

spring 2016

President's letter



Dear Members, Let me start by offering you belated wishes for a happy New Year! As usual we have an excellent line up of speakers for our programme over the next few months and an interesting list of excursions over the spring and summer months. Our thanks must go to Belinda Burke, Louise Gosling and Sue Rothwell for the efforts they put in to arrange this programme for us. Do take advantage of it!

Since the last newsletter, Anna Bloor has joined the committee to help oversee matters to do with planning and conservation. She cannot possibly cover every case that comes to our attention, so if you'd like to join in with the society's efforts to preserve our architectural and archaeological heritage by commenting on planning applications, then do get in touch. No special skills are required and guidance and help can be given.

In the current time of austerity and government cuts, there is disturbing news of local councils in other areas of the country closing museums and disbanding their historic environment teams. Our local councils in the North East have announced more limited cuts to date. But local government budgets are set to reduce further, so there is a danger that these mechanisms for preserving our heritage will also be reduced and even disappear here. Please do take opportunities to make representations to local politicians about the vital role that museums and heritage professionals make in preserving our heritage for the benefit of local people and visitors alike. If you hear of any impending cuts do let your Committee know and we will make representations.

Andrew Millard President

Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland

Summer excursions

We had three very successful summer trips. Our inclement English weather was kind, giving us sun each time.

Martin Roberts led an extremely informative walk, explaining the development of some of Durham's buildings and gardens in the shadow of our beautiful castle and cathedral. How often do we walk by a building, wondering 'what lies behind that front door?'. Some of the riverside banks covered with trees were once beautiful landscaped gardens.

Dr Adrian Green guided us around the splendours of Belsay castle, hall and gardens. The 14th-century castle has some surprising remnants of the paint used to brighten the walls in the dark interiors – perhaps brightening

up the inhabitants' lives as well. The hall, built in 1807–17, was developed along Grecian lines, inspired by a honeymoon in Athens. We finished the day by looking around the unusual and beautiful gardens.

Dr Eric Cambridge was our guide on a bus tour exploring the development of early Christian settlement, viewing churches in our local area. Instead of explaining just the structure of our churches he gave us a fascinating insight into the religious and social development in Anglo-Saxon times, the influence of the Vikings and the transition into Norman times. We viewed wonderful stone sculptures, still present in these churches, and a rare boundary stone alongside a previous Roman road.

Louise Gosling Excursions Team



Admiring the elegant 18th-century staircase at Eden House, St John's College, Durham, with Martin Roberts



Visit to Belsay Hall with Adrian Green



Studying the north wall of Escomb Church

New excavations at Binchester

Results of the 7th and final season

Fort The removal of areas of paving within the cavalry barrack this year revealed lines of post-holes belonging to successive versions of the interior partition walls. Continuing investigation of the presumed decurion's accommodation at the north-east end of the building revealed a complex sequence of structural alteration.

An explanation for the widespread subsidence previously noted in this part of the fort was discovered this year. Prior to the construction of the cavalry barrack there had clearly been a phase in which many large pits were dug in this area, accompanied in some cases by platforms of burnt stones (imported from elsewhere on the site not burnt *in situ*) and spreads of charcoal and ash. Although as yet undated this activity may conceivably belong to the later years in the life of the primary fort when, as indicated by the 1970s and 1980s excavations, it became more akin to a works depot represented by extensive ironworking

and the dumping of associated waste on the site of the demolished *praetorium*.

Vicus In the *vicus* trench work concentrated on completing the excavation of the interior of the part of the bathhouse previously exposed along with the investigation of the area between it and Dere Street and between it and the strip-buildings to the north. In the *apodyterium* the secondary plunge-pool added along its west side was fully revealed.

The most significant discovery within the bathhouse was the recognition that the narrow corridor-shaped chamber south of the *apodyterium* had originally been equipped with a hypocaust and tubulation (the lining of hollow bricks forming a heated cavity behind the plaster of the walls above floor level). This extended to either side of an early partition wall located immediately east of the original doorway connecting with

the *apodyterium* and is most likely to have been supplied with heat indirectly from the neighbouring circular *laconicum*.

