



Although there are fewer articles in this quarter's newsletter, the last few months have been very busy. July saw SWAAG's excavation of the Romano-British site at The Hagg. Funding from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's Sustainable Development Fund enabled an area of approximately 400 square metres to be excavated. There was great interest in the site and 96 volunteers, of whom about a third were SWAAG members, signed up to help over the seventeen days of the dig. Approximately 25 people assisted the project team each day. Most came from the local area but there were volunteers from as far afield as Scotland and Dorset!

The dig revealed a remarkably well-engineered site, with large flagged areas, cobbling, retaining walls and pathways. A full description of the findings will be available on the website when the excavation report is published.



Photos: Threshold of the round house, raising the large slab, excavation of a quern stone



What's happened to the finds from The Hagg summer excavation?

We collected quite a variety of objects and materials during our time on The Hagg. Some of these are easily identifiable but others require more specialist knowledge to bring meaning to what we found and to help us understand how these examples of the material culture affect our interpretation of what was happening all those years ago.

We have collected three broad groups of material:

Bulk Finds – The majority falls into this category and includes, amongst others, the pottery sherds and fragments of animal bone and flints, which are traditionally called “lithics”.



Small Finds – These are the more specialised objects such as the cosmetic palette, shale bead and steelyard weight. The term “small find” isn't anything to do with the size of the object but is used to denote something that requires a more detailed approach to its study and interpretation.

Environmental samples – These are soil samples taken from particular features such as postholes or specific soil layers, which it is felt, might contain things of interest and which will inform us about the environmental conditions at the time they were laid down. The items typically recovered from environmental samples include things that are generally not easily recoverable by hand excavation such as pollen grains, fish bones, small animal bones, charcoal fragments and seeds.

Most of our finds, once recovered, are grouped by material type; pot, animal bone, metal, glass, flint, burnt material, fired clay, and then bagged and labeled with the site code and context number. A decision then has to be made as how best to clean them.

Materials such as pot, lithics, stone objects, animal bone



and other robust items can usually be washed in water, rinsed clean and left to dry.



Some items, like certain types of Iron Age or earlier pottery can be very fragile and run the risk of reverting to the clay they were made from if immersed in water! Similarly daub and anything else that is likely to be damaged by water (such as painted wall plaster) are usually just air-dried and if necessary gently brushed.

Iron (ferrous) items should not be washed at all.

After the initial cleaning has taken place there is the opportunity to review the initial assessment, and often what was thought to be pot, when cleaned, might just prove to be another stone and can be discarded.

The bulk finds we retrieved from The Hagg this year included:

Material	QTY*	Weight (g)
Roman pot	162	1987
Post Med pot	32	195
Glass	6	17
Lithics	26	176
Animal bone	**	730
Burnt Material	20	221
Fired clay	8	160
Daub	c20	630

*sherds/fragments

** difficult to quantify

Each of these types of material needs to be assessed by a different specialist. In the past when ASDU (Archaeological Services Durham University) were involved in The Hagg excavations they took care of all this post excavation work but this year we are commissioning the specialist reports ourselves.

Our specialists have been chose from; contacts we already have, recommendations from Tony Liddell, people who assessed earlier material via ASDU.

The Roman pottery is with Eniko Hudak at PCA Durham. Eniko ran two pottery workshops for us, provided comment and answered questions as SWAAG members were finds washing for PCA. Eniko also worked on the Roman Pottery from the Bedale bypass excavations and so hopefully may be able to tell us something about how our pottery compares with that much larger assemblage. Eniko also came and visited us during the summer dig.



Rebecca Cadbury-Simmons, from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, is assessing the animal bone. Rebecca holds a first degree in Archaeology from Bradford and an MSc in Palaeopathology (Distinction) from Durham. Animal bone does not survive well in the acidic soils of the Dales and so not surprisingly we have a small amount of sometimes rather fragile fragments. Many of these will be unlikely to show enough features to enable species identification; nevertheless we do hope that there are some diagnostic fragments, which will provide useful information.



Dr. Barry Bishop, one of the UK's leading lithics experts, has agreed to look at our small collection. We think these are unlikely to have originated on the site itself but are more likely to have washed down the slope from earlier settlements higher up the Dale side.

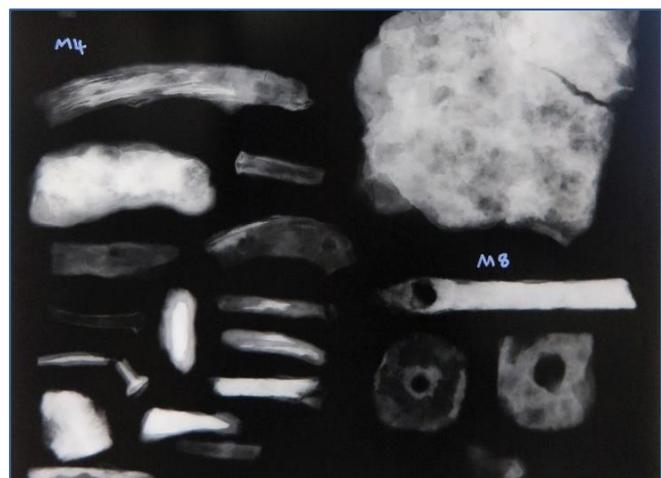
In addition to these bulk finds we also have our small finds, metal and stone objects.

