

# Altogether Archaeology

*Digging our heritage in the North Pennines*



## ALTOGETHER ARCHAEOLOGY NEWSLETTER 2018 (Spring edition)



**POTTERY FINDS FROM  
WELL HEAD**



**FLINT KNAPPING**



**WE KNOW HOW TO  
PARTY!**



# Altogether Archaeology

*Digging our heritage in the North Pennines*

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## **Committee members**

Rob Pearson

Alan Newham

Jenny Pritchard

## **Firstly ....**

Altogether Archaeology is declaring Spring with this new, April edition of the Newsletter! We decided at the end of last year to slot in an extra, shorter, issue at this time of year to keep members informed about some of the important business decided at the AGM.

Almost 30 members and guests attended the AGM. Considering the weather conditions, sub-zero temperatures and heavy snow showers, this was a good turn out particularly as some hardy members had travelled across high Pennine roads to be there.

Our membership continues to grow and the Committee has had another very busy year, setting up projects, applying for grants and planning events. So ... we have an action-packed schedule ahead and look forward to seeing you all out and about ... now that the snow has disappeared!



*The AGM at Marwood Social Centre - it was lovely and warm **inside!***

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## Editorial

2017 finished on a high note. As you know, we enjoy experimenting with new formats, and our Christmas Shin-dig at St. John's Chapel Town Hall was no exception!

As well as the tried, tested and completely fiendish quiz put together by Martin Green, we instigated a programme of short talks by members. This proved to be a huge success.

We were treated to fascinating insights into the archaeology of the Faroe Islands and Holy Island from Martin Green and Alan Newham respectively; Tony Metcalfe talked about his digging adventures down South (Yorkshire) and Mike Powell shared some ideas in the pipeline about providing interpretation at sites AA has worked on in Weardale and exhibiting important finds locally.

Highlights included learned disquisitions from Elaine Vallack and Dot Coe. In a previous edition of the newsletter, Elaine wrote about her experience as a 'novice digger' on the Peregrini Project, Lindisfarne. Her talk returned to the topic and Elaine delivered a highly entertaining presentation about the vital importance of choosing, and hanging on to, your equipment - particularly the selection of the most appropriate bucket for the job.

Dot has devoted some considerable time to the study of back-filling and her erudite lecture on the Art and Science of Back-Filling, was extremely informative - and very funny.

We began 2018 with a venture in Experimental Archaeology, and you can read an account of Rob Young's flint knapping workshop on page 8.

In February, we had a double bill of talks delivered by Paul Frodsham on St. Botolph's Chapel, Frosterley, and David Petts, who spoke about the Early Medieval North Pennines.



*Martin's fiendish Christmas Quiz (photo: Tony Metcalfe)*

March was the AGM; Mike Powell fills us in on the news on page 5. We have been fortunate to secure funding from Northern Heartlands for a further dig at Holwick dig in May and there is an item about that on page 7.

Also in this issue, Jenny Pritchard tells us about La Hougie Bie, an amazing passage grave on Jersey, on page 9.



*Flint knapping workshop (photo Tony Metcalfe)*

I hope you enjoy this Spring Newsletter. We are 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 11).

**Chris Powell**

## News from the AGM

The AGM took place on Saturday 17th March in Marwood, near Barnard Castle.

### **Election of Committee members**

Under the transitional arrangements approved at last year's AGM in order to stagger committee elections, the terms of office of 3 members expired at the meeting. Jenny Pritchard and Rob Pearson both agreed to stand for election again. Harriet Sams has decided to 'retire' as she is planning an extended trip abroad with her family. We wish Harriet well on her travels and hope to see her back on the committee at some point in the near future. Elaine Vallack, who was co-opted to the committee last year and took on the role of Events Co-ordinator, was nominated to fill the third vacancy.

All three nominees were elected unanimously, so the committee is continuing at full strength and current members are listed on page 2.

The coming year is shaping up to be a busy one for the committee (as always) and we are looking forward to serving members by taking every opportunity that we can to develop the activities of the group.

