

Newsletter 8 January 2024

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**We are a local
voluntary group
exploring the
hidden aspects of
our rich heritage
spanning thousands
of years.**



BEYOND THE WALL

Welcome to our eighth Newsletter. Many thanks to all those whose have provided articles: Lorraine Clay, Andy Willis, Phil Bowyer & Anne Milligan.

Wishing you all a very happy New Year and looking forward to some good archaeology in 2024.

Andy Curtis

Membership

Membership for the coming year runs from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. Subject to changes at our AGM in the New Year our subscription rates are: £10 single, £15 couple, £5 students or on benefits.

All our subscriptions go to the cause of furthering our commitment to community archaeology.

AGM will be announced by separate email.



Stan Beckensall 90th with Aron Mazel & Rachel, Hexham Abbey

An Archaeological Journey by Andy Willis

This is my story on how I became involved in archaeology. It is not necessarily a unique story, as most people interested in archaeology have tales to tell on how they took up the trowel and mattock.

Growing up and living in Britain, we are fortunate to be surrounded by a rich landscape of archaeology and history just waiting our exploration. On the outskirts of the village where I grew up in the 1960s, are two Bronze Age burial mounds (haunted of course), learning in later years that they are known by archaeologist as bowl barrows. Many other archaeological and historical features nestle in the surrounding area. I enjoyed the school trips to places like Fishbourne Roman Palace and Arundel Castle.

I am one of those people fascinated with exploring ruins, prehistoric monuments, lumps and bumps on the ground, and strange looking landscapes. Other than my imagination, I did not have any real context in which to place the features I was looking at, well not until 1994. 1994 was one of those times in life when very little seemed to go right, in and out of work, in and out of relationships, in and out of good health, those sorts of things. In my search for some meaning in life, I stumbled across a GCSE archaeology evening class, in which I signed up. I absolutely loved it, the course put some flesh on the bare bones of my archaeology knowledge.

During this course, I got it into my crazy head to apply for a degree and become an archaeologist. You need to understand that I came from a very none academic background, “people like us don’t do that sort of thing” was the general thought in regards to going to university. Due to being out of education for many years there was a need to prove that I was up to the task to sit for a degree. To prove this an Access to Higher Education course was suggested. This course was said to be at A level standard, well I took it and passed, which meant I could go on and do a degree.

I enrolled on a BA honours Archaeology course at King Alfred’s College Winchester, which on top of the year-long Access to Education, was for three years. I simply loved it, admittedly some aspects of the course were difficult, and some subjects were quite frankly, boring. It was a great course though. After 3 years I graduated with a BA honours Archaeology degree. For me this was one of the better judgements I made in life.

After graduation, I landed my first job in commercial archaeology working at Alnwick Castle. This was to record everything archaeological before the building of the water feature and poison garden. It was this that brought me to Northumberland, almost 24 years ago. I continued to work in commercial archaeology for a number of years, taking part in some interesting digs, and some not so interesting, like standing out in the pouring rain on a building site on a watching brief, watching a mechanical digger excavate the top soil in the vain hope of uncovering something of archaeological interest. Archaeology is rewarding though, simply holding a fragment of pottery that could be 800 years old, leads to questions about who and how it was made and for who, was it high status or utility. What were the raw material used for the pottery, was it quarried, where, by who, how was it transported. It’s detective work, sifting through clues, studying the material remains of the past.

It is not necessary to train at degree level to be involved in archaeology, many local enthusiasts have a great depth of knowledge about their local history and archaeology. NOWTAG a community archaeology group, is great place for people to get involved in archaeology, over the years the group has been involved in many archaeological projects. Many interesting sites have been surveyed and excavated contributing to the archaeological record and knowledge of Northumberland.

Into the second decade of NOWTAG

A personal view by Phil Bowyer

Although its gestation began in 2011 with Anne and I getting involved in 'Altogether Archaeology' activities in the North Pennines, Tynedale North of the Wall Archaeology Group was officially established in September 2013, which means we are now into our second decade. It has been a great pleasure to have chaired the group throughout this period, but I am hoping that this does not become a 'life sentence'.

Over these ten years NOWTAG has established an excellent reputation within the archaeological community for the quality of our members' work and the value of its recording and reporting. I am enormously grateful for the enthusiasm and skills that all have brought to the group. It has been great to observe the way in which members have enhanced their own experience, skills, expertise, and confidence over the years. In co-ordinating the work of the group, I have very much appreciated how the combined capacity of the group has grown year on year. The teamwork has been tremendous.



Hon. President: Dr Stan Beckensall

Our choice of the 'North of the Wall' tag was in effect a 'mission statement' in the days before it became in vogue for every organisation to pen such eloquent outlines of their objectives. The NOW tag was based upon the fact that for a great many years archaeology in Tynedale had been completely dominated by the attention given to less than 400 years of Roman occupation at the expense of the rest of the over 4,000 years for permanent habitation in the area. Of course, Hadrian's Wall, rightfully a World Heritage Site, has yielded much amazing archaeology but it has also hoovered up the vast majority of resources available for archaeological activity and research. A primary aim of our community group was to explore and to enhance awareness of aspects of the local archaeology that had been largely overlooked and under-reported.

We were not the first to seek to address this imbalance. In the 1990's the then Northumberland National Park Archaeologist, Paul Frodsham, took on board the task of seeking to rebalance the content of archaeological investigation in the area. Importantly for the subsequent work of NOWTAG, Paul commissioned Tim Gates to carry out an aerial photographic survey of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor between Greenhead and Chesters. Tim's two reports from 1999 and 2004 were to provide NOWTAG with the fundamental reference source for its ongoing programme of landscape survey. In the days before Lidar the quality of Tim's aerial photography was of the highest order, and still today provides us with images of features some of which are not clear on Lidar. His interpretation of the features shown by his photos has stood the test of time, technological advance and 'boots on the ground' landscape survey. With the limited resources available at the time Tim undertook some selective site visits to test and enhance his aerial observations, but most of the numerous new sites that he identified had not been explored on the ground until NOWTAG members started to trek out onto the fells in all weathers armed with his reports. In practice, however good the data from aerial observations, there are always further features identified and sometimes examination on the ground results in a reinterpretation of some previously recorded features.

