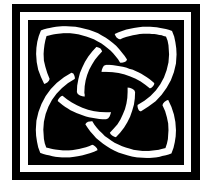


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 12 Issue 1: Spring 2009

A new year beckons

Surveying and Digging

Yes, winter is almost behind us and it's time to think of warm sunshine and balmy evenings once again. Hmmmm..

In a spirit of confidence, at least, we plan to pick up where we left off last year on Brackenber Moor. We have quite a range of opportunities for members to get their hands dirty here.

First of all, accompanying this Newsletter you should find an application form for Martin Railton's free **Surveying Course** scheduled for the weekend of 30th March and 1st April. Martin hasn't decided yet exactly what will be surveyed but one possibility is the site of the supposed Roman Signal station. A geophysical survey here could prove extremely interesting.

Further into the year there are firm plans for a second phase of **Excavation** at the Druidical Judgement Seat. You'll find a summary of last year's findings in this Newsletter, together with an outline of our plans for continuing the work. Martin has scheduled the excavation for the week of 18th-25th July to coincide with the first week of the Festival of British Archaeology. Application Forms for places on the dig will appear in due course.

Summer Events

At the back of this newsletter you'll find details of tour plans for the first couple of **Summer walks**.

With luck the weather will be kind enough for us to try, once again, to follow Frank Giecco up to Hilton mine. You might remember we were rained off here last year.

Our second suggestion is an evening

walk across Bampton Common where there is a very unusual early religious site at Towtop Kirk near Carhullan. This is an extremely atmospheric area with a fine medieval clapper bridge. Those with sufficiently strong stomachs to read local author Sarah Hall's book "The Carhullan Army" might find yet another reason to pay a visit.

October Conference

Finally in October we have our **2009 Conference**. The title of this is "Life



*Clapper bridge, Towtop.
Safer than it looks and there's a
ford, too, if you want to fall in
more elegantly*

in Medieval Eden" and you can get a first glimpse of the **Programme** on the website (applebyarchaeology.org.uk). You'll also find a **Registration Form** there if you want to get ahead of the game and book a place early.

Hope we'll see you at one or other of these events.

Martin Joyce

Members' Evening

This year's Members' Evening featured first Martin Railton, who brought us up to date on last year's Brackenber dig, and then John and Anne Walton who talked about their visits to Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Martin emphasized how all the digging at the Druidical Judgment Seat had been done by hand - from the removal of turf to the very gentle scrapping required to reveal a possible posthole. All the soil removed was sieved - hard work but work which was rewarded by the finding of a useful number of flints. A metal detectorist examined the area but found nothing of archaeological interest. Three trenches were dug and they were recorded by means of both detailed drawings and photographs.

One piece of pottery was found and three experts have now examined it. They conclude that it is "difficult to date"! It is suggested that it was from a handmade vessel used for cooking and could have been made anytime from the late Bronze Age to the post-Roman Period, with a probable date in the Iron Age. A specialist in stone tools was surprised at the range of flint tools found. Some were well made using good quality flint; others seemed to indicate less expertise on the part of the individual knapper and used inferior flint. Most of the flints came from soil that had been disturbed over the centuries. One piece, a thumb-nail scraper, was found in the fill of a stone lined pit enabling the experts to

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give an early Bronze Age date. Soil samples were taken for environmental testing but revealed little of archaeological interest.

The conclusions to date indicate that the inner bank was reinforced by cobbles from the nearby stream and may have supported a wooden fence. The flints suggest late Neolithic or early Bronze Age activity, possibly associated with nearby Bronze Age burial monuments. The pottery shard, which had probably been disturbed by ploughing, is likely to relate to the possible occupation of the enclosure in the Iron Age.

Martin concluded by advising that the second phase of the excavation, planned for July 2009, will provide further dating evidence and more understanding of the nature of early activity on the site. It will involve opening up a fourth trench and re-examining one of the trenches opened in 2008. Earlier in the year further geophysical studies will be undertaken in the vicinity to identify other possible sites in order to gain a greater knowledge of the surrounding landscape.

Martin's full report on the Phase I excavations can be found on applebyarchaeology.org.uk under the "Research Papers" tab.

