

DIGGING FOR BRITONS!

Community Excavation of an Iron Age/Romano-British settlement at High Carlingill in the Lune Valley

Aerial photography in the 1970s identified a series of late prehistoric native settlements along the eastern side of the Lune Valley between Sedbergh and Tebay (Higham 1979). The site at High Carlingill, approximately 600m south of Low Borrowbridge Roman fort, was surveyed by the RCHME in 1993 (Figure 1) but had not been investigated further. Digging for Britons! is an NLHF-funded community archaeology project, run as a partnership between Lunesdale Archaeology Society and Solstice Heritage, seeking to extend our knowledge of the site and its relationship to the wider landscape.



Figure 1: RCHME survey of site with geophysical survey overlay

In 2018, three trenches were excavated to investigate the main enclosure banks and some of the suspected roundhouse platforms, aiming to answer questions on the development of this multi-phase settlement. Small finds showed there was Romano-British occupation on the site, but radiocarbon dating demonstrated that the two main phases of the enclosure were both Iron Age in date. A complex series of alterations to the structures supported this impression of long-term, and possibly continuous, occupation.

In 2019, further pottery finds confirmed that use of the settlement was contemporary with occupation of Low Borrowbridge fort. The work this time focused on two roundhouses in different parts of the site, one of which yielded an intact earthen floor containing considerable organic remains. These included charred grains of spelt wheat and hulled 6-row barley, hazelnuts, weed species from arable, ruderal and damp environments and twigs and charcoal from a variety of species.

Radiocarbon dating will be undertaken from these samples. Further scientific analysis adding to our emerging picture of this fascinating and understudied site and landscape is awaited.

Background

Lunesdale Archaeology Society (LAS) was formed in 2011 and has been investigating the history and pre-history of the Lune Gorge, Tebay for the past six years (Hooley *et al.* 2016). In 2011 and 2012 the Society excavated a building to the south of the known Roman fort at Low Borrowbridge. From 2014 to 2015 the Society continued its explorations of the fort interior and environs using non-invasive geophysical surveying techniques (OAN 2014, 2015). These were followed by excavations in the fields to the south of the fort (OAN 2016). The proximity of the High Carlingill Settlement to the Roman fort provides a unique opportunity to investigate possible interaction (such as supply and trade) between the settlement and the auxiliary fort.

References

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