

**Housekeeping** The Society's new website is currently under construction and may be viewed at [www.durham.ac.uk/archandarch.dandn](http://www.durham.ac.uk/archandarch.dandn)

**Members Meeting** Please contact the Secretary if you would like to give a short presentation (10–15 minutes) on any subject that would be of interest to other members.

**Newsletter** Short articles by members are always welcome for this

newsletter, as are photographs and news of forthcoming events. If you would like to contribute anything, the Secretary would be delighted to hear from you.

**Sale of publications** There are still some back issues of the *Transactions* and *Durham Archaeological Journal* and copies of Peter Ryder's *The medieval cross slab grave cover in County Durham* for sale to members, for the very reasonable price of £1 per volume (£3 for non-members). Please contact the Secretary for details.

## Programme 2006–07

All lectures will be held at Elvet Riverside, Room 141 New Elvet, Durham, at 2.30 pm (except where noted). Everyone is welcome to attend

- Saturday 14 October **Archaeology in the Yorkshire Dales National Park Robert White** Archaeologist for the Yorkshire Dales National Park
- Saturday 11 November **The Prittlewell Prince Ian Blair** Museum of London
- Saturday 9 December **Members Meeting** Followed by a reception at the Heritage Centre, St Mary-le-Bow. Please contact the Secretary if you wish to book a place at the reception
- Saturday 13 January **The Neolithic and Bronze Age monument complex of Thornborough, North Yorkshire Jan Harding** Newcastle University
- Saturday 10 February **Before the Raj: East India Company burial monuments in western India Professor Chris Scar** Durham University
- Saturday 17 March **Vindolanda and the military community, expanding the knowledge of the Roman Frontier Andrew Birley** Vindolanda Trust
- Saturday 14 April To be confirmed
- Saturday 19 May **AGM**
- Saturday 9 June **Industrial Heritage: a future for the past and a past for the future? Ian Ayris** Historic Environment Manager, Newcastle City Council
- In addition to the usual lecture programme, there will be a joint meeting with the University of Durham Archaeology Society:
- Thursday 2 November **Archaeology and the media Julian Richards** well-known archaeologist, broadcaster and writer. To be held in the Dawson Lecture Theatre (Room D110), Department of Archaeology, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE  
7.00 pm

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# ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## OF DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND

## Newsletter 6

autumn 2006

### President's letter



**Dear Members,** This is my first formal communication with you since becoming President at the AGM in May. Let me begin by saying I regard it as a considerable honour to be elected to this prestigious role, not least because I have only been in the region for a relatively short time. I hope to build on the tremendous work done by my predecessor, Niall Hammond, whose strenuous efforts have contributed to improving the Society's standing. I am sure you would all join with me in thanking him for his work on behalf of the Society.

As you read through this edition of the Society's Newsletter, you will discover the months ahead are filled with lectures and meetings, all of great interest, and some additional to the usual programme. This is also quite an exciting time in the historic environment field in terms of publications, as the report on the excavations at the castle in Barnard Castle is anticipated in the coming months as well as the North East Region Research Framework.

I look forward to working with the Committee and the general membership to develop and broaden the range of activities undertaken by the Society.

**David Mason** President

Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland



The AGM at Hexham guided walk, with Hugh Dixon

### Society field trips 2006

#### Gayles Moor

On 18th June, Tim Laurie led a trip onto Gayles Moor. Despite inclement weather, much ground was covered, as the minibus ferried us from site to site while Tim led us back through a prehistoric landscape.

First, we explored three burnt mounds at Sturdy Springs. These enigmatic features, mounds of burnt stone, are generally located near water sources, and excavations have revealed that they are usually associated with troughs, apparently designed to hold water. The group speculated on their possible use; they are generally interpreted as Bronze Age saunas, although some might have been used for cooking. But what rituals might have accompanied a steam bath on a windswept hillside?

We then visited rock art sites on the moor and, at Johnson's Allotment (North), Tim showed us an enclosure ringed by a possible palisade trench and made the members stand at regular intervals around the trench as human posts, to demonstrate the scale of the monument. An inspection of an animal burrow revealed ancient turf lines in a mound within the enclosure. At the end of the day, we visited the imposing univallate Brigantian hill fort of Castle Steads.

Excavation of the lowest of the mounds at Sturdy Springs is due to start soon and it may be possible to arrange a visit to the site. Would all those interested please contact the Secretary.



Checking the defences at Castle Steads

#### Sockburn, Croft and Melsonby

In July the Society was grateful for the opportunity to visit Sockburn, Croft and Melsonby with Emeritus Professor Rosemary Cramp, Honorary Vice-President of the Society, as our guide. The site of Sockburn, strategically placed in a bend in the River Tees, was clearly important in the Anglo-Saxon period, as indicated by the consecration of Highbald as bishop of Lindisfarne there in AD 780/1 and of Archbishop Eanbald of York in 796, suggesting that this was a Minster site. Its continuing significance is evident in an exceptional collection of predominantly tenth century Viking sculpture in the adjacent Conyers Chapel. The quality of the collection of cross shafts and hog-back tomb stones probably indicates the presence of an important Viking manor.



Fragment of hog-back grave cover discovered at Sockburn, during recent consolidation work by English Heritage

The party then visited the earthworks in the adjacent field with Kate Wilson of English Heritage. Here, areas of ridge-and-furrow and a possible deserted medieval village or manor house were explored, as well as the evidence for a post-medieval formal garden. This is clearly a site that would repay detailed field survey. Both the Chapel and Sockburn Hall are on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk register, but Professor Cramp applauded English Heritage for its work in consolidating the Chapel. The Society maintains an interest in the preservation and long-term future of the site (*see* Newsletter 5).