The narrow strip of ground between the bathhouse and Dere Street contained a massive accumulation of charcoal and ash deposits, presumably in part at least waste derived from the neighbouring furnaces. The lowest road surface or pavement encountered was level with the internal floor surface of the baths. It had also been cut through by the construction trench for the plunge-bath extension. Numerous re-surfacings of Dere Street interspersed with charcoal deposits lay above this, the latest surface of the road being 2.5 metres above the earliest encountered.

What next? The conclusion of the fieldwork will be followed by a thorough assessment of the data and materials recovered to inform and guide the subsequent phases of post-excavation study and analysis eventually resulting in publication. As to the remains themselves, the bulk of the excavated areas will be backfilled. However the exposed portion of the extramural bath-building will be enclosed by a temporary protective structure (funded by the County Council) that will enable visitors to continue to view and appreciate this magnificently well-preserved building for the next year or two while a strategy for the longer term development of Binchester is formulated in collaboration with the Auckland Castle Trust which now owns the majority of the site.

I would like to express my personal thanks to all of the volunteers who have contributed to the success of the project over the past seven years.

Dr David Mason

Principal Archaeologist
Durham County Council

Carved stone
recovered from the barrack

© Archaeological Services
Durham University ▶

Stone toilet seat ▶

© Archaeological Services
Durham University



▶ The remains of the marvellously well-preserved extramural bath-building

© Aerialcam Ltd

Hornby Castle Season 2015 Fieldwork update

Work at Hornby during the 2015 Season has concentrated on Trench 6 which has, in many ways, illustrated the history of the excavated site in miniature. The trench lies at the north-east edge of the excavated area, directly to the south of the site boundary with St Mary's Church and parallel with the earlier Trench 4 which previously yielded the collapsed remains of a two-storey hall block.

At the beginning of the season further rubble from the collapsed Hall was located in the south-western corner and right at the end of the season the substantial foundation of the eastern wall of the Hall was located. However, the front wall of the Hall was also largely overlain by a 1.2-metre wide gravel path associated with the late 18th-century landscaping of the site by Capability Brown and the Reverend William Mason. The path itself contained the remains of a system of positive drainage with a brick-lined channel centrally placed within its course and a network of pipes leading off to the north-east. A significant quantity of late 18th- and early 19th-century material associated with the pleasure ground was recovered in a clearly defined zone to either side of the path. This included a gilded livery uniform button and a series of commemorative clay pipe bowls, including one depicting Britannia as a mermaid to celebrate the victory of Admiral Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Along the eastern side of the trench and below the level of the 18th-century pleasure garden a clearly defined rammed clay platform was encountered, yielding a significant quantity of sherds of early 17th-century pottery and also some glass ware. More significantly, traces were also encountered of a series of ephemeral post-holes and some military artefacts, including lead musket shot and a badly corroded iron cannon ball. It has been suggested that this may be connected with an attempt by Sir Conyers-Darcy to fortify the site against local Parliamentary forces during the Civil War. The platform was unfortunately disrupted by the

drainage works associated with the later pleasure garden, so it has not as yet proved possible to gauge its full extent and more readily identify its function.

At the north-eastern edge of the trench, partially underlying the later drainage works and clay platform, were the clearly defined foundations of a kitchen of later medieval date associated with the Hall of the Pleasaunce directly to the west. A mortar floor overlying a layer of blue puddled clay was located that continued to line the wall foundation of the kitchen directly to the north and is believed to be a rudimentary form of damp proofing. Overlying the mortar floor were the clearly defined remains of two pastry and one bread oven along with traces of a larger tiled fireplace for roasting. Evidence of the use of the building at the time of its destruction in the form of a significant deposit of food bone was quickly identified. Intriguingly, evidence of the destruction event itself was found in the form of a dense concentration of military arrow heads, mostly from the floor but with one embedded in the rear wall of the bread oven into which it had been fired!

The south-eastern wall of the kitchen was partially truncated by the drainage network associated with the pathway, leading to possibly the most interesting and significant find of the season! In amongst a deposit of residual 12th-century imported pottery from Northern France was discovered a small bone object which was initially thought to be a gaming piece. However, the York Archaeological Trust has identified it as a tuning peg from a harp and experts in early music at Cambridge University have identified it as Pre-Conquest. This, together with the previous discovery of imported pottery from Northern Germany from the late 10th or early 11th century, raises the intriguing possibility of elite occupation of the site in the Pre-Conquest period.

