

ERAS news

No 31

September 1989

This is the low-fat version of ERAS News, but it nevertheless contains some important information. Because the Ferens Art Gallery is closed for refurbishment after January, we have been unable to finalize the lecture programme in time to send you a membership card before the first meeting of the season, the Reports meeting. Therefore, you will need to refer to the Diary of Events at the end of this newsletter for the dates of the first couple of meetings. Apologies all round, but I'm sure it won't affect the quality of the lectures. The lecture meetings after January will be held in the old Grammar School.

Alas, we have to say goodbye to two people from whose enthusiasm and experience as professional archaeologists ERAS has greatly benefited: David Crowther at Hull Museum and John Dent at the Humberside Archaeology Unit. Some members will have happy memories of digging at Brantingham or North Cave with John Dent and on the foreshore or Redcliff with Dave Crowther. But it is not only in the field that their work has been evident: Dave Crowther guided the last volume of the East Riding Archaeologist through to publication as the Society's Editor while John arranged for our archaeological knowledge to be improved in the most entertaining way through the lecture programme and has more recently been the Society's Chairman. ERAS is a Society of enthusiastic amateurs and not a professional body, but we do look

EAST RIDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

EXCAVATION REPORTS

PARK GRANGE FARM, LONG LANE, BEVERLEY AN INTERIM STATEMENT

Peter Didsbury

towards the professionals for guidance and direction. Obviously our loss is someone else's gain: Dave Crowther goes to Bury St Edmunds as Museum Manager and John Dent goes north as Regional Archaeologist for the Borders, a large area rich in archaeology. Perhaps we shall meet either one of them on some future excursion.....

Mention of excursions brings me conveniently to the ERAS trip to Northamptonshire on Saturday 23 September for which there are still some places available. There is one change from the provisional itinerary - the coach will be leaving Ferensway at 8.00am, not 8.30, to give us time before lunch to visit the first of the day's sites: Kirby Hall is a Tudor building in the gardens of which an excavation has been recovering the 17th century layout with its 'Dutch' influence. The director, Brian Dix, has kindly agreed to give us a talk. After lunch we will be shown around the excavation of Stanwick Roman villa and West Cotton DMV where the Oxford Archaeology Unit have been digging. From there we go to Piddington Roman villa, site of a long-term excavation by the Upper Nene Archaeological Society. The price of £8.50 for the excursion includes all entrance fees. Last-minute bookings will be taken at the Reports Meeting on September 20.

The long - awaited Wessex weekend has not been forgotten and looks likely to materialize at last, in May 1990. We shall need 25 participants for it to be viable, so if you want it to go ahead, start encouraging at least one friend to join you.

The departure of Dave Crowther and John Dent has obviously left some gaps among the Officers of the Society which are being filled as follows until the next AGM: Dave Evans, already a member of the editorial sub-committee, will act as Editor, Peter Halkon as Chairman and Valerio Fairhurst as Vice-Chairman.

1. The site: location, nature of threat

The site is located at Park Grange Farm, Woodmansey, North Humberside, in a pasture field south of the farm buildings (TAO47378). It lies in a natural drainage hollow orientated roughly east/west, with higher relief to both north and south.

In early summer 1989, the landowner began excavating two fish ponds in this hollow, each c.150 metres long and c.25m wide. The first stage of the work involved removal of topsoil and peat lying over a flint gravel surface at a depth of c.1-1.5m; the second, now scheduled for the spring of 1990, will require the ponds to be deepened at least another metre, gravel extraction to be followed by lining the ponds with clay prior to the flooding and stocking with fish. All the archaeological features referred to below lie at the interface of the gravel and overlying deposits, and will thus be destroyed when work recommences.

2. The nature of the archaeology

Archaeological features can be divided into two broad groups:

