

Swaledale Big Dig

Newsletter no. 14 – June 2016

Our final presentations took place on Friday 15th April.



Professor Carenza Lewis of the University of Lincoln gave a most interesting talk about “How Swaledale’s Big Dig contributes to national research” and Alan Mills summed up the findings of our two year project: “The Swaledale Big Dig - some answers and questions.” This was followed next day by our final Open Day. Both events were very well supported with 83 people attending Friday evening and 141 on the Saturday.

In the image above, Carenza Lewis and Tristen Brown are looking at the Big Dig booklet “Swaledale: a valley and its people”. This full-colour 24-page booklet has been distributed to every household in Fremington, Grinton and Reeth and is available free of charge in many of the retail outlets and pubs in the local area. It is very popular – we printed 2,500 and at the time of writing we have less than 600 left! The booklet is available to download from the SWAAG website at <https://www.swaag.org/HLF/Project%20End%20Documents/Big%20Dig%20Household%20Booklet.pdf>

In Newsletter 13 we reported that following our work on the Grinton-Fremington Dyke system we had recovered five pieces of charcoal from within the bank which were radiocarbon dated to the Bronze Age between 1300 BC and 1800 BC. Since then we have received two further radiocarbon dates of 453BC and 51BC, both Iron Age dates.



Previously, in 2012 we recovered charcoal from the dyke on Harker Mires, to the South, which was dated to 10th / 11th century AD, the early medieval period. Perhaps the Grinton-Fremington Dykes were constructed at this time too, or maybe up to a 1,000 years earlier. More work is needed to resolve this mystery!

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. In addition to the work with Project Nightingale, reported on in Newsletter 13, colleagues recently carried out further geophys surveys in support of "Stories in Stone", 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. Later in the year colleagues will do similar work with the Long Preston Big Dig, another HLF supported project.

Publications

In addition to the Big Dig booklet, referred to above, there are also a number of videos on Youtube documenting the progress of the Big Dig. These have been produced by Mike Cook and Nicki Oliver of Border Collie Rescue and Colliewood Films; for example see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX0pjbV5JjM&nohtml5>

The Darlington & Stockton Times of 11th April 2016 carried an article about our final presentations; see http://www.darlingtonandstocktontimes.co.uk/news/14419616.TV_archaeologist_returns_for_conclusion_of_Swaledale_Big_Dig/

The June Reeth Gazette also carried an article about the conclusion of the Big Dig. Back copies of the Gazette are available at <http://www.2dales.org.uk/gazette/reethgazette.html>

The Big Dig Final Report is available on the SWAAG website at <https://www.swaag.org/HLF/Project%20End%20Documents/Final%20report%20FINAL%2019%20May%202016%20with%20%C2%A9%20SWAAG.pdf>

The final report will be lodged with both the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Historic Environment Record (HER) and with OASIS which provides an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer-funded fieldwork and a similar increase in fieldwork undertaken by volunteers.

The Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group is a Registered Charity No. 1155775

Forthcoming events

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

Oliver Cooper, Project Manager, Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd has informed us that there are several upcoming talks and exhibitions relating to the finds from 'Roman Catterick', uncovered as a result of the current work on the A1.

The 'Roman Catterick' exhibition of 50 artefacts from Catterick is currently at Richmondshire Museum until October 2016, and thereafter moves on to Bowes Museum then Bedale Museum.

Talks on the finds will be at
Gilling West Village Hall - Thursday 30th June, 7pm.
Richmond Town Hall - 4th July (evening). Speaker TBC
The Station (Richmond) - Date TBC. Gary Brogan



A notice to all pit owners.

Our 50 test pits yielded over 4,000 pieces of pot. These and the other finds belong to the landowner concerned. Nothing we found was of any value, no hoards of coins for example (!) but if you would like to keep some or all of the finds from your pit then please let me know. Ideally we would like to keep those bits of pot which tell us most about how the villages developed, with the most interesting pieces being put on display in the museum.

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 info@swaag.org

The 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 a range of archive material held at the Swaledale Museum with a view to making it more accessible for researchers.
- The history of education in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale.
- 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.

The next meeting of the group is Thursday 14th July, 4.15pm, the Buck Hotel, Reeth. 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.

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)!

Well, this is the final edition of the Swaledale Big Dig Newsletter. I have enjoyed working with so many of you. I have learnt a lot, not only from the work we have done, the courses and walks, but also from meeting many of you. I and the Project Team hope you have found this a useful and interesting experience too.

Finally, thank you to all who have helped and supported us:

- The Heritage Lottery Fund for their generous support
- Professor Carenza Lewis of the University of Lincoln
- Reeth Parish Council
- Grinton Parish Council
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and colleagues there
- Northern Counties Archaeological Services
- Members of the local community who kindly volunteered their gardens and land for test pits and surveying
- Members of the Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group, the Wensleydale Young Archaeologists and all those who volunteered their time to dig the test pits, carry out the surveys and support the project.

Best wishes

Alan Mills