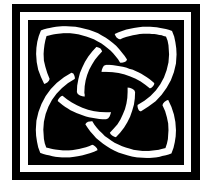


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 12 Issue 2 : Summer 2009

What's New?

October Conference

Plans are now well advanced for our October Conference. Entitled "Life in Medieval Eden" the programme is extremely varied and, we feel sure, will provide a highly entertaining day. This year we have tried particularly hard to obtain top-class speakers and, once again, Angus Winchester will be in the chair.

The only snag (!) is that our grant application has been turned down and so at present we are struggling somewhat financially. What would make an enormous difference would be to see a really good turnout from our own membership. We have kept the cost of admission low specifically to encourage a high attendance, so we are really looking to you all to come along and support the Group. The charge is only £11 for a full day's lectures. If you can't come yourself, why not buy somebody a ticket as a present? An application form and details of the Conference Programme are attached.

Brackenber Phase II

We plan to repeat last year's opportunity to get your hands dirty with some practical field-archaeology. A whole week of excavation is planned at the Druidical Judgement site between

18th and 24th July, to coincide with the Festival of British Archaeology 2009. Brackenber II will examine the entrance to the enclosure and the terminus of the ditch. As previously, training will be provided free of charge by members of North Pennines Archaeology. A booking form for the event is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Finally, please note that we plan to show off the results of all our excavation work in an exhibition in the TIC at Appleby Moot Hall. This will be timed to coincide with Heritage Weekend on the 12th - 13th September.

Summer Programme

This year's Summer Programme got off to a flying start at the end of May with a visit to Towtop Kirk above Bampton.

Events were slightly delayed by the need to recover the Leader's car which had become grounded during a minor, unplanned, off-road manoeuvre. Fortunately sufficient skill, manpower and equipment was available to effect this without the loss of anything more than composure.

Everyone agreed that Towtop was a very interesting site indeed and the atmospheric location was enhanced by a mixture of sunshine and driving rain.

It was very satisfying to find that

members were still keen to move on to a second site - a small cairn on Rough Hill. We found the site but were unimpressed by any claim for great antiquity.

On our return to Bampton it seemed like a good idea to visit the "St Patrick's Well", just to settle our nerves.

At the back of this newsletter you'll find details of plans for the remainder of the Summer walks.

Phyl's Phone Number

And finally, the more observant of you may have noticed that the number on your membership card is wrong. Phyl's phone number is still 017683 53463.

Martin Joyce



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Investigating 'Roman' sites on Brackenber Moor

At the end of March eight members of the group returned to Brackenber Moor to investigate two possible Roman sites. The first (Site 1) was the location of a possible enclosure at Coupland Beck, which was recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1861 as the site of a Roman camp (known as 'Coupland Camp' or 'Coupland Fort'), situated immediately behind the former Dun Cow Public House (HER 1815). The site occupies a natural headland (much like the Druidical Judgment Seat earthwork), although there is little to see at the surface other than a flat area of land. Site 2 is a circular earthwork, which is visible at the northeast corner of Brackenber Moor, and is believed to be the site of a possible Roman signal station, known as Brackenber Moor Signal Station (HER 3473). This is one of three possible locations recorded in the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Record (HER)!

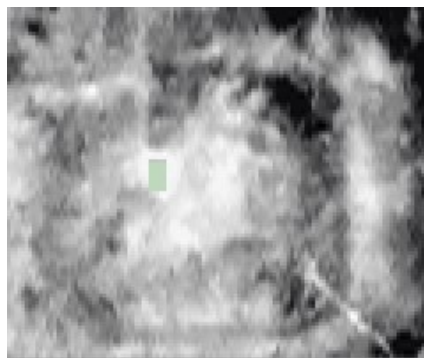
We conducted geophysical surveys with a resistance meter, having set out a regular 20m grid using tapes and the principles of Pythagoras' Theory (it does come



in handy sometimes)! When a small electric current is injected into the ground it encounters sub-surface resistance, which is measured. This resistance relates to the ability of the soil to retain moisture and can correspond to the location of cut archaeological features or buried stonewalls etc. Data was recorded by the instruments and downloaded into a laptop computer for initial data processing in the field using specialist software.

