

### Binchester 2010



This year will see the second season of the major research excavation at the Roman fort at Binchester. Last year saw the AASDN work with the Department of Archaeology, Durham University and the Department of Classics, Stanford University, on exploring the upper levels of the north-east corner of the fort. They exposed evidence for medieval activity and the foundations of a probable late Roman barrack, as well as several towers linked to the defensive rampart that surrounded the fort. Members of the Society took the chance to come out and work on the excavations and have since been involved in processing the many finds that were uncovered. This year the project will continue excavation within the fort and hopefully expand into new areas of the site. Once again, society members will be able to get involved in the excavation. The precise dates of the excavation are still being confirmed, but are likely to be in July and early August. For further information about the chance to get involved in the dig contact Dr David Mason at [david.mason@durham.gov.uk](mailto:david.mason@durham.gov.uk). To get more information about last year's work, take a look at the project blog at <http://binchester.blogspot.com/>.



Aerial view of the site, showing a late Roman barrack block and a possible medieval building  
© Aerial-Cam



Society members working on site at Binchester (top) and helping with post-excavation work (above)

### Anniversary celebrations

2011 marks the 150th anniversary of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, and it is proposed that this event should be marked and celebrated. Proposed activities include an all-star programme of lectures, a day conference covering all aspects of the Society's activities, and an extended trip to Chester and the surrounding area.

Any further suggestions will be gratefully received.

### Making bread without an oven

Louisa Gidney has kindly agreed to lead another practical session for us at the Botanic Gardens on Saturday 12th June 2010. On this occasion we shall be exploring methods of making bread using hearths and a firebox, as well as different types of dough. In areas like the North East of England, where wheat did not grow successfully, barley or oats would be used, and oat breads were much more widespread and diverse

than the modern Scottish oat cake, with many regional variations.

Please wear old clothes and adequate footwear. We shall meet at the Visitor's Centre at 2.00 pm and the session will end at 4.00 pm. There is no charge, and friends are welcome, but it would be helpful if you could let Belinda Burke know by Friday 4th June if you would like to attend.

## Culture and cultural heritage

**Members are undoubtedly aware of Durham's bid to be the City of Culture for 2013, the proposal embracing not just Durham City but its hinterland as well. While this is a laudable ambition, there is a noticeable gap in the county's current 'cultural heritage offer', namely a county museum or similar institution where the rich and varied heritage of County Durham as a whole could be accessed by local people and visitors alike; a major educational facility as well as an additional tourism attraction.**

There used to be four archaeology/history galleries at the Bowes Museum, but these were dismantled as part of the recent refurbishment scheme and will not be replaced. Soon after his election as Leader of the County Council, Mr Simon Henig announced his ambition to establish a 'People's Museum' and this would certainly be appropriate at the foundation of the new unitary authority. However, as yet, no firm plans have emerged.

If Society members support the idea of a 'county museum', perhaps they would make their views known by writing to Councillor S Henig, Leader of Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham City DH1 5TY.

## Durham Heritage Centre



**Durham Heritage Centre and Museum, in the church of St Mary-le-Bow on North Bailey in the centre of Durham, is the result of over thirty years of hard work by dedicated volunteers. The church became redundant in 1967, and the Bow Trust was formed in 1975 to preserve the Grade I Listed Building and to open it to the public as a Heritage Centre. The Bow Trust is the charitable trust and governing body for the Museum that the church now contains.**

The Heritage Centre has attracted many objects relating to local history, and is now a museum of local history, principally of the City of Durham since 1500. Earlier artefacts relating to the City are mostly collected and displayed by the Fulling Mill Archaeology Museum. Durham Heritage Centre and Museum, run entirely by volunteers, gained Accreditation by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council in 2007.

The Museum aims to present the history of the City of Durham for the enjoyment and education of residents and visitors. Friends of the Museum benefit from invitations to exhibition openings, lectures, events, and unlimited visits. In addition to welcoming new Friends, we are currently looking for volunteers to serve on the Management Committee of the Museum. We are particularly keen to find people with the time and skills

to oversee marketing and fundraising for the Museum, and someone able to co-ordinate our large team of volunteers.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend or in volunteering for the above roles, please contact [admin@durhamheritagecentre.org.uk](mailto:admin@durhamheritagecentre.org.uk).

## Fieldwork Programme spring 2010

**We have a full and evolving package of fieldwork activities to cover a range of tastes this year. We start on 27 February with the first of what will hopefully be a number of sessions at Sockburn Hall near Darlington, recording the re-used medieval panelling in the dining room.**



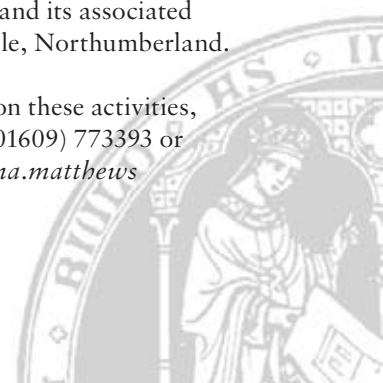
Medieval panelling in the dining room at Sockburn Hall

**20–21 March** We commence a small archaeological excavation on the midden deposit adjacent to the ruined 18th-century Banqueting House at Hornby Castle near Bedale, North Yorkshire. The deposit has yielded finds of 18th- and early 19th-century date related to entertainment activities in the Banqueting House; but also early 17th century handmade clay pipes and mid 15th-century pottery. This promises to be an interesting opportunity to explore a 'find rich' high status later medieval/post-medieval rural site. Further sessions have been arranged for 1–2 May and for later on in the summer.

