



## **A History of the Archaeology Section**

By Gemma Lewis (2007)

Updated by Nick Boldrini (2023)

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## 1 In the beginning

Before the 1970s there were no paid professional archaeologists to curate or protect the archaeological heritage of County Durham. Rescue excavations on threatened sites were carried out by volunteers, enthusiasts, and amateur archaeologists who recognised the vulnerability of the archaeology of the County from the threats of development and mineral extraction.

The curators of the Bowes Museum protected the archaeology where possible, by collecting archaeological finds or being involved with rescue excavations when archaeology was exposed. Curators such as Thomas Wake were involved in rescue excavations, including that at Scargill in 1946 where a landslide revealed a Roman shrine and altar. Had the site not been excavated it is likely that the altar would have severely damaged and perhaps even destroyed, along with other archaeological evidence. The curators of the Bowes Museum and amateur archaeologists also prevented the removal of many wonderful artefacts found in the county to other regional and national museums.



*From left to right, Frank Simpson, Ian Richmond, Thomas Wake and Richard Wright with the Scargill altar in 1946*



*Scargill Altar 1946*

Other staff at the Bowes Museum were also involved in protecting and promoting archaeology. Michael Wheeler, under the aegis of the Education Officer at the Bowes Museum, also promoted understanding of the county's archaeology in the 1970s. Michael also developed the outreach and educational resources of the Archaeology Section.

## 2 The 1970s

In the early-to-mid 1970s David Austin and Peter Clack were employed by the Department of the Environment to conduct the Northern Archaeological Survey, resulting in the two-volume '*Archaeology in the North*' published in 1975. The information which they compiled was based on Ordnance Survey cards, supplemented by a collection of aerial photographs. The resulting archive became the Local Information Collection, which Peter Clack continued to maintain when the Department of the Environment kept him on as County Field Officer.

Meanwhile, at the Bowes Museum, Georgina Plowright was employed as the first Antiquities Assistant in 1971, when she began to structure the collection of archaeological material which had been acquired since 1956 and establish the collecting area for the Museum following County re-organisation. Georgina was also involved with the important rescue excavations in the civil settlement (*vicus*) beside the Roman fort at Greta Bridge and was ably assisted by a number of volunteers, including Ann Biggs, Arthur Woodhead, and Parkin Raine.

Georgina left to continue a career in museums and was replaced by Rick Jones who worked, amongst other things, on raising the importance of archaeology in the planning and development control system. The post was also re-classified as Antiquities Officer with Rick's appointment. During this time the Archaeology Section's numbers increased as a result of funding from the MSC (Manpower Services Commission) which allowed many keen but unemployed graduates to acquire their first experience of professional archaeology. Among the staff at this time was Ian Ferris, who went on to direct the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, and Tim Smit, who later took a different direction by rescuing the "Lost Gardens of Heligan".

Rick also directed extensive excavations at Binchester Roman fort and took a leading role in ensuring that the County Council took part of the site into guardianship and opened it to public access. The Archaeology Section has continued to run the site ever since. During the period 1977-1978, two further large-scale archaeological surveys were conducted in the county; one of the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment and the other of the Coal Measures area. These and previous surveys demonstrated the requirement for archaeological consultation in areas vulnerable to large-scale mineral extraction, and the subsequent need for a Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the county. The Durham Sites and Monuments Record was the last of the County SMRs to be established in England.

Rick left to become a lecturer at Bradford University in 1978 and was replaced by Dennis Coggins who, with his long-time collaborator Dr. Ken Fairless, undertook numerous and significant excavations on prehistoric and early medieval sites in upper Teesdale. Some of these, such as Simy Folds and Forcegarth Pasture, he had begun when he was a lecturer at Middleton St George College. Dennis also relocated the Archaeology Section to the West

Lodge at Bowes where it would remain for the next decade, although initially with few facilities. This included having no telephone, which for a short time resulted in the Museum general office having to put up a sign in a top floor window to let those in the lodge know there was a call for them!

In the 1970s, the information of the fledgling SMR was based on Ordnance Survey cards and aerial photographs. However, the paper records which made up the SMR were split physically between the University of Durham and the Bowes Museums, an arrangement that made consulting these records rather difficult.

By the 1980s, all District Councils in the county were sending their lists of planning applications to the Antiquities Officer who checked these lists against the various maps and cards of the SMR in order to ascertain if the development was likely to be harmful to known archaeological sites. The Antiquities Officer, when necessary, would request conditions to be placed on the planning applications that would help protect or at least record this archaeology. Funding for such work was also requested from developers but sometimes the requests for both conditions and funding were unsuccessful.