The results of the survey were slow to appear but as we completed the survey it became apparent that we had detected the remains of a ditch enclosing a sub-rectangular area, and traces of an outer bank, just like at The Druidical Judgment Seat. It appears that we may now have not one prehistoric settlement site but two!

Unfortunately, the whole site has been very damaged by ploughing leaving very little to see on the ground.



At site two the sun came out and we could fully appreciate the setting of this earthwork, with Murton Pike and the fells beyond. However, the danger from stray golf balls was al-

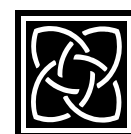
ways present, one of which even landed on the earthwork as we worked! The results of the survey here were impressive and clearly showed the presence of a circular stone wall and internal structure, suggesting we did indeed have the site of a signal station. We also identified a sub-rectangular ditch nearby, which none of us had seen before. It is possible that this was the remains of a stack-stand, although this was uncertain.

We achieved good results over our days of surveying, and all appreciated being outside in such a dramatic setting. We now have even more archaeological evidence for the long



history of occupation on Brackenber Moor.

Martin Railton



The Bronze Age in Cumbria - Unearthed

In April, Appleby Archaeology group welcomed Patricia Shaw, the Environmental Specialist at North Pennines Archaeology and a long time member of the group, as speaker for the last talk of the season.

The Bronze Age artefacts discussed were unearthed in West Cumbria on the Abbeytown Ridge near Overby Quarry in June 2008. The area is fairly flat with shallow ridges. Several sites have been excavated in recent years in three phases, prior to gravel extraction. None were on the highest ground but the sites looked to the northwest across the Solway to Criffel.

In 2003-2005, three phases of excavation were undertaken at New Cowper. Evidence was revealed for important prehistoric activity in the form of a series of pits containing early Neolithic pottery and cremated material. This soil matrix is to be further analysed for bone and plant material. A Bronze Age burial cairn, which had been damaged by ploughing, was also identified. This contained three Beaker vessels, one of which was found to contain beeswax. Also identified were a possible palisade enclosure, a square enclosure, driveway, field boundaries, and pits of possible Bronze Age, Iron Age or Romano-British date, which are highly significant for Cumbria, and may indicate extensive activity at the site throughout the later prehistoric periods. These excavations are soon to be published as a monograph.

In May 2008 trial trenches were dug as part of an archaeological evaluation at Overby Quarry. One of the trenches contained a collared urn with the remains of a cremation in it. This was a major find and signified the potential importance of the site. Permission was obtained for further excavation and a larger area was opened. This revealed a concentrated area of burning and pits where approximately thirty cremations were uncovered, some were con-

tained within urns and most of these were collared, some 30 cms in height. Collared urns are found widely throughout the United Kingdom and are dated to the early and middle Bronze Age. Typically they have a small base, a conical body and a heavy overhanging rim or collar.

Bronze Age cremations are fairly rare in Cumbria. The most famous sites are at Garlands Hospital near Carlisle, which produced at least fifteen urned cremations when the hospital was built, and at Ewanrigg, c.10km south west of the Overby, where a series of excavations by Bob Bewley in the 1980s identified a total of 29 cremation burials and a single cist burial. Radiocarbon dates from Ewanrigg (2470 cal BC - 1520 cal BC) suggest that burials were being interred over a period of about 940 years during the Bronze Age. More recently, excavations at Allithwaite in the early 2000s by Oxford Archaeology North uncovered a series of Early Bronze Age cremations, including a complete and three fragmentary urns within solution hollows in the limestone paving and in 2005, Durham University found one unurned and two urned cremations of provisional Late Bronze Age date at Milnthorpe. Both the excavations at Ewanrigg and Allithwaite showed association of the burials with natural features.

The cremations pits from Overby Quarry, most of which contained fragments of burnt bone, were arranged in satellite pits around the central area of burnt material and cremations. The arrangement suggesting that there was central focus. Some of the pits had been intercut and some were quite deep. These findings indicate that the cemetery had been used over a period of time, perhaps spanning several generations.

