

Swaledale Big Dig

Newsletter #1 February 2014

This is the first in a series of occasional Swaledale Big Dig Newsletters which are intended to be produced at roughly monthly intervals.

Progress

We have made an excellent start to the project.

The Documentary Research Training Day at the North Yorkshire County Records Office went very well. Eighteen people attended; we had a very enjoyable day and learnt a lot about sources both there and elsewhere. Several of us are beavering away on medieval & post-medieval sources such as the Patent Rolls, the Bridlington Priory Chartulary and North Yorkshire Quarter Sessions. Dave Backhouse and colleagues are busy translating the Reeth Market Charter for us; despite being 1694/5 it is in medieval Latin which continued in use until 1733 for official documents.



We have acquired our geophysical surveying equipment; a Bartington magnetometer and a Geoscan resistivity meter. Stephen Eastmead and Mike Walton, together with a number of SWAAG members, are getting to grips with surveying but are hampered by the weather at the moment.

Good progress is being made by Dave Brooks and colleagues on preparing for the formal launch on 13th March. More on this later. Mike & Pat Walton have done a tremendous job in preparing the displays.

Preparations for the test pits in Reeth are progressing well, thanks to Rob Nicholson & Philip Bastow, as is the work with local schools – thanks to Sue Nicholson and her team. We plan to be involving the children in geophys-ing a field at Gunnerside School in April followed by digging a test-pit there, then further work with the Schools on Reeth Green.

At the moment we have half-a-dozen or more people who have volunteered their gardens for test-pitting in and around Reeth. We expect many more to sign up at the launch events. **Coming up next**

In the next week or so we will be leafletting Reeth, Fremington and Grinton to promote the Big Dig and invite people to the launch events.

The first of two events takes place on Thursday 13th March 2014, 7pm, Reeth Memorial Hall. Dr Carena Lewis of Cambridge University and Time Team will give the key-note address supported by Robert White of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA). The second event is a Heritage Open Day on Saturday 15th March, 10-3, also in the Memorial Hall, Reeth to which all are invited to learn more about the project, volunteer their gardens and enrol on our free courses. The draft courses timetable is:

March/April: Interpreting Landscape 2x 3 hrs

May/June: Archaeology of Britain – 5 weeks x 2 hrs; start on or after 28/4

May/June: Finds Handling – live during digging test pit

May/June: Archaeological Illustration – live during digging test pit

July: Interpreting Aerial Photography / Lidar

Sept/October: Archaeology of Britain– 5 weeks x 2 hrs

Before summer 2015: Topographic Survey using GPS

Before summer 2015: Interpreting Geophys



Other local heritage groups will also be represented at the Heritage Open Day including the Reeth Vernacular Buildings Group (house history etc), the Swaledale Museum, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the Upper Dales Family History Group.

After the launch we will begin surveying and digging in earnest!

How you can get involved

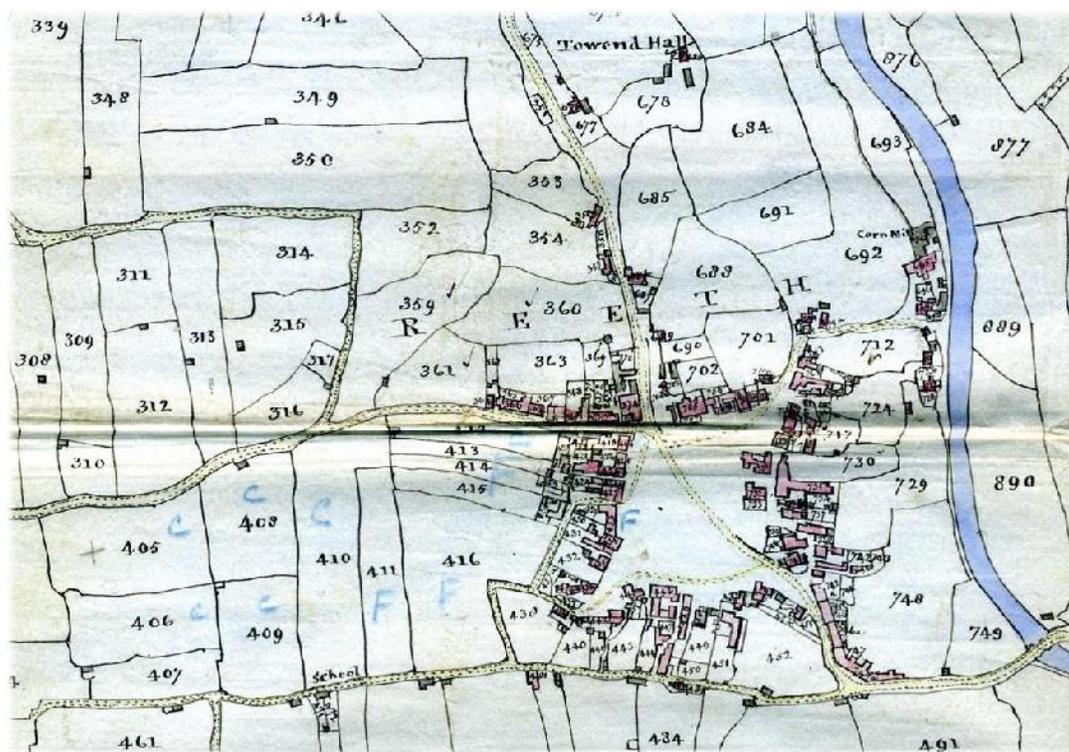
The timetable for the next few months following the launch is :

