

## Appleby Archaeology Group

### Report of February 2016 Meeting

Jamie Quartermain Senior Project Manager with Oxford Archaeology North attracted a good turnout at the February meeting of Appleby Archaeology when he spoke on the Roman Occupiers & their Relationship with Native Britons in the North West.

Traditional views of native life in Romanised settlements have recently been questioned. Recent archaeology suggests that the physical remains and material culture of the period is similar to that of the preceding Iron Age. In his talk he outlined the results of some recent excavations in the North West which have benefitted from radiocarbon dating and detailed analysis, identifying changes over the period of the occupation.

He reminded us that in 55BC Julius Caesar visited Britain and that it was Claudius in 43AD that invaded and then conquered the south and east of England where the distribution of villas and civilian towns is an indication that the native population of the south and east adopted Roman ways with enthusiasm.

During the 70's and 80's AD the Romans, under the command of Agricola extended their control into northern and western England. The remains of forts their associated civilian settlements (vici) and roads are evidence to this but signs of villas are almost non-existent.

Jamie then described, using evidence from sites in the north, life before, during and after the Roman Occupation.

There was a deterioration in the climate in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (1250 BC - c800 BC) which resulted in loss of agricultural land and this combined with an increase in the population led the people to protect their settlements. Defensive structures appear. Examples include defensive ditches at Castle Crag, Ullswater, and in Glencoyne Park, Ullswater where there are upright stone walls around a settlement. Swords have been found in high status burials of this period and unlike bows and arrows and knives they have only one function that of a weapon. These findings indicate a time of instability and a need to defend the settlements.

A more settled period indicated on Askham Fell where there is an Iron Age settlement which demonstrates an organised structure of round houses and animal stockades suggestive of Roman influence. The need for defences appears to have gone as there are several entrances.

Research at several sites indicate their uses over many centuries and among those described were the following sites:-

A Romano British settlement in Thornton in Lonsdale which was excavated in 2003 by members of the Ingleborough Archaeology Group. Their results showed that the settlement predated the Romans. Charcoal from trenches across the ramparts gave carbon dates of 88 -66BC and finds of several types of Roman pottery indicate continuous occupation of the enclosure from the late Iron Age to the later years of the Romano-British period. The early function of the site was stock management but there is evidence of metal-working in the Romano-British period. It would seem that the local farmers recognised the opportunity offered by Roman occupation and added an industrial element to their life.

Ewanrigg near Maryport was in continuous use for 1400 years. The site, a double-ditched curvilinear enclosure with a funnel entrance (a banjo fort), was dated by pottery evidence to the fourth century AD. However, carbonised grain from a pit within the enclosure produced a calibrated radiocarbon date of 1410-1000 BC, indicating that the site had its origins in the Bronze Age. There are no signs that there were any Roman building within the enclosure.

At Walton Le Dale there is an extensive settlement dating from 70AD to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. There, there are many industrial features, rectangular buildings and at the centre a round house. Roman coins and pottery were found. The site has been interpreted as a military run industrial production centre where the native population are likely to have worked.

Excavation of a settlement at Barker Farm, within the complex of Lancaster University, revealed an Iron Age settlement of unenclosed round houses which may have lasted throughout the Roman occupation. There must have been contact with the Romans as the settlement was a short distance from the fort at Lancaster and near the junction of roads with the important road heading north (Galgate).

A final reference was made to Southwaite Hillfort, Thirlmere where there is evidence that the ditch around the Iron Age hill fort was re-dug in the period 538-678 AD suggesting that life after the Romans departed continued as before.

In conclusion Jamie said that the evidence was that the native Britons of the north were little influenced by Roman culture in spite of the military forts, vici and roadways. The essentially rural population, who may have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the Romans for example industrial working, appear to have continued to live their lives much as before and continued to do so after the Romans left. It does however appear that the period of Roman occupation in the north was one of peace and stability for the native people.

The group thanked and warmly applauded Jamie for his very interesting talk and many used the opportunity to ask questions.

The next talk will be on Tuesday March 8<sup>th</sup> in the Markey Hall Appleby at 7.30pm when the Dr David Johnson, Ingleborough Archaeology Group will speak on Lime burning and Lime kilns in Westmorland.