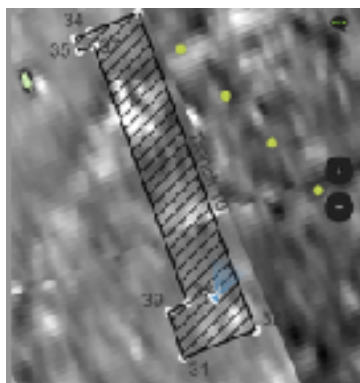


31st May 2025 : Dig Diary Day D minus 2

The preparation is now complete and so the scene is set to begin this year's dig at Hunting Hall Farm on Monday of next week. All being well we intend to be on site every day from 10.00 until 16.00 with our final day currently set at Sunday 29th June but please keep an eye on the daily dig diary (alternatively on our website archaeology blog, lowickheritagegroup.org) for any changes to the plan.

Topsoil removal has already exposed some potentially exciting features, some we already know and require further investigation but others are new to us. If this year is anything like our previous adventures then these areas will prove to be very fruitful.

Also and new this year, and thanks to our tech guru, Alistair Mckenzie, we now have access to a highly accurate GPS location system. The first photo shows Ali standing in



trench 10 at the centre of our mysterious 15m diameter circle. And how do we know this? Because the second photo shows what Ali can see on his screen with his position overlaid on the geophysics map of the site and the circle obvious at the lower right centre.



The semi circle above and left indicates the position of a palisade. Both features are among this year's targets for further investigation.

2nd June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 1



A great start today. An excellent turnout and very gratifying to see so many new volunteers. We really hope everyone enjoyed themselves (and perhaps more importantly you'll come back again!). The day began with our resident archaeologist Kristian Pedersen briefing us all about this year's objectives and how our two trenches are going to help us achieve them. Our volunteers were split between trench 8 in the inner of the ditch and bank system and trench 10, a revisit to some of our excavations in 2019 and 2022. An amazing amount of progress has been made already including our first find,

a bone situated within the structure of what might turn out to be our mysterious and so far unexplained circular feature. The first photo shows Kristian supervising us (in his dreams!) in trench 10. The second photo shows a happy bunch of volunteers in trench 8.

3rd June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 2

After such strong gusts of wind during the night it was a relief this morning to find our trusty tents exactly where we left them yesterday (it wouldn't have been the first time one of our tents had gone walkabout in strong wind). Not quite as many volunteers today but sufficient to keep the momentum going in both trenches though we were interrupted by a few heavy afternoon showers that sent us scurrying for shelter in the tents.

Today's photos show how our activities are aimed at this year's objectives. The first photo shows the very deep feature first uncovered a couple of years ago that included lots of charcoal. Was this industry for making iron? We'll expand this feature hoping it might give up more evidence.



Ever since the geophysical survey in 2018 we've been aware of a mysterious 15 metre diameter circle. We now think that the second photo indicates its structure. It's among these packed large stones that we've already found a couple of bone fragments. The purpose of these stones is still uncertain. Could it enclose a Bronze Age burial area? We've found lots



of pits within the area. That's just one possibility. Watch this space.

The third photo shows the outcome of our early work in the inner of the two ditches that surround the entire site. It's just possible to make out the interface between the clay and the dark organic rich soil towards the bottom. We've come back to this because it gave us lots of food for thought towards the end of last year's dig.



4th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 3



A full day today, exposing more of the ditch in trench 8 and further cleaning of trench 10. Some of you will recognise much of trench 10 as this is the third time it's been worked on. It's an expanded trench 3 that's been made wider towards



the west. Re-revealed today were some old friends, the 'Big Stones' first seen in 2019. Their purpose remains unknown but it's likely they've been recycled through the ages. Their size and shape suggests that they could possibly have been standing stones at one time though that would probably pre date our

predominantly Iron Age site. They may have then been repurposed as a gateway through the palisade into the settlement. They almost certainly became an obstruction during medieval ploughing hundreds of years later and were laid flat. We hope to find more of them as the dig progresses.

5th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 4

We enjoyed much better weather than we anticipated today. No howling gale, no rain and just a bit warmer. Ideal for archaeology. We focussed on three areas again, still in the cleaning up phase but this still gave us our first serious find.



