



## **MILLOM AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

**DECEMBER 2022-NOVEMBER 2023**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- A) To promote and encourage interest in and research into the local history of Millom and its surrounding areas.
- B) To arrange events and activities which will cater for the above, including lectures, outings and exhibitions.
- C) To acquire funding to commission relevant geophysical surveys and archaeological digs within Millom and its surrounding areas.

#### **Committee**

The committee meets monthly to discuss and agree the programme, projects, funding bids, etc. Current members are: Jan Bridget, chair; Liz North, treasurer; Jonathan Powell; Geoff and Margaret Edmondson; we currently do not have a secretary. Louise Thomson and Kathryn Miller have resigned.

#### **Facebook**

Our Facebook group now has 1,251 members. It is fairly active with new posts several times a week and members participating in discussions. It is the main method we use to communicate with people, although not everyone is on Facebook!

#### **Website**

Our website, which we regularly up-date, is another communication method. Here are the statistics for the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 to 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023: Unique visitors to site: 2,098; Pages downloaded: 4,816; Hits: 41,330.

#### **Other Publicity**

As well as our Facebook Group and Website, when we are holding events we design posters and distribute them around Millom and Haverigg and sometimes in Broughton-in-Furness, as well as posting on other relevant Facebook groups and emailing Cumbria Local History Federation who include details in their mail outs.

We also send out regular press releases and had a friendly newspaper reporter who included our news items in the local media. However, we have yet to replace him. This year we have had excellent news items reported including information about the six axe heads Josh Carr found not too far from the castle – this was covered in several news outlets as well as local television. There have been follow-up articles on the launch of our book *Millom and District: Prehistoric Past*; our Geophys Project and most recently the toy cannon Stephen and Josh Carr found with information about our event,

## **Events**

### **11<sup>th</sup> February 2023: Millom and District: Prehistoric Past Launch**

We held a launch event of the above book at Holy Trinity and 86 people attended. Jan Bridget spoke about the booklet; Duane Farren talked about his Prehistoric finds and the footprints on the Duddon Shore and Josh Carr shared his excitement at finding four Bronze Age axe heads (he went on to find a further two).

### **4th March 2023: Medieval Millom and Later**

Sixty-five people attended the event. The first speaker, Daniel Elsworth, gave an overview of the early medieval period in Cumbria. The second speaker, Fiona Pervez, told us about Ranulph le Mechine, the Strong Man of Cumbria. The final speaker, Professor Angus Winchester, told us about Millom Castle manorial records

### **3rd June 2023: Charter Day**

As usual we organised an event on the Saturday of Charter Weekend. This included arts and crafts stalls, live music with Mel Holmr as well as an amazing dulcimer player, Ken Battersby. Josh Carr ran a metal detecting practical and the new Finds Liaison Officer came to meet local detectorists and help to identify objects they had found.

### **24th June 2023: Holy Trinity and Millom Castle Geophys Survey**

Sixty-seven people attended this event which was to share the background to, and the findings of, the magnetometer survey conducted in the fields around the church and castle. Twelve volunteers took part in the survey. A write-up and the reports can be found on the Projects page of our website.

### **9th September 2023: Medieval Hunting**

Forty-five people attended this session. Visitors were greeted by Adrian Powell and his Harris Hawk, Ducky, then as folk entered the church they were entertained by Ken Battersby playing medieval music on his dulcimer. The event was based around a possible Tudor Hawking Whistle introduced by Josh Carr who found the whistle in the vicinity of Millom Castle.

The chair, Jan Bridget, began her presentation by sharing a recording of the poem The Battle of Hastings read by the author, Marriott Edgar, then gave an overview of Medieval Hunting with special emphasis on the Deer Parks at Millom and Ulpha.

Richard Greer shared some of his research Hunting in Medieval Furness.

And finally, Iain McNicol, archaeologist and re-enactment artist, shared and explained some of the medieval equipment he has made.

The presentations/papers can be accessed on our website under News.

### **11th November 2023: Millom Castle and the English Civil War**

Forty-eight people attended this event, many had not been to our events before. Although the presenters were Jan Bridget and member Sue Lawson, this was very much a team effort with members conducting research, retrieving articles from the archives and helping to transcribe original documents. We also liaised with the Beggar's Youth Theatre encouraging them to make a sound recording of a member a reading of one of the documents we found. The research uncovered whilst preparing for the event has led to a new project, to conduct further research and write *Millom Castle, the Huddlestons and the English Civil War* which we hope to launch on the 380<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the siege of Millom Castle.

### **Groups**

We have helped to facilitate the establishment of two groups:

#### **Prehistoric Appreciation Group**

The group began on 22nd July and has had four meetings, all held at Millom Library, on the fourth Saturday in the month, 10-12.

There are several core members with new members/visitors joining each month. All have a love of the history of our area, in particular its Prehistoric past. Josh Carr regularly attends and often brings his axe heads and other Prehistoric finds.