Over these ten years NOWTAG has completed extensive landscape surveys along the Hadrian's Wall Corridor covering an area from Ravensheugh Crag in the north-east to Carr Edge Farm in the south-east, continuing westwards via Greyside, Howden Hill, Sewingshields, Greenlee, Gibbs Hill, Edges Green and Cleughfoot. There are now just a few farms along this route that we have not yet surveyed and we are hoping to fill a couple of the gaps this year. Apart from a one year 'Beyond the Wall' project support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and start-up support from Northumberland National Park NOWTAG has completed this work without external financial resources. We have received financial support from the National Park for excavations of a rock art site at Carr Hill and stack stands on Sewingshields. We also carried out a series of excavations at a farmstead site on Greyside.

Reports on all our activities are available to download from our website, www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk

From its inception NOWTAG has enjoyed invaluable support, advice, and guidance from Northumberland National Park in the person of their Historic Environment Officer Chris Jones and we have had the opportunity to contribute to their Greenlee environmental project headed up by Steven Lipscombe. Others within the professional and volunteer archaeological community have also been very generous in their support for our group's work. They all know how grateful we are so I hope that they will forgive me for not adding a long list to this article.

One specific aspect of our close working relationship with the National Park was an invitation from Chris Jones for NOWTAG to extend its investigations further north following an approach from Dennis Salt at Rattenraw Farm in Redesdale who had found possible features. Andy Curtis and I joined Chris Jones and Dennis Salt in a walkover of the farm which led to NOWTAG carrying out a level 1 landscape survey there in the year before the advent of 'Revitalising Redesdale', a major multi-faceted Heritage Lottery funded project.

NOWTAG members then led two level 3 detailed measurement surveys for Redesdale volunteers at an enclosed settlement and a farmstead site on Rattenraw identified by the initial NOWTAG surveys. Our members continued to participate in a number of subsequent Revitalising Redesdale archaeological activities, and led training activities for the new Redesdale volunteers. When the Revitalising Redesdale project came to its end NOWTAG members played a prominent role in helping to establish a new voluntary Redesdale Archaeology Group in order to continue the work started under Revitalising Redesdale auspices.

It is perhaps typical of an archaeological approach to take the title 'Into the second decade...' and proceed to explore the past decade. After ten years it has obviously got into my blood! From experience we know that exploring the past can be challenging, but saying what the future will bring can be even trickier, so I will end this by saying that I will separately add an article on what is unfolding in Redesdale. We are still awaiting confirmation of our plans for a couple of NOWTAG landscape surveys. Details will follow by email once arrangements have been confirmed.

Three days, three panels, three birds by Lorraine Clay

If it had not been for my sharp-eyed brother on Facebook, I wouldn't have known there was a Rock Art excavation in Kilmartin but as soon as I knew I filled in a hopeful application!

When I received confirmation of two days in the second week. I was ecstatic! I booked the Kilmartin Hotel where my brother and I stayed six years ago to visit Temple Wood, Achnabrech, Kilmichael Glassary and more.

In Scotland the rock art is more organised and accessible ("right to roam"), although it took two maps to get to Ormaig and some faith to find Cairnbaan then.

For those of you who don't know, Kilmartin has one of the highest concentrations of Rock Art in the UK; and getting to dig at a rock art site is pretty rare.

For those of you who don't know what Rock Art is, it's pecked motifs on stone in tombs and in the landscape, on current evidence dating from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age on the West Atlantic sea-board.

Driving up was the same day as Storm Agnes! The roads were awash and the wind whipping the wheel. I pulled in at Glasgow for a breath. I was so relieved to make it, just in time to go round the shiny new museum before checking in.



If you are going to Kilmartin, take your own rock art books, there's none in the museum shop yet. Fortunately, Paul Frodsham had alerted me to one Stan "the man" Beckensall wrote, which my brother bought me as an advance birthday present.

When Agnes took a break I strolled along the valley to Glebe Cairn, and a couple of Largies (which there was access to six years ago, but the stones have been adjusted to make it impossible).

Day one and I met the rest of the crew at Carnaserrie. We had three panels to excavate one half way up, one $\frac{3}{4}$ up, and one right near the top on a slope. It was no exaggeration that it was a half hour walk up. I cheated and accepted a lift to the farm, but that was just $\frac{1}{4}$ the way. I noticed a lovely new sign to Ormaig, and another I didn't have time to read as we bumped up the track.



Panel 1 (above) was a typical (up there) cups with multiple rings (up to 5 on this one), and may have been quarried out along one edge in prehistory. Similar in style to Paul's secret site!

We started the day bailing at panel 2 (below). There had already been new cups found there by Kaitlyn, right of the photo, just underneath the turf. Gavin McGregor was excited to share with the school kids a possible hafted axe shape (although I thought it looked more like a bird).



It was tricky initially determining the natural geology: the decomposed sandstone looking a bit like pot, but I soon got my eye in.

Farmer Rosemary Neagle came up on her quad bike to see what we were up to. She is so enthusiastic and knowledgeable - lots of the artefacts in the museum were found and donated by her!

Rain and wind made it a bit unsafe, especially up at the top, so we finished half day. Rosemary gave me and another sodden digger a welcome lift from the farm to the carpark, and recommended the venison at the pub.

Before dinner I drove to Poltalloch House (for Malcolm) but there were cows and calves with a "right to roam" too in the field so I had a go at Torbhlaren. For once the Garmin was making sense and I had a few dry minutes (although the grass was so wet I was soaked from the knees down). I couldn't see any rings for love nor money (although I might have a couple on the photos I took); I made myself content with a few cups on the standing stone.



Day 2 was a bit better but we still had to bail and I didn't venture from my central spot. I briefly took the phone out to take a couple of photos, particularly some quartz for Paul Frodsham, which petered out in the lower deposits. I thought I might have found an elongated cup but Aaron Watson and geologist Roger weren't convinced.



Henry had found a flint up here, but no more were forthcoming. Rosemary came by, enthusiastic, flanked by her collie entourage. Someone pointed out a white-tailed eagle and we all paused to watch it and listen to its eerie wail.



I tried for Ballygowan and realised it was the same field as Poltalloch! Doh. I consoled myself at Temple Wood, whose spiral, in the gloom, was only visible with the eye of faith (below).



Day 3

I wasn't meant to be there three days but I had the hotel one more night and volunteered for backfilling day and wasn't turned down.

