



Community Archaeology Study Days 2006/7

STUDY DAY 3 – Recording Historic Buildings

Royal Observer Corps Building, The Knavesmire, York. Saturday 10th June 2006

**GREATER YORK
COMMUNITY
ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT**

CONTACT

Feedback from the study day:

“It was an opportunity to learn new skills, to visit a little-known building and to increase awareness of the ROC” Participant

“Tony’s expertise was much appreciated and he is a very approachable tutor”
Participant

“I enjoyed the people, the history and the ‘having a go’!” Participant

In December 2005 the Community Archaeologist ran a workshop on ‘Understanding Historic Buildings’, which proved to be extremely popular. As a follow up to this it was suggested that we run a couple of sessions on *recording* historic buildings, but we needed a suitable venue. The perfect opportunity came up when the Dringhouses Local History Group had a tour of an old Royal Observer Corps (ROC) building on the Knavesmire in York. This building has an important history but is not open to the public or protected in any way. It was suggested that we could practice recording techniques on this building, producing some scale drawings as a result.

Tony Berry, an Illustrator for English Heritage, also does building recording for Wigginton History Society in his spare time. He offered to run a day on recording buildings at the ROC building and it was decided that we would split the session in two, as there is so much of the building to record. Therefore, in June 2006 we began the survey of the ROC building, with the help of twelve volunteers.

Tony began the day by explaining why we record buildings and showing the participants some of the tools of the trade. He had also brought along an extensive collection of building surveys he had previously done to demonstrate the end result of a survey and the types of drawing conventions that are used.

Elizabeth Smith, Chair of Dringhouses Local History Group, attended the day and kindly talked briefly about the ROC and the work that they did during the Second World War and the Cold War. She presented some old newspaper clippings, photographs and other information about the ROC, which helped the participants to

understand more about the social history of the building.

Following this, Tony led a walkabout tour of the building, pointing out what the different rooms would have been used for and where alterations had been made to the building. The volunteers were then split into three groups, each assigned to record a wing of the building. Tony divided his time among the groups, who were taught to measure along the walls and record the positions of walls, doors, windows and stairs on a plan of the building. This took the remainder of the day and proved to be a challenging afternoon for many of the volunteers, who had never done such work before.

By the end of the day we had produced three almost complete plans of different parts of the building, which would be tied in to each other and drawn up into a complete plan of the building. The next session, on 5th August, will concentrate on recording the elevations of the building – all are welcome to attend!

Thanks very much to Tony Berry for preparing such an interesting day and for his guidance on survey techniques. Thanks also to Elizabeth Smith for giving an impromptu talk about the ROC and to Phil Sanderson from Hamilton Panthers Football Club for providing access to the building (which is currently used as their club rooms).

Contact

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