

# Altogether Archaeology

*Digging our heritage in the North Pennines*



## ALTOGETHER ARCHAEOLOGY NEWSLETTER 2019 (Spring edition)



**MEDIEVAL EXPERTS  
WATCH THE WORKERS**



**THE ANNUAL AA TENT  
ERECTING EVENT...**



**... BUT IT WAS WORTH  
ALL THAT EFFORT!**



# Altogether Archaeology

*Digging our heritage in the North Pennines*

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# Editorial

The last few months have been incredibly busy, and we're still only half-way through the 2019 Altogether Archaeology programme! Our year began with a talk from Ben Westwood, finds officer for County Durham, who revealed that there is definitely life after pot washing, and an update on the 2018 Holwick excavation from Martin Green. We moved into new territory with the 2019 Holwick excavation: thanks to a grant from Northern Heartlands we were able to develop our community remit with an arts, culture and heritage project and you can read more about that on page 8.

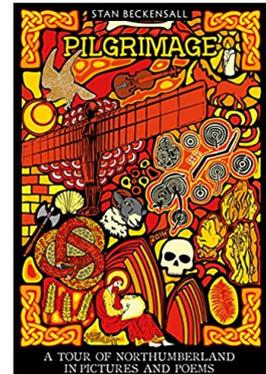
The previous newsletter included Greg Finch's review of *Lost Lives, New Voices: Unlocking the Stories of the Scottish Soldiers at the Battle of Dunbar 1650* and, in February, Prof. Chris Gerrard, one of the authors of this fascinating account enthralled our audience with his story of the Battle of Dunbar. He was followed by Jamie Armstrong talking about the latest developments at Auckland Castle.

March saw the AGM (see Jenny Pritchard's report on page 5). Afterwards, Prof. Diana Whaley, re-united with some of her hard-working band of transcribers, discussed exploring North Pennines place names, and Dr. Rob Young delivered a thought-provoking interpretation of the excavations at Cow Green. Later in the month, Drs. Sheila and Andrew Newton ran another excellent finds drawing workshop at Edmundbyers, and AA took part in the open weekend at Wynch Bridge End Cottage in Teesdale. You can read Elaine Vallack's lively account of events on page 7.

And in April we went walking ... in Arkengarthdale, led by Stephen Eastmead, and exploring the archaeology around Cotherstone, with Harriet Sams. Paul Frodsham's talk about survey and excavation work at Long Meg was followed by a guided tour of this enigmatic (and, on the day, very wet) site. Which brings us to May and the recently completed 3rd Holwick excavation.

There is lots of exciting news about that on our website and in the items on pages 6 & 8.

Also in this edition of the newsletter, an article by Liz Cook about an unexpected Roman site on the island of Alderney (page 10) and a review of a podcast interview with Stan Beckensall on page 11. Don't forget to check out our upcoming events section on page 12 for news of what is still to come in 2019.



*Poring over the map at Middle Farm (photo: Elaine Vallack)*



*Diana and the Transcribers at the AGM*

**And Finally ...** I hope you enjoy this Spring Newsletter. We are always on the lookout for items for the next, full-length, issue. So, if you have any suggestions for items or would like to contribute an article yourself then please get in touch (details on page 13).

**Chris Powell**

## News from the AGM

This year, the AGM took place at the Village Hall in Mickleton near Middleton-in-Teesdale. The meeting was attended by 44 members and guests. While there was not the volume of snow and ice we faced at last year's AGM, members did however have to brave flooded roads and wintry weather! Well done to all who made it.

The Chair, Tony Metcalfe, welcomed everyone and had received apologies from 9 members who were unable to join us. Minutes of the previous AGM, the Chair's report and the Financial report, which had been distributed to all members in advance of the meeting, were approved.

### **Election of Committee Members**

In accordance with the agreed procedure, the 3 members of the Committee who were up for re-election (Carol White, Chris Powell and Alan Newham) were re-elected. Following the resignation of the Secretary during 2018, Jenny Pritchard had agreed to undertake the duties for the Group and she was confirmed in the role of Secretary. Members had previously been invited to apply to be on the Committee and one nomination was received (Sue Goldsborough). This was agreed by members and we look forward to her joining us. Paul Frodsham remains our Honorary Archaeology Adviser reporting to the Committee on professional archaeological matters. You can find the full list of current committee members on page 2.