The second talk transported the group from the moors of Cumbria to the slopes of Mount Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples. Using their photographs, John and Anne Walton took the group on a climb to see the volcanic crater and on a tour of Pompeii and Herculaneum. John first visited the sites in 1951 and returned with Anne for a holiday in 2007.

Mount Vesuvius is about the same distance from Pompeii as Cross Fell

is from Appleby. It was the eruption of Vesuvius in August AD 79 that buried the Roman towns. Pompeii was engulfed in volcanic ash and Herculaneum in lava and mud. Volcanic ash becomes fertile agricultural soil as



Roman street at Pompeii

well as being relatively easy to excavate. This has led to greater destruction and exposure at Pompeii than at Herculaneum where the mud encased structures are more protected and difficult to explore. A further difficulty is that much of present day Herculaneum has been built over the ancient town.

There was high death toll at Pompeii with an estimated 5000 killed. It would appear, from the written records, that the people did not think the ash would reach them and they remained in the town. At Herculaneum many more bodies are now being found close to the coast, which suggests the people tried to escape by the sea.

As John and Anne talked they showed a number of slides and we were taken along roads passing ditches with stepping stones, into the forum and amphitheatre at Pompeii. One road, they mentioned, was unusual as there was a bend in it so that the view along it was blocked. The reason became clear from the graphic sign indicating the way to a brothel.

There were springs and evidence of bathing everywhere. The colours in

the murals and mosaics were surprisingly well preserved, particularly in Herculaneum. Household items were evident such as pots and wine vessels and even a carbonised loaf.

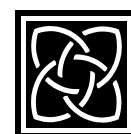
Where bodies have been uncovered they have been decayed, but the shape in the ash can be recovered using a special technique so that people now appear as they must have been when the volcanic material killed them, often in bedrooms and taking shelter in cellars.

The towns were frozen in time.

Phyllis Rouston



Finds from Herculaneum



Bioarchaeology

In December, Professor Charlotte Roberts from Durham University spoke on “*What we can learn about the human remains of our ancestors: the study of bioarchaeology*”. Professor Roberts, who trained as a nurse before studying archaeology, is one of the United Kingdom’s leading experts in osteoarchaeology and paleopathology.

Bioarchaeology is the study of biological remains from archaeological sites. Through studying human remains in their archaeological context the archaeologist can begin to reconstruct their lives by finding out about where people lived, what they ate, the work they did and the diseases they suffered from. In practice the remains are skeletal, sometimes complete skeletons but often collections of bones or pieces from cremation sites. Soft tissues are preserved in exceptional conditions such as the bog body found at Lindow Moss, Cheshire in 1984 and the Otzi, the Iceman, found in an Alpine glacier in 1991.

In law all skeletal remains excavated must be investigated and the ethical issues associated with the reburial of these remains or their preservation in museums for further research are currently under debate.

Bioarchaeologists attempt to reconstruct people’s life as seen at the point of death. Stature and age at death can be determined from the skeleton, as can the sex in the case of adults, but it is more difficult to determine this in “non adult” remains. From these details it is possible to draw up a mortality profile. Historical data is sometimes present. When the burials in Spitalfields Crypt, London, were investigated by archaeologists 300 coffin plates were found giving details of the person’s age, date of death and some historical data.

Changes caused by disease can be seen in bones and teeth and these changes can be compared with today’s knowledge of disease. Trauma, osteoarthritis and infection are often evident, whereas tumours are rare. Some diseases, for example syphilis, have characteristic bone changes that can be recognised most easily in a complete skele-

ton. The incidence of diseases of these kinds can be mapped across the country.

A high incidence of osteoarthritis was found at Wharren Percy, the site of a medieval village in North Yorkshire, reflecting perhaps the hard physical life of the medieval peasant. There was evidence of fractures in the diseased bones. A high number of fractures was also found in bones from Norway probably due to the icy conditions.

Bone destruction due to sinusitis is seen. Sinusitis is associated with pollution, allergies, and dental problems. A high incidence was found following an excavation of a medieval cemetery in a poor parish of York associated with local industry.

Examination of teeth can be informative. There is evidence of drilling as early four thousand years ago and of a tooth filled by a rosary bead from a more recent period. Defects in the enamel indicate stress which might have been caused by a dietary deficiency or by diseases such as measles. Dental caries, which suggests a more refined diet with a high sugar content, has increased over the centuries. The greatest rise has been in the post medieval period but there was a peak in Roman times.

