

# YEARSLEY MILL RESEARCH PROJECT

Newsletter No 1

November 2013

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We're really glad to tell you that the application for a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant was submitted last week! Those of you who have been involved with grant applications will know how many hoops there are to jump through and Geoff Snowdon has done a huge amount of work to get it all together. Eventually we received letters of support from the Historic Environment Team Leader of the North Yorkshire Council, Paul Jackson at the Howardian Hills AONB, John Harrison (author of 'Eight Centuries of Milling in North East Yorkshire'), the Head Teacher at St Hilda's (Ampleforth) and Hovingham Primary Schools and, most importantly, the Forestry Commission, without whose blessing we could not excavate.

We have also received a more practical form of support from Helmsley Archaeological and Historical Society who have donated £1,000 for excavation and £50 from the Ryedale Walking 4 Free Group for a walk round Gilling Park. We're very grateful for this funding as, apparently, only 25% of HLF applicants actually receive a grant, so these donations will enable us to excavate even if we're unlucky with the grant.

Geoff has prepared a three year programme which we hope will start in April, regardless of the funding, when John Harrison and Peter Morgan, both mill experts, will come to tell us about watermills. Jon Kenny, our Community Archaeologist, will lead the training in excavation techniques before the actual excavations begin under his guidance. He will also work



with David Roberts and Geoff on projects for St Hilda's and Hovingham Primary Schools: apparently watermill technology, bread production, etc. will work well within the National Curriculum.

Before that, however, we are intending to arrange a get-together. Roughly forty people have expressed an interest in YMRP: it will be good to get together so that the excavators, documentary researchers, etc. can meet each other, as well as to catch up on progress. We will arrange the meeting as soon as we know whether we have received the grant: the decision on that will obviously hugely affect how we proceed. The HLF process takes at least eight weeks, so don't expect anything to happen until, maybe, January or February.

We're pleased to say that John Illingworth, who took the above photograph, has agreed to be our 'Official Photographer' to record the project. We would also like to record our work digitally, certainly a blog, but perhaps something more, and so if any of you would like to take this on, we'd be more than delighted.

So that's where we are heading, but here are a few snippets about the watermill which may have arisen since we last spoke to you.

I hope you enjoy reading YMAP's report which I have attached. You will see from it that the pottery we excavated dated from 12<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century and so it is probable that the mill complex was in operation during that period. The latter date ties in with documentary evidence.

One amazing and totally unexpected thing has happened. YMAP researchers had found that a George Yeoward was at Yearsley mill from around 1669 to 1724. Through John Harrison we've been in contact with a leading member of the Hampshire Mills Group called Tony Yoward who is a direct descendant of George! Tony was actually unaware that he had an ancestor who was a miller, though he and his wife had researched the family tree and knew well of his connections in this area. His family also lived at Windygates Farm. Tony is as excited as we are about the connection and hopes to come to see the remains of his ancestor's watermill next year.

Finally, I hope it's not too early to wish you a Very Happy Christmas and New Year.