ERAS news

No 41 September 1994

If I didn't already know it was autumn by the weather, I should be reminded by the start of the society's lecture season. As has become customary the first meeting, which is on September 21, will be taken up by accounts of recent local archaeological work. You will find a list of the later lectures included with this newsletter as the membership card is not quite ready for distribution. I'm sure you will agree that Andrew Foxon has once again produced a lecture programme of both quality and breadth.

You will have discovered other accompanying items with this issue. A copy of the society's constitution is provided because many of our newer members have not received one before. Please also take a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire so that the Committee can have some feedback from you to influence their decisions about the running of the society. This is your chance to make all those complaints that you've ever thought of (as well as identifying those activities for which you joined ERAS) Please note that there is no Field Study Group meeting this October.

Some ERAS members have been working as volunteers at the Hull Magistrates Court site in Hull, particularly during recent weeks when the excavation has been open on most Sundays to try to cope with the numbers of skeletons that have been uncovered from the Augustinian Friary. The Humberside Archaeology Unit is continuing to excavate into November and welcomes volunteers.

There is a new item in the newsletter this week - an archaeological crossword compiled by Kate Dennett: solution in the next newsletter (and if you get stuck, I'm afraid, as is frequently the case, I don't know the answers!).

FIELDWORK AND EXCAVATION

An archaeological site at Ulrome in Holderness, North Humberside

Last summer Hull City Museums Archaeology Department received a call from a member of the public staying at the Seaside Caravan Park at Ulrome in Holderness (Figure 1) to say that remains of a wooden raft could be seen sticking out of the cliffs nearby. This sounded promising and a visit was arranged for later that same evening. The raft turned out to be a number of horizontal timbers supported by vertical stakes protruding from the bottom of a V-profile ditch clearly visible in the cliff (Figure 2). Some sherds of calcite-gritted pottery of the late Iron Age or Romano-British native traditions were recovered from the ditch-fill above the timbers, as well as fragments of animal bone.

The site was visited on a number of occasions over the autumn and winter, not only by Hull Museums staff and members of ERAS but also by colleagues from Humberside Archaeology Unit. Section drawings were prepared, photographs taken and much more animal bone, pieces of worked antler, iron-working slag, soil samples and a few pieces of pottery recovered. Unfortunately severe autumnal storms eroded the cliff very quickly and the wooden remains were washed away, but not before the lifting of the better-preserved pieces and sampling of the others. On 4th December, with the help of members of the ERAS Field Studies Group, a small excavation was undertaken on part of the cliff containing the ditch and timbers, which had slumped forward onto the beach because of erosion. This work showed that the horizontal timbers had been positioned one on top of the other and were retained in between vertical stakes, some of which went right through the underlying sands and gravel and into the boulder clay beneath. A chunky body sherd of calcite-gritted ware was found on top of one of the horizontal timbers but it is possible that this could have fallen down from above through a fissure which had opened up between the cliff and the slumped material. A long section of antler lying parallel to one of the horizontal timbers at the junction of the ditch deposits and the sand and gravel must still have been *in situ* . The numerous pieces of animal bone and antler recovered from the site are now being examined by Dr Keith Dobney of the Environmental Remains Unit at the University of York: a preliminary listing should be available shortly but already bones of pig, cow and horse have been identified.

The purpose of the wooden timbers is still something of a mystery and even the writers cannot agree on their purpose. They appear in some respects to act as a retaining wall, supporting the unstable sand and gravel on the south side of the ditch, but they were only a couple of metres long. They did not continue any great distance into the cliff and if they were a retaining wall, why were there not timbers on the north side of the ditch? In plan other wooden horizontals secured by smaller stakes or pegs joined the line of timbers at an oblique angle. It has also been suggested that the timbers are the remains of a weir or fish-trap. The soil above the wood was very dark and contained lots of organic material. Soil samples taken by Barry Constantine of Skipsea suggest very good conditions for the preservation of organic remains quite apart from the wood. Well-preserved insect assemblages have been recovered including members of the family Ptinidae, such as spider-beetles which are often found associated with human refuse, a human flea, several species of dung beetle and wood worm to mention but a few.

Harry Kenward has commented that they are the best preserved specimens that he has seen for a long time. There is clearly considerable potential for further work to be carried out. The excellent preservation of the remains is explained by reference to the stratigraphy of the cliffs at that point on the Holderness coast (figure 2). A shallow depression in the boulder clay (Skipsea Till) contains a thick layer of laminated sands, gravels and stones, into which not just one but two ditches were cut (the ditch immediately to the right of the ditch containing the wood has so far yielded only a few pieces of animal bone and appears to be earlier). Water collected in depressions in the boulder clay and helped to keep the lower ditch deposits saturated. It is no accident that the timbers disappear at the same level as a 19th/20th century land drain several metres further to the right.