### **Financial Report**

Greg Finch's financial report for 2017 showed that Altogether Archaeology ended the year in a healthy financial position with a balance of almost £4,600 in our bank and building society accounts. During the year we completed expenditure from the Heritage Lottery Fund Start-up Grant and this project was signed off successfully. Income from subscriptions rose in 2017 in line with an increase in membership to 110 and totalled £2,455. This sum was matched by income received from donations. These comprised a significant anonymous donation of £2000 plus £454 raised from contributions received in exchange for Stephen Eastmead's "QGIS & Lidar" book, all proceeds from which Stephen has kindly donated to AA. Proceeds from Stephen's book are still coming in and will appear as further donations in the 2018

accounts. We are most grateful to Stephen and our other benefactors for their generous support for AA.

### **Membership Subscriptions**

The committee has agreed that membership subscriptions for 2018/19 should remain at the current level and so the rates for subs due on 1st April 2018 are:

Individual membership - £25

Joint / family membership - £35

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

We hope that all current members will want to continue to support AA over the next year and look forward to seeing you all at future events and activities. Please arrange to pay subscriptions promptly as this greatly assists our cash flow and keeps our Treasurer very happy.

### **Data Protection**

Members attending the AGM were advised that the UK Government is introducing new data protection regulations (the General Data Protection Regulation) in May 2018 and the committee has recently reviewed what AA needs to do in order to comply. We have produced a Privacy Notice which describes the personal data we hold about members, what we use the data for, and how we ensure the security of this data and protect our members' privacy. The Privacy Notice has now been posted on the AA website and we have sent a copy to all our current members. Please take a moment to read the notice as it contains advice on what to do if you want to check or amend the data we hold about you. The covering letter (sent via email) also asks you to let us know if you have any specific preferences about the methods we use to communicate with you. We value the support of each and every one of our members so we want to make sure we respect your wishes. If you have not received your copy of the Privacy Notice please let us know and we will sort this out.

**Mike Powell**

## And a bit extra ...

The AGM also doubled as a 'mini' conference, and we were entertained by three speakers this year.

Martin Green gave us a comprehensive account of work at the Well Head medieval settlement at Holwick, from the early days of the first surveys in 2011 when, in his words, we were all 'younger and more beautiful' (there were even a few slides to prove it) to the muddy maelstrom of backfilling the trenches in the torrential rain in 2017. What is emerging is a very complex pattern of settlement at Well Head which, coupled with the general paucity of documentary information about deserted upland medieval settlements, is a good reason to revisit the site. The North Pennines is very interesting territory!

Tony Metcalfe took us through the Well Head Settlement finds, many of which have been definitively dated as 13th and 14th century. There are some interesting examples of lead glazed Tees Valley ware and some unusual pieces of highly coloured slipware, possibly originating in Germany or the Low Countries. Quite a few of the finds point to high grade artefacts, which has interesting implications for the Medieval farmers at Holwick.

One thing is clear, additional workshops to label and identify the finds would be extremely useful and the question was raised, do we want to start from scratch and devise a proper fabric typology? This is something that hasn't been undertaken in this area, and could be a very valuable resource.

We will be returning to Well Head in May this year, see the item below, Revealing Medieval Teesdale, for information about the activities we have planned.

After lunch, Liz Ryan gave a talk on the Vikings and the Tees. Existing research suggests that there are few traces of Scandinavian influence in County Durham. However, Liz is investigating the evidence of activity North of the Tees and cited three valuable research sources: *The Portable Antiquities Scheme*, *Place Names* and *Viking Stone Sculptures*. She came up with some fascinating arguments to support her thesis that the River Tees was a conduit for Viking activity, although most settlement tended to occur south of the river. Her talk provoked lots of questions and sparked a very lively debate - there is clearly plenty of scope for more research into this topic!



Fragments of a decorated plate found at Well Head (photo Tony Metcalfe)

## Revealing Medieval Upper Teesdale



*Digging at the Well Head settlement, July 2017 (photo Mike Powell)*

We now know from our excavation at the Well Head site that the settlement was active for a considerable period of time during the middle ages. Our excavation last year attracted a significant amount of interest, enough to warrant a return to Holwick to seek out additional evidence.

