

Dates for your diary

Thursday 21st March 7:30pm Thropton Memorial Hall (small hall): Andrew Parkin will be giving a talk on “Classical Influences in North East Buildings”. Andrew is Keeper of Archaeology for the Great North Museum. The Neo-Classical revival was a key movement in the early 19th century, with architects travelling in Italy and bringing their experiences back to this country. The results can be seen in cities such as London and Cambridge; almost the whole of Newcastle’s town centre was rebuilt in this style in the 1830s by John Dobson, Thomas Oliver and Richard Grainger.

Thursday 11th April 7:30pm: Thropton Memorial Hall (large hall): Nigel Mills, World Heritage and Access Director at The Hadrian’s Wall Trust will talk on ‘Hadrian’s Wall and the Hadrian’s Wall Trust’. Hadrian’s Wall is a world heritage site that includes not just the wall but also the extensive surrounding area and structures such as coastal defences. The Trust’s job is to manage the site for the community and visitors, promote education, protect the archaeology and conserve the landscape.

Thursday 16th May 7:30 Thropton Memorial Hall. The AGM will report on the year’s activities and feature a number of short talks. Refreshments will be served.

Ian Colquhoun is once again planning a series of walks for the spring and early summer. We will circulate details as these as soon as we can.

Looking further ahead, we have invited Paul Frodsham to give the 2013 David Dippie Dixon lectures. Many of you will know Paul – he helped us define the CCA research agenda. Going even further back, it was his talk to the History Society some 10 years ago on the centenary of the publication of Upper Coquetdale that instigated the National Park project that eventually became CCA. Paul is now with the North Pennines AONB, running a project called Altogether Archaeology which brings together professionals and volunteers to investigate the rich archaeological heritage of the area.

Heritage Lottery Fund

As you know, the HLF has funded our work at Barrowburn over the last 2 years. As a result of projects like ours, they have developed a new grants programme called Sharing Heritage. This is aimed at helping communities understand the history and character of their local area.

HLF obviously thinks highly of the work we’re doing at Barrowburn. As a result, they asked CCA to be present at the February launch of Sharing Heritage in Manchester, and Caroline Allott and Chris Butterworth went along to share our experiences with other projects, HLF staff, and other heritage organisations. HLF staff had worked hard on the press as the event was covered that morning by the Radio 4 Today programme, BBC Breakfast and, in our region, The Journal.



The keynote speaker was Michael Wood who stressed that, as illustrated by the Olympic opening ceremony, it was time to focus on the history of communities and tell the story of the people, not just Kings and Queens. He said that people should be possessors and agents of their own history and take a pride in their past, with a study of local history illuminating national trends. As someone who had grown up in Manchester, he noted the North West’s links with the suffragette and co-operative movements.

Michael then interviewed representatives from three different HLF-funded projects. The first involved researching the lost pubs of Chapel Street in Salford, work that focused on oral history and architecture. The second was a schools-based project in Sheffield looking at the

relevance of history for today's children by exploring the city as the home of football with its early clubs and the emergence of codified rules. The final project also focused on oral history, investigating the communities along the Llangollen canal in Shropshire and North Wales, including interviewing and recording in Welsh.



Clearly, the Barrowburn project is different from these – being largely archaeology-based. But, as well as pushing back dates in the history of mill technology, it does fit the pattern of interplay between national and local events, affected as the mill was by large-scale events such as war, disease and weather.

Chris and Caroline talked with senior HLF staff and a BBC researcher. We definitely seem to be doing what HLF wants projects like ours to do – spreading the word through talks, displays and publications, as well as encouraging visits and having a site that's accessible to the public.

The Kingfisher of the Coquet

by Susie Kennedy

As we enter Cragside's 150th anniversary year, it can sometimes be difficult to pick out a single thread that was to lead to the building of the 'Palace of the Modern Magician' on the unlikely rocky slopes of the Debdon and Coquet valleys.



However, in Lord Armstrong's case the golden thread was his lifelong love for fishing, which all began when, as a boy, he was sent to Rothbury to take the country air to help cure a persistent chest complaint. He took to the water like the proverbial duck and very quickly learnt the angler's craft with rod and line. It was a pursuit he enjoyed with his father and a number of local characters that became lifelong friends.