### 3 The 1980s

By the 1980s, the SMR records were becoming difficult to maintain and were even more inaccessible. The threat to archaeological sites and landscapes in County Durham was ongoing because of continuing development and additional resources were required to monitor planning applications. A project was instigated by (amongst others) Dr Colin Haselgrove and Professor Rosemary Cramp to provide a computerised SMR. In 1984, Percival Turnbull was employed by Durham University to put together an application for funding in order to pull all the data of the SMR together and to compile a digitised SMR. Following negotiations between Durham University, Durham County Council and English Heritage, Percival was appointed as the first (temporary) Sites and Monuments Record Officer. The post was funded by English Heritage and based in the Department of Archaeology, Durham University. The priority was to digitise all of the existing information with the help of the staff of NUMAC (the Northumbrian Universities Multiple Access Computer). Percival would fill in endless batches of *pro forma* sheets and the NUMAC staff would punch it in as numbered fields, which could be translated by any relational database. Eventually, the data was transferred to a PC system. The computer (a Sirius computer) had as much memory as a 2007 pocket calculator.

By 1987, an up-to-date record of the known archaeology of County Durham was in place and funding of the SMR was gradually transferred to Durham County Council. The SMR was transferred entirely to the Bowes Museum upon completion. In the same year, Mary Lakin was appointed as the first permanent SMR Officer. In 1989, John Pickin was appointed as Antiquities Officer, the last person to hold that title. John replaced Dennis Coggins when the latter retired.

Between 1989 and 1992 the archaeology section at The Bowes Museum was involved in a joint archaeology project with Cleveland County Council during major roadworks on the A66 between Bowes and the Cumbria county boundary. Funded by English Heritage, this was one of the largest highway archaeology schemes in the country at the time and included landscape survey, excavation within the Rey Cross Roman marching camp and Bowes Moor signal station and a successful programme of public interpretation.

In the mid 1980s, a major project was undertaken to assess the potential of the county in various areas. The Durham Archaeological Survey (1983 – 1988) was carried out by Department of Archaeology, Durham University. The project involved a desk-based assessment of 10 study areas over the County, in some case crossing the borders into neighbouring authority areas. These study areas were chosen to cover a variety of landscape types, and as much of the areas as possible were fieldwalked.

## 4 The 1990s

This was a transitional period for the Archaeology Section which included the start of SMR-based Development Control (DC) advice in response to the implementation of PPG16 (Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 16). PPG16 was published by the Secretary of State in 1990 and set out the government's policy that archaeological remains should be given proper consideration in the planning system. It assigned responsibility for the funding of any archaeological work necessary to mitigate the effects of development to the person or organisation developing the site. With the advent of PPG16 and a greater role for archaeological advice in the planning process, Mary Lakin soon found much of her time taken up with Development Control work.

Henceforth, as in the rest of the country, development-engendered archaeological works would be undertaken by commercial archaeological contractors in accordance with a brief or specification of works prepared by the local authority archaeological officer. Ann Biggs, formerly an excavator at Piercebridge and Binchester, was appointed on a part time contract to assist with DC works and the Bowes collections. Ann's part time role, originally intended as a short-term measure, actually lasted until 2003 when she retired.

In 1990, a grant-aided SMR assistant post was set up, and Linda Smith was appointed. This involved the use of Superfile on a Compaq Deskpro 386/20e with a 110Mb disc. At the end of this post Linda was kept on to help with SMR searches and Development Control.

Between 1990 and 1991, the Department of Archaeology, Durham University carried out the Durham City Archaeological Conservation and Management Project, also known as the Urban Archaeological Database (UAD) project. This project had a number of strands: one was to analyse the Development of Durham City over time; another was to create a database system to maintain and update the information gathered for the project. This information was then used to come up with a strategy for dealing with archaeology through the planning process. The project was published in the Durham Archaeological Journal of 1993.

Mary remained as SMR Officer until 1991, when she left to take up the post of County Archaeologist for North Yorkshire. Linda Smith took over the post of SMR officer until she also left, and Niall Hammond was appointed to the role in late 1991.

When John Pickin left the Council in 1994, the role of Antiquities Officer came to an end and the new post of County Archaeologist was established. This was a significant achievement as, despite archaeology now having the status of a material consideration in the planning process, there had been difficulties persuading the County Council of the need for this post. Durham was the last English county to take on a County Archaeologist.