(a) In various places along the southern bank of both ponds are roughly circular cobble-spreads sitting in light coloured sand deposits which fill hollows and/or cut features in the gravel surface. When excavated, these prove to contain primary butchery deposits (pig, sheep, horse, cow), burned bone, charcoal, and hand-built pottery with square-sectioned upright rims presently interpreted as being of late Iron Age or early Romano-British date. Wheel-thrown Romanised

coarsewares are also present, and one feature has yielded securely stratified terra sigillato in association with handmade wares. None of the ceramic material from the site is presently thought to post-date c.AD200. The largest of these features so far excavated is currently interpreted as a dry stream bed subject to anthropogenic disturbance both before and during the period of its infilling with water-borne(?) sands. The sand fill of this feature contains apparently deliberately placed stones in its upper levels, and has yielded artefactual material throughout its depth, comprising hand-built pottery as described above, bone including a neat stack of four horse(?) jaws, a perforated boar's tusk, and c.1/4 of the lower stone of a quern. This is almost certainly of sandstone from Spilsby or Elsham in South Humberside; it possibly belongs to a beehive upper stone, but, if a flat quern, is unlikely to post-date c.150 (pers. comm., D. Spratt and L. Wright). These deposits are overlain by "post-Roman" peat. In other parts of the southern section a sequence of two peat deposits is visible, the earliest lying above the gravel and separated from the topmost peat by further sand deposits.

(b) At various points along the higher northern edge of both ponds there are large timbers visible in situ, either cutting the base gravel or clay/alluvial deposits which overlie it (see further below).

3. Work already undertaken

Investigation of the above features began in early June 1989 as a rescue and recording exercise by ERAS Field Study Group members, the work being carried out at weekends only. A public appeal for funds also raised £175, which allowed the author to supervise a team of Employment Trainees on site for five days. Excavation of three of the features described under

(a), above, has been undertaken, and at the time of writing, one has been completely excavated and recorded, and two are nearing completion. In addition, two of the timbers described under (b) above have been excavated and taken to the University of Sheffield (Department of Prehistory and Archaeology) for identification and dendro-chronological dating. One proved to be an oak post c.18" in diameter, having adze cuts at its lower end, and with bark still intact. Unfortunately, the heartwood has been destroyed in antiquity and no dating by this method is possible. The other, species still uncertain, is susceptible to dendro-dating and this is due to be carried out in the winter of 1989/90. A third timber, up to 2 metres long, and bedded in gravel, has been partially uncovered and then backfilled to await on-site recording and sampling if further work takes place. Finally, a start has been made on cleaning larger areas in the western pond in an attempt to discern what other archaeological elements may be present, an exercise which may already be revealing structural features.

It should be noted that the Society has been fortunate in receiving advice and environmental/depositional "input" from Dr. Paul Buckland and Pat Wagner of Sheffield University, and Dr. Steve Ellis of the University of Hull and the Quaternary Research Association. Ms Wagner has taken column peat samples, as well as silt samples from beneath the oak timber referred to above. These have been prepared for analysis, and she reports that invertebrate preservation in all samples is excellent, one of only two sites in East Yorkshire where this has proved to be the case in peat deposits of this age. Dr. Ellis is hoping to arrange for pollen cores to be taken and analysed as part of the University teaching programme in autumn 1989.

4. The site in its setting: interpretation

The site lies on the northern edge of an "island" of higher relief within the lower Hull valley, i.e., the Cottingham/Woodmansey glacial outwash gravels, stretching between Hull and Beverley over a distance of c.8kms, and c.5kms from east to west at its widest point (British Geological Surveys, One Inch Series, Drift Edition, Sheet 72 Beverley). To the west are the till-covered lower slopes of the Yorkshire Wolds, and to the east the low-lying estuarine alluvium of the valley floor. There is extensive evidence from aerial photography of Iron Age/Romano-British settlement on this gravel deposit (Loughlin and Miller 1979), as well as of former drainage channels in the vicinity. The existence of settlement of this period under peat lying over the lower parts of the gravel deposit, was however, unsuspected. The nearest cropmark settlement site which may be of this period lies on higher ground immediately south of the peat deposit (NMR AP Ref: TA 0437/6-156 of 7.5.75; Humberside SMR Refs: 6619, 8811). The writer's post-graduate research suggests that no archaeological fieldwork relevant to the period has been undertaken on these gravels, and that there are only one or two recorded surface finds (Didsbury, in prep.).

The site is currently interpreted as representing activity of late Iron Age to early Romano-British date, in marginal land perhaps on the fringes of higher settlement foci to south and north. The site was clearly dry enough to allow exploitation at this period, though the absence of a horizon between gravel and peat over most of the site suggests its removal by a flooding episode or episodes, perhaps attendant on postulated late Roman sea-level transgression maxima. The site has subsequently remained "wet" until the present day and appropriate only for seasonal grazing and rubbish disposal, as evidenced by 19th century rubbish dumps which penetrate the peat.