### **Membership Subscriptions**

The Committee decided that subscriptions for 2019/2020 should remain at current levels and would like to thank everyone for their continued support.

Individual membership - £25

Joint / family membership - £35

Student membership (any person aged 16 or over in full-time education) - £15

### **Becoming a Charity**

Our Business Plan included the possibility of us registering with the Charity Commission at some point to gain some of the advantages this offers. One member felt that, before this could be considered by the membership, fuller information relating to its implications needed to be shared with everyone. As a result of this concern, the Committee will prepare and distribute information for members.

### **Holwick Stories**

Chris Powell informed the members that our bid for funding from Northern Heartlands had been successful. 'Holwick Stories' is an arts-based project, a new departure for the group.

### **Holwick Excavation Update**

Martin Green gave an update on radio-carbon dating results from some of the finds from the excavations at Well Head, Holwick. Details of the results can be found on our website.

### **Speakers**

After the AGM, Professor Diana Whaley gave a comprehensive talk on 'Exploring North Pennine Place-names' and, after a refreshment break, Dr. Rob Young gave a talk on the 2018 excavations at Cow Green.

It was lovely to see so many members come along to support Altogether Archaeology and we look forward to seeing you at our future events.

*Jenny Pritchard*

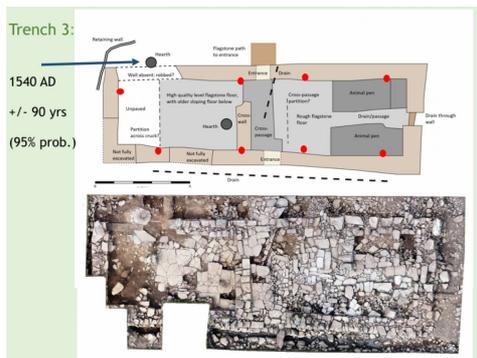
# And a bit extra ...

## Carbon dating news from Holwick

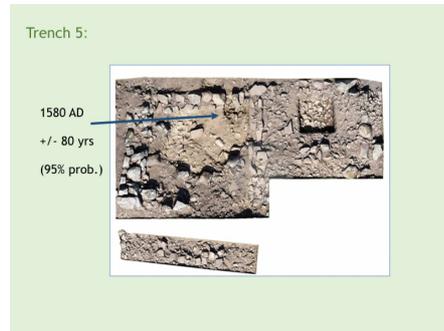
We have received the first set of radio-carbon dates from samples collected during our 2018 excavations at the Well Head settlement in Holwick, Upper Teesdale. Martin Green, AA's Fieldwork Co-ordinator, revealed the results at our AGM in Mickleton on Saturday 16th March.

Dates have been obtained from charcoal found in each of the 3 trenches we opened last year, all calibrated to a 95% probability. For the most part, the datings were as expected, but there was one really surprising and exciting result (spoiler alert, see trench 4)!

The charcoal sample from trench 3 came from the stone hearth located under the NW wall-line of the longhouse excavated in this trench. This gave a date of around 1540 AD, suggesting that the hearth was a relatively late feature in the sequence of this building's use.

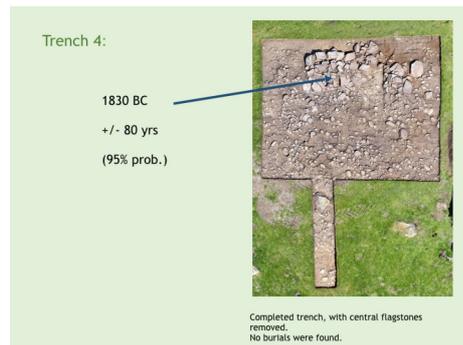


Trench 5 initially looked like a two-celled building set in a scooped platform. The crude foundation stones suggested a potentially early date, but we couldn't establish a construction sequence. Charcoal obtained yielded a date of approximately 1580 AD, again suggesting that the activity causing the



burning occurred fairly late in the history of this structure's occupation.