One can also try to understand the site in so far as it relates to the surrounding landscape. Though sadly this is being eroded at a frightening rate by the sea, it is possible to gain some idea of how it once looked by examining enclosure maps of the 18th/19th century and old editions of Ordnance Survey maps. One surprising result of the cartographic study was the discovery that originally a finger of Barmston parish extended south along the coast into the parish of Ulrome (figure 3). The tip of this extension was clearly centred on the field called Highlands, a hill of glacial sands and gravel. Over two hundred years of coastal erosion has

almost completely obliterated the extension, with the result that the surviving part of Highlands forms a relict island of Barmston parish in the middle of Ulrome. The reason for this apparent anomaly is that the parish boundary followed an old water course which originally flowed northwest into what is now the Barmston Drain:

> "this district appears to have been intersected by a series of sinuous and irregularly shaped lakes, whose surplus waters found an outlet not in the present artificially constructed channels which convey them directly into the German Ocean but in quite a different direction along a sluggish water course, still extant, which falls into the Humber near Hull ... When the sea lay many miles further off ... it is supposed that the intervening land stood somewhat higher, and that consequently Holderness was a complete water basin with its outlet towards the Humber"
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> Munro 1890: 469

As coastal erosion advanced it was found to be more practical to lead the Barmston Canal into the North Sea. The ditch containing the wooden remains no doubt drained into the former water course and although the surrounding sand and gravel would have provided good natural drainage, the water table was still high because of the underlying boulder clay and local topography. The interpretation of the timbers is still a matter for debate but the ditch in which they were found is best understood in terms of the local drainage pattern. The high water table has clearly helped to preserve a wide range of organic material and there is considerable potential for further work on the environmental evidence (eg palynology, botany, zoology and dendrochronology) although lack of resources to pay for a radiocarbon dating and other necessary work is a handicap. Ditch 1 seems to have been used to dispose of waste from antler-working and iron smelting and it is hoped to involve specialists from the relevant fields in the project.

Sadly, in addition to the continuous problem of coastal erosion the site has also shown signs of indiscriminate digging in search of antiquities by person or persons unknown. It is likely that potentially important evidence will be lost unless any finds made are reported and made available for study. The assistance of ERAS members living in the area to monitor any further disturbance of the site would be greatly appreciated.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the contribution made by a number of people to the project so far: thanks are due to Mike Humblade of Humberside Archaeology Unit SMR, to Jack Cooper for kindly giving access to finds from the site; to Mr Houghton of Seaside Caravan Park, on whose land the site is located; to Barry Constantine for his preliminary report on the environmental evidence; to Andrew Foxon for identifying the antler; to Michael Boyd, Assistant Keeper of Natural History at Hull City Museums, for his helpful advice regarding the geology of the area and last but not least to members of the East Riding Archaeological Society's Field Study Group including: Joe Santaniello, Rachel Briggs, Susan Gibson, Valerie Fairhurst, Diane Brown and Robin Moore.

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David Priest and Bryan Sitch

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LECTURE PROGRAMME

20 Dec 1993 **Thomas Sheppard and Archaeological Collecting** Bryan Sitch

There can be few people involved in archaeology of the region who have not heard of the founding father of Hull City Museums, Thomas Sheppard (1876-1945). Appointed Curator with responsibility for one museum in 1901, he retired from the post forty years later having created no less than six museums, some of them the first of their kind, such as the Museum of Fisheries and Whaling at Pickering Park and the Commerce and Transport Museum (now the Hull and East Riding Museum) on High Street. There is little doubt that Sheppard was one of the most successful provincial curators of the first half of the 20th century. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he has been the subject of both an exhibition and a book by former Principal Keeper of Hull City Museums, Tim Schadla-Hall (1989). He also figured prominently in a book about museums in Yorkshire and Humberside (Brears and Davis 1989) and also in a book written to celebrate Museums year in 1989. In the same year, Sheppard's life was scrutinised afresh in connection with the Phoenix project, the excavation of the old Municipal Museum on Albion Street destroyed by bombing in 1943. It is perhaps understandable then that assesssments of Sheppard have bordered

on eulogy.

Thomas Sheppard was born in the village of South Ferriby in 1876 whilst his mother, Myra, was visiting her sister. The fact that he was born on the south rather than the north bank (both his parents were teachers in Hull) was, as Sheppard used to say, largely due to the pressure of circumstances, though it would later help him justify collecting in Lincolnshire. Thomas was the first of ten gifted children. Harry became Treasurer of Beverley Borough Council; Harvey, Superintendent Engineer in Hull's steam trawling industry; George, State Geologist in Equador; Walter, Secretary of Reckitts Ltd; May, Headmistress of Boulevard Secondary School, and Ann, Lecturer in farming at Reading Agricultural College.

It is possible to detect in Sheppard's childhood some of the influences that helped shape his later career. Sheppard's uncle Thomas Havercroft collected fossils and antiquities in the neighbourhood of his home at South Ferriby and as Sheppard often spent school holidays with his aunt and uncle, he also developed a passion for collecting. Whilst still a schoolboy, Sheppard was entrusted to Canon William Greenwell (1820-1918) to accompany the famous Durham antiquary and ecclesiastic on his diggings, but he preferred the company of the Driffield antiquary, J R Mortimer (1825-1911). The latter had his own museum on Lockwood Street which Sheppard visited most Sundays to talk about archaeology.

Perhaps surprisingly, in view of his background and parentage, Sheppard left school at the age of thirteen and started work at the North Eastern Railway Company's Goods Station Office in Kingston Street, Hull. One of the perk's of the job was a rail permit, which enabled Sheppard to travel around the region collecting information about site of geological and archaeological interest for a series of newspaper articles, later published in book form as *Geological Rambles in East Yorkshire* (1903). Sheppard was also a member of a number of the flourishing scientific societies in Hull and it was in his capacity as Secretary of the Hull Scientific and Field Naturalist's Club that he wrote to Hull Corporation, urging it to take over the collection of the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society held in the Royal Institution. The Hull 'Lit and Phil', as it was popularly known, was founded in 1822 with the intention of promoting arts, science and literature. It collected from its foundation and had to move several times to keep pace with its expanding collections. By the late 19th century, however, the museum, by then based in the Royal Institution, and its collections, were in

the doldrums and there was much speculation about its future. The Corporation did agree to take over the Literary and Philosophical Society's Museum but for reasons rather different than those envisaged by the scientific societies. When Sheppard was appointed as the Curator of Hull Corporation's first publicly-funded museum, he was told bluntly that the top floor of the Royal Institution was needed for an art gallery and the museum was simply the means to that end. Sheppard was instructed to come at ten, smoke a cigar, deal with any enquiries, and look after the specimens but on no account to spend any money as that was required for the paintings! (Sheppard 1934). If it thought that by appointing an inexperienced young man it would have a pliable and acquiescent servant, the Museums Sub-Committee was in for a rude awakening because Sheppard proved to be an extremely dynamic and resourceful individual.

