

Altogether Archaeology

Digging our heritage in the North Pennines



**IT'S THE FIRST ALTOGETHER
ARCHAEOLOGY NEWSLETTER!**



**AUCKLAND
CASTLE DIG**

(photo: Stephen Eastmead)



**SEWINGSHIELDS
HADRIAN'S WALL**

(Photo: Tony Metcalfe)



**'LOST ROADS' OF
HEXHAM FELL**

(Photo: Stephen Eastmead)



Altogether Archaeology

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Message from the President of Altogether Archaeology

The new Altogether Archaeology group is now on the road! As its Honorary President I am proud to be on this journey with you. It is encouraging to see that since the inception of the group, members of the committee have been extremely busy investing time in planning a way forward that will ensure that future projects are relevant, robust, and fit within a sound research framework. This approach demonstrates a maturity of thought which will ensure that any work that the group embarks on will be both of value to the wider archaeological community and worthwhile for the members. The first project, 'The Lost Roads of Hexham Fell' is an example of how a group such as AA can develop its own research agenda and discover new archaeology. Much more fun testing your own ideas than someone else's! I am confident that the future (as well as the past the group unearths) is in safe hands.

Best wishes,

Stewart Ainsworth



Stewart with AA Secretary, Mike Powell & Chair, Tony Metcalfe at the inaugural AGM in March (photo: Alex Jackson)

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*Holwick walk, June 2016 led by Tom Gledhill.
(photo: Tony Metcalfe)*



*Lunch break on Yeavinger Bell, August 2016
(photo: Tony Metcalfe)*

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the Altogether Archaeology Newsletter! We have had a busy year since our AGM in March, lots of fascinating routes have been walked, sandwiches eaten and workshops held, all of which were really well supported by members.

We also ran our own dig, looking for a lost Roman road on Hexham Fell. The dig was a particular triumph as it showed that, as a group we do have the expertise and commitment to plan and undertake such a complex enterprise, and you can read about it in the pair of excellent articles by Greg Finch and Martin Green, the driving forces behind the dig, on page six.

Many of our members also took part in the dig in the walled garden at Auckland Castle, and Michelle Arthy's piece gives a fascinating insight into the experience. You will also find an article about the North Pennines Virtual Museum - a venture well worth investigating - in this newsletter and Alan Newham's personal account of the Sewingshields Walk.

We couldn't include items about every activity, so here are some photographs to give you a flavour of what else we have been up to.

Chris Powell



How many archaeologists can you fit in a roundhouse? Holwick walk, led by Tom Gledhill, June 2016. (photo: Mike Powell)



Paul's best catalogue pose. Yeavinger Bell, walk led by Paul Frodsham, August 2016 (photo: Tony Metcalfe)



Mallerstang walk, led by Harriet Sams, July 2016 (photo: Mike Powell)



Brian & Janet, concentrating!

Archaeological Finds drawing workshop led by Sheila and Alan Newton, November 2016 (photo: Tony Metcalfe)

Doing the business for AA...

In the rest of this newsletter you can read about many exciting activities that AA has been involved in this year. Whilst all of this has been happening, your committee has also been beavering away on a couple of key projects that will help us go on delivering an interesting and worthwhile archaeology programme for members well into the future. It's not the glamorous side of Altogether Archaeology, but as this work is crucial to us remaining a thriving community organisation we thought we should let you know what we have been up to.

Back in March we were awarded a Start-up Grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund. These grants are designed to help new heritage-related groups, like us, build themselves into robust and successful organisations. We have used the bulk of our grant to fund these projects.

The first project is about creating what we are calling our 'Research Framework'. Right from the beginning of AA we have always done significant archaeological research work to very high standards. Your committee is absolutely committed to the principle that we should continue to do the same going forward. The Research Framework is central to this. It is being written by *Oracle Heritage Services* (better known to us as Paul Frodsham) and reviews what is already known about the archaeology of the North Pennines, and outlines the main current gaps in knowledge, and what can be done about them. The key part of it for us is an 'AA Research Strategy' which will set out plans for the group's fieldwork and research over the next three to five years. It will aim to achieve a 'best fit' between priorities identified in the Research Framework and what our members want to do (which is why we asked you all to

complete a survey over the summer). The Research Strategy will be an essential supporting document for the grant applications we will soon be making to fund the next phase of our fieldwork.

