



The last few months have been quiet ones, in terms of SWAAG activities, but behind the scenes preparations are in hand for this summer's return to The Hagg. On Saturday 21st April there was an exhibition and talk in Reeth Memorial Hall. Philip Bastow gave a presentation on progress and discoveries made in 2017 and outlined the proposed areas for this year's excavation in July.



There is more information on The Hagg on the SWAAG website, under 'Publications: SWAAG Survey and Excavation Reports'. For information about this summer's dig, which runs from 4th to 18th July, contact andrea@swaag.org

Roman Pottery Workshop and Talk – 8th May

Thanks to the Fabric of Place project, 12 eager learners (mostly non-potters) assembled for a workshop by Graham Taylor, of “Potted History”. This was followed by an evening talk for some 25 members.



Graham has been a potter all his life, including 20 years spent in Africa working with local potters while they learned techniques from each other and produced pots for an international market. On returning to the UK he continued to explore wide-ranging historical, traditional and archaeological techniques and has gone on to use these methods in recreating pots and kilns from cultures from across Europe, from the Neolithic through to Mediaeval and beyond. These re-creations are made for museums, shops, re-enactors, films, television, schools and his own demonstrations. He is a true experimental archaeologist and his long association with pots and knowledge of wide-ranging ceramic techniques have enabled him to comment effectively on finds and to answer archaeological riddles.

Graham pointed out that the Romans made pots on an industrial scale – some kilns used for amphorae would have fired around 300 – 400 amphorae at each firing. One site in France is known to have fired around 40,000 pieces of Samian ware at each firing!

Graham brought original (sherds) and reproduction (whole) Roman pots to show us, plus moulds and his own reproduction Roman potter's wheel, known as a stick wheel. You can see something similar in action on YouTube; variations of stick wheels are still used across the world. Having talked about different types of Roman pots and explained in detail the way they were made, clay types used and firing methods employed, he then demonstrated these methods, using moulds for oil lamps and the wheel for making pots of different sizes; of course he made it look so easy but, as I certainly found, it was anything but.



We students were then let loose on the clay (the Romans would have dug and prepared local clay but we were spared that) to make lamps, pots and any decorative pieces we fancied, to try out the techniques. A number of brave souls tried making thrown pots on the wheel – MUCH more difficult than it looked; some very strange, and one or two lovely, pots were made using that method.

The amount of information we absorbed during the afternoon was astonishing; Graham being clear, logical and funny in his delivery. He was easy to understand, full of fascinating insights into both Roman and archaeological methods and an inspirational teacher. I, for one, am longing to do more potting!

For his evening presentation Graham focussed on his work at Vindolanda, where he has built and commissioned a Roman-type kiln. There is an account on Graham's blog: <http://pottedhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2017/06/firing-vindolanda-kiln.html>

The group expressed warm thanks to Graham and to the Fabric of Place project for allowing us this unique opportunity. For those who might like to become "Roman potters", Graham runs day workshops at Vindolanda with the opportunity to really practice techniques and, hopefully, conquer the wheel.

Christine Wallace.



Slei Gill Lead Mining Walk – 10th May

On a bright but breezy day a small group set out to look at the industrial archaeology along the Slei Gill, in Arkengarthdale. The walk was led by Alan Mills, a SWAAG member, with a particular interest in the lead mining of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale. We started off in the tiny community of Arkle Town, which at the industry's height, housed miners and their families and even had its own poorhouse.



The Yoredale series, of limestone, sandstone and shales, which outcrops in Arkengarthdale, was laid down in warm, shallow seas around 300 million years ago. Subsequent geological/tectonic activity caused the horizontal layers to be uplifted and faulted. Hot saline solutions penetrating these lines of weakness and subsequent cooling and seepage led to the mineralization of ores such as lead (lead sulphide or galena) and what the lead miners called 'gangue'

(barites, calcite and fluorspar). Unlike coal, the lead was usually found in near vertical veins, rather than in horizontal seams. Occasionally mineralization did spread out sideways to form a 'flat' or 'flot', which was much prized by the miners.