One of Sheppard's first jobs was to sort out the miscellaneous collection of curiosities in the Royal Institution. These included part of a walking stick said to have belonged to Queen Elizabeth, a pair of boots worn by Sir E Verney at the battle of Edgehill (sadly stolen from Wilberforce House a few years ago) and baked Maori heads, but it is as well to remember that the collections included the famous Roos Carr Images, wooden figures in a model dug-out canoe recently dated to the late bronze age (Coles 1990). The wood has also just been identified as yew (Coles 1993, p21).

After two years reorganising the collections and displays with the help of the first attendant, Ted Raper, the Municipal Museum opened to popular acclaim. Initially there was only one museum, but his natural charm and the support of influential people enabled Sheppard to open Wilberforce House in 1906, the Pickering Park Museum of Fisheries and Shipping in 1912, the Commerce and Transport Museum in 1925, the Easington Tithe barn Museum in 1928, the Mortimer Museum in 1929, and the Railway Museum in 1933. The 'Old Times Street' was never officially opened to the public before it was destroyed by bombing during the Second World War.

Sheppard devoted almost his whole life to museums work and was president of the Museums Association in 1923. I say almost because, amazingly, he also had a demanding leisure time career in amateur theatricals and was a leading figure in a number of local societies. In 1908, for example, he was President of the Hull Literary Club, Hull Shakespeare Society, the Hull Scientific and Field Naturalists' Club and the Hull Geological Society.

the Hull Geological Society.

Despite his lack of experience, it is clear that Sheppard quickly developed firm ideas about the role of museums. To summarise these ideas briefly, Sheppard believed that a museum was a permanent institution, accessible to all, which collected locally in order to educate its visitors. It was preferably small, no doubt because of the way museums provision had expanded in Hull, but also because of the problem of museum fatigue, of which Sheppard was well aware.

With regard to collecting, Sheppard wrote that "the days of attempting to form a miniature British Museum with a little of everything and nothing in particular are over ... the object of our provincial museum should be to illustrate the history, geology, natural history and antiquities of the districts in which they are situated" (Sheppard 1905). This is not so very different from what would in museum parlance be called a mission statement. This also formed the basis of a collecting policy with a collecting area but, as many people have commented, Sheppard found it difficult to restrict his area of collecting to the East Riding. For example in 1903 Sheppard obtained a collection of Viking grave goods from burial mounds at Efaefsk in Russia. He sold half of the finds to the British Museum in order to fund Hull Museum's share. Quite apart from collecting outside the country (let alone the county!), Sheppard was also dividing the collection between two institutions, something he later criticised Canon Greenwell for doing (Sheppard 1918a). The same stratagem was used to acquire the collections of the Royal Albert Institute at Windsor during the 1920s. The sale of some French pottery and display cases almost covered the cost of the original acquisition though it did mean dividing the collection. It must be remembered that Sheppard was working under severe financial constraints and it is for perhaps this reason that many of Sheppard's most important acquisitions have racy stories attached to them. Indeed Sheppard took positive pride in promoting these anecdotes because it was a way of promoting the museums and was flattering to himself.

As a Lincolnshire man born, if not bred, Sheppard had little scruple in collecting (despite his pronouncements on collecting areas) in Lincolnshire. For example, he made several attempts to acquire the Iron Age logboat from Brigg before the owner finally agreed to donate it to Hull Museums. With the aid of a breakdown gang from the Corporation, Sheppard quickly

loaded the logboat onto a barge but the owner, Cary-Elwes, had second thoughts and wired Sheppard not to move the boat. Sheppard sent a reply, saying "almost truthfully" that the logboat was already in Hull! (Sitch 1989).

Sheppard's resourcefulness is apparent in the acquisition of the finds from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Hornsea Hydro in 1913. An avid reader of newspapers, Sheppard spotted a brief report of the discovery of antiquities during the development of a bathing establishment and followed it up with a personal visit. Unfortunately the owner and developer, John Wilson (d.1917), was not at all sympathetic and sent Sheppard away with a flea in his ear. Sheppard returned and pretended that he was very interested in Hydros. For two long hours Sheppard says that he was on thin ice as he spoke about plumbing, heating, lighting, decor and catering arrangements, but he was finally rewarded when the owner gave him permission to excavate. It is an amusing story and Sheppard clearly had a great sense of humour as well as having considerable journalistic skills.

