ERAS news

No 32 December 1989

You probably don't need me to tell you that the 'New Light on the Parisi' dayschool was a success: as 247 people attended this meeting at Hull University on 11 November a large proportion of the ERAS membership must have been gathered together on that day, along with many others interested in archaeology (who of course we hope will soon be ERAS members too).

Whether the Northamptonshire excursion can be adjudged such a success rather depends on your viewpoint: to those who participated it was undoubtedly a success; to our Treasurer, counting the loss to the Society resulting from the low turnout, it might not seem so straightforward. Thanks are certainly due to the site directors who enabled us to see such a range of current excavation in Northamptonshire: Brian Dix, David Windell, and the Friendship-Taylors; and also to Melanie Whewell who coordinated it for us. However, the shortfall in numbers will doubtless make the Society more aware of bookings and costs in future. It hasn't yet deterred us from arranging further excursions, as you will see from the enclosed leaflet about the Wessex long weekend. Copies of the leaflet have already been sent to those members who earlier expressed a particular interest and many bookings have already been taken. Places do remain, but the number of hotel rooms available at the concessionary rate is limited so you will need to book quickly to obtain

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

your preferred choice of hotel room. Since this newsletter has been somewhat delayed by seasonal events, the £5 late booking fee will not be imposed until February 1, but please note that payment in full will be required no later than one month before the excursion.

One of the sites that we shall certainly visit during the Wessex weekend is Avebury, recently designated one of eleven World Heritage Monuments in Britain; this distinction has not, however, prevented Avebury from being the target of a number of planning applications. Though the hotel complex on Overton Hill was rejected earlier this year, the decision on the proposed conference hotel at West Kennet Farm has yet to be announced, and the 'theme park' at Avebury Manor is still being considered.

ANNUAL DINNER

The Wessex excursion will be closely followed by the Annual Dinner. The venue is diiferent this year: Staff House at Hull University. An after-dinner speaker is planned and live music will be provided by Jack Harrison and fellow musicians on traditional instruments such as as the Northumbrian pipes and the hurdy-gurdy. Details and a booking form are included with this newslotter.

NEW FACES

The replacement for John Dent has been appointed; he is is Ken Steadman from the Museum of London who will take up his post at the Humberside Archaeology Unit on December 18th.

EXCAVATION REPORTS

BLAYDES STAITHE — Dave Evans
Interim Report — Humberside Archaeology Unit

Excavations by the Humberside Archaeology Unit on behalf of the Regent Housing Society and Pearson Building Ltd. have made dramatic discoveries this summer relating to the early fishing industry in Hull. The excavations took place from mid-August to mid-September on a prime waterfront site on the High Street next to Drypool Bridge, previously occupied by 19th century warehouses.

Before the start of the 14th century the River Hull used to run along the line of what is now the High Street. The next five centuries were to see a process of land reclamation which steadily pushed the river eastwards into its present position. Whilst the town's whaling industry was concentrated on the Humber foreshore, the River Hull offered more sheltered anchorages, and it was here that the town's main wharves were located, together with their associated industries (such as salting, pickling, tarring, rope making, boat building, etc.) and warehouses. Excavations in 1978 at Chapel Lane Staithe exposed part of the 14th century waterfront timbers which still stood 1.5m high (the waterlogged conditions next to the river have ensured that timbers survive particularly well). The precise positions of the 15th and 16th century waterfronts are unknown, and the recent excavations were intended to see if any trace of these survived below the 19th century buildings.

The most spectacular discovery was of two or more large, circular timber vats set into a 15th century surface, and extending back at right angles to the river. They are stave-built tubs with wooden bases. Each is linked to the next by a narrow wooden pipe - one of which still carried the remains of a sluice.

These would have enabled the vats to have been topped up with water directly from the river; the water level in each could then be regulated by opening or closing the sluice as necessary. Fish bones in the base of one of the vats suggest that thay may have been used by the fish salting industry which used to be sited in this vicinity - hence, the street names of Salthouse Lane and Salter's Lane (now Blaydes Staithe). Whilst much of the fish bought in Hull itself would have been fresh, fish destined for inland villages and towns had to be salted, dried or pickled after it was landed. Fish formed a major component of the medieval diet - particularly as there were three days in the week when the church forbade the eating of meat. Consequently, curing and salting of fish were major industries in Hull.

The excavations also uncovered the remains of several later waterfront buildings dating perhaps to the 17th century. These appear to have been timber buildings set on low brick walls. Waterlogging was clearly a problem even then, as the foundations were built over rows of closely set wooden piles.

172-182 HIGH STREET, HULL — Dave Evans
Interim Report — Humberside Archaeology Unit

An archaeological evaluation of 172-182 High Street, Hull was undertaken in August prior to the development of the site. The work was undertaken by Dave Evans of the Humberside Archaeology Unit and consisted of hand excavation of machine-cut trenches. The funding for the work was provided by Horncastle Homes Ltd., the developers of the site.

The principal aims of the evaluation were to determine the depth, extent and condition of the medieval and later deposits in the area affected by

development, and to check whether the preliminary conclusions reached in a 1971 excavation by Hull Museum on 178 High Street were a) reasonable and b) could be extended to the development of the whole of the street frontage at this end of the High Street. Accordingly a fairly large area was opened by machine. This showed that, although large parts of the street frontage were honeycombed with cellars, the archaeological deposits survived to a considerable depth and showed a high degree of preservation.

