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Introduction

1.1 Why Study the Duddon?

This may come as news to you if you don't know the Lake District, or only visit occasionally, but this jewel of the English countryside is far from *natural*, despite its astounding beauty and its status as an icon of the Romantic Movement. In fact, it is a *cultural* landscape, and it has been extensively altered by human hands over about 10,000 years since we first moved in after the last Ice Age. These many changes have been softened by the passage of time, which probably explains why some people do not see them. They range from wholesale upheavals of the various habitats (such as removal of ancient forests), through extensive quarrying and mining scars, down to construction of individual walls and buildings.

It is because of our interest in uncovering the reasons for these changes that we have studied the history of the Duddon Valley and described our findings in this book. In many respects, we could have chosen almost any valley in Cumbria for this project, which makes our finds all the more exciting. Based on what we now know about the Duddon, it is reasonable to assume that much more fascinating material awaits discovery in many other upland valleys, and we hope that our successful methods will be replicated elsewhere.

However, the Duddon does have some special

features, at least for those of us who know and love it. It is probably one of the least-visited parts of the Lake District, being well off the standard tourist trail, and lacking in most modern amenities (apart from an excellent pub and a small village shop cum post office). For that reason, it has perhaps received less scrutiny than some others, although we know that from before the time of Wordsworth there has been a steady stream of lucky visitors. Perhaps more importantly, parts of the valley have already received some archaeological investigation, notably by the National Trust, and the records left by these surveys showed that the Duddon might be rich in further marks of the past.

Undoubtedly, however, the main reason our Duddon project began is because the valley lies on our doorsteps. The Duddon Valley Local History Group, which ran the project and wrote this book in collaboration with the Lake District National Park Authority, has been active for several years, and the project partly arose from our own earlier observations. Perhaps the main message to emerge from our work is the value of using professionally guided volunteers to investigate the past in their own backyard. We hope this book will inspire you to get involved in studying how our ancestors lived in your area.

Map 1 (Left) Location of the R2R study area within the Lake District National Park and Cumbria

1.2 The Physical Background

The parishes of Ulpha, and Seathwaite with Dunnerdale, lie almost entirely within the catchment of the River Duddon, but also include a small area west of the River Lickle in the south-east of the study area. From White Pike in the east the boundary follows the main watershed (the rim of high fells) all the way round the head of the valley to Buck Barrow in the south-west. Only the southern boundary does not follow good natural features, crossing the Duddon about a mile above Duddon Bridge (the approximate tidal limit) to Broughton Mills before following the River Lickle north.

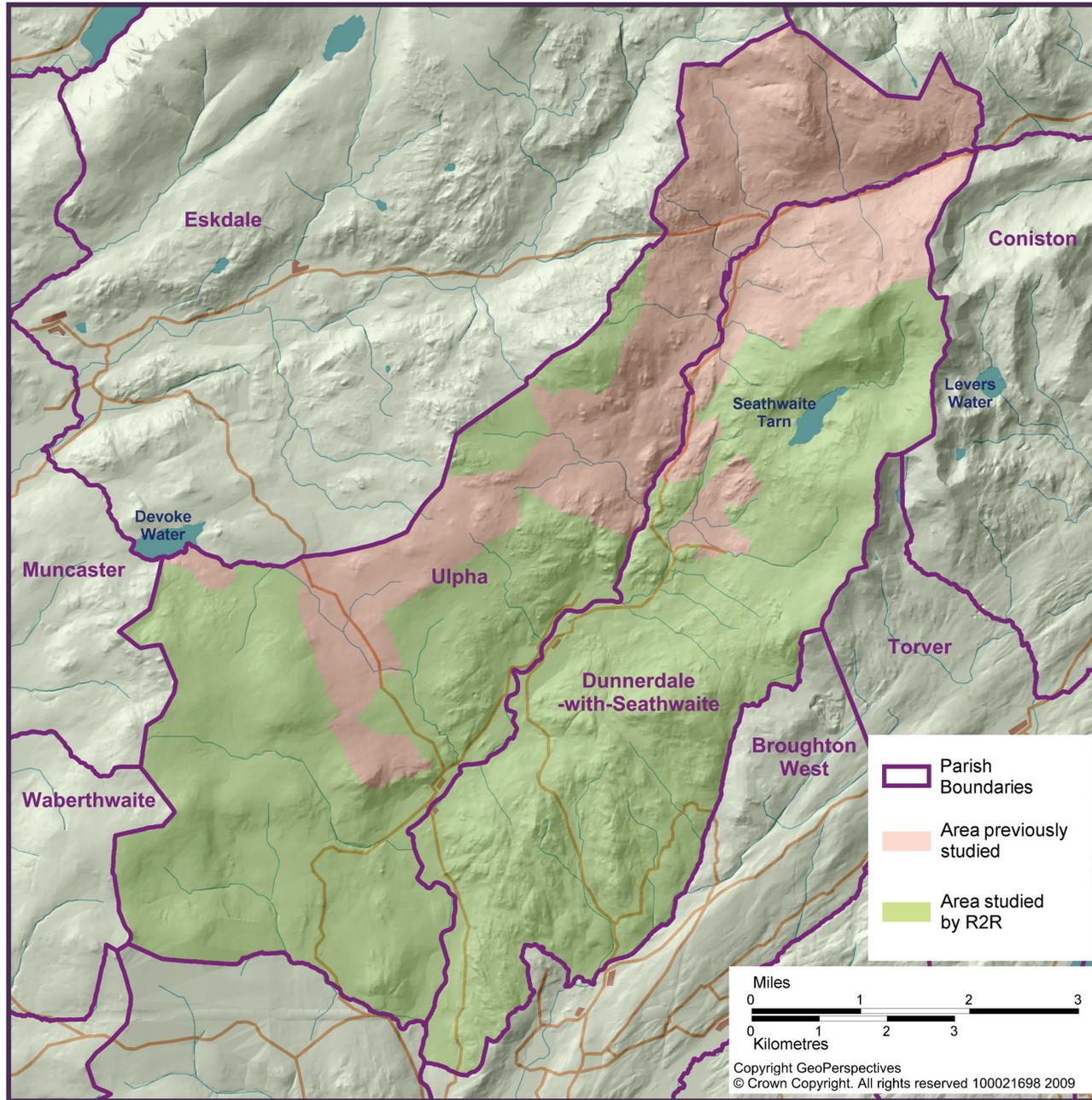
The Duddon Valley lies within the distinctive landscape of the Lakeland fells; this distinctiveness owes much to geology. Apart from a tiny area of younger lime-rich rocks (along the west bank of the River Lickle between Broughton Mills and Lind End Wood) the entire area lies within a group of rocks called the Borrowdale Volcanic Series, formed about 450 million years ago in the Ordovician period of geological history. At that time the landscape would have been spectacularly different from today with explosive volcanic activity producing vast thicknesses of lavas and ashes. The resulting highly-eroded rocks we see today are often bewilderingly complex in