(Watching brief during the Society's excavation has revealed similar sand deposits and artefactual material over the property boundary to the east, where peat is currently being extracted.)

Summary

Recent work in the lower Hull valley has revealed unexpected Iron Age/Romano-British settlement on two of its major geo-morphological components, i.e. the till-covered slopes of the Wolds (Didsbury 1988) and the low-lying estuarine alluvium (Didsbury 1988, forthcoming 1989). These discoveries are now complemented by the site under discussion, which offers our first glimpse of the utilisation of marginal areas within the largest of the fluvio-glacial gravel spreads which interrupt the valley alluvium. The only Iron Age/Romano British sites to have been excavated in the lower Hull valley (Saltshouse Road, Hull - Challis and Harding 1975, Greylees Avenue, Hull - C.B.A. Forum 1985) were small scale excavations with limited funding and no provision for post-excavation or publication. All indications so far suggest that good preservation of flora and fauna in various deposits at Park Grange Farm is likely to yield valuable data relevant to the interpretation of environment and economic strategy in the valley at this period.

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Recent Research in Roman Yorkshire, British Archaeological Reports 193, Oxford, 1988.

(Ed) An application has been made to H.B.M.C. for funding and Peter Didsbury is presently awaiting what we hope will be a favourable response.

MARKET WEIGHTON BYPASS

Peter Halkon

A trench approximately 120 metres by 30 metres has been opened by machine along the route of the bypass. Although the site is heavily plough-damaged, on the top of a gravel rise there is a very large number of post holes and other features cutting the gravel. Towards Hawling Road itself, where the plough has been less destructive, a series of hearths has been found, in some cases with pottery in association. This pottery appears to be in the Iron Age tradition although the presence also of Romano-British wheel-thrown wares suggests a possibly later date. Traces of roundhouse gulleys have also been located.

Conditions appear favourable for the survival of environmental evidence by Market Weighton Beck where an important sequence of alluvial deposits has been found.

Aerial photography has revealed extensive ridge-and-furrow overlying linear features, pits and enclosures. The density of crop marks seems to be correlated with the density of Roman pottery finds.

The Durham excavation team leaves on 23/24 September and because such a large excavation area has been opened as many volunteers as possible are needed both now and after the main team departs. Building on the bypass starts in January and it is expected that fieldwork will be continued by the Society during the winter. There has been a good response from members so far but more help is needed - contact Peter Halkon if you are interested (Tel: Hull 847926).

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IRON AGE WINESTEAD

Angus Smith

Work has continued since April on the fifth season of

work at Weldons. In addition to the usual orange/black, sometimes rather "corky", sherds, which are still being found, two different types of pottery turned up while augering - a dark grey pedestal base, and a sherd of burnished pottery (not Black Burnished). Val Rigby of the British Museum appears quite interested in these two sherds, one of which could be third century B.C. A stray find on the surface turned out to be a sherd of Medieval Humber Ware, possibly from Little Kelk. In addition to pottery we found good evidence of a hearth with a largish scatter of fired clay and calcined bone.

So far it has been an exciting year as at the time of writing the original excavation is being enlarged with the aid of a J.C.B. Already we have been able to confirm the existence of at least 40 metres of continuous ditch. We intend to work for as long as possible this year, taking advantage of the dry spell which has lowered the water table to our advantage. We may not get another chance for years so any offers of help mid-week would be most appreciated.