Of the small finds, things like the cosmetic palette and steelyard weight need no further work before they go to our Roman Finds specialist Dr. James Gerard, Senior Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at Newcastle University. However there are one or two other items that need to be worked on by our conservator, Karen Barker, before James sees them.



In particular we have a shale bead, which needs work to conserve and stabilise it, and the ferrous items all need to be x-rayed. Due to the large amounts of rust and corrosion that accumulate around iron it is often very difficult to tell what lies within and it is only once the specialist looks at the x-rays that they are able to distinguish something (perhaps an arrowhead) in the amorphous brown lump.

After James has examined the x-rays anything of interest will be cleaned and the rust removed by Karen to reveal the object within.



We also retrieved several quern fragments, and stone objects that we believe to be hones, burnishing stones, possible gaming counters and pot lids. John Cruse, coordinator of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society's Regional Quern Survey, has assessed these.

The final one of our three finds groups is 8 soil samples intended for environmental analysis.

We have environmental results from earlier Hagg excavations that showed, amongst other things, evidence of 6-row barley or bere meal being grown in the surrounding area.

This year's samples were all taken from underneath the flagged floors, in different areas of the site, which we are hoping might provide evidence of earlier occupation. We expect that the environmental samples will be processed at ASDU.

Now is not the right time to go into much more speculative detail about what the finds might mean but once we have all the specialist reports back we will be seeing how this new factual detail is going to inform our view of this fascinating site.

We will be holding another public meeting in Reeth Memorial Hall to update everyone, so keep a watch on the events listing on the website and look out for the email giving further details of the time and place (likely to be early in 2018).

We will however be happy to provide updates or answer questions at any of the Tuesday night meetings.

Rob Nicholson

Members' Meetings

At September's meeting Philip Bastow, project manager for The Hagg, gave an illustrated talk to outline the main structural features discovered on the site.

October's usual meeting was replaced with a supper, which took place at the CB Inn, in Arkengarthdale. Thirty members attended and enjoyed an excellent meal. Flora kindly organised a general quiz to round off the evening and the winners, on table 1, were rewarded with a box of her famous flapjack!



Local History Group

The Local History Group met for their quarterly meeting in October. Andrea Dixon updated the group about The Hagg dig. Richard Hunt gave an update following his talk at the Swaledale Museum, mentioning that he had collected more folk tales about the Scots which centre on Crackpot. He went on to talk about Andrew Fleming's theory about the dykes and there followed a discussion about their dating and purpose.

Will Swales talked about the use of Scottish coinage in the manor court books of Healaugh and Muker between 1686 and 1712. These books contain references to annual rents being paid by copyhold tenants in pounds, shillings, pence and placks. A plack was worth a fraction of a penny. Will speculated that the presence of Scottish drovers might have been the reason for the use of this unusual monetary denomination. Several old drove routes passed near Reeth and there were large cattle markets at Brough and Middleham. There was further discussion about the manor court books in relation to the method of inheritance. Judith Mills noted that, although partible inheritance meant the property was divided amongst all the children, in the manor court books inheritance seemed to be through the sons, unless there were only daughters to inherit. She asked those currently transcribing the books to notify her if there was inheritance by sons and daughters at the same time.

Peter Denison-Edson mentioned that Durham University is running a community project 'Belief in the North-East' details of which can be found on their website.

The next meeting is on Thursday 8th 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.

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

Jane Harrison

DATE(s)	TIME	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	DETAILS	CONTACT
14-11-2017	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	Peter Denison-Edson will talk about Romans. (Details tbc)	Sue@swaag.org
19-11-2017	tbc	Wensleydale	Walk	Dave Brooks will lead a mining walk around Keld Heads	Sue@swaag.org
09-12-2017	7pm	Tennant's, Leyburn	Xmas Dinner	Bookings will be taken nearer the time	Shirley@swaag.org
09-01-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting and talk (Free to members. Guests and visitors will be asked for a voluntary donation.)	tbc	Sue@swaag.org
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.)	Rob Nicholson will talk about Finds Processing and Assessment with special reference to finds from The Hagg	Sue@swaag

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	tbc	Sue@swaag.org
08-05-2018	7pm	The Buck Hotel, Reeth	Members' meeting	tbc	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	Sue@swaag.or