variety and distribution, but the key point is that many of them are relatively hard and resistant to erosion, giving a rocky landscape of mountain, crag and scree. The large areas of bare rock and steep ground plus the fact that the local volcanic rocks often produce highly acidic soils place severe limitations on agriculture and other land-use.

Huge changes have occurred to the landscape since volcanic times due to continental movements and erosion, and the marks of a fairly recent geological episode – glaciation – still lie heavily upon the land. At various times over the last half-million years or so the climate has cooled sufficiently to replace the erosive work of rivers with that of ice. Sometimes great ice-sheets over-rode everything but the highest peaks. More recently as the climate warmed ice was confined to valley glaciers which occupied and deepened the pre-existing river valleys, such as that of the Duddon, which radiate out from the central fells.

Map 2 (Right) Detail of the R2R study area, showing the two parishes included in the survey, and the area surveyed in detail before the R2R project began. Main roads are indicated in brown.

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Photo 1 The middle Duddon Valley showing the improved pastures on the valley floor and the enclosing open fells

Ice is powerfully erosive and the bare scratched rocks, steep craggy valley sides and broad valley floors which resulted are still clearly visible today (Photo 1). Tributary glaciers produced 'hanging' valleys such as those of Seathwaite Tarn and Mosedale, perched above the main valley. Glaciation and related changes in sea-level gave post-glacial rivers and streams renewed energy to create gorges and waterfalls such as those at Wallowbarrow, Birks Bridge and Thrang Force. As the power of the glaciers waned, eroded materials (glacial 'drift') were deposited in hollows and along the broad valley floors and gentler valley sides providing the possibility of better soils. The Duddon

too has deposited more fertile alluvium in areas subject to flooding such as those below Hall Dunnerdale and between Birks Bridge and Cockley Beck.

Climatically the area is typical of western upland Britain. With regular exposure to Atlantic depressions and the cooling and condensing effect of the mountains, rainfall is high, between 1200 mm per annum in the south, rising steadily to over 3000 mm on the fells at the head of the valley. Many of the dry days are cloudy which affects the potential for crop-growth. The wet climate has favoured the development of widespread areas of peat, whose acid and ill-drained characteristics do not favour agriculture although in

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the past it has provided a useful source of fuel. The Atlantic influence at present gives an equable climate, summers not generally being particularly warm nor winters particularly cold. Altitude affects temperature, with the high tops being typically 4 or 5 degrees centigrade cooler than the valley bottoms, a difference accentuated by wind-exposure.

Frosts, a key influence on plant growth, occur more frequently with distance from the sea from perhaps 50 days per annum in the south to over 150 in the north. All these factors combined to form a landscape now largely devoted to pastoral farming, with arable being limited to pockets of better soils and a small range of crops such as oats which were suited to the growing conditions. Even then the traditional hay-making might be delayed well into the summer months (in the days before baled silage) and cereal crops could sometimes not be harvested at all.

Despite the currently acidic and peaty nature of the soil, some upland areas were farmed during periods of warmer, drier climate. These occurred during the late Neolithic period to the early Bronze Age (described in more detail in Section 1.3) and also to a lesser extent during the Medieval period. The colonisation of these upland areas was probably influenced by

population increase associated with the milder climate forcing people to exploit more marginal land. A wealth of archaeological remains dating from these periods has remained relatively undisturbed in the upland areas, most notably at an altitude of between 240 and 360 metres.



Photo 2 An aerial view of the Duddon Valley (© English Heritage NMR)

1.3 Archaeological Background

Time, in most cases, and nature everywhere, have given a sanctity to the humble works of man, that are scattered over this peaceful retirement.