The archaeological deposits were found to survive to a depth of nearly four metres below the present ground surface. This conflicts markedly with the 1971 excavation which claimed that a natural subsoil occurred at a depth of 5ft 6ins on the street frontage and at 7ft at the back of the site. Moreover, the 1971 report claimed that this subsoil was a peaty silt, whereas their drawn sections showed clay underlying all deposits. In those areas examined by the current assessment the underlying subsoil was found to be a well-sorted light brown clay containing lenses of sand and other water-borne deposits. This would suggest that this was alluvial in origin and represents an earlier flood plain of the rivers Hull and Humber.

Above this, the level of the ground had been artifically raised by the massive dumping of indurated blue-grey plastic clays which incorporated various midden deposits, e.g. pottery, oyster shells, bone, tile etc. This must mark the initial land reclamation along the Hull foreshore. Pottery within this deposit is of late 13th-early 14th century type and is consistent with colonization of this part of the town which began in about 1300.

Above this level were established two medieval tenements. Documentary references show that these had been established by at least 1347. The earliest houses

would have been set parallel to the street on the actual frontage. As such they lay outside the area of the present excavations; however, it is likely that these survive underneath the modern cellars. Behind the tenements were substantial garden plots in which were recovered large quantities of 14th century rubbish. By the end of that century the houses were extended back into these areas and the evidence for their walls were encountered in the excavations. The footings comprised a mixture of limestone and brick which would have formed the sills for half-timbered buildings. A great deal of evidence was found for hearths, floor surfaces and room divisions. Subsequently, several minor changes in property boundaries were observed, but the basic pattern of tenement holdings remained static until the 18th century. At this time almost all of these properties were rebuilt in brick, although some parts of the frontage remained half-timbered (as evidenced by 19th century engravings in the Ferens Art Gallery).

The structural remains that were encountered were of good quality. The same is also true of the finds assemblages. The latter include a complete Dutch pottery cauldron of about 1500; a rich collection of imported French, Dutch and German pottery ranging in date from 1300 to 1650; a Dutch polychrome slipware fire cover of about 1640 (only the sixth example to be found in Britain and the first in Hull); a complete pair of 15th century scissors; a complete 16th century thimble; a delicate bronze medieval plaque depicting a head; a decorated butt plate of a knife; and large quantities of other finds.

Oral tradition links 179 High Street with a house occupied in the 1670s by Sir William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania. The house later became Hull's first Deaf and Dumb Institution.

MARKET WEIGHTON BY-PASS
Interim Report

Peter Halkon

After much negotion, coordinated by Martin Millet, with the Department of Transport, Humberside County Council Technical Services and English Heritage, (all of these organisations being most cooperative), work finally began on the excavation in last August. The dig was conducted by a joint team from Durham University Department of Archaeology and ERAS, directed by John Creighton and the writer, and generously funded by English Heritage, Durham University and the Robert Kiln Trust. During the excavation a further generous donation was presented by the Mayor of Market Weighton, Councillor Steve King, on behalf of Market Weighton Town Council. Thanks must also be given for the generous help of Mr P. Grundy the Farm Manager and Mr and Mrs Stringer for the accommodation at Hayton.

After the line of the by-pass was surveyed and fenced and a series of test pits had been dug, the topsoil in a trench 150m x 20m was cleared by machine. At first there was disappointment because the stone walls suggested by a resistivity survey were not present; it was the gravelly subsoil which had given the readings. It soon became apparent that much of the stratigraphy on top of the ridge had been destroyed by ploughing, both medieval and modern, and remnants of rig and furrow could clearly be seen. When the first furrows were excavated, however, a large number of postholes were uncovered, appearing as sandy fills in the natural gravel. Many of these appeared to be related, but the lack of stratigraphy makes it difficult to say at the time of writing which belonged to which. There were certainly some alignments which could represent fence lines or property boundaries and some which appeared to represent post and beam construction walls of rectangular buildings. The plan and nature of the buildings became clearer in the continued excavation

by Wilberforce College students and ERAS volunteers between the end of September and the beginning of December. Dating remains problematic, but several of the postholes contained small, worn Roman-British sherds.

The only major features, other than postholes, in the eastern section of the excavation trench, where the natural was gravel, were a series of intercutting pits containing Romano-British pottery. One of these, however, cut through the burial of a woman and child, the woman being in a crouched position. Several weeks ago a further shallow pit was found containing the incomplete but partially articulated skeleton of a horse.

In the western end of the trench where the subsoil was predominately sandy, a series of pits, hearths and three shallow gulleys were found, each full of pottery and animal bones.

The major find of the excavation so far is a superb Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead in brown flint, found by Ian Chorlton. The substantial number of worked flints found both in fieldwalking and excavation suggests the presence of a prehistoric site.

Thanks to all members who have helped this autumn for their hard work. The dig is to continue after a Christmas break. For further details please contact the writer on 0482 847926 after January 3rd.

