



NEWSLETTER NO 2

NOVEMBER 2011

Most people will, by now, know that our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful and we have received £12,750 as the first instalment of 50% out of a total of £27,500. The Project is actually worth £42,000 with the extra being our contribution in terms of volunteer hours. We will receive a further instalment of 40% when we have spent the first instalment and a final instalment of 10% on completion of the Project.

The North Duffield Historic Landscape Project will run for three years. Elements of the agreed Project are the Big Village Dig, on which more later, fieldwork involving field-walking, geophysical survey and targeted excavation, a re-enactment event involving Iron Age/Roman re-enactment groups on the village green, the building of a re-construction of an Iron Age roundhouse (more of this later) creation of educational packs to work alongside the National Curriculum on the Iron Age and later periods with North Duffield School, a final more academically based event at the end of the third year with a History Fair and Keynote Speaker and finally production of academic Reports of the findings as well as a more user-friendly version for local consumption. That should keep us out of mischief.

Throughout, we have worked very closely with Jon Kenny and latterly Hannah Baxter of York Archaeological Trust, without whom, none of this would have been possible.

BIG VILLAGE DIG(BVD) and BIG SCHOOL DIG(BSD) 2011

At an early stage, and before we had received notification of our lottery windfall, we entered our BVD in the Council for British Archaeology's Festival of British Archaeology which ran for the last two weeks in July 2011.

Throughout the preceding 12 months we had sought volunteers amongst the residents to allow a test pit to be dug in their gardens. We had received 25 volunteers including North Duffield School. I decided it would be a good idea to run the BSD as a separate event to test our methodology for the bigger event and so, we dug three test pits on the school playing field on 23rd June 2011. The children did the digging under the supervision of Jon, Hannah, Tony Stevens and myself. Almost inevitably it rained and, had it not been for - the use of our own gazebo and two borrowed from the Ash Duggan

Committee, the event would have been cancelled. The children dug up almost 1000 items and washed them for later identification. The children, as ever, were really enthusiastic and had a great time(as did certain teachers).

The whole of Years 4,5 and 6 took part in the process spread over the whole day and watched, at break time, by the rest of the School. Andrea with the Reception Class of 5 year olds, asked us if we could do a similar event with her children. I 'salted' their sandpit with some genuine artefacts that I have found whilst out walking away from the village and therefore of little archaeological value to us. The children dug them up again in a flurry of sand and excitement .

Both events went really well and we shall be repeating them in future years.

The BVD dawned really wet and again we can thank the Ash Duggan Committee for lending us enough gazebos to cover 12 test-pits. Actually 13 were dug with two of them on the village green. We hoped to identify the 'core' or earliest traces of the village, discover the chronology of occupation and involve more local people in their local heritage.

Roughly half the pits were dug by the householders themselves under supervision of the professionals, the remainder being dug by York University Archaeology students volunteers and members of AND.

Most of the pits had mixed deposits of old and modern pottery indicating disturbance from ploughing or building. One pit, in Back Lane, at the lowest depth, had Roman pottery and what may turn out to be Iron Age pot-boilers(stones used for heating water prior to pottery being able to withstand direct flames from the fire) in circumstances which suggest that they are undisturbed. There were several hundred finds from this pit suggesting that this dwelling was in the original core of the village.

Roman, Norman and Medieval pottery was found as well as later and modern pottery. This suggests that North Duffield has been populated since at least the Roman Conquest. No Saxon or Iron Age pottery was found. This also confirms findings from material recovered from field-walking.

So the event appears to have succeeded on all fronts and there is likely to be a similar event next year as more people have volunteered their gardens and we still have some who volunteered this year but which did not have the staff to excavate.

I have created a CD of photographs taken over the weekend, Every test-pit is covered plus one or two more from the cameras of those taking part. A full break-down of the 'finds' is included on a pit- by- pit basis. They are on sale for £2 and all takings will go to AND so let me know if you would like a CD.

We have now started on erecting the compound that will eventually hold the Iron Age Roundhouse. Materials are being sourced locally wherever possible

and the school will be heavily involved at all stages. This is intended to be a permanent structure to remain as a resource for local children to learn what it was like to live in the Iron Age with the chance to try spinning, weaving and flour milling and bread-making amongst other things.

We are now well into the field-walking season. We have completed 3 ½ fields over the last two years and plan to start a new small field on Saturday 12th November. The mild weather means the crop is growing faster than we might expect, so our window of opportunity will be closing soon.

Our website is now up- and- running- ndchs.org.uk . It is under constant revision and updating so have a look. Thanks to Brian Burgess for creating and maintaining this site. We have had several new members and contacts from elsewhere as a direct result as well as people from all over the country reading the various pages.

Finally, whilst it may not be what most people think of as 'archaeology', on the outskirts of the village on the A163, about 400m after the derestricted speed sign there is a milestone that was erected in 1793 when the Turnpike road was built. The faceplate is missing having been removed in the last war to confuse the Germans should they invade. I have successfully applied for funding from NYCC plus some donations from members to allow a new cast iron plate to be made. The mould is currently in a foundry at Halifax and we should have the new plate shortly.

If you are interested in getting involved in any of our events you will be very welcome, just get in touch. Either let Tony Stevens or myself, Brian Elsey, know. We are particularly keen to get some younger members. Whilst we have a good relationship with the school, we are sadly missing new members in the 30-50 years age-groups. Despite reports to the contrary, neither Tony nor myself will go on for ever and there is plenty of interesting things to do.

Perhaps a bit early and perhaps you don't need reminding, but I probably won't get another chance in writing to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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