The second meeting focused on Lacra as a result of which the Society organised a walk with Stephe Cove up to Lacra on 28th October.

#### **Millom Detectorists**

Millom Detectorists began on 5th August and has now had four meetings, all held at Millom Library, the first Saturday in the month, 10-12.

There is a core membership with new members visiting or joining each month. All are either metal detectorists or wish to take up the hobby. Josh Carr shares his expertise on what is the best equipment, insurance, permissions, etc., and has taken beginners out to show them the ropes.

## **Projects**

### **Heritage Triangle**

In order to move this project forward the Society have handed it over to South Copeland Tourist Community Interest Company which is being renamed South Cumberland Cultural Heritage CIC, with appropriate objectives. The Company are awaiting news from Carlisle Diocese as to whether it will be allowed to lease the Old School Complex on a long-term, pepper-corn rent.

### **Millom and District: Prehistoric Past**

This project was completed in January 2023 with the publication of a 140 page book. Funding from CGP books and Silecroft School Education Trust Charity paid for the printing of 200 copies; these quickly sold out and the Society had to have another 100 printed. Most of the copies have now been sold for either £10 (at shops and other outlets we receive £6.50 per copy) or £8 at events or distributed to relevant people/organisations as a thank you for support/review copies. There are still some for sale in various outlets. Feedback has been excellent. We have so far raised £1,645 which is going towards other Society events/projects. For example, we were able to donate £500 (combination of crowd-funding and the Society) to Holy Trinity Church (where we hold our events) towards the cost of buying cushions for the pews to make the venue more comfortable for our events. More information about the book is available on the Projects section of our website.

### **Millom Castle and Holy Trinity Archaeology Project**

This project started off with the Holy Trinity Stones Project which we completed in 2022 then grew to the Millom Castle and Holy Trinity Geophysics Project, which we completed this year (although, see below for Drone Survey) and has now become the Archaeology Project.

We were awarded £5,500 from Copeland Borough Council (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) to conduct magnetometer surveys of the fields around the castle and church. Twelve volunteers took part and a Report produced of the findings which were shared at a special event in June. Our Report and the Archaeology Report can be accessed on the Projects Section of our Website.

In order to move the project forward, the Society have applied for funding to Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society to employ a specialist firm to conduct drone surveys of the back field (behind the church), the field where the six axe heads were found (this is too hilly and stony to conduct normal surveys) and Millom Castle which is too dangerous to conduct a physical survey like we did with the church. At the end of the surveys we should have a 3D model of Millom Castle for the public to access. We learnt on 25<sup>th</sup> November that our application has been successful – we thank CWAAS and our two referees, Bill Shannon and Pauline Clarke.

On completion of the drone survey the results will be examined alongside the earlier magnetometer surveys and sites to sink trenches identified. We will need to access

significant funding as there are likely to be quite a few potential trench sites. It is hoped to submit a funding bid around March/April time. This will be our largest project to date, will include volunteers and will need to come under South Cumberland Cultural Heritage Community Interest Company (see above) as we will need an appropriate legal structure to apply for larger grants. What we will be looking for spans the whole period from Prehistory (with the possibility of a hill fort or burial ground), a Roman road, any evidence of a monastery which may have preceded the church, evidence of the medieval village, anything from the English Civil War, up to present times.

This is our most exciting project to date and has the potential to be a game-changer for the area and the History Society.

### **Millom Castle and the English Civil Wars**

There is very little evidence about Millom Castle during the English Civil Wars. Volunteers took part in research to try and discover what might have happened here at this time. We identified several interesting documents but two turned out to be significant; one of these had not been seen for decades; they both shed light on the siege of 1644 as well as further action during the first Civil War. As a result of the research the Society have decided to conduct further research and produce a booklet *Millom Castle, the Huddlestons and the English Civil War*. There will be Appendices which will include the original articles found and Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeology Society have kindly given us permission to reproduce two key articles from 1872 and 1924. We have been awarded £250 from CGP Books and £350 from Silecroft School Educational Trust Fund towards the printing. We hope to publish the book in time for the 380<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the siege of Millom Castle: Sep-Oct 2024. Two articles about the findings are due to appear in Cumbria Local History Federation and British Association for Local History.

### **Evaluation**

We have met four of the six objectives identified in last year's Annual Report, i.e.

1. **Complete and publish the Millom and District Prehistory Booklet ✓**
2. **Organise further events ✓**
3. **Try and move forward on the Heritage Triangle Project ✓**
4. **Continue applying for funding for geophysical surveys ✓**
5. **Increase active membership of the Organising Committee x**
6. **Investigate the possibility of making podcasts of events x**

We are still looking to increase membership of the Organising Committee and decided not to pursue podcasts of events because of the complications of copyright.