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SWANLAND TOWN END EXCAVATION
July-August 1989

Patrick Norfolk
& Derek Brooks

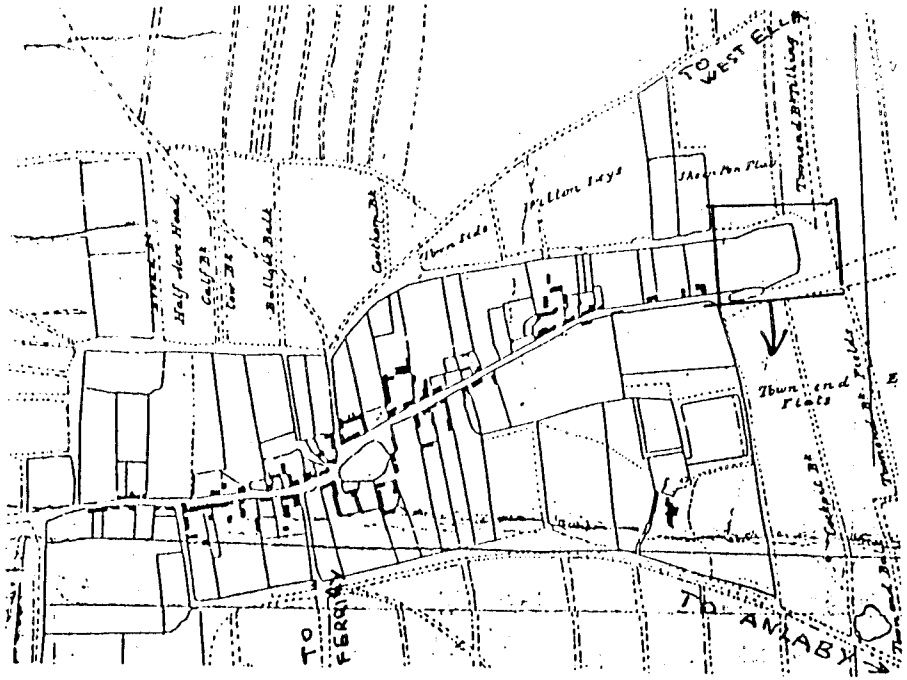
Most Medieval villages can be recognised by a hollow road and the existence of backroads running parallel to it. The properties usually ran from the main street

to the backroad. Swanland village is no exception to this rule. It is quite a long village: in the 16th century its houses extended for 3/4 mile. I have good evidence that a large hall existed close to the western end. A field behind is named 'Hall Close' on the first ordnance survey map. A chapel of ease to Ferriby Priory, built in the 13th century, was nearby.

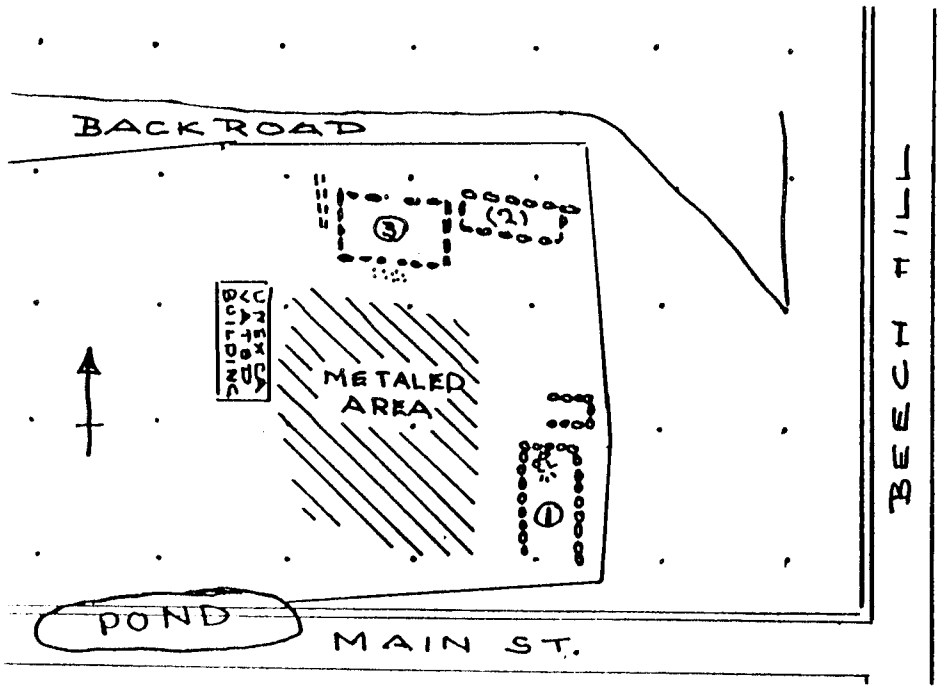
The excavation described here took place at the eastern end of the village. It is quite possible that the buildings involved were the very last buildings on the street, as the balk for the strip field adjacent to the site is named 'Town End Balk'. Because of the existence of a dew pond on the main street at this point the buildings here were built on the back road and on the end road which joined the main street and the backroad. A building which we know to exist but has not yet been excavated forms the fourth side of a quadrangle. If the spacing of the buildings was similar all the way down the street it is probable that there were some 66 houses down each side of the village, totalling 132 in all.

All excavation work had to be completed in the short space of time available before the developers started work on the site. Because of this it was decided to concentrate on revealing walls and producing a plan.

