

Stay in touch! If you have an interesting topic you'd like to share or a question just get in touch and we'll publish or try to answer.

***Fingers crossed that we can begin to hold our monthly meetings again from next month. We've pencilled 7.00 pm, Wednesday 18 August in the diary and are looking forward to checking out our new central venue of Great Eccleston Village Centre. The Centre boasts some great facilities including two meeting rooms of different sizes and a fast broadband connexion so those members unable to get to meetings should be able to join in on-line (when we've had some practice!).***

For new members and those who haven't been to WA meetings (the last one was February 2020), meetings are informal, generally lasting up to 90 minutes. We usually focus on report back from digs and discussion of any finds and we have occasional guest speakers.

The first meeting this year will be a very brief AGM – probably no more than 30 minutes and there will be a speaker, probably drawn from our own membership. Details will be emailed out to members in advance.

### **Brock Cottage Dig**

Our dig at Brock has continued although we're now in need of regular volunteers to keep up the momentum. Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday appear to be the favoured days, although at the weekend you have to get there early for a car park space. Other days are possible but we must have a minimum of 2 diggers and a maximum of 6 at any time. One must also be an experienced digger to act as 'designated responsible person' or dig leader. If you can offer some time (even half days are useful), please get in touch.

### **Other News**

Our member Pat alerted us to a development by United Utilities involving a pipeline running E-W from Longridge to Broughton. The course of this pipeline will most likely cross the line of the Walton-le-Dale to Lancaster Roman road. On our behalf, David Ratledge contacted United Utilities



### **Socially-distanced diggers**

Clockwise from top left:  
Kev, Simon Sian Andy,  
Sarah, Colin

with a request that WA be allowed to inspect the probable point of intersection. The initial UU response was fairly encouraging and we're now waiting for the final answer.

Although David identified the course of the road using LiDAR imagery, it would be valuable to find tangible physical evidence on, or rather under, the ground.

## Archaeological Travels

A recent trip down south gave me the opportunity to visit a site on my archaeological bucket list.

Staying in a small village in Oxfordshire, Mrs H informed me that she would like to see the White Horse of Uffington which was apparently only a short drive away. An added bonus was that the Horse lies on the same hill as Uffington Castle, an Iron Age hillfort, and is also on the Ridgeway, the prehistoric trackway still in use by hikers today. Reckoned to be Britain's oldest road, the Ridgeway proper runs from Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire to Streatley in Berkshire where, as part of the National Trail, it joins another ancient road, Icknield Way, for a total of 87 miles. A significant feature of the Ridgeway is that along its route it passes many ancient sites, including those mentioned above. Mrs H also pointed out that nearby was Wayland's Smithy, a Neolithic Chambered Long Barrow.

Now this was something special! Almost 50 years ago, as a Lancashire exile in Kingston upon Hull, I attended evening classes run by archaeologist Aubrey Burl (1926-2020), an acknowledged expert on megalithic monuments. I recalled him showing the students a photo of his wife standing in front of the façade of Wayland's Smithy and this image stuck in my mind and left me with the aim of visiting the site myself one day.

Suitably enthused, having found the White Horse Car Park and quickly scanning (first mistake) the signpost giving directions to these sites, we set off to view the White Horse, climbing uphill towards the summit of Uffington Castle. Despite the quite hot sun, here was a pleasant breeze as we reached a path leading to the White Horse. At this point (second mistake) we realised that from our vantage point the White Horse was practically invisible, since it was created to be viewed from below not above.



Uffington White Horse top left, non-vantage point centre, Uffington Castle right, Ridgeway far top right. (Google Earth)

Undaunted, we continued the climb to the summit to view the hillfort and its impressive banks and ditches and then continued down to the Ridgeway beyond which, according to the aforementioned misread signpost, would lead, after around half a mile, to Wayland's Smithy.

This half-mile turned out to be about two miles, now in very hot sun and (third mistake) with no



water. However, the several people we met *en route* assured us that it was 'not much farther' and it was well worth the walk. The first part of these statements was optimistic but the second part was absolutely true.



Top: Entrance to burial chamber. Above: Mrs H in front of reconstructed façade. Originally this had 6 sarsen uprights.

Wayland's Smithy was built in two phases around 5,600 years ago, initially as an oval barrow about 4m x 1.8m, inside which were found the remains of 15 individuals. About 100 years later a cruciform chamber was constructed and then the whole covered by a long barrow of 56m x 43m.

We were the only people there and its location in a quiet wooded grove generated an atmosphere that's difficult to describe but was almost tangible.

Refreshed spiritually if not alimentally we set off for the two and a half mile hike back to the car.

If you have any interesting photos or recollections of sites you've visited, please email them to [secwya@gmail.com](mailto:secwya@gmail.com)



Another great site also visited on this trip was North Leigh Roman Villa. This courtyard villa was one of the largest in Roman Britain and was lived in for over 300 years from the early 1<sup>st</sup> Century



AD. In its later phase it possessed 16 mosaic floors, 11 rooms with hypocausts and 3 bath suites. The site is free to enter and, in addition to the upstanding remains, has another Roman legacy: snails.



Left: *Helix Pomatia*: Roman edible snail. Stick ferrule is approx. 4cm/1.75in.

Small image: Wikipedia



These large edible snails (*Helix Pomatia*) were introduced by the Romans and obviously caught on with the wealthy Romano-British who built and lived in villas like North Leigh and Chedworth.

A fellow visitor we met told us she'd first been told about the snails 40 years ago and had 'longed to see them all these years'.

Fascinating as they are, snails are **not** on my bucket list.

**LATE NEWS: David Ratledge** was acknowledged in latest issue of CBA's *British Archaeology* for his contributions to *Itinera* the new publication by the Roman Roads Research Association (RRRA).

**Return to Cabus Roman Road!** Watch out for email in next week or so with news of this dig!

#### WEBSITES WORTH VISITING

Lancashire's Roman Roads (David Ratledge): [www.twithr.co.uk](http://www.twithr.co.uk)

Roman Roads Research Association: <http://www.romanroads.org>

Lancashire Archaeological Society: <https://lancsarchaeologicalsociety.wordpress.com>

Wigan Archaeology Society: [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age: <https://u3asites.org.uk/lytham-st-annes>, <https://u3asites.org.uk/wyre-lancs>, <https://u3asites.org.uk/preston>

**Membership Benefits: Full Membership:** 10 meetings with voting rights, group membership of Council for British Archaeology and CBA(NW) and Lancashire Local History Federation, free training, participation in digs, basic kit loan, personal dig insurance, WA Newsletter, Wigan AS and Lancashire Local History Federation newsletters, Lancaster Uni's Centre for Regional Studies circulars. (£12 individuals, £18 two family members at same address, full-time students up to age 21 free). **Associate Members:** participation in digs, basic dig training, loan of kit, dig insurance, newsletter and circulars as above (£5).

**All classes of paid membership in 2021 - £5 per person**

#### WYRE ARCHAEOLOGY OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

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#### CONTACTS

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