A small piece of ceramic rim that we believe to be from a wheel spun pot from the Late Iron Age / Romano-British period. That sits well in our story because it was in a spot adjacent to finds from previous years that have been radiocarbon dated to the first century AD. Alistair spent the day cleaning the 'Big Stones' to get back to how we left them in 2019. Lots of unfinished work still to do there. There are several more days of 'cleaning'



the site before the more serious excavation begins. We've opened a very large area this year and we really need more volunteers, no matter how much archaeology experience you have, to get the most out of this year's dig. Please don't hesitate to drop in on us. Every hour of your time will help.



6th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 5



A really good day. It began with a visit by a group of youngsters who were first taken to see the Farm's mock Iron Age roundhouse structure before being shown around the site then trying their hand at a bit of archaeology. We really hope they enjoyed it and they're more than welcome to return for more visits during the dig. Whilst they were here Deb unearthed a coin. As always whenever one

of us finds something interesting it's always shared with others and it wasn't long before Deb had a sizeable audience. It's the first coin of historic interest that we've ever found on this site. Our expert, Alistair, believes that it's almost certain to be a Scottish Bawbee,



(16th Century perhaps) and worth about sixpence. Presumably lost by a farm worker of the time. Otherwise



lots of progress was made on the clean up process by a decent turnout of volunteers. It's been so good to welcome new friends to our dig during the first week. Room for lots more.

7th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 6

Thank you to Deb Campbell for today's dig diary entry. Despite the promised deluge a very good cohort of diggers appeared today. A unique find was exposed by Mark in trench 8: Photo 1 may look like a scoop of chocolate ice cream but it's a posthole containing



wood placed deeply in the clay well beneath the topsoil. This was found by following a line from a posthole uncovered by Ethan two days ago. We are excited by this extraordinary find. Meanwhile in trench 10 the clearing back is almost complete (Photo 2) and today's find was a little piece of worked flint! Great to see some new faces today who despite the



early finish due to rain and thunder are keen to return.

Photo 3 is a drone photo to mark what's almost the end of our first week showing the relative positions of the two trenches and our tents.

8th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 7

Today marks the end of our first week of excavation and by every measure it's been very successful. Not only the progress we've made on cleaning the trenches but what's been especially pleasing is the number of new volunteers who have joined us this time. The discovery of what may be a wooden post in the ring ditch will perhaps offer the chance of testing its age by



dendrochronology (analysis of tree growth rings), a more accurate assessment than radiocarbon dating.

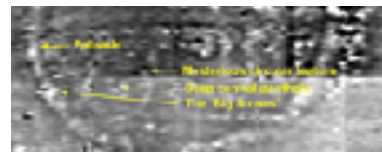
We may have found two posts and these possibly indicate the presence of a picket fence within the ditch, perhaps to prevent animals (and children!) falling in. We continue to clean very carefully around the very deep posthole at the centre of our



mystery circle. This may take several days. There haven't yet been many finds but that's not unusual during the cleaning phase. Yesterday there was a very small flint 'debitage', that is a small element of flint that chipped off a larger piece during the knapping process. We're now looking forward to our second week. Archaeologist Kristian Pedersen has identified the areas on which we'll be concentrating, most notably an area of cobbled surface and also two clusters of large, deeply embedded stones.

9th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 8

The beginning of week two and things are getting busy, particularly in Trench 10. We're now slowly transitioning from 'cleaning' into the excavation phase as features become more prominent. In recent days the diary has referred to the 'Mysterious Circle', the 'Big Stones' and the 'Deep Posthole'. It would be pertinent now to relate photos of these principal features to an annotated version of the geophysical survey map that we use for guidance (Photo 1) together with a drone photo of the trench (Photo 2). We also now appear to have two cobbled paths that seem to be intersecting each other (Photo 3).



converging on the embedded large stones that we think form the structure of our mysterious circle. Definitely one for Kristian to think about. No doubt that a suitably positioned section will help decide which is older. We've also had finds of bone in what is either a pit or a post hole (Photo 4) together with cattle teeth in one of the cobbled paths.



10th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 9

An excellent turnout of volunteers today including some very welcome new members. That meant there were enough of us to allow work on all areas of interest in both trenches. Add in a few interested visitors so all in all it's been a terrific day. It probably comes as a bit of a surprise that we can get so excited about the small bit of wood found in trench 8



(perhaps we should get out more often!). But a two thousand year old bit of wood is something rather special. Because it shouldn't still be there. It should have decomposed. So having taken it out we are taking great care with it until we know how best to preserve it. Then if that wasn't enough, we've now found another piece close by. Could finding these wooden remains tell us more about how typical ditch and bank systems



were constructed two thousand years ago? More finds of bone, cattle teeth and a small shard of pottery in trench 10 have made it a very productive day.