From William Wordsworth's 'Approach to the Duddon'
(Notes to *The River Duddon, A Series of Sonnets*, 1820)

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The 'peaceful retirement' of the Duddon Valley that William Wordsworth described almost 200 years ago is, in many respects, still recognisable today. The most prominent elements of the landscape – the stone walls, farmhouses and barns, broadleaved woodland and open fell – are much as they were in the early nineteenth century. There have, of course, been some changes. The Duddon blast furnace, which had been in operation for 83 years when Wordsworth wrote his sonnets, closed down 46 years after their publication. Charcoal is no longer produced in industrial quantities in the Duddon woods. The details of the farming landscape have changed, more varied buildings now exist and the surfaces of the roads have been improved for motor vehicles. Nonetheless, the landscape still looks much as it did then, though there is less activity than there was. Although walkers and mountain-bikers dot the landscape, there are fewer

people working on the land. The slate quarries are silent and the roar and smell of the blast furnace no longer pervade the air.

However we can still catch glimpses of the Duddon Valley of the past through the physical traces that are left to us in the form of archaeological features and remains of buildings. Although not all periods of human settlement are represented in this way, we can use information from our R2R project survey and from elsewhere in the Lake District to make an informed guess at what life was like in the Duddon Valley from the very earliest times.

12,000 years ago

Around 12,000 years ago the Duddon Valley began to emerge from underneath the glacial ice. As the climate warmed up, the landscape changed. A tundra



Photo 3 Swinside stone circle (©LDNPA)

vegetation of mosses and dwarf shrubs developed, which was later replaced by birch woodland. Humans soon moved into the area in search of large game animals such as elk, red deer and aurochs. Not far to the east of the Duddon, small families of hunters were living in caves in the limestone on the northern fringe of Morecambe Bay and it is likely that they visited the valley from time to time on hunting trips.

Over the next few thousand years human populations expanded as the climate continued to improve and the vegetation cover changed still further. Settlements were concentrated on the coast; a sprinkling of microlithic flints, used to make composite weapons

and tools, have been found in numbers on the sand dunes around the estuary of the river Esk. These people fished in the sea, hunted wildfowl in the local estuaries and collected fruits and nuts from the deciduous woodland. Although no microliths have yet been found in the Duddon Valley, it is likely that as in earlier times, groups of hunters would travel up the valley looking for game animals and to fish for migrating salmon in the river. There is some evidence that small areas of woodland on the higher ground, around Seathwaite Tarn, may have been cleared through burning in order to create clearings to attract grazing animals such as deer.

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6,000 years ago

Woodland growth eventually reached its fullest extent about 7,000 years ago, so that most of the Lake District landscape, up to around 750 metres above sea level, was covered in trees. Not long after this, domesticated crops and animals were introduced into the area – possibly over the sea from Ireland – and settlement began to spread more widely over the land. Small clearings were opened up in the woodland in order to build timber houses and to plant wheat and other crops. Cattle, pigs and goats provided meat and other resources, but hunting, fishing and gathering wild foods continued to be important. These settlements were small and relatively temporary and after a while, once the soil was exhausted, families would clear another patch of woodland and create a new settlement.

Tools were made from wood, bone, flint and stone. Most flint came from the beaches to the west while occasionally better quality flint was obtained through trade from further afield. A special type of stone that could be flaked like flint was obtained from the mountains north of the Duddon Valley in order to make polished stone axes. People from the Duddon may have undertaken the difficult journey into the central Lake District fells to obtain the volcanic tuff from quarries which had been used for generations. The roughed-out axes were brought back to the settlements and laboriously polished with sand and water over many hours to produce beautiful but highly functional cutting tools. These polished axes were traded or exchanged far and wide, bringing communities in the Duddon Valley and the surrounding area into contact with people as far away as Scotland, Ireland and southern England. Travelling by sea was much easier than by land but by this time well-established overland trails would have

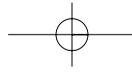
developed through the forests and over high ground.

During this period large circular monuments were constructed, sometimes using massive upright timbers and sometimes using boulders. The most impressive surviving example in the area is the stone circle at nearby Swinside (Photo 3). Families from the Duddon Valley may have visited this monument on significant occasions in the year such as mid-summer and mid-winter, in order to make offerings and supplications to their gods or to celebrate births and alliances or to mourn the passing of family members.

4,000 years ago

The climate continued to get warmer and around 4,000 years ago it became possible for settlement and agriculture to extend from the valleys onto the flanks of the lower fells, up to 300 metres above sea level. To begin with this would have involved the creation of upland pastures for cattle and sheep, for example around Devoke Water – visited at first only in the summer months – but later becoming places for year-round occupation in addition to the settlements in the valley. Trees and scrub were cleared and stones gathered up into piles in order to improve the land for grazing and later for arable agriculture. Houses were circular in shape, constructed with an internal ring of supporting posts, probably with a thatched roof and wattle and daub walls, like the example excavated at Stephenson Ground (Photo 60).

