

The Tebay and Orton Local Distinctiveness Project, delivered by ACTion with Communities in Cumbria (ACT), worked with the communities of Tebay and Orton to provide training, events, and raise awareness of, and pride in, cultural and environmental heritage.

Tebay and Orton are situated to the north of Tebay Gorge, which forms a north-south thoroughfare through the landscape. For centuries, much of the distinctiveness of the area has been defined by this route way. In the past it formed a prehistoric trading route, an important Roman road and a route for drovers and pack horses. In recent years, the main west coast train line and M6 have forged their way through the valley.

## Background

At the start of the Project ACT Development Officer Annie Hamilton-Gibney organised a series of drop-in events encouraging local people to come forward with ideas and information to shape the Tebay & Orton Distinctiveness Project.

A key finding from these sessions was the appreciation people had for the local heritage and landscape and a wish to find out more about it.

A series of archaeological research and surveying workshops led to the discovery of an early settlement site where some of the first farmers were living when the stone circles were being built in the area.

The workshops were so well attended, ACT went on to support the set up of 'Lunesdale Archaeology Society' (LAS). With the support of professional archaeologists, the group undertook two excavations at the Roman Fort of Low Borrowbridge, each followed by a successful open day event.

## The Project

Workshops and training sessions for LAS supported them to research what was already known about the heritage of the site, and explore the surrounding area on foot, looking for clues in the landscape.



*Talk at the Roman Fort by costumed interpreter*

With so much interest, it was essential to plan the open days well, to showcase the trenches before they were 'backfilled' and returned to farming use. It also gave the community a chance to visit the Roman Fort which is on private land and not usually open to the public.

The Roman theme was embraced by businesses in the area; the Cross Keys Inn, Tebay, put on a special Roman menu and local textile artist Jan Hicks displayed Roman spinning and weaving.

During the open days, refreshments and 'trench tour talks' were provided by the LAS group members who had volunteered throughout the excavations. Exhibitions of finds were put on display as well as reproduction items depicting Roman military and domestic life. Guided tours of the fort were led by a costumed Roman interpreter Joe Jackson from Cumbria Heritage.



*Roman Open Day: Weaving demonstration, Roman food tasting, Centurion on duty and 'Meet the Archaeologist'*

Joe also visited Tebay Primary School to deliver an assembly in full Roman regalia. This inspired the children to produce drawings and write letters home as if they were Roman soldiers stationed at the fort.

Their work was put on display at the open day and despite the event being held in the summer holidays, it was well attended by many of the children and their families.

## What has been achieved?

The school has an education pack about their 'local Romans', with photos of finds, reproduction items and some genuine Roman building materials from the excavations. It will be made available to other local schools on request.

LAS have a publication about the excavations and a foundation of training and excavation experience on which to build.

They can now use their research and landscape survey skills to explore the area further. They also have a good network of archaeologists to provide advice and supervision for any excavation work they plan in the future.

## The Learning

- Consider all aspects of running an event including health and safety, insurance, parking, refreshments, toilets etc.
- Take all the advice from professionals you can, (especially if it is free)
- Make local people aware of the heritage on their doorstep, they will only respect and help to protect what they know about.
- Just because a site has been there for hundreds of years doesn't mean people know about it.
- Informing local children about their heritage is imperative; they will be the people to safeguard it in the future

## Contact Details

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ACRE Topic Sheet on 'Your Heritage'

[www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning/Resources/Community+Led+Planning+Toolkit/Topic+Sheets.htm](http://www.acre.org.uk/our-work/community-led-planning/Resources/Community+Led+Planning+Toolkit/Topic+Sheets.htm)



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## ACT champions community and rural issues

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