as the home of James Ratcliffe 3rd earl of Derwentwater who played a leading role in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. We started out tour in the crypt of Dilston Church which is a rare example of a recusant church, dating from around 1616 and allegedly built with money from the same sources which financed the gunpowder plot. The church survived the subsequent demolition of the hall by its change of use to a parish church. With Frank and Tricia as our knowledgeable guides small groups of us were able to descend into the crypt to view the last resting place of the early Earls of Derwentwater.

continued on Page 4

An intriguing medieval pot containing the remains of a young child was also found here. The displays in the chapel were no less fascinating and Liz, the local historian, was able to give many of them a unique local context. Most intriguing of all were the scraps of clothing which had remained hidden in the church for hundreds of years

Contents:

PAGE 2: The Defence of Cumbria (Russell Barnes)

PAGE 3: Recent investigations at Long Meg (Tom Clare)

PAGE 4: Events

The Defence of Cumbria in the 20th Century

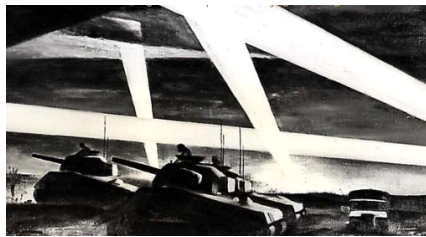
The speaker, Russell Barnes first became interested in 20th Century defences when he was growing up in Workington and he is now an authority on the subject and has an extensive web site. (www.huttonrow.co.uk). He reminded the group of The Defence of Britain Project, which ran from April 1995 to March 2002 under the auspices of the Council for British Archaeology. This project led to nearly 20,000 twentieth century military sites being recorded in the United Kingdom. Russell then turned to what had happened in Cumbria during the Second World War.

To protect Britain from invasion the country had been divided into battalion areas, manned by the Home Guard, a volunteer force formed in May 1940. There were twelve such areas in Cumberland and Westmorland and they were controlled by the Border Regiment in Carlisle. Appleby was area 10, Penrith 8 and Carlisle 12. There were, of course, many others who contributed to the home defence and included the Royal Observer Corps, the Royal Navy with a base at Barrow, the Royal Air Force with a base at Silloth, the Civil Defence Corps and the ARP.

Plans for the number and types of defences were first drawn up in August 1940 and then amended in June 1941. Many of the defences were road-blocks which were located at strategically-placed spots such as road, rail and river bridges or narrow points on the road. They were intended to obstruct and delay the enemy and to offer some protection to the towns and villages they guarded. The enemy was expected to arrive on the east coast but plans were in place should they have come from Ireland. It is difficult to gain a full picture of the intended defences from what can be seen today as many were never constructed and many have been removed. The speaker identified

the types of defences employed in the area. These included pillboxes, anti-tank gun emplacements, loop-hole walls and defence lines.

The remains of pillboxes are evident across the county. The variations in their construction were pointed out. Pillboxes were well camouflaged and often had trenches dug around them. Those illustrated included one at Dunmail



Raise on the A591, one on Stainmore and one at Kirkby Stephen overlooking the A685. Evidence of anti-tank emplacements was illustrated by one at Edenhall, which was built into an existing farm building, and trained on the bridge at Langwathby, and one at an overgrown site at Lazonby, trained on the bridge between Lazonby and Kirkoswald. There was a loop-hole defence wall at Eamont Bridge and it is still possible to see the holes made low down in the wall to enable rifles or machine guns to be fired down the Pooley Bridge road. This defence formed part of Stop-Line: 18 Western Command, a defence line which extended from Pooley Bridge across the Eden and then along its course ending near Brampton. These Stop-Lines had been planned across the country as a series of barriers to ensnare and delay the German forces. They used natural and man-made features such as rivers, canals and railway embankments, and were further defended by concrete pillboxes, gun-emplacements and anti-tank obstacles.