Agriculture was becoming increasingly important and food production more sophisticated – for example animals were now being exploited not just for meat but for dairy products also. Wild resources were also still crucial and a number of stray finds of distinctive flint arrowheads from this period have been found in the Lakeland fells, perhaps lost during hunting expeditions. Over time some of the cleared



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land at higher altitudes was also tilled and planted with crops. The stone gathered from the fields was often cleared into lines along the edges of the fields in order to ease the passage of the plough. Movement of stock for summer grazing would have continued but now the animals would have been taken even higher up the fellsides.

A little before 3,000 years ago there was a rapid worsening of the climate with cooler conditions and wetter weather. This may have been the result of normal fluctuations in climate but may alternatively have been the result of volcanic eruptions that are known to have occurred at this time in what is now Iceland. Volcanic ash ejected into the atmosphere could have caused the environmental deterioration which led to a general abandonment of upland settlement. The thin soils on the slopes of fells that had been cleared began to degrade, and eventually most of the higher settlements were abandoned in favour of the valleys. Between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago those settlements that were left on the fells became more substantial, with stone foundations for the houses and a defensive stone wall. This suggests that pressure on land and resources may have led to conflict. The pattern of temporary, shifting settlement had finished and many of these sites were occupied for long periods. Some were still in use when the Romans arrived in the Lake District.

At this time at least some of the dead were buried underneath stone cairns, often in stone lined boxes known as 'cists'. Some of these cairns were built on the tops of fells, like the massive example on Whitfell (Photo 55), and appear to have been constructed using stones cleared from fields some distance away. Whoever was interred here must have been very important to their community for such a burial monument to be constructed. Other rituals may have taken place at the many ring cairns that are

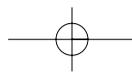
dotted around the higher fells surrounding the Duddon Valley, including the two sites that were excavated at Seathwaite Tarn (see Chapter 5). These sites were most likely built and used during the summer months when stock was being grazed on the higher pastures.

At the beginning of this period the very first metal objects would have been seen in the Duddon Valley. At first these would have been of copper and later of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. It is likely that these first objects – flat copper axes and pieces of jewellery, including gold – would have been brought over the sea from Ireland, where there was an early development of metallurgy. Flint, bone and wood were also still important for making tools, but polished stone axes were no longer used. A thousand years later, iron became the principal material for producing cutting edge tools and has remained so.

1,900 years ago

When the Roman legions eventually marched into the central Lake District and first set eyes on the Duddon Valley, it is likely that they would have seen a landscape of scattered settlements, some defended by walls, surrounded by small fields planted with oats, barley and vegetables, some managed woodland and grazing land for sheep and cattle on the lower fells. The inhabitants of the Duddon Valley are likely to have belonged to the large tribe known as the Brigantes which occupied northern Britain at this time. It is also possible that they may have been part of a smaller sub grouping known as the Setantii, although this is not certain.

The Roman occupation will certainly have affected life in the valley, with construction of the fort close by at Hardknott and a surfaced road on the



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route of the well-used track that undoubtedly already existed between Eskdale and the head of Windermere, passing Cockley Beck at the head of the valley.

Unlike most other forts in the area, Hardknott does not appear to have attracted a *vicus* (civilian settlement) around it. The soldiers would therefore have looked to the surrounding settlements, including those in the Duddon Valley, for supplies and services.

Although there is no clear evidence, it is likely that the Romans organised an iron smelting industry, at least on a small scale, using the local ores in Eskdale and charcoal from the woodlands. Men and boys from the Duddon Valley may well have been recruited for this and for other work such as forestry and pottery and tile production.

1,000 years ago

Although people in the Duddon Valley had long-distance contacts with other parts of Britain and Ireland from the earliest times, the Roman occupation expanded contact with the outside world to an extent not seen previously. However, at the end of the Roman occupation, life probably carried on much as it had before, revolving around the annual farming cycle and small scale industrial activities.

Not long after the Romans left, a new political authority emerged known as the kingdom of Rheged, possibly centred on the old Roman city of Carlisle. This was later absorbed into the expanding Anglian kingdom of Northumbria. For a while, after the collapse of the Anglian kingdom, the Lake District was effectively under local rule, and it was during this period, just over 1,000 years ago, that Norse settlers came to the Lake District following political upheaval in the Norse settlements in Ireland. In addition to the wonderful ecclesiastical sculpture in churches on the

coastal fringe of the Lake District, including crosses and hogback tombstones, the Norse communities left a rich legacy of placename evidence to mark their presence. In the Duddon valley the name Gaitscale at the head of the valley indicates that a Norse shieling (summer farm) was established probably in the late tenth century (the name probably means ‘the shieling where goats are kept’). Some archaeological evidence of early settlement can be seen beneath the later earthworks of the abandoned post-medieval farm at Gaitscale. The ‘thwaite’ ending of the name Seathwaite also denotes clearance of woodland in the Norse period.

In 1092 the Normans conquered Carlisle and the entire Lake District came under Norman control. In the years prior to this the area had been under Scottish rule, possibly including the Duddon Valley. Over the next century the Norman barons consolidated their power, and life in valleys like the Duddon began to change. By the thirteenth century land in the valley bottom was let to tenants and farming centred on cultivation of a common field, tilled in strips, separated from the grazing land on the fellsides by a stone wall known as a ‘ring garth’. Cattle and sheep were still taken into the fells for grazing in the summer months, but former shielings such as Gaitscale and Seathwaite gradually became established as permanent farms. The lord of the manor retained ownership of the fell land, which in the Duddon Valley was part of the medieval forest of Millom, primarily for hunting. The tenants paid for rights to resources such as peat for fuel, grazing of pigs and goats in the woodland and cutting of bracken for animal bedding and thatch. In times of strife they also provided military service. Farming life was overseen by the manor court on behalf of the community. It provided some control over farming practices that could damage resources.