The first County Archaeologist in Durham was Niall Hammond. The advent of the County Archaeologist post coincided with the disappearance of the post of SMR Officer. This post was replaced by that of Assistant Archaeology Officer, who had the task of assisting with Development Control whilst also maintaining the collections still held at The Bowes Museum and managing Binchester Roman Fort. Work also continued in surveying the archaeology of the County. Pip Robinson was involved in a number of projects in the Section which included a survey of DMVs (Deserted Medieval Villages) and a rescue excavation in Barnard Castle. Gerda Pickin also did several short-term contracts in 1990-1991.

Samantha Middleton became the Assistant Archaeology Officer in 1994 and played a key role in a major redisplay of the archaeology galleries at Bowes Museum between 1994-1997. Sam started regular and productive dialogue with local metal-detectorist groups, especially the Dunelm Club which assisted with surveys at Binchester and Piercebridge. The Archaeology Section also developed the Dere Street Trail to encourage people to visit the Dere Street Roman forts on their way to Hadrian's Wall.

In 1996, to celebrate the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Neville's Cross, the Section staged a series of events in conjunction with the University and Cathedral. The events included a trial excavation (which didn't find anything), a battle re-enactment, and a number of lectures.



*Sam in 1996 on National Archaeology Day*

Between 1997 and 2003, the Accelerate Scheduling Program was carried out to identify sites and monuments within the County Durham landscape, which were suitable for scheduling, as part of the wider national Monuments Protection Programme. Multiple field visits were completed, mainly from

January to March of each year, to assess monument survival, to describe the site's features and surrounding landscape and to consider whether the structures should be protected through scheduling.

Iain Watson, head of Durham Studies and a forward thinker in IT projects, initiated the Durham Record, a project to digitise and catalogue huge numbers of archive photos and make them publicly accessible on PCs in libraries across Durham. A decision was made to include an edited version of the SMR on this system, and so in 1995 the Durham SMR became the first English SMR to be fully searchable by the public. A few years later in 1999, with wonderful support from amongst others David Harris at DCC IT, a fully searchable SMR went live on the internet. It was the first SMR in the UK to be online and available to the public.

To search for archaeological and historical sites in Co. Durham fill in one or more of the boxes below using the picklists where provided, and then click on the search button. Use the reset button to begin a new search.

**SMR No:**

All sites on the SMR have an individual number, if you know the number enter it here.

**Place name:**

Select the name of a town, village or area of Co. Durham you are interested in.

**Type of archaeological site:**

There are many hundreds of site types from castles to villages.

**Historic Period:**

Select the historic period in which you are interested.

**Grid reference:**

If you know the British Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site enter it here using a four figure reference e.g. NZ2532.

**Protected Sites:**

A small number of archaeological sites, landscapes and buildings have special legal protection and designations.

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Screen from the first online SMR in 1999

Throughout the 1990s, several significant excavations were also undertaken at Andrew's Hill and Seaham (both Anglo-Saxon cemeteries); along the A66 corridor, on the Roman forts at Chester-le-Street and Binchester; and on lead-mining remains at Rookhope, among other places.

Throughout this period the Archaeology Section remained responsible for managing Binchester Roman Fort, and a steady stream of seasonal wardens all provided sterling service and education to countless visitors - children and adults alike. Funding from DCC Economic Development Department in 1993 allowed significant improvements at Binchester with a new car park, access,

and interpretation in order for Binchester to become an important part of the Dere Street Trail.

A Roman bather mannequin - "Claude" was installed in the bathhouse at Binchester along with several wall hangings. Claude was a star of the Archaeology Section for a number of years, and only once did he leave his post, when the site was broken into. Claude disappeared only to send a postcard from Spain and then mysteriously return to his original position some weeks later wearing a flowery Hawaiian-style shirt and flip-flops - none the worse for wear but missing the ends of some fingers!



*Claude on duty at Binchester*

By the late 1990s it was increasingly clear that the lack of a post dedicated solely to development control was putting an unreasonable strain on the section. An agreement was made to create a new post which was initially funded by English Heritage. Sam Middleton left the Council and two new appointments were made; Fiona Macdonald as Development Control Officer, and Deborah Anderson who had responsibility for collections and outreach. Deborah began the first Time Detectives excavations beginning at Coxhoe Hall (which continued yearly until 2005). Time Detectives, through funding from the New Opportunities Fund, helped young people aged 12-16 years old to get involved with archaeological activities during the summer holidays.



*Niall, Fiona and Deborah on Meet the Ancestors*

## 5 2000s - Until Local Government Review

In 2000 The Archaeology Section was relocated from the Bowes Museum and moved into the Durham Studies Department which was part of the newly created Arts, Libraries and Museums department based at County Hall in Durham City. At this time, the Bowes Museum also became an independent museum, no longer part of DCC, though DCC continued with a role to assist them for some time. Deborah continued to care for the archaeology collections at the Bowes Museum until 2005.