Sheppard as the prowling curator (HDM 21.7.1913)

One of Sheppard's greatest acquisitions was the Mortimer collection. J R Mortimer had been a major influence on Sheppard during his youth and when the old man died in 1911 it was natural that every effort would be made to secure the collection for Hull. The executors of Mortimer's estate wanted £3,000 for the 60,000 archaeological and 6,000 geological specimens and the conditions of the will stipulated that they should be offered first to Driffield for one year, then to Hull and then to anyone. Driffield's period of approval lapsed and Sheppard negotiated with the trustees and reduced the price to £1,000. This was still more than the Corporation could afford and it was only the kindness and generosity of Colonel George Henry Clarke which secured the collection for Hull in 1913. Sheppard could not resist letting slip that he had previously acquired Mortimer's collection of maps on which he had recorded the provenances of the various discoveries and that it would have been embarrassing if the Mortimer Collection had gone elsewhere. (*Hull Museum Publication* 85, (1911) 13; Sheppard 1918b: p81).

The curator as highwayman
(Adventure, the official organ of the Hull Publicity Club 1.7.1930: 5-6)

There are many stories connected with the acquisition of specimens and Sheppard enjoyed, indeed actively promoted, a reputation for unscrupulous collecting. He must have enjoyed seeing himself portrayed variously in cartoons as highwayman, burglar and snatcher. It is as a collector that he is most often thought of today (Schadla-Hall 1989). His acquisitiveness could be attributed to a collecting fetish. It would explain some aspects of his curatorship, such as the lack of a formal accessioning system. Sheppard spent a lot of time in the public eye; because of his lack of resources he lost no opportunity in advertising the museums and attracting potential benefactors. He was very knowledgeable, he had a great sense of humour and he loved being the centre of attention. Arthur Berry, for example, has said of the Hull Geological Society's 50th Anniversary medal which bears Sheppard's profile, a map of East Yorkshire taken from the one of Sheppard's numerous articles, the ammonite from the Lower Lias discovered by Sheppard, *Metarnioceras Sheppardi* and very likely his geological hammer too, that Sheppard could not have squeezed more of himself onto the medal if he'd tried! (Berry 1986). Few members would have dared question this action because Sheppard's public reputation was so well-established. Years of acting as the fountain of all wisdom regarding the history, geology, archaeology, natural history, commerce and transport of Hull and the East Riding and basking in the public adulation generally had an unfortunate effect on Sheppard's vanity and self-esteem. At times he could be arrogant and self-opinionated. He was most definitely wrong in dismissing the mesolithic bone points from Holderness as forgeries, though I have shown elsewhere that the motivation for this, the last and most acrimonious episode in a series of public attacks on the archaeological discoveries made by the Morfitt family of Atwick, must be seen as part of a long-standing campaign of harassment arising from an incident during the early 1900s (Sitch 1993). When the British Museum acquired William Morfitt's bone points, Sheppard obtained plaster casts and displayed them in his fakes and forgeries cabinet (Sheppard 1932 p81). The discovery of similar bone points at Hornsea and on the Leman and Ower banks off the Norfolk coast during the 1930s and a number at Brandesburton during the 1950s, suggests that William Morfitt's bone points were authentic after all. In his dealings with the family, Sheppard seems to have given way to strong feelings of personal animosity.

Sheppard's last years cannot have been happy. He badly underestimated the danger of destruction from bombing at the outbreak of the Second World War, no doubt because of his role in keeping museums open during the

First World War to maintain public morale. At the 1938 Museums conference in Belfast (the then) Dr Mortimer Wheeler had said that anyone "directly or indirectly responsible for a museum or art gallery was neglecting ... his (sic) duty if he was not taking all feasible steps to protect his collections from ... the avoidable visits of war" (*The Belfast Telegraph* 5.7.1938) Archive correspondence with Harold Dudley, Curator at Scunthorpe Museum, shows that Sheppard was aware of the precautions taken by other institutions and thought them unnecessary. In 1941 he retired "under the age limit". By the end of that year bombing had damaged the Municipal Museum, the Commerce and Transport and the Mortimer Museums. The Railway Museum and the still unopened Old-Time Street had been entirely destroyed. On 24 June 1943 the Municipal Museum in Albion Street, the administrative centre of Hull Museums, was gutted by incendiaries. It is only fair to point out, however, that Sheppard was in poor health after years of overwork. The loss of so much that he had devoted his life to creating must have been a contributory factor to his death in February 1945.

There is no doubt that Thomas Sheppard's appointment in 1901 was beneficial for museums in Hull and for museums nationally and internationally. He has rightly been praised for the enormous amount of good work he did. At the same time one must be aware of certain unpleasant characteristics, particularly what Harold Dudley described as Sheppard's 'mania of acquisitiveness'. This picture of the man 'warts and all', will not find favour with all but then it is up to each generation to re-interpret its heroes and heroines.

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Bryan Sitch

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17 Nov 1993:**New Light on the Early Mesolithic in the Vale of Pickering** Tim Schadla-Hall

Tim Schadla-Hall, former Principal Keeper at Hull City Museums, needs no introduction to members of the Society, some of whom probably attended Tim's adult evening course in archaeology during the early 1980s.

The mesolithic lasted roughly from about 7400 to 5400 BC and was the last great hunter-gatherer period in North-West Europe. It used to be little understood, especially in East Yorkshire where the first archaeological discoveries were repressed to a certain extent by Thomas Sheppard (see above pp 5-13). The earliest sites at Star Carr in the Vale of Pickering, at Skipsea, Hornsea and Brandesburton in Holderness, and on the North

Yorkshire Moors are best understood in the light of the environmental changes taking place after the retreat of the last ice-sheets in the region about 11,000 years ago. At this time Britain looked rather like parts of Scandinavia today with deposits of glacially-transported material, pools of water and minimal vegetation. The amelioration of the climate after the end of the last glaciation was not maintained, however, and the temperature became colder again before improving. Round about 9400 bp there was a phase of rapid warming during which the landscape was colonised very quickly by the fauna and flora. At this time, because more of the earth's water was still frozen as ice, sea-levels were lower and the land that we now know as the British Isles was simply an extension of the European continent.