After Dunkirk all coastal areas were defended and 153 coastline emergency batteries were built around Britain. At first these were

manned by the army but later some of the troops were provided by the Home Guard. At these sites, in addition to placements for different types of guns, there would have been observation posts, control points to synchronise the firing of the guns, search lights, engine houses to power them and living quarters for the troops. Russell gave a detailed description of the Workington emergency battery. Very little is visible today but there are some photographs and anecdotal evidence from local people. Anti-invasion beach landing blocks, as seen at Harrington, and mines, were also features of coastal defence.

Russell then spoke about defences such as camouflage and decoy bombing sites which were used to protect airfields, military sites and industrial sites in Workington and Carlisle. He concluded with a description of Royal Observer Posts used during the Cold War. These were concrete bunkers, fourteen feet underground and spaced 14 miles apart. 32 had been built and the last 21 were closed in 1991.

The speaker was thanked for his comprehensive presentation which had informed and entertained the group and would ensure that they would look more carefully at the remains of any concrete structure that might have been part of Cumbria's defence against invasion.

Phyllis Rouston
Phjyllis Rouston

Recent investigations at Long Meg

Many visitors joined Appleby Archaeology group for the last talk of the season, when Tom Clare, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Archaeology at Liverpool John Moore's University and former county archaeologist for Cumbria, spoke on *Recent Investigations at Long Meg*.

The first known record of Long Meg and her Daughters was made by John Aubrey, the seventeenth century antiquarian, and the first detailed diagrams showing a path through the circle and a now vanished second, smaller circle were drawn by William Stukley in the early 1800s. In the second half of the nineteenth century carvings were identified on Long Meg.

Long Meg and her Daughters is one of the largest stone circles in Britain and the second largest to have banks and ditches within the circle, as found at Stanton Drew in the Mendips. No remains have been found inside the stones and one idea is that it was a trading post for stone axes, another that it was an astronomical site and today with the interest in Neopaganism, cards depicting Long Meg can be bought to mark the winter solstice. Mr Clare said that recent findings are suggesting new ideas for the context of the circle.

He continued by describing some of the features of the monument, the carvings, the structures and landscape and by drawing comparisons to other sites. Stan Beckensall and others have found more carvings. Some on the monolith, Long Meg, are very low down, which may indicate that they were carved before the stone was placed in its present position. Carvings have now been identified on other stones in the circle. The rock art takes the form of spirals and concentric rings similar to some found in the Boyne Valley, Ireland. The only

other monuments in Cumbria with similar markings lie within a mile of each other at Little Meg and Glassonby Circle. Portal stones, which mark entrances, are seen in a number of monuments such as tombs but are not common in stone circles. At Long Meg there is a double set, now fallen, at the south west entrance. Similar portals are seen at Stanton Drew in the Mendips.

Long Meg is separate from the circle but appears to stand within a complex set of monuments. In the 1970s Aubrey Bell noted that there was a bank associated with the circle. Clare has since discovered that the bank is more extensive and further surveying has shown that it predates the narrow ridges and furrows that can be detected within the circle. The monument is not set on the hill top but is built into the landscape with the contours changing direction inside the circle. Aerial photography in the 1980s revealed a ditched enclosure around the present-day farm buildings. This abuts the circle and probably predates it. The entrance to the enclosure is associated with a spring. Identified at the same time were a number of enclosures and ditches in the surrounding landscape some of which are probably prehistoric. Two parallel ditches running east to west raise the question whether this was an avenue or cursus. Similar complex prehistoric landscapes are seen elsewhere e.g. at Stanton Drew and Rudstone in North Yorkshire. No evidence was found of the smaller circle that Stukley drew or of any timber structures predating the stone circle as were found at Durrington Wells in Avon. Mr Clare emphasised that over the centuries monuments will have been destroyed and that much of the prehistoric landscape remains buried.

