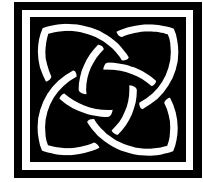


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Winter 2006

Volume 9 Issue 4

Winter News

AGM, Members Evening and Subscriptions

Our 9th Annual General Meeting will be held in January, and a copy of the minutes from last year's meeting are enclosed. Please read these before the meeting. Also, subscriptions are now due for 2007. I hope you have enjoyed being a member of Appleby Archaeology Group and will renew your subscription for another year. Please use the enclosed form, and send payment to the membership secretary, or alternatively pay at the AGM.

At this AGM our chairman, Harry Hawkins is due to stand down. He has been chairman for the last 5 years, and in that time has put a great deal of time and energy into developing the group. He has been instrumental in supplying us with an impressive collection of speakers, and organising a wide range of events, including our first conference. Happily, Harry will continue to serve as a committee member, and will continue to support our events.

The newsletter editor also feels it is time for a change! I have been producing this newsletter since the inception of the group 9 years ago, and feel it is time for someone else to take a turn.

This will be my last newsletter, but I will be on hand to help my replacement take the reins. I will also continue to serve on the committee, and will be concentrating my attention on our fieldwork activities next year.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members:

**A Merry Christmas
and Best Wishes for 2007**

Martin Railton

Long Meg Stone Circle Visit

On a sunny, warm, autumn afternoon 7 members met at this very large stone circle. They remembered Tom Clare's recent talk and looked at various features. From the circle could be seen the Lakeland fells to the west and the Pennines to the east. They could see that the circle was situated at the head of a small valley. This valley

leads to the River Eden and a gypsum outcrop, the latter possibly used for the original decoration of the stones. The ditched enclosure was not visible on the ground although it showed up clearly on an aerial photograph. The three spirals on the Long Meg sandstone pillar were noted together with a further possible spiral near the base. The double set of portal stones were also noted and, on walking slowly round the circle, members speculated on the possible types of stone used and looked - not very successfully - for further spirals on these stones. The outing concluded enjoyably with tea and chat at the Little Salkeld Mill.

Stanley and Shirley Darke

Members enjoying a walk round Long Meg and Her Daughters Stone Circle

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Romans and natives in Cumbria

The autumn season began with a talk by Andrew Hoane. Andrew, with a team of students and volunteers, led by Dr Helen Loney from Glasgow University, has undertaken fieldwork and excavations, over the last few summers in the Ullswater area and in particular in Glencoyne Park.

The aim of their project was to learn more about how local society developed in the first and second millennia BC, and how it interacted with the Romans after their invasion. Little is known of this period as there are few traces and only a small number of artefacts have been found. The artefacts that are found tend to be of Roman origin and, so far, no native pottery of this period has been discovered. Advances in carbon dating and other techniques mean that other evidence such as charcoal and pollen can now be accurately dated.

Andrew started with an overview of the Roman occupation in Cumbria. The period of invasion lasted from around 70-90AD followed by a time of consolidation, until 130 AD. At the end of the second century life had settled down and by 260 local administrators were taking over from the military. The decline in Roman influence is evident from 350 onwards. The Roman presence in the Lake District lasted just over 200 years, or ten generations. Evidence of that presence is easily seen in the remains of fortifications, military camps and roads and in artefacts and written records.

The field work was undertaken to find out more about what was happening before the Roman invasion. The landscape surveyed included Matterdale, Gowbarrow Fell and Mell Fell. Geophysical techniques and resistivity studies, both of which can detect buried features, were used and fifteen Iron Age or Romano-British sites were found, eight of which were within Glen-

coyne Park. The survey covered land between 100 and 700 metres but no site was found above 300m.

Andrew then described a site found at Threlkeld. This was an unenclosed site with a series of hut platforms, field boundaries and paddocks. Excavations revealed a possible round house and blacksmith's workings dated to 150-100BC. Both sites had been covered by cairns when they fell out of use. Stones that would have been used for grinding and smoothing were found along with an iron object. The number of stones might suggest that hides had been prepared on the site. Radiocarbon dating indicated that the site was occupied from 200BC to 200AD and it was concluded that those who occupied it were not well off.

