

spring 2009

New investigations at Binchester Roman Fort



As most readers will be aware, for the last four years the County Council's Archaeology Service has run a summer season of community excavation in conjunction with Archaeological Services Durham University at East Park, Sedgefield. For 2009 – and hopefully for many years to come – it is the intention to transfer this event to Binchester Roman Fort. Very little of the fort and its accompanying civil settlement has been excavated, and the *Time Team* investigation in 2007 demonstrated that the site is of even greater importance and extent than was hitherto believed. If all goes according to plan, the new project

will be a joint venture between the Archaeology Service, the Department of Archaeology of Durham University and the Department of Archaeology of Stanford University, with this Society as the fourth partner. As at East Park, the project will be a mix of undergraduate fieldwork training and community excavation, taking place in June and July in the first instance. Further information will be available nearer the time regarding places for those wishing to take part. There will also be the opportunity to participate in the finds processing work both on site and during the rest of the year.

David Mason President

Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland

Experimental archaeology

Following the success of the natural dyeing practical last summer, Louisa Gidney has kindly volunteered to host another session at the Botanic Gardens in Durham on Saturday 13 June. This time we shall be learning about the manufacture of sails in the post-Roman period.

It is assumed that the huge sails on Viking longships would have been made of wool, since the Scandinavian countries had no source for materials such as cotton or hemp. But wool would have needed to be proofed, and the theory is that this was a process involving bone grease and red ochre, which would account for the discovery of large quantities of smashed-up cattle long bones, for example, at Carlisle. Conversely, the absence of cattle bones on the post-medieval dockland site in London, despite evidence for salt beef production to provide for long voyages, could indicate that they were shipped over to the Netherlands, where sails were proofed.

We shall be assisting with a small-scale reconstruction of this process; proofing a cauldron, smashing up and simmering bones, cleaning the grease off them, and proofing a small piece of cloth. This is a pilot run for the proofing of a large woollen sail, and eventually the recreation of a Viking ship tent, the final results to be written up as an article in *Durham Archaeological Journal*.

The practical will take place outdoors, old clothes are advisable, and adequate footwear is essential. We shall meet at the Visitors' Centre at 2.00 pm and the session will end at 4.00 pm, but members are welcome to take breaks to visit the gardens or café if they wish. There is no charge for the workshop, but please let Belinda Burke know by Friday 5 June if you would like to attend, so we know how many to expect.



Natural dyeing practical, June 2008

Dordogne, Spring 2008

Beetling-cliffs, valleys, rushing muddy rivers,
Green forested high tops and slopes stretch away,
Tidy peaceful French country towns, châteaux,
Small fields, ways ever winding deep and narrow.

Once an Ice-Age Eden where new life came,
Aurochs, bison, mammoth, rhino-woolly grazed,
Giants of their kind – bears gave yawn and sigh,
Horse and reindeer sped, ibex clashed on high.

To this scene came people, garnering its riches,
Unconscious of fame to come: *Cro-Magnon*,
Mousterian, *Magdalenian*, *Neanderthal*,
Such ringing names not their sole memorial.

Grey, brown and black-streaked rocks hanging over,
Shelter many a camp site of these ancient folk,
Where tools exquisite and practical, supine
Next some small engraved image fine.

Beneath the bluffs and spreading canopies,
Long lost halls run in secret defiles dark.
Here, hand and eye did earthen colours marry,
Bold of line, in copious wond'rous bestiary.

Magic had its place – *birdman* and *unicorn*.
Hands reach out in appealing silhouette,
And of strange spots and other symbols seen,
We may only wonder the thought or dream.

They crawled in blackness with feeble flame,
Recording their world, on cold mud lain.
Why – for power, worship, pride, creative joy?
To try to know this, in our minds only
May we search, while in those caverns lonely.

Eric Smith

Fieldwork

An opportunity has arisen to explore the medieval high status landscape associated with Lammerside Hall and Pendragon Castle in the Vale of Mallerstang, close to the Cumbria / County Durham / North Yorkshire border.

