

### President's letter



**Dear Members,** Now that the days are getting shorter we are restarting our lecture programme. I hope you will be able to come and hear the wide range of speakers who are lined up for the coming months. We do hope to be in our usual venue at Elvet Riverside from October, but there is some doubt about the ongoing refurbishment works, so do check before you come just where we will be. Our December Members' Meeting will be at the Oriental Museum.

You will no doubt have seen news reports about Binchester, 'the Pompeii of the North' over the summer. The excavations have certainly produced spectacularly preserved remains.

There is currently some doubt over the future of the site as the Church Commissioners intend to sell the land. Details, and a link to a petition, can be found on the Binchester Blog at <http://tinyurl.com/Binchester>.

Last year your Committee agreed to reinstate the Society's research grants for members. One award of up to £250 is available each year to fund fieldwork, archival or documentary work, post-fieldwork costs or publication costs related to archaeological or architectural research in North East England. If you have in mind some piece of work that could be enabled or furthered with such a subvention, please do apply by 31 December. Details are available on the Society's website or from Belinda Burke.

**Andrew Millard** President

Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland

### Digging deep into the Cathedral's past

**Archaeologists working at Durham Cathedral say discoveries made during a dig at the monument suggest there could have been a Roman site on the Cathedral peninsula.**

A team of specialists from Archaeological Services Durham University, working with the Cathedral's Archaeologist, Norman Emery, are digging in the former Great Kitchen ahead of work to transform it into a breath-taking exhibition space as part of the Cathedral's Open Treasure project.

So far, many of the finds have been related to kitchen waste, giving a unique insight into the diet of the monks who lived and worked in the Cathedral. But earlier this year, archaeologists unearthed Roman Samian ware, as well as pieces of 13th-century stained glass. One of the pieces of Roman pottery has been recycled to make a spindle whorl for spinning thread.

Mr Emery said, "The pottery is very interesting because it makes you wonder if there could have been a Roman site here on the Cathedral peninsula.

We know there was a site not too far away called Old Durham, on the other side of the river, but several Roman artefacts have been found in this area previously, so combined with these finds, this could suggest that there was a site much closer to home."

Work is now proceeding on structural modifications, particularly with the removal of the 1951 Search Room and the offices associated with the former Prior's Kitchen Record Office, the later divisions to form the shop, and concrete floors. This gives a much clearer impression of



▲ Norman Emery examines a fragment of medieval glass  
 Courtesy of John Attle, Durham Photographic Society  
 ♦ The glass fragment  
 Courtesy of Durham Cathedral

the earlier appearance of the area. It will also allow further areas of the Covey to be investigated. The removal of wall plaster and 1951 brickwork is revealing built features, and methods of construction, which may help in elucidating the structural history of the kitchen and its associated buildings.

The next phase of Open Treasure will see a new exhibition route created, taking visitors up to the Monks' Dormitory, through a new gallery and finishing in the Great Kitchen where the Treasures of St Cuthbert will be on display, before returning to the Cloister via the Covey.

## News from Roman Binchester 2014

This year saw another successful season of excavation at Binchester Roman Fort. Major progress was made in both trenches and we look forward to our final year on site next year.

Within the fort, we are currently exploring one of the Roman cavalry barracks. Although it has been challenging picking out the complex development of the structure, it is clear that the barrack had at least two major phases of activity. In the earlier phase, it was a typical Roman cavalry barrack, with rows of rooms for the soldiers paired with stables for their mounts. At some point, possibly in the 3rd or 4th century AD, this larger building contracted into a narrower structure. At the northern end was a well preserved accommodation block for the commander of the *turma*.

We spent the final weeks of the season excavating a series of stone-lined post holes and post-pads that lay within the main body of this later structure – hopefully some of these will resolve themselves into internal divisions or similar features. We also discovered this year that at some point the northern gable wall of the barrack was moved northwards, resulting in the reconstruction of a drainage gully. In this area, we also started to get a better sense of the defences of the fort. We encountered the inside of the curtain wall in both the ramparts within our trench; we also identified and excavated one of the corner turrets. It was noticeable that the northern curtain wall was far better constructed than the cruder eastern curtain wall, which belonged to the earliest phase of the fort. The northern wall was constructed at a later date, probably when the fort contracted in size in the early second century AD.