I was rewarded with a merlin and a Golden Eagle!! The Eagle spent quite some time surveying our endeavours, so high up. The merlin was past in a shot and I would have thought it a Kestrel if there weren't some experts about.



I risked going up to the mysterious site 3 (above), up near where Rosemary found (and excavated) a cist. A quartz blade was found up here. There were only cups with single rings up here too (perhaps the start of a telephone dial or rosette?)

It was tough downhill at the end of the day after seven hours backfilling (I'd totally lost track of time).

Tougher was the five hours drive home! Initially it was beautiful along the coast, but it became dark at Glasgow. I pulled over at Cairns for coffee and cake and dug out my night driving glasses for the final onslaught. The glare from oncoming traffic was horrid – everyone seemed to be heading North.

It was such a relief to get home - I didn't have the energy for a bath so I gorged on snacks and fell asleep - dreaming of sky, birds, and circles.

It was such an almost unique opportunity, and I am so grateful for Archaeology Scotland for their co-ordination and to Rosemary Neagle for being the perfect host.

“Before” photos c/o Aron Watson, other photos author's own.

Archaeology on Android – integrated mapping and navigation by Andy Curtis

I have been using my Android smartphone for the last few years as a navigation tool when out walking. There are several good navigation apps which you can download for free and many of them allow you to use Ordnance Survey maps at 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scales, often for a reasonable yearly subscription. The maps can be used offline without the need for a phone signal or using up your expensive mobile data. Indeed, OS have their own app, *OS Locate*, which works well (but doesn't have all the features I would like).

I was initially using an app called *ViewRanger* which was very accurate in the field, easy to use and an ideal walking companion. Even stored away in my pocket I have confidence it knows where I am, even if I don't (or at least not exactly). Usually, I prefer just to walk and look only occasionally at the screen when I need to know where I am or if crossing open country to find a point of interest (POI) I've added to the map in advance. Turning the screen off also preserves battery life.

However, *ViewRanger* was recently shut down. The company had been taken over by a rival app, *OutdoorActive*. Their product is nowhere near as good, and this prompted me to look at what apps are out there that might be more suitable for both normal navigation and, in particular, for their potential use in archaeology.

My requirements are quite demanding:

- App should ideally be free or cheap to download and use
- App should have an easy-to-use interface and accurate navigation system
- OS maps should be available for offline use at reasonable cost
- App must be capable of handling OS National Grid References

- App needs to be able to easily create and manage POIs (ideally with associated information, links and even photos)
- App should enable you to easily navigate to POIs in the field
- App should allow you to upload and calibrate your own maps (such as LIDAR and aerial images) and use those for navigation with, or instead of, the loaded base map.

Over the year or so I have been testing a variety of available systems and have found one, *Locus Map* (Assam Software, current version 4.20.1), that seems to meet nearly all of my requirements.

Downloading the app is free and quite usable as it is with three maps downloadable for free. I have two covering the whole of England and Scotland. Its free maps (called *LoMaps*) are an improved version of *Open Street Map* with added contours and altitude data.

The company also offer premium subscriptions: (Silver) is 10€ per year (about £8.60) which unlocks nearly all of its useful features. Gold is a little more (20 €) and provides satellite imagery, unlimited base maps of other countries. OS Maps (covering both 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scales) are available for download from the Locus Map Store at additional cost (Cheviot Hills or Hadrian's Wall areas are currently about £3.60 each). This could get pricey if you are round and about a lot as they do not yet offer an annual subscription.

The interface is very customisable which makes it very versatile but does come with a steep learning curve. I have found navigation using the GPS built in to the phone accurate to about 8-10m and, with careful use, battery power is sufficient in the field.

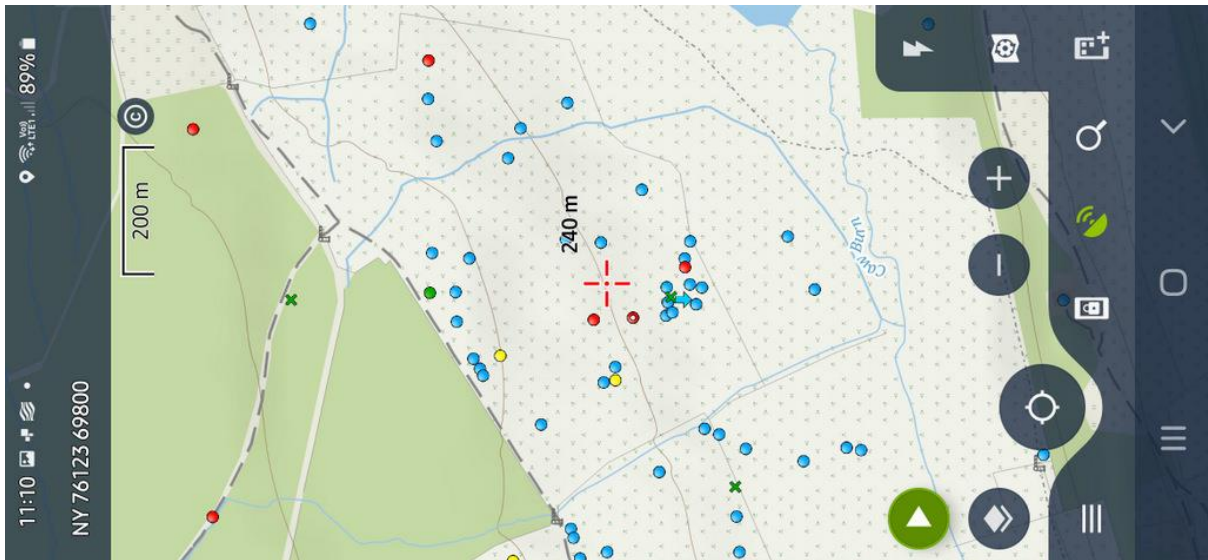
Silver subscription allows you to calibrate and use your own maps offline. I have tried calibrated images of LIDAR, Google Earth satellite and even the Historic England aerial mapping. This makes such resources available offline in the field as part of an integrated navigation tool. It will not only direct me on the ground to easily find the features of interest but allow direct navigation over a LIDAR or other embedded mapping image.