In addition, during this period the Archaeology Section become involved in National Archaeology Day and in 2000 the Bowes Museum organised one of the biggest National Archaeology Days in the Country.

During 1999 and into 2000, two ground-breaking projects were initiated in partnership with Northumberland County Council Archaeology Section. A grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund funded "*Keys to the Past*", a more accessible, online version of the SMRs of the two counties. In addition, the New Opportunities Fund funded "*Past Perfect*", the creation of computer-generated 'virtual reality' models of several Durham and Northumberland archaeological sites, together with digital access to their archives.

Back in 1956, Bowes Museum had been taken over by Durham County Council. In August 2000, the trusteeship of the Bowes Museum passed from Durham County Council to the Bowes Museum Trust, and was again an independent museum. The archaeology collection, most of which related to the period 1956 – 2000, was still housed at the Museum, but it was curated by the Archaeology Section.

Fiona Macdonald was seconded briefly to the DCC "Best Value" team in 2000/2001 and Nick Boldrini was appointed, on a short-term contract to act as DC Officer. Nick left when his contract finished and joined North Yorkshire Archaeology Section.





*Nick with Time Detectives in 2001*

In 2001 Fiona replaced Niall as County Archaeologist when he left to work for the Ministry of Defence.

In 2001 a survey of charcoal pits in Upper Teesdale was carried out by Tom Gledhill, with funding from the Countryside Agency, English Nature, the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Yorkshire Archaeological Society. Over 370 pits as well as over 30 bloomeries were identified in the walkover survey.

Andy Platell was contracted from Archaeological Services University of Durham on a temporary basis in 2002 to provide cover for the DC post.

David Petts joined the Section in 2002 to project manage *Keys to the Past* and later to undertake the preparation of a Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment in the North East. David also carried out the first stages of the preparation of a Research Framework for Hadrian's Wall before leaving to become a Lecturer of Archaeology at the University of Chester. Both projects were collaborations with Durham University's Archaeology Department.



*David Petts on the Sedgefield Open Day 2006*

In 2002, Time Team visited East Park, Sedgefield, and carried out a large-scale geophysical survey followed up by selective sampling excavation which confirmed the existence of a significant and previously unknown Roman settlement.

In 2003 Lee White became responsible for development control.

From 2004 - 2006 a survey of Stanhope medieval deer park was carried out under the auspices of the Friends of Killhope museum, with part funding by Durham County Council. This was managed by Tom Gledhill and Ros Nicholl. This involved a landscape survey, and recording of earthworks, and over 1300 records were added to the HER as a result of this work.

The Rock Art Project also began in 2004 in conjunction with Northumberland County Council Archaeological Section. Teams of volunteers were recruited and trained to record and survey prehistoric rock art sites across both Counties.

In 2004 David Mason replaced Fiona MacDonald as County Archaeologist, when she left to become the Principal Archaeologist for Berkshire Archaeology.

In 2005, East Park, Sedgefield was chosen as the site for a new joint initiative undertaken with Archaeological Services Durham University in which undergraduate fieldwork training was followed by a community excavation. Further summer seasons followed in 2006 - 2008. Members of the public were encouraged to try their hand at excavation; some people came just for a day, others enjoyed it so much they came back every week. In 2007 a young person's excavation day was also run for those in the 7-11 age-range.



*Sedgefield Excavation 2006*

In 2005, Gemma Lewis became the temporary Assistant Archaeology Officer appointed to cover Deborah's maternity leave and was involved with the DCC Museum Accreditation application.

In 2005, the Weardale Society and Groundwork West Durham commissioned 5 surveys of the historic settlement patterns of a number of Weardale villages. The survey was carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates and Archaeo-Environment Ltd.

In 2005, the first Archaeology Day was organised at County Hall and in 2006 the first *Archaeology County Durham* magazine was published, enabling the work of Durham County Council Archaeology Section, professional contracting units and local amateur groups to be disseminated to a wider audience for the first time.

In August 2006, the Archaeology Section moved from the annexe building beside County Hall to a new office building a short distance away known as the Rivergreen Centre.

The Archaeology Section also vigorously pursued external sources of funding to undertake or commission research projects that would increase our knowledge of the county's archaeology. This is particularly important because, in comparison with neighbouring North Yorkshire and Northumberland, County Durham has had relatively little investment in archaeological research. Thus it was that in 2006 Hannah Wiggins joined the Section as a Project Officer to carry out the English Heritage-funded Historic Landscape Characterisation project.