This brings me to our second main project. Having a well thought out Research Strategy backed by solid evidence is great start but unless we have the right organisation and sufficient funding in place to deliver it we are not going to get very far. In other words, we also need order a 'Business Plan & Fundraising Strategy'. We have enlisted the assistance of business consultant Chris Barlow of *ERS Research & Consultancy* to produce this. Chris is helping the committee to think through what our priorities are as an organisation, how we can achieve the capabilities we need to deliver our goals, and where we can raise the funding to go on doing great archaeology. Chris will then draw our ideas together into a structured business plan which we will use to steer the group forward.

Both of these projects will be completed by the end of this year and we are enormously grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for its support.

Mike Powell



AA Members hard at work on the Research Framework, The Golden Lion, Allendale, October 2016 (photo: Tony Metcalfe)

The 'Lost Roads' of Hexham Fell (Part 1- the background)

Our excavation this summer really owes its origins to the Allendale and Hexhamshire Lidar project led by Stewart Ainsworth which many of us were involved with during the North Pennines AONB's Altogether Archaeology programme. However, I wanted to peer over the northern boundary of the Lidar images we used during that project, and Martin Green was able to help here, having impressively wrestled to the floor the technology needed to convert the raw Environment Agency data into visible images. Handing the images over to me late last year he said he'd noticed a long straight line heading west to south- westwards over the high ground to the south of Hexham. We looked at it further. It appeared to run on due westwards in the direction of Carlisle. We cautiously declared it to be a linear feature, far be it to leap to any excited early conclusions!

It was time to take a look. With bated breath we came around the corner of a lane north of Catton in Allendale to where the 'linear feature' crossed it. The exact point was easy to find, marked as it was by gas pipeline posts on either side, and a band of replacement tarmac between them, a landscape feature of slightly more recent origins than the Roman period. However, when we went to cross the line of the feature further east, on a lane nearer Hexham, there were no such pipeline markers. Willing to do whatever it took for Altogether Archaeology I then went to the Dipton Mill Inn. The barman, who has worked on that land for decades, confirmed that there were no pipelines in the area but that, now he came to think of it, he had seen a slightly raised line running over one or two of the fields in very dry weather.



Greg enjoying the weather during preliminary investigations on Hexham Fell. (photo: Alex Jackson)

Intrigued and in much less than 'very dry weather' later in January, Martin and I then went out to walk over the land near Stublick, courtesy of the farmer. Even though we knew we were in exactly the right place it was virtually impossible to see any trace of the feature on the ground, until, through nearly horizontal sleet, we noticed a rough line of puddles on the waterlogged ground, running off to the east, and just beside it, a very slightly raised camber a few metres wide. And no pipeline markers. How lucky that we were out on such a wet and cold day that a roadside ditch would reveal itself! Directly on top of the line further across the field was a large pile of stones. The farmer had put them there 40 years ago when he gave up trying to plough the field because of the amount of stone he ran into. Even more promising.

Clearly we had come across TWO separate linear features: a pipeline to the west, and something probably much older to the east. Stewart Ainsworth cast his experienced eye over the eastern feature as seen on Lidar and agreed it had the right profile and width to have been a road. He also helpfully sent some of the 1km square Lidar tiles that we could manipulate further.

I also found a couple of useful old estate maps covering the area, from which the boundaries of the land cultivated in the medieval period could be mapped onto the Lidar imagery. The linear feature disappears at that point, indicating that it was older still. Time to start digging!

Greg Finch

The 'Lost Roads' of Hexham Fell (Part 2- the dig)

Our first dig is now over! (Well, apart from the report-writing) Over nine days of August this summer, twenty-seven AA members took part in the excavation near Hexham, uncovering and recording a previously unrecorded Roman road.

As usual for AA The weather was, to put it politely, 'variable'. We had gales, rain and even some warm sunshine. At least, being summer and not at high altitude, we didn't have to face conditions as bad as at some past digs. The Portaloos stayed upright and the Watch Currock cows confined their damage to trashing the spoil-heaps rather than the trenches. However, when planning the dig, I forgot to get sponges for drying out trenches..... big mistake. But overall we were able to work nearly all of every day, and did a prodigious amount of excavation and recording.

Altogether, we opened one hundred and fifteen square metres of trenches, with all except a few square metres cleaned and recorded. I've checked through our plans, sections, measurements of trench locations, and readings of levels. It all seems to make good sense and I haven't spotted any problems with the recording. Success! What differs from previous digs is the degree of involvement of members



De-turfing on Hexham Fell- everyone's favourite task! (photo: Michael Hall)

with the laying out and recording of the trenches. With no 'real' archaeologists to help us apart from Paul, for the first time a lot of tasks had to be done entirely by us.

