

A short note about my appreciation of Arnold Aspinall

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I am delighted to have the opportunity to thank Arnold publicly for the research support and the education in geophysics I have received from him over a period spanning more than 30 years. Strangely enough I sought him out first at an Archaeometry Conference for help with dating and characterization of early glass. Alas something went wrong with the results of the NAA analysis and so this project was abandoned, as a letter in the Jarrow archives for 1970 records.

We were similarly unsuccessful in our first joint geophysical projects: at Jarrow an area to the north of the church which was reputed to have contained many stone buildings in the 18th century, and had been confidently marked as a Roman fort on early OS maps, was so bedevilled with later structures and earth moving that we could get nothing coherent from it. We had two different attempts at this site and in the second enlisted the help of some Durham students who only succeeded in maiming the equipment. The most recent Durham attempt with a magnetometer on this parcel of land did identify some features, but they proved to be late. Arnold would come and show me print outs of other sites he had surveyed in which monastic plans or Roman settlements showed up with magical clarity, and after another confusing result from Whithorn I began to feel that I had a malign influence on Arnold's results.

There has been one huge success however - a long term project the final account of which we are currently bringing to a conclusion- although the first results were published in 1978. The first site at The Hirsell, Coldstream, was a field near to the house which had been recently ploughed yielding some carved stones including crosses and architectural fragments. Here in 1978 Arnold master minded a group from Durham in a survey which included three resistance teams, whilst he and his wife Priscilla, using a magnetometer, surveyed the southern part of the field and also checked our resistance surveys with magnetometer and fluxgate gradiometer. Forty-one 10m squares were surveyed, and the results hand dotted under Arnold's watchful eye every night. The result was published and used as the guide for our first trenches in 1979. Over the subsequent four seasons a multi phased site emerged – in one area intact Neolithic remains; evidence for later prehistoric occupation in the form of fragmentary ditches and pottery, and above that an extensive cemetery with burials dating from the 11th – 17th centuries, and a church of several phases.

Arnold has recently reprocessed the geophysical data and it is clear how much more there is to discover in that field. Whilst we were engaged on the excavation in the Dial Knowe, Arnold turned his attention further a field to a hill top site Hirsell Law which dominates the estate in the north. Here air photographs had indicated a large enclosure and the magnetometer survey of the area has clearly revealed one of the largest enclosed sites in the region, with ditch and probable palisade, some evidence

for round huts in the interior, as well as rectangular structures postdating the enclosure on the south. Unfortunately not all the work we wished could be done on that area and it is now planted with pheasant cover, but there is enough evidence to provide a very convincing picture of the site. I hope that when all the focal places revealed by excavation and survey are considered together then we can build up a picture of the development of an estate through time in a unique fashion. Arnold and I still have nearly a year to complete this work, but I feel, and I hope that he does also, that it has been worthwhile archaeologically and a very enjoyable joint enterprise.