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Farm houses were long, narrow structures with side entrances, like the example excavated at Stephenson Ground (Photos 9 and 61). Early examples were of timber construction but later on, stone foundations were used. Some of these medieval farming settlements were located higher up the valley sides than the farms in the valley today. They were probably abandoned later in the medieval period and their remains have been located through our survey at places like Pikeside Farm (See Chapter 4.2) and Long House Close on the way up to Seathwaite Tarn.

The longhouse at Stephenson Ground – the only excavated local example – is dated through radiocarbon and the pottery sequence to the twelfth to fourteenth centuries AD. It is therefore later than the Norse period. A more recent excavation of a longhouse at Gatescale in the Buttermere Valley also produced pottery evidence for fourteenth century occupation. The valley began to see the first signs of organised industry in this period. This included the production of iron, for knives, spades, plough tips and the other tools needed for farming. Iron ore was most likely brought from the rich deposits in neighbouring Eskdale and smelted with charcoal which was produced by felling the small scrub trees on the lower fells and burning them in covered pits. At least two medieval ‘bloomeries’ (smelting sites) are known in the valley (Photo 4) and it is likely that more await discovery. The production of wool was also reaching industrial levels in the Lake District by the end of the medieval period and the traditional Herdwick flocks of the Duddon Valley farms would have been an important component of this.

250 years ago

By the eighteenth century the landscape of the Duddon Valley was beginning to look very similar to

the present day. Great changes had taken place in the Lake District from the mid-sixteenth century, partly as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, and partly through evolution of the relationship between tenant and landowner. Large tracts of land that had been owned by the monasteries were sold to private owners, and later, as conflicts over the border between England and Scotland decreased as a result of the accession of James I to the English throne in 1603, the requirement for tenants to provide military service declined.

Increased confidence on the part of tenants led to greater investment in the infrastructure of the farming landscape. From the mid-seventeenth century the long, narrow farmhouses of earlier periods, with their stone foundations, wattle and daub walls and thatched roofs, were replaced with the solidly built, slate-roofed houses that are now so typical of the Lake District. Barns and hog houses were also built to the same standards, and an increasing effort was put into improving the land. Inbye fields in the valley were drained using stone-lined culverts, put under the plough and treated with lime. The process of intaking (enclosing and improving) land outside the former ‘ring garth’ was continued so that by the end of the eighteenth century, the majority of the fields that we see today were in existence.

As in earlier periods, farming was based on arable agriculture in the valley bottom and grazing stock on the fells. The practice of moving animals to shielings in the upper pastures in the summer had long ceased as farms now included both valley land and upland grazing. However sheep had become increasingly important as the woollen industry developed and the fells around the Duddon are littered with the ruins of stone structures that were used in sheep rearing in this period. These include shepherds’ huts and shelters, bields to protect sheep in severe weather, sheep dubs

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Photo 4 Remnants of a bloomery on Forestry Commission land at Grassguards (© LDNPA)

(for washing sheep), as well as tracks and small areas of cleared land to improve grazing.

Industry in the valley had also developed on a much larger scale. In 1737 a blast furnace (Photo 5) was built near Duddon Bridge by a consortium of the Backbarrow and Cunsey companies and must have come to play a large role in the life in the community of the valley, at least in its lower reaches. The blast furnace used charcoal as fuel, and the need for increasing quantities led to the management of the

Duddon woods on a coppice rotation system. The coppice poles were cut on a cycle of between 14 and 25 years and were cut to length, stacked, covered with turves and burnt on platforms constructed in the woods. The platforms, known as ‘charcoal pitsteads’ (Photo 45) (a name reflecting the earlier method of producing charcoal in pits) can be seen in woods such as Rainsbarrow near Ulpha.

The bark that was stripped from the coppice poles before burning was used in local tanneries, and some

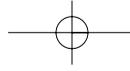
coppice wood was also used for wood turning, including, in the nineteenth century, the production of bobbins for the Lancashire cotton industry. The tall chimney and converted mill buildings by the road at Millbrow, at the southern end of Rainsbarrow Wood, are a testament to this important industry.

Mining and quarrying in the valley had also developed from small-scale origins. The spoil tips and ruined buildings on the south-western flank of Hesk Fell are all that now remains of a copper mining industry that was of great economic importance for a short while in the nineteenth century. Other mining remains can be seen above Seathwaite Tarn. Much more obvious are the huge spoil tips and scars on the fellsides on both sides of the valley which resulted from the quarrying of slate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The largest quarries are by the Walna Scar track, dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Slate quarrying lasted longer than mining and must have provided lucrative employment for the people of the Duddon Valley for many years. Other industries included the production of rope and cloth from hemp (see Chapter 3.6).