Interestingly the plans and sections were drawn by fifteen different people, and others were involved in taking the levels, laying out trenches, and surveying in their positions.



Planning like pros (photo: Stephen Eastmead)

We should have a preliminary version of the report on the website this autumn. The photogrammetry images of the road surface look superb. Please see the website for these images.

The conclusions aren't in doubt: what we found is a typical Roman minor road as confirmed by Dr Alan Rushworth on his



Getting to grips with the equipment
(photo: Stephen Eastmead)

visit, similar to others he has seen excavated in northern England. We don't have datable finds (though the ditch sediment may be helpful), but the lack of finds actually supports a Roman date...only the Roman army would have built a road which then had little use.

Greg Finch has just spotted an article from the 1970s of an excavation of a Roman road a few miles north of Hexham, probably part of the Stanegate; the section drawing in the article looks the same as our own (except our road is a bit wider) so it is all very exciting.

Other compelling evidence is the disappearance of the road on Lidar where medieval ridge-and-furrow crosses it at



A 'lost' road! (photo: Michael Hall)

Nubbock, the absence of the road on eighteenth century maps, and the discovery (in trench five) of the road surface under an eighteenth century field bank.

Overall, a great success.... and it shows we can carry out quality archaeology with limited professional supervision. Thanks go to all who took part, the farmers for their tolerance, the Racecourse for parking, and the experts who came to see what we were up to.

Martin Green



Aerial shot! (photo: Stephen Eastmead)

Some thoughts on Sewingshields...

The date was 3rd September 2016 and the weather was inauspicious, the sky a uniform grey threatening to deliver the rainy forecast as we left the Housesteads car park...the wrong way. "That's not the



(photo: Tony Metcalfe)

way" called someone who knew. Martin Green, in the lead hesitated, seemed about to say something but shrugged his shoulders and we pressed on through a gate to find the true way one minute later. Our guides Martin Green and Phil Bowyer were to lead us on a circular route of some seven and a half miles immediately to the north of Hadrian's Wall describing archaeological sites along the way.

Anyone taking a stroll along the wall would be looking at the landscape to the north but what would they see? The extensive view is one of wild pasture, crag and forest over undulating terrain. What they would surely miss is what we were privileged see. It would be reasonable to follow with the clear and sometimes speculative descriptions supplied by our guides of the various settlements, burial Cairns, field systems and rock art that we saw on our route, yet I find it impossible to convey in print the living experience of being present in this historic scene.

The books that inform us of the history, geology and archaeology that are

required for a good understanding of an area must be accompanied in the end by field visits. To stand on the edge of a Bronze Age burial cairn near a medieval field boundary in this ancient panorama can be a moving experience that can't possibly be found in books and lectures, although the presence of the Northumbrian midge created another kind of moving during our lunch in the middle of a Romano-British settlement!

The walk was a joint venture between Altogether Archaeology and Tynedale Archaeology. It was a pleasure to take part in it and such outings should continue to be a significant element of the strategy, especially for those members who may be unable to commit to continuous days on an excavation. So more please, particularly if they could end with a surprise....

We finally gained the wall towards the end of our circuit and peeled off down a slope



Legion XIII in full splendour (photo: Tony Metcalfe)

towards the access path for Housesteads Fort only to be confronted by Legion XIII marching towards the fort. What an impressive sight they were, in full uniform with auxiliary soldiers and their women bringing up the rear. Orders were bellowed followed by a chorus response and they all seemed and somehow looked to be Italian! What an end to the walk!

Alan Newham

Auckland Castle Walled Garden Dig - 'Peaches & Pineapples'

I have been a member of Altogether Archaeology now for about seven years and have been involved with some fantastic digs all over the county, but it was while volunteering at Auckland Castle in Bishop Auckland that an amazing opportunity presented itself. We, as volunteers were going to get a chance to dig in the walled garden, needless to say, I signed up straight away.



Working in the peach houses at Auckland Castle (photo: Tony Metcalfe)

It was great to see some familiar faces from AA on the first day of the dig, including Matt Clayton from Durham Archaeological Services, who were running the dig, gave us a brief introduction to the site. The garden dates back to the 1750s, to Bishop Richard Trevor's time, and continued to be used extensively by Bishop Shute Barrington who grew pineapples, vines, peaches and figs. These exotic fruits were a sign of wealth and prosperity, apparently pineapples could sell for the equivalent of two thousand pounds in today's money! They were also hired out as dining table

centrepieces to give off the appearance of wealth.