The site which Tim Schadla-Hall has been excavating for a number of years at Seamer Carr lies in an area of unimproved peatland which North Yorkshire County Council had selected for waste disposal in the Vale of Pickering. The landscape consists of clay tills and gravel and sand outwork deposits in the north overlain by peat deposits in the south. When archaeological work was first considered it was thought that something like Star Carr, excavated by Clark between 1949 and 1952, would be found. Clark's excavation was a great piece of work for the time, with many flint microliths and over 180 bone points (Brandesburton, with thirteen mesolithic bone points, comes a poor second), and bones of aurochs (*Bos primogenius*), bear, elk, roe deer and red deer. Clark concluded that the site had been the winter base camp of seasonally-moving people. Strangely for a site next to an extensive area of water, there was almost no evidence of fishing. Fresh water fish from the Continent did recolonise British waterways after the last glaciation via the river systems of the North Sea Plain. However, in the case of Star Carr, it is thought that access for fish was prevented by a steep gorge at Malton (Wheeler, 1978; but see Schadla-Hall 1988 p32).

In 1976, with the support of the Department of the Environment (now the HBMC.) a series of excavations was begun, and in 1979 a flint scatter, known as Site C, was found sealed beneath the peat and radio-carbon dated to c.9300 bp. In 1985, exploratory trenches revealed that instead of the small isolated site which Clark's work had suggested, the early mesolithic occupation had been much more extensive, covering an area of 2-3000m^2. In order to obtain a better idea of the extent of the occupation, 2m^2 holes were dug about 15m apart over a considerable area along a critical

contour of 24.5m O.D. This revealed another extensive early mesolithic site (Site K) comparable in date to Site C. A scatter of 8000 worked flints, stone-lined hearths and some animal bone was found, including a piece of red deer antler with evidence of grooving and splintering, presumably for bone points.

Site K yielded the earliest post-glacial horse in England dating to about 7700 BC and the earliest dog dating to about 7400 BC. A horse skeleton from an early mesolithic context at Seamer Carr has recently been dated to 9790±180bp and is very good evidence for the survival of horse in the post glacial period. Over 27,000 pieces of flint, including hammerstones, cores and flint flakes have been examined by Andrew David, an expert on early lithics. The statistics are impressive. Over 95% of the material was recorded to within one centimetre. The flint consisted of high quality, large pieces of flint from Flamborough and low quality material from the boulder clay. Some of the flints could be joined back together to show how pieces had been broken and reused. As a result the stages of working were now better understood.

Excavation also revealed the environmental changes that had occurred. At about 10,000 years ago the climate was still very cold, but as it became warmer late upper palaeolithic hunter-gatherers used the area. Further light was shed on this period of the site's history by the auguring project conducted by Edward Cloutman, who studied the development of the landscape by auguring to reach beneath the peat. A staggering 85% of holes produced evidence of early mesolithic activity. It became clear that the Vale of Pickering was becoming drier because of drainage to improve the land. North Yorkshire County Council built a sewage treatment plant in the middle of the vale of Pickering in 1961 and due to shrinking of the peat the foundations are now exposed. During the 1950s the bone finds were of superb quality; nowadays they are mostly rotten because of drainage.

The greatest concentration of finds was along the Hertford River, dug by French prisoners-of-war during the 19th century, which destroyed perhaps the most significant part of the site. Part of a platform of split timber planks was found. Paul Mellors lifted a complete block of peat for micro-excavation under laboratory conditions at Cambridge.

Another site which came to light was Barry's Island, an area of higher ground which arose from the landscape as the surrounding peat began to dry

out and contract. The area was augured at 10m intervals to provide a subterranean contour map, revealing that 24.5m OD was the crucial level for mesolithic activity. The most intensively occupied areas seemed to be on islands in the middle of the Vale and the speaker suggested that the hunter-gatherers deliberately sited their encampments here to avoid disturbing the wildlife. This occupation appears from recent work on the bone finds to have lasted all year round. One of the more mysterious finds from Barr's Island was an aurochs metapoidal bone drilled through the marrow and chopped off at the end, measuring 15cm long by 3cm wide by 1.5cm thick, and the speaker appealed for anyone who thought they might know what it was to contact him. The current consensus of opinion suggests that it was an early mesolithic bone-working tool.

One pit on Barry Island yielded 200 pieces of bone (six of them worked); 120 from the lower layers, 80 from the surface. Two hundred pieces of flint were also recovered. A sand layer above suggested that there had been a sudden and extensive flood in the late mesolithic. This sand layer contained much early mesolithic material, more so than the underlying peat.

The recent excavations showed that the early mesolithic occupation at Seamer Carr was more extensive, more long-lived and more complex than had previously been thought. Occupation is now believed to have taken place all year round. It is interesting to speculate that some of the flints could have been used to cut reeds for fuel. If the people were capable of cutting down the woodland to make log boats and rafts, they were perhaps also constructing wooden shelters with reed-thatched roofs, although no hard archaeological evidence of this has yet been found.

Tim Schadla-Hall is Director of Leicestershire Museums, Galleries and Archives.

