

Swaledale Big Dig

Newsletter no. 13 – April 2016

The Big Dig is now winding down towards our final presentations and displays later this month.

Our final presentations will take place on **Friday 15th April**, 7.30pm in Reeth Memorial Hall. Professor Carena Lewis of the University of Lincoln will talk about “How Swaledale’s Big Dig contributes to national research” and Alan Mills will address “The Swaledale Big Dig - some answers and questions.” Entry is free.

This will be followed on **Saturday 16th April, 2016**, 10am to 4pm, again in the Memorial Hall, by **The Big Dig Open Day**: displays will cover

- What the Big Dig has achieved
- Results and interpretation from the Big Dig
- The finds from the Test Pits.
- SWAAG’s plans for future activities

Members of the team, including our finds specialists, will be present to answer questions and discuss your interests. The 2015 pit reports will be available to look at and pit owners will be able to collect their own copy.

Whilst our recent focus has been on the April events, nonetheless there is still quite a lot of recent and future activity to report on.



In mid-March we carried out further work on the Grinton-Fremington Dyke system.

You might recall that last September we were privileged to be granted Scheduled Monument Consent by Historic England, to investigate a small part of the Dyke on Harkerside. At that time we recovered five pieces of charcoal from within the bank which have been radiocarbon dated to the Bronze Age between 1300 BC and 1800 BC.

We cannot assume the Dykes were necessarily constructed in the Bronze Age because where we found the charcoal was not what we would describe as a “secure context”. The charcoal could perhaps have remained in the environment for hundreds or even thousands of years before being incorporated in the bank during its construction at a later date. For this reason we returned in March and recovered some further samples for radiocarbon dating. We await the results with interest!



SWAAG and the Big Dig team work closely with colleagues at the Swaledale Museum in Reeth; as part of our collaboration we have developed a small display (above) of the some of the finds from our recent work. This will be developed further over time.

Leaving a lasting legacy is a key objective of the Big Dig. In addition to the skills and knowledge acquired through participation in the digs, the courses and walks we have a tangible legacy in the sophisticated geophysical surveying equipment obtained as part of the project.

This equipment continues to be used to benefit other community-based projects and charities.

Thus SWAAG is pleased to be able to help Operation Nightingale; this was founded in 2012 to utilise both the technical and social aspects of field archaeology to help rehabilitate injured soldiers recently returned from conflict zones. Next week SWAAG colleagues will be carrying out geophys surveys at Marne Barracks, Catterick, on behalf of the Defence Archaeology Group (see http://www.daguk.org/?page_id=329) to identify areas where they can be reasonably confident that the participants in Operation Nightingale will find something of interest.

Later in the month, colleagues will be carrying out further geophys surveys in support of a new HLF-supported project, "Stories in Stone". This is a four-year programme of community and heritage projects that has been developed by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project will enable people from all backgrounds and of all ages to learn about, enjoy and help manage the stunning limestone landscape around Ingleborough, both above and below ground. If you are interested in participating in this project then please contact Don Gamble at the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust on 015242 51002 or email don.gamble@ydmtd.org .

The recently formed Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Local History Group will also form an important part of the legacy of the Big Dig. Members of the group continue to be active in a number of projects; for example:

- Scanning the Margaret Batty archive. Mrs Batty is well-known as the author of 'Bygone Reeth'; her archive is a valuable source of oral history; digitizing it will make it more widely available.
- The 19th C tithe transcriptions are virtually complete and may be searched, together with the tithe maps, at <http://www.swaag.org/TitheApportionmentDb/TithesMenu.php>
- Health and medicine in post-medieval times
- Researching medieval tax returns
- Investigating the Roman road from Bainbridge over Swaledale
- Swaledale place name studies – see <https://willswales2.wordpress.com/>
- Transcribing Healaugh and Muker Manorial Records; this and the tithe project are in association with the North Yorkshire County Record Office.

Forthcoming events

30th April – Alan Mills & Peter Denison-Edson will be talking about the Swaledale Big Dig at the Medieval Settlement Research Group Conference, Lincoln University

14th June - Alan Mills & Peter Denison-Edson will be talking about the Swaledale Big Dig at a meeting of the Darlington U3A.



A notice to all pit owners.

The material which we recovered from your test-pit belongs to you. We recovered nothing of any value, regrettably no hoards of silver coins etc, but if you would like the finds back, mainly pottery, please let me know.

Note that all test pit reports may be downloaded from the SWAAG website www.swaag.org

How you can get involved with the Big Dig legacy

There are still opportunities for all to become involved as the work of the Big Dig will be carried forward by SWAAG. If you are interested and able to participate in any of the following activities please contact the person shown:

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

Documentary research / Local History : Judith Mills: judith@swaag.org

General enquiries bigdig@swaag.org or alan@swaag.org

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



Finally, many thanks to Roy and Julie at the Buck Hotel, Reeth www.buckhotel.co.uk for their support and for making a meeting room available to us free of charge.

Best wishes

Alan Mills