Once down on the site we could make out clearly the upper pineries, vineries and peach houses because the remnants of the greenhouses were still in place, if a little worse for wear. It looked like a straightforward case of shifting huge amounts of rubble and soil to make way for the new restaurant footings, but boy was I wrong!

As we started to excavate deeper, some absolutely beautiful features revealed themselves. There were remnants of elaborate flue systems that linked the upper and lower pineries; a stoke hole from the peach house that was still intact with its doors on, there was even a shovel beside the furnace, left behind on the last day it was used. As we started to lift the floors of the greenhouses more flues and complex heating systems were exposed along with boilers that served the hot water pipes. It was amazing to see the workmanship involved in heating these greenhouses, it made me realise the complexity of creating the right temperate climate to grow such exotic fruits.



Aerial view of boiler house, Auckland Castle walled garden (photo: Stephen Eastmead).

As the weeks passed this pioneering eighteenth century walled garden finally gave up its forgotten secrets. It felt wonderful to be involved in this project because we were recording an area of archaeology, previously unrecorded in

such detail, which can now be used by future generations to understand the past.

In conclusion, a dig that was only supposed to take four weeks actually lasted fourteen, but it was well worth all the hard work. Roughly seventy two volunteers in total helped dig over that period and I know some have already signed up to join Altogether Archaeology.

Now the Auckland Castle walled garden can begin a new chapter, it will once again be used for growing fruit and vegetables which will feature on the menu in the new contemporary restaurant that will be built in its surroundings.

Michelle Arthy

Epiacum Finds Workshop

The scheduled monument, Epiacum, is arguably the best preserved and, consequently, the most interesting Roman fort in the Roman Empire. However, people are forbidden from doing any excavating. Fortunately, these rules don't apply to moles! So for several years, in the wind, rain and hail (in spring), volunteers from Altogether Archaeology and Friends of Epiacum have been sieving molehills and collecting finds brought to the surface by the moles.

These finds have to be sorted and catalogued. Each bag of finds corresponds to one square of a grid which was set up over the site each year. Greeted with tea, coffee, biscuits and cake we split into groups and began work by choosing our find bags. With Paul Frodsham and Rob Young in charge, we learnt how to categorise the objects. Each find was given a number which related to what year and where it was found. Then forms were completed giving

the number, type, measurements and a brief description of the find. Photographs showing the various sides of the objects alongside its number, were added to a computerised photographic record.

Initially, the bulk of the finds, otherwise known as 'interesting stones' were discarded – not always as easy as you would think with some appearing to have rims. Most others were either pot and roof tile sherds or metal, with a number only being revealed after vigorous scrubbing with water and toothbrush (eventually half a toothbrush). As well as some small pieces of pot sherds (some Roman, some Victorian blue and white) our group recorded nails, slag, glass and mortar.

Among the Roman pot sherds were those made of coarse ware, being hard, gritty and black, and these would have been used for cooking pots and pie dishes. Fine ware included Samian, which being hard, fine and orangey/red covered in a glossy red slip makes it more suitable for the table. Two rounded pot items were identified as feet for larger pots by Sue Sharp.

We were able to view the 'special' finds, already catalogued and closely guarded by Paul. The bronze dolphin, gaming piece and metal knob are relatively large compared to the sieve, but how the exquisite tiny glass and jet beads were recovered is remarkable. The exciting stage will come when all the information is collated. The distribution of the finds should reveal more about the daily lives of the Nervians at the fort, and any later inhabitants, establish dates of occupation and the function of buildings.

Paul Frodsham and Rob Young must be thanked for running such an engrossing and successful afternoon - as must Carol White for the delicious cakes!

Janet & Brian Stirk

The North Pennines Virtual Museum

What happens to important archaeological finds from the North Pennines? They vanish! An exaggeration, but important finds such as the Heathery Burn Hoard are now hidden in the British Museum and rarely on display. The AONB team knew this would be the fate of many finds from the Altogether Archaeology project, they would not be showcased locally.