In Trench 2, the focus was on the exceptionally well-preserved bath-house. Although we had already discovered last season that the walls survived to a height of nearly 2 metres, it was only this year that the extent of this survival was fully appreciated. The building had been filled in with massive dumps of late Roman rubbish, probably in the later 4th century. We removed nearly all this material from the interior of the structure, revealing the stone flagged floor across the structure.

The chronological complexity of the building began to be revealed. It was clear that the main room originally contained a cold water plunge bath, but this was knocked out at some point and the wall lined with stone benches as it was converted into a changing room. This led to the blocking of several doors, and in one corner a new wall was built changing the shape of the room. This change within the bath-house probably occurred at the same time as the painted plaster work that seems to have lined the room was covered over with a cruder, plain white plaster. The north-east corner of the changing room appears to have acted as a shrine, and two *in situ* stone altars were found there at the end of last year. One of these carried an inscription recording its dedication to the goddess Fortuna by Eltaeminus, a retired military architect who belonged to the *Ala Vettonum*, the cavalry unit of Spanish origin who were stationed at Binchester.



David Mason (centre) and staff from Archaeological Service Durham University with the inscribed altar discovered in 2013  
© Durham University

Other parts of the bath-house were also more or less cleared out, revealing more floors (some with culverts running beneath them). A particular nice discovery was a small, almost pristine, plunge bath that had been constructed in a later annexe that had been added to the front of the main baths building. This still had its drainage hole which clearly linked up with the neighbouring system of culverts. The trench was extended slightly in places just to allow us to get a better sense of the overall plan; it was clear that rooms continued to both the north and the east. One of these rooms contained what appears to be another bath or water cistern, and retained the bases of a stone arch or vault that once covered it.

There was, as ever, excellent finds retention, including exceptional quantities of animal bone from the rubbish deposits within the bath-house. The highlight, however, was a silver ring of 2nd- or 3rd-century date, which came from the barrack trench. This had a carnelian gemstone set into it which carried the symbol of an anchor with two fishes suspended from it. This was a common symbol amongst early Christian communities, and is an exceptionally rare example of evidence for pre-Constantinian Christianity from Roman Britain.



### Dr David Petts

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Silver Roman ring with gemstone bearing early Christian symbols

Scale 2:1  
Photo by Jeff Veitch  
© Durham University

### The main room of the vicus bath-house under excavation

Photo Colin Turner



## Hornby Castle Season 5 update

**A significant improvement in both weather and ground conditions has enabled good progress to be made in the painstaking process of uncovering and recording the rubble of the collapsed building first identified this time last year in Trench 4.**

Further sections of the timber water pipe have been located beneath the rubble and surviving sections of mortar floor. Tantalising glimpses of architectural detailing have been found including a section of moulded stone window mullion and a piece of tiled pavement which parallels an example recently uncovered at the site of the Augustinian Friary in Central York and which was dated to the early 14th century.

Further hints have also come forward of the destruction of the building including further military artefacts such as a bodkin arrowhead along with evidence of burning in the form of badly burnt and oxidised walling stone. It is hoped that more will be discovered as the rubble is carefully removed over the remainder of the season.

Further information has also been uncovered in respect of the usage of the building, with significant further quantities of expensive imported pottery from the 14th and 15th centuries, and bones of wild boar and venison representing elite dining. Other artefacts have also been uncovered which provide an interesting insight into daily life including the hinge from a large timber chest, a bronze jetton and the handle from a simple iron lamp. Quantities of an orange/red waxy substance sealed between the collapsed medieval walling and floor have also been found which will shortly be analysed by the Bio-archaeology Unit at York University.



A fragment of an early 14th-century moulded stone window mullion

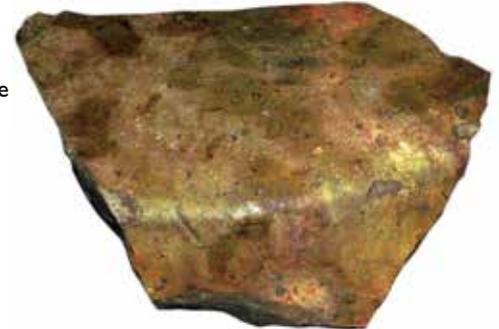
Scale 1:2

© Erik Matthews

A fragment of the base of a Humberware jug

Scale 1:2

© Erik Matthews



Some limited field walking has taken place on the adjacent field that was the site of the Mere in the medieval period. This has revealed significant quantities of water abraded pottery dating from the 12th to the 15th centuries, but also un-abraded pre-conquest pottery hinting at a possible earlier settlement focus for the village. Work will be on-going until the beginning of November and more interesting discoveries are anticipated. A short session of filming has also taken place on site for the new series of *Digging for Britain* which will be aired in late November or early December.