Altogether Archaeology is absolutely delighted that the project has been awarded funding from the Northern Heartlands Community Initiative Fund, managed by County Durham Community Foundation, and thanks are due to Martin Green for his hard work putting the application together. Anna Collins, one of the community facilitators at Northern Heartlands, has posted a great blog about about the project on their website, which you might be interested to read @ <http://bit.ly/2E4SNGT>

As well as helping to cover the costs of the excavation itself, part of the grant is earmarked to encourage community

participation, so it will enable us to offer a range of opportunities for local people and visitors to become involved.

The dig itself will take place from **12th to 27th May 2018** and we are planning a number of associated public events, the first of which is a talk about the results of the 2017 dig and our plans for this year. We will explain how people can get involved and there will also be an opportunity to look at some of the finds from the site. This will happen on **Monday 16th April at 7.30pm in Middleton-in-Teesdale Village Hall.**

Other activities will include an open day on the site, archaeology walks, workshops to clean and record finds and a final public talk to discuss the results of this year's dig. Keep an eye on the website for details of these events.

## Flint knapping at Harehope Quarry

Rob Young packed a vast amount into the two hours of his flint knapping workshop, which took place on a cold Saturday in January at Harehope Quarry. However, the huge wood burning stove in the eco-classroom was well stoked up and we were warmly received by Jill Essam of the Harehope Quarry Project.

Rob began by talking us through the different types of flint and the ways in which they were used. He is a brilliant communicator and even managed to make lithic classification accessible and interesting! Most of the examples he had on show were teaching samples and many of the forms were familiar, arrowheads, scrapers, axes, microliths etc. but the piece that captured everyone's imagination was a Neanderthal discoid handaxe, beautifully smooth and



*(photo: Mike Powell)*

wonderfully balanced, that just slipped naturally into your right hand. It was quite extraordinary to think that, 60,000 years ago, a similar axe could have been wielded by one of our ancestors.

Harehope was an ideal venue for this workshop as there is plenty of space designed for outdoor activities. So ... we left the comfort of the classroom and braved the January wind. Rob had brought a car load of materials - flints for knapping and flint tools for doing the knapping as well as all the gear needed by 21st century amateurs, aprons, safety goggles, gloves etc. He showed us how to hold both the tool and the piece to be worked at the correct angle so that the flakes just fell away... he made it look so easy!



*Rob shows us how it's done. (Photo Tony Metcalfe)*

Once you got a rhythm going, it was quite addictive and could even be rather tuneful, but it could also be intensely frustrating ... just as you thought you were achieving the perfect surface you'd knock it at the wrong angle, or too hard or not hard enough and it all went to pieces, literally. However, the satisfaction of finally revealing that perfect, sharp edge was immeasurable. And the edge was very sharp. Holding it, you got a real sense of how a hunter with the requisite skills would use the implement to skin a rabbit or clean a hide.



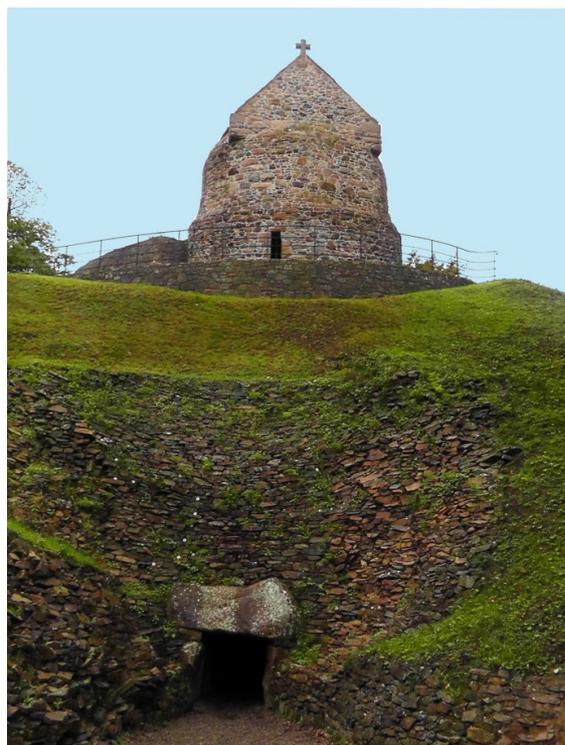
*(photo: Chris Powell)*

This was a departure for Altogether Archaeology. Our first hands-on experimental archaeology workshop! It was hugely enjoyable, a welcome practical activity outside the 'digging season.' Let's hope it was the first of many.