Fishing was to lead the adult Lord Armstrong on a journey of exploration into the power of water and its many applications in motive power and hydroelectricity. As he developed from being a

successful solicitor to an extraordinary engineer, he made his fortune, enabling him to return to Coquetdale in later life; along with Lady Margaret he started to build their dream that became Cragside. And on returning he reacquainted himself with his old fishing friends and his passion for his favourite sport.

Lord Armstrong never did things by half and set about improving the fishing both at Cragside and on the Coquet. The results can be seen in a guide to Rothbury, by an unknown author, in 1885, which describes a walk along the Coquet, beyond the Thrum Mill - *'Passing further on, and at the foot of the bank, enter a gateway that leads through a field to the Fish Ponds. These were erected by the Conservators of the Coquet Fishery for the propagation of the best salmon; this was very successful in the hands of Sergeant Spence, and there was every reason to hope they would supplant the old bull trout, and reason of failure was the salmon did not return from the sea again. The whole concern is now in the hands of Sir W. G. Armstrong, and the place is used for the propagation of various kinds of foreign trout, chiefly Fontenaille and Swiss. These are yearly sent in large numbers into the Coquet, and must be of great benefit of the people of Rothbury, and a source of pleasure to anglers.'*

Heavens only knows what the Environment Agency or Natural England would make of that today!

Lord Armstrong was known as the 'Kingfisher' in Coquetdale because of his great prowess with rod and line. In the 'Heroes of Industry', a book of biographical sketches by Evan Rowland Jones and published in 1886, we read - *'Fishing was his favourite sport. He imbibed the taste from his father. Even in his pastime his inventive genius found employment. A new bait basket was contrived, whereby the minnow was kept at a lower temperature. His tackle was continually undergoing improvement and he became one of the most accomplished fishers on the Coquet.'*



In another interview with Lord Armstrong in 1893 the bait basket was said to be his first invention. Several rugby-ball shaped baskets have been discovered at Cragside and we don't know what they were used for, could they be the missing 'Bait Baskets'?

A Border Roads project?

Although there is likely to be a considerable amount of post-excavation work and report writing, this summer's dig represents the end of our three seasons at Barrowburn. So the question is, what do we do next?

The committee has been discussing this, and we have a proposal that is designed to provide a wide variety of different types of work for two to three years, starting in 2014. We obviously want this variety so that as many people as possible can get involved; we're anxious to ensure that excavation is included in the mix, because that's something that's clearly popular.

As many of you will know, the routes through the Cheviots, principally Clennell Street, the Salters' Road, Dere Street and The Street, are very old. Today they are popular walking routes, but records going back to medieval times attest to their use for trade, droving, smuggling and military movements. Obviously, Dere Street was used by the Romans, but the course it took was almost certainly prehistoric in origin, as are those of the other roads.



A cross dyke on Clennell Street

Walkers using these routes today pass through a landscape that is rich in relics and ruins – ranging from Bronze Age fields and settlements (as investigated by Rachel Pope on Clennell Street) through Iron Age farms and camps to the remains of medieval agriculture – and farmhouses that were abandoned less than 100 years ago. Although these remains are often recorded in the county's Historic Environment Record, these records are terse, sometimes inaccurate and certainly hard to get at. Most passers-by see the obvious stuff – such as the hilltop camps, but don't know the rest is there.

We are proposing a project that will involve documenting and photographing these sites, surveying a few of them and carrying out some very focused excavations. Coupled with desk research and analysis of aerial photographs, we will build up a valuable picture of what went on along these roads.



Camp Knowe from Clennell Street

Clearly, we will have to make our results available to as wide an audience as possible – so we're thinking about a series of deliverables – such as a web site, a book and route cards for walkers – all of which will help visitors and others appreciate and understand what they see – and direct them to sites that are not immediately obvious.



Cultivation terraces next to The Street

We've described this plan to Heritage Lottery Fund staff in Newcastle, and had a meeting with them. We think this went well – the Barrowburn project has given us considerable credibility – and so over the next few months we plan to develop a formal proposal and a grant request. If anyone has any suggestions or thoughts about improving these plans – or adding to them – please let someone from the committee know. Future newsletters will keep you up to date on progress.

Flodden Update

The Flodden 500 project has been awarded a 4 year grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund that will enable the work that's been going on for the last few years to carry on and develop.

The programme will still involve excavation but aspects such as surveying, geophysics, metal detecting and the analysis of 16th century documents will be expanded. There will be a travelling exhibition and two local ones curated by Scottish Borders Museums.