



Dear Members,

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2018, and a happy birthday for its second year of publication. Many thanks to Jane Harrison, the editor and key contributor, for all of her hard work in publishing what I believe has proved to be an informative and enjoyable periodic update on SWAAG activities.

2017 proved to be a busy and enjoyable year with an excellent range of activities; something to suit everyone. Thank you all for supporting us and taking part and thanks especially to all of those responsible for organising and running the activities.

2018 promises to be just as busy and just as enjoyable. Sue has already arranged a full calendar of talks, walks and social events and there are meetings of the Local History Group and of course a return visit to The Hagg.



Unfortunately, we were not so lucky with the Sustainable Development Fund this year and we have not been awarded a grant for The Hagg dig. Nevertheless by careful management of the budget we believe that we have adequate SWAAG funds available for this year. We expect to circulate the details for the dig soon, but tentatively the dates to put into your diaries are the 4th through the 18th July. As last year the dig will continue through the weekends so that there will be opportunities for those who have weekday commitments to join in. Again, numbers on site

will be limited so keep an eye on your inbox.

I hope that you will enjoy the year, but please do not forget that we welcome ideas and suggestions for new activities, talks, walks and events - especially so if those suggestions are accompanied by an offer to take the lead! If you are unsure and would like to discuss any ideas please do not hesitate to drop me an email [dave@swaag.org](mailto:dave@swaag.org). I look forward to hearing from you.

If it is not too late may I wish you all a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2018.

David Brooks

## *Visit to Vindolanda Roman site – 20<sup>th</sup> October*

On a beautiful and sunny October day 25 members met at Vindolanda. The day began with a talk by site archaeologist Marta Alberti, who described the site layout, its history, and the wide variety of artefacts which had been found at the site. Vindolanda predates Hadrian's Wall and was demolished and rebuilt nine times during the Roman occupation. The site remained in use for 400 years afterwards, finally being abandoned in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Excavations take place each summer with a potential for another 100 years of work!



After Marta's introduction we were free to wander about the site, which contains the extensive remains of bath houses, barracks, headquarters, the commanding officer's residence, village houses, workshops, latrines, a Romano Celtic temple, a post Roman mausoleum and replica wall sections in turf, timber and stone. During the exploration we came across a threshold similar to that found at The Hagg.



On the way to the cafe and museum we saw the replica Roman kiln built by Graham Taylor, who visited The Hagg during the 2017 dig and who is scheduled to visit us later in the year (see diary). The museum contains a large collection of militaria and personal items found on site, including metal, leather, wood and fabric which had been well preserved in the anaerobic mud. There is a large collection of footwear, including children's shoes. Some members spotted steelyard weights and cosmetic palettes similar to those found at The Hagg last summer. And of course the visit would not have been complete without seeing the exhibition of Vindolanda tablets!

A. D.



## *Keld Head Mine walk– 19<sup>th</sup> November*

Sunday 19th November was sunny and bright; just the weather for our excursion into Wensleydale for Dave Brooks' mining walk. Situated near the village of Preston-under-Scar, Keld Heads is the oldest mine in Wensleydale, with records going back to the 12th century. In 1294 the lead from here was used to roof nearby Jervaulx Abbey. The output at its peak in the mid- 19th century was huge, with 250 people employed in mining and processing the lead ore.



The smelting took place on two roasting hearths, four ore hearths and one slag hearth, with all the flues coming together into two large, flagged flues (still visible), leading up 550 feet into a Condenser House, where lead could be recovered from the smoke and fumes. In 1856, from the 1374 tons of ore smelted, no less than 96 tons were recovered in the Condenser House. From there the flue runs a further two miles uphill to a stack at Cobscar Mill, on Preston Moor.



As most of the men would also have had farming work to do, the smelting took place in eight-hour shifts. It took about an hour to complete preparation of the furnace, six hours of blasting and a final hour to clear out the ashes and to cool the furnace with cold water. Peat was the primary fuel with some coal used to light the peats.