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Bryan J Sitch
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15 Dec 1993: **Natsef-Amun, Priest of Ancient Egypt: the recent scientific investigations** Dr Rosalie David

In 1828 members of the Leeds Philosophical Society undertook one of the earliest scientific investigations of an ancient Egyptian mummy. During the 19th century it had become the custom to return from the Grand Tour with a mummy as a souvenir, the unrolling of which was regarded as something of a social occasion. Unfortunately, no information was gained by these frivolous unrollings and important evidence was lost. For its time the Leeds Philosophical Society's study of the mummy of Natsef-Amun was exemplary, especially when it is remembered that it was only a few years since Jean-Francois Champollion had succeeded in deciphering hieroglyphs. By studying the hieroglyphs on the outside of the coffin, members of the Leeds Society established that the mummy was that of a man called Natsef-Amun, who had been a priest in the Temples of Amun at Karnak (Luxor) in Upper Egypt.

It was Napoleon's ill-fated attempt to conquer Egypt at the end of the 18th century which stimulated widespread interest in the antiquities of ancient Egypt. The scientific commission, made up of well-respected intellectuals or *savants*, which accompanied the French army, produced well-illustrated reports about the statues, temples and pyramids; these, together with the stories told by returning soldiers, encouraged people in Britain, France and other European countries to travel to Egypt to acquire antiquities. Some of these travellers were more discerning and had a genuine interest in scholarship and research.

One of the particularly rich hunting grounds for antiquities was the west bank of the Nile opposite Luxor where the necropolis of the capital of New Kingdom was situated. It was short distance away from the mortuary temples of Queen Hatshepsut at Deriel-Bahri that the mummy of Natsef-Amun was excavated by an Italian speculator called Passalacqua. Having failed as a horse-dealer, Passalacqua joined the trade in antiquities and undertook excavations in search of objects to sell to collectors. His own

collection was later bought by Frederik Wilhelm IV of Prussia, who wanted his museum in Berlin to rival those of other European powers. Natsef-Amun's mummy, however, was sent to Passalacqua's home town of Trieste in 1823 and from there it travelled to London, where it was purchased by the collector William Bullock. Natsef-Amun's mummy was finally acquired by the banker, John Blayd's (1754-1827), who presented it to the Leeds Philosophical Society.

For its time the 1828 investigation was very good but it had its limitations. In 1989 Peter Brears, Director of Leeds City Museums, asked the Manchester Mummy Project to examine Natsef-Amun's mummy once again with the benefit of new techniques made available through advances in technology, including radiology, endoscopy, CAT-scanning, serology, DNA analysis, finger-printing and dentology. The new autopsy also had the advantage of being non-destructive.

The range of modern scientific techniques enabled the Manchester Mummy Project Team to obtain detailed information about Natsef-Amun's life. He died between the ages of forty and fifty, the normal life expectancy for Egyptians three thousand years ago. He was a tall strong man, although he suffered from a number of diseases. He worked as a priest in the greatest temple complex in Egypt at Karnak and held the important post of Scribe of the Accounts of the Cattle of the Estate of Amun. He recorded food given to the sacred cattle which were slaughtered daily and offered to the god Amun. The ancient Egyptians believed that the gods had human requirements and had to be washed, fed and entertained. As a waub-priest Natsef-Amun would have been ritually pure, washing several times during the day and night and observing certain taboos. However, he was not permanently on duty at the temple since priests worked in rotation. Natsef-Amun had a family outside the temple. His wife was the daughter of one of the temple's priests and his son later became a priest in his turn. Natsef-Amun lived during the tumultuous times of the late 20th Dynasty (c.1100 BC). The High Priest of Amen Re at Karnak, Herihor, seized political power at Tanis in the Nile delta. Natsef-Amun himself may have had conflicting loyalties because although he must have supported the High Priest, during the 1828 autopsy a leather disc inscribed with the name of the king was found amongst the bandages of his mummy. We will probably never know whether he was a closet royalist!

The Manchester Mummy Team's investigation of Natsef-Amun set new

standards for the study of ancient mummies. X-ray Computer Tomography is a method of analysis which provides information about the different densities of the tissues within the human body and so can reveal signs of disease. This data can be stored in digital form. Natsef-Amun suffered from arthritis in the neck and in the right hip but this must be seen as part of the normal process of ageing. Endoscopy enabled samples to be taken from deep within the mummy without causing damage, the long probe of the industrial endoscope being inserted through a hole in the body. Tissue samples taken in this way were examined histologically for evidence of disease. The Manchester Team was particularly interested in Natsef-Amun's protruding tongue which must have been very swollen at the time of his death. The most likely explanation is that Natsef-Amun was stung on the tongue by an insect and that he choked to death on his own tongue. Samples of the orbit muscles of one of Natsef-Amun's eyes, which were in a remarkable state of preservation, were successfully re-hydrated and evidence of peripheral neuritis, a condition associated with diabetes, was found. Further samples also revealed that the priest had suffered from parasitic worms known as Filaria. The adult worms migrate to the lymphatic system and block the ducts, causing fluid retention or Filiarisis. The gross swelling of the legs, the groin, the scrotum or the vulva which can result is commonly known as elephantiasis. Natsef-Amun's legs show that he suffered considerable fluid retention in the lower part of his body. Evidence for the disease can also be seen in a wall-painting depicting the Queen of Punt (Somaliland), from where the ancient Egyptians obtained incense for their temples.

Natsef-Amun also suffered from plaques of atheroma in the blood vessels of his groin. This is a common ailment nowadays because of the high level of cholesterol in the modern diet. The condition can lead to strokes, heart attacks and gangrene. The ancient Egyptians were largely vegetarian but Natsef-Amun's diet of beef and other rich foods, which he would have received as payment out of the offerings made to the god Amun, may have contributed to his medical condition.