Trench 4, located about 150m west of the centre of the settlement on the flat top of a drumlin, contained an enigmatic curving length of bank. We identified this tentatively



as a Bronze Age funerary monument (despite the lack of evidence for burials), possibly a ring-cairn. Charcoal was found under a slab on the inner side of the fragmentary ring. This has yielded a date of 1830 BC +/- 80 years and confirms that this is indeed a Bronze Age feature.

We hope to be able to analyse more samples from Holwick in due course which will give us further dating evidence, but these first results provide an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle. More information about this project can be found in the Interim Report on the 2018 Excavation which can be downloaded from the [Reports](#) page of our website.

**Martin Green**

All photos © Stephen Eastmead

# Open weekend at Wynch Bridge End Cottage



Wynch Bridge End Cottage was the location, at the end of March, for a weekend of guided walks and talks about the archaeology of the area. Maps dated 1857 and 1895 denote the site as Westclose House, and this recently renovated cottage with attached byre provided the ideal venue to display some of AA's artefacts. Stephen Eastmead and Rob Pearson were on hand during the day to explain the finds and talk about our excavations.

Karen and Ron Heyes and I volunteered to deliver the guided walks, which definitely took me out my comfort zone! In preparation, Martin Furness, the Senior Reserve Manager for Natural England, and Tony Metcalfe, AA Chair, gave us a tour and then it was down to us. We had 7 visitors each day for the walks and began by exploring the Iron Age/Romano British roundhouses, enclosures and agricultural fields near to the River Tees at Wynch Bridge. Karen had clearly done her homework and was able to answer questions such as: 'What food did they eat?' (brassicas), and her printouts of artists' impressions of the site proved invaluable.

We then made our way to Barney Byre, Long Rigg and Holwick via Hield House and the nature reserve. Andrew Robinson, the incumbent at Middle Farm, Holwick, lives in close proximity to the Well Head site, and his field contains a wealth of archaeology: longhouses, medieval walls, ancient

trackways, a modern day spring outlet and a tractor that hasn't moved for at least 50 years. On reaching the River Tees we encountered early 19th century test tunnels for lead and finished up at Staple Crag, where hundreds of Mesolithic lithic fragments (now in the Bowes Museum) have been found.



*The track up over the scar*



*Barney Byre - a sauna, or just a pile of stones?*

One of the most rewarding aspects of events like this is what you learn from the participants. At Barney Byre, we discovered that a rare alpine plant, Parsley Fern (*Cryptogramma Crispa*), grows on the scree slopes of the Whin Sill. One of our visitors, a potter, drew our attention to the skill shown by the medieval craftsman who carved a regular inside wide curve to one of our pot finds. A spinning wheel was set up in the byre and the demonstrator was able to explain the significance of the whorls we found at Well Head. As we were packing up at the end of the weekend, a family arrived with a

fascinating story: the mother was the last tenant of Wynch Bridge End Cottage and her husband was evacuated to Holwick Lodge during the war, where he ended up staying to work for Lord Strathmore.

Around 30 people attended the talks: 'Archaeology of the North Pennines from the melting of the ice age circa 11,000 B.C. to current day.' As Martin Green was unable to deliver the Saturday talk, I was asked to take his place. How scary! This was far more nerve racking than the walking tour and I was pleased that Stephen Eastmead was there to provide further information about AA excavations at the Well Head site!

In short, the weekend was a great success. So to all you members of AA – you too can volunteer, scare yourself and become a more informed archaeologist.

**Elaine Vallack**



*Lapwing eggs spotted on the walk (photo: Derek Gwynne); all other photos: Elaine Vallack*

## Holwick Stories: a New Direction



*Alan on film!  
(other football teams are available)*

This was a new venture for Altogether Archaeology, combining our excavation work with a really exciting arts project. In May, thanks to funding from the Northern Heartlands Community Initiative Fund,

we were able to extend our investigations into the deserted medieval settlement at Well Head, Holwick and to complement the dig findings with film making, oral history and creative writing.

During the past two seasons at Holwick, we have been amazed by the response of the local community and by the abundance of personal stories, memories and family legends we uncovered alongside the remains of the medieval village. So, we thought it was time we recorded some of that wonderful anecdotal evidence to create a Holwick archive.