Mr Clare suggested that in the early Bronze Age the landscape was wooded and that some of the alignments considered important today,

for example to Little Meg, would not have been visible. He then put forward the idea that the monument was placed on the site because of the nearby spring and river. The ditched enclosure goes around a valley and the stone circle appears to enclose the head of that valley whose steep sides drop down to the river Eden at its narrowest point where a natural cataract forms. The cliffs of the valley are sandstone with an outcrop of gypsum appearing white against the sandstone. He suggested that this would have been a focal point in the landscape and in the valley and that both were significant to our ancestors. Similar associations with water are seen at other prehistoric landscapes including Stonehenge and Durrington Wells in Avon.

He concluded by returning to the stones themselves. Evidence from stones that had been buried suggest that these monuments would have been colourful and may even have been painted with gypsum. It may be that the colour, shapes, size, texture and relationship of the stones were meaningful and important. More detailed study is needed. Many of the stones are rounded erratics and in the future, it is hoped that petrological analysis will tell us where the stones came from and whether Long Meg was extracted from the nearby cliffs.

Phyllis Rouston

continued from page 1

until excavations started.

Leaving the chapel we moved on to the remains of Dilston Castle, a fortified tower house with its once 'up to the minute' gun loops and fortifications which reflect the constant threat to the peace from cross border warfare. The castle was incorporated into the later Dilston Hall. Whether it was completely enclosed by the later structure or merely joined on in some way is a conundrum for archaeologists as no trace of the magnificent Dilston Hall remains. The mound of rubble that was left after the destruction was comprehensively cleared away by the Victorians when they landscaped the park in the 1800's.

It is hard to believe that the beautiful wooded grounds with its fine avenue of giant redwood trees were once the location of the finest mansion in Northumberland. It comprised a vast house surrounded by formal gardens and two deer parks with grounds stretching down to the infamous 'Devil-water'. Just as intriguing was the fact that the countryside through which we had driven contained inconspicuous trees, gates and fence posts which had formed part of the Jacobean 'post box' system of passing treasonable messages amongst the northern rebels. It was easy to see why Derwentwater's 'bonny lord' has been the inspiration to poets and writers since before his untimely death on the scaffold at Tower Hill.

Our final, welcome stop of the day was the Dilston Castle tea room, where the students of the Mencap college, which now owns the grounds, demonstrate their cake making skills. The delicious cakes and scones provided a fitting end to a packed but very enjoyable and informative trip through the fascinating history of this corner of Northern England.

Heather Edwards

Autumn Talks

Glencoyne Park

7.30 Tues 12th Sept

Our first talk of the Autumn Season is on prehistoric settlements and landscape in Glencoyne Park, Ullswater. The talk is by Dr Helen Loney and Andrew Hoan from Glasgow University, who have been excavating and surveying in the park for the past few years with the help of students and volunteers.

Monuments in the Landscape

7.30 Tues 10th Oct

Aaron Watson has recently been involved in the Monuments in Eden Project run by Penrith Museum. He will be talking to the group about Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial monuments in Cumbria and their relationship to the landscape.

Cumbrian Prehistoric Rockart

7.30 Tues 14th Nov

Kate Sharp has been studying Cumbrian prehistoric rockart at Durham University. What does it all mean? She will be talking about her research, and introducing some recent discoveries of new rock art sites in Cumbria.

The Sedgefield Project

7.30 Tues 12th Dec

Gareth Davies of North Penines Archaeology will be talking to the group about ten years of research, survey and excavation in a Norfolk Parish.

Request to Members with Email

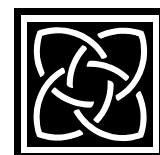
If you are a member and have an Email address, would you please send it, as an email message, to our Secretary, Phyllis Rouston. This will help us with keeping you informed about group events and last minute changes. Thank you.

Send an email with the header: "Appleby Archaeology Group"
To:

p.rouston@btopenworld.com

Help Wanted with Group Website

We would like to start a website for the group to help publicise our events and share information. However nobody on the committee feels they have the time or expertise to develop the idea. If you have any skills or experience you feel you could share, please call Harry on 01768 864340



SENDER:

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