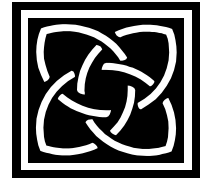


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Winter 2007

Volume 10 Issue 4

The Conference Season

This autumn has been notable for a series of quite excellent Archaeological conferences.

The autumn started, of course, with our Society's very own **"People and the Land" Conference** in Appleby Grammar School on 6th October

We had fielded a strong field of speakers, including two from our own Society, under the skilled chairmanship of Angus Winchester. So we were delighted to attract around 70 delegates, some travelling large distances to attend. Sadly the Mr A Robinson from Somerset, of whom we had such high hopes, turned out not, in fact, to be Mr Baldric of Time Team. Though, to do our own Mr Robinson credit, he was quite a celebrity in his own right as he was mid way through a project involving visiting every one of the old County towns and walking to the highest point in that county. He said he intended to write a book when he finished and I assured him we would all buy a copy!

I won't attempt a précis of the talks because, if everything goes to plan, we shall publish a set of Proceedings for the Conference and you can read all about it there. Suffice to say that speakers clearly warmed to the strong theme provided by the Conference and delegates felt very much involved in the shared in-

terest that they generated. Lunch was very convivial with a splendidly varied and tasty buffet. Sausage rolls were still being consumed as we all went home.

The crumbs were only just being cleared away, as it were, when some of us were headed for conferences in the Lake District National Park



Appleby Archaeology's "People and the Land" Conference gets under way

(LDNPA) and Carlisle (Tullie House).

The **LDNPA conference** is now a well-established favourite with many of us in the Society. And since it moved to the Theatre by the Lake it has become a lot more professional and stylish. You have to be quick off the mark to buy tickets, in fact, because it's always a sell-out.

There's often a strong mining theme to this conference, which particularly appeals to this author, but there's always something for everybody. This year's star act was an account of the discovery of remains of

an amazing primitive "railway" amongst debris which had fallen into the Elizabethan workings at Roughton Ghyll. It seemed possible that this could date back to around 1250 AD. If this proved to be the case we would then be looking at the earliest example of railway technology in Europe. The National Railway Museum in York is, apparently, very interested.

There was also an excellent talk about the excavation of one of the ring cairns which lie scattered throughout the central Lake District. This had been carried out in seriously foul weather in June of this year, largely by volunteers, supervised by LDNPA. Despite a very thorough investigation, however, the function of the cairns remains as enigmatic as ever. But a slide taken at the excavation site and showing the shapely summit of Harter Fell framed within a notch formed by an adjacent rocky knoll may give a clue to what was going on.

And finally, to Carlisle, where Tullie House was hosting a **Day School** to celebrate **30 years of Archaeological Excavation in Carlisle**.

Harry went to this one and reports a formidable range of speakers, including Sue Stallibrass, a bone expert, John Zant, talking about the "other Carlisle

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Vindolanda : *Size Does Matter*

Andrew Birley of the Vindolanda Trust had the undivided attention of the Appleby Archaeology Group as he made the Roman garrison's time at Vindolanda come alive. Andrew is the third generation of his family to be excavating at Vindolanda.

The site of Vindolanda is likely to have been chosen by the Romans because of its strategic position as it lies half way between Corbridge and Carlisle on Stanegate, the Roman frontier and supply route, which was established around 80AD. The location would have provided many of the resources needed for building and living there. There were wooded valleys and mineral resources such as sandstone, limestone and clay, with iron, lead and coal mines close by.

There have been at least nine forts on the site spanning a period from 85 to 410AD. The early forts were earth works with turf and timber ramparts and had to be replaced every five to ten years as did any civilian buildings outside the fort. The Roman army laid down a clean cover of clay and turf over demolished structures before rebuilding. This created anaerobic conditions in some areas, and the lack of

oxygen has resulted in the survival of some structures and many discarded items such as the famous writing tablets. These early forts lie to the south and west of the later stone forts and several metres below the present ground surface. From the 140s onwards a series of stone forts were built and it is the remains of these that are visible today.

The forts expanded, contracted and were modified to meet the needs of the of the Roman army. Roman soldiers, in the same way as happens with modern armies, did tours of duty and when they left a fort it was destroyed and rebuilt by the next garrison to be posted there. Several instances were described.

The first fort was replaced by a much bigger construction around 95-100AD after the withdrawal of Roman troops from Scotland made it more necessary to defend the Stanegate frontier. The fort was at its largest between 105-130AD and it was during this time that Hadrian's wall was built. Vindolanda would have been a base for the wall but it being a mile away was perhaps considered too far and soon additional forts were built on the wall itself. Later in the second century, when the An-

tonine Wall was built, Hadrian's wall seems to have been moth-balled and Stanegate again became important. At this time large defensive ditches were built. Later buildings subsequently collapsed into these ditches. Two hundred and fifty circular huts were built on the fort platform between 200-212AD. These would have housed up to two thousand people and may have been built to house soldiers and their followers during the Emperor Severus's campaigns into Scotland. One theory is that they were built by soldiers from North Africa, who came with their families, to augment the army in Britain and wanted to live as they did at home.