Silver also allows use of WMS/WMTS feeds when you are online at home (or using mobile data in the field). This means that you can overlay your base map with a feed from The British Geological Survey showing and identifying the rocks (or superficial deposits) below your feet. Maps from the Coal Authority show coal measures, former shallow coal mining and pit shafts. First and second edition (6" and 25") OS maps are available as WMTS feeds from National Library of Scotland.

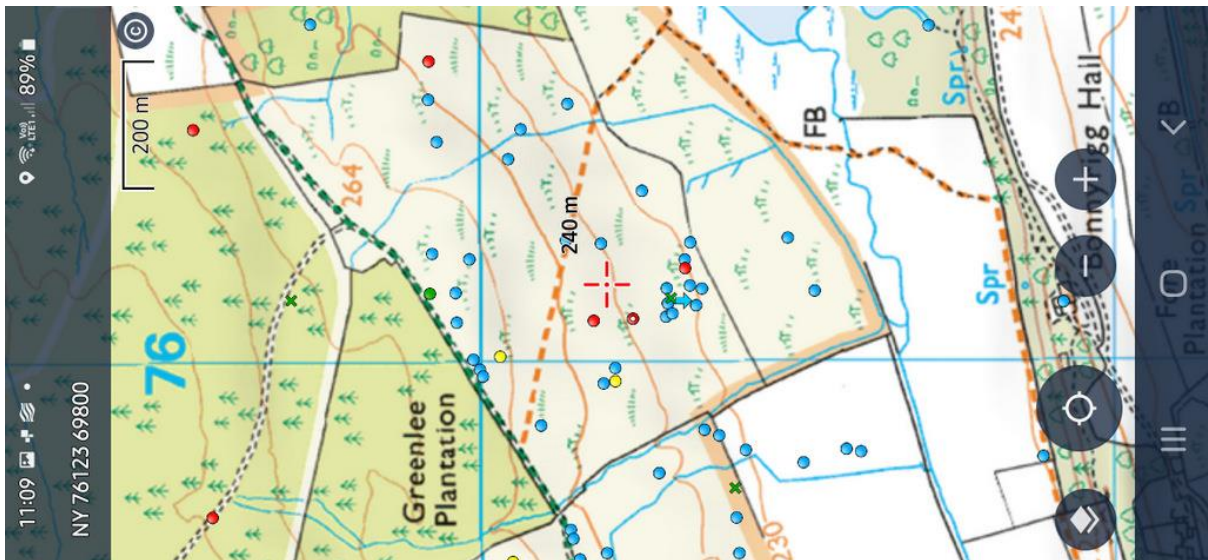
Below are some screenshots of *Locus Map* in use (portrait images rotated to fit better on the page). Notes and even photos of sites can be added to POIs directly in the field. The same company also make a dedicated app called *Locus GIS* which has many of the same features and you can also use for mapping in the field but comes at higher cost.

Wet weather would be a problem (as it is with paper maps). Location accuracy, navigation ability and battery life all need checking for archaeology survey. If it comes up to the mark, it will make it possible to easily check out features seen on the LIDAR and HE maps, not just

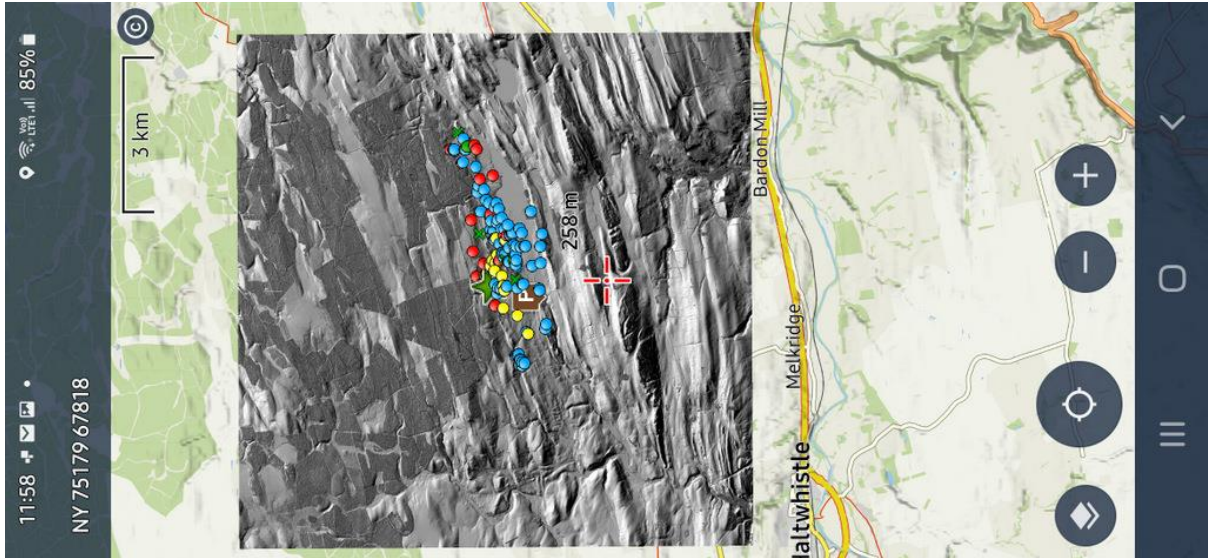
showing where you are standing on the LIDAR map at any time, but also creating a recorded track of where you have been and what you (should) have seen.



