



Bolsterstone Archaeology and Heritage Group

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

ANNUAL REPORT

October 2021 – September 2022

Our programme of talks and events has more or less gone back to normal over this year, which has been a great relief. All our talks have been in-person with zoom access for those who couldn't get to the venue on the night and a recording for those who wanted it, thanks to Andy.

Membership in 2021 started out at 45 and we now have 65 members. This is really fantastic growth and we need to make sure we keep the interest going. Numbers generally increase in the second half of the year when it is more economical to join at half price and pay only the members' rate at talks; we need to ensure these members want to stay with us. This summer we've had more visits to excavations than usual, which helps to inspire interest and people get to know each other.

The Committee has managed to meet every 2 months throughout 2021-22 in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall. We have a full committee, but that doesn't mean you cannot stand if you would like to join us – we can have elections! Given the increase in member numbers, we are looking to expand the committee by recruiting a Membership Secretary, who would look after the personal details of members and liaison with them, including mailing out news. Please think about it – there is a nomination form with the AGM papers (on the back of the agenda). There are also lots of small ways to help outside the committee and share the load, such as making refreshments at meetings or selling raffle tickets...please consider if and how you could help.

To update on the grants we have received recently. With the funds from Stocksbridge Town Council to design and print publicity leaflets and bookmarks, we aim to share our bookmarks with students when the timing is right, and we have been discussing plans for potential school visits during 2022-23 and ways to engage young people in their heritage. If you have experience of working with children and young people and would like to help with this, do get in touch. In November 2021, Alex Archer, Co-op Member Pioneer, joined our committee meeting to share details of the grants available from the Co-op. We have been familiarising ourselves through a training session on how to bid for the Co-op Community Fund, which we plan to do in the future.

Our Treasurer Andrew Tissington writes: Our financial year has been remarkably robust following the pandemic and we are in a good position going forward. We are very grateful for the grants we have received in this and the previous year. The Sheffield Town Trust helped with the majority of the cost of surveys and reports. The Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership also helped us with their "Building A Community Group" grant and the Coop have been most helpful supplying us with some of our meeting refreshment needs.

As mentioned already, we have also had a large increase in member numbers. There have been several reasons for this. Our Facebook page has been a tremendous asset, allowing news of our activities to be circulated widely. Zoom meetings hosted by Andy Heath, both during and after the pandemic, have also contributed to raising our profile with people who may not be able to join us at Christ Church. Finally our live meetings have of course been most enjoyable and the increase in members has given us extra income. We now also have access to online banking, allowing members to pay subscriptions easily and conveniently.

In terms of activities, following October 2021's AGM, we held a workshop in Bolsterstone Village Hall on 6 November, featuring Mike Dyson and his penknife collection – he also brought equipment to show us how penknives are made and gave us a talk about local penknife makers. With tea and home-made cakes, it was an excellent event.

On 17 November Alex Sotheran, archaeologist with the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership, gave us an overview of all the projects he is involved with, as the 4 years of funding draws to a close at the end of 2022. These include surveys of Wadsley and Loxley Common and Bitholmes Wood. On 15 December we again enjoyed a Christmas meal at the Castle in Bolsterstone, tucking into turkey and mince pies.

The talks we arranged from January to July 2022 were all held in person at Christ Church, the first in the church itself as wifi was not available in the meeting room. Thanks to member Andy Heath, they were also available live on zoom for those who couldn't be in the hall, and also recorded so we could listen to them later on YouTube. Andy has a special interest in ensuring these events work for everyone, particularly for those who are new to zoom, or who need subtitles or transcripts. Our Facebook site (thanks to Dorothy Whittaker and Daphne Mather), with over 600 followers, has been busy advertising the talks and other news, alongside emails, and regular articles have appeared in Look Local.