**27–28 March** Return to Lammerside in Cumbria to record by plane table the late medieval rabbit warren associated with Pendragon Castle. We hope Scheduled Monument Consent can be obtained in the future for a small excavation at the main site to answer some of the outstanding questions. Work so far will be reported at a conference at Stirling University on 19–20 June, and in a subsequent publication.

Later in the year we hope to commence a fieldwork exercise in the North Pennine Lead Mining Area recording a mining/processing site and its associated facilities, probably in West Allendale, Northumberland.

If you would like any information on these activities, please contact Erik Matthews on (01609) 773393 or 07951380829, or by e-mail at [rubyna.matthews@btinternet.com](mailto:rubyna.matthews@btinternet.com).



## Salving, smitting and smorring

In June 2009, some Society members joined Louisa Gidney at the Botanic Gardens for another session of experimental archaeology. As explained in Newsletter 11, the aim was to explore methods of proofing that might have been used on the woollen sails of Viking longships. Starting from techniques that would have been familiar to shepherds – salving sheep with a mixture of tar and fat to protect against lice, ticks and keds – and smitting and raddling (a means of marking the sheep with red or yellow ochre), it was postulated that similar materials could have been used to proof sails; the Viking sailors drawing on their farming roots and using their experiences with live sheep to find a suitable treatment for wool.

In order to replicate archaeological finds of fragmented bone, Louisa expended considerable effort, experimenting with three axes of varying weight. The only one that made a significant impact on the fresh beef bones was a fearsome bullock splitting axe. She then demonstrated how such an assemblage would be sorted by a bone expert, using diagnostic zones to estimate the number of individuals present. With the aid of samples prepared earlier, she showed how boiling the fragments resulted in a thick gelatinous stock with a surface layer of fat, the shattering of the bones ensuring greater efficiency in rendering them when using a small cauldron.

Cloth samples were then prepared and treated with different combinations of surface fat, jelly and Stockholm tar, gently heated. It was found that the use of both fat and jelly with the tar provided the most satisfactory result in terms of integration of the mix,



Louisa Gidney with the 3.27 kg axe and samples of shattered bones. Behind her boils a cauldron full of porridge – a method of proofing a new cooking pot

and flexibility and penetration of the fabric. Society members then experimented with red and yellow raddle powder (a modern ochre equivalent) which, besides producing a more attractive colour, has been shown to be a good filler of voids in the fabric, with anti-bacterial properties that would have helped to prevent the wet sail from rotting.

*This summary was based on the text of Louisa's poster which was accepted for the Association for Environmental Archaeology conference in September 2009.*

## Publications

Society publications continue to sell well. When David Austin's book, **Acts of Perception: the study of Barnard Castle in Teesdale** was printed, the initial print run of volume I had a minor fault in that some of the illustrations were slightly under inked. But the printers supplied us with several copies of this first print run for our launch event. They are now on sale for £10 each, available from the Society Secretary, Belinda Burke.

It has also come to our attention that the ISBN number printed in the **Piercebridge** report is incorrect. This has now been rectified with stickers bearing the correct number. If you have bought a copy of the report and would like to change the number, please contact Belinda, who will send you a sticker.

## Excursions in 2009



Paul Bahn with a group of members at the entrance to Church Hole cave, Creswell Crags, August 2009



Visit to Hornby Castle with Erik Matthews, September 2009



View of Yeavinger Bell from the site of Ad Gefrin

## Programme 2010

All lectures will be held at Elvet Riverside, Room 141 New Elvet, Durham, at 2.30 pm unless otherwise notified. Everyone is welcome to attend

- Saturday 10 April **Re-evaluating earl medieval Northumbrian contacts and the 'coastal highway'**  
**Christopher Ferguson** D Phil student, University of Oxford
- Saturday 8 May **AGM at Corbridge**
- Saturday 12 June **Making bread without an oven** **Louisa Gidney** Durham University . Rent-a-Peasant  
2.00 pm to 4.00 pm A practical at the Botanic Gardens, Durham
- Saturday 25 September **Flodden 500 Initial results from fieldwork in advance of the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Flodden (9 September 1513)\*** **Dr Christopher Burgess** County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council
- Saturday 16 October **Traditions and Transitions Material culture and deposition in the later Iron Age of North-East England**  
**Arthur Anderson** Ph D Student, Durham University
- Saturday 13 November **The late Iron Age ritual site at Hallaton, Leicestershire** **Rewriting the early history of central Britain**  
**Professor Colin Haselgrove** University of Leicester
- Saturday 11 December **Members Meeting**

\* The excavations at Flodden are due to take place from 4–19 September. There is likely to be an open day at the site on the middle weekend of the dig (11–12 September) with formal site tours, but visitors are welcome at any time. Further information will be posted on the project website: [www.Flodden.info](http://www.Flodden.info). Members are also welcome to join the excavation as volunteers; contact Chris Burgess for details.

## Excursions

- Saturday 22 May **North of England Lead Mining Museum, Killhope** In the afternoon Ian Forbes will lead a walk to Low Slitt lead mine in the Middlehope Valley and we shall visit Westgate Primitive Methodist Chapel
- Sunday 11 July **A walk along Druridge Bay** Lead by **Andrew Burn** of Archaeological Research Services Ltd
- Saturday 14 August **Berwick upon Tweed and Norham Castle** Lead by **Dr Adrian Green**
- Sunday 5 September **A walk around Thomas Bewick's Newcastle** Lead by **Dr Peter Quinn**

We are very grateful to committee members Susan Rothwell and Louise Gosling who have kindly agreed to organize trips for the Society, with Susan acting as contact:

Mrs Susan Rothwell 5 Ramshaw Close, Langley Park, Durham DH7 9FP  
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