11th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 10

Another hot day and an excellent turnout with Trench 8 now proving very popular! More post holes are appearing and have been complemented by finds of bone and ceramic. In Trench 10 more finds this time a copper alloy (probable) medieval strap end and a rather lovely rubbing stone. A very nice post-hole abutting the interior of the large ring was sectioned by Pauline. It



contained a bone and stone placed directly on the base. Within the interior and close to the large post hole excavated in 2021 Poppy emptied a small area of back-fill revealing a likely feature as purposefully laid stone is emerging. This might be a pit which is similar to those already excavated within the ring on the southeastern quadrant: if so it would demonstrate consistency of use-of-space within the ring as this pit is in the northwestern quadrant.

12th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 11



Not quite so many volunteers today but 'work' continued apace in both trenches. What was thought to have been a bone find in trench 8 yesterday turned out after washing to be a third piece of wood. It's a mystery how wood has survived what might be two thousand years since the ditch was an important feature of the Iron Age settlement. Last year we found many animal bones close by in amazing condition. The nature of the soil in this trench is clearly important. Later in the day, an unusual structure being worked on by Carole and Ali became apparent. It seems to be a structure comprised of fairly

regular positioned stones in a concentric pattern. Some of these stones are very tightly packed. The feature is about 2 metres in diameter and situated just outside the north western edge of the palisade in trench 10. Check out the photo to see how the red sandstone components appear at regular intervals around the perimeter. This surely has more to offer when it's excavated over the next few days.



13th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 12



That was a warm one. Low mid twenties by the afternoon but a steady breeze kept it comfortable. A decent turnout with the return of old friends and some much welcome new volunteers. Contrary to the image given by TimeTeam archaeology is not all about digging and trowelling. Today we

look at a couple of other lesser known elements of our digs. The first photo is of the Lowick Heritage Group treasurer Helen meticulously going through the necessary paperwork and figures. Essential work and the basis of all the incredible fund raising Helen does which enables our digs to go ahead. The second photo is our second in command Deb recording one of the features. All of the important features are drawn this way. Good old fashioned pencil and paper that will be available to others forever. Photo 3 is the product of her efforts.



In other news: Those of us who were around in 2019 and first saw the 'Big Stones' have been itching to get back to them to find if there are any more. Over the last couple of days we've been excavating around them and there are definitely several more being revealed, though perhaps not quite as big. Photos of those later. In the meantime in Trench 8 even more wood has been found, this time at the other side of the ditch. Tomorrow we hope to have an expert on Iron Age wood visit the site to give his opinions.

14th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 13

The Despondent Men's Club! Driech really doesn't cover it but despite the miserable weather 5 of us got stuck into trench 10 today defying all the heavens could throw at us. Very good progress was made uncovering more of the 'big stones'. Without doubt this is our 'palisade' but the size and volume of stones raises the question of this feature being attributable to a period other than our late Iron Age community. More bone was retrieved and additional contexts discovered. To the south there was further work on the 'pathway' within the cobbles. This seems to be resolving into two features: a linear feature going east to west and an overlying (?) feature initially trowelled by Kristian which he worked on again today revealing a gritty surface suggestive of burning and high temperatures. Interestingly as the possible boundary of this feature was cleared, charcoal and slag were recovered. A miserable day was turned into a successful one and with the weather set to hold we should have both trenches in perfect condition for work tomorrow!





15th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 14

Another week done and we're now half way through our scheduled four week dig period. A nice number of volunteers today including three enthusiastic newcomers, all with no



previous archaeology experience, and all of whom had travelled a significant distance especially to be with us. We are very grateful because every hour of volunteer time is valuable. We sincerely hope you enjoyed the day and that you will come back again soon. In the meantime it's all happening in trench 8. Apart from yet another wooden stake (that's about half a dozen of them), the 'miners' in T8 found a broken granite quern stone with another possible piece of it close by, some broken wheel spun pottery, all probably Romano-British to early medieval and a curious lump of drilled sandstone, purpose unknown. It seems likely that the Iron Age ditch may have later been used as a dumping ground for broken material, however there's much more exploration to be done within. As yet we're still nowhere near the depth we reached last year when we found lots of animal bone. The rest of today's team focussed on defining the extent of the many stone structures in what is turning out to be a very complex trench 10. Although we've investigated a significant part of this trench in previous digs we still have several square meters that we've never touched. These lie predominately within the 'mysterious 15m circle'. Fingers crossed we'll make good progress this week.