On 16 February 2022 we started this year's talks with a change of speaker - Tim Cockrell kindly stood in and gave his talk 'Rock Art, Routeways and Hallowed Places in the Neolithic: a case study from the Upper Don valley', which pulled together a lot of his research and theories. He recounted how rock art study did not develop, due to difficulties in dating, until quite late on when Richard Bradley started to work on it. The discovery of rock art in this area has been quite a surprise. Malcolm Nunn gave us Part 1 of his talk on 'The Great Sheffield Flood of 1864' on 16 March, with Part 2 to come next winter. Many people have heard of the Flood but know little more – Malcolm had an excellent series of old photos and shared his extensive knowledge of events.

On 20 April, Gordon Parkinson, who is a volunteer guide at Wortley Top Forge, shared his research into the people concerned with managing the iron working at the forge, which involved members of both the



Wilson family from Broomhead Hall and the Spencer family from Cannon Hall. As a former teacher, Gordon has a clear style of presentation which helped us to understand some of the technical side. We followed up his talk with a visit to the Forge on 4 May, where after tea and biscuits we had a really good tour - Gordon set the waterwheel going for us, and later a number of the steam engines were puffing away.

Richard Godley brought along many items for us to look at before and after his talk on 'Lumberjills – 'Women on the Land' Project' on 18 May. This inspired lots of interest.

It was surprising to learn that the Women's Land Army was directed by suffragette Lady Gertrude Mary Denman, founder of the Women's Institute.

Anders Hanson leads walks around Kelham Island, and so he translated his walk into a talk which he gave us on 15 June – 'A History Tour around Kelham Island', which inspired us to go and explore the area. His research into the buildings and some of the local characters was fascinating. Ken Dash returned to give us another talk on 20 July on his extensive research on 'The Story of Meersbrook Hall' which generated lots of questions and discussion. The house was built in 1759 for banker Benjamin Roebuck, and housed the Ruskin Museum from 1890 to 1953.

Our first talk of the 2022-23 programme was by David Clarke from Sheffield Hallam University on 'Celtic Stone Heads'. Dave's talk was based on his postgraduate research and ranged from the gruesome to the bizarre from around the world, trying to comprehend the dating and significance of our fascination with the human face. He finished with some examples, including our very own face in Bolsterstone.



We shared a table at the Sheffield Heritage Fair on 29-30 January which was very busy, and we had a table at the Bolsterstone Fair on 2 July, next to the Stocksbridge and District History Society. We displayed posters, leaflets and finds which generated lots of interest. It was a very busy day.

Our table at Bolsterstone Fair (photo thanks to Cllr Janet Ridler)

We were invited to the launch of a booklet 'Walk the Old Tracks' outlining the routes and history of many local walks, one of the projects within the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership. We also have a representative on Bolsterstone Community Forum and keep them informed of our activities.

As well as the talks, over the year we have had some excursions and walks. Ruth Morgan led a guided walk around Bolsterstone on a couple of occasions - 23 July in the Festival of Archaeology and 10 September in the Sheffield Walking Festival/Heritage Open Days, outlining the excavations and history of buildings in the village, and out along Heads Lane, talking about some of the characters and places in the valleys on either side. A group of about a dozen people went on a walk with Tim Cockrell on 21 November 2021 up onto Wharncliffe Chase, via the location of the Deepcar Mesolithic camp, to have a look at any evidence of quern production and the settlement site on the top.