Another project, the Aggregate areas in County Durham Archaeological Assessment Project was carried out in 2006 – 2007. This involved transcription of sites visible on aerial photographs over a large area of the county, as well as



the publication of monograph on the project. This was funded by English Heritage, through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. A publication of the 1970s excavation at Piercebridge Roman fort was also funded by English Heritage, again through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

Gemma carried out the first SMR Audit in 2007 which, with funding from English Heritage, assessed the SMR computer and hard copy systems against national standards, and identified areas for improvement.

In 2007, Matthew Symonds replaced David Petts to take the Hadrian's Wall Research Framework through to completion.



*David and Hannah during the Time Team visit to Hamsterley in 2007*



*Matt with a Time Team's Land Rover at Binchester*



*Lee, Gemma and Julie Hawthorn (Community Heritage Officer) at Easington Primary School, for the WW2 outreach day in 2007*

Between 2007 and 2008, the North East Coast National Mapping Programme Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment Survey (NERCZA) was carried out, another aerial photograph transcription project funded by English Heritage as part of a national coastal assessment programme. Phase 2 of the project also involved some fieldwork to assess selected sites in more detail.

In April 2008 Gemma Lewis, left for another post.

In April 2008, Dr Robert Collins, Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) for the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) joined the authority following the closure of the Hancock Museum, where they had been previously based. The Portable Antiquities Scheme allows archaeological objects found by the public, including metal detector users, to be recorded onto a publicly accessible database. A team from the PAS has been with DCCAS ever since, and their history is given separately.

In July 2008, Matt Symonds left DCC after having completed the Hadrian's Wall Research Framework.

Between December 2008 and June 2009, Archaeo-Environment Ltd carried out a Historic Environment Audit for the Limestone Landscapes Project. This project looked at HER data, but also involved a trawl of First Edition Ordnance Survey maps to identify new sites.

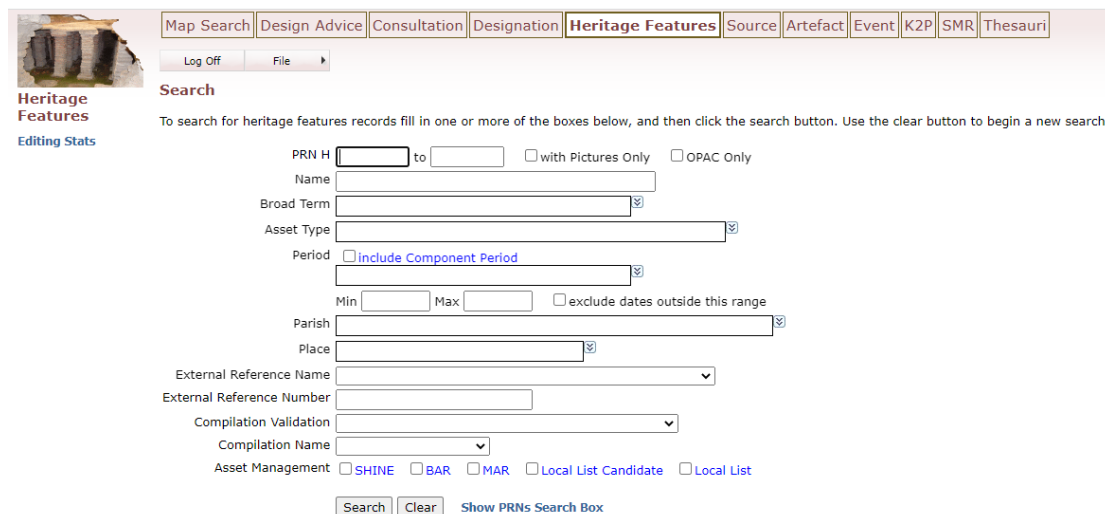
In January 2009, Clare Henderson joined the authority as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Institute of Field Archaeologists workplace Learning Bursary scheme, with the role of Trainee Assistant Historic Environment Record Officer.

## 6 Local Government review and into the 20-teens

Darlington became a Unitary Authority in circa 1996, and until 2009, the SMR served a two-tier local authority structure, being based at the County Council, but also serving the seven district authorities of Durham City, Derwentside, Easington, Chester-le-Street, Sedgfield, Teesdale and Wear Valley as well as Darlington Borough Council. In April 2009, as part of Local Government Reform (LGR), the area of County Durham became one authority, with all 7 districts and the County Council merging, though Darlington remained separate. The archaeology service still provides an advice and information service to Darlington.