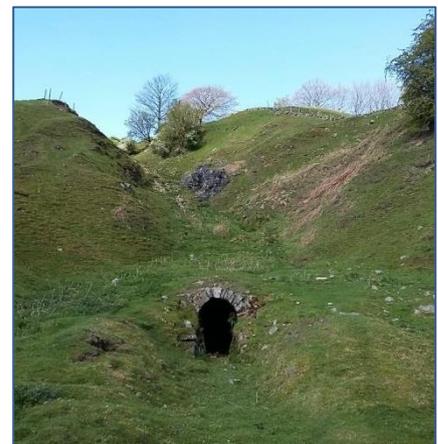
Mine shafts were driven down vertically but, until the early 19th century, 100 feet was about the limit for these, as rope became too heavy to haul with the winding technology available. A sequence of stepped shafts was developed to overcome this. Later 'levels' were dug horizontally into the hillside, to intersect a vein at depth. Having crossed the Arkle Beck, our next stop was to look at the entrance to such a level at Booze Wood. This level would have been of sufficient height to allow the use of pit ponies. Others were so low that they could only be worked by miners crawling in on their hands and knees.



The 'bouse', a mixture of lead ore, mud, rock and other minerals, which came out of the mine, had to be separated before the ore could be smelted. This was known as 'dressing'. First the bouse was tipped into storage bays or 'bouse teams', where water was used to wash the ore and loosen the waste material. The photograph, above left, shows the bouse teams at Booze Wood. Pure ore then went into the 'bingstead', waste was thrown away and the remaining mixed ore and rock was sent for crushing. This was done by hand prior to the use of roller-crushers, driven by a water wheel. The remains of the wheel pit, for the waterwheel at Booze Wood, can be seen above. Once the fragments were of similar size they were agitated in water in a 'Hotching tub', during which process the heavier lead ore sank to the bottom and could be extracted. The washed and dressed ore then went to be smelted.

We continued our walk up the valley. The landscape along the Sleil Gill has been left heavily scarred by the lead mining industry. All around are the remains of shafts, levels, spoil heaps and dressing floors. Some of which are shown in the photographs below.

On the horizon were the remains of hushes, where water had been sent down a vein line to scour away the surface and dislodge any loose ore. There were a number of dams created on Fremington Moor for this purpose.





We finished our walk by going along the track to the hamlet of Booze and then on down the lane back down to Langthwaite. It was a very enjoyable walk on a glorious day – and the flowers were amazing too!

For more information see: *Mining and Miners in Swaledale & Arkengarthdale: An introduction to lead mining* (2011). Alan Mills.

J. H.

Members' meetings

March

Perry Gardner, a SWAAG member, spoke about his excavation with SHARP (Sedgford Historical and Archaeological Research Project), which has been running in north-west Norfolk since 1996. There is a wealth of sites around the present day village, including an Iron Age farmstead, a Roman villa, an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and a World War I aerodrome.

Perry was particularly interested in one of the skeletons – S0034 - that of a juvenile male. The body was buried with oyster shells. The skeleton displayed injuries on one side, possibly caused by the nature of work undertaken. Perry had investigated whether fishing might have been taking place in the locality, although Sedgford today is stranded about 4 kilometres from the sea. Around 1000AD there was a North Atlantic/North Sea ‘fish event horizon’, known from finds from archaeological sites dated to that time, which show a sudden increase marine fishing. At Holme-next the-Sea, not far from Sedgford, two lines of posts have been found, which were used as fish traps and thought to be Saxon.

April

The AGM took place during the meeting on Tuesday 10th April. Shirley Gale decided not to seek re-election as a trustee and was thanked by Dave Brooks for her contribution over the past many years. Jane Harrison was elected as a new trustee, and Mike Keenan and Andrea Dixon were re-elected for a further term.



Rob Nicholson then spoke about finds processing and interpretation of some of the discoveries from The Hagg. He talked about the main categories of finds which occur e.g. building materials, pot, glass, bone, organics, metals, flints etc. and explained that to preserve a find it should usually be kept in the same state in which it was recovered (wet kept wet and dry kept dry).



Above is the silver and gilded brooch found on The Hagg in 2017. Originally it would have had a sprung pin. It is a relatively rare item and would have been used by a male military figure in the early to mid-third century. We can only speculate as to how it came to be on the site. You can read more on the finds on the SWAAG website, under ‘Publications: SWAAG Survey and Excavation Reports’.

Local History Group

The Local History Group (LHG) was created in 2014, growing out of interest in the history of the area generated by the Swaledale Big Dig. It is a loose-knit group of people united by their interest in exploring the local history of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale. Although the LHG is a sub-group of SWAAG participants need not be members of SWAAG but are of course encouraged to join.