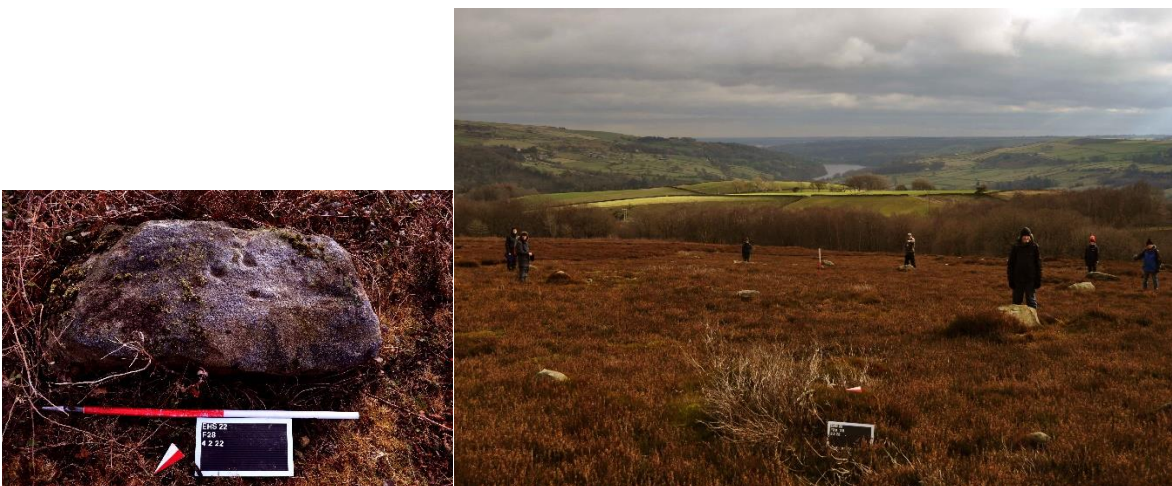
Walk on Wharncliffe Crag and visit to excavations at New Hall, Castleton

There have been a few short excavations going on this summer for student and community involvement, and we were invited to visit Creswell Crag on 28 June, New Hall in Castleton on 20 July and Roughbitchworth on 10 August, where Barry Tylee has obtained NLHF money to contract archaeologists to excavate trenches through the possibly Romano-British 'camp' or circular feature - they revealed clear banks and ditches.



Excavating the ditch at Roughbitchworth (photo from Fb)

Field survey work carried on. In the winter we worked with Tim Cockrell on a walkover survey of the north side of Ecclesall Woods, finding and recording cupmarked stones, as part of his project funded by Sheffield Town Trust. The committee commissioned Tim to lead a walkover survey of Emlin Moor (across the valley from Duke's Road) both to record any archaeology and to train members; having been postponed in 2021, it finally took place in January-February this year, with permission from the Fitzwilliam estate and Natural England. The volunteers located over 90 features which were recorded and Tim's report is on the BAHG website. He is also having a paper published in the Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society, titled 'Broomhead Moor: Making and Memorialising a Remembered Place'.



Emlin Moor finds from Tim Cockrell's report

Jayne Wright, Dorothy Whittaker and Susie Abrahams have arranged a couple of sessions in Bolsterstone Churchyard in September, beginning a project on recording the inscriptions, designs and stonemason's



marks on the gravestones. Already they have found some very interesting links to historic happenings, people and places. Twenty people are helping - they enjoyed it so much they are continuing to come along to further sessions. If you would like to join the project, please message BAHG using the message button on our Facebook page.

We have contributed a number of places to the Local Heritage List for South Yorkshire, which now has over 100 'assets' approved in the Sheffield area – we have submitted the

original Fox mills and office building, St Matthias church, the Clock Tower and the bolsterstones for starters, and the first two have been approved (see [Samuel Fox & Co Office Block and Mills - South Yorkshire Local Heritage List \(local-heritage-list.org.uk\)](https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/)). Everyone needs to think about buildings or sites which are not listed or scheduled, and which are important to the community, which could be put forward - anyone can submit something. Being on the list will give them an element of protection in the planning process. Get in touch if you think something should be added but you don't feel confident to do it yourself.

By joining BAHG, you not only have the opportunity to hear some fascinating talks and visit interesting places, but you are also kept informed of events by email and can borrow a range of books and magazines we have collected. We are an affiliate organisation with the CBA (Council for British Archaeology) and receive an excellent Archaeology magazine every two months which is available for members to read – look out for copies at meetings.

Do tell us if there are topics you would like to hear more about or places we could visit. A feedback form is available on zoom and at in-person meetings and we'd like to hear your thoughts. We have a full programme of talks planned for the coming year but we always welcome new ideas - do get more involved if you feel able to.

RM 3/9/2022