Also in April 2009, the Archaeology team moved from Arts, Libraries and Museums to become part of Regeneration and Economic Development (REDs) Directorate.

In April 2009 most of the data was transferred from the SMR software into a new data structure. At this time, the SMR officially began to be called an HER (Historic Environment Record) to reflect the step change that this migration represented. The data was separated out into different modules to better reflect national standards for recording. At this time, the UAD digital data was also imported into the HER. It had not been updated since creation and was subsequently cleaned and enhanced by a project which completed in 2012.



The screenshot displays the 'Heritage Features' search interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with tabs for 'Map Search', 'Design Advice', 'Consultation', 'Designation', 'Heritage Features' (selected), 'Source', 'Artefact', 'Event', 'K2P', 'SMR', and 'Thesauni'. Below the menu are 'Log Off' and 'File' buttons. The main heading is 'Heritage Features' with a sub-link 'Editing Stats'. A search instruction reads: 'To search for heritage features records fill in one or more of the boxes below, and then click the search button. Use the clear button to begin a new search.' The search form includes the following fields and options:

- PRN H: [ ] to [ ]  with Pictures Only  OPAC Only
- Name: [ ]
- Broad Term: [ ]
- Asset Type: [ ]
- Period:  Include Component Period [ ]
- Min: [ ] Max: [ ]  exclude dates outside this range
- Parish: [ ]
- Place: [ ]
- External Reference Name: [ ]
- External Reference Number: [ ]
- Compilation Validation: [ ]
- Compilation Name: [ ]
- Asset Management:  SHINE  BAR  MAR  Local List Candidate  Local List

At the bottom of the form are 'Search', 'Clear', and 'Show PRNs Search Box' buttons.

### *Screen Grab of HER software in December 2022*

In September 2009 Deborah Anderson, Assistant County Archaeologist, left the authority, and in January 2010, Clare Henderson was appointed to this post.

In 2009 – 2011 the Miner-Farmer Landscapes of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) National Mapping Project (NMP) was carried out. Only small part of this project was within the County Durham area.

In 2009, a new campaign of work started at Binchester. Through a collaboration between DCCAS, Durham University, Stanford University, Texas Technical

University and the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, work continued until 2015. Areas of the fort's defences were investigated, as were most of a cavalry barrack as well as areas of the vicus, including a bath house.

Although funding for a new HER Officer post had been secured from English Heritage some time previously, LGR delayed the setting up of this post, which was not advertised until December 2009, with Nicholas Boldrini taking up the post of HER Officer (HERO) in June 2010.

After this appointment, another phase of HER development started, with the HERO leading the development. A new module was added to the HER to record Designations in January 2011, and the final migration of data into the correct modules was completed in January 2012.

In 2010, the excavations at Binchester from 1976 – 1981 and 1986 – 1991 were published in two volumes by DCC as “The Beautiful Rooms are Empty”.

Partially as a way to resolve issues still hanging over from LGR, and partially as a response to budgetary pressures, REDs restructured in 2011. This resulted with the County Archaeologist's post being re-designated as the Principal Archaeologist in October 2011, and the Assistant Archaeology Officers being re-designated as Senior Archaeologists in November 2011.

The Landscape partnership project Heart of Teesdale was carried out between 2011 and 2016. This involved an audit of the project area to identify key features, and one outcome was a field barn survey across the area.

In 2012 an HER Audit was carried out. Originally this was planned as a 5 yearly update of the previous audit, but due to the software change, a full audit was carried out and identified various improvements for the team to work on.

In 2012, the first Archaeological Trigger Map was produced for Darlington. The aim of this was to identify areas where the team wanted to automatically be consulted for Planning Applications, rather than having to request them.

In April 2012, the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project was finished, and the HLC Officer, Hannah Wiggins, moved to another post within the authority.

In 2013, another Landscape Partnership Project was carried out known as the “River Tees Rediscovered” project. This involved a heritage audit of the project area, the lower part of the River Tees.

A further landscape project involving a heritage audit was carried out in 2014, with the “Land of Oak and Iron” Project. This project was run by Gateshead Council but included areas in the north of County Durham as part of its remit.

In 2013, Nick Boldrini, a member of the Territorial Army, was mobilised to serve in Afghanistan, and was away for the whole year, with his post being temporarily

backfilled by Peter Rowe, the HER Officer at Tees Archaeology, on secondment.

