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CLARO COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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In this edition we hope to explore the progress of our project through the medium of our display materials, which we have built up over the past two years. Recently we have mounted exhibitions at North Yorkshire County Record Office, Knaresborough Castle, and Park Grove Methodist Church in Scriven. In the first instance our material consisted of a collection of photographs illustrating the work of the group, which has been developed into a sophisticated and professional exhibition which is constantly being refreshed and updated. We have display boards, collections of maps, aerial photographs, artefacts, original works of art and other items. Most importantly, we staff the exhibitions with personnel who can explain the material on show. On occasions, we have also the benefit of expert opinion from the Yorkshire Museum and from Kevin Cale of Community Archaeology Ltd. Our next event will be on June 20th, at Knaresborough Castle, as part of the Harrogate Borough Council Medieval Day.

RECENT EVENTS



In March we had the opportunity to set up our display at North Yorkshire Records Office Open Day. On this occasion more than 800 people came through the door, some of whom were interested in our work. On Easter Saturday we set up our exhibition at Knaresborough Castle, as part of the 800th anniversary of the Maundy Money Ceremony, which originated in Knaresborough. About 100 people came to see us, giving an opportunity to promote our other events.

In addition to mounting our display, there have been other group activities, including an exploratory search for Medieval Slag, or waste material from metal working, as evidence of ancient metal working in Scriven. We are aware that the area is littered with names relating to the process eg. Smelt Field, Smelt Bridge and Smelt Pond. To progress this work we circulated households in the

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relevant area with a leaflet, calling for samples of slag and permission to take sample cores of soil from gardens. To date, no one has contacted us to report any samples in response to our leaflet, but one of our members has brought some slag from his garden. We borrowed an auger (drill) to extract a core of soil from a suitable site. Kevin is shown on the previous page, working with the auger. Although we did not find slag, natural geology revealed natural clay, when augered to a metre. A sample was taken for evaluation and experimentation. The pottery tutor at Henshaw's Arts and Crafts Centre processed the clay to remove unwanted particles eg. Sand, after which she produced a small pot, which was biscuit fired, with an excellent result, indicating that local clay is of good enough quality to make pots. This supports the theory that most villages had their own pottery. .

Our Chairman, David Hunt, gives occasional lectures on aspects of our work to a wide range of interested groups. David's portfolio now includes a lecture on Scriven, which was recently formed part of the Prime Time series at the Mercer Gallery.

Most of our events and activities result in approaches from members of the public offering information, opportunities for further study and expertise. In this respect, the Scriven Finds Day was particularly rewarding.

SCRIVEN FINDS DAY

Over the past year we have been building up expertise in setting up displays and exhibitions, together with skills relating to identifying finds from the area. This activity culminated in an open day giving an opportunity to the people of Scriven to find out about our work and to bring in items of interest they found in the area. We were fortunate to have the use of good facilities in the hall at Park Grove Methodist Church at Scriven on April 17th. We alerted the population of Scriven to the event by leafleting about 300 households in advance and were pleased to see about 50 visitors on the day. The main purpose was to encourage Scriven residents to bring in items of possible archaeological interest, which had been found in the study area. There was an opportunity for finds to be identified by a team of experts.

We showed display boards covering the activities of the group, finds research, Slingsby Family and Manor and Village houses.

A comprehensive collection of maps and aerial photographs were available, together with a display case containing Scriven finds and a power point presentation.

There was an impressive collection of quern stones (Prehistoric grinding stones) collected from local farms, also displays of slag and augering techniques.

Visitors who had brought finds were directed to the finds team, made up of Kevin Cale of Community Archaeology Ltd. And Dave Evans, of York, and members of CCAG, where finds were weighed measured, identified by experts, recorded and photographed.



We had an interesting group of visitors, mostly from the study area or with local connections. The visitors included a member of the Great Ayton Community Archaeology Group. Some people brought finds. All of them brought interest and information for us. Group members manning the exhibition were able to gather and follow up information from the visitors, with some amazing results in the area of house histories, oral history, quern stones and integration of new finds with existing finds.

Only four finds came from the study area, one of which was of great interest and led us to a garden in Scriven which was full of Quern Stones (Prehistoric Grinding Stones) and other items of interest. We have already visited and recorded this site and expect to study it further, with the permission of the landowner. Some visitors brought in collections of items from outside the area, which we will identify and record at a later date.

Although the number of local finds was small, this was a worthwhile and energizing day which opened doors for the group and for the local residents. We will be developing our local contacts and perhaps considering another event in the future. Thank you to everyone involved, especially to Mike Baxter and Ann Smith for masterminding the event and to Thomas Baxter for taking the photographs. Below, we show a local farmer demonstrating a collection of querns.





Identifying Finds at Scriven

WHAT NEXT?

We have now been working for two years on the Five Year Scriven Project. We have opened up interesting and rewarding fields of study, which begin to integrate and form a picture. The group is made up of people from varied backgrounds, who are able to learn new skills and to support each other to the benefit of the project. Above all, we have identified a great enthusiasm among the people of Scriven, past and present, to share their knowledge with us. We hope to capitalize on this in all sorts of ways in the future. Have you got anything to tell us? Why not come to our next exhibition at the Harrogate Medieval Living History Day at Knaresborough Castle on June 20th.

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