A curvilinear enclosure was found at Glencoyne Park similar to Ewe Close near Crosby Ravensworth. The enclosure was on a plateau overlooking Ullswater and was 40 metres in diameter with four hut circles. Initial excavations of one of the hut circles revealed the walls of a circular hut 15 metres in diameter with an entrance to the East. In Celtic mythology entrances faced the rising sun and the West was associated with night. Several flat slabs led from the entrance to a central hearth. Excavations to a depth of 10 centimetres found a layer of artefacts which included Roman pottery, a glass bangle and fragments of a blue jar. This Roman detritus was an unexpected find. The Roman artefacts indicated that there had been interaction between the native Britons and the Romans around 150AD. Further examination of the hut walls showed that they were remodelled on five different occasions. Evidence found in levels below the Roman artefacts indicate that the hut circle was in use for a period of 500 years from 150BC to 350AD. Excavation from the surrounding area suggested occupation of the

site from 900BC and the nearby landscape of cairns and field boundaries provides evidence that there was activity in the vicinity 1500 years before the Romans.

The findings raise a number of questions about society in Cumbria over this period. It appears that people were living in curvilinear enclosures from about 300BC and that there was a higher population in areas such as Glencoyne Park than that of today with perhaps 70-80 people living in an enclosure. These enclosures are not typical of Bronze Age or Iron Age sites but they may have been focal points within the ancient landscape and had an important role in Iron Age society. There is nothing in the landscape around the unenclosed site at Threlkeld, which may have been an industrial site and nothing to indicate why either site was abandoned or why the Threlkeld site had no apparent contact with the Romans.

Many questions remain to be answered. Much of the archaeology, which might have provided some of the answers, has gone with field improvements and the enclosures of the 18th century. Glencoyne Park was a deer park until the 19th century and thus more archaeology has been preserved which could, perhaps, yield further information about a period in the past about which we know little.

Phyllis Rouston

Neolithic and Bronze Age Cumbria

In October Appleby Archaeology Group enjoyed meeting and hearing from Aaron Watson, consultant archaeologist to the Living among the Monuments project hosted by Penrith Museum. Dr Watson outlined the project which aims to explore the Neolithic and Bronze Ages in the Vale of Eden. These ages, 4000 - 1800 BC, are characterised by monuments such as Long Meg and Mayburgh Henge but little research into the period has been done in Cumbria. It is now thought that Cumbria was part of an area known as the Irish Sea Zone and it is believed that the locations in this zone, which included the East of Ireland, Southwest Scotland, the Isle of Man and Northwest Wales were interconnected by sea travel. By using field archaeology the project aims to study, the monuments in the landscape and to identify the pattern of prehistoric settlements.

The characteristics of the different time spans were identified. In the early Neolithic, 4000-3000BC man was clearing the land, the coastal strip was occupied, enclosures and long cairns were built and the extraction of tuff, a volcanic rock, from Great Langdale had begun. A map illustrated the relationship of the enclosures to the Vale of Eden and showed that three enclosures defined a possible route from the north.

Between 3000-2000BC further land was cleared, the coast continued to be occupied but the monuments changed. The long cairns fell into disuse and henges and stone circles were built. Rockart, similar to that seen in Ireland, appeared on this side of the Irish Sea and recent work has demonstrated a concentration in the Vale of Eden. The extraction of tuff was now extensive and the sites in Great Langdale formed the largest Neolithic stone quarries in Western Europe. The

stone was transported to other sites to be ground and polished and distributed to other parts of the country. It is possible the unfinished stone and the axes were moved through the Vale of Eden.

By the early Bronze Age, 2000-1800BC, increasing areas of marginal land were occupied and again the monuments changed. The stone circles became smaller with some concentric formations. The old circles appear to have been reused for funerary rites and round barrows and kerb cairns appear. There was a decline in quarrying as metal began to replace stone.

Dr Watson then spoke of the challenge of interpreting the prehistory of the Vale of Eden. There is very sparse archaeological evidence associated with stone circles and archaeologists tend to know more about what they were not, rather than what they represent. The question to be answered is "What are these abstract forms in the landscape?" Studies have shown relationships with astronomical events such as the winter solstice at Long Meg and others have classified the geometric form. Dr Watson has re-examined the monuments in Cumbria and classified them by size. He has found that in the larger circles the stones are placed more closely together and that the small diameter circles with their more widely spaced stones often have a funeral cairn within the

stones.

