

Windlestone Hall An opportunity under threat?



Windlestone Hall, situated roughly halfway between Sedgefield and Bishop Auckland, is one of the most significant country houses in County Durham. The current house dates from around 1834 and was reputedly built by Ignatius Bonomi for Sir Robert Johnson Eden, although there are records to suggest there has been a house on the site since at least the 16th century. The house is Grade II* listed and sits within a designed landscape park which includes numerous other listed buildings and structures such as a clock tower, stables and entrance lodges. The house was the home of the Eden family for some four hundred years, whose most famous son was Sir Anthony Eden, British Prime Minister at the time of the Suez Crisis in 1956. The Hall has, since the 1960s, been in the ownership of Durham County Council (DCC) and been used as a special school.

The use as a school – while ensuring the building's continued future in the post-War period at a time when many other notable houses in Durham, such as Coxhoe Hall and Streatlam Castle, were abandoned and demolished – has, however, resulted in many modern functional but unsympathetic additions. All this may now be about to change, the school has closed and the DCC are putting the house and estate up for sale.

The Society has expressed concerns regarding both the building's safety while it stands empty, and also in



Windlestone Hall

ensuring that a sympathetic new owner is found who will fully understand the costs and requirements of finding a new use while caring for the Hall and estate into the future. To this end, we have entered into correspondence with both Councillor Simon Henig, the leader of DCC, and Sedgefield Borough Council. Both have responded positively to reassure the Society that the building is being cared for in the short-term, and that a detailed planning brief will be enforced on any new owner to ensure care in the long term.

Members who are interested are encouraged to write to both the county and district councils and can access the excellent planning documents prepared by Sedgefield BC either in person through the Forward Planning Team at the Council Offices in Spennymoor, or on their website at <http://www.sedgefield.gov.uk/> (and search on 'Windlestone Hall SPD').

Niall Hammond Vice President AASDN

Hardwick Park and East Park excavations

Towards the end of June, the Society revisited Hardwick Park with Catherine Grezo and Tony Smith. The transformation since our AGM in 2005 was remarkable; water now flows down the cascade, the Temple of Minerva, nearly completed, provides an elegant focal point on the far side of the lake, with colourful beds of perennials in keeping with 18th-century taste flanking its approach, and Neptune has returned to the Serpentine River, overlooked by the Gothic Ruin. This romantic 'castle' has been restored with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Grant to straighten its leaning tower so it could be reconstructed to its original height.



The Gothic ruin, visited by AASDN in 2005 ... and the restoration

Fortified by a splendid finger buffet at the Hardwick Hall Hotel, the group later visited the excavations in the East Park with David Mason.

Forthcoming exhibitions at the Old Fulling Mill Museum, Durham

Treasures from the Attic 29 September 2008 to 25 January 2009 An in-house exhibition based on the story of the Old Fulling Mill and the University's archaeological collections

Ad Gefrin 50 years on February to March 2009 English Heritage sponsored exhibition

For a programme of regular weekend workshops for children at the Old Fulling Mill, see www.dur.ac.uk/fulling.mill/events

The Society website www.communicate.co.uk/ne/aasdn

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Programme 2008–09 on back page

Programme 2008–09

All lectures will be held at Elvet Riverside, Room 141 New Elvet, Durham, at 2.30 pm (except where noted). Everyone is welcome to attend