Study of Natsef-Amun's dentition revealed that in common with most Egyptian mummies, his teeth had widespread attrition because of the coarse nature of the diet. Samples of bread studied microscopically show quantities of sand and other abrasive particles in them, residues from grinding the grain into flour. These hard particles caused rapid abrasion of the teeth and sometimes this could leave the pulp exposed, leading to

abscesses, loosening of the teeth and even sepsis of the bone and blood. Amenophis III suffered chronic peridontal disease. One interesting feature of Natsef-Amun dentition was an unusual pattern of wear on the sides of his teeth. This could have been caused chemically by drinking acidic fruit drinks or by over-enthusiastic dental hygiene. The ancient Egyptians used small splayed twigs with natron salt as toothbrush and toothpaste respectively. It is only with the introduction of sweet, sugary foods in the Egyptian diet in the Graeco- Roman period that evidence of dental caries (tooth decay) is found.

Natsef-Amun's hands had been cut off during the early 19th century autopsy, which meant they could conveniently be removed to the Greater Manchester Police Force to obtain finger-prints. The Manchester Police had earlier developed 'The Manchester Mummy Method' for finger-printing mummies using dental alginate which can be applied to the finger tips and peeled off to provide perfect prints. This technique can also be used to obtain prints from, and thereby identify, the bodies of people who have died in fires and it is now in common use.

DNA testing is opening up a whole new area of study and it should be possible in the future to see whether mummies were related to each other genetically. One of the most dramatic results of the recent study, however, was the facial reconstruction of Natsef-Amun [1]. The technique depends upon the availability of a skull or cast of a skull, over which layers of modelling clay are built up to specific thicknesses. In the past the skull would have had to have been extracted physically but radiology and the CAT-scan now provide a non-destructive method of creating the necessary base for the clay. The digital data from the X-rays can be stored on a magnetic tape and using a sophisticated remote controlled milling machine an accurate copy can be carved out of polystyrene without disturbing the mummy. Richard Neave's facial reconstruction of Natsef-Amun showed him to have had a strong face not unlike the people who live in Luxor today. Like the finger-printing technique, facial reconstruction also has considerable potential in forensic work.

The modern techniques used in the study of Natsef-Amun provided a considerable amount of detailed information in a non-destructive way. This information, together with that from other mummies, is held on an international mummy database in Manchester. This record can be used to study patterns of disease preserved in the early population of Egypt. In

this way the study of the mummy of Natsef-Amun can help us to understand the history of diseases which could bring benefit to people living today. As Dr David reminded us, ancient Egypt is often portrayed as a glamorous society but the physical evidence of the mummified bodies tells a different story of widespread disease and personal discomfort.

[1] The technique had already been used to reconstruct the face of Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great (see J Pragg, (1984) The Flesh on the Bones.,*Popular Archaeology*, **5(9)** 8-11.

Bryan Sitch

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Learn More about Archaeology!

There are two new opportunities this year to get actively involved in learning more about archaeology:

1] Archaeology 'A' level - a one year course on Tues/Thurs evenings at Wyke VI Form College. The syllabus includes an individual project on some aspect of local archaeology that particularly interests you. Tel: 0482 346347. (And yes, I did enjoy doing this course several years ago - Ed).

2] Certificate in archaeology, University of Hull. In year one an introduction to archaeological method will be followed by foundation modules providing outlines on Prehistory, Roman Britain and Medieval Archaeology. Special reference will be made to local examples. In the second year students will look in more detail at particular themes with proposed modules on:

The changing landscape of Britain
Archaeology of settlements
Religion, ritual and burial
Crafts, industry and trade

Further details from: Centre for Continuing Education, University of Hull, 49 Salmon Grove, Hull HU6 7SZ. Tel: 0482 465524.

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It is with sadness that I have to report the sudden death of Derek Cutts, one of the founder members of the East Riding Archaeological Society.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

