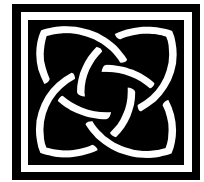


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 13 Issue 1 : Spring 2010

Editorial

Your Committee has been thinking hard about what the Group might do this summer. This hasn't been easy when we've all been up to our waists in snow (Martin Railton reports that the icicles up at North Pennines Archaeology's Nenthead offices have been a serious health and safety hazard this year), but the days are lengthening nicely now and it's possible to imagine we might be warm again one day.

Obviously Brackenber has to be the centre of attention. One thought is that we might have a look at the sandstone caves in the side of St George's Gill adjacent to the Druidical Judgement Seat site. Personally I find this a particularly exciting prospect as I like caves and there must be a good chance of finding something here which could inform our understanding of the very earliest history of the area. Health and Safety will have to be consulted again, of course, and there are probably special SSSI considerations too. Martin Railton is investigating.

More realistically, perhaps, we are looking at further investigation of the Roman signal station identified by the Group's geophysics study in May 2009. The Golf Club has given its permission in principle, and English Heritage are looking for projects so might provide funding. We think they might be further encouraged if we offered to work with North Pennines Heritage Trust and included a study of Augill signal station, where the Trust owns the associated smelt mill complex. Martin Railton has also suggested that future excavation might be opened to students. This would help financially and also provide a pool of enthusiastic labour to do the heavy digging!

In the short term, please note the latest plans for the first group of Summer walks.

Martin Joyce

The Staffordshire Hoard

Like most people in the country who are interested in history and archaeology, and many thousands who are not, I was fascinated by the discovery in July this year of the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found. You can imagine my delight when, on a pre-Christmas visit to London I spotted a poster advertising a small exhibition of objects from the treasure that was being held in the British Museum



Gold plaque with intertwined stylised arms The

complete Hoard, comprising over 1500 objects, mostly of pure gold, is now in the temporary care of the British Museum, after the Treasury Valuation Committee valued the objects at £3.825 million on 25th November. But such is public interest in the Hoard that 18 objects, including the twisted Christian cross, the boar shaped helmet piece and a cross section of helmet and sword fittings are on temporary display in Room 37 at the Museum.

Although small, this free exhibition is well worth a visit. I had already looked at the photographs of the Hoard on the dedicated website but that did not prepare me for the sense of wonder which came from looking at the original pieces, some still with Staffordshire sand clinging to them. The intricacy of the tiny garnets and the delicate gold work was stunning. It was almost impossible to believe that the objects had been buried for over thirteen hundred years. Current

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Members Evening 2010

Many members braved the weather to attend the Annual General meeting of the Appleby Archaeology Group and to listen to two very interesting talks from members of the group.

Barbara Blenkinship spoke on **Lancaster Delftware Pottery**. She had had to change her emphasis as her talk had been planned to follow a talk on the archaeological excavations of the Lancaster Pottery in 2007 and 2008. Unfortunately this had had to be cancelled.

Undaunted, Barbara gave a history of the pottery, whose foundations had been unearthed by North Pennines Archaeology (NPA) prior to development of the site. The excavation revealed the footprint of the pottery, which closely corresponded to an early 19th century map showing the original building.

Delftware is tin-glazed earthenware which, typically, has blue decoration on a white ground. Tin glaze production in this country was started in Norwich by Flemish Potters in the sixteenth century, and by 1754 there were three main centres in England, Liverpool, Bristol and London. The manufacture of tin glaze pottery requires a particular type of clay and the largest deposit in the British Isles is to be found at Carrick Fergus in Northern Ireland. This was convenient for importing the clay to Liverpool and Lancaster where it was mixed with local clay.

No one, including Lancaster Museum, seemed to know about the pottery until NPA began its work. It is now considered to be a site of national interest, as the sites of the other tin glaze potteries are now covered by substantial Victorian buildings. The pottery made at Lancaster was exported to the American colonies and very little was documented.

At that time Lancaster was one of the busiest ports in England, larger than Liverpool, and fortunes were being made exploiting the sugar, rum and slave trades. To balance these imports, merchants needed to sell goods in return. An enterprising Quaker merchant, John Beakbank, went into partnership with other merchants from Lancaster and built the pottery

in 1754 on the south bank of the Lune. It was a substantial, three-storied building with a 55 yard frontage to the quay. They recruited experienced delftware potters from Liverpool and operated the pottery until around 1786 when the river Lune began to silt up and navigation by ocean going ships became very difficult. Around the same time, creamware from the Staffordshire potteries was surpassing delftware. The site was taken over by the Lancaster Gas Light company in 1826 and the gasworks finally closed in 1958.

The pothouse was demolished around 1940 leaving substantial foundations that were excavated in 2007 to reveal a plan of the pottery and details of the kiln. The Lancaster kiln is the most complete delftware kiln ever excavated in Britain and is of enormous interest to ceramic historians.



A delftware Soup Plate, possibly made at the Lancaster pottery

Barbara used a picture from an 18th century tile panel from the Netherlands to explain the working of the pothouse. The tile showing schematic view of the interior of a three storied delftware pothouse fits closely with the evidence from Lancaster and illustrates the stages in pottery production, from moulding the clay to selling the product. Saggars, which are protective casings of fire clay in which delicate ceramic articles are fired, are shown being dried. These are identical to those found at Lancaster.

The vast number of shards that were found on the site would have been discarded as waste, but many appear well fired and have helped to identify patterns. The pottery made at Lancaster was everyday ware, such as plates, cups and chamber pots, which would have been required by settlers in the New World. There is no evidence, so far, of non essentials such as vases. The pottery was, however, well painted and decorated. Barbara then showed a series of pictures of pot shards to illustrate the variety of patterns, colours and rim designs, some of which have never been recorded in any book on British delftware. One striking pattern, of a Chinaman sitting in his garden under a smiling sun was previously unknown. Not all the wasters are pot shards, as a huge amount of discarded kiln furniture, such as bits of saggars, was found and is now being studied,

Barbara concluded by emphasising the importance of the site to ceramic historians. From the shards found on the site it has been possible to establish what was made there and, as a result, some extant delftware which had

previously been thought to have been made at Liverpool and other British potteries may need re-attribution.

A second member, Martin Joyce, described how a find made during excavation of the Roman fort at Vindolanda in the summer of 2008 had inspired a study of the **Roman Calendar**.

The find consisted of a small strip of metal perforated by a line of holes and inscribed with the word *September*. Some of the holes were labelled with the additional letters, *K*, *N* and *ID*. Archaeologists believed the strip could have been part of a complete disk recording all twelve months of the year and small enough to have been carried by, say, a Roman legionary whose job, every other day, was to advance a peg located in the holes, thereby keeping track of the date.

Though September is the ninth month in our modern calendar, the fact that the name has its root in the Latin for seven is a consequence of the earliest Roman Calendar beginning in March. This calendar also had only ten months - January and February weren't "invented" until later! Other surprises about Roman chronology included the facts that they operated an eight-day week and that they counted their dates "backwards". Thus where we



The Vindolanda Find

might say "28th of September", an early Roman would have said "3 days before the first of October". To make this system slightly easier, as well as the first of the month (the Kalends), dates were measured from two other fixed points in the month, the Nones and the Ides. Looking again at the Vindolanda find it was clear that the location of the letters *K*, *N* and *ID* on the strip fitted precisely with the position of the Kalends, Nones, and Ides for September, thus confirming at least some form of calendar-related use.

More recently, however, commentators have proposed that the Vindolanda find might actually have formed part of a much more sophisticated mechanism. They suggest that it was in fact designed to tell the time rather than the date - in other words, it was part of a clock rather than a calendar. The Roman hour was a highly variable quantity defined during the day as one twelfth of the

time between sunrise and sunset, and vice-versa during the night. Vitruvius, writing around 25BC, describes an astronomical or "anaphoric" clock consisting of a two-dimensional star map (i.e. an accurate representation of the constellations), pivoted on Polaris, the pole star, and rotated by means of a water-mechanism under a wire modelling the local horizon. If the horizon wire was positioned correctly and the speed of rotation controlled accurately, then constellations on the star map would appear to "rise" and "set" above and below the model horizon just as the real stars would do overhead. If the orbit of the sun were also included on the star map (the so-called *ecliptic* track), then with a model sun positioned according to the date (in early December, for example the sun will rise in the constellation Sagittarius), then the mechanism would model the rising and setting of the sun. If the transits above and below the horizon wire were then divided up equally by additional wires, the mechanism could be used to gauge how far the model sun had progressed through its day-time or night-time orbit - in other words, what time it was.

The advanced theory then is that the Vindolanda find is the remains of the ecliptic track of such a clock. The star-map on which it would have been mounted and pivoted (presumably of wood) has been lost, but the holes in the surviving metal fragment represent the position where the model "sun" would have been located and advanced every second day. More complete examples have been found on the continent but nothing of this nature has ever been seen in Britain.

Whatever the true nature of the Vindolanda fragment it remains a truly fascinating and intriguing find.

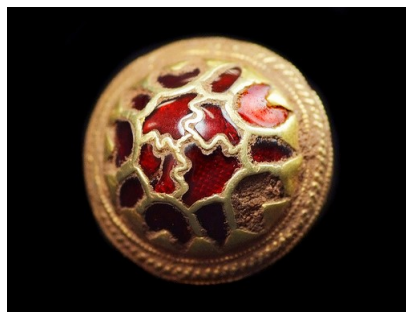
Both speakers answered questions from members before being thanked and warmly applauded.

Phyllis Rouston

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thinking dates the objects to the late 600's or early 700's but no-one is sure when they were actually buried.

The Nov/Dec edition of British Archaeology has an excellent account of the discovery and some wonderful photographs; the current Jan/Feb issue has up-to-



Scabbard boss

date information about the future of the Hoard. For those who can't make the exhibition, which lasts until February 7th, the websites listed below have the latest news and many wonderful photographs. They



Hilt fitting

may also have details of other small exhibitions, perhaps back in the Midlands, and the latest on the appeal launched recently by historian David Starkey on behalf of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. These two museums, in the heart of Anglo Saxon Mercia, are jointly appealing to the public to raise £3.3 million by April to buy the Hoard and keep it in the Midlands. If they are unsuccessful the find could be put up for sale in smaller lots and the proceeds split between the finder and the farmer on whose land it was found.

www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk
www.britishmuseum.org

Heather Edwards

Spring/Summer Programme

The Bassenthwaite Lake Project in the LDNP

Tuesday 9th March

Mark Graham
Grampus Heritage

Prehistory of the North Pennines

Tuesday 13th April

Paul Frodsham
Historic Environment Officer, North Pennines AONB Partnership

Evening tour of the Penrith Henges

Tuesday 18th May, 6.30pm

Leaders: Phyl Rouston and Martin Joyce

A visit to King Arthur's Round Table and Mayburgh, possibly continuing to the Castlerigg Circle at Keswick. Meet outside Appleby TIC to share transport

Afternoon tour of the Archaeology of Mardale

Saturday 19th June, 2pm

Leader: Jean Jackson

Meeting point still to be advised - contact Phyl on 017683 53463 for details. We'll share transport for the tour which will be followed by refreshments and a visit to the Mardale Exhibition at Shap Heritage Centre



SENDER:

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