



The Lanchester Partnership

Progress Reports from Working Groups 2020-2021

Friends of Longovicium

Geophysical Survey

Archaeological Services from Durham University were able to complete our contracted survey of three fields on the steep hillside south of the fort, and the probable crossing point of the River Browney. This showed an expected reduction of Roman remains south of the fort; unfortunately no evidence was found of the hoped-for river crossing. This could be because no evidence remains of a timber bridge or the crossing may have just been an unmetalled ford. Overall, the Friends have now been able to have geophysical surveys completed of nearly all of the expected occupation area of the fort and vicus.

Investigations during “lock-down”

Although no meetings of the Friends have been held this year, individual members have been researching various Roman features of Lanchester and area. These include a suspected signal tower at Sacriston; a Roman site at Satley; a prehistoric or Romano-British enclosure at Peth Bank, Lanchester; a Roman villa at Old Durham, Durham; roadways leading from Longovicium, and associations with the *vedra flumen*, the River Wear.

Talks and displays

It was obviously not possible to do any talks or displays. However, one of our members, Darin Smith, has been producing a number of excellent computerized illustrations of various buildings within the fort and vicus. These have been added to the web site as and when produced.

New book on Roman County Durham

David JP Mason, senior archaeologist for Durham County Council, has recently published “Roman County Durham: The Eastern Hinterland of Hadrian’s Wall”. Not only does this book contain a major chapter on Longovicium, based in part on the surveys arranged by the Friends of Longovicium, it contains illustrations throughout by Darin Smith, one of the Friends. This has naturally pre-empted a book proposal by the Chair of the Friends, who now has to re-think his proposal!

Rodney Hawkins
Friends of Longovicium.

Environment Group

The Environment Group aims to improve the environment whilst conserving the character of the village and the surrounding countryside, to raise awareness of climate change issues amongst its members and the community and reduce the carbon footprint of Lanchester.

Tree planting

This has been a really successful enterprise this year.

- Over 3500 trees have been planted during the last year in the Lanchester Area.
- Trees were obtained from our tree nursery, donated by Ova Energy, acquired by group members through links with the Permaculture group, purchased by landowners and also by the Wear River Trust.
- Over 20 adults and many determined children took part in several planting days over the winter and early spring.
- Currently there are over 1000 saplings in the tree nursery. Many seedlings growing in pots.
- 1000 canes and spirals in store

Litter picking

- Annual litter pick was again cancelled due to Covid.
- Group decided to purchase their own litter pickers to lend out to villagers.
- Grant obtained from DCC with help from Kath Ivens.
- 30 adult and 20 children's pickers purchased. Safety leaflet produced.
- Linked in with a new initiative set up called Lanchester Wombles (run by 2 village members). Pickers advertised and lent out via this group. (8 given out at present)

Plastic Free

- No collection of crisp packets and oral products during lockdown as Community Centre closed
- Plastic free challenge. This has been a huge challenge as businesses and individuals have actually increased the amount of SUP during pandemic.
- Discussion with DCC over waste management. Involvement, through council, with government's new Environment Bill.

Improving small spaces

- 2 small spaces identified around Lanchester that needed a tidy up. Local people were approached informally and the areas improved by surrounding residents.
- Some larger areas currently in early stages of investigation e.g. Alderside, Broadoak, Fenhall Park entrance and village by pass.

Balsam picking

- No organised group balsam pulling carried out during lockdown.

Other topics under discussion for potential action

- Craftivism.... Where groups gather together to undertake crafts linked to environmental issues.
- Hedge cutting/verge cutting ... discuss with councils whether there could be a reduction in the amount of cutting to reduce emissions.
- Water Quality at Malton... approach WRT to see if regular testing is done in this area.

Sonny Shepherd
Environment Group

We are very sad to report the passing of Steven Bailey, Leader and founding member of Lanchester Community Orchard. He was a driving force behind the initiative and provided exemplary service and leadership to the group over many years. Sonny Shepherd is acting temporarily into the leadership role but the group is searching for a permanent replacement. Christine Davis who is the new membership secretary is assisting her.