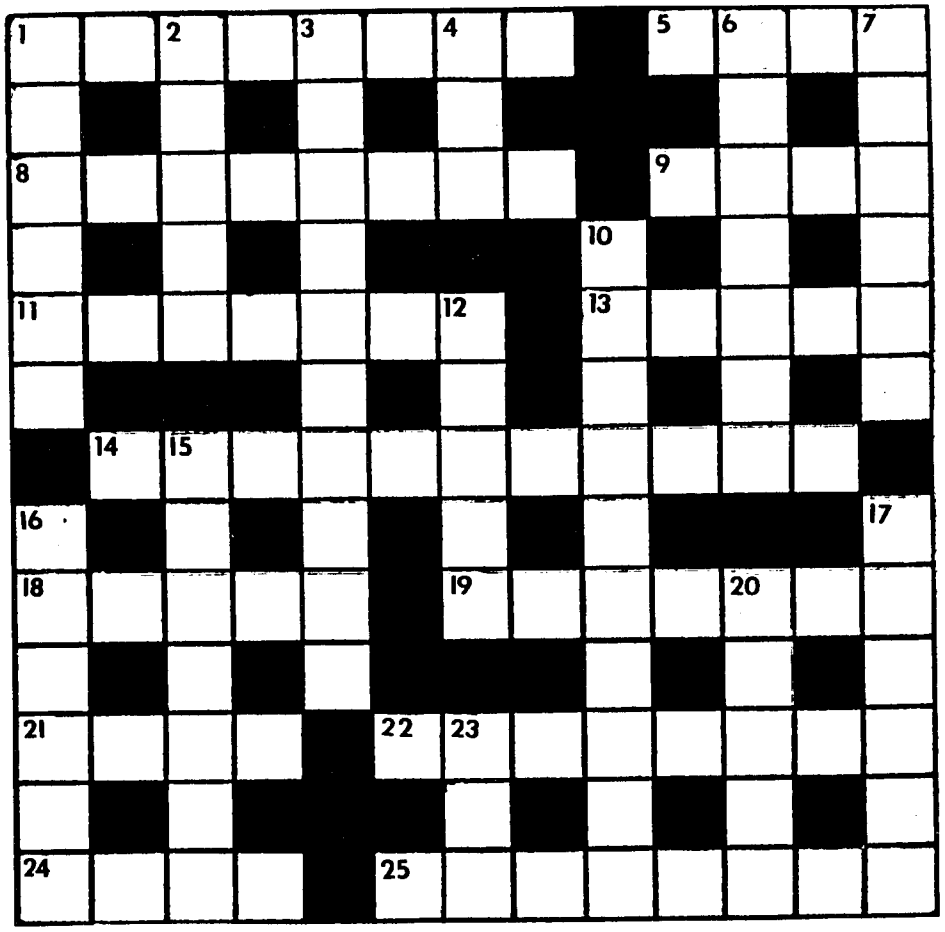
ACROSS

1. The language of an ancient country in the Balkon Peninsula. (8)
5. Got a taxi to work on site, in spite of her colleagues' objections. (4)
8. The most sacred part of an ecclesiastical site. (4,4)
9. The emblem of the 20th Roman legion. (4)
11. (and 7 down) Tea before a Greek letter I blur at Garton. (7,6)
13. Exclaim at the last girl to get a good grade. (5)
14. Pete on the john! (3,2,3,3)
18. (and 16 down) Snax on logs a crazy picnic of the 7th century? (5,6)
19. Evolutionists versus creationists, the debate goes on. (7)
21. A sluggish waterway? (4)
22. A curvy piece? (4,1,3)
24. Almost like mixed up glass. (4)
25. Head to upland pasture for a deception. (8)

DOWN

1. Fish are stuffed, we hear, on excavation.(6)
2. Rarely seen on site, this one has a heavenly body and some great locks. (5)
3. Firm agreement with a pig. (4,2,4)
4. Sum up with a hi-tech test.(3)
6. Nearby, mislay a hundred in a small room - gosh! (5,2)
7. See 11 across.
10. How many diggers are needed? The answer is lost in time. (2,3,5)
12. Sign on the site? (2,3)
15. A most imperious lady. (7)
16 See 18 across.
17. Frozen stiff! (3,3)
20. A confused Maori, in the wrong country. (5)
23. Gallic dig reveals illustrious remains. (3)

Answers to: Kate Dennett, 455 Chanterlands Ave, Hull HU5 4AY, by October 10. The first correct solution opened wins its owner a ticket to the ERAS dinner on October 23 (or return of their payment if he/she has already booked). If you don't want to cut up your copy of ERAS News (after all it won't start a very large fire) you can either photocopy the grid or list your answers.



DIARY OF EVENTS

Wednesday 21 September	7.30pm
ERAS lecture Reports Meeting	Old Grammar School South Church Side Hull
Monday 3 October (from)	7.00 - 9.00pm
Certificate in Archaeology 2 year course starts Peter Halkon, Kevin Leahy, Rodney Mackey Terry Manby	details from: Centre for Continuing Educ. University of Hull 49 Salmon Grove Hull HU6 7SZ Tel: 0482 465524
Wednesday 5 October	
NO FSG meeting in Castle Warehouse	for alternative venue and activities, contact Peter Halkon Tel: (0482) 847926
Saturday 22 October Sunday 23 October	9.45am - 5.00pm (lectures) 10.00 - 5.00pm (visits)
University of Leeds weekend course: Monastic Landscapes in Northern Yorkshire *Stephen Moorhouse and Panel*	sae for leaflet: Dep of Adult Continuing Ed University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT Tel: (0532) 333220
Saturday 29 October	10.00am - 5.00pm
University of Sheffield memorial dayschool: Wetland Archaeology, (with special reference to the Humber basin) Fee: £14.00 (£7.00)	Sir Henry Stephenson Building Mappin Street Sheffield 1

Saturday 12 November	10.00am - 5.00pm
University of Leeds (with Univ of Bradford) dayschool: Forensic Archaeology *Panel of speakers* Fee: £14.50 (£12.00)	Dep of Adult Continuing Ed University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT
Saturday 12 November	
Cleveland County Archaeology Section (in conjunction with RCHME) dayschool: Maritime archaeology in north east England	further details from: Gary Green Cleveland Archaeology Southlands Centre Ormesbury Road Middlesborough TS3 0YZ Tel: 0642 327583 ext 223
Saturday 12 November	2pm
Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Roman Antiquities Section) Romancing the Stones - some inscriptions from Roman Britain, *Dr L Keppie*	Claremont University of Leeds
Saturday 26 November	10.00am - 5.00pm
South Yorkshire Archaeology Day results of fieldwork in the region Fee: £14.00 (7.00)	Sir Henry Stephenson Build. Mappin Street Sheffield 1
22 June - 23 October	10.00am - 4.50pm Mon - Sat 2.30pm - 5.50pm Sun
British Museum exhibition GREEK GOLD Jewellery of the Classical World Admission £3.50 (£2)	Rooms 27-28, Main Entrance Great Russell Street

Ed: I also receive details of lectures, day and weekend schools, study tours and conferences in other parts of the country (and abroad) when they are published in CBA's *Briefing*. Please contact me if you want more information.