

NEWSLETTER NO 6

DECEMBER 2013

Firstly I must apologise for the lateness of this Newsletter. I would have preferred to have it done by October but events conspired against me. A number of issues have got in the way, not least the hectic year we have had - the dust is only just starting to settle.

It has been a mixture of things old and things new plus a few that we could not have anticipated. Almost everything we set out to do has been done with only one slight disappointment.

You may remember that I reported that in support of Jon Kenny and YAT we had been in talks with the Army Injury Recovery Unit at Catterick. In fact, we had two meetings there hoping that we might emulate the Operation Nightingale that had been active on Salisbury Plain. The object had been to engage physically and psychologically damaged soldiers in archaeology. After initially some positive feedback the project stalled. This was partly due to the fact that Operation Nightingale was being run by Wessex Archaeology (Phil Harding of Time Team fame) and that they appeared to have moved North to Middlesbrough and partly due to a lack of response from the Unit themselves. In any event, I can report no progress since early in the year.

TUESDAY TIME TEAM

More positively, the initiative to introduce adults with learning disabilities to archaeology did take off. Funder, the Workers Education Authority, authorised a funded course with the Monday Club in Selby run by Jon Kenny to which I was delighted to be able to offer my support in a programme of presentations, projects, site visits and practical tasks. Apart from helping Jon to deliver the weekly course of instruction and interaction, we also hosted the groups attendance for a day on our excavation (of which more later) and a day daubing the roundhouse where even the carers got involved. We started out with a group of 9 students but due to various factors a couple dropped out leaving us with a hardcore of 7. We are now about to start a new round of talks to decide how we develop the groups interest in archaeology even further.

They had dubbed themselves the Tuesday Time Team of which I and Jon are now Honorary Members!

BIG SCHOOL DIG 2013

We returned to North Duffield Community Primary School in 2013 for our third season of test pits in the school playground. This is ever popular with both pupils and staff and has become a regular event in ours and their calendar and I hope will continue going forward. We were lucky to select three areas where there were plenty of interesting 'finds' for the children including some Roman artefacts.



Children digging up the past

As is customary, the children washed and dried their finds for later identification.



Chapel Haddlesey

A new initiative in 2013 was a similar event at Chapel Haddlesey Primary School which arose as a result of a chance meeting I had with a member of their staff at an event in Barlby in 2012. Jon Kenny, Tony and I attended at the

school and the children dug two test pits which sadly did not produce too much in the way of interesting 'stuff'. Nevertheless the children and staff had a great time and we are invited back in 2014 to dig on an old windmill site.

CELTIC FESTIVAL

All the planning and heartache came together over the weekend of 8th/9th June in the shape of an event on the village green involving Celtic Warriors, Roman soldiers, crafts and displays with a visit to the roundhouse on tractor and trailer thrown in for good measure. Thank you to everyone who helped in whatever way - there were a great many of you without whom we could not have had such a wonderful weekend.



Children into battle

Comitatus, the late Roman Re-Enactment group created a whole new persona in the shape of Celtic warriors complete with woad –painted naked (almost) bodies. Demonstrations of archery and javelin throwing from horseback and a display of birds-of-prey and demonstrations by the History Society and others of spinning, weaving, bread-making, pottery, pole-lathe work, games and helmet-making attracted a huge number of people over the two days-we estimate at least 1000. We know we had 600 individuals on my roundhouse trip 'cos we counted them(thanks Roger). Thanks also to John and Rob Ellwood for the use of the tractors and trailers and both of them and Paul for driving in their own time. We started off planning to have one trip every two hours with one tractor. We finished up with two tractors ferrying a constant stream of spectators to the site.

The Picnic-on-the-Green on Saturday evening was attended by well over 100 people who were entertained by Colleen's Fancy Irish folk group round the camp - fires provided by Comitatus. The children certainly enjoyed themselves. Not sure about the Celtic Warrior who fell into the pond about 2.0am in the morning!

We had donations of £500 to the Archaeology fund(thanks to Andy whose dire threats of violence to spectators reaped such huge rewards).



Hard work but worth it in the end. We had loads of wonderful comments and requests to hold another one next year. Emphatically 'no' from me but I know a nice man who is planning a Viking Festival for next year.

A DVD is available from me for the sum of £5. I can also supply any 'stills' of the event on disc for £3.

