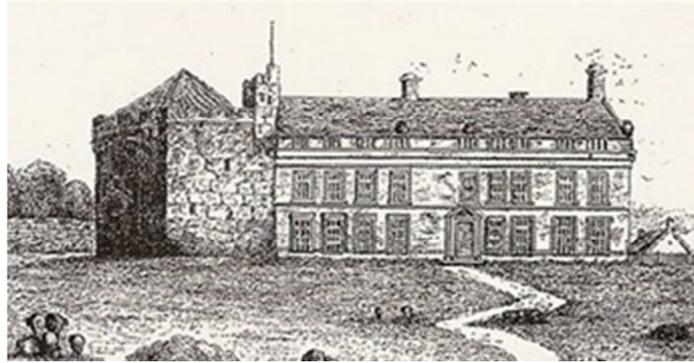


# Cresswell Pele Tower



## Newsletter, Oct 2017

### Archaeological Test Pits, 4<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Back in January and February we completed a highly successful community archaeology project details of which, including videos and photographs, are on the project website <http://cresswellpeletower.org.uk/>. Following this we recently carried out further archaeological work, this time inside the tower. After cleaning, photographing and planning the two floors of the pele tower we dug 3 test pits under the supervision of archaeologist Philippa Hunter, Archaeological Research Services Ltd.

#### Test Pit 1, Ground floor.

We lifted a 2 x 1 metre area which contained 3 different surfaces – concrete, brick and flagstones. Beneath the concrete we found some modern items including plastic and, intriguingly, the bones of a dead bird on one of which was a ring. Details of what was written on the ring were sent to the British Trust for Ornithology and it turned out that the bird was a fulmar that had been ringed on the Farne Islands in August 1986. So we have firm (or dare I say concrete) evidence that the concrete floor was laid after 1986!

The bricks we lifted were probably 18<sup>th</sup> century which ties in with the building of the adjacent Mansion House in about 1750. A few centimetres beneath the bricks and flagstones we found a well preserved flagstone floor, almost certainly the original tower floor from the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century.



*Ground floor*



*Bird ring*



*Original flagstone floor*

## Test Pit 2, First floor



*First floor after cleaning*

A similar sized test pit was dug next to the top of the stairs, the main purpose of which was to dig down to the top of the barrel vault below so that a structural engineer could inspect a large crack in the vault. Before excavation could begin, however, acrow props were installed by local contractor MIMARC Construction Ltd to make sure the vault didn't collapse! We soon encountered the beautifully constructed stone vault and, I'm pleased to say, the engineer was satisfied that the crack wasn't too serious and could be repaired.



*Test Pit 2 showing the top of the medieval barrel vault*

### **Test Pit 3, First floor**

Our third test pit was dug in an area of undisturbed flagstones which we think formed part of the medieval floor. By lifting and then excavating beneath this floor we hoped to find some dating evidence such as pottery which would give us a date for the floor and the construction of the tower itself. In this we were successful. We found some pieces of medieval green glazed pottery which will be looked at by a pottery specialist. We await the date with baited breath as we have no documentary evidence for when the tower was actually built.



*Victorian clay pipe found when cleaning the floor*



*Excavating Test Pit 3*

Having completed the excavations all 3 test pits were backfilled and the flooring relaid. If you were to visit you would have no idea where we dug (provided you don't look too closely)!

## Delivery Phase

The Project Team continue to work on all the other aspects of the Development Phase and, following a recent review meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund, we are aiming to submit a Delivery Phase application to the HLF in early March 2018. This funding bid will include all of the capital works needed to restore the tower and make it accessible to the public. It will also include further community archaeology and a community archive research project. We are also currently setting up a Charitable Trust to take the project forward.



*Archaeology is fun!*

## Ivy clearance

We are in negotiation with Parkdean Resorts to lease to the Charitable Trust the woodland surrounding the tower. Earlier this year volunteers assisted us in clearing some of the ivy which is rampant in this woodland. We are planning to continue with this work every **Tuesday and Thursday, 10 am -12 each morning, in November**. If you would like to help out please feel free to come along but it would help if you could let us know beforehand that you are coming along by contacting Michael Wright on 01670 860007 or email [mkwright@mkw1.co.uk](mailto:mkwright@mkw1.co.uk).

## Cresswell Pele Tower Project Team