

NEWSLETTER Autumn 2021

Well, we all seemed to have survived the Corona virus with all the social distancing and lock-downs. Even though many have felt rather lonely shut in our homes all day long and only venturing out for a short time each day for exercise.

We are pleased to say that Add-Venture is slowly getting back to normal. One course, Archaeology at York has already taken place this year and deemed very successful. The bird migration course at Skegness is expected to take place in October with only minor changes.

The next event on the calendar is the AGM on 18 October. This will be held using Zoom, the video conferencing system which has gained huge popularity recently. It is simple to use, free for most people and avoids any travelling. Details on how to take part in this Zoom event are contained in the 'Notice of AGM' document sent along with this Newsletter. This will give you an opportunity to join the Committee and promote your ideas on how the club is run. We welcome all members, visually impaired students as well as sighted guides.

There are three new courses for this year and next. The bird migration at Skegness, the History of Norwich and the Alternative energy course at Machynlleth in North Wales will all be going ahead. Brief details of these are shown below.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2021

My first course with Adventure in learning was to York. I was looking forward to going on this course for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was my first trip away since Covid, freedom at last. Secondly as a new member to the group I was looking forward to the York course. Thirdly As the Chairman of the group I wanted to meet some of the committee and members of the group in person. Also, it would give me an opportunity to understand the group in a practical way.

From the Covid point of view I was excited to be going away. I felt Nervous about travelling by train, how busy was it likely to be? Luckily it wasn't very busy and I spent most of the journey talking to another guide dog owner. Spending time with a group of people felt strange but any concerns I had were soon forgotten. I can honestly say the only time I felt concerned in relation to Covid was in the market, it was so busy!

As a member I thoroughly enjoyed the course. My bedroom and ensuite was spacious, clearly designed for students using a wheelchair. Just the ticket for me and my guide dog Yuri. We had plenty of food which was very tasty. As soon as I got to the university campus I met my guide Howard who was friendly, and helpful throughout the course. If I had not been with Howard I would have missed out on so many things as he was so descriptive. He even gave me the chance to feel a Viking's plaited beard, something I have never done before. All the members on the course were very friendly, and I am very glad to say that I didn't feel like the new girl.

The course itself was very informative. Although I have visited York before and visited the Minster, Yorvic museum and the railway museum, there are always new things to see. The highlight for me was the Archaeological dig, we were shown pots that been dug up, and an explanation of the pottery - its age, type of pottery and what it might have been used for. It fascinated me how you could uncover walls from historical buildings, and how you discover items which would give a picture of how people lived in the past.

As the Chairman of the group I was pleased to meet some of the committee, and to get to know them as individuals not just committee members. It was also great to meet all the other members who were on the course. It gave me a much better understanding of the group, their quirks, and the realities of the group. I was pleased to discover that group members had made friendships and did other activities together such as walking.

In conclusion I am proud to be heading such a vibrant, imaginative, friendly group. Also a committee who is hard working and can create such a wonderful course as the York course. This course has stimulated me to want to work harder, and ensure the group continues to be successful, and ensure more people get the opportunity to attend our courses.

Janet Whapples

ARCHAEOLOGY AT YORK, a short report by Paul Cripwell, editor.

The campus at York University is surprisingly spacious with many of its colleges spread over parkland. A small river runs through it and there are lakes and ponds containing swans and other wildlife. Our accommodation was in James College in very comfortable rooms with en-suite facilities. This is a far cry from the cramped rooms that I remember from my university days. How times have changed. The only drawback was the ten-minute walk from our

accommodation to the dining hall in Vaughan College and the Exhibition Centre where the lectures took place. A frequent bus service enabled us to get into York's historic city centre in about 10 minutes. The whole environment is very quiet and conducive to study. That is, however, for our second night. Scarcely had we retired to our rooms for the night when we were rudely awakened by the ear-piercing shriek and clanging of the fire alarms. We all turned out dressed only in our jimjams (and other interesting night attire!) and stood around waiting for instructions. A few minutes later several security men and two firemen dressed in high-viz jackets and sporting axes and other frightening tools turned up and gazed at the building. No smoke, no flames, just an accidental pressing of the alarm button by someone near one of the doors had triggered it all off. Reminisces of Ampleforth on the North York moors course in 2019 when a similar thing happened. Hint: make sure you pack some presentable nightwear when booking on future courses.

