

Swaledale Big Dig

Newsletter no.6 October 2014



The Big Dig walk at Keld, Swaledale 26th August 2014

It has been a few weeks since the last newsletter and as usual we have been extremely busy; digging further test pits, geophysical surveying, out walking, organizing and attending courses as described further in the following pages.

During the August Bank Holiday week we offered four organized walks to the public, one looking at geology and lead mining in Swaledale, and three at archaeology including further industrial archaeology. These were well supported despite the inclement weather on the last day, with a total of 51 people joining in.



On the Grinton Moor Mining Heritage Walk

Our programme of free courses continued in September. Robert White of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) presented two evening sessions looking at interpreting aerial photographs and Lidar images. These are very important in helping us understand the development of medieval Fremington and Grinton. Practical work involved the group looking at examples from the huge collection of images at the YDNPA head office in Bainbridge; a valuable resource which may be viewed by appointment. At the end of the month we began a four week session “Delving into Archives” with Marion Moverley, exploring ecclesiastical, feudal, manorial and fiscal records and importantly not only how to interpret them but also how to find them and organize one’s research. I will shortly be organizing a meeting for those interested in forming a local history group; if interested email me at alan@swaag.org



Left, one of Marion Moverley’s sessions; right Robert White

September was a very busy month for us. Mike Haken, Webmaster and Editor of the Roman Antiquities Section of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, gave a most interesting evening talk on Roman roads in North Yorkshire, focusing on how Lidar imagery has helped reveal what is believed to be a Roman Road from Bainbridge over Swaledale towards Barnard Castle, possibly going to either the fort at Bowes or at Greta Bridge or maybe even both. Fascinating stuff and more for us to investigate.

Early in the month we completed a further two test pits in gardens in Reeth, bringing the total to a creditable twenty-seven. We will do a small number more in Reeth in 2015, including two more with children from Richmond Methodist Primary School, twinned with Arkengarthdale School. The results and what they might mean will be presented at our end-of-year events on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th November, see below.

Towards the end of September a number of us, led by Mike Walton, spent four consecutive days carrying out a geophysical survey of the potential medieval settlement in Grinton; our thanks to Mandy and Simon Barningham, Leo and Margaret Macknight, the landowners and to Raymond Calvert, who farms the land.



Left: Jane Harrison geophysing at Grinton
Right: the resistivity team – Andrea Dixon, Justin Wood, Dave Brooks, Alan & Judith Mills



The results of the Grinton magnetometry survey overlaid on Google Earth.

Two potential enclosures are visible in the above geophysics images, one in the field second from the right, the other in the small left-most field. We will be organizing a short course next year on interpreting such images, so will say no more at this time.

The 2014 Season - What have we learnt?

Join us at the end of November in Reeth Memorial Hall for our end of season event.

On Friday, 28th November, 7pm-9pm there will be presentations by the SWAAG Project Team:

- what have we achieved
- what have we found
- what has it taught us about the history of Reeth
- our plans for 2015

On Saturday, 29th November, 10am to 4pm, please come to

- learn more about the Project's achievements to date
- examine the finds and reports from the Reeth test pits
- explore what they tell you about Reeth's past
- discuss our plans for Fremington and Grinton in 2015
- consider next year's courses

Meet the SWAAG team, the archaeologists who support us, discuss your interests and see how you can get involved in the Swaledale Big Dig. As usual there is no charge for these events.

Further forthcoming events

- (i) The Finds Handling and Identification day, focusing mainly on pottery has proved so popular that we are running this twice, on 8th November and again on 14th March. Both are already full but if you are interested in attending then let me know and I will put you on the reserve list.
- (ii) We have arranged an introductory surveying course led by Miles Johnson of the YDNPA. This will consist of a 2 hour session, Wednesday 3rd December, 7pm-9pm in Reeth Memorial Hall, looking at the principles, techniques, interpretation of drawings etc followed by a practical session the following Sunday, 7th December, 10am-4pm, on the land at Fremington where we believe there might have been a medieval settlement. Places on the Sunday will be limited to ca.15. Please let me know if you wish to come to either the theory session alone on the Wednesday or both Wednesday and Sunday.
- (iii) In the Spring we will offer a follow-up to Roger Martlew's popular short course on British Archaeology. This is scheduled for 5 weeks from Thursday 16th April 2015 to Thursday 14th May inclusive, 7pm-9pm, Reeth Memorial Hall.
- (iv) As mentioned above, we will develop a short course in the New Year on interpreting geophysical survey results; details later
- (v) Finally, our Big Dig weekends for 2015 are provisionally set for 16th/17th May, 20th/21st June, 18th/19th July.

There is also the possibility that we might organize a two-day course Archaeological Illustration. If you are interested in this possibility then please let me know.

The Big Dig in the press

The October edition of the Reeth Gazette carried an article referring to the Big Dig.

Summary

Thanks to the support of a large number of people and organisations we are making excellent progress with interest in the project exceeding expectations. We had a considerable number of finds to classify which have now been identified by our expert Jenny Vaughan. We look forward to sharing this with you on 28th / 29th November.



Left: Peter Denison-Edson and Mike Brooks represented the Big Dig at an Heritage Open Day, in Middleham; Right: Low Level Crushing Mill visited on an organised walk



Left: at Leaside, Reeth, one of the September test pits
Right: on the free August walk to Maiden Castle, Harkerside, Swaledale

How you can get involved

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: rob@swaag.org

or Philip Bastow: philip@swaag.org

Surveying incl geophys : Mike Walton: mike@swaag.org

Documentary research Ann Russell: ann@swaag.org

or Judith Mills: judith@swaag.org

General enquiries or for more info on courses etc: bigdig@swaag.org or alan@swaag.org

We are particularly keen to hear from people in Fremington and Grinton with gardens or land where we might be able to put a test pit.

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 please join SWAAG (see the website)!



This is the QR code for the photo album website. Use an app such as QR droid on your smartphone to take you straight there.

You can follow the progress of the Swaledale Big Dig on Twitter @SwaledaleDig

If you do not use Twitter then the Twitter feeds are displayed on the SWAAG website and also on the Reeth Memorial Hall site at <http://www.reethmemorialhall.co.uk/> under the Regular Users tab.

This is the QR code for the SWAAG website www.swaag.org



I would particularly like to thank Jim & Jackie at the Buck Hotel, Reeth for making a meeting room available to us free of charge; it is very much appreciated.



www.buckhotel.co.uk

Thank you for your interest and support.

Best wishes

Alan Mills

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