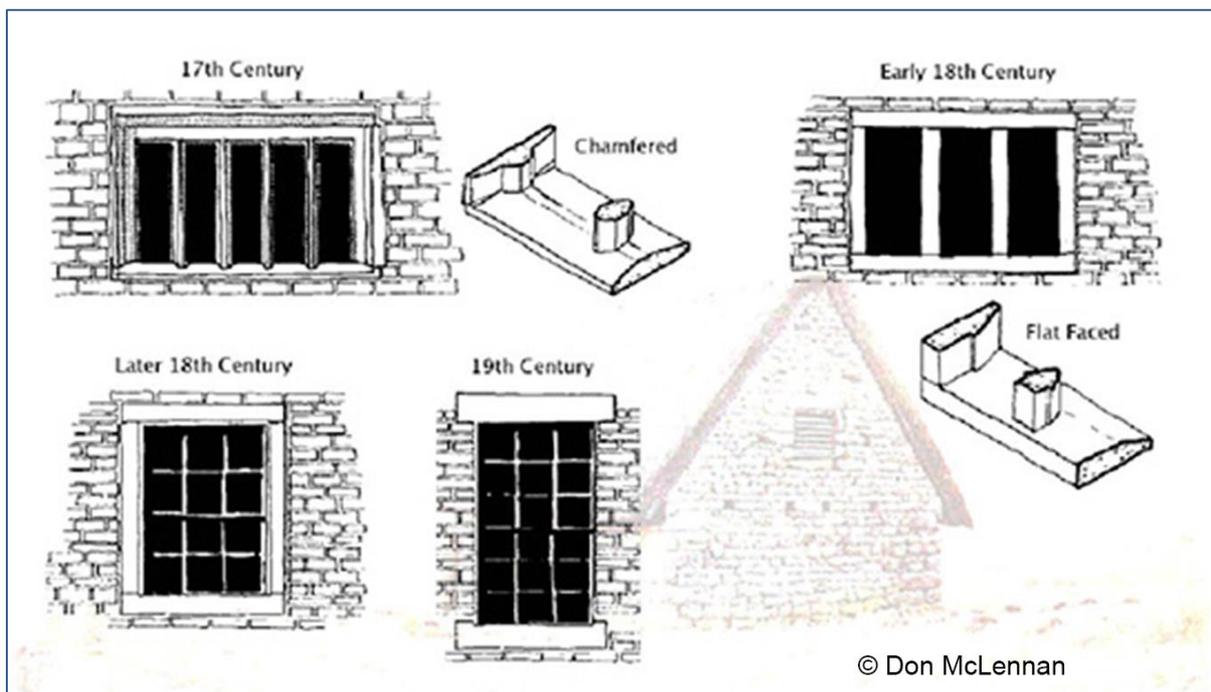
The group meets regularly, currently twice a year. Typically two or three members present their particular interests, leading to a group discussion.

Over the last four years topics discussed have included education in the 19th century, dating vernacular buildings, interpreting the landscape, understanding field names, surviving bread ovens in Swaledale, 14th century Swaledale through tax returns, the Hagg dig, the Fremington Hoard. A significant benefit of the group to local researchers is that lively discussion leads to ideas and theories being tested by other members often opening up different avenues to explore and enabling further progress to be made. We also all learn, sometimes things we didn't even know we were interested in!

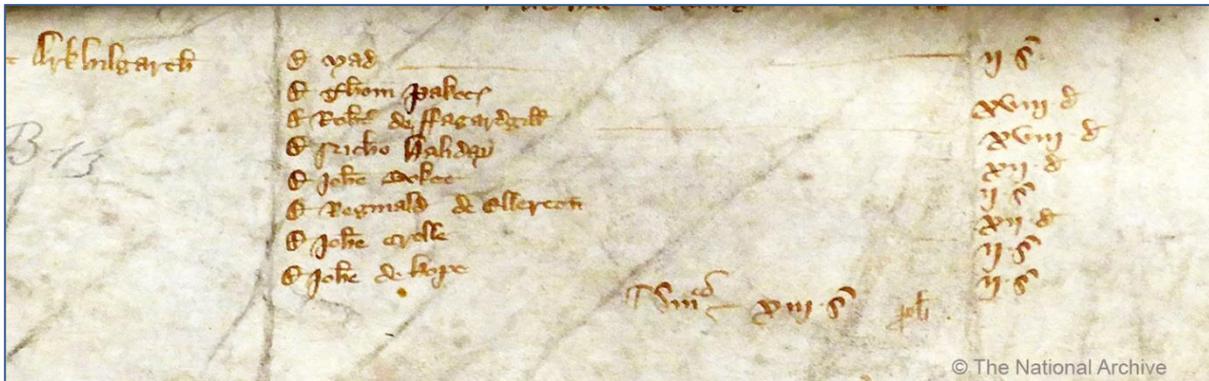
Members of the LHG also work with colleagues at the North Yorkshire County Records Office transcribing local records. The first project was to transcribe the local tithe apportionments. These are of great interest to family historians, not merely showing who lived where but also giving an insight into housing conditions at the time. They also help understand the development of our local settlements. Having completed this project the team has moved on to transcribing the records of the Healaugh and Muker Manor Courts. Much of the land in Swaledale was held by copyhold (similar to leasehold) and all transfers were registered in the Manor Court. These too are of interest to family historians as well as providing an insight into how land ownership developed, leading to the patchwork of small holdings we still see evidence of today. All the transcriptions are freely available on the SWAAG website.

