

The Archaeological
Practice Ltd.



PEREGRINI
Lindisfarne
Landscape Partnership



LINDISFARNE COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY

THE HEUGH LINDISFARNE

Archaeological excavations in June 2017



Invitation to volunteers

THE HEUGH, LINDISFARNE, NORTHUMBERLAND: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS 2017

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A second season of archaeological investigations will be held as part of the Lindisfarne-Peregrini Community Archaeology Project in Summer, 2017.



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Illus. 01: Location of The Heugh

The Archaeological Practice, Newcastle upon Tyne is carrying out a series of archaeological investigations with volunteers for the Peregrini Lindisfarne Community Archaeology Project, part of the HLF-funded Peregrini Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership.

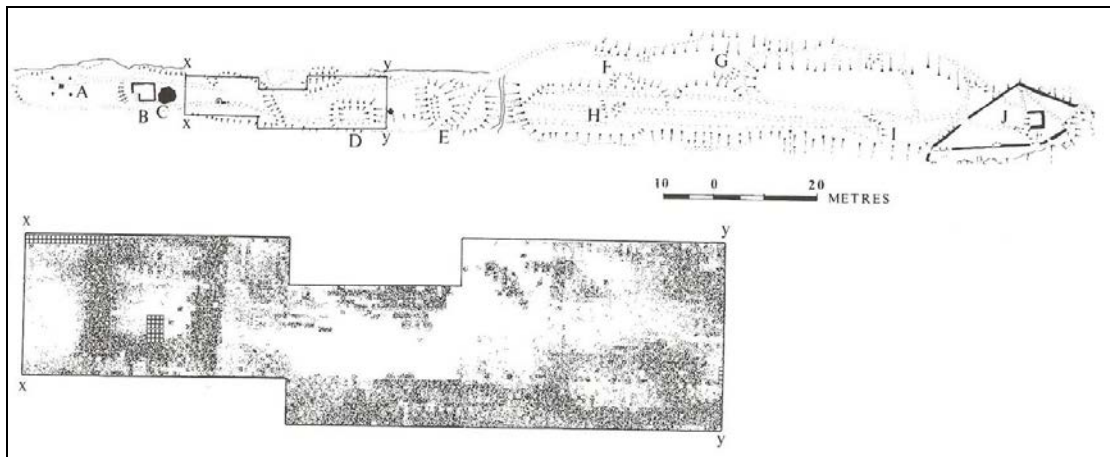
Participation is open to all, with equipment and training provided **FREE OF CHARGE**. Just bring your lunch and appropriate clothing.

Proposed fieldwork for June 2017 – which remains subject to consent by *Natural England* - includes the investigation of features of unknown date on the ridge of high ground to the south the Priory known as the Heugh, a whinstone ridge extending east from the south-west corner of the island, opposite St Cuthbert's Isle. This area has long been suspected as a possible site of buildings associated with the early medieval monastery, active between the 7th and late 9th centuries, but the only buildings currently upstanding there are of much later origin. A key aim of the investigations is to establish the date of buried structures there and whether or not they are linked with the Anglo-Saxon or medieval monasteries.

Historic Background

Lindisfarne has a fascinating archaeological heritage extending from prehistoric through to post-medieval and recent times. It is most famous, however, for its early medieval monastery, founded by St Aidan and King Oswald in AD 635. The link with St Cuthbert, and the Lindisfarne Gospels, are particularly well known. However, very little is known for sure about the actual form of the early medieval monastery, though it is assumed to have occupied the same site as the medieval priory, founded in, or shortly before, AD 1122.

The key point to note here is that little is known for sure of the form of the early medieval establishment, but that some authorities have speculated that the remains on the Heugh may have been part of it. A good description of the remains on the Heugh is provided by O'Sullivan and Young (1995) and is reproduced here. Along the Heugh is a series of small, shallow ruins only clearly visible in late spring when the growth of grass is at its lowest. Some of these were first observed in the late nineteenth century by a casual visitor to the island, and at least one was excavated by Brian Hope-Taylor in the 1960s. The visible features were surveyed by the Lindisfarne Research Project in 1984-5, and a resistivity survey of the whole ridge was also carried out, to see if further evidence existed below ground.



Illus. 02: O'Sullivan and Young's Plan (above) based on geophysical survey (below) of perceived archaeological features on The Heugh.

One of these sites, enclosing the current war memorial towards the west end of the ridge and known only from geophysical survey, was explored in June 2016 and found to be the foundations of a massive, 2.5 m wide wall constructed of roughly cut facing stones either side of closely-packed, deeply-set cobbles, with smaller cobbles forming an upper surface. There were no significant finds to provide evidence for dating, but the massive walls and form of this structure suggests that it may have been a tower, while its absence from early maps and the lack of mortar in the structure or from the area around it indicates that it is likely to be an ancient structure, perhaps pre-Conquest in origin.



Illus. 03: Excavations on Area 1 (O'Sullivan and Young's 'Structure C') in 2016.