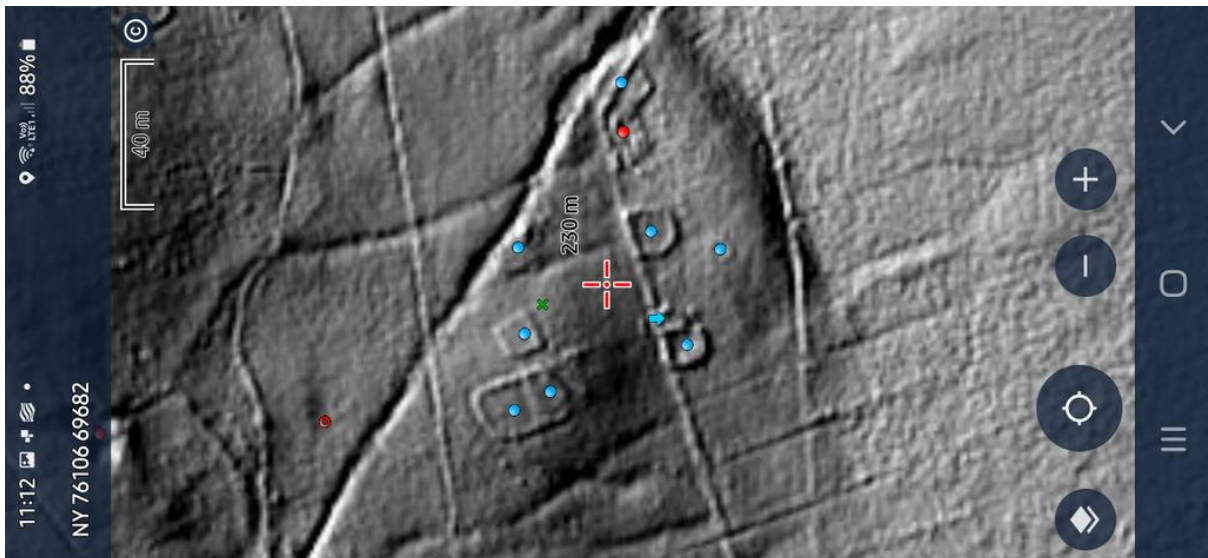
Using free Locus Map background with points of (archaeological) interest from Greenlee. Shows continuous display of OS grid reference (top of screen) and altitude (in black) at screen centre.



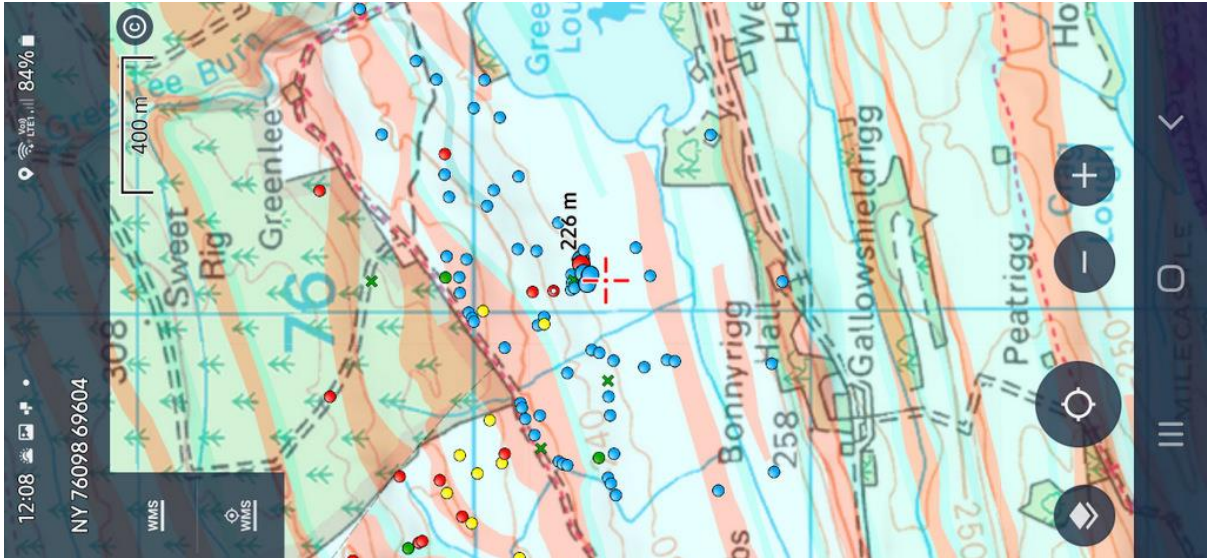
Using OS map backgrounds (1:50,000 and 1:25000 depending on zoom level) at Greenlee



Base map of Greenlee area overlaid with 100 sq km of calibrated LIDAR (DSM hillshade) over which you can navigate in the field completely offline as an opaque or transparent overlay.



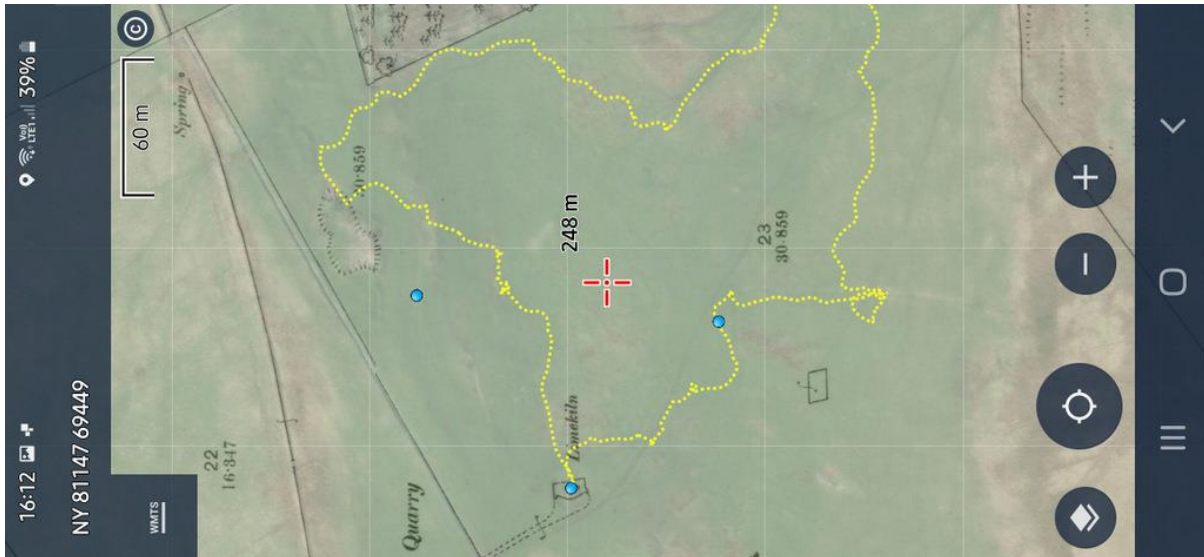
LIDAR overlay from Greenlee zoomed in to define and locate points of interest, in this case small enclosures and stack stands attached to linear banks. Note scale top right of the screen shows 40m.



