

AGM 2017 - Transcribing, digging and walking

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Carol Dougherty MEDEIVAL DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION UPDATE

The stalwart band of people transcribing the early documents relating to Appleby are practically going cross-eyed but making great progress!

Two people have now transcribed over 30 documents from the 1500s and 1600s – they have been working on them independently and then comparing their efforts – happily much of the content has been mostly agreed upon and we now feel we have a fair representation of these papers.

Many surnames occurring in the documents are still very much evident in town and surrounding area, some place names look a bit different in these documents eg Frieth Gate, Dribeck, Scattergait and Burelles but there is no mistaking the location. In another document there is also possibly no mistaking what awaited Appleby's felons in 1620 when 6d was paid for "a planck that spaned the gibett".

Watch this space for the next update!

Martin Railton DIG APPLEBY: BREAKING THE GROUND

Dig Appleby is a Community Archaeology Project with the aim of providing new information about the origins and development of Appleby-in-Westmorland, the former county town of Westmorland. There has been very little previous archaeological research undertaken within Appleby-in-Westmorland, due largely to the lack of modern development within the historic core of the town, and the limited opportunities for excavation. However, the few investigations that have taken place suggest that well-preserved archaeological remains do survive both within the historic core of the town and in the surrounding landscape.

The Dig Appleby project was launched in June 2016 by Appleby Archaeology group with a public meeting in the Appleby Town Hall, which saw a number of town's people both signing up as project volunteers, and offering access to their gardens for archaeological investigation. The first stage of the project saw the excavation of a series of test pits and small trenches within the gardens and green spaces of Appleby, primarily focusing on the surviving medieval evidence within the former burgages on Boroughgate, the main street of the Norman town running from Appleby Castle to St Lawrence's Church.

The most productive space investigated last summer was the garden to the rear of St Annes Hospital on Boroughgate, which was subject to a preliminary geophysical survey followed by the excavation of two test pits and a small trench. The St Anne's Hospital site occupies four medieval burgages, which were purchased by Lady Anne Clifford for the construction of alms-houses for the poor. Immediately after purchase, the Countess erected a hospital and on the 2nd Aug 1661 obtained a Charter for the founding of the hospital. The land to the rear was subdivided into garden plots for the residents, which had been cultivated until recently.

Following the removal of a significant depth of garden soils a crude cobbled surface was identified in two trenches, which is believed to be medieval. This was very similar to a surface previously identified at the top of Boroughgate at Shaw's Wiend, which was cut by medieval rubbish pits (see CW3 2013, 73-88). A significant assemblage of medieval pottery was recovered, and a post-setting was excavated by some budding young archaeologists under the supervision of professional staff from Wardell Armstrong. The small size of the investigation limited the interpretation of this feature, which was probably part of a larger structure. The remains of a 19th century outbuilding were also identified, which showed as a high-resistance anomaly in the geophysical survey. Elsewhere the test pits revealed cobbled yard surfaces, the remains of demolished post-medieval buildings, and garden structures.

Following the test pit excavations a Finds Workshop was held for project volunteers led by a specialist from Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. All of the test pits produced medieval pottery, with 60% coming from the small trench to the rear of St Anne's Hospital. A total of 147 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered comprising mainly cooking pots and jugs. The majority of the medieval ceramics appear to date to the 13th-14th century with a smaller amount of later reduced wares. A wide range of post-medieval ceramics, clay pipe, animal bone, glass and metal objects were also recovered, along with the project's first prehistoric find, a probable Mesolithic blade of grey flint.

In tandem with the archaeological investigations, volunteers have taken part in a series of palaeography workshops, and undertaken a visit to the Archives Office in Kendal to examine early documents relating to Appleby-in-Westmorland. Project volunteers are now putting new skills to good use by transcribing a series of documents from the town and providing valuable new information about various aspects of the town's history.

Further test-pit investigations are to be undertaken in 2017 with the final results being presented in a project report and a display in the town's Tourist Information Centre. It is hoped that this preliminary project will lead to some larger-scale investigations and research into other aspects of the town's history. The Dig Appleby project has been supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, for which the Appleby Archaeology Group is very grateful.

Chris Wilson A WALK AROUND APPLEBYS BOUNDARIES

Chris described his efforts to discover the ancient boundaries of Appleby – the hard way, by walking around them. His look back in time started with the current Ordnance Survey map and went on to show 1843 tithe map boundaries and then a beautiful 1831/32 map drawn up by Robert Dawson, an officer in the Royal Engineers. This showed a boundary change causing the loss of both the towns MPs - the only County Town in the country to suffer such ignominy. Interestingly both William Pitt the Younger and Earl Grey (yes, the tea) had represented Appleby and both had become Prime Ministers. Further back in 1780, the commons to the north, south and east are shown as being incorporated within the town. Finally Chris showed a tracing of a map found in the Lonsdale archive he thought was about 1524 with a town boundary extending as far as Colby, Hoff, Rutter Falls, Ormside, Coupland Beck and Aspland. He then went on to entertain the audience with a virtual tour using photographs taken on a walk around the boundary.