In the meantime the results of the Society's previous fieldwork at Lammerside Castle in Cumbria are to be published by Shaun Tyas before the end of the year in a book entitled *A House Such as Thieves Will Knock At*.

## Excavations and geophysical survey at Greta Bridge Roman fort

Between 2012 and 2014 there have been a series of archaeological investigations at Greta Bridge, firstly as part of development work at the Morrith Hotel and subsequently a geophysical survey funded through the Heritage Lottery Funded Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership and undertaken under the aegis of the Society.

This small hamlet sits at the eastern end of the major trans-Pennine route across Stainmore, which has been in use since at least Roman times and is now followed by the A66. The Morrith Arms Hotel lies over the north-east defences of the Roman fort. The fort has never been the subject of excavation. The dualling of the A66 in the 1970s revealed buildings belonging to the civil settlement lining its Roman predecessor. Dating evidence suggests the *vicus*, and thus indirectly the fort itself, did not come into existence until the mid-2nd century.

Refurbishment of the Morrith Arms and its facilities required archaeological investigations (undertaken by Archaeo-Environment in collaboration with Northern Archaeological Associates) and these revealed the remains of a substantial Roman building to the north of the fort on the end of the high promontory between the River Greta and Tutta Beck and probably beside a spur road linking the fort with the main Roman road to the

north-east. Measures were taken to record the structure and then to relocate a proposed water treatment plant to preserve the Roman remains for future investigation.

As part of the Community Archaeology module of the Heart of Teesdale Landscape Partnership Scheme, the Society commissioned Northern Archaeological Associates and GSB Prospection Ltd to undertake an outreach programme of geophysical and topographic survey during autumn 2013. As well as attempting to gain a better idea of the layout of the fort interior this was designed to provide the opportunity for local individuals to work with NAA and to take part in both the magnetometer survey and resistivity survey. Landscaping to form a golf course in the early 20th century along with the apparent importation of considerable quantities of soil impeded the clarity of the results. Nonetheless, it was possible to gain some insight into the location of roads and the extent of individual buildings. The surveys also suggested that considerable sections of the eastern defences have slumped down the steep slope that drops away to the former course of the Greta which once ran much closer to the fort than it does today.

South of the fort there is little evidence for an extensive *vicus*, or even the road leading south from the defences.

Dr David Mason

## Programme 2014–2015

All lectures will be held at Elvet Riverside, Room 141 New Elvet, Durham, at 2.30 pm unless otherwise notified. Everyone is welcome to attend

- Saturday 20 September **Reconstructing Hadrian's Wall**  
**Professor David Breeze**  
This lecture will take place in the Leech Hall, St John's College
- Saturday 11 October **Monarch, prince and lord Aspects of castle building in north Wales and the March in the 13th century**  
**Dr John Kenyon**
- Saturday 8 November **Celtic art in northern Britain An archaeological view**  
**Dr Fraser Hunter** National Museums of Scotland
- Saturday 13 December **2014 Members Meeting** Oriental Museum, Durham  
Please contact the secretary for details
- 2015**
- Saturday 17 January **Identifying ephemeral human colonisation events in the North Atlantic islands**  
**Dr Mike Church** Archaeology Department, Durham University
- Saturday 14 February **"We dusted them off good" The German army at Beaumont Hamel 1914–16**  
**Alastair Fraser** Archives and Special Collections, Palace Green Library
- Saturday 7 March **'The King under the car park' Greyfriars, Leicester and the search for Richard III**  
**Richard Buckley** Director, University of Leicester Archaeological Services
- Saturday 18 April **The Bronze Age shipwreck at Salcombe** **Ben Roberts** Archaeology Department, Durham University
- Saturday 16 May **AGM** Bishop Auckland. Details to follow

## Extended excursion 2015

It is proposed that the long weekend excursion in late May or early June 2015 will be centred on Ipswich. It is envisaged that the itinerary will include most, if not all, of the following:

Grimes Graves  
Sutton Hoo  
Colchester  
Lavenham  
Framlingham Castle  
Ixworth House

Booking forms will be available nearer the time, but if you would be interested in joining this trip, please contact Dr David Mason at [david.mason@durham.gov.uk](mailto:david.mason@durham.gov.uk).



Visit to Wroxeter, June 2014  
Photo Belinda Burke

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