Greenside Mine Underground Tour

2015 started with a guided underground tour of Greenside mine with Warren Allison. Read about Alan Dunthorne and Helen O’Brien’s experience of the tour here.

It was a cold, frosty morning as we waited for Warren at Glenridding. We’d been told to wear wellies as it could be wet inside the mine, and few of us relished the prospect of walking up an icy track in them. Perhaps the hard hats would come in useful sooner than we thought. As we entered the Lucy Tongue Level of the mine by sliding down a two metre long drainpipe, we wondered how on earth we would ever get back up again. But there was no time for worrying as we splashed our way along the level, trying not to trip over the railways sleepers underfoot or to bang our hard hats on the roof beams.

Earlier, in the car park, Warren had shown us a detailed map of the levels. The Lucy Tongue Level is over a kilometre long and was the main entrance for much of the mine’s existence. It took about 15 years to tunnel out, using hand tools, before finally reaching the valuable Greenside Vein which was at one point the largest producer of lead in the UK.

Warren had told us that it was pretty dry. As we waded through the mid-shin high section we realised that dry is a relative term. We did, however, always feel totally safe: the mining group has propped up the roof in places using the old wooden railway sleepers and scaffolding, and some areas have sandbags along the sides of the walls. When the mine closed in the early 1960s the machinery was still state-of-the-art and so was removed to be reused elsewhere; the old shafts are now filled with (amazingly clean) water and the engine room is an empty cavern.

Equipped as we were with modern waterproofs, hard hats, and electric headlamps, it was not hard to imagine the conditions under which the early miners must have worked. No safety equipment unless you consider a cloth cap safe and working by candle or oil lamp in the confines of the narrow tunnels. Despite this, there was only one fatal accident in the mine itself due to a fire, though the effects of the harsh conditions and breathing dust wrecked the health of many of the labour force.
Here and there we would come across reminders of these men: footprints frozen in wet concrete: a scratched notice date 1889. There have been reports of ghosts, and in the silent, flickering shadows it would be easy to believe in them.

In its final days the mine was used by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to test a detection system for underground nuclear tests. The managers would go down the mine in their suits and ties, and we saw where a branch tunnel had been dug out to provide them with their own toilets.

The journey to the top, using the drainpipe!

And the return journey to the top? Well we all made it back up the drainpipe but it involved a lot of pushing and pulling, and was definitely not very elegant!

Warren will be leading an above ground archaeological tour of Greenside Mine on Thursday 24 September. Please make a booking if you would like to join us (archvol@lakedistrict.gov.uk).

Pre-season Archaeology meeting

On Tuesday 3 March, we had a great pre-season meeting, attended by more than 30 archaeology volunteers. It was a great opportunity for new and existing archaeology volunteers to meet with one another and to find out a little bit more about what the role of archaeology volunteer entails. Holly gave a presentation on the varied work that volunteers can get involved in, such as level 1 walkover surveys, conservation work, vegetation clearance on listed structures and the importance of bracken bashing. Holly also talked through the programme of events for 2015. This was followed by a presentation from Tim Duckmanton, Volunteer Team Leader, who gave a background to volunteering for the Lake District National Park Authority and thanked people for their support and commitment to volunteering. Annie Duckworth, Volunteer Support Administrator, briefed people on using the electronic activity log system and how to book onto training events such as navigation training. If you are unsure how to do this, Annie is always very happy to talk things through with you over the phone – or you can arrange a time to meet so she can demonstrate the system to you! Contact Annie on: 01539 792605 or e-mail her at: Annie.Duckworth@lakedistrict.gov.uk

Sandbed Mine, Caldbeck

Eleanor has commissioned Oxford Archaeology North (OAN) to produce a detailed photographic survey of Sandbed Mines, a lead mine of 19th—20th century date in Caldbeck Fells. Using a digital camera attached to a small remote-controlled helicopter (a quadracopter), OAN have flown this site and will produce detailed images of the spoil heaps and mining buildings. Volunteers will then be asked to annotate these maps in the field to produce a detailed survey plan of the mine. We will circulate dates for this in the near future.

