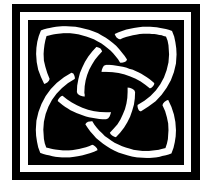


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 11 Issue 2: Summer 2008

Out and about with Appleby Archaeology

How the time does slip by – the Christmas decorations have only just come down and the longest day is now merely weeks away!

It seems, however, that your Committee has not been entirely idle.

Plans are now well-advanced for next year's Appleby Archaeology Group **Conference**. The general theme will be "Medieval Eden" and it is already clear that there is a lot to talk about. It would be a good idea to avoid booking any long holidays next October.

More immediately, members should have had details of our plan to **Excavate** at "The Druidical Judgement Seat" (DJS) on Brackenber Moor in July. This will be our contribution to this year's "Archaeology Week". The excavation has been funded by a grant from the Cumberland Westmorland AA Society, for which we are extremely grateful.

This is an exciting opportunity for members to get their hands dirty and to involve themselves in true research – we currently have no dating evidence for the DJS.

We have had an excellent response to our call for volunteers and if you have not al-



The Druidical Judgement Seat (DJS)
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ready had your booking accepted I regret to tell you that we can't really take any more people on at present.

However, everybody, whether booked or not will be welcome at the **DJS Open Day** which will be held on Saturday 19th July. This will provide an opportunity to see exactly what has been found without the bother of groveling in the mud to dig it up. If you'd like to attend, please meet at 10am in the Golf Club car park, Brackenber Moor, for a guided tour. Note that some walking will be required.

Finally, if you feel cheated about missing a place on the July excavation, please note that this is only Phase 1 of our

plans for DJS and, if funding can be obtained, it is possible that there will be a second week of excavation later in the year

Finally, we have already had our first summer outing. A select group joined Tony Greenwood author of "*An old renovated church in a curious spot*" on the evening of the 15th May for an atmospheric visit to the isolated church at **Ninekirks**. It was a beautiful evening, entirely appropriate for the occasion. One of our party, John Davidson recalled how, when he had been Head at Brougham School, he had taken children to the church for services. Mr Greenwood was warmly thanked for leading the visit.

Shortly, on the 15th June we shall all be off again - this time to **Vindolanda**. The plan is to assemble at Vindolanda at 11.00 for an introduction to the site by Andrew Birley. This promises to be an excellent day out.

Martin Joyce

Contents

Pages 2/3 :
Pages 3/4:
Page 4:

Post-Medieval Pottery
Environmental Archaeology
Forthcoming Events

Post Medieval Pottery

Appleby Archaeology concluded its winter programme in April when Jo Dawson from Greenlane Archaeology, Ulverston spoke to the group on Post Medieval Pottery.

Post medieval pottery has tended to be disregarded by archaeologists and the sherds from the period were ignored as they removed the upper layers of soil in their quest to find out about earlier times. High status pottery, such as Wedgwood cream ware, survives in collections in houses and museums and lower status items, such as tobacco jars and Christening mugs, survive as family heirlooms and are often seen on programmes such as The Antiques Road Show. Post medieval pottery was found at the recent excavation at the K-Village site at Kendal and specialist analysis of this assemblage has been done.

The 17th century saw the beginning of the consumer age with pottery being produced in more forms, patterns and colours. The medieval shapes were replaced by vessels with specific functions and most are easily recognised today.

Jo's research started in 1999,

while on a walk to look at a hill fort near Craiglochart, Edinburgh. She discovered fragments of pottery, glass and other materials on the surface of a midden. As she collected and examined these finds it soon became clear that these were not a random distribution of peoples' rubbish. Many of the sherds were white and came from sets with a band of colour and stripe of the same colour around the rim, one set having a red band and stripe the other a blue. Her interest increased when she found sherds of the blue and white pattern which included the crest of the City of Edinburgh, and a banner above with the words "Edinburgh City Poor House". Jo decided to look at the pottery in a wider context and she collected and examined sherds from the surface of middens from nearby institutions including the site of



Sherd from Edinburgh City Poorhouse

the Royal Edinburgh Asylum and Edinburgh City Hospital, before excavating a small trench in the main midden at the Poorhouse

A significant part of her research was studying documents relating to the institutions such as histories, letters order forms and minutes of meetings. Correspondence from

the pottery factories and their pattern books were also examined.