To counter this effect a virtual museum was proposed to present the history of the North Pennines in one hundred objects, drawing on the finds revealed by the project and other important artefacts previously taken from the area. However, to turn this idea into (virtual) reality the AONB needed a local partner. Volunteers from the Weardale Museum - which focuses on the more recent history of the area – accepted the challenge. Working closely with the AONB and Archaeological Practice - the web designer - they exploited a range of expertise and



AA find. Gold hair tress-ring discovered during Altogether Archaeology excavations, July 2014. (Source & Copyright: Elisabeth Langton-Airey)

networks to broaden the scope of the project to include significant objects from the stone-age to the present day. Thus,



Another AA find! Stone head, St Botolph's Chapel, Frosterley, photographed shortly after its discovery (Source & Copyright: Paul Frodsham)

after fifteen months of hard work, the North Pennines Virtual Museum, was launched in August 2015! The online collection brought together fifty objects, including those scattered far and wide, telling the story of the area's history.

There are objects in the online collection that are in National Museums such as the Heathery Burn Hoard and the Weatherhill Beam Engine at the York Railway Museum. Others are in regional museum collections and archives: the Kirkhaugh gold tress ring (*see left*) discovered during Altogether Archaeology excavations has joined its twin at The Great North Museum whilst the German POW newspaper *Die Zeit am Tyne* is at the Northumberland Archive.

Some objects are on display locally: there are several at the Weardale Museum including a Neolithic axe and at Kilhope Lead Mining Museum, ranging from the iconic Wheel to Sopwith's Geological Models.

A few are now inaccessible: the *Titanic* Anchor Head is at the bottom of the Atlantic and the Westgate Castle spiral staircase was backfilled after the Altogether Archaeology excavation. Others are in private collections such as the Ayle Stone Head found near Epiacum Roman Fort, whilst the Eastgate Hoard is lost! And the virtual collection covers the full gamut of museum exhibits – not just artefacts but also visual images like the stunning painting of the Weardale Campaign of 1327, and the atmospheric 1939 photo of Manley's weather station on the summit of Great Dunn Fell.

This project, like Altogether Archaeology, is a work in progress. Now the lottery funded phase is over the Weardale Museum continue to host the website and encourage nominations for new objects. Earlier this year seven objects were added including the prehistoric fossil tree at Stanhope and the 1853 Daguerreotype of Isaac Holden, the inspiration for Isaac's Tea Trail.

We hope that members of the Altogether Archaeology community group will nominate exciting new objects - not limited to archaeological finds - that illustrate the story of the North Pennines and its relations with the outside world. You can download the simple Accessions Proposal form from the website: www.npvm.org.uk

David Humphreys

Weardale Museum Volunteer
www.weardalemuseum.co.uk

(photos courtesy of the NPVM)

November 2016

Just a couple more events to round off the year ...



Hadrian's Wall Networking Conference, Hexham, November 2016 (photo: Stephen Eastmead)



Archaeological Finds Drawing workshop, November 2016 (photo: Tony Metcalfe)

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Future Events

We have another exciting year coming up! You can find details of all of our events on the website here:

http://www.altogetherarchaeology.org/_events.php

We also plan to include excavations in our programme however, just to whet your appetite, these are some of the activities scheduled for 2017 ...

January

Exploring historical maps - A workshop at Durham County Records Office.

February

Mini-conference. Two talks in one day (including a lunch break and social interaction, of course!) The *Swaledale big-dig* by Alan Mills and '*Lost Roads*' of *Hexham Fell* by Greg Finch and Martin Green.

March

AGM & update from Paul Frodsham.

April

Walk - *Archaeology of the Bollihope Valley* with Rob Young

May

Walk - *Maiden Castle*, from Reeth, Swaledale

June

Activities to be confirmed.

July

Walk - *Simonside Hills* with Paul Frodsham

September

Site visit to Epiacum with Stewart Ainsworth & Paul Frodsham. A joint venture with Ingleborough Archaeology group.

October

Walk - *Mallerstang re-visited* with Harriet Sams

November

Mini-conference. '*Pineapples for the Prince Bishops*' - Harry Beamish and the *Prehistory of the Eden Valley* by Harriet Sams.

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Contribute to the newsletter:

We welcome submissions of general archaeological interest as well as those about AA activities. Please let us know what you have been up to! We are always on the lookout for your contributions.

We ask that submissions should be a maximum of 500 words.

If you would like to contribute an article or photographs for the next edition, please get in touch with the Newsletter Editor, Chris Powell chrispowl@me.com

Join us

You will find information about how to become a member of AA, including membership fees on our website:

www.altogetherarchaeology.org

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Social media

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and finally....

Thank you!

to all of our contributors and photographers for this first edition:

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