Audio producer Rachel Cochrane spent time on the site, talking to volunteers and visitors; she was overwhelmed by the wealth of material gathered and now has the task of interpreting and editing it to produce a series of 'Holwick Stories' podcasts.

If you were digging with us or visited the site, you may also have come across our film makers, Mark and Marie of Lonely Tower Film and Media, who were documenting the excavation and interviewing participants. They are going to make two short films, one specifically about Altogether Archaeology and the other an interpretation of Well Head and its place in the history, landscape and culture of Upper Teesdale. They have already put some lovely snippets of film on Facebook and twitter, so do take a look if you haven't already caught up with them.

One of the highlights of the project was Catherine Massiter's fabulous family photo album, pictures of Holwick from the 1940s and 50s when her family used to holiday at Hungry Hall Farm. Another was the visit by Cotherstone Primary School. The children were fascinated by the site, got stuck into some digging with great gusto and, as usual, spotted loads of small finds that we'd missed!

It is always a joy to listen to children's responses to archaeology and we are going to capture some more of their enthusiasm as the project isn't over yet. Later in June, we will be at Cotherstone Primary School, letting the children loose on some finds (lots of mud and water!) and encouraging them to create stories about what they see. Once again, Rachel and Lonely Tower will be recording what they come up with and adding it into the mix.



*Children from Cotherstone Primary School investigate the site (see also cover photo)*

All of the material produced will belong to Altogether Archaeology, for us to use on the website, in our publicity, at talks and however else we decide to spread the word. As soon as it is ready to premiere, probably at one of the autumn talks, we will let you know!



*Anna Collins from Northern Heartlands does her bit!*

*(photos: Mike & Chris Powell)*

#### **Useful links:**

Lonely Tower Film & Media:  
[www.lonelytower.co.uk](http://www.lonelytower.co.uk)  
Rachel Cochrane :  
[www.listenupnorth.com](http://www.listenupnorth.com)



## Roman Fort, Alderney



(Photo: Martin Batt)

Jenny Pritchard's recent article on prehistoric sites in Jersey has prompted me to set down my experience from a few years ago when staying at St Peter Port, Guernsey on a group walking holiday. The plan was to have some days completing the coastal circuit of the island, interspersed with excursions to three other islands.

Walking around Guernsey we came across historic sites from most periods; not so many on Sark or Herm. The final visit, to Alderney, was a day trip by small plane. The flight went well and we walked anti-clockwise round the coastal path, keeping an eye open for the island's famous white hedgehogs. We seemed to inspect a lot of bunkers and other fortifications left over from World War II. Keen to see something different, I had spotted on the map that we would pass a "possible Roman fort".

This proved to be a crumbling rectangular structure known locally as 'The Nunnery' right on the seashore, facing France. It had high stone walls with rounded corners, with a courtyard and some buildings inside. The Nunnery had clearly had many uses over the

years, most recently Nazi modifications for a lookout (I believe some of our Roman coastal stations and shore forts may have been similarly altered). The outer walls certainly looked very familiar to someone who has spent many happy hours visiting Roman sites across the north of England! There were even herringbone courses at intervals (which I first saw at Lanchester), and it was obvious there had been some excavation.

Of course I had to carry on walking with the group then, but, conveniently for me, at the end of the day the airport was closed by fog. We had to stay on Alderney overnight, and so had the time next day to visit the island museum. The museum director, Jason Monaghan, has, in the last ten years, run a series of community digs, both at the fort and on the nearby common, where traces of a Roman village have been revealed.

There is plenty of information on the internet, including an article in *Current Archaeology* (Dec. 2011) and videos of the digs on YouTube. Surprisingly, researchers are confronted by news headlines such as 'Alderney Roman fort lays claim to being the best preserved small Roman fort in the British Isles'- now where have we heard something a little like this, and a lot closer to home?