On Saturday 28th March we will commence an earthwork survey and measured drawing of the surviving masonry of the Medieval manorial site at Lammerside just to the west of the River Eden. The site has been largely unstudied, but is included on the Schedule of Ancient Monuments as a Peel Tower. A preliminary examination of the site suggests something much more complicated, with evidence of a separate hall and chamber block, a precinct wall, garden earthworks including garden structures, a park pale and evidence of a stone-built medieval bridge across the River Eden.

The site appears to date from the 14th century and is associated with the Warcop family who were members of the Neville household. It was abandoned in the mid to late 16th century, following on from a protracted and bloody hunting dispute involving the Warcops, the Cliffords and the Whartons.

The tower seen across the earthwork of the precinct boundary ▶

The 14th-century stairway at the rear of the tower ▶▶

This will be the first of several sessions in the area which will be extended to recording the late medieval artificial rabbit warren associated with Pendragon, together with a detailed survey of the remains of Pendragon Castle itself, which comprises a hunting estate dating from the late 13th century, associated with the Cliffords. For more information please contact Erik Matthews on (01609) 773393 or e-mail at rubyna.matthews@btinternet.com

Anyone who would like to be kept informed of fieldwork opportunities, and who is not on the Society's e-mail or telephone list for fieldwork, should contact the Secretary.



A quick message to everyone who hasn't filled in a Gift Aid form

The Gift Aid scheme enables charities to claim tax relief on donations (including members' fees) made by UK taxpayers. In short, if you give the society £15, the Government will give the Society £3.75. This obviously makes a big difference to the

Society's coffers. At the moment, about half of the members have signed up, so we've included a Gift Aid form with the newsletter. If you're not sure whether you've filled in a form, don't worry, send it anyway – two copies are better than none!

Simon Alderson Treasurer AASDN

Programme 2009

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 21 March **St Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-Spring A window into the past** **Dr Peter Ryder**
Historic Buildings consultant
- Saturday 18 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
note This lecture will take place in CG85, in the Chemistry Department at the Stockton Road entrance to the University Science Site
- Saturday 23 May **Annual General Meeting at Seaton Sluice** with a visit to Seaton Delaval Hall
- Saturday 13 June **Sail proofing practical at the Botanic Gardens in Durham** Please contact the Secretary if you wish to attend
2.00 to 4.00 pm
- Saturday 19 September **Redefining aesthetic narratives A reassessment of the designed landscapes of North Yorkshire**
Leslie Johansen-Salters PhD student, University of York
- Saturday 10 October **The tomb robbers of No-Amun Power struggles under Ramesses IX** **Dylan Bickerstaffe** Egyptologist
- Saturday 21 November **Ordinary people's houses** **John Grundy** Architectural historian and broadcaster
- Saturday 12 December **Members' Meeting**

Excursion

For details of summer excursions, please contact the Secretary



Just published! **Roman Piercebridge Excavations by D W Harding and Peter Scott 1969–1981** edited by **H E M Cool and D J P Mason**

ISBN 978 0 9510388 57. AASDN Research Report No 7

Full retail price £24.00 (plus £5.00 p&p) . Special price offer of £15.00 (plus £5.00 p&p) extended to end of April

This handsome 362-page hardbacked volume describes the results of the extensive excavations carried out by the late Peter Scott at Piercebridge in the 1970s which explored parts of the Roman fort, the adjacent civil settlement and the remains of a previously unsuspected bridge revealed during gravel extraction. It also includes a report on the excavation by Dr (now Professor)

Dennis Harding of a villa at nearby Holme House, one of the most northerly in the whole of Britain. There are full accounts of the vast amount of pottery recovered along with the coins, metalwork, animal bone and high quality glassware.

Thus, finally, there is what one hopes is a fitting testament to all the work done by Peter Scott, Dennis Harding and all their helpers.

Officers 2009–10

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