A number of deductions were made following detailed analysis of the information obtained. The pottery dated to a period extending from the 1870s to the early 20th century. It was possible to identify where most of the pottery had been produced and what made up a typical collection, and from this to gain insight into the social conditions within the institutions at the time.

The earliest crockery from the Poorhouse consisted of soup bowls with the Edinburgh crest and associated with them were tin mugs and soup spoons. In 1875 a new set of crockery with a slightly different pattern was ordered and this order included pottery tankards. In 1891 the crockery was replaced and the range was extended to include plates, soup plates, pudding bowls, and a variety of serving dishes. Items of cutlery now included knives and forks.

Indications from these finds suggest that the arrangements for serving food and the diet altered during the period. It is likely that in 1870 the food given to the paupers was of the type that could be eaten from a bowl with a spoon and that it was dished out to all from one location.. With the introduction of serving dishes in 1891 it is likely that a least some of the

food was served to smaller groups, possibly serving themselves, and the presence of cutlery suggests a more varied diet.

Sex and class distinction may be evident from the pottery. It is possible that the two colours either blue or red stripes were used to ensure the larger portions of food were given to the men. Class distinction was more evident in the finds from the Royal Edinburgh Asylum established in 1809. Prior to 1842, when a pauper wing was built at the asylum, the patients were all fee-paying. This is reflected in the number of sherds from high status pottery with gold edging which include sherds of bathroom ware such as soap dishes and chamber pots, all with crests.

Before 1887 it appears that the fee-paying patients used a full range of crockery, in a variety of patterns such as willow pattern from potteries in Glasgow and Greenock. After 1877 the pottery was made by Copeland. When the pauper wing opened in 1842 the patients there used crockery which was basic and the only implements they had were spoons. At a later stage there is evidence that the paupers were using knives and forks with a full range of a less

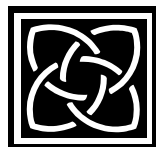


Soap dish from Royal Edinburgh Asylum

decorated crockery similar to that found at the Poorhouse.

Some of these changes may reflect a more enlightened approach on the part of the institution to the care of both paupers and the mentally ill in the last quarter of the 19th century. Few of Jo's audience had appreciated how much information can be deduced from bits of pottery that are found everywhere and can be picked up from beaches the countryside and the garden. Every one was intrigued at this insight into post medieval pottery and showed their appreciation by warmly applauding the speaker..

Phyllis Rouston



Environmental Archaeology

Appleby Archaeology Group welcomed Jaqui Huntley to their March meeting when she spoke about environmental archaeology. She is the English Heritage Regional Science Advisor for the north east and has a teaching and research role as an archaeobotanist in the Department of Archaeology at Durham University.

Environmental archaeology involves the removal of samples from archaeological sites and their analysis in the laboratory and though it may not have the impact of ancient buildings and excavations, it can provide insight into the lives of ancient people and of the environment in which they lived. It includes the study of plant and animal remains, pollens, desiccated and fossilised human and animal dung (coprolite) and other micro remains such as food residue on pottery shards. Organic material can be dated using radio carbon techniques

Some information of how the land was used over the centuries can be gleaned from illustrations in old documents. These show some of the farming practices, such as winnowing and threshing, but more precise information can be obtained by examining the by-products found in the soil. The type of crops grown can be identified from husks and seeds and sometimes, when there has been an accidental fire during the drying process, from their charred remains. The presence of weed seeds can indicate the type of soil as some, for example, will only grow in limestone soils and others in clay.