One of the most significant industrial developments in the valley, although hidden from all but those



Photo 5 Duddon Bridge blast furnace (© LDNPA/Andrew Lowe)

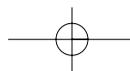


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who walk into the fells to see it, was the construction in 1904 of the dam and reservoir at Seathwaite Tarn to provide a water supply for Barrow.

The construction of the reservoir in the early twentieth century constituted the latest significant event in over three thousand years of human interest and activity at Seathwaite Tarn. Eight thousand years ago hunters may have cleared areas of woodland around the tarn in order to attract and kill game. Three thousand years ago it was a focus for activity

which involved the construction of numerous ring cairns on its shores. In later centuries sheep and cattle would have grazed the summer pastures around it and later still miners toiled past it on their way to the copper mine at the head of the hanging valley in which it lies. It has been our good fortune in the early twenty-first century to investigate this long history of Seathwaite Tarn and the Duddon Valley through our Ring Cairns to Reservoirs (R2R) project.



1.4 The Major Objectives of the R2R Project

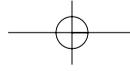
- *To significantly increase knowledge and understanding of the historic environment in the Duddon Valley among a wide audience*
- *To stimulate active participation in the research and interpretation of the historic environment*
- *To provide educational benefits and a documented historic environment resource produced through the project*
- *To encourage effective management of the historic environment*
- *To provide a firm basis for local participation and ownership of the historic environment*

The initial impetus for the project was the discovery of a prehistoric ring cairn in the upper reaches of the Duddon Valley, the desire to understand more about its origin and purpose, and the need to explore whether there are other related sites in the vicinity.

This motivation led to a discussion and a verbal contract between the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and the Duddon Valley Local History Group (DVLHG). Both were fired by the excitement of discovery and the wish to learn more.

From the DVLHG perspective this was an opportunity to get to grips with some real field work on their 'own patch', and to explore in more depth some of the things that they were aware of on the fells but of which little was recorded.

The project proposal was slowly put together, with the debate majoring on our main objectives which were to look in more depth at previously un-surveyed land and for the group to be involved in an archaeological dig. As discussion progressed with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) officials we gradually understood that our desires were only a vehicle for attaining what they saw as the real objectives; the true value would not just be in the activity but what it would produce of a long-term nature and how it would benefit the community as a whole as well as those who took part. Not only would there be tangible benefits such as the greatly enhanced Lake District Historic Environment Record that would be invaluable to LDNP officers and farmers alike, but there would also be a continuing

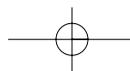


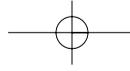
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capability in the form of the project team – now well trained and skilled – who would go on discovering new things over time with further survey and research.

All the people involved will remember the friends they have made and the journey taken together through the different stages of the project, the laughs and the learning, and the incredible landscape that formed the backdrop.

It is proof of the foresight of those HLF officials that most of those who have participated in the project are keen to continue, and the most frequently asked question as we conclude our initial work is, ‘what next?’ Also, a positive development is that local farmers are fast understanding that if recorded and managed in the right way, the sites would potentially enhance their income under agri-environment grant schemes.





2

A History of the R2R Project

2.1 Preparation

For many of us who have walked amongst the grassy tussocks and iridescent bracken of the Duddon Valley, the ancient cairns, rugged barns, coppiced woodlands, abandoned mines, industrial relics and tell-tale remains of a road that once led to the last outpost of the Roman Empire have become just part of the fabric of the landscape. Perhaps we should be surprised that free from intensive farming and conifer plantations these ancient monuments remain to tell a unique and remarkable story about the people who have farmed, worked stone, practiced their religion and buried their dead for the past 4,000 years. But perhaps not.

Maybe the surprise is not the tantalizing glimpse of ancient remains but the fact so few people have surveyed and recorded them – until now.

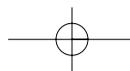
Beginnings

In the beginning there was Harry Kellett, a legendary individual who for a large part of his life had observed and recorded many sites of archaeological interest in and around the Duddon Valley. Harry was an inspiration and a mentor to Penni Harvey-Piper, who in the 1980s and 1990s oversaw several seasons of excavation at sites near Stephenson Ground in the upper Lickle Valley. These digs confirmed the existence of early Bronze Age settlement and sites that had been occupied thereafter through several periods of use.

This legacy makes it difficult to be precise about when the current project actually started, but it

certainly owes much to the discovery by Peter Rodgers in 2002 of two Bronze Age ring cairns to the south of Seathwaite Tarn in the Duddon Valley. Peter is a retired National Park Area Manager with a keen interest in archaeology. Noting that the cairns were similar to others that had been found in other parts of the Lakes, he reported his observations to John Hodgson, the Senior Archaeologist in the Lake District National Park.

John Hodgson's interest was fired and, along with Peter and fellow LDNP archaeologist Eleanor Kingston, he carried out an exploratory excavation in



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2003 of part of the larger cairn. The excavation produced one piece of Bronze Age pottery: enough to warrant further work when funds became available.

The Duddon Valley Local History Group

The Duddon Valley Local History Group (DVLHG) had been set up in the late 1990s and had focused mainly on recently remembered history and the post-medieval period. But its monthly programme of talks covered a wide range of topics: in 2002 Penni Harvey-Piper gave a talk on the Stephenson Ground excavations, while in the following year Eleanor Kingston gave two talks on local archaeology to the group and in 2004 led a field trip to the medieval farmstead at Gaitscale in Wrynose Bottom.

