

**Press Release**

**Summer season of community archaeology has revealed more tantalising insights into Holy Island’s past.**

The second Summer season of the Peregrini Lindisfarne Community Archaeology project on Holy Island has been successfully concluded with spectacular results.

In addition to the significant and well publicised discovery of the foundations of a possible early Anglo-Saxon chapel on the crown of The Heugh, other exciting remains were uncovered in the vicinity.

To the West of the chapel, close to the existing war memorial, further investigation was carried out on the remains of a substantial stone-built platform structure partially uncovered last year, which has been tentatively identified as the base of a tower, again possibly of Anglo-Saxon date. Mortared into the south face of the platform structure, which consisted of a single course of rough cobbles, the excavators discovered a socketed stone, thought to be a reused stone cross-base, and an external surface of small rounded cobbles in the same area. The presence of a cross-base suggests the possibility that the platform feature may have originally been the site of a ceremonial cross.

The Lantern Chapel, at the west end of The Heugh, was also investigated. This has been a poorly understood building and, in its current form, bears little resemblance to a chapel, although a chapel-like structure is depicted in this position on a map of the island dating from 1548. Excavation here seems to have confirmed the existence of this chapel by uncovering the footings of an east-west wall sitting directly upon the natural bedrock, apparently the remains of an older, narrower building on an east-west axis beneath the visible walls. A grave had been cut into the bedrock within the chapel and the disturbed remains of several individuals were found above it, but left undisturbed.

Although the dates of construction and use of the three major structures excavated on The Heugh in 2017 remain unclear, it is likely that they represent a long period of sacral activity and it is hoped that the analysis of samples taken from all three sites will provide significant additional information in the coming months.

In addition to the cultural heritage of The Heugh, the natural environment has also been studied and appreciated as part of the wider Peregrini Lindisfarne project, which has been made possible by National Lottery players thanks to a £1.37m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The whin bedrock upon which two of the excavated structures are founded has been studied by geologist Ian Kille, while the plants and animals of The Heugh and its southern shore are as inspiring now as they were to St Cuthbert and his contemporaries. Prior to this season’s excavations, the natural environment had already given some clues to the hidden secrets of The Heugh, when a botanist working on the Peregrini Whin Grassland project recently questioned why different non-whin type plants were present on parts of The Heugh; the archaeology project has answered this question, showing that these plants were growing over the sandstone chapel.

This season’s work on and around The Heugh has confirmed the importance of Holy Island in terms of its natural history and cultural heritage which combine to produce a unique and inspiring landscape. Conservation Manager, Sara Rushton said ‘*The results of this year’s excavations on The Heugh have exceeded all our expectations and will cause us to radically re-think how this narrow, exposed rocky ridge was used in the medieval and early-medieval period. These discoveries will make an important contribution to our understanding of the development of the monastery on Holy Island’*.

The significance of the archaeology and the national importance of the natural environment will require a careful balancing act and much thought as to how best to holistically manage both. The archaeological sites have been temporarily backfilled and the nationally important habitat restored in order to give the community and other stakeholders time to develop a new project to look at, interpret and manage the whole Heugh - a real legacy for the Peregrini Lindisfarne project.

**Peregrini Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership**

**Background information**

Peregrini is a landscape partnership project made up of community, voluntary and public sector organisations. The project has received £1.37m funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund and is part of their national Landscape Partnership Programme. Partner’s funds and other grants dictate that over the next three years the £1.82million project will fund a wide variety of conservation and engagement projects on Holy Island and the adjacent mainland.

The Peregrini Lindisfarne Landscape Partnership Scheme is managed by a Partnership of professional and community representatives from Holy Island and surrounding shore side area. The lead organisation for the Scheme is the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, hosted by Northumberland County Council.

Our vision for the scheme is that, *through partnership,* *Peregrini will protect, restore, enhance and manage this special place as one environment. We will draw upon our community’s close connection to its landscape, seascape, heritage and history to make the area a better place to work, live in and visit*. The project will be delivered across a three year period within which a framework will be developed with partners to safeguard the legacy of the PLPS.

The scheme area is within the north Northumberland coastal plain, a landscape of sandy coastline. The area is rich in biodiversity including five UK priority habitats, very rare plant species, rich wildlife habitats (particularly for migratory and breeding birds) and high geological and geomorphological interest. The distinctive historic heritage of the area reflects both ecclesiastical influences and the strategic defence of coast and border. Cultural heritage is entwined with connections to farming, rural industry; St Aidan, St Cuthbert and the associated monasteries, cells and hermitages; Holy Island’s association with the Golden Age of Northumbria; and the Lindisfarne Gospels most immediately reflected in its name. The scheme name was chosen to remind us of the monks and other devout itinerants who, in search of wilderness and tranquillity, built monasteries and cells on remote islands such as Lindisfarne. These people were known as Peregrini; it gives us the word pilgrim, thousands of whom regularly visit the area today.

Our six main aims are;

1. Involve and give people skills to participate fully in the conservation, management, operation and celebration of landscape heritage.
2. Protect, restore and enhance the landscape, centred on shared inter- tidal waters, bringing the mainland and island together within their marine setting.
3. The links between land, sea and shore, landscapes and historic features are presented and promoted to increase knowledge and assist economic regeneration.
4. Access to the landscape for recreation and appreciation is enhanced for as wide an audience as possible whilst being sensitive to the pressures this creates.
5. Weave the various strands of heritage into the creation of one community-led archive and holistic website.
6. As a Partnership, develop and improve agency working in the area to promote better management of heritage including plans for future management and maintenance of PLLPS sites and assets.

[www.peregrinilindisfarne.org.uk](http://www.peregrinilindisfarne.org.uk)

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

**About The Archaeological Practice Ltd**

Richard Carlton is a Director of the Archaeological Practice Ltd, with responsibilities including project management, a wide range of fieldwork and desktop research. He has a wide range of excavation and structural recording experience and has completed numerous development-led, desktop assessments, covering sites and monuments of all periods, principally in the northern region. He co-wrote the detailed documentary studies of Harbottle and Thirlwall Castles and Low Cleughs Bastle, undertaken for the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA), and has managed the programme of post-excavation analysis associated with the Harehaugh Hillfort Project, for the same authority. Most recently he has managed and contributed to the Northumberland National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park Historic Village Atlas series. His special fields of expertise are Balkan ethnography and ceramic studies, and he is currently involved in various fieldwork-based research projects in Britain and the Western Balkans. He has published extensively on the above themes.

The Archaeological Practice specialises in carrying out and reporting on archaeological and historical research for private, corporate and public clients.

They draw on a wide range of expertise to carry out work in the cultural heritage field, including archaeological assessment & evaluation, topographical & geophysical survey, historic buildings recording and community research. Areas of specialisation include Roman pottery, Roman frontiers, oral history, community archaeology, IT in archaeology and farm surveys.

Based in Newcastle and Northumberland, their staff have many years’ experience working with clients in development and control work in North Yorkshire, Durham, Cumbria, Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. In addition to development-led projects, they have carried out a variety of multidisciplinary research projects in Britain and abroad.

[www.archaeologicalpractice.co.uk/](http://www.archaeologicalpractice.co.uk/)

**About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

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