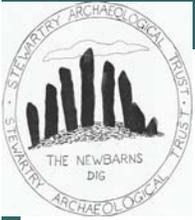


# THE NEWBARNs PROJECT



STEWARTRY ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST  
NEWSLETTER NO. 4  
JANUARY 2ND 2007

This is the fourth Newsletter that the Newbarns Project has produced for the edification both of our diggers and our supporters all over the world.

To sum up. At the end of the 2006 Season we have got two Round Cairns, each between 35 and 40 metres in diameter, dating back to the Neolithic era. On the South Cairn we have got one badly robbed-out passage grave which was originally set into the kerb of the cairn, but was almost



Sam our young YAC winner taking a level with the dumpy.

destroyed by the Victorian builders in their search for suitable granite stones to build local housing. There are now no less than eleven Early Bronze Age (EBA) cremation pits, one of which, a quite magnificent piece of engineering, was set into the edge of the cairn under a huge capstone which required the full impact of a very large JCB to gently slide it off the top of the burial. This has still to be examined in 2007 as the rains came in late August and never let up until the end of the 2006 Season. In addition there is one other large EBA burial and nine smaller ones, the capstones of which have all been either moved or removed to expose the boat-shaped burial pits so typical of that era in pre-history.

Of the three parallel field drains which were constructed during the mediaeval occupancy of the site the central and western ones have been cleared and, in one instance, repaired to enable them to serve their original purpose. As to the reason for their being put there in the first place there is still no real answer to this. Suggestions to date include their presence to drain a rockery-type herb garden to supply the mediaeval vets with drugs and the possibility that their construction, hard work at the time, was in the form of a penance imposed on naughty monks. Any further suggestions will be gladly received by the Excavation Director. One of the new dig sweatshirts, designed by our own site artist, Keith Clark, will be given as a prize to the best suggestion accepted by the Committee.

The Iron Age crannog is still being examined and a distinct shape is now appearing of a

large roundhouse with part cobbled flooring covered with clay surrounded by subsidiary buildings and a fenced yard.

The North Cairn caused great excitement amongst the ranks of the diggers as day after day we exposed more and more EBA burial features ranging from three very large boat-shaped pits containing votive deposits to a very small pit less than a metre long with its small mini-capstone still in place. The grouping of some of the burials suggest some form of family interment having taken place with the small pits being for children where, in one case, a mini replica of a tool found in a larger pit was contained amongst the cobbling of the smaller one.

To date we have got fourteen burials on the North Cairn with many more awaiting detailed excavation. In addition the remains of a possible satellite cairn have been found only a few metres to the east of the main cairn.



It is also our intention in the near future to extend the excavation trench of the base of the mediaeval building in the south-east quadrant which was the first feature to be discovered on site. While we had the JCB on site an area was cleared of turf and peat in preparation for excavation.

After the ecological disaster of 1159 BC when Mount Hecla, on Iceland, erupted and produced an eighteen year hiatus of terrible weather conditions the resultant higher water tables would have caused the landscape around Newbarns to be very different from what it is today. Both the North and South Cairns would have been completely encircled by boggy and peaty ground and the North Cairn would have had the waters of the loch on at least three of its sides. This would have meant that each of the cairns would have been an area of dry ground in a watery environment, perhaps they were even a refuge from man and beast in the surrounding wild landscape. The cairns would also have been a place to make contact with those ancestors who had gone before and whose remains had been laid there to rest back in the mists of time. The cairns would have been special places and they would have been given a religious and cosmological significance in a landscape which is difficult to appreciate today. The people believed in the powers of the water gods and other deities and with the Romans regard for the ritual significance of wetland areas and our finding of a Roman votive offering between the cairns, they must have provided a very powerful contact between the lived-in world of man and that

Otherworld inhabited by the spirit species—the various water deities and by the spirits of the ancestors who had gone before.

The total excavation of the South Cairn is now in view. The final examination and recording of the exposed features, the drains, the burials and the crannog should be completed by the end of the 2007 Season when it can then be decided what is to be done with it.

The North Cairn will keep us busy for a long time into the future, permission being given by the landowner, and we hope that the public will continue to visit us and give both encouragement and donations into our boxes. Funding as usual is going to be very tight with all the diggers paying their own expenses and finding their own accommodation.

A final note for Newbarns: We have had 8 Professionals, 16 Veterans, 2 Post Grads, 7 Students, 14 Mature Novices and 10 YAC's on site Season 2006.

Sadly two of our more experienced diggers, Ken Cooper and Dave Wright have been absent due to illness and we wish them both well and hope they will be fit to carry on this coming season.

### **INGLESTON MOTTE**

This excavation continues under the admirable directorship of Robert McCubbin. To date the exposure of the defences are ever growing and we will soon have a 360° encirclement of the timber towers. Robert is still finding a prodigious assemblage of artefacts and will be looking for suitable, experienced volunteers in 2007. He can be contacted by phone at 01556 504859 or by email at [mccubbin.hillowton@virgin.net](mailto:mccubbin.hillowton@virgin.net) Regrettably we still cannot invite visitors to view this site which is right in the middle of prime agricultural land.

Alas, we have lost our valued surveyor, Rodney Pringle FRCS, FSAScot, who sadly died last October and whose services to archaeology will be sadly missed by many ongoing projects such as ours.

Our congratulations to "The General" - Sir Norman has been awarded a CVO by the Queen in her New Years Honours list.

Our thanks to you all, to Sir Norman and Lady Tessa for their encouragement and support. To the Committee, the Perry family, those who so generously hired the JCB on our behalf, and to all our artists, illustrators, IT people and visiting "experts". Without all of you we cannot function.

Lizzie & Alastair     Jan 2nd 2007