Greenlee OS map with WMS overlay (online) from BGS showing bed rock. The lower of the two WMS control buttons allows identification of rock type at the screen cursor location.



Practice navigation on my local golf course using a semi-transparent LIDAR (DSM) hillshade overlaid on, and providing a 3D view to the free Locus Map base. Current location shown by blue circle at end of a yellow bread-crum trail of the route I have followed. The orange line shows the direction the phone is pointing (west towards a set of three bunkers below a green) showing direction to follow. Controls at the bottom of the screen are optimally setup to provide easy access to features (e.g. to turn overlays on or off, add points of interest) that you may need in the field.



Showing track (yellow) of a previously recorded field excursion overlaid at home with an online WMTS feed (transparent overlay) of the 2nd edition 25" OS map from National Library of Scotland.

If you are interested in using a mobile phone for navigation (and perhaps to support your field archaeology) I can recommend downloading and trying out the free features of Locus Map. You can change to a paid subscription later if you want any of the additional features. Maps that have been calibrated elsewhere can also be imported into the free version. I gratefully acknowledge Martin Green's assistance with the downloading and processing of LIDAR data.

Please let me know if you have a smart phone, would like to try out a versatile offline navigation app, but perhaps would prefer some assistance in setting it up. This is much easier one-to-one or with a small group.

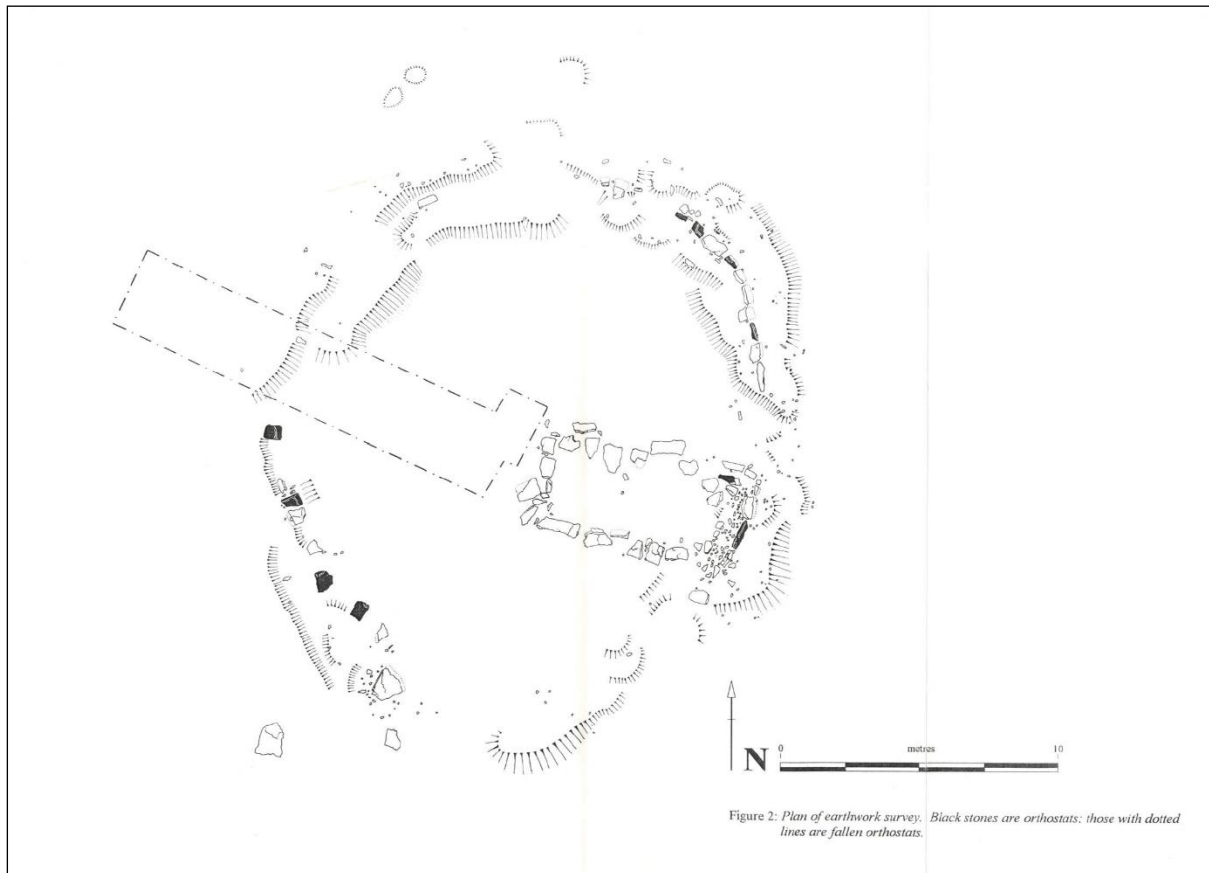
Gibbs Hill Landscape Survey by Phil Bowyer

Over the years NOWTAG members have established a reputation for their hardiness in being prepared to venture out onto the Fells whilst others may choose to sit in beside the fire. Once again in 2023 we were out during February investigating the archaeological landscape on Gibbs Hill Farm. Being able to survey whilst the vegetation is still low and before the lambing season starts has provided the parameters for our challenging timing.

Our landscape survey on Gibbs Hill is an extension from the Northumberland National Park environmental project on the adjacent Greenlee and Stonefolds Farms. In 2022 we had completed an extensive survey of those farms and had included National Park volunteers in the fieldwork. Many of the unresolved questions arising from that survey, such as the dating and functions of the numerous small enclosures recording, a lack of identifiable farmstead remains in a large area of Greenlee Farm and the absence of identifiable pre-Medieval settlement that would have been anticipated given the presence of cord rigg and the

pattern in adjoining parts of the Hadrian's Wall Corridor, were also encountered at Gibbs Hill.

Gibbs Hill does have a known prehistoric site, a scheduled Bronze Age enclosed cremation cemetery, set in the higher rough terrain of Chatley Craggs to the north of the farm. This had been partially excavated in 1994 by Archaeological Services University of Durham (ASUD), who kindly provided NOWTAG with a copy of their excavation report prior to our survey.