SITE 1 This was excavated last and slightly more work was undertaken on this house. In spite of that, several questions remain unanswered. The south wall could not be found because of the proximity of a hedge and a large tree. The north wall had largely disappeared. The part that remained of the east wall was quite substantial; it was four or five courses high in places. Below a floor level inside this wall was a large area of carbon containing sherds of The west wall was of only one course with a depression in its centre suggesting an entrance. Another possible



SWANLAND
Taken from enclosure map 1824



INSET Scale 1:1250

entrance was close to a paved internal area which contained a brick hearth surrounded by clay. A few stones to the east of the hearth suggested traces of a wall. To the north of the building was a very tumbled-down outbuilding, only three walls of which could be recognised. It may in fact have been an open-fronted building apart from the paved area close to the hearth. Actual floor levels were difficult to find. Because of limited time, the south end of the house floors were not revealed nor was the floor in the outbuilding. On the east side of this property ran a high bank and further east ran the return of the back road.

SITE 2 In contrast to site 1, which was aligned north-south, this property ran east-west. With the exception of the north walls, survival of the walls of this building was limited. No entrances were observed. At the east end another wall, possibly of an outhouse, ran north to south. Once again, due to lack of time and assistance, the rest of this building was not excavated. No floor areas were found. In the southeast corner a chalk area was found which appeared to be foundations of an earlier house. This chalk continued into site 3 and was cut through by later walls.

SITE 3 Like site 2 the south wall remains were poor but did contain an entrance. Outside this was an area of cobbling approximately 3x2 metres. The east wall in its centre almost touched the corner of site 2 and also cut through the earlier foundations. Between this wall and the west wall of site 2, a jeton was found on a floor layer. The north wall in places was also very substantial and had a doorway in its centre. Outside this doorway was a hollow in the steep banking allowing access to the back road which at this point runs east-west. Outside the west wall approximately 2.5m away another substantial wall runs north-south.

We may never know what the rest of this building was

like as it is now under a heavy overburden placed there by the builders. Between this and the west wall of site 3 were two ancient surfaces, one above the other. On the uppermost, a large quantity of coal had been deposited and both these levels contained a considerable amount of pottery sherds - in fact, much more than has been recovered from the rest of the excavation put together. Most of this pottery can be dated to the late 15th and early 16th century, the exception being several pieces of 12th-13th century date: these could possibly be associated with the earlier building. Starting from the paved area on the south side of site 3 was a large area, some 30m square, covered with stone rubble. This was checked by a long narrow trench and other small exploratory squares. Further to the south of this, and running up to the road, was a large hollow which could well have been a pond. Suggested uses for the metalled area could be a stack yard or stockade.

Finds from the site

METAL — Many nails, some of which are of the horse shoe variety; keyhole horse shoes; hinge crook for door or window; jeton or Nuremburg token inscribed Hans Schultes.Nor.

POTTERY — Most of this is Humberware, possibly from Holme-on-Spalding Moor; several sherds of 12th-13th century Orangeware.

BONE — Large variety of butchered animal bone mainly from sheep and cow.

STONE — Chalk spindle whorl.

GLASS — Piece of flat glass, very blackened.

BRICK & TILE — Bricks 10" x 5" x 2" are used on site, not in walls but for paving; many pieces of hearth tile found but not in large amounts, perhaps, like the brick, re-used from other sites.

WALLS — All walls are constructed from both chalk and oolitic limestone, but also contain large squared-off flints and some erratics.

PAVED — South entrance of site 3 chalk and cobbles. Internal floor of site 1 limestone and chalk.

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ARCHAEOLOGY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROJECT

Alison Williams
Humberside C.C. Archaeology Unit

Are you interested in digging, drawing, displays, reconstructions, research, writing, pots, publications or publicity?

Then the Archaeology E.T. Project may be for you!

The project runs alongside the County Council's Archaeology Unit. The general theme for the project is 'Archaeology in the Community' and the aim is to interest and involve as many people as possible in archaeology.

Archaeology trainees have the opportunity to join in on the Unit's excavations and do other outdoor work such as earthwork surveys, fieldwalking and finds processing. But if you're the indoor type then you could work on the project's publications and interpretation programme; writing and researching, marketing and publicising. Or how about the archaeological records; paperwork and mapwork, archiving and cataloguing, computor database work. You may be interested in doing the Certificate of Heritage Interpretation, or joining the college workshops to

learn typing, wordprocessing or computer skills. There are also media and marketing courses available.

It's not all archaeology here though - if you're artistically inclined why not join our Illustration team. Trainees are taught different illustration techniques and graphic design skills, using these to produce the project's displays, booklets, leaflets, and interpretive panels. There's also the chance to experiment with computer graphics and desktop publishing. You can update your portfolio and if you want to gain a qualification why not try A level Art, the Media Practitioner's course, or City and Guild Photography.

And the job prospects? Whilst archaeology is fascinating and illustration work is absorbing, the skills you can learn on the project are widely transferable.

So far ALL our trainees have gained work. Openings include:-

Archaeological Excavations
Archaeological Records work
Museum work
Illustration and Design - commercial
Illustration and Design - archaeological/museums etc
Marketing/Publicity
Clerical work

Interested? Then why not come to the project, have a chat, look around and see if its really for you. Ring Alison Williams on 0482 868770 to arrange an appointment.