- Saturday 20 September **Welcome to the cheap seats Cinemas, sex and landscape** Shaun Richardson Ed Dennison Archaeological Services
- Saturday 11 October **The shock of the old** Discovering Ice Age cave art in Britain Dr Paul Bahn
- Saturday 8 November **Finding Bacchus** Excavations at the sanctuary of Liber Pater, Dacia (Roumania) Professor Ian Haynes University of Newcastle upon Tyne
- Saturday 13 December **Members' Meeting Followed by a reception in Durham Heritage Centre** Joint event with the Bow Trust
note We are still seeking contributions from members for the Members' Meeting. If you could offer a short talk, or have any information or artefacts that you would like to bring to the attention of other members, please contact the Secretary, Belinda Burke. The Meeting will take place at 2.30 pm in Elvet Riverside 141, after which we shall retire to St Mary-le-Bow for mulled wine and mince pies. This will provide an opportunity to view the exhibition about the work of the sculptor Fenwick Lawson, 'The making of "The Journey" and other works'. Please let the Secretary know in advance if you wish to attend the reception.
- 2009 Saturday 10 January **From castle to country estate** Recent work at Hornby Castle, North Yorkshire Erik Matthews
- Saturday 14 February **Iron Age settlement on the Northumberland coastal plain** New discoveries Dr Nick Hodgson Tyne and Wear Museums
- Saturday 21 March **St Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-Spring** A window into the past Dr Peter Ryder Historic Buildings consultant
- Saturday 19 April **World Heritage** An appraisal of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, with a review of some historic sites and cultural landscapes in the UK and Africa Professor Anthony Hyland Emeritus Professor of Architecture, National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
- Saturday 16 May **Annual General Meeting** Details to follow

Committee news

The new editorial team of David Petts, Sarah Semple and David Mason, with assistance from Ben Edwards, is now working hard on Volume 18 of **Durham Archaeological Journal**, with a view to publication by the end of this year.

Regretfully, David Petts will be leaving the post of **Fieldwork Officer** at the end of the year, owing to other commitments and a desire to concentrate his efforts for the Society on editing the Journal. So we are urgently seeking to fill this post, with David offering the new recruit any support that he can provide.

Meanwhile, if anyone has any projects in mind, and would like to lead a fieldwork session, please let us know. The Society has the use of some surveying equipment.

Officers 2008–09

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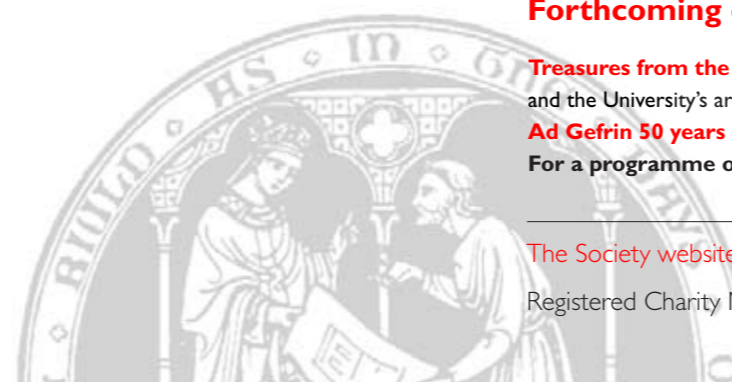
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East Park, Sedgefield 2008

A fourth season of the joint Durham County Council Archaeology Section/Durham University Archaeological Services excavation at the Roman settlement at East Park, Sedgefield, took place this summer. As in previous years, this consisted of three weeks of undergraduate fieldwork training followed by three weeks of community excavation. Readers will recall that in terms of layout the settlement consists of groups of ditched and fenced enclosures or property plots lining both sides of the north-south Roman road popularly known as Cade's Road for a distance of at least 800 metres. Geophysical survey shows a single row of such plots west of the road but a far more complex arrangement to the east and apparently continuing beneath the outskirts of modern Sedgefield (Plan 1).

In 2006, the focus of attention was the single, isolated enclosure to the west side of an apparently open area, perhaps a market square or village green, in the centre of the eastern half of the settlement, close to the edge of modern Show Field. In 2007, the land immediately east of this enclosure was examined. The area in front of the enclosure had remained as open ground throughout the life of the settlement. Beyond this, however, lay one or more timber buildings set, like all of the others seen so far in this settlement, within a fenced and ditched enclosure which continued beneath Show Field.