The group moved on to the church of St Peter at Croft-on-Tees, which contains the remains of a particularly finely carved Anglo-Saxon cross shaft, now unfortunately hard to view, being placed behind the railings of a funerary monument in the north chapel. Finally, we visited the church of St James at Melsonby, to inspect two carved stones which Professor Cramp has interpreted as forming one octagonal shaft, perhaps the base of a lectern (as postulated for an octagonal column base found in the monastic excavations at Jarrow)\*.

## The Warcop Range

In August, former Society President Niall Hammond and his colleague, Philip Abramson, led another popular trip onto MOD land, exploring the archaeology of the Warcop Range in Cumbria. First of all, we visited the site of Burton Hall. There we saw prominent earthworks, interpreted as fish ponds or, alternatively, as ponds for retting flax, since a quantity of flax seed had been found in environmental samples taken from the area. No structures remain on the site of Burton Hall, the farm having been demolished in the 1940s but, fortunately, two descendants of the Hilton family, who lived there from 1300 to 1750, joined the trip. They talked about their researches into their family's history, and showed us photographs of remnants of ornamental stonework from the building, currently in the churchyard at Warcop. There were also traces of the medieval village of Burton



A view of what may be the fish pond for Burton village

and associated field systems and, on higher ground, the remains of a dammed stream, possibly the fish pond that supplied the village. The group then proceeded towards the imposing Roman Fell, taking in a high upland settlement with a medieval drove way flanked by tofts.

At Scordale, the efforts to stem the erosion of river defences caused by increasingly prevalent flooding were discussed. A recent study had concluded that, rather than continuing to contain the river, thereby risking flash flooding further downstream, it was better that the river should be allowed to find its own course, even though this had implications in the erosion of the natural and historic environment.

Finally, we visited the prehistoric settlement at Swindale Brow, a group of enclosures and round cairns considered to be of Bronze Age date. There was speculation about why anyone should settle in such an inhospitable location. Were the inhabitants hiding from an aggressor? Was the occupation seasonal, related to summer grazing? It was still hard to imagine why such a harsh, isolated spot had been chosen.

\* Professor Rosemary Cramp first wrote about the Sockburn sculptures in her 1984 book, *County Durham and Northumberland*, which heralded the beginning of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture project (now up to seven volumes, with another, on the West Riding of Yorkshire, due next year). She had earlier discussed and illustrated the sculptures at Croft and Melsonby in her catalogue for the 1977 exhibition, *A Century of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, shown at Durham and Hexham. These two sites were subsequently catalogued in Jim Lang's posthumous volume in the CASSS series, *Northern Yorkshire* (2001), which includes part of modern County Durham formerly in the North Riding. The project is still run under Professor Cramp's direction from the Department of Archaeology, Durham University, sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and published by the British Academy. For more information on the series, see <http://www.durham.ac.uk/corpus>

Derek Craig Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeology, University of Durham and AASDN member

## Fieldwork at Gainford

Earlier this year, two fieldwork days were organised jointly with the Gainford Local History Society. The first was a photographic session in the church, where Penny Middleton discussed techniques of photographing buildings and let the group try out an impressive array of photographic equipment. In June, we returned to survey the remains of a deserted medieval village in a field adjacent to Gainford Hall. Penny Wilson of Durham University organised a magnetometer survey, while another group grappled with the earthworks with the aid of a plane table and Penny Middleton tied the whole survey into a grid with a total station theodolite. At the end of the day, the owner of Gainford Hall kindly showed us around his home. We admired the plasterwork and panelling in the hall and parlour, before climbing



Gainford Hall, with the survey area in the foreground

onto the roof. Afterwards, we visited the wonderful circular dovecote.

The completion of the plane table survey will take at least one more session, and there is great potential for future fieldwork in the area, so we hope that the Society will continue to be involved in this exciting project.



Plane table surveying at Gainford



The dovecote and (right) the interior



## Fieldwork programme

Sunday 1 October	Plane table survey Probably at Gainford, but to be confirmed	Sunday 26 November	Skeleton washing at Northern Archaeological Associates
Wednesday 18 October 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm	Session at Archives Office in Durham on historical sources for Gainford To be confirmed	Sunday 28 January	Plane table survey or fieldwalking Location to be confirmed
Sunday 22 October 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Follow-up session in the Local History Library, Clayport To be confirmed	We are always anxious to encourage more members to take part and beginners are very welcome. Please contact Penny Middleton, a few days before the event, if you would like to take part.	

## Archaeology evening class

Following the highly successful 'Introduction to Archaeology' course, promoted by the AASDN and run by the Workers Education Authority (WEA), Philip Abramson will be teaching another ten-week course on 'The Archaeology of Roman Britain', examining the archaeological evidence for four hundred years of imperial occupation and its impact on the native population.

An informal survey of some of those who enrolled in the first course provoked glowing praise for the course and its teacher. The sessions were 'interesting', 'thought-provoking', and 'a good introduction to the period for someone who didn't know very much before'. Those who took part enjoyed practical elements of the course: an

introduction to map-reading techniques, interpreting archaeological stratigraphy from photographs, and looking at environmental samples under a microscope. It was also seen as a pleasant night out, with great company, pitched at the right level for the group, with animated discussions enlivened by Phil's enthusiasm and sense of humour. All those who were contacted intend to enrol again.

The next course starts on Monday 8th January 2007, and includes a field trip to Hadrian's Wall after Easter. Anyone interested should contact Michelle Scott, WEA County Durham, Miners Hall, Red Hill, Durham DH1 4BB; telephone (0191) 383 2717.