Collectively we have learnt a lot. Did you know that...?

- windows can help date houses



- in its heyday in the 19th century there were 239 pupils on the roll at Arkengarthdale School; this year there are 14!
- during the 19th century thirteen year old pupils were employed as teaching assistants
- medieval tax returns show us that 700 years ago surnames were in the process of developing



The names of the taxpayers in this 1327 lay subsidy return for Arkengarthdale are De Mad(?), Thomas Pakoc, Robert of Fagardgill, Nicholas Haliday, Reginald of Ellerton, John Crolle, John of Hope.

- the tithe transcriptions tell us that in 1844 there were 18 houses occupied in Booze; the 1841 census tells us that there were 39 households with 183 people; it must have been pretty cramped with virtually every house in multiple occupancy with an average of 2 families and 10 people! I doubt there are much more than 10 people living there permanently now.
- the Swaledale Manor Courts practiced partible inheritance whereby land was divided equally between all sons or their heirs (on occasion as many as seven) and to daughters only if there had been no sons; however, where women did inherit they retained the right to hold or dispose of the copyhold even after marriage.

I hope some of the work of the LHG might be of interest to you. If so please get in touch and come to the next meeting on Thursday 4th October 2018, The Buck Hotel, Reeth

Alan Mills alan@swaag.org

The mystery object – an update from Rob!



You will remember from the last newsletter that we recovered a piece of rolled or folded lead shaped into a cylindrical mass. Initial assessment suggested that this could be working waste, a weight or (improbably) a curse. Careful unrolling of the object, by a professional conservator revealed an irregularly shaped sheet with no obvious marks or other features apart from a perforation at one end. Whilst this might suggest its use as a suspended weight the irregular shape would speak against this theory.



Future dates

Please see the details of forthcoming events below.

The next newsletter

The newsletter relies on contributions from members so if you would like to contribute a photograph or short article about a walk, talk or event please contact me at: jane@swaag.org. Future events, of interest to members, could also be publicised. The next newsletter will be issued towards the end of the summer.

Jane Harrison

DATE(s)	TIME	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	DETAILS	CONTACT
08-06-2018	tbc	Queen's Head, Finghall	Members' Social	Dinner at The Queen's Head. Booking Essential	Shirley@swaag.org
19-06-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting NB CHANGE OF DATE	Dr James Gerrard of Newcastle University will talk about 'Connecting Small Worlds: travel and communication in Roman Britain'	Sue@swaag.org
10-07-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting	An informal pint at The Buck during the dig on The Hagg. A chance to catch up and talk about progress and finds.	Sue@swaag.org
04-07-2018 to 18-07-2018		The Hagg	This year's dig.		Andrea@swaag.org
11-09-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting	Feedback from this year's dig on The Hagg	Sue@swaag.org
25-09-2018	tbc	CB Inn, Arkengarthdale	Members' Social	Dinner. Booking essential	Shirley@swaag.org
03-10-2018	tbc	Calver	Walk	Alan Mills will lead a walk around Calver Hill to explore Bale smelting and mining sites	Alan@swaag.org

09-10-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Talk by a professional archaeologist (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	Northern Archaeological Associates will speak about the work they undertook on the A1 expansion and discuss outcomes of post-ex work	Sue@swaag.org
13-11-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' Meeting	Peter Denison-Edson will give a talk on the subject of the Romans in Swaledale	Sue@swaag.org
14-12-2018	tbc	Tennant's Leyburn	Members' Social	Xmas Dinner. Booking essential	Shirley@swaag.org