Plan of Chatley Craggs Cremation Cemetery - Figure 2 from ASUD Report (1995)

In his 1995 ASUD excavation report Max Adams commented upon the challenges facing any landscape survey of the surrounding area:

“The problem with such a landscape in terms of relating isolated monuments to settlement and economy is that many, more subtle, archaeological features are virtually undetectable. Settlement features such as hut circles are likely to have been obscured by soil development and by afforestation, and it remains to be seen whether they can be located using current remote sensing techniques. Air photography offers very little hope. It may be that intensive field walking will reveal further features which can be linked via linear earthworks and other boundary features into a plausible prehistoric landscape, but probably to a limited extent only compared with such rich visible landscapes as the Cheviots.”

This statement appropriately sums up the challenge that NOWTAG volunteers took upon themselves. An additional factor not specified above is that the terrain in the vicinity of Chatley Craggs is very stony, including an extensive boulder-field to the south-east.

Accurately identifying potential stony boundary features or possible clearance or settlement sites in such terrain is fraught with difficulty. Members had to apply all the experience that they have gained from other local surveys in order to both identify very subtle features and to avoid their 'mind's eye' generating imaginary features. Nevertheless, a number of credible, potentially prehistoric features were identified, and do offer at least a start towards establishing elements of a 'plausible prehistoric landscape' for this area. Four low stoney banks were identified to the east of the burial site, along with cleared areas and a couple of small enclosures within the boulder-field to the south-east plus three clearance cairns and a couple of lengths of low stoney banks a little further south. Although any interpretation must be tentative these features could be indications of a proto-field system.



Examining a small stoney enclosure near Chatley Craggs

The extent of surviving cord rig in the northern area is suggestive that during at least some part of the Iron Age/ Romano-British period there was arable activity. However, as was the case on Greenlee and Stonefolds, the lack of evidence for habitation features typical of this period is puzzling.

In the southern part of the survey area there are just two indistinct lengths of low stony alignments. However, rather than implying the lack of prehistoric activity in the area this is probably the outcome of what appears to have been quite intensive Medieval or Post-Medieval activity removing surface evidence of previous land use. The extensive network of ditches, both defining the northern edge of this area and demarking boundaries within it, indicated the degree of effort that went into land improvement during this period. It is worth noting that the preponderance of small enclosures in the eastern part of Gibbs Hill and on Greenlee recorded and discussed under the 2022 survey is not found in the area surveyed in 2023. This may indicate that provisions for livestock were concentrated to the east.

Medieval and post-medieval features identified in the northern part of our survey area suggests that activity here was pastoral, with the probable shieling structure located within the prehistoric enclosed cremation cemetery perhaps providing a shelter for those dealing

with the livestock. We tentatively identified possible remains of two shieling structures in the southern area but found no clear evidence of any farmstead, further extending the area on Greenlee surveyed in 2022 where the lack of farmstead indications given the extent of Medieval and Post-Medieval agricultural activities is unexpected.

Full survey reports for both 2023 and 2022 are available to download from our website at www.tynedalearchaeology.org.uk

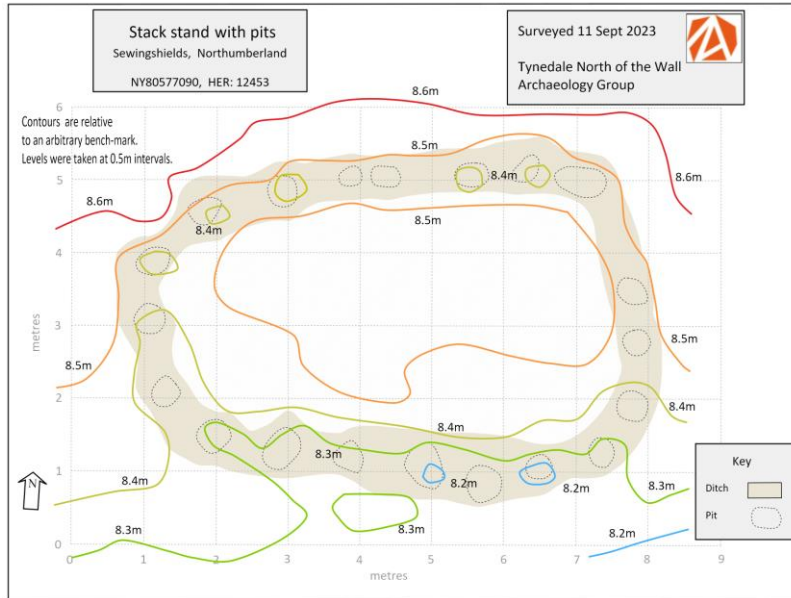
Excavation of a pitted stack stand at Sewingshields by Andy Curtis

In September 2023 we followed-up a previous NOWTAG excavation in June 2022 which examined two contrasting stack stands at Sewingshields, one which had 'pits' within its surrounding ditch and one without pits. The new excavation examined the NW quadrant of another oval, ditched stack-stand. This stand was surrounded by 20 large wedge-shaped pits dug on the line of the shallow ditch but much deeper into the sub-soil.

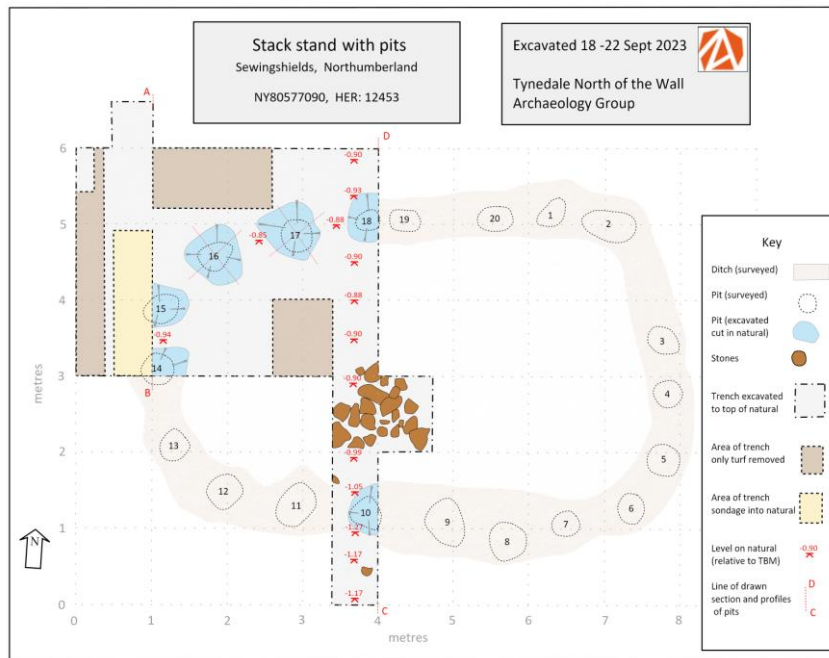
Immediately prior to excavation the new stand was subject to a detailed survey led by Ian Cooper which included precise levelling. The resulting plan guided the excavation and was considered an essential resource. The excavation was directed by Martin Green, who was also mainly responsible for the final report, with advice received on site from Chris Jones (Northumberland National Park), Tim Gates and Don O'Meara (Historic England).