For 2008, it was decided to examine the front part of the enclosure lying immediately adjacent to and behind (west of) the single enclosure investigated in 2006. A length of the ditch along the front of the enclosure was excavated along with part of a parallel ditch sub-dividing the interior of the enclosure. Both were interrupted by a centrally placed gap marking the entrance through which a track-way surfaced with cobbles and gravel passed.

In addition, permission was obtained from the landowners to extend the geophysical survey into the neighbouring Show Field, the last remaining open area close to Sedgefield. This revealed the pattern of enclosures continuing to the east but did not reveal any features such as a fort, villa or religious complex to explain why the settlement had developed here (Plan 2).

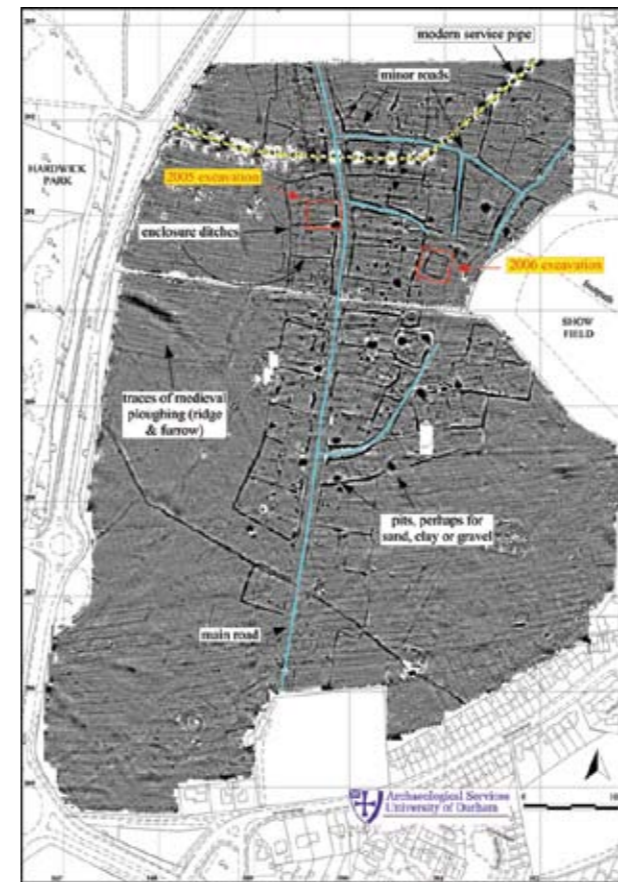
David Mason President AASDN

Trip to Birdoswald and Spadeadam

Thirty members went on a trip to the Roman fort of Birdoswald by Hadrian's Wall and into Northumberland to visit RAF Spadeadam under the direction of Phil Abramson. Some of us having attended a couple of courses on the Romans taught by Phil, we anticipated a very instructive and fun day out – and we certainly weren't disappointed. Phil's sense of humour and vast knowledge of the Romans meant we learnt a lot about Birdoswald. The section of wall alongside the fort is a wonder to see and to some of us it was an unknown 'gem' – being so well preserved. We had fun striding along some of the wall looking for the inscriptions left by the Roman legionary builders and seeking out their customary 'phallic' carvings on the building stones.



Sedgefield Plan 1 (© ASUD)



Sedgefield Plan 2 (© ASUD)



Piercebridge garden with medieval wall and Roman bathhouse



Viewing Willowford Roman bridge



Spadeadam launch pad for Blue Streak



Piercebridge Roman bridge

Phil brought alive the panoramic setting for the fort on the edge of a hilltop, which also enhanced its defensive position – the clever Romans. A very interesting extra to this site is the evidence unearthed of its continuing occupation after the Romans left Britain in the 5th century – and today there is still a farmhouse over part of the remains.