16th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 15



Another great day at the dig. Good turnout of volunteers and very productive in our two trenches. It would appear that the quern stone mentioned yesterday appears to be a 'Beehive' quern stone. That probably makes it older than we thought, putting it back to the Iron Age. The photo shows two drilled holes, one for loading the grain and the other for a

handle with which to turn the stone, one on top of another. I'm sure we'll get better photos once we have removed and cleaned it. Two big pieces of animal bone from trench 8 today too. Work continues in trench 10 to establish 'edges', 'cuts' and individual features such as pits and postholes. There seem to be postholes appearing across the trench



and interpretation is going to be almost impossible because they probably existed over a very long period spanning hundreds of years. Differential drying of the surface is letting us identify the pits that we'll section over the next couple of weeks. We've decided that Sunday 29th June will be our last digging day. The following week will be used to tidy up the site so if you're planning a visit then better make it during the next couple of weeks. Very warm weather over the next few days (a heatwave has been mentioned. In Northumberland? Really?)



17th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 16

TRENCH 8

We have come through the drains, which were not cut very wide nor very deeply below the placement of stones or the drain tiles. This means, fortunately, that they have not disturbed much of the archaeological deposits around or underneath. Both of the drains seem to have gone through a homogeneous and thick layer of sterile clay — this is perplexing us somewhat, as the homogeneity and absence of any organic material implies that it was deposited by flowing water. Were it a stagnant pond, there would presumably be much more of an organic content through time. Was this possibly deposited in an episode of extreme rainfall? It overlies a lovely organic layer, in which we are recovering bone and wood. The stones here are deliberately arranged, too. At the moment, we can only say that these deposits are younger than the basal levels we encountered last year, which provided us with a copious quantity of cattle bone, but younger or contemporary with the quern and its associated pottery which might be Anglo-Saxon. Once we have exposed the features and stones properly, we shall get into sectioning the features, and thereafter we can begin our plunge into the deeper and wetter deposits below.

TRENCH 10

The 'cleaning' of the trench is almost complete. We were able to begin sectioning some features, one of which was a pit on the northern extremity of the trench. It provided little evidence, so we have no idea of what its function might have been. The pit did

resolve itself into a deeper slot in the centre, so it may be a posthole, albeit the organic content of the fill was not significant and therefore does not agree with a postulate that a post dissolved in situ. The palisade trench continues to be excavated, but at its northern



margin some large cattle bone was encountered. Moreover, it has emerged that we have two large concentric features opposite one another at either side of the palisade. It remains to be determined what their function may be, or if they are even associated with the palisade, but we are entertaining the premise that they are and define this structure with potential pits or upright posts. We shall begin excavating those tomorrow.

More concentric stone arrangements are emerging in the central and southern half of the trench. So many circular stone arrangements is a puzzling phenomenon, so we are keen to get into these as well. We may have to entertain hypotheses of some industrial function, or that they may not belong to the Iron Age phase of occupation. Whatever they are, we move towards a resolution soon, as we are prepared in all areas to begin sectioning and the finer work of archaeological excavation.

18th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 17



We've had an amazing turnout of volunteers today that allowed us to make progress in all areas of our two trenches. Trench 8 was as productive as ever and providing us with today's highlight of several pieces of broken pottery with much more of it still to be removed. It looks like an entire pot that's been smashed and was found immediately adjacent to the Beehive quern. More finds of bone and wooden stakes too plus what appears to be a concentric stone structure right at the bottom of the ditch. Surely a candidate to be sectioned.

In trench 10 Carole managed to remove a huge piece of what is probably cattle bone in the immediate area of the big stones. Major excavation around these stones is planned for tomorrow that we hope will finally resolve things one way or the other about whether they do in fact form a component of the Iron Age palisade. Late in the day a worked agate core was recovered by Lara and Hanlan from the base of a pit at the very northern end of Trench 10. Kristian suggests that this is from the Mesolithic period and so could be one of the oldest artefacts we've ever found on this site.