Excavation revealed many similarities with the pitted stand excavated in 2022 although that was located on a deeper peat soil with pits cut more shallowly into the subsoil. What was the purpose of the pits is still unknown. The provision of additional drainage, holding of large supports for a raised platform, or perhaps created from digging out fence posts were all considered.

What material was stacked on the stands also remains unknown. The stacking of peat or turf for domestic fuel, or of hay for animal feed, still seem the most likely possibilities. No small finds or suitable dating evidence was obtained. Rough calculations from the likely rate of peat accumulation suggest the stack stand to be a few hundred years old, but this is a very uncertain figure.



Survey plan with contours



Plan of excavation, superimposed on the survey



3D model of excavated stack stand (<https://skfb.ly/oLCBn>)

Further North of the Wall: Exploring archaeology in Redesdale

By Phil Bowyer

As quite a number of NOWTAG members are already aware we have played a significant part in the development of community archaeological investigation within Redesdale. Prior to the establishment of the Heritage Lottery funded Revitalising Redesdale project NOWTAG had carried out the first Level 1 landscape survey on Rattenraw Farm, and then followed this up by leading a Level 3 detailed recording survey at the enclosed settlement site on behalf of Revitalising Redesdale. Both here and at other locations in Redesdale NOWTAG members led training activities for new volunteers from Redesdale. When the Revitalising Redesdale project came to its end in September 2022 NOWTAG members played a prominent role in helping to establish a new voluntary Redesdale Archaeology Group in order to continue the work started under Revitalising Redesdale auspices.

The first year of Redesdale Archaeology Group (RAG) working independently has been busy and successful, with several NOWTAG members having significant roles both on the RAG Committee and in organising and participating in surveys and excavations carried out under RAG auspices. As the RAG Landscape Survey Organiser I was delighted with the achievements of the first two surveys, at Yatesfield and Garretshiels.

Under Revitalising Redesdale community volunteers had worked alongside MOD volunteers on excavations at an extensive settlement site at Yatesfield, on the Otterburn Ranges. RAG has now established itself in its own right as a community partner with the Otterburn Training Area and national MOD archaeological organisation. The RAG landscape survey early in 2023 identified extensive field system features in the area surrounding the excavation site. Significantly the survey recorded features indicative of farming activity on the site probably dating back into the Bronze Age period, with features consistent with a sequential development from initial clearance cairnfields, through 'proto-field system' to a more developed rectilinear field system characteristic of Iron Age/Romano-British occupation. This is significant in the context of an ongoing debate about to what extent settlements in Redesdale followed or preceded Roman occupation. As yet there has been no conclusive direct evidence of Bronze Age occupation in Redesdale so the RAG survey findings throw up interesting possibilities.



Recording prehistoric field boundaries at Yatesfield

During April this year I will be leading further landscape survey on behalf of RAG in adjoining areas. NOWTAG members who have not yet become involved in RAG activities would be most welcome to participate (RAG membership fees are the same as NOWTAG).

At Garretshiels the RAG survey focused upon a couple of medieval settlement sites, and also came up with interesting findings. The southern site, thought from Lidar observation to be a deserted possible medieval village, proved to have just two multi-celled structures indicative of habitation. However, there were clear indications that the site had been extended at some point, with the tantalising possibility that there had been iron working within the extension area. RAG will be seeking to investigate this possibility in more detail this year and will be extending the landscape survey west of the A68. Among likely features to be recorded in this area we are particularly interested to explore for indications of routeways that could have been used for the movement of iron ore from known workings on Blakehope Fell to the Garretshiels settlement, plus any routeways linking to the holloways identified in 2023 thought to be signs of livestock movements across an extensive area of broad rigg and furrow.

RAG also worked in conjunction with the MOD to continue with the excavation at Yatesfield started under Revitalising Redesdale, and with Richard Carlton and The Archaeological Practice to continue from the 2022 Revitalising Redesdale excavation at Bremenium. The potential for further significant discoveries at this site means that RAG will be seeking longer term funding to enable several more year's investigations.



Surveying at Garretshiels

If you would like to know more about RAG membership and other forthcoming activities please contact the Secretary, Pauline Hogarth at secretaryredesdalerag@gmail.com

Work at Ayres Quay, summer 2023 by Anne Milligan

The Archivist of the Jewish Archives in Newcastle had contacted David Petts about doing project work at Ayres Quay, a long disused Jewish cemetery in the midst of modern-day Sunderland. An American couple working in Newcastle for a period had learnt of Ayres Quay and given a donation to the Archives for work to be carried out in the disused cemetery. As part of Belief in the North-East project David was able to combine both above ground archaeological work and the Jewish traditions in the region.

The first day we met with dense vegetation but with David's usual able organisation and us fit and willing group of workers we had a changed site by the end of just the first day.



Headstones emerged with one big basilica in the centre under tarpaulins. Many were fallen and broken but Hebrew script visible on many. The Archivist was there on the first day and as happens with a small and focused group threads of questions and interests come up and the question of where the synagogue in Sunderland would have been came up.



Research since has shown the timeline, and rather than write 5,000 words the video on Youtube David made - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7nQiLJZWNy> – gives a comprehensive potted summary of both the physical work and the context of the site with

two very different periods of Jewish people in the area. The Youtube video also discusses the question of who now upkeep it, and what happens now, given that the historical time and people have now passed with the Jewish community generally moving southwards.



We went back for a second round, this time with recording sheets to draw and describe a headstone each. It was a memorable project in the small and contained site, showing how belief covers so wide a remit and how the east coast has been under such different influences to the west of Britain.