

SIZERGH: DIG IN THE PARK, 2013

SECOND TRAINING DAY 29 JUNE 2013

Levens Local History Group's second of two training days held in and around the Great Barn on the National Trust's [NT] Sizergh Estate, enjoyed better weather than the first, the previous Saturday. 55 volunteers, plus speakers and helpers attended, and we were especially pleased to welcome to the morning lectures Mrs. T. Horneyold Strickland, and members of her family; a total of 64.

As on the first training day, Stephen Read, secretary LLHG, welcomed the participants to the start of a project, which was almost two years in the making, and although it was an LLHG project it was now, essentially, a co-operative event hosted by LLHG, in partnership with NT, on NT land, with expertise provided by Oxford Archaeology North [OAN], the professional archaeologists contracted to support the project. The project was now coming to its exciting culmination. He gave an introduction to the speakers, the first of whom was Jamie Lund, NT's Regional Archaeologist.



Jamie provided an *Introduction to the Dig in the Park Project*, explaining that it flowed on from a detailed 2010 landscape survey of the whole of the Sizergh Estate that had been carried out by NT volunteers, LLHG and OAN. He gave an overview of the history of Sizergh Castle and the Sizergh Estate in general, the areas of existing archaeological interest, the areas to be excavated and surveyed; being a putative 'burnt mound', a landscape feature that may be associated with the mediaeval deer park boundary, the Great Barn itself and the parkland to the south of the house, and the hoped for benefits and results from the project. His talk was illustrated with many slides of the house and grounds, the landscape survey in progress, the specific areas to be investigated, all with additional maps and diagrams to emphasise the points being made.

Three presentations were then made by members of the OAN team, which were introductions to the practical sessions to be held in the afternoon. Jamie Quartermaine gave an overview of the building survey techniques that were to be applied in the survey of the Great Barn being undertaken as part of the project. His profusely



illustrated talk was given with enthusiasm and panache, and made a seemingly dry subject exceedingly interesting. Similarly, Karl Taylor, presenting the survey techniques to be utilised in the geophysical survey of the parkland, elevated what was a technical subject into an informative, and at times amusing, presentation of how we will be utilising the skills we were about to learn. The final talk of the morning was by Fraser Brown who demonstrated his vast knowledge and experience of the archaeology of burnt mounds, their construction, and the theories promulgated to try and explain their function within the landscape; a tour de force. The afternoon practical sessions operated concurrently, but were repeated in order to allow participants to experience all three sessions. Peter Schofield led an internal survey of the barn using a reflectorless total station instrument.



He showed how a pen computer on the instrument linked to a power point projector making it possible for us, and any visitors to Sizergh during the project, to see the survey being created in front of us on a screen. We were all encouraged to use the instrument and assist in creating draft survey maps and elevation drawings. Jamie Quartermaine gave a further demonstration of his skills in flying his model helicopter to create a set of images of the external face one of the courtyard cottages. The use of a photographic mast to produce further semi rectified photography was also

demonstrated. We were able to practice processing these images into an accurate elevation drawing using a computer with the results projected onto a screen. In the parkland, Karl and Jamie Lund demonstrated the use of resistivity and magnetometry survey techniques, and encouraged us all to undertake the use of the machines in an area of the putative boundary ditch.



These three practical sessions provided a most informative guide to the techniques we would be adopting during the survey aspect of the project. Down at the burnt mound, Fraser Brown further discussed their known history, detailing the characteristics of the mound [thankfully agreeing that to all intents and purposes we had an actual, and quite large, example of a burnt mound] and whetting our appetites for the commencement of the dig itself in a week's time.



All in all it was another highly enjoyable, informative and successful training day.