As we've just completed our second week I think it's time for some half time statistics. Thanks to Helen's immaculate record keeping we've had an unbelievable amount of volunteer support. During the first two weeks of the dig we've had 43 volunteers, many of whom were new to us and to the hobby, who between them have provided an astonishing 726 hours of their time. With every hour important during a time limited dig I, on behalf of Lowick Heritage Group, want to thank every one of you for your efforts. It's so much



appreciated. We've also had 10 visitors, some of whom have left us with wonderful comments about their experience and these will be shared with the Community Foundation once the dig is over.

19th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 18

On a baking hot day the volunteers produced amazing work ! In trench 10 the slot through the 'palisade' was begun producing a most unexpected feature amongst the tumble of stones. This was a clearly defined construction complete with bones and



(probable) Iron Age pottery. Soil samples were taken and the feature will now be left for inspection by Kristian. The palisade area and associated features were cleaned back further by Carole, Meriel and Ethan whilst Hannah began the task of sectioning the probable pits identified in the interior of the ring. Hannah was then joined by Ethan in a labour of love plan-drawing the feature.



In Trench 8 a mammoth task was set to trowel on all the identified contexts and finds to consolidate what we have found thus far in advance of cleaning back the whole trench as it has been excavated thus far. This involved the removal of suspected posts and known pieces of bone, wood and pottery. With only two objects to be raised tomorrow we are on target to begin the the major focus of trench 8: the excavation of the bottom layers and the treasures we hope for therein!! A special mention

and thank you must go to Mark and Julian who both relatively new to archaeology produced amazing work and kept old lags John and Allan on their toes!!



20th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 19

Mad dogs and Englishmen... (and a couple of mad Jocks) !! On the hottest day of the year a hardy group of us assembled and happily completed the 'emptying' of trench 8 before heading off at lunchtime to seek some shade and an ice cream!

Our quern stone was removed revealing it is indeed of the type known as 'Beehive' and -gathering the matrix lodged in the grinding mechanism for the purposes of floatation - we were able to see the extent of the damage to the stone. By good fortune Lindsay Allason-Jones of Border Archaeology Society visited the site at precisely the time it was being cleaned. Her impression (and bear in mind only an impression) was that the quern stone may have been abandoned during manufacture which is an option worth considering. The rest of the pottery was also removed, there being a significant amount. A veritable jigsaw for those who like that



kind of thing. And finally the last of the bones was removed! Well done all!



21st June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 20

The forecast was wrong and unsurprisingly only five of us turned up! A haar (that's a sea fret to anyone further south!) hung over the site until lunchtime after which it remained quite nice really... just shows you never know! Trench 8 saw the removal of the large piece of pink granite which might potentially be related to the quern stone. Certainly it had the look of a saddle quern



but at the same time, not quite! Another puzzle! The large posthole in trench 10 has nearly bottomed-out with a stone base now becoming apparent. We had a very welcome visit from Graeme Cavers who is a Director of AOC and a specialist in the Iron Age. He has given us some valuable advice on the management of our trench 8 finds and he and Kristian exchanged ideas on the more subtle aspects of the investigations. Cleaning of bones from trench 8 was carried out as was the entertainment of some delightful young visitors. We have a very specific plan of action for the remaining days which should now be thankfully cooler so look forward to seeing everyone at 10 am tomorrow !

22nd June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 21

Today marks the end of our third week. Now there's only a week to go and as we've found in previous years things tend to speed up and get more interesting as we approach the end of our dig (remember the AngloSaxon grave turning up on the penultimate day of our dig in 2022 that had us on tenterhooks until we could go back to it a year later). It's been great to see a couple of old friends back with us today; even if their time is limited we're thrilled to have their company. During the last few days we've also been privileged to have visits by other experienced archaeologists. All along we've learned that archaeology isn't an exact science (what is?) and that interpretation is often based on experience and precedence. The visiting archaeologists have provided us with some good advice on the preservation of the timber and bone finds from Trench 8. Also the visitors today were quite helpful in interpreting the 'mysterious circular feature' that some of Kristian's colleagues suggested was a Bronze Age mortuary enclosure: their opinion is that Iron Age roundhouses can indeed be that large (15m diameter), and they are not



altogether unusual from more recent studies. This is much more consistent with the data, and would explain the central position of John HR's posthole.

