

Dallowgill – A Walk Through History

On Sunday 14th April, Community Archaeologist Kev Cale led members of the Group on a walk to explore the historic landscape of Dallowgill, thanks to the financial support of Nidderdale AONB.

Kev explained how the early “pre-enclosure” landscape of Dallowgill, and much of Nidderdale, consisted of rough rock-strewn land, similar to the rocky field below Greygarth Monument.



Starting in monastic times & earlier, enormous efforts in field clearance and drystone-wall construction resulted in the landscape which we see today.

Straight and regular walls and field patterns are typical of the parliamentary enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries,



The boom time for wall and building construction was in the first half of the 1800's, and the freshly quarried walls would have looked very different from the weathered sandstone which we see today.



but older walls, probably built in mediaeval or earlier times are irregular and often have large boulders in them and are more irregular construction – these were seen between Bents and Pete's Place.



The Carboniferous sandstone was laid down in a river delta, and you can often find fossil coal-ferns, similar to modern day Monkey Puzzle.



The harder grey "Gannister" which is also common is formed from the original soil, and fossil roots are common.

Prior to the 1800's, most of the homes in Dallowgill would have been simple single storey houses with low walls and a steep ling-thatched roof. The old roof started above the large corner stones.



The exception would have been the larger 2-storey yeoman farmhouses typified by stone mullion windows.



The buildings at Pete's Place were previously called Quarry House, and were the base for the manager of a stone slate quarry in the gill nearby. This and several other interesting buildings in the area have been studied as part of an historic buildings survey by the AONB, the results of which we hope to have available soon.



From above Tom Corner, Kev explained how the earthworks of Fortress Dyke were thought to be Roman-British in

origin, but recent pollen analysis suggested that they may be much earlier. On Hambleton Hill many flints have been found dating from



Mesolithic times, not long after the last ice-age. After this the area would have been scrub woodland - it wasn't until the Bronze-Age, around 5000 years ago, that the current peat formed on the moors due to climate change forming the characteristic landscape we see today.



In the 1800's the body of what was thought to be a Roman soldier was found preserved in the peat on Grewelthorpe Moor, with flesh and clothing intact due to the preserving properties of the peat. Kev explained that ideally modern analysis of the remains would be undertaken, but unfortunately the location of the grave in Kirkby Churchyard where the remains were interred were unknown due to a fire destroying church records.

Returning to the chapel everyone thanked Kev and agreed what an enjoyable and informative afternoon it had been - hopefully the first of many!