Penni and Eleanor helped to create a climate in which the extensive cairn fields on the fells above Stonestar were often mentioned. In February 2005 Eleanor made a visit to the area, accompanied by a number of members of the DVLHG. Some of the features had already been recorded but, with the bracken down, there was a lot more showing through than summer visits had suggested. Eleanor reported back to John on what she had seen and noted in the company of a local group now determined to gain a deeper understanding of these old mysteries in their midst.

The connection

John Hodgson had been working for some time on raising the profile and importance of the human history embedded in the natural wonders of the Lake District. He was building on the work of Andy Lowe, who had figured prominently in the restoration of the Duddon Furnace. Now, the yearly archaeological

conference was becoming an established and popular regional event. What was lacking was a more detailed examination of the landscape and a systematic recording of the secrets it held.

Whilst involved in helping the Eskdale Local History Group put together a bid for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, John saw the opportunity to bring two related objectives together and to seek HLF funding for a separate project in the Duddon Valley. In April 2005 Eleanor talked to the DVLHG committee about the possible project and on the basis of her brief outline the committee agreed to a meeting with John at which the project was discussed in detail. There was a great deal of scepticism and concern within the group. They wanted to take things further, but the project before them seemed to involve a lot of work (no one at that stage knew how much!) and would require considerable commitment from the wider membership.

The proposal

The outline project proposal was for a joint project between The Lake District National Park and the DVLHG. It had three immediate aims:

- 1 A Level 1 survey of the un-surveyed parts of the Duddon Valley.
- 2 An archaeological excavation of the Seathwaite ring cairns.
- 3 A number of Level 2 surveys of selected sites.

At the time nobody in the group knew what Level 1 or Level 2 surveys meant, but TV's *Time Team* had shown us how easy and interesting excavation was (ho ho) . . .

The analysis

John provided some 'typical' estimates for Level 1 and Level 2 survey times and the committee set about analysing what would be required to be successful if they agreed to take on the project. (The 'typical' estimates, it turned out, had been derived from surveys by professional archaeologists of areas with fewer archaeological sites: we were to discover that we were dealing with a totally different beast!)

A questionnaire was sent out to the membership to establish what level of commitment people were prepared to make and over a six-week period several half-day workshops were held to envisage each stage of the project and identify all of the tasks that would have to be carried out, whether in the field or in the organising and support activities.

By September 2005 a detailed document had been produced that included key processes, estimates of people required, and financial expenditure; it also identified a number of 'unknown aspects' of the project. Confronted with this projection of what might await us and the depth of commitment

required, the committee, after long debate, accepted the responsibility of sailing the good ship DVLHG into what were now roughly charted but still unknown waters. A meeting was held with our mentor, John Hodgson, who gratefully accepted the commitment and the document, which was then used as a central plank in the HLF grant application.

The agreement and its 'deliverables'

By the end of February 2006 the HLF grant was approved. With certain provisos, it provided £50,000 worth of funding; we had to provide £87,000 worth of contributed effort.

The details of the agreed deliverables and objectives can be found in Appendix 8.1 but the key elements were the three aims already listed above. The Level 1 survey was to cover 75 per cent of the un-surveyed areas within the parishes of Dunnerdale–Seathwaite and Ulpha; the two ring cairns awaited excavation; and we undertook to complete 20 Level 2 surveys of agreed sites.

2.2 Planning and Implementation

On 18 March 2006 over 30 people attended a project launch day that had been widely advertised both inside and outside the group. The launch presented our objectives and organisation along with a background history of the archaeology of the Lake District. A walk up to the two ring cairns at Lead Pike, a first for most of the assembled company, rounded off a day that generated a great deal of interest and excitement. That enthusiastic momentum has prevailed throughout the project and has been one of the keys to its overall success.

Following the launch – with a greater number of people now signed up to take part – it was necessary to work on the protocols that would be required both for safety and consistency if we were to have several teams operating at one time. With guidance from John Hodgson the committee did sterling work, organising six training and team formation days during May and June. Four fully-trained teams were then ready for work.

Riddle: when is a pile of stones not a pile of stones? A tricky one I know, and equally perplexing was why were a group of vets, social workers and housewives, bundled up in waterproofs and wandering around a vast empty fellside trying to resolve it?

It was our second archaeological training day and our enthusiastic little band was inspecting the fellside just below the Walna Scar Road. Over the past few weeks we had been taken to the site of a burnt mound and ring cairn and enlightened by John Hodgson on the differences between Neolithic enclosures, Medieval Longhouses and Bronze Age hut circles. Now, trusted onto the fellside without his guiding hand, we were keen to show that we had been attentive students.

Our search started with a downhill sweep. Spreading across the fellside ten paces apart we scrutinised the rocks and boulders strewn in our path. Could they possibly form part of a rectilinear shape or circle? Did the surrounding grass look disturbed? Or was the fellside simply as nature had left it when abandoned by the glacier over twelve thousand years ago? We all longed to find signs of an ancient settlement. For all we knew pottery, bronze work or even human remains might lurk just below the surface. At the merest hint of human intervention we reached for a yellow marker flag and stuck it in the ground (Photo 6). The success of the training day relied on us recognising the potential of the fellside disturbances.