The cultivation of cereals in an area can be mapped out. In the Neolithic period the remains are primarily those of wild plants but over time the production of cereals takes over. Oats were a significant crop in the north west from in the Iron age through to the Romano-British period with small localised areas of cultivation in the north east being associated with Roman cavalry sites. Barley was the dominant crop north of a line from the Wirral across to the Wash. Different varieties of wheat were grown over the centuries. Emmer wheat was common in the Bronze Age and its cultivation persisted in

settlements north of the Tyne. Spelt wheat was grown in the lowland settlements until the 10th and 11th centuries. A bread wheat, similar to today's wheat, appears first in the Anglo Saxon period. Rye was grown on Stainmore and there is documentary evidence of its being grown in a nunnery near Bowes.

Jaqui described the technique of boring into the earth using a hollow drill to obtain a cylindrical example of the underlying soil. The cores of soil obtained can cover a considerable period of time, with the deeper parts being earlier than those near the surface. The core can be thinly sliced, and each section analysed to build up a picture of how the land usage has changed through time

Pollen grains, such as those from oaks and dandelions, persist in the soil and can be detected and identified. Pollen can travel long distances and finding it gives the archaeobotanist an idea of the landscape of the time. Pollen analysis of peat cores from Warkworth in Northumberland showed that at the time the castle was built the landscape was open pasture land and must have looked very much as it does today.

Environmental archaeology can help to determine how the weather has changed through the millennia. Conditions are indicated by the type of vegetation but important clues can be obtained from the presence of insects and minute organisms. For example different species of beetles tend to be found under certain climatic conditions. The knowledge of the present climatic range of a species, and of the age of the sediments in which its remains were found, provide insight into past climatic conditions.

Animal remains show the livestock that were grazed and how they were used. An animal's bones can show its species and the teeth can indicate its age. The remains of young sheep and cattle suggests that they were used for meat but if the remains are of older stock it is more likely that the sheep were kept for wool and the cows for milk. Laboratory examination may reveal details of butchering. From this information and the location of the find it is possible to deduce which cuts of meat were being eaten by the peasants and which by the "high table". The number of bones found sometimes poses a question. For

example, near Carlisle, two hundred cattle front legs were found indicating one hundred beasts, but four times as many shoulder blades were found. The shoulder blades showed signs of butchery which suggests that they had been brought in to feed the garrison. To date the source of this meat has not been identified. There are however very few large assemblages of bones due to acid soil conditions and small discrepancies in the number of bones are not significant.

Documentary evidence such as the tablets of Vindolanda tell us much about the daily lives of the people but findings of this kind are rare. Information about age and health are found from human remains and artefacts will give an idea of their status. Coprolites can show what our ancestors were eating and what parasites they had. For example a trace of bran can show the type of cereal eaten. Further information about diet is gained from analysis of pottery. At Carlisle, pottery, similar to that found in North Africa, showed that the food eaten contained figs, grapes, apricots and coriander suggesting that the garrison originated from Mediterranean. By contrast at Ribchester, at the time when the troops stationed there, came from present day Romania, the diet contained quantities of cabbage and radish. Thus it seems likely that that in the early days of the Roman occupation the troops continued to eat as they had in their own country.

Phyllis Rouston

Forthcoming Events

Vindolanda Sunday 15th June

This is an all-day event intended to follow up Andrew Birley's excellent talk to the Group last year. We plan to meet at Vindolanda in time at 11am for a presentation by Andrew Birley himself.

Scordale Mine 2.00pm Sunday 6th July

Afternoon walk led by Frank Giocco. Meet at Town Head, Hilton (at the fell gate). OS 737 207

Open Day at the Brackenber Moor Research Excavation 10am Sat 19th July

Meet at the Golf Club on Brackenber Moor for a guided tour of the excavation at the Druidical Judgement Seat (see front page for background details)



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