## The Dolmens of Jersey - La Hougie Bie

In October 2017, we decided to escape to Jersey for a week's holiday. On arrival at the airport, I spotted a poster advertising 'La Hougie Bie'. It looked fascinating and something I hadn't expected, so I had to find out more.

La Hougie Bie is a Neolithic passage grave (4000 to 3250BC). It is a huge mound and apparently one of the largest and best preserved passage graves in Europe. It was first excavated in 1924 and finds included pottery, flint tools, beads and both animal and human bone. Further excavations were carried out in the 1990's – the original entrance was exposed and an 'equinoctial' alignment was discovered.



*(photo Jenny Pritchard)*

The entrance is quite low but after a short distance bent double, you can stand almost upright before the final few yards to the main chamber. Wait a moment to let your eyes adjust and you will be amazed! The huge stone slab roof is held up by massive stone

pillars and there are three chambers – one on each side and one at the back. It is really mind-blowing thinking about how this was constructed.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century a small vaulted chapel was erected on the top of the mound. It was later remodelled in 16<sup>th</sup> Century and became a centre for pilgrimage. In 1792, Philippe d'Auvergne enclosed the chapel in a small neo-gothic castle which became known as 'The Prince's Tower'.

The next great change came during the Second World War when the German forces dug into the mound to build a battalion command bunker on the opposite side of the passageway entrance.

In 2012, two men using metal detectors discovered a large hoard comprising thousands of coins, gold torques and bracelets. There is an audio-visual display explaining how it was discovered, recovered from the site and preserved.

There is a museum on site which is filled with amazing artefacts from the Neolithic period plus finds from other Dolmens on the Island. Jersey Archaeology is also recreating a 'long house' on the site. Originally they were using only Neolithic-type tools to cut down trees and to cut and shape the timbers. However, they soon realised this would take too long to complete and it was agreed that they could use modern hand tools. The building is expected to be completed in 2019 when it will be used as an education centre.

La Hougie Bie is just one of 12 known Dolmens around the coast. We also had time to visit four other sites: La Pouquelaye de Faldouet (my favourite), La Sargenté, La Table des Marthes and La Pinnacle. But that leaves 7 good reasons to return to Jersey!

**Jenny Pritchard**

## Coming Up

Elaine has been hard at work putting a programme together and we have another exciting year in store! You can find details of all of our events on the website:

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

## Briefly ...

### April

**Saturday 14th** - First Aid Training at Eastgate Village Hall

**Monday 16th** - public talk about the 2017 excavation at Holwick and plans for further work in May this year. Middleton-in-Teesdale village hall.

**Saturday 21st** - mini-conference: *Valuing Neolithic Heritage in the landscapes of Northern England*. Two talks in one day (including a lunch break and social interaction, of course!). Kate Sharpe on *Rock Art in the NE and Cumbria* and Emma Watson on *Neolithic monuments in Northern England*. Bowes and Gilmonby Hall, Bowes.

### May

**12th - 27th** Excavation at the Well Head Settlement, Holwick, Teesdale.

### June

**Saturday 16th** - *Lost Industrial Hexhamshire Revisited*. Guided walk led by Greg Finch.

### July

**Saturday 14th** - *Archaeology at the Edge of Empire*. Guided walk north of Hadrian's wall led by Martin Green.

### September

*Exploring the Archaeology of Cotherstone* with Harriet Sams; date tbc.

### October

Saturday 13th - another double bill of talks. Peter Ryder on *Early Churches in the North Pennines* and Richard Carlton on *the Excavation of an Anglo Saxon Church on The Heugh, Lindisfarne*. Whitley Chapel Village Hall.

### November

Saturday 3rd - David Johnson *There are no known Anglo-Saxon sites in the North-West - an alternative view* and Perry Gardner, *Digging at Sedgeford, Norfolk*. Mickleton Village Hall.

### December

AA's famous Christmas Shindig, including the traditional *Big Archaeology Quiz of the Year* (with star prizes!). Keep an eye on the website for details.

## 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)

## Social media

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 welcome submissions of general archaeological interest as well as those about AA activities. We are always on the look out for your contributions, especially for our longer, Winter issue, so please let us know what you have been up to!

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](mailto:chrispowl@me.com)