Unusually, the dressing floors were situated at the lowest point on the site so that the dressed ore had to be transported uphill to the mill. The finished pigs were brought down to the railway line which ran along Wensleydale. It is said that the landowner Lord Bolton, who had a private waiting room at the station, never missed a train; if he was late then the train would wait for him!

The two-storey Peat Store, with its four stone arched openings along the front and windows above, still stands with a sheet metal roof to protect it. The engine house and chimney for the steam driven pumping engine have recently been cleared of undergrowth and are now easier to explore. Our tour also included water reservoirs and the remains of a ropeway, which was used by the nearby quarry.



Keld Heads finally closed towards the end of the 19th century when the River Ure began to penetrate the lower levels and the costs of pumping out the water rendered it uneconomic. Today it is a place of peaceful woodland, with trees and bracken having taken over the site. A lovely walk on a sunny Autumn day. Thank-you, Dave!

*"The Lead Smelting Mills of the Yorkshire Dales and Northern Pennines" R.T. Clough 1962*

*"Mines and Miners of Wensleydale" I.M. Spensley 2014*

S. N.

### *Members' meetings*

At **November's meeting** Dave Brooks reported that SWAAG had been well represented at the Council for British Archaeology's community archaeology event in York. We took the SWAAG display, Philip Bastow gave a presentation on The Hagg and we were asked to submit an article to CBA's magazine, Forum, to be published later this year. Stephen Eastmead led a workshop about the use of QGIS and LIDAR by community archaeology groups; his publication is available on the SWAAG website under 'QGIS-Lidar'.

Rob Nicholson mentioned that the specialist reports on the finds from The Hagg would be available on the SWAAG website. All the reports are now complete and can be found under 'Fieldwork Reports' and include reports on lithics, querns, Roman pottery, environmental samples, animal bone and the small finds. Two of the report authors, Eniko Hudak (Roman Pottery Specialist at Pre-Construct Archaeology) and Dr James Gerrard (Senior Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at Newcastle University) will be speaking to SWAAG in February and July respectively. In connection with the finds see the 'Stop Press!' towards the end of the newsletter.

Sue talked about two interesting archaeological sites that she and Rob had visited in Portugal. The first at Troia had pits which were used for the making of Garum, the fish paste which was a favourite in the Roman Empire. The second site, very extensive site was at Conimbriga, which has only been partially excavated. One of the exhibits was a cosmetic palette very similar to that found at The Hagg.



Peter Denison-Edison then gave an illustrated talk about the Roman Army in the North. He explained that the North of England had a military presence for much longer than the South lasting for over 350 years. There were Roman garrisons/settlements at Catterick, Bainbridge and Bowes but as yet evidence for Roman presence in Swaledale is sparse. It seems possible a road ran through from Bainbridge to Bowes and various archaeological remains have been found in the Dale. A lead ingot, attributed to Hadrian, was discovered but then lost in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, cavalry harness decorations were found at Fremington and a coin hoard discovered at Grinton. To this can be added the coin found on The Hagg. The question for deliberation is - how did The Hagg fit in with the known Roman presence outside Swaledale?



**December's meeting** was replaced by a Christmas meal at Tennant's in Leyburn, which was enjoyed by about 25 members.



**January's meeting** unfortunately had to be cancelled because of the weather.

*Stop Press! Something to ponder from Rob...*

Although we have now received back all the assessment reports we commissioned, there is one further piece of post-ex (post-excavation) work that we need to complete.

We found this piece of scrunched up lead...



What do you think it is?

Was it a piece of lead working waste waiting to be re-smelted? If so, then why would it have been rolled up?

Or perhaps it was a merchant's sample to show the quality and purity of the local lead production that was then folded for ease of transport?

Or a weight?

Or a rolled up object?

For those of you with a more imaginative approach to life and Archaeology and who have been to Bath, might it be a lead curse tablet? (If you want to know more about these then have a look at the Wikipedia article on 'Bath curse tablets'.)