Their opinion on Trench 8 is that it is a particularly large ditch. The presence of the stake holes might be a retaining wall of wattle to hold the clay back, but once the site was abandoned or the trench ignored, the clay washed in -- perhaps in an unusually wet episode (maybe even wetter than last night?). Also, the material in the ditch seems to be consistent with discard (i.e. a dumping ground), rather than deliberate deposition, but this is contingent on the spatial patterning. By this we mean whether the animal bone deposit is continuous or localised. At the moment, we have an impression that it is continuous, but this can only be said of the small extent that we have exposed. With only a week to go we are expecting the excitement to be turned up to eleven. Please don't miss out!

23rd June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 22

It's been a very blustery day and our tents took a bit of a battering but have survived the ordeal (at least



they had before we left the site!). Despite that we've had a tremendous turnout of volunteers, once again including two very valuable newcomers. Every hour of volunteer time we can get



before we close on Sunday is vital to help us achieve this year's objectives. It's been a busy day in terms of finds. Lots of bone, a jawbone that's probably that of a horse, what looks like a carnivore's tooth (going by the size of the tooth it must have been a big one!), and a small flint debitage, probably Neolithic or Bronze Age. It's typical for the number of daily finds to increase towards the end of our digs but today has pushed our total number of finds so far to about a hundred. With six days still to go that finds total will

rise sharply.

With so many volunteers available we have been able to enjoy big teams in both trenches. It also meant we had small groups working together across the full length of trench 10. That also means that each of us, either as an individual or small group, is concentrating on a relatively small area and it's easy to lose touch with what else is going on. To keep everyone aware of the bigger picture Kristian gave a very welcome end of day summary about his current understanding of events, however, even at this late stage of the dig a single important find could affect the eventual interpretation.



24th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 23



Another great day today. Lots of volunteers setting about their final week tasks and three young archaeologists trying their skills for the first time, one of them even managing a find. She now has her name in our archaeological record. I'm sure they enjoyed themselves. More finds from around the trenches including a significant lump of Iron Age pottery, more animal bones and another probable

rubbing stone. The large mandible reported yesterday was finally lifted though it was so fragile it broke into three pieces. This was found deep inside our perceived palisade ditch. Maybe the bone might give us an idea of the age of the palisade. Is it older than the surrounding ditch and bank system or did it exist at a similar time to enclose the main domestic and industrial structures?



We're also now at that stage when we are sectioning the various pits and postholes, examining them for 'cuts' and taking soil samples for flotation and analysis over the next few months. Some of the cuts are difficult to spot without the trained eye. We'll just have to take Kristian's word for it!

Another important day for us when we shall receive the children from Bailey Green Primary School in Killingworth, North Tyneside. We always look forward to their regular visit to our digs when we have a range of activities planned. Photos in tomorrow's diary. Our archaeology will continue as normal though and with only five days remaining there's still lots to do.

25th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 24



It's always a great day when the children of Bailey Green Primary School pay us their annual visit. Perfect weather too. There were twelve children today and they are derived from their after school history group so all have an interest in our Iron Age settlement. We offer them so many different activities during the four hours they're with us. This year we had, for the first time, the benefit of the mock Iron Age roundhouse that's been built on the farm. It's

ideal as a location for showing typical domestic activities of the period. Today, whilst dressed in typical Iron Age clothing they had the chance to enjoy weaving using a reproduction loom from the period, digging in the trench, metal detecting, stone identification and soil analysis looking for tiny fragments

of bone and charcoal for example. From the feedback we've received it all went down very well. Hopefully a couple of photos in tomorrow's diary.

Meanwhile digging continued in our two trenches. Julian miraculously managed to recover a black beetle carapace from black soil buried deep in a black deposit. We've absolutely no idea how. The significance is that these are very temperature dependent and may give some clue as to the climate at the time. There's now some doubt about the animal jawbone lifted late yesterday. Originally thought to be a horse it may now be cattle.



26th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 25

Back to normal today having enjoyed the school visit yesterday. Still time for the end of day photo with the children dressed in Iron Age costumes and within the farm's mock roundhouse. It was ladies day in trench 10 (well at least up to lunchtime. The absence of an archaeologist in the afternoon meant we curtailed proceedings early in this very complex trench). However, further work during the morning is emphasising that it's likely there are at least two levels of archaeology, that is

cobbles found above other, and likely much older stone structures. In trench 8 work continued through the day when the 'boys from the black stuff' continued lifting a variety of organic material such as limpet shells, snail shells and animal bones. Late in the day we had a visit from the former county archaeologist, Chris Burgess. It will be interesting to hear his opinions. Now only 3 days left in this year's dig and thankfully the weather forecast suggests we'll get full days.



