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CLARO COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2010

Our last edition included an item on a set of photographs of Knaresborough dating back to the 1940s. We have news relating to these images. You can read about the work of our dedicated tree survey team, working in the study area. A large collection of papers relating to the history of Scriven has become available to us, courtesy of North Yorkshire Library Services. Learn something about our work with records. We have completed more than two years work on this five year study, but a great deal remains to be done, with new topics emerging all the time.

News From the 1940s

Following our item in the September issue on 1940s photographs, group members set up an impressive display, including all 80 images, which was shown in Knaresborough Library over a period of three days in October. The event was preceded by a press release in the Knaresborough Post, inviting local residents to come into the Library to see if names could be put to any of the photographs. There was an enthusiastic response from the public, resulting in the identification of 20 individuals, including a few of the German Prisoners of War.

The event has also generated a number of stories about war time Scriven and Knaresborough, with older residents recalling the visits of General Montgomery and Prime Minister Churchill to inspect the troops at Scriven Hall and the occasion when bombs dropped in Scriven Park. One lady was even able to produce a piece of shrapnel from one of the bomb sites, which her father had retrieved at the time. Another lady came to the Library to make sure that she did not appear in any embarrassing photographs from the past! One gentleman kindly brought in a ship in a bottle, made by one of the prisoners and sold to his father. Another person produced a box of black and white photographs of wartime Harrogate and Knaresborough, including some of the arrival of Winston Churchill in 1944.

Thanks to the staff of Knaresborough Library for their enthusiastic assistance with this event.

Some visitors have provided us with names and telephone numbers of others who may be able to provide us with further information, including contacts with ex POWs and their families. If anyone is able to add to our current information, please feel free to contact us via our Email address or in person at the Undercroft of Knaresborough Court House Museum on Thursdays only.

**History and Heritage in the
Harrogate District**



Exhibition at the Library



Trees in the Landscape

We can learn a lot about the history and evolution of the landscape from the presence or absence of trees and hedges, particularly about the history of farming.

Members of the group have been surveying trees and hedges in the study area to collect and record information for use in a final report. The work is seasonal and labour intensive, requiring dedication, knowledge, ingenuity and accuracy.

The team study aerial photographs relating to trees and hedges, establish grid reference, using GPS. Each specimen is photographed, with position, size, age, form, species and condition being recorded on site. The information is entered into our computerised record to form an important part of the total study.

The team surveying trees and hedges are enthusiasts and have taken every opportunity to develop and use their knowledge. Initial training has been provided by Ian Wallace, a local specialist, since which time several members of the team have attended an event at Fountains Abbey, mounted by The Tree Warden Forum of The Tree Council. The topics offered for study included Veteran Tree Recording, Trees in the Historic Landscape, Managing Trees in

Public Spaces and Ancient Woodland Ecology. All of these topics are highly relevant to our

History and Heritage in the Harrogate District



work. Thanks to this team for their heroic efforts. We believe that many members of the public are fascinated by trees and note that the National Trust are currently calling for volunteers to help with recording trees (recent item on Radio 4 Today Programme).

Keeping in Touch with the Younger Generation

Claro Community Archaeology Group has always made an effort to interest young people in our work. As part of a living history week based on a castles theme, Kevin Cale of Community Archaeology Ltd and members of our group have been working with Coppice Valley Community Primary School in Harrogate. The children were introduced to the range of heritage professionals engaged in discovering the past, followed by workshops on looking at our ancestors from skeletons and concluded with a presentation by David Hunt on Knaresborough Castle. The team also facilitated the involvement of medieval reenactors who arrived in full costume to spend a day looking at aspects of medieval life with the children. Pupils and staff showed great enthusiasm, especially in the construction of magnificent costumes. Thanks to everyone concerned with making this day a success.

For the future, we are planning to work with St Mary's Roman Catholic School in Tentergate Knaresborough to set up a project relating to our study in Scriven. His school is very local to our project and can boast a Roman artefact being found on the edge of the grounds in the 1950s.

Looking at the Records

Over the life of this project we have examined local records from many sources. Recently we have been presented with a real challenge, in the shape of the Atkinson Papers, compiled by a local historian called Arthur Atkinson at the beginning of the last century. These papers are briefly on loan to us from Harrogate Library. Members of the group have taken up the challenge of photographing and transcribing the entire collection, so that it can become part of our permanent record. This is a mammoth task currently under way in a private room in Knaresborough Library. Thanks again to library staff for their interest. We have also had access to a unique collection of photographs relating to the Slingsby family. Copies of these images now form part of our record. This is time consuming work, requires a degree of skill, innovation and accuracy. These are just two strands of a complex tapestry which will form the final outcome of our study.



Working on the Records in Knaresborough Library



STOP PRESS

Remember our item on learning from buttons? We now have a new field of research into bag seals which were used in connection with importing flax for the local textile industry, from as far a field as Russia. We recently had the privilege of hearing John Sullivan, formerly of the University of St Andrews, speak on this subject. We hope to give you more information on this subject in a future issue.

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