Information on where someone lived can be obtained from chemical analysis of bone and teeth enamel. One example is the presence of an isotope of strontium in the soil. Strontium isotope analysis is of special interest for archaeologists as the tooth enamel and bone, where the isotope collects, are formed at different stages of a person’s life and by comparing the analysis with geological data, the archaeologist can determine where an individual lived at different times in their life.

Professor Roberts concluded her talk by illustrating the value of her work to modern medicine. For the last ten years it has been possible to extract DNA from biological remains. Ancient DNA enables the expert to investigate questions of human, animal,

microbial and plant genetics.

Tuberculosis, a disease that has afflicted mankind for thousands of years and is recognized by skeletal changes, was described. The earliest evidence of the disease is from a skeleton, dated to around 5000BC, found in Italy. In Britain the first skeletal evidence, confirmed by ancient DNA analysis is from the Iron Age (400–230 BC) and further evidence shows it was present in the population of the south of England during the Roman period

The disease was very prevalent in the medieval and post medieval times accounting for up to a quarter of the deaths recorded in London in the 1780s. Improving social conditions in the 19th century and the introduction of antibiotics in the 20th century saw a steady decline until the 1990s. Since then the incidence has risen steadily and the bacterium which causes the disease has become resistant to antibiotics.

It is now possible to extract ancient DNA from that bacterium. DNA from human skeletons from all over Britain and Europe is being examined to identify strain variations in the bacterium and to see how the strains have evolved over time. A comparable study is being done in Arizona and it is hoped that the knowledge gained from this research will help in the prevention and management of the disease today.

Phyllis Rouston

Lindow Man

The last issue of our Newsletter carried an advert for the Lindow Man exhibition in Manchester. I was so intrigued by Prof Roberts' outline of the ethical issues that I thought I'd pop down and see it - I was going that way anyway so it was no hardship.

I was glad I went - it was really very interesting, but it was also an unexpectedly emotional experience.

The exhibition is notably light on factual stuff and concentrated much more on the reactions of people who had been involved with the discovery - from the peat workers who'd dug the body up to the forensic archaeologists who'd studied him. The curators were clearly in quite a tizz about the ethical issues - but in a way their response had just made things worse.

The body was displayed under subdued lighting in a large Perspex case projecting from the wall so you got a good close view. There was an absolute minimum of labeling and you had to hunt quite hard to find the gory details about cause of death etc. To my mind this made the whole experience strangely unsettling. So much had effort had been expended in avoiding over-dramatising the corpse (there were, significantly, no pictures of the body in any of the supporting literature) that you came across this strange leathery, flattened object in a box at the side of the gallery and thought "oh, right". There is a strange expression of surprise on the face, which is still

very lifelike. I found the whole experience rather disturbing. It felt disrespectful.

I came away very doubtful about the value of the exhibition. If it had been presented as a purely scientific exercise it seemed to me that it would have been fully justified. The paucity of information, however, meant that it was essentially just a spectacle, even if it was done in a sensitive way. Certainly I don't feel the remains should be reburied - there's potentially too much vital information there. On balance, though, my conclusion was that Lindow Man should not be on public display.

I'd be interested to hear if anyone else has been to the exhibition and, if so, what they thought about it.

One last observation - although the body is referred to as Iron Age, carbon dating gives a wide range of results and the consensus is for a 1st Century AD date of death. It felt distinctly odd to be looking at somebody who in turn might have seen Paulinus socking it to the Druids on Anglesey. So perhaps I'm not quite so clear about what I think about all this after all. The stomach contained grains of mistletoe pollen too. Weird.

Martin Joyce

Spring /Summer Programme

The Bronze Age in Cumbria - Burials Unearthed

Tuesday 14th April

Patricia Shaw
North Pennines Archaeology

Evening walk to Towtop Kirk, Bampton

Tuesday 26th May

Leader: Martin Joyce (61131).
Mysterious religious site in an atmospheric location. Meet 7pm at the turning to Hullockhowe in Bampton, NY 514183

Minimal walking but boots advised as the ground is rough.

Afternoon walk to Scordale Mines

Sunday 21th June

Leader: Frank Giecco.
Meet 2pm at Town head, Hilton, NR 737207. Three hour walk on rough track and even rougher fellside. Boots essential.



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