



The IAG's first 30 years!

By Beverley Rymer

This year, 2026, marks the 30th anniversary of the Ingleborough Archaeology Group based in Ingleton. First formed under the leadership of Alan King in 1996, it is marking this milestone with celebratory events during the year.

In this time the Group has carried out a series of significant excavations and surveys in the Ingleborough area, encompassing also Ribblesdale, Chapel-le-Dale, Kingsdale and Malham Moor. As an active research group it has built on, enhanced, and sometimes corrected, the archaeological understanding of an area that has been populated over many millennia. An area designated within the Yorkshire Dales National Park as "a landscape of archaeological value".

Projects have ranged from medieval lime kilns to prehistoric monument complexes, from the 19th century construction camps at Ribblehead Viaduct to a 17th century chapel, from upright placed stones on Ingleborough to early medieval shielings (upland seasonal shelters). *Pictured above: a 17th century lime kiln excavated at Kilnsey.*



Several important projects stand out. That at Broadwood near Thornton-in-Lonsdale in 2004 was the first excavation of a type of complex enclosed settlement relatively common in the Yorkshire Dales and east Cumbria, dating it to the pre-Roman Iron Age with later occupation. Another in 2005 and 2009-10 at Kingsdale Head found evidence of significant flint and chert tool production by Middle Stone Age hunter-gatherers over many generations, as well as a Mesolithic cooking pot and a Bronze Age burnt mound. This provided new evidence of seasonal mobility in this

upland area over the period. *A flint knife found during the Kingsdale Head excavation is pictured.*

A third such project, for the first time anywhere, investigated a range of sow kilns, an early type of lime kiln, winning a national award. The Group has also worked with a locally-based archaeologist examining in detail a series of farmsteads around Ingleborough that have been radiocarbon dated to the Anglo-Saxon period.

An IAG survey of the North-west flanks of Ingleborough added dozens of previously unrecorded sites to the YDNPA Historic Environment Record (HER) and played a critical role in alerting Natural England (NE) to the dense presence of archaeological structures in a landscape previously viewed primarily in terms of natural habitats. *Right: a possible ring cairn recorded during the survey.*



Archaeological surveys are now routinely carried out prior to enclosure and tree planting on NE's land, enhancing any extant HER records.



IAG projects vary in length from just a few days to much longer archival research, with members participating as they can. Fieldwork can include trowelling during a dig, drawing excavation plans, washing finds, doing geophysical, walking and measurement surveys (Level 2 and 3 field surveys), recording and writing up results. *Left: surveying a cairn at Haws House Pasture near Ribbleshead.*

Other members prefer to attend the winter lectures programme and take part in the summer archaeology and history outings.

Members need no previous experience of archaeology and are encouraged to contribute and learn during the projects, with professional guidance provided by the archaeologist and support from experienced members. All equipment is provided by the Group. This being the Three Peaks area a good set of waterproofs and a few layers of clothing are sometimes required!

The Group's [publications](#) provide an overview of the variety of sites and historical periods it has worked on, with analysis of the findings for each. There are projects underway in 2026 and new members are always welcome.