He spoke of the value of examining monuments in relation to the surrounding landscape and mentioned two Neolithic monuments the Ring of Brodgar on Orkney and Avebury in Wiltshire. The Ring of Brodgar is circled first by a ditch, then by sea and finally by hills so the ring might have been intended to mirror its topography. At Avebury the stone circle lies in a basin surrounded by an earthwork henge which again is surrounded by higher ground. These observations suggest that the sites were carefully selected. Similar relationships with the landscape can be seen in the large monuments in the Vale of Eden. At Long Meg there is an uninterrupted view of the Lakeland mountains and the Pennines hills but no view down into the valley. Similarly the valleys disappear at Swinside and Castlerigg and again the circles are emphasised by, or emphasise, the fells which surround them. Mayburgh Henge is enclosed by earthworks and then by the surrounding fells. It was suggested that these monuments were perhaps an attempt to ground Neolithic man within the mysteries of the landscape.

The smaller monuments of the early Bronze Age are found on different sites and seem to be on the edge of an area, often on a slope. They may have indicated

ownership of a settlement area or marked the site of a cairn.

The second part of the project aims to discover where the people lived and it is hoped that finding the pattern of occupation may lead to a better understanding of the monuments and of the prehistory of the Vale of Eden. A similar project, the Clava Field Walking Survey had been carried out over a number of years. The location, near Inverness, like Eden, has several Neolithic monuments and there was little knowledge of settlement areas. Those taking part walked the length of the fields at set distances apart looking for pieces of flint and other prehistoric artefacts scattered on the ground. The nature and distribution of the finds was recorded and provided clues to the human activity. At Clava the results indicated that people had lived near the monuments. A similar survey was started in early October, covering a wide strip of land from the Lake District through to the Eden Valley encompassing Mayburgh and Long Meg. Currently volunteers are surveying fields at Whinfell and to date have found scatters of worked stone.

Dr Watson answered questions from the group and was thanked for a very informative talk. He was asked if he would come back next year to tell the group how the project was progressing.

Phyllis Rouston

BOOK REVIEW

Winchester, Angus,
*England's Landscape:
The North West.*
English Heritage, £35.

The only drawback of this book is its price which at £35 probably places it out of most people's book buying budget especially when the companion and much larger volume on the Northeast is £25!

Angus Winchester who has done a lot of work on Cumbrian history over the past 20 years contributes most of the chapters and Alan Crosby who has written widely on the social history of the Northwest is the other contributor. In their book they trace the development of the landscape of the North West, that is Lancashire and Cumbria, as impacted upon by human activities from Prehistory to Modern Times. The book is thematic rather than chronological with four main themes of Land and People, Making a Living, Expressions of the Abstract and Landscape and Mind. Each theme is well illustrated with examples from both counties drawing on a wide range of resources. The many excellent photographs are well connected to the text and give the book an attractive and 'good browse' feel with a number of 'boxed' pages that develop a particular subject. There is a particularly interesting box on marl pits on the south Lancashire Plain. On the down side the print is rather small, chosen I suspect to make the book physically smaller by keeping it to some 257 pages, but the result is still a very readable history of the landscape of the North West. The text is not cluttered with references and there is a wide ranging bibliography.

Ask for a copy for Christmas!

Harry Hawkins.



Winter Events

**AGM and
Members' Evening**
7.00pm Tuesday 9th January
Our AGM will be followed by
two talks by members of Appleby Archaeology Group

Talks start at 7.30pm
Anne Bell - Keeping the Barbarians Out, and
Martin Joyce - Holy Wells of Eden

Early Medieval Cumbria

7.30pm Tuesday 13th Feb.
Rachel Newman from Oxford Archaeology North will talk about the archaeology of this period.

Motor Tour: WW2 Defences of the Eden Valley

Sunday, 25 February
Start time 1.30pm.
Meet at Appleby TIC.

**Tileries:
A Forgotten Industry**
7.30pm Tuesday 13th March
Ted Davies will be talking about the forgotten industry of tile-making in Cumbria

The Slaughter of the British: Excavations at Heronbridge

7.30pm Tuesday 10th April
A talk by David Mason, County Archaeologist for Co. Durham

Appleby Archaeology Group talks are free to members. Visitors are very welcome £1.50 admittance.



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