A second site ('Structure D') explored in June 2016 a little further to the east, in the area between the current lookout tower and shipping beacon, revealed more building foundations, this time in the form of massive limestone blocks forming the base of a north-south wall between 1 m and 1.2 m wide, with an apparent, narrower east-west return at the north end. Numerous smaller, squared stone blocks bearing crude chisel marks, showing that they had been shaped as building stones, were found in deposits above these foundation stones, but no other finds to indicate their date of origin. However, the nature of these remains, absence of mortar bonding material and documentary corroboration suggests that they are of early origin. Excavations carried out by Hope-Taylor just to the east in 1962, probably on the east end of the same structure, concluded that the building concerned was a church, although the excavator does not appear to have reached foundation level and the evidence for his interpretation is not recorded. Only further excavation will be able to confirm this interpretation.



Illus. 04: Excavations on Area 2 (O'Sullivan and Young's 'Structure D') in 2016, showing the remains of building foundations.

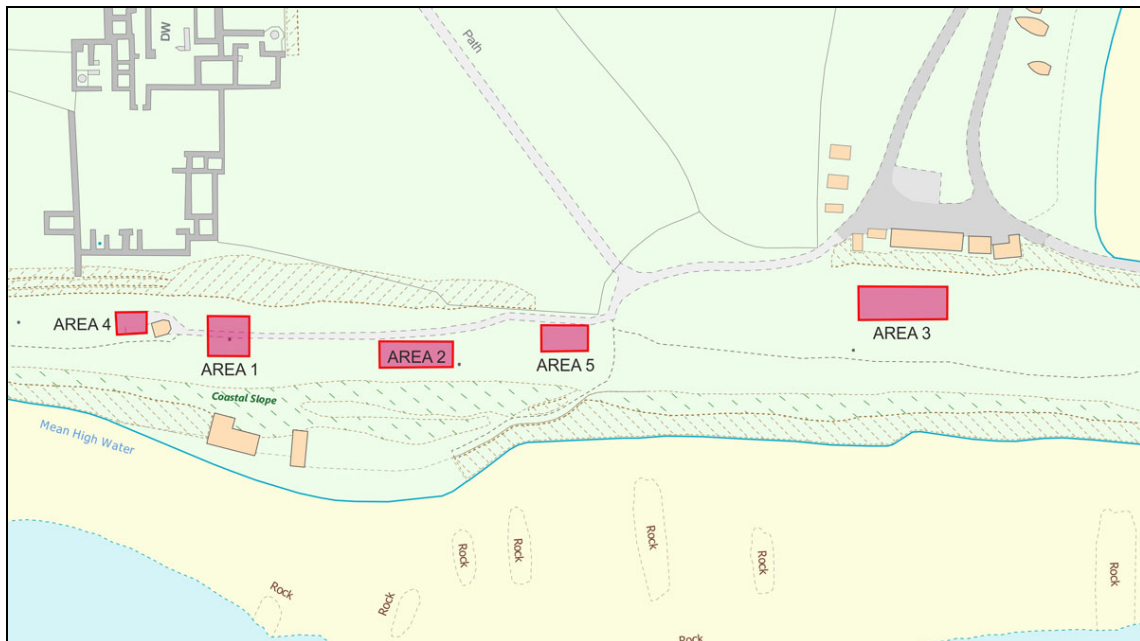
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF FIELDWORK IN 2017

This project has one general aim - to characterise the nature and condition of the structures on the Heugh. A particular aim is to try and establish the date of the various structures, in order to ascertain whether they may relate in some way to the early medieval monastery or the medieval priory.

TRENCH LOCATIONS AND PURPOSE

As noted above, the proposed trenches are located in order to investigate and evaluate four structures, or supposed structures, on the Heugh, two of which were also investigated in 2016 and had previously been partially evaluated by undertaken by Brian Hope-Taylor. The final form of each trench will be dependent on decisions made once work is in progress, and plans must be to an extent flexible at this stage.

The amount of work actually completed will be dependent on factors such as the number of volunteers attending, the complexity of the archaeological remains encountered, and the weather.



Illus. 05:

The positions of areas proposed to be sampled by excavation in Summer 2017.

Subject to consent, it is proposed to excavate in four locations (Areas 1-4, above), with an additional site held in reserve, as set out below. These will carefully located so as to cause no inconvenience to wildlife and other visitors to the Heugh.

AREA 1.

To investigate the geophysical anomaly around the war memorial. This structure was examined in 2016 but no secure dating evidence was retrieved, so a principal aim of the 2017 excavation will be to provide evidence for dating this structure, as well as to confirm its scale and state of survival.

AREA 2.

To reinvestigate a structure that was also partially examined in 2016, but from which no secure dating evidence was retrieved. In 2017 the excavation will be located to enable detailed recording of Hope-Taylor's excavation (presumed to be at the opposite, east end to the 2017 excavations), and to sample previously disturbed features and samples.

AREA 3.

To investigate the area between O'Sullivan and Young's 'Structures F/H and G'.

AREA 4.

To investigate the interior of the structure known as the Lantern Chapel. This structure is the only one appearing on early maps of the area but nothing is known about it, although it is presumed to be a look-out or early lighthouse.

Depending on available resources, **AREA 5** may also be investigated by means of a small evaluation trench.

In addition to this, there may be opportunities also to carry out limited work on **St Cuthbert's Isle** where consolidation works are proposed to combat the effects of erosion.

TIMETABLE AND PERSONNEL

It is proposed to complete the evaluation over the period between 12th June and 2nd July, with fieldwork largely undertaken by volunteers, under constant professional direction and supervision by a team including Richard Carlton, Paul Frodsham, Marc Johnstone, Mike Parsons, Peter Ryder and Rob Young.