

Volunteers and visitors discover Fryston's past

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Archaeology volunteers at work in Monk Fryston Hall woods

The Community Project, which aims to discover more about village heritage after it was granted to the Benedictine Monks soon after the founding of Selby Abbey in 1070, is providing the opportunity for people of all ages to get involved and either train, participate or simply learn more about archaeology and how their predecessors lived over the past 1,000 years through the artefacts that are found.

One group of visitors, South Milford Guides, contributed significantly to the project when a Guide found a missing link in their story: a piece of 12th-century pottery. Site Director of Archaeology, Simon Tomson, identified it as a piece of high status tableware; part of a large jug similar to those once used by the Lord Abbot of Selby for serving wine. Simon commented: "We have hundreds of sherds of early medieval cooking pottery but had not found any tableware until the Guides came and helped during their visit."

Guide Leader, Paula Spence, commented that she: "Had been to many museums but never found the pottery displays remotely interesting but that had now changed completely as she had seen how pot shards help to develop our understanding of the past."

A few days earlier, the first group of Excavation Trainees found the foundations of a building within a few hours of getting started, and this led to the discovery of three further walls. They are at one end of a building and this has enabled the more experienced volunteers to plot more accurately the structures on their dig site. No doubt the second group of 20 local trainees will be hoping for a similar exciting start to their new hobby.

[quote=Monk Fryston Brownie]"I love digging in the pit because you could be the first one to touch something which has not been touched for hundreds of years."[/quote]

Finding Fryston Project Manager, Ray Newton, commented: "We could not have got off to a better start. So far we have opened or extended four trenches and in each one we have hundreds of artefacts and each has its own story to tell providing us with more information for our research project. However, the most important thing is that everyone is thoroughly enjoying themselves."

"For example the comments from the Monk Fryston Brownies after their visit are typical, 'most fun in ages', 'awesome and amazing', 'I love digging in the pit because you could be the first one to touch something which has not been touched for hundreds of years'."

Ray Newton continued: "We have another busy weekend ahead of us and are fully booked with visits and training days; then on Saturday 18 July we have an Open Day. We hope lots of people take advantage of it to see for themselves what we are doing and what is often just below their feet. We are sure they will be amazed when they see what we have already discovered and found. Anyone who is interested in 'having a go' can enquire through our [website](#)."

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "The Finding Fryston project is a fantastic opportunity for local people to try their hand at something new and delve into the stories of the past. We're committed to funding projects that every community can take pride in and learn about their local heritage. In this case, learning about history is fun for all ages!"

Notes to editors

Monk Fryston Time Team is a self-funded local history group formed in 2009 by residents to research and document the History of Monk Fryston. Their research has led them to stage two public 'Monk Fryston Revealed' exhibitions with accompanying lectures; to publish a Monk Fryston Heritage trail leaflet; to provide information on aspects of Monk Fryston's history to pupils at the Primary School; to hold information events and activities at the village Summer Fayre and to stage public and private talks on various topics of local history. The team organised an Introduction to Archaeology Course based in the village to help them develop their understanding and interpretation of all aspects of archaeology. This led to the members identifying the excavation site and conducting archaeologist led excavations over the past three years. Team Members research various items of interest and commit to sharing their findings with the rest of the group. Information is stored in their virtual 'cloud based' filing cabinet and is accessible to all the team members. The group meet once a month and new members, either resident or non-resident are always welcome to join.

Further information

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[Volunteers extending and opening the first trench](#)

[Search for the Monks underway in Monk Fryston](#)