From 2014 - 2018 the Heritage Lottery Funded *Durham at War* project was carried out, which also funded a temporary HER assistant post for 4 months in 2013 and 2014. The position was held by Ben Dyson who carried out World War I (WWI) related enhancements such as inclusion of war memorials on the HER. The project also funded a LIDAR project using members of the community to hunt for remains of possible WWI sites. Results for WWI sites were limited, but a number of other sites were added to the HER.

In 2015, with funding from English Heritage, the HER was added to the Heritage Gateway online service, to allow it to be viewed and searched against other relevant data sets.

In June 2015 Lee McFarlane (formerly White) left to join Historic England. Financial constraints meant her post was not immediately replaced, and the HERO had to start Development Management work for Darlington. In November, a temporary Archaeology Officer was set up for a year, and Lauren Proctor left the PAS to take up the role. Despite various temporary posts since this date (mainly for HER enhancement), this was effectively a 25% reduction in the team's permanent capacity.

In 2015 – 2016, it was agreed to roll out the Trigger Map previously produced for Darlington across County Durham.

Between 2015 and 2017, the North of England Civic Trust and Lanchester Parish Council carried out the Lanchester Community Heritage Audit project, which involved using HER data as a basis for assessing and recording all the heritage of the parish.

In 2015 and 2016, Archaeo-Environment Ltd, in conjunction with local community groups, carried out a historic environment audit of the line of the Stockton and Darlington railway, funded by the Local Authorities along the route.

In July 2016 Clare Henderson left the team, and the HER officer was required to take on more Development Management and Countryside work. In October 2016 Lauren Proctor was appointed as the new Senior Archaeologist. However, the switch of the HERO role to cover more DM and Countryside work remains in place, with the loss in capacity being felt in the area of HER development and enhancement. The latter is now mainly carried out by HER volunteers, and temporary posts.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery fund, The Archaeological Practice Ltd carried out a Heritage audit for the Bright Water Landscape Partnership area in 2016. This project covered the area of the River Skerne in south west Durham. Further community projects were also planned as part of this partnership including excavations at: East Park Sedgfield; Walworth and Archdeacon Newton Medieval Villages; historic building recording, and the Carr Lands



project, aiming to gather and interpret paleo-environmental data. All were completed eventually, despite delays caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

In 2016 and 2017, Durham University carried out further excavations at Binchester, investigating the cemetery south-east of the fort. Further work was commissioned by The Auckland Project, and led by Northern Archaeological Associates, with community volunteers excavating the north-east fort defences and the associated roads.

When the HLC officer left in 2012, there was still some work to complete, regarding the project. One element was to make the HLC available on the internet, and following completion of the relevant manuals, this was achieved when the website went live in 2017. Further work to enable the digital archiving of the project with the Archaeology Data Service was completed in 2019 (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1055090> ).

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## County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)

Hannah Wiggins, Nicholas Boldrini, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.5284/1055090>. [How to cite using this DOI](#)

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### Historic Landscape Characterisation

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*DCCAS HLC on ADS website Jan 2023*

### Introduction

The County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation (CD&D HLC) is part of a wider programme of characterisation undertaken throughout England.

Using techniques and methods refined through two decades of HLC creation in England, the CD&D HLC attempts to tease apart the palimpsest landscape into its component parts, recording these changes in order to document how the landscape has changed. The results are then used to judge trajectory of change and guide decision-making in the future, in order to manage and retain the character of an area.

The HLC is available as a resource for all researchers, both private and commercial, and can be used as a framework and springboard for other research projects. It consists of a main report, a secondary report considering all landscape classification types, and a database. This data records the character of the landscape of CD&D over thousands of years.

In addition to the archived dataset, the online version of the HLC can also be found here: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/hlc>



In 2017 another HER Audit was carried out. This again identified areas for improvement for the HER.

In February 2018, the Limestone Landscape project data was finally imported into the HER, with data checking and cleaning being carried out by volunteers.

In 2018 – 2019, the Trigger Map for DCC was updated, but at the request of planning it was altered slightly to show areas of high potential. This involved more work on the data to make it fit this purpose. Following on from this, it was decided to also update the Darlington map in a similar fashion, and this was delivered to them in 2022.

In 2018, Bowes Museum indicated that they no longer wanted to be an archaeological archive, and an agreement was reached for DCC to take over the role of county archaeological repository. Transfer of the material occurred

in 2019, with the material being deposited at Seven Hills. New racking for the material was installed and then gradual sorting happened with volunteer help from 2020 onwards interrupted at various times due to Lockdowns associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Between 2018 and 2019, the area of Stockton and Darlington Railway was identified as a Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) by Historic England and an aerial photograph and LIDAR transcription project was carried out along the route. A similar project was also carried out in another HAZ identified at Bishop Auckland, between 2019 and 2021.