Trips were organised to the Jorvik centre and DIG. At Jorvik we travelled in time capsules underground passing reconstructed Viking houses, workshops and back yards. Here animated figures made it a memorable experience of Viking life in ninth and 10th century York (Eboracum) as the Romans called it. Friendly Viking hosts were there to explain things and allow us to handle genuine artefacts recovered from the Coppergate excavation.

On the Wednesday we had a chance to have a go at a real dig. A coach took us to a new excavation some miles away. Roger Inman, Chair of the Hidden Valleys Community Project, who led the excavation, explained that it was probably a medieval chapel. Many volunteers were on hand to help and advise as we all scraped in the earth with our trowels. A few sherds of pottery were uncovered but sadly we found no roman coins or the fabled silver goblet! While the first group were digging others were shown by Anne Jenner how to identify various pottery types. Anne is a pottery specialist at York Archaeology Trust at the University Throughout the afternoon we were treated to cups of tea and chocolate biscuits to keep us going.

Many thanks must go to Roger and Anne as well as the farmer and landowner who gave permission to dig.

It would be nice to go back some time and see just what lay beneath the layers that we were working on.

The Thursday was a free day when we could do our own thing. Many chose to visit the Minster (a booking system to limit the numbers was in operation). Another group went to the Railway Station to visit the National Railway Museum. Again, pre-booking was necessary to avoid overcrowding. York has plenty of scope for exploration with its ancient buildings from medieval to Victorian times.

Many thanks to Mary Goodlad for her hard work in organising this course, to Jean Taylor for assisting her and thanks also to Eleanor Tew for devising the course and for making all the initial contacts.

FROM AN APPRECIATIVE MEMBER

I'm just letting you know how much both Julian and I enjoyed the York Add-venture in Learning course.

To run one of these courses during normal times takes a huge amount of work and planning, so we both were full of admiration about how you and the others managed to run this course at a most difficult time when the country was beginning to recover from the Covid pandemic.

We thought the accommodation arrangements were very good, and the meals provided were outstanding. I quite enjoyed the fact that we had a little walk between our accommodation, the lecture room and the refectory. With the quality and the quantity of the food that was provided, I think I would have put on even more weight otherwise!

We enjoyed it all, but we thought the day at the archaeological dig was really special, and an experience we will long remember.

Gwenda and Julian Dinsdale

FUTURE COURSES

AUTUMN BIRD MIGRANTS AT GIBRALTAR POINT SKEGNESS

Monday 4th - Thursday 7th October (3 nights)

Approximate cost - Student £320, Guide £240.

The price includes hotel accommodation in single en-suite rooms (doubles available), breakfast, evening meals and transport for outings.

Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve is known for its diversity of wildlife. In autumn we should hear various migrants and flocks of waders. After breakfast in the hotel we will have a program of bird studies at Gibraltar Point and hopefully another reserve.

This course is already full, but names can be added to the waiting list.

Please contact Isobell to get a place on the waiting list.

This course will involve a reasonable degree of fitness to walk on uneven ground and stand around birding

NORWICH PAST AND PRESENT

13th – 17th June 2022.

We have reserved accommodation at the Holiday Inn just outside the centre of Norwich which will be very suitable. The cost is likely to be greater than previously advertised. However it will still be for double or twin rooms with en-suite facility and include dinner, bed and breakfast and a packed lunch each day. Single rooms are available for an additional cost.

The actual cost and further details will be available nearer the time. Previous bookings for this course will still be honoured but need to be confirmed.

Please contact Isobell to confirm your booking or make a new one.

CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY – WALES

Accommodation has been reserved at The Centre for Alternative Technology at Machynlleth, mid Wales from 26th-30th September 2022.

This is a renowned eco centre that researches and supports greener ways of living. Set in 24 acres with examples of environmentally responsible building, renewable energy, organic gardens and woodland. It even has a water-balanced cliff railway. It is hoped to be able to put together an interesting program in line with the work carried out there. It has its own cafe, and all food is vegetarian.

Please contact Isobell by phone or email to reserve a place.

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