Later we returned to discuss and record our finds and get to grips with the latest technical equipment.



Photo 6 Team training. The eager students await the verdict of the archaeologist on their 'pile of stones'. A key part of Level 1 surveying is the temporary flagging of structures of potential interest, followed by photographic recording, rough measurement, location fixing and data recording.

What did those letters GPS stand for? Great Place to Start seemed far more apt than Global Positioning System. With the press of a button a ten figure grid reference popped up on the screen. Liz had found an excavated channel, Ricky a spoil heap. We allocated site names and numbers and took photos of the features next to red and white ranging poles for scale. We had been told to limit our photos to one or two, quite a restraint, but with a digital camera it was easy enough to erase the duff ones.

The morning had started to brighten and a skylark sang overhead as we gathered around a small pile of stones. It was then we realised we were not alone. With impeccable timing John Hodgson had appeared over the ridge and joined us. Yes, he confirmed, it probably was just that – a pile of stones – but, quick to give encouragement he declared that some of the other sites, where

yellow flags strained in the breeze, might prove more promising. All we needed was practice and time to get our 'eye in'. Buoyed by this bit of news we resumed our search. Across the valley the last vestiges of mist had lifted from the summit of Scafell Pike and the sun was poking through. Perhaps it was a sign of promise: we had learnt new skills and met new friends, next time we might even uncover some of the Duddon's hidden secrets. Surely it was just a matter of time.

Team structure and evolution

It was originally envisaged that the survey teams would operate under fairly strict control, but we quickly realised that this was neither desirable nor practical. After some discussion we agreed that each team would be given all the capability they needed in terms of

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Photo 7 Team training, here at the site of a burnt mound

training and equipment, and then allocated fairly large chunks of the fells to survey at their own pace. While the overall approach was to be standard, each team was encouraged to develop its own style and momentum.

This proved to be a crucial decision. Looking back, we can see that differences in operating styles were necessary to accommodate the varying balances and individual pressures within each team, as well as a variety of approaches to the leadership role.

It is a credit to all concerned that most of the interaction within teams and between them has been very positive, producing an overall outcome far beyond any of our expectations.

How the joint management worked

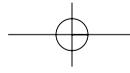
The high-level structure of the project followed a model adopted by the LDNP as a standard. At the top

was a board consisting of two senior LDNP managers, John Hodgson (the designated project leader), and the chairman of the DVLHG; the board met two or three times a year to ensure that the plan was being achieved and that the right resources were available for continued progress.

The day-to-day running of the project was carried out through the DVLHG and the team structure that had been evolved; the LDNP archaeologists provided specialist knowledge and professional organisation of the excavation.

Team leaders met on a three-monthly basis to highlight problems, report on progress and to agree and allocate survey areas. The meetings were sometimes boisterous but always meaningful and constructive.

Individuals were allocated specific responsibilities and small working groups were set up to deal with larger tasks. These ranged from communication with



local farmers and landowners to training and familiarisation in the use of a new data input system for submissions to the Lake District Historic Environment Record (LDHER) (see Chapter 8.5).

Problems along the way were to be expected and duly surfaced, but the ultimate success of the project shows that the joint management approach worked well. We received consistent support from the senior levels of LDNP and from John Hodgson and his team (who were simultaneously faced with many other demands on their time) while the DVLHG and the team structure we evolved performed reliably despite a few hiccups.

The journey from incompetence to experience

In the summer of 2006 when training was taking place it was evident that while a few people had some experience of what was being undertaken most of us had little or none. What we did have was a great deal of enthusiasm and willingness to learn, and fortunately those with knowledge were more than happy to share what they knew. In all our survey teams in the early days, helpful advice was always on hand from the more experienced members, while fierce debates could take place on minor issues as teams struggled to get interpretations right.

There is no doubt that people were ‘having fun’ – an important and often-stated objective – but at the same time, week by week, we were becoming far more capable as readers of the landscape; we would all admit that if we went back now and re-surveyed the ground covered in the first year, we would probably find things that we missed.

Individuals have achieved a level of competence that would be admired by many professionals, and this

expertise, operating within the team environment, has created a potent resource.

Success driven by the participants

Looking back as the project draws to a close we are amazed at just how much has been achieved, but even more amazed at how much time and effort has been given – probably four times as much as the original estimate (in cash-equivalent terms, about £350,000), a staggering contribution from a small local group. It has been this continued commitment by both teams and individuals in the many different aspects of the project that has underpinned its success.

It would be wrong to name specific individuals but, as in any such undertaking, there have been those who have sustained a very high and consistent input; those who have always been willing to sort out a notoriously difficult task; and those who could be relied on to step in when no other help was available. Of such people it is frequently said that ‘they know who they are’ (though frequently they never collect their medals). They were the wind in our sails, and without them we might never have set forth, or foundered long before we reached . . . but is this really the end?

New teams have been formed for the compilation of this book, the creation of a series of archaeological walks and the final feedback to participants and the wider stakeholders. Once again, talent has emerged and willing participants are engaged in new tasks; the teamwork and learning continue.

If nothing else, this book is a testament to the continued efforts of people working together to nurture and understand the environment around them; and it is a record of what they have achieved so far.