The only human remains that have been found so far come from this period. Tests indicate that they were of a man who came from Allendale and that he had met a cruel death suggesting that troublesome natives were dealt with severely.



Reconstruction of Vindolanda

Forts in the later third and fourth century were built over the round houses and modified as needs dictated.

The civilian areas extended south and west beyond the forts and occupied a far greater area. They would have made a big demand on local resources. The remains of large wooden buildings of the pre Hadrian forts have been excavated, and the use of so much wood must have had an impact on the local people. Later civilian buildings were built of stone. The settlement, or vicus, thrived in the 3rd century but had disappeared early in the 4th possibly because the army was reorganised into smaller garrisons and everybody lived within the fort. No pottery or coins later than 280AD have been found in the vicus but later coins and pottery have been found within the fort. Recent geophysical studies indicate that there are civilian and industrial buildings to the north of Stanegate.

The writing tablets, of which there are more than 1000, provide great insight into the daily lives of the people. There are examples of everyday correspondence, for example an invitation to a birthday party with the earliest example, in the western world, of a women's

handwriting, as well as lists of army stores, duty rotas and even writing exercises that have been corrected.

Two rare finds were a mass of hair which was originally part of a centurion's helmet and a sealed box wood box containing seeds of opium. The anaerobic conditions have ensured the preservation of leather items such shoes, textiles, most spun from native wool, and basketwork,. Many other artefacts have been recovered including beautiful painted glass, lead loom



Party invitation from Vindolanda

weights .items of jewellery and weapons.

The letters and inscriptions give some idea of the relationship between the garrisons and the local Britons. At the start of the occupation it seems the locals were despised but as time went on they may have been treated with some respect as is suggested by the inscription on the base of a statue translated as "The troops from Gaul dedicate this statue to the goddess Gallia, with the full support of the British-born troops". It

may be significant that the letters of the last phrase of the inscription were very small.

Andrew's final slide of a small statue to the god Priapus god of fertility and possibly farming illustrated the title of his talk, He concluded his presentation by outlining the future plans for work at Vindolanda and inviting those present to visit the site and volunteer to assist in excavations. It is estimated that it will take one hundred and fifty years to investigate the site fully! .

The committee hope to arrange a summer visit to the site which they hope will be well supported .

Phyllis Rouston



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fort" at Stanwix, where excavation has thus far been confined to opportunist small-scale trenches, and Rachel Newman, repeating most of what she had said at the Appleby Archaeology conference! The Day School was wound up by Henry Owen-John, once a field archaeologist, who grew up in muddy trenches but now wears a suit and is the regional director for English Heritage. He spoke fluently and without notes about the future of archaeology, where it leads and its importance in Carlisle to the 'visitor led economy'. At this point Harry says he felt a twinge of rebellion at the possibility of the work by the Group being assessed for its value to the 'visitor led economy'. Though he felt it was a valid point, he thought that the question as to what extent tourism should lead research excavation was not answered. Nor was there any enlightenment about what has happened to the artefacts found, or why has so little has been published.

Perhaps we may hope for more information at the follow-up Conference in March (see adjoining column)

Martin Joyce & Harry Hawkins

Classified Advertisements

Celebrating Carlisle's Heritage

Tullie House Museum is hosting a three-day Conference next year between Friday 7th and Sunday 9th March. Tickets cost £80 but include two lunches and a three course Conference dinner! Telephone 01228 534781 for further details

CWAS Transactions

The Society has recently received the generous donation by Mr Steven Trevelyan of a set of Cumberland and Westmorland Society Transactions.

This includes some very early copies for 1927 to 1930 and a near-complete set for the period 1960 to 1989. The donation also includes a number of articles and books of local interest. A full index will appear on the Society's website when this eventually sees the light of day (you'd better come to the AGM if you want details on this). Harry is acting as Librarian and members are welcome to borrow items from him.

Druidical Judgement Seat

Martin Railton has now written a full report on our work on Brackenber Moor this summer. It is extremely impressive and can be viewed at <http://www.nparchaeology.co.uk/recent/brackenber.html>

Forthcoming Events

Tenth Anniversary AGM and Members' Evening

7.00 pm : Tuesday 8th Jan

The AGM will be followed by presentations from AppArch members. Phyllis Rouston will talk about **The Archaeology of Arran** and Harry Hawkins will take us on a trip down memory lane with **Ten Years of Appleby Archaeology**.

There will then be a small celebration! All are invited.

Tracking the Elusive Norsemen

7.30 : Tuesday 12th Feb

Linda Corrigan of the English Place Names society will talk about the use of place names to trace Viking settlement patterns in south Cumbria.

Environmental Archaeology

7.30 : Tuesday 11th Mar

Jaqui Huntley of Durham University will tell us about recent developments at the cutting edge of archaeological science.



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