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NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

Developments in the Hull and East Riding Museum

Bryan Sitch
Asst. Keeper of Archaeology
Hull City Museums

The thatching of the Iron Age roundhouse reconstruction in the Hull and East Riding Museum (formerly the Transport and Archaeology Museum) started in early November. The reconstruction is part of Phase 1 of the redevelopment of the archaeology displays in the Museum. A brand new gallery has been fitted out and the displays will open in May 1990.

The new gallery is located on the ground floor of Castle Warehouse, very close to the Museum's largest Iron Age exhibit, the Hasholme logboat. The new displays, entitled 'A Celtic World', will feature a life-size reconstruction of an Iron Age farmstead complete with a roundhouse, four-post structure, eight models dressed in period costume and a chariot complete with fibre glass ponies. The reconstruction, when finished, will show a farmstead in the East Riding 2,300 years ago.

Work on the wooden framework of the roundhouse was completed in October. Mr John Cottrell-Smith, formerly site-supervisor on the Weelsby Avenue Iron Age reconstruction, very kindly built the roundhouse with some help from students of Wyke Sixth Form College and Wolfreton School. The roundhouse was thatched in November by Mr. Richard Allen and two colleagues, professional thatchers based in Louth.

Students of Wyke Sixth Form College are also working on the chariot construction as a special educational project in consultation with the Archaeology Department of Hull City Museums. John Boddy Timber Ltd have very generously given sponsorship to the project in the form of free wood.

Chariot reconstructions have been made in the past: for example, by the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in Edinburgh, but the Hull City Museums construction will be able to draw on evidence from the recent excavations of chariot burials in the region. The East Riding/North Humberside is unique in that a dozen chariot burials have been found to date. They are found nowhere else in Britain, and the closest parallels can be seen in northern France.

The new 'Celtic World' gallery of the Hull and East Riding Museum will provide a very attractive and exciting educational and tourist resource which will, inevitably, invite comparison with a certain museum in York. However, entrance to Hull City Museums is free, and members of the public will be able to walk through the Iron Age landscape at their own pace.

The new gallery is beginning to take shape, and it has already attracted interest in the local press (see Yorkshire Post, October 3rd, November 7th; Hull Daily Mail, November 8th). It will be interesting to compare these pictures with the completed gallery and its roundhouse, chariot and landscape in a few months time.

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LECTURE SUMMARIES

18 Oct: THE ANGLO-SAXON MONASTERY AT DACRE - Rachel Newman

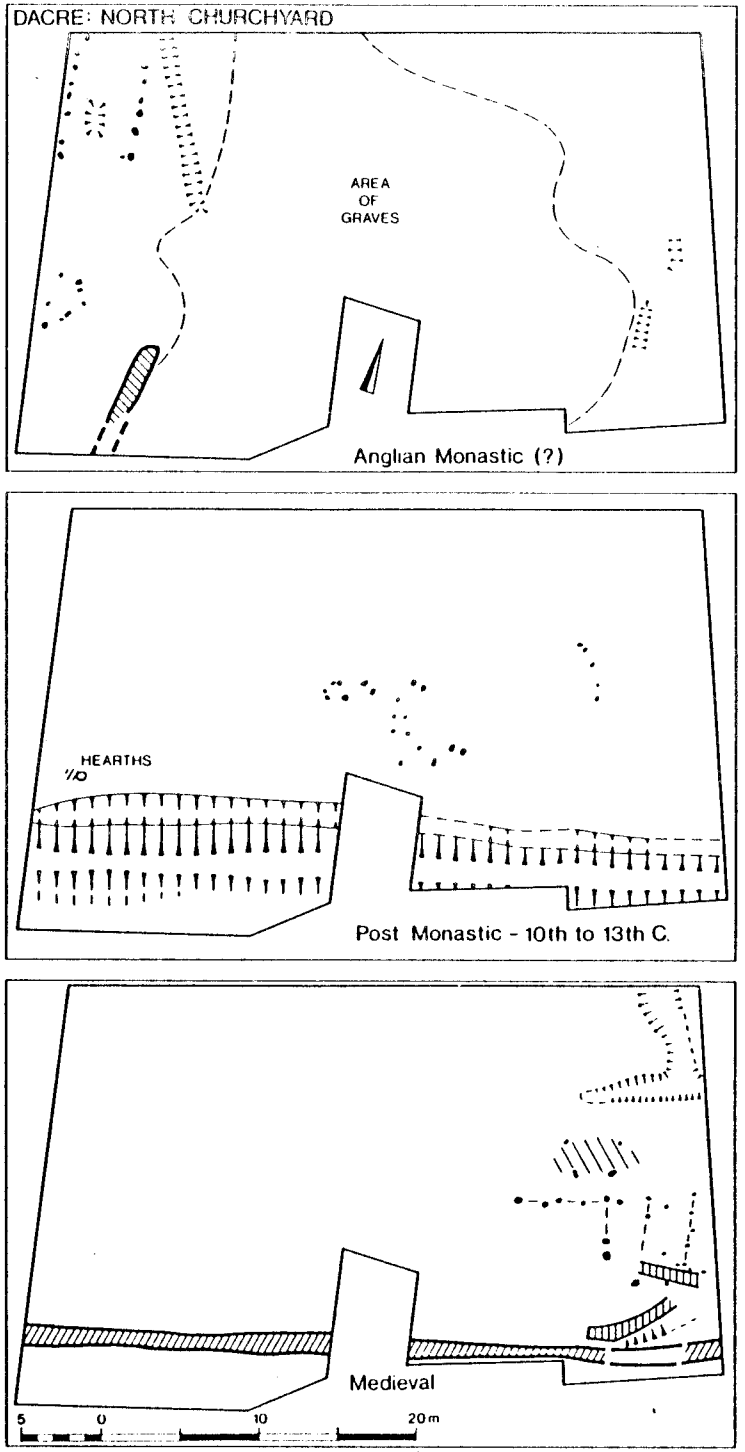
In this lecture Rachel Newman, of the Cumbria and Lancashire Archaeology Unit, gave the results of excavation funded by a wide variety of bodies between 1982 and 1985. The object of the excavation was to establish whether there ever was a monastery at Dacre, a village lying four miles west of Penrith in Cumbria. The documentary evidence for the monastery is hardly