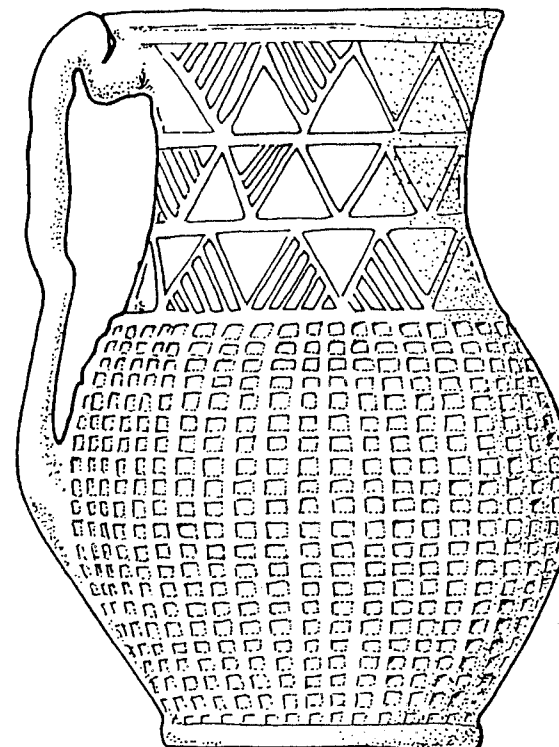
FINDSPOT

A MINATURE LEAD JUG FROM SIGGLESTHORNE Peter Didsbury

Metal detecting of spoil heaps at Sigglesthorne after the close of the Society's excavations in 1988 brought to light several items of interest which is intended to publish in these pages in coming issues.

The subject of the present note is a tiny lead jug c.2"/5cms high. It has been partly crushed in antiquity, and the accompanying illustration restores its original shape except for the handle. Other signs of damage include two rather deep gashes or knife-cuts on the neck, and it is possible that these were inflicted during the period of the vessel's use, for

the sides of the incisions are oxidised in the same fashion as the rest of the vessel's exterior.



(drawn by Ian Beck)
scale: x2

The jug has been cast in a mould and its decorative scheme suggests that it is copying the kind of pottery vessel which would have been in use in the region in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. A mould for casting similar jugs was excavated in York Minster some years ago and it is certainly possible that some

of these miniatures had a religious function; most of the known examples, however, come from ordinary domestic urban contexts and are generally regarded as children's toys. Examples from rural contexts may be rare, and one is tempted to suggest that this example belonged to a child from a fairly well-off village family.

The find was made by Mr. Mike Cocksedge, of Hornsea, who has generously placed it in the Society's care for eventual display in Hornsea Museum.

Further Reading: Base-metal Toys, Geoff Egan,
Finds Research Group
700-1700, Datasheet 10.

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

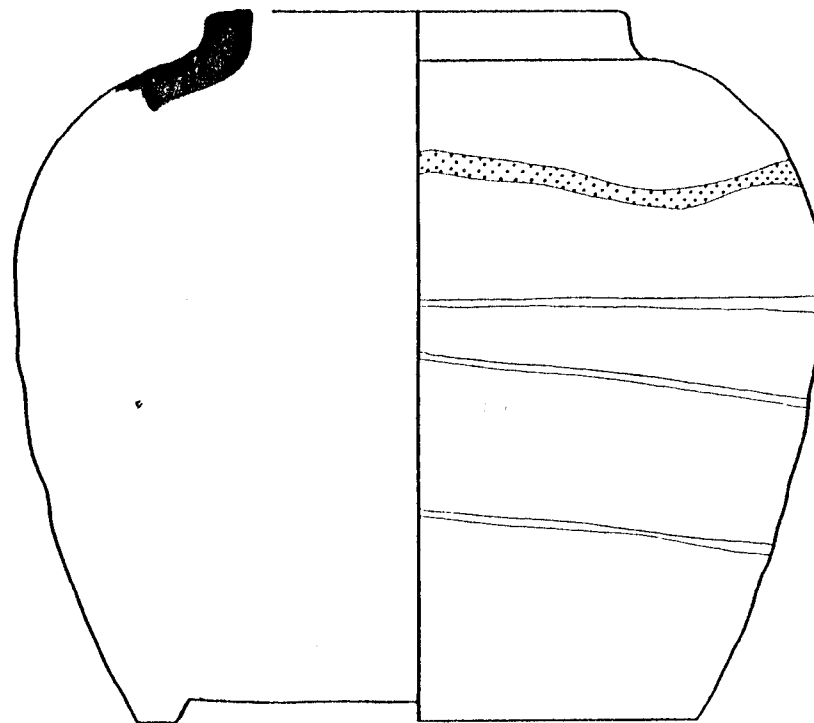
Bryan Sitch
Assistant Keeper of Archaeology

The Hull and East Riding Museum (Transport and Archaeology Museum) on High Street has received a number of interesting enquiries and donations since the last ERAS newsletter.

I am pleased to report that Mr G Wilmot has donated a curious jar, which was found together with the Dorset 'pill' or 'owl' discussed in ERAS News 29 (March 1989, pp 7-9), on the site of St Mary's College. The jar is about 93mm tall and has a coarse stoneware fabric with lots of white angular grits, and a thick light-grey glaze. Some attempt has been made to paint a blue line (stippled in the drawing) near the shoulder of the jar, but it is very faint. Mr Peter Didsbury has a larger example on which the blue painted decoration is much more clearly defined.