It is hoped to explore the site of the kitchen and its relationship with the adjacent hall in the forthcoming 2016 season.

Erik Matthews Fieldwork Officer



Early 18th-century gilded livery button. Actual size

The coat of arms has still to be identified

Photo Erik Matthews

Weekend Excursion to Ipswich 12–16 June 20015

Last year the Society enjoyed another successful long weekend based in Ipswich, with visits to Colchester, Grimes Graves, Ickworth House, West Stow Anglo-Saxon village, Sutton Hoo and Framlingham Castle, with a tour of Ipswich town on the final morning.



Reconstruction of a workshop or barn, based on the plan of Hall 7 at West Stow. The widely spaced post-holes indicated a different building style from other halls, so wattle-and-daub panels were used as infilling within a timber structure



A victims of 'ritual killing', found on the eastern periphery of the Sutton Hoo site. The grave contained timber resembling a simple plough, or could it have been part of a gallows?



Grimes Graves was first identified as a Neolithic flint mining site by William Greenwell, who excavated there in 1868–70

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View along the wall-walk at Framlingham Castle to Tower 6 with an inserted Tudor chimney



The Willis Building in Ipswich, designed by Norman Forster, built in 1974. In 1991 it was designated the youngest Grade I Listed Building in Britain

This September we shall be visiting the Portsmouth area during 22–27 September, as detailed in the last newsletter and on our website. As always, we are most grateful to Dr David Mason for organising these trips.

Arch & Arch news

The Society sends out regular emails to members with updates for our programme and details of other activities in our area, entitled 'Arch & Arch news'. If any members are not currently receiving these and would like to be added to the distribution list, please email archandarch.dandn@durham.ac.uk.

Durham Museum and Heritage Centre, St Mary-le-Bow

Saturday 2 April 2016 There will be a Family Open Day at Durham Museum and Heritage Centre, North Bailey, Durham City. Entrance is free, with family activities available. Details at <http://www.durhamheritagecentre.org.uk/>.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Society has been invited to put on a temporary exhibition in the Museum this summer to showcase its work, and preparations are well underway. We intend to hold an opening for members of our Society and the Bow Trust, details to follow.

Message from the Secretary

I have held the Secretary's post for the past fourteen years, during which time the Society has grown considerably and branched out into different areas of activity. I would now like to hand over all or part of the job to others, partly owing to pressure from other commitments, but also because it may be time for a fresh approach, and a

chance to explore new possibilities. At a recent Committee meeting it was suggested that the post could be divided into different roles, for example: Programme Secretary, Newsletter Editor and General Secretary. We are grateful to Durham University for providing our email account and for allowing us to use their lecture theatres for our meetings; we also have a mutually beneficial arrangement with the Department of Archaeology and the University Library, whereby we send copies of Durham Archaeological Journal to other societies and organisations at home and abroad in exchange for their publications, and this task is currently overseen by the Secretary. So there needs to be at least one person belonging to the University who could take on these roles. If you are interested and would like to find out more about what is involved, please contact me to discuss. I will, of course, be happy to provide support to the new Secretary or Secretaries, and we

are very fortunate in having a strong and supportive Committee, some of whom already assist with secretarial tasks.

Belinda Burke Society Secretary

Committee membership

Two new members are elected to the committee at the AGM every year, to serve for a three-year term of office. If you would like to stand, please could you let the Secretary know as soon as possible before the AGM.

A request for information

Between 1965 and 1967 Ian John Charles Foster (1908–1978), Keeper of Oriental Books at Durham University 1950–1973, delivered a series of illustrated lectures on Early Christian architecture on behalf of the Society. As part of a Durham University project I am editing and reviewing this lecture series. If you attended these lectures or knew Foster, and would be willing to be interviewed for the project, then please contact me at e.a.preece@durham.ac.uk or on telephone (017985) 701 152.

Edward Preece

Officers 2015–16

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