conclusive; indeed the Worcester recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles is the only version to include the reference by the Venerable Bede, and though Bede records that a monastery was being built at Dacre a short time before he was writing he gives no idea of when the monastery came into being or ceased to exist, nor the location of this 'Dacre'. There is one other Dacre known today near Pately Bridge in Yorkshire. That Dacre, however, has provided no archaeological evidence for an early church, while in the Cumbrian Dacre there has been some evidence: in 1875, part of a Viking age sculptured cross was found during the rebuilding of the east end of the church; in about 1900, part of an earlier cross-shaft of pre-Viking age was discovered close to the church; and in the 1920s a drain was found and excavated, leading from under a previous churchyard boundary, indicating that it was at least as old as the church. The drain was lined with massive stones, so was probably constructed to drain buildings rather than just a cemetery. Its position suggests that these buildings were on the south side of the present church (and hence inaccessible under the graveyard).

The building of a cottage to the west of the church provided the opportunity for some excavation to the north and west of the church, and a little to the south, including the re-excavation of the drain. One of the main reasons for excavating in the northern area was a series of 'bumps', evidence ofearthworks which had not appeared on any map (there were in fact no real estate maps so the first maps for the area were the first Ordnance Survey edition.) Geophysical survey produced evidence of anomolies which might represent buildings, but it was expected that the area available for digging could only cover the periphery of any monastery. As it turned out, no stone buildings were found, but part of a Saxon cemetery and one or two features which were clearly not Anglo-Saxon: groups of stake-holes, and pits and a gully which were

clearly older than Anglo-Saxon. All these features cut into the natural and were, more or less, without dating evidence.

It became apparent that the present churchyard is rapidly covering up a much earlier cemetery. In 1983 a series of ridges on an upper terrace was investigated. They were previously thought to be agricultural, but turned out to be graves. All these graves belong to period which is aceramic in Cumbria. Some 234 graves were found, though the speaker thought it likely that this was an underestimate. The inextactitude was a result of the poor preservation of bones caused by the acid soil so that most often only a faint grave cut or recut was all that could be detected. The best preserved burials did show a set of teeth, indicating that the head lay at the west end of a grave aligned roughly east-west, with the body laid supine. The teeth were of adults. There were no grave goods; however there were one or two other pieces of evidence: a dark organic seam where the side of a coffin had collapsed in and ended up in a lower soil level, and numerous lumps of iron, originally thought to be agricultural in origin but which turned out to be coffin fittings; these all appear to be 9th century or earlier and together form one of the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon coffin fittings in the country. Curiously, two types of locks were also found, somewhat unexpected finds in a cemetery. A few examples do exist of burial in locked boxes, in York Minster and in Hereford Cathedral, but this seems to be a short-lived tradition of the 9th and 10th centuries. Without a more complete example from the Dacre site it is not possible to say that it was anything more than the re-use of chests which happened to have locks. The only grave good found was a millefiori glass bead which was quite clearly an import from the continent, raising the interesting possibility of links between northwest England and the continent.



Three phases found in the excavations at Dacre.

The graves were clearly intercut and three phases could be traced - this cutting through previous graves was a common practice in medieval and earlier centuries but it does still suggest that the cemetery was in use for a long period. Thus if there is a monastic site at Dacre, the speaker concluded, the cemetery continued in use after the monastery. The excavation revealed that the grave area ceased abruptly, but no clear boundary features were found. To the west lay a wall beyond which were no more graves. Although the wall was cut by a later ditch which obscured its progress, it did appear to make a turn and could mark the southwest boundary of the cemetery.

pre-Conquest buildings

The excavation also revealed what appeared to be buildings belonging to the pre-Conquest period; most interesting of these was a circular or sub-rectangular structure at least six metres across of a posts-in -postholes construction. This building nestles into a natural river terrace which was quarried back to accommodate the building. Also found was a concentration of pre-Conquest metalwork. A second rectangular building was without dating evidence, though a pit which cut it (and therefore post-dated it) contained a sherd of medieval pottery. Unfortunately, the first building disappeared under modern graves and the metalwork was found in a residual context, together with 12th/13th century pottery. On the positive side, however, the metalwork was in good condition and unmistakedly Anglo-Saxon. Apart from this the only pre-Conquest metalwork consisted of four pieces from the area of the drain and two from the orchard. Anglo-Saxon loomweights of 8th-10th century dates were also found. The coins comprised a silver sceatta of c.738-57, and five stycas dating from between 820 and 854.