Thursday, 24 April	Gunnerside Geophys	Gunnerside School
Monday, 28 April	Gunnerside Test Pit	Gunnerside School
Tuesday, 29 April	Gunnerside Test Pit	Gunnerside School
Saturday, 10 May	Training Day	Memorial Hall
Saturday, 17 May	Dig Day	Reeth
Sunday, 18 May	Dig Day	Reeth
Friday, 6 June	Swaledale Festival Dig Day	Reeth
Monday, 9 June	School Dig Day	Reeth
Thursday, 12 June	School Dig Day	Reeth
Saturday, 21 June	Dig Day	Reeth
Sunday, 22 June	Dig Day	Reeth
Saturday, 19 July	CBA Dig Day*	Reeth
Sunday, 20 July	CBA Dig Day*	Reeth

*CBA Festival of Archaeology

nb. the nature of the activities with the Schools means that participation is limited to a small number of members

The dates of the test pits on Reeth Green are subject to approval by the Parish Council so the timetable may be subject to change; please watch the website www.swaag.org



Reeth 1839

There are many opportunities for all to become involved in the Big Dig. If you are interested and able to participate in any of the following activities please contact the person shown:

Test-pitting, Rob Nicholson: mrwohl@hotmail.com

or Philip Bastow: cabinetmaker@philipbastow.plus.com

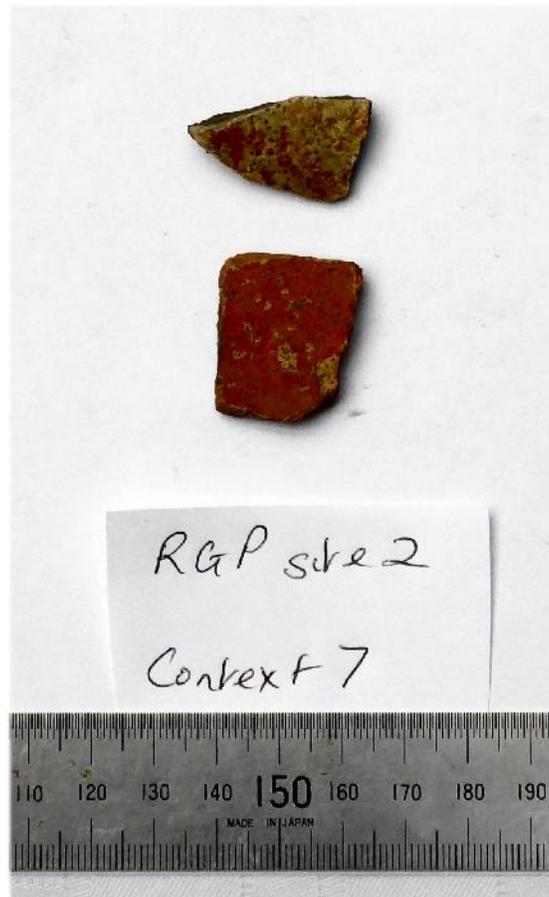
Surveying incl geophys, Stephen Eastmead: seastmead@gmail.com

or Mike Walton: walton@swaledale.org

Documentary research Ann Russell: annrussellrg@gmail.com

or Judith Mills: judith.mills@hotmail.co.uk

General enquiries to bigdig@swaag.org



Medieval pot sherds from a garden in Silver St, Reeth

If you are interested in some other aspect of history (eg family history, vernacular buildings etc) then we can put you in touch with relevant groups; if you are interested in archaeology generally then join SWAAG (see the website) !

All the best

Alan Mills