We also identified Future Plans/Activities at last year's AGM:

1. **Publish the Millom and District Pre-history Booklet:** This has been done.
2. **Further develop ideas for Rev. William S. Sykes three books donated to Holy Trinity Church to allow access/publication:** We have agreed to get them digitised

and copies to Barrow Archive with the documents being made available via our website.

3. **Heritage Triangle/SCTCIC. The South Copeland Tourism Community Interest Company is to change its name to South Cumberland Cultural Heritage CIC with new objectives:** This has in the process of being changed and the Heritage Triangle handed over to them.
4. **Bank Account signatories:** Geoff is now co-signatory.

## Chair's Report

2022-2023 has been a very successful year for the Society. Not only have we achieved publicity for the history of Millom and our Society in local media but regionally via television and various Facebook groups plus Cumbria Federation of Local History and nationally via the article in the British Association for Local History.

We have helped to promote the amazing Prehistoric monuments of our area and the incredible Bronze/Iron Age axe head finds of local metal detectorist Josh Carr who works closely with the Society. I am particularly delighted that we have sold or distributed most copies of *Millom and District: Prehistoric Past*, and the feedback has been excellent.

We also helped towards making Holy Trinity and Millom Castle area a new Conservation Area; this has now been passed by Cumberland Council and will help raise the profile of the Heritage Triangle; it includes the Castle, Church, Old School and School Master's house plus the area around. If evidence is found during the archaeology project the conservation area is likely to expand.

Holding our events at Holy Trinity church means that the 12<sup>th</sup> century church is exposed to more people and the events help towards the upkeep of the church. However, we know that the old pews, whilst being an integral and important part of the church, are not very comfortable to sit in for any length of time. Because of this the church wardens ordered cushions to be made and I am delighted the Society were able to give £500 towards the cost (partly from our own funds and partly from Crowdfunding).

This year many more volunteers have been involved in the Society, in our projects, research and giving presentations. I am delighted that we have volunteers from a wide-range of backgrounds including people who were born and bred in the Millom area but also incomers. I believe our work is helping to break down barriers and encouraging pride in our area. It is very exciting that, as part of our research for the Civil Wars event, we have uncovered primary evidence about the siege at Millom Castle.

The introduction of the two monthly groups is an added plus as it gives people the opportunity to share in the excitement of the area's history.

It is disappointing that there has not been any commitment from the Diocese regarding the Old School and the School Master's House. However, I think you will agree, we have achieved a huge amount this year and I am proud of the work we have all done. I would like

to personally thank the Committee and all the volunteers who have helped to make this a successful year and, of course, our funders.

## Next Year's Objectives

1. Complete and publish Millom Castle, the Huddlestons and the English Civil Wars.
2. Conduct the drone survey, produce article on findings for CWAAS Transactions.
3. Submit funding bids to conduct the community archaeology project.
4. Develop and organise a programme of activities to meet our objectives.
5. Arrange to have the Sykes writings digitised (one needs typing up) with copies at Barrow Archives and made available via our website.

## Accounts

The Income and Expenditure Accounts were presented at the AGM by Treasurer, Liz North:

In essence, it has been a busy year financially with grants from different organisations. The book has been a huge success earning £1,465 for the Society. We donated £500 towards the cost of Holy Trinity church acquiring cushions for the pews - £323 of which was raised for this purpose via Crowd Funder. The website costs remain excellent value: just over £68 for the year – one of the attendees said she visits the website regularly and it was agreed it was a clear and accessible website. We closed the year with a healthy balance of £2,853.34 and are awaiting receipt of £5,000 for the drone survey and £350 towards the costs of printing the new book. ACTION: It was agreed that as the Society are now dealing with larger amounts of money in future the annual accounts will be independently checked.

<b>Millom and District History Society</b>			
<b>Income and Expenditure Year Ending 26 November 2023</b>			
<b>Balance brought forward 1.12.22</b>			<b>3056.44</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Book Sales			1465.00
Events			580.96
Donations			520.00
Grants			5750.00
	Geophys	5500.00	
	CGP Civil War Book	250.00	
Other Income			415.68
	Geophys Crowdfunder	67.50	
	HT Cushions Crowdfunder	323.18	
	Key Ring Sales	25.00	
<b>Total Income</b>			<b>8731.64</b>

<b>Expenditure</b>			
Membership Fees			90.00
Venue			120.00
Website			80.39
Project Costs			8513.15
	Stones Project	750.00	
	Prehistoric Book	1239.57	
	Geophys	5981.58	
	HT Cushions	500.00	
	Knights Tale	42.00	
Photocopying			8.20
Speaker Expenses			135.75
<b>Total</b>			<b>8947.49</b>

<b>Uncleared Cheques</b>			
Website Hosting			68.40
			<b>68.40</b>
<b>Uncleared Income</b>			
			<b>0.00</b>
<b>Balance at Bank 26 November 2023</b>			<b>2853.34</b>
<b>Cash in Hand</b>			<b>21.80</b>

Jan Bridget, Chair, November 2023