re-excavation of the drain

Only a small area around the drain could be excavated, because of the proximity of modern graves. The earliest feature was a very large ditch running across the site, underneath the (pre-Conquest) drain and considerably earlier than it. The second feature was an 'occupation' level covering the ditch. Part of a pre-Conquest glass bangle, bits of wood and clay were found, but no pottery. The overlying drain was constructed of large re-used masonry blocks of two types. The stones could have come from an unknown Roman site, but are unlikely to have been moved far because of their weight. The drain itself had been cleared in the 1920s excavation and there was no dating evidence from the stones or the fill but there were interesting finds from the backfill of that earlier excavation. These included a beautiful 9th century ring, a metal decoration tentatively identified as an escutchen, and a stylus. The stylus is not Roman, nor does it conform to a medieval design. It is a most significant find and the main evidence for a monastic site - the only centres of literacy in this period were monasteries. That the drain belongs to the monastery is circumstantial; in form it is Y-shaped, so two drains are meeting at this point, originating from the direction of the two ends of the modern church; it also appears to curve but the cause of this turn could not be ascertained because it would lie out in the field, outside the threatened area and hence outside the limits of the excavation. However, the drain does not appear to be associated with the present church and churchyard and it would seem reasonable for it to belong to the postulated monastic occupation of the site.

excavation in the orchard,

The earliest evidence of activity in this area to the west was a ditch which did not resemble a boundary ditch and seems to pre-date elements of the medieval churchyard. If it in fact continued round on its

course it could be the same ditch as found underneath the re-excavated drain. A cobbled area was also found. The old ground surface appears to have been eroded before the medieval period. Dark soil surrounding two burnt areas possibly indicates the rebuild of a subcircular building rather than the building itself. Loomweights were associated with the hearths and also some chips of Anglo-Saxon glass. The speaker suggested that this was an area of industrial activity.

Following this Saxon phase, the next identifiable phase of activity is when a bank and ditch cuts across the site, immediately to the north of the present church. This underlies the wall which was the boundary of the modern churchyard until the 1950s. A wall was constructed on top of the bank after the ditch had silted up, probably in the 13th century. The wall contained large pieces of sandstone from an earlier building, possibly an earlier Anglo-Saxon church on the site.

medieval period

Remains of medieval buildings were very fragmentary, only a single course in depth, but indicated that the eastern part of the field beyond the wall formed part of a farmstead which was in use from the early 14th to the early 16th century. From what is known of medieval Dacre it was a small vilage with a church and was the manorial seat of the Dacre family who became lords of half of Cumbria by the 16th century. The 14th century castle has survived, more or less intact, together with much of the village.

Rachel Newman summarised the evidence obtained for a Saxon monastery at Dacre:

(i) There was a major cemetery from at least the 12th century, and probably the 8th or 9th, with a continuing religious tradition from pre-Conquest Christian graves. The focus of the cemetery appears to be to its south. The lack of child burials is

consistent with a monastic cemetery.

(ii) There is evidence of a monumental structure which must be pre-14th century. The pre-Conquest glass and lead, though only in a residual context, suggests an ecclestiastical building, and the evidence of possible glassworking supports this.

(iii) The metalwork suggests a site of some importance; it is the largest collection of pre-Conquest finds in Cumbria and includes the all-important stylus.

Though admitting that many questions remained unanswered, the speaker felt that what had been found at Dacre was a monastic site, which was then abandoned for a period before becoming a parochial site, though with some continuity of burial activity. The excavation must have been a frustrating exercise at times, restricted by the present church and churchyard from digging in the very areas where the monastery was most likely to have been centred. Rachel Newman did admit to hoping one day to be able to excavate in the field beyond.

The editor wishes to thank Rachel Newman and the Cumbrian and Lanacashire Archaeology Unit for permission to reproduce the plans of the site.

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8 Nov: THE WEST HESLERTON PROJECT - Dominic Powesland

Work on West Heslerton, situated on the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering, has now been going on for 10 years. The area has a distinctive geotopographical sequence, ranging from the chalk Wolds and their dry valleys partially filled with hill wash, down to the sands and gravels of the Vale itself.

Aerial photography had been used in an attempt to understand this landscape block. This had revealed many cropmarks particularly on the edge of the former

Fenland in the bottom of the Vale which had been covered by windblown sand. The ancient landscape was relatively well-preserved; excavations and aerial photography showed that settlement had been on the edge of the Fenland in the Iron Age and Roman period. In post-Roman times the area had become too wet for the inhabitants, and, perhaps under the influence of new Anglian settlers, they moved their settlement to higher drier land.