During 2020-2021

- Members were able to continue with routine maintenance of the Orchard
- The group welcomed refugees on day visits. These visitors were able to share in some of the routine maintenance work and a meal that was provided on the site.
- Planned for a reopening event – “Easter at the Orchard” – which was held successfully on Sunday 12th April 2021
- As social restrictions ease there will be a return to the wide range of outdoor activities in which we try to engage diverse groups of individuals who can benefit from interacting with the area

Members of the Orchard Group

Monitoring Development

Aims

Members of this group work to ensure that:

- The local planning regulatory framework adequately reflects the needs and aspirations of Lanchester and its residents
- Historic and natural assets of the area are catalogued in a systematic way in order that they can continue to be protected where necessary
- Planning applications in Lanchester are systematically monitored and scrutinized against the legislation and local regulations
- Lanchester residents are able to make informed responses to planning consultations issued by the County Council

The Lanchester Neighbourhood Plan

- Members of the Partnership worked with the Parish Council and others (as part of a designated group) over a long period on the preparation of the plan
- It was finally accepted by the local community at the Referendum on 6th May 2021
- The origin and history of the plan is shown in the note below

Statement from the Neighbourhood Plan

As Lanchester Parish moves through the 21st century, the challenge will be to conserve the story and character of the Parish, and those who lived farmed and worked there, for future generations, whilst maintaining a thriving community and a living landscape for today's residents. (Referendum Draft)

County Durham adopted its own plan (“The County Durham Plan”) in October 2020. By then (in 2019), Lanchester Parish Council had already produced a preliminary version of Lanchester Neighbourhood Plan. The preliminary plan was matched to and placed in a format that matched the County plan. A final version of the Lanchester Plan was produced and submitted to local residents for their endorsement at a Referendum held on Thursday 6th May 2021. The document was approved for use with the overall support of the local community.

Planning Applications

- During the course of the year the group brought a number of proposals to the attention of residents and urged them to comment
- An example of the success of the approach was an effective response to the proposed development of an area opposite the Fort near Briardene. Geophysical Surveys show this area to be crisscrossed by tracks leading to and from the Fort. The developer was tasked to provide a more suitable response which fitted better with the archaeological significance and visual impact of the location.

Steve Bailey

Steve used his expertise over many years to support the production of the Lanchester Neighbourhood Plan and even though he was ill, attended the count on 6th May as a scrutineer. He passed away in Willowburn Hospice on July 22nd. The plan is an amazing tribute to his contribution to Lanchester in this and other areas of work (see Orchard Group).

Transport Group

The Village Link Bus

- The bus has continued to operate throughout the Covid lockdown periods
- We continued to provide additional shopping support for residents affected by lock-down for as long as it is needed, thanks to superb work by Luke Stone (Stanley Travel), the driver
- As of March 2021, conditions had not yet returned to anything like normal so we have not been able yet to ease back into the usual service. We await further developments in the easing lock down arrangements so that passenger numbers can increase again
- We were not able to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the start of the bus service.
- We making plans to increase passenger numbers again once conditions allow
- We have continued to identify grant sources and encourage local fund raising and donations and the bus account is healthy
- We have thanked the driver, Luke, for the remarkable job that he has been doing during the lockdown period
- We still intend to make a minor route change one day a week, extending the route to Lanchester Nurseries. Lockdown has prevented us from implementing this so we now plan to implement the change in 2021-22

Mick Gladstone and Heather Roberts
Bus/Transport Group

Social Activities Group/Village Vita

Paradiso Club

- The club has been inactive during the pandemic for obvious reasons and so we were unable to make the progress planned.

Fun Run

- We have booked a date of September 26th for the 2021 event which will no doubt need to be tailored to restrictions at the time but should still see an event happening.
- During the year we have utilised grants and fundraising proceeds we received earlier to purchase a sound system, some route marking kit, a shed for storage.
- We are currently working on signage, radios and other kit requirements.

Ceilidh

- We were unable to hold the Ceilidh in 2020 as planned due to government restrictions.

Fun Dog Show

- This was not possible due to the pandemic

Partnership Birthday Celebrations

- We could not make any plans for a celebration due to the pandemic

Other new events delivered during lockdown

- We organised a virtual light switch on event for the Christmas lights in the village, which was a great success and was well received.
- We also organised for Santa to walk the streets of Lanchester and his Elves to hand out gifts to the children, in partnership with the parish council. This was again well received.

Michelle Atkinson

Social Activities Group/ Village Vita

Lanchester Partnership – Churches Together Covid Response

- This group was set up very rapidly in March 2020 in order to provide an emergency response to the needs of individuals and families affected by shielding during the early stages of the pandemic.
- The aims of the partnership were formally amended to accommodate this type of emergency response activity
- A system of shoppers and deliverers was activated to make food deliveries arranged around a central hub, located at the Methodist Chapel
- The system was further adapted to support vulnerable families and individuals in need of food. Schools made referrals.
- Christmas Hampers were delivered to families
- Thanks are due to the many organisations and individuals who contributed financially and in kind (mentioned in the donor section of the Chair's report)
- The scheme has now wound down but could be reactivated in similar circumstances

Michelle Atkinson

Covid Response