

Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

The Swaledale Big Dig - Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group wins Heritage Lottery Fund support.

Today, the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (“SWAAG”) has received £76,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an exciting new project, The Swaledale Big Dig, to take place in the Reeth, Grinton and Fremington areas of Swaledale and Arkengarthdale in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The project will be launched on Thursday 13th March 2014 at a public meeting in the Reeth Memorial Hall and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2015. The launch meeting will be addressed by Dr Carenza Lewis of Cambridge University who has regularly appeared in the TV series “Time Team” and other archaeological programmes and has extensive experience of community-based projects. On the 15th March following the launch there will be an open day in the Reeth Memorial Hall when members of the community will be able to learn more about the project and what is currently known about the development of the local settlements. They will be able to discuss their interests and explore the wide range of courses on offer with the members of SWAAG.

The Swaledale Big Dig Project

The Swaledale Big Dig will involve local people, parish councils, the Yorkshire Dales National Park, schools and community groups in a process of discovery leading to the digging of a large number of test pits in the area by members of the public overseen by the local archaeology group, SWAAG. Analysis and interpretation of the findings from the project will help develop a deeper and better understanding of the past history of the settlements and enhance the sense of belonging. The knowledge and skills of those involved in the project will be enhanced leaving a lasting legacy of new skills within the community.

The Swaledale Big Dig will be executed in three phases. Phase One, beginning in the first half of 2014, will be a process of enquiry and investigation, engaging the community in a wide range of archaeological techniques including initial documentary research, field walking, landscape surveying, and geophysics. Phase Two, continuing into 2015, will see those techniques applied in the field including the digging of a number of test pits in public spaces and private gardens. Phase Three will involve widespread dissemination of the results of the project through local meetings, in brochures, the local media and in a written report which will be published by SWAAG.

Commenting on the award, Alan Mills, the SWAAG Project Manager said: “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund for this exciting project. It will provide the local community with a unique opportunity to work together to explore and discover their local heritage thereby enhancing a sense of belonging. We look forward to working together with a wide range of local people from differing backgrounds to not only learn more about our collective past but to also leave a lasting legacy of skills to enable this work to carry on after the Big Dig finishes.”

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber said: “There is a flourishing interest in archaeology and the Swaledale Big Dig project will foster this in the area. This is a fantastic project which will allow people to try their hand at something new. We’re committed to funding projects that every community can take pride in and learn about their local heritage. “

Background

The modern settlements in the civil parishes of Grinton and Reeth have histories going back at least to Anglo-Saxon times and perhaps earlier. However, our knowledge of the development of the three villages which form the basis of this project is fragmentary. Reeth now has the appearance of a small

planned Georgian market town centred on a large green. The history of Reeth after the granting of the market charter in 1694/5 is well understood but little is known prior to this apart from an entry in the Domesday Book of 1086 and before that the identification of an Iron Age settlement to the West of the village. Our knowledge of both Fremington and Grinton is similarly sketchy. The Swaledale Big Dig will engage these local communities in a wide range of activities in order add to our knowledge of the development of the three villages over the ages; to stimulate greater informed interest in their heritage, and to embed a range of skills to enable the communities to continue to research, record and interpret their heritage in the future. A greater appreciation of the heritage landscape combined with the skills to understand it will also facilitate its better management. The project will increase our sense of ourselves as a community, enhance our understanding of the history of our dale for a period with few written records and attract welcome publicity widely.

The Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG) is a community group formed in 2009, which grew out of the Friends of the Swaledale Museum. Our constitution states: "SWAAG is established for public benefit in the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale area to investigate and record any aspect of past human activity and the natural environment; to make available the results of this work; and to stimulate public interest in the history, heritage and environment of the area by informing and educating". The Group is entirely run by volunteers and currently has a strength of some 40 active members. We hold regular monthly meetings, offer walks and talks to the public, organise an annual programme of archaeological investigation and publicise our activities and findings on our website www.swaag.org

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Notes to editors

About Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG)

SWAAG is a volunteer-run community group which grew out of the Friends of the Swaledale Museum some four years ago and now has more than 40 active members. We have been very successful in obtaining significant levels of funding from bodies such as the LEADER programme, the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Yorkshire Dales Sustainable Development Fund. Using that support SWAAG has developed a programme of landscape and geophysical surveying throughout the local area as well as an exceptionally informative and wide-ranging website, three seasons of excavation, events for local schools and regular themed walks for the general public.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.5bn across the UK including £380m to 2,845 projects in Yorkshire & the Humber alone. Website: www.hlf.org.uk.

For further information, images and interviews, please contact

David Brooks, of SWAAG, on 01969 623658, email davidofpreston@gmail.com