THE ROUNDHOUSE

The structure is complete as is the thatching. We have daubed well over half of the walls and what a fine time we have had. Everyone wants to get in on the act because it isn't often you get the chance to do something like this.





Some rather muddy children!

The children had a day daubing-not sure who got the most mud on them but it might have been me. I did a Risk Assessment and fitted the children out with masks, safety glasses and rubber gloves. We walked them to and from the site and they had a whale of a time.

We have had a fire in the roundhouse on several occasions, cooking sausages and bread and, of course, washed down with the odd bottle of beer. We have had quite a few enquiries from other groups and individuals either wanting to visit or to know how we did it or where got the materials from.

A DVD showing a 'time lapse' of the build and a tour of the roundhouse is available for £3.

EXPLORING THE IRON AGE

You will remember that we held our first proper archaeological dig just S of Parkhouse Farm in 2012 and uncovered what we believed was a large ring-ditch-perhaps an animal compound - as we did not find any post-holes. From the small section of ditch we uncovered last year we estimated that the feature was up to 15m in diameter. Consequently, when we returned for a further week of digging from 20th-26th July, we marked out our trench with the intention of being able to fully excavate the remaining ditch. Those of you who came to the site will now know that the reality was far more exciting than a ring-ditch. Firstly, we found that our 'ring-ditch' was a great deal larger than 15m across: 20 m to be precise. What is more we uncovered a series of pits arranged roughly 1/3 of the way towards the centre following the curvature of the ditch. Indeed, these could be the post-holes we were looking for although only one showed any evidence- a post-pipe- and one other had stones within the fill that could be packing material for a post.

Surprisingly, we found what appears to be a doorway or entrance to the W; most roundhouses have entrances to the E or SE. The 'entrance, if such it is, has a large pit at its Northern terminal which showed evidence for holding a

post whilst the Southern terminal showed no evidence of a post. Aerial photographs show what appear to be an entrance , conventionally to the SE.

When we cleared the centre of the feature we found two areas of clay which may well be 'hearths' although there is no evidence of burning typically found with such features. This may be explained by deep ploughing having truncated the feature. A further pit slightly off-centre contained post-packing and iron items(?) which are currently at the lab awaiting x-ray.

We found further sherds of Iron Age pottery in the ditch and central pit, one worked flint tool in the ditch which showed evidence of having been used and several pieces of what I suspect is iron working slag. All these items have gone away for conservation and identification.

So what have we got? Have we got a huge roundhouse ?: if so there are very few larger ones in the country. If it is a roundhouse-did it have a roof? Expert comment is that it is too large as the roof would have been too heavy. If it did not have a roof is it a ceremonial structure-perhaps even a henge? In short, we do not know. Research is taking place to try to find precedents so the Jury is out for the time-being. Some eminent experts have been approached for their views and I will report back in due course.

We will, of necessity, have to return to the site for a third year in the hope of answering some of these questions and finding the entrance shown in aerial photographs.

Shortly before the dig, I was approached by the Council for British Archaeology asking if we would be prepared to host the winners of a National Young Archaeologists Club competition. We were delighted to be asked and quickly agreed. They turned up on the Sunday and had a brilliant day with us. They were presented with a 'goody bag' by the Society and they all sent lovely letters of thanks and confirmed their wish to become real archaeologists.



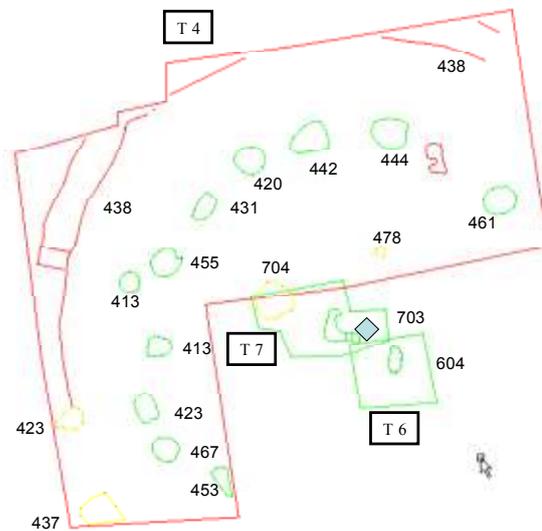
The Young Archaeologists and their Mums at work

Following on from this, during the course of the dig , a further request from the CBA involved a young lad from Bradford with terminal cancer who had a 'live'

dig on his bucket list, was received and again, I could not refuse, so with the landowners permission, the site was kept open for a further week to allow him to attend with his uncle. I also cooked sausages(his favourite meal) on the roundhouse fire and as he was leaving the site he must have thanked me 20 times. He has asked if he can come again next year. Would that he could.



Connor from Bradford and his Uncle on site



Composite plan of site showing pits, hearths, ditch , entrance/doorway etc



Members of the Tuesday Time Team on their first 'dig'

THE EDUCATION PACK

This has created considerable interest from other people and groups and North Yorkshire County Education Services have shown interest in adopting it. The Education Pack is now available on DVD at a price of £5 for interested party. Exceptionally, a hard copy of the pack is available at £15 although our stocks currently await renewal.

DUKE OF YORK AWARD

Following a meeting with the Independent Assessors in September, when we presented our case and was grilled about what we have been doing, we shortly afterwards learned that we had won the award and duly four of us attended a glittering presentation in The Spa at Bridlington to receive the award. The Assessors said very kind things about our work in the Community- this was a Community Initiative Award- and were very impressed with everything that we have been doing to engage the Community, particularly the children.



Receiving the Award from the Duke

Upwards of 40 other groups also received a similar Award. We hold the Award for a number of years and then can re-qualify if we still meet the criteria. This was a very proud day for all of us. We are now entitled to exhibit the Duke's logo on all our correspondence.



The Duke taking to our party

CONFERENCE 2014

We are now looking down the barrel of the end of our three year Project. It seems to have flown by but there is still a great deal to be done. Whilst it is extremely exciting to have uncovered a monumental structure within the landscape of North Duffield, it does present some complications in terms of meeting our July deadline for the end of Project. It is highly unlikely that we will be in a position to write up the Reports and create the booklet to accompany closure of the funding in the time available to us and therefore we almost certainly will need to apply for an extension. I do not anticipate a problem as our HLF Manager has been extremely impressed by our work. We have even aroused the interest of Prehistoric Yorkshire, an academic journal of the Prehistoric Section of Yorkshire Archaeological Society and I have submitted a paper for their next publication due out early in 2014.

The Keynote speaker for our Conference has been confirmed as Dr Melanie Giles, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Manchester University, an expert on the Iron Age, particularly the Iron Age landscapes of East Yorkshire and the author of many papers, journal articles and books. I was fortunate to meet her at a Conference in Sheffield 2 years ago and she has kindly agreed to present a paper on 'Iron Age Weapons Burials in Britain-with particular reference to East Yorkshire and one of her students will present a paper on the Hasholme Iron Age log boat.

Make a note in your diaries for Saturday 15th June 2014 as I suspect that interest in Melanie's paper will be intense. Preference will be given to Members of the Society and supporters of AND.

WHAT' NEXT?

What indeed. We need to maintain the head of steam we have built up over the last 2 ½ years. With that in mind, at a recent History Society meeting I floated the idea of the formation of a new branch of the Young Archaeologists Club. Seven members volunteered to consider involvement- the more the merrier as it means each individual has less to do and the scheme can become sustainable. I have been in touch with the CBA who manage the scheme and obtained various forms and Guidelines. Any decision will not be made until 2014 and only then after a meeting to discuss our options. If anyone feels that they can offer a little of their time at least to attend the meeting and perhaps to get involved please get in touch with me- no obligation at this stage.

I plan to have an informal meeting early in the New Year when I will explain our obligations were we to decide to go ahead. If you would like to know more visit the CBA website ad see the article on YAC.

We have all the equipment we need and the expertise and manpower to continue with a programme of excavation and exploration. What started out as a small dig to sharpen our archaeological teeth on a relatively simple site has come back to bite us with the finding of a monumental structure. There are extensive crop-marks throughout the village some look of an earlier date than the one we are currently investigating. The evidence is currently pointing towards late Iron Age from the ceramic assemblage.

If there is anything above that you would like to get involved in please let me know as we are always looking for new faces on our team.

One final note. You may have noticed an absence of field-walking opportunities. The weather has put paid to any chance we might have had- either too dry, too wet, wet and dry in the wrong order etc etc etc. But I plan to keep trying.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

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