Tricia, using excellent slides of the site and artefacts, described the meticulous excavation of the urns. A number were intact and had to be wrapped in cling film and further protected by bandages or

foam before being removed from the site. Others were removed with the soil still around them, which ensured that all fragments of any broken pot were kept together. One large pit contained an intact pot and charred wood, which can be dated, and the species identified. Cremations not in pots, and other burnt materials were sampled for further analysis.

Everything archaeological was removed down to the natural soil level. Every stage of the excavation was recorded. Written records, detailed plans and photographs were taken of each level of the excavations to ensure that the contexts and relationships of the finds was noted to help in the interpretation of the sequence of events on the site.

In conclusion Tricia spoke about the detailed post excavation work that, subject to funding, would be done. It is hoped that a full analysis by experts in their field will be done on the pottery and its contents, the burnt bones, wood fragments, and a general environmental analysis to determine, amongst other things, the plants and other possible remains that would have been deposited at the same time as the cremations. In time it is hoped that the broken pots will be reconstructed and these and other material will be displayed locally.

There were many questions from the floor and the group concluded that Tricia would have to return in the future to report on the post excavation work. She was thanked and warmly applauded.

Phyllis Rouston

Cup-marked rock at Loweswater

When Jamie Lund came to talk to us about the National Trust's archaeological survey of the Buttermere valley earlier this year he showed some slides of a recently-discovered cup-marked rock at the Loweswater village end of Crummock Water. I've always been interested in rock art so pestered Jamie till he came up with a grid reference (NY146205). I finally got round to paying a visit during that spot of nice weather just before Easter.

I was really glad I went as it's a truly remarkable site. The cup marks themselves may not be tremendously impressive, compared to Northumbrian and Scottish counterparts (though they're the best I've yet seen in the Lake District). But their location more than makes up for this.

The rock is the very tip of a glaciated knoll that dominates the surrounding fields and creates a magnificent viewing platform from which to survey the enormous mountains that surround you. I remember an earlier lecture from Aaron Watson on the "multisensory experience" of megalithic sites in which he claimed that monuments like the Castle Rigg stone circle appear to have deliberately chosen locations with 360 degree panoramic views. In some cases the monuments themselves may model or reflect the surrounding landscape in some way.

This seems particularly true of the Loweswater rock. The cup marks seem to be everywhere across the keel-shaped outcrop which feels very much like a model mountain. Part of the rock seems to have been quarried away in relatively recent times and iron posts have been inserted here and there. But enough remains to make it clear that the site was venerated and confirm, what you feel instinctively, that this is indeed a sacred place.

What seems quite incredible though is that the site, which is right next to

a well-used footpath and is such an obvious location for rock art, was recognized only very recently.

The reference Jamie gave me was on a website at <http://www.themodernantiquarian.com/site/7823> and dates to late 2005/early 2006. Kate Sharp has since been able to tell me that the site was identified in 2003. I always seem to fairly wear myself out checking out obvious rocks when I'm out on the fells. I've not had the slightest bit of luck so far, but this find gives me hope and fresh encouragement.

If you want to pay a visit yourself you could do worse than park at Buttermere village, climb up to the top of Rannerdale and then head



down towards Crummock water. There's an excellent path that takes you round the head of the lake and the Rock. You could then have lunch at the Kirkstyle Inn in Loweswater village and walk back to Buttermere along the other side of the lake.

But this is quite a long walk, so alternatively, if you're not feeling so energetic, just start with lunch at the Kirkstyle and take the lake road to the rock. It's only about 15 minutes on fairly level terrain.

Martin Joyce

Summer Programme

Afternoon walk to Scordale Mines

Sunday 21st June

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

Lammerside and Wharton Hall

Saturday 1st Aug

Leader: Erik Matthews.
Meet 1.30pm at the pub in Nateby, NY 775067. Guided introduction to the Medieval Manorial site of Lammerside plus a visit to Wharton Hall.

Attendance at summer outings is free to members. Non-members are very welcome to come along too but there will be a charge of £1.00



SENDER:

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