Unfortunately the recent acquisition by the Archaeology Collections is rather a poor piece of

pottery. There are unglazed patches and a number of accidental grooves, especially where the grits have been caught and dragged when the pot was turned on the wheel. However, the jar is of some interest, particularly to students of food history. Mr Peter Brears has kindly identified the pot as a stoneware ginger jar of oriental origin, possibly Chinese. Such jars were used to import ginger preserved in syrup and would have been seen in most good quality grocers' shops in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



(actual size)

Both the ginger jar and the Dorset 'pill' were deposited in the nineteenth century when the back of Cranbrook Avenue and Inglemire Lane was used as rubbish dump. Household refuse was often used to fill in old brick-fields (Victorial County History: York East Riding, 1969, p. 377) and Brick and Tile Works are shown close to the site of St Mary's College on the Ordnance Survey Editions of 1893 and 1928.

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SOUTH BANK LETTER

Kevin Leahy

I must say that I was surprised by all of the fuss about the Rose Theatre - don't people realise that this sort of thing is perfectly normal and that the destruction of Ancient Monuments is going on all of the while? To give an example from off my own patch we have just set some sort of a record by digging a Roman well in 20 minutes. A 9km stretch of Ermine Street is being turned into a dual carriageway and the only response we were able to make for most of the length was me and Irene McGrath plus her invaluable metal detector.

We were out on the line of the road one day when I was called over by one of the digger drivers who said that he had found something interesting. On getting to the place where he was working I found that in digging a drain he had cut a near perfect section through a rather nice stone-lined well. It was a metre in diameter by three metres deep and must have been capped off in some way as it contained no earth fill. The site engineers were concerned as they could afford no delay because the concrete was waiting. I was given 20 minutes to excavate and record the well while they placed the shuttering.

Photographs and measurements took care of the recording but I needed to see what was in the bottom

of the well. Desperate circumstances call for desperate measures so I asked the digger driver if he could get his bucket into the bottom of the well; he said he would try and plunged his bucket in. From his first dip came some blocks of walling stone and from the second what looked like a rounded black pot. In the following bucket-full came some animal bones and the rim of a greyware pot - the dating evidence we needed. When I came to wash the black pot I had a surprise as it turned out to be a human cranium.

When a site is to be destroyed we must carry out a salvage not a rescue excavation and the results can often prove worthwhile. The pot rim gave us a second century date for the well. Human skulls have been found in Roman wells elsewhere in Britain and it is clear that we are looking at a ritual practice. The animal bones are the jaws of a pig and an ox which again have been found in other Roman wells. The two of us had to take care of this excavation by ourselves with not an actor in sight, just when we could have used one: Alas poor Yorik.....

Apologies from the Editor

Some might say that I ought to put aside a page for these, but in any case I must apologise to Bryan Sitch for failing to acknowledge his authorship of the Roman Castleford lecture summary in the last newsletter.

DIARY OF EVENTS

	<u>Time and Venue</u>
21 August - ?	Market Weighton
Excavation	contact Peter Halkon Tel: Hull 847926
Wednesday 20 September	7.30pm
ERAS Reports Meeting	Ferens Art Gallery Hull
Saturday 23 September	8.00am departure
Excursion to sites in Northamptonshire	Ferensway
Wednesday 4 October	7.30pm
Field Study Group	Castle Warehouse, Chapel Lane Staith, High St, Hull
Wednesday 18 October	7.30pm
ERAS lecture: The Anglo-Saxon Monastery at Dacre (Rachel Newman)	Ferens Art Gallery Hull

Wednesday 8 November	7.30pm
ERAS lecture: West Heslerton (Dominic Powesland)	Ferens Art Gallery Hull
Saturday 11 November	10 am - 5 pm
ERAS/Hull University dayschool: 'New Light on the Parisi'	University Lecture Theatre Physics Building University of Hull
Wednesday 15 November	8.00 pm
Hull Classical Association lecture: The Silver Mines of Laurion	Hull University Education Centre (near library) further details from Dr Ryder Tel: 465630
Wednesday 13 December	7.30 pm
ERAS lecture: Roman York: New Discoveries in an Ancient City (Patrick Ottaway)	Ferens Art Gallery Hull
