



Community Archaeology Workshop: 9

WORKSHOP 9 - Understanding Historic Buildings

Saturday 10th December 2005

Participants' praise for workshop 9:

"Very good - 10/10!"

"The workshop was very clear and informative... it was excellent being encouraged to look and deduce what we could tell about the buildings on the tour of the village"

"Excellent tutor; good venue; great walkabout; good talk, slides and refreshments!"

"The expert made the subject interesting and accessible for 'beginners'"

"Very competently organised!"

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CONTACT

Workshop 9 was a fascinating insight into identifying and understanding historic buildings. The workshop was based on the idea that archaeology encompasses everything from below ground all the way through to the buildings above ground. The speaker, Alison Sinclair, was an expert in her field. Alison is a renowned Architectural Historian who has written the List of Listed Buildings for York, worked for English Heritage and now campaigns for preserving the character of the built environment as Chair of the York Open Planning Forum. Alison presented her talks at a very accessible level, helping people with no previous experience to understand the nature and architectural details of historic buildings.

Alison began the day with a talk entitled 'Looking for the Evidence'. Using slides she illustrated the different types of Vernacular buildings in Yorkshire – buildings built of local materials with a domestic, industrial or agricultural function. She highlighted differences in building materials (brick, stone, timber-framing), different roof types (thatch, slate, pantiles, cat-slide roofs) and window types (Yorkshire sash etc). There are also diagnostic patterns within these types, such as the brick patterns characteristic of different periods (such as English Garden Wall and Flemish Bond)



and the different ways of working stone.

After this introduction, and a hot cup of tea, we moved on to look at 'What the Evidence tells us'. Using local examples, Alison explained how to deduce the age of a building from its external appearance and plan. This included identifying architectural features characteristic of specific periods, such as raised bands, and the relationships of certain features that can reveal information about the plan, such as chimneys, doors and windows.



After lunch, we looked at the evidence of the Tithe Barn, where the workshop was held. We studied the timber framing, the roof trusses, the brick bonding, the doors and discussed the age and use of the building.



Following this, Alison led a tour of Nether Poppleton. We stopped at various houses in the village and were asked what we could deduce from their external appearance. After a while, everyone could spot architectural details from different periods, including roofs that had once been thatched, 18th-century window arches, Georgian brick bonding and Victorian finials! The tour was an excellent way to put theory into practice and everyone enjoyed guessing the ages of the houses.

Thanks very much to Alison for such an interesting and enlightening day. Thanks also to Alec and Kathleen Acomb for providing refreshments and help in the barn.

Contact

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