27th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 26

We made a lot of progress today, and the weather was kind to us. We are resolving the features in Trench 10 quite confidently, exposing trenches in which the clobbering was placed. A suspicion that we might have the vestiges of another roundhouse disturbed by later ditches is emerging, which can be

tested through the radiocarbon dates from bones recovered in these. This provides a nice sequence of occupation, and will in turn decisively demonstrate that the palisade and the ring ditch were cut into this older roundhouse. It is likely Iron Age, but how much older than it is vis-à-vis the ditches remains to be determined through radiocarbon samples. The excavations of these was done very nicely by Lorna, Dominic, Sue, Poppy, and her father.

John HR was digging deeply in the palisade ditch, and recovered a cattle femur to add to our collection of teeth and the mandible. Again, these are welcome finds to establish an absolute date for the palisade. We began the excavation here assuming that this was a pit, but as we got deeper into this feature, it has become apparent that we are on the southern margin of the palisade. This was accompanied by some charcoal, however, sadly there is no ceramic or any other cultural material within this fill. Carole diligently sought out some dating material from a pit that we dug quite some time ago that contained the haematite that derives from Cumbria. It seems that she was successful !



A copious quantity of faunal material is coming out of Trench 8 which is much more complex than we had anticipated. Despite reaching a depth of 2.55 metres. we have not found the base. Why is this so different from the excavations last year ? We have limpet shells, and now a large quantity of bird bone and bone from smaller mammals. All are embedded in a thick and undifferentiated organic layer replete



with decaying wood and presumably ash. We entertained ideas that we might have struck an older glacial deposit such as a kettle hole, or perhaps a fossil rivulet, but this does not agree with the limpet shells which could not be introduced by anything other than anthropogenic agency -- or the more remote possibility that some prehistoric sea gull dropped them ! In short, we are probably not able to reach the bottom, albeit we shall try to core into this using an auger than John HR has or alternately submerge a DIY core into this to strike the basal layers. We will spend the next few days recording what we can here, but it has become quite the puzzle. It is an extraordinary sequence which we must elucidate through sedimentary samples and so on.



(Kristian added a postscript: '*I am genuinely perplexed!*'.)

How does he think the rest of us mere mortals feel?)

28th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 27

On our penultimate day in the field for this season's investigations, we have fortunately elucidated some of the structures and patterns that had previously confused us. In Trench 10, we have multiple phases of occupation: the cobble filled ditches have been recut on at least three occasions. In the most recent fill, we have recovered Iron Age ceramic, albeit we are unable to assign this to any period of the Iron Age as it is quite coarse and has no diagnostic characteristics to suggest a closer temporal assignment. This pattern is also seen in the palisade ditch, where there are intrusions by postholes or pits. A lower surface has emerged where Karen and Ailsa were excavating, suggesting that there might be yet another and an older horizon beneath all the occupation debris that we have encountered this season. Additionally, there are subtle vestiges of a roundhouse platform that was disturbed by the construction of the palisade ditch and the enigmatic 'ring ditch' which seems, on the balance of evidence, to perhaps be another roundhouse platform lacking any domestic features within its circuit. We were able to establish the multiple recuts of the ditches by the work undertaken by Ethan and Lorna this afternoon.

The excavations in Trench 8, which cuts across the inner ditch enclosing the site on the western approaches, has provided a vast amount of faunal evidence. We have also recovered a considerably well preserved log, which may have fallen into the ditch when it was abandoned, but equally may have been a post of some sort that toppled. It is of likely a hardwood, and of sufficient diameter, that dendrochronological dating is a possibility for us. This will provide us with a single calendar year in which the log was felled. A concentration of small mammal bone in a part of the ditch where Julian was excavating is perplexing, for the skeletons seem to be largely intact. None of these seem to afford much nutritional value, but they may be juveniles that perished and were deposited within the trench. A more considered interpretation of this must await faunal analysis and determination of the species present. We believe that we may see the cutting for the trench, which is scarcely as deep as we have progressed. This suggests that the ditch was dug into an older, natural deposit replete with necrotic clay. The accumulation of so much organic material militates against any argument for a rivulet, for the current would presumably wash this away, so the likelihood is that we have fortuitously encountered the vestiges of a kettle hole. A core was kindly taken, with immense effort, by Julian, Mark, and Dominic, assisted by John Home Robertson. This ought to provide us with an excellent environmental history of the site.