**Liz Cook**

## Poems and Prehistory: Stan Beckensall, unsung North East Hero

This captivating podcast is a ‘must listen’ for anybody who knows and admires the work of Stan Beckensall and, for those who have never come across him, you’re in for a treat! Stan, who hails from Hexham, was recently awarded an MBE for his services to prehistoric rock art and history. He is a prolific author who has been seeking out, researching, sketching and writing about rock art for many years. However, the written word doesn’t tell us nearly as much about the man himself as this interview, capturing as it does, Stan’s unique voice and warm personality. The podcast will take you on a journey through time, exploring his native Northumberland, not forgetting its dark and violent past, via ancient burial sites, castles, moorland, archaeological digs and aerial views. It is wonderful to hear the anecdotes about his work, but Stan is also a poet and what better way to appreciate his inimitable poetry than by listening to him read it himself?

The piece is produced by Rachel Cochrane and is the result of a collaboration with Stan Beckensall and interviewer Anne Painter. Rachel set up her podcast website ‘listenupnorth’ eight years ago, primarily to capture the rich culture and heritage of the North East through her audio recordings. She has been involved in numerous local projects, including our own ‘Holwick Stories’ and has recorded many hours of oral history as well as the work of over two hundred creative writers. She became friends with Stan after attending his fascinating lectures, and this podcast is the fulfilment of a long held ambition to record him talking about his life and work.



*Stan Beckensall in his study (photo: Rachel Cochrane)*

Rachel and Anne interviewed and recorded Stan amidst the crowded bookshelves in his study at home in Hexham. When asked what he hoped his legacy would be, Stan replied, ‘To leave a legacy which others can use and also to be remembered as a nice man.’

**The podcast is available on**

[www.listenupnorth.com](http://www.listenupnorth.com) where you can download or listen online.

<http://www.rachelcochrane.com/portfolio-item/unsung-ne-hero-stan-beckensall/>



## Coming up...

You will find details of all our events on the website:

<http://www.altogetherarchaeology.org/events.php>

Please always check details in advance

**Sun. 9th June:** Walk in the Eden Valley, **Moor Divock, Lunesdale, Cumbria**, led by Patrick Neave.

**Weds. 17th July: Churches of the Tyne Valley.** A day expedition exploring **ecclesiastical architecture** between Corbidge and Heddon-on-the-Wall, led by Alan Newham. Look on our website for more information about this event.

**Sat. 20th July: Extraordinary General Meeting**, followed by a talk from Dr Stuart Wrathmell of the Medieval Settlement Research Group 11.00 am - 3 p.m., at Mickleton Village Hall.

**Sat. 12th October:** Alan Newham reprises the subject of **Anglo Saxon Church Architecture** followed by Martin Roberts discussing **Early Vernacular Buildings**. 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m., Mickleton Village Hall.

**Sat. 16th November:** Rebecca Gowland, human bioarchaeologist, on **'Funerary Evidence of Anglo Saxon Children'**. Plus another talk, further details tbc.

**Sat. 7th December: The Altogether Archaeology Christmas Shindig.** 11.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m., St. John's Chapel Town Hall.

## Contact us

For more information about AA, please get in touch.

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## Join us

You will find information about how to become a member of AA, including membership fees on our website:  
[www.altogetherarchaeology.org](http://www.altogetherarchaeology.org)

Keep up to date with what is going on via our social media accounts.



Follow us on Twitter!

[@Altogether\\_Arch](https://twitter.com/Altogether_Arch)



Like our Facebook page!

[@altogether.archaeology](https://www.facebook.com/altogether.archaeology)

## Contribute to the newsletter

We produce two newsletters each year. One like this one, a shorter Spring edition with news and updates after the AGM and another, longer issue at the end of the year. The winter edition is a celebration of the year's events with contributions from members about activities, or their particular archaeological obsessions, and another, We welcome submissions of general archaeological interest as well as those about AA activities. We are always on the lookout for your contributions, so please let us know what you have been up to!

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](mailto:chrispowl@me.com).

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

## And Finally ....

### Thank you

**to all of our contributors and  
photographers:**

Martin Batt

Rachel Cochrane

Liz Cook

Stephen Eastmead

Martin Green

Derek Gwynne

Mike Powell

Jenny Pritchard

Elaine Vallack

and to

Julia Thompson for her help with the  
newsletter