

## Appleby Archaeology Report Talk March 2018

Members who braved the weather to come to Appleby Archaeology's March meeting were well informed and entertained by Louis Martin, Cultural Heritage Officer of Morecambe Bay Partnership.

Louis started by talking about Headlands to Headspace (H2H) a major community project to celebrate the rich heritage of Morecambe Bay. The project is being led by the Moercambe Bay Partnership with support from a wide range of organisation such as the many groups that make up the Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership. H2H is a 5 year project, now in its fifth year working to bring benefits to communities, the environment and the heritage of the Bay. It covers an area of 500sq.km and had £1.9 million grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund.

Louise' talk concentrated on the cultural heritage with particular reference to sites of archaeological interest which span periods from the Neolithic to the second World War. Her well-illustrated talk included several short videos and interviews demonstrating the commitment and enjoyment of the many volunteers to the projects.

The tour of the archaeological sites demonstrated the skills gained by the volunteers and some new techniques used by professional archaeologists. Identification and recording of sites and decisions as to how to protect and conserve were all part of the projects with training days for the volunteers and open days for the public to learn more about The Bay's rich heritage. Archaeological desk based assessments were the first step in any project.

Evidence of the rich military history of Barrow and Walney was the first stop on the tour. On the site of a 1940's airfield used for military anti - aircraft training there are the concrete and rusted remains of weaponry including rifle butts and a rifle range. At Hilsford Fort, South Walney the remains of an artillery coastal searchlight emplacement is seen. The large curved opening at the front was where the search light was placed looking out to sea. The fort had been a battery encampment used in both wars. Many pillboxes, defensive structures, are found on the western coast of Walney and around the docks at Barrow. Many of the structures seen are in need of conservation both from encroachment of the sea and damage from the elements.

Moving further east to Gleaston Castle, thought to have been built as a manorial residence possibly for defence against the Scots in the late 13th century and abandoned in 1458, Louise described how new techniques in aerial surveying had shown evidence of earlier structures. The site survives as the ruins of three towers and associated curtain wall the aerial survey highlighted ridge and furrow and a possible track way to the north-east of the castle, in addition to terracing and possible building platforms within the castle's courtyard giving the professionals a better understanding of the site.

Birkrigg Common was the next stop, a jewel in the Furness landscape, rich in flora and fauna and Bronze Age sites including burial cairns, hut circles a large enclosure and stone circles. The main job of the volunteers, seen on one of the videos, was clearing vegetation, primarily bracken, away from the immediate area of the stone circle. This has improved the setting of the monument and revealed a second outer ring of stones, which became hidden beneath the vegetation during the summer months. Opening up the site will enable people to more fully explore the monument and by increasing the visibility of the archaeological remains, protect them from accidental damage.

Moving to near to Grange over Sands two towers, possible Victorian Follies, were described. Hampsfell Hospice built in 1846 to provide shelter for travellers after climbing the fell has an inscription above the door and inside three poems on letter boards. Kirkhead Tower, an early 19th century summer house with lovely views, is associated with a very early church. Geophysical surveys here indicate the presence of ridge and furrow marks and a possible round house of a prehistoric date.

Warton Crag, near Carnforth, is scheduled as an Iron Age hillfort and is on the Heritage at Risk schedule. It was surveyed during the project using Lidar. The findings suggest that it was non defensive and more likely to have been a hilltop enclosure dating back to the Neolithic.

Louise concluded her tour at Jenny Brown's Point Silverdale. The site has a range of archaeology including an impressive sea wall, uncovered in recent years by storms. It was constructed from 1874 and was an attempt at reclaiming Silverdale Sands but was later abandoned.

She spoke in more detail of the project's attempt to unravel some of the mystery of the origins and function of a local landmark, a limestone chimney thought to be an old copper smelting chimney which lies on the Lancashire Coastal Way. It is a grade 2 listed dating from late 18th Century and is marked on the 1919 OS Map as ruins. Close by recent erosion has revealed the remains of a small jetty and other buildings. The severe threat to the site and the lack of understanding of its function and history made the chimney site a priority for further investigation.

Volunteers with professional guidance and support undertook an extensive documentary research followed by geophysical and aerial surveys to make a permanent written and drawn record of the site. The research culminated in an excavation on site in November 2017. Evidence of a smelting process was found for example flues, slag and a firebox. The results of ongoing investigation of the composition of the slag and analysis of the soil samples taken will, it is hoped confirm what went on at Jenny's point.

Louise's enthusiasm and the enjoyment of the volunteer as seen in the short videos was inspiring and entertaining and Louise received an enthusiastic round of applause.

The last talk of the 2017-18 season be on 12th April in the Supper Room Market Hall Appleby when Prof. Colin Hazelgrove will talk on *The Late Iron Age Royal Site at Stanwick*

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