Tomorrow shall largely be focused on the drawing of sections in both trenches, and the collection of more samples, so do join us to see the results from the fieldwork before we proceed to the post-excavation analysis in GarageLab.

29th June 2025 : Dig Diary Day 28

This has been our last day on site for this year and so I think it's appropriate that our resident professional archaeologist has the honour of writing our final dig diary. Thanks Kristian.

TRENCH 10

The excavations in Trench 10 extended our familiarity with the features that appeared when we were excavating both Trench 3 and Trench 5. We had encountered so much significant stone within the presumed palisade ditch that we could only infer that there was some re-use of these features through the duration of occupation of the site. This season we endeavoured to understand this palisade better, for we had encountered in Trench 9 last year on the other side of the site, and there was not nearly the same volume of stone or suggestions of re-use or adaptation to later phases of occupation. As we investigated this, we came upon a pit excavated into the palisade; above this was what can only be described as a rubble layer of mixed occupational debris. Perhaps an occupational phase was levelled, so another phase could be build atop this ? Whatever the sequence, we were able to determine through stratigraphy at least two phases after the palisade's existence: one represented by a pit, and above this the rubble. Fortunately, we recovered good organic evidence from the palisade in the form of mandibles and femurs from what is probably cattle. This ought to provide us with radiocarbon dates should they contain sufficient collagen.

Moving south of the palisade, there were peculiar cobble-filled ditches. At first, we assumed that they would follow a simple course; however, here our expectations were frustrated. It seems that one of them, orientated ENE-SWS, was recut on three separate occasions. The ditches were also going off in slightly different directions rendering correlation with what we could observe visually in plan difficult. To the west of this recutting complex, another cobble-filled ditch was investigated that was orientated somewhat differently from the aforementioned one. This also had a posthole cut into this, again suggesting multiple phases of occupation.

Along the western margin of the trench, where the putative 'ring' was studied, the ditches are again complex and evince indications of multiple cuttings. In this instance, though, on our final day, we discovered a lower horizon replete with organics impregnated into the soil. The ceramic that was recovered here was badly scorched, and we are presently uncertain whether this derives from the late Bronze Age or the Iron Age. Unfortunately, we could not investigate this any further so made the prudent decision to leave this feature for another season's investigations. We do not wish to compromise the preservation of organic material by introducing oxygen into sealed deposits.

TRENCH 8

This trench was far more complex and productive than was assumed last year. The ditch was cut into an extant organic deposit, likely a kettle hole. Organic horizons were sealed by a homogeneous clay fill, which we suspect represents the washing in of clay when the ditches-and-banks ceased to be maintained. Beneath this, though, was domestic detritus such as animal bone, a broken quernstone, and ceramics. The faunal material is rich and varied, ranging from bovine to smaller mammals. We have even recovered avian fauna and also limpet shells. The latter could only have been introduced by anthropogenic agency, and affords unusual evidence of maritime resource exploitation in the Iron Age. The surviving wooden stakes, placed in a vertical position, suggests that some sort of wattle fencing retained the clay bank while the site was in use.

OVERVIEW

Everyone put in splendid work this season, and we are most grateful to all of you for your contributions. As I am away through the summer, I very much look forward to us convening at 'GarageLab' in the autumn months to begin processing this extraordinary corpus of evidence. We leave, as ever, with more questions, but we have also solved some of the conundrums that faced us earlier regarding phasing the site. I am still very much disposed to regard this as a prosaic agricultural settlement, but one that was resilient insofar as it could adapt its activities to the changing political and economic landscape of the Romano-British frontier zone.

For my part and on behalf of Lowick Heritage Group, I'd like to thank everyone who has taken part this year. So many volunteers including a significant number of new people who joined us for their first experience of this enjoyable, healthy and convivial outdoor hobby. So good too to see some old friends again. To the many visitors who have left their comments. They are important to us. To the children from Bailey Green School who make us all smile. Thanks for all the many photos taken by you and posted on WhatsApp of which so few make it into the diary. I've proposed a 'coffee table book' with lots of photos and few words. Let the photos tell the story. Thanks to Kristian for his patience and to Deb as his deputy (and occasional diary editor!). Without the permission of Karen and Tom Burn of Hunting Hall Farm we wouldn't be digging at all. Many thanks. And to you for reading the diary. Looking forward to next year already! Today's photos don't need captions. It's what happens when you give the camera to a professional cameraman!

Best Wishes,
Paul