www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/archaeologyvolunteers
Lime Kiln Conservation

Our first conservation project of the year involved a limekiln at Mungrisdale. On the 19 February a team of Network Volunteers cleared away the vegetation from this kiln. This time with the support of a field ranger for the area, Paul Robinson, volunteers were able to lift up the metal grate that sits on top of the kiln and cut the back the tree that has been growing inside the kiln. The tree stump was treated with an herbicide and hopefully won’t regrow!

Mervyn Cooper also led a conservation project to carry out vegetation clearance to Grade II listed potash kiln in Dunnerdale-with-Seathwaite.

Level 2 archaeological survey training

This year our archaeological supervisors attended a level 2 survey training day run by OAN. The supervisors were trained in how to identify and mark up earthwork features, how to set up the equipment and how to draw up the plans. This type of survey involves producing more detailed topographical surveys compared to the level 1 walkover surveys that have previously been undertaken. Supervisors were trained in using a theodolite, here a small telescope (alidade / theodolite) measure angles, with an attached electronic device to measure angles. These measurements taken by the theodolite were noted and plotted onto graph paper. No sooner had the training event been completed, it was Tricia and Alan’s turn to lead a level 2 survey at Haltcliffe Romano British enclosure at Linewath, this site was identified during a level 1 survey last year and now a detailed drawing has now been produced.

www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/archaeologyvolunteers

email: archvol@lakedistrict.gov.uk
Forthcoming Network activities

Guided Walk in Eskdale

On Sunday 12 April, John Hodgson will be leading a walk to look at the remains of post-medieval iron mining and transportation, peat huts and a fantastic multi-period prehistoric landscape of stone circles, burial cairns and remains of early cultivation. There will also be an opportunity to discuss the importance of the Eskdale valley for the current World Heritage site bid for the Lake District. Please meet at 11am at Dalegarth Station (nr Boot) pay and display car park, grid ref: NY173007. It’s a fairly strenuous walk and will last until mid-afternoon. Please bring full waterproofs and a packed lunch. Please make a booking at archvol@lakedistrict.gov.uk if you wish to come.

North East Work Parties

Tricia has also provided the archaeological work party dates for the following Mondays and Thursdays right up to June, some of these might be used as bracken clearance days. Nevertheless please contact Tricia to book a place at triciabrown@talktalk.net.

- **April** - Thursday 30th,
- **May** - Monday 4th, Thursday 14th, **Monday 18th**, Thursday 28th,
- **June** - **Monday 1st**, Thursday 11th, Thursday 25th, **Monday 29th**,

REPORT FROM LDNPA VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP TEAM (VLT).

Mervyn Cooper, one of our Archaeology Supervisors, represents the Archaeology Volunteers on the VLT. If you have any questions, issues or comments about your volunteering role for the LDNPA, please contact Mervyn: email coopermervyn@hotmail.com or telephone 01229 582379.

Key messages and minutes of the recent meeting on 2nd April will shortly be available on the Extranet.

Mervyn reports that:

- despite all of the initial concerns, the Volunteer Roles and Contributions exercise had proved a great success. In total there are 404 'active' Volunteers and with 135 'inactives' removed from the database. A total of around 7,000 duties have been pledged for the coming year.
- within our Archvol. team, 64 of you responded and with an anticipated contribution of 549 duties. Holly’s challenge will be to continue to provide the opportunities, yours will be to live up to your commitment! Keep up to date with the calendar of Archaeology events and make sure you sign up.
- for each volunteering duty, whether or not you are claiming expenses, you are asked to make sure you complete and submit an Activity Log.
- the next VLT meeting is arranged for 4 June when the Volunteering Strategic Plan 2015 - 2018, (again to be available on the Extranet), will be discussed and an Action Plan developed.