In 2019, internal funding was found to set up a temporary Archaeology Assistant post to help with HER enhancement and help prepare for the impending move out of County Hall. This post was filled by Emma Watson, who had previously been an HER volunteer.

As part of a national strategy, Historic England decided to give its National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE - formerly the National Monuments Record and the Excavation Index) data to all HERs, and partially fund its incorporation into the HER, before ceasing to manage the data. Durham started this process in 2019, and as of 2023, this is still ongoing.

## **7 Twenty Twenties**

The twenties started badly with the COVID 19 pandemic. This disrupted all aspects of life, and in particular for the section led to the almost complete cessation of any volunteering work within the HER, though fieldwork projects were eventually able to restart with suitable mitigation in place.

However, on a more positive note, as a result of the NRHE to HER project, the temporary Archaeology Assistant post was extended for a year, ending in December 2020.

In March 2021, the Local Listing Pilot project was started with funding from National Government. This targeted 6 areas for a Local List to be set up – Sedgfield, Shildon and the Stockton and Darlington railway Corridor, Stainton and Raby, Sacriston, Bishop Auckland, Shotley Bridge.

Partially with the Local List funding, but also with some left over NRHE to HER funds, another Temporary Assistant post was set up in 2021, again filled by Emma Watson.

In October 2021, the Past Perfect website was finally taken offline. Keys to the Past remains online, though it has been moved to new platforms more than once since its inception – the last time in March 2022.

In March 2022, Lauren Pratt left on Maternity leave. It took until May to get cover appointed, and this was Emma Watson.

This left the Archaeology Assistant post vacant, and in October 2022 Mark Randerson was appointed for what remained of this post.

In March 2023, Lauren Pratt left DCC, not having returned from Maternity leave, and Emma Watson took on the role as Senior Archaeologist as a permanent appointment.

At the time of writing, Mark is still in post (August 2023).



## 8 Staff Listing

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Staff Name</b>	<b>Job Titles</b>
1971 – 197?	Georgina Plowright	Antiquities Assistant
197? - 1978	Rick Jones	Antiquities Officer
1978 - 1989	Dennis Coggins	Antiquities Officer
1984? - 1987	Percival Turnbull	Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) Officer
1987 - 1991	Mary Lakin (Fraser)	SMR Officer
1989 - 1994	John Pickin	Antiquities Officer
1990	Linda Smith	SMR assistant
1991	Linda Smith	SMR Officer
1991	Niall Hammond	SMR Officer
1994	Niall Hammond	County Archaeologist
1994 – 199?	Samantha Middleton	Assistant Archaeology Officer
199? - 2001	Fiona Macdonald	Development Control (DC) Officer
199? - 2009	Deborah Anderson	Assistant Archaeology Officer Collections and outreach
2001	Nick Boldrini	DC Officer (Temporary)
2001 - 2011	Fiona Macdonald	County Archaeologist
2002	Andy Platell	DC Officer (Temporary)
2003 - 2011	Lee White (McFarlane)	DC Officer
2002 - 2007	David Petts	Keys to the Past Officer
2004 - 2011	David Mason	County Archaeologist
2005 - 2008	Gemma Lewis	Assistant Archaeology Officer
2006 - 2012	Hannah Wiggins	Historic Landscape Characterisation Officer
2007 - 2008	Matthew Symonds	Hadrians Wall Research Framework Officer

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Staff Name</b>	<b>Job Titles</b>
2009 - 2011	Clare Henderson	Trainee Assistant HER Officer.
<b>2010 - Present</b>	<b>Nick Boldrini</b>	<b>HER Officer</b>
<b>2011 – Present</b>	<b>David Mason</b>	<b>Principal Archaeologist</b>
2011 - 2015	Lee White (McFarlane)	Senior Archaeologist
2011 - 2016	Clare Henderson	Senior Archaeologist
2013	Peter Rowe	HER Officer (Temporary)
2015 - 2016	Lauren Proctor (Pratt)	Archaeology Officer
2016 - 2023	Lauren Proctor (Pratt)	Senior Archaeologist
2019 - 2020	Emma Watson	Archaeology Assistant
2021 - 2023	Emma Watson	Archaeology Assistant
<b>2023 - Present</b>	<b>Emma Watson</b>	<b>Senior Archaeologist</b>
<b>2023 – Present</b>	<b>Mark Randerson</b>	<b>Archaeology Assistant</b>