Unfortunately our understanding of Anglian settlement is hampered by the proliferation of burial archaeology of the period. Many cemeteries are known but relatively few settlements. In an attempt to understand the settlement of the West Heslerton area, four sample trenches were dug along a ladder settlement spotted by aerial photography. One of the trenches had well-preserved stratigraphy. Early Anglian pottery was found associated with roundhouses, and radiocarbon dating of organic material from a pit gave the amazingly apt date of AD 410! There was evidence that when the Anglians came to Britain, the newcomers adopted some of the Romano-Britons' culture.

The good sense of the newcomers was revealed by the move away from the filthy Iron Age and Roman settlement to a better site 2km away. Blown sand has enhanced the archaeological preservation in this area, and work between 1978 and 1984 uncovered the greater part of an Anglian cemetery. The excavation could claim particular importance because it was one of only a few where the cemetery edges have been located and hence the size of the cemetery could be calculated. Organic grave goods survived relatively well, and a lot is being learnt about costume, jewellery and metalwork. A sequence of burials was found going right back into the Neolithic (4000-2000 BC), suggesting that there was residual communal recognition of this burial ground.

Most of the Anglian dead had received summary burial, and the skeletons were found in all sorts of positions (though conditions in parts of the cemetery were not very suitable for animal bone preservation). Only a few burials were in any sort of extended position - more frequently they were closer to a crouched burial. One hundred annular brooches were found, but the temptation to lift the most impressive finds first was resisted. Better results were obtained by micro-excavation in the laboratory. To this end, many of the Anglian graves were lifted complete by surrounding them with a layer of polyurathane foam. The excavators trenched around each grave, excavated underneath it until only a few pillars of soil supported the grave, and then inserted foam into the cavity. In this way the graves were lifted complete out of the ground.

In the comfort and controlled conditions of the laboratory a lot of interesting discoveries were made. One body had been covered in leaves which it was hoped could be identified. Bits of textile, leather and traces of wood were found which would reveal much information about the Anglians. One Anglian burial had a 'handbag' with a ring of elephant ivory at the top and containing a knife in a leather sheath with a wooden handle. Evidence of tapestry weave, a type of textile hitherto never found before the 10th century was discovered. Plant remains too have added to our understanding of the Anglians.

Dominic Powesland emphasised that these sites were not detectable by fieldwalking, geophysical survey or study of cropmarks. Yet the archaeology was certainly there - out of 7 trenches, six (by chance) hit buildings and excavation was undertaken on an unusual scale with a large number of people trowelling back the surface, eventually of a whole field, to reveal a whole series of timber-framed buildings and grubenhäuser. These were not merely temporary shelters as the timbers of these houses might have lasted up to

200 years. Very similar evidence of domestic buildings was found in Northumberland. The grubenhäuser measured up to 8m x 4m by 1m deep, and contained lots of Anglo-Saxon rubbish. These Anglo-Saxon 'time capsules' were excavated extremely carefully. Some grubenhause pits contained a lot of animal bone, loomweights and potsherds. It would be wrong, however, to see the grubenhäuser as weaving sheds on account of the loomweights, because the rubbish was only deposited after the building had gone out of use. Dominic was of the opinion that most of the grubenhäuser were used for grain storage.

In one building, interestingly, an area of burning occupied one third of the area of the building - too much, surely, for a hearth, and in fact Dominic thought that this building was probably a smokehouse.

Elsewhere a medieval headland had preserved an Anglo-Saxon metalworking furnace with an anvil, honestones and slag. Much of the iron deposited as grave goods in the cemetery probably came from this furnace. Different parts of the site were used for different purposes; certain areas were used for malt kilns.

The excavations at West Heslerton have been extremely rewarding and further work on the faunal and floral assemblages will be very informative. For instance, more pagan Saxon seeds have been found (using sieving techniques) at West Heslerton than in the rest of Britain put together. It was even possible to say that wheat was being grown in the Vale of Pickering rather than on the Wolds because of the absence of chalk-loving species among weed seeds found in the grain.

We look forward to hearing more about the results of the work at West Heslerton in due course.

Bryan Sitch

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DIARY OF EVENTS

	Time and Venue
Wednesday 3 January	7.30pm
Field Study Group	Castle Warehouse, Chapel Lane Staith, High St, Hull
Wednesday 24 January	7.30pm
ERAS lecture: The medieval hospital of St. Giles, Brough, N. Yorks. (Peter Cardwell)	Ferens Art Gallery Hull
Wednesday 21 February	7.30pm
ERAS lecture: Flag Fen (Francis Prior)	The Old Grammar School South Church Side, Hull
Saturday 17 March	1.45pm
EYLHS walkabout	Hemingborough church and village
followed by AGM	Cliffe Parish Hall
Wednesday 21 March	7.30pm
ERAS lecture: Down in the Deep South: recent archaeological work in South Humberside	The Old Grammar School South Church Side

Saturday 24 March	2.30pm
EYLHS lecture: Thomas Thompson of Hull, the banker	Beverley library gallery

20-21 April	
ERAS Wessex weekend excursion	centered on Salisbury

Friday 27 April	
ERAS Annual Dinner	Staff House Hull University

If you wish to attend any of the East Yorkshire Local History Society's events, please contact their Programme Secretary, Miss P Aldabella, 187 Greenwood Ave, Hull. Tel: Hull 805205. There is coach transport arranged for all their excursions.

ERAS

Letters and contributions for inclusion in the Newsletter should be addressed to:
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