I think we tend to agree with our specialist, Dr James Gerrard, who said; "This might be a piece of scrap, a weight or even possibly (but perhaps improbably) a curse tablet."

So, it may be a bit too thick to be a curse tablet, but we're going to try and get it unrolled. It will be going back to Karen, our conservator, in the coming weeks to see what she can uncover...

Watch this space!

## *Local History Group*

Transcription of the Muker & Healaugh Manor Court records, showing transfers in the copyhold system from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, continues. Book H has recently been completed and added to the others already on the SWAAG website. If anyone is interested in helping with this project all offers will be gratefully accepted! Training will be given. There is a website for the group at [www.swaledalelocalhistoryblog.wordpress.com](http://www.swaledalelocalhistoryblog.wordpress.com) which includes a contact page.

If you have an interest in local history, or are doing your own research, you are welcome to join the group. The next meeting is on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March at 4.15pm in The Buck Hotel, Reeth.

## *Future dates*

Please see the details of forthcoming events below.

## *The next newsletter*

The newsletter relies on contributions from members so if you would like to contribute a photograph or short article about a walk, talk or event please contact me at: [jane@swaag.org](mailto:jane@swaag.org).

Future events, of interest to members, could also be publicised. The next newsletter will be issued in April.

Jane Harrison

DATE(s)	TIME	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	DETAILS	CONTACT
13-02-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting and talk (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	Eniko Hudak, the Roman pottery specialist who assessed our finds from The Hagg, will talk about her work	Sue@swaag
08-03-2018	4.15 pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Local History Group Meeting		Judith@swaag.org
13-03-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting and talk (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	Perry Gardner will talk about a dig he has recently taken part in, at Sedgeford in Norfolk on the Middle Saxon settlement site, cemetery and ovens which SHARP has been working on for over 20 years.	Sue@swaag.org

10-04-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting and AGM	SWAAG AGM	Sue@swaag.org
08-05-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel Reeth	Members' Meeting Talk by Graham Taylor	Graham is a nationally-known potter who creates beautiful replicas of prehistoric and Roman pots using authentic methods. This talk is free to members thanks to funding from the Fabric of Place project.	Sue@swaag.org
08-05-2018	2pm - 5pm	tbc	Pottery workshop with Graham Taylor	This workshop is free to members thanks to funding from the Fabric of Place project	Sue@swaag.org
10-05-2018	tbc	Arkengarthdale	Mining Walk	Alan Mills will lead a walk to explore the history of lead mining in Arkengarthdale around Sleil Gill and Booze	Alan@swaag.org
08-06-2018	tbc	Queen's Head, Finghall	Members' Social	Dinner at The Queen's Head. Booking Essential	Shirley@swaag.org
19-06-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting NB CHANGE OF DATE	Dr James Gerrard of Newcastle University will talk about 'Connecting Small Worlds: travel and communication in Roman Britain'	Sue@swaag.org
10-07-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting	An informal pint at The Buck during the dig on The Hagg. A chance to catch up and talk about progress and finds.	Sue@swaag.org
11-09-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting	Feedback from this year's dig on The Hagg	Sue@swaag.org
25-09-2018	tbc	CB Inn, Arkengarthdale	Members' Social	Dinner. Booking essential	Shirley@swaag.org
03-10-2018	tbc	Calver	Walk	Alan Mills will lead a walk around Calver Hill to explore Bale smelting and mining sites	Alan@swaag.org
09-10-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Talk by a professional archaeologist (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	Northern Archaeological Associates will speak about the work they undertook on the A1 expansion and discuss outcomes of post-ex work	Sue@swaag.org
13-11-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' Meeting	Peter Denison-Edson will give a talk on the subject of the Romans in Swaledale	Sue@swaag.org
14-12-2018	tbc	Tennant's Leyburn	Members' Social	Xmas Dinner. Booking essential	Shirley@swa