Our tour of Spadeadam was fascinating – like stepping back in time, observing all of the older rockets, lorries, etc used by the forces and now abandoned. At times it felt quite eerie standing amongst the derelict buildings – as always, Phil's knowledge and sense of humour made it an extremely enjoyable visit. Our walk to view the old launch pads felt like the set for some futuristic film!

AGM at Piercebridge

Our AGM trip this year was to Piercebridge and we were blessed with a lovely sunny day, lovely food at the local farm shop but, best of all, an extremely interesting, informative tour around the various sites.

We started off the day by looking at the remains of the original bridge and were able to understand the importance of this crossing over the River Tees. Dere Street was the main supply route from York to Hadrian's Wall and connected all the forts in between. It was interesting to observe how much the river had changed its course. During our visit we watched the divers in the river looking for artefacts – they have spent many years excavating the river and have found many exciting finds. We then had a brief tour around the parts of the excavated fort which lie at the back of the settlement of Piercebridge – the majority of the village is built over the layout of the fort. We were then able to explore the site at our leisure.

Our AGM took place in the local village hall and was followed by a lovely tea supplied by the Piercebridge WI. Following on from this we were invited by one of the WI ladies to view the Roman bathhouse remains in her garden – this was a really exciting extra to the day. "Imagine living with so much history in your garden," was what a number of us thought. Above the bathhouse was a medieval building and the arch was still well preserved, forming part of the garden wall. Despite having visited this site previously there was still so much more that we learnt that day.

Louise Gosling AASDN

Publications

Bargains for members

Research Report 5 Past, Present and Future: the archaeology of Northern England £3 (p and p £4.75)

Papers presented at a conference in Durham in 1996 provide an overview of the archaeology of our area from early prehistory to the industrial period.

Research Report 1 The medieval cross slab grave cover in County Durham Peter Ryder (1985) £1 (plus postage and packing)

Back issues of the Journal

Current Society publications

Research Report 6 Acts of Perception: a study of Barnard Castle in Teesdale David Austin. Members £50, non-members £65 (plus postage and packing)

Research Report 7 Roman Piercebridge: excavations by DW Harding and Peter Scott 1969–1981 edited H E M Cool and D J P Mason. Due to appear towards the end of 2008.

Teesdale Archaeology

Anglo Saxon Hartlepool and the foundations of English Christianity: an archaeology of the Anglo Saxon monastery Robin Daniels

The monastery at Hartlepool is a site of major importance in the Christian conversion of Northumbria. This volume draws together and synthesises the archaeological evidence that has accumulated over 170 years of active investigation into the Anglo-Saxon settlement. Information about buildings, cemeteries, artefacts and environmental resources is presented and analysed along with a discussion of the possible organization of the settlement and its relationship to its hinterland.

Since this book is extremely competitively priced at £15 plus £5 postage and packing, it was not possible to negotiate a reduction for our members, but Robin Daniels has kindly agreed to deliver a bulk order for members who can pick up their copy at a Society meeting, thereby saving them the cost of postage. If you would like a copy for £15, please contact our Membership Secretary, Maureen Smith.

Courses in archaeology and architecture

Newcastle WEA

The Bronze Age Tuesdays 10.00 am to 12.00 am, starting 16 September **Abbey Road Sports Centre** Pity Me (free parking available) **tutor** Mrs Maureen Smith, AASDN Membership Secretary

Centre for Lifelong Learning Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland

website <http://cll.sunderland.ac.uk> email lifelonglearning@sunderland.ac.uk telephone (0191) 5152800

Living in the Past Archaeology and prehistory in the North East Mondays 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm, starting 29 September

Newcastle Claremont Tower Newcastle University campus **tutor** Ian Colquhoun

Hillforts and Homesteads Later prehistory in the North East Tuesdays 7.15pm to 9.15 pm, starting 30 September **Durham**

Clayport Library . tutor Ian Colquhoun

Experiencing architecture in the North East Mondays 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm, starting 29 September **Newcastle Claremont Tower** Newcastle University Campus **tutor** Anthony Hyland