

LDNPA Conference 2012

Quite a few AppArch members found the time to attend this year's "Archaeology in the Lake District" conference organised by the National Park Authority and held, as usual, at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick. It's a cheap day out and there's always something new and interesting to hear

This year was no exception, and though I've no intention of reporting in detail on the individual presentations I think you might like to read about a couple of highlights.

One of the talks described the trials and tribulations involved in supporting Time Team's excavation at the Coniston Copper mines. The programme directors had hoped to find traces of the Elizabethan mining carried out by the Mines Royal company. The results will be broadcast early next year though it will, apparently, be one of the last Time Team programmes as it seems that the production team is running out of steam. Whatever, Time Team had a desperate struggle at Coniston because access to the site was extremely difficult and finds were few and far between. About the only things that turned up were a piece of oak and five bits of pipe stem. The oak conveniently gave an Elizabethan carbon date but, as the presenter admitted, that in no way meant that the site was Elizabethan.

So in desperation they looked closely at the pipe stems. Now, I hadn't realised this but it seems that it's possible to date pipe stems from the diameter of their bore. This seems wildly improbable, but perhaps if you've nothing else to go on then I can just about imagine that the data may be useful. I found myself wondering if the pipe-stems that have come out of our recent field-walking efforts may have something to tell us - there are certainly enough of them!

A talk on prehistoric mountain monuments also took my interest. I'd heard about ring-cairns before - mysterious ritual circles built of stone rubble - but *boulder cairns* were new to me. A boulder cairn, we were told, takes the form of a large boulder propping up a small arc of stone walling enclosing a square metre or so. The wall would have been up to a metre high and would generally have been built on the uphill side of the boulder. There would have been no entrance so whatever went in went over the top of the wall. They are found in the central Lakes and, though they are presumed to be prehistoric, their purpose is as enigmatic as the rock art of the area.

As I said, there's always something new at the LDNPA conference, even if it's very old!

Martin Joyce

Winter Lecture Programme

Epiacum - the latest developments at Whitley Castle

Tue 11th Dec

Alastair Robertson (Local Historian)

The 'Miner-Farmer' project and moles, the archaeologist's little helpers

AGM and Members evening

Tue 8th Jan

(Please note 7.00pm start for AGM)

Tricia Shaw - Asklepon of Cos
Carol Dougherty - Kilmartin
Elisabeth Hodgson - A coaching inn at Brough

The history of Holme Cultram Abbey

Tue 12th Feb

Jan Walker and Pat Bull (WCAS)

Prehistoric features on Fylingdales Moor, North Yorkshire - Moorland surveys and the parallels with Cumbria

Tue 12th Mar

Blaise Vyner (Blaise Vyner Consultancy)

The archaeology of the Carlisle Northern Distributor Road - evidence for some of the earliest Cumbrians

Tue 9th April

Fraser Brown (Oxford Archaeology North)

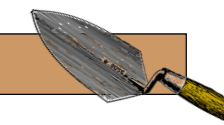


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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Group News

A warm welcome to all the new members who joined AppArch this Autumn. Membership is now at an all-time high. We were a bit alarmed earlier this year to find that the Market Hall management had mistakenly booked us into the main hall rather than the Supper room - we thought that our typical lecture-programme attendance might look a bit sparse in the larger room. But as things turned out we were such a crowd that we were actually very comfortable.. It might even be a bit of a squeeze when we get back upstairs!

Our next meeting, January's "Members" meeting, is of course our AGM and I enclose an Agenda together with Minutes for last year's meeting. There's also a renewal form for membership. Rates are now £12 single, £20 joint, a small increase agreed at the last AGM. To take the sting out of this, however, we have lined up an exceptionally well-qualified speaker list for the members evening - see back page for details.

Finally, may I wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 2013.

Martin Joyce

It's a small thing but the brief moment when the eye lights

Field-walking : October 2012

on a flake of flint, glistening moistly on a clod of earth in a freshly ploughed field, can expand into a glow of satisfaction that lasts for days.

You pick it up and gently clean it with your fingers. It's translucent, shading from white to grey and still has a sharp edge. This is a tool which someone lost or discarded thousands of years ago. It was struck from a core of flint that someone brought here deliberately. We know this because flint doesn't feature anywhere in the geology of Cumbria and we can be confident that any flakes are man-made because flint doesn't erode naturally in this way.

No, someone in the distant past needed a blade to cut or scrape something. They made what they needed then dropped it. This tiny flake is a satisfying object to contemplate in just so many ways!

Field-walking this year has given quite a few of us this sort of experience with gratifyingly little effort. You'll recall that last year we had the good fortune to find a Neo-

lithic burial site on the edge of the Golf course at Brackenber - that's the burial site that was meant to be a Roman signal station. Well, this autumn Martin Railton happened to notice that a couple of large fields on a ridge adjacent to this site had been ploughed and he managed to get permission for us to field-walk them. The theory was that if you've got people being buried somewhere then it stands to reason that there must have been people living nearby. Perhaps we might find traces of them living on these fields.

And indeed we did. OK, there were no spectacular polished hand-axes or delicate flint arrow-heads but we did find quite a number of small scraper, borer and knife-like tools, together with a profusion of odd bits of waste flint. The grid position of each individual piece was also carefully recorded so that the eye of faith might one day be able to identify any habitation or work-place locations.

On our final visit to the site, heavy rain had made field-walking really hard work. By the end of the morning, heads were drooping and, as numbers dwindled, Carol Dougherty, our leader, was beginning to think that she might have to complete the field on her own. But then enthusiasm was magically revived by the discovery of a wonderful silver coin - see below:

A full analysis of our finds will follow shortly, but I think I can already safely say that we shall be back there again next year!

Martin Joyce



Silver Victoria Bun Head Half Crown of 1874 recovered by Margaret Thompson

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Bronze Age Burials in the North-West : analysis of the Brackenber remains

At the November meeting of the Appleby Archaeology Group, members were fortunate to hear the results of the latest research by PhD student Sam Walsh on Bronze Age human remains and burial sites in the North West, including recently discovered material from Brackenber Moor near Appleby-in-Westmorland.

Sam has been investigating Early Bronze Age (2,200-1,500 BC) burial practices for a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire. This has involved the analysis of cremated remains from museum collections in the North West and also the cremated human bone from the newly discovered site at Brackenber Moor.



Cremation experiment

Human remains can tell us a lot about people in the past, not just the age, sex and height of individuals, but also information about their diet, diseases suffered, injuries sustained and, sometimes, the activities undertaken in life. Analysis of the remains can also provide a unique insight into prehistoric burial practices and beliefs.

In the Bronze Age there were two main burial types: inhumation; with bodies often laid in a crouched position in a stone cist or grave, and cremation. The cremated bones are often placed in pottery vessels or in pits. Cremation is often considered to have been a low-status form of burial, but actually involved a significant investment of time and resources, being a lengthy process, both in the creation and maintenance of a funerary pyre, and the subsequent burial of the cremated remains, which were often placed in funerary monuments, as at Brackenber Moor. Here several individuals were placed in pits within a circular bank and ditch, along with a collared urn and smaller accessory vessels, dated to 1,900-1,700 BC. Five individuals, four adults and a child have been identified at Brackenber Moor.

The most complete Bronze Age cremation was of a middle-aged/older woman, who was buried with two small decorated pottery vessels. Analysis of the bone indicated

that she had developed extra bone on her hands, and there were signs on her spine and jaw which suggested she had suffered from osteoarthritis. The breakage patterns on the bone, suggested she had been laid on her left side on the funerary pyre, after which the bone was collected and buried in a pit. Another adult female showed signs of stress on one side of her body, indicating a repetitive strain from a specific activity, possibly the scraping of hides or another activity.

Research on other Bronze Age cremation sites in the North West (e.g. Aglionby, Carlisle) has suggested that children were always buried with an adult or maybe a family member. This was presumably as a form of guardianship. However, the monument at Brackenber has provided a unique example of a child being buried alone in a pit with a collared urn. Does this mean the child had no ancestry at that location or was he/she being singled out in some way? The audience was intrigued by the questions this raised.

The group thanked Sam Walsh warmly for sharing her recent research, which has helped to highlight the human story of so many centuries ago. Further work is to take place at Brackenber Moor next year as part of the Altogether Archaeology Project organised by the North Pennines AONB Partnership, and is open to all interested individuals. Further details of the investigation will be circulated through the Appleby Archaeology Group and our Facebook site, www.facebook.com/ApplebyArchaeology.

Martin Railton

New Light on the battle of Bosworth : 22 Aug 1485

Editor's note : This article is by our new reporter in the Midlands, AppArch member Frank Walmsley, who has recently moved down to Stafford. Frank is also a member of the Richard III Society and so has been closely following the remarkable archaeological finds that have turned up recently in connection with the Battle of Bosworth and the death of Richard. Since all this has been happening on Frank's new doorstep, and since Richard III had close connections with our own area we thought it would be good if Frank wrote a feature for the newsletter.

Ambion Hill in Leicestershire is marked on the OS 1/50,000 sheet 140 with crossed swords and 'Bosworth Field 1485' as the site of the Wars of the Roses battle dur-

ing which Richard III, last of the Plantagenet kings was killed. For many years that has been the accepted site. In 1974, using the best historical evidence available Leicestershire CC began the development of a country park and visitor centre. That included King Richard's Well from which the monarch reputedly slaked his thirst before the battle. A mile to the east lies Sutton Cheney church where Richard is said to have prayed for victory, while a little further south is Stoke Golding and Crown Hill where Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, received Richard's crown, recovered from a thorn bush.

However, the archaeological evidence for the site was fragmentary. The royal army, led by the king and John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk, may have numbered 12,000 men, while Henry and John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, led a force of perhaps 5,000, including French mercenaries. Lord Thomas Stanley, later 1st Earl of Derby, and his brother Sir William Stanley and the Earl of Northumberland also brought many men from the north onto the battlefield. Such large numbers of men and their horses must have left some mark on the locality, even if only grave pits. Ambion Hill and environs would have been crowded. Battles require space, if only to allow soldiers to wield their weaponry, bow and arrow, sword, pikes, halberds, and to fire hand-held guns. The artillery, with cannons, chains and cannon-balls, and the baggage-trains also needed space.

Fortunately, the Heritage Lottery Fund agreed to fund an archaeological survey of the locality, backed by a study of the few historical accounts, and a survey to reconstruct the



Richard III of England at Bosworth

more open 15th century landscape. Volunteers equipped with metal detectors working with local farmers painstakingly probed and prodded several square miles of rural Leicestershire. A Roman road, known as Fenn Lane, proved to be the key. Linking Watling Street and Man-cetter (Atherstone) with Ratae (Leicester) it crossed the search area from south west to north east. Both armies followed it during their approach marches. Somewhere in the vicinity lay the marsh which brought down the king and his horse as he charged recklessly towards Henry and his standard bearer, Sir William Brandon. A further missing feature was the windmill where Norfolk, commanding the Yorkist vanguard was said to have been killed as he

fled the battlefield.

The main concentration of finds to date has indicated that the opposing armies approached each other along Fenn Lane before deploying parallel to it some 3 kilometres (almost 2 miles) south west of Ambion Hill. The royal army formed up just south of the road or even partly upon it, while the smaller Lancastrian force faced them to the south. Northumberland and the Stanleys positioned their forces to the rear of their respective hosts, awaiting events. Near contemporaries state that Henry had the advantage of the sun shining behind him and into the eyes of the opposition. Fenn Lane is a public road, so it may well conceal archaeological items.

Carbon 14 dating revealed that an area of peat marsh known as Fenn Hole lay just south of the road protecting Henry's right flank. The French archers and artillery secured his left flank. Richard's artillery lay at the opposite end of the battlefield, protecting his left flank. Metal detecting yielded the largest find of round shot ever found on a medieval battlefield together with sword fragments, scabbard and harness fittings. A site on the edge of the former marsh produced what has become a battlefield icon, a gilded silver boar badge, rather more than inch in length which in all probability came from a knight riding close to Richard in his fateful charge. A wider spread of finds north of Fenn Lane suggested that, following the death of the King, the Yorkists retreated in disorder towards Ambion Hill. Historical research also showed that there was a windmill north of Daddlington village. That lay on the line of retreat.

Richard's body was taken back to Leicester then displayed in Greyfriars church for two days. Recent excavations by Leicester University on the site revealed two skeletons, one male the other female. The former, with its contorted spine, is thought to be that of the king. The results of DNA analysis will not be available until 2013, but the find has triggered a debate on the appropriate re-interment site, with the influential Richard III Society declaring a preference for York Minster. Richard spent his youth at Middleham Castle, then ruled the north of England on behalf of his elder brother, Edward IV. Meanwhile Ambion Hill, marked by Richard's standard bearing the white boar, and a memorial sundial, offers an excellent viewpoint from which to study the battlefield.

Frank Walmsley